



**BARR PROPERTY
& PLANNING**

Continual Progress

Visual Impact Assessment Planning Proposal 505 Minmi Road, Fletcher

Prepared By Barr Property and
Planning

For Kingston Minmi Road Pty Ltd

February 2020

Document Control


Title: Visual Impact Assessment
Address: 505 Minmi Road, Fletcher
Job No. 16NEW0091

Client: Kingston Minmi Road Pty Ltd

Document Issue:

Issue	Date	Prepared by	Reviewed by
Draft 1	30/01/2020	Laura Robinson	Rebecca Johnston
Final	17/01/2020	Laura Robinson	Rebecca Johnston

Signed



Laura Robinson
Planner
B. Dev Studies, PIA (Assoc)



Rebecca Johnston
Principal Planner - Planning
BTP (Hons) RPIA

For queries about this report please contact

Rebecca Johnston
0420 660 085
rjohnston@barrpandp.com.au



Contents

1	Introduction	6
1.1	Scope.....	6
1.2	Purpose	6
2	Methodology	7
2.1	Evaluating Visual Impact.....	7
3	Background.....	9
4	Existing Conditions	10
4.1	Site Description.....	10
4.2	The Project.....	11
4.3	Landscape Character and Visual Environment	11
4.3.1	Existing Landscape Character	11
4.3.2	Existing Visual Environment.....	12
4.4	View Selection Criteria.....	13
4.4.1	Basis of selection.....	13
4.4.2	Heritage items.....	13
5	Visual Impact Assessment	14
5.1	Identification of key views, vistas and analysis	16
6	Assessment of Impacts.....	28
6.1	Impact findings	28
6.2	Mitigation measures.....	28
7	Conclusion	29
8	References.....	30



List of Tables

Table 1.....	13
--------------	----

List of Figures

Figure 1 Landscape Character and Visual Impact Rating Matrix (Source: RMS.nsw.gov.au)	8
---	---

Glossary

Below is a table of the terminology frequently used within this document. All terminology is used in accordance with the Environmental impact assessment practise note EIA-N04 prepared by Roads and maritime Services, December 2018 (RMS EIA-N04).

Term	Meaning
Aesthetics	<i>Relating to the sense of the beautiful or science of aesthetics, i.e. the deduction, from nature and taste, the rules and principles of beauty.</i>
Desired future character	<i>A term used to capture the desirable future outcome or vision for an area as set down in planning documents or as professionally assessed and envisaged by urban designers or other built environment professionals.</i>
EP&A Act	<i>Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979</i>
Impact	<i>The effect of a proposal, which can be adverse or beneficial, when measured against an existing condition.</i>
Impact Assessment	<i>Broadly, the process of describing and characterising the expected effects of a proposal. In the context of an EIS or REF, impact assessment will also lead to the identification of mitigation measures and safeguards which would be addressed if the proposal were approved.</i>
Landscape	<i>All aspects of a tract of land, including landform, vegetation, buildings, villages, towns, cities and infrastructure.</i>
Landscape character	<i>The combined quality of built, natural and cultural aspects which make up an area and provide its unique sense of place.</i>
Landscape character zone	<i>An area of landscape with similar properties or strongly defined spatial qualities, distinct from areas immediately nearby.</i>
Landscape character type	<i>Multiple similar landscape character zones repeated within a larger study area, grouped to avoid repetition in their description.</i>



Magnitude	<i>The measurement of the scale, form and character of a development proposal when compared to the existing condition. In the case of visual assessment this also relates to how far the proposal is from the viewer. Combined with sensitivity, magnitude provides a measurement of impact.</i>
PSC	<i>Professional Service Contractor</i>
Sensitivity	<i>The sensitivity of a landscape character zone or view and its capacity to absorb change of the nature of the proposal. In the case of visual impact this also relates to the type of viewer and number of viewers. Combined with magnitude, sensitivity provides a measurement of impact.</i>
Significant	<i>In the context of EIA, after analysing the extent (type, size, scope, intensity and duration) and nature (predictability, resilience of the environment, reversibility, ability to manage/mitigate, level of public interest) of a proposal, an expected level of impact of a proposal which requires an EIS to be undertaken. The term should be avoided in landscape character and visual impact assessments if the expected level of impact is below this threshold.</i>
Urban Design	<i>Urban design is the process and product of designing projects so they: fit sensitively with the built natural and community environment; contribute to the functioning of the community; and contribute to the quality of the public domain for the community and road users. Architects, engineers, environmental experts, landscape architects, planners and urban designers are all involved in urban design. Urban designers are generally landscape architects and architects who have extended their expertise into the field of urban design.</i>
VEM	<i>A Visual Envelope Map, also referred to as 'viewshed' or 'visual catchment', is the area within which a project can be seen at eye level above ground. Its extent will usually be defined by a combination of landform, vegetation and built elements.</i>
View	<i>The sight or prospect of a landscape or scene.</i>
Visibility	<i>The state or fact of being visible or seen</i>
Visual Impact	<i>The impact on the views from residences, workplaces and public places.</i>



1 Introduction

Barr Property and Planning have been engaged Kingston Minmi Road Pty Ltd to prepare a Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) to support a Planning Proposal at Lot 23 in DP 1244350, 505 Minmi Road, Fletcher (the Site). The objective of the Planning Proposal is for the rezoning of E4 Environmental Living to part R2 Low Density Residential and part E2 Environmental Conservation. The preparation of a VIA will assist in determining the landscape and visual impacts of the Planning Proposal.

1.1 Scope

This VIA addresses the potential landscape and visual impacts associated with a Planning Proposal at Lot 23 in DP 1244350, 505 Minmi Road, Fletcher. This VIA has been undertaken as per Newcastle City Councils instructions including the correspondence from TCG Planning dated 25 May 2018.

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this VIA is to:

- (a) identify the landscape and visual impacts of the proposal; and
- (b) analyse these impacts to determine their significance of the locality.



2 Methodology

The following evaluation method has been adopted from the methodology outlined in the Guideline for landscape character and visual impact assessment – Environmental impact assessment practise note EIA-N04 prepared by NSW Roads and maritime Services, December 2018 (RMS EIA-N04).

2.1 Evaluating Visual Impact

The RM EIA_N04 method measures impact based on the combination of sensitivity and magnitude. In this regard sensitivity refers to:

“the qualities of an area, the number and type of receivers and how sensitive the existing character of the setting is to the proposed nature of change. For example a pristine natural environment is likely to be more sensitive to a change of the nature of a four lane motorway than a built up industrial area. The design quality of the proposed development does not make the area less sensitive to change but instead affects the magnitude of the impact as described following”.

Whereas magnitude refers to:

“the physical scale of the project, how distant it is and the contrast it presents to the existing condition. For example a large interchange would have a very different impact on landscape character than a localised road widening in the same area. A more distant bridge would have a lesser magnitude than one nearer to residents. A vegetated embankment facing a parkland would have less contrast than a retaining wall in the same location.

Magnitude will also need to consider cumulative impact, which is a consideration of the result of the incremental impact of the proposal when added to other past, current and known likely future activity”.

To evaluate the impact a rating matrix from EIA-N04 has been adopted per Figure 1. Each viewpoint is given a rating per the matrix and a description of both the magnitude and sensitivity for each viewpoint has been provided justifying that rating.



		Magnitude			
Sensitivity		High	Moderate	Low	Negligible
	High	High	High-Moderate	Moderate	Negligible
	Moderate	High-Moderate	Moderate	Moderate-Low	Negligible
	Low	Moderate	Moderate-Low	Low	Negligible
	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

Figure 1 Landscape Character and Visual Impact Rating Matrix (Source: RMS.nsw.gov.au)

The following classifications for describing the meaning of each degree of impact have been adapted from Landscape Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2002:

Negligible- Only a very small part of the proposal is discernible and/or is at such a distance that it is scarcely appreciated. Consequently, it would have very little effect on the scene.

Low - The proposal constitutes only a minor component of the wider view, which might be missed by the casual observer or receptor. Awareness of the proposal would not have a marked effect on the overall quality of the scene.

Moderate - The proposal may form a visible and recognisable new element within the overall scene that affects and changes its overall character.

High - The proposal forms a significant and immediately apparent part of the scene that affects and changes its overall character.

3 Background

The objective of this Planning Proposal is to amend the Newcastle LEP 2012 to facilitate the future delivery of the land for low density residential development and environmental conservation purposes. The previous Planning Proposals did not include a Visual Impact Assessment. The locality of Minmi and Fletcher has been developing over the past 10-20 years into more heavily urbanised, residential land with the previous uses as bushland and passive agricultural land. Specifically the sites history according to the Flora, Fauna and Threatened Species Assessment historically the study area (the site's) vegetation has been significantly disturbed by selective logging of mature trees. More recent disturbance at the site includes grazing by domestic goats, the creation of tracks by motor bike riders, rubbish dumping and firewood collecting. (Source: Flora, Fauna and Threatened Species Assessment prepared for the site by ecobiological 2012).



4 Existing Conditions

4.1 Site Description

The site is a 26.2 ha parcel of land situated on the southern side of Minmi Road. The site is predominantly disturbed, relatively heavily vegetated bushland.



Figure 2 Site Location (Source: Sixmaps)

The subject site is located within the suburb of Fletcher. As seen in Figure 3 predominant surrounding land uses are R2 Low Density Residential, E2 Environmental Conservation and SP2 Infrastructure. The site is an isolated lot bounded by residential zoned land and approved residential subdivision to the west and south east (under civil works construction), east and north by fully residentially developed areas. In the general area and to the south is the Newcastle City Council operated Waste and Resource Management Facility. To the south west is Blue Gum Regional Park. To the west is the township of Minmi and the Cemetery. In a general northern and western area open space corridors leading to the main body of the Hexham Swamp.

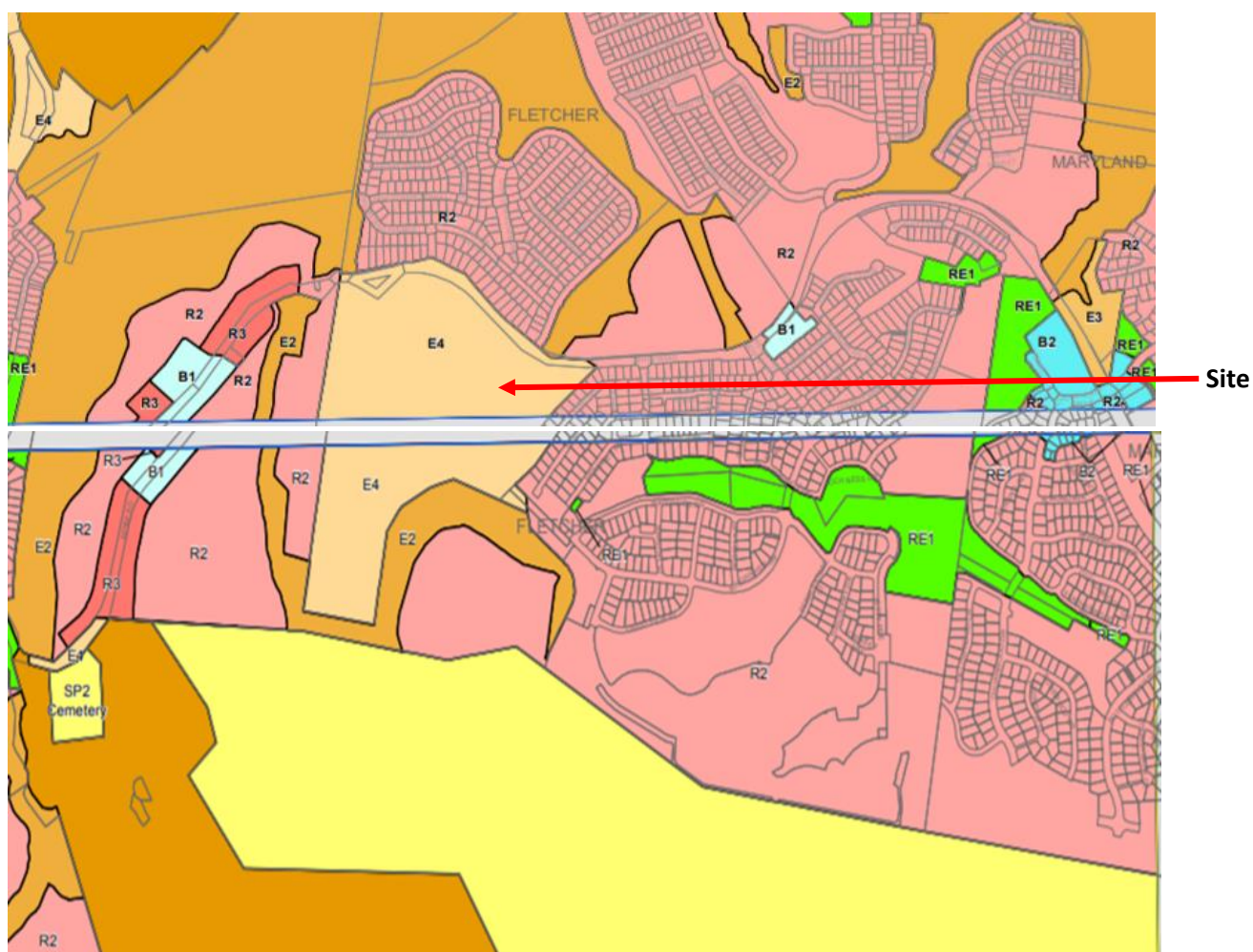


Figure 3 Extract of Current Land Zoning Map Sheet LZN_001B and, Map Sheet LZN_002A (Newcastle LEP 2012)

4.2 The Project

The project is a Planning Proposal for the rezoning of E4 Environmental Living to part R2 Low Density Residential and part E2 Environmental Conservation. The low-density residential component of the land has an area of 15.4ha and the environmental conservation component an area of 10.8ha of the site. Should the Planning Proposal proceed, and the land be rezoned for low density residential and environmental conservation purposes, then the residential portion of the site will be subdivided and developed with primarily detached dwelling houses and the remaining area conserved and retained in its present bushland state.

4.3 Landscape Character and Visual Environment

4.3.1 Existing Landscape Character

Natural Topography

The land is generally undulating. Topographically the site spans three north westerly trending gullies running off a north-east trending ridgeline with proposed development area on both east and west

facing slopes, either side of the combined gullies. Site slopes are generally gentle to moderate, but steeper in the vicinity of site boundaries and locally in drainage lines and gullies which cross the site falling to the west to north-west. Surface drainage follows the natural surfaces and existing drainage lines falling ultimately to Minmi Creek, to the north of the site.

Built Environment

The surrounding built environment is predominately low density residential buildings. The dwellings are generally one to two storeys high and represent architecture and building design trends from the last twenty years. The dwellings are generally one building per lot and include wide driveways, landscaping and double garages. To the north of the site is a subdivision awaiting development.

Vegetation

The site is predominantly disturbed, relatively heavily vegetated bushland. The surrounding vegetation is generally dispersed patches of disturbed bushland vegetation between subdivisions and surrounding riparian corridors.

Waterways

There is no predominate waterways existing that contribute to the landscape character.

4.3.2 Existing Visual Environment

Landmarks and dominant visual features

There are no dominate landmarks on the site. The dominate visual features of the setting are thick vegetated bushland amongst mountainous terrain.

Distant or filtered views

The distance filtered views include Blue Gum Hills Regional Park to the west of the site and further to the south of the site distant views of Hexham Swamp. Views to and from the site are generally filtered due to tall mature trees and the slopped terrain.

Visual barriers

The visual barriers to and from the site include clusters of tall mature trees and ridge lines surrounding the site. Residential development and the roofs of dwellings on neighbouring sites create a visual barrier from the surrounding views and vistas.



4.4 View Selection Criteria

4.4.1 Basis of selection

The selection of the viewpoints was based on:

- Desktop mapping
- Site inspection
- Consent authority requirements

4.4.2 Heritage items

The following heritage items are surrounding the site.

Table 1

Item Name and relationship to site	Address	Suburb	LGA	SHR/LEP Reference
John Brown's Model Farm within 250m south of the site.	29 Woodford Street	Minmi	Newcastle	Item no. 1337
Cemetery within 500m west of the site.	27 Minmi Road	Minmi	Newcastle	Item no. 1334
Duckenfield Colliery Railway (relics) large heritage area west of the site.		Minmi	Newcastle	Item A14

The proposed development will not have an adverse landscape or visual impact on these surrounding heritage items. This is due to their distance from the site and the surrounding residential development existing between the heritage items and proposed development site.



5 Visual Impact Assessment

Based on the foregoing selection criteria this section maps and describes 6 views of the site from a variety of close and more distant viewpoints. A photograph of each viewpoint is accompanied by a description of the view and the major visual elements within that view.

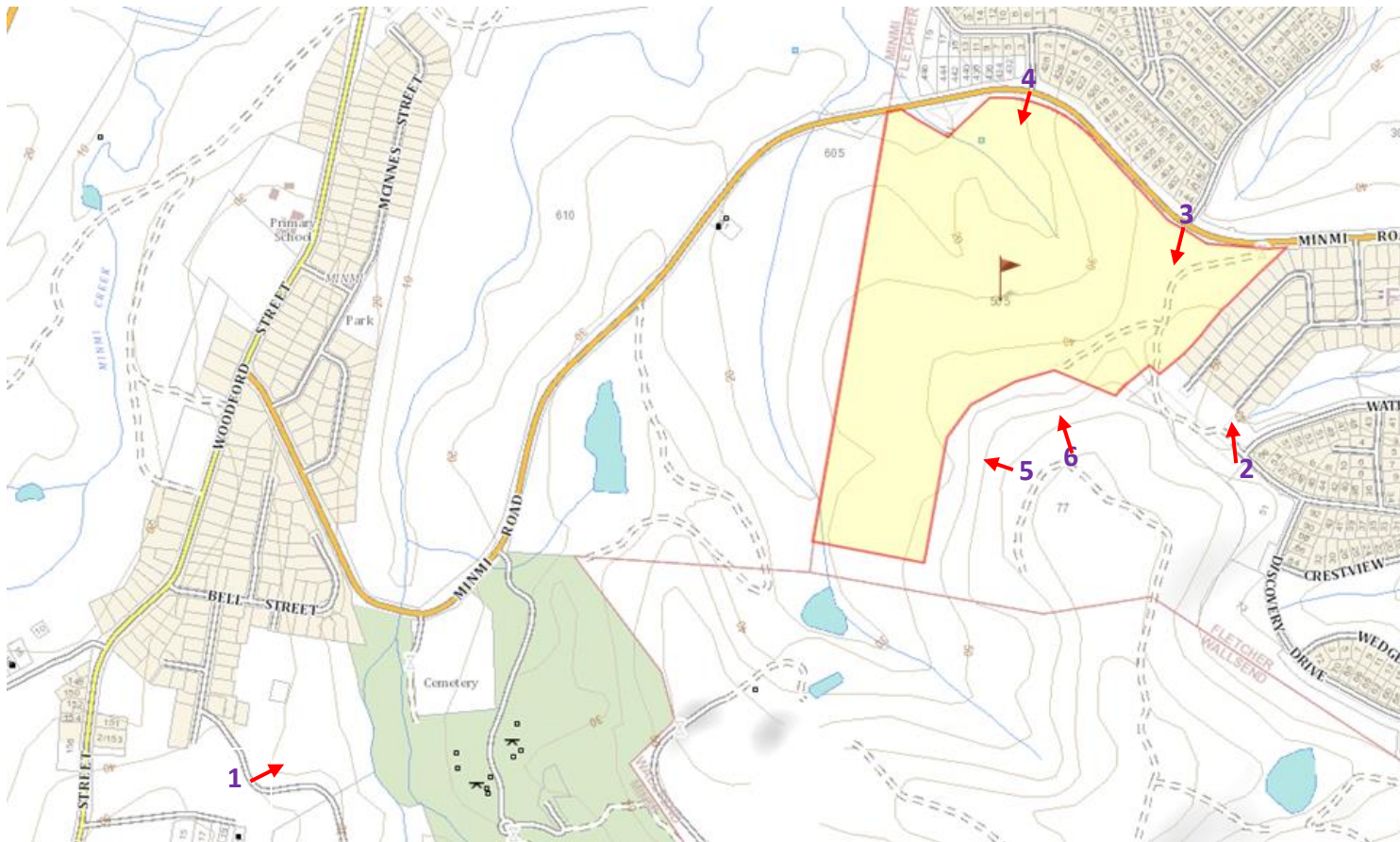


Figure 4 Viewpoints Selected



Figure 5 Indicative Subdivision Layout Showing Ridge Lines and Viewpoints.

5.1 Identification of key views, vistas and analysis

Viewpoint 1



Photo taken on Church Street, Minmi close to Telford St looking northeast towards the site.

Viewpoint 1	
Location	Church St, Minmi close to Telford
Distance	1km south-west
Receptors	Existing residences
No. of viewers	Moderate
Existing view	Bush of Blue Gum Hills Regional Park.

Expected Visual Impact	
<p>This viewpoint assesses the visual impact from the existing Minmi Village and the Blue Gum Hills Regional Park. Blue Gum Hills Regional Park is an outdoor recreational area located to the south- west of the site.</p> <p>The proposed development cannot be observed from this viewpoint or Minmi Village as a whole. The tree line in the photograph is the ridge line. The ridge is covered in thick bushland protecting this vista and view, which combined with the vegetation to be retained on site, will suitably screen the development site from view. Blue Gum Hills Regional Parks views and vistas are similarly also protected by this thick bushland ridge.</p> <p>The landscape impact from this point will remain the same as the site cannot be seen. The current landscape character is a residential village nestled amongst passive agricultural plots and bushland.</p>	
Visual Impact Rating	Negligible
Landscape Impact Rating	Negligible



Viewpoint 2



Photo taken at junction of Kingfisher Parade and Walker Crescent, Fletcher. Looking north – northwest towards the site.

Viewpoint 2	
Location	Junction of Kingfisher Pde and Walker Crescent
Distance	10 metres – 100 metres
Receptors	Existing residents, future residential development
No. of viewers	Moderate
Existing view	Mix of residential development, bushland vegetation and infrastructure in the form of roads.

Expected Visual Impact	
<p>The visual impact of the proposed development is shown above. As indicated the green represents the approximate vegetation to be retained from the neighbouring development, screening future development of the proposed site. The red circle indicates vegetation to be removed where future residential development will occur.</p>	
<p>The landscape impact is that the proposed development will continue the current surrounding amenity of landscape character. The proposed development site is an isolated lot surrounded by residential development and as such the proposal matches the landscape character type.</p>	
Visual Impact Rating	Moderate Low
Landscape Impact Rating	Low



Viewpoint 3



Photo taken at the eastern entry at junction of Brookfield Avenue and Minmi Road, Fletcher. Looking directly towards the site.

Viewpoint 3	
Location	Junction of Brookfield Ave and Minmi Rd
Distance	10 metres – 100 metres
Receptors	Existing residents and passers-by.
No. of viewers	Moderate
Existing view	Screened residential to the left and thick vegetation to the right.

Expected Visual Impact	
<p>The visual impact of the proposed development is shown above. As seen the green represents the approximate vegetation to be retained for environmental conservation purposes. The red circle indicates vegetation to be removed where future residential development will occur, this residential development is backing onto existing residential development. The residents of this viewpoint primary view are north towards Hexham swamp not south towards the proposed development site. Passers-by along Minmi Road will predominately only have a screened view of the development, as most of the development is located on the other side of the retained vegetation.</p>	
<p>The landscape impact is that the proposed development will continue the current surrounding amenity of landscape character that is residential dwellings. The proposed development site is an isolated lot surrounded by residential development and as such the proposal matches the landscape character type .</p>	
Visual Impact Rating	Moderate-Low
Landscape Impact Rating	Low



Viewpoint 4



Photo taken at the western entry at the junction of Brookfield Avenue and Minmi Road, Fletcher. Looking directly towards the site

Viewpoint 4	
Location	Junction of Brookfield Ave and Minmi Rd
Distance	10 metres – 100 metres
Receptors	Existing residents and passers-by.
No. of viewers	Moderate
Existing view	Minmi Road and bushland.

Expected Visual Impact	
There is no visual impact from this view as this bushland is being retained for environmental conservation.	
<p>The landscape impact is that the proposed development will continue the current surrounding amenity of landscape character that is residential dwellings. The proposed development site is an isolated lot surrounded by residential development and as such the proposal matches the landscape character type. The landscape impact of the above photograph maintains the character of bushland as no vegetation is being removed and is being retained for environmental conservation.</p>	
Visual Impact Rating	Negligible
Landscape Impact Rating	Negligible



Viewpoint 5



Photo taken from future Walker Crescent, Fletcher looking directly west over the site.

Viewpoint 5	
Location	Future Walker Crescent
Distance	10 metres – 100 metres
Receptors	Future residents.
No. of viewers	Moderate
Existing view	Residual land awaiting residential development and bushland

Expected Visual Impact	
<p>The expected visual impact from this viewpoint is low as the site will be screened by the future residential development that will occur on the residual parcel of land directly south of the site from where the photograph was taken</p>	
<p>The landscape impact is that the proposed development will continue the current surrounding amenity of landscape character that is residential dwellings. The proposed development site is an isolated lot surrounded by residential development and as such the proposal matches the landscape character type.</p>	
Visual Impact Rating	Low
Landscape Impact Rating	Low



Viewpoint 6



Photo taken from future Walker Crescent, Fletcher looking directly north over the site

Viewpoint 6	
Location	Future Walker Crescent
Distance	10 metres – 100 metres
Receptors	Future residents
No. of viewers	Moderate
Existing view	Residual land awaiting residential development and bushland.

Expected Visual Impact	
<p>The visual impact from this view is that the green circle approximately indicates the vegetated bushland being retained for environmental conservation. The rest of the views will be screened by the future residential development to occur on the residual parcel of land directly south of the site from where the photograph was taken. The future residents on this residual parcel of land will maintain their view of distant bushland.</p>	
<p>The landscape impact is that the proposed development will continue the current surrounding amenity of landscape character that is residential dwellings. The proposed development site is an isolated lot surrounded by residential development and as such the proposal matches the landscape character type.</p>	
Visual Impact Rating	Low
Landscape Impact Rating	Low



6 Assessment of Impacts

6.1 Impact findings

The findings of the visual impact indicate that as the proposed development is not changing the broader landscape character of the locality. There is change to the specific landscape character zone on site, however this is only occurring to 58.8% of the site and the other 41.2% is being maintained in its current state.

There is no visual impact from sensitive areas such as Minmi Village and Blue Gum Hills Regional Park as there is a heavily vegetated ridgeline separating the areas.

6.2 Mitigation measures

The Planning Proposal proposes to rezone 58.8% of the site as low density residential and 41.2% as retained bushland for environmental conservation. The retention of bushland mitigates the discernible changes in landscape and visual impact. The Planning Proposal is considered infill development between residentially zoned areas. A mitigating factor of the development is that it is in character of the surrounding landscape.



7 Conclusion

This VIA was undertaken to assess the visual impacts of the proposed rezoning and future development on surrounding roads, the Blue Gum Hills Regional Park, proposed conservation lands, existing Minmi village and other nearby suburbs. This VIA has found that the combination of landscape and visual sensitivity impacts will be of minor significance. The direct significance of impacts for development is minimal, in comparison to the already cumulative impacts of existing and proposed development in the broader area. The visual impact of this development is mitigated by the fact that it is an isolated site amongst existing residential developments and has a significant amount of bushland being retained on the site.



8 References

NSW Roads and Maritime Services (December 2018) *Environmental Impact Assessment Practise Note EIA-N04*.

Ecobiological (2012) *Flora, Fauna and Threatened Species Assessment prepared for 505 Minmi Road Fletcher*.

