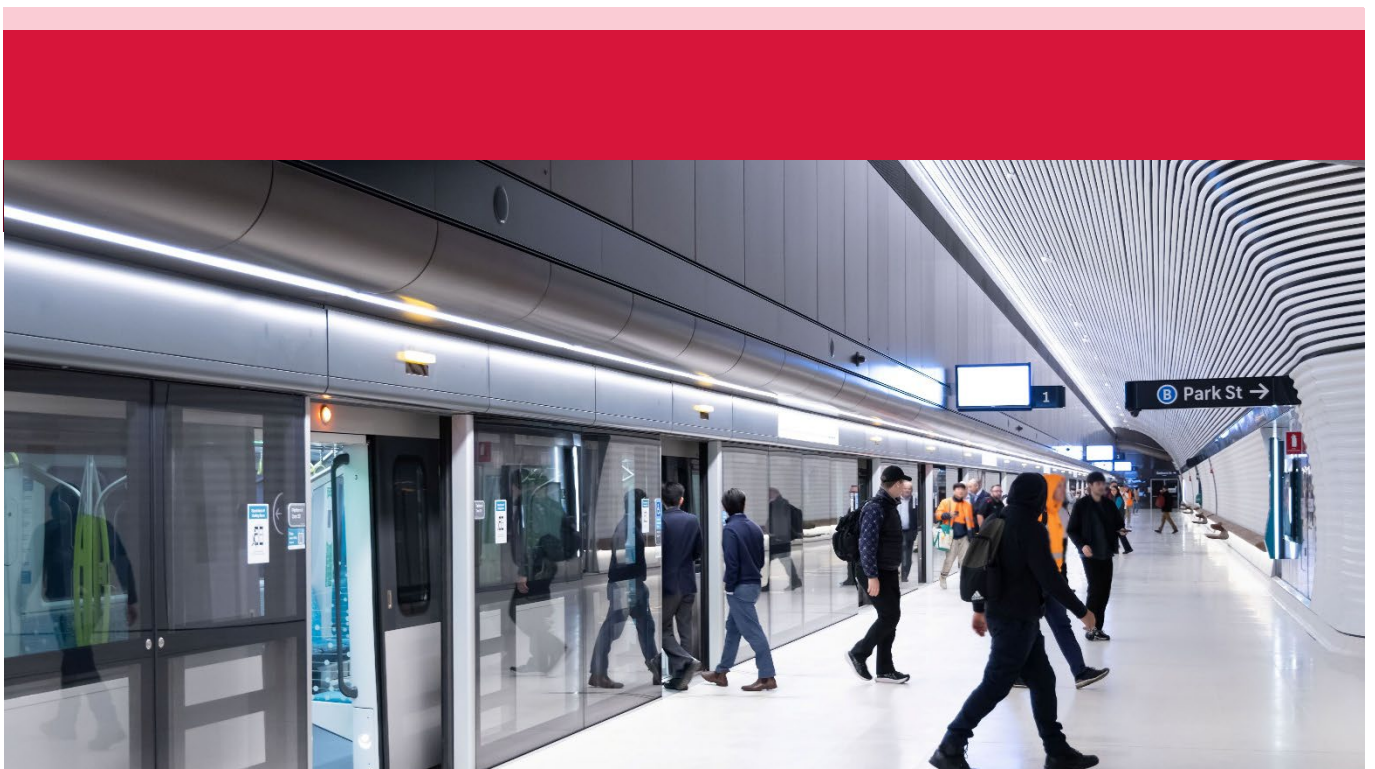


Guideline for protecting land for future infrastructure

Protecting land for future infrastructure including corridors and facilities

July 2026





Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure acknowledges that it stands on Aboriginal land. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land, and we show our respect for Elders past, present and emerging through thoughtful and collaborative approaches to our work, seeking to demonstrate our ongoing commitment to providing places in which Aboriginal people are included socially, culturally, and economically.

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Guideline for protecting land for future infrastructure

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What is corridor protection?

Corridor protection refers to the identification and management of land that may be required for the delivery of future infrastructure. It is a proactive planning measure that enables long-term infrastructure delivery by signalling to development industry future intent for the land and enabling early measures to protect land before competing development interests emerge.

The level of planning protection applied depends on three key factors:

- the certainty of the project's location
- exposure to existing or future development pressure
- the availability of funding for land acquisition and delivery.

At an early stage, where the location of infrastructure is not yet finalised, planning mechanisms can be used to guide future land use decisions (including rezonings) and reduce the risk that development precludes the delivery of necessary infrastructure. Where a project alignment is confirmed, more definitive planning controls may be needed. This is to prevent development from encroaching on the land identified for the infrastructure, either above or below ground.

Purpose of this guideline

This Guideline supports NSW Government infrastructure agencies and providers to protect land for future infrastructure through the NSW planning system. Its primary focus is linear infrastructure such as transport and utility corridors. The principles outlined may also be applied to non-linear infrastructure, such as land required for localised road-widening, open space, schools or hospitals. While this guideline will use the term 'corridor', references to a corridor should, where relevant, be read as also including site specific non-linear infrastructure.

This document updates and replaces the 2015 Planning Guideline for Major Infrastructure Corridors. It reflects lessons learned over the past decade, and incorporates changes to planning processes, where relevant.

Why protect land for future infrastructure?

Corridor protection assists future infrastructure projects to proceed with reduced delay and avoid unnecessary costs. It enables infrastructure delivery that keeps pace with population and economic growth across NSW.

Corridor protection serves several functions: safeguarding, certainty, and cost-effectiveness.

Safeguarding



Protects essential land from incompatible development.

Certainty



Clearly communicates the intended future use of land to developers, planning authorities, and the community.

Cost-effectiveness



Can reduce costs by avoiding the need for complex workarounds or retrofits.

Population growth projections reinforce the importance of corridor protection. NSW's population is expected to grow by more than 100,000 people annually over the next two decades. In Greater Sydney alone, the population is projected to increase to 6.6 million by 2036¹. Freight volumes are estimated to increase by 26 per cent across NSW between 2021 and 2041, with a 40 per cent increase in Greater Sydney alone². Corridor protection will be critical for NSW to successfully service that growth.

Some of NSW's most significant infrastructure projects were made possible through historical corridor protection including road, public transport, and open space infrastructure.

Example of infrastructure delivered with the support of early identification and protection.



M2 Motorway

The M2 Motorway provides a critical connection between North Sydney and the Harbour Bridge to the Hills District in the north-west. The corridor for the M2 was identified and protected under the *Cumberland County Plan* during the 1950s and 1960s. The motorway was officially opened to traffic in 1997.



Greater Sydney Parklands

The Greater Sydney Parklands (previously known as the Western Sydney Parklands) are Australia's largest urban park and will play a critical role in protecting biodiversity and servicing the recreational needs for a growing Western Sydney. The Parklands were first identified in the 1960s under the *Sydney Regional Outline Plan*. The Western Sydney Parklands Act was published in 2006, which establishes the park boundaries and Parklands Trust.

¹ <https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/Research-and-Demography/Population-projections>

² NSW Government *Delivering Freight Policy Reform in NSW, June 2025*



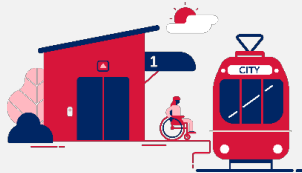
M5 Motorway

The M5 was constructed in stages commencing in the 1990s. The land was originally protected in the 1950s and 1960s. The decision to tunnel a section of the motorway in Sydney's east was made at the design stage to protect significant bushland at Wolli Creek. The motorway provides a critical connection from Botany in Sydney's south to Sydney's growing southwest.



Rouse Hill Town Centre and Metro Station

The creation of Rouse Hill Town Centre is an example of early government land acquisition to support place making outcomes in a greenfield area. In the 1980s, the NSW Government acquired a golf course which has since been developed into a mixed-use town centre. Rouse Hill Town Centre opened in 2007 and is supported by the Sydney Metro Northwest. The vibrant precinct includes retail, dining, commercial and residential uses, and has benefitted from an integrated land use and transport planning approach.



Sydney Metro Northwest (Chatswood to Sydenham)

The corridor used to construct the Chatswood to Sydenham Metro through the CBD was protected under environmental planning instruments, notably *State Environmental Planning Policy (Infrastructure) 2007*.

What types of infrastructure can be protected?

Corridor protection is not limited to an infrastructure type. It is commonly applied to linear infrastructure, however individual infrastructure sites may be considered for protection, for example a future health or education precinct.

The type of infrastructure to be considered for protection would be determined through relevant strategic planning processes and subject to an agreement between the infrastructure agency and the Department.

Type of infrastructure typically considered for protection



Biodiversity

Biodiversity protection areas



Transport

Public rail (heavy/metro)
Freight rail
Light rail
Motorways



Open Space

Regional open space



State Facilities

State recreation facilities
Hospitals
Schools
Prisons
Emergency services



Utilities

Water supply pipelines or canals
Sewer pipelines
Electricity transmission lines
Gas pipelines
Communication services



High Pressure Pipelines

Hydrogen
Petroleum
Aviation fuel

How are infrastructure corridors identified?

Before corridor protection can occur, projects progress through various investigations, including needs assessment and strategic land use, network, and business case planning.

Corridor identification occurs through a sequence of strategic planning processes. In NSW, infrastructure needs will normally be identified through problem definition and strategic needs assessment.

In some instances, the need to extend an infrastructure network may be identified as part of an agency or land use strategic planning process. This may identify extensions to, or new infrastructure provisions needed to service or shape the location of planned growth or changing demand patterns (i.e. a new road network or rail/metro extension; or a transmission line extension required to

facilitate energy transition to renewables). In these cases, indicative locations for future major infrastructure assets may be identified on strategic plans or maps.

To further refine the needs and future infrastructure demands, agencies may undertake further strategic assessment, which may include, for example, a strategic merit test or a multi-criteria analysis of strategic alignment options. Depending on the project, agencies may seek community input to determine their preferred strategic corridor alignment.

These early identification processes identify future infrastructure needs only. While the identification results can be published by the infrastructure agency, this does not establish formal corridor protection.

What types of land can be protected?

The land that can be protected can be at grade (ground level or viaduct) or below ground (generally up to 30 metres below ground).

The width and depth of the corridor being protected is determined by the infrastructure agency. The agency must demonstrate that the land is required to facilitate construction and operation of the infrastructure project. Before detailed designs are undertaken, the protected corridor may be wider or deeper than the final project requires.

In determining the appropriateness of the proposed corridor, the Department will consider the need to protect the infrastructure as well as the impact on a landowner's use or enjoyment of their land. The corridor should affect the fewest number of properties possible, with the most restrictive protections applying only where strictly necessary.

The Department does not require infrastructure agencies to protect the entire length of a proposed infrastructure corridor. The Department will publish maps identifying only the sections of the corridor that are formally protected. The decision to publish or disclose the location of any remaining, unprotected portions of the corridor rests with the infrastructure agency. This is optional and not required by the Department.

Sub-surface protections

The *Transport Administration Act 1988* facilitates the construction of certain underground infrastructure, such as tunnels, without requiring the acquisition of surface land. The *Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991* sets out the framework for compensation where land is acquired, including where an adverse impact on a landowner's use or enjoyment of the land may give rise to a compensable interest. In many cases, subsurface development may not give rise to compensation.

Sub-surface protections are required to ensure that activities within the corridor do not affect the future infrastructure. Engineering advice may be sought if significant development is planned (e.g. large excavations or deep piling) near the future infrastructure. See future underground infrastructure corridors in this guideline for how sub-surface protections can be applied.

Some infrastructure types, such as road or rail tunnels, generate impacts within 30 metres of the surface (e.g. noise or vibration). Current practice is that land impacted by road and rail tunnels, within 30 metres of the surface, will require planning protections. Technology changes may affect this benchmark over time.

Who decides when to protect a corridor?

The decision to seek statutory planning protection for an identified corridor rests with the agency responsible for funding the land acquisition and managing the protections (i.e. concurrence agency). This is most likely to be the infrastructure agency. Not all infrastructure projects will seek or require corridor protection.

In addition to the infrastructure agency, the decision to protect a corridor is typically made by:

- the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, in its role as both the strategic and statutory planning authority for NSW; and
- NSW Treasury or Infrastructure NSW, where funding for land acquisition is required.

A risk-based approach to determine the need for corridor protection is expected. Agencies should assess:

- the risk or likelihood of the corridor being lost to competing development;
- the cost and consequences of losing the corridor; and
- strategic alternatives and delivery implications.

Before pursuing statutory planning protections, agencies should have considered all viable alternatives, including the option of not protecting the corridor.

Corridor identification and protection phase

This phase is where this guideline takes effect. The corridor identification and protection phase includes the infrastructure agencies investigation into options to progress the infrastructure project from strategic need to delivery. By and large, any infrastructure project, whether likely to enter the corridor protection process or progress directly through to design and delivery, needs to undergo investigation to determine its location. Through this process it is generally identified if corridor protection is required.

Circumstances where corridor protection would be considered appropriate include development intensification or pressure around key areas the infrastructure needs to go, extensive timeframes prior to infrastructure delivery, or infrastructure location will assist in surrounding land use planning and infrastructure coordination.

Development pressure



Identification of development can result in additional fragmentation of land and an increased number of impacted landowners, making it more difficult to secure the optimal alignment for infrastructure and therefore maximise servicing potential.

Long lead time



Knowing where infrastructure should be located well ahead of delivery enables the future infrastructure to be integrated into the area well ahead of delivery, enabling smoother delivery and long-term infrastructure coordination.

Land use planning



Where infrastructure is likely to influence land use planning or would benefit from being considered as part of a broader planning program.

Maintenance and progressive land acquisition phase

Once protected, a corridor should be maintained and relevant responsibilities of the protection mechanism applied (e.g. concurrences). For some protection mechanisms, this may also require refinement of the corridor and progression from infrastructure investigation area to either a future infrastructure corridor or infrastructure design and approval (having received committed funding).

Acquired lands need to be maintained as per arrangements i.e. rented back through the market, vegetation and land use maintained. Maintenance is important to retain the corridor's viability and prevent the corridor becoming a negative aspect of the community.

Infrastructure design, funding and approval phase

Once the identified delivery period approaches, the infrastructure agency obtains funding for the infrastructure (either through internal budgets or through requests to NSW Treasury). Infrastructure design is finalised and the development approval process is followed.

Once development approval has been granted by the Minister for Planning, the infrastructure project will be subject to the applicable statutory planning framework, including relevant provisions of the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021*.

Any existing corridor protection mechanisms may need to be reviewed and, where appropriate, amended or removed through the relevant statutory planning processes.

Infrastructure delivery

Once infrastructure is delivered, or land has been fully acquired for delivery and the infrastructure is being constructed it may no longer require protection through the corridor protection mechanisms, noting that other planning controls may continue to apply.

Corridor protection mechanisms

Infrastructure corridors can obtain planning protection through 5 different mechanisms under the NSW planning system. These mechanisms reflect varying levels of certainty about a project's alignment, design, and delivery timeframe. They are:

1. Infrastructure investigation areas
2. Reserving land as a future infrastructure corridor
3. Protection via Statutory Planning Approval (protection through planning consent)
4. Underground infrastructure corridors
5. Strict SP2 Infrastructure zone.

Each of these mechanisms plays a different role in the infrastructure planning lifecycle and should be selected based on the level of project maturity, risk of incompatible development occurring, and strategic importance of the corridor.

Protections provided under the State Environmental Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021

The *State Environmental Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021* (Transport and Infrastructure SEPP) assists in facilitating infrastructure delivery in NSW by establishing planning controls, including permissible development and assessment and consultation requirements, in relation to infrastructure.

The Transport and Infrastructure SEPP identifies and provides guidance for a variety of infrastructure types – correctional centres, electricity transmissions, health service facilities, parks, pipelines, railways, roads, telecommunications, education facilities, and ports just to name a few.

In terms of corridor protections, the Transport and Infrastructure SEPP establishes planning controls that guide what development may be permissible in relation to particular infrastructure types, including relevant consultation and assessment requirements. The SEPP applies to a range of infrastructure types and, in some cases, extends to infrastructure that has received development approval but is not yet constructed. This enables certain planning controls to apply to approved but unconstructed infrastructure, including requirements for consultation or consideration of impacts in proximity to that infrastructure.

For example, the Transport and Infrastructure SEPP defines ‘rail corridor’ as:

rail corridor means land —

...

(c) in respect of which the Minister has granted approval under Part 3A or

Division 5.2 or (before its repeal) Division 4 of Part 5 of the Act, or consent under Part 4 of the Act, for the carrying out of development (or for a concept plan for a project comprising or including development) for the purpose of a railway or rail infrastructure facilities.

Transport and Infrastructure SEPP, Part 2, Division 15 Railways,
Subdivision 1 Railways and rail infrastructure facilities

This means, infrastructure being delivered but not yet operational can be afforded the same protections. While the Transport and Infrastructure SEPP may apply to infrastructure that has received development approval but is not yet constructed, the controls provided under the SEPP do not necessarily replace the need for corridor protection mechanisms.

Where appropriate, corridor protection measures may be reviewed and, if no longer required, amended or removed through the relevant statutory planning processes.



Infrastructure investigation areas

Purpose

Infrastructure investigation areas allow for early, risk-managed protection of strategically identified corridor alignments. They apply where further refinement needs to be undertaken as part of a broader review of land use planning, as part of urban renewal of the area, or where project delivery is still subject to further needs analysis and funding decisions. Infrastructure investigation areas are temporary, typically with a five-year sunset clause, providing the infrastructure agency with adequate time to progress investigations without resulting in landowners remaining subject to planning controls for a dormant project.

Protection mechanism

Infrastructure investigation areas are typically identified and protected through the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021* (Transport and Infrastructure SEPP). In some circumstances, they may be included in a place-based environmental planning instrument (State-led rezoning or Local Environmental Plans).

The Department has full discretion in considering requests for an infrastructure investigation area and may support the infrastructure agency request where:

- a) the infrastructure agency can demonstrate that further corridor refinement is imminent (e.g. scheduled within 6–24 months) and will materially inform alignment or delivery decisions
- b) a proposed rezoning is likely to compromise the corridor's viability due to land use conflict, intensification, or fragmentation that cannot be mitigated

- c) the infrastructure agency has engaged with the landowner(s), rezoning proponent, and local council to explore interim design options, staging or alternate responses
- d) the infrastructure investigation area sits within a broader precinct or structure planning framework where deferral supports a more integrated land use and infrastructure outcome.

Once protected through the infrastructure investigation area protection mechanism, the infrastructure agency should request that local councils identify investigation areas on planning certificates (e.g. s10.7(2) and (5) of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*) of affected areas to explicitly refer to the infrastructure investigation area.

Infrastructure investigation area will typically be subject to a sunset provision (commonly around five years), depending on how the relevant environmental planning instrument is drafted. The time period should provide adequate time for the infrastructure agency to progress investigations. Prior to the completion of the relevant period, minimum six months prior, the infrastructure agency is expected to write to the Secretary of the Department advocating one of three options:

1. The corridor alignment has been investigated, and the need and location of the corridor has been confirmed, and full corridor protection is being sought (land reservation as future infrastructure corridor);
2. The corridor alignment has been investigated, and it has been determined that the corridor is not required for future infrastructure; or
3. The corridor alignment requires further investigation, as guided by the infrastructure agency's work program, and the infrastructure investigation area concurrence should be continued for a specified period.

The Secretary of the Department will consider the request and determine at their discretion.

While the timeframe for repeal of an infrastructure investigation area will typically be set to five years, this timeframe may be varied in consultation with the Department, noting that the Department retains responsibility for determining the appropriate timeframe in accordance with relevant planning processes. The infrastructure agency must however demonstrate why the additional time is required.

Limitations of infrastructure investigation areas

Infrastructure investigation areas do not prevent development already permissible within the current lawful zoning.

Infrastructure investigation areas only apply for a 5-year period. If the infrastructure agency does not write to the Secretary of the Department prior to this time period ending, the infrastructure investigation area will not continue to apply.

Example of situations where use of an infrastructure investigation area protection mechanism would be appropriate for consideration.



Locations in urban renewal precincts or where the alignment of the corridor needs to be considered as part of an overall redevelopment of an area.



Corridors subject to detailed route refinement as part of a business case process.



Situations where development pressure necessitates an interim planning response.

Justification document

Infrastructure investigation areas are required to be supported by a planning report, equivalent to a scoping report, as guided by the *Appendix A to the State Significant Infrastructure Guidelines – Preparing a Scoping Report*. The planning report document should be submitted to the Department and used to inform the making of the Environmental Planning Instrument to protect the corridor, and will likely be publicly exhibited.

An example of requirements that need to be addressed by a planning report for an infrastructure investigation area is available in **Appendix A**.

It is important that the level of assessment and community engagement carried out for each corridor protection project is proportionate to the scale and likely impacts of the project. The Department should be engaged as part of scoping needs for the justification document.



Future infrastructure corridors

Purpose

Protecting land as a future infrastructure corridor in a statutory instrument provides one of the strongest forms of planning protection. It is suitable when the corridor alignment has been confirmed and there is a strategic commitment to delivery, even if land acquisition is staged and the infrastructure is yet to be progressed to business case stage. A future infrastructure corridor protection mechanism is usually utilised to enable protection over a long period of time while also permitting continued use of land with checks and measures to ensure its viability for infrastructure delivery is retained.

Protection mechanism

Corridors are zoned SP2 Infrastructure – Future Infrastructure Corridor under the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021*.

A future infrastructure corridor will:

- identify in detail where the future infrastructure will be delivered;
- enable protection of land while allowing existing land uses to remain viable, thereby not triggering the need for immediate acquisition;
- introduce referral and consultation requirements for development within the corridor, where specified under the applicable planning controls (which may include seeking input from the relevant infrastructure agency);
- may include sub-surface mapping (e.g. for tunnels) for future underground infrastructure corridor protection;
- create transparency for landowners, industry, and the public;
- enable longer-term land acquisition; and
- identify the appropriate land acquisition authority to manage the acquisition of land within the Future Infrastructure Corridor.

Land acquisition

It is important to note that protection under the future infrastructure corridor protection mechanism may trigger hardship claims under the Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991.

The infrastructure agency must acknowledge the need for funding any successful land acquisition claims before the Department considers providing protection under the future infrastructure corridor protection mechanism. A means for securing funding for acquisition requests should be obtained through the infrastructure agencies' internal processes.

Example of situations where use of a future infrastructure corridor protection mechanism would be appropriate for consideration



Projects with confirmed infrastructure alignment or area, known to Lot/DP level of detail.



Linear transport and utility corridors with a clearly refined alignment and broadly known construction requirements.



Projects supported by a business case for land acquisition funding, if needed.



Infrastructure not planned for delivery for medium-long term.

Justification document

The infrastructure agency is required to prepare a justification document to support the request for rezoning land to SP2 Infrastructure – Future Infrastructure Corridor. Documentation should broadly align with the planning proposal approach outlined in the Department’s *Local Environmental Plan Making Guideline 2023*. This guideline categorises different types of planning proposals based on the complexity of the proposal. The infrastructure agency should consult with the Department to determine which category should be applied.

To apply for a request for a future infrastructure corridor, some areas require supplemental consideration beyond the *Local Environmental Plan Making Guideline 2023*. An example of the requirements that need to be addressed by a planning report for a future infrastructure corridor is available in **Appendix B**. Documents should be submitted to the Department and will be used to inform the making of the Environmental Planning Instrument to protect the corridor and will likely be exhibited.

It is important to ensure that the level of assessment and community engagement carried out for each corridor protection project is proportionate to the scale and likely impacts of the project. The Department should be engaged to inform the scoping needs of the justification document.



Protection via statutory planning approval

Purpose

In some cases, protection may be pursued through project led statutory development assessment processes, such as State Significant Development or State Significant Infrastructure processes. This protection mechanism is designed to encourage collaboration between the infrastructure agency and the development proponent to design the infrastructure and development in a way that enables acceptable outcomes for all parties and be implemented through conditions of consent.

Protection mechanism

A State Significant Development or State Significant Infrastructure approval may impose conditions that prevent conflicting development within a defined corridor alignment, even in the absence of infrastructure investigation area identification or relevant land reservation zoning. This method is

particularly suited to corridors where the delivery timeframe is immediate, and planning consent provides a fit-for-purpose method for managing land use conflict. In these cases, the infrastructure agency will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement in accordance with the Department's *State Significant Infrastructure Guidelines* or the *State Significant Development Guidelines*.

Protection via statutory planning approval is:

- used in cases where project delivery is imminent
- able to apply conditions that may include acquisition triggers, sub-surface protection, or staging plans
- typically paired with land acquisition powers or agreements.

Note about protection via statutory planning approval

Once an infrastructure project's State Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) have been issued, it may be necessary to also reserve the corridor (SP2 Infrastructure – Future Infrastructure Corridor) under the Transport and Infrastructure SEPP.

Reservation may be needed in areas of high development pressure, where there is a risk of urban encroachment, during the time between the SEARs being issued and the Environmental Impact Statement being lodged (a typical timeframe is up to 2 years, with extension of time being possible).

In these cases, it may be appropriate for the Department to use the Scoping Report as the basis for the planning intervention decision, rather than requiring an additional planning proposal be prepared by the infrastructure agency.

Example of situations where protection at statutory planning approval stage would be appropriate for consideration



Projects nearing construction commencement but do not yet have approval, and therefore protections under the *State Environment Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021*.



Projects are supported by a final business case for land acquisition and project delivery.



Impacts to imminent infrastructure is known and can inform modifications to proposed development.

Justification document

Protection requests from an infrastructure agency as part of a Statutory Planning Approval are required to be supported by a planning report, equivalent to a Scoping Report as guided by *Appendix A to the State Significant Infrastructure Guidelines – Preparing a Scoping Report*. The planning report document should be submitted to the Department and be used to inform the making of the Environmental Planning Instrument to protect the corridor and will likely be publicly exhibited.

An example of requirements that need to be addressed by a planning report for protection via statutory planning approval is available in **Appendix C**.

It is important to ensure that the level of assessment and community engagement carried out for each corridor protection project is proportionate to the scale and likely impacts of the project. The Department should be engaged to inform the scoping needs of the justification document.



Future underground infrastructure corridors

Purpose

The protection of underground infrastructure corridors is frequently required in areas subject to increased development. This is to ensure that a structurally stable environment is maintained for the delivery of future underground infrastructure.

Protection mechanism

Future underground infrastructure corridors are typically mapped through the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure)* (Transport and Infrastructure SEPP) and are required to be supported by a planning report, equivalent to an Environmental Impact Statement scoping report. The scoping report document should be submitted to the Department and be used to inform the making of the Environmental Planning Instrument (EPI) to protect the underground infrastructure corridor.

Underground infrastructure corridor protections apply where no surface disruption is anticipated (subject to future infrastructure design). Should there be a known need to disturb surface development (i.e. full or partial demolition), alternative protection mechanisms may need to be explored.

Protection of underground infrastructure corridors is:

- used in cases where underground infrastructure locations (both horizontal and vertical) are known, subject to final infrastructure design
- concentrated on protecting a viable, structurally sound underground infrastructure space
- centred on excavation and load bearing considerations for surface development.

Approach to cut-and-cover areas

Where there are areas of land predicted to be cleared and excavated as cut-and-cover, land should be rezoned as SP2 Infrastructure – Future Infrastructure Corridor. The future use of land required for underground infrastructure will be significantly disrupted, resulting in similar outcome to land impacted by surface infrastructure once delivered, therefore, land should be zoned and acquired accordingly.

Example of situations where a future underground infrastructure corridor protection mechanism would be appropriate for consideration



Projects in areas subject to increased development (i.e. increase in building sizes and basement carparking).



Tunnel infrastructure with sub-surface impact only.



Tunnel depths are broadly known.

Justification document

Future underground infrastructure corridors are required to be supported by a planning report, equivalent to a scoping report as guided by *Appendix A to the State Significant Infrastructure Guidelines – Preparing a Scoping Report*. The planning report document should be submitted to the Department and be used to inform the making of the Environmental Planning Instrument (EPI) to protect the corridor and will likely be exhibited.

An example of requirements that need to be addressed by a planning report for a future underground infrastructure corridor is available in **Appendix D**.

It is important to ensure that the level of assessment and community engagement carried out for each corridor protection project is proportionate to the scale and likely impacts of the project. The Department should be engaged to inform the scoping needs of the justification document.



SP2 Infrastructure zones

Purpose

A SP2 Infrastructure zone, as guided by the *Standard Instrument – Principal Local Environmental Plan 2006*, can protect land strictly for the future use of infrastructure.

Protection mechanism

A SP2 Infrastructure zone is typically used to significantly restrict development on land to the specified infrastructure purpose, subject to any permitted ancillary or compatible uses. It enacts protection through the environmental planning instrument by defining what is and is not permitted within the zone, as well as enacting protections under Chapter 2 of the Transport and Infrastructure SEPP.

Protection via a SP2 Infrastructure zone is:

- generally used in cases where project delivery is imminent, but the infrastructure development approval process has not yet commenced
- accompanied by land acquisition obligations
- prohibits additional development, unless specified otherwise
- can be used during broader State-Led rezonings (i.e. precincts or growth areas), subject to funding acknowledgement
- triggers the application of protections under Chapter 2 of the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021*.

A SP2 Infrastructure rezoning is usually conducted under one of two planning pathways, either as part of a broader rezoning (e.g. State-led) or as a planning proposal.

Land acquisition

It is important to note that protection under the strict SP2 Infrastructure land use zone may trigger hardship claims under the *Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991*.

The infrastructure agency must acknowledge the need for funding any successful land acquisition claims before the Department will consider providing protection under this protection mechanism. A means for securing funding for acquisition requests should be obtained through the infrastructure agency's internal processes.

Example of situations where a SP2 Infrastructure protection mechanism would be appropriate for consideration



Project location is known and a high level of design/planning completed.



Funding for land acquisition is secured or responsibility acknowledged by infrastructure agency.



Commencement of project development approvals process is imminent.

Justification document

The justification documentation for land to be rezoned to SP2 Infrastructure (not future infrastructure corridor) should align with the planning pathway under which the rezoning is occurring. If the rezoning is undertaken as part of a broader State-led rezoning process, the required justification should be discussed with the relevant team in the Department. Where the rezoning is separate from any broader process, the standard planning proposal process should be followed.

Summary of corridor protection mechanisms

Protection mechanism	Implementation tool	Stage of identification	Justification Document
 Infrastructure investigation areas	State Environmental Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021	Preferred strategic alignment identified. Confirmed alignment subject broader urban renewal planning or further refinement	Planning report similar to scoping report under <i>State Significant Infrastructure Guideline - Preparing a Scoping Report</i>
 Future infrastructure corridors	State Environmental Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021	Confirmed alignment	Planning report similar to Planning Proposal under <i>Local Environment Plan Making Guidelines</i>

 Statutory planning approvals	Condition of consent	Delivery imminent, location known.	Planning report similar to scoping report under <i>State Significant Infrastructure Guidelines - Preparing a Scoping Report</i>
 Future underground infrastructure corridors	State Environmental Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021	Confirmed subsurface alignment (partial or entire)	Planning report similar to scoping report under <i>State Significant Infrastructure Guidelines - Preparing a Scoping Report</i>
 SP2 Infrastructure	Relevant Environmental Planning Instrument	Development approval process imminent, location known	Dependent on planning pathway

How to select the appropriate protection mechanism

In consultation with the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, an infrastructure agency needs to consider several factors when proposing a corridor protection pathway. They should consider the strategic infrastructure planning needs, project maturity, funding availability, and the risk of development encroachment. **Appendix E** maps out a high-level consideration tree to assist infrastructure agencies in considering corridor protection options.

Considerations for protection mechanism selection

Infrastructure agencies should consider the following factors when proposing the most appropriate protection pathway.

Project maturity and strategic certainty



Early strategic identification

If the infrastructure need is confirmed, but detailed alignment and design work is ongoing, an infrastructure investigation area may be appropriate.



Confirmed alignment

Where a corridor has undergone detailed planning, a preferred alignment is identified, and project delivery is endorsed, a future infrastructure corridor should be considered.



Imminent delivery

Where the project is nearing statutory approval or construction, protection via statutory planning approval (via State Significant Development or State Significant Infrastructure consent conditions) may provide the necessary controls.

Development pressure



High development activity or rezoning risk

Stronger protections are necessary to avoid land fragmentation or value uplift. In these cases, a future infrastructure corridor or, where zoning is impractical, Protection via statutory planning approval may be appropriate.



Moderate or future development risk

Infrastructure investigation areas can provide targeted protection, particularly when combined with strategic planning instruments (e.g. precinct plans, structure plans).

Funding and acquisition timing



No secured funding for acquisition

Infrastructure investigation areas allow agencies to maintaining planning visibility while undertaking further investigations and funding requests.



Funding partially secured or staged

A hybrid approach may be used — infrastructure investigation areas in low-risk areas and zoning or acquisition in high-risk segments.



Funding secured / business case approved

A future infrastructure corridor or protection via statutory planning approval mechanisms should be considered and aligned with delivery schedules.

Infrastructure Type



Linear infrastructure (e.g. road, rail, transmission)

Most appropriate for all 4 methods, depending on surface or subsurface design. Agencies should apply protections based on corridor section maturity.



Sub-surface infrastructure (e.g. tunnels)

Future underground infrastructure corridor protection or protection via statutory planning approval may be recommended for affected lands only (e.g. around station boxes).



Placed-based infrastructure (e.g. hospitals, schools, other)

Most appropriate for all surface methods. Agencies should consider protections based on project maturity.

Governance and decision-making readiness



Agency decision to protect

A clear internal infrastructure agency commitment, such as a Gate 1 business case or ministerial endorsement, should precede protection actions.



Absence of strategic justification

Projects without strategic needs assessments, demand modelling, or preferred mode/alignment decisions are not yet suitable for protection. These projects should be strategically identified in relevant infrastructure strategies and monitored and investigations continued.

A risk-based approach

The protection method selected for a corridor, or part of a corridor, does not need to be uniform. Infrastructure agencies may apply multiple protection methods across the same corridor to reflect local conditions and infrastructure project staging.

The Department will ultimately determine the appropriate protection method for each project, considering the method proposed by the infrastructure agency. The Department encourages a flexible and proportionate approach, while ensuring that decisions to pursue protection are transparent, justified with evidence, made in coordination with land use planning teams, and supported by the necessary inter-agency approvals and funding strategies.

Repealing corridors and managing interim uses

Protection of land for future infrastructure must be supported by clear planning mechanisms for both removing protections when they are no longer required and managing interim uses where delivery is not imminent. The NSW planning system must balance the need to protect land for critical infrastructure with the need to avoid unnecessary or prolonged restrictions on landowners, councils, and development outcomes.

Repealing corridors

Corridor protection should be reviewed periodically to ensure that it reflects current infrastructure priorities, planning strategy, and delivery intent. Where the rationale for protection no longer exists whether due to changes in policy, technical feasibility and innovation, or project abandonment, formal repeal of protections should be pursued through the same planning pathway used to apply the protection.

Repeal may be justified in circumstances where:

- the project has been formally cancelled or re-scoped with a different alignment
- new technical, environmental, or social constraints have rendered the alignment unviable
- technical innovation no longer requires the alignment to be protected (for subsurface infrastructure)
- the infrastructure need is no longer supported by current strategic planning frameworks
- a material change in infrastructure strategy has been endorsed by government (e.g. mode shift from heavy rail to metro)
- delivery has occurred via an alternative corridor or method.

Mechanisms for repeal

Protection mechanism	Repeal tool	
 Infrastructure investigation area	State Environmental Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021	Should be revoked through removal of the relevant amendment to the State Environmental Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021. The decision should be documented and communicated with affected councils and stakeholders.



Future infrastructure corridor

State Environmental Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021

Should be revoked through removal of the relevant amendment to the State Environmental Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021. The decision should be accompanied by a planning proposal and gateway determination, consistent with standard Local Environmental Plan-making procedures.



Statutory planning approval

Condition of consent

Where protection is embedded in project consent (e.g. State Significant Development or State Significant Infrastructure), the relevant approval instrument must be formally modified or rescinded.



Future underground infrastructure corridor

State Environmental Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021

Should be revoked through removal of the relevant amendment to the State Environmental Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021. The decision should be documented and communicated with affected councils and stakeholders.



SP2 Infrastructure

Relevant Environmental Planning Instrument

Should be revoked through removal of the relevant Environmental Planning Instrument. The decision should be accompanied by a planning proposal and gateway determination, consistent with standard Local Environmental Plan-making procedures.

Principles for repeal

The repeal process should be transparent, with written justification and consultation where the corridor affects multiple stakeholders.

The rationale for repeal must demonstrate that the corridor is no longer strategically or operationally required.

Where repeal may affect future servicing or connectivity, alternative infrastructure options should be considered or mapped.

Interim uses for future infrastructure corridors

Where a future infrastructure corridor has been protected but delivery is not imminent, managing interim land uses is essential to:

- avoid unnecessary under-utilisation of land;
- support landowner's continued use and enjoyment;
- maintain alignment integrity; and
- enable compatible urban outcomes.

As the future infrastructure corridor protection mechanism is used in situations where infrastructure is not planned for delivery for the medium- to long-term (i.e. 5+years), surrounding areas may be likely to encounter substantial change prior to infrastructure delivery. To allow these areas to retain the ability to remain relevant within their community and also take up opportunities of progression in the area, interim uses should be considered.

Interim corridor uses let communities benefit from economic activities, public spaces, and urban design projects while land awaits infrastructure delivery. This avoids land remaining unused for extended periods and helps landowners make residential, community or economic use of their land similar to neighbouring properties. Development must be temporary but can run short or long term, depending on when the infrastructure is scheduled.

The Interim Uses Policy permits uses beyond those that were previously permitted to be considered by consent authorities. The infrastructure agency also needs to consider the use in terms of what is physically proposed and how the integrity of the corridor can be retained or rehabilitated prior to the delivery of the infrastructure.

Principles for interim uses

Interim use should not compromise the future delivery of infrastructure.

Temporary or low-intensity land uses may be permissible where they are reversible or do not require significant capital works.

Where possible, interim uses should contribute to broader strategic planning objectives (e.g. temporary open space, renewable energy, community uses, temporary economic uses).

Appendices

Appendix A Sample planning report requirements for infrastructure investigation areas

The planning report must:

- describe the project in simple terms
- include an analysis of feasible alternatives in relation to the project the objectives, and identify the alternatives that will be investigated further as part of the investigation into the future infrastructure corridor or project
- outline early community views on the project and identify what engagement will be undertaken during the investigation to confirm the future infrastructure location or need and preparation of the future Environmental Impact Assessment as part of the infrastructure development approval process
- identify the key matters requiring further assessment of the infrastructure investigation area and the proposed approach to assessing each of these matters consistent with any relevant Government legislation, plans, policies or guidelines.

Part two – General Requirements of the *Appendix A to the State Significant Infrastructure Guidelines – Preparing a Scoping Report* should be followed in relation to form, structure and length, presentation, GIS data specifications, general map requirements, accessibility and navigation.

Table 1: Sample planning report requirements for infrastructure investigation areas

Section	Sample Requirement
Introduction	As per <i>Appendix A to the State Significant Infrastructure Guidelines – Preparing a Scoping Report</i> .
Strategic context	In line with <i>Appendix A to the State Significant Infrastructure Guidelines – Preparing a Scoping Report</i> , including any additional investigations required to confirm the location and need for corridor protection.
Project	As per <i>Appendix A to the State Significant Infrastructure Guidelines – Preparing a Scoping Report</i> . The planning report should also provide a work program/timeframes for investigations to lead to a conclusion of the location and next steps at the end of the infrastructure investigation area protection (i.e. 5-year sunset clause).

Statutory context	In line with <i>Appendix A to the State Significant Infrastructure Guidelines – Preparing a Scoping Report</i> , including the infrastructure agency’s role in responding to development approvals.
Community engagement	In line with <i>Appendix A to the State Significant Infrastructure Guidelines – Preparing a Scoping Report</i>. Where the project is of a sensitive nature, limiting early engagement with landowners and surrounding community, a clear rationale for this approach must also be provided. The report should also detail how the infrastructure agency will engage landowners, the community, relevant councils, and state or federal agencies as part of further investigations into the infrastructure location and need.
Proposed assessment of impacts	In line with <i>Appendix A to the State Significant Infrastructure Guidelines – Preparing a Scoping Report</i>. Impacts should be in line with the impacts of the infrastructure investigation area, and provide enough rationale for the location of the investigation area as an appropriate location for the future infrastructure. More detailed impacts analysis will be required if a request for future infrastructure corridor protection is progressed. Further matters to be investigated as part of a future infrastructure corridor protection request should be documented.

Appendix B Sample planning report requirements for Future Infrastructure Corridors

Part One: Objectives and intended outcomes

Clear and concise description of the corridor protection and future infrastructure project, written in plain English, so it can be easily understood by the community.

This section of the Strategic Environmental Assessment is a statement of what is planned or proposed, not how it is to be achieved.

Project description	Provide a clear and concise description of the corridor protection project and future infrastructure that is planned for delivery within the identified corridor. Describe the potential future infrastructure project, including key components that may be built within the corridor and that may affect the design of the corridor alignment, such as location and width.
Project objectives	Outline the objectives of the corridor and the future infrastructure, including working business requirements and future servicing ambitions. Include a brief summary of the 'infrastructure gap' that has led to the future infrastructure as a preferred solution. The infrastructure gap and the intent of the future infrastructure to solve this issue will be expanded in Part Three.
Project outcomes	Provide an overview of the desired outcomes of the future infrastructure and the protection of land prior to infrastructure delivery.

Part Two: Explanation of provisions

How the objectives or outcomes from Part One will be achieved through the requested planning intervention.

Existing planning framework	Identify existing Environmental Planning Instruments that apply to the corridor and relevant sections that will be impacted by the request to protect the corridor, including relevant policies and strategies. Explain the consequences of amending these instruments.
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Desired planning intervention outcomes	Provide desired outcomes/intent of planning controls, including consideration of adjacent land and current and future land use/development within the identified corridor. Acknowledgement of land acquisition legislation and policies that will apply to the land as well as other relevant policies such as interim uses. Provide a detailed description of the number of properties affected by the corridor protection, including property types and whether full or partial acquisition is likely.
Desired future surrounding land uses	Provide a suggestion of suitable land uses as land around the future infrastructure evolves prior to infrastructure delivery. These land uses should complement the future infrastructure, not impede delivery, and support appropriate growth surrounding the corridor. Future surrounding land uses should be considered alongside relevant strategic plans, policies and strategies of the area.
Part 3: Justification Provide a desk-top assessment of the corridor and its need to determine whether the planning intervention should be supported. This is the most important section of the Strategic Environmental Assessment and should integrate findings from supporting studies and investigations to justify the planning intervention. It must also consider how these findings interact, including whether the corridor and future infrastructure will align with the strategic planning framework and context, and any potential environmental, social, or economic impacts.	
Strategic justification for future infrastructure project need	Provide clear and concise discussion of the strategic need for the future infrastructure. This should expand on the 'infrastructure gap' mentioned in Part One.
Strategic justification for planning intervention to protect land for future infrastructure	Provide clear and concise discussion of the strategic need for the planning intervention to facilitate future infrastructure delivery (e.g. development pressures, increase in incompatible future uses, misalignment of infrastructure funding).
Identification of alternative options	Provide a description and strategic analysis of alternative options investigated as part of the project, including alternative infrastructure solutions that were investigated to solve the identified 'infrastructure gap'. A strategic analysis of alternative options to protecting the corridor should also be provided. This should include an assessment of the strategic costs and benefits of protecting

	the corridor relative to other options, and the consequences of not protecting the corridor.
Justification of identified corridor alignment	Address matters of consideration from Sections B, C and D of Table 3 of the Local Environmental Plan Making Guideline. Consideration should be given to the impact of the planning interventions as well as potential impacts of the future infrastructure. Where alternative alignments were available, provide reasoning and rationale for the preferred alignment (i.e. Alignment A impacted X% more vegetation compared to Alignment B, however Alignment B would result in X impacts which were considered more detrimental to the future area).
Part 4: Maps Maps and aerial photography, where relevant, should be used to clearly demonstrate why the corridor alignment has been proposed in its location.	
Clear and informative mapping	Mapping must be consistent with the Department's <i>Standard Technical Requirements for Spatial Datasets and Maps</i> using the same format, symbology, labelling and appropriate map scale. All existing and proposed mapping submitted to the Department as part of a planning proposal should be accompanied by GIS data. In relation to the proposed corridor, the range of maps should include, but not limited to: • the corridor alignment and immediate surrounds • current land use zoning and proposed corridor protection zoning • identification of land where planning interventions apply (e.g. adjacent excavation considerations, application of Interim Uses policy) • any alternative zone(s) for surrounding land uses, if a change is proposed • the extent of potentially impacted: – community and social infrastructure – heritage conservation area – heritage items

	– native vegetation and validated regionally important environmental values – environmental conservation areas, including biodiversity stewardship sites and Cumberland Plain Conservation Areas – utility and servicing infrastructure, including pipelines – extractive, mineral and energy resources – noise sensitive receivers • any other subject that may be a limiting factor or impact that guided the final corridor alignment and planning intervention (e.g. acid sulphate soils which would complicate future infrastructure delivery). Additional material, such as aerial photographs clearly identifying the subject site, should also be included where appropriate.
Part 5: Consultation Set out the extent of consultation having regard for the public exhibition requirements in Section 1 of the Local Environmental Plan Making Guideline. Exhibition periods should run a minimum of 28 days, however this period may be extended depending on the complexity of the project and requests from community.	
Prior to community consultation	Describe the consultation process and the issues raised by relevant state agencies and local council during the identification of a corridor alignment. The document should identify where the design of the infrastructure or the corridor alignment has been amended in response to identified issues. Where amendments have not been made, reasoning should be provided.
Post community consultation	Describe the consultation process and the issues raised. The document should identify where the design of the infrastructure or the corridor alignment has been amended in response to identified issues. Where amendments have not been made, reasoning should be provided.

Part 6: Project timeline

Provide guidance to impacted landowners and broader community regarding the protection and acquisition of land in relation to the delivery of the future infrastructure.

Next steps	Outline the next steps of the process, including land acquisition processes and ongoing communication with landowners and the community about maintenance of the protected corridor and intent for future infrastructure delivery.
Future infrastructure delivery process and timeframe	Provide a summary of the process for progressing delivery of the future infrastructure and proposed timeframes.

Appendix C Sample planning report requirements for protection via state planning approval

The planning report must:

- describe the project in simple terms
- include an analysis of feasible alternatives considered in relation to the project objectives, and identify the alternatives to be investigated as part of future development approvals process for the future infrastructure
- provide an early indication of community views on the project and identify what engagement will be undertaken as part of the future development approvals process for the future infrastructure
- identify the key matters requiring further assessment and the proposed approach to assessing each of these matters consistent with any relevant Government legislation, plans, policies or guidelines.

Part two – General Requirements of the *Appendix A to the State Significant Infrastructure Guidelines – Preparing a Scoping Report* should be followed in relation to form, structure and length, presentation, GIS data specifications, general map requirements, accessibility and navigation.

Table 1: Sample planning report requirements for protection via state planning approval

Section	Sample Requirement
Introduction	As per <i>Appendix A to the State Significant Infrastructure Guidelines – Preparing a Scoping Report</i> .
Strategic context	In line with <i>Appendix A to the State Significant Infrastructure Guidelines – Preparing a Scoping Report</i> , including any additional investigations needed to confirm the location and need for corridor protection.
Project	As per <i>Appendix A to the State Significant Infrastructure Guidelines – Preparing a Scoping Report</i> .
Statutory context	As per <i>Appendix A to the State Significant Infrastructure Guidelines – Preparing a Scoping Report</i> . The intent of conditions of consent should be discussed and justified.
Community engagement	As per <i>Appendix A to the State Significant Infrastructure Guidelines – Preparing a Scoping Report</i> .

Proposed assessment of impacts	In line with <i>Appendix A to the State Significant Infrastructure Guidelines – Preparing a Scoping Report</i>. Impacts should justify the location of the investigation area for the future infrastructure. More detailed impacts analysis will be required at the development approval stage for the future infrastructure. Further matters to be investigated as part of future development approval of the infrastructure should be included.
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Appendix D Sample planning report requirements for future underground infrastructure corridors

The planning report must:

- describe the project in simple terms
- include an analysis of feasible alternatives in relation to the project objectives, and identify the alternatives to be investigated as part of future development approvals process for the future infrastructure
- provide an early indication of community views on the project and identify what engagement will be undertaken as part of the future development approvals process for the future infrastructure
- identify the key matters requiring further assessment and the proposed approach to assessing each of these matters consistent with any relevant Government legislation, plans, policies or guidelines.

Part two – General Requirements of the *Appendix A to the State Significant Infrastructure Guidelines – Preparing a Scoping Report* should be followed in relation to form, structure and length, presentation, GIS data specifications, general map requirements, accessibility and navigation.

Table 1: Sample planning report requirements for future underground infrastructure corridors

Section	Sample Requirement
Introduction	As per <i>Appendix A to the State Significant Infrastructure Guidelines – Preparing a Scoping Report</i> .
Strategic context	As per <i>Appendix A to the State Significant Infrastructure Guidelines – Preparing a Scoping Report</i> .
Project	As per <i>Appendix A to the State Significant Infrastructure Guidelines – Preparing a Scoping Report</i> .
Statutory context	As per <i>Appendix A to the State Significant Infrastructure Guidelines – Preparing a Scoping Report</i> , including the infrastructure agency's role in responding to development approvals.
Community engagement	As per <i>Appendix A to the State Significant Infrastructure Guidelines – Preparing a Scoping Report</i> .

Proposed assessment of impacts	In line with <i>Appendix A to the State Significant Infrastructure Guidelines – Preparing a Scoping Report</i>. Impacts should justify the location of the investigation area for the future infrastructure. More detailed impacts analysis will be required at the development approval stage for the future infrastructure. Further matters to be investigated as part of future development approval of the infrastructure should be included.
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