



# 361-365 NORTH ROCKS ROAD

## VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT ADDENDUM

PREPARED FOR  
**EG PLANNING**  
FEBRUARY 2024  
FINAL



URBIS

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# 01 INTRODUCTION



## 1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

Urbis has been engaged by EG planning to provide additional information in relation to the visual effects and potential visual impacts of built form included in a Planning Proposal for the subject site. The Planning Proposal includes greater height and density of development across the site plan than is currently permissible and has been the subject of a recent Rezoning Review. The Rezoning Review undertaken in October 2023 by the Strategic Planning Panel of the Sydney Central City Planning Panel (the SPP) recommended that the proposal should be submitted for a Gateway determination because the proposal has demonstrated strategic and site specific merit. The panel also recommended a number of revisions (relating to scale, height and open space), prior to the Planning Proposal being submitted for Gateway determination. The Record of Decision issued by the SPP secretariat recommended that the height of some parts of the development be limited. The SPP recommended a maximum 6 storeys, with heights 'stepping' down relative to the sloping topography and also 3 storeys along the North Rocks Road frontage.

### SCENARIOS CONSIDERED

This addendum provides a comparative analysis of the visual effects and potential visual impacts between:

**Scenario 1** - The heights as recommended by the SPP, including a maximum 6 storeys and 3 storeys along North Rocks Road frontage or interface.

**Scenario 2** - The preferred heights put forward by the proponent and its consultant team, including a potential additional 1 storey in the far north-western corner of the site (up to a maximum 7 storeys) and a potential additional storey along the central part of the North Rocks Road frontage or interface (up to a maximum 4 storeys).. Both schemes include adjustments in the height of built form which presents to adjacent neighbouring residential development to the west and east, and lower height options that present to North Rocks Road to the south.

The purpose of this comparative analysis (between Scenario's 1 and 2) is to investigate whether there would be a material difference in the extent of visibility, likely perception of bulk and scale, and less or lower level of resultant potential visual impacts for the community from the representative key public domain view places within the site's visual catchment.

## 1.1 BACKGROUND

This report follows a previous Visual Impact Assessment report prepared by Urbis in October 2022 (the VIA) and can be read in conjunction with it. The VIA includes detail and observations about the predominant visual character of area's which adjoin the subject site and features that contribute to the areas visual context. Observations in the VIA speak to the visual compatibility of the Planning Proposal with the existing and desired future character of North Rocks and other parts of the visual catchment. The VIA was informed by a desktop analysis of the underlying landform, slopes analysis and viewshed maps, the parameters of which the proposed height (7 Storeys) and the height of surrounding mature vegetation to the west, north and east.

The height of vegetation was established via Point Cloud Data and Digital Elevation Models from NSW Government Spatial Services datasets - Sydney 2019-06 and aerial mapping from Nearmap - 2022-09-12. The height of vegetation will have grown in the intervening years (2019-2023) such that the screening effects of the surrounding vegetation are likely to be greater and more effective, reducing the potential visual catchment even further than what is considered in the VIA and in this addendum. Therefore, the potential visual catchment will be smaller and more constrained than included in viewshed maps.

We are advised that a response to the SPP prepared by Mecone (12th and 22nd December 2023) requested that any approval or conditions allow the masterplan to retain one additional storey of height in limited parts of the site. The potential allowance of additional height would be considered if it could be demonstrated that in those locations there would be negligible visual or other impacts.

Suggested locations to accommodate one (1) additional storey include:

- At the far north-western corner of the site from 6 up to a potential 7th storey, where the topography falls away and can accommodate an additional level without any adverse impact, and;
- Along the central part of the North Rocks Road frontage (from 3 up to a potential 4th storey), consistent with the historic 12m height control applying to the land opposite the site on North Rocks Road.

The certifiably accurate photomontage included in this report show these options in those locations.

## 1.2 VISUAL CATCHMENT

The potential visual catchment is a theoretical geographical area within which parts of the site and in this case proposed development, may be visible. Urbis have based assumptions about existing visibility on fieldwork observations from surrounding roads public open spaces, highpoints and reviewed view shed maps prepared using GIS data.

View shed maps are included below at Figures 1 and 2. The view shed maps show that:

- There is no significant difference in the extent of potential visibility between the scenarios. The difference is negligible and has no material effect on the visual catchment.
- Scenario 2 (shown in yellow in Figure 2) at part one additional storey to a maximum of 7 storeys, will be visible to the same extent as the lower height Scenario 1 (shown in green in Figure 1) to the north, west and east.
- Scenario 2 is more visually accessible to the south, directly opposite the site across parts of the North Rocks Shopping Centre. This is a location of low sensitivity in terms of relevant visual impact assessment criteria.



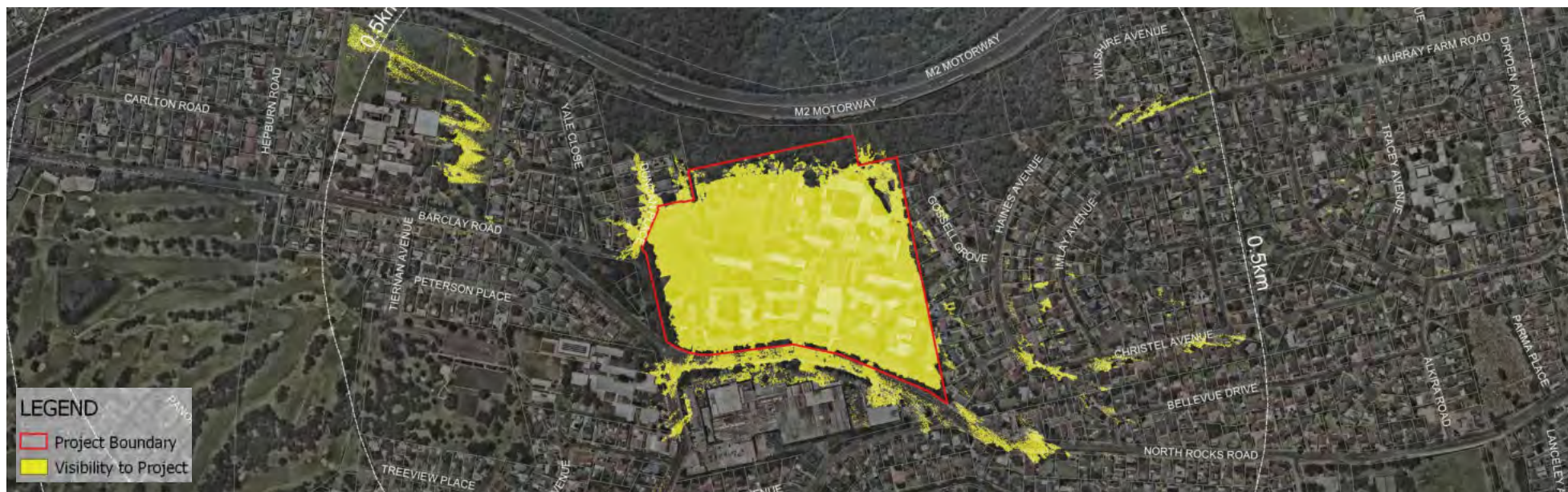


Figure 1 View Shed Map 1 (Scenario 1 part-five and part-six storey development).

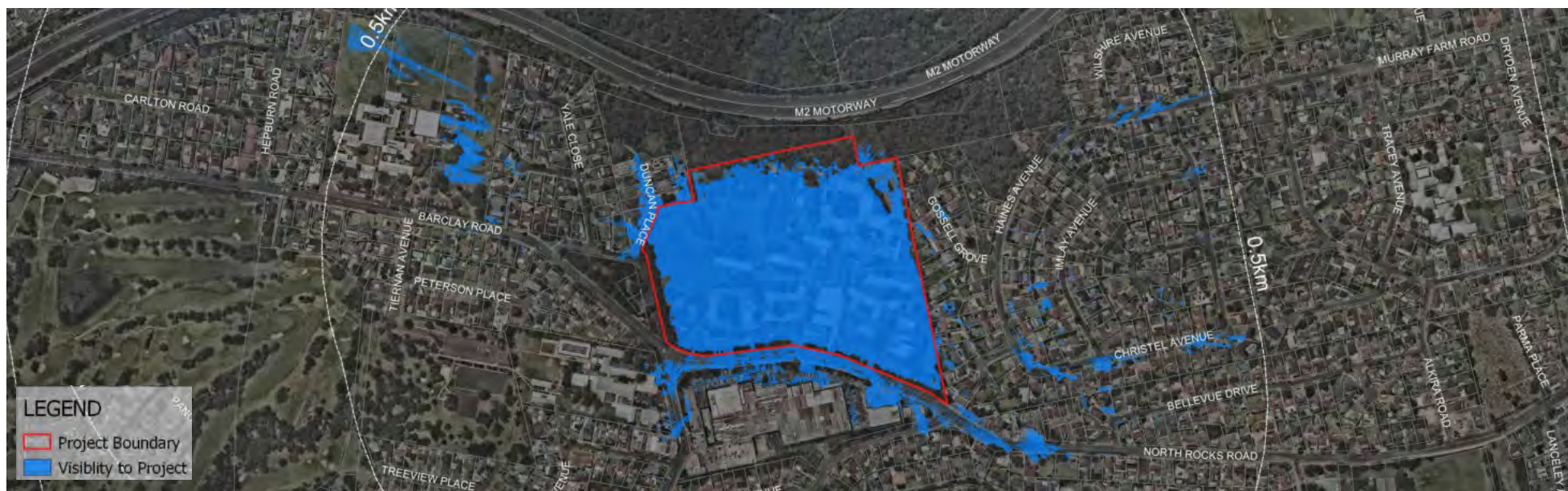



Figure 2 View Shed Map 2 (Scenario 2 part-six and part-seven storey development).





# 02 VISUAL EFFECTS ANALYSIS

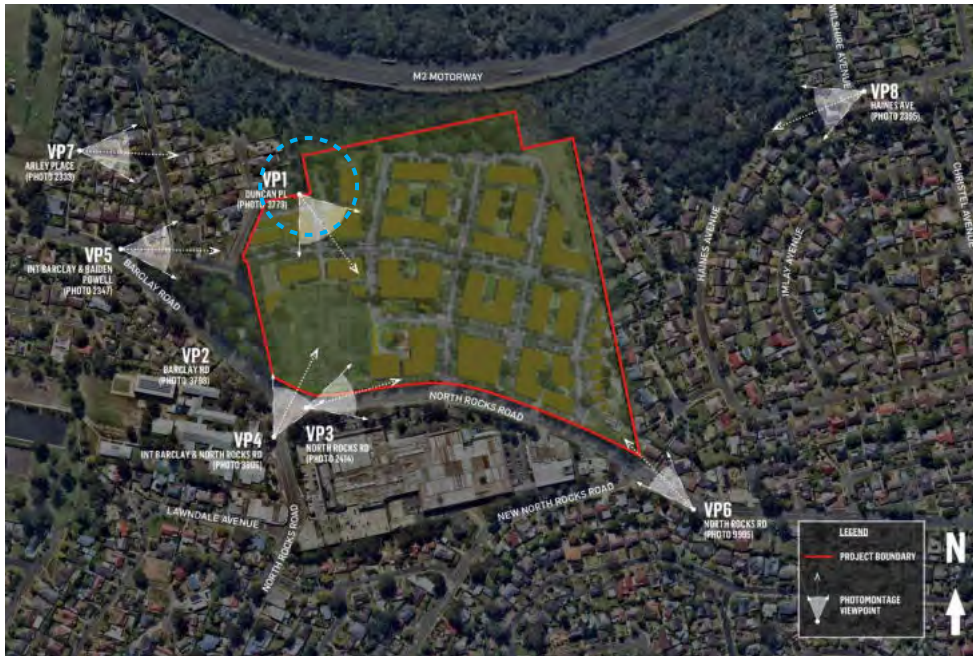






# VIEW PLACE 1

## ADJACENT TO REAR OF 1 DUNCAN PLACE



**Figure 3** View place location.

### EXISTING VIEW

This view is available from Crown Land (forming the western boundary extent) located between the rear of residential dwellings in Duncan Place and the subject site.

The existing view is predominantly characterised by existing mature and juvenile vegetation on the subject which will be retained. The photomontage does not include additional planting proposed as part of the Planning Proposal so the composition shown is a 'worst case' scenario in terms of visibility.



**Photo 1.** Existing view.

### PROPOSED VIEW

The mid-ground composition will include filtered views to the upper parts of Scenario 1 & 2. The additional height sought (above the recommended 5 + part 6th storey) does not block scenic or important features or compositions, such as unique topography, vegetation, heritage items or icons. The upper part of the massing obscures a minor extent of open sky and forms a new built form horizon. Retained foreground vegetation will soften the effects of the massing and help to retain the intrinsic visual quality of the site, view and visual context. Whilst the built form proposed will change a minor extent of the view, its effects are limited, minor and when relevant impact ratings criteria are applied, would result in a low visual impact rating.

### VISUAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SCENARIO 1 & SCENARIO 2

A small section of the upper storey of Scenario 2 is visible , generating negligible visual effects and no perceptible additional visual impact to Scenario 1.





Photo 2. Proposed view.



# VIEW PLACE 2

## BARCLAY ROAD APPROACH VIEW



**Figure 4** View place location.

### EXISTING VIEW

Views from Barclay Road towards the site are extremely limited, where only isolated, filtered glimpses for east-bound road users, are possible. This view from the south side of the road, provides some access to the south-west corner of the subject site via the existing open space and planned oval.

The existing view is predominantly characterised by ornamental gardens, gently sloping topography and existing mature along the site's boundary. The photomontage does not include additional planting proposed as part of the planning proposal which would further reduce potential views to any buildings proposed.



**Photo 3.** Existing view.

### PROPOSED VIEW

A small section of Scenario 1 is visible in the mid-ground composition between intervening vegetation and retained vegetation along the site's western boundary. Scenario 2 is blocked by intervening vegetation. The available view of Scenario 1 is limited to an isolated glimpse from Barclay Road, predominantly for east-bound users.

### VISUAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SCENARIO 1 & SCENARIO 2

Nil - Scenario 2 is not visible.



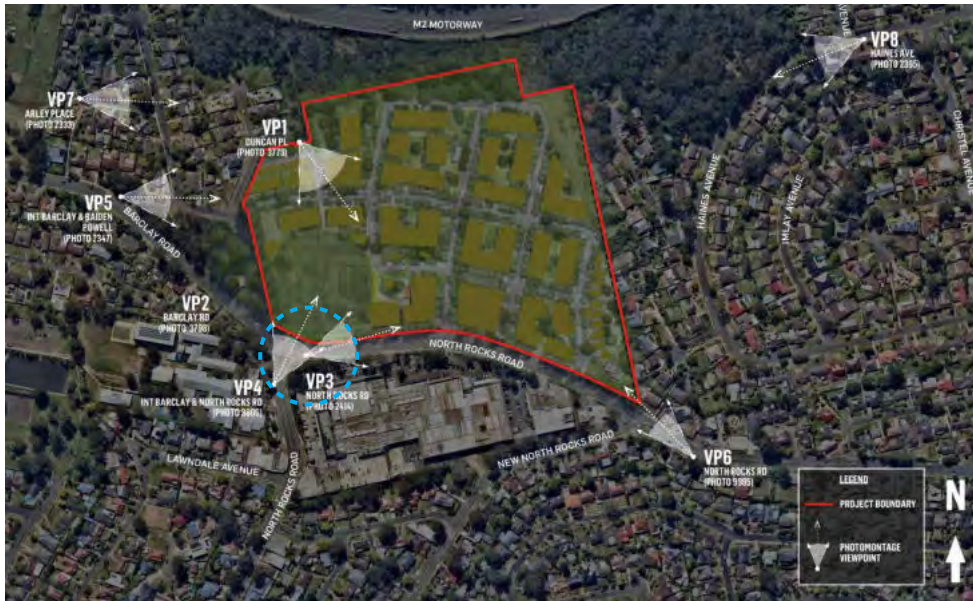


Photo 4. Proposed view.



# VIEW PLACE 3

## NORTH ROCKS ROAD VIEW NORTH-EAST



**Figure 5** View place location.

### EXISTING VIEW

This view east towards the site is characterised by North Rocks Road and intermittent vegetation along the southern site boundary. The view is typical of a pedestrian experience from the south side of North Rocks Road adjacent to the shopping centre.

### PROPOSED VIEW

The mid-ground composition will include filtered views towards Scenario 1 & 2 where the taller components of the massing are partially visible between retained vegetation. The built forms proposed will block small sections of open sky and do not block views to heritage items, scenic or sensitive public domain reserves, and open spaces. Visibility of the proposal is limited to a short section of North Rocks Road for viewers who are immediately adjacent to the site and whom will experience views from moving viewing situations rather than for sustained periods.

### VISUAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SCENARIO 1 & SCENARIO 2

The in extent of visual change between Scenario 1 & 2 is negligible. The additional height in Scenario 2 would be difficult to perceive given its spatial setback, limited height, and articulated form. Visibility and perception of Scenario 2 would reduce as a result of further design development such as articulation within the envelope, use of recessive colours and materials above the streetwall height. As proposed planting within the scheme matures, visibility of the upper setback storey will reduce.



**Photo 5.** Existing view.



**Photo 6.** Proposed view.



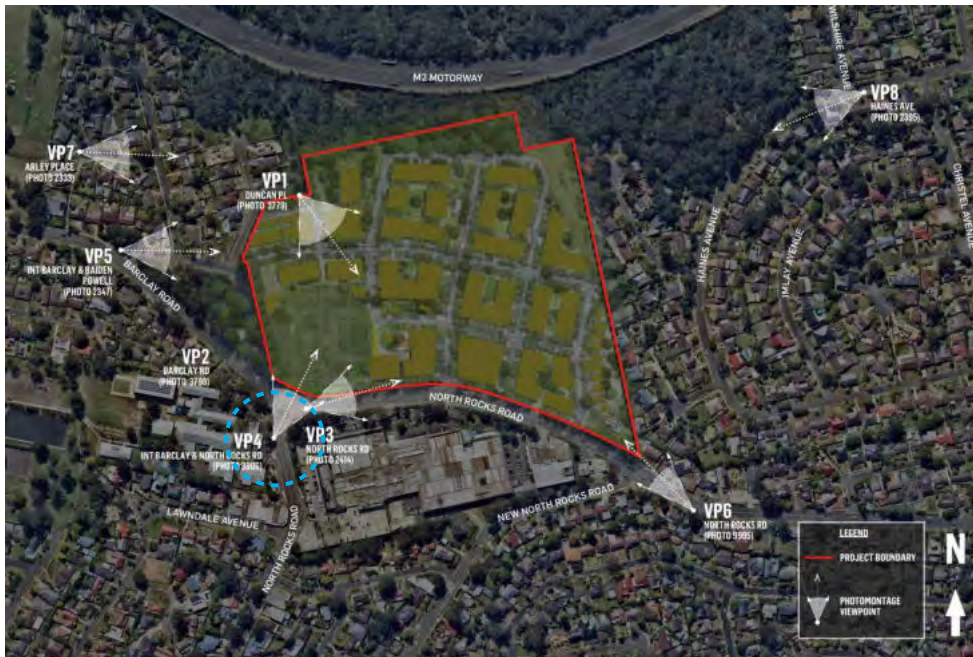


**Photo 7.** Proposed view with indicative planting at approximately 7 years post construction.



# VIEW PLACE 4

## NORTH ROCKS ROAD APPROACH FROM THE SOUTH



**Figure 6** View place location.

### EXISTING VIEW

The view is characterised by the North Rocks Road carriageway, mature trees along the site's southern boundary and the south-west part of the subject site.



**Photo 8.** Existing view.

### PROPOSED VIEW

The mid-ground composition will include a partial view of a small upper storey section of Scenario 1 visible between retained vegetation and a negligible extent of the upper storey of Scenario 2. The built forms proposed will predominantly block views to vegetation and open sky and do not block views to heritage items, scenic or sensitive public domain reserves, and open spaces. Visibility to the proposal is limited to a short section of North Rocks Road for viewers who are immediately adjacent to the site and whom will experience views from moving viewing situations rather than for sustained periods.

### VISUAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SCENARIO 1 & SCENARIO 2

The in extent of visual change between Scenario 1 & 2 is negligible. The additional height in Scenario 2 would be difficult to perceive given its spatial setback, limited height, and articulated form. As proposed planting within the scheme matures, visibility of the upper setback storey will reduce. The lower height scenario in visual terms offers no material benefit in relation to reducing visual effects and potential impacts on public domain views.





Photo 9. Proposed view.



# VIEW PLACE 5

## VIEW EAST AT INTERSECTION OF BARCLAY ROAD & BAIDEN POWELL PLACE



**Figure 7** View place location.

### EXISTING VIEW

The composition is characterised by large, mature trees of varied species to the north and south of Baden Powell Place which results in a dense tree canopy cover that blocks or highly filters views beyond. Baden Powell Place recedes eastward to the site's western boundary where further large trees block views into the site and any long distance views beyond.



**Photo 10.** Existing view.

### PROPOSED VIEW

Vegetation outside of the site and retained vegetation along the site's western boundary block views of both Scenario 1 and Scenario 2 such that the existing view compositions form this vicinity will not change.

### VISUAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SCENARIO 1 & SCENARIO 2

Nil - Neither scenario is visible.

Scenario 2 will not create any adverse visual impacts in this and similar views from the west.





Photo 11. Proposed view.



# VIEW PLACE 6

## NORTH-WEST VIEW ALONG NORTH ROCKS ROAD



**Figure 8** View place location.

### EXISTING VIEW

The view is characterised by the North Rocks Road carriageway. The northern side of the road includes an open expanse of foreground and low height residential development. The mid-ground includes part of the subject site which is heavily screened by existing vegetation. The southern side of the road includes vegetation, infrastructure and partial views of commercial development.



**Photo 12.** Existing view.

### PROPOSED VIEW

The view includes the south-east corner of the site and parts of Scenario 1 and 2. A minor amount of the upper sections of built form adjacent to North Rocks Road is visible above retained boundary vegetation. The retained boundary vegetation parallel to North Rocks Road blocks the mid and lower sections of both scenarios, where the majority of the proposed development is not visible.

### VISUAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SCENARIO 1 & SCENARIO 2

The difference in extent of visual change between Scenario 1 & 2 is minor to negligible as the ability to perceive the difference in bulk and scale of the scenarios would be difficult to distinguish. The lower height scenario in visual terms offers no material benefit in relation to reducing visual effects and potential impacts on public domain views.





Photo 13. Proposed view.



# VIEW PLACE 7

## VIEW EAST FROM ARLEY PLACE



**Figure 9** View place location.

### EXISTING VIEW

The elevated position at the western end of Arley Place is one of a few elevated, isolated locations from which a partial view towards the site is available. The view is characterised by vernacular residential suburban development including mature vegetation. Single and double storey detached dwellings are visible to varied degrees amongst large trees located within properties which block views into the site.



**Photo 14.** Existing view.

### PROPOSED VIEW

Intervening vegetation and built form blocks virtually all built form of both scenarios. A small section of Scenario 1 is visible above an existing residential roof form and forms a minor to imperceptible change in the visual composition.

### VISUAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SCENARIO 1 & SCENARIO 2

Nil - Scenario 2 is not visible.





Photo 15. Proposed view.



# VIEW PLACE 8

## SOUTH-WEST VIEW ALONG HAINES AVENUE



**Figure 10** View place location.

### EXISTING VIEW

The composition is characterised by vegetation of varied species including large trees within residential properties to either side of Haines Avenue and the 1st Murray Farm Scouts site. The vegetation largely blocks views of existing built form, with only partial views of roof forms visible between the viewpoint and site.



**Photo 16.** Existing view.

### PROPOSED VIEW

Intervening vegetation blocks nearly all of Scenario 1 and 2. A small section of Scenario 1 is visible to the centre left and is the most visible section of both scenarios. A smaller section of Scenario 2 is visible to the left of the composition and adds a negligible extent of additional built form to the composition.

### VISUAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SCENARIO 1 & SCENARIO 2

The difference in extent of visual change between the scenarios is minor to negligible. The lower height scenario in visual terms offers no material benefit in relation to reducing visual effects and potential impacts on public domain views.





Photo 17. Proposed view.





# 03 CONCLUSION



## 2.1 SUMMARY

This addendum provides a comparative analysis of the visual effects and potential visual impacts between two height scenarios:

**Scenario 1** - The recommended heights by the SPP, (being a maximum 6 storeys and 3 storeys along North Rocks Road)

**Scenario 2** - The preferred heights put forward by the proponent and its design consultants, which included a potential one (1) additional storey in the far north-western site corner (maximum 7) and along the central part of the North Rocks Road interface (maximum 4).

The visual catchment of the site and the tallest RL proposed is very limited and constrained to close views from a short section of North Rocks Road.

GIS viewshed analysis and fieldwork observations confirm that the tallest forms proposed will not be visible from the M2 motorway.

Close views from North Rocks Road to the site will be of short duration, from moving, viewing situations and will include 4 replacement buildings.

## 2.2 CONCLUSION

There is no significant difference in the extent of potential visibility between Scenario 1 & 2.

There is no material difference in the extent of visibility of either scheme from all representative view places.

- The visibility of part-six and part-seven built form located at the far north-western corner of the site is tested in Views 1, 5, 7 & 8.
- An additional storey in height (Scenario 2) located along the central part of the North Rocks Road frontage has been tested in Views 3, 4, and 6.
- The 7 storey form proposed at the north-western and lower part of the site, is of low or no visibility. Only filtered partial views of one building may be visible from the rear yards of the closest residential dwellings located at Duncan Place. This part of the subject is not visible from the public domain.
- Proposed boundary planting or any potential visual mitigation techniques along North Rocks Road when employed will further reduce visibility of the proposal.
- Retained and potential boundary vegetation along North Rocks Road will in time, significantly reduce the perception of scale from North Rocks Road.
- Neither scenario blocks access to any documented views, heritage items, icons or areas of unique scenic quality.
- The visual effects (quantum of change and extent of visible built form) is essentially the same in both scenarios where the potential visual catchment in relation to the taller scheme will change by a negligible extent.
- Both scenarios allow for the retention of significant vegetation on the site and as such maintain its underlying intrinsic scenic quality.
- Scenario 1 in visual terms offers no material benefit in relation to reducing visual effects and potential impacts in public domain views.
- The ability to perceive the difference in scale of the scenarios would be difficult to distinguish and Scenario 2 does not generate any additional potential visual impacts compared to the lower scenario.
- Scenario 2 (up to 7 storeys in the north-western corner of the site and up to part 4 storeys along North Rocks Road) can be supported on visual impact grounds.