Kitchener LEP back on track

The Department of Planning today placed on exhibition a proposed local environmental plan (LEP) for land adjoining Kitchener village to confirm its purpose and outcomes, including protecting local biodiversity.

Department Deputy Director-General Plan Making and Urban Renewal Tom Gellibrand said the draft LEP seeks to:

- Remove ambiguities about whether land is zoned rural or residential;
- Ensure planning provisions for the land are consistent with the outcomes of the Lower Hunter regional strategy and the accompanying regional conservation plan; and
- Address biodiversity issues.

Mr Gellibrand said it was important to explain the background to the exhibition.

Mr Gellibrand said Cessnock City Council last year proposed permitting about 900 residential lots across the entire LEP area.

“However, the council had not resolved the potential biodiversity impacts of this development,” Mr Gellibrand said.

“This LEP area includes endangered species including Lower Hunter spotted gum ironbark forest and river-flat eucalypt forest, with the threatened regent honeyeater and swift parrot recently seen in the area.

“Potential impacts on these species from the development need to be carefully considered.

“As a result, the NSW Government in May 2010 amended the LEP to limit the residential zoning to part of the proposed release area.

“Residential development was permitted in the area where a single large landowner proposed arrangements to secure additional ongoing environmental land for permanent protection, to compensate for development on its land.”

Mr Gellibrand said however, in amending the LEP to deal with this issue information in the LEP’s map and text had unfortunately become inconsistent.
Mr Gellibrand said the Minister for Planning had appointed the Director-General of the Department of Planning as the relevant planning authority to re-exhibit and clarify the intent of this LEP, due to the importance of confirming the zoning of the land.

“This exhibited amendment, if approved, will make permissible the release of 200-300 lots of land,” Mr Gellibrand said.

“It is possible that the rest of the release area could be considered for rezoning to residential at a future date, if the council and landowners are able to resolve biodiversity offset issues.”

The LEP amendment is on exhibition at:

- Department of Planning: Newcastle Office, 26 Honeysuckle Drive, Newcastle (9:00am to 5:00pm, Mon to Fri) (4904 2700).
- Department of Planning: Information Centre, Ground floor, 23-33 Bridge Street, Sydney (9:00am to 5:00pm, Mon to Fri) (9228 6333).
- Cessnock City Council: Administration Building, 62-78 Vincent Street, Cessnock (9:00am to 5:00pm, Mon to Fri) (4993 4100).

It is also available at www.planning.nsw.gov.au

The exhibition will end on 3 September 2010.

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