

Peer review report for PP-2021-7146 Cobbitty Sub-Precinct 5, South Creek West Land Release Area Comments, 9 May 2025

Revised Comments provided by the Chief Engineer

Purpose

The Chief Engineer (CE) has been requested by the Planning Proposal Authority (PPA) to review the proponents' geotechnical reports and related studies including a Peer Review.

The foundation request to the Chief Engineer was in essence – “Is the Chief Engineer of the opinion that the geotechnical information provided is sufficient to recommend that the proposed rezoning can proceed through the usual assessment avenues?”

Reports/Correspondence Reviewed

- Comments on Geotechnical Peer Review report – South Creek West, Sub-Precinct 5, Cobbitty, 641 and 657 The Northern Road, Cobbitty NSW, Douglas Partners, 28 March 2025, Project 92225.11 Ref: R.002.Rev1
- South Creek West Precinct 5 (Part) – Draft Peer Review of Geotechnical Reports and Provision of Engineering Advice, Martens, 13 March 2025, Ref: P2410492JR01V01 250313
- Report on Detailed Geotechnical Investigation – South Creek West, Precinct 5, Cobbitty, Douglas Partners, 20 December 2024, Project 92225.11
- Always Consultancy Pty Ltd letter. Rezoning Review, PR-2024-33- Camden LGA – PP-2021-7146; Panels Determination that Planning Proposal should be Submitted for gateway Determination, 28 March 2025.

Background

These comments are provided for the PP-2021-7146 Cobbitty Sub-Precinct 5 referred to herein as “the Project”.

The Panel has recommended the proposal be updated to address matters of site-specific merit. One of the matters relates to geotechnical issues associated with the ridgeline adjacent to a water storage facility. The Panel state the outcomes of a Peer Review of

the proponents' Geotechnical reports would assist in determining the development potential of the land. As referenced above Martens & Associates (MA) prepared a peer review of the Douglas Partners (DP) geotechnical submissions (March 2025). DP were then requested to provide a response to the MA peer review.

Comments

- The Project does have geotechnical challenges. These challenges require engineering solutions, and this has been clearly stated by both MA and DP, e.g. there will be a requirement for retaining walls and significant earthworks. The design reporting of those solutions typically occur at the next stage of project works and not prior to rezoning.
- Further and ongoing geotechnical monitoring is required as stated by both MA and DP
- It is understood that the proponent has already made commitments to execute the additional investigation and monitoring at an appropriate time.
- DP have been given opportunity to respond to the MA peer review. DP has "worked through" a number of technical issues raised by MA. Some issues identified by MA and responded to by DP can come down to technical to a throwing. It is considered that the absolute or precise resolution of these issues will not make meaningful changes to the project at its current stage (possible not at any stage for some issues). This can be further articulated if requested.
- There are 51 no. responses from DP to the MA peer review. The CE has reviewed each individual response. DP has in some cases provided clarification where it was considered MA may have not had adequate information and or required technical clarification. DP has also in some cases defended their approach where MA may have considered that DP were in technical error. The CE does not considerate it necessary to provide individual responses (51 No) to inform this report. For absolute clarity it is confirmed that that each of the 51 responses was reviewed by the CE. If the CE thought that any of the responses were in error or not adequately, the CE would have sought further clarification. This was not the case.
- The CE is of the opinion that any further back and forth between consultants to try and gain a consensus technical point of view would not add any value to the project at this stage.
- The DP responses are either fit for purpose or could be further drilled down to a final resolution, at an appropriate time.

- It is noted in Always Consulting letter “the Draft Peer Review appears to have been undertaken within what would be expected of an adversarial or contested setting”. I would agree with this sentiment. It is unfortunate for the engineering industry that when one consultant is commissioned to peer review another consultant’s work, that it is taken as opportunity to attack the other consultant’s work and takes the form of the proverbial “consultant knowledge swinging competition”.
- It is noted that DP did not provide a response to the conclusions provided by MA. It is understood that’s DP’s position is that given they have provided the individual responses (51) that by extension they have addressed the MA conclusions.
- Conclusion 4 provided by MA needs to be responded to by the proponent. Given the geotechnical challenges of the project a response to the statement “all in” or “all out” should be provided by the proponent. It is understood that the “all in” or “all out” refers to the extent that the geotechnical challenges/treatments will be undertaken.
- DP have provided an appropriate amount of detail for the required geotechnical remediation and hazard reduction measures required for the site. This is detailed in section 13.1 of the 20 December 2024 report.
- It is understood that the main purpose for the CE review of the documentation is assist in determining whether the project should proceed to Gateway determination. Both MA and DP have both acknowledged that further geotechnical investigations and monitoring should be carried out. By inference this suggests that both MA and DP are of the opinion that Gateway determination should be carried out. So that further investigation and monitoring can take place at the next step of this project.

Conclusion

The DP geotechnical investigation and the DP responses to the MA peer review have indicated that further investigation and monitoring is required for the site. Further ongoing geotechnical monitoring is already being carried out. There is sufficient understanding and acknowledgement of the geotechnical challenges this site presents. As with any project there are engineering solutions to the challenges of unusual and difficult site conditions.

The nature and extent of geotechnical engineering investigations, and hence geotechnical solutions required for the project should not be underestimated by any party.

Given the acknowledgement by all parties that further geotechnical investigation and monitoring is required and will take place at an appropriate time the CE is of the opinion that the project should proceed to Gateway determination.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Rex Wightley".

Rex Wightley BE (Civil), MBT, FIEAust, EngExec, CPEng, NER, APEC

Chief Engineer