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Capacity of Heathcote Ridge land for future development to be carefully considered

The NSW Government will investigate the suitability of rezoning a large area of land west of Menai for employment, residential and conservation purposes.

The Gandangara Local Aboriginal Land Council (GLALC) has requested the Department of Planning consider the development capacity of the 865-hectare site known as Heathcote Ridge through a State significant site (SSS) study.

The GLALC's preliminary proposal identifies:

- 80 hectares for potential employment purposes;
- 5 hectares for retail uses;
- 408 hectares of possible residential land; and
- 372 hectares of conservation land.

The majority of the site is currently zoned Rural (Future Urban) under Sutherland Shire Council's local environmental plan, with some areas zoned for environmental protection.

The Department's Deputy Director-General Tom Gellibrand said the site's large size, its potential to contribute to regional employment and housing outcomes and the opportunity to conserve important wildlife corridors, meant the SSS process was the appropriate mechanism to consider the proposal.

"The preparation of an SSS study will ensure a comprehensive and inclusive approach is taken to what really is a site of regional significance," Mr Gellibrand said.

"The process will allow full investigation of the broad range of issues associated with the site and will include close and detailed consultation with Sutherland Shire Council, the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water and other key stakeholders.

"Liverpool City Council, which directly adjoins the site's south-western boundary, will also be closely consulted, including during the preparation of the study requirements which is the next step in the process."

Should the study determine that the site is appropriate for residential development, the land would subsequently be submitted for inclusion on the Metropolitan Development Program (MDP) – the NSW Government's comprehensive inventory of Sydney's land supply.

Mr Gellibrand said the SSS process allowed the studies normally undertaken for inclusion on the MDP to also take place concurrently with the rezoning request for the site.

"There is no doubt that there are a wide range of very important issues to be considered as part of this study, including whether the site is in the right location for residential development at this stage.

“It is one of the benefits of the SSS process that all of these issues can be considered at the same time through a holistic investigation of the site’s future capacities and constraints.”

The site is located wholly within the Sutherland Shire local government area and extends along the eastern side of Heathcote Road, with a collection of smaller parcels along New Illawarra Road further to the east.

Next steps in the SSS process:

- The Department of Planning will prepare a package of requirements for the SSS study in consultation with local councils and relevant government agencies.
- The GLALC will then prepare the SSS study based on these requirements.
- The Department of Planning will then review the adequacy of the study and, if deemed adequate, place the study on public exhibition for a minimum of 30 days.
- Following exhibition, the Department of Planning will consider the rezoning proposal taking into account the SSS study and any submissions received during exhibition and make a recommendation to the Minister for Planning.
- If rezoning is considered appropriate, the site would be declared a State significant site through an amendment to the Major Development State Environmental Planning Policy, which would incorporate the relevant planning provisions for the site.

Department of Planning media contact: Paul Searle on (02) 9228 6295