



30 Swan Street, Morpeth

Planning Proposal to rezone land



Visual Impact Statement Peer Review

Maitland City Council

Author: Dr. Richard Lamb

20 May 2015



Table of Contents

Visual Impact Statement - Peer Review at 30 Swan Street, Morpeth	3
Summary of my experience and CV	3
1.0 Executive Summary	5
2.0 Purpose of Report	7
3.0 Documents Reviewed	8
4.0 Site and Historical Context.	8
4.1. Site and Existing Streetscape Character	8
4.1.2 Ownership	13
4.1.3 Development Process	14
4.1.4 Relevance of the Historical Context of Morpeth	18
5.0 Review of Methodology for the Visual Impact Statement (VIS)	20
6.0 Review of Supplementary Information	25
6.1 Morpeth Local Environmental Plan 2011	25
6.2 Morpeth Management Plan May 2000;	25
6.3 Maitland City Wide Development Control Plan (MDCP)	26
7.0 Conclusion	28
Appendix 1: Photographic Plates	29
Appendix 2: Curriculum Vitae	36



May 2015

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By email: robcb@maitland.nsw.gov.au

Dear Rob,

Visual Impact Statement - Peer Review at 30 Swan Street, Morpeth

I refer to the above and to Council's commission to Richard Lamb and Associates for an independent peer review of Visual Impact Statement prepared by Terras Landscape Architects in relation to a planning proposal to re zone land at 30 Swan Street.

I understand that the planning proposal is to re zone land from RU1 Primary Production to R1 General Residential. An indicative subdivision plan showing 9 lots has been prepared which appears to indicate that view corridors along Edward Street and from parts of Swan Street as outlined in the Morpeth Development Control Plan (Morpeth Heritage Conservation Area) may be affected.

Summary of my experience and CV

I, Richard Lamb, author of this report, am a professional consultant specialising in visual impacts assessment and the principal of Richard Lamb and Associates (RLA). I have taught at the University of Sydney and specialised in heritage conservation, environmental impact assessment and visual perception studies for 30 years.

I provide professional services, expert advice and landscape and aesthetic assessments in many different contexts. I carry out strategic planning studies to protect and enhance scenic quality and landscape heritage values, conduct scenic and aesthetic assessments in all contexts, from rural to urban, provide advice on view loss and view sharing and conduct landscape heritage studies. I act for various client groups on an independent basis, including local councils, government departments and private clients. I provide expert advice, testimony and evidence to the Land and Environment Court of NSW in various classes of litigation. I have appeared in over 200 cases and made submissions to several Commissions of Inquiry. I have been the principal consultant for over 500 consultancies concerning the visual impacts and landscape heritage area of expertise during the last ten years.



At the University of Sydney I had the responsibility for teaching and research in my areas of expertise, which are visual perception and cognition, aesthetic assessment, landscape assessment, interpretation of heritage items and places and cultural transformations of environments. I taught both undergraduate and postgraduate students in these areas, giving specialised elective courses in visual and aesthetic assessment. I continue to supervise postgraduate research students undertaking PhD and Masters degree academic research in the area of heritage conservation and Environment Behaviour Studies (EBS). The latter field is based around empirical research into human aspects of the built environment, in particular, in my area of expertise, aspects of visual perception, landscape preference and environmental cognition.

I have had a number of empirical academic research papers on landscape perception and preference, landscape aesthetics and heritage conservation published in international journals.

I have developed my own methods for landscape assessment, based on my education, knowledge from research and practical experience. I am familiar with research and technology associated with the assessing and representing the visual impacts of wind farms.

My CV can be viewed on my website at www.richardlamb.com.au at the People tab. The CV is under revision at the moment but will give an idea of the range of work I have undertaken.

1.0 Executive Summary

- The proposal (planning application) is in relation to a site at the north eastern edge of Morphett Town centre on Swan Street, which is one of the town's original primary planned roads.
- Swan Street is laid out parallel to the Hunter River and in accordance with a strict grid system and hierarchy of roads established when it was a private town in the early 19th century.
- The subdivision pattern in Swan Street reflects its historical layout in that the north and south sides exhibit a relatively uniform settlement pattern in terms of individual dwellings or commercial buildings, similar lot size, similar side and front setbacks.
- The south side at the eastern end of Swan Street is characterised by individual residential development dwellings, some early and original 19th C Victorian cottages and others early to mid-20th C origin, but many share similar architectural elements.
- The north side of Swan Street east of Robert Street is characterised by larger sized lots and built form including industrial and commercial development but is characterised by a similar underlying grid system with lots addressing the primary street, Swan Street. Four residential dwellings are located east of the industrial precinct and fill the space between it and the subject site.
- The subject site is largely undeveloped which increases the extent of views available from the public domain in this part of Swan Street and from Edward Street further east.
- Private domain views are also potentially available from dwellings located along the south side of Swan Street in the vicinity of the subject site.
- Public and private domain views include a visual connection to the Hunter River flood plain and filtered views to rural lands to the north, to Hinton and other smaller settlements to the north, north west and north east.
- In the reverse direction, the subject site is not highly visually exposed to the north due to the lower elevation of viewing locations across the Hunter River floodplain, intervening vegetation for example along the river banks and intervening development, depending on the location of the viewer.
- No definitive methodology is accepted as best practice in the field of Visual Assessment in NSW. RLA have used our own methodology developed over the last 30 years by Dr Richard Lamb as a bench mark by which to evaluate the key components set out in the Visual Impact Statement (VIS) prepared by Terras Landscape Architects.
- We note that the Statement of Heritage Impact supports the application on the basis that the proposed development does not significantly affect the heritage significance of the site. This report also states that the site is listed within the table Urban Infill and Urban Extension included in the Maitland Urban Settlement Strategy 2012.

- Table 1 provides a summary of our comments and general overview of the adequacy of the VIS.
- The assessment in our opinion, although adequate overall, does not clearly address the following;
 1. The relationship or importance of the underlying Morpeth historic 'Darling Plan style' grid subdivision pattern.
 2. An analysis of the streetscape character as a basis to assess compatibility and visual fit and the impacts of the visual effects on the streetscape character and quality, of the intended end use of the subdivision.
 3. The link between visual effects and impacts. The analysis of views is in relation to a table, the ratings on which are in some cases inconsistent with comments in the text.
 4. The relationship between the historic layout and subdivision pattern of Morpeth and how this related to the views plan in MDCP.
 5. Adequate justification for an alternative view corridor focussing on Edward Street, supported by retention of views between buildings in a future subdivision.

Although there are some deficiencies in this regard, I generally agree with the conclusions of the VIS that the planning proposal can be supported on visual grounds.

2.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide an independent analytical review of the Visual Impact statement (VIS) prepared Terras Landscape Architects in December 2014, which supports the planning proposal to re zone land at 30 Swan Street. The report will provide a summary in relation to the adequacy of the methodology followed in the VIS and assessment of whether fundamental issues have been analysed and considered adequately in relation to the relevant strategic and statutory planning framework, including Heritage issues and views.

This report is in response to Council's request that we comment on the methodology adopted by the proponent's visual impact consultants and its adequacy in regard to consideration of the impacts of the proposal at the local Morpeth Village scale and wider visual context and whether potential visual impacts have been adequately assessed.

Morpeth is recognised as a town with heritage significance in itself as well as containing a number or individually listed items and places of cultural significance. A primary consideration for this report therefore relates to the potential for Morpeth firstly to sustain new residential development and secondly whether such development is compatible with the existing landscape and heritage character and qualities of Morpeth, in visual terms.

In answering these questions, it is necessary to ascertain whether the existing landscape and character of Morpeth can support new residential development and if so in what area or areas. A second issue to be addressed is whether the existing historical character and process of development of Morpeth indicates opportunities and constraints for new residential development that could guide the appropriate form of that development.

This report is structured to consider each of these issues, i.e.:

1. to review the adequacy of the Visual Impact Statement including a determination as to whether the proposal satisfies the consideration of the MMP 2000 and the MDCP 2011.
2. In so doing the review is to objectively assess the existing landscape, scenic and heritage character of Morpeth to ascertain whether there is potential for new residential development at 30 Swan Street.
3. To identify opportunities and constraints for the future use of this site for residential uses in the context of the historic patterns of development, views and existing qualities of Morpeth.
4. If appropriate to recommend performance standards for the location, form and detailing of future residential development.

3.0 Documents Reviewed

- Visual Impact Statement revision A prepared by Terras Landscape Architects in December 2014.
- Statement of Heritage Impact (SoHI) prepared by EJE Heritage in 2014.
- Morpeth Management Plan 2000 (MMP).
- Morpeth Development Control Plan 2011 (MDCP) for the Morpeth Heritage Conservation Area.
- Planning Proposal for rezoning prepared by Pulver Cooper and Blackley in May 2014

4.0 Site and Historical Context.

RLA provide this brief historical summary as part of our review of the importance of the historical context of Morpeth and the relationship of the subject site and proposed development to it. In our opinion an appreciation of the historical context of Morpeth is relevant to this proposal in that it contributes to the basis of whether the proposal is compatible and responsive to the underlying 'Darling Plan style' town grid and underlying subdivision pattern and thereby also in relation to the existing streetscape character.

The subject site is at 30 Swan, Morpeth, located on the northern side and at the eastern end of the road and is described as Lot 3 DP 237264. The site was formerly partly occupied by one of three of Morpeth's railway stations which although not a heritage item itself played an important role historically in the early and mid 20th C in to the development and subsequent decline of Morpeth's shipping activities.

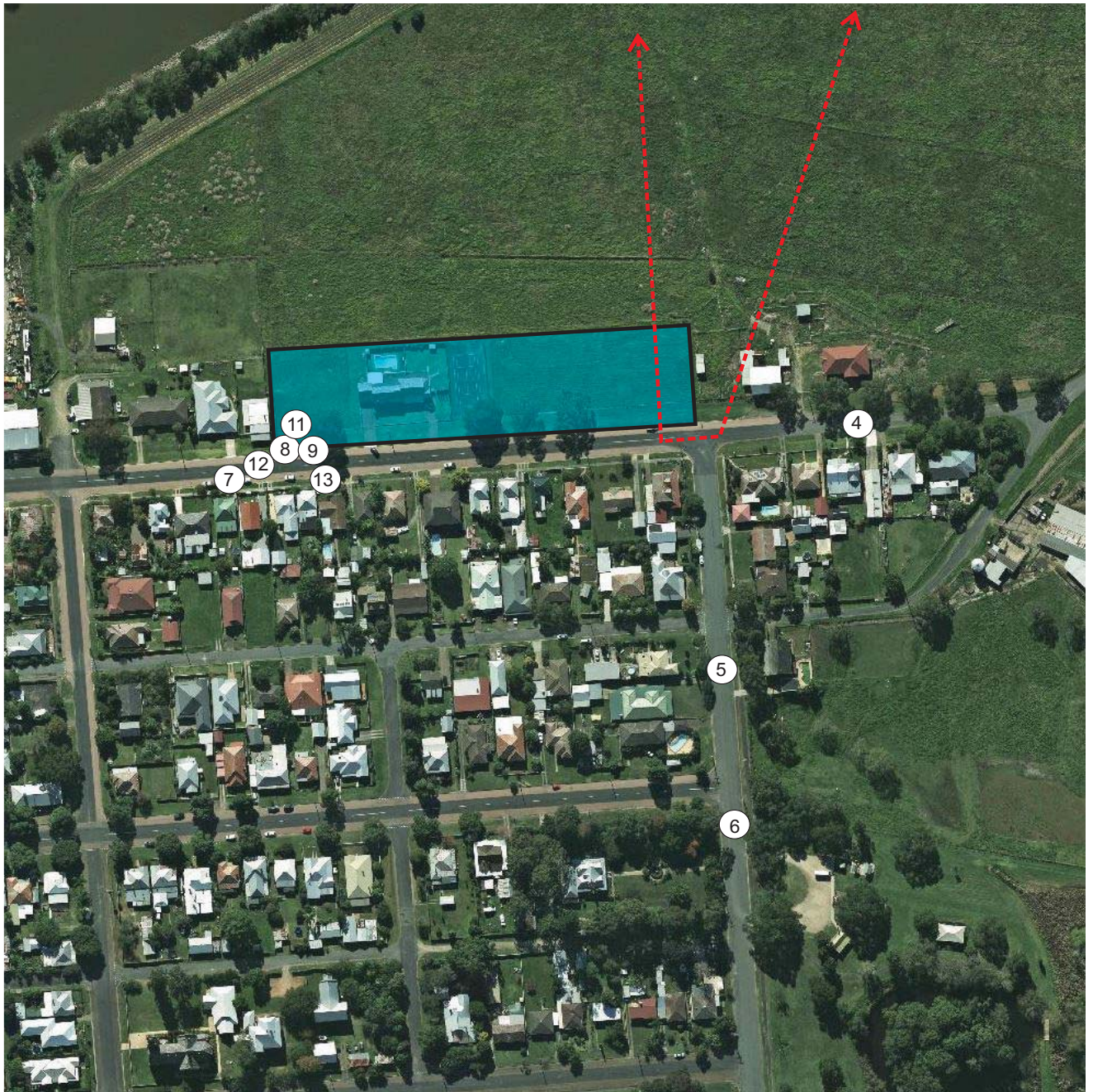
4.1. Site and Existing Streetscape Character

The subject site is relatively flat and appears to be have been modified or levelled to support the railway tracks and yard facilities which once stood on the site. The site is characterised by one individual two storey circa 1970s residence, tennis court and open lawn areas and is otherwise of a rural appearance. It is surrounded to the west and south by detached residential development and to the north and east by rural land or rural activities.

A sandstone post is located outside but close to the Swan Street boundary of the site and appears to be a mile post or marker. The stone is accompanied by another stone and plaque which was unveiled in 1991. The plaque reads as follows;

"This stone was placed in 1858 to mark the commencement of the first Great Northern Road in the Colony of New South Wales, Morpeth and District Progress Association Project"

We note that the SoHI report instructs that this item should be protected from disturbance. In addition we observed that two large timber gate posts at the eastern end of the Swan Street



Map 1: Immediate Viewing Locations



Approximate location of subject site



Suggested alternative view cone cf. map in MDCP



Viewing Location (refer to Photographic Figures)



Not to Scale



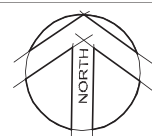
Map 2: Wider Visual Catchment Viewing Locations



Approximate location of subject site



Viewing Location (refer to Photographic Figures)



Not to Scale



Map 3: Suggested alternative view cone relative to MDCP map



Suggested alternative view cone cf. map in MDCP



Not to Scale

boundary appear to be those used when the site was still operating as a railway station and yard area and are approximately in line with the former access to the goods shed at the eastern end of the site. A further assessment of this feature may be required as a mandatory action in accordance with the Heritage Act 1977 (NSW)

Swan Street was planned to be the main commercial and residential street in the private town of Morpeth and as such was laid out parallel to the Hunter River and in accordance with a strict grid system and hierarchy of roads.

Swan Street is divided into four blocks by the four original secondary roads which run perpendicular to Swan Street. Each block within this development pattern along the southern side of Swan Street appears to share similar characteristics in terms of lot size and building siting with the front elevation of each building presenting to the main street.

This general arrangement continues east along Swan Street particularly along the south side and at the eastern end which although it includes infill housing development, still exhibits a relatively uniform settlement pattern, for example individual dwellings on similar sized lots, with similar width side and aligned front setbacks. The south side is characterised by original early original 19th C Victorian cottages, many with Georgian proportions and others modified more recently, many of which share similar architectural elements, scale and form. Among these are early to mid 20th century detached residences.

The blocks located along the north side of Swan Street display similar characteristics except between Robert Street and George Street. This block is characterised by larger sized lots and built form including industrial and commercial development but is set within a similar arrangement defined by the same underlying grid system, with lots addressing the primary street, Swan Street. A subdivision plan of Morpeth circa 1860 shows that an additional 4 lots east of George Street up to the boundary of the former railway yards and the existing boundary of the subject site were planned.

Given that the town's planned subdivision stopped at the subject sites boundary its appears to have remained as one large lot to the present day and in this regard is still largely undeveloped. The resultant predominant open character of the site may have contributed to the actual and perceived visual connection with rural lands to the north and may have given rise to the location of view 'corridors' in the MDCP Part E Special Precincts Heritage Conservation Areas View Corridors Map, one of which appears to cover the entire subject site.

4.1.2 Ownership

Originally known as Green Hill or Illulaung, the site of Morpeth was granted to Lt Edward Charles Close in 1821. By 1823 a small settlement was established at the site and by 1834 the official layout of the township was established and allotments of Close's grant were released for sale and lease. Morpeth thereby began its life as a private town. It wasn't until 1920 that all of Close's land was finally sold off.

The influence of Close and his vision for the layout of the town and disposition of land uses remains until today. The original geometry of the town and the spatial influence of the ideology of the place as a centre for commerce and also of a tenanted rural landscape can still be discerned.

4.1.3 Development Process

The original layout of the town followed two major influences, that of the river and of Close's theories of town planning (Figure 1). The figure gives an indication of the effect of the river alignment on the location of the first street, which became Swan Street. Swan Street is one of the bounding streets that was intended to contain Morpeth. The early subdivision of land followed access to Morpeth from the river and from the east (Maitland) and west (Patricks Plains). Close's first plan appears to have been drawn by a surveyor who had little understanding of the appropriate scale of the lots which soon were found to be too large, but who understood the fashion for the geometry of town plans laid out by Close and others (See Figure 3). The subdivision plan is similar in layout to parts of other settlements established in the Governor Darling era of planning (eg. Newcastle, Bolwarra, parts of East Maitland, Forbes, Braidwood, etc.). Darling served as a military secretary in America and the West Indies and may have been influenced by the same theories of colonial planning as other contemporaries of Close, such as Brisbane and Dangar.

The 1830's saw Morpeth develop commercially as well as residentially. Morpeth originally developed along Swan, Tank, High, Northumberland and Robert Streets in a generally two block grid pattern. The land along the river front developed beyond Robert and Tank Streets at the same time (Figure 2). Perhaps because it began as Close's private town, Morpeth did not develop a formal civic centre and is not organised around public open space. Civic buildings were added to the town later, as infill buildings among already established residential and commercial streets.

The original subdivision followed a pattern of dividing each block into seven, with the ends each being divided into three allotments facing the side streets and the remainder divided into two allotments, each facing the streets to the north or south, totalling sixteen allotments per block. Close Street is essentially a lane splitting the block pattern along the rear boundaries of lots facing Swan and High Street and requiring the subdivision of the central lot on the secondary north-south streets. It is indicated on an auctioneer's advertisement circa 1841 when the Hunters River Auction Company auctioned 14 allotments in January that year. The 1849 plan of Morpeth does not show Close Street in existence at this time and indeed it may not have been established until much later. The subdivision of larger lots between primary streets with laneways that bisected the blocks reflected the pressure for commercial development and subdivision of land into more practically sized lots near the commercial area of Swan Street and the river, as well as the need for rear access to commercial properties. The development of Close Street saw the beginning of the re-interpretation of the original subdivision pattern and also of a fashion in subdivision that featured bisecting laneways as the third level of a hierarchical street pattern. This fashion lasted into the mid 20th century in many country towns that experienced boom growth in the inter-war period.

A clear street hierarchy thus exists in Morpeth. The development pattern and original street layout by Close was simpler than the pattern now in existence. Later subdivision and division of blocks longitudinally eventually led to a series of tertiary streets or lanes which further subdivided the underlying pattern of primary and secondary streets. Primary streets run

Page 15



Figure 2 Morpeth circa 1860



Figure 3 Subdivision pattern of Morpeth circa 2010

east west, secondary north south and the tertiary streets and lanes run predominantly, but not exclusively, east west. Figures 8 to 10 illustrate the relationship between each street hierarchy type. Figure 11 shows the complete existing street hierarchy of Morpeth including the bounding streets.

4.1.4 Relevance of the Historical Context of Morpeth

The urban contemporary context of Morpeth is based on the framework of the past. The framework is important as a means to inform future planning, design and heritage conservation. The urban context in Morpeth includes elements of the following; Architectural quality, detail and character, heritage conservation areas, character neighbourhood quality, streetscape and public domain design, cultural patterns and development, precincts, localities, neighbourhoods and cultural places.

Morpeth's Character has been derived from ongoing settlement processes from its establishment in the early and mid 19th Century. This includes overlays of different historic periods of development onto the physical and biological landscape such as constraints on development by flooding growth of rail and road infrastructure, demand for space for residential development, industrial land and commercial activities. Changes in technology, siltation and later regulation of the river, rise of irrigated agriculture economy, population drift to the city, decline of rural industry and pressure for heritage tourism.

The physical and biological constraints and opportunities for development and the process of historical development in Morpeth provide an intact and legible example of the typical development of private towns throughout NSW. Its history can be understood in relation to a small number of distinct districts that retain original character. In our opinion these attributes should be considered in relation to the merits of any rezoning application and urban infill proposal.

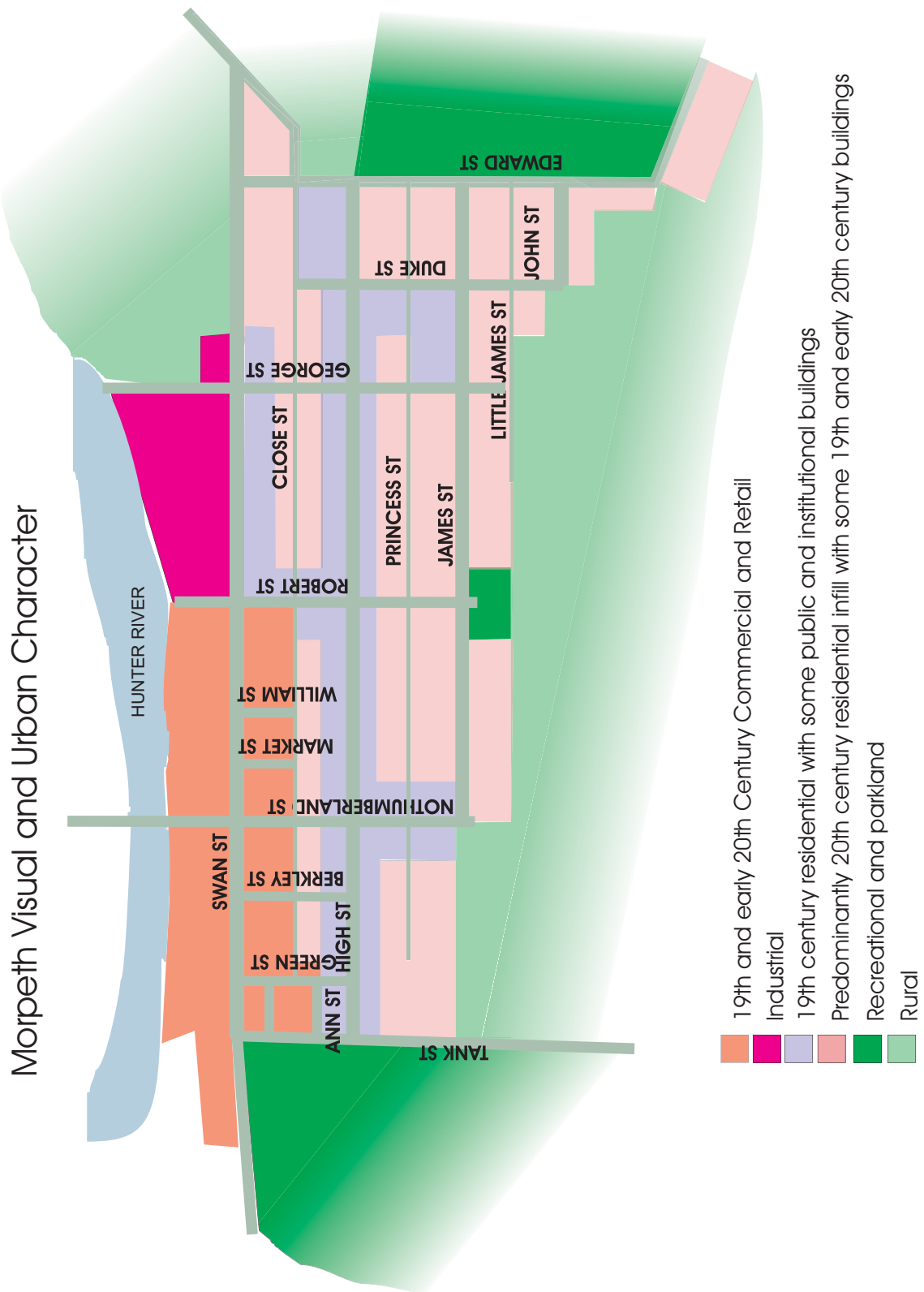


Figure 4 Diagrammatic visual and urban character of Morpeth

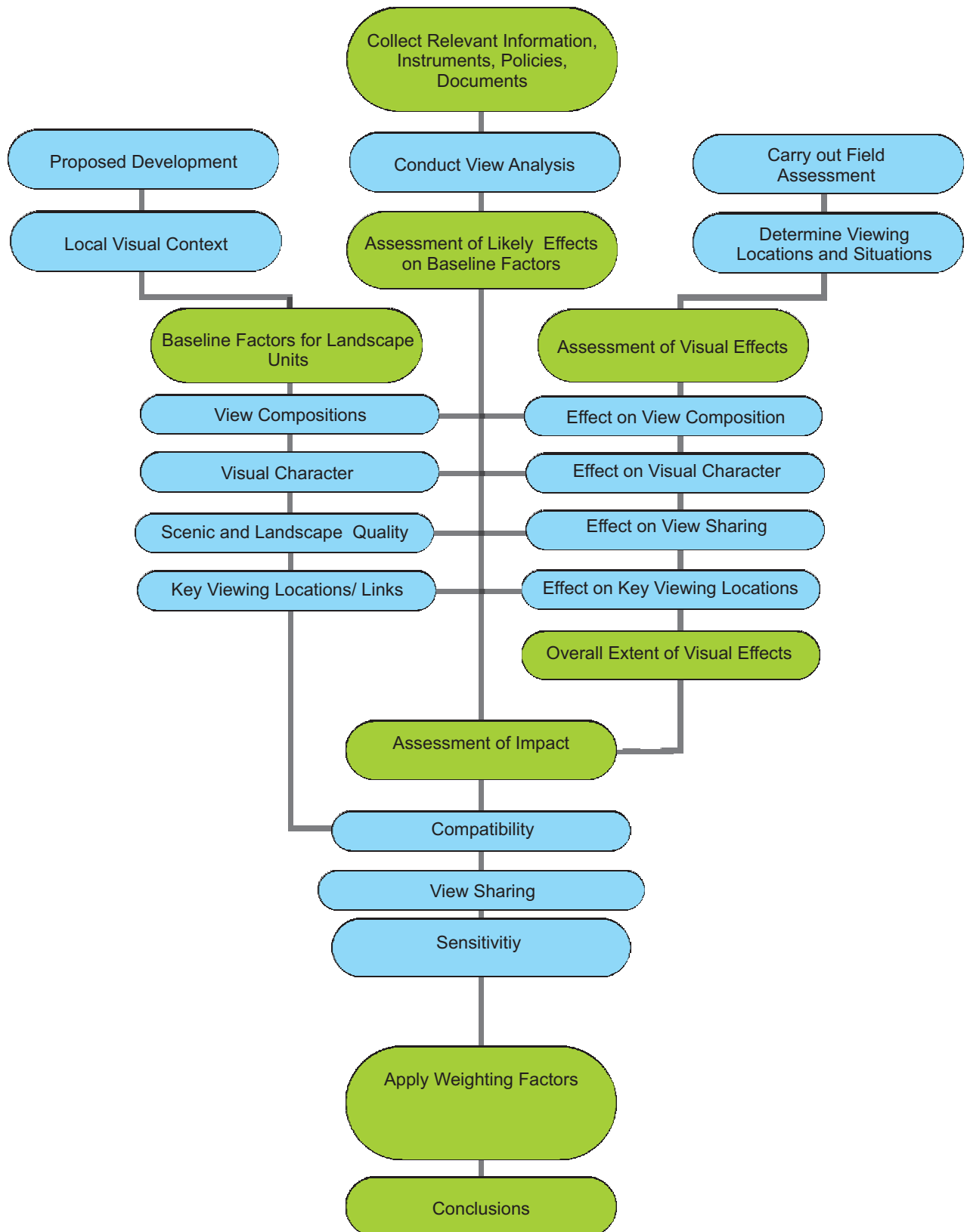
5.0 Review of Methodology for the Visual Impact Statement (VIS)

The Department of Planning and Environment does not provide guidance as to the inclusions and requirements of Visual Impact Assessments or Statements. This review accepts that there is no industry standard of best practice that determines how such reports are conducted and that a wide range of approaches are possible. Typically such an assessment is required to provide information in relation to the landscape character and values and any specific scenic or significant vistas of the area potentially affected by the proposed development.

Over a 30 year period RLA have developed our own methodology for Visual Impact Assessment. This method is shown in the flow chart below which is a graphic representation of the parameters of the assessment and the logic and sequence of analysis and assessment tasks undertaken. In our opinion as a minimum the following key attributes of any proposed development should be analysed and assessed in order to determine potential visual effects, impacts and therefore the appropriate scale or form of development within a specific visual environment;

- Assess the local Visual Context in terms of its existing baseline factors ie visual character, quality, key viewing locations etc. including those identified in the MDCP.
- Understand the proposed development sufficiently to be able to assess the potential visual effects of it, within this visual (and heritage) setting ie effects on the visual character and quality, effects on existing views (composition) as seen from appropriate viewing locations.
- Assess the impacts of the effects in the context of compatibility, view sharing and sensitivity

We have summarised and tabulated the key components of the Terras Visual Impact Statement and compared them to the essential elements of our methodology in Table 1 below.



Richard Lamb and Associates Visual Impact Analysis and Assessment Method Flow Chart



Table 1

Terra Landscape Architects VIS Methodology Component	RLA Comment
Consideration of the proposed development within the local visual context	
<u>Visual Character</u>	Section 02.1.2 addresses the local area character and has been adequately represented and assessed.
<u>Streetscape quality</u>	The streetscape character in the vicinity of the site has not been specifically analysed or assessed, nor the relationship of the subject site to the underlying subdivision pattern and alignment of properties to Swan Street. In this regard no comment is made in relation to the heritage significance of this established underlying settlement pattern. Limited passing comments are included in the document in section 05 View point Analysis. However in our opinion, the indicative subdivision plan submitted appropriately responds to the existing subdivision pattern of Swan Street and the wider character of Morpeth in terms of its lot sizes and orientation to Swan Street. The proposed lots vary in width as do those opposite the site along the south side of Swan Street. In our opinion development controls included in the Maitland DCP Heritage Conservation Area: Morpeth are adequate to ensure that the overall streetscape character of Swan Street can be maintained.
<u>Visual Catchment</u>	A view point analysis map is shown at Figure 5.0 and includes locations within 500m and up to approximately 3km from the site. Photographs from each view point show representative views, compositions and confirm the visibility of the proposed development site. In our opinion the site has a limited visual catchment and low external visibility despite its slightly elevated location adjacent to rural land. In this regard in our opinion the visual catchment has been satisfactorily determined and an adequate number and range of viewing locations are represented in the report.
<u>Key viewing locations</u>	Section 04 includes a commentary regarding significant view corridors in Morpeth and in particular view corridors shown in the MDCP 2011.



Terra Landscape Architects VIS Methodology Component	RLA Comment
	Photographs 1 and 2 from Swan Street and Edward Street respectively both appear to be locations which fall within cone shaped view corridors shown on the MDCP Part E special precincts Heritage Conservation Areas View Corridors Map. Photograph 5 taken from Hunter Street in Hinton also appears to be from a direction which is covered by a wide arc on the map and labelled as 'View from Hinton'. The Terras report therefore addresses the requirements within the MDCP. In our opinion their commentary is adequate. We comment further that the site's external visibility is extremely limited from the north and north west due to intervening riverside vegetation and development and in this regard the proposed development is unlikely to be visible at all from Hinton. Views from Swan Street to rural lands north west, north and north east of the site remain accessible from the public domain via side setback and height controls to be applied during the DA process. The axial view corridor north along Edward Street can be similarly protected with the application of an easement or setback which is proposed by Terras Landscape Architects and supported by RLA.
<u>Assessment of Visual Effects</u>	
<u>Composition,</u> <u>Character</u> <u>Streetscape Quality</u>	This assessment is limited. Visual effects are described briefly below each view point photograph and the weighting of the effect is indicated by a 'X' in a corresponding box on each view point sheet. The assessment is displayed in a matrix and read horizontally across each line. Components such as viewer access, sensitivity, effect and impact are assessed as low, medium or high individually. The two most important and potentially impacted views are 1 and 2 from Swan and Edward Streets respectively. As previously noted the streetscape character of the site has not been established, therefore the level of visual effects on the streetscape character cannot be determined. Although the ratings appear to be logical there is a missing step as to the compatibility of the effect and therefore its impact on potential future streetscape quality. RLA concur with



Terra Landscape Architects VIS Methodology Component	RLA Comment
	the assessment of components in each case and overall would rate the visual impacts of the Swan Street view as High and the visual impacts of the Edward Street view as moderate, given that the development, once easement or side setback controls are applied will not form part of the focal view. In our opinion this assessment is adequate.
<u>Assessment of overall Visual Impacts</u>	
<u>Visual impacts, compatibility, sensitivity and view loss</u>	The assessment of visual impacts appears to be mixed in with the assessment of visual effects. There is limited commentary as to how the impacts of the proposed development will affect the composition in each view, and if so the sensitivity of that viewing location or any potential impacts on the streetscape etc. It is not clear what is the overall or summary weighting or resultant impact in each case. The rating of visual effects shown on the table with the views does not always appear to be linked accurately to the associated comments or to the impacts rating for each viewpoint location. Having said that, RLA concur that due to limited external visibility of the site, views 1 and 2 are the most important. If I considered the approval of the planning proposal and the potential development of 9 dwellings on the site and were to apply our own methodology it is likely my ratings would be similar. View 1 from Swan Street would have an overall rating of high visual effects but moderate visual impact due to general compatibility with the settlement pattern and View 2 from Edward Street would have a low visual effect (subject to MDCP controls) and a moderate visual impact, given that all effects are not within a direct axial view which is of greater heritage significance and deserves protection, as proposed, and most of the existing view will remain unaffected by the proposed development.

6.0 Review of Supplementary Information and Studies where relevant to the Visual Impact Statement.

The Visual Impact Statement has been reviewed in the context of a number of statutory and non-statutory reports which guide the development and strategic planning of the Maitland Local Government Area (LGA) and Morpeth itself.

The historic town of Morpeth sits within the north ward of the Maitland Local Government Area, north and east of Maitland.

6.1 Morpeth Local Environmental Plan 2011

Many individual heritage items are identified within Morpeth and are recorded in Schedule 5 of the MLEP 2011. We note that no individual items exist within the subject site but that the entire site sits within the Heritage Conservation Area of Morpeth Town which has local significance.

6.2 Morpeth Management Plan May 2000;

The Morpeth Management Plan provides the overarching basis and framework for management of the Maitland City Councils responsibilities in Morpeth and provides objectives and policies which relate to the management of the Heritage Conservation Area.

Overarching Principles for management of Morpeth and which are relevant to the planning proposal include the following

- Understanding and sustaining Morpeth's Heritage and Character
- Protecting local amenity, village character and community life.

Comment

The management plan primarily works at a broad level offering guidance for strategic planning and conceptual design of ongoing development, urban infill and subdivision in Morpeth.

Objectives 1 and 2 above have not explicitly been explored or assessed within the VIS or considered in relation to this planning proposal. Our review however concludes that the conceptual subdivision proposed is of a nature and scale which fits appropriately within the wider historic and visual context of Morpeth and the immediate visual character of Swan Street.

6.3 Maitland City Wide Development Control Plan (MDCP)

The subject site is located at the east end of Swan Street on its northern side, approximately 200m south of the Hunter River. This end of Swan Street does not share the same visual character as Swan Street to its west and within the town centre but nonetheless sits within the Morpeth Heritage Conservation Area. Any proposed development in this part of Swan Street is required to be considered sensitively in the context of its wider heritage setting and values.

DCP Part E Special Precincts 2011 includes the subject site within the Rural Outskirts Precinct which includes recreational space and rural plains that surround the township of Morpeth. An industrial special precinct sits immediately adjacent and west of the subject site and a residential precinct is opposite the site along the entire length of the south side of Swan Street.

Rural Outskirts Precinct

This precinct is characterised by open rural areas and open pasture, low scale isolated buildings and rural dwellings.

The specific characteristics of this precinct can be summarised by the following:

- *Rural surrounds which features barns and farm houses and evidence of floods.*
- *Open farming plains that provide clear views to the township of Morpeth from surrounding areas.*
- *Incorporates the floodplains and meandering Hunter River.*

Comment

The proposed development (proposal to rezone land) will not in itself cause any significant change to the specific visual characteristics of the site or precinct. If the proposed development is approved, further individual development across the lots on the site will be subject to the objectives and controls for residential development in the MDCP which in our opinion are appropriate and sufficient to ensure that the existing and desired future character of the immediate and wider context is protected and enhanced.

Views from the township to Rural Surrounds

Views

Morpeth is elevated above surrounding agricultural land and river flats and has a very strong connection to these rural surrounds. Views along streets, gaps between buildings and open land at the axis of streets are of particular significance. Significant views and view corridors have been identified on the map below.

Aim

The relationship between the town and the rural surrounds should be maintained through the protection of these significant view corridors.

Comment

Section 4.1 of the VIS provides commentary on the response of the proposal to views defined in the MDCP. The VIS interprets the view corridors map as showing a corridor extending across the entire site and suggests that this is an unreasonable control on a site that has had extensive development on it in the past. RLA agree with this interpretation and suggest that the corridor which covers the subject site is there by virtue of the fact that the site has been largely undeveloped in recent history. Intensive development on the site has not occurred because of the existing zoning applied to the site and the resultant low scale and low density built forms on site have allowed incidental views to the rural surrounds from this part of Swan Street to exist. These incidental views across the subject site appear to have assumed greater importance as shown in the MDCP than is warranted. In our opinion these view while they provide a setting for outward views from one part of the edge of the existing township are not heritage views, specifically planned for the purposes of creating visual links between Heritage Items or specific scenic or important items, but have simply occurred incidentally.

In our opinion if the proposed development was to be approved, the most important heritage view axes down Swan and Edward Streets can be preserved with the application of an easement to prevent incursion into the Edward Street corridor and residential development controls included in the MDCP.

An axial view to rural lands exists along Edward Street. As one of the early planned secondary streets, the axis is significant both in visual impacts and heritage terms. The view is constrained to the road alignment and by street tree planting and residential development along the west and eastern sides of Edward Street and centres on a small rural shed which is located on an adjacent property east of the subject side. A small part of the subject site along its eastern boundary aligns with Edward Street and forms part of the composition of this view as the viewer approaches the northern end of Edward Street. North of Close Street the arc of the view become less constrained by roadside development and wider. In this approximate location the proposed development will form a greater part of the view.

We concur with conclusions in the VIS that views to the north and north east from the intersection of Swan and Edward Street are important and should be protected. In our opinion an amended or alternative cone of view from this location should be defined relative to the MDCP map (Figure 3). The alternative cone is consistent with our recommendations for protection of the view in that cone and could be implemented with the application of an appropriate zoning, which would act to prohibit built structures in the view cone as it crosses the subject site. We have included a plan of an indicative view cone for Council's consideration (see Figures 1 and 3).

7.0 Conclusion

RLA have reviewed the Visual Impact Statement in respect of the 30 Swan Street Planning Proposal prepared by Terras Landscape Architects and find that the logic and methodology used in their assessment is sufficient and adequate. On this basis I can support their conclusions and recommendations.

Although commentary in relation to visual effects, visual fit and compatibility of the proposed development is not explored fully, the conclusions I reach are similar to those in the VIS in that on balance a subdivision of this scale and in the design shown interacts appropriately with the local visual and historical context and is in my opinion compatible with it.

I support suggested mitigation strategies in the VIS and the inclusion of appropriate protection of views from the end of Edward Street across part of the subject site and to the north and north east. However I do not think that an easement over part of the future subdivision, as proposed by the applicants, is sufficient or likely to be effective in controlling the potential construction of buildings and other structures and thereby retain views, as required. I suggest that an appropriate Environmental Protection zoning would be more effective and appropriate.

I am of the view that existing MDCP controls in relation to side setbacks, height, form and scale of individual dwellings on each block if applied consistently and cognisant of the need to retain some views of the rural landscape beyond would be sufficient to retain through site view corridors from the private and public domain along Swan Street and that no further special controls are warranted.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Lamb'.

Yours sincerely

Dr Richard Lamb
Richard Lamb & Associates



Location 1: View south west from Brisbane Fields Road.



Location 2: View south west from Brisbane Fields Road.



Location 3: View south west close to the end of Swan Street and similar to Terras Viewpoint 3.



Location 4: View west along Swan Street just east of the subject site boundary.



Location 5: Axial view north along Edward Street from south of its intersection with Close Street.



Location 6: Distant axial view north along Edward Street from south of its intersection with John Street.



Location 7: View north east to the site from near No 35 Swan Street, similar to Terras Viewpoint 1.



Location 8: Detail of marker post and plaque in front of 30 Swan Street.



Location 9: Detail of commemorative plaque.



Location 10: View south from Hinton Road similar to Terras Viewpoint 4.



Location 11: View north east across the site towards Hinton Bridge



Location 12: Streetscape view east along Swan Street in the vicinity of the site.



Location 13: Streetscape view of dwellings in the vicinity of the site.



Location 14: View west from Hunter Street in Hinton, similar to Terras Viewpoint 5

Appendix 2: Curriculum Vitae

Summary Curriculum Vitae: Dr Richard Lamb

Summary

- Professional consultant specialising in visual and heritage impacts assessment and the principal of Richard Lamb and Associates (RLA)
- Senior lecturer in Architecture and Heritage Conservation in the Faculty of Architecture, Design and Planning at the University of Sydney, 1980-2007
- Director of Master of Heritage Conservation Program, University of Sydney, 1998-2004.
- 30 years experience in teaching and research in environmental impact, heritage and visual impact assessment.
- Teaching and research expertise in interpretation of heritage items and places, cultural transformations of environments, conservation methods and practices.
- Teaching and research experience in visual perception and cognition, aesthetic assessment and landscape assessment,.
- Supervision of Master and PhD students postgraduate students in heritage conservation and environment/behaviour studies..
- Experience in academic empirical research into human aspects of the built environment, in particular aspects of aesthetic assessment, visual perception, landscape preference and environmental psychology.
- Richard Lamb and Associates provides:
 - professional services, expert advice and landscape and aesthetic assessments in many different contexts
 - Strategic planning studies to protect and enhance scenic quality and landscape heritage values
 - Scenic and aesthetic assessments in all contexts, from rural to urban, provide advice on view loss, view sharing and landscape heritage studies.
- Dr Lamb provides:
 - Expert advice, testimony and evidence to the Land and Environment Court of NSW and Planning and Environment Court of Queensland in various classes of litigation.
 - Specialisation in matters of heritage landscapes, visual impacts, and urban design
 - Appearances in over 150 cases and submissions to several Commissions of Inquiry and the principal consultant for over 400 consultancies.
- Qualifications
 - Bachelor of Science - First Class Honours, University of New England
 - Doctor of Philosophy, University of New England in 1975
 - Accredited Administrator and Assessor, Myers Briggs Psychological Type Indicator
- International Journals for which Publications are Refereed
 - Landscape & Urban Planning
 - Journal of Architectural & Planning Research
 - Architectural Science Review
 - People and Physical Environment Research
 - Journal of Environmental Psychology
 - Australasian Journal of Environmental Management
 - Ecological Management & Restoration
 - Urban Design Review International