

Williamstown Special Activation Precinct



Frequently asked questions

April 2022

What is a Special Activation Precinct?

Special Activation Precincts are dedicated areas in regional locations identified by the NSW Government to become thriving business and employment hubs. The government will prioritise planning and investment for these Precincts.

The Special Activation Precincts program is an important part of the NSW Government's 20-year Economic Vision for Regional NSW – Refresh, led by the Department of Regional NSW and funded by the \$4.2 billion Snowy Hydro Legacy Fund.

The Department of Planning and Environment (the department) is responsible for preparing the streamlined planning framework for the precincts, which includes three key parts:

1. *State Environmental Planning Policy (Precincts-Regional) 2021* (Precincts - Regional SEPP);
2. Precinct master plans; and
3. Precinct delivery plans (which will be prepared by Regional Growth NSW Development Corporation after completion of the first two parts of the framework).

The aim is to develop a master plan and conduct environmental assessments upfront to reduce the cost and time for investors and businesses to set-up in the precincts.

What is the Williamstown Special Activation Precinct?

In May 2020, the NSW Government announced the Williamstown Special Activation Precinct (the Precinct).

The Precinct leverages from the investment in defence and aerospace industries, and

connections to national and international air, sea and road transport and freight and logistics, creating around 3,700 new jobs for the region over the next 40 years.

It will build on the Hunter Region's history of supporting Australia's defence and emerging aerospace industries around the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Base Williamstown as well as its proximity to air, road, rail and sea transport.

How has the Precinct been determined?

Master planning for the Precinct commenced with an investigation area of approximately 10,000 hectares. Following extensive technical studies and stakeholder input, the proposed area for the Precinct is 395 hectares. The Precinct is located south of RAAF Base Williamstown and the Newcastle Airport.

The draft master plan takes a coordinated and precinct-wide approach to addressing historical land constraints including flooding, drainage and water quality, which have acted as a barrier to development in the past. Land within the Precinct will be rezoned to allow for new commercial and industrial land uses, delivered over 40 years.

What are the planning controls proposed for the Williamstown Special Activation Precinct?

The proposed addition to the Precincts - Regional SEPP will remove land forming the Precinct from the application of the *Port Stephens Local Environmental Plan 2013* (Port Stephens LEP). It is intended that the Precincts - Regional SEPP will become the primary environmental planning

instrument for all land within the Precinct and establish new land use zones, controls relating to exempt, complying and local development and introduce streamlined development application processes for land within the Precinct.

Due to the number of constraints in the Precinct, a complying development pathway is not initially possible for the majority of the land.

To change this, the department proposes amends to the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Planning Systems) 2021* (Planning Systems SEPP) to list the Precinct as an 'identified site' under the policy and enable State significant development (SSD) applications to be lodged.

Following the completion and determination of the SSD process, a complying development pathway would be available for approvals of early works such as clearing of land, filling and enabling infrastructure sought.

The SSD application will be lodged by the Regional Growth NSW Development Corporation (the corporation). The SSD approach ensures impacts, such as groundwater, Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) contamination, cultural heritage and biodiversity issues are assessed in a precinct-wide approach with ongoing monitoring in place.

The SSD process will provide more certainty for landowners and the community so there is a coordinated approach to planning approvals, staging and development.

In parallel with the SSD process, the corporation will prepare a delivery plan that is consistent with the Precincts-Regional SEPP and the master plan. The delivery plan will provide guidance on environmental management and urban design elements such as setbacks, landscaping, parking parameters, and the like.

Both the SSD and the delivery plan will be on public exhibition in early 2023.

What are the main changes being proposed to the current zoning?

The land-use strategy for the Precinct will

include 3 zones:

- A new *Regional Enterprise Zone* will facilitate the development of industrial and employment activity connected with the defence and aerospace industries.
- A new *C2 Environmental Conservation Zone* will protect, manage and restore areas of high ecological value, water supply catchments, natural waterways and prevent development that could destroy or damage those values.
- Existing *SP2 Infrastructure Zones* under the Port Stephens LEP will be reflected to ensure the continued operation of the RAAF Base Williamstown and Newcastle Airport. It is also proposed that land to the south of Cabbage Tree Road will be required for infrastructure purposes to manage flooding and stormwater from the Precinct. This land will be zoned SP2 Infrastructure.

How will flooding and drainage be managed?

The proposed flooding and water cycle management strategies outlined in the draft master plan is largely driven by a catchment based approach.

The draft master plan has been designed so there is no adverse effect on surrounding properties and to contain any impacts as a result of development in the Precinct.

The proposed plan identifies areas for shallow flood detention basins south of Cabbage Tree Road to control and manage peak flows and flood volumes from the Precinct. This safeguards the surrounding areas from flooding.

The Precinct drainage network, within and downstream of the Precinct boundary will be investigated during the SSD process to improve the drainage function.

The fill strategy that has informed the draft master plan will be further detailed as part of the SSD and delivery plan. The draft master plan recommends an average 2-2.5m of fill across most of the Precinct, with a network of channels and wetlands that have been integrated with the

water quality strategy to provide drainage and flood detention for the Precinct. The fill strategy will be further explored and confirmed during the SSD and delivery plan work.

Will sites outside of the Precinct be impacted by flooding?

The flooding and water cycle management strategy has considered the existing catchment beyond the Precinct boundary including local flooding, regional flooding, tidal inundation and groundwater flows as well as the existing drainage network. It is recognised that flooding is a significant constraint in the area.

To facilitate the proposed development, the flooding and water cycle management strategy has the objective of ‘no flood impact’ outside of the Precinct boundary. Where this cannot be achieved, the draft master plan identifies a number of sites to be zoned SP2 Infrastructure so there is no impact on private land outside of the Precinct.

The proposed measures to manage flooding and drainage such as flood detention, floodplain storage offsets and augmentation of existing infrastructure will be located within the Precinct.

How will environmental impacts be managed, including PFAS and other contaminants?

The proposed flooding, drainage, stormwater, geotechnical and biodiversity strategies for the Precinct have considered the management of PFAS and this forms an integral part of the above management strategies to ensure any future development within the Precinct will limit PFAS mobilisation.

While the Precinct is not a remediation project, it will not create additional impacts and will aim to prevent the mobilisation of PFAS in any impacted environmental media (including soil, sediment and water) through mitigation measures and strategies informed by industry experts.

The NSW Government seeks to work closely with and support the Commonwealth Department of Defence which is currently undertaking an extensive remediation program both on and off RAAF Base Williamstown. The draft master plan does not prevent the Department of Defence’s remediation program to continue.

Where required, development in the Precinct will be staged, to not inhibit the ongoing management and remediation of PFAS.

What controls are in place to protect Aboriginal cultural heritage?

We pay our respects to the Worimi people as the custodians of the land in the Precinct.

The controls in the draft master plan aim to retain, protect and celebrate Williamstown’s proud Aboriginal culture and heritage, protect and mitigate harm to Aboriginal heritage values in the Precinct and encourage cultural land management practices.

The draft master plan also outlines strategies that involves and empowers local Aboriginal people in training and employment opportunities during delivery of the Precinct, including more broadly, mentorship programs and developing a cultural competency training program for new businesses.

What controls are in place to safeguard valued flora and fauna species?

The Precinct includes areas of high biodiversity values including the critically endangered Swift Parrot, and the vulnerable Koala, Squirrel Glider, Wallum Froglet and Earp’s Gum. The Netted Bottle Brush may be prevalent within the Precinct.

The Precinct includes 102 hectares of native vegetation. The draft master plan protects a large proportion of this native vegetation and the associated biodiversity values through the retention of an expansive central environmental protection area in the centre of the Precinct. This will provide an important habitat connection and corridor with adjacent high-value biodiversity areas including land forming part of the Hunter

Region drinking water catchment and Tilligerry State Conservation Area further to the west.

How will trucks and heavy vehicles be managed along Cabbage Tree Road?

With private vehicles the main form of transport in the Precinct, the draft master plan encourages improvements to both public and active transport networks to better connect the Precinct to surrounding centres.

The Traffic and Transport Report has considered the increased movement of heavy vehicles associated with the proposed uses and provides mechanisms for the appropriate separation of traffic and people between Newcastle Airport, freight and logistics areas, workers and visitors to the Precinct. The draft master plan also recommends a number of upgrades to the regional road network to facilitate Precinct development.

Why has the Precinct been split into three catchments?

The Precinct has three proposed catchment areas – Northern, Western and Eastern - so that development can take place according to each catchment's potential to accommodate new land uses and be developed over the long term.

The catchment approach is based on investigations that propose strategies to effectively manage flooding, drainage, and contamination, without having an adverse effect on the surrounding area.

How long until development commences and where will it commence?

Development cannot start until the master plan has been finalised to rezone the land, the SSD application determined, and the delivery plan developed.

The staging of the catchments will be detailed further in the delivery plan and the SSD application. The government proposes to prioritise the Northern Catchment for development first.

How will acquisitions be managed?

We understand this is a difficult time for some landowners as the corporation will need to acquire land within the Precinct for its activation.

The corporation will be in contact with landowners who may be affected by acquisition as the master plan, design and staging are developed and finalised.

Any land acquisitions will be undertaken in accordance with the *Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991* (Just Terms Act) and other relevant legal frameworks.

Land acquisition in the Precinct will be managed by the corporation. This is a long-term development, over 40 years and potential acquisitions will be managed in a staged approach, over time.

What are the next steps?

The department is running information sessions for landowners in, and close to the Precinct.

Please visit www.planning.nsw.gov.au/williamtownsap to register for a session.

The exhibition period has been extended to 56 days, double the standard 28 days, so the community has time to meet with the team, review the draft master plan and associated documents, and make a submission.

How can I provide my feedback?

The exhibition period has been extended to 56 days. [Have your say before 8 June 2022.](#)

Once exhibition closes, the department will review and finalise the master plan, taking into consideration feedback received from submissions. The department will publish all submissions and prepare a submissions report, which will be published when the master plan is finalised, likely towards the end of 2022.

Where can I get more information?

Williamstown Special Activation Precinct

w: www.planning.nsw.gov.au/williamtownsap

e: activationprecincts@regional.nsw.gov.au

p: 1300 734 466

To view the draft master plan, technical studies,
and to make a submission, go to
www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/williamtownsap

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