

Landscape Architects Design Statement:
141 JAMES RUSE DRIVE; CAMELLIA

For

Statewide Planning Pty Ltd.

15th October 2014

1.0 GENERAL

The Statement has been prepared by Sturt Noble Associates to provide a background to the preparation of the Landscape Master Plan for the proposed Camellia Precinct.

The site is located on a section of land bordering the Parramatta River at Camellia, set between James Ruse Drive and the Rail line.

The Parramatta River is one of the major urban waterways of Sydney, running through the heart of the city in Parramatta to Sydney Harbour and the CBD.

The proposed development involves the construction of 14 new residential apartment buildings, commercial space and associated infrastructure including roadways, public realm and communal open space and parks located directly on the river in close vicinity to the Parramatta business district.

The site presents an important opportunity to focus on the River's historic, natural, recreational and visual values.

The River is an important focus for the development. The proposed landscape master plan needs to recognize the river as a dynamic and healthy natural system, understood as a unique local asset. This new phase of the rivers history can be one of rejuvenation, stewardship and a return of natural values.

With the proposed new residential community facing the large tertiary education facility across the river at the University of Western Sydney (UWS); the river has the potential to be enhanced as a focus for community life and events. It is an opportunity for the river to connect places and attractions as well as a place for quiet personal recreation.

2.0 SITE ANALYSIS

2.1 Ecology

2.1.1 Soils

The majority of the site has been sealed with concrete slabs which were applied to seal in potentially contaminated soil associated with the former uses of the site. Some deep soil remains along the boundary to James Ruse Drive and along the river bank. However the site is largely disturbed and contaminated fill that will have to be capped and a constructed soil fabricated to sustain the new landscapes.

2.2.2 Vegetation

The original vegetation would appear to be Cumberland Plain Woodland communities occurring on the soil landscapes of the Blacktown and Birrong Groups. None of this woodland has survived the sites historic developments. All the foreshore land along the river has been filled. Accordingly the Swamp Oak and Woodland communities once present behind the mangroves are totally absent.

Remnant mangroves and salt marshes once extensively lined the foreshores and tidal water flats of the region. The remaining mangrove area consists predominately of Grey Mangrove (*Avicenna marina*) species with scattered occurrences of River Mangrove (*Aegiceras corniculatum*).

Existing vegetation on the site consists of a number of planted trees, and shrubs (mostly exotic weed species), in areas between concrete and asphalt which are likely remnants of gardens.

A number of herbaceous species occur on the site, though these are predominately exotic weed species growing opportunistically in soil between concrete and asphalt. Tree species on the site consist of exotic species, such as *Cinnamomum camphora* (Camphor Laurel), and a number of planted, native tree species, some endemic to the Sydney region and others from other regions of Australia.

A number of non-endemic native species occur that are commonly planted in gardens and as street trees such as *Corymbia citriodora* (Lemon-scented Gum), *Lophostemon confertus* (Queensland Brush Box), and *Eucalyptus nicholii* (Narrow-leaved Black Peppermint).

The northern border of the site for the proposed development is contiguous with a linear patch of mangroves growing alongside Parramatta River.

2.2 Heritage

The site is located on a section of land bordering the Parramatta River at Camellia, set between James Ruse Drive and the Rail line. The land was originally part of John MacArthur's Elizabeth Farm, then became a nursery that was later developed as the suburb of Camellia. In the 1960s the subject site became part of the James Hardie's Fibrolite plant which operated nearby. The site is currently vacant.

At the north east edge of the site, just outside the boundaries of the subject site the former rail bridge abutments are identified in the Railcorp S170 Register.

The State Heritage Inventory contains the following Statement of Significance:

"The Camellia (Parramatta River) underbridge abutments are of local significance as a remnant of an excellent example of a classic 19th century bridge in the English railway design tradition remaining unaltered in their appearance since their construction. Remnants of the bridge have potential to provide information on the construction techniques of such railway underbridges. These remnant abutments were part of the (believed to be) only privately railway built underbridge to survive on the Government railway system. The remnant brick abutments are aesthetically significant in their fine classical detailing featuring large arches with decorative stone ends, brick header voussoirs, a stone course between the substructure and the classically detailed balustrade with stone capping."

Additionally to the north of the site across the river:

"The Female Orphan School Precinct as a component of the former Rydalmere Hospital is of outstanding cultural significance, primarily for its continued use and development, between 1813 and 1989 as a public welfare institution for the care and management of the disadvantaged."

The river wetlands are also identified as being significant remnants of the early character of the river and should be retained and protected with revegetation where appropriate using compatible species.

2.3 Access

James Ruse Drive and the Clyde Carlingford rail corridors form strong lines of physical containment of the site while the river, along the northern boundary of the site, is a natural edge which is important to the visual context of the adjacent areas. Not far to the South is situated the Camellia Railway Station and a light rail link is proposed along this rail corridor.

2.4 Views and vistas

The historic views to and from the former Female Orphan School and its curtilage are significant view as are views of the rail bridge and Parramata River.

3.0 DESIGN ELEMENTS

The proposed Landscape Master plan will enhance the Parramatta River system as the major natural asset of the area and is to be characterised by a healthy river and foreshore.

Public pedestrian and cycle access and linkages between the hinterland and the river and recreation opportunities are to be implemented while protecting the riparian vegetation with appropriate setbacks.

Landscapes adjoining the foreshore will address the aquatic gateway to Parramatta, with a high quality public realm and open space.

The Rydalmere and Camellia Precincts will have improved connectivity for pedestrians across the Parramatta River to UWS from the Clyde-Carlingford Rail Bridge and to Camellia Station and potentially a new ferry wharf.

3.1 *Paving and Surface Treatments*

Materials used in the public domain will be durable, robust, and easily maintainable and should meet as far as possible the requirements of environmental sustainability. Selection of paving materials and surface treatments is particularly important in coordination of the public domain to ensure consistency and continuity. Appropriate design of surfaces in streets and open spaces will meet the access needs of all pedestrians.

3.1.1 *Streets*

Footpaths will be a unifying element in the streetscape where buildings, signs, planting, objects and people provide constant variation and change. They will give a clear expression of pedestrian priority, which will be obvious to both pedestrians and drivers. Continuity of footpath dimensions, levels, materials and edges are therefore important. Permanent objects such as kerb ramps, footpath crossings, pedestrian refuges and street furniture will appear as occasional interruptions in the overall pattern rather than as dominant elements of the streetscape.

All footpaths will provide ease of movement for everyone, including people with different degrees of disability. Visual simplicity and observation of pedestrian desire lines is important as is the use of contrasting pavement textures and markings to alert street users to potential hazards such as intersections and footpath crossings. Cyclepaths will conform to necessary standards, provide an integral part of the transport system and link to existing infrastructure.

Asphalt, Concrete and stone have been traditionally used for paving in many public domain projects in Sydney and will form the key elements in the proposed landscape. They are historically appropriate materials that complement each other and provide a neutral setting for architecture. All these materials are relatively long lasting, and can be easily recycled.

3.1.2 *Open Space*

Parks and squares will form the special places in the public domain. A degree of continuity with the streets, which form the unifying framework of the public domain, are essential in creating a consistent identity for the Camellia Precinct. Finishes in parks and squares will provide a degree of continuity with the general image of the public domain established in streetscape treatments, yet will have a greater diversity of materials to create a specific identity for each place.

Permeable surfaces such as grass, planted areas, and stabilised gravel/ deco granite will be the dominant element in parks and squares. This has the advantage of providing respite in the urban environment, creating a comfortable space for play, and promoting the infiltration of rainwater to soils.

The character of each space will be enhanced by the layout and choice of materials, and the scale and finish of particular elements such as seating, walls, bollards, lights, etc. The natural and cultural heritage of Camellia, in particular the dominant image of the industrial past, will be reflected in the design of finishes and elements.

3.1.3 *Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD)*

Water Sensitive Urban Design will underpin the public realm design. Opportunities for collection, storage, reuse and bio-filtration will be maximized in the design of buildings, infrastructure and open space.

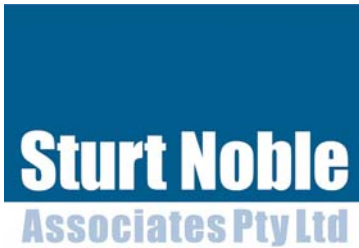
Streetscapes are designed with central rain gardens along the medians and other areas of rain garden and salt marshes will be incorporated in the open space design.

3.1.4 *Planting*

The development improves the foreshore landscape, so that local native vegetation and natural geomorphology are preserved, restored and extended in accordance with any government-adopted catchment strategies.

Two mangrove species currently occur on the site and will be replanted following the completion of soil remediation works. The Grey Mangrove is dominant in the area and approximately 80% of the plantings will be of this species. The Grey Mangrove will be planted through all areas of the site currently containing mangroves, from the low tide mark to the high tide mark. The River Mangrove generally only occurs in areas around the low tide mark and during revegetation will be planted within a distance of 5-10m of the low tide mark.

To offset the loss of mature mangroves from reconstruction works, the high tide area is to be planted in areas with Coastal Saltmarsh species, a community that does not currently occur on the site. Coastal Saltmarsh is an Endangered Ecological Community (EEC) listed at a state level as Coastal Saltmarsh.



A selection of endemic trees is proposed to visually enhance the riparian zone along the foreshore.

A range of both Heritage and exotic species will provide accent and seasonal amenity to the other open space areas.

General planting and ground covers are selected for their visual amenity, reflecting traditional themes in a modern landscape while being low maintenance species. Some specialist planting is required to the Water Sensitive Urban Design Elements. Accent planting will be used to highlight entry points from external streets and lead residents or visitors through the site

3.1.5 *Ecologically Sustainable Landscape Works*

On site detention basin, holding tanks and bio retention swales will be incorporated into the landscape design, helping green public spaces and provide interest while also functionality benefiting the site by capturing and reusing water on site and relieving pressure to off-site storm water systems.

Planting within the site is proposed to of hardy native and or ornamental species are selected for their relatively low water maintenance requirements.

A selection of long lasting crushed recycled inorganic mulches is intended for selected garden areas. Other selected materials are resilient and long lasting. For example primary stairways and walls through the foreshore terraces are concrete but sections are proposed to be formed from recycled brick reminiscent of heritage elements.

3.1.6 *Heritage Considerations*

The location of significant heritage items in the vicinity of the development site will require consideration of any potential impact on the heritage items arising from future redevelopment; including:

- Protection, regeneration and interpretation of riverside wetlands;
- Protection of significant views to and from the former Female Orphan School and its curtilage.
- Treatment and interpretation of the former riverside crossing.

View lines such as to the Female Orphan School boat house from the Foreshore Reserve are to be reinstated by means of appropriate plant selection and constructing viewpoints within these site lines.

Materials and detailing of existing heritage structures are considered in the landscape and will be reflected in built elements and furnishings such as seat selection and brick inlay detailing to insitu concrete seating benches. The industrial past of the site can be reflected in the design of finishes and elements including steel and core ten.

The Camellia underbridge abutments may guide design and materiality. These remnant brick abutments provide precedents in their fine classical detailing featuring large arches with decorative stone ends, brick header voussoirs, a stone course between the substructure and the classically detailed balustrades with stone capping.

4.0 PLANNING FRAMEWORK

The *Parramatta River Foreshores Reserves: Concept Plan and management Strategy* (Clouston; December 1994) sets out an important vision for Parramatta River which was referenced in preparing the landscape master plan.

In addition the Sydney Regional Environmental Plan (Sydney Harbour Catchment) 2005 outlines a range of Criteria to be considered. The design responds to these in the following details:

22 Public access to, and use of, foreshores and waterways

The Landscape development “*maintains and improve public access to and along the foreshore, without adversely impacting on watercourses, wetlands, riparian lands or remnant vegetation*”,

The Landscape development “*maintains and improve public access to and from the waterways for recreational purposes (such as swimming, fishing and boating), without adversely impacting on watercourses, wetlands, riparian lands or remnant vegetation*,”

23 Maintenance of a working harbour

Consideration is “*given to integrating facilities for maritime activities in any development*,” by improving access to the Parramatta River

24 Interrelationship of waterway and foreshore uses

The Landscape development “*promotes equitable use of the waterway, including use by passive recreation craft*,”

The Landscape “*development on foreshore land ... minimises any adverse impact on the use of the waterway, including the use of the waterway for commercial and recreational uses*,”

25 Foreshore and waterways scenic quality

Landscape development “*maintains protects and enhances the unique visual qualities of Sydney Harbour and its islands, foreshores and tributaries*,”

26 Maintenance, protection and enhancement of views

Landscape development will “*maintain, protect and enhance views (including night views) to and from Sydney Harbour... and minimise any adverse impacts on views and vistas to and from public places, landmarks and heritage items*,”

5.0 PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

Parks and squares will form the special places in the public domain of the Camellia Precinct. The character and quality of each space respond to the function, user requirements and the particular environment of the place.

There are four major types of open space proposed for Camellia Precinct:

- The Foreshore Parks (Eastern, Central & Western sections)
- The Foreshore Reserve/ edge along Parramatta River.
- The Central Square
- Green links/ Buffer zones along the Railway corridor and James Ruse Drive and along streets.

Detail design elements will form a continuous framework for park design, and the design of individual parks will build on the framework to create a special image for each place.

5.1 *Open Space Objectives*

The key open space objectives are to:

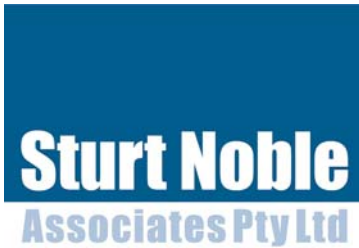
- Establish a green link along the foreshore that can be extended to neighbouring development sites and creates an activated connection to the river.
- Create new areas of public open space along the river that offer opportunities for active and passive recreation.
- Introduce a central public square to the site that creates a dynamic retail and social heart to the development in the form of a public square with activated retail edges and social spaces.
- Establish a structure of streets and plazas that provide generous footpaths and outdoor dining areas activating the streets and retail edges to the buildings.
- Introduce wide planted swales and street trees to create green links that provide visual and physical connections to the river and foreshore open spaces and the urban core of the site.

5.2 *Key Open Space Elements*

5.2.1 *Foreshore Reserve*

The Foreshore Reserve forms an edge to the largest public open space of the Precinct, and provides a strong link in the Parramatta River Foreshore Reserves Concept. Design of the Foreshore Reserve will define a strong image for the Precinct, and relate to the surrounding park systems.

The water edge is a strong defining characteristic of Camellia. The remnant mangroves are a part of the natural history, and an important connection to the riparian ecology. These will be restored after decontamination works are completed and form a significant part of the future character of the Foreshore Reserve. High tide areas in some places will be planted with Coastal Saltmarsh species.



Appropriate treatment and detailing of the Parramatta Foreshore is critical to both the retention of elements of cultural and natural history, and successful integration of water to the public domain.

A variety of treatments will be implemented along the foreshore, to provide a number of different water/land relationships, and to create some breaks in an otherwise continuous edge treatment.

Where, for safety reasons, some form of balustrade or pedestrian protection is required, details will be simple and robust, with minimum interruption of water views.

Opportunities for access to the water are maximized by creating a waterfront promenade, using a variety of treatments – timber and concrete steps, boardwalks and look out decks. The use of timber is encouraged for structures which have water contact – it is durable and attractive, and has a strong association with maritime industry and the history of the site.

The promenade breaks out to passive rest areas, lookouts to key river elements and estuarine interactive elements. This timber and hard paved river promenade, provides access to the foreshore environment and adjoining sites. Accessible paths slide between walls and a series of planted terraces connecting the upper areas to the foreshore.

5.2.2 Foreshore Parks

The foreshore open space is effectively broken into 3 major spaces -Eastern, Central & Western sections

A. Western Foreshore Park

This large open space creates a destination and a place for active and passive recreation. An open lawn creates a green breakout space from the street with views across the river and planted edges and banks soften level changes, define spaces and provide interest and habitat. Public art elements referencing the sites ecology are located along key sightlines

B. Central Foreshore Park

An elevated walkway provides a path along the foreshore, projecting out over new marsh planting and between the mangroves to afford views of the river.

The re-established foreshore line draws the river into the site and generates a zone for new saltmarsh planting that will enhance the local ecology and promenade experience.

A deck at an upper level projects out over planted landscape terraces, providing a view of the marsh and river and the activity along the walkways below.

A planted channel winds through the forum between stairs and landscape terraces, creating intimate spaces with views of the river. During rain events surface water is directed into a WSUD soak area with potential overflow to the stormwater system.

At the top of the Park is the forum - an informal plaza with views of the river that links the urban retail core of the site with the foreshore parks.

C. Eastern Foreshore Park

This space is perhaps the most important open space in the precinct. It forms a gateway to the precinct for those people moving up the Parramatta River to Parramatta and across the railway and new pedestrian bridge. This gateway location was identified as significant in the *Parramatta River Foreshores Reserves: Concept Plan and management Strategy* (Clouston; December 1994).

A large open lawn creates a place for active and passive recreation beside the river and includes a children's place space which creates a destination and a point of activity in the precinct.

The timber and hard paved river promenade, provides access to the foreshore environment and adjoining sites and accessible paths slide between walls and a series of planted terraces connecting the upper areas to the foreshore. Splayed lawn terraces with seating edges create multiple opportunity spaces for individuals and small groups transitioning from these upper areas to the foreshore park and river.

A deck with BBQ's, tables and chairs and a pergola/ public art installation is offset from the bridge crossing and projects over the foreshore walk, providing extended views of the river.

5.2.3 Central Square

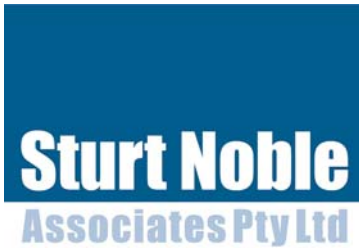
The layout of this central public area is such that there are multiple accesses and cross site opportunities without compromising the sense of this being a large public plaza

All areas are provided with good general visual and surveillance access while creating separated niches and framed views when seated.

Wide pedestrian areas create comfortable circulation and activation spaces in front of retail premises. Large lawn areas with tree planting create a green outlook and break out space to the central hub providing a place of interest and respite. The areas of lawn slope from the planted channel to a seating edge that faces the retail premises.

A planted channel winds through the main square, creating a green finger that collects surface water during rain events directing it toward the forum and forming part of the greater WSUD site system.

Prefabricated concrete forms are used to build up the planted channel edge and to create clusters of informal social seating off the main circulation spaces. This forms an abstracted Waterway which links the Square to the Riverine ecology without being contrived.



Raised planters with feature tree planting create seating edges and grand planting islands are experienced from above and along the pedestrian access in the large plazas that link spaces.

5.2.4 Green Links/ Buffer zones

The Design introduce wide planted swales and street trees along circulation routes to create green links that provide visual and physical connections to the river and foreshore open spaces and the urban core of the site.

Wide pedestrian areas provide comfortable circulation and activation spaces in front of the retail areas and allow for outdoor dining areas to spill out into the streetscape activating and enlivening the development.

Raised planters with feature planting and trees create seating edges and islands of green in the large plazas that link spaces. Street trees along the access roads green the streets, provide seasonal interest and create a filtered canopy that loosely enclose the voids between the towers making them more comfortable for people.

Lushly planted swale's in the centre of the streets collect surface water, green the streets, create pedestrian refuges at crossings and reinforce the green links that extend from the development to the foreshore.