The Southern Highlands Regional Shooting Complex proposal at Hill Top has been approved by the NSW Government following an amendment to the site’s zoning plan, which was the subject of a recent court decision.

NSW Minister for Planning, Tony Kelly, said the $5.1 million expansion of the existing shooting facility was originally approved in early 2009 following a review by an independent expert panel, but the approval was subsequently overturned in the Land and Environment Court.

“The court’s findings did not relate to the merits of the development rather a legal technicality that has now been resolved,” the Minister said.

“As such, the proposal was able to be reconsidered in its original form and a fresh decision made based on the merits of the project.

“My approval largely replicates the previous approval and, as such, I have determined the project is able to go ahead subject to 27 conditions.”

These include:

- Strict limits on noise with regularly monitoring required, in line with recommendations of the independent panel which originally reviewed the proposal in 2008;
- Strict operating hours;
- Traffic management; and
- Environmental protection.

The November 2009 Land and Environment Court decision found the safety buffer area for the complex was prohibited under the relevant zoning plan.

As a result, a minor amendment was made to make it clear the safety buffer area is permissible, which was the intention of original zoning plan.

The proposal includes:

- Retention of the existing 800 metre rifle range and ancillary facilities;
- An additional 500 metre rifle range;
- A new 50 metre pistol range;
- A new combined 200 metre rifle and pistol shooting range;
- A new shotgun range;
- A new indoor air pistol range; and
- A clubhouse, internal access roads, car parking, generator and water tanks.
Mr Kelly said only 136 of the 1,036 hectare site will be used for the shooting ranges and related facilities, with the remaining 900 hectares to be protected for environmental conservation.

“In total, only 25 hectares of land will actually be cleared for the approved facilities,” the Minister said.

“At the same time, an environmental offset agreement will see two shooting clubs relocate to Hill Top and result in a net increase of 1,795 hectares of high conservation land to the State reserve system.