

APPIN & NORTH APPIN PRECINCTS LANDSCAPE VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT STATEMENT

PREPARED FOR WALKER CORPORATION
OCTOBER 2022
FINAL FOR SUBMISSION

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Urbis have been engaged to prepare the Landscape Visual Impact Assessment for the strategic planning of future development across the Appin and North Appin Precincts.

The key findings are based on an analysis of data sets and technical studies provided by the project team and client, consideration of strategic needs for the site, a review of aerial imagery and fieldwork observations.

Visual analysis and determination of visual character areas (VCA) across the Appin and North Appin Precincts is based on fieldwork observations. This analysis concludes that the majority of the site is characterised by culturally modified pastoral landscapes.

Notwithstanding the visual landscape is relatively open and free of development, the Appin and North Appin Precincts include electricity and gas infrastructure, transmission pylons and lines, groups of residential dwellings and hobbies farms, roads and other detracting visual elements.

There are few examples of visual components, features or combinations of features to make the majority of the site visually distinctive, unique, of high scenic quality or worthy of specific scenic or visual protection. Exceptions include visually prominent and distinctive stands and corridors of mature vegetation, most of which are shown to be retained and augmented within the Appin and North Appin Precincts Indicative Plan and Appin (Part) Precinct Structure Plan - Release Area 1.

Assessment of the likely visual effects and impacts is 'high level' in relation to potential future development across the area and is focussed on indicative layouts for the Appin (Part) Precinct Structure Plan - Release Area 1

The majority of the Appin (Part) Precinct is of low visibility from surrounding public domain locations, where the eastern edges of Release Area 1 will be of medium and high visibility from a section of Wilton Road, for a short period of time and from moving, viewing situations.

Based on a review of the Release Area 1, potential views to future development will in part be mitigated by a north-south aligned and heavily vegetation riparian corridor, a large vegetated reserve, flexible open space and the blocking effects of the local vegetated ridgeline which sits broadly in a north south alignment.

Urbis support the planning proposal to rezone the Appin and North Appin Precincts from a visual perspective as a result of the highly modified nature of the site, the limited level of unique visual features and the response of the design for Release Area 1 in maintaining and augmenting the existing significant vegetation groupings to mitigate visual impacts.

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE APPIN PROJECT

Greater Sydney's population is projected to grow to approximately 6.1 million by 2041 – over a million more people than currently live in the region.

The NSW Government has identified Growth Areas as major development areas that will assist in accommodating this growth. The Greater Macarthur Growth Area (**GMGA**) is one such growth area and is a logical extension of the urban form of south-west Sydney. The GMGA is divided into precincts. The Appin Precinct and North Appin Precinct are the southernmost land release precincts of the GMGA. The goal is to deliver 21,000+ dwellings.

The land is to be rezoned and released for development to achieve this goal. A submission has been prepared by Walker Corporation Pty Limited and Walker Group Holdings Pty Limited (the **Proponent**) to rezone 1,378 hectares of land (**the site**) within the Appin Precinct from *RU2 Rural Landscape* to the following zones:

Urban Development Zone

Zone 1 Urban Development (UD)

Special Purposes Zone

Zone SP2 Infrastructure (SP2)

Conservation Zone

Zone C2 Environmental Conservation (C2)

The zonings are shown on the Appin (Part) Precinct Plan (**the precinct plan**). 'The precinct plan' will be incorporated into the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Precincts – Western Parkland City) 2021* and contain the provisions (clauses and maps) that will apply to 'the site.' 'The precinct plan' envisages the delivery of 12,000+ new homes.

A structure plan has been prepared for the site and is shown on the Appin (Part) Precinct Structure Plan (**the structure plan**). It identifies staging and the first stage to be developed – Release Area 1. Release Area 1 is anticipated to deliver 3,500+ dwellings.

The submission is aligned with strategic land use planning, State and local government policies and infrastructure delivery. The development potential is tempered by a landscape-based approach that protects the environment and landscape values, shaping the character of new communities. A series of residential neighbourhoods are to be delivered within the landscape corridors of the Nepean and Cataract Rivers, supported by local amenities, transit corridors and community infrastructure.

The submission includes a hierarchy of plans. The plans and their purpose are summarised in Table 1.

1.2 INTRODUCTION

Urbis have been engaged by the Proponent to prepare an Landscape Visual Impact Assessment Statement to support the Appin and North Appin Precincts Indicative Plan.

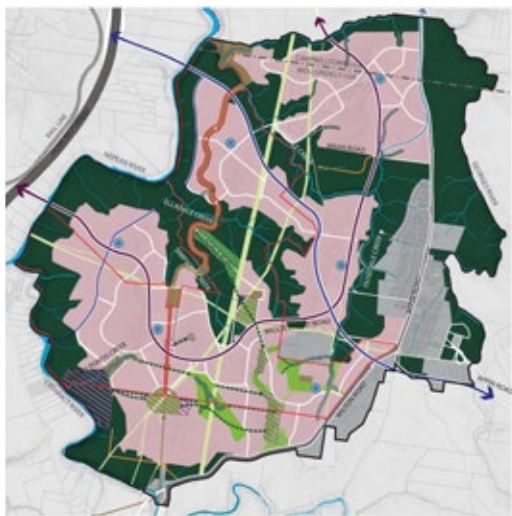
The Appin and North Appin Precincts are the southernmost land release areas of the Greater Macarthur Growth Area (**GMGA**) – refer to Figure 1 and Table 2 for key features of the precincts.

The Appin and North Appin Precincts immediately neighbours the suburbs of Gilead to the north, Wilton to the south and Douglas Park to the west. Dharawal National Park, a large protected national park, is located to the east. The precincts are predominately bound by waterways, with Mallaty Creek to the north, George's River to the east, Nepean River to the west and Cataract River to the south.

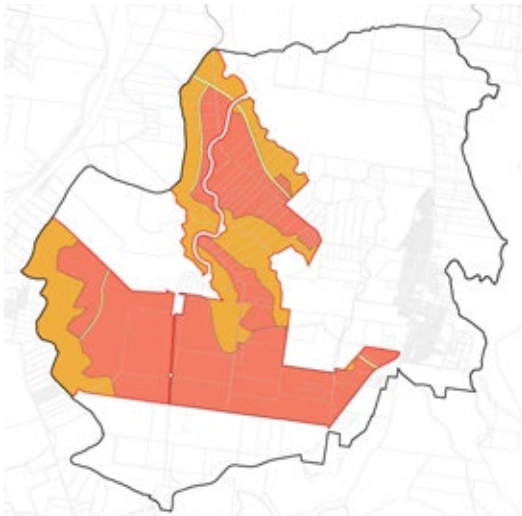
This report is an Addendum to and should be read in conjunction with, the **Appin & North Appin Precincts Urban Context Report** prepared by Urbis.

Table 1 Title and Purpose of Plans

1. Appin & North Appin Precincts INDICATIVE PLAN	2. APPIN (PART) PRECINCT PLAN (THE PRECINCT PLAN)	3. APPIN (PART) PRECINCT STRUCTURE PLAN (THE STRUCTURE PLAN)
Broader context & for information purposes only. It has no statutory weight. It identifies: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Higher-order transport networkCentres hierarchySchool sitesConservation areasResidential areasCultural sites and connections	It shows the land proposed to be rezoned (the site) and incorporated into a new schedule in the <i>Western Parkland City SEPP 2021</i> . The precinct plan contains the development provisions (clauses and maps) applicable to the site and is used in assessing development applications.	Structure plan for the site, showing staging of release areas. It illustrates land use components including (but not limited to): <ul style="list-style-type: none">Low and medium-density residentialRetail and employment centresSchoolOpen spaceDrainage network/basinsTransport network



(21,000+ dwellings)



(12,000+ dwellings)



(12,000+ dwellings)
(inc. Release Area 1 - 3,500+ dwellings)

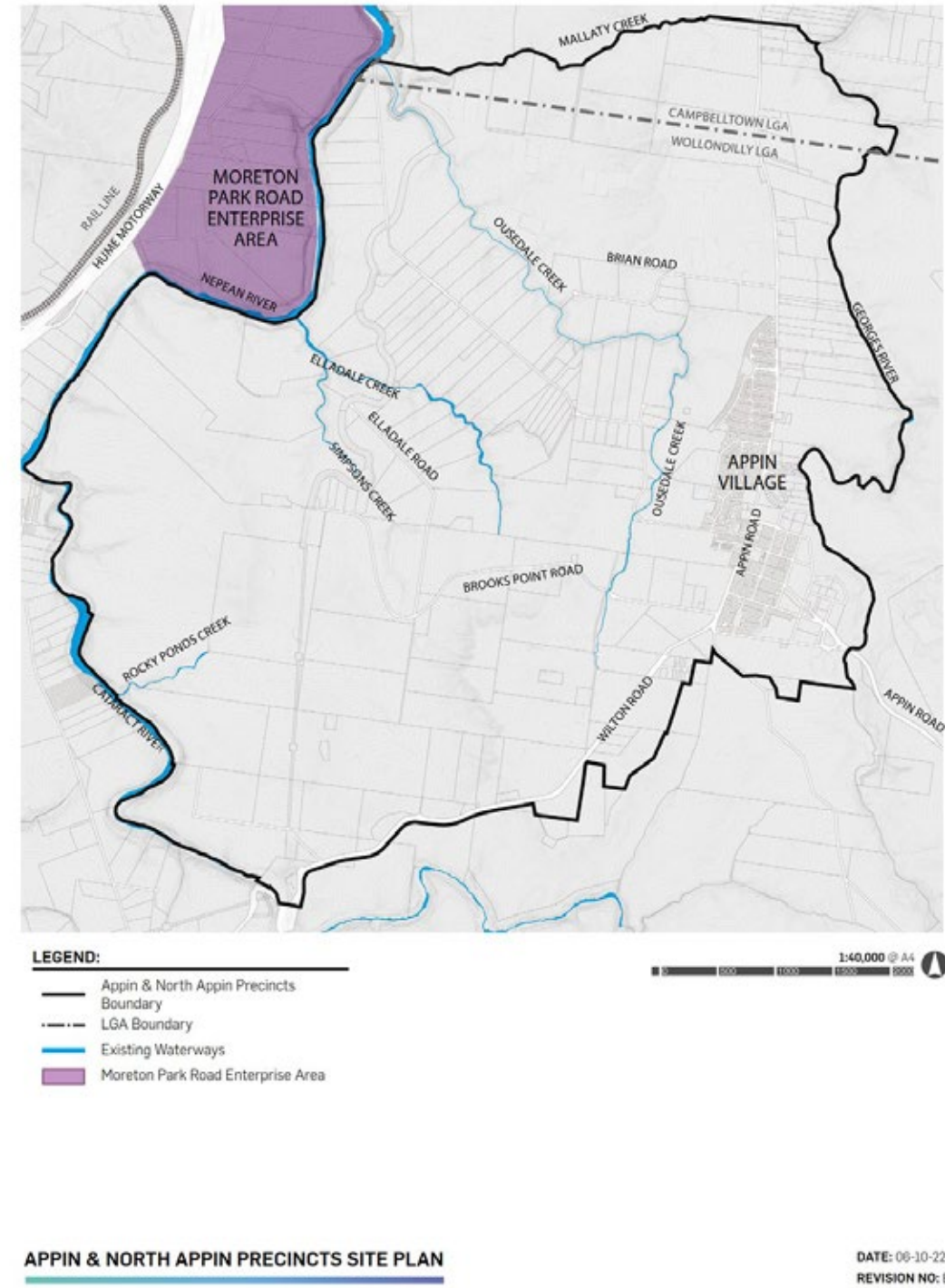
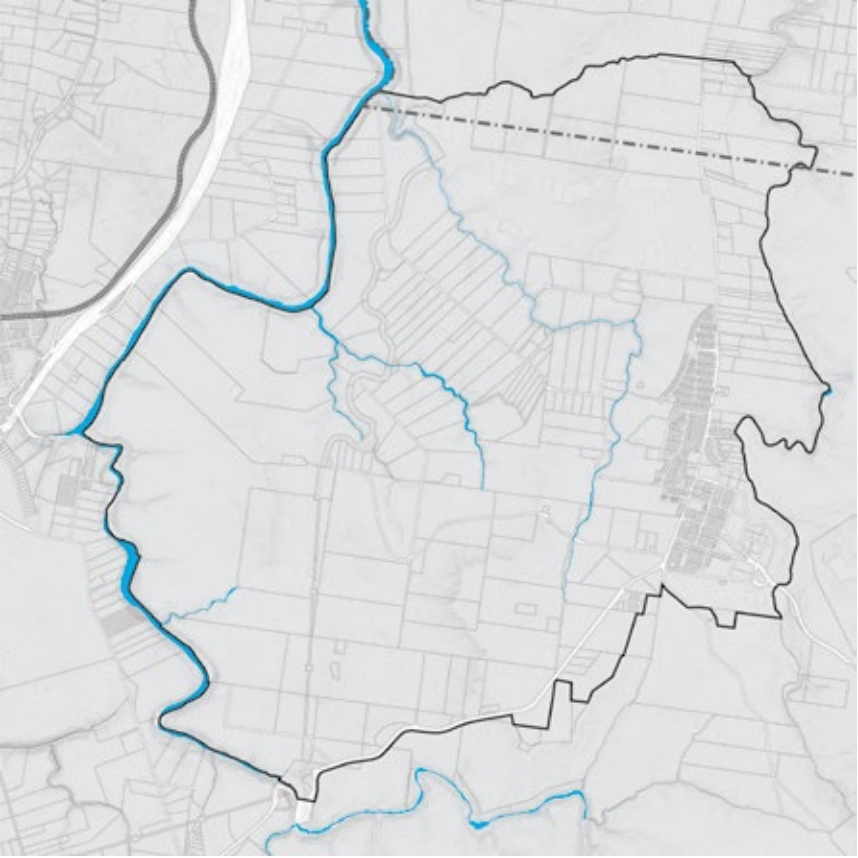


Figure 1 - Boundary of Appin and North Appin Precincts

Table 2 Table 2: Appin & North Appin Precincts Indicative Plan – summary of key attributes

Location	Key Attributes	
<div>  </div>	Area	• 3,826 ha
	LGA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part Wollondilly • Part Campbelltown
	Proposed Dwellings	• 21,000+
	Proposed Population	• 65,000+

This report summarises the desktop review and analysis of relevant background information and the fieldwork undertaken to inspect the precinct. The objectives of the report are:

- Provide visual analysis and determination of visual character areas of the Appin & North Appin Precincts
- Map the visual resources and external visibility of the precincts
- Map visual opportunities
- Analysis of visual effects of Appin & North Appin Precincts Indicative Plan and Release Area 1 on baseline factors.

This report is limited to an assessment of the visual effects and impacts only, of future potential development across the site, on existing baseline visual information.

All information gathered relates to the identification of visual and scenic resources, including visually significant unique features, external visibility of parts of the subject site, key external views to and from the site and internal visual connections within the site including linkages to between identified features for example heritage items.

This information has been based on a desktop review of relevant aerial mapping, high-level consideration of cultural values (Indigenous and Non-Indigenous), technical reports and detailed fieldwork inspections of the Appin and North Appin Precincts.

Relevant factors regarding the retention and protection of fauna corridors, biodiversity, non-indigenous heritage, servicing restrictions, critical infrastructure and practical considerations have been considered and contribute in part to the key findings which primarily relate to visual opportunities and constraints.

For further detailed information regarding the Strategic Policy Context of the site, its physical and regional context please refer to the **Appin & North Appin Precincts Urban Context Report** prepared by Urbis.

This report concludes:

- There are few examples of visual components, features or combinations of features to make the majority of the site visually distinctive, unique, of high scenic quality or worthy of specific scenic or visual protection and that the majority of the precinct is of low visibility from surrounding public domain locations

- Historical land uses and cultural modification across the Appin & North Appin Precincts results in a visual landscape of low scenic quality.
- Limited viewing time of Release Area 1 for vehicles using Walton Road.
- Release Area 1 proposes new boundary planting adjacent to Wilton Road which will filter views of built form and add new linear stands of vegetation.

The rezoning Proposal can be supported in its current form.

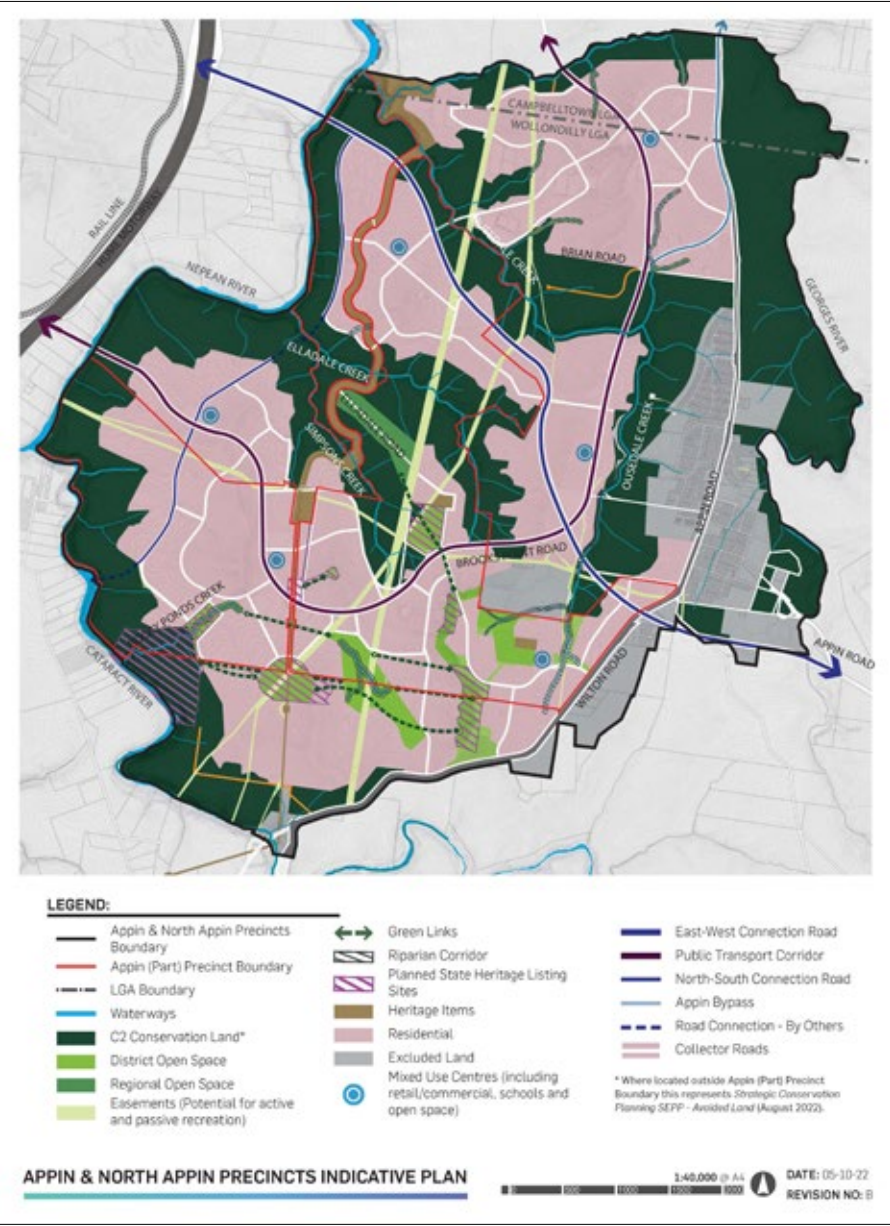


Figure 2 - Appin & North Appin Precincts Indicative Plan

SECTION 2:

VISUAL ASSESSMENT PROCESS

2.1 WOLLONDILLY SCENIC AND CULTURAL LANDSCAPE STUDY

A background review of the existing scenic and cultural landscape study that incorporates the Appin Precinct was undertaken prior to fieldwork analysis.

The *Draft Wollondilly Scenic and Cultural Landscape Study* (WSCLS) prepared by Wollondilly Shire Council seeks to "enhance and protect views of scenic and cultural landscape from the public realm Wollondilly Shire Council LGA". The study identifies twelve Landscape Character Units across the entire LGA. Appin is predominantly categorised within the Upper Nepean Unit 10 (refer to adjacent Plan). This character unit comprises of areas between the foot slopes of the Razorback Range and the edge of the protected natural areas east of Wilton and Appin Roads.

The study describes the character unit 10 as an undulating landscape with extensive cleared areas that allow for long-distance views across the lower-lying areas to the surrounding hills. The landscape is bisected by steep sandstone gorges associated with the Nepean, Cataract, and Georges Rivers. From some select locations along the ridgeline, the top of the vegetated Razorback Range to the west can be seen as a dark ribbon in the background. However, due to dense vegetation cover and the existing topography in Appin views are limited.

The study identifies key visual elements to protect in the character unit 10. In relation to Appin these include:

- The mostly rural outlook from the rail line/s.
- Vegetated riparian corridors and steep sandstone gorges, including remnant bushland bands along the Nepean River and creek lines flowing towards it.
- Scenic values of the Nepean and Cataract River gorges.
- Rural land as buffer zones to bushland corridors.
- Open pastures and remnant vegetation on the mid and upper slopes in Appin that define the background of the view from many areas in Wollondilly; and

- Views to the Razorback Range from Appin Road/ Wilton Road, Wilton Park Road and Wilton Airport.

The study highlights that Landscape Character Unit 10 has a rich history, with multiple historic associations, development patterns and rural landscape indicating that it is an important cultural landscape. The visual relationship with elevated areas surrounding the Upper Nepean valley is integral to its character.

While the recommendations of this study highlight current visual amenity and their historic and cultural context, there appears to be little reference to future character with the Appin slopes progressively being transformed by urban development in accordance with its Growth Centre status and land use infrastructure plan.

Key Findings

- *Wollondilly Scenic and Cultural Landscape Study* (WSCLS) does not acknowledge the future footprint of urban capable land within the Appin Precinct and the impact this will have on key visual elements to protect. There are some inaccuracies in this study about the views in and out of Appin.
- Site-specific assessment of visual context is required to verify specific locations of important and sensitive view places and views, and the potential visibility of future development within the urban capable land.

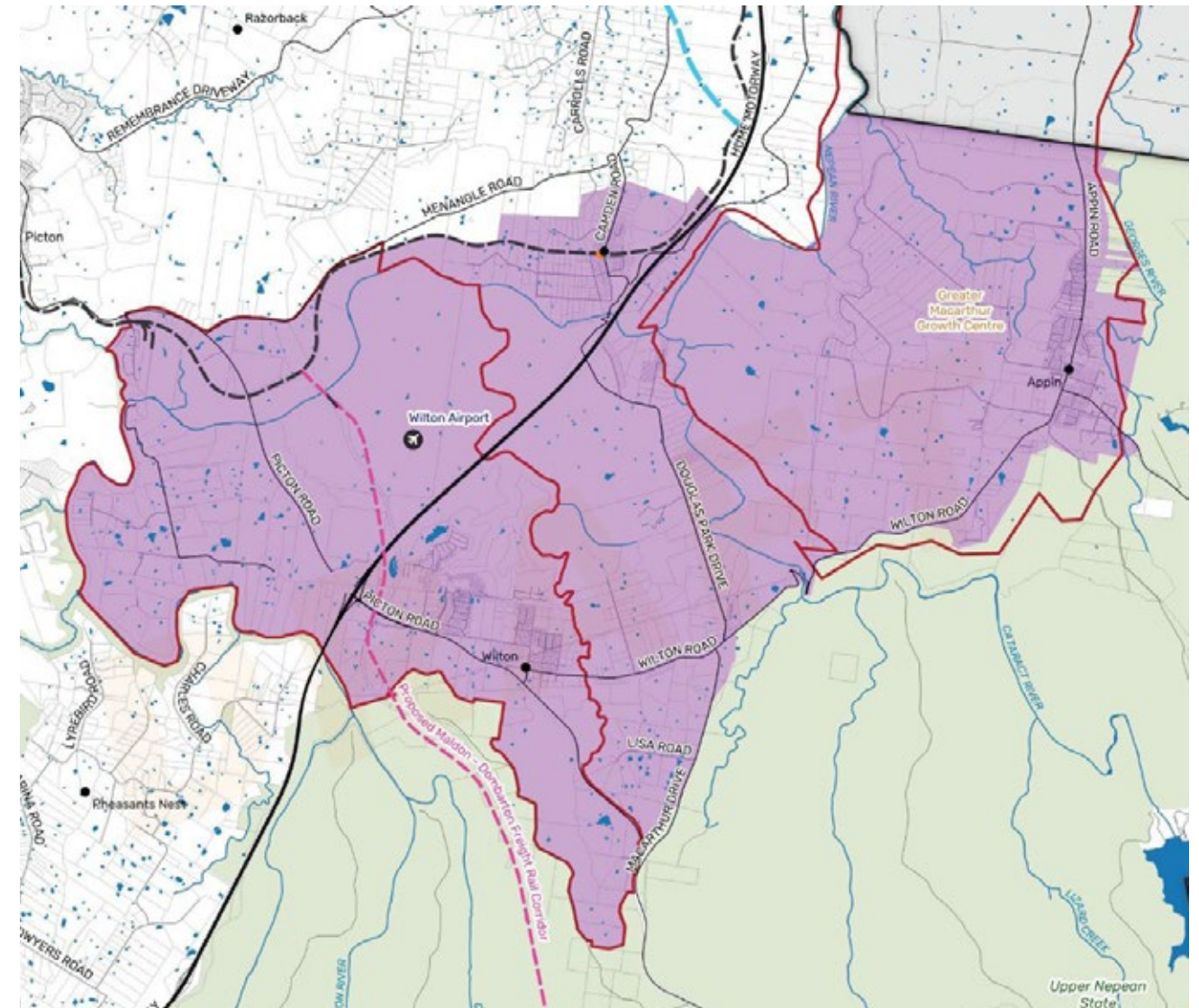


Figure 3 - Plan of Landscape Character Unit 10 (Source: Wollondilly Scenic and Cultural Landscape Study)

2.2 VIEWSHED ANALYSIS

The north and south-west of the site boundary predominantly features rural land and small towns in the suburbs of Wilton, Douglas Park, Menangle, and Gilead. Wilton is the closest town to Appin with a small population of 3000, followed by the larger Campbelltown to the north. The City of Wollongong sits south-east of Appin at the coastal edge. It is best known for its heavy industry, ports, continuous chain of surfing beaches, as well as attraction sites; Nan Tien Buddhist temple, Jamberoo Action Park, and Wollongong Botanic Garden.

The Nepean River and Cataract River is a major waterway which flows north-south at the site boundary, connecting up to the Warragamba River. Two water supply diversion weirs managed by WaterNSW are located near Wilton and Appin. Built in 1888, the weirs are an important part of the water supply system. WaterNSW will continue to provide upgrades for efficient waterflow of the river.

As a rural locality, the area lends itself to open space and tranquillity which can be seen in the various retreat centres and camp-sites, bed and breakfast stays, and religious venues. An example of this is to the south of the site is the Bodhisadha Forest Monastery, a Buddhist temple which sits at the south boundary near Wilton Rd, or the St Mary's Towers Retreat centre at Douglas Park which is also a historical landmark. Wineries and riding ranches too can be seen at the east and north west of the site such as Glenbernie Orchard, and Razorback Ridge Wines.

The north and south site edges feature dense bushland and national park conservation areas with picnic areas, and lookouts. National Parks bounding the site include the Dharwal National Park known for its creeks waterfalls, and swimming holes. South of the site features the memorial gathering site for the Appin Massacre which is held at the Cataract Dam.



Figure 4 - Appin and North Appin Precincts potential viewshed analysis

2.3 VISUAL ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Following a desktop review and analysis of relevant background information including aerial imagery and potential viewshed, Urbis inspected the subject site including the majority of the Appin & North Appin Precincts in March 2022.

Geo-tagged high-resolution photographs were captured and analysed to determine a number of discreet visual character areas and to provide examples of unique visual resources present across the site (see Figures 5 - 8). Visual character areas and visually significant resources were mapped across the site and together with visibility form the basis of this report

VISUAL CHARACTER is a term which refers to predominant visual features that are present in the landscape or across the site. Visual analysis is undertaken at two levels, firstly across the whole site area at a broad level and then at a more detailed level in relation to individual landscape character areas identified based on any unique attributes and the presence of consistent visual elements of features. In other words Visual Character Areas (VCAs) are defined by geographical areas of consistent character or consistent mix of individual attributes.

Character areas relate to the base-line attributes that are considered most significant to the visual character of the area, in particular natural landscape features such as scenic natural landscapes or groupings and the presence of water bodies. We note that the broad VCA boundaries shown are indicative only and defined to clarify potential areas for future land uses.

The visual character of the locality in which the development would be seen is identified. It consists of identification of the physical and built components of the area and the setting of the proposal that contribute to its visual character. The character elements include topography, vegetation, land uses, settlement pattern, urban and built form, interface of land-water elements, maritime features and waterways. Visual character is a baseline factor against which the level of change caused by the proposal can be assessed. The desired future character of the locality is also relevant to assessing the extent of acceptable change to character. .



Figure 5 - Vernacular rural buildings



Figure 6 - View west from Post Mill Road, Appin
















Figure 7 - View north west from Brian Road



Figure 8 - View north west from within ceremonial area

2.4 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

LEGEND	
	Appin & North Appin Precincts
	Appin (Part) Precinct
	LGA Boundary
Landscape Character Areas	
	Pastoral Landscapes (R1): Open areas of pastoral landscapes, grazing and live-stock, intermittent remnant vegetation, isolated residences and access to distant views. The landscape has been highly modified as a result of agricultural uses with large levels of vegetative clearing.
	Rural Small Holdings (R2): Small pockets of semi-rural living with larger lots than Appin township but smaller than surrounding landscape, often forming small clusters of residential dwellings with visual accessibility to one another and medium to close distance views of the surrounding landscape resulting from surrounding vegetation and topography.
	Township / Suburban Settlement: Visually established suburb typically characterised by a grid system road layout and settlement pattern of small lot living and mature vegetation and gardens. The settlement is noticeably different from the surrounding
	Recreational: Highly modified landscape for the purposes of recreation in which the landscape is distinctly separate from its surrounds due to the highly specialised nature if its use.
	Commercial Holdings: Commercial enterprises such as the Colliery that are at odds with the surrounding built-form scale (both commercial and residential).
	Visually Contained Green Area: Visually secluded area characterised by mature trees surrounding an open grassed area. Views of the highly modified surrounding landscape and infrastructure are largely obscured, creating a noticeably separate area from the rest of the site.
	Significant Vegetation Groupings: Predominantly characterised by vegetated riparian corridors along creeks and rivers which is distinctive due to form, density and colouration of the tree canopy. Mature vegetation often limits long distance views across the site and creates visually contained and physically separated areas throughout the site.
	Existing Easements
	Excluded Land
	Excluded Urban Greening

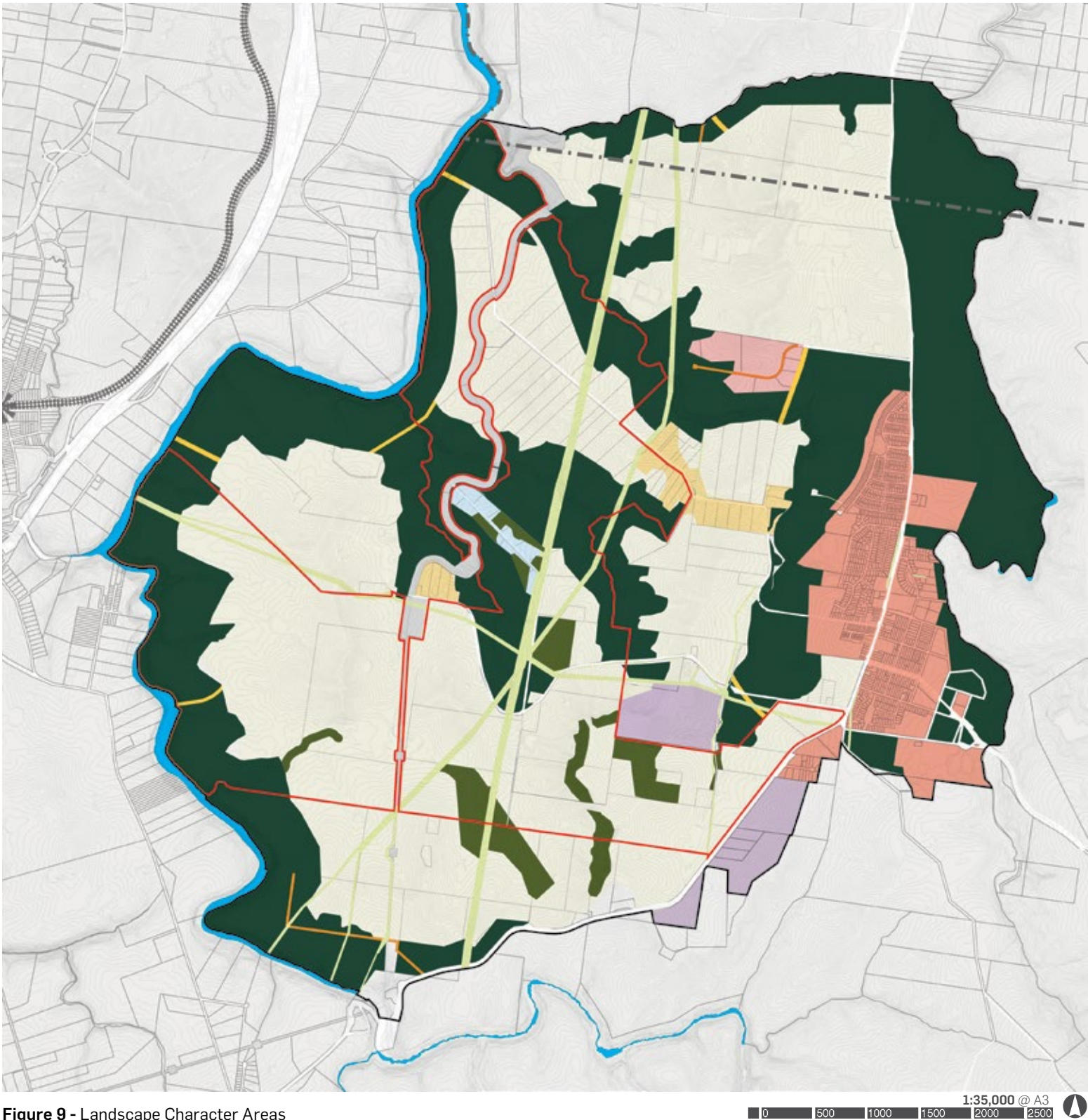


Figure 9 - Landscape Character Areas

2.5 VISUAL RESOURCES AND EXTERNAL VISIBILITY

SCENIC QUALITY

Scenic quality is a term used in landscape assessment and perception research which relates to the likely expectations of viewers regarding scenic beauty, attractiveness or preferences of the visual settings. The level of scenic quality attributed to a site is baseline factor against which to measure the visual effects. Empirical research about scenic quality and cultural values of aesthetic landscapes as determined in empirical research undertaken in Australia by academics including Terrance Purcell, Richard Lamb, Colleen Morris and Gary Moore. Moore (2006) summarises the theoretical and methodological constructs in the field of environment, behaviour and society (EBS) and discusses the largest body of research in this area prepared by Associate Professor Terry Purcell and Dr Richard Lamb. The research details result in relation to the experience, perception and aesthetics of natural and cultural landscapes, affective experience of the environment, and the perception of scenic quality.

SCENIC QUALITY OF THE SITE

The precinct would be considered in isolation and as part of its wider visual setting as low-moderate scenic quality given its natural topography, open nature and lack of built forms, presence of visually significant stands of vegetated slopes and riparian corridors.

Notwithstanding overall the Appin and North Appin Precincts is also characterised by isolated but visible infrastructure elements including high voltage transmission easement, gas extraction sites and associated electricity sub-stations. The previous and current uses, and presence of hobby farms and storage areas and relatively homogeneous large areas of pastoral landscapes together provide a 'down-weight' to the overall scenic quality and uniqueness of the Appin & North Appin Precincts.

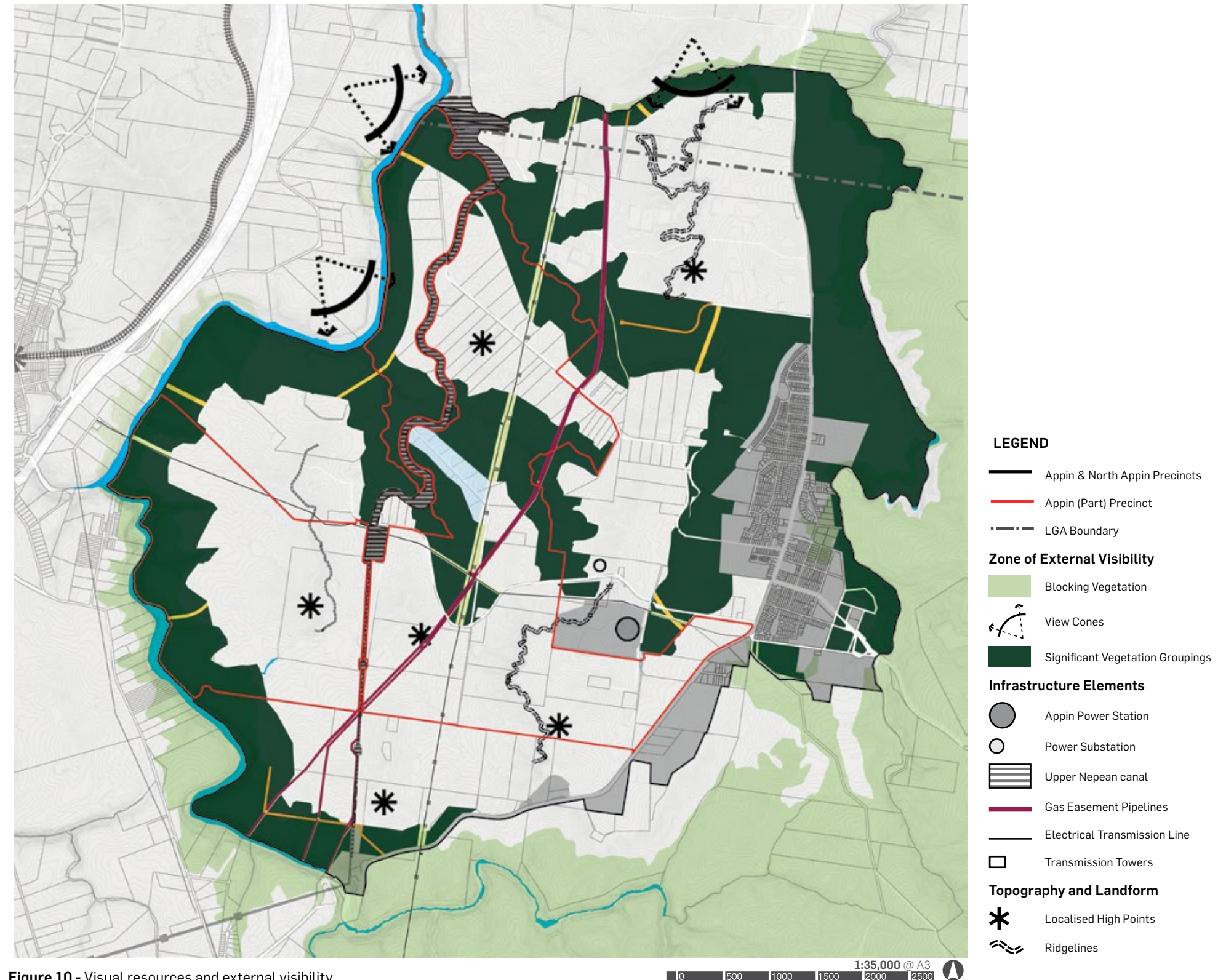


Figure 10 - Visual resources and external visibility

REPRESENTATIVE VISUAL RESOURCES IMAGES



Figure 11 - Power lines and easements



Figure 12 - Upper Canal



Figure 13 - Appin substation



Figure 14 - Transmission pylons and easements



Figure 15 - Significant mature vegetation groupings



Figure 16 -Ridgeline to the west of Teston Farm

2.6 VISUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Maintain views to:

- Razorback Ridge, Blue Mountains, Heritage sites and Teston Farm
- Long distance views north from Teston Farm area towards Camden scenic hills

Topography and vegetation create visually contained and separated pockets within the site with the opportunity to create distinct areas. Potential for more intense development that would not impact on long distance views.

Towards the site

Maintain ridgelines and localised high points clear of development where possible to protect perceived scenic quality and long-distance views towards the site for the surrounding landscape and community. Maintaining these elements in their current form helps to visually maintain an aspect of the 'sense of place' for people when viewing the site.

LEGEND

— Appin & North Appin Precincts

— Appin (Part) Precinct

--- LGA Boundary

Views

← Key Views

← Secondary View

○ Indicative View Point Location

↻ Wollondilly Scenic Study Identified Views

Visually Contained Areas

Topography and Landform

* Localised High Points

~ Ridgelines

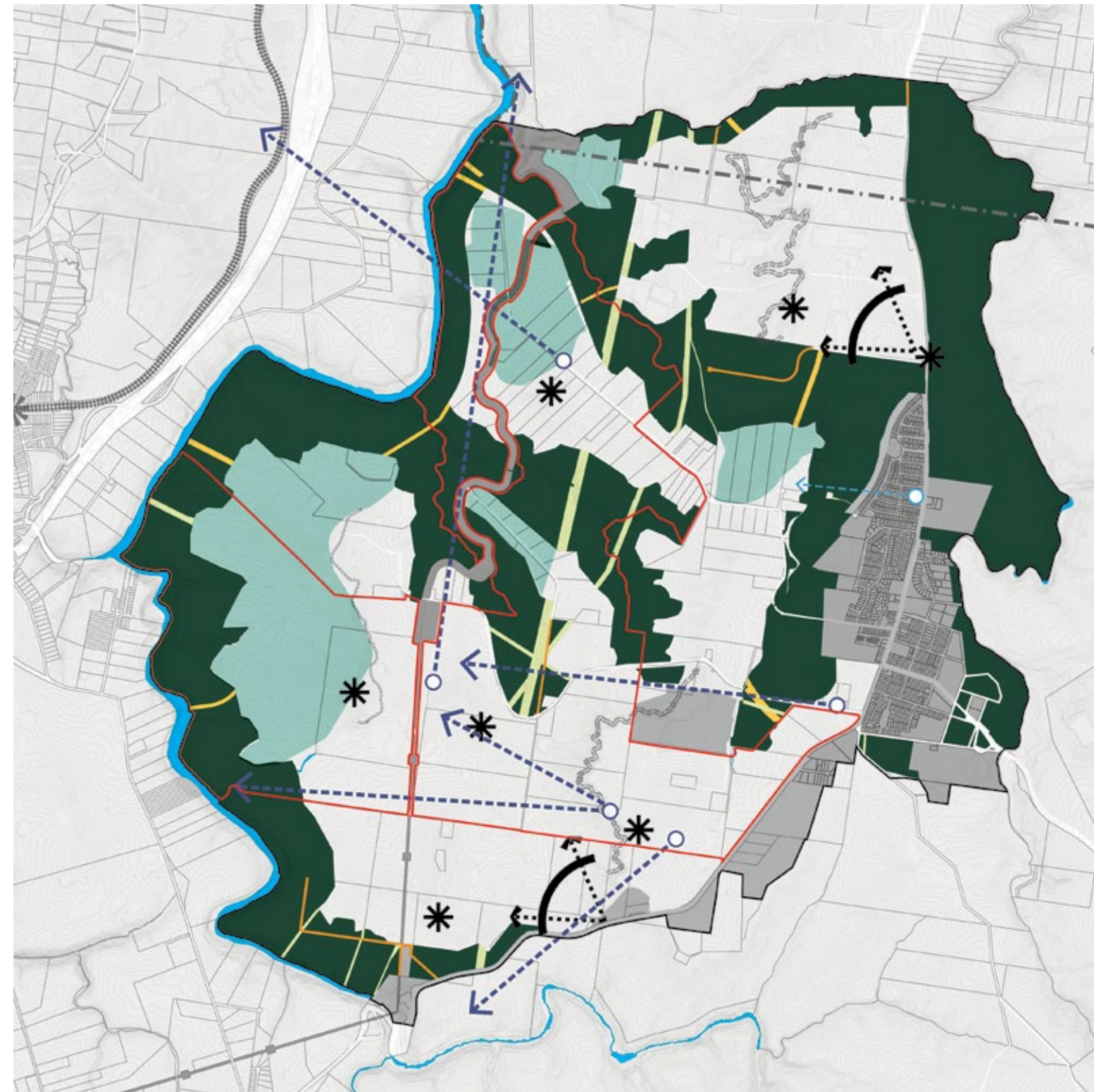


Figure 17 - Visual opportunities

SECTION 3:

**VISUAL ANALYSIS KEY
FINDINGS**

3.1 KEY FINDINGS

Key visual insights include the following:

VISUAL CHARACTER

Large areas of the Appin & North Appin Precincts are homogeneous in terms of visual character and scenic quality. These areas are largely devoid of visually prominent or distinctive resources other than mature stands of vegetation and riparian vegetation bounding the site to the south and west. In other words there are few examples of visual components, features or combinations of features to make the majority of the site visually distinctive, unique or worthy of specific protection. Landscapes of similar visual character exist to the west, south and east and in fact characterise the majority of south-west Sydney and the Growth Area. Exceptions to this and features are included in Figure 10 - Visual Resources and External Visibility.

EXTERNAL VISIBILITY

The majority of the site is of low visibility from the public domain. Walker Corp landholdings within the Appin (Part) Precinct are of low visibility from surrounding main roads including Appin Road, Wilton Road, Douglas Park Road, M31 and Moreton Park Road. Visibility into the majority of the site is limited due to intervening undulating topography, low, local ridgelines and knolls within the site and due to the presence of dense stands and corridors of mature vegetation.

In our opinion, the presence of such features and large areas of relatively homogeneous pastoral landscapes together reduce the overall scenic quality of the precinct's visual landscape.

3.2 ANALYSIS OF VISUAL EFFECTS OF APPIN & NORTH APPIN PRECINCTS INDICATIVE PLAN AND RELEASE AREA 1 ON BASELINE FACTORS

A high level assessment of the likely visual effects has been undertaken to assess the potential future development across the area and is based on Appin and North Appin Precincts Indicative Plan and Appin (Part) Precinct Structure Plan - Release Area 1 (Figure 18).

Overall, the precinct is of low visibility from the surrounding public domain.

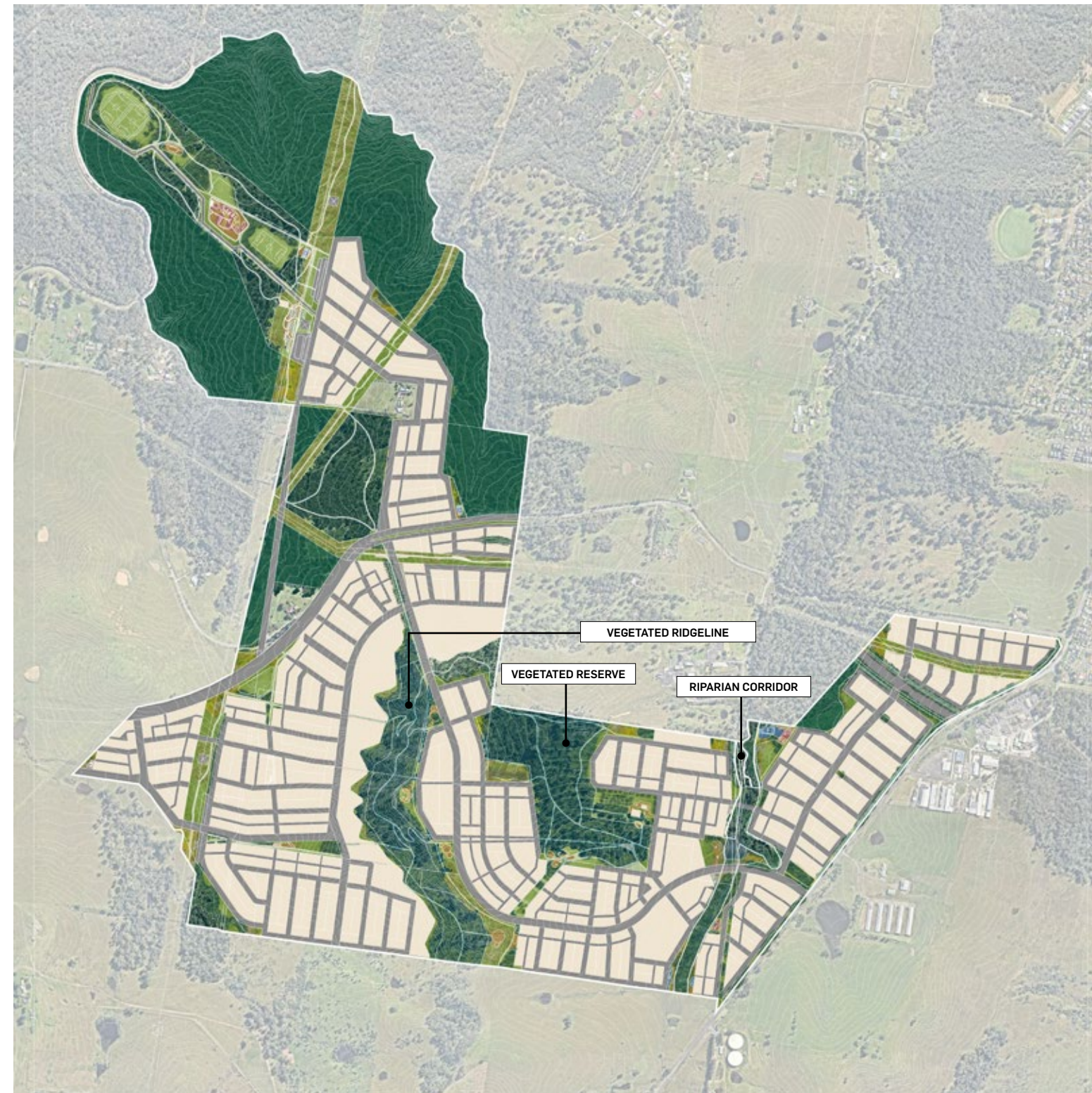


Figure 18 - Appin (Part) Precinct Structure Plan - Release Area 1 Landscape Masterplan

The eastern extent of the proposed Release Area 1 will be of medium - high visibility due to the eastern boundary running adjacent to Wilton Road. While there will be high visibility from Wilton Road, this will be for a short period of time from moving vehicles which will limit the overall viewing time of the area.

The retention of significant vegetation groupings identified within the Landscape Character Areas and Visual Resources analysis contributes to visual mitigation of potential views of built form within Release Area 1 through:

- A north-south vegetated riparian corridor.
- The blocking effects of the local vegetated ridgeline which is broadly aligned on a north-south axis.
- The use of tree planting to the eastern boundary of the structure plan adjacent to Wilton Road.

3.3 SUMMARY

The visual assessment of the Appin & North Appin Precincts identified several distinct landscape character areas and visual resources within the site.

Historical land uses and cultural modification results in a visual landscape of low scenic quality.

The exception is the identified significant vegetative groupings and stands of mature vegetation which form a prominent visual feature in the landscape and often act as boundaries and define landscape character areas.

The structure plan has recognised the importance of the vegetative groupings in acting as significant visual features within the landscape and their potential to mitigate visual impacts of the proposed built form visibility from adjacent roads through retention within the structure plan.

The Proposal can be supported from a Visual perspective for the following reasons:

- Limited external views into site, with close range views only available from the north and north-west, and longer distance views from locations such as Razorback Ridge being viewed within a wide visual catchment over distance.
- The highly modified nature of the Precinct through historical land use and corresponding limited visually distinctive or unique landscape elements.
- Retention and augmentation of significant site vegetation.

- Limited viewing time of Release Area 1 for vehicles using Walton Road.
- Release Area 1 proposes new boundary planting adjacent to Wilton Road which will filter views of built form and add new linear stands of vegetation.



Figure 19 - View west from vegetated ridgeline highpoint towards Nattai National Park



