



Hills of Gold Wind Farm Project Amendment Factsheet

Following feedback from Tamworth Regional Council, the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE), National Parks and Wildlife, the community, and input from construction contractors, ENGIE is making a number of changes to the project. These changes are intended to provide more clarity and reduce overall impacts of the project during construction and with ongoing operation.

Summary of the changes

Quarry

Expansion of an existing quarry within the Nundle State Forest, is being considered. The quarry is closer to the project than previously assumed sources of material, creating the potential to reduce the number of trucks travelling on local roads, and in particular through Nundle.

Transport route

An alternative access route proposes delivery of wind turbine components and some general construction traffic to access the wind farm via Crawney Road, rather than the previously proposed Devils Elbow Bypass. While this will create traffic on Crawney Road, minimal impact with no change to the level of service is expected. The change avoids the need to build the Devils Elbow Bypass and retaining walls on Morrisons Gap Road and will reduce the volume of traffic using this route.

Turbine removal / relocation

To create a larger buffer between the project and Ben Halls Gap Nature Reserve, one turbine will be removed, and 20 turbines will be slightly relocated. This has created a 1.2km wildlife corridor and reduced the potential impact to birds and bats to 'low' following all proposed operational mitigations available to the project.

Location of substation and battery storage

If Crawney Road is to be used for construction and oversize vehicles, a potential new location closer to the new proposed route becomes an option. The optional location would be at least 3km from the Teamsters Rest campsite and has been assessed for impacts to those residents living along Crawney Road.

Transmission line

Optional use of tower structures for the transmission line to potentially reduce the height and number of structures required. Also increasing the size of the switching station and some additional access tracks to the transmission line.

Public exhibition

The amendment is expected to be on public exhibition from mid-November to mid-December and can be accessed at:

- ▶ Tamworth Council Chambers
- ▶ Nundle Library
- ▶ Upper Hunter Shire Council Office in Scone
- ▶ Liverpool Plains Shire Council Office in Quirindi
- ▶ Hills of Gold Wind Farm Community Hub (corner of Jenkins and Oakenville Streets, Nundle)
- ▶ <https://pp.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/hills-gold-wind-farm>

Project Amendment

Quarry expansion option

The expansion of an existing quarry is being considered as an option that would reduce the number of haulage trucks on local roads. ENGIE is proposing to expand an existing Forestry Corporation of NSW quarry, located within the Nundle State Forest, 9km from the nearest turbine.

Given its close proximity to the project, sourcing material from this quarry would significantly reduce the number of trucks travelling through Nundle and the broader local road network.

It is proposed that the quarry be expanded to extract up to 500,000 tonnes per year, from its current operation of 30,000 tonnes per year. With around 700,000-800,000 tonnes required for construction of the wind farm. The disturbed area would be rehabilitated before being handed back to the Forestry Corporation, so they can use it again as a pine plantation.

Comprehensive assessments have been carried out on the possible expansion of the quarry to determine potential impacts to factors such as soils, water and air quality. The assessments show that most impacts are unlikely or can be managed through measures such as catch drains to reduce erosion or using water sprays to minimise dust.

New transport route

Given the strong reservations by Tamworth Regional Council about the Devils Elbow Bypass, the Project has reassessed access routes for construction vehicles and Over Size, Over Mass (OSOM) vehicles to further reduce impacts.

The alternate route proposes most of the OSOM and construction traffic uses Crawney Road, and therefore construction of a bypass at Devils Elbow and retaining walls along Morrisons Gap Road would no longer be required.

OSOM vehicles refer to those transporting the larger components of the wind farm such as the tower segments and the blades. It is envisaged that transportation of this equipment will take a total of around nine months, with up to six vehicles travelling the route each day, six days per week.

The proposed OSOM route would follow Crawney Road beyond the Pearly Gates Bridge with access to the site from three possible locations off Crawney Road. Further work is continuing with the Registered Aboriginal Parties, Local Lands Services, Crown Lands and construction contractors to determine the most suitable access point.

To support the new route, we are proposing to seal Crawney Road up to the determined access site (between 2 and 4km) and upgrade the road to be suitable for transport of turbine components, including two bridge upgrades. Following construction, the road will be repaired to a better condition than prior to its use by the project.

Traffic management measures will be put in place to minimise disruption for residents such as a text messaging service to alert when OSOM vehicles are travelling, layby areas to allow for overtaking and avoiding school bus times.

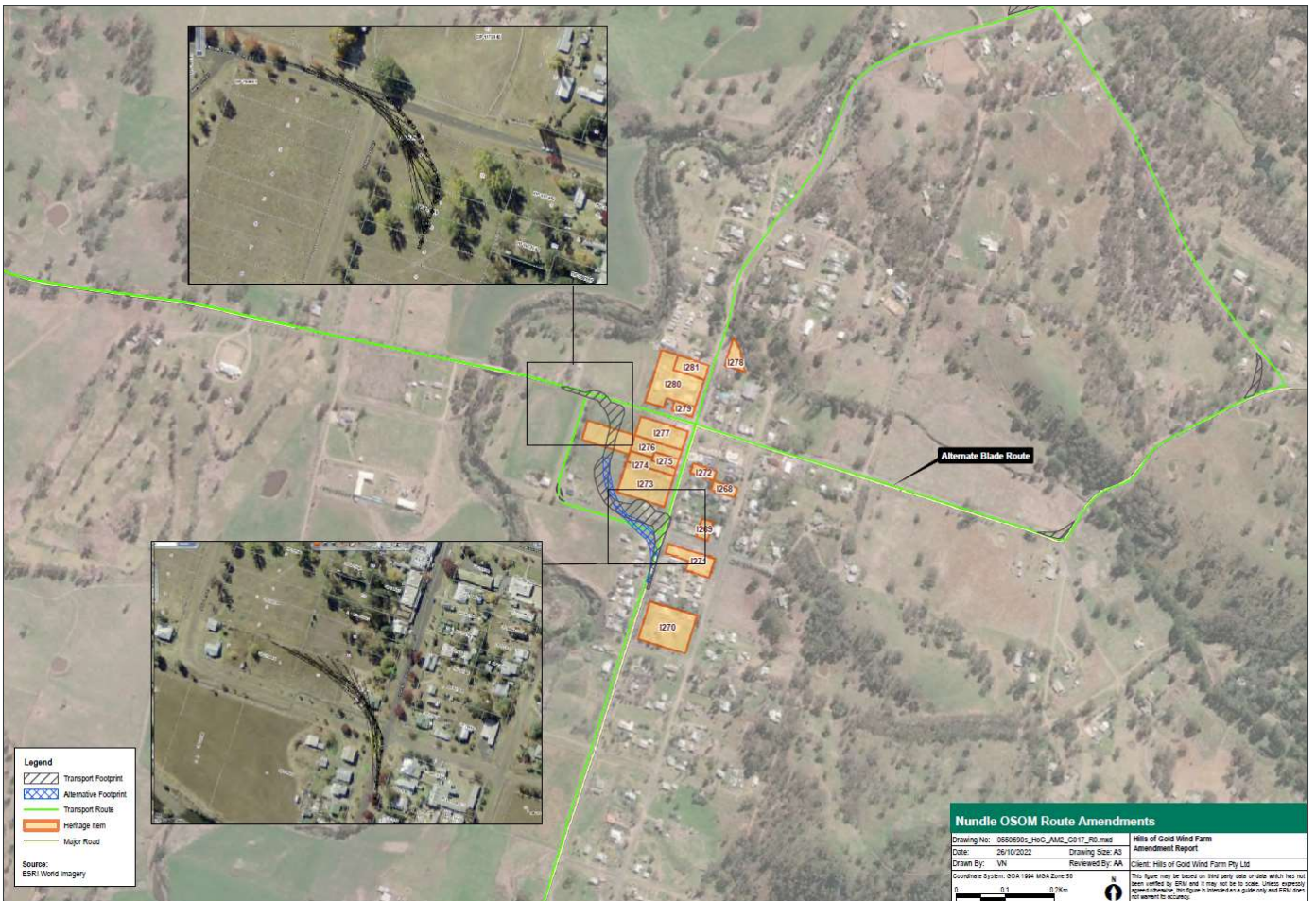
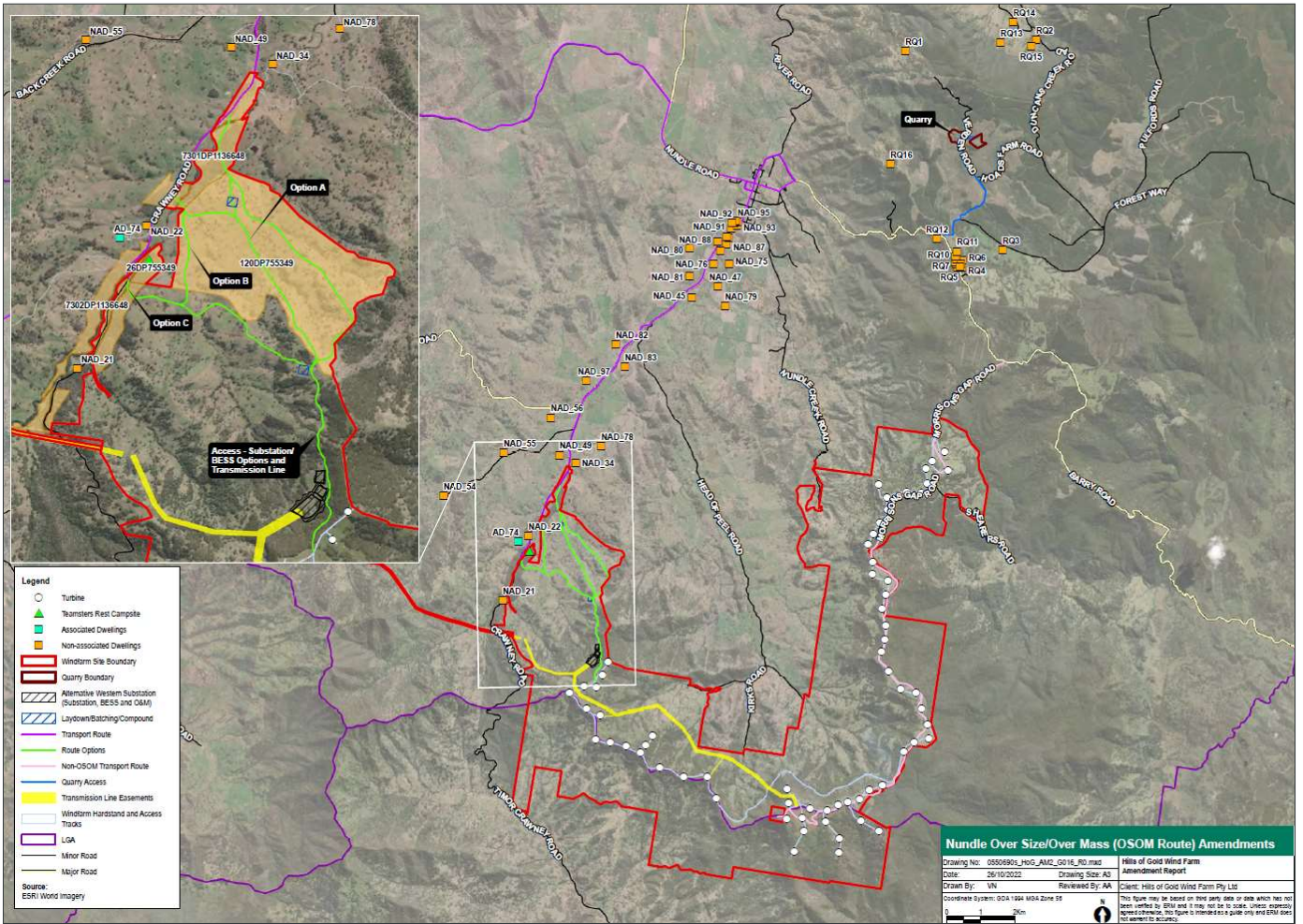
The previously considered route via Barry Road and Morrison's Gap Road is still proposed for the majority of construction traffic and could be used for returning empty or packed down wind turbine component transport vehicles. Minor road works within the road reserve of the existing Devils Elbow and Morrisons Gap Road is proposed to improve road safety for these traffic movements.

Route through Nundle

Oversize load routes through Nundle are being assessed with consideration of a route that mostly avoids the main intersection of Oakenville and Jenkins streets by diverting behind the Peel Inn on Herron Street and Innes Street, before entering Jenkins Street. An option for transporting blades is being considered that would loop around Happy Valley Road and back onto Jenkins Street to join Crawney Road.

Both options take into account previous concerns raised by the community regarding traffic along Jenkins Street between Oakenville and Innes streets, and protection of the avenue of trees along Oakenville Street on the approach to Nundle.

Nundle Over Size / Over Mass (OSOM route) amendments





Changes to turbine layout

To further reduce potential impacts to native flora and fauna and responding to matters raised by the DPE's Biodiversity, Conservation and Science Directorate, it is proposed that a turbine be removed from the project and a further 20 be slightly relocated.

The removal of turbine WP 41 and minor relocation of 20 turbines from their previous locations, will create a larger distance between the wind farm and Ben Halls Gap Nature Reserve, as well as create a 1.2km corridor for wildlife movements. It will also increase the distance between turbines and move them further away from hollow trees which are either confirmed or have potential to be a nesting site, reducing the risk of collision for bats, owls and other birds.

These changes to turbine locations also respond to feedback from National Parks and Wildlife Service regarding aerial firefighting, with the wider distance between turbines increasing the accessibility around the turbines. The changes reduce the potential collision risk to 'low' following all available operational mitigations available.

Development footprint changes

The proposed changes in the project, including the new transport route, a potential new location for the substation and battery, and new transmission line infrastructure, result in an overall development footprint of approximately 447ha.

Of this footprint, 302ha would be temporarily disturbed during construction, and includes the access road off Crawney Road, temporary access roads to the transmission line, and temporary equipment laydown areas. This figure is notably larger than previous figure of 200ha as it is a worst case scenario, showing the cumulative size of multiple options - such as all three access routes off Crawney Road, and the optional locations for the substation, battery and maintenance facilities, only one of each option will be built.

The permanent footprint is approximately 145ha, an increase of 45ha since the previous project revisions, but still significantly less than the initial Environmental Impact Statement of 242ha. The additional 45ha is predominantly as a result of assessing multiple substation, battery and access road options, all of which will not be built, and the increase in transmission line easement.

Get in Touch

Do you want to get in touch with the team?
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