



# **158-164 OLD BATHURST RD, EMU PLAINS**

**VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

*We acknowledge First Nations peoples and their continuing connection to land, waters and culture, because we strongly believe in reconciliation and collaborative engagement for a better future.*

*We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging, whose knowledge, traditions and stories guide custodianship on what will always be their ancestral lands.*

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# INTRODUCTION

## Executive summary

### Purpose of this report

GroupGSA have been engaged by Penrith City Council to undertake an independent visual impact assessment in relation to the development application for industrial units at Emu Plains.

### The site

The site is located at 158-164 Old Bathurst Road, Emu Plains and is bound by Old Bathurst Road to the north, David Road to the north-west, existing industrial development to the south-west, the Blue Mountains train line to the south, and a new commuter car park to the east (currently under construction).

### The proposal

The proposal is comprised of 39 individual industrial sites, ranging in size from 2,000 m² to 8,126m². A looped access road provides vehicular access within the site, connecting to David Road opposite 156 Old Bathurst Road.

### Landscape character

The surrounding context to the east and west is industrial, with varying scale developments occupying the land between Old Bathurst Road and the Blue Mountains train line. A rural grazed landscape is located to the north of the site, managed by the Emu Plains Correctional Facility.

The Blue Mountains train line to the south is elevated on an embankment, with residential land on the flat land further south.

The site sits within a large band of land with designated Scenic and Landscape Values under the Penrith City Council LEP.

## Methodology

As part of this visual impact assessment, GroupGSA has conducted desktop background research as well as site explorations of the surrounding area, on both foot, by vehicle, and by train.

## Conclusion

The development as proposed does not have an unreasonable visual impact on the surrounding area. The proposal is not visible from the ground floor of any sensitive receptors such as residential areas. The proposal includes significant tree and understorey planting to its perimeter and retains a large number of existing trees along its northern, eastern and southern boundaries which assist in ameliorating views towards the development.

Existing views and vistas from the surrounding area towards the Blue Mountains will not be significantly diminished by the proposal and are in keeping with the zoning under the current Penrith Local Environment Plan (LEP) 2010 and precedents set by the surrounding industrial land use.

## Terms used in this report

The following provides a brief description of the terms which have been used within this report

- Landscape character: The aggregate of built, natural and cultural aspects that make up an area and provide its unique sense of place. Landscape in this context is taken to include all aspects of a tract of land - the built, planted and natural topographical and ecological features
- Magnitude: The scale, form and character of a development proposal. In the case of visual assessment also how far the proposal is from the viewer. Combined with sensitivity, magnitude provides a measurement of impact
- Sensitivity: The sensitivity of a landscape character zone or view and its capacity to absorb change. Combined with magnitude, sensitivity provides a measurement of impact
- View: The sight or prospect of some landscape or scene
- Visual catchment: The extent of the area that the proposal will be visible from
- Visual impact: The impacts on the views from residences and other public places
- Visual impact rating: A visual impact rating is determined by cross-referencing magnitude with sensitivity and is measured in the following grades:
  - + High
  - + High to Moderate
  - + Moderate
  - + Moderate to Low
  - + Low
  - + Negligible

Further information relating to the assessment methodology and calculation of ratings is provided within the report.



# METHODOLOGY

## Desktop study

A desktop study was carried out to identify the likely key views for the proposed development and also identify any sensitive visual receptors based on mapping and aerial photography.

These mapping exercises were used to identify locations of known or possible views to be investigated during the fieldwork phase.

## Fieldwork & photography

Following the desktop study, the fieldwork component involved site inspections during which the existence and extent of views was explored in detail from surrounding areas.

Site inspections were carried out on the following dates:

- Tuesday 6 September 2022 (By foot and by vehicle)
- Friday 16 September 2022 (By train)

## Assessment of visual impact

This report aims to measure the expected level of visual impact that would result from the construction of the proposed development, including proposed landscaping and screening.

For each view, visual sensitivity and visual magnitude have been rated as per the definitions on the opposite page. A visual impact rating has been determined by cross-referencing visual sensitivity with magnitude. Table 1 has been used to identify the visual impact rating of the views.

An explanation of each visual impact rating is explained below:

High: The visual impact on these viewers is significant and would typically require amelioration at the site planning stage.

Moderate: The visual impact on these viewers is at a localised scale and can be mitigated or already has some existing screening or an existing setback which minimises visual impact.

Low: The visual impact on these viewers is considered low and no or very little amelioration is required.

Negligible: The visual impact on these viewers is considered very low or non-existent and no amelioration is required.

## Magnitude

Magnitude can be described by the following definition:

*The scale, form and character of a development proposal. In the case of visual assessment also how far the proposal is from the viewer. Combined with sensitivity, magnitude provides a measurement of impact.*

Magnitude is assessed by determining the overall significance of the proposal each view. It can be summarised simply as the level of change proposed.

The following factors are key measurements to be taken into consideration:

- Existing screening
- Apparent size (often determined by distance between the viewer and the proposal)
- Visual context - Presence (or absence) of any items which provide context and scale to the proposal.

## Sensitivity

Sensitivity can be described by the following definition:

*The sensitivity of a landscape character zone or view and its capacity to absorb change. Combined with magnitude, sensitivity provides a measurement of impact.*

Sensitivity is determined by assessing the context at the view location. The following examples are provided as a guide:

- Residential context - Low capacity to absorb change due to potential impacts on day-to-day lives of local residents. High sensitivity.
- Industrial context - High capacity to absorb change due to dynamic use patterns, limited hours of high use levels and regular change within character area. Typically self-contained built form with limited views in/out. Low sensitivity.
- Commercial context - High to moderate capacity to absorb change depending on land use and built form character. May include office blocks or low-rise business parks. Moderate to low sensitivity depending on type.
- Open space context - Highly varied capacity to absorb change depending on open space typology and character. An expansive open space dominated by views to further green areas will have a low capacity to absorb change. A linear pedestrian link in an urban context may have a high capacity to absorb change if it is in a dynamic location with competing demands on users. High to Low sensitivity depending on character.
- Transport corridor - High to moderate capacity to absorb change depending on surrounding character and context. As a dynamic environment typically experienced from a moving position, transport corridors can tolerate high levels of change and are typically expected to continually change and adapt. Low sensitivity.

Table 1: Visual impact rating table

Sensitivity	Magnitude						
		High	High - moderate	Moderate	Moderate - Low	Low	Negligible
	High	High	High	High - moderate	High - moderate	Moderate	Negligible
	High - moderate	High	High - moderate	High - moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Negligible
	Moderate	High - moderate	High - moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate - Low	Negligible
	Moderate - Low	High - moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate - Low	Moderate - Low	Negligible
	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate - Low	Moderate - Low	Low	Negligible
	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible



# SITE CONTEXT

## Regional context

**Located at the edge of the Cumberland Plain, the Blue Mountains form a scenic backdrop to local views and vistas.**

The Blue Mountains form a consistent visual backdrop to the Emu Plains area, bookending all west-facing views with its natural landscape of forested hills and escarpments.

The topography is somewhat varied, with steep river banks running alongside the Nepean River. A relatively flat area is then located to the west of the river, before the land begins climbing as it hits Emu Heights and the Blue Mountains.

## Local context

**Sitting within an east-west band of industrial land, the site is well separated from sensitive residential and retail land uses.**

The localised topography is reasonably flat and limits views toward the site by eliminating natural high points that create longer views or vistas. Located just under 1km from the Nepean River, and approximately 450m from Great Western Highway, the site is visible from neither of these locations thanks to existing built form or established trees.

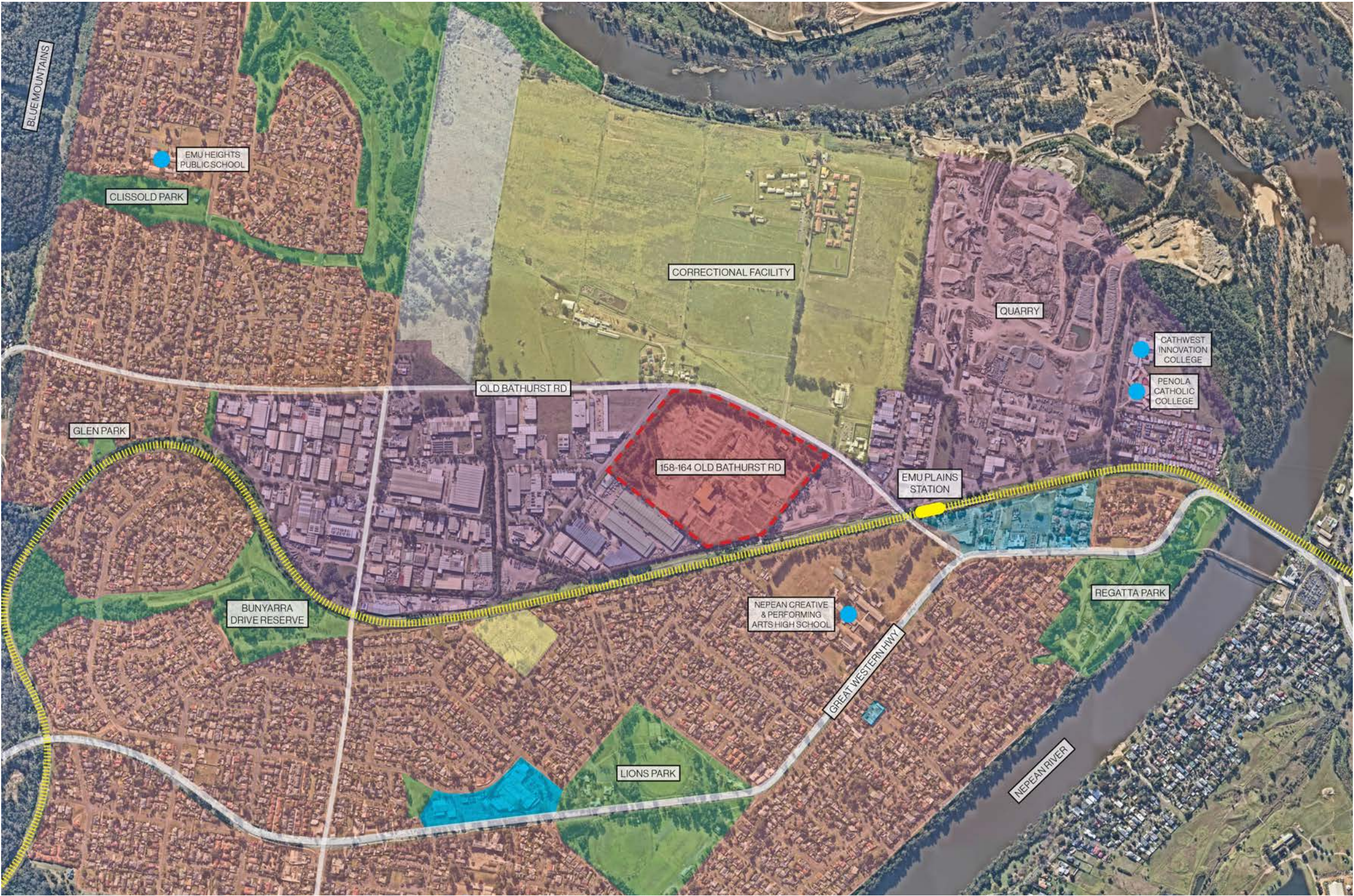
The site is located within an area zoned for industrial use, with established industrial areas to the west and east of the site. A new commuter car park is currently being constructed on a triangular site immediately to the east of the subject site, in an area also zoned for industrial uses.

To the north of the site is a large site occupied by Emu Plains Correctional Centre. A significant portion of the site is currently maintained as a rural landscape, including the area fronting Old Bathurst Road, opposite the subject site.

The Blue Mountains train line runs along an elevated embankment to the south of the site, giving elevated views over the subject site and the neighbouring industrial land. This embankment also visually separates the industrial areas from the residential zones on the south of the train line, removing views between the two areas.

Legend (Zoning as per Penrith LEP 2010)

Industrial	Residential
Retail	Recreation
Infrastructure	Deferred matter





# SENSITIVE VISUAL RECEPTORS

## Scenic and Landscape Values

**The site occupies a small portion of a large area identified for the protection of scenic character and landscape values**

The subject site sits within a large area designated to have Scenic and Landscape Values under the Penrith LEP, and is required to ensure that *'development in these areas is located and designed to minimise its visual impact'* (clause 7.5).

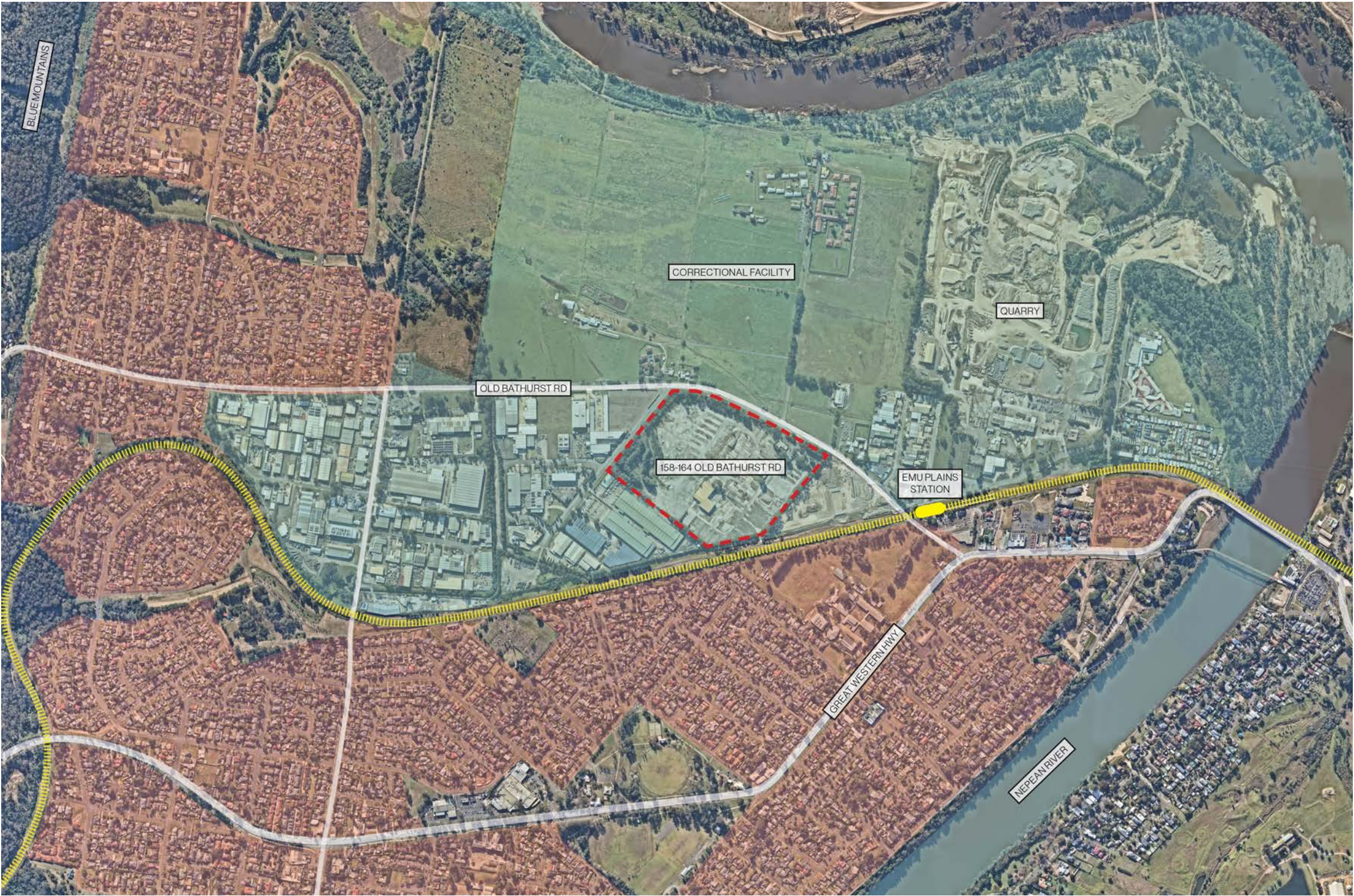
This requirement must be considered within the context of visual assessment, potentially increasing the sensitivity of views within this area. It is understood that it is the views towards the Blue Mountains which have been identified for their scenic value and any development must consider this in its design.

## Residential views

**Although located nearby residential areas, there are no direct views from these areas into the site.**

The residential area to the south of the site is visually separated from the industrial area by the embankment for the Blue Mountains train line. The level of the train lines appears to be roughly level with the gutter line of the single storey homes adjacent.

The residential area north of Old Bathurst Road and west of Russell St does not have views towards the site as existing vegetation within Emu Green Reserve and/or along Lapstone Creek block long views.



### Legend

- SLV area (as per Penrith LEP 2010)
- Residential zoning (as per Penrith LEP 2010)



# SITE CONTEXT VIEWS



**01/**

**Description**

Rural landscape to north side of Old Bathurst Rd, opposite the subject site. Land forms part of corrections facility and is zoned SP2 Infrastructure [Correctional Centre].

**Location**

Old Bathurst Road, opposite 158-164 Old Bathurst Road.



**02/**

**Description**

Adjacent industrial land use with built form, car parking and mature boundary hedge.

**Location**

David Avenue near Sommerville Circuit.



**03/**

**Description**

Adjacent industrial land use with built form, car parking and mature tree planting.

**Location**

Sommerville Circuit near David Avenue.



**04/**

**Description**

Nearby industrial land use with built form, car parking and fencing. Note minimal or no landscaping to lots. Distant views to Blue Mountains behind.

**Location**

Lee St between Smith Street and Railway Street.



**05/**

**Description**

Nearby industrial land use with built form, commuter car parking and fencing. Street trees planted outside commuter car park in foreground. Distant views to Blue Mountains behind.

**Location**

Lee Street at entry to commuter car park.



**06/**

**Description**

New micro-industrial storage facility to be constructed on site on opposite corner. Approved DA, with construction commencing shortly..

**Location**

Corner David Road and Old Bathurst Road.



**07/**

**Description**

Established vegetation in foreground and mid-ground block views towards the site from local centre. Distant views to Blue Mountains through canopy gaps.

**Location**

Car park near corner of Old Bathurst Road and Great Western Highway.



**08/**

**Description**

Nearby industrial built form no landscape setback to rear boundaries. Intermittent tree planting within rail corridor.

**Location**

Blue Mountains train line behind 14 Bromley Road.



**09/**

**Description**

Nearby vehicle lay-down area with minimal tree planting to rear boundary backing onto train line. Intermittent trees located within rail corridor.

**Location**

Blue Mountains train line behind 76 David Road.



**10/**

**Description**

Neighbouring industrial built form with tree planting to rear boundary backing onto train line.

**Location**

Blue Mountains train line behind 46-52 David Road.



# VIEWS & VISTAS

## View locations

- 01** Blue Mountains train line
- 02** Old Bathurst Road near Smith Street
- 03** Old Bathurst Road at the corner of David Road
- Context view locations (refer page 8)





# VIEW 01

## Existing view

The existing view towards the site shows the established boundary trees which are to be retained.

### Location

Blue Mountains train line (moving train), adjacent to the southern boundary of the site

### Viewing distance

Approximately 40m.





**Proposed view**

The new loop road is visible within this view, turning near the boundary of the site. Street trees are planted to both sides of the new road, creating three rows of trees before the first built form is visible on lot 9.

**Visual impact**

**View magnitude**

Moderate-Low  
View is ameliorated by retention of established boundary trees and planting of new street trees. Built form is of a scale and form that fits with the surrounding industrial context.

**View sensitivity**

Low  
Views are from a transport corridor (train line) so they are fleeting and have a high capacity to absorb change. The proposed use matches the surrounding industrial context, extending the dominant visual character of the area.

**View visual impact rating**

Moderate-Low





# VIEW 02

## Existing view

The existing view towards the site shows the established boundary trees which are to be retained and the existing site entry to the former Rocla site which is to be removed. There are no site entries proposed along Old Bathurst Road.

### Location

Old Bathurst Road footpath near 1 Old Bathurst Road.

### Viewing distance

Approximately 18m to closest boundary, 100m to existing entry.





**Proposed view**

The Old Bathurst Road frontage has a minimum 15m setback to retain the existing boundary trees established as a loose row along this boundary. A new row of street trees is proposed along Old Bathurst Road which will provide additional screening to the site and reinforce the landscape character of the precinct.

**Visual impact**

**View magnitude**

Negligible

The proposed view retains the existing boundary trees and adds an additional row of large trees along Old Bathurst Road to increase the density of the vegetative screen. Only glimpses of built form are visible through the canopies.

**View sensitivity**

Low

View is taken from within the Old Bathurst Road corridor, a road dominated by fast-moving traffic with minimal pedestrian usage. The adjacent Emu Plains Corrections Facility is by nature an inward-facing facility with low visual sensitivity.

**View visual impact rating**

Negligible





# VIEW 03

## Existing view

The existing view towards the subject site is dominated by the dense existing vegetation established to the corner of Old Bathurst Road and David Road. The vegetation is located within the site boundary and blocks views into and out of the site.

### Location

Old Bathurst Road carriageway (westbound) near David Road.

### Viewing distance

Approximately 40m.





## Proposed view

The proposed view to this corner shows filtered views to the new industrial built form through the site identity statement and the proposed 15m landscape setback to Old Bathurst Road.

### Visual impact

#### View magnitude

Moderate

The existing view to the site is of a dense, established vegetated mound which blocks views into and out of the site. The proposal is for feature signage and planting which will provide partial screening towards the site.

#### View sensitivity

Low

The view is seen typically from moving vehicles along a main road and is located as a continuation of an existing industrial area.

#### View visual impact rating

Moderate-Low





**SYDNEY**

Level 7, 80 William Street  
East Sydney NSW 2011  
Australia

**MELBOURNE**

Level 4, 152 Elizabeth Street (by appointment only)  
Melbourne VIC 3000  
Australia

**BRISBANE**

Level 14, 100 Edward Street  
Brisbane QLD 4000  
Australia

**HO CHI MINH CITY**

19th Floor – Havana Tower, 132 Ham Nghi,  
Ben Thanh Ward, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City  
Vietnam

