

**SOUTH JERRABOMBERA ESTATE
STAGE 1F ROAD – ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT**

F Dominic Fanning

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1 PROJECT HISTORY

The “*subject land*” for the purposes of this *Report* is Stage 1F in the Stage 1 development area of the South Jerrabombera Estate residential development project (Figure 1).

The original approval for the South Jerrabombera Estate Stage 1 development area identified a deviation of the peripheral road along the southeastern side of Stage 1 (Figure 2); purportedly for biodiversity purposes. The rationale for that deviation derived from earlier flora and fauna investigations of the South Jerrabombera project by Kevin Mills & Associates (KMA 2004 - 2017); as discussed below.

It is noted that the project included a drainage easement and access track along the southeastern side of Stage 1; which would have isolated a small ‘triangular’ patch of vegetation (see Figure 2).

Subsequently, the proponent (Village Building Company) has sought to remove the deviation of the peripheral road – to align the road with the existing approved drainage easement and access track at that location and to use the ‘triangle’ of land for residential development purposes (Figure 3).

Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council sought additional information with respect to the potential ecological impacts of the straightening of the road; and a subsequent *South Jerrabombera Biodiversity Constraints Report* was prepared by EcoLogical Australia (ELA 2019); as discussed below.

Subsequently, the Department of Planning, Industry & Environment (DPIE) sought additional information regarding ecological circumstances; and recommended an “*additional survey/rapid assessment*” be undertaken. In response to that request, the undersigned conducted a ‘rapid assessment’ of the area to be affected by the proposed road straightening on 23 November 2020 (as documented below)

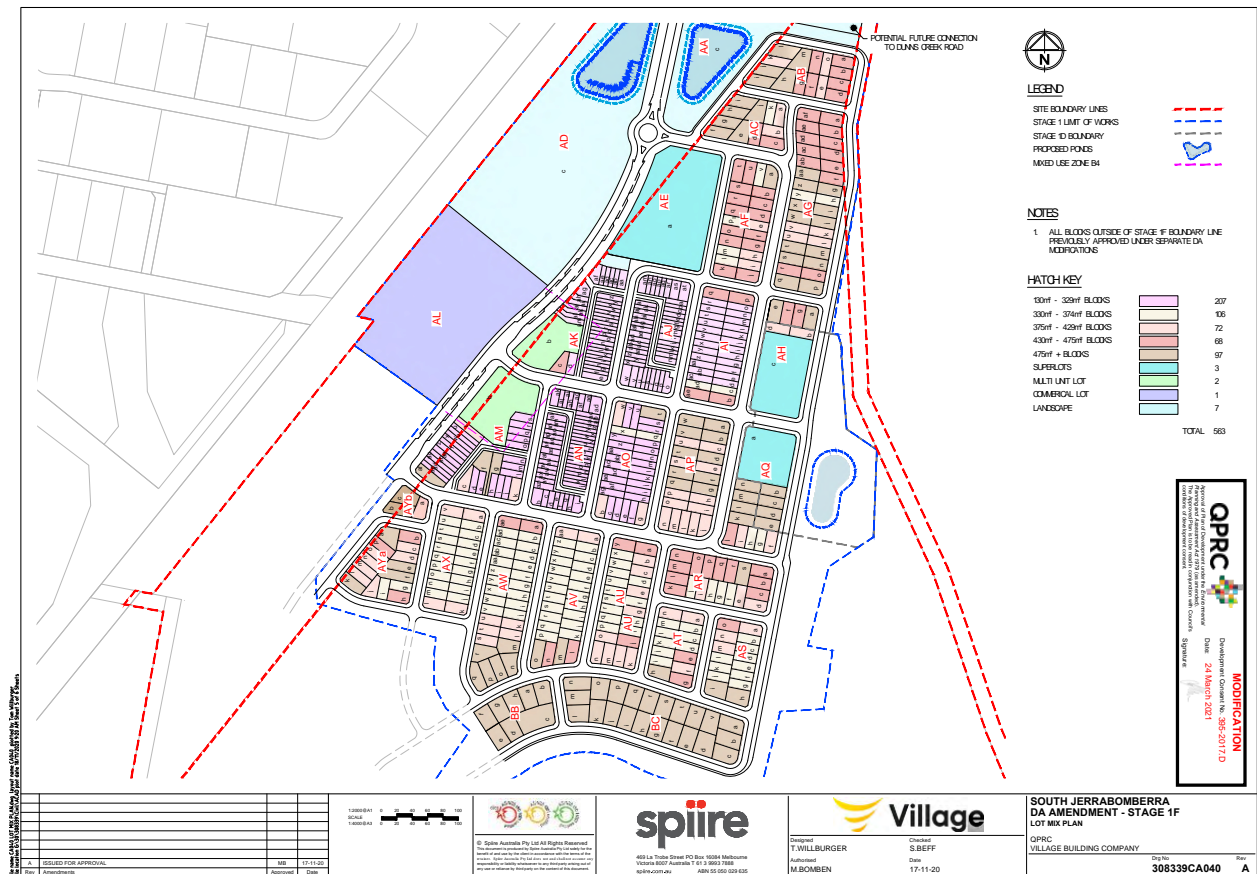
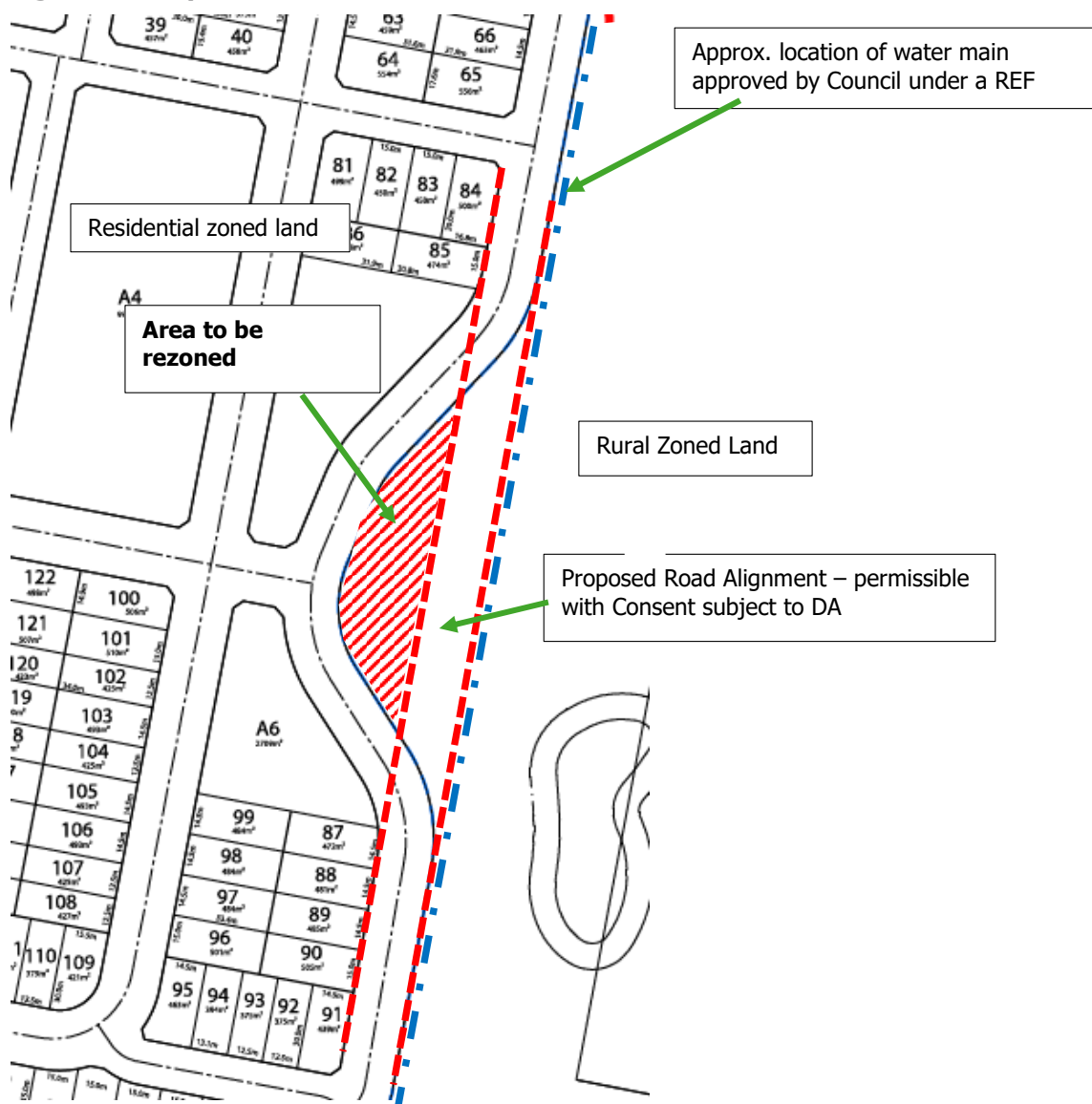


Figure 1 South Jerrabomberra Estate Stage 1 – highlighting the Stage 1F area (with the relevant parts being identified as AQ and AH – on the right)

Figure 5 Proposed Road and residual land



Council have approved the REF for water and sewer along the proposed straightened road alignment.

Figure 2 The portion of Stage 1F of the South Jerrabombera Estate project – which has now been approved by Council

2 ECOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Earlier ecological/biodiversity *Reports* regarding the subject land were prepared by Kevin Mills & Associates (KMA 2013; 2014a, b and c; 2017).

The KMA *Reports* variously describe the area including and around the subject site (the 'triangle' to be affected by the road straightening) as a mosaic of exotic grasslands with patches of native grassland; including partly within the 'triangle'. However, as noted below, the ELA 2019 survey within the 'triangle' only identified a relatively small area as dominated by native species such as *Lomandra longifolia* and *Carex appressa*.

The ELA 2019 *Report* (mentioned above) reviewed the previous KMA *Reports* and assessed the biodiversity values of the additional area of land to be developed in Stage 1F (the small 'triangle' of land identified above). ELA also conducted a site inspection – consisting of a flora meander, a full floristic biometric plot, observation of habitat features and opportunistic observations.

The ELA 2019 *Report* states that the land affected by the proposed road re-alignment is located on land “that is highly degraded, heavily modified and consists predominantly of exotic vegetation” and is “dominated by exotic grasses, shrubs, forbs, and noxious weeds”. There were (in 2019) some patches dominated by native species such as *Lomandra longifolia* and *Carex appressa* (as mapped by ELA).

It is noted that the KMA 2014b investigation did not specifically inspect the 'triangle' itself – no transects were conducted within the 'triangle' and the only flora plot was located essentially on its southeastern edge. Vegetation to the southeast (in the E2 land across the drainage easement) is in better condition; and contains far fewer weeds and introduced species.

The undersigned inspected the subject site on 23 November 2020 – to make observations regarding the vegetation present and to obtain photographs.

It was my observation in late 2020 that the majority of the vegetation within the 'triangle' was as described by ELA – predominantly of introduced and weed species; with patches (particularly at the northern extremity of the 'triangle') dominated by common and abundant native species. Dominant introduced species included African Love Grass, Patterson's Curse, Cat's Ears and Phalaris.

It is also noted that at the time (23 November 2020) the approved sewerage and water easement and the associated access road had been installed (see attached photographs at the end of this *Report*). Those features of the project would have isolated the 'triangle' in any case - resulting in a small patch of vegetation surrounded by roads and tracks; of extremely limited ecological or biodiversity value.

In addition, the vegetation that was present in 2020 (and before) was a derived grassland; absent any trees or significant shrubs. The area had clearly been highly modified and degraded long prior to the current development activities.

By contrast, the land to the southeast of the road (within the land to be retained for conservation purposes) generally has a high density of native groundcover plants and fewer introduced plants (consistent with the previous mapping by KMA and others).

3 CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES

Recently - on 24 March 2021 - Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council approved the road straightening project in Stage 1F of the South Jerrabomberra Estate project' with the 'triangle' approved to be cleared and filled for residential development purposes.

That area of land (the 'triangle' – see Figure 2) has since been cleared; with large mounds of fill currently occupying the 'triangle' (see photograph below). No native vegetation remains within the 'triangle'.



View to the northeast along the approved straightened road running along the southeastern side of Stage 1F. The Stage 1F development area is located in the left midground (to the left of the dark brown road alignment) with the sewerage/water easement and access track to the right. The large mounds of fill (in the middle of the photograph) are located on what was the 'triangle' of land in Stage 1F prior to the approved modification.

4 CONCLUSIONS

As discussed in detail above, the relevant part Stage 1 of the South Jerrabombera Estate Development Area was not characterised by substantial areas of native vegetation prior to its being cleared for approved residential development purposes. The vegetation that was present in the 'triangle' of land was dominated by introduced plants and weeds, with only small areas dominated by native vegetation. No trees or substantial shrubs were present in the 'triangle' in 2019 or 2020.

Furthermore, there is a substantial area of native vegetation to the east and southeast of the Stage 1 development that is to be retained for biodiversity conservation purposes. The 'triangle' (even if it contained significant native vegetation – which it did not) would have been isolated by surrounding roads and infrastructure; and of little or no biodiversity conservation value.

The road straightening project in Stage 1F of the South Jerrabombera Estate Development has subsequently approved by Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council. As a consequence, the subject site has been cleared and filled. No native vegetation remains within the relevant area in Stage 1F.

Any prior issues regarding native vegetation and/or potential biodiversity impacts is moot.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'F Dominic Fanning', with a stylized flourish at the end.

F Dominic Fanning
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Photo 1 View to the southeast from the approved maintenance easement – over part of the substantial E2 lands to be conserved on the subject land. The approved maintenance easement is located along the eastern boundary of the Stage 1 project lands.



Photo 2 View to the northeast from the approved maintenance easement – over part of the substantial E2 lands to be conserved on the subject land. The E2 lands contain predominantly groundcover native vegetation – with smaller patches of weeds and introduced species.



Photo 3 The small 'triangle' of disturbed land proposed to be rezoned for development purposes. This patch is degraded (consisting predominantly of introduced species) and would provide no ecological valid outcome – as it would be isolated by the road to the left (the west) and the drainage easement (to the right). It provides no biodiversity conservation benefit.



Photo 4 The small 'triangle' of land at Jerrabomberra South – dominated by introduced species. This patch of land is of no biodiversity conservation value.