

NORTH APPIN (PART) PRECINCT

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ASSESSMENT

PREPARED FOR
INGHAM PROPERTY GROUP

FINAL

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we work and on which our site is located, the Dharawal people, and pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging. We thank them for their continuing care of Country and the skies, waterways, lands and spirits of which Country is comprised. We acknowledge the cultural significance of the Appin region to Aboriginal people and are committed to embedding this cultural significance in our work in meaningful and respectful ways.





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CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----------|
| INTRODUCTION | 6 |
| PROJECT OVERVIEW | 7 |
| PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT | 7 |
| PLANNING CONTEXT & TECHNICAL STUDIES | 8 |
| GREATER MACARTHUR 2040 | 9 |
| WOLLONDILLY DCP 2016 | 9 |
| WOLLONDILLY SCENIC AND CULTURAL LANDSCAPES STUDY | 9 |
| LANDSCAPE VISUAL ASSESSMENT | 10 |
| EXTERNAL VISIBILITY OF THE SITE | 11 |
| VISUAL ASSESSMENT PROCESS & DOCUMENTED VIEWS | 12 |
| LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS | 16 |
| VISUAL RESOURCES OF THE SITE | 17 |
| KEY FINDINGS | 18 |
| VISUAL OPPORTUNITIES | 18 |

01

INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROJECT OVERVIEW

Greater Macarthur Growth Area plays an essential role in the delivery of Greater Cities Commission's strategic vision set out in *The Greater Sydney Region Map – Metropolis of Three Cities*. Greater Macarthur 2040: An interim plan for the Greater Macarthur Growth Area was released by the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) in November 2018 and in November 2022, the Greater Macarthur 2040 Structure Plan was finalised. Together, these documents depict the strategic planning framework for the Growth Area and will ultimately guide precinct planning.

North Appin Precinct has been identified as one of the southernmost land release areas and is envisaged to deliver around 5,000 new homes, a local centre and a north-south Transport Corridor.

The North Appin (part) Precinct is owned by IPG, within which the NSW Government has identified delivery of up to 3,000 new homes and the securing and implementation of a koala corridor along Ousedale Creek.

Following the release of the final Structure Plan, and as the majority landowner within the North Appin Precinct, IPG seeks the opportunity to submit a Planning Proposal for their site to contribute to the delivery of homes, jobs and transport infrastructure as envisaged in the Greater Macarthur 2040 Plan .

1.2 PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

Urbis have been engaged by Ingham Property Group to undertake baseline analysis of the visual environment and to provide visual findings and recommendations to inform the spatial arrangement of future development across the site.

This information provides just one layer of information relevant for consideration along with ecological, cultural, physical and other technical information. The retention of areas of high scenic quality and distinctive or visually significant landscape character areas is valued by local communities and Councils, and as such should be given due consideration.

A detailed Landscape Visual Impact Assessment has not been undertaken at this stage given the planning stage of the project and the indicative nature of future development. In this regard the report assesses the response of the North Appin (Part) Precinct Draft Structure Plan against the visual resources, opportunities and constraints of the subject site.

02

PLANNING CONTEXT & TECHNICAL STUDIES

2.1 GREATER MACARTHUR 2040

The Greater Macarthur 2040 : An Interim Plan for the Greater Macarthur Growth Area (Greater Macarthur Plan) provides a framework for the future of the Greater Macarthur Growth Area (GMGA) and the development of land release areas from Menangle Park to Appin. It intends to build on the critical role of the Campbelltown-Macarthur Metropolitan Cluster, by providing new jobs and homes for the residents of southwest Sydney.

The plan identifies the landscape south of Menangle Creek as characterised by relatively flat and open pastoral land with scattered tree cover, of low to moderate scenic value.

It also identifies planning principles that are relevant to views and visual impact assessment in regards to precinct planning and that any planning must:

- be informed by a landscape assessment to take advantage of and retain key landscape features of the area, including high points, views to surrounding areas, creeks and areas of existing vegetation.

It further notes the importance of landform to the west of the site, specifically the Razorback Range which provides high impact vistas from within the GMGA.

2.2 WOLLONDILLY SHIRE COUNCIL DCP

No documented views or scenic protections within the site are identified in the DCP.

2.3 WOLLONDILLY SCENIC AND CULTURAL LANDSCAPE STUDY

A background review of the existing scenic and cultural landscape study that incorporates the site 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 ridge line, 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.

Furthermore, Appin is largely only visible from within the Appin landscape itself and the claim in the WSCLS that identify visibility of the mid and upper slopes from many parts of the Shire is inaccurate.

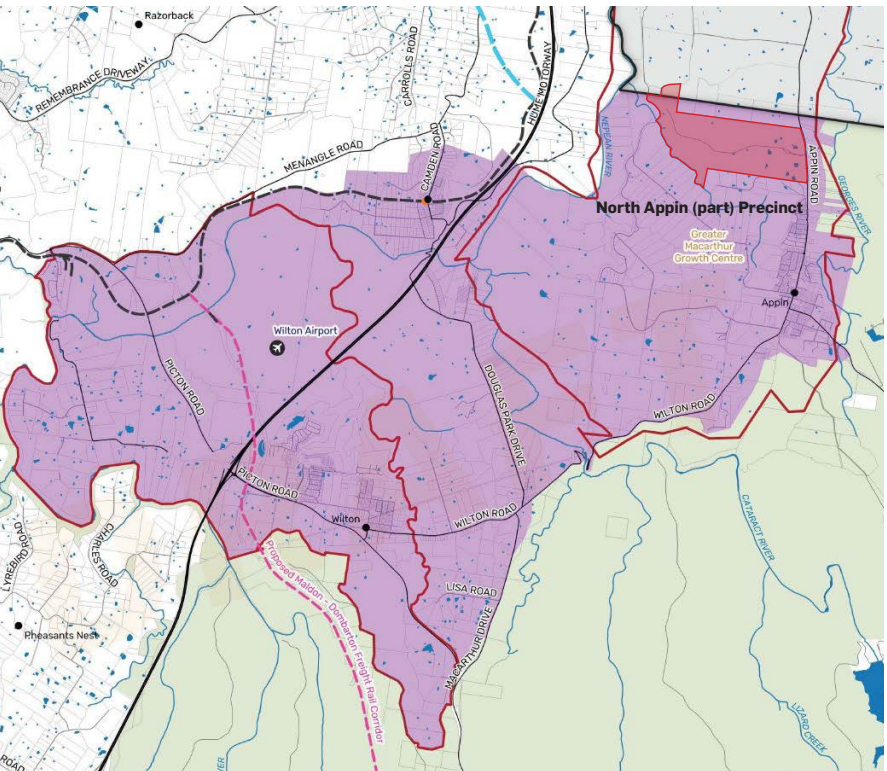


Figure 2 - PLAN OF LANDSCAPE CHARACTER UNIT 10 (Source: *Wollondilly Scenic and Cultural Landscape Study*)

03

LANDSCAPE VISUAL ASSESSMENT

3.1 EXTERNAL VISIBILITY OF THE SITE

The potential visual catchment is the theoretical area within which the proposal may be visible, and, in this regard, the visual catchment is larger than the area within which there would be discernible visual effects of the proposal. The visibility of any proposed development varies depending on constraints such as the blocking effects of intervening built form, vegetation or topography.

Visibility refers to the extent to which the proposal would be physically visible, identifiable for example as a new, novel, contrasting or alternatively as a recognisable but compatible feature. Various features affect the extent of visibility for example intervening buildings, the presence of vegetation, infrastructure and topography.

Prior to undertaking fieldwork, Urbis staff undertook a desktop review of all relevant statutory and non-statutory documents, an analysis of aerial imagery and topography including Google Earth to establish the potential visual catchment and to inform fieldwork inspections.

Filed work observations of the site were undertaken from a range of distances (close and medium) based on the potential viewshed analysis to establish the relevant visual catchment. Topography, existing built-form and mature vegetation significantly impact on the visibility of the existing site and the proposed development, with both becoming visually obstructed or highly filtered as a result of surrounding landscape elements, and therefore generally limits the effective visual catchment to close range views. It was found that:

- Views of the site are highly limited by topography and intervening vegetation.
- The eastern section of the site is most visible due to ridge line s and high points.
- Large extent of the eastern section of the site are visible to vehicles using Appin Road, although these are peripheral views from moving vehicles and as such as likely to be brief in nature.
- Views from south of the site (eg along Maquariedale Road) are almost entirely blocked by mature vegetation surrounding Ousedale Creek.
- The western section of the site is not visible from the surrounding landscape by topography and surrounding mature vegetation.
- The site is not visible from either the older residential or more contemporary area of Appin township.

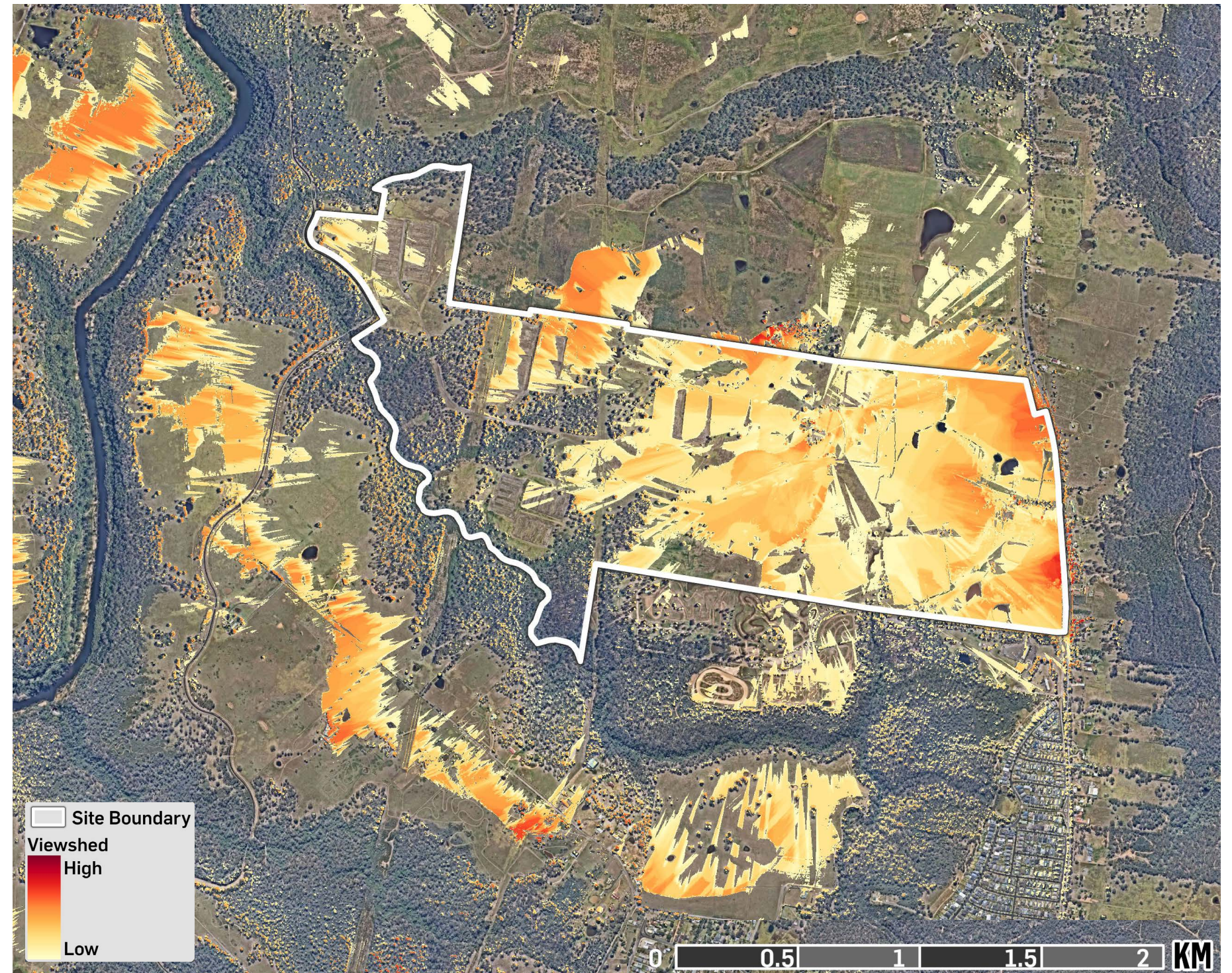


Figure 1 Potential visual catchment based on topography.

3.2 VISUAL ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The following pages assesses the predominant visual and landscape elements of the precinct including physical, natural and man-made features as well as views and vistas. The following definitions have been used to help determine the baseline visual qualities of landscape and sites in order to inform our assessment.

VISUAL CHARACTER

Visual character refers to predominant visual features that are present in the landscape. The visual character of the subject site may be partly defined by external or adjacent landscape features, that is the landscape sits within the immediate (local) and wider visual catchment.

Visual changes (visual effects) that contrast with and are not compatible with the predominant visual character of the landscape and surrounding landscapes may generate impacts on the visual character. Conversely existing and approved residential development around a site may increase its visual compatibility with surrounding visual landscape character depending on what is proposed.

VISUAL RESOURCES

Visual resources refers to unique or distinctive natural or built forms that are visually prominent on the site and in external public and private domain views towards the site. Visual resources contribute to the visual character and wider visual setting of the site. As such, visual resources may be easily identifiable individually or collectively by the community and in this regard may be valued by the local community. Significant visual resources of a site can be considered as baseline constraints for development. Visual resources can include stands of mature vegetation on a site that are highly visible or areas of undeveloped topography of 'natural' appearance, which contribute to the visual amenity of the site and to its visual character. Such features may be valued or recorded in statutory and non-statutory documents and where possible should be retained and enhanced so as to minimise the extent of visual change across a site and reduce potential impacts on specific views or on the predominant visual character of the site.

SCENIC QUALITY

Scenic quality is a term used in landscape assessment and visual perception research which relates to the likely expectations of viewers regarding scenic beauty, attractiveness or preferences for the visual settings. The level of scenic quality attributed to a site is a baseline factor against which to measure the visual effects and may act as a constraint to development.

3.3 DOCUMENTED VIEWS

Views from a variety of accessible locations were documented during fieldwork to inform the assessment. Viewpoint locations are shown in Figure 2 below, with views shown in the following pages.

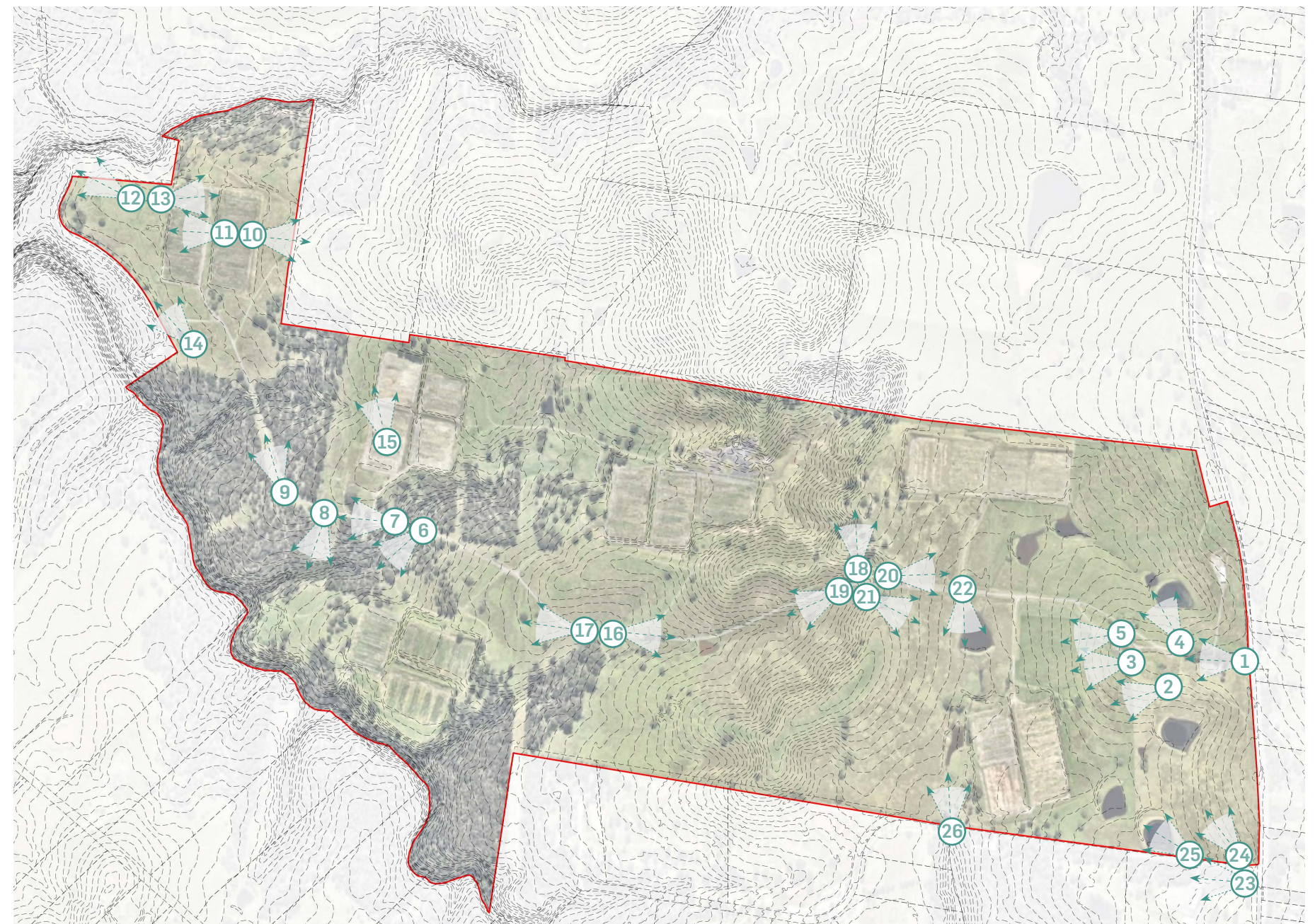


Figure 2 Viewpoint location map.



Figure 3 Viewpoint 1 - View west from site entrance from Appin Road.



Figure 4 Viewpoint 2A - View south-west from elevated area near site entrance to the Blue Mountains.



Figure 5 Viewpoint 2B - View north-west from elevated area near site entrance.



Figure 6 Viewpoint 3 - View south-west from site ridge line .



Figure 7 Viewpoint 4 - View north from internal site road of dam within Lily Ponds Gully.



Figure 8 Viewpoint 5 - View south-west of cattle equipment with distant view of the Blue Mountains.

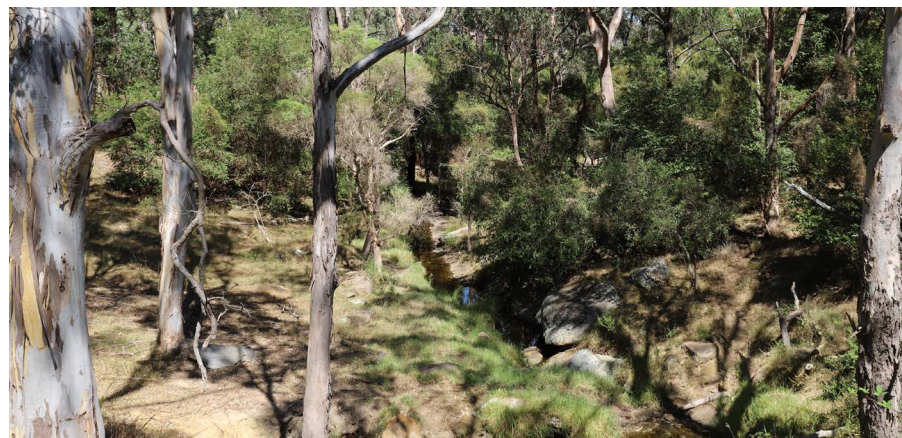


Figure 9 Viewpoint 6 - View south-west of creekline.



Figure 10 Viewpoint 7 - View east along internal site road.



Figure 11 Viewpoint 8 - view south of electricity transmission easement and pylons.



Figure 12 Viewpoint 9 - View north-west of internal site road with mature vegetation to either side.



Figure 13 Viewpoint 10 - View east of high point adjacent to site from former poultry farming site.



Figure 14 Viewpoint 11 - View west from former poultry location.



Figure 15 Viewpoint 12 - View west of Mallaty creekline with Sydney Canal beyond.



Figure 16 Viewpoint 13 - View east over former poultry farming site with external high point outside of the site in the distance.



Figure 17 Viewpoint 14 - View south-west of Sydney Canal adjacent to the site.



Figure 18 Viewpoint 15 - Highly modified landscape of former poultry farming site with electricity easement and mature vegetation adjacent.



Figure 19 Viewpoint 16 - View east from internal site road with undulating pastoral land.



Figure 20 Viewpoint 17 - View west from internal site road of pastoral land with partial views of distant ridge line s.



Figure 21 Viewpoint 18 - View north of largely cleared pastoral land with individual trees throughout.



Figure 22 Viewpoint 19 - View south-west from ridge line over undulating landform towards the Blue Mountains.



Figure 23 Viewpoint 20 - View east along internal site road towards site boundary and Appin Road.



Figure 24 Viewpoint 21 - View south-east over undulating pastoral land towards Brian Road.



Figure 25 Viewpoint 22 - View south over dam towards Brian Road.



Figure 26 Viewpoint 23 - View west along Brian Road (southern site boundary).



Figure 27 Viewpoint 24 - View of eastern site boundary from Brian Road.



Figure 28 Viewpoint 25 - View north-east over site from intersection of Brian Road and Appin Road.



Figure 29 Viewpoint 26 - View north of Lilly Ponds Gully.

3.4 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

LEGEND

— Site Boundary

Landscape Character Areas

- Riparian Vegetation:** 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.
- Open Rural Landscape:** Open rural landscape that is almost entirely clear of built form. Intermittent vegetation including riparian corridors that allows for expansive views of cleared land. The landscape has been highly modified as a result of agricultural uses such as large levels of vegetative clearing.
- Enclosed Area:** Areas visually contained by surrounding mature vegetation with low visibility from within the site and surrounding it with limited long distance views that is in contrast to much of the site, particularly the eastern half.
- Ridge & Slope:** Undulating slope with some remnant mature trees along the ridge line and sporadically on the slope but clear of significant groupings of vegetation. Provides topographical interest and separates the eastern, elevated part of the site from the lower western part.
- Modified Landscape:** Highly modified land due to previous use as poultry farm. The landforms are characterised as stoney with regenerating grass and weeds. Is noticeably different from the rural and vegetated lands surrounding it.
- Infrastructure:** Electricity transmission lines, pylons and easements with large linear expanses cleared of vegetation that allows long distance views through the site in north / south directions.



Figure 30 Landscape character areas within North Appin

3.5 VISUAL RESOURCES OF THE SITE

| LEGEND | |
|--|---|
| — | Site Boundary |
| Scenic Resources | |
| | Riparian and large grouping of vegetation |
| | Ridge & Slope |
| | Internal road |
| ● | Water body |
| | Modified land / previous building site |
| ■■■■ | Creek |
| Infrastructure Resources | |
| | Electricity easement & transmission line |

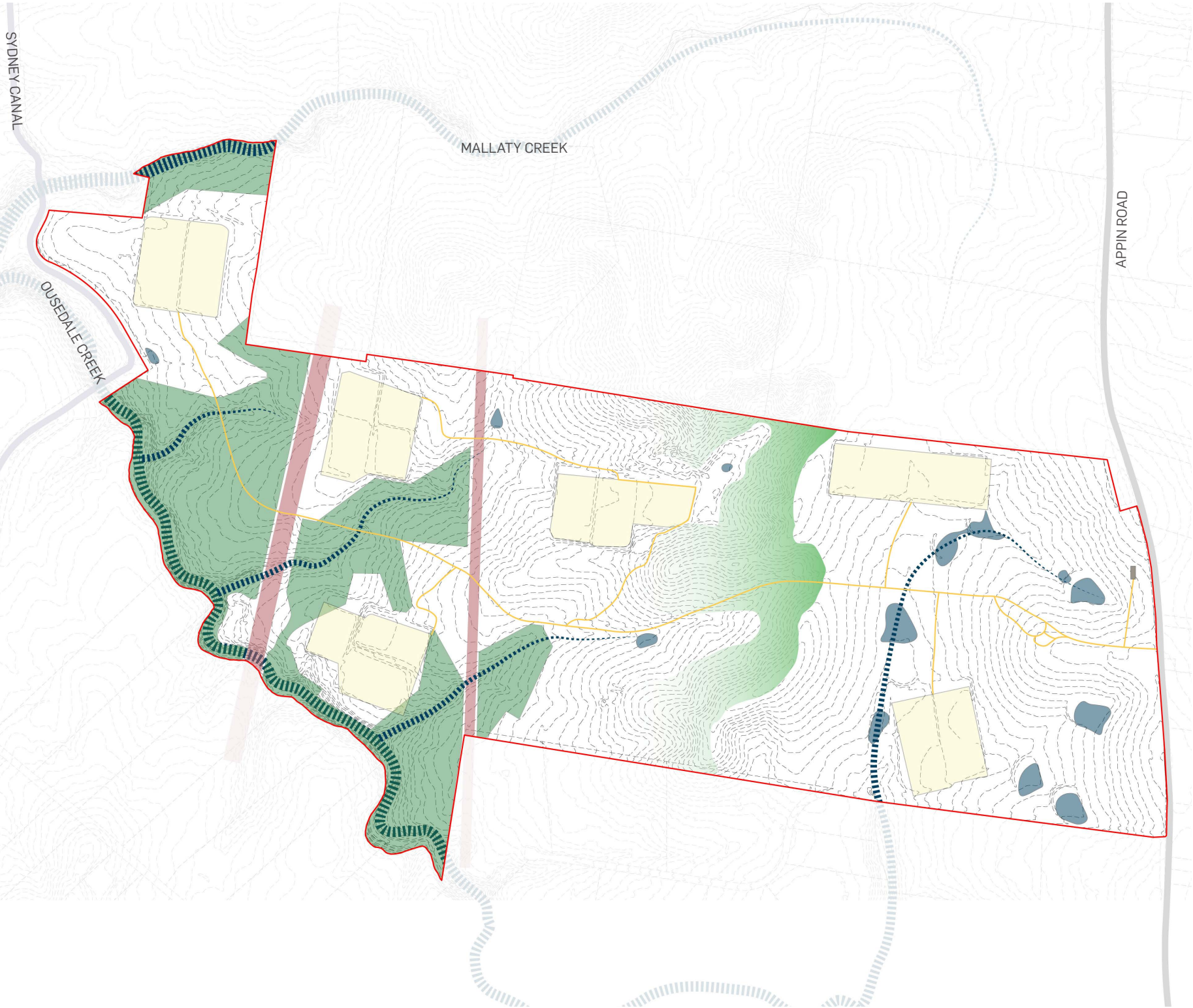


Figure 31 Visual resources within North Appin.

3.6 KEY FINDINGS

VISUAL CHARACTER

Large areas of the site have been cleared of vegetation through previous land uses, however vegetation remains, including riparian corridors which are distinctive due to form, density and colouration of the tree canopy. Vegetated groupings often limits long distance views across the site and creates visually enclosed and physically separated areas throughout the site.

The site is separated by a centrally located ridgeline orientated north-south, with the elevated position to east and lower, more visually contained areas to the west.

Several areas of the site have been extensively modified through previous use as a poultry farm, and these areas are distinctly different from the surrounding landscape through geometric, uniform shapes and stoney land with regenerating grasslands and invasive weeds. While both the surrounding rural land and poultry areas are modified landscapes, the poultry farm sites are clearly defined areas based on their previous building footprints compared to the more open and undulating land surrounding it.

SCENIC QUALITY OF THE SITE

Large areas of the site have been extensively modified for agricultural uses and has resulted in areas of native vegetation being cleared which creates expansive views from elevated eastern areas of the site, including views to Razorback Ridge and the Blue Mountains

Valued features including creeklines and associated riparian vegetation are present within and adjacent to the site. The creeklines themselves, while largely hidden from view from much of the site by surrounding vegetation, form topographical areas of interest and scenic quality when views of them are possible, generally when in close proximity to them.

Current and previous land uses and infrastructure including electricity easements, pylons and overhead cables, as well as the poultry farm sites, degrade the scenic quality of the site by being at odds with the surrounding landscape and features that are not visually unique or valued.











The site would be considered in isolation and as part of its wider visual setting as having moderate scenic quality given its semi-rural nature, natural topography including creeklines, presence of visually significant riparian corridors and prominent elevated areas, ridge lines and slopes that provide distant views to the west .

3.7 VISUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Analysis of existing visual and landscape features of the site present opportunities which have informed the development of the Draft Structure Plan and will inform the Final Structure Plan and future Precinct planning and include:

- Potential for expansive views to Razorback Ridge and the Blue Mountains from the east of the site along ridge lines (such as open recreation trails).
- Ridgelines and localised high points clear of built form development where possible to protect scenic quality and potential future long-distance views towards the site that may occur due to development or vegetation clearing surrounding the site.
- Recreational link with intermittent retained and focal planting along ridge line.
- High points capable of expansive western and eastern views could be utilised as public recreation space (such as parks) and have potential as visual markers for the site.
- Provide buffer around creeklines and riparian corridors to allow for linear views along the corridors and ensuring visual and spatial separation from surrounding development to maintain visual prominence and distinctiveness.
- Use areas of site separated from one another (eg areas enclosed by vegetation) to create visually distinct areas of development from one another and increase visual diversity and interest across the site.
- Extend vegetation corridors where possible (eg Lily Ponds Gully) to link existing water bodies to provide recreation / pedestrian and cycle route / drainage link through the site and create visually distinct area for development.
- Align road corridors within elevated eastern part of the site on an east to west axis to create view corridors to the west.
- Vegetate lower and mid slopes of ridge line to provide visual interest and scenic quality when viewed from western lower areas of the site.

VISUAL OPPORTUNITIES

| LEGEND | |
|---|---|
|  | Site Boundary |
|  | Riparian and significant vegetation grouping |
|  | Riparian and vegetation buffer |
|  | High point |
|  | Vegetated lower and mid slopes of ridge |
|  | Ridge line clear of development and used as recreational link |
|  | Expansive views west to Razorback Ridge & Blue Mountains |
|  | Vegetation and development set back from Appin Road |
|  | Link water bodies with extended vegetation / recreational & visual link |
|  | Visually enclosed distinct design areas |

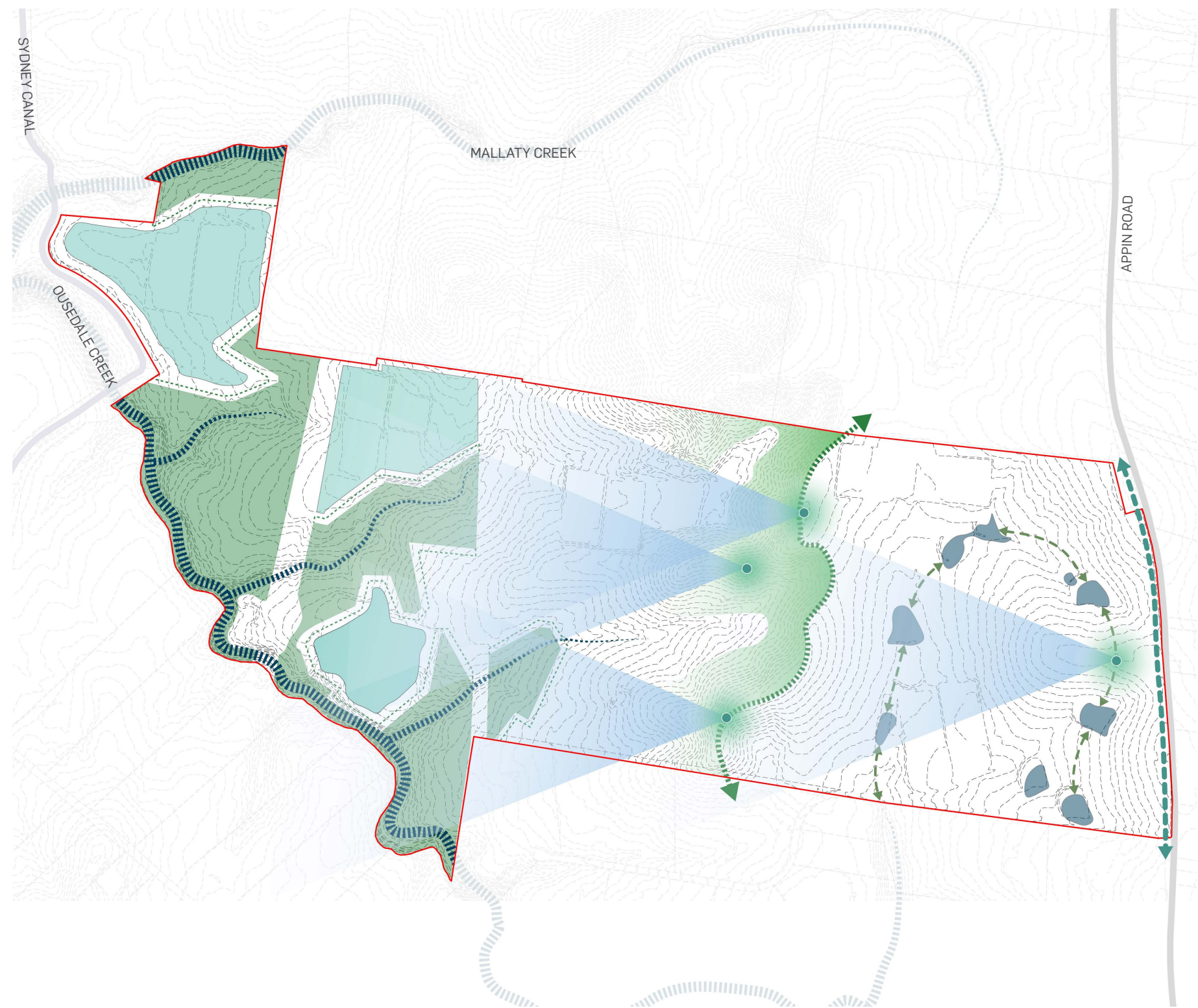


Figure 32 Visual opportunities within North Appin (part) Precinct.