

Landscape Visual Impact Assessment

A wide-angle photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground, there is a grassy field with some low-lying shrubs and a wooden fence post. The middle ground shows a line of trees and a small pond. In the background, there are rolling hills under a cloudy sky. The entire image is framed by a white border.

APPIN & NORTH APPIN PRECINCTS LANDSCAPE VISUAL IMPACT STATEMENT

PREPARED FOR WALKER CORPORATION
OCTOBER 2024
FINAL

URBIS STAFF RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Urbis have been engaged to prepare the Landscape Visual Impact Statement for the strategic planning of future development across the Appin & North Appin Precincts (the site).

The key findings are based on an analysis of data sets and technical studies provided by the project team and client, consideration of strategic needs for the site, a review of aerial imagery and fieldwork observations.

Visual analysis and determination of visual character areas (VCA) across the site, is based on fieldwork observations. This analysis concludes that the majority of the site is characterised by culturally modified pastoral landscapes.

Notwithstanding the visual landscape is relatively open and free of development, the site includes electricity and gas infrastructure, transmission pylons and lines, groups of residential dwellings and hobby farms, roads and other detracting visual elements.

There are few examples of visual components, features or combinations of features to make the majority of the site visually distinctive, unique, of high scenic quality or worthy of specific scenic or visual protection. Exceptions include visually prominent stands and corridors of mature vegetation.

Assessment of the likely visual effects and impacts is 'high level' in relation to potential future development across the site and is focussed on indicative layouts for the site.

The majority of the site is of low visibility from surrounding public domain locations, with sections of the eastern edges of the site being of medium and high visibility from a sections of Wilton Road and Appin Road for a short period of time and from moving, viewing situations.

Urbis support the Planning Proposal from a visual perspective as a result of the highly modified nature of the site and the limited level of unique visual features of the site.

SECTION 1:

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

In November 2022, Walker Corporation Pty Ltd and Walker Group Holdings Pty Ltd (the Proponent) lodged a Planning Proposal (PP-2022-3979) to rezone part of the Appin Precinct.

PP-2022-3979 (referred to as the Appin (Part 1) Precinct) proposes to rezone the land from RU2 Rural Landscape to Urban Development Zone (UDZ), C2 Environmental Conservation and SP2 Infrastructure via an amendment to State Environmental Planning Policy (Precincts – Western Parkland City) 2021.

The UDZ will facilitate approximately 12,000 dwellings. The C2 zone will facilitate the conservation of 470ha of endangered ecological community and help implement the Office of the NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer (NSW Chief Scientist) recommendations.

The new zones are accompanied by a structure plan outlining the intended land uses. In addition, the Proponent produced an Appin and North Appin Precincts Indicative Plan to illustrate how the new zones might fit within the broader precinct as land is developed. The Indicative Plan has no statutory weight and will be refined as further planning proposals are prepared.

1.2 APPIN (PART 2) PRECINCT PLANNING PROPOSAL

The Appin (Part 2) Precinct Plan envisages the delivery of the following:

- 1,312 dwellings (as a mix of low-density, medium density and apartments)
- 17.64ha conservation land

The planning proposal submission is aligned with strategic land use planning, State and local government policies, infrastructure delivery and PP-2022-3979. The development potential is tempered by a landscape-based approach that protects the environment and landscape values, shaping the character of new communities. A series of residential neighbourhoods are to be delivered within the landscape corridors of the Nepean and Cataract Rivers, supported by local amenities, transit corridors and community infrastructure.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

Urbis were engaged by Walker Corporation to undertake a baseline analysis of the visual environment of the Appin and North Appin Precincts and to provide visual parameters and guidelines (opportunities and constraints) to inform the spatial arrangement of future development across the site.

This information provides just one layer of information relevant for consideration along with ecological, cultural, physical and other technical information. The retention of areas of high scenic quality and distinctive or visually significant landscape character areas (LCA's) is valued by local communities and Councils and as such should be given due consideration. We note further that visual impact assessments and landscape visual impact assessments are routinely required or mandatory in relation to re-zoning Planning Proposals and SSDAs.

A detailed LVIA has not been undertaken at this stage given the planning stage of the project and the indicative nature of future development, without intended yields or massing's.

This report is an Addendum to and should be read in conjunction with, the **Appin (Part 2) Precinct Urban Context Report** prepared by Urbis.

1.4 LIMITATIONS

This report is limited to an assessment of the visual effects and impacts only, of future potential development across the site, on existing baseline visual information. All information gathered relates to the identification of visual and scenic resources, including visually significant unique features, external visibility of parts of the subject site, key external views to and from the site and internal visual connections within the site including linkages to between identified features for example heritage items. This information has been based on a desktop review of relevant aerial mapping, high-level consideration of cultural values (Indigenous and Non-Indigenous), technical reports and detailed fieldwork inspections of the site and internal Walker-owned land holdings.

Relevant factors regarding the retention and protection of fauna corridors, biodiversity, non-indigenous heritage, servicing restrictions, critical infrastructure and practical considerations have been considered and contribute in part to the key findings which primarily relate to visual opportunities and constraints.

SECTION 2:

VISUAL ASSESSMENT PROCESS

2.1 WOLLONDILLY SCENIC AND CULTURAL LANDSCAPE STUDY

A background review of the existing scenic and cultural landscape study that incorporates the Appin Precinct was undertaken prior to fieldwork analysis.

The *Draft Wollondilly Scenic and Cultural Landscape Study* (WSCLS) prepared by Wollondilly Shire Council seeks to "enhance and protect views of scenic and cultural landscape from the public realm Wollondilly Shire Council LGA". The study identifies twelve Landscape Character Units across the entire LGA. Appin is predominantly categorised within the Upper Nepean Unit 10 (refer to adjacent Plan). This character unit comprises of areas between the foot slopes of the Razorback Range and the edge of the protected natural areas east of Wilton and Appin Roads.

The study describes the character unit 10 as an undulating landscape with extensive cleared areas that allow for long-distance views across the lower-lying areas to the surrounding hills. The landscape is bisected by steep sandstone gorges associated with the Nepean, Cataract, and Georges Rivers. From some select locations along the ridgeline, the top of the vegetated Razorback Range to the west can be seen as a dark ribbon in the background. However, due to dense vegetation cover and the existing topography in Appin views are limited. The study identifies key visual elements to protect in the character unit 10. In relation to Appin these include:

- The mostly rural outlook from the rail line/s.
- Vegetated riparian corridors and steep sandstone gorges, including remnant bushland bands along the Nepean River and creek lines flowing towards it.
- Scenic values of the Nepean and Cataract River gorges.
- Rural land as buffer zones to bushland corridors.
- Open pastures and remnant vegetation on the mid and upper slopes in Appin that define the background of the view from many areas in Wollondilly; and

- Views to the Razorback Range from Appin Road/ Wilton Road, Wilton Park Road and Wilton Airport.

The study highlights that Landscape Character Unit 10 has a rich history, with multiple historic associations, development patterns and rural landscape indicating that it is an important cultural landscape. The visual relationship with elevated areas surrounding the Upper Nepean valley is integral to its character.

While the recommendations of this study highlight current visual amenity and their historic and cultural context, there appears to be little reference to future character with the Appin slopes progressively being transformed by urban development in accordance with its Growth Centre status and land use infrastructure plan.

Furthermore, Appin is largely only visible from within the Appin landscape itself and the claim in the WSCLS that identify visibility of the mid and upper slopes from many parts of the Shire is inaccurate.

Key Findings

- *Wollondilly Scenic and Cultural Landscape Study* (WSCLS) does not acknowledge the future footprint of urban capable land within the Appin Precinct and the impact this will have on key visual elements to protect. There are some inaccuracies in this study about the views in and out of Appin.
- Site-specific assessment of visual context is required to verify specific locations of important and sensitive view places and views, and the potential visibility of future development within the urban capable land.

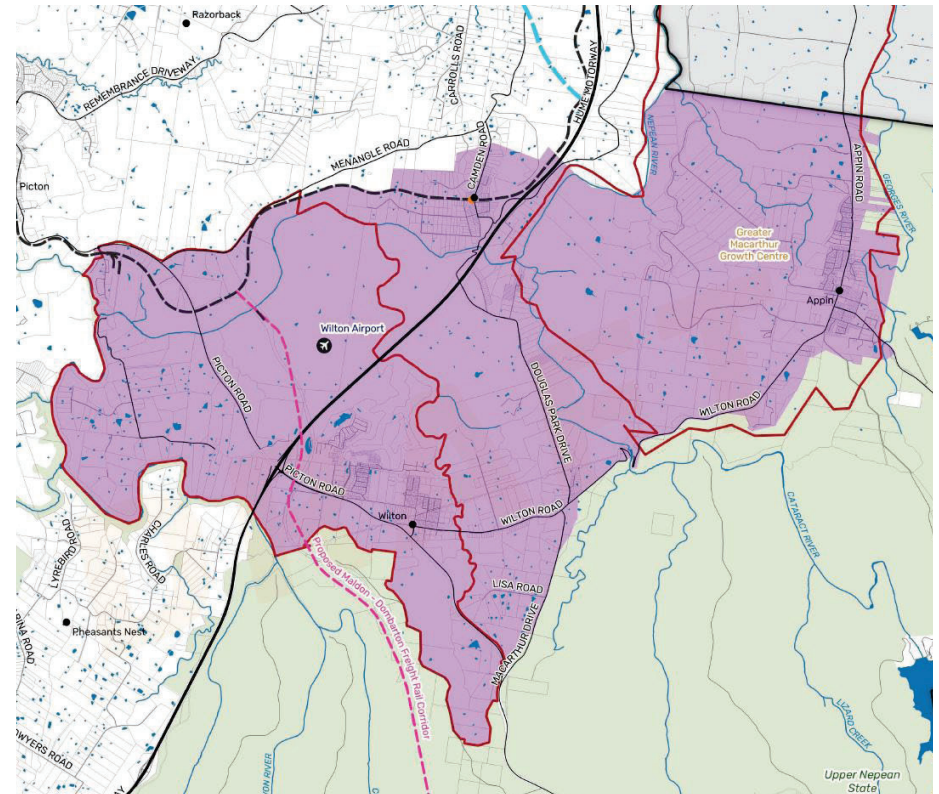


Figure 2 - PLAN OF LANDSCAPE CHARACTER UNIT 10 (Source: Wollondilly Scenic and Cultural Landscape Study)

2.2 VIEWSHED ANALYSIS

The north and south-west of the site boundary predominantly features rural land and small towns in the suburbs of Wilton, Douglas Park, Menangle, and Gilead. Wilton is the closest town to Appin with a small population of 3000, followed by the larger Campbelltown to the north. The City of Wollongong sits south-east of Appin at the coastal edge. It is best known for its heavy industry, ports, continuous chain of surfing beaches, as well as attraction sites; Nan Tien Buddhist temple, Jamberoo Action Park, and Wollongong Botanic Garden.

The Napean River is a major waterway which flows north-south at the site boundary, connecting up to the Warragamba River. Two water supply diversion weirs managed by WaterNSW are located near Wilton and Appin. Built in 1888, the weirs are an important part of the water supply system. WaterNSW will continue to provide upgrades for efficient waterflow of the river.

As a rural town, the site lends itself to open space and tranquillity which can be seen in the various retreat centres and camp-sites, bed and breakfast stays, and religious venues. An example of this is to the south of the site is the Bodhisadha Forest Monastery, a Buddhist temple which sits at the south boundary near Wilton Rd, or the St Mary's Towers Retreat centre at Douglas Park which is also a historical landmark. Wineries and riding ranches too can be seen at the east and north west of the site such as Glenbernie Orchard, and Razorback Ridge Wines.

The north and south site edges feature dense bushland and national park conservation areas with picnic areas, and lookouts. National Parks bounding the site include the Dharwal National Park known for its creeks waterfalls, and swimming holes. South of the site features the memorial site to the Appin Massacre honouring the Aboriginal people killed in 1816,

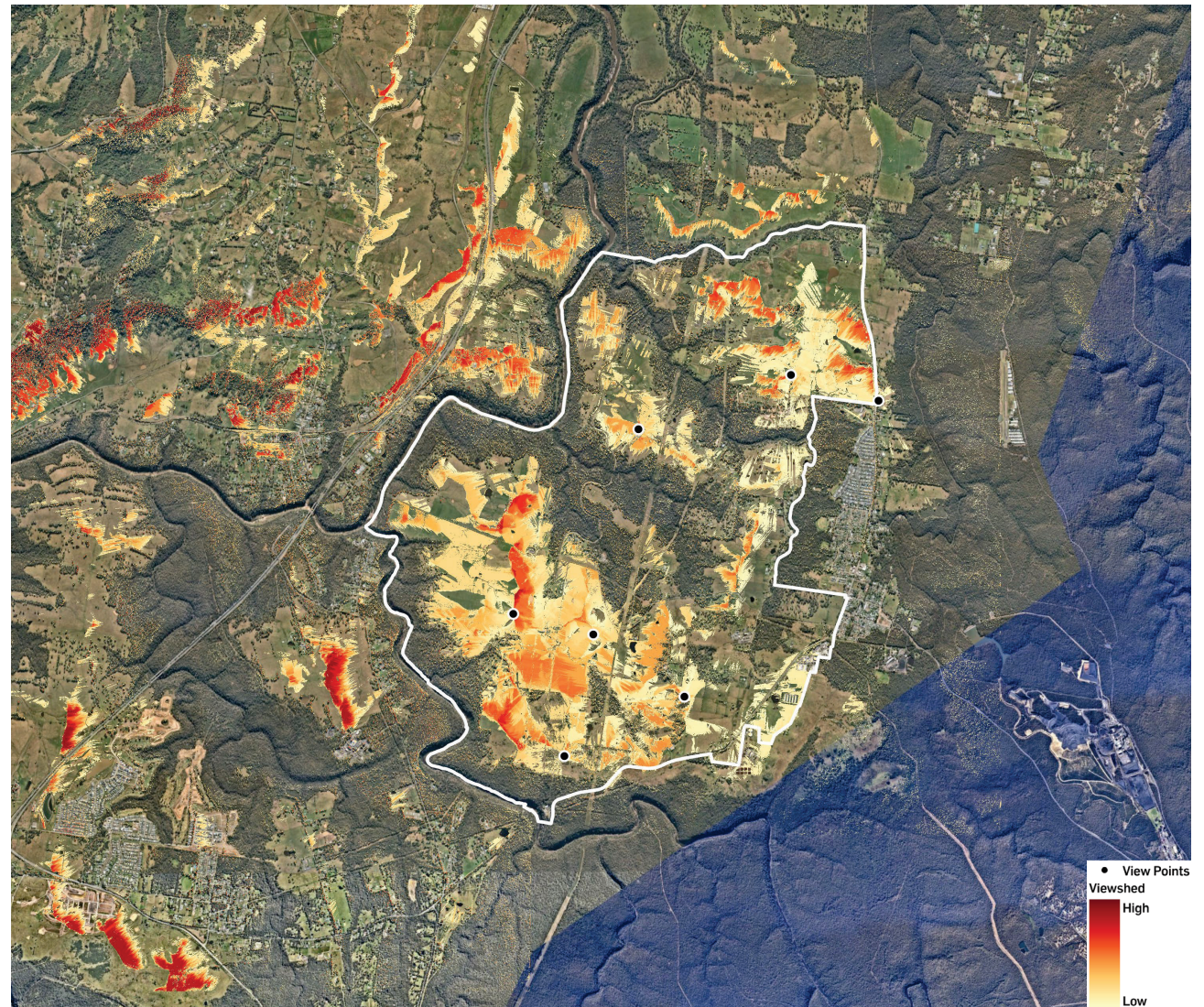


FIGURE 2 APPIN PRECINCT POTENTIAL VIEWSHED ANALYSIS

2.3 VISUAL ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Following a desktop review and analysis of relevant background information including aerial imagery and potential viewshed, Urbis inspected the subject site including the majority of the Appin Precinct in March 2022.

Geo-tagged high-resolution photographs were captured and analysed to determine a number of discreet visual character areas and to provide examples of unique visual resources present across the site (see Figures 3 - 6). Visual character areas and visually significant resources were mapped across the site and together with visibility form the basis of this report

VISUAL CHARACTER: is a term which refers to predominant visual features that are present in the landscape or across the site. Visual analysis is undertaken at two levels, firstly across the whole site area at a broad level and then at a more detailed level in relation to individual landscape character areas identified based on any unique attributes and the presence of consistent visual elements of features. In other words Visual Character Areas (VCAs) are defined by geographical areas of consistent character or consistent mix of individual attributes.

Character areas relate to the base-line attributes that are considered most significant to the visual character of the area, in particular natural landscape features such as scenic natural landscapes or groupings and the presence of water bodies for example the ephemeral stream Kororoit Creek. We note that the broad VCA boundaries shown are indicative only and defined to clarify potential areas for future land uses.

The visual character of the locality in which the development would be seen is identified. It consists of identification of the physical and built components of the area and the setting of the proposal that contribute to its visual character. The character elements include topography, vegetation, land uses, settlement pattern, urban and built form, interface of land-water elements, maritime features and waterways. Visual character is a baseline factor against which the level of change caused by the proposal can be assessed. The desired future character of the locality is also relevant to assessing the extent of acceptable change to character.



FIGURE 3 - VERNACULAR RURAL BUILDINGS



FIGURE 4 - VIEW WEST FROM POST MILL ROAD APPIN



FIGURE 5 - VIEW NORTH WEST FROM BRIAN ROAD



FIGURE 6 - VIEW NORTH WEST FROM WITHIN CEREMONIAL AREA

2.4 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

LEGEND

Appin & North Appin Precincts

Appin (Part 1) Precinct

Appin (Part 2) Precinct

LGA Boundary

Landscape Character Areas

Pastoral Landscapes (R1): Open areas of pastoral landscapes, grazing and live-stock, intermittent remnant vegetation, isolated residences and access to distant views. The landscape has been highly modified as a result of agricultural uses with large levels of vegetative clearing.

Rural Small Holdings (R2): Small pockets of semi-rural living with larger lots than Appin township but smaller than surrounding landscape, often forming small clusters of residential dwellings with visual accessibility to one another and medium to close distance views of the surrounding landscape resulting from surrounding vegetation and topography.

Township / Suburban Settlement: Visually established suburb typically characterised by a grid system road layout and settlement pattern of small lot living and mature vegetation and gardens. The settlement is noticeably different from the surrounding

Recreational: Highly modified landscape for the purposes of recreation in which the landscape is distinctly separate from its surrounds due to the highly specialised nature of its use.

Commercial Holdings: Commercial enterprises such as the Colliery that are at odds with the surrounding built-form scale (both commercial and residential).

Visually Contained Green Area: Visually secluded area characterised by mature trees surrounding an open grassed area. Views of the highly modified surrounding landscape and infrastructure are largely obscured, creating a noticeably separate area from the rest of the site.

Significant Vegetation Groupings: Predominantly characterised by vegetated riparian corridors along creeks and rivers which is distinctive due to form, density and colouration of the tree canopy. Mature vegetation often limits long distance views across the site and creates visually contained and physically separated areas throughout the site.

Existing Easements

Excluded Land

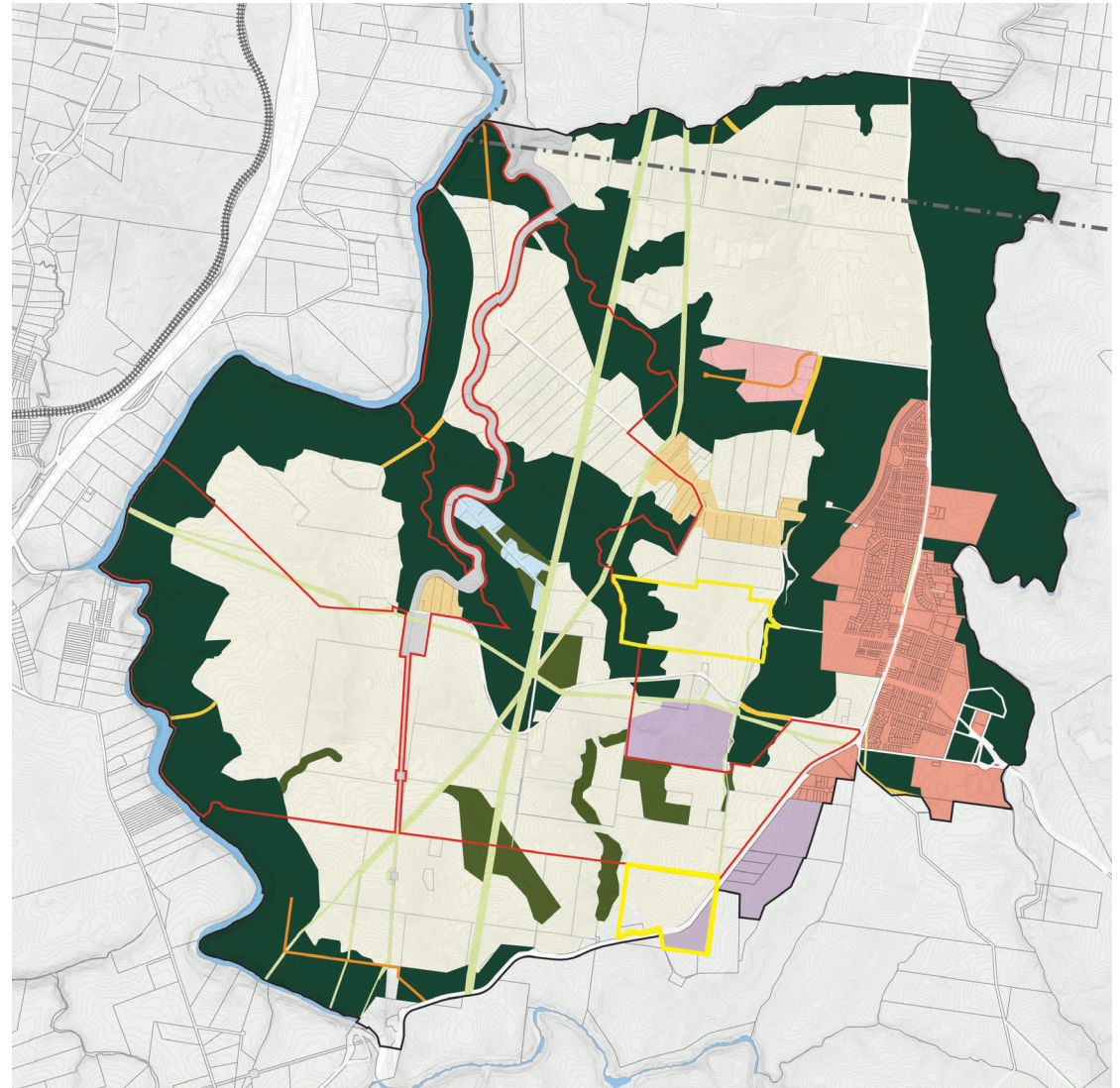


FIGURE 7 - LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

2.5 VISUAL RESOURCES AND EXTERNAL VISIBILITY
















SCENIC QUALITY

Scenic quality is a term used in landscape assessment and perception research which relates to the likely expectations of viewers regarding scenic beauty, attractiveness or preferences of the visual settings. The level of scenic quality attributed to a site is baseline factor against which to measure the visual effects. Empirical research about scenic quality and cultural values of aesthetic landscapes as determined in empirical research undertaken in Australia by academics including Terrance Purcell, Richard Lamb, Colleen Morris and Gary Moore. Moore (2006) summarises the theoretical and methodological constructs in the field of environment, behaviour and society (EBS) and discusses the largest body of research in this area prepared by Associate Professor Terry Purcell and Dr Richard Lamb. The research details result in relation to the experience, perception and aesthetics of natural and cultural landscapes, affective experience of the environment, and the perception of scenic quality.

SCENIC QUALITY OF THE SITE

The site would be considered in isolation and as part of its wider visual setting as low-moderate scenic quality given its natural topography, open nature and lack of built forms, presence of visually significant stands of vegetated slopes and riparian corridors. Notwithstanding overall the Appin Precinct is also characterised by isolated but visible infrastructure elements including for example high voltage transmission easement, gas extraction sites and associated electricity sub stations. The previous and current uses, and presence of hobby farms and storage areas and relatively homogeneous large areas of pastoral landscapes together provide a 'down-weight' to the overall scenic quality and uniqueness of the subject site.

LEGEND

- | | |
|--|--|
|  Appin & North Appin Precincts |  Gas Easement Pipelines |
|  Appin (Part 1) Precinct |  Electrical Transmission Line |
|  Appin (Part 2) Precinct |  Transmission Towers |
|  LGA Boundary | Topography and Landform |
| Zone of External Visibility |  Localised High Points |
|  Blocking Vegetation |  Ridgelines |
|  View Cones | |
|  Significant Vegetation Groupings | |
| Infrastructure Elements | |
|  Appin Power Station | |
|  Power Substation | |
|  Upper Nepean canal | |

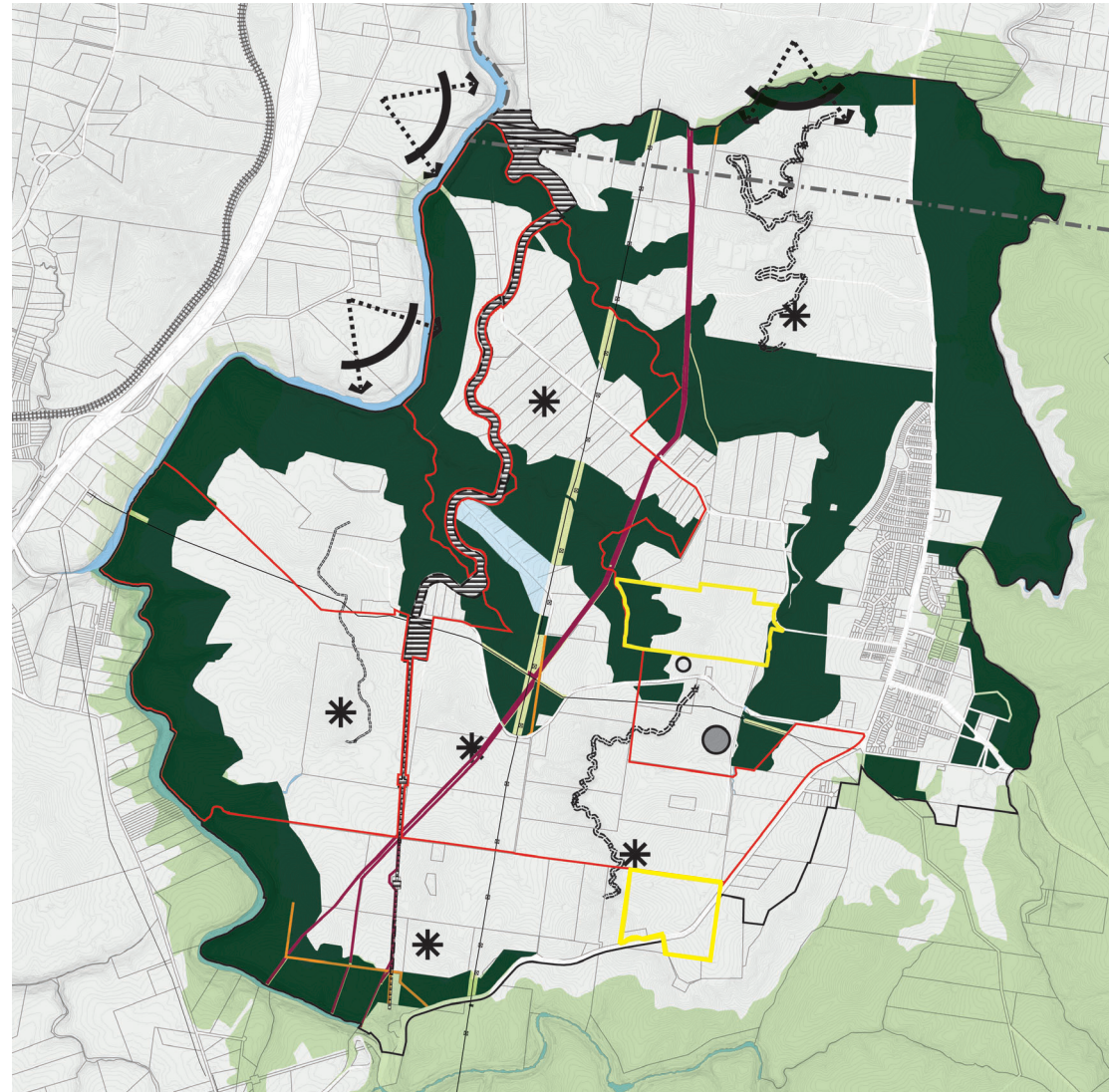


FIGURE 8 - VISUAL RESOURCES AND EXTERNAL VISIBILITY

REPRESENTATIVE VISUAL RESOURCES IMAGES



FIGURE 9 - POWER LINES AND EASEMENTS



FIGURE 10 - UPPER CANAL



FIGURE 11 - APPIN SUBSTATION



FIGURE 12 - TRANSMISSION PYLONS AND EASEMENTS



FIGURE 13 - SIGNIFICANT MATURE VEGETATION GROUPINGS



FIGURE 14 - RIDGELINE TO THE WEST OF TESTON FARM

2.6 VISUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Maintain views to:
▪ Razorback Ridge
▪ Blue Mountains
▪ Heritage sites – namely the potential massacre site and burial ground
▪ Testons Farm
▪ Long distance views north from Testons Farm area towards Camden scenic hills
Topography and vegetation create visually contained and separated pockets within the site with the opportunity to create distinct areas. Potential for more intense development that would not impact on long distance views.
Towards the site
Maintain ridgelines and localised highpoints clear of development where possible to protect perceived scenic quality and long-distance views towards the site for the surrounding landscape and community. Maintaining these elements in their current form helps to visually maintain an aspect of the 'sense of place' for people when viewing the site.

LEGEND

Appin & North Appin Precincts

Appin (Part 1) Precinct

Appin (Part 2) Precinct

LGA Boundary

Views

Key Views

Secondary View

Indicative View Point Location

Wollondilly Scenic Study Identified Views

Visually Contained Areas

Topography and Landform

Modified Tree (Scarred)

The map displays the Appin and North Appin precincts, with Appin divided into Part 1 and Part 2. It highlights visually contained areas in green and identifies key views with blue dashed arrows and secondary views with light blue dashed arrows. Topography and landform features are indicated by black asterisks, and modified trees are marked with orange stars. The map also shows the LGA boundary and various view points.

FIGURE 15 - VISUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Prepared by Urbis for Walker Corporation 13

SECTION 3:

VISUAL ANALYSIS KEY FINDINGS

3.1 KEY FINDINGS

Key visual insights include the following:

VISUAL CHARACTER

Large areas of the Precincts are homogeneous in terms of visual character and scenic quality. These areas are largely devoid of visually prominent or distinctive resources other than mature stands of vegetation and riparian vegetation bounding the site to the south and west. In other words there are few examples of visual components, features or combinations of features to make the majority of the site visually distinctive, unique or worthy of specific protection. Landscapes of similar visual character exist to the west, south and east and in fact characterise the majority of south-west Sydney and the Growth Area. Exceptions to this and features are included in Figure 8 Visual Resources and External Visibility.

EXTERNAL VISIBILITY

The majority of the site is of low visibility from the public domain. Walker Corp landholdings within the Precincts are of low visibility from surrounding main roads including Appin Road, Wilton Road, Douglas Park Road, M31 and Moreton Park Road. Visibility into the majority of the site is limited due to intervening undulating topography, low, local ridgelines and knolls within the site and due to the presence of dense stands and corridors of mature vegetation.

In our opinion, the presence of such features and large areas of relatively homogeneous pastoral landscapes together reduce the overall scenic quality of the visual landscape.

3.2 SUMMARY

The visual assessment of the Appin & North Appin Precincts identified several distinct landscape character areas and visual resources within the site.

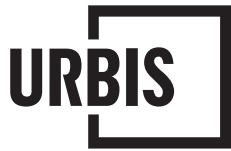
Historical land uses and cultural modification across the Precincts results in a visual landscape of low scenic quality.

The exception is the identified significant vegetative groupings and stands of mature vegetation which form a prominent visual feature in the landscape and often act as boundaries and define landscape character areas.

The Planning Proposal to re-zone the Precincts is supported from a visual perspective as the analysis has identified:

- Limited external views into site, with close range views only available from the north and north-west, and longer distance views from locations such as Razorback Ridge being viewed within a wide visual catchment over distance.
- The highly modified nature of the Precincts through historical land use and corresponding limited visually distinctive or unique landscape elements.
- Retention and augmentation of significant site vegetation.

Landscape Visual Impact Assessment - Addendum



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8th October 2024

APPIN & NORTH APPIN PRECINCTS LANDSCAPE VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT STATEMENT - ADDENDUM LETTER

This Addendum Letter has been prepared to provide additional information in relation to the **Appin (Part 2) Precinct** Planning Proposal.

The Proponent has prepared the subject submission to rezone 100.10 hectares of land (the **Site**) within the Appin Precinct from *RU2 Rural Landscape* to the following zones:

Urban Development Zone

Zone 1 Urban Development (UDZ)

Conservation Zone

Zone C2 Environmental Conservation (C2)

The Site is known as the Appin (Part 2) Precinct. The Site directly adjoins the Appin (Part 1) Precinct – refer to **Figure 1**.

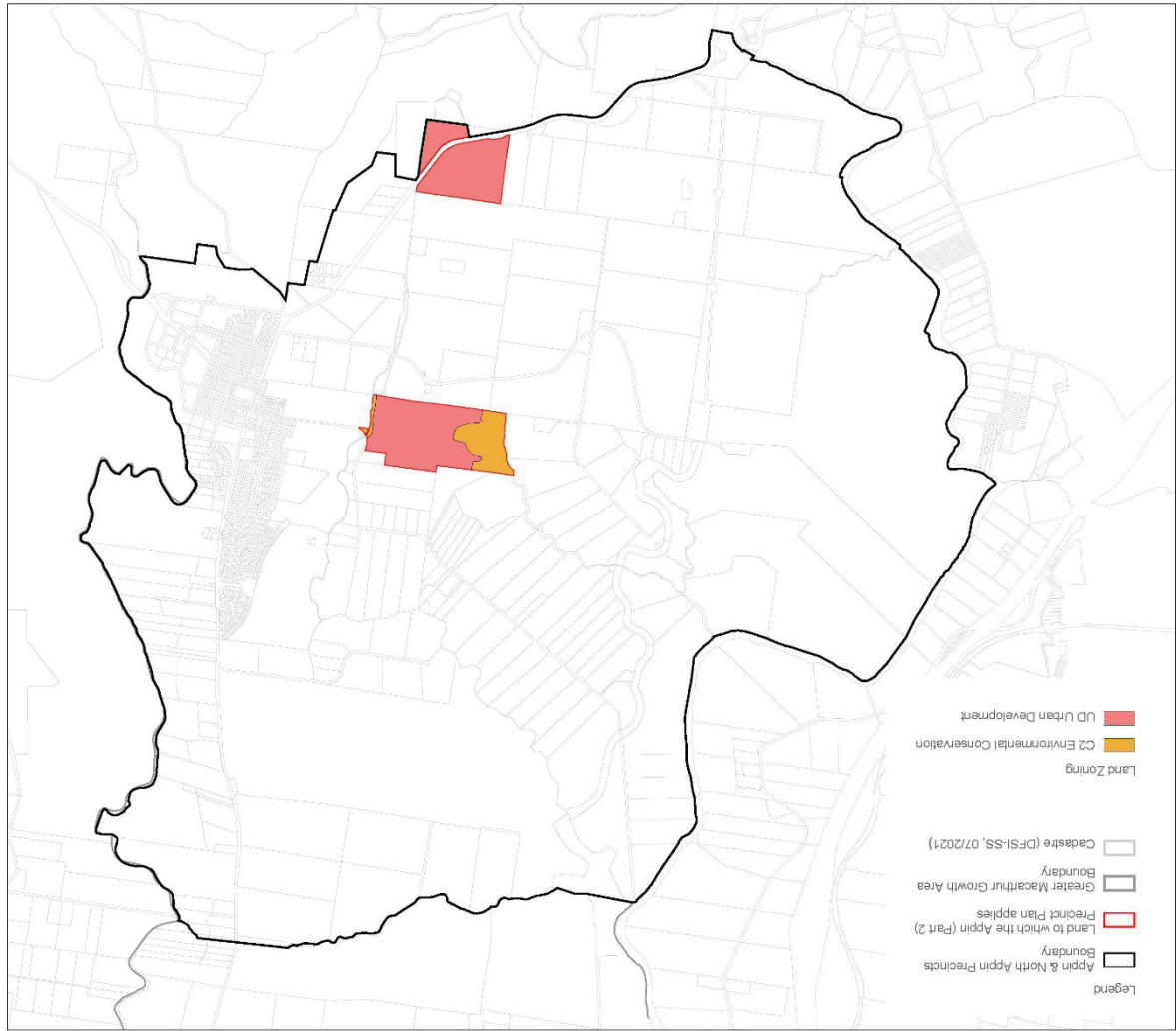


Figure 1: Boundary of the Appin (Part 2) Precinct.

The Appin (Part 2) Precinct Plan zones land for conservation and urban development. It establishes the statutory planning framework permitting the delivery of a range of residential typologies, retail, education, business premises, recreation areas, and infrastructure services and provides development standards that development must fulfil. Within the proposed urban development zone, 1,312 dwellings and more than 30,000 sqm of gross lettable floor area for retail and commercial space can be delivered.

FINDINGS OF APPIN & NORTH APPIN PRECINCTS VISUAL ASSESSMENT

Urbis were engaged by Walker Corporation in 2022 to undertake a baseline analysis of the visual environment and provide parameters and guidelines to inform the spatial arrangement of the future development across the Appin & North Appin Precincts (**Landscape Visual Impact Assessment Statement**).



The assessment concluded that the proposal to re-zone the precincts could be supported from a visual perspective as a result of:

- The highly modified nature of the site
- The limited level of unique visual features
- Maintaining significant vegetation groupings on site

ASSESSMENT OF APPIN (PART 2) PRECINCT PLANNING PROPOSAL VISUAL IMPACT

Urbis have reviewed the impact of the Appin (Part 2) Precinct Planning Proposal on the original visual assessment and found that it has no impact on the finding of the assessment. Minor updates to the original report are outlined below:

- **Assessment Introduction (Chapter 1)** apart from minor text updates to reflect the Appin (Part 2) Precinct Planning Proposal.
- The findings of the visual assessment process (**Chapter 2**) apart from minor graphic and text updates to reflect the Appin (Part 2) Precinct Planning Proposal.

Chapter 3 – Visual Analysis Key Findings has been updated to remove assessment of the ILP for Release Area 1 as this is outside of the Appin (Part 2) Precinct Planning Proposal and no ILP or landscape master plan has been prepared for the Part 2 Planning Proposal.

The key findings of the visual character and external visibility of the site are unchanged from the previous assessment. The Appin (Part 2) Precinct Planning Proposal can be supported from a visual perspective as the findings from the original assessment remain unchanged by the additional areas.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nicholas Sisam".

Nicholas Sisam
Associate Director