VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT - 237 WHARF ROAD RESIDENTIAL REDEVELOPMENT

237 WHARF ROAD, NEWCASTLE, NSW 2300

AWABAKAL COUNTRY

prepared for:

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assessment summary

1. ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

Terras Landscape Architects has undertaken a visual assessment of a proposed residential redevelopment at 237 Wharf Road, Newcastle, 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 study area is located at 237 Wharf Road. The foreshore and harbour lie to the immediate north of the site across Wharf Road. The former rail corridor to the south with Hunter Street and Newcastle city centre beyond. Wharf Road is a popular tourist road taking in the Newcastle Harbour while Hunter Street provides an arterial route into the city, now also providing the Newcastle light rail line. 237 Wharf Road is zoned as multi-use and within the eastern tip of Newcastle's Civic Precinct.

- The site is currently occupied by a two storey mirrored glass office building, basement carpark and mature native trees, which combine to provide heavy shade to the southern and eastern side of the site.

- The local area character units associated within a 500 metre radius of site include: industrial working harbour, active foreshore, mixed use, commercial, open space, residential and local streets.

- The proposed development will see the construction of a six storey residential building with undercroft car parking and terraced structural planters around the podium level. The proposed six storey structure differs from much of the surrounding multi-storey developments as it is less solid in profile.

- Greatest visual access to the site is limited to approximately 250 metres due to surrounding development and existing vegetation and views are generally heavily filtered.

- The greatest visual access afforded into the site will be from immediately adjacent the site within approximately 100m or less. Keeping within both the zoned height envelope and clear of the protected view corridor, it does not appear to impose itself unnecessarily upon the site or skyline.

- The overall visual impact rating has been assessed to be low to moderate. It is believed the proposed built form will be seen as an extension of the existing development occurring in the surrounding area with existing mature vegetation and proposed landscaping to the lower levels providing integration.

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 has been undertaken in accordance of the requirements of Guidelines for Landscape Character and Visual Impact Assessment (RMS, 2013) and as such, the work has been carried out following the below steps:

- Assess the visibility of the proposal. This includes a review of the existing visual environment/landscape setting of the locality.
- Identify key existing viewpoints and their sensitivity. 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.
- Assess 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.

A 0.9m diameter helium filled red balloon was positioned in the approximate centre of the study area. The balloon was released to the maximum height of the proposed building (3.1 metres above existing ground level) and tightly secured. This balloon was 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 64, DP 596913).

•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 site lies within the eastern tip of Newcastle City Centre's ***Civic Precinct***, and is located between the western end of the ***Foreshore Precinct*** to the north, the ***East End Precinct*** to the south and a pocket precinct identified as the Multi-Use Space Precinct.*

The area is bound by the former rail corridor and future Hunter Street Live-Work Units laneway, a Key Site Identified as a 'Multi-purpose Community Space Precinct' and intangibly by the Brown Street view corridor.

Areas immediately adjacent the site contain;

- A very similar but slightly taller office building to the west in the same reflective blue glass-walled style and similar planting styles.
- A somewhat run-down open-air carpark with mixed small - medium sized trees to the east. (Key Site and 'Multi-purpose Community Space Precinct')
- A DCP laneway corridor to the south, which presents now as a wide unkept strip with some unidentifiable construction work and associated paraphernalia along the north side of Hunter / Scott Street.
- Wharf Road to the north and the narrow western end of the foreshore parkland (RE1) containing lines of mature trees with an open grassland.

The sites architectural context is a combination of commercial, residential & retail uses with the buildings being predominantly 4-5 stories.

The southern side of Wharf Road, where the site is located, has a predominant streetscape pattern of buildings with elevated ground floor podiums, basement parking but not a defined streetscape character, and contains a variety of built architecture styles, heights and setbacks.

In the wider area, a variety of building heights up to 10 floors, various styles and street front typical of a commercial centre or overlapping into public space: awnings, cafe tables, planting etc.

Recreational open space with lawns, trees and well-used pathways defines the other main contextual identity within the study zone associated with the harbour foreshore and public open space.

Image 1 Site location

The site is zoned B4: Mixed Use** within a larger swathe of B4 (MU1) (Mixed Use) zoned land which forms parts of the Civic Precinct. The objectives of this zone are outlined below:

- *To encourage a diversity of business, retail, office and light industrial land uses that generate employment opportunities.*
- *To ensure that new development provides diverse and active street frontages to attract pedestrian traffic and to contribute to vibrant, diverse and functional streets and public spaces.*
- *To minimise conflict between land uses within this zone and land uses within adjoining zones.*
- *To encourage business, retail, community and other non-residential land uses on the ground floor of buildings.*
- *To support nearby or adjacent commercial centres without adversely impacting on the viability of those centres.*

A map of the local zoning categories is shown on the next page.

* *Newcastle DCP 2012 - Section 6.0 Locality Specific Provisions- Subsection 6.01 Newcastle City Centre .*

** Currently listed in *Newcastle Local Environmental Plan 2012 (Current version for 26 April 2023 to date) as MU1 - Mixed Use* and on the *Land Zoning Map - Sheet LZN_004G* as *B4 -Mixed Use.*

the site

Image 2 The site and immediate surrounds

Image 3 Land zoning diagram

site description

3.2. Site Description

The site itself faces onto the harbour to the north and currently contains a two storey(& basement carpark) reflective glass office building set up from the street on a raised podium with a wide set of steps and ramps for access from Wharf Road only. Within the building curtilage are a variety of low mixed plantings, both young and mature palms including the native Cabbage Palm (***Livistonia australis***) and mature / semi-mature trees to the south and east which appear to be predominantly Grey She-oak ***(Casuarina glauca)*** Broad-Leaved Paperbark (***Melaleuca quiquenervia***).
The DCP-protected view corridor along Brown Street to the south of the site faces approximately north-north east towards the harbour beyond. This view is currently mostly obscured, partly by the mature trees within the boundary of the site which appear to reach double the height of the existing building.

Image 4 View south east from the foreshore path showing existing building and trees on site.

Image 5 View north north east from Brown Street along the Protected View Corridor showing existing building and trees on site.

4. VISUAL ENVIRONMENT

4.1. Landscape Character

The visual environment is defined by multi story buildings adjoining both Hunter Street and Wharf Road which create visual corridors east - west. The buildings to the north and east of the site give way to open parkland with public open space associated with the foreshore and structured planting of mature trees.

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.

Image 6 Site showing context in aerial view (nearmap July 2023)

4.2. Landscape Character Units

Newcastle DCP 2012 identifies several precinct areas within the city centre to determine existing character and future shaping of development. Many of the contemporary functions within these precincts overlap, but within the study area of the proposed development site, distinct character units may be described.

Eight landscape character units are identifiable within a 500m radius of site, of which three relate to various phases of development. These are:

1. Industrial
2. Working harbour
3. Active foreshore
4. Mixed use
5. Commercial zones
6. Open space
7. Residential
8. Local streets

These are explained in greater detail on the following page.

Image 7 Landscape character units within 500m of site

landscape character units

1. Industrial

Image 8 Industrial buildings across the harbour during ferry ride across harbour.

250 metres north of the site across the harbour lies heavy industry interfacing with the working harbour. This land stretches from the most nearest tip of Carrington and beyond into Mayfield North and Kooragang.

Image 14 View north from foreshore adjacent site, towards Carrington's industrial areas.

2. Working harbour

Image 9 View northeast during ferry ride to Stockton.

The Port of Newcastle is the largest deepwater harbour on Australia's east coast, handles approximately 4,700 ship movements, and 170 million tonnes of cargo annually. The harbour is also used extensively by recreational vessels and lies to the immediate north of the site.

Image 15 View north west from foreshore adjacent site, towards Carrington's grain loader.

3. Active foreshore

Image 10 View westward along the harbour Promenade

The foreshore footpath provides a pedestrian link along the harbor promenade. The pedestrian axis is popular with both walkers and cyclists who use it for recreation and commuting. Mature existing trees and open lawn spaces provide a buffer between the harbour and the city.

Image 11 View eastward along the harbour Promenade

4. Mixed use

Image 12 View east from corner of Wharf Road adjacent the intersection with Merewether Street and Workshop Way, towards site.

Hotels and high density residences, commercial services and professional offices all coincide within this unit. Public transport nodes including the light rail and the ferry to Stockon are to be found nearby.

Image 13 View north east from corner of Crown Street towards site.

landscape character units

5. Commercial

Image 16 View east along Scott Street adjacent site.

A wide range of shops, restaurants, visitor accommodation, entertainment and variety of professional services exist within the network of Newcastle East and the CBD.

Image 21 View east along Hunter Street at corner with Perkins Street.

6. Open space

Image 17 View south to Perkins Street from Wharf Road.

An open green corridor of lawns, trees and public space stretches from slightly west of the site on the foreshore, and widens out to accommodate a central ribbon of parkland between Wharf Road and Scott Street soon after the site, as it continues east towards Foreshore Park , Camp Shortland and the beaches.

Image 18 View west along Market Street Lawn towards the site. Wharf Road shown to the right hand side, and Scott Street to the left.

Previously the location of the Newcastle rail line, the land has been retained as public open space to encourage permeability between the harbour and city.

7. Residential

Image 19 Looking east, Perkins St. near the intersection with Church Street.

Perched on the hill behind the CBD is a dense grid of housing parcels dating from the early settlements of Newcastle. Building styles vary and the whole of Newcastle East and development to the south of the site is classified as a heritage conservation area

Image 22 Looking east, partway up Perkins St.

8. Local streets

Image 20 View east along Hunter Street towards the pedestrian mall.

Despite the prominance as a visitor destination, the majority of users of the streets and spaces around the East End of Newcastle are still local residents within the immediate few kilometres. Honeysuckle and Wharf Road provide major east west links through the study area. South of Hunter Street lies the city grid

Image 23 View North along Perkins Street towards Wharf Road.

5. THE PROPOSAL

5.1. Proposed Project and Landscaping

The project involves the construction of a six storey residential apartment block plus a basement car parking facility, and swimming pool.

The proposal involves the removal of all existing trees and vegetation on site.

The proposed building has matched the set back of the existing building from the eastern boundary to facilitate the view corridor north along Brown Street to the harbour.

The landscape scheme involves terraced landscape levels from the street providing a buffer between the public and private areas. Planting to the first floor proposed to spill down the facade will soften the built form. High quality finishes are proposed with the landscape merging with the built form.

To the southern side of the building at the Hunter Street interface a dense planting scheme is proposed with species adapted to lower light levels.

The existing palms within the street are proposed to be retained to Wharf Road with suggested links to the eastern and southern boundary proposed to tie in with future public open space network.

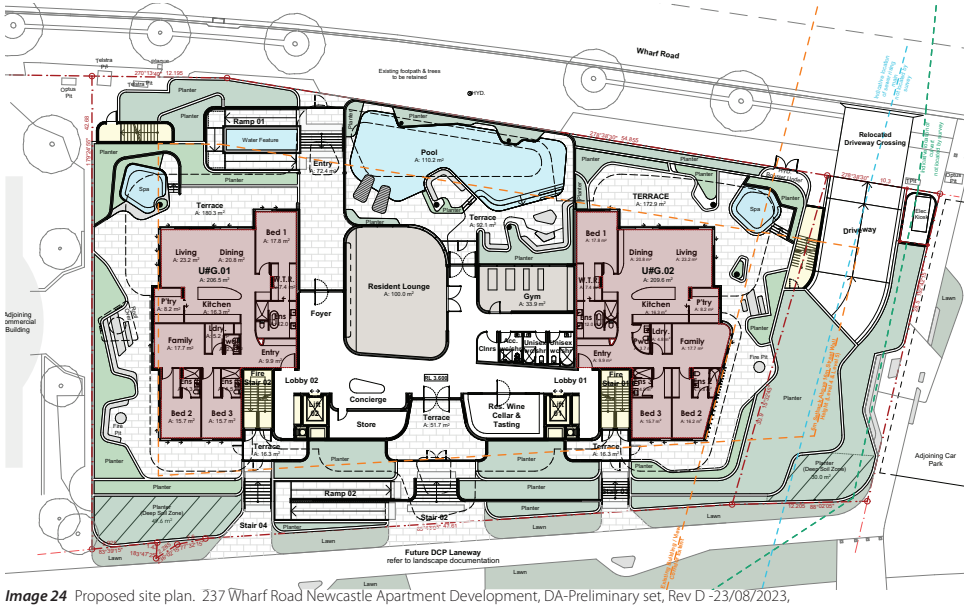

Image 24 Proposed site plan. 237 Wharf Road Newcastle Apartment Development, DA-Preliminary set, Rev D -23/08/2023, EJE Architects.

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 then 500 metres.

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 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 created digitally and included to put views to the site in context with the surrounding area.

Image 25 Viewpoint locations

viewpoint data sheets

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, that while the viewshed area extends to over 1500m across Newcastle harbour the density and relative scale of existing vegetation and development leave the proposal effectively indivisible from the rest of the city mass beyond about 500m.

The most prominent views afforded into the site will be for pedestrians in the vicinity of the junction of Brown and Scott Street, and those immediately adjacent the site along Wharf Road, as well as motorists travelling along Wharf Road and Hunter Street.

Views from the well-trafficked (pedestrians and cyclists) foreshore path along the sea wall are all limited and densely filtered by the mature trees.

The furthest view possible along the protected view corridor (Brown Street) starts below the first trees at the foot of the hill south of the junction with King Street.

The proposed building would theoretically be visible from as far away as Stockton foreshore and parts of the Horsehoe Beach carpark (likewise; most of the on-water views) but would blend into the existing city scape and would be difficult to distinguish due to the distance and the mature trees in the foreground

Several other filtered views are afforded through neighbouring streets, as shown on the map adjacent.

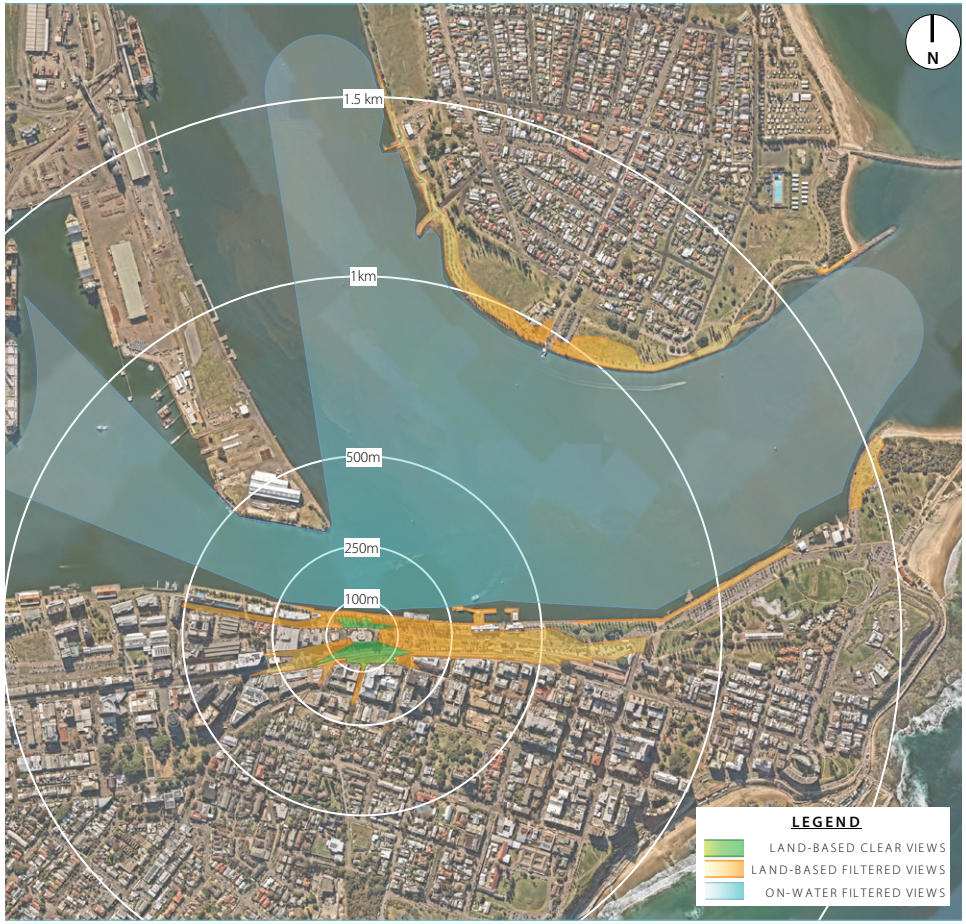

Image 26 Viewshed diagram.

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

ELEMENT	RATING: LOW	RATING: MEDIUM	RATING: HIGH
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	RESULTS WHEN A PROPOSAL PRESENTS ITSELF WITH HIGH VISUAL CONTRAST TO ITS VIEWED LANDSCAPE WITH LITTLE OR NO INTEGRATION AND/OR SCREENING.
	MODERATE	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).
	LOW	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.
	NEGLIGIBLE	THERE ARE NO VIEWS OF THE PROPOSAL COMPONENTS AND AS SUCH THERE IS NO IMPACT

Source: Adapted from EDAW, 2000

assessment criteria

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: South of Intersection of Brown Street and King Street

Image 27 View north north east towards site.

Site
Distance: 230m s-south east
View position: superior
Visual Quality: Medium

Viewpoint 1	
Viewer Access	Proximity to site and high viewer numbers rates access for this location as HIGH.
Visual Effect	The visual effect is assessed as MODERATE due to proposed scale of development, siting principles, screening landscaping and colour selection. The building has been set back from the eastern boundary to avoid the view corridor.
Visual Sensitivity	The Visual Sensitivity of the site is considered HIGH as it is a DCP-protected view corridor.
Visual Impact	The proposal does not encroach within the view corridor and the Visual Absorption Qualities of the surrounding urban context means that the proposal will result in a MODERATE visual impact 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:				
Moderate				

Image 28 Viewpoint 1, existing

Image 29 Viewpoint 1, indicative photomontage of proposaL.

viewpoint 2

Location: 304 Wharf Road at pedestrian crossing.

Image 30 View east towards site from pedestrian crossing adjacent 304 Wharf Road.

Site
Distance: 250m south east
View position: Neutral
Visual Quality: Low

Viewpoint 2	
Viewer Access	This view is typical of motorists travelling east along Wharf Road. Viewer access is considered HIGH due to viewer numbers and proximity to site.
Visual Effect	The visual effect is assessed as LOW, as the proposal will not be particularly noticeable within the existing street scape.
Visual Sensitivity	The Visual Sensitivity of the site is considered MODERATE within the context of existing development.
Visual Impact	The proposal will have very little effect from this vantage point and will result in a LOW visual impact.

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				

Image 31 Viewpoint 2, existing

Image 32 Viewpoint 2, indicative photomontage of proposal.

viewpoint 3

Location: Harbour side Promenade adjacent 292 Wharf Road

Image 33 View south east towards site from foreshore path showing indicative building mass as red dashed line.

Site
Distance: 150m south east
View position: Neutral
Visual Quality: Medium

Viewpoint 3	
Viewer Access	This view is typical of pedestrians and cyclists travelling east along the foreshore path. Viewer numbers and close proximity to the site result in a HIGH access score.
Visual Effect	The visual effect is assessed as MODERATE, as the proposal will have the context of existing developments, and will have some landscape integration with planting to soften the built form.
Visual Sensitivity	The Visual Sensitivity of the site from this vantage point is considered High.
Visual Impact	The visual impact is likely to be MODERATE from this location due to the proposed vegetation and integration with existing development, and existing trees external to site providing a screening effect.

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				

viewpoint 4

Location: Pedestrian Crossing at 200 Wharf Road.

Image 34 View west towards site from nearest pedestrian crossing at 200 Wharf Road showing indicative superimposed building mass as red dashed line.

Site
Distance: 200m south
View position: Neutral
Visual Quality: Low -Medium

Viewpoint 4	
Viewer Access	Viewer access from this location is considered HIGH due to high viewer numbers and proximity to site.
Visual Effect	The visual effect is assessed as MEDIUM due to the proposal noticeably contrasting with its existing viewed landscape however the existing vegetation to the foreground provides a degree of integration
Visual Sensitivity	Sensitivity is HIGH here due to the nature of the viewpoint being tourist or passive recreation.
Visual Impact	The visual impact is likely to be HIGH from this location due to the above factors.

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				

viewpoint 5

Location: Approximate mid-point of ferry crossing to Stockton.

Image 35 View south west towards site from mid ferry crossing, showing indicative building mass as red dashed line.

Site
Distance: 700m south west
View position: Neutral
Visual Quality: Medium - High

Viewpoint 5	
Viewer Access	This viewpoint was selected as a representation of what may be experienced by passengers on the Queensferry crossing to and from Stockton, or potentially other private watercraft. Daily viewer numbers will exceed 500 and generally be of short duration. A HIGH viewer access rating is required.
Visual Effect	The visual effect is assessed as LOW, as the proposal will not breach the roof line of the distant developments and mature trees along the foreshore will filter much of the built form.
Visual Sensitivity	Due to this view being predominantly one of a commuting travel corridor, the sensitivity shall be rated as HIGH.
Visual Impact	The visual impact is rated as MODERATE from this location due to the above factors.

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

viewpoint 6

Location: Pedestrian Crossing at 159 Wharf Road.

Image 36 View west towards site from Queensferry Wharf pedestrian Crossing showing indicative building mass as red dashed line.

Site
Distance: 400m east
View position: Neutral
Visual Quality: Low

Viewpoint 6	
Viewer Access	Access is considered HIGH due to high viewer numbers and proximity to site.
Visual Effect	The proposal will contrast the existing viewed landscape with the built form occurring above the vegetated foreground however the vegetation will provide screening to the majority of the proposed development resulting in a MODERATE visual effect
Visual Sensitivity	While it is acknowledged that this is a tourism / visitor route and the adjacent areas provide both environment factors which could lead to the rating of high sensitivity, this viewpoint can be rated as MODERATE due to the preponderance of development and the roadway.
Visual Impact	The visual impact is likely to be MODERATE from this location due to the above factors.

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

viewpoint 7

Location: Ferry Terminal, Stockton.

Image 37 View south west towards site from Stockton foreshore at ferry wharf showing indicative building mass as red dashed line.

Site
Distance: 1km north
View position: Neutral
Visual Quality: High

Viewpoint 7	
Viewer Access	Viewer access is MODERATE with large potential daily numbers, despite typical short viewing times and the distance to the site.
Visual Effect	Although the proposal shall be visible, the building sits well within the city mass and the skyline, will be further filtered by foreshore trees and so shall have a LOW- NEGLIGIBLE visual effect.
Visual Sensitivity	This viewpoint is given a MODERATE rating due to being a commuting travel corridor.
Visual Impact	The visual impact is likely to be LOW from this location decreasing to NEGLIGIBLE with the visual absorption of the city.

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				

viewpoint 8

Location: Pedestrian area adjacent 187 Hunter Street

Image 38 View north west towards site from pedestrian area adjacent 187 Hunter Street, at the foot of Perkins Streets.

Site
Distance: 200m east south east
View position: Neutral
Visual Quality: Low

Viewpoint 8	
Viewer Access	This viewport is typical of motorists traveling west along Hunter Street and pedestrians moving north towards the harbour. Viewer access is considered HIGH due to viewer numbers and proximity to site.
Visual Effect	The proposal noticeably contrasts with the viewed landscape however is in keeping with the development to the west of the site and landscaping to the lower levels will help to integrate the proposal at the street level, giving it a MODERATE rating.
Visual Sensitivity	Due to being a major travel corridor, the view is given a HIGH sensitivity rating.
Visual Impact	The visual impact is likely to be HIGH 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				

Image 39 Viewpoint 8, existing.

Image 40 Viewpoint 8, indicative photomontage of proposal.

viewpoint 9

Location: Rydges Hotel, Merewether Street.

Image 41 View east towards site from path adjacent Rydges Hotel on corner of Merewether Street looking down Wharf Road, showing indicative building mass as dashed red line.

Site
Distance: 550m west
View position: Neutral
Visual Quality: Low

Viewpoint 9	
Viewer Access	This viewpoint has HIGH viewer access due to proximity to site and numbers of cars / pedestrians through location.
Visual Effect	The proposal will be a significant height increase at the end of the view corridor however will be integrated into the setting by the surrounding development adjoining wharf road therefore the visual impact will be MODERATE
Visual Sensitivity	HIGH rating due to being a major travel corridor.
Visual Impact	The proposal is rated to have a MODERATE visual impact due to the above conditions.

Visual Evaluation Criteria	NEGLIGIBLE / VERY LOW	LOW	MODERATE / MEDIUM	HIGH
Viewer Access				■
Visual Effect			■	
Visual Sensitivity			■	
Visual Impact - Significance rating based on above criteria:				
MODERATE				

viewpoint 10

Location: 275 Hunter Street

Image 42 View east towards site from 275 Hunter Street.

Site
Distance: 250m west
View position: Neutral
Visual Quality: Low

Viewpoint 10	
Viewer Access	This viewpoint was selected to indicate what may be experienced by pedestrians travelling east along Hunter Street. The road will carry more people but their visual access will be of shorter duration and the proposal less visible due to exiting development and mature trees at an acute angle. Pedestrian numbers will vary but it has been assigned a HIGH access rating.
Visual Effect	Visual effect is moderate as although the proposal noticeably contrasts with its viewed landscape the proposal sits within the existing built environment of Hunter Street and is an extension of the existing built form. Suggested tree planting within the public corridor to the south of the site would further help integration
Visual Sensitivity	This viewpoint can be said to have a HIGH rating due to being a major travel corridor.
Visual Impact	The visual impact is likely to be MODERATE 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:				
Moderate				

Image 43 Viewpoint 9, existing

Image 44 Viewpoint 9, indicative photomontage of proposal showing approximate extents of building mass.

8. VIEWPOINT SUMMARY

Viewpoint Summary				
	ACCESS	EFFECT	SENSITIVITY	IMPACT
Viewpoint 1 Intersection of Brown and King Streets (230m)	HIGH	MODERATE	HIGH	MODERATE
Viewpoint 2 / Photomontage 304 Wharf Road at pedestrian crossing(250m)	HIGH	LOW	MODERATE	LOW
Viewpoint 3 Harbour side Promenade adjacent 292 Wharf Road (150m)	HIGH	MODERATE	HIGH	HIGH
Viewpoint 4 / Photomontage Pedestrian Crossing at 200 Wharf Road (200m)	HIGH	MODERATE	MODERATE	HIGH
Viewpoint 5 Approximate mid-point of ferry crossing to Stockton (700m)	HIGH	LOW	HIGH	LOW
Viewpoint 6 Pedestrian Crossing at 159 Wharf Road (400m)	HIGH	MODERATE	MODERATE	MODERATE
Viewpoint 7 Ferry Terminal, Stockton (1km)	MODERATE	LOW / NEGLIGIBLE	MODERATE	LOW
Viewpoint 8 Pedestrian area adjacent 187 Hunter Street (200m)	HIGH	MODERATE	HIGH	HIGH
Viewpoint 9 / Photomontage Rydges Hotel, Merewether Street (550m)	HIGH	MODERATE	MODERATE	MODERATE
Viewpoint 10 275 Hunter Street (250m)	HIGH	MODERATE	MODERATE	MODERATE

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 a surrounding site inspection 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.

The current development within the site is a heavily tinted mirrored glass reflecting surrounding buildings and mature trees. The area is zoned for mixed use which is reflected in the commercial / residential character of the area.

The majority of viewpoints located high viewer access due to having a high number of viewers and within close proximity of the site, however immediately adjacent development and mature vegetation ensures that views are filtered from most viewpoints.

Viewpoint 1 is the view corridor north through Brown Street, further south mature street trees uphill create a barrier. The proposal, while taller than the existing building on site, has been sited away from the eastern boundary and the view corridor, is less dense in form and allows some passage of northern sky around its central mass. The proposed removal of the mature trees to the east rebalances the loss of vertical light and opens up potential views towards the water within the view corridor. Plantings around lower floors and penthouse balconies will provide some green integration and softening of the built form. The overall impact is therefore considered moderate, however the proposal is an extension of the surrounding built form.

Viewpoint 2 is typical of motorists travelling east towards the site along Wharf Road and shows the context of existing nearby development. The proposal will have a low impact due to the built form in the foreground and existing mature vegetation screening the majority of the proposal from this location.

Viewpoint 9 is located at the bend of Merewether Street, further west. For this vantage point, the proposal has been rated as moderate impact due to the height increase of built form to the end of the view corridor however the proposal will be seen as an extension of the existing built form along Wharf Road.

Viewpoint 3 is adjacent the water front cafe on the northern side of Wharf Road, and represents the first vantage towards the site of pedestrians and cyclists travelling east along the foreshore pathway. The matrix renders a 'high' impact however it is considered that the visual impact from this viewpoint is likely to be moderate due to the proposed development appearing as an extension of the existing built form which occurs to the south of Wharf Road from this viewpoint with existing mature trees filtering views to the south.

Viewpoint 4 is located at the northern side of the pedestrian crossing adjacent "Scratchleys" (sic) restaurant. Mature trees within the boundary of the existing carpark will provide significant screening of the development from this location. The high impact rating is primarily due to the sensitivity of this viewpoint however it is considered that the visual impact could be re assessed as moderate due to the screening afforded by the existing vegetation and the proposal being an extension of the existing built form from this viewpoint.

Viewpoint 6 is 200m east of Viewpoint 4, and is located within the crossing adjacent the Queensferry Wharf. A moderate impact is given by the matrix, however in context with scale of existing developments visible nearby, it is recommended that a 'low' impact is considered appropriate.

Viewpoint 5 is typical of passengers crossing the harbour on the Stockton Ferry or on other watercraft within the harbour. The sensitivity due to the nature of this viewpoint has resulted in a moderate impact however it is considered that the visual impact will be low due to the proposal blending with its viewed environment of built form adjoining the harbor. Similarly Viewpoint 7 from the foreshore of Stockton approximately a kilometre away shows a low impact.

Viewpoint 8 shows an unusually clear sightline of the proposal and the impact can be rated as high. The photomontage illustration demonstrates the proposed landscape integration around the lower levels in softening the streetscape aspect. Presumed future growth of the currently small street trees will further soften the setting. It is suggested that more tree planting along the laneway will further soften and integrate the building. Although 'high' is initially shown via the ratings system, the innate visual absorption of the urban context and wide busy roadway suggests that 'moderate' may be more appropriate.

Viewpoint 10 is somewhat more screened from the potential pedestrian and vehicular views along Hunter Street by existing development and mature trees. As noted above in location 8, the street trees will grow to further soften the proposal and it is again suggested that further tree planting within any public laneway development may assist integration of building. The impact rating can be seen as medium.

9.2. Conclusion and Recommendations

A review of the visual catchment of the proposed multi-storey residential development showed that the clearest views of the site were generally limited to within 250m of the site due to the existing built environment, topography, and mature trees. Existing built form and mature vegetation will help to partially screen the proposed development.

It is acknowledged that the site is a prominent location at the eastern extent of waterfront development adjacent to the foreshore therefore the sensitivity of the site is typically high due to viewpoints from major travel routes, natural and tourist or passive recreation occurring within close proximity to the site. That said, the viewpoints assessed are viewed within the context of the surrounding landscape. The proposal is seen to be integrated with the existing environment, consistent with the character of the area and in context of the established developments. A high-quality built finish and dense streetscape-level plantings will assist in integration of the proposal and contribute positively to the street interfaces. The proposal will have a low-moderate accumulative visual impact on the surrounding area.

It should be noted that although it is not usually a recommendation to remove existing native trees, the proposed necessity to remove those currently on site to create an undercroft parking facility enables a better outcome for the view corridor north along Brown Street, as a clearer sightline towards the harbour will be achieved.

It is recommended that future developments within the adjacent car park protect the existing medium-sized trees or provide similar sized specimens outside the protected view corridor of Brown Street. Similarly, further tree planting in the laneway zone immediately south of the proposal will assist integration of the proposal.

10. REFERENCES

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