

How Bangalow's Landscape will Change

18.3.3 Precinct 3 – Bangalow (Broken Head Road to Byron

Creek)

Visual effect

The major visual changes in the Bangalow precinct would be associated with the significant amount of earthworks in the precinct, specifically the major cutting through 'Arundel', the works around the existing Bangalow bypass, the crossing of Broken Head Road and the severing of agricultural plantations.

The proposed upgrade in this precinct would traverse a series of valleys and ridge lines, requiring significant earthworks along much of the route to achieve a satisfactory vertical alignment. In particular, large cuttings would be required near Broken Head Road and to the north. A particularly large cutting would be required near 'Arundel', and would also represent a significant visual change in the landscape, slicing through a natural hill top. Being set against the skyline, it is widely exposed to views, especially from the north. Areas from which the cutting would be able to be seen include elevated parts of the Bangalow township, such as areas from Rankin Drive or other areas north of the railway line, and parts of the St Helena ridge. In addition to the significant vertical size of these cuttings, cutting angles of repose would need to be relatively flat, therefore occupying a large footprint. Substantial fill embankments would also be required in the Byron Creek floodplain. Similarly, the large cuttings near Broken Head Road and the bridge itself would result in notable visual changes that would be highly visible from Broken Head Road and the residences and other properties located along it.

The proposed works around the Bangalow interchange would be significant due to the large increase in road infrastructure, including the pavement surfaces of the four parallel roadways (the north- and southbound carriageway of the proposed upgrade, the realigned existing highway on the

current northbound carriageway of the Bangalow bypass and the proposed new local access road), on- and off-ramps, roundabout and additional bridges over Bangalow Road and Byron Creek.

Further increasing the degree of visual change in this area would be the removal of roadside vegetation lining the eastern side of the existing highway alignment and Bangalow bypass, in what would be the median strip of the proposed upgrade. This vegetation is particularly dense and well established and its removal would alter the outlook from the existing highway alignment, opening up views towards the east. These views would be largely dominated by the hard pavements associated with the proposed upgrade and the new local access road. In addition to representing a highly noticeable loss, it would also expose the upgrade works and existing highway alignment to views from a larger area than is currently the case. The narrow distance between the different road and carriageways limits the potential for landscaping or other measures that would provide visual separation or screening.

Visual effects around the Bangalow interchange would be further increased by the potential construction of a noise barrier on the western side of the existing highway, required to provide noise amelioration to residents of outlying residential areas in Bangalow, including the 'Clover Hill' estate. If a noise barrier was constructed at this location, it would be likely to require the removal of significant established vegetation on the western side of the existing highway. The cumulative effect of these works would be the complete removal of vegetation along what is currently a densely vegetated road and visually pleasant road corridor. Revegetation would eventually resemble the current situation.

The twin bridges over Byron Creek and the railway line would constitute a significant infrastructure element. The relatively open and exposed location of the bridge and associated large fill embankments in the floodplain of Byron Creek would exacerbate the visual effect, with little screening provided by either the

landform or vegetation cover. In this naturally flat landscape, the large fill embankments in particular would be highly noticeable as a 'foreign' object in the landscape. The height of the bridge would also readily reveal the construction method of the bridge, including the numerous piles that are likely to be required. Initial design investigations have indicated that piles are likely to be staggered which will result in a more solid appearance of the two bridges when seen from surrounding areas.

While the bridge over Bangalow Road would be significantly shorter, its visual effect would be similar as it is equally raised above the natural floodplain level, and readily exposed to viewers driving along Bangalow Road, which is important as one of the main entry and arrival points at the township.

A second instance of major twin bridges would need to be constructed over Skinners Creek. They would be almost parallel to the existing highway alignment and within close proximity to it. Its significant elevation above the natural valley floor, together with the earthworks associated with the structure, would make it a visually noticeable and therefore important infrastructure element in the precinct. Because of this, the detailed design resolution of the bridge would have a significant bearing on its visual effect when seen from surrounding areas or the existing highway.

Another visual effect of the proposed upgrade results from the severing of a number agricultural crop areas on the eastern side of the existing highway alignment. Affected crops would include macadamia plantations, as well as coffee plantations south of Broken Head Road. The visual effect of severed plantations, in particular of severed macadamia plantations, would be highly noticeable from the proposed upgrade, from Broken Head Road and from within the affected properties themselves. North of Broken Head Road where macadamia plantations are largely set out in fairly straight rows either perpendicular or

parallel to existing roads, the visual effect of severed plantations would be exaggerated by the changing angles between the proposed upgrade alignment and the strong grid pattern of the plantations. The resulting conflicting geometries would make it obvious that the proposed upgrade was imposed on the pre-existing agricultural landscape.

Visual sensitivity

The visual sensitivity of this precinct is likely to be high, as much of the proposed upgrade would be exposed to viewing by a potentially large number of local residents and tourists, both of whom would be highly sensitive to changes in the landscape. The proposed upgrade would be highly visible from local roads such as the existing highway alignment (including the Bangalow bypass), the new local access road, Bangalow Road and Broken Head Road. A potentially large number of viewers would also be able to see the works associated with the proposed upgrade from parts of Bangalow, in particular from areas in close proximity to the upgrade such as around Ballina Road, and from higher lying areas north of the railway line. Other potential viewers would include farm workers and local residents on properties east of the proposed upgrade and along Broken Head Road.

Visual impact

The visual impact of the proposed upgrade in this precinct would likely be moderate to high due to the moderate visual effect and the high visual sensitivity of viewers in the precinct. The twin bridges over Byron Creek and the railway line would constitute a significant infrastructure element. The relatively open and exposed location of the bridge and associated large fill embankments in the floodplain of Byron Creek would exacerbate the visual effect, with little screening provided by either the landform or vegetation cover. In this naturally flat landscape, the large fill embankments in particular would be highly noticeable as a 'foreign' object in the landscape.

