



25 June 2026

Department of Planning, Housing and
Infrastructure
Via NSW Planning Portal

Contact: Peter Chrystal
Our Ref: DOC2026/122477
Your Ref: SSD-76210271

Dear Sir/Madam

Submission - Objection to Bluestone Hardrock Quarry Project (SSD-76210271)

Cessnock City Council (Council) writes to formally lodge a submission to the Bluestone Hardrock Quarry Project (SSD-76210271), formerly referred to as the Pittman Quarry. The project is within the Singleton Local Government Area (LGA); however, Council notes that haulage routes and broader impacts extend directly into the Cessnock LGA.

This submission should be considered as an **objection** to the proposal.

The Bluestone Hardrock Quarry proposal was considered by Council at the meeting held 17 June 2026 and the following resolution was unanimously resolved:

1. *That Council make a submission objecting to the Bluestone Hardrock Quarry, formerly Pittman Quarry proposal (SSD-76210271), clearly outlining concerns relating to road impacts, traffic impacts, impacts on pedestrian safety, lack of required and reasonable infrastructure contributions, lack of community consultation with Cessnock LGA residents and any other matter staff consider relevant.*
2. *That Council liaise with Singleton Council to address these concerns collaboratively.*
3. *That Council continue to advocate for adequate funding to support safer roads for heavy haulage, including road repairs and improved traffic safety infrastructure at:*
 - *The Elderslie and Maitland Roads intersection; and*
 - *The Maitland Road and New England Highway intersection.*
4. *That Council investigate options for incorporating heavy haulage contributions.*
5. *That Council provide a copy of the objection to State Members.*

In addition, Council officers have reviewed the submitted Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Council requests that the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) considers the matters outlined in this submission in its assessment of the application.

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Council acknowledges that the EIS is currently on public exhibition and seeks approval for the establishment and operation of a hard rock quarry extracting up to 1 million tonnes per annum (Mtpa) over approximately 30 years, representing a significant long term industrial development within the Hunter region.

While Council recognises the broader need for construction materials to support regional growth, it considers that the proposal, in its current form, presents unacceptable impacts on the Cessnock LGA and fails to adequately address key planning, infrastructure and community concerns.

Key Issues and Concerns

1. Significant Traffic Generation and Regional Impacts

The proposal intends to transport materials by truck with average of 220 movements (110 in and 110 out) per day, between 6.30am to 4pm (Monday to Friday). The road transport route from the site extends over approximately 13km from the site entrance to the Hunter Expressway interchange at Branxton.

Transport routes connecting to major corridors, including the Hunter Expressway via Branxton and surrounding localities, will directly affect Cessnock communities. Council considers that these impacts are not adequately recognised or mitigated in the proposal, and that greater weight must be given to cross-boundary effects in the assessment process.

Council's Strategic Planning assessment confirms that the proposal will generate substantial traffic movements, with likely impacts extending into the Anambah–Branxton Regionally Significant Growth Area (RSGA). This area is identified in the Hunter Regional Plan 2041 as a key growth corridor requiring coordinated infrastructure delivery and long-term strategic planning.

While it is acknowledged that the studies relating to the RSGA are not yet published, Council would be able to provide the Proponent further details, if requested. A Draft Structure Plan is anticipated to be publicly available in the coming months and the EIS and associated technical studies should be required to address the implications of the Project to this RSGA.

Council is concerned that:

- No detailed assessment of the implications to the RSGA has been undertaken in the EIS or Integrated Transport Assessment (ITA);
- The scale of quarry traffic has not been adequately integrated with current strategic planning for the RSGA;
- The proposal risks undermining coordinated infrastructure planning already underway; and
- The cumulative effect of heavy vehicle movements across a high-growth corridor has not been properly addressed.

2. Impacts on Local and Regional Road Infrastructure

The scale of the proposed quarry operations, involving the extraction and haulage of up to 1 Mtpa of material, will impose a substantial burden on local and regional road infrastructure over the life of the project.

Council is concerned that the existing road network to be used for haulage is not designed to accommodate sustained heavy vehicle traffic of this magnitude. This will result in accelerated road deterioration, increased maintenance costs, and long-term infrastructure liabilities being transferred to local government.

Council's infrastructure assessment identifies direct impacts on roads within the Cessnock LGA, particularly:

- Elderslie Road (Regional Road): approximately 600m within the Cessnock LGA.
- Maitland Street (Regional Road): approximately 400m within the Cessnock LGA.

The proposal will:

- Increase traffic volumes and significantly reduce the asset life and condition of these roads;
- require intersection upgrades and traffic management treatments to maintain safety and efficiency; and
- create ongoing maintenance liabilities for Council.

The section of Elderslie Road in Cessnock LGA was originally an unsealed gravel track and has gradually been sealed over time. It is now a narrow, single-lane road carrying two-way traffic and does not have sealed shoulders.

It appears that the traffic assessment undertaken as part of the EIS has relied on visual inspection only and accordingly has not adequately considered these issues. However, due to the age and nature of the road it is not built to modern engineering standards. The pavement beneath the seal consists of a relatively thin layer (about 100–200 mm) of unverified gravel. Based on local knowledge, the original gravel road was only wide enough for one-way traffic, meaning the outer edges likely have even less support (around 100 mm or less). As a result, these edges are prone to damage such as rutting and surface deformation.

While the road is currently used by heavy vehicles, an increase in the number and frequency of these vehicles is expected to accelerate deterioration of both the sealed surface and the underlying pavement.

For this reason, Cessnock City Council is seeking a contribution from the proposed development towards upgrading this section of Elderslie Road, in addition to any ongoing Section 7.11 contributions for haulage. The upgrade would involve strengthening the pavement using properly specified materials and construction methods in line with Transport for NSW standards, with the aim of achieving a design life of approximately 30 years. The exact contribution amount can be determined on a proportional basis following further discussion, following a full condition and structural assessment.

Further consultation is required between the Proponent and Council, to ensure adequate investigation into this section of road and determine an adequate pavement treatment, to identify a total cost that can be used to determine what the contribution might be.

Council also notes operational constraints, including that heavy vehicles cannot utilise local residential streets such as George Street and Lindsay Street, that there are restrictions on turning movements (for example, a right turn from Elderslie Road onto Maitland Street), and the interface with State-managed roads including the New England Highway and Hunter Expressway. These constraints further complicate traffic routing and network performance.

3. Road Safety and Pedestrian Impacts

Council advocate for adequate funding to support safer roads for heavy haulage, including road repairs and improved traffic safety infrastructure at:

- The Elderslie and Maitland Roads intersection; and
- The Maitland Road and New England Highway intersection.

Council has significant concerns regarding road safety impacts of the proposal. The increase in heavy vehicle movements through constrained rural and urban interfaces has a high potential to impact the safety of pedestrians and other vulnerable road users. The introduction of heavy haulage prior to delivery of pedestrian infrastructure represents a safety risk to the community. In particular, children during their commute to and from local schools and bus stops.

In relation to the Social Impact Assessment's (SIA) consideration of pedestrian safety, it is not agreed that the consultation with the local bus company diminishes the community concerns raised in relation to pedestrian safety, as there can be no certainty that the community would have raised concerns with the local bus company. It is further noted that previous accident history does not negate the need to consider the potential impacts of the proposal.

The SIA should also be updated following a more comprehensive traffic study, as currently no detailed safety audit is included in the ITA. The ITA also incorrectly states that '*due to the proposed operating hours of the proposed developed, Haul trucks will not be operating at a time in the afternoon evening when school buses are using the various sections of the haul route.*' Haulage is proposed to 4pm, which would include school bus transport hours in the afternoon.

Council highlights that a planned footpath connection along Elderslie Road, linking a bus stop to the Singleton LGA boundary, remains unconstructed and grant dependent.

4. Inadequate Infrastructure Contributions Framework

Given the scale and duration of the proposal (up to 30 years of operation), Council considers that the development must deliver substantial and enforceable infrastructure contributions. Council strongly emphasises that the development must fully fund its proportionate impact on infrastructure, that contributions must address both capital upgrades and ongoing maintenance, and that binding mechanisms must be established prior to determination.

Absent of such commitments, the financial burden of infrastructure upgrades is likely to fall disproportionately on Council and the local community.

Concern is raised that the EIS and SIA incorrectly state that Council do not have a contributions framework for extractive industries. Council has a traffic generating development clause incorporated into the Cessnock City Wide S7.11 Infrastructure Contributions Plan. This plan has been in force since it was adopted on 20 May 2020. This is indicative of the lack of consultation that has occurred by the Proponent.

Council will not accept the Proponent's proposal of Singleton's contribution rate for roads in Cessnock LGA, and request implementation of the traffic generating development clause of Council's City Wide S7.11 Contributions Plan.

Council also raise concerns that the SIA purports that haulage contributions could be used for community infrastructure and local projects, which is an incorrect understanding of how haulage contributions are required to be allocated. It is not agreed that the current proposal would create a net community benefit regarding haulage contributions.

In accordance with Council's City Wide S7.11 Contributions Plan, Council notes that:

1. An assessment of any Traffic and Transport Study and the haulage route that will affect the Cessnock Council LGA will be required;
2. Once Council have completed an assessment, further advice will be provided.

It is reiterated that Council would expect that the Proponent upgrades Elderslie Road to an appropriate standard for its use as a haulage road, together with the payment of a haulage levy to ensure that the proposed quarry does not create significant impacts on the road pavement.

5. Community Consultation and Social Impact Assessment

Council notes that while some consultation activities have been undertaken, including information sessions, there remains strong evidence of ongoing community concern regarding the project's impacts.

Council considers that engagement to date has not adequately captured nor addressed the concerns of residents within the Cessnock LGA, many of whom will be directly affected by haulage routes and associated impacts.

The following matters are noted from the SIA, which warrant further consideration:

- The SIA has not adequately considered the Cessnock LGA in relation to strategic policy, consultation or identification of Elected Representatives as stakeholders.
- The SIA acknowledges that there will be a high residual impact from 'Frustration because of traffic queuing (Elderslie Bridge) and delays'. The applicant does not provide any substantive justification or mitigation for this level of impact on the community.
- As previously noted, it is considered that the SIA consideration on pedestrian safety should be more comprehensive.
- Council's previous detailed comments from January 2026 are not attached to the SIA or EIS and have not specifically been responded to.
- The SIA has not clearly addressed the 'Quarry' considerations contained in Appendix B of the *Technical Supplement Social Impact Assessment Guideline for State Significant Projects*.

6. Cumulative Impacts

Cessnock Council request that DPHI ensure that the cumulative impact assessment of the Project meet the requirements of the Cumulative Impact Assessment Guidelines for State Significant Projects (CIA Guideline).

Concerns are raised that the EIS and associated appendices have not adequately or consistently considered cumulative impacts, and accordingly there are significant uncertainties of the potential impacts to the community.

Regarding the current assessment, it is noted that:

- The EIS, ITA and SIA consider projects inconsistently. For example, the ITA only considers one subdivision in the Singleton LGA. The ITA does not consider any SSD projects, including the Stage 2 Huntlee Development, which proposes significant urban growth, and does not appear to have made any detailed analysis of the RSGA.
- The EIS does not consider any projects in the Cessnock LGA, other than SSDs.
- It is considered that the RSGA should be considered in detail in the EIS.
- In accordance with the CIA Guideline, the cumulative impacts should be considered for the life of the project. It is not apparent in the ITA that this has been considered.
- The Noise Impact Assessment does not consider cumulative impacts to residents along the transport route.

The submitted EIS should include a consolidated list of all relevant projects, supported by detailed consideration in the technical assessments.

7. Quality of the Lodged Application

The proposed extraction of approximately 30 million tonnes of material over the life of the project represents a substantial industrial activity with potential impacts including:

- Dust Generation;
- Noise and vibration;
- Biodiversity;
- Visual impacts on the landscape; and
- Cumulative regional environmental effects.

Council notes that DPHI and relevant state agencies will consider these impacts. Council request that DPHI ensures that the lodged studies appropriately address the Planning Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs). As noted, there appears to be deficiencies in this regard, including:

- The submitted EIS and SIA have not included a detailed consideration of the impacts to the Cessnock LGA and has not demonstrated a sufficient level of consultation undertaken with Cessnock Council.
- Lack of detailed assessment of potential traffic impacts on the capacity, condition, safety and efficiency of the local and State Road network (as identified above), including a road safety audit.
 - o The current road safety audit is limited to Elderslie Bridge.
 - o The condition of the roads appears to have been limited to a visual inspection.
 - o Details of the road geometry and alignment, including available sight distances, has not been undertaken for all intersections.
 - o Assessment of turn treatment warrants for intersections has only been undertaken for the Stanhope/Springvale intersection.
 - o Comments provided in the ITA suggest that the right turn out of New England Highway onto Wine Country Drive is currently performing at a low level of service. It is also suggested that the development traffic does not alter the LOS. It is unclear where this intersection is as Wine country Drive and New England Highway do not intersect.
- A comprehensive and consistent cumulative impact assessment has not been undertaken.
- In relation to the Economic Impact Assessment (EIA), it is noted that it does not include analysis of Cessnock Council in relation to the Local Effects Analysis. The EIA should be updated to acknowledge that any money collected for road haulage is required to be spent on the impacted length of road and accordingly cannot be considered to be a positive economic impact.

Concluding Comments

Overall, concern is raised about the long term degradation of rural amenity, existing infrastructure and the impacts on nearby communities and environmentally sensitive areas arising from the matters discussed.

In conclusion, Cessnock City Council does not support the Bluestone Hardrock Quarry Project (SSD-76210271) in its current form. Council considers that the proposal imposes unacceptable impacts on local and regional road infrastructure, presents significant and unresolved road safety risks, fails to adequately address cross-boundary impacts on the Cessnock Local Government Area, lacks a robust and enforceable infrastructure contributions framework, and does not demonstrate sufficient community consultation.

Council therefore requests that the Department give due consideration to the matters raised in this submission during its assessment of the proposal.

In closing, Council have unanimously voiced their objection and have formally opposed this development proposal.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on telephone 02 4993 4208 or via email council@cessnock.nsw.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Chrystal', with a stylized, cursive script.

Peter Chrystal
Interim General Manager