



Kiama West Proposal – Visual Attributes Study

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# 1. Introduction & Site visual context

This Visual Attributes Study presents a preliminary analysis of the visual resources of the Kiama West Proposal Site (the 'Site') to inform potential future land use change.

Envisage Consulting specialise in scenic landscape and visual impact assessment and have prepared this Study for Traders in Purple.

The report focusses on:

- Broadly describing the existing Site's visual context, including the surrounding landscape character
- Describing the Site's main features and landscape character
- Analysing the Site's broad visibility and views from four main viewpoints
- Mapping visual attributes and measures to that could be applied to minimise visual impact in future land use change.

## Site's visual context

The Site covers about 114.7 hectares of land (including about 5.5 hectares of 'paper roads' under Crown ownership) and is situated to the west of the urban fringe of Kiama, within Kiama Local Government Area (LGA).

Parts of the Site are highly visible from surrounding local roads, with the busiest of those being Jamberoo Road that connects Jamberoo to Kiama and the Princes Highway and provides the 'entrance' to the coast and Kiama from the west. The Site can also be seen from the local roads of Old Saddleback Road and Saddleback Mountain Road, both of which are elevated and offer panoramic views east toward the coast and west toward the Illawarra Escarpment.

Changes to views from these local roads have the potential to both positively and negatively influence the broader scenic qualities of the LGA. There is a distinct change in landscape character as one moves from the urban edge of Kiama to the rural hinterland. Currently, the high local ridgeline that runs north-south along the western side of Kiama's urban area visually divides Kiama (and views toward the Pacific Ocean), from the rural hinterland to the west (and distant views toward the Illawarra Escarpment). The Site sits immediately west of that ridgeline.

## Landscape character surrounding Kiama

The landscape character of a place describes the distinctive physical elements that combine to create a 'sense of place' and make one landscape different from another. These physical elements can include landform, land use, vegetation type, presence of water, availability of views and the built environment.



*View from Saddleback Mountain lookout over rural hinterland towards Kiama (on coast in centre)*

The dominant landscape character of the broad visual environment (from the coastal settlement of Kiama to the western hinterland) is made up of:

- Intensive urban development concentrated on the coastal fringe
- Newer residential development occurring on the town edges, with the western urban edge of Kiama seen along the ridge west of the town from more inland rural areas (including the Site)
- Pastoral areas west of Kiama having an attractive pastoral landscape of rolling green hills, scattered rural homes, vegetated creeklines and other larger tracts of native vegetation
- Trees forming 'windbreaks' on ridgelines in the rural areas
- Drystone walls, as both stock fencing in rural areas and as a feature in newer residential areas
- Opportunities for elevated views are a distinctive feature – with views dominated by a pastoral landscape with a backdrop of the Illawarra Escarpment when looking west, and coastal views when looking east.

These landscape characteristics are illustrated in the collection of photographs overleaf.



*New homes on western fringe of Kiama very evident on the skyline*



*Drystone Walls, new residential on the western ridge of Kiama and views of Illawarra Escarpment*



*Tree 'windbreaks' on ridgelines in rural areas*



*Rolling green hills, windbreaks, scattered rural homes, tree-lined watercourses and Illawarra Escarpment*



*New residential on the south-western edge of Kiama and local roads with both rural and ocean views*



*Panoramic views from local roads (this view toward rural landscape of Jamberoo and Escarpment)*

**Landscape character of area to the west of Kiama and surrounding Site**

## 2. Visual attributes of Site

### Site features and landscape character

The Site comprises the following main features:

- Pastoral land which dominates the majority of the Site
- Landform which consists of rolling to steep green hills, incised by drainage lines and watercourses, with Spring Creek being the main watercourse situated along the lowest land, and flowing generally south to north
- Dense vegetation which tends to trace along these watercourses, with the darker green contrasting with the brighter green pastoral areas
- Other patches of vegetation on higher areas, including a large area (zoned C2 Conservation) situated on the upper slope in the north-eastern corner.

These landscape characteristics are common with other rural areas inland of Kiama, however, a characteristic which distinguishes the Site and contributes to its distinctive landscape character is its location on the very fringe of Kiama. That location allows for residential land uses to be seen from the Site - being the nearby housing along most the immediate eastern ridgeline. The housing presents a strong and contrasting built element, with most housing light-coloured and seen against the skyline - highlighting its visual presence.

Photographs of the Site's landscape characteristics are shown below and illustrated on the **Kiama West – Site Visibility and Main Viewpoints Map** overleaf.



*Looking south over Site (from Jamberoo Road) - new housing on ridge, rolling hills, vegetation in valley*



*Looking east over northern part of Site (from Jamberoo Road highpoint) - new housing on ridge*



*Views over Site to west from shared pathway (north of Greyleigh Road)*



*Panoramic views over Site from Old Saddleback Road (looking north-west), with Illawarra Escarpment in background*

### Landscape character of Site

## Broad visibility of Site

The Site is essentially ringed by local ridgelines on all sides which limit outside views when within the lower parts of the Site. At the same time, those ridgelines present vantage points from which to see into and across the Site from the surrounding area, as described further below.

As described previously, there are also opportunities for more distant views over large parts of the Site from elevated public viewpoints such as when descending along Saddleback Mountain Road and Saddleback Mountain Lookout. There are no views to the Site from the main urban area of Kiama, nor can it be seen from the Site, apart from the band of residential seen against the eastern ridgeline.

The Pacific Ocean is not visible from the Site except as glimpses to the north-east (from high points in northern section below the Jamberoo Road/Jerrara Road intersection) and from near the Old Saddleback Road boundary.

From higher parts of the Site there are views over the rural hinterland to the Illawarra Escarpment.

## Mapping of Visibility and main viewpoints

The **Kiama West Proposal - Site Visibility and Main Viewpoints Map** (opposite) indicates the most visible areas, including those parts seen from the four main surrounding viewpoints (refer below).

Due to the large area covered by the Site, and that parts of it can be seen from many locations both nearby and further away, the approach to visibility mapping has been to focus on which parts of the Site are the most visible, and to identify the main outside viewpoints. It is felt that such an approach provides the most meaningful analysis to inform any future land use planning for the Site.

As such, a detailed analysis has been undertaken of four close, representative viewpoints into the Site which provide elevated and wide views across it. Those four viewpoints are particularly important due to both proximity and extent of the Site seen - the visual impact to those viewpoints should be taken into account when considering possible land use change.

Those four viewpoints are:

- Viewpoint (VP) 1: Jamberoo Road/Jerrara Road intersection
- Viewpoint (VP) 2: Old Saddleback Road
- Viewpoint (VP) 3: Long Brush Road
- Viewpoint (VP) 4: Shared pathway (northern end Greyleigh Drive/west of Bele Place).

The subsequent tables (Table 2-1 to 2-4) describe the attributes of each viewpoint and illustrate the broad area visible from them.

Note there are other surrounding viewpoints from more minor locations (generally further away) and others relatively similar in proximity to those four viewpoints. Further viewpoints would be documented in the next stage of the Project.



Kiama West Proposal - Site Visibility and Main Viewpoints Map

## Table 2-1: Viewpoint (VP) 1 - Corner of Jamberoo Road & Jerrara Road

### Location

- Jamberoo Road is a busy local road, connecting Jamberoo to Kiama and the Princes Highway
- This is one of the main viewpoints to the Site
- A local high point, forming the border between two viewsheds when travelling along Jamberoo Road
- Views are to the east over the Site and eastern ridgeline, and to the west are toward Jamberoo and the Illawarra Escarpment.

### Character of existing view

- Pastoral land dominates the view – rolling green hills, with darker vegetation mostly tracing the watercourse channels down through the hills and along the lower valley floor
- There is also a large parcel of darker vegetation to the northern (left) end of the view
- The narrow band of houses seen along the far ridgeline contrast against the rural landscape and breach the skyline.

### Visibility of Site

- A large part of the Site is visible - the green hills immediately east (with newer housing on ridgeline) stretching through the central valley and vegetated creekline to the southern boundary with Old Saddleback Road.
- The map shows the approximate extent of visibility from this viewpoint (shown in green), with photographs at right illustrating a selection of views available from this viewpoint.

### What could reduce visibility/visual contrast if land use changes?

- Establishing landscape screening along Jamberoo Road and Jerrara Road boundary
- Ensuring any buildings are set below the level of Jamberoo Road (until first main corner toward Kiama)
- Design new roads within the Site to follow along contours – allowing development to better 'sit' within the landscape and allowing future street trees to screen views of development across the Site.
- Maintaining existing dense vegetation on eastern (opposite) ridgeline
- Careful design on most visible area of Site – on slope on eastern (opposite side) (e.g. height/scale/colour/layout of development).



Approximate area visible from VP 1 (Jamberoo Road highpoint)



View to south part of Site (Old Saddleback Road on ridge)



View to central part of Site (eastern ridge in background)



View to east part of Site (new housing on eastern ridge)

## Table 2-2: Viewpoint (VP) 2 - Old Saddleback Road

### Location

- Old Saddleback Road is a local road, connecting mostly rural properties to the south with Kiama.
- VP2 is situated along the section of Old Saddleback Road between the intersection with Long Brush Road to Kiama's south-western fringe.

### Character of existing view

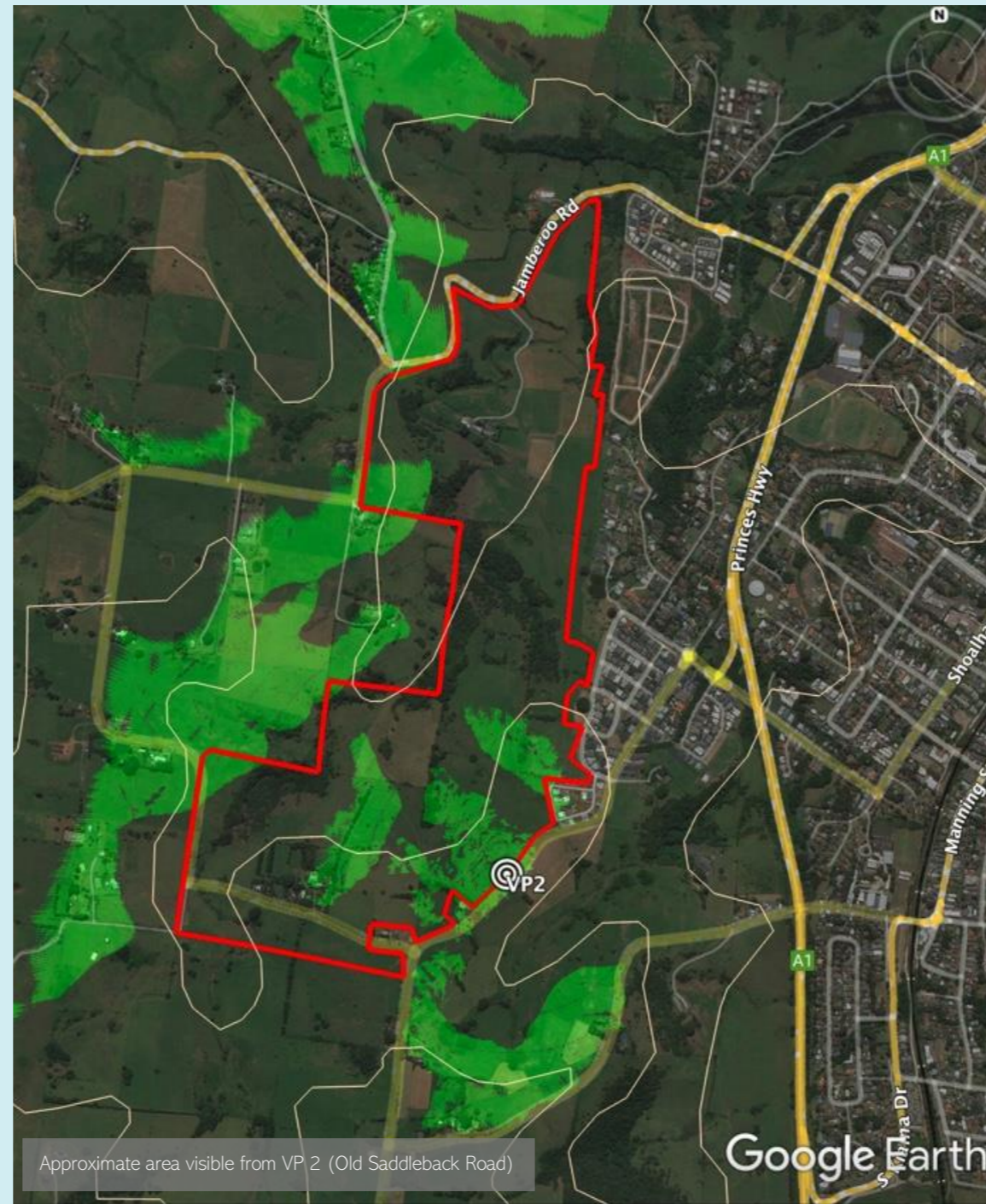
- This section of Old Saddleback Road allows for a relatively uncommon opportunity to see both inland pastoral areas, the distant Illawarra Escarpment to the west, and ocean views to the east.
- On the western side are rolling green hills supporting mostly pastoral uses - with scattered residential and farm buildings punctuated by the darker green of dense vegetation which often follows the valleys and watercourses
- On the eastern side views look over nearby paddocks to an elevated view of the ocean
- Recent housing forms an obvious built element to the north on the skyline and prevents further views over the main residential areas of Kiama.

### Visibility of Site

- Most of the southern half of the Site can be seen from this section of Old Saddleback Road.
- Views to the northern half of Site are limited to a small part near the highest part of Jamberoo Road; and the southern side of the grassed hill close to Jerrara Road.
- On the highest part of this section (near Long Brush Road intersection) the housing that stretches along the ridgeline east of the site is a dominant visual element.
- The map shows the approximate extent of visibility from viewpoint (shown in green), with photographs at right illustrating a selection of views available from viewpoint.

### What could reduce visibility/visual contrast if land use changes?

- Establishing landscape screening along the Old Saddleback Road boundary
- Ensuring any buildings (and possible future landscaping) are set below the level of Old Saddleback Road (north-east of Long Brush Road) so as to retain uninterrupted distant views of Illawarra Escarpment
- Design of road layout to follow across contours – thus preventing long views along roads and allowing for large street trees to breakup views across the development and create a treed character.



View to north - east over Site



View towards new residential on eastern ridge (next to Site)



View to north over Site



## Table 2-3: Viewpoint (VP) 3 - Long Brush Road

### Location

- Long Brush Road is a local road, connecting mostly nearby rural properties to centres such as Kiama and Jamberoo, and the Princes Highway to the east.
- VP3 is situated on a highpoint with views over the Site.

### Character of existing view

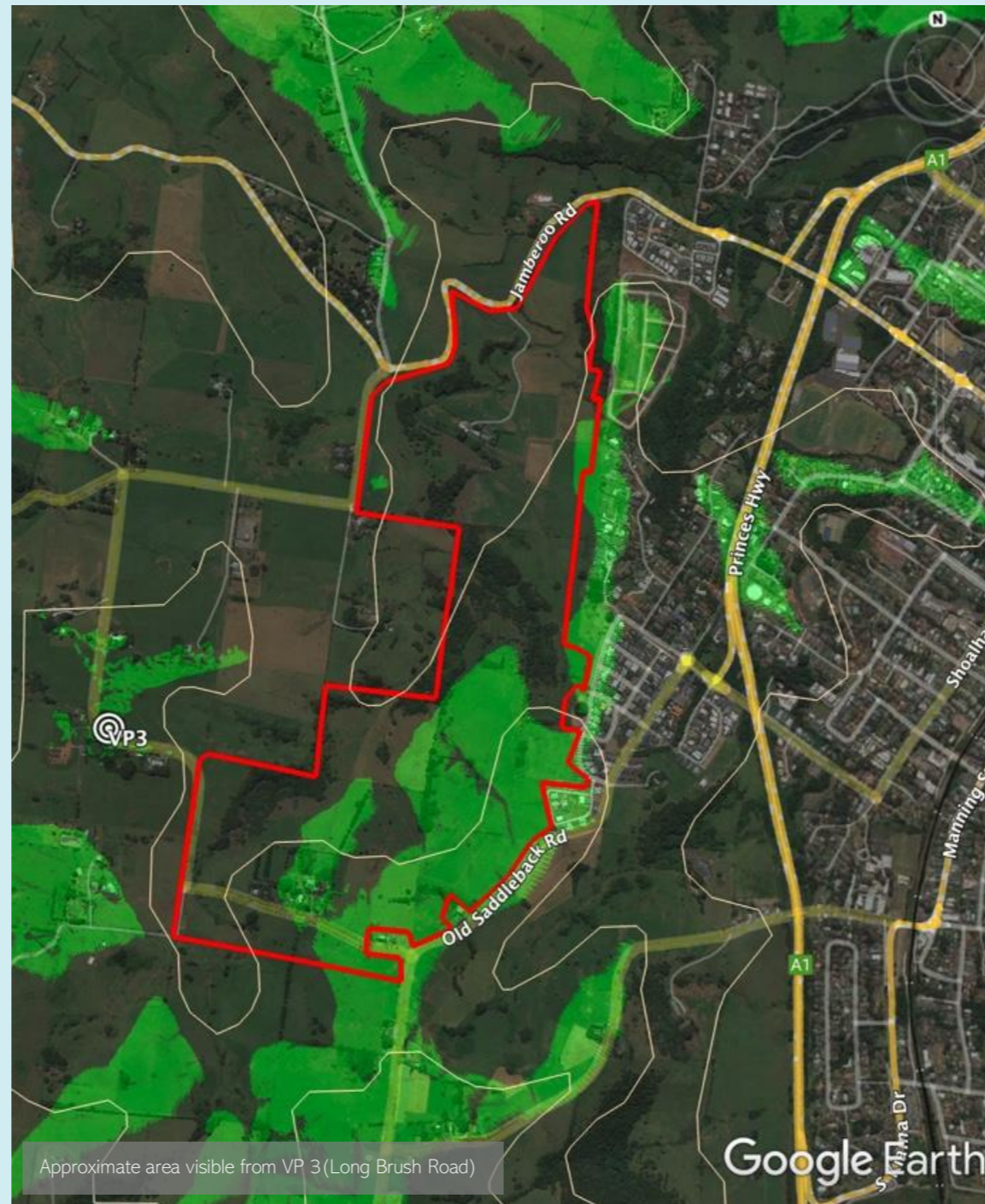
- From this part of Long Brush Road there are mostly pastoral views of rolling green hills in the foreground when looking east (i.e. which includes looking over the Site)
- The limit of the land seen to east is defined by the local ridgeline along Old Saddleback Road, with new housing seen on the skyline a dominant element
- There are no views of the ocean due to that eastern ridgeline.

### Visibility of Site

- A large area of the Site's hillside below Old Saddleback Road can be clearly seen
- There are also very close views of the nearest part of the Site fronting Long Brush Road, encompassing the area to the vegetated creekline.
- The map shows the approximate extent of visibility from this viewpoint (shown in green), with photographs at right illustrating a selection of views available from this viewpoint.

### What could reduce visibility/visual contrast if land use changes?

- Maintaining a visual buffer to Long Brush Road though no more than low intensity development.
- Design any road layout to follow across contours (especially on hillside below Old Saddleback Road) – thus preventing long views along roads and allowing for large street trees to breakup views across the development and create a treed character.



View to north - east over Site (urban fringe of Kiama on ridge)



View to east over Site (Old Saddleback Road/housing on ridge)



View to south- east over Site (Old Saddleback Road on ridge)

Table 2-4: Viewpoint (VP) 4 - Public shared pathway, northern end of Greyleigh Drive

Location

- This 500m pathway provides a local vantage point with impressive, panoramic views over the rural hinterland and toward Illawarra Escarpment.
- This viewpoint represents a range of views from the ridgeline running along the eastern side of the Site.

Character of existing view

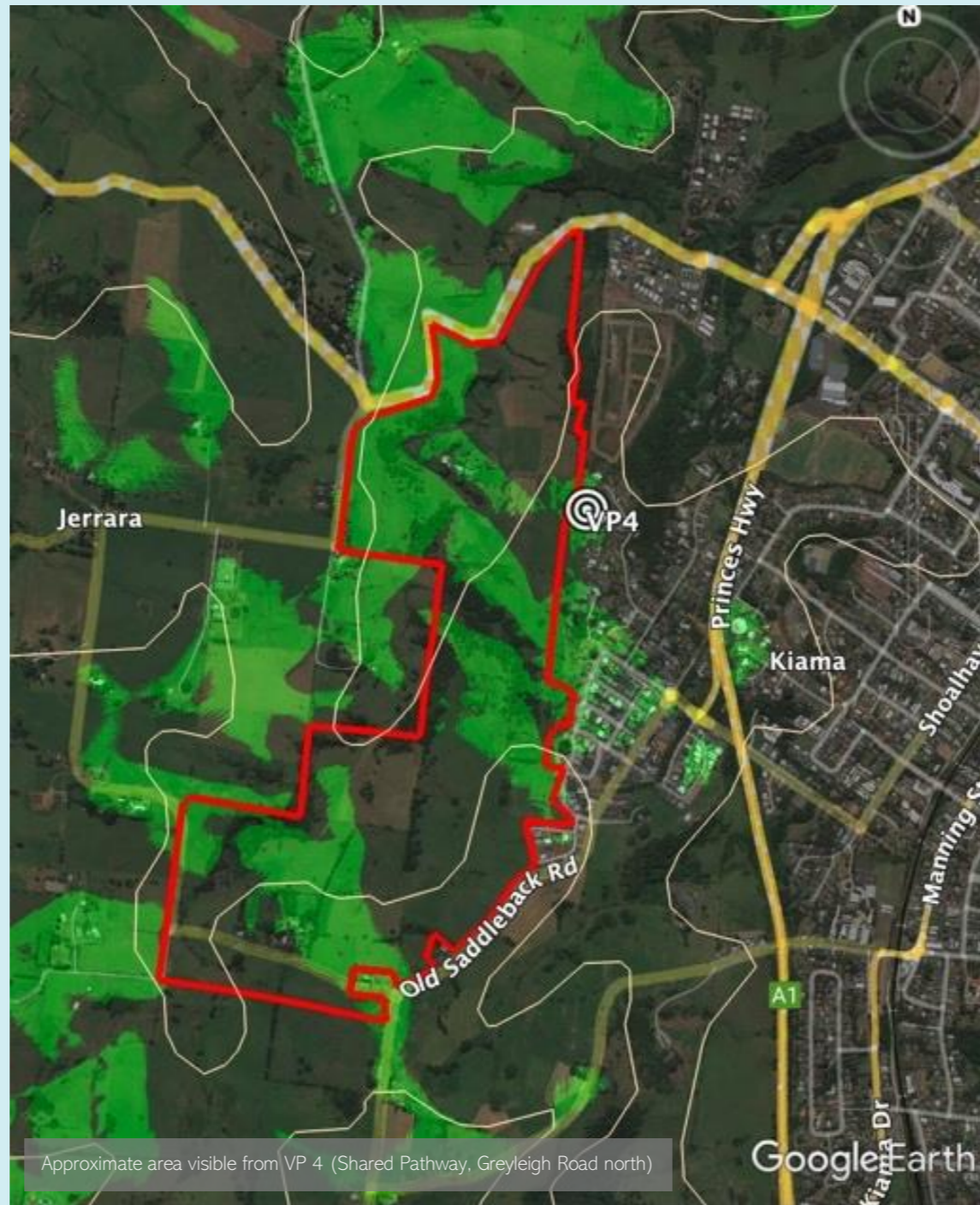
- There are mostly pastoral views of rolling green hills in the foreground when looking west (i.e. which includes looking over the Site)
- The Illawarra Escarpment forms a strong landscape feature in the background.

Visibility of Site

- A large part of the northern area of the Site can be seen
- The most visible area seen is the hillside on the opposite side of the valley, being the hill below Jerrara Road and Jamberoo Road
- The map shows the approximate extent of visibility from this viewpoint (shown in green), with photographs at right illustrating a selection of views available from this viewpoint.

What could reduce visibility/visual contrast if land use changes?

- Ensuring any new development maintains some view corridors so as to retain uninterrupted distant views of Illawarra Escarpment
- Design any new road layout to mostly follow across contours (particularly on seen hillside)– thus preventing long views along roads and allowing for large street trees to breakup views across the development and create a treed character.



View to west over Site, Illawarra Escarpment in background



View to north along pathway (Site to left)



View to south along pathway (Site to right)

# 3. Site planning considerations to address visual attributes of any land use change

Broad recommendations have been made to address the implications of possible future land use change, by

- Protecting and retaining visual attributes and the scenic values of the Site, particularly when seen from surrounding key viewpoints
- Identifying 'high visibility' locations that would require particular consideration and design due to how visible those areas are outside key viewpoints
- Identifying opportunities to improve the visual presentation of roads, and physical and visual connections into the Site
- Identifying appropriate locations for visual buffers, including to protect valued panoramic views from local roads
- Designing a road layout/treatment to reduce visual impact by breaking up views across the Site.

Those recommendations are described in **Table 3-1** and illustrated on the **Kiama West - Visual Attributes and Future Site Planning Considerations Map** overleaf.

**Table 3-1: Site planning considerations to address visual attributes of any land use change**

#	Future Planning Considerations	Discussion & responses
1.	Protect views from Jamberoo Road highpoint	This viewpoint marks a visual threshold from where views over the Site are possible. It is also the first location on Jamberoo Road from where there are views of the urban fringe of Kiama, with clear views on the newer residential areas on the ridgeline. Any new development should be set below the level of the road (via setbacks, building heights). Some partial landscape screening may be desirable depending on any land use change.
2.	Retain Jerrara Road 'windrow' trees as visual buffer	This border of native trees is along the Jerrara Road ridgeline on the western border of the Site. It is a strong landscape element which acts as a natural visual buffer to views from further west to the Site.
3.	Retain and rehabilitate vegetation along watercourse buffers and C2 Conservation land	It has been assumed that any vegetation within watercourse buffers and C2 Conservation land would be rehabilitated. That response would improve the scenic amenity of the Site and serve to breakup views across the Site.
4.	Design future road layout and treatment to breakup views of any future built elements from surrounding viewpoints (particularly in areas identified as "high visibility")	The future layout should follow along the contours as far as possible, particularly in areas identified as highly visible. That layout would allow for larger street trees to be established which would break up views across the Site from surrounding viewpoints and reduce the extent of any built elements seen. Roads aligned downslope would be far more visually obvious.
5.	Design for visual buffer to viewpoints from Long Brush Road	Elevated views are possible of a large part of the Site from this viewpoint, with the road aligned toward the Site. It is recommended that low intensity development be maintained, and possibly some partial screening be incorporated depending on future site planning.
6.	Design for visual buffer on southern side of Long Brush Road	This is a linear area separated from the main Site by Long Brush Road. It is recommended that low intensity development be maintained, and possibly some partial screening be incorporated, depending on future site planning.
7.	Opportunity to create an attractive entry to Kiama	Establish landscape planting along Jamberoo Road, preferably with a strong landscape theme that denotes this western entry to Kiama. Any land use change to this location needs to take account of the visibility from this entry.
8.	Retain vegetation on upper hillside	This area of vegetation is important to reduce the extent of existing housing seen along the ridgeline. Most of the vegetation appears to be within a C2 Conservation zone, however, some may not be, yet should also be retained.
9.	Maintain view corridors along local streets	There are existing panoramic views along local east-west streets over the Site, the rural hinterland and toward the Illawarra Escarpment which provide public viewpoints and create a sense of place. Those view corridors should be maintained.
10.	Existing pathway – maintain view opportunities and connect to Site	This public pathway runs for about 500m along the ridgeline to the east of the Site, providing panoramic views over the Site, the rural hinterland and toward the Illawarra Escarpment. Some viewing opportunities and connection should be retained, depending on the form of any planned land use change.
11.	Integrate Waabie Reserve	There is an opportunity to connect this local park both visually and physically into the Site through pathways. From the reserve there are also panoramic views over the Site toward the Illawarra Escarpment, which should be retained through appropriate design.
12.	Retain panoramic views from Old Saddleback Road	There are panoramic views from Old Saddleback Road where it borders the Site (which are particularly important as the ocean can also be seen at the same time to the east). These should be maintained with any future land use change, via appropriate setbacks, building heights and landscape treatments.

- 1. Protect views from Jamberoo Road highpoint
- 2. Retain Jerrara Road 'windrow' trees as visual buffer
- 3. Retain and rehabilitate vegetation along watercourse buffers and C2 Conservation land
- 4. Design future road layout and treatment to breakup views of any future built elements from surrounding viewpoints (particularly highly visible areas)
- 5. Design for visual buffer to viewpoints from Long Brush Road highpoint
- 6. Design for visual buffer on southern side of Long Brush Road



- 7. Opportunity to create an attractive entry to Kiama
- 8. Retain vegetation on upper hillside
- 9. Maintain view corridors at end of existing local streets over Site to Illawarra Escarpment
- 10. Existing pathway - maintain some viewing opportunities and connect into Site
- 11. Integrate Waabie Reserve
- 12. Retain panoramic views from Old Saddleback Road

Kiama West Proposal - Visual Attributes and Future Site Planning Considerations Map

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