



VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT - THE VINTAGE APARTMENTS  
LOT 102 DP1284428, POKOLBIN, NSW  
WONNARUA COUNTRY  
prepared for:  
STEVENS GROUP



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# assessment summary

## 1. ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

Terras Landscape Architects has been engaged by Stevens Group to undertake a visual assessment of a proposed new stage of The Vintage along Wine Country Drive, NSW. The criteria for the visual assessment has been detailed and viewpoint data sheets have been prepared using site photographs to allow the reader to gain a visual appreciation of the views from the identified significant viewing locations.

Additional descriptive text and information has been provided to support this investigation. This summary has been provided as a brief commentary on the findings of the visual assessment.

- The subject site forms part of a staged subdivision known as 'The Vintage', located within the Hunter Valley, NSW. The site is located approximately 50 kilometres north west of Newcastle City and is connected through M15 (Hunter Expressway). The proposal sits 10 minutes south of the Huntlee developments which is a residential establishment supported by shopping centres, eateries and services located further north of the proposal site along Wine Country Drive.
- The study area is formally identified as Lot 102 DP1284428. It is located in Wonnarua Country within the Cessnock Local Government Area. It is subject to the Cessnock DCP (2010), specifically part E-Specific Areas, E2-The Vintage.
- The proposal is located on a 6053 square metre site within The Vintage along Wine Country Drive. The site is currently maintained cleared grasslands forming part of the undulating landscape. The site sits just east of existing multi-story accommodation apartment buildings where as the wider landscape further to the north and east past Wine Country Drive is dominated by rural landscape which consists of production land and rural residential lots.
- Six key landscape character units are identifiable within a 4500m radius of the site. Arterial Road (Wine Country Drive), Commercial / Accommodation, Residential, Native Vegetation Patches, Recreation and Rural Landscape (Production and Residential).
- The report has been conducted based on a visual assessment of the proposal when viewed from Wine Country Drive only.
- Wine Country Drive is a tourism roadway in which vehicles are permitted to travel 90km/h. There are no public transport locations or reasons to stop along this portion of road so viewing time will always be short and viewed at speed.

- Viewpoint 1 2 and 3 have been assessed as vehicles traveling north, these viewpoints have returned a HIGH visual impact rating but have been reassessed as MODERATE.
- Viewpoint 4 and 5 have been assessed as vehicles traveling south, these viewpoints have a LOW visual impact rating and has been reassessed as VERY LOW visual impact as the proposal is barely visible while traveling south.
- There is the desire for additional residential stages of The Vintage between Wine Country Drive and the proposal, if this was to proceed then the dwellings would screen the proposed apartments from views along Wine Country Drive.
- A review of the visual catchment of the proposed site showed that views are to be somewhat filtered by topography and vegetation. The proposal will have a MODERATE visual impact when traveling north along Wine Country Drive and VERY LOW when traveling south.
- It is noted that there is the potential future development of residential dwellings in the foreground which would provide screening to the proposed apartments through built forms and landscaping as per 'The Vintage' District Control Plan (DCP) requirements.
- Recommended further mitigation measures:

Additional layering of planting buffer along roadside boundary.

Early works planting for vegetation would be recommended to ensure trees are established in the early stages of the development.

Varied treatment and use of recessive colours to the facade to reduce its perceived mass and encourage integration into the existing landscape.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

### 2.1. Objectives

The objectives of this report are as follows:

- To identify and describe the existing visual/landscape environment and to evaluate its current qualities including an assessment of visual quality.
- To identify viewsheds and to locate and/or identify typical viewpoints from which the impacted areas may be seen.
- To determine what the likely impacts the proposal may cause to the prevailing visual/landscape quality of the area and to make recommendations, where appropriate, to reduce the visual impact of the proposed development if required.

### 2.2. Methodology

The methodology applied to this study involves systematically evaluating the visual environment pertaining to the site and using value judgements based on community responses to scenery. This identifies aspects that are more objective (such as the physical setting, character and visibility of a proposal), from more subjective aspects, such as the compatibility of the proposal within the setting.

Visual data collection involves systematically evaluating the visual environment from relevant viewpoints through fieldwork to determine the actual potential for views to the site. Once a viewpoint has been identified, data is recorded both photographically and as detailed notes.

The selection of viewpoints has generally been based on locations where potential for views of the proposed development would occur. Viewpoint selection criteria include: consideration of where views can be obtained from publicly frequented locations, such as major traffic corridors; prominent look-outs or locations of high scenic value; or, where members of the local community may be affected.

This assessment was undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the Scenic Quality Guidelines (LMCC, 2013) and as such the work has been carried out following the steps noted below:

**1. Describe the landscape and visual context.** A description of the site and its context as well as photos from significant vantage points has been included to demonstrate the broader landscape setting and features.

**2. Identify the visibility and related visual-sensitivity of the landscape and any viewpoints.** This includes a review of the existing visual environment/landscape setting of the locality and the preparation of a Visual

Envelope Map (VEM) to explore the study locality. This requires the preparation of a viewpoint analysis using a representative number of viewpoints located within a reasonable distance of the site located within its visual catchment.

**3. Assess the likely landscape and visual impacts.** A brief description of the proposal is included within this section followed by an assessment of the likely impacts based on a composite of the sensitivity of the view and the magnitude of the proposal being a combination of scale, size and character having regard to the proximity of the viewer.

**4. Report illustration.** Include illustrations such as photomontages, artist's impressions and other three-dimensional (3D) imaging where necessary to clarify the landscape and visual changes and potential impacts to the site and surrounding viewpoints.

**5. Summary and conclusion.** Include a summary of the main findings of the report, and if appropriate, a discussion of the overall likely level of landscape and visual impact of the proposed development on the site and surrounding viewpoints.

The purpose of the above methodology is to reduce the amount of subjectivity entering into the impact assessment and to provide sufficient data to allow for third party verification of results as well as compliance with the requirements of the scenic quality guidelines.

Three 0.6m diameter helium filled red balloons were positioned in relevant lots of the proposed subdivision stage. These were released to the maximum height of each proposed building allowed within The Vintage Architectural and Landscape Guidelines (approximately 8 metres). The balloons were then used to identify (or attempted to view) the proposal from various points within the subject locality.



### 2.3. Terminology

The below meaning for the following terms shall apply to this report:

- The proposal/development site is that activity which has the potential to produce a visual impact either during the works or as a result of it.
- The subject site (referred to also as the site) is defined as the land area directly affected by the proposal within defined boundaries. (re: (part) Lot 102, DP 1284428).
- The study area consists of the subject site plus the immediate surrounding land potentially affected by the proposal during its construction and operation phase.
- The study locality is the area of land within the regional visual catchment whereby the proposal can be readily recognised. Generally this is confined to a six-kilometre radius beyond which individual buildings are difficult to discern especially amongst other development where contrasts are low. Further, visual sensitivity generally declines significantly beyond this range due to the broad viewing range that can be had from vantage points. For this study the locality has been limited to the visual catchments that have distances less than a quarter-kilometer as views beyond this are extremely restricted.

### 3. THE SITE

#### 3.1. Site Context

The subject site forms part of a staged subdivision known as 'The Vintage', located within the Hunter Valley, NSW. The site is located approximately 50 kilometres north west of Newcastle City and is connected through M15 (Hunter Expressway). The proposal sits 10 minutes south of the Huntlee developments which is a residential establishment supported by shopping centres, eateries and services also located along Wine Country Drive.

The study area is formally identified as Lot 102 DP1284428. It is located in Wonnarua Country within the Cessnock Local Government Area. It is subject to the Cessnock DCP (2010), specifically part E-Specific Areas, E2-The Vintage.

The Vintage subdivision is a boutique high end residential establishment situated around an 18 hole 71 par golf course. It is located within Tourism Zone (SP3) and provides a range of luxury accommodation including 12 existing 4.5 star apartments, along with a range of villas and houses to support the stay and play lifestyle which The Vintage offers. The Vintage aims to integrate itself with the natural environment while celebrating the relaxing and sophisticated character of the Hunter Valley. It aims for built forms that mould into the wider landscape through the use of recessive colours and materials.

The Vintage maintains this through a set of Architectural and Landscape Design Guidelines and a Design Review Committee which consists of two local community members, a developer representative and a council representative who must approve any proposed developments within the subdivision. Each proposal is also reviewed in detail by a third party professional who offer an un-bias opinion on the proposal.

The site is situated within a landscape dominated by classical rural forms of open cleared grassland and remnant forest patches (RU2 and RU4). Residential zoning (R1 - General Residential, R2 - Low Density Residential, R5 - Large Lot Residential) is situated north and north east from the site, one of these being a new developments situated along Wine Country Drive (Aria Hunter Valley) this is a multi-stage development offering a large lot residential lifestyle.



Image 1 Site location



Image 3 The site and surrounds

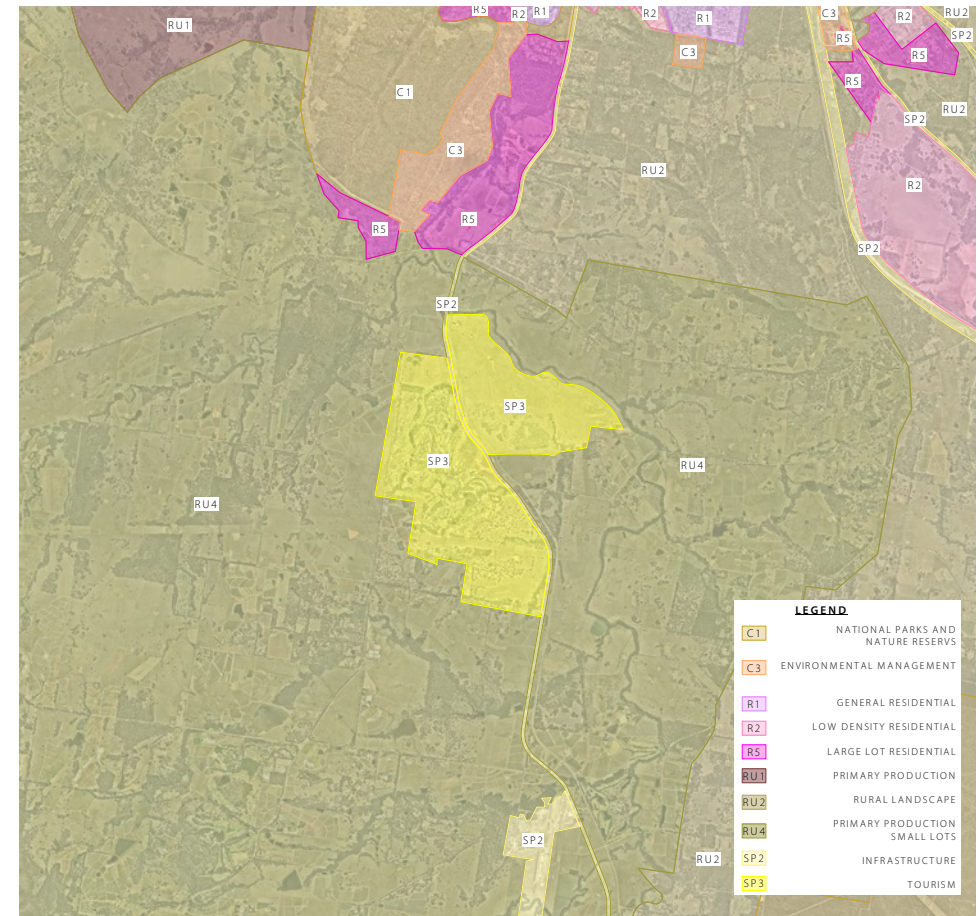
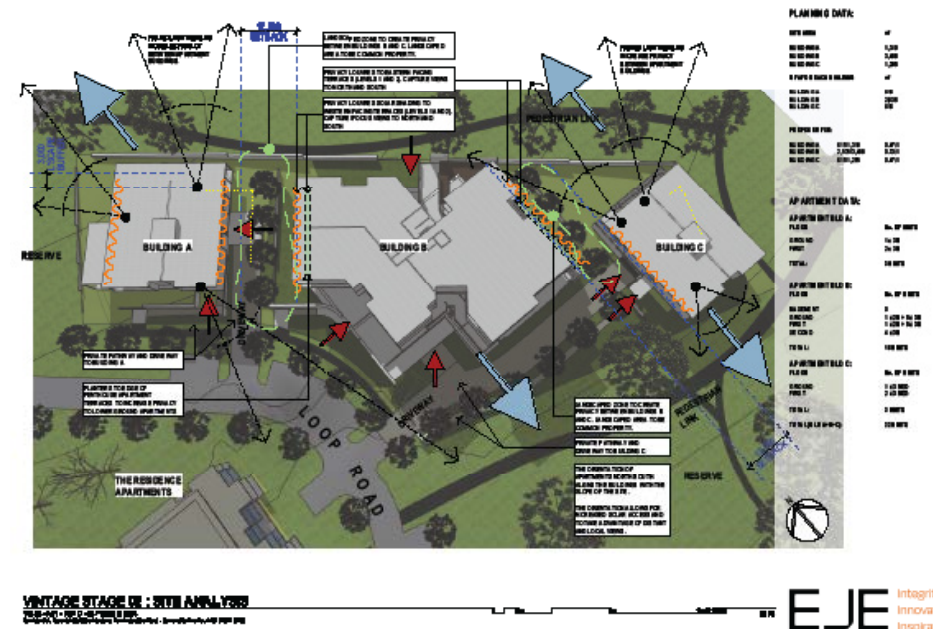


Image 2 Land zoning diagram



### 3.2. Site Description

The proposal is located on a 6053 square metre site within The Vintage. The site is currently maintained cleared grasslands forming part of the undulating landscape. Located along the Wine Country Drive roadside boundary sits an existing landscaped mound, once established this will provide further roadside screening. The site sits just east of existing multi-story accommodation apartment buildings where as the wider landscape further north and east past Wine Country Drive is dominated by rural landscape which consists of production land and rural residential lots.



**Image 4** EJE Site Analysis, Revision D.

## 4. VISUAL ENVIRONMENT

### 4.1. Landscape Character Units

Landscape character may be defined as a distinct and recognisable pattern of elements, or characteristics in the landscape that make one landscape different from one another, rather than better or worse (The Countryside Commission & Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002). It is often created by the interaction of natural and human factors especially in urban areas where human activity tends to occur at its most intense. It is the degree and type of interaction between the two that will have a bearing on the visual quality of an area.

The immediate area around the proposal site is a mix of residential, public and private recreation, commercial and rural landscape, resulting in a variety of landscape settings and characters. Beyond the immediate vicinity of the site, are areas of native vegetation patches and extensive rural landscapes. These landscapes form the overall rural lifestyle and contribute to the broader character of the local area.

Six key landscape character units are identifiable within a 5000m radius of the site. These are:

1. Arterial Road: Wine Country Drive.
2. Commercial / Accommodation.
3. Residential.
4. Native Vegetation Patch.
5. Recreation.
6. Rural Landscape: Production and Residential.

These are discussed in greater detail on the following pages.

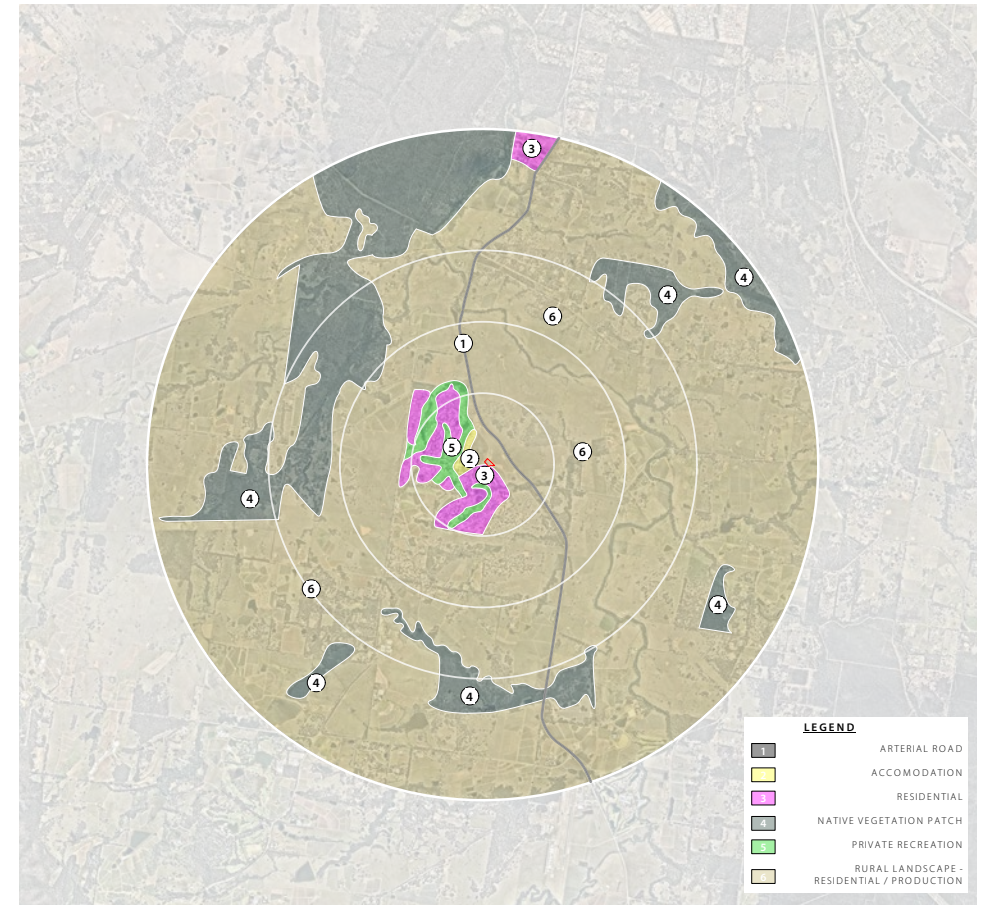


Image 5 Landscape character units within 500m of site

## 1. Arterial Road



Image 6 Wine Country Drive north of site



Image 7 Wine Country Drive at Huntlee

The site is located along Wine Country Drive a local arterial road (SP2). Wine country Drive acts as a main connection route between Cessnock and Branxton.

For the purpose of this report, Wine Country Drive has been classed as a tourism road.

## 2. Commercial / Accommodation



Image 8 Existing apartment accommodation within The Vintage



Image 9 NINETEEN bar within The Vintage.

Within The Vintage, there is a range of accommodation units in the forms of houses, Villas and apartments. The high amount of accommodation contributes to the overall subdivision character of a boutique golf resort. The subdivision is zoned as Tourism (SP3).

There are two commercial bar and eateries located within the subdivision 'The Legends Bar and Grill' and 'Nineteen', these help to support the lifestyle offered within the subdivision.

## 3. Residential



Image 10 Residential dwellings within The Vintage



Image 11 Huntlee residential development

The Vintage is a high end boutique residential subdivision aiming to integrate residential housing into the natural environment. Approximately 3600 metres north of The Vintage, there is a new residential subdivision undergoing construction 'Aria Hunter Valley', which contains a set of residential lots starting from 2000 square metres in size. Even further north along Wine Country drive is the Huntlee developments. The Huntlee developments consist of a mix of residential and commercial. The residential forms here consists of a denser housing form compared to that of 'The Vintage' and 'Aria Hunter Valley'.

## 4. Native Vegetation Patch



Image 12 Remnant forest patch



Image 13 Remnant forest patch

Spread across the rural landscape are patches of remnant forest patches. These remnant forest patches vary in size and consist of predominantly native vegetation.



## 5. Recreation



Image 14 The Vintage Golf Course



Image 15 Public park space within The Vintage

The Vintage holds a 18 hole, par 71 golf course which intertwines with the layout of the subdivision, the golf course is open to the public and residents, the course also includes a driving range, chipping practice area and practice putting green. Additionally the subdivision holds a range of pocket parks and green spaces for public use. All recreational spaces are located within SP3 Tourism zoning.

## 6. Rural Landscape: Production and Residential



Image 16 Open rural grassland



Image 17 Local vineyard

The overall character of the local area is an open rural landscape, this landscape is dominated by cleared grassland along with production land such as livestock or vineyards, or residential lifestyle dwellings on large land lots.

## 5. THE PROPOSAL

### 5.1. Proposed Project and Landscaping

The proposal is made up of three multi story apartment buildings siting opposite to a set of existing apartments to the west. The proposed apartments consists of 22, 2 - 3 bedroom units supplemented with 37 internal parking spaces. The proposal includes a mix of public and private open spaces, refer to future landscape documentation for further detail.



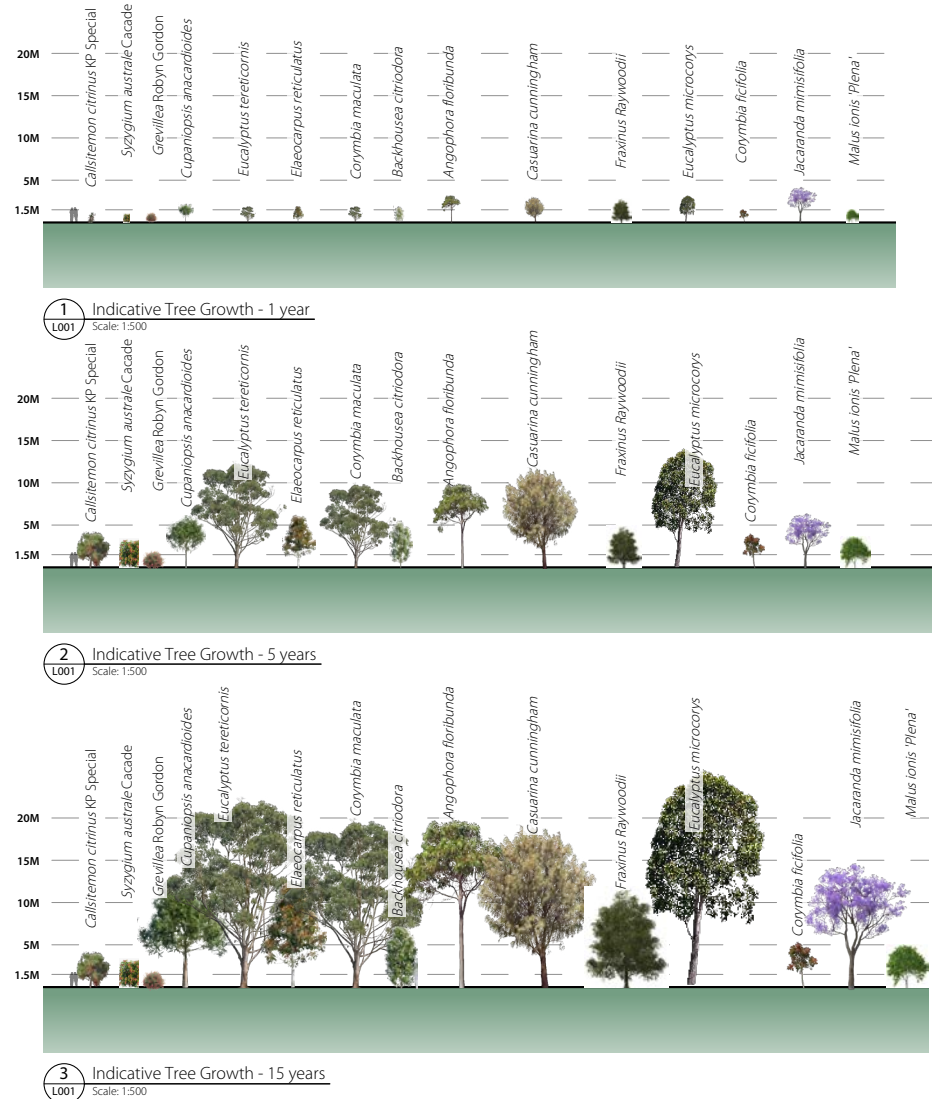
Image 18 EJE Site plan Revision D



Image 19 Aerial view looking South

## PREDICTED TREE GROWTH

The Vintage



PREDICTED TREE GROWTH					
Location Reference	SPECIES	POT SIZE	HEIGHT: 1 YEAR	HEIGHT: 5 YEARS	HEIGHT: 15 YEARS
Buffer Planting (Existing planting on site boundary mound)	<i>Callistemon King Park Special</i>	2.5L	0.5-1 (0.75)	3-5 (4)	3-5 (4)
	<i>Grevillea Robyn Gordon</i>	2.5L	0.5-1 (0.75)	1.5-2 (1.75)	1.5-2 (1.75)
	<i>Syzygium australe Cascade</i>	2.5L	0.5-1 (0.75)	2-4m (3)	2-4m (3)
Buffer Planting (Established in Precinct G Tender documentation)	<i>Backhousea citriodora</i>	100L	1.8-2.4 (2)	4-6 (5)	6-8 (7)
	<i>Corymbia maculata</i>	100L	1.8-2.4 (2)	8-10 (9)	15-20 (18)
	<i>Cupaniopsis anacardioides</i>	100L	1.8-2.4 (2)	4-8 (6)	8-15 (12)
	<i>Eucalyptus tereticornis</i>	100L	1.8-2.4 (2)	10-15 (13)	20-30 (25)
	<i>Elaeocarpus reticulatus</i>	100L	1.8-2.4 (2)	4-8 (6)	8-15 (12)
Tree species listed within Masterplan for Hawkins	<i>Angophora floribunda</i>	100L	2-3 (2.5)	5-15 (10)	10-30 (20)
	<i>Casuarina cunninghamiana</i>	100L	2-3 (2.5)	7-15 (11)	15-30 (22)
	<i>Fraxinus Raywoodii</i>	100L	2.5-3.0 (2.75)	5-6 (5.5)	10-12 (11)
	<i>Eucalyptus microcorys</i>	100L	3.0-4.0 (3.5)	10-20 (15)	20-40 (30)
	<i>Corymbia ficifolia</i>	100L	2.0-3.0 (2.5)	5-7.5 (6)	10-15 (12.5)
Tree species listed within Vintage Apartments CC	<i>Jacaranda mimisifolia</i>	300L	4-5 (4.5)	5-7.5 (6)	10-15 (12.5)
	<i>Malus ionis 'Plena'</i>	200L	1.5-2.0 (1.5)	2-4 (3)	4-6 (5)

Note: Heights in () are the average expected growth and are demonstrated in the diagrams to the left



## 6. VIEWPOINT DATA SHEETS

### 6.1. Viewpoint Analysis

This section of the VIA considers the likely impact that the proposed development may have on the local visual environment. This is achieved by selecting particular sites, referred to as Viewpoints, conducting inspections and determining how the development will appear from these locations. These viewpoints are further explored in the following sections. Other potential viewpoints around the site were also assessed for inclusion in this report. Due to local topography, existing vegetation, access and existing development, views to the site are generally limited to less than 1000 metres from the south of Wine Country Drive and 2000 metres from the north of Wine Country Drive, these views are filtered by planting buffers along Wine Country Drive which will increase as the existing planting establishes.

Where accessible, areas within the study locality were visited to gain an appreciation of views and sight lines back to the subject site. This VIA assesses the existing visual amenity of the site from Wine Country Drive and resultant visual impact of the proposed development.

Landscape assessment is concerned with changes to the physical landscape in terms of features/elements that may give rise to changes in character. Visual appraisal is concerned with the changes that arise in the composition of available views as a result of changes to the landscape, people's responses to the changes and to the overall effects on visual amenity. Changes may result in adverse (negative) or beneficial (positive) effects.

The nature of landscape and visual assessment requires both objective analysis and subjective professional judgement. Accordingly, the following assessment is based on the best practice guidance listed above, information and data analysis techniques, uses subjective professional judgement.

Photographic images were taken using a digital camera with a focal length approximating a standard 50mm lens for a conventional 35mm camera and equivalent to the human eye, so that all images represent an accurate representation that is neither zoomed in or out. A number of indicative photo panoramas have been included to put views to the site in context with the surrounding area.

**DATE OF SITE VISIT:** 12.03.2024

**WEATHER AT THE TIME OF THE SITE VISIT:** Sunny

**CAMERA MODEL & FOCAL LENGTH USED:** Canon EOS 760D; 31mm Focal Length with 1.61x Crop Factor (equivalent of 35mm sensor on full frame camera) to achieve 50mm field of view, closest equivalent to human eye.

**TAKEN AT HEIGHT:** 1700mm

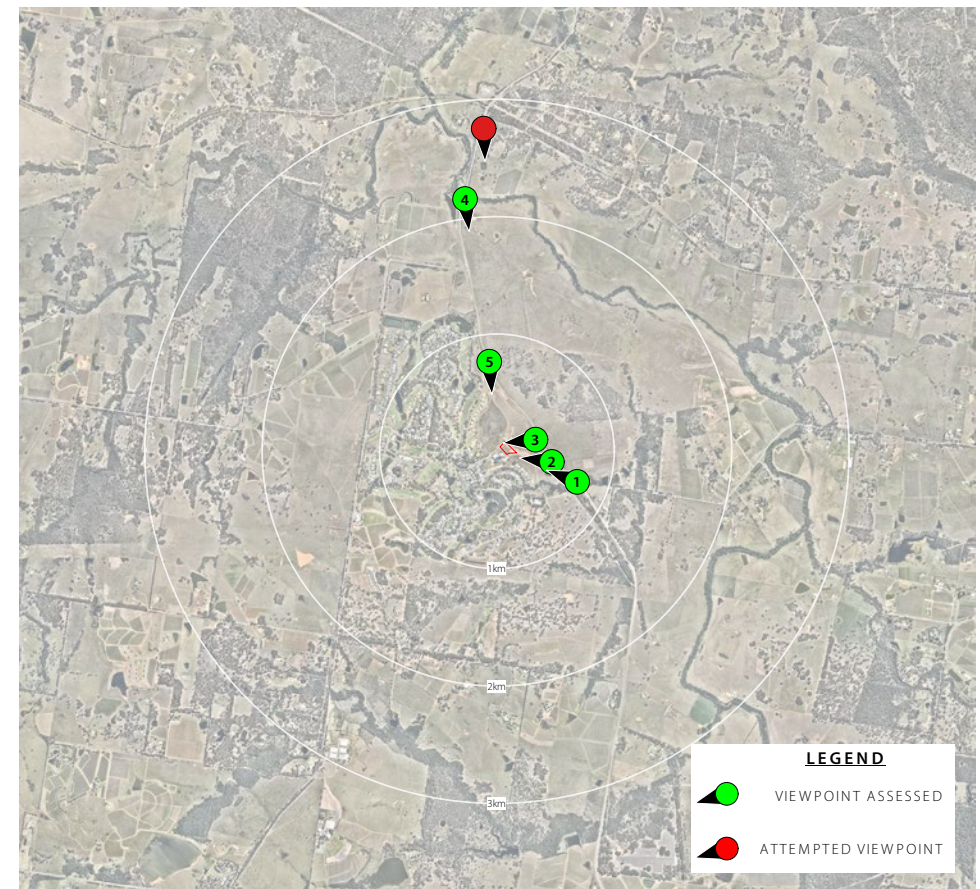


Image 21 Viewpoint locations

## 6.2. Viewsheds

The viewshed diagram explores and demonstrates the views into the site from the nominated viewpoint locations. As discussed in the viewpoint analysis, due to topography and existing vegetation the viewshed area is restricted to a maximum distance of approximately 2000m.

It is noted that as the proposal is located along Wine Country drive it would likely be visible during vehicular transport but would be view within the context of the existing stages of 'The Vintage'.

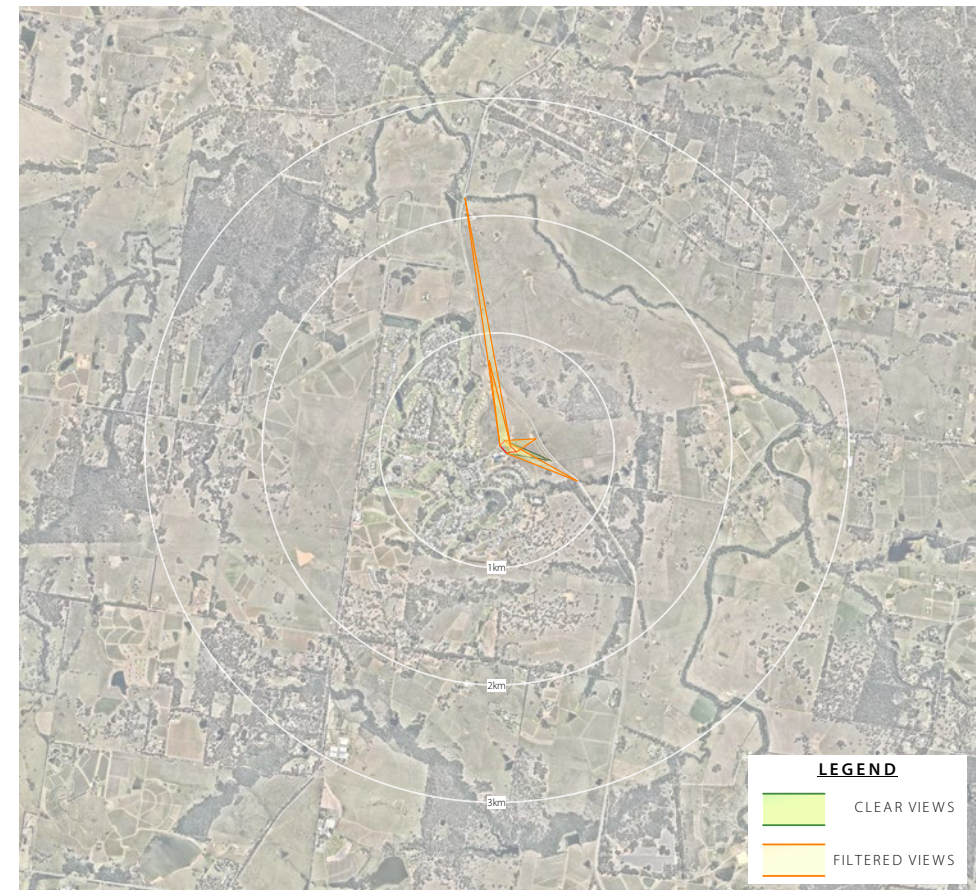


Image 22 Viewshed diagram.

## assessment criteria

## 7. ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

### 7.1. Visual Quality

The visual quality of an area is essentially an assessment of how viewers may respond to designated scenery. Scenes of high visual quality are those that are valued by a community for the enjoyment and improved amenity that they can create. Conversely, scenes of low visual quality are of little scenic value to the community with a preference that they be changed and improved, often through the introduction of landscape treatments (e.g. screen planting).

As visual quality relates to aesthetics, its assessment tries to anticipate subjective responses. There is evidence to suggest that certain landscapes are continually preferred over others with preferences related to the presence or absence of certain elements.

The rating of visual quality of this study has been based on the following generally accepted conclusions arising from scientific research (DOP, 1988).

- Visual quality increases as relative relief and topographic ruggedness increases.
- Visual quality increases as vegetation pattern variations increase.
- Visual quality increases due to the presence of natural and/or agricultural landscapes.
- Visual quality increases owing to the presence of water forms (without becoming common) and related to water quality and associated activity.
- Visual quality increases with increases in land use compatibility.

VISUAL QUALITY REFERENCE TABLE				
		RATING		
		LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
ELEMENT	LANDFORM / RELIEF			
	CONTRAST	FLAT TERRAIN DOMINANT. RIDGELINES NOT OFTEN SEEN.	UNDULATING TERRAIN DOMINANT. LITTLE CONTRAST OR RUGGEDNESS. RIDGELINES PROMINENT IN ONLY HALF OF LESS OF LANDSCAPE UNITS.	HIGH HILLS IN FOREGROUND AND MIDDLE GROUND. PRESENCE OF CLIFFS, ROCKS AND OTHER GEOLOGICAL FEATURES. HIGH RELIEF (E.G. STEEP SLOPES RISING FROM WATER OR PLAIN). RIDGELINES PROMINENT IN MOST OF LANDSCAPE UNIT.
	VEGETATION			
	DIVERSITY AND CHANGING PATTERNS	ONE OR TWO VEGETATION TYPES PRESENT IN FOREGROUND. UNIFORMITY ALONG SKYLINE	PATTERNING IN ONLY ONE OR TWO AREAS. 3 OR 4 VEGETATION TYPES IN FOREGROUND FEW EMERGENT OR FEATURE TREES	HIGH DEGREE OF PATTERNING IN VEGETATION. 4 OR MORE DISTINCT VEGETATION TYPES. EMERGENT TREES PROMINENT AND DISTINCTIVE TO REGION.
	NATURALNESS			
	CORRECT BALANCE	DOMINANCE OF DEVELOPMENT WITHIN MANY PARTS OF A LANDSCAPE	SOME EVIDENCE OF DEVELOPMENT BUT NOT DOMINANT	ABSENCE OF DEVELOPMENT OR MINIMAL DISTURBANCE WITHIN LANDSCAPE UNIT. PRESENCE OF PARKLAND OR OTHER OPEN SPACE INCLUDING BEACH, LAKESIDE, ETC.
	WATER			
	PRESENCE, EXTENT AND CHARACTER	LITTLE OR NO VIEW OF WATER. WATER IN THE BACKGROUND WITHOUT PROMINENCE. PRESENCE OF POLLUTED WATER OR STAGNANT WATER.	MODERATE EXTENT OF WATER. PRESENCE OF CALM WATER. NO ISLANDS, CHANNELS, MEANDERING WATER. INTERMITTENT STREAMS, LAKES, RIVERS, ETC.	DOMINANCE OF WATER IN FOREGROUND AND MIDDLE GROUND. PRESENCE OF FLOWING WATER, TURBULENCE AND PERMANENT WATER.
	DEVELOPMENT			
	FORM & IDENTITY	PRESENCE OF COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL STRUCTURES. PRESENCE OF LARGE SCALE DEVELOPMENT (E.G. MINING INFRASTRUCTURE, ETC) RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT	PRESENCE OF ESTABLISHED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT. SMALL SCALE, INDUSTRIAL ETC. IN MIDDLEGROUND. PRESENCE OF SPORTS AND RECREATION FACILITIES.	PRESENCE OF RURAL STRUCTURES (E.G. FARM BUILDINGS, FENCES ETC.). HERITAGE BUILDINGS AND OTHER STRUCTURES APPARENT. ISOLATED DOMESTIC SCALE STRUCTURES.

Source: After Clouston & Brouwer, 1995



# assessment criteria

## 7.2. Viewer Access

This considers the relative number and type of viewers, the viewer distance, the viewing duration and view context. The rationale is that if the number of people who would potentially see portions of the proposal is low, then the visual impact would be low, compared to when a large number of people would have the same view.

VIEWER ACCESS MATRIX													
		VIEWER DISTANCE											
		VERY SHORT (<1km)			SHORT (1-2km)			MEDIUM (2-3km)		LONG/DISTANT (>3km)			
		VIEWING DURATION											
		<10mins	10-30mins	>30mins	<10mins	10-30min	>30mins	<10mins	10-30min	>30mins	<10mins	10-30min	>30mins
VIEWER NUMBERS	VERY LOW (>49 PEOPLE PER DAY)	L	M	H	L	M	M	L	L	M/L	L	L	L
	LOW (50-149 PEOPLE PER DAY)	L	M	H	L	M	M	L	L	M	L	L	L
	MODERATE (150-199 PEOPLE PER DAY)	M	H	H	M	M	H	L	M	M	L	L	L
	HIGH (>200 PEOPLE PER DAY)	H	H	H	M	H	H	H	M	H	L	L	M

Source: Adapted from Urbis, 2008

## 7.3. Visual Effect

Visual effect is the interaction between a proposal and the existing visual environment. It is often expressed as the level of visual contrast of the proposal against its setting or background in which it is viewed.

This is particularly important should any proposed development extend above the skyline unless, once again, there are particular circumstances that may influence viewer perception and/or visual impact.

It should be noted that a high visual effect does not necessarily equate with a reduction in scenic quality. It is the combination of both visual sensitivity and visual effect that results in visual impact.

VISUAL EFFECT TABLE	
LEVELS	HIGH
	MODERATE
	LOW
	NEGLECTIBLE
	RESULTS WHEN A PROPOSAL PRESENTS ITSELF WITH HIGH VISUAL CONTRAST TO ITS VIEWED LANDSCAPE WITH LITTLE OR NO INTEGRATION AND/OR SCREENING.
	RESULTS WHERE A PROPOSAL NOTICEABLY CONTRASTS WITH ITS VIEWED LANDSCAPE, HOWEVER, THERE HAS BEEN SOME DEGREE OF INTEGRATION (E.G. GOOD SITING PRINCIPLES EMPLOYED, RETENTION OF SIGNIFICANT EXISTING VEGETATION, PROVISION OF SCREEN LANDSCAPING, CAREFUL COLOUR SELECTION AND/OR APPROPRIATELY SCALED DEVELOPMENT).
	OCCURS WHEN A PROPOSAL BLENDS IN WITH ITS EXISTING VIEWED LANDSCAPE DUE TO A HIGH LEVEL OF INTEGRATION OF ONE OR SEVERAL OF THE FOLLOWING: FORM, SHAPE, PATTERN, LINE, TEXTURE OR COLOUR. IT CAN ALSO RESULT FROM THE USE OF EFFECTIVE SCREENING OFTEN USING A COMBINATION OF LANDFORM AND LANDSCAPING.
	THERE ARE NO VIEWS OF THE PROPOSAL COMPONENTS AND AS SUCH THERE IS NO IMPACT

Source: Adapted from EDAW, 2000

#### 7.4. Visual Sensitivity

Another aspect affecting visual assessments is visual sensitivity. This is the estimate of the significance that a change will have on a landscape and to those viewing it. For example, a significant change that is not frequently seen may result in a low visual sensitivity although its impact on a landscape may be high.

The assessment of visual sensitivity is based on a number of variables such as: the number of people affected; viewer location including distance from the source; the surrounding land use and degree of change. Variables may also include viewer position, i.e. inferior, where the viewer's station is below the horizontal axis as characterise by looking up (least preferred), neutral, where the viewer sight line is generally along the horizontal axis, and, superior, where the viewer sight line is above the horizontal axis as characterise by looking down to an object (most preferred).

Generally the following principles apply:

- Visual sensitivity decreases as the viewer distance increases. This occurs as changes to the scenic environment must be assessed over a broader viewshed which is comprised of a greater number of competing elements.
- Visual sensitivity decreases as the viewing time decreases.
- Visual sensitivity can also be related to viewer activity (e.g. a person viewing an affected site while engaged in recreational activities will be more strongly affected by change than someone passing a scene in a car travelling to a desired destination).
- Visual sensitivity decreases as the number of potential viewers decreases.

Visually sensitive landscapes include:

- Main ridgelines
- Significant natural landscape features such as coastal headlands, prominent hills, lake channel entrances, lake islands and lake promontories
- National Parks, State Recreation Areas and other protected natural conservation areas
- Other areas zoned for natural values (areas zoned C2 - Conservation)
- Within 100m of the lake edge
- Within 300m of the coastal edge
- Heritage conservation areas and precincts

The adjoining table outlines the visual sensitivity based on the above criteria.

VISUAL SENSITIVITY TABLE						
		DISTANCE ZONES				
		FOREGROUND 0-0.5km 0.5-1km		MIDGROUND 1-1.5km 1.5 - 2km		BACK- GROUND (>2km)
LAND USE	RESIDENTIAL: RURAL OR URBAN	MODERATE SENSITIVITY	MODERATE SENSITIVITY	LOW SENSITIVITY	LOW SENSITIVITY	LOW SENSITIVITY
	NATURAL AREAS	HIGH SENSITIVITY	HIGH SENSITIVITY	HIGH SENSITIVITY	MODERATE SENSITIVITY	LOW SENSITIVITY
	TOURIST OR PASSIVE RECREATION	HIGH SENSITIVITY	HIGH SENSITIVITY	MODERATE SENSITIVITY	MODERATE SENSITIVITY	LOW SENSITIVITY
	MAJOR TRAVEL CORRIDORS	HIGH SENSITIVITY	MODERATE SENSITIVITY	MODERATE SENSITIVITY	MODERATE SENSITIVITY	LOW SENSITIVITY
	TOURIST ROADS	HIGH SENSITIVITY	MODERATE SENSITIVITY	MODERATE SENSITIVITY	LOW SENSITIVITY	LOW SENSITIVITY
	MINOR ROADS	MODERATE SENSITIVITY	LOW SENSITIVITY	LOW SENSITIVITY	LOW SENSITIVITY	LOW SENSITIVITY
	AGRICULTURAL AREAS	LOW SENSITIVITY	LOW SENSITIVITY	LOW SENSITIVITY	LOW SENSITIVITY	LOW SENSITIVITY
	INDUSTRIAL AREAS	LOW SENSITIVITY	LOW SENSITIVITY	LOW SENSITIVITY	LOW SENSITIVITY	LOW SENSITIVITY

Source: Adapted from EDAW, 2000

## assessment criteria

### 7.5. Visual Impact

Visual impact is the assessment of changes in the appearance of the landscape as the result of some intervention typically man-induced, to the visual quality of an area having regard to visual sensitivity and visual effect and the other attributes that these elements embody as discussed above.

Visual impact may be positive (i.e. beneficial or an improvement) or negative (i.e. adverse or a detraction). When visual impacts are negative, the loss of visual quality needs to be determined and when they are found to be undesirable or unacceptable, then mitigation measures need to be formulated with the aim of reducing the impact to within, at least acceptable limits.

The adjoining table illustrates how Visual Effect and Visual Sensitivity levels combine to produce varying degrees of Visual Impact. The overall project assessment summary is assessed as LOW. Further assessment is provided in the Visual Evaluation for selected viewpoints.

VISUAL IMPACT TABLE					
		VISUAL EFFECTS LEVELS			
		HIGH	MODERATE	LOW	NEGLIGIBLE
VISUAL SENSITIVITY LEVELS	HIGH	HIGH IMPACT	HIGH IMPACT	MODERATE IMPACT	NEGLIGIBLE IMPACT
	MODERATE	HIGH IMPACT	MODERATE IMPACT	LOW IMPACT	NEGLIGIBLE IMPACT
	LOW	MODERATE IMPACT	LOW IMPACT	LOW IMPACT	NEGLIGIBLE IMPACT
	NEGLIGIBLE	NEGLIGIBLE IMPACT	NEGLIGIBLE IMPACT	NEGLIGIBLE IMPACT	NEGLIGIBLE IMPACT

Source: EDAW, 2000

### 7.6. Visual Absorption

Visual absorption capacity (VAC) is the physical capacity of a landscape to accept human alterations without loss of its inherent visual character or scenic quality.

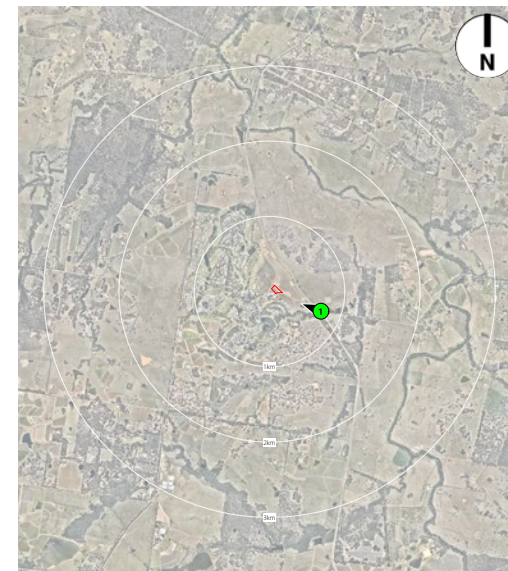


## viewpoint 1

Location: Wine Country Drive Traveling North



Image 23 View north towards site.



Site	Viewpoint 1	
Distance: 400m South	Viewer Access	Wine Country Drive is a primary thoroughfare through the Hunter Valley. While traveling north, despite the short duration, due to the high viewer number and close proximity, viewer access is considered HIGH.
	Visual Effect	The visual effect is assessed as HIGH, although there are some forms of landscape integration the proposal will present as a high contrast to the landscape and protrudes above the ridgeline with minimal foreground screening.
View position: Inferior	Visual Sensitivity	The visual sensitivity of the site is considered MODERATE as it will be viewed in close proximity along Wine Country Drive, the proposal presents a visual change in the landscape but is viewed within the context of an existing apartment building and residential dwellings.
	Visual Impact	As the proposal is located closer to the road compared to the existing apartment building and has limited foreground screening along with a high viewer number the proposal is assessed as HIGH from this location.
Visual Quality: Medium	Professional Comment	Views from Viewpoint 1 are the first view of the proposed building while traveling north, while there is already views of an existing apartment from this view, the proposed apartments are located at a higher elevation and have less foreground screening from topography and existing vegetation, although with screening from established vegetation the proposal can be reassessed as a MODERATE visual impact. Additionally, there would be no views to the proposal should there be residential dwellings within the foreground built to the height restrictions set in place by The Vintage.

Visual Evaluation Criteria				
	NEGLECTIBLE / VERY LOW	LOW	MODERATE / MEDIUM	HIGH
Viewer Access				
Visual Effect				
Visual Sensitivity				
Visual Impact - Significance rating based on above criteria:				
High				
Reassessment based on Professional Opinion:				
Moderate				





Image 24 Viewpoint 1, existing.



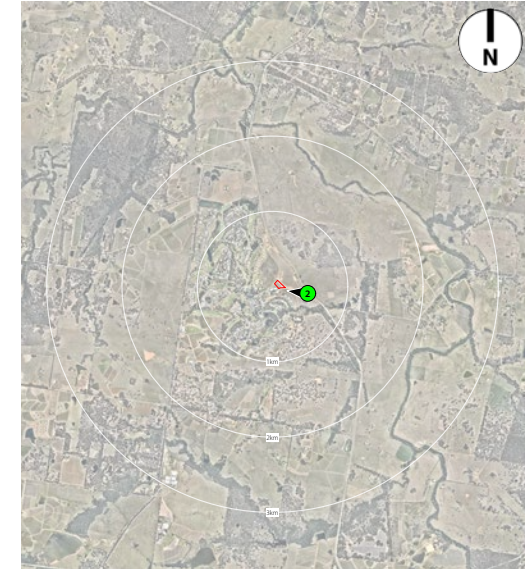
Image 25 Viewpoint 1, indicative photostitch of proposal showing approximate extents of building mass.

## viewpoint 2

Location: Wine Country Drive Traveling North



Image 26 View west towards site.



Site	Viewpoint 2	
Distance: 200m south-east	Viewer Access	Despite the short duration, due to the high viewer number and close proximity, viewer access is considered HIGH.
	Visual Effect	The visual effect is assessed as HIGH, as the proposal situates itself in closer proximity to Wine Country Drive and at a higher elevation than the existing apartments.
View position: Inferior	Visual Sensitivity	The visual sensitivity of the site is considered HIGH as it will be viewed in close proximity along Wine Country Drive and alters the forms of the rural undulating landscape.
	Visual Impact	As the proposal stands out from the existing built forms and landscape with minimal foreground screening along with high viewer access it has been assessed as HIGH from this viewpoint.
Visual Quality: Medium	Professional Comment	The proposal has been assessed as HIGH due to the visual change it poses on the landscape although with additional landscape screening and establishment of existing planting buffer this view can be reassessed to MODERATE visual impact. Much like viewpoint one, residential dwellings built to the vintage height restrictions would void views afforded from this location as represented graphically on the next sheet.

Visual Evaluation Criteria				
	NEGLIGIBLE / VERY LOW	LOW	MODERATE / MEDIUM	HIGH
Viewer Access				
Visual Effect				
Visual Sensitivity				
Visual Impact - Significance rating based on above criteria:				
High				
Reassessment based on Professional Opinion:				
Moderate				





Image 27 Viewpoint 2, indicative photomontage of proposal with maximum residential dwelling heights.

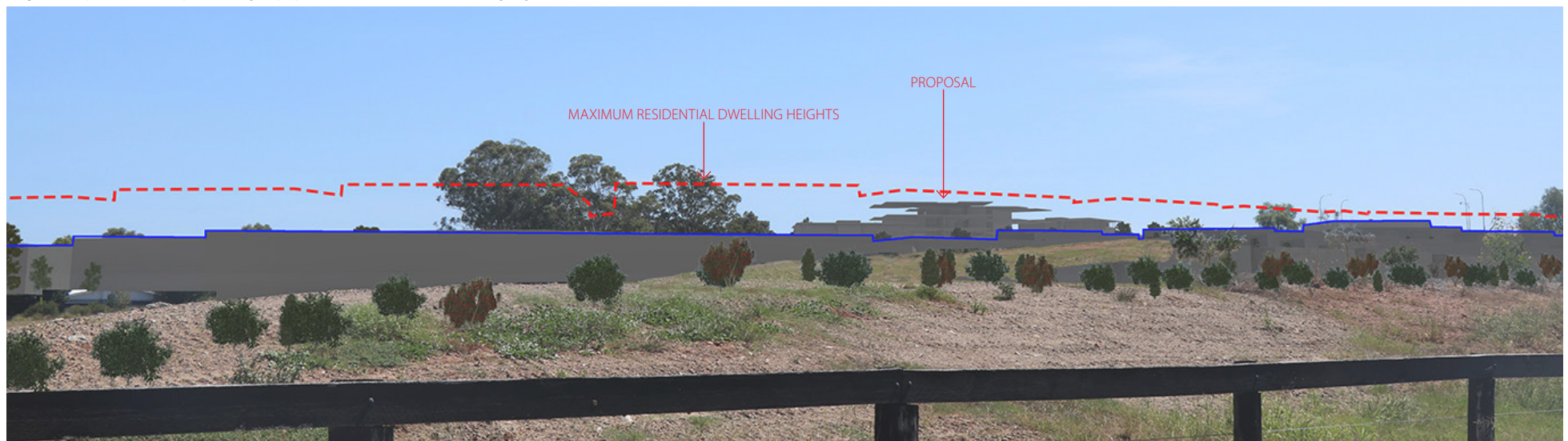


Image 28 Viewpoint 2, indicative photomontage of proposal with ground floor residential heights, indicative first floor heights and vegetation at 1 years' growth.



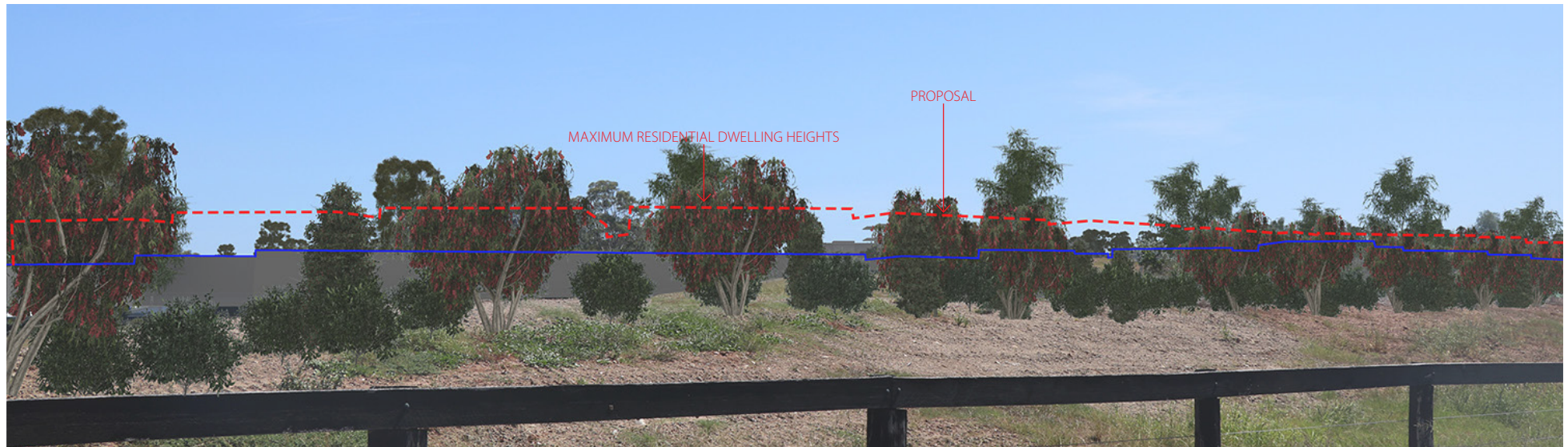


Image 29 Viewpoint 2, indicative photomontage of proposal with ground floor residential heights, indicative first floor heights and vegetation at 5 years' growth.

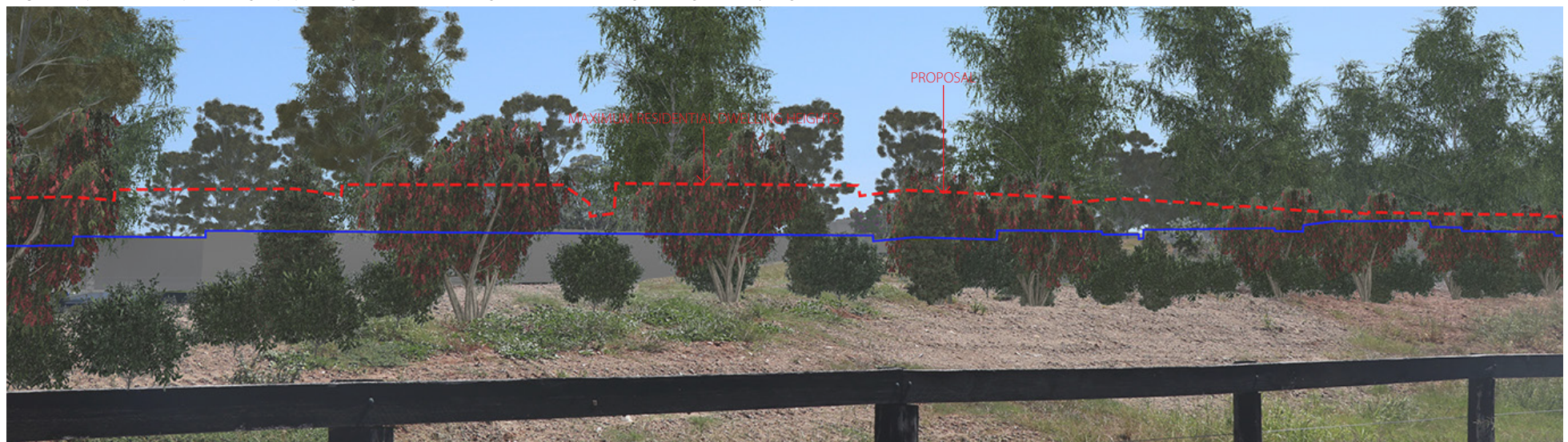


Image 30 Viewpoint 2, indicative photomontage of proposal with ground floor residential heights, indicative first floor heights and vegetation at 15 years' growth.

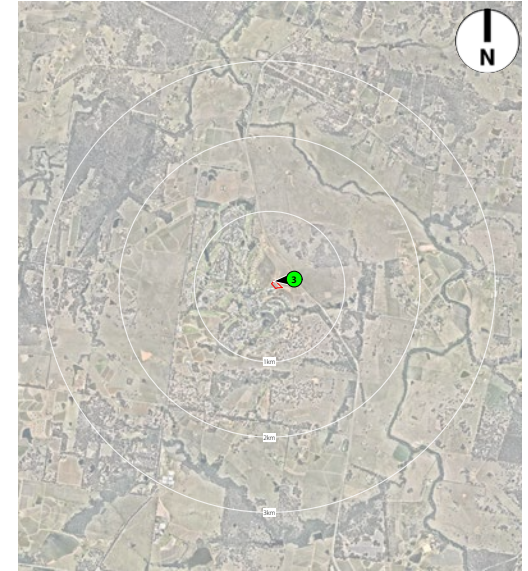


## viewpoint 3

Location: Wine Country Drive Traveling North



Image 31 View west towards site.



Site	Viewpoint 3	
Distance: 200m east	Viewer Access	Despite the short duration, due to the high viewer number and close proximity, viewer access is considered HIGH.
	Visual Effect	The visual effect is assessed as HIGH, as much like viewpoint two, when viewed from this location the proposal situates itself in closer proximity to Wine Country Drive and at a higher elevation than the existing apartments.
View position: Inferior	Visual Sensitivity	The visual sensitivity of the site is considered HIGH as it will be viewed in close proximity along Wine Country Drive and alters the forms of the rural undulating landscape.
	Visual Impact	As the proposal stands out from the existing built forms and landscape with minimal foreground screening along with high viewer access it has been assessed as HIGH from this viewpoint.
Visual Quality: Medium	Professional Comment	The proposal has been assessed as HIGH due to the visual change it poses on the landscape although with additional landscape screening and establishment of existing planting buffer this view can be reassessed to MODERATE visual impact. Much like viewpoint one, any residential dwelling built to the vintage height restrictions would void any views afforded from this location.

Visual Evaluation Criteria				
	NEGLIGIBLE / VERY LOW	LOW	MODERATE / MEDIUM	HIGH
Viewer Access				
Visual Effect				
Visual Sensitivity				
Visual Impact - Significance rating based on above criteria:				
High				
Reassessment based on Professional Opinion:				
Moderate				





Image 32 Viewpoint 3, existing.

EXTENT OF PROPOSAL WORKS VISIBLE



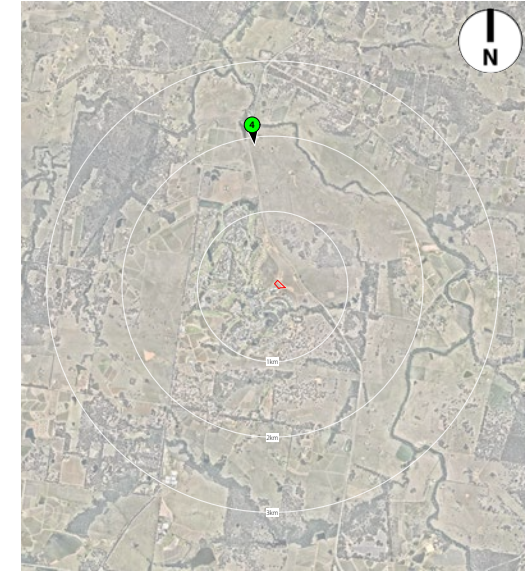
Image 33 Viewpoint 3, indicative photostitch showing approximate extents of the proposal.

## viewpoint 4

Location: Wine Country Drive Traveling South



Image 34 View south towards site.



Site	Viewpoint 4	
Distance: 2000m north	Viewer Access	The viewer access from this viewpoint is considered MODERATE due to the distance from site and extended viewing time.
	Visual Effect	The visual effect has been assessed as LOW as the proposal will be slightly visible over the ridge line.
View position: Neutral	Visual Sensitivity	The visual sensitivity of the site is considered LOW as it will be viewed from an extended distance from this viewpoint.
	Visual Impact	As the proposal is being viewed from a long distance and the impact on the ridge line is minimal the visual impact has been assessed as LOW from this location.
Visual Quality: Medium	Professional Comment	The proposal's visual impact can be reassessed to VERY LOW as there is a range of foreground elements screening the view of the proposal and the proposal poses a minimal visual change to the overall views afforded from this location due to the extended distance.

Visual Evaluation Criteria				
	NEGLIGIBLE / VERY LOW	LOW	MODERATE / MEDIUM	HIGH
Viewer Access				
Visual Effect				
Visual Sensitivity				
Visual Impact - Significance rating based on above criteria:				
Low				
Reassessment based on Professional Opinion:				
Very Low				





Image 35 Viewpoint 4, existing.



Image 36 Viewpoint 4, indicative photostitch of proposal showing approximate extents of building mass.

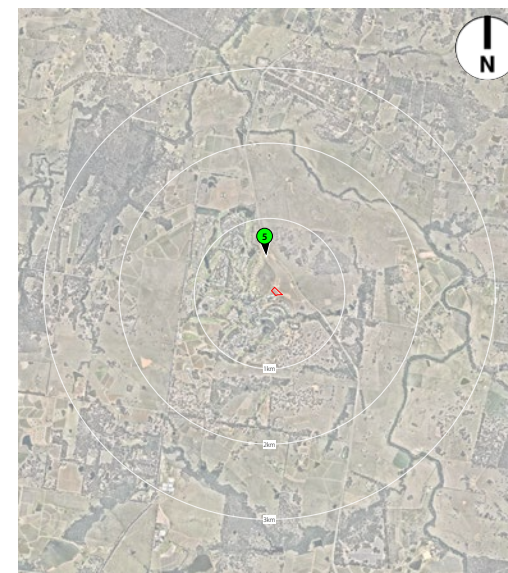


## viewpoint 5

Location: Wine Country Drive Traveling South



Image 37 View south towards site.



Site	Viewpoint 5	
Distance: 750m north	Viewer Access	Despite the low duration, due to the high viewer number and close proximity, viewer access is considered HIGH.
	Visual Effect	The visual effect is assessed as LOW, as although the proposal slightly protrudes above the ridgeline, the majority of the proposal is screened through existing topographic forms.
View position: Neutral	Visual Sensitivity	The visual sensitivity has been assessed as MODERATE due to its classification as a Tourist Road and distance from site.
	Visual Impact	While there is a high viewer number the majority of the proposed apartments will be screened by existing topographic forms therefore, the visual impact has been assessed as LOW from this location.
Visual Quality: Low	Professional Comment	While the visual impact has been assessed as LOW, the views from this location are afforded to vehicles traveling 90km/h and a minimal portion of the proposal is visible, therefore the visual impact has been reassessed as VERY LOW. Furthermore, there is the potential for residential dwellings to be placed within the foreground to a maximum of 8.5m which would completely screen the proposal from this location.

Visual Evaluation Criteria				
	NEGLIGIBLE / VERY LOW	LOW	MODERATE / MEDIUM	HIGH
Viewer Access				
Visual Effect				
Visual Sensitivity				
Visual Impact - Significance rating based on above criteria:				
Low				
Reassessment based on Professional Opinion:				
Very Low				



Image 38 Viewpoint 5, indicative photomontage with ground floor residential heights, indicative first floor heights.



Image 39 Viewpoint 5, indicative photomontage of proposal with ground floor residential heights, indicative first floor heights and vegetation at 1 years' growth.





**Image 40** Viewpoint 5, indicative photomontage of proposal with ground floor residential heights, indicative first floor heights and vegetation at 5 years' growth.



**Image 41** Viewpoint 5, indicative photomontage of proposal with ground floor residential heights, indicative first floor heights and vegetation at 15 years' growth.



## viewpoint summary

## 8. VIEWPOINT SUMMARY

Viewpoint Summary					
	ACCESS	EFFECT	SENSITIVITY	IMPACT	REASSESSED IMPACT
Viewpoint 1 Wine Country Drive Traveling North (400m)	HIGH	HIGH	MODERATE	HIGH	MODERATE
Viewpoint 2 / Photomontage Wine Country Drive Traveling North (200m)	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	MODERATE
Viewpoint 3 Wine Country Drive Traveling North (200m)	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	MODERATE
Viewpoint 4 / Photomontage Wine Country Drive Traveling South (2000m)	MODERATE	LOW	LOW	LOW	VERY LOW
Viewpoint 5 / Photomontage Wine Country Drive Traveling South (750m)	HIGH	LOW	MODERATE	LOW	VERY LOW

## 9. IMPACT ASSESSMENT

### 9.1. Discussion

This section considers the general impact the proposal may have on the local visual environment and identifies those areas where the visual impact may potentially be the most significant. This was done by undertaking an inspection of the surrounding area and broadly scoping the study area to identify where the proposed development would likely to be visible and appear to be most prominent. Visual effect may be either based on the degree of exposure or the number of people likely to be affected.

It should be noted that this report and its ratings have been based upon the current concept model and surrounding viewed landscape. Refer conclusions and recommendations for potential site mitigations to reduce visual impact.

The most prominent views of the proposal are afforded to viewpoints 1, 2 and 3 which all return a HIGH visual impact due to the extent of works visible while traveling north along Wine Country Drive. The proposal provides a high contrast of change even when viewed in the context of the existing development as the buildings encroach closer to the road than the existing multi-story apartments, furthermore, while the existing apartments already protrude over the ridgeline the proposed apartments sit much higher when viewed from Wine Country Drive. When taking into consideration the addition of landscape screening in the immediate vicinity of the proposal along with the establishment of the existing planting buffer along Wine Country Drive the proposal can then be reassessed to a MODERATE visual impact for viewpoints 1, 2 and 3.

When viewing the proposal from viewpoints 4 and 5, there is a minimal portion of the proposal visible while traveling south along Wine Country Drive therefore the proposal has been assessed to have a LOW visual impact. Furthermore the proposal insignificantly protrudes above the ridgeline and would be viewed from a vehicle traveling at 90km/h therefore, the proposal has been reassessed to have a VERY LOW visual impact when viewed from viewpoints 4 and 5.

It is noted that there is the desire for additional residential stages of The Vintage between Wine Country Drive and the proposal, if this was to proceed then the dwellings would screen the proposed apartments from all views along Wine Country Drive should the dwellings be built to the 8.5m height limit. This would give the proposed apartments NIL visual impact when viewed from Wine Country Drive.

Viewpoints have been taken into consideration as if they were afforded to viewers driving along Wine Country Drive. Viewers traveling along Wine Country Drive will be driving at 90km/h, reducing time spent viewing these views. There are no public transport locations or reasons to stop along this portion of road so viewing time will always be short and viewed at speed.

The assessed stages of growth for proposed vegetation are at years 1, 5 and 15. The location of this vegetation and extension of the existing planted mound and the proposed vegetation within the proposed residential development and proposed vegetation associated with the proposed apartment development. Viewpoints 2 and 5 establish that overtime the proposed vegetation further mitigated visual impacts of the proposed development from Wine Country Drive.

Despite the shift in visual amenity from open rural landscape to vegetated buffers the proposed vegetation will soften the development and will result in a reduced visual impact of built forms.

## 9.2. Conclusion and Recommendations

The report has been conducted based on a visual assessment of the proposal when viewed from Wine Country Drive only. Wine Country Drive is a major roadway in which vehicles are permitted to travel 90km/h, there is no points along the report area that encourage stoppage so all views are assessed as moving within vehicles. A review of the visual catchment of the proposed site showed that views are to be somewhat filtered by topography and vegetation. The proposal will have a MODERATE visual impact when traveling north along Wine Country Drive and VERY LOW when traveling south.

The Vintage guidelines require the use of recessive material and colours which encourage built forms to sit quietly within the landscape, this will help to reduce the overall adverse visual impact the proposal has on the landscape.

Recommended further mitigation measures:

- Additional layering of planting buffer along roadside boundary.
- Early works planting for vegetation would be recommended to ensure trees are established in the early stages of the development.
- Varied treatment and use of recessive colours to the facade to reduce its perceived mass and encourage integration into the existing landscape.



## 10. REFERENCES

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- NSW Planning Portal Spatial Viewer <https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/spatialviewer/#/find-a-property/address>, viewed 25.10.2023
- The Vintage, 2024. *Architectural and Landscape Design Guidelines*.
- Think Economics, October 2023, *Social and Economic Impact Assessment (Version 1.1)*
- Williamson, D, 1978, "Scenic Perceptions of Australian Landscapes", *Landscape Australia*, Vol. 2, pp 94-100.

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