

Executive Summary

Transport for NSW (Transport) is seeking a modification to the approved Westlink M7 project (Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) reference number SSI-663) under section 5.25 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (NSW) (EP&A Act). The proposed modification would enable the construction and operation of an additional lane in both directions within the existing median of the Westlink M7, for approximately 26 kilometres from about 140 metres south of the Kurrajong Road bridge at Prestons (southern end) to the intersection with Richmond Road in Oakhurst/Glendenning (northern end), excluding at the Westlink M7/M4 Motorway (Light Horse) Interchange.

What is proposed?

The extent of the approved project and the proposed modification is shown in Figure E-1. The key features of the proposed modification are shown in Figure E-2 to Figure E-6, and would include the following:

- Widening of the motorway into the existing median for a length of about 26 kilometres along the Westlink M7, from about 140 metres south of the Kurrajong Road overhead bridge at Prestons (southern end) to the Westlink M7/Richmond Road interchange in Oakhurst/Glendenning (northern end), excluding at the Westlink M7/M4 Motorway (Light Horse) Interchange
- Widening the exit from the Westlink M7 northbound onto the M4 Motorway westbound from one lane to two lanes
- Widening of 43 existing northbound and southbound bridges on the Westlink M7 at 23 locations within the centre median, and on the outside of the bridges on the approach to the M4 Motorway from Old Wallgrove Road
- Upgrades, additions and modifications to noise walls
- Utility works and upgrades to drainage infrastructure
- Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) installations, adjustments and relocations to cover the new lane configurations, including toll gantry adjustments, relocation of variable speed limit signs (VSLS) and variable message signs (VMS) and new traffic loops to cover the new lanes.

The following would also be required to facilitate construction of the proposed modification:

- Establishment of construction ancillary facilities within and adjacent to Westlink M7
- Vegetation clearing within the median/widening areas and construction areas
- Demolition of existing infrastructure within the widening areas
- Provision of temporary water management infrastructure and establishment of waterway crossings and diversions
- Utility works within Westlink M7 and adjoining roads, particularly around existing motorway bridge sub-structures
- Earthworks for bridge and road widening within the existing median
- Bridge widening including establishment of sub-structures and bridge components
- Pavement widening works within the road median
- Finishing works.

The approved M12 Motorway would connect the Westlink M7 to the approved Western Sydney International Airport. It is proposed that the proposed modification is constructed at the same time as the interchange with the approved M12 Motorway project to minimise disruption and achieve efficiencies during construction.

The description of the proposed modification presented in this Modification Report has been based on the concept design for the proposed modification, and would be subject to detailed design and detailed construction planning (if approved). This may include variations to the design and details presented in this report in response to design development, public submissions received during public exhibition, or identification of opportunities to further minimise potential environmental impacts.

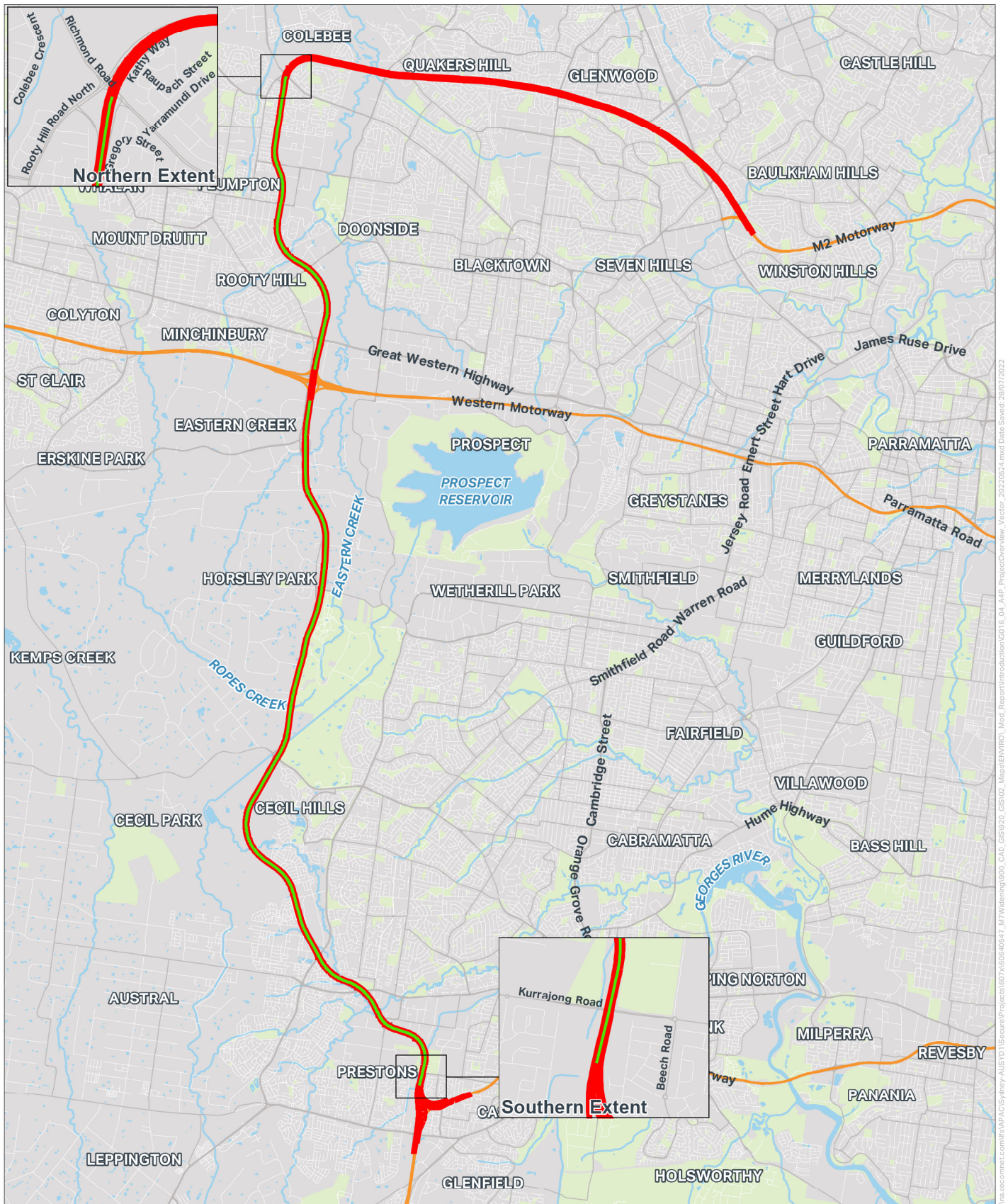


FIGURE E-1: EXTENT OF THE APPROVED PROJECT AND THE PROPOSED MODIFICATION



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- Legend**
- Proposed modification
 - Approved project
 - Motorway
 - Primary road

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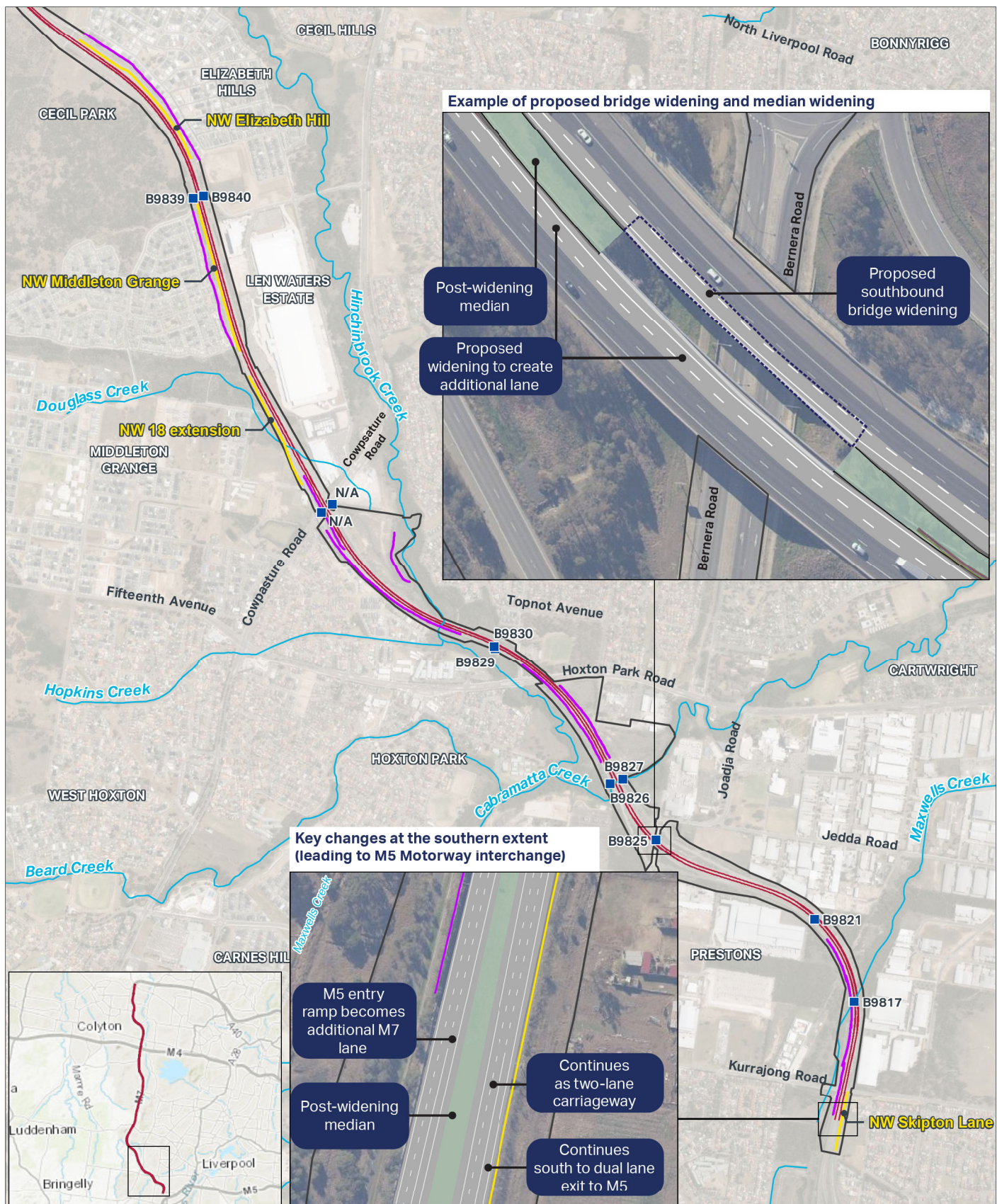


FIGURE E-2: KEY FEATURES



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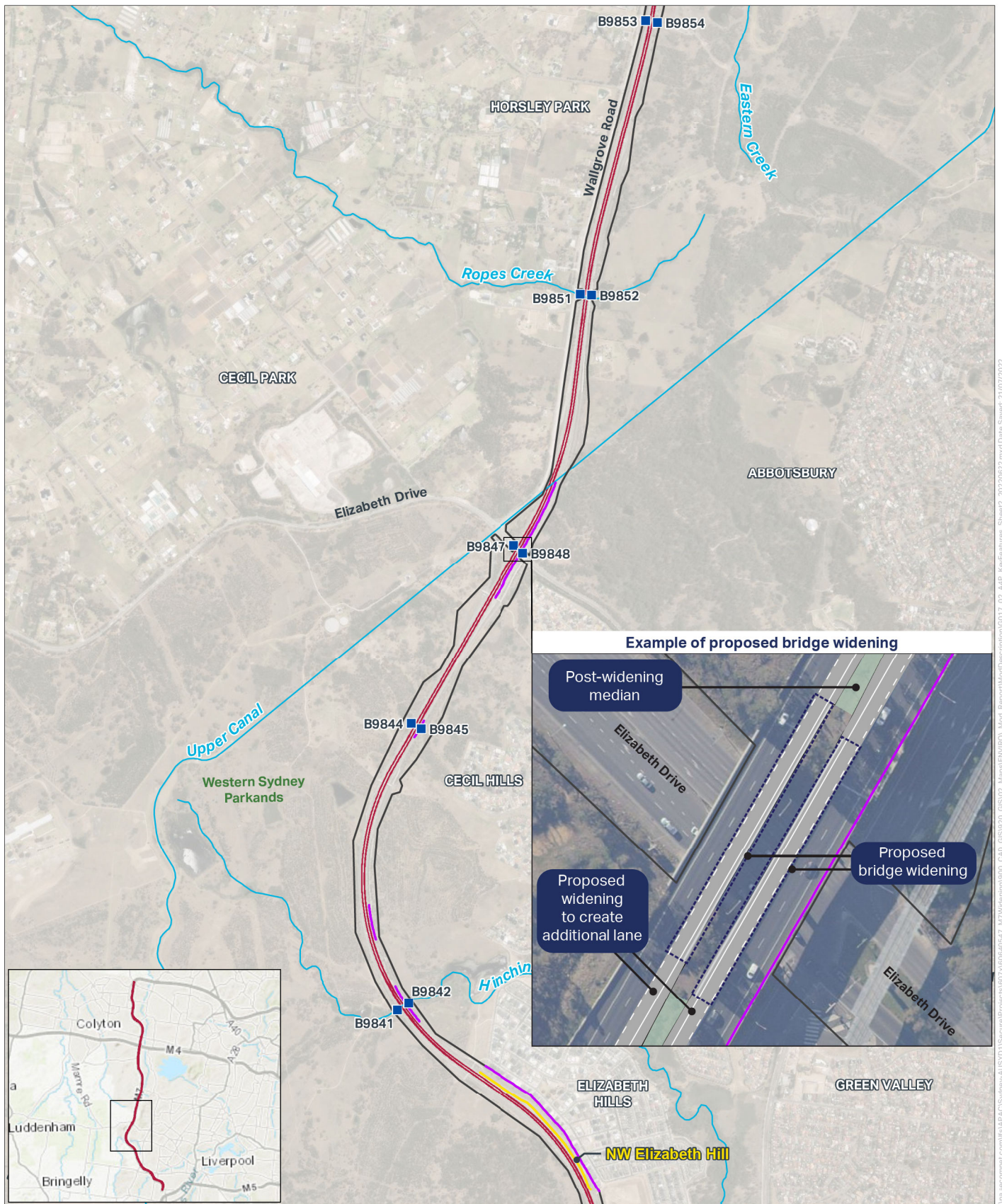


FIGURE E-3: KEY FEATURES



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Legend

- Proposed widening
- Operational footprint
- Watercourse
- Existing noise wall
- New noise wall (NW####)
- Transport for NSW bridge number B9#### proposed to be widened

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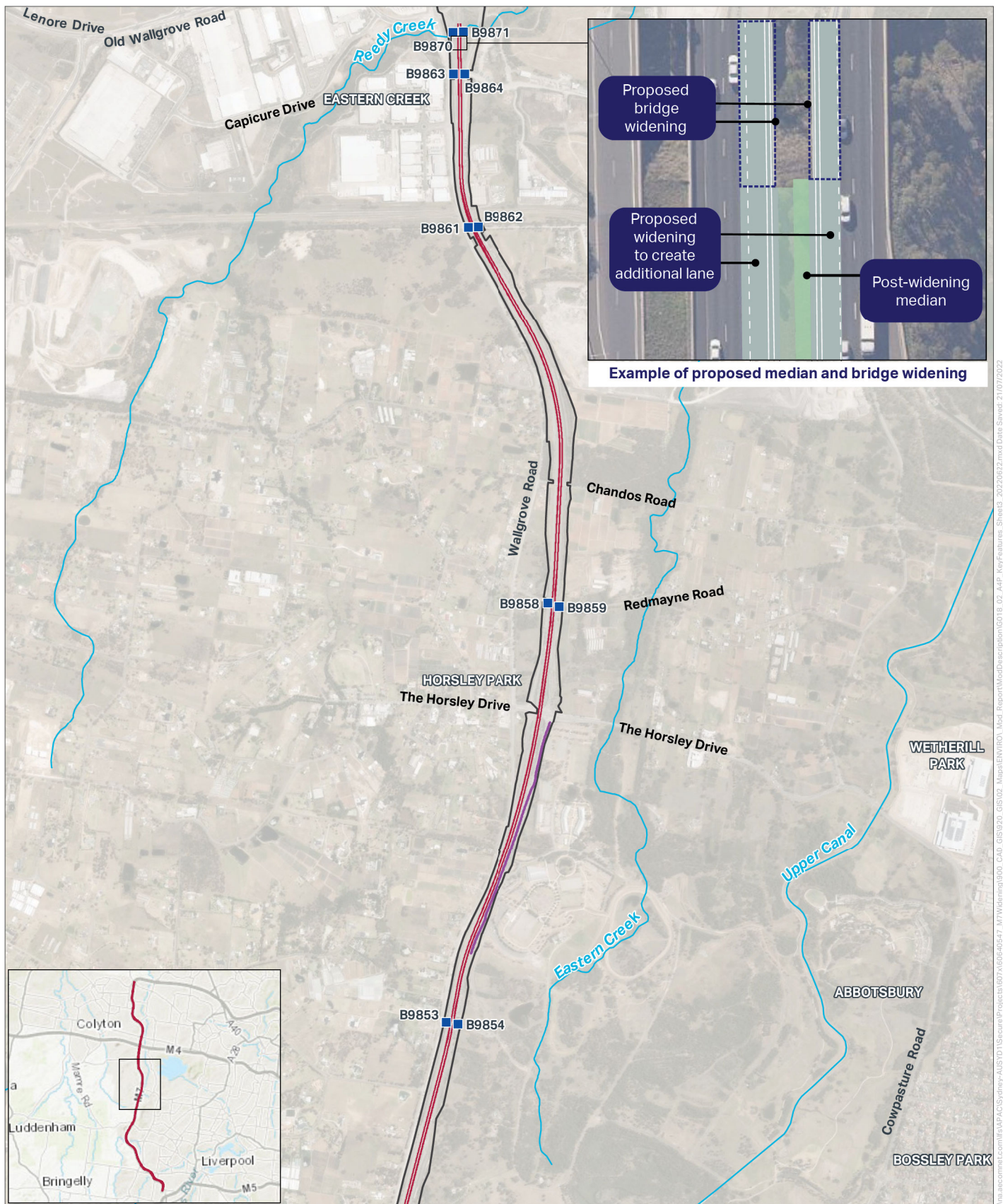


FIGURE E-4: KEY FEATURES



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Legend

- Proposed widening
- Operational footprint
- Watercourse
- Existing noise wall
- Transport for NSW bridge number B9#### proposed to be widened

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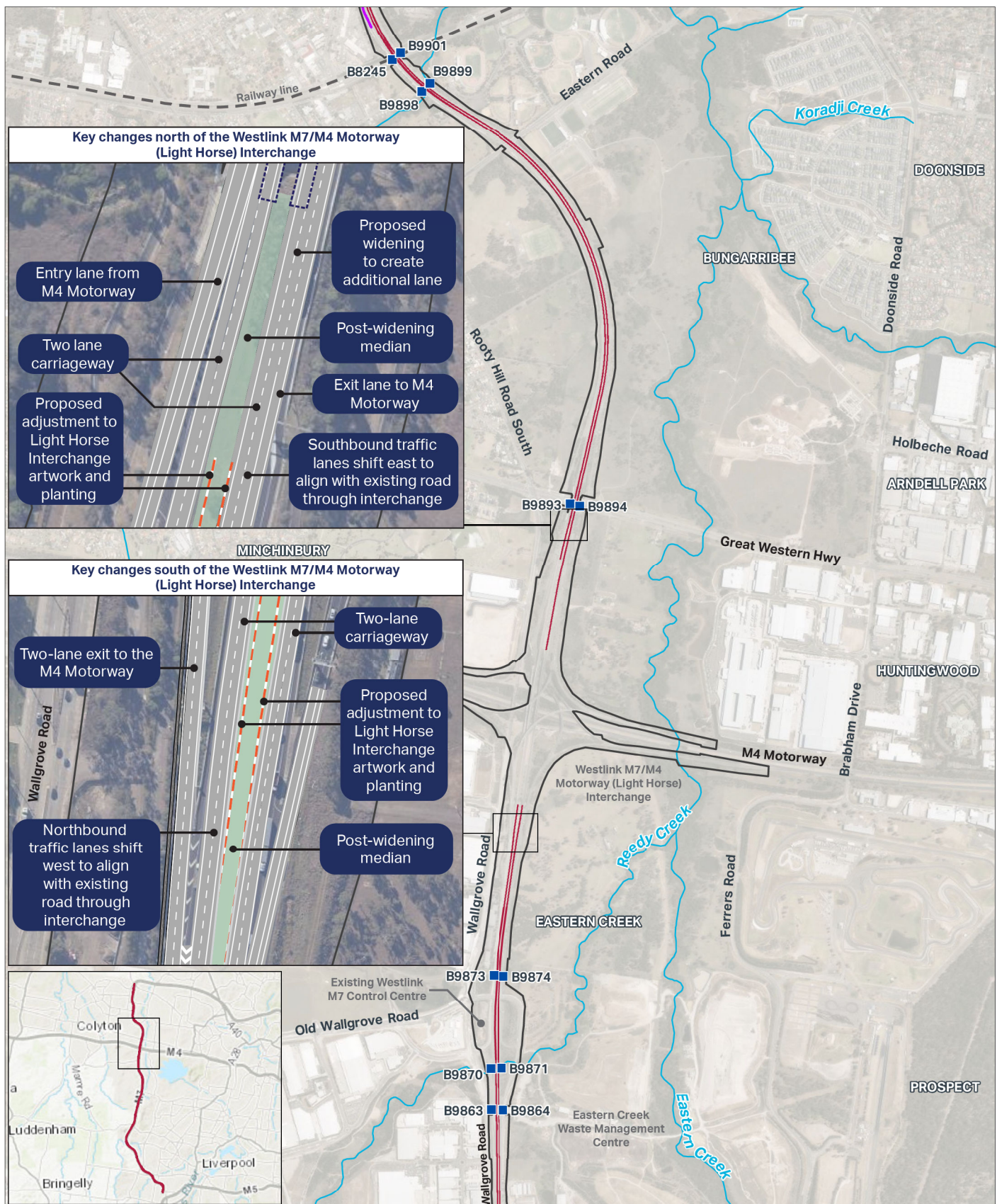


FIGURE E-5: KEY FEATURES



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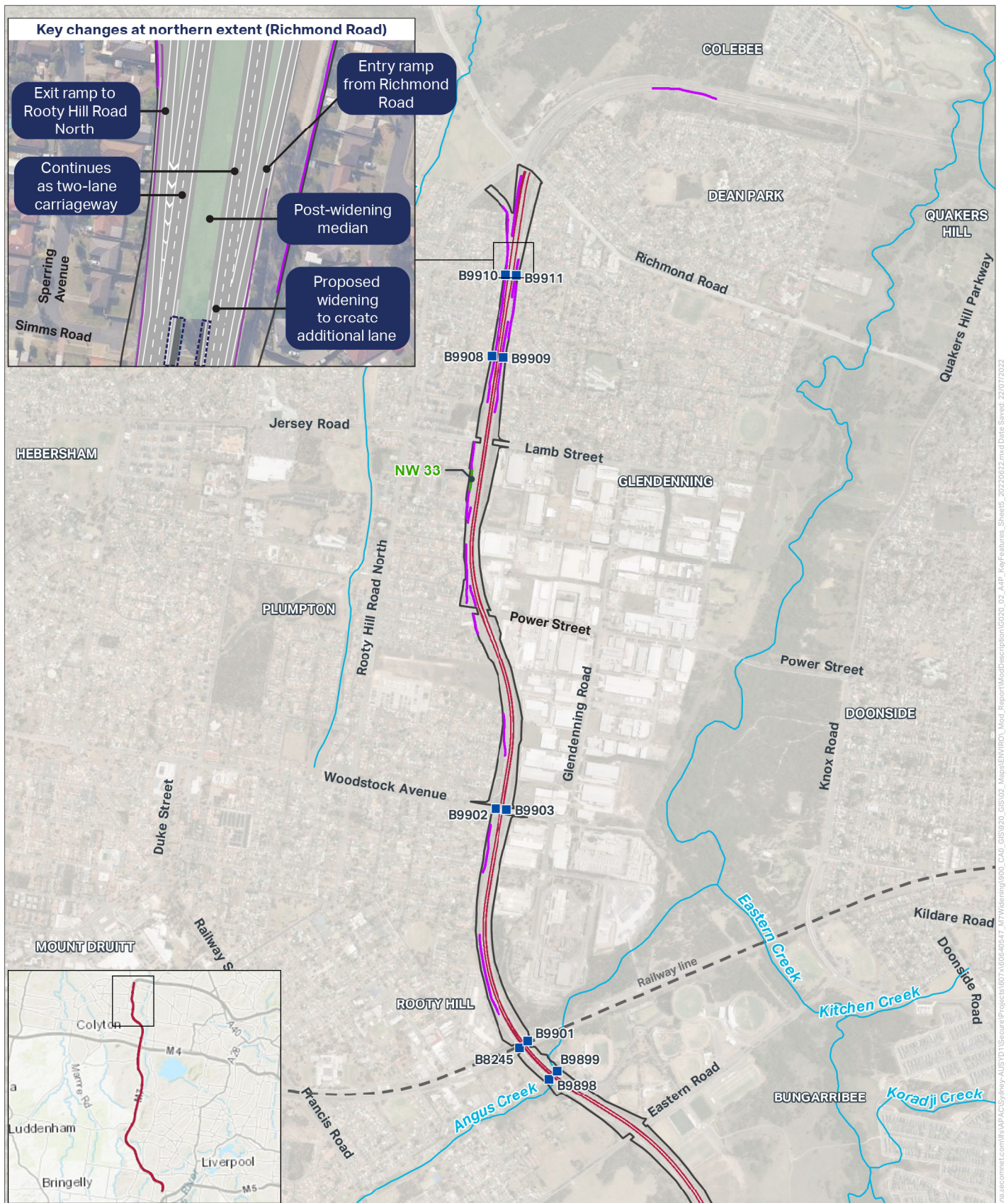


FIGURE E-6: KEY FEATURES



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What are the project objectives?

The objectives for the development of the proposed modification are to:

- Provide additional capacity on the Westlink M7 to meet future traffic growth, reduce congestion and improve connectivity and reliability
- Avoid and minimise impacts on the road network, the community and environment during construction
- Integrate with the new M12 Motorway, minimising disruption during construction and providing safe and efficient connectivity in the operations phase
- Deliver a design that integrates with and respects the existing urban design and landscape features of the Westlink M7
- Provide a cost effective / affordable solution.

Why is it needed?

The Westlink M7 is a major road infrastructure corridor on Greater Sydney's orbital motorway network and has a key role in providing connections to both existing and future transport infrastructure. The Westlink M7 is also one of Greater Sydney's key freight corridors.

The population of Greater Sydney is expected to grow to about 6.6 million people by 2036 (NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, 2020), while the population of Greater Western Sydney (extending from Windsor in the north to Campbelltown in the south, and from Parramatta in the east to Penrith and the Blue Mountains) is expected to grow to three million people in the same timeframe (Infrastructure Australia, 2020). This population growth, new employment precincts and a number of planned developments, including the Western Sydney International Airport, is expected to put significant pressure on the existing transport network (Infrastructure Australia, 2020). Traffic modelling undertaken by Transport indicates that the existing transport network will not be able to service future demand sufficiently and efficiently.

Since its opening in 2005, traffic on the Westlink M7 has grown by around 4.5 per cent per annum to 191,000 average daily traffic (AADT) in 2019. As a result, the Westlink M7 frequently reaches its capacity, and experiences consistent recurrent congestion during both the morning and evening peak periods, particularly along the southern section of the Westlink M7, between the M4 Motorway and M5 Motorway.

Upgrading infrastructure, including roads, is vital to ensure that Greater Sydney's transport system is able to cope with the growth of its population and the need to travel between different areas of Greater Sydney. Plans such as *Greater Sydney Region Plan: A Metropolis of Three Cities – connecting people* (Greater Sydney Commission, 2018a), *Future Transport Strategy 2056* (TfNSW, 2020) and the *State Infrastructure Strategy 2018-2038 – Building Momentum* (Infrastructure NSW, 2018) identify that upgrading transport infrastructure assists in facilitating the objectives and outcomes of those plans.

How would the project satisfy this need?

Increasing the road capacity of the Westlink M7 through the delivery of the proposed modification would address current and projected congestion issues, and enhance safety. The proposed modification would also support objectives and goals of the strategic planning and policy documents shaping Sydney's growth, such as those mentioned above and described further in **Chapter 3** (Need for the modification and strategic context).

What is the approval process for the project?

The proposed modification is related to a deemed State significant infrastructure project (SSI-663-Mod-6). Section 5.25(2) of the EP&A Act notes that a proponent may request the Minister modify the Minister's approval for State significant infrastructure. section 180(1) of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021* (NSW) (EP&A Regulation) notes that a modification request must be in the approved form, contain details of the modification, and have regard to the *State Significant*

Infrastructure Guidelines (DPIE, 2021). This Modification Report has been prepared to meet the requirements outlined in section 180(1) of the EP&A Regulation and the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) issued for the proposed modification. A full checklist of the SEARs is provided in **Appendix A** (Statutory requirements).

The Modification Report will be publicly exhibited to provide the community, government agencies and stakeholders with an understanding of what is proposed and an opportunity to provide feedback. Transport will consider the feedback in the further development of the proposed modification. Transport will then submit a report to DPE that documents submissions received and responds to issues raised. The DPE will prepare an assessment report for the Minister for Planning who will then determine whether or not to grant project approval and specify any project conditions.

What alternatives were considered?

Strategic alternatives and various design and construction options were considered and assessed against the project objectives and other relevant criteria. Opportunities to reduce potential adverse social and environmental impacts of the proposed modification were investigated, in addition to the key objective of improving the efficiency and reliability of travelling on the Westlink M7. The potential to use the median for additional traffic lanes or public transport in the future was identified in the Environmental Impact Statement for the approved project (Roads and Traffic Authority, 2000).

The alternative design options considered included:

- Option 1: Do nothing
- Option 2: Widening the Westlink M7 from the M5 Motorway to the M4 Motorway, using the centre median
- Option 3: Widening the Westlink M7 from the M5 Motorway to Richmond Road, using the centre median
- Option 4: Widening full length of the Westlink M7, from M5 Motorway to The Hills M2 Motorway Interchange, using the centre median.

Following assessment of the options, Option 3 was chosen as the preferred option for the proposed modification.

Additionally, design options for the Westlink M7/M4 Motorway (Light Horse) Interchange were assessed separately given the complexity of the lane arrangements at this interchange. The interchange connects the Westlink M7 with the M4 Motorway and enables high volumes of traffic to enter and exit the Westlink M7. Traffic volumes are particularly high coming off the Westlink M7 northbound as motorists exit onto the M4 Motorway. Two options were considered for this location, factoring in the preferred option for widening of the Westlink M7:

- Alternative A: Widening the existing Westlink M7 through the M7 Westlink/M4 Motorway (Light Horse) Interchange to include an additional lane in each direction
- Alternative B: Retaining two lanes in each direction on the Westlink M7 through the interchange, providing a two-lane northbound exit to the M4 Motorway and a third lane joining as an on-ramp from the M4 Motorway. Southbound lane configuration would include a dedicated single lane exit to the M4 Motorway.

Following assessment of the options, Alternative B was chosen as the preferred option for the Westlink M7/M4 Motorway (Light Horse) Interchange.

It was considered that these preferred design options would provide a superior combination of benefits when compared to the other options examined, including reduced environmental and social impacts, better constructability, improved traffic flow and the provision of a more affordable and cost-effective solution.

What consultation has been undertaken with stakeholders?

Consultation with stakeholders was undertaken during design development and preparation of this Modification Report. Consultation has included stakeholder briefings, distributing community notifications, Aboriginal cultural consultation and undertaking residential interviews.

Residential interviews were undertaken to better understand the potential social impacts of the proposed modification on community members. A total of 889 residences were approached, from which 130 residents participated in the survey. The results have been used in the assessment of the proposed modification (refer **Section 7.12 (Social)**).

Consultation feedback has informed the environmental assessments undertaken for the proposed modification and ongoing communications. Key concerns communicated during the community consultation related to:

- Increased traffic volumes on local road network
- Noise impacts from construction and operation
- The scope of the proposed modification and how it would occur
- Impacts to the shared path
- Impacts to Aboriginal cultural heritage and non-Aboriginal heritage.

Consultation and engagement with relevant stakeholders will continue through the detailed design, construction and operational stages of the proposed modification (subject to project approval).

What are the main beneficial outcomes expected?

The main beneficial outcomes from the proposed modification include:

- Easing of congestion by enabling faster and more reliable connections between Sydney's South-West and North West
- Better and more reliable trips for road users, businesses, and freight
- Improved journey times to planned growth areas including the new Western Sydney International Airport.

What are the main adverse outcomes expected and how would they be managed?

The central median strip of the existing Westlink M7 was designed with the intention to provide sufficient space within the road corridor to develop additional lanes in the future, with minimal impacts. However, there would still be some temporary and permanent adverse impacts associated with the construction and operation of the proposed modification.

The Modification Report outlines measures to avoid, manage, mitigate, offset and monitor adverse impacts during construction and operation. If approved, the design, construction and operation of the proposed modification would be carried out in accordance with the management and mitigation measures identified in this report, in addition to measures identified in the conditions of approval.

Key environmental management and mitigation measures outlined in this report include the preparation of a comprehensive construction environmental management plan (CEMP) to manage environmental impacts during construction. The CEMP would include several sub-plans to manage specific issues identified in the Modification Report. Further mitigation requirements are likely to be identified during detailed design, construction planning and in consultation with communities and relevant stakeholders. Consultation with surrounding major projects would be undertaken with the view to mitigating and managing potential cumulative environmental impacts during construction and operation.

A summary of the main issues and key management measures identified in the Modification Report is provided below.

Traffic and Transport

The main potential adverse traffic and transport impacts during construction include:

- Temporary road network changes, which consist of, but are not limited to:
 - Reductions in speed limits along the Westlink M7 (e.g. from 100 kilometres per hour to 80 kilometres per hour)
 - Temporary road and/or lane closures on the Westlink M7 and surrounding road network
 - Temporary traffic diversions ranging from 300 metres to 2.8 kilometres of additional travel distance with off-motorway detours or contraflow arrangements
- Temporary detours off the existing shared path adjacent to the Westlink M7, resulting in approximately 300 metres to 1.3 kilometres of additional travel distance for motorists.

The primary environmental management tool to address these construction impacts would be the CEMP, which will be prepared by the construction contractor in consultation with Transport prior to construction. The CEMP will contain a Construction Traffic and Access Management Plan containing site-specific plans and controls for works areas across the construction footprint. These plans would outline the guidelines, general requirements, and specific procedures for how construction works are to be delivered to limit the impact on traffic and transport operation in the area.

The proposed modification would result in a mostly positive impacts to traffic and transport, including improvements in network performance, travel times and roadway level of service.

The main potential adverse transport and traffic impacts during operation include:

- Reduced vehicle speeds in the areas outside the proposed modification along the Westlink M7, due to increased traffic demand
- Decreased intersection performance at some intersections (associated with increased traffic volumes and growth in the area, and to a lesser degree the proposed modification).

In order to minimise adverse impacts during operation, mitigation measures would be implemented including investigation of potential impacts to vehicle speeds outside the proposed modification, and investigation of intersection improvements.

To address potential safety risks to cyclists, the proposed modification would introduce restrictions which would prohibit cycling on the shoulder of the Westlink M7 mainline between the M5 Motorway and Richmond Road. Cyclists would instead be required to use the signed alternative route via the existing shared path.

Noise and vibration

During construction a variety of proposed activities and equipment used would have the potential to adversely affect local noise and vibration levels, including in relation to extensive night time works that would be required. The main findings of the noise and vibration impact assessment for the construction phase are outlined below:

- All construction stages had the potential to affect residential receivers by producing noise levels above applicable noise management levels
- 15 out of 34 noise catchment areas (NCAs) would be 'highly affected' by certain activities at some point during construction
- Receivers close to the proposed new noise walls would experience noise levels above the applicable noise management levels during their installation
- Roads traffic noise along proposed detour routes during construction would increase significantly by more than 2 Decibels (dB) in some places
- Cumulative construction impacts may increase the number of receivers that experience excessive noise levels
- Construction vibration may be generated by vibration intensive equipment proposed to be used at various stages during construction.

In order to manage potential noise and vibration impacts associated with construction, a construction Noise and Vibration Management Plan (CNVMP) would be prepared as part of the CEMP, which will include procedures for extended and out-of-hours work.

Additionally, due to the noise and vibration impacts associated with the operational phase of the proposed modification, a number of sensitive receivers would be eligible for the consideration of feasible and reasonable noise mitigation measures, despite the extension of existing noise barriers and the introduction of new noise barriers. Operational noise and vibration mitigation measures would include at-source and at property noise treatments identified through an Operational Noise and Vibration Review.

Air Quality

The main risk of air quality impacts is from dust emissions during construction, which was found to be high for all construction stages without the implementation of mitigation measures. The air quality assessment found that:

- 2 out of 11 zones assessed were found to have a high risk of dust soiling due to the close proximity of sensitive receptors to the construction footprint
- All other zones assessed were found to have a moderate risk of dust soiling due to the proximity of sensitive receptors to the construction footprint
- In regard to risk to ecological receptors, most construction zones assessed were found to have a medium dust soiling risk due to the proximity of native vegetation and areas zoned for environmental conservation purposes.

Given the existing volume of traffic utilising the Westlink M7, combustion emissions from the volumes of construction traffic on the Westlink M7 and adjacent road network are unlikely to result in a notable reduction in ambient air quality at nearby sensitive receptors. Off-motorway detour routes due to construction works are expected to result in some localised increase in ground level pollutant concentrations however these would be temporary in nature.

In order to minimise construction impacts, air quality mitigation measures would be adopted in the CEMP and implemented to meet air quality performance outcomes.

Hydrology and flooding

Construction activities and construction ancillary facilities have the potential to affect local flood behaviour and impact on the surrounding environment. In addition, flooding has the potential to impact construction areas within the construction footprint. Prior to construction, measures aimed at mitigating the impacts of construction activities on flood behaviour would be identified, and also to mitigate impacts to construction areas/activities. A flood management plan will be prepared as part of the CEMP for the project and will detail the processes for flood preparedness, materials management, weather monitoring, site management and flood incident management. The flood management plan will be developed in accordance with relevant guidelines.

During operation, the level of flood immunity to the Westlink M7 would be maintained. The bridge waterway and drainage structures along the existing Westlink M7 were designed to provide a 1% Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP) level of flood immunity to its carriageways. This level of flood immunity would be achieved under both pre- and post-proposed modification conditions. Minor, localised changes in flood behaviour were predicted during operation. For example, increases in peak flood levels, depths and duration of inundation outside the operational footprint were predicted in several locations (for all modelled flood events up to the Probable Maximum Flood (PMF) event). Mitigation measures would be implemented which include confirming any design refinements required during detailed design.

Biodiversity

Potential impacts on biodiversity values from construction of the proposed modification include:

- Direct removal of 7.48 ha of modified native vegetation containing seven Plant Community Types, aligning to six Threatened Ecological Communities

- Removal of 2.31 ha of potential roosting and foraging habitat for a species of bat, the Southern Myotis (*Myotis macropus*)
- Removal of fauna habitat (native vegetation and drainage lines)
- Disturbance to sections of 18 creeklines ranging from smaller 1st order unnamed creeks through to larger 5th order streams (Cabramatta Creek).

In order to manage the potential biodiversity impacts during construction a Biodiversity Management Plan would be developed that includes measures to avoid and/or minimise impacts on sensitive ecological areas and revegetate/restore disturbed areas. Additionally, ecosystem credits and species credits would be required to offset for impacts of the proposed modification to Plant Community Type vegetation and the foraging habitat for the Southern Myotis.

Social

Potential adverse social impacts, which would result from the construction of the proposed modification include:

- Loss of community cohesion and sense of place
- Impacts to health and wellbeing such as increasing stress and anxiety
- Amenity impacts (traffic and access, noise and vibration, air quality and visual)
- Loss of livelihoods
- Construction fatigue.

During operation, social impacts may include:

- Impacts to health and wellbeing such as increasing stress and anxiety
- Loss of amenity (noise and vibration and visual).

The mitigation and management measures identified for the proposed modification have been developed to enhance potential positive impacts where possible, and to address potential adverse impacts. The mitigation measures identified for social impacts for the proposed modification include:

- Implementation of a Community and Stakeholder Engagement Plan
- Explore options to add additional lighting on the Westlink M7 shared path
- Investigate opportunities to source construction workers from the local community
- Construction ancillary facilities within private and public reserves and parks would be planned to minimise impacts on existing social infrastructure and would be returned to their original or improved condition following construction.

Implementation of mitigation measures for other environmental impacts (such as noise and vibration, traffic and other amenity-related impacts) would also manage related social impacts.

Landscape character, visual amenity and urban design

Overall, the visual impact of the proposed modification during construction was assessed to be high to moderate and adverse to neutral. This is due to the high magnitude of change that would occur, as the scale, and proximity of construction equipment and activity would be larger than visual elements within existing views. The qualitative rating of the change is mostly adverse due to the removal of vegetation and the presence of construction activity and equipment within the views.

The predominant landscape character impact as a result of the proposed modification would be to the landscape character within the Westlink M7 corridor itself, which was assessed to be a moderate impact. Within this landscape, the highest rating of impact due to the proposed modification would occur as a result of proposed changes to the Light Horse Sculpture Parade and memorial fig planting. In order to mitigate this impact, the design and reinstatement plan would seek to maintain the integrity and significance of the memorial as a whole and would be developed in consultation with the sculpture artist, NSW Returned Services League (RSL) and NSW Office of Veteran Affairs.

During operation, the overall visual impact as a result of the proposed modification was assessed to be moderate to low, with two viewpoints having high and high to moderate impact due to the sensitivity of these viewpoints and widened motorway and bridges, combined with removal of vegetation.

Mitigation measures would be implemented to minimise visual impacts as a result of the proposed modification.

Other environmental impacts

Further environmental issues have been assessed in accordance with the SEARs issued for the proposed modification, including surface water and groundwater, heritage (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal), land use and property, soils and contamination, and other issues. These assessments are provided in **Chapter 7** (Environmental assessment) of this Modification Report, together with relevant mitigation measures to address the impacts identified.

How can I comment on the proposed modification?

The modification report will be placed online for public exhibition by DPE for 21 days. During the public exhibition period any person may make a submission to DPE regarding the proposed modification, and these submissions will be considered in the assessment of the modification application.

Submissions can be made online at:

<https://mpweb.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/have-your-say>

Alternatively, submissions can be made in writing and sent to the address below:

Attention: Director, Transport Assessments
Department of Planning and Environment
Locked Bag 5022
Parramatta NSW 2124

Further instruction on making a written submission and information on handling of personal information is available at the webpage address above.

Submissions received during public exhibition will be responded to in a 'Submissions Report', which will address the issues raised, and also outline any proposed changes to the proposed modification after the exhibition period. This report will also be made available to the public.

Transport and DPE will inform the community and stakeholders when a decision has been made regarding the modification application. Should the proposed modification be approved, further consultation would take place with the community and stakeholders prior to and during construction.