



Mooney Mooney and Peat Island

Planning Proposal and Concept Plan

Visual Assessment - Review



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Executive Summary

- Richard Lamb and Associates (RLA) were engaged by Government Property NSW (GPNSW) to prepare the Visual Assessment for the strategic planning process which has led to the proposed Mooney Mooney and Peat Island Concept Plan (the Concept Plan).
- RLA provided base-line analysis and preliminary assessment of the visual exposure, visual character and visual constraints and opportunities to be taken into account in planning for the area covered by the Concept Plan (the site).
- RLA worked closely in association with the principal urban design consultants, Urbis, in formulating the principles that underpin the Concept Plan.
- The site is on the north side of the Hawkesbury River at Mooney Mooney and partially bounded on the east by Mooney Mooney Creek (Figure 1).
- The maximum visual catchment includes part of the waterways of both the Hawkesbury River and Mooney Mooney Creek (Figure 2).
- The site is of low visibility from Mooney Mooney Creek and of high visibility to a short section of the Hawkesbury River north of the road bridges of the M1 Pacific Motorway (the Motorway) and the Pacific Highway (the Highway)(Figure 3).
- The site is visible to various degrees from the Motorway and Highway. In both contexts, the views are dominated by the infrastructure corridors which are of low intrinsic scenic quality.
- Views from the Motorway are confined by topography, vegetation and the alignment of the carriageway. Other than in the vicinity of the Mooney Mooney/Brooklyn interchange, the site is of minimal visibility.
- The areas proposed to be rezoned east and west of the Motorway corridor are of low visibility from the Motorway.
- The site is not visible, other than for two prominent hills, from the Hawkesbury River east of the road bridges and is not visible from the Brooklyn locality.
- The part of the site visible from the immediately adjacent part of the Hawkesbury River includes Peat Island, with a significant number of existing buildings, significant areas of cleared, disturbed land and mangrove forest.
- The scenic features with highest visibility from roads and waterways are prominent hills with steep, rocky, naturally vegetated appearance. No urban uses are proposed on these areas.
- Other than for these areas, the site, where visible from the public domain, is dominated by land of urban, urban/institutional or disturbed character. The existing character areas are

identified on Figure 4.

- The Key Attributes for each character area, its opportunities for development and the response of the Concept Plan are summarised in this report.
- The intrinsic visual constraints on potential land uses including built form were assessed for all parts of the site and are shown on Figure 5.
- High constraints were determined to apply to scenic natural landscape areas and isolated parts of the foreshore of the Hawkesbury River.
- Moderate constraints were determined for an existing disturbed area south west of the Motorway, fronting the Hawkesbury River. This area is significantly screened from views from the River by Peat Island and its buildings and landscape.
- Low constraints were determined for other disturbed areas, areas of existing urban character and areas isolated in the infrastructure corridor (refer to Figure 4).
- Opportunities for future uses were also determined for specific areas of the site, based on existing character and intrinsic visual constraints (Figure 5).
- Peat Island was identified as an area that presents the opportunity for adaptive reuse.
- Three areas were identified as having potential for future water-based recreation uses.
- The adjacent land south west of the Motorway was identified as presenting opportunities for an appropriate mix of compatible uses, including public recreation, water-based recreation and limited residential use.
- The intrinsic constraints and opportunities were then assessed against the likely visual character of the areas shown for proposed rezoning in the Concept Plan (Figure 6).
- There is a high compatibility between the land uses proposed in the Concept Plan and Zoning Plan and the RLA Visual Assessment.
- All areas assessed by RLA as of high visual constraints, with natural scenic character and high visual exposure, are proposed to be either national parks and nature reserves or reserved for public recreation.
- Areas assessed by RLA to be of low visual constraint or to be of existing urban and disturbed character are proposed to be zoned R1 or R2. Indicative locations for appropriate forms of housing are shown in each proposed zone.
- The forms of housing indicated reflect the RLA Visual Assessment and recommendations made in formulating the Concept Plan, as follows:
- R1 General Residential zoning includes the potential for detached, attached and medium density residential uses. Locations indicated for each in the proposed zoned areas are varied and are appropriately responsive to visual exposure, existing and desired future character as constraints and opportunities.

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- Attached residential development the form of townhouses indicated in the R1 zone is confined to areas of existing disturbed land of low visibility, or to existing residential streets.
 - Medium density 2-3-storey residential and townhouse development is indicated in an area of existing institutional character on part of the former Mooney Mooney Centre site, one nearby street and in one confined area that is of low visibility on disturbed land that is highly screened in views from the Hawkesbury River.
 - Medium density 1-2-storey residential development is indicated, restricted to a confined area proposed to be zoned R1 on land between the Motorway and the Hawkesbury River.
 - This area is surrounded by land that is proposed to be public recreation (parkland), stretching along the foreshore from adjacent to the Motorway to the north boundary of the site.
 - Potential future residential buildings would be widely separated from water recreation uses associated with a proposed marina and boat stacker building.
 - The design of the 1-2-storey residential apartment development would potentially be subject to a site-specific DCP as part of a design excellence process such as a design competition.
 - Controls over building height and form, articulation, setbacks, footprints, materials, and landscape, consistent with the scenic qualities of the setting, would be required.
 - R2 low density residential zoning is proposed to be generally restricted to areas of low visibility from the waterways, or in areas of existing urban character.
 - Two small areas of low density residential development west of the Motorway are indicated (one in R1 zone and the other in R2) both of which are significantly screened by existing vegetation and have potential low visibility from the Hawkesbury River.
 - The larger area of proposed R2 zoning east of the Highway in Mooney Mooney occupies existing residential and former school land and is low visibility from the Highway and Mooney Moony Creek.
 - Development of this area subject to appropriate development controls would be within the existing urban visual character of adjacent streetscapes.
 - Appropriate land uses are proposed for the two areas of the site isolated within the Motorway and Highway interchange corridor (B2 neighbourhood centre and SP3 tourist zone with relocated RMS and Ambulance Service facilities).
 - An RE1 Private Recreation zone is proposed for part of the land west of the existing Motorway/ Highway interchange to facilitate a proposed marina on the waterway, with a boat stacker building and car park indicated.
 - A marina would be a new feature visible from the Hawkesbury River. A marina has a high potential to be compatible with the character of adjacent urban foreshore and waterways development such as is evident in the nearby Brooklyn area.
 - Maritime uses of the waterway for a marina and adjacent foreshore for ancillary building development are considered compatible proposed uses with respect to the provision of SREP
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20, Hawkesbury Nepean River Catchment (SREP 20) and the recommendations of the accompanying Visual Quality Study.

- The boat stacker building indicated could be subject to a design excellence process such as design competition with a brief that it must demonstrate design excellence and compatibility of the building with its setting by appropriate design, materials, finishes and colours.
- An SP3 Tourist zone is proposed for Peat Island, an indicative design response to which on the Concept Plan is demolition of a number of non-significant buildings, adaptive re-use of existing heritage structures and a proposed Hotel/tourist accommodation building.
- This proposed use is considered to be compatible with the existing and desired future character of views from the waterway and with the provisions of SREP 20 and the Visual Quality Study.



LEGEND:
SITE BOUNDARY



MOONEY MOONEY & PEAT ISLAND



Figure 1
Study area boundary



Visual Assessment

1.0 Purpose of this report

Richard Lamb and Associates (RLA) have been engaged by Government Property NSW (GPNSW) to prepare a preliminary Visual Assessment (VA) for the strategic planning process which has led to the preparation of the Concept Plan and Zoning Plan for Mooney Mooney and Peat Island. The author of this report, Dr Richard Lamb, was principal consultant to the team that prepared deemed State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) Sydney Regional Environmental Plan No. 20, Hawkesbury-Nepean River Catchment and is the principal author of the Visual Quality Study that contains recommendations for implementation of the policies in the instrument.

RLA are specialist consultants in visual analysis and assessment. We were one of several consultancies providing technical advice at various stages of development of the Concept Plan. We do not have expertise in strategic and statutory planning and accordingly have not proposed specific development controls.

Various other constraints have been taken into account in the land uses proposed in the Concept Plan and Zoning Plan other than visual assessment, including requirements for fauna corridors, biodiversity, bushfire, flooding, non-indigenous heritage, servicing restrictions and practical considerations of development feasibility and delivery. The VA has been one input balanced against others in the Concept Plan.

RLA developed and followed a methodology designed to ensure that the visual and landscape character and qualities of the subject land were identified, analysed, and assessed. A summary of the application of the methodology follows, along with a series of figures which we used to illustrate our findings.

We have now been requested to provide a review of the VA in relation to the Concept Plan (appended). This report is that review.


Our assessment identified opportunities and constraints for urban development of the land primarily for residential and associated purposes, based on the existing visual character of areas of the subject land, their external and internal visibility and the potential visual effects and impacts that would be likely to occur with the range of indicative forms of future development in each character area.

Our methodology, field work and analysis provided a level of base information which was provided to the principal urban design consultants, Urbis, at the early stages of development of the Concept Plan. The analytical work was reviewed and further refined prior to finalisation of the Concept Plan shown on Figure 6.

This report is a review of the findings of our VA work in relation to the Mooney Mooney Concept Plan. We have reviewed our process of assessment, principles and recommendations and prepared a summary of the findings.



LEGEND:

 SITE BOUNDARY



MOONEY MOONEY & PEAT ISLAND

 No Scale



-  Maximum visual catchment (visibility of any part of site)
-  Visual catchment of proposed land uses in Master Plan (approximate)

Figure 2
Visual catchments

Visual Assessment



2.0 Study area and physical setting

Figure 1 shows the study area (the site) outlined in red over an aerial image. The site is complex in shape and is dissected by two infrastructure corridors (Motorway and Highway). The site is bounded on the west and south by water of the Hawkesbury River. It includes Peat Island and the causeway linking it to the land. It includes existing urban land in Mooney Mooney east of the Motorway, areas of scenic natural landscape on both sides of the Motorway and an extensive area of river foreshore. The north boundary is partly on the alignment of the Highway.

Figure 2 shows the site in relation to the river and road and rail transport infrastructure corridors. The landscape surrounding the site and dominating the aerial image is predominantly National Parks and Nature Reserves with isolated settlements at Brooklyn (to the south), Mooney Mooney (immediately adjacent) and Milson Island (north west).

The underlying geology is a significant influence on the visual environment. Geologically, the study area is part of the Hornsby Plateau land system and the surface geology consists of the Triassic Hawkesbury Sandstone series of sediments. The softer underlying Narrabeen series sandstones and shales are exposed in the road corridor cuttings and lower slopes in the south of the site.

Naturally vegetated steep, rocky topography is characteristic of undeveloped areas in the south and north of the site, shown in green on Figure 4.

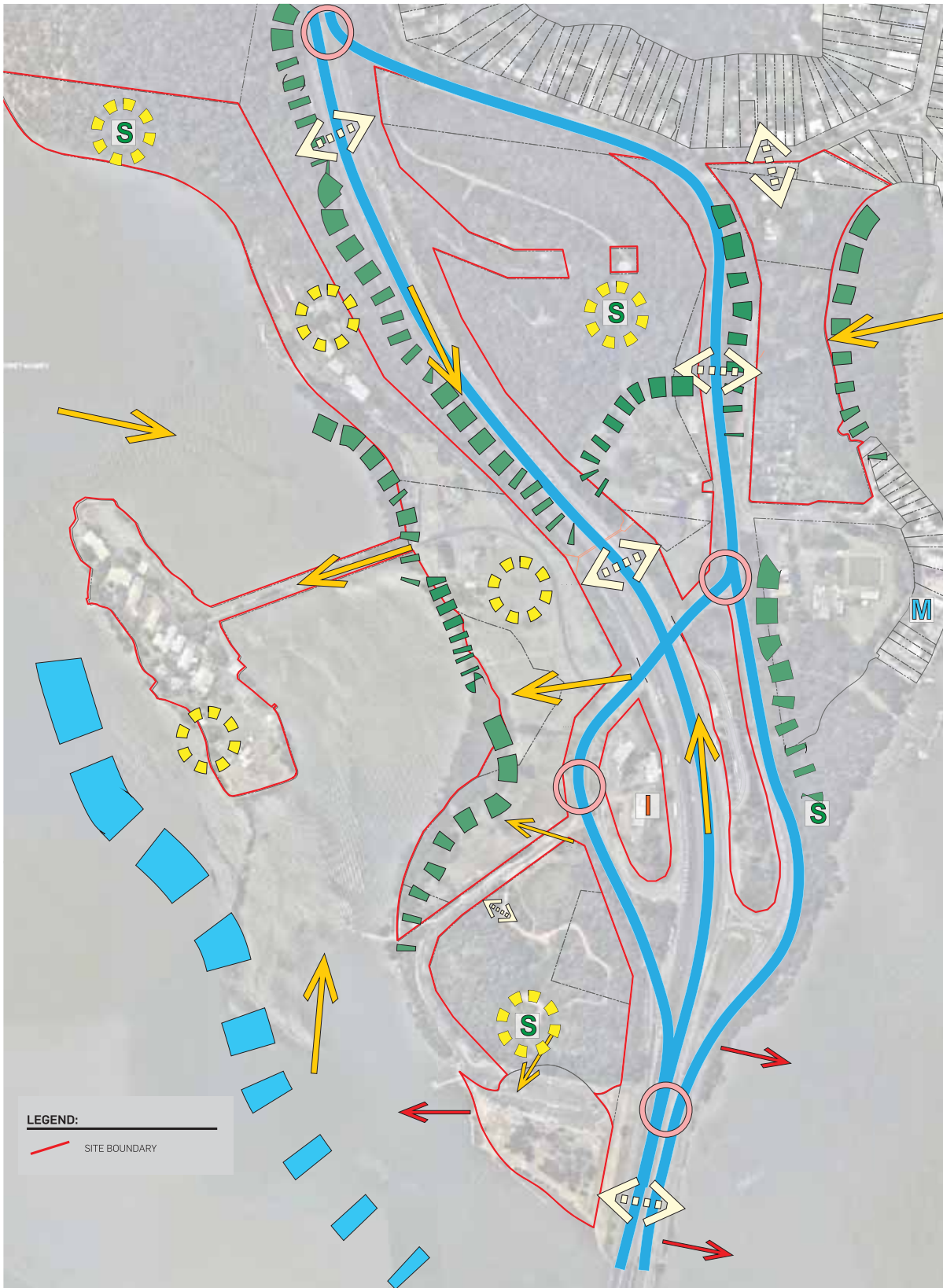
3.0 Visual catchment

The maximum visual catchment of the site is shown with an approximate boundary on Figure 2. The boundary shows the maximum area over which there would be likely to be visibility of any part of the existing site. It contains a much smaller area over which there would be likely visibility of proposed future land uses. For example, the naturally wooded, steep feature locally described as “Tank Hill” is the most prominent feature of the site and would be visible from the waterways east, north and west of the site. At the south of the site is a smaller but locally prominent naturally vegetated small hill that is also visible from the waterways east of the road corridors and road bridges. The hills are predominantly proposed to be preserved in their existing character as national parks and nature reserves, or public recreation areas and would remain visible, but unchanged.

Factors that condition visibility of the site and likely effects of future land uses proposed in the Concept Plan are shown on Figure 3.

4.0 Process of visual analysis

The visual analysis is undertaken at two levels, firstly across the whole study area at a broad level and then at a more detailed level in relation to individual landscape character areas which were identified during the refinement of the process of assessment. Base-line assessments across the entire study area are summarised in Figures 2 and 3, below. The base-line attributes of entries, nodes and visual corridors, visual exposure, scenic natural landscapes and green fingers of vegetation were applied to define



URBIS

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-  Significant entries/ nodes
-  Scenic corridors
-  Filtered corridor views
-  Inward views
-  Exposed to external views
-  Green screens of vegetation
-  Scenic natural landscape
-  Maritime industrial landscape
-  Outward views
-  Infrastructure and services



Figure 3
Visual Exposure

Visual Assessment



character area. Consideration of the findings of these initial analysis steps led to the initial identification of individual character areas that include those with a consistent mix of individual attributes (Figure 4).

Special consideration was to be given to transitions between areas, edges and existing or required future buffers, as although the areas have internal consistency, in the visual environment they merge or transition into other areas as one moves through the study area.

A summary analysis is below.

4.1 Entries, nodes and visual corridors

Entries and nodes, places where alternative routes or views can be taken, help to define one significant aspect of the visual experience of the site.

Figure 3 shows identified entries nodes and visual corridors as part of the initial exploration of the visual exposure and visual experience of the site. View corridors are commonly the source of the dynamic experience of moving through an area in which a viewer assembles an image or its overall character, as well as experiencing its diversity. View corridors include roads and the river.

Four road entries/nodes were identified, three of which feature alternative corridor routes between the Motorway and Highway. Lower speed of travel on the Highway and one lane in each direction only, invites a more relaxed viewing experience. One entry node on the Highway adjacent to the existing RMS and Ambulance Service facilities provides a view into part of western side of the site.

4.2 Exposure to the public domain

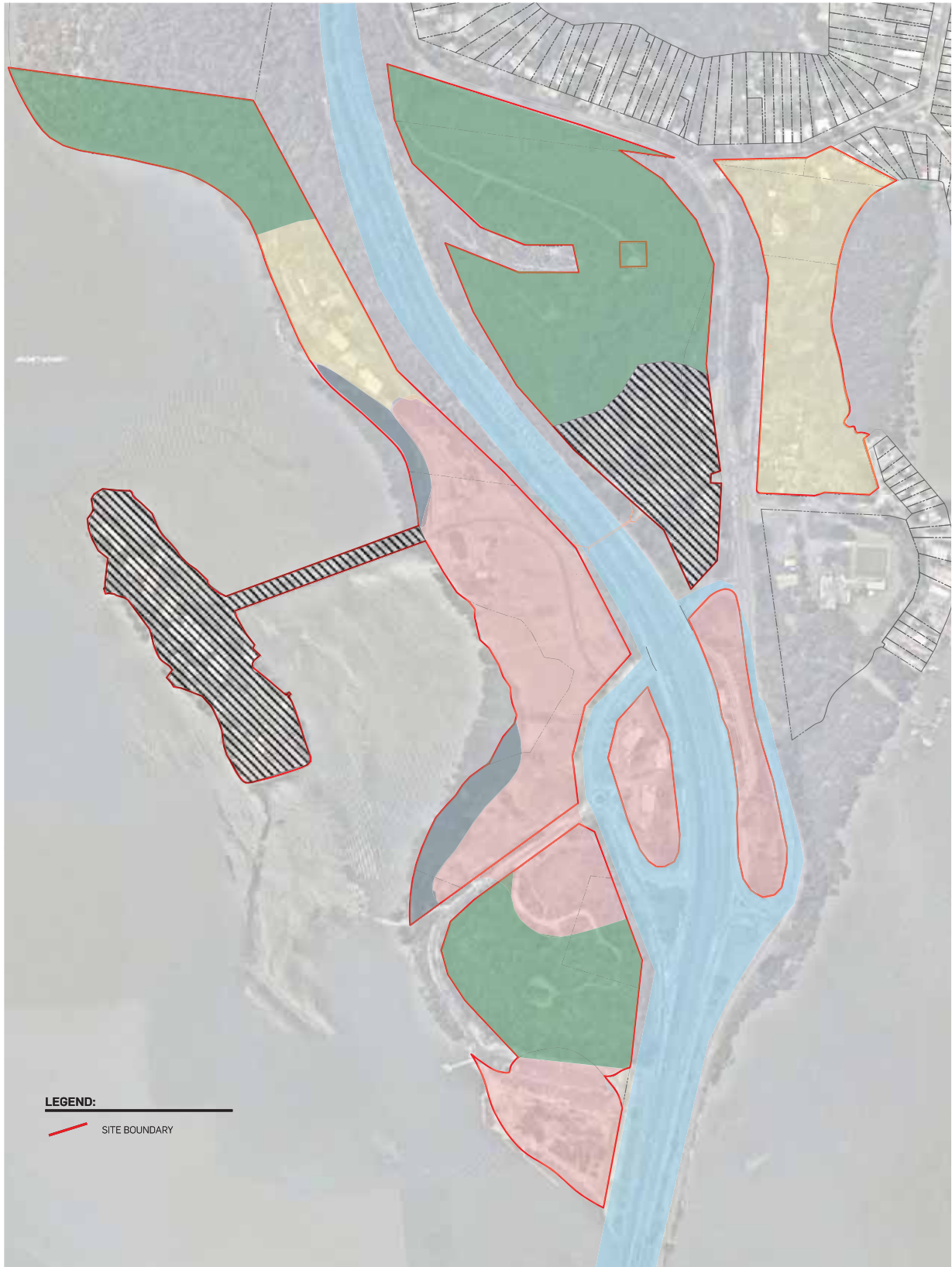
Figure 2 shows a simplified representation of exposure of the site to external views. The least constrained views are from the waterways, however the area over which there could be views of proposed future uses of the site is limited. No development is proposed on the prominent hills or natural or semi-natural landscape features identified on Figure 4.

The main public domain visual access to the site are the Motorway and Highway corridors that coalesce at the road bridges across the Hawkesbury River and also diverge at the Mooney Mooney interchange. Travelling speed, road cuttings, screening vegetation and natural topography focus views along the corridors and limit lateral views.

South-bound viewers on the Motorway have limited opportunities to view the site. North-bound viewers have a partial view to the northwest from the road bridge, including Peat Island and a foreground hill that blocks the view of the remainder. A fleeting, screened, focal view toward Tank Hill is possible from the vicinity of the Highway underpass on the Motorway north of the existing RMS and Ambulance Service facilities area (see Figure 3).

South-bound viewers on the Highway view only steep topography and foreground natural vegetation on the site until almost reaching the entrance to the Mooney Mooney Centre site, after which the view is dominated by road corridor infrastructure. The north eastern part of the site toward Moonee Moonee Creek is not significantly visible over most of its extent.

The eastern side of the site is visible from the Hawkesbury River from immediately north of the road



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-  Infrastructure corridor
-  Disturbed land
-  Urban
-  Urban-institutional
-  Semi-natural
-  Natural/ scenic



Figure 4
Existing Visual Character

Visual Assessment



bridges for some distance toward Milson Island. The foreshore is screened from view to varying extents by Peat Island, its vegetation and buildings.

4.3 Scenic natural landscapes and green fingers of vegetation

Figure 3 shows two associated attributes of the landscapes of the study area; scenic natural landscapes and green fingers of vegetation. These are associated, because the scenic natural landscapes are dominated by natural vegetation character and often demonstrate other consistent natural such as steep or rocky topography. The areas we mapped as scenic natural landscapes have high consistency of those attributes.

We made a distinction between these areas of coherent high quality scenic landscape and fingers of vegetation, as the latter are more variable, may be less continuous and in some cases are formed of groups rather than discrete bands or blocks of vegetation. Importantly, green fingers often cross boundaries and link to external or adjacent character areas, unifying visual character with areas outside the site.

Green fingers are characteristic of the foreshore on the east side of the site, where a variable but largely continuous mangrove forest lines the shore.

4.4 Existing character areas

Figure 4 shows the result of the visual analysis of consistent or mixed visual character across the site as part of the preliminary stage of identification of individual character areas for closer consideration of appropriate zonings and potential controls.

Areas of scenic natural and semi-natural landscape are shown in green and charcoal shading respectively, disturbed land in pink, urban in chalk and urban/institutional, hatched.