

Move to save bush

By Ben Chenoweth Oct. 7, 2014, 1:15 p.m.



Stumped: NSW National Parks Association Macarthur branch spokeswoman Julie Sheppard believes 13 hectares of endangered woodlands and forest in Appin should not be cleared by developers. Picture: Jeff de Pasquale

PRO-CONSERVATION groups have condemned a proposal to clear almost 13 hectares of endangered ecological communities in Appin for residential development.

More than 23 hectares of the 62.8-hectare site has been earmarked for development with 13 hectares of the endangered Cumberland Plain Woodland and Shale Sandstone Transition Forest ecological communities identified to be cleared.

The woodland and forest is also the preferred habitat of nationally listed threatened species, the Cumberland land snail.

The developer, Walker Corporation, has defended its intentions and will seek Wollondilly Council's support for a biodiversity plan application at next Monday night's council meeting.

If passed, the biodiversity certificate would allow the removal of the 13 hectares.

News Business

Any clearing would have to be justified by offsets that “maintained or improved” the vegetation.

NSW Nature Conservation Council chief executive Kate Smolski said the proposal was contradictory.

“Biodiversity offsetting is supposed to ensure that important bushland affected by development is ‘improved or maintained’ [but] it is difficult to see how destroying 13 hectares of endangered woodland at Appin improves or maintains anything,” she said.

“The company says it will permanently protect 54 hectares of bushland [as part of the proposal], but almost 13 hectares of vegetation will be lost, including two endangered ecological communities and the habitat of the threatened Cumberland land snail.

“This proposal is a typical example of the flaws associated with biodiversity offsetting.”

NSW National Parks Association Macarthur branch spokeswoman Julie Sheppard said there were several concerns about the proposal.

“If you offset something it means you are going to destroy something,” she said.

“It’s regrettable if it’s going to destroy any endangered areas and it’s an undesirable thing to be doing,” she said. “Critically endangered means there is so little of it left, so why would you be destroying any of it?”

“Walker will remain the owners of the offset area [from what I understand] so there is a question mark on the management of large significant areas.

“How they’d manage it so it’s not degraded is the big question.”

Walker Corporation planned communities director Chad Walker said the designated offset area would have a covenant title to ensure it remained protected.

“For conservation purposes, Walker will provide an offset of 54 hectares of bushland to be managed in perpetuity,” he said.

“Walker will be required to undertake conservation works and the land will be managed in perpetuity under an agreement with the NSW Minister for Environment,” he said.

“Walker is currently working with the Office of Environment and Heritage to initiate a plan of management to ensure the safeguarding of the environment and habitant species.”