Hive Battery Developments Pty Ltd

VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Proposed Battery Energy Storage System

103 Cabbage Tree Rd, Williamtown NSW

December 2023

conus
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

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A	29.11.23	Draft Submission	AC	AC
B	06.12.23	Final Submission	AC	AC

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

Conus Landscape Architecture has been engaged by HDB, on behalf of Hive Battery Developments Pty Ltd and Clean Energy Transfer Fund Pty Ltd to prepare a Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) of the proposed Battery Storage Energy System (BESS) at 103 Cabbage Tree Rd, Williamtown, NSW.

1.2 The Proposal

The proposed development is for a BESS to be located behind a residence and machinery/storage shed on a property at 103 Cabbage Tree Rd, Williamtown. As detailed in plans prepared by HDB, it consists of a single compound which measures 44.16m long x 32.41m width. The compound houses 12 x 2.5m high x 1.73m wide x 9.34m long individual batteries, grouped in pairs and several associated facilities (water tank, storage room, power conversion system, control room). This compound is contained within a 3m high HushPanel noise barrier with Trimdek profile and coloured Windspray. This noise barrier will totally conceal all of the internal structures. The compound is raised up on a 1.8m high grassed batter to be above the floodplain.

This development falls under the local government area of Port Stephens Council (PSC) and has been requested through a Request for Information (RFI), dated 26.9.23 to accompany a Landscape Plan:

> *A Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) is required to be provided that includes photomontages and a detailed assessment of the likely visual impacts of all components of the project (including transmission lines, substations, and any other ancillary infrastructure) on surrounding residences and key locations, scenic or significant vistas, and road corridors in the public domain and provides details of measures to mitigate and/or manage potential impacts.*

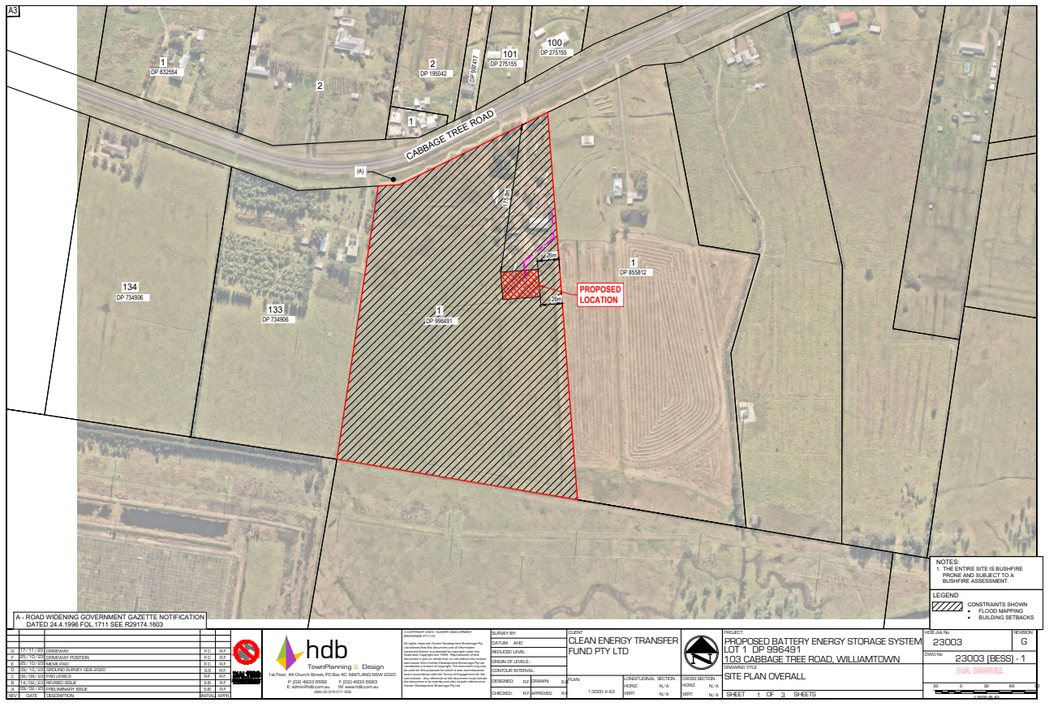


Figure 1: Overall Site Plan (source: HDB, 2023)

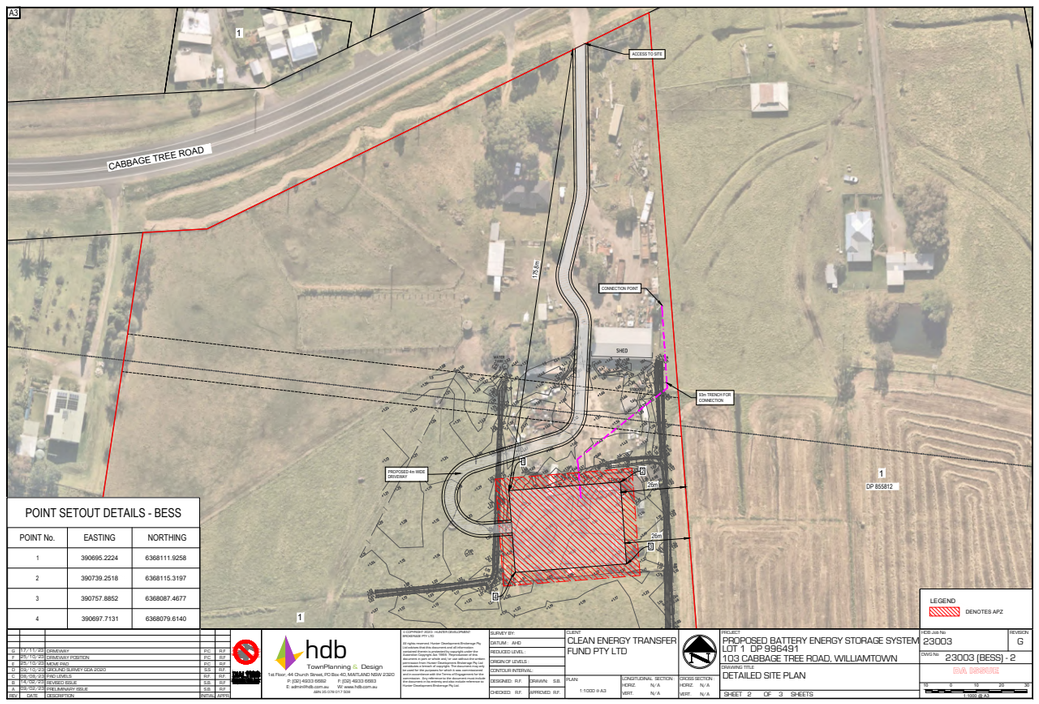


Figure 2: Detail Site Plan (source: HDB, 2023)

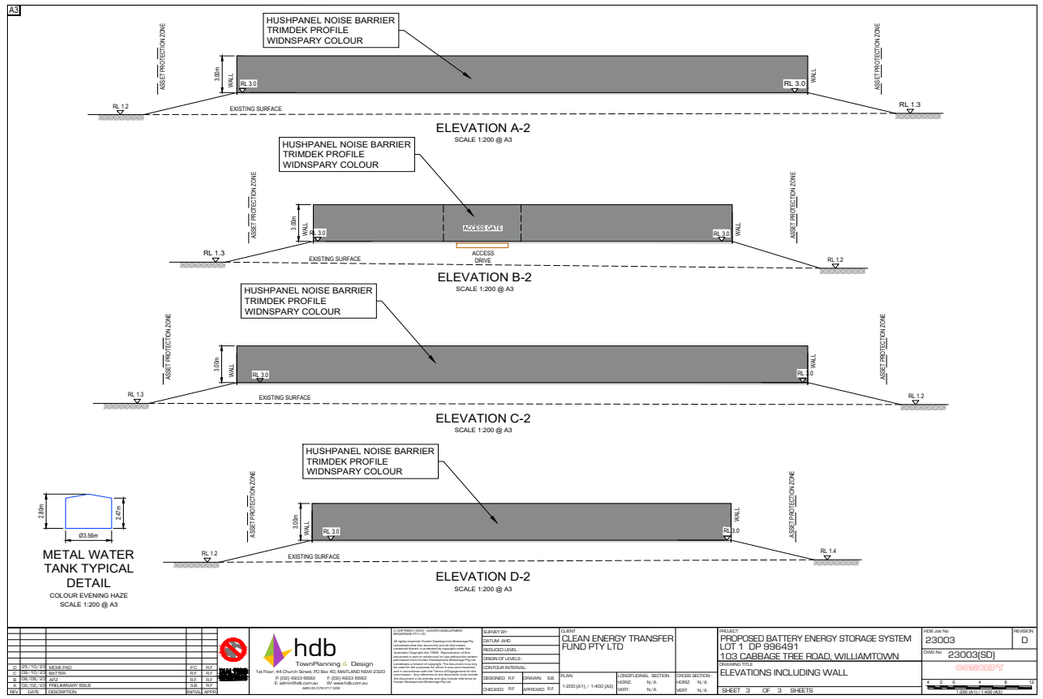


Figure 3: Site Elevations including Wall (source: HDB, 2023)

Figure 4: Location Map (source: Six Maps, 2023)

1.3 Purpose and scope of this report

PSC states that a VIA refers to a 'report that examines the visual impact of a development in situations where a development presents significant bulk, height or variations to setbacks. To be prepared by a suitably qualified person'. Additionally, a VIA is a tool to measure and assesses potential landscape and visual effects or impacts. This process can be used to potentially inform and influence the design or planning process. The end result of this process is that takes account of potential landscape and visual impacts to reduce negative impacts and enhance the existing landscape and visual environment. *PSC, DCP 2014 Development Application Supporting Documentation.*

1.4 Applicable Guidelines

The visual impacts of the proposed development has been assessed in accordance with the following guidelines:

- *Environmental Roads and Maritime Services, (2018,) Impact Assessment Practice Note EIA-N04 Guideline for Landscape Character and Visual Impact Assessment, Version 2.1*
- *Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment, (2013) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition*
- *Lake Macquarie City Council, (2013) Scenic Management Guidelines Part D: Requirements for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Study area

The study area, located on the southern side of Cabbage Tree Rd, Williamtown is part of single rural residential 93.388ha block, zoned RU2 Rural Landscape Land Use (PSC). It has a single residence, a large metal storage shed and several above ground concrete water tanks, in addition to multiple abandoned rural machinery items. The majority of the site, which, whilst lower than Cabbage Tree Rd, is a flat and level floodplain totally cleared of its existing vegetation. There are several Eucalyptus trees planted around the residence and along the western boundary of the house precinct. Small numbers of horses and dairy cattle are present. An overhead powerline easement is located just to the North of the proposed development. The highest point occurs near Cabbage Tree Rd in the Northwest corner of the property.

Prior to being removed, the original vegetation community would have consisted of Northern Melaleuca quinquenervia Swamp Forest and Estuarine Sea Rush Swamp Oak Forest, part of the Coastal Swamp Sclerophyll Forest, now an endangered ecological community. A stand of Estuarine Sea Rush Swamp Oak Forest exists to the South of the Site whilst Northern Melaleuca quinquenervia Swamp Forest occurs to the North. On the Western boundary, the adjoining property displays groves of the large exotic Giant Bamboo.

2.2 Landscape treatment of the proposed development

The following LDA03 Rev C Landscape Plan, dated 06.12.23 indicates the landscape treatment of the proposed development.

Figure 5: LDA03 Rev C Landscape Plan, dated 06.12.23 (source: Conus Landscape Architecture, 2023)

3.0 VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

3.1 Glossary of terms

The following is a glossary of terms and their abbreviations used (where applicable):

TERM	DEFINITION	ABBREVIATION
Aesthetics	Relating to the sense of the beautiful or science of aesthetics, ie the deduction, from nature and taste, the rules and principles of beauty.	
Australian height datum		AHD
Amelioration	The ability to reduce the visual impact of a development through siting design colour or screening	
Background	Parts of a setting that appear most distant typically greater than1.5 kilometres; also referred to as the regional setting.	
Canopy tree	A tree with a minimum height of approximately 10 metres with an average crown spread of at least 8 metres to 10 metres in width	
Desired future character	A term used to capture the desirable future outcome or vision for an area as set down in planning documents or as professionally assessed and envisaged by urban designers or other built environment professionals.	
Environmental Impact Statement		EIS
Foreground	The area that immediately surrounds the proposal up to a distance of 0.5 kilometres; also referred to as the local setting.	
Impact	The effect of a proposal, which can be adverse or beneficial, when measured against and existing condition	
Kilometres		Km
Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment	The assessment of the impacts of the proposal on landscape and visual values.	LVIA
Landscape	All aspects of a tract of land, including landform, vegetation, buildings, villages, towns, cities and infrastructure.	
Landscape Architecture	A profession involved with the assessment, design and management of the built and natural environment.	
Landscape Character Assessment	The process of mapping, describing and evaluating landscapes on the basis of the presence and arrangement of various landscape features	LCA
Landscape character type	Multiple similar landscape character zones repeated within a larger study area grouped to avoid repetition in their description.	LCT
Landscape character zone	An area of landscape with similar properties or strongly defined spatial qualities, distinct from areas nearby.	
Local planning policy framework	Local planning policies are tools used to implement the objectives and strategies of the Municipal Strategic Statement	LPPF
Magnitude	The measure of the scale, form and character of a development proposal when compared to the existing condition. In the case of visual assessment this also relates to har far the proposal is from a viewer. Combined with sensitivity, magnitude provides a measurement of impact**.**	
Metres		m
Middleground	An intermediate area that is a 0.5 -2km distance from the proposal. Also referred to as the sub-regional setting.	
Modification level	The degree to which a development contrasts or blends with its setting.	
Receptor	A location or type of user for which views of the proposal may be possible.	
Significant landscape	The landscape is of national importance.	
Sensitivity	The sensitivity of a landscape character zone or view and its ability to absorb change of the nature of the proposal. In the case of visual impact this also relates to the type of viewer and number of viewers. Combined with magnitude, sensitivity provides a measure of visual impact.	
Urban design	The process and product of designing projects so they: fit sensitively with the built natural and community environment; contribute to the functioning of the community; and contribute to the quality of the public domain for the community and road users. Architects, Engineers, environmental experts, Landscape Architects, Planners and Urban Designers are all involved in urban design. Urban Designers are generally Landscape Architects and Architects who have extended their expertise into the field of urban Design.	
Viewer perception	The way in which people respond to what they are seeing as influenced by things other than purely visual, for example noise and economic benefits.	
Viewpoint	Moderate or high sensitivity location from which views to the construction process or components of the proposal may be possible.	
Viewshed	The surface area visible from a particular viewing location.	
Visability	The state or fact of being seen	
Visual amenity	The qualities of a landscape setting that are appreciated and valued by a viewer.	
Visual catchment	The area over which an object can be seen within the landscape based on line of sight.	
Visual impact	The result of assessing the sensitivity level of a viewer and the modification level of a development	
Visual sensitivity	The degree to which various user groups would respond to change based on their expectation of a particular experience in a given setting.	

3.2 Visual Impact assessment

SENSITIVITY	MAGNI TUDE			
	High	Moderate	Low	Negligible
High	High	High-moderate	Negligible	Negligible
Moderate	High-moderate	Moderate	Moderate-low	Negligible
Low	Moderate	Moderate-low	Low	Negligible
Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

Sensitivity and Magnitude

Overall impact

Table 1. Impact level (matrix of sensitivity and magnitude)

Sensitivity	Criteria
Very High	Nationally designated landscape with high conservation or heritage value and absence of landscape detractors. Protected views identified in planning policy designation, State designated publicly accessible landscape or heritage assets.
High	Locally designated valued landscape with many distinctive characteristics and very few landscape detractors. Public views with a high visual prominence and a high number of users in close proximity, private views in close proximity, passive recreational receptors where the landscape has a high visual value.
Moderate	Landscape with some distinctive characteristics and few landscape detractors. Public views with a moderate visual value and a moderate number of users in close proximity, active recreational receptors where the landscape has little visual value.
Low	Landscape with few distinctive characteristics and presence of landscape detractors. Public views with a little visual value and a low number of users, where receptors are mostly road users in motor vehicles or passers-by, people at their work place or views from commercial buildings where the landscape has some visual value.
Very Low	Landscape with no distinctive characteristics and presence of many landscape detractors. Public views with none visual value and a limited number of users not in close proximity, people at their work place or views from commercial buildings where the landscape has little or no visual value.

Table 2.Sensitivity Ranking Criteria

Magnitude	Criteria
Very High	Total loss or major change to key characteristics of the existing landscape. The proposal forms a significant and immediately apparent part of the scene. It significantly contrasts in scale and character (either existing or planned). It is severely detrimental to the quality of the scene.
High	Notable loss or change to key characteristics of the existing landscape. The proposal forms a dominant feature of the scene to which other elements become subordinate. It contrasts in scale and character (either existing or planned). It is reducing the quality of the scene.
Moderate	Partial loss or change to key characteristics of the existing landscape. The proposal forms a visible new element within the overall scene, yet one that is relatively compatible with the surrounding character (either existing or planned) and view's composition. It is possibly reducing the quality of the scene.
Low	Minor loss or change to key characteristics of the existing landscape. The proposal constitutes only a minor component of the wider view, that is compatible with the surrounding character (either existing or planned) and view's composition.
Very Low	Limited or no loss or change to key characteristics of the existing landscape. The proposal constitutes only a minor component of the wider view, which might be missed by the casual observer or receptor. Awareness of the proposal would not have an effect on the overall quality of the scene.
Negligible	No change in the landscape or view.

Table 3. Magnitude Ranking Criteria

3.21 Sensitivity

Low. The proposal sits adjacent/ to the rear of an existing metal storage shed, which in turn lies to the rear of the main residence. Surrounding the proposal is an expansive wide, flat turfed floodplain. Beyond the Southern boundary, a stand of *Casuarina glauca* (Swamp Oak), remnant of Estuarine Sea Rush Swamp Oak Forest and along the western boundary, clumps of Giant Bamboo provides a visual green wall backdrop to the open flat grassed field.

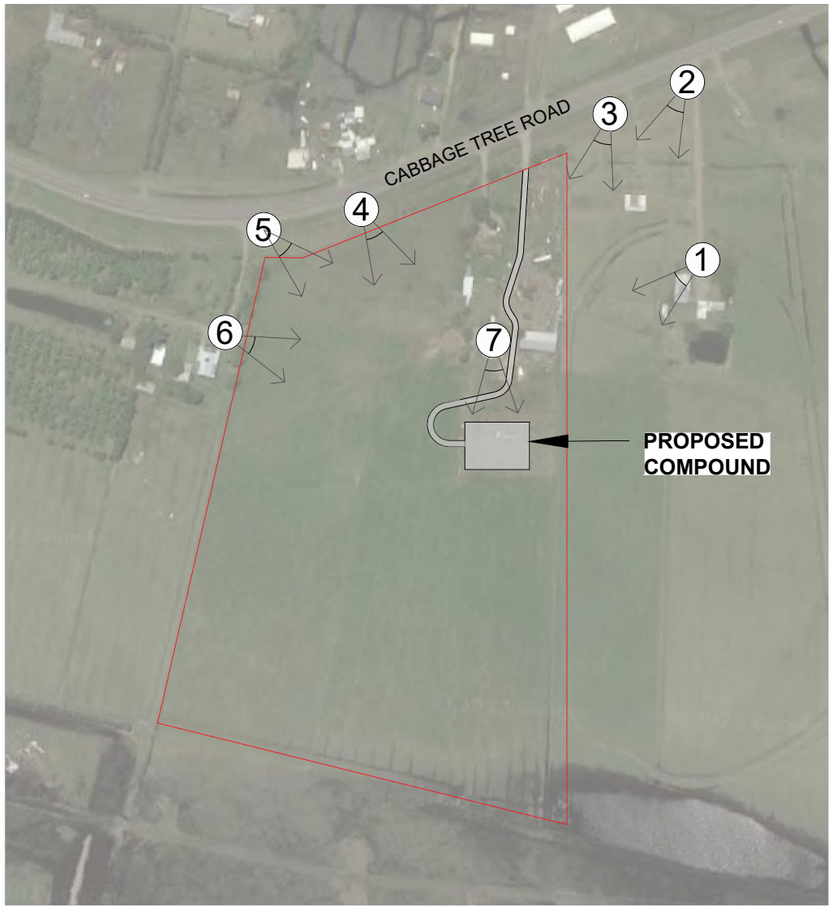
3.22 Magnitude

Low. The proposed development comprises of various different shaped and sized buildings, which have a maximum height of 2.52m. The tallest structure is the 3m high water tank. These structures are all concealed from view from the outside by a 3m high HushPanel acoustic fence. In turn, this 3m acoustic wall is screened by a buffer of native plants.

3.33 Landscape character and visual impact assessment

The landscape character and visual impact assessment will be determined by referencing viewpoints showing existing landscape character in relation to the proposed development, taking from the same viewpoints. The local character of each of these viewpoints will be described and then an Impact Level Matrix will reveal the ultimate level of visual impact at each viewpoint/site.

7 viewpoints were selected around the proposed site (refer to the Viewpoints location map below).



LOCATION MAP (NOT TO SCALE)

Viewpoint	Location	Direction
1	Adjoining residence No.101 Cabbage Tree Rd, East of Site	SW
2	No.101 Cabbage Tree Rd, East of Site	SW
3	No.101 Cabbage Tree Rd, East of Site	SW
4	103 Cabbage Tree Rd (Site)	SE
5	103 Cabbage Tree Rd (Site)	SE
6	103 Cabbage Tree Rd (Site)	E
7	103 Cabbage Tree Rd (Site)	S

Viewpoint 1: Looking Southwest from East of Site

Existing

Existing landscape character

View looking southwests from the adjoining residence at 89 Cabbage Tree Rd, Williamtown shows an open, expansive view framed by the existing metal machinery/storage shed to the right-hand-side of the view and the tree line of *Casuarina glauca* (Swamp Oak) on the left-hand-side of the horizon and a tree line of Giant Bamboo towards the shed. Scattered to the left/rear of the shed can be seen a plethora of miscellaneous scrap machinery. In the fore to midground, there is a shortage of trees, save for 2 young *Salix babylonica* (Weeping Willow), the one in the foreground being dead. Grass is the main visual material. The presence of 3 sets of overhead powerlines, one in the foreground, a line in the midground (with poles) and one in the background (with poles) dominates the visual catchment.

Proposed + visual impact

Proposed landscape character

Whilst the scattered miscellaneous scrap machinery is still visible, the BESS, with its 3m HushPanel acoustic fence cannot be seen through the layered dense screen plantings. Together with the background surrounding trees, the visual impact is softened by this dense layered planting treatment. The openness of the visual catchment is till maintained, despite the addition of more vegetation to the south of the shed.

SENSITIVITY	MAGNITUDE			
	High	Moderate	Low	Negligible
High	High	High-moderate	Negligible	Negligible
Moderate	High-moderate	Moderate	Moderate-low	Negligible
Low	Moderate	Moderate-low	Low	Negligible
Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

Sensitivity and Magnitude

Overall impact

Viewpoint 2: Looking Southwest from Northeast of Site

Existing

Existing landscape character

View looking southwests from the beginning of the driveway of the adjoining residence at 89 Cabbage Tree Rd, Williamtown. It shows an open, expansive view framed by the existing small metal shed to the right-hand-side of the view and the tree line of *Casuarina glauca* (Swamp Oak) on the horizon. Located to the left/rear of the shed can be seen a one item of rusted scrap machinery. In the fore to midground, there is a shortage of trees, save for 1 dead *Salix babylonica* (Weeping Willow), Grass is the main visual material. The presence of 3 sets of overhead powerlines, one in the foreground, a line in the midground (with poles) and one in the background (with poles) dominates the visual catchment.

Proposed + visual impact

Proposed impact

With only one piece of rusted scrap machinery still visible, the BESS, with its 3m HushPanel acoustic fence cannot be seen through the layered dense screen plantings. Together with the background surrounding trees, the visual impact is softened by this dense layered planting treatment. The openness of the visual catchment is still maintained, despite the addition of more vegetation to the south of the small shed.

SENSITIVITY	MAGNITUDE			
	High	Moderate	Low	Negligible
High	High	High-moderate	Negligible	Negligible
Moderate	High-moderate	Moderate	Moderate-low	Negligible
Low	Moderate	Moderate-low	Low	Negligible
Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

Sensitivity and Magnitude

Overall impact

Viewpoint 3: Looking Southwest from Northeast of Site

Existing

Proposed + visual impact

Existing landscape character

View looking southwests from the beginning of the driveway of the adjoining residence at 89 Cabbage Tree Rd, Williamtown. It shows an open, expansive view framed by the existing small metal shed and shipping container to the right-hand-side of the view and the tree line of *Casuarina glauca* (Swamp Oak) on the horizon. Located to the left/rear of the shed can be seen a one item of rusted scrap machinery. In the fore to midground, there is a shortage of trees, save for 1 up against the shed), Grass is the main visual material together with prominent fence lines in the foreground. The presence of 3 sets of overhead powerlines, one in the foreground, a line in the midground (with poles) and one in the background (with poles) dominates the visual catchment.

Proposed visual character

Whilst the scattered miscellaneous scrap machinery is still visible in front of the new screen planting, the BESS, with its 3m HushPanel acoustic fence cannot be seen through the layered dense screen plantings. Together with the background surrounding trees, the visual impact is softened by this dense layered planting treatment. The openness of the visual catchment is still maintained, despite the addition of more vegetation to the south of the large shed.

SENSITIVITY	MAGNITUDE			
	High	Moderate	Low	Negligible
High	High	High-moderate	Negligible	Negligible
Moderate	High-moderate	Moderate	Moderate-low	Negligible
Low	Moderate	Moderate-low	Low	Negligible
Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

Sensitivity and Magnitude

Overall impact

Viewpoint 4: Looking Southeast from Northwestern part of Site

Existing

Proposed + visual impact

Existing landscape character

View looking Southwest from the slightly elevated Northwestern section of the Site (compared with lower-level majority of Site), adjacent to Cabbage Tree Rd. This visual catchment is characterised by trees (eg. *Eucalyptus botryoides*) in the left-hand-side midground, set around a concrete water tank. Fence lines are prominent in the foreground and midground. Additionally, as in the previous eastern views, 3 sets of overhead powerlines, one in the foreground (with poles), a line in the midground (with poles) and one in the background (with poles) dominates the visual catchment. Openess and expansive-ness of the flat level grassed floodplain are 2 visual attributes of this visual catchment. To the background horizon the tree line of *Casuarina glauca* (Swamp Oak) can be seen on the horizon.

Proposed visual character

The proposed development is considerably screened by the layered natural plantings from this viewpoint. The screen plantings provide a seamless continuation to the existing *Eucalyptus botryoides* (Bangalay), together with the tree line of *Casuarina glauca* (Swamp Oak) along the horizon. Scattered miscellaneous scrap machinery is still visible in front of the new screen planting, the BESS, with its 3m HushPanel acoustic fence cannot be seen through the layered dense screen plantings. The grassed paddocks with their dividing fences still create a sense of space consistent with the agricultural landuse of the area.

SENSITIVITY	MAGNITUDE			
	High	Moderate	Low	Negligible
High	High	High-moderate	Negligible	Negligible
Moderate	High-moderate	Moderate	Moderate-low	Negligible
Low	Moderate	Moderate-low	Low	Negligible
Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

Sensitivity and Magnitude

Overall impact

Viewpoint 5: Looking Southeast from Northwestern corner of Site

Existing

Existing landscape character

View looking Southwest from the Northwestern corner of the Site, adjacent to Cabbage Tree Rd. This visual catchment is characterised by eg. *Eucalyptus robusta* in the left-hand-side midground, set around a concrete water tank. Fence lines are prominent in the foreground and midground. Additionally, as in the previous eastern views, 3 sets of overhead powerlines, one in the foreground (with poles), a line in the midground (with poles) and one in the background (with poles) dominates the visual catchment. Openess and expansive-ness of the flat level grassed floodplain are 2 visual attributes of this visual catchment. To the background horizon the tree line of *Casuarina glauca* (Swamp Oak) can be seen on the horizon, framing the visual catchment with a green frame.

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Proposed + visual impact

Proposed visual character

The main visual catchment is provided by the grassed paddocks in the foreground still creating a sense of space consistent with the agricultural landuse of the area. The proposed development is considerably screened by the layered natural plantings from this viewpoint**.** The screen plantings provide a seamless continuation to the existing *Eucalyptus botryoides* (Bangalay)*,* together with the tree line of *Casuarina glauca* (Swamp Oak) along the horizon. Existing open rural fencing is still visible in front of the new screen planting, the BESS, with its 3m HushPanel acoustic fence cannot be seen through the layered dense screen plantings.

SENSITIVITY	**MAGNITUDE**			
	High	Moderate	Low	Negligible
High	High	High-moderate	Negligible	Negligible
Moderate	High-moderate	Moderate	Moderate-low	Negligible
Low	Moderate	Moderate-low	Low	Negligible
Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

Sensitivity and Magnitude

Overall impact

Viewpoint 6: Southeast from next to adjoining residence No.121 to the West of Site

Existing

Existing landscape character

View looking Southwest from the Northwestern section of the Site, adjacent to the 2 storey residence at 121 Cabbage Tree Rd. This visual catchment is characterised by trees (eg. *Eucalyptus botryoides*) in the left-hand-side midground, set around a concrete water tank. Fence lines are prominent in the foreground and midground. Additionally, as in the previous eastern views, 2 sets of overhead powerlines, a line in the midground (with poles) and one in the background (with poles) dominates the visual catchment. Openess and expansiveness of the flat level grassed floodplain are 2 visual attributes of this visual catchment. To the background horizon the tree line of *Casuarina glauca* (Swamp Oak) can be seen on the horizon.

Proposed + visual impact

Proposed visual character

The main visual catchment is dominated by the grassed paddocks with open rural fencing is still visible in front of the new screen planting in the fore/midground still creating a sense of space consistent with the agricultral landuse of the area. The proposed development is considerably screened by the layered natural plantings from this viewpoint. Blending together with the tree line of *Casuarina glauca* (Swamp Oak) along the horizon. Existing, the BESS, with its 3m HushPanel acoustic fence cannot be seen through the layered dense screen plantings

SENSITIVITY	MAGNITUDE			
	High	Moderate	Low	Negligible
High	High	High-moderate	Negligible	Negligible
Moderate	High-moderate	Moderate	Moderate-low	Negligible
Low	Moderate	Moderate-low	Low	Negligible
Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

Sensitivity and Magnitude

Overall impact

Viewpoint 7: Looking South from Western side of shed

Existing

Existing landscape character

View looking South from the Western side of the metal machinery/storage shed, showing location of access drive from Cabbage Tree Rd. A plethora of miscellaneous scrap machinery dominate the foreground and midground visual catchement. The overhead powerlines and their poles are still visible in the foreground and midground and background. To the background horizon the tree line of *Casuarina glauca* (Swamp Oak) can be seen on the horizon. Compared to the other more expansive open views, this visual catchment is more confined.

Proposed + visual impact

Proposed visual character

The view looking immediately south from adjacent to the existing metal machinery shed has changed in that it has closed the visual catchment with a more vertical element provided by the layered screen planting. Similar to the other viewpoints, at maturity, the planting has completely concealed the raised compound with it's 3m high acoustic fence.

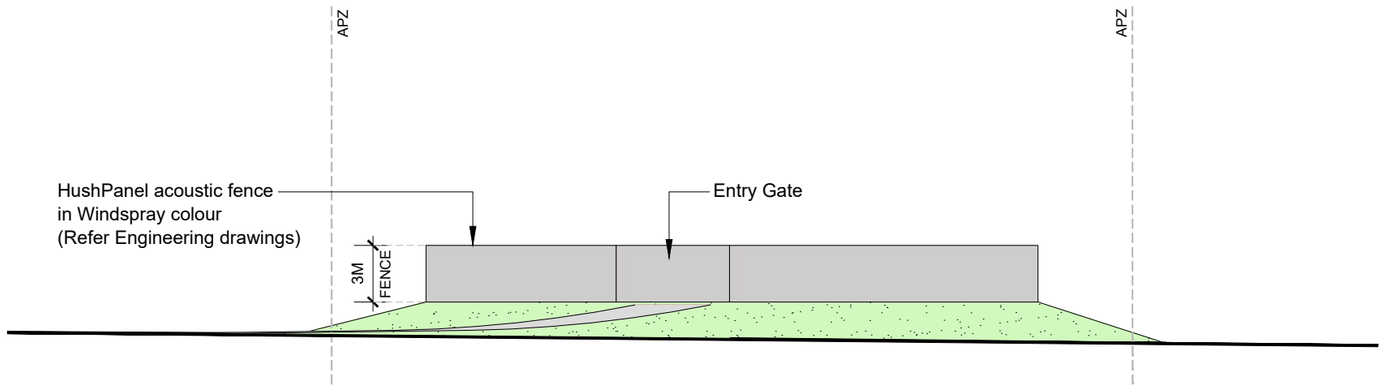
SENSITIVITY	MAGNITUDE			
	High	Moderate	Low	Negligible
High	High	High-moderate	Negligible	Negligible
Moderate	High-moderate	Moderate	Moderate-low	Negligible
Low	Moderate	Moderate-low	Low	Negligible
Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

Sensitivity and Magnitude

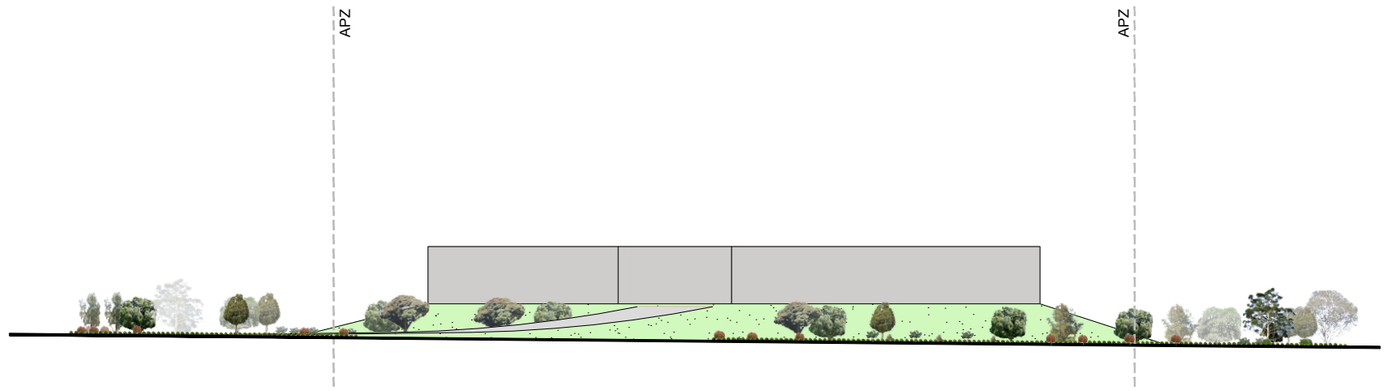
Overall impact

4.0 Elevations

As seen below is an elevation of the western side of the BESS (B2) which shows a progression of what the landscape treatment will look like at 1 year after planting, 5 years after planting and maturity, approximately 10 years from planting. As shown, there is almost full screening of the raised BESS compound and its 3m high perimeter HushPanel acoustic boundary fence. Note the use of the colour Windspray for the acoustic fence minimises visual impact at construction, which gradual reduces its visual impact as the planting grows and gradually conceals most of the boundary fence in time.

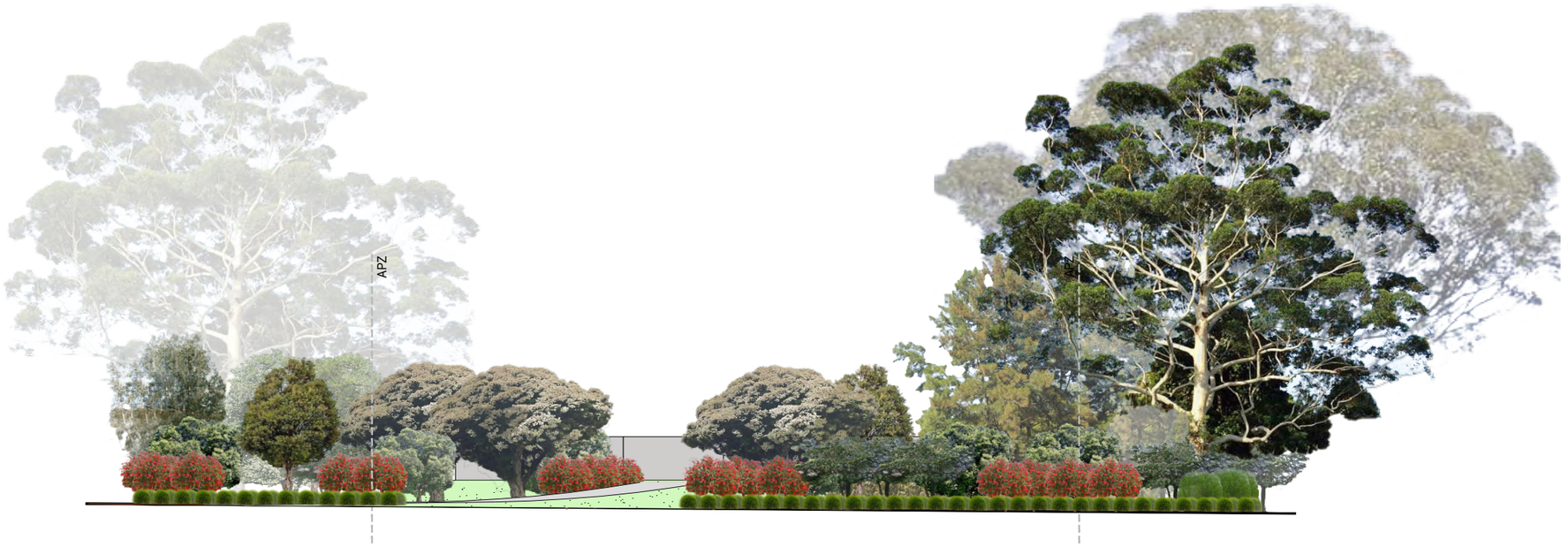


01/04 **ELEVATION B2** **1:200**



02/04 **ELEVATION B2 (1 YEAR OF PLANTING)** **1:200**

03/04 ELEVATION B2 (5 YEARS OF PLANTING) 1:200



02/05 ELEVATION C2 (MATURED STAGE) 1:200

5.0 Conclusion

The proposed single BESS compound with its 3m high HushPanel Windspray-coloured acoustic wall will be totally screened by native plantings at maturity. The proposed development will ultimately be predominantly concealed from all viewpoints. The low sensitivity and moderate-low magnitude of the proposed development has resulted in a moderate-low visual impact. The grey-coloured Windspray colour of the HushPanel wall is also of low visual impact. The only evidence of something there will be the plantings. Even though the Site is an open and expansive grassed floodplain with an agricultural landuse with very few structures and houses, the proposed screen planting treatment will provide a low visual impact as viewed from most viewpoints. With good growing conditions from good soil, mulch and irrigation, in addition to good natural rainfall and coastal warm temperate climate of the location, the plantings will reach their maturity within a 10 year time frame.