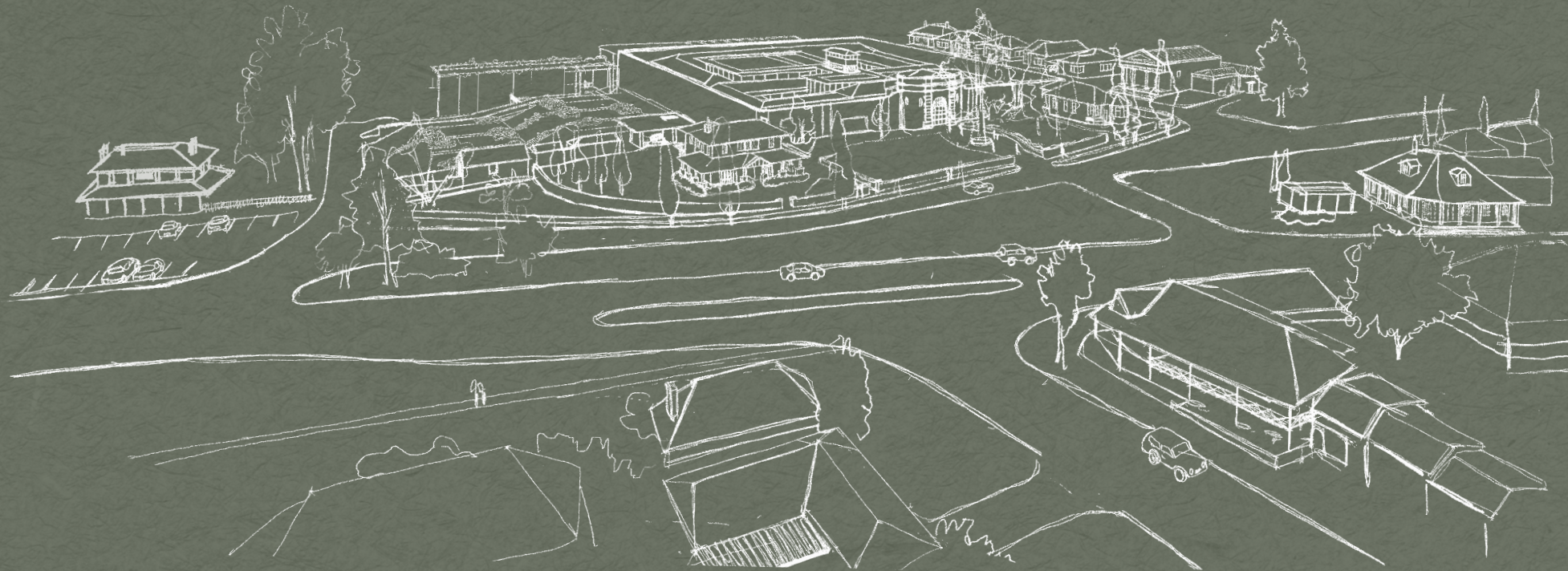




AN ADAPTIVE REUSE PROPOSAL FOR THE FORMER BERRIMA GAOL



**Western Hotel Rooms
Between the Escarpment and the Wall**
Clarification of the design rationale and visual impact of proposed hotel suites

29 May 2026

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TURNER

Executive Summary

This report has been prepared in response to Item 3 of the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure’s Request for Information relating to the proposed western hotel suites at Berrima Gaol.

The Department requested further justification of the design rationale underpinning the articulated northern hotel bar form, supported by additional visual impact assessment and consideration of opportunities to further reduce the perceived scale of the southern extent of the building while maintaining hotel accommodation and preserving the relationship to the Wingecarribee River corridor.

This report demonstrates how the proposed hotel form has evolved through an iterative design process from initial concept through to the current proposal, illustrating how **feedback received through SDRP Sessions 1 and 2 directly informed the final design outcome.** It documents the progression from the initial hotel accommodation concepts, through the linear bar form explored during SDRP review, to the refined articulated massing now proposed.

Particular emphasis is placed on the manner in which SDRP feedback directly influenced the design outcome, including recommendations relating to built form articulation, visual permeability, landscape separation, visibility of the gaol wall, relationship to the escarpment and reduction of perceived bulk.

To support this assessment, the report incorporates findings from the **Addendum Visual Impact Assessment** prepared in response to the Department’s request.

The addendum specifically examines views of the western hotel suites from locations identified by the Department and Heritage Council, including:

- the western end of Wilshire Street looking south toward the hotel suites and escarpment;
- the Police Sergeant’s Residence and northern Wilshire Street frontage;
- Wingecarribee Street looking north toward the western hotel suites;
- the Wingecarribee River corridor looking east toward the site; and
- longer range views west of the river corridor.

The additional visual assessment confirms that visibility of the western hotel suites is generally constrained by the sandstone escarpment, vegetation and topography. Where visible, the proposal is experienced as a contained and integrated built form outcome within the broader landscape and heritage setting. The assessment demonstrates that visual impacts reduce significantly with distance from the site and that views from the river corridor are generally filtered, intermittent or unavailable.

The report concludes that the **proposed articulated hotel form is the outcome of a rigorous design evolution process that directly responds to SDRP recommendations** while balancing heritage conservation, landscape character, visitor experience and operational requirements. The additional visual analysis confirms that the proposal maintains the visual prominence of the gaol walls, preserves the broader landscape setting of the Wingecarribee River corridor and achieves an acceptable visual outcome from publicly accessible viewpoints.



This Western Hotel Rooms package has been prepared to address the relevant matters raised by the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) on 16 December 2025, consolidating and clarifying the extensive design testing, heritage assessment and iterative refinement previously undertaken through SDRP sessions and the SSDA Design Report.

For a detailed response to each DPHI matter raised, refer to the **Response to Submission Report** prepared by Sutherland Planning.

Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI)
Response to Submission and Request for Information

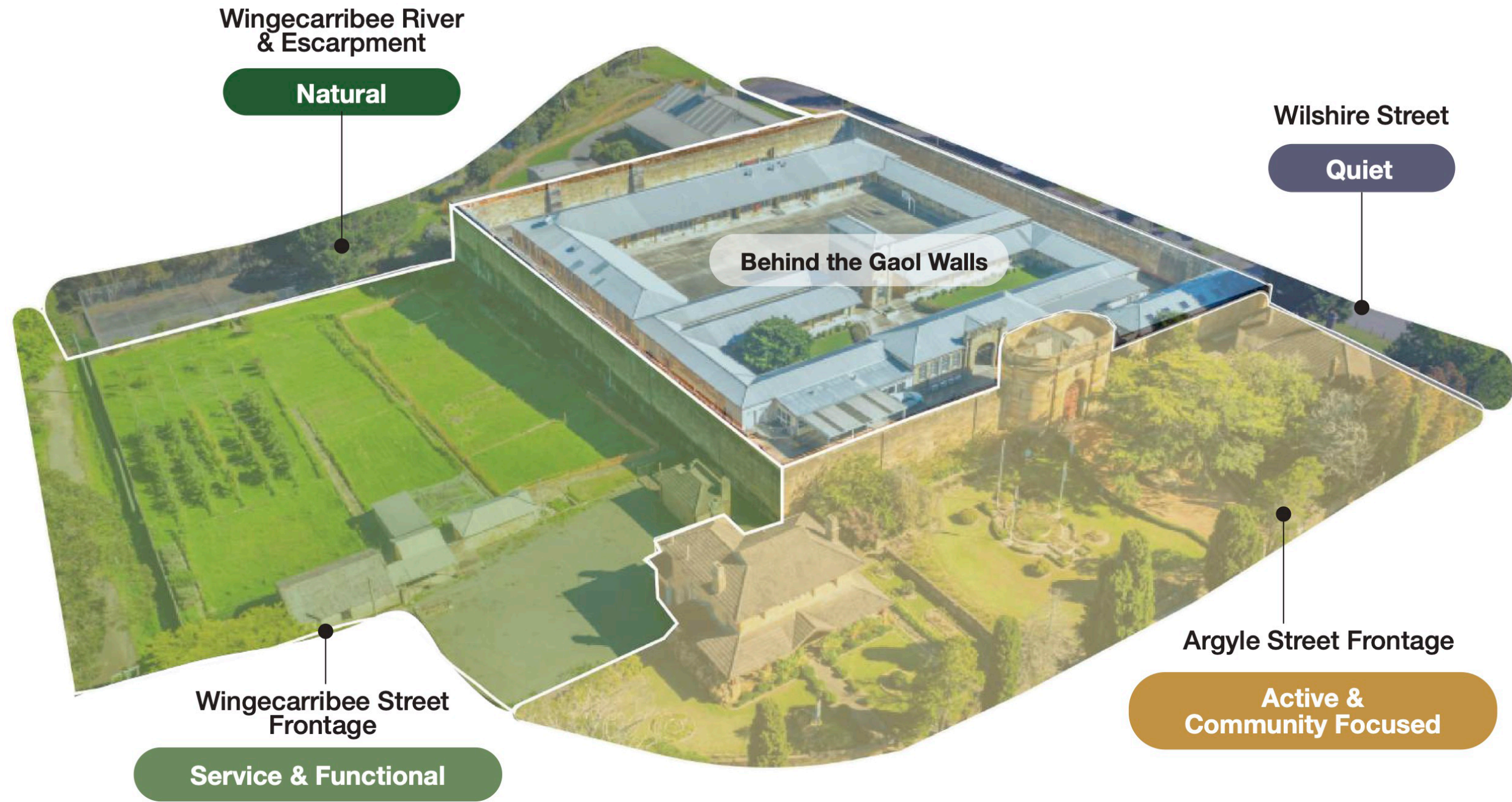
Item 3. Western Hotel Rooms

The Department requires further justification for the design rationale behind the northern bar’s ‘kinked’ massing form. It is noted the proposed hotel’s massing form was not presented to and reviewed at, SDRP session 2. The Department requests the further design rationale, supported by additional visual impact assessment, be presented to the SDRP for review and endorsement. The scale of the southern end of the bar form (4 stories) looks to be of greater visual impact than what was presented at SDRP. The design may benefit from further breakdown of the massing to this end of the ‘bar’, and it should be included in the VIA so that the scale impacts are better understood. This should include options that favour views/curtilage to the river and retain the suites within the ‘bar’ form.

1. Site Character

Observations and Analysis

Site Analysis
Key Character
Areas



Wingecarribee River & Escarpment
At the point where the Gaol meets the Wingecarribee River, the landscape is strongly defined by the escarpment separating the river from the Gaol grounds. This natural topography forms both a visual backdrop and a protective threshold to the ecological setting.

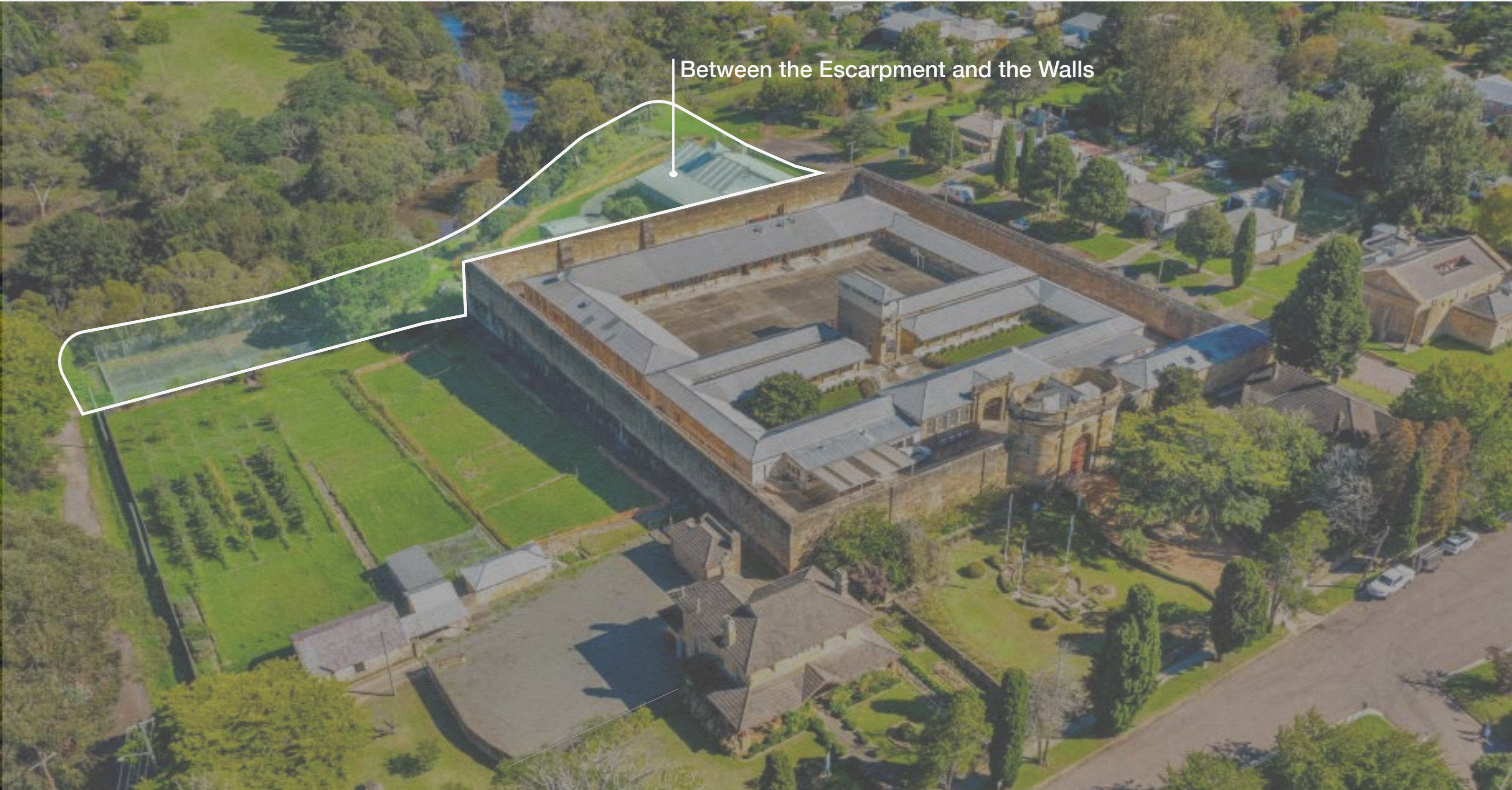
Wingecarribee Street Frontage
Wingecarribee Street forms the southern edge of the Gaol precinct, presenting a transitional frontage between the historic walls and the township. Unlike the more formal civic face of Argyle Street, this edge has been used for service driveways, sheds, and ancillary functions, giving it an informal character.

Argyle Street Frontage
The Argyle Street frontage forms the most iconic face of Berrima Gaol, defined by the dominant sandstone wall, the gatehouse entry, and the Governor and Deputy Governor residences. These elements establish the colonial character of Berrima and strongly contribute to the integrity of the Conservation Area.

Behind the Gaol Walls
Behind the Gaol Walls, the original 1839 sandstone entry gate remains an entry threshold, marking the site's layered history. The exclusion 'sterile zone' continues as a interstitial surveillance buffer. The two courtyards contrast in character: the east softened by lawn and tree planting, the west a large hardstand yard, while the 3 x 2 m outward-facing cells maintain direct but controlled views to these spaces.

Wilshire Street
Wilshire Street is a quiet residential address that sits in contrast to the more formal civic frontage of Argyle Street. The Gaol wall and Courthouse establish a strong institutional presence, yet the street is equally defined by a series of modest dwellings with generous front gardens contributing to the intimate residential character of the street.

Between the Escarpment and the Gaol Wall Hotel Suites





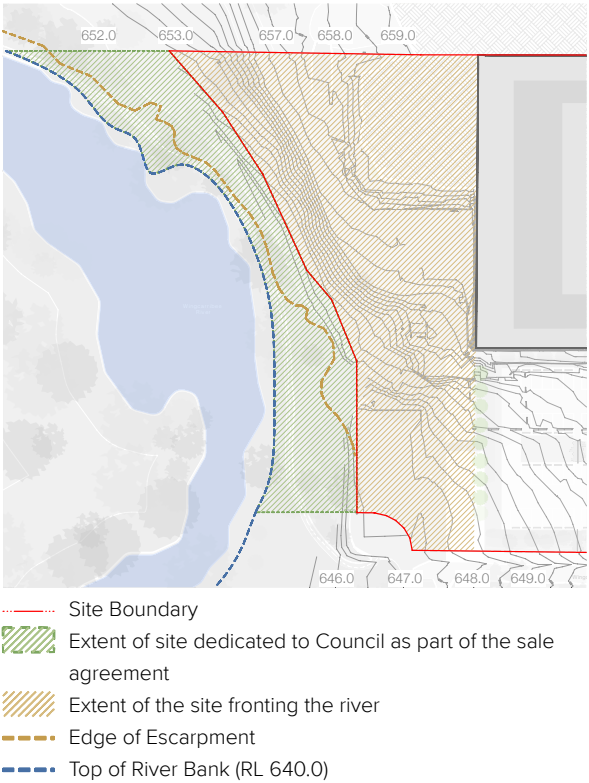
Site Analysis Diagrams

The design of the hotel suites emerged from a comprehensive analysis of heritage significance, topography, landscape character, view corridors and operational requirements.

These constraints established the design parameters within which the hotel accommodation could be located and informed the massing studies presented to the SDRP.

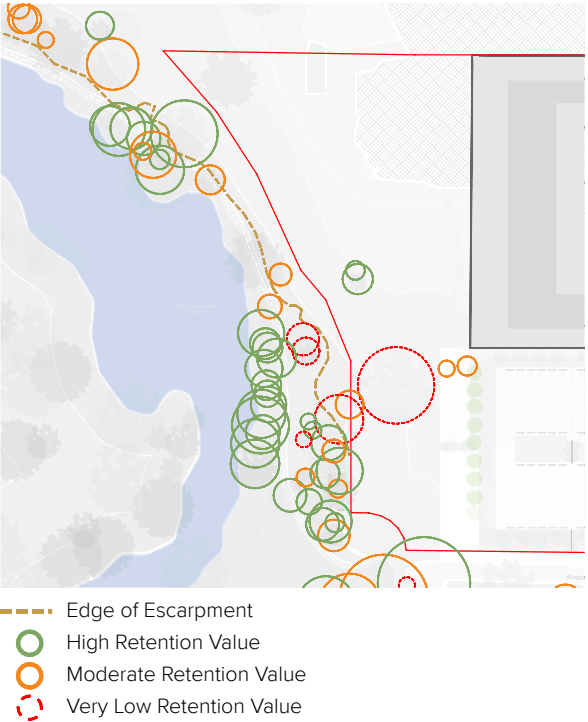
Existing Site Boundary & Contours

The relationship with the river is defined by the escarpment with up to 12m difference in height



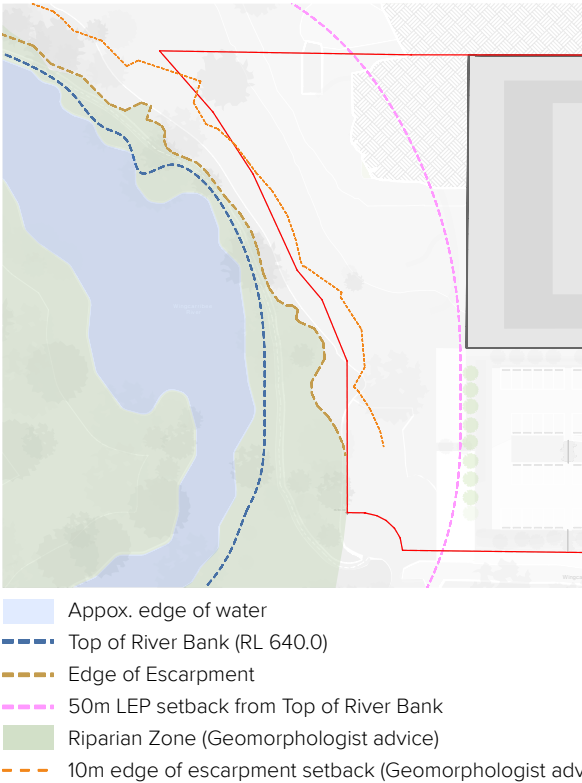
Existing Trees

The majority of moderate and high retention value trees are located below the escarpment



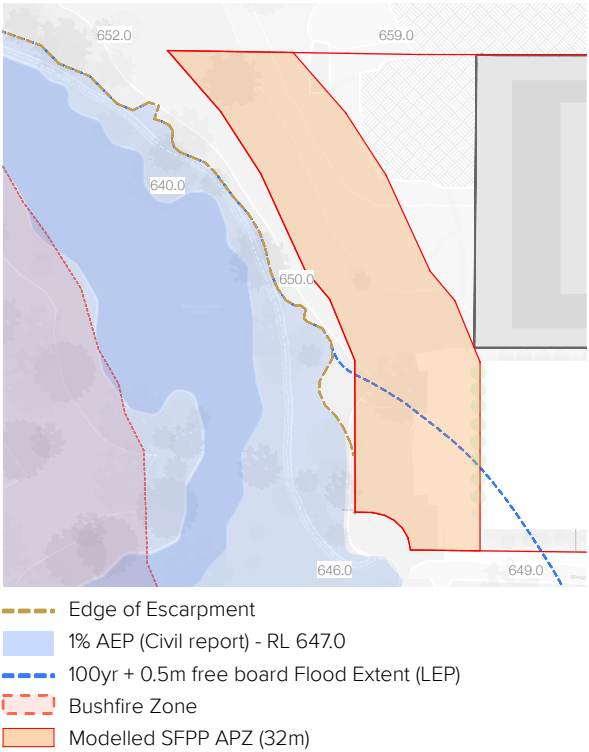
Riparian / Ecology Zone

A detailed study specific to the site conditions has identified that the escarpment plays an important role in defining the extent of the Riparian Zone



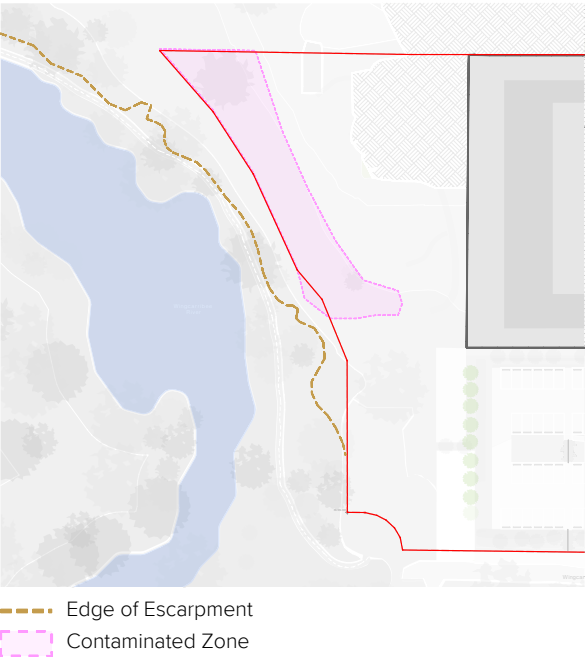
Bushfire & Flooding Zone

Bushfire and flooding risks are limited to the lower levels of the site



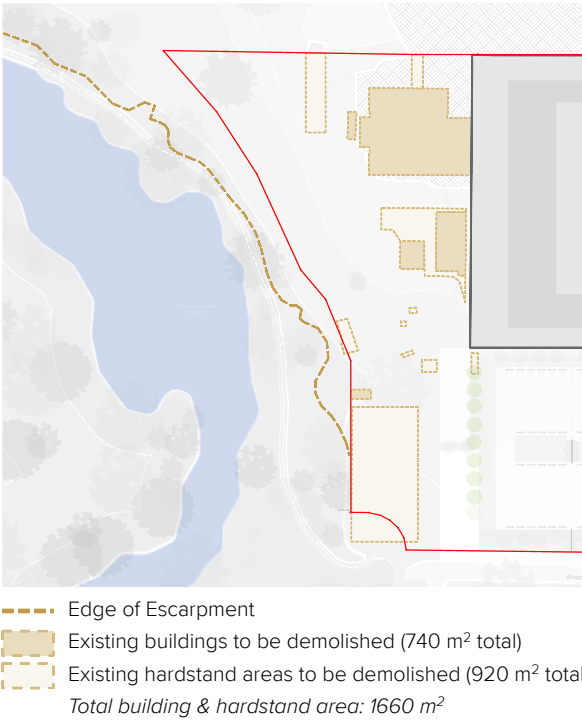
Contamination Zone

As part of the site legacy the rear of the site was used as a dumping area. The contaminated fill will need to be removed changing the existing ground levels



Existing Building & Hardstand Areas

Over 30% of the rear of the site fronting the river comprised buildings and hardstand areas

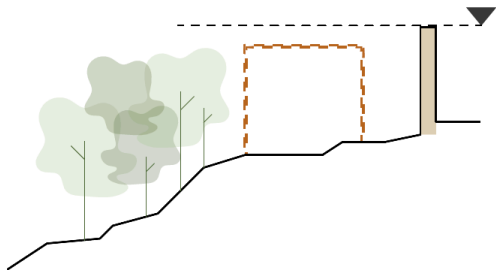


2. Design Evolution

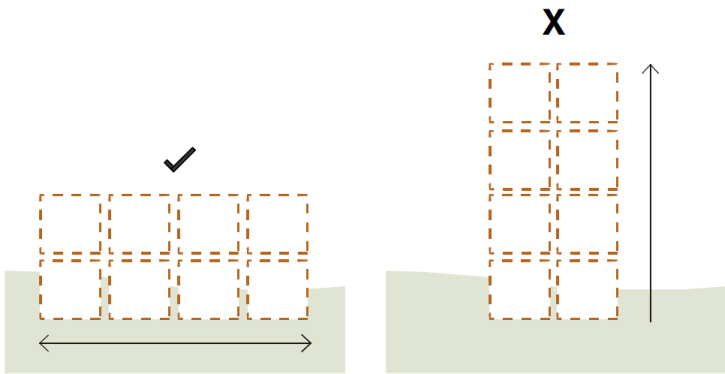
An iterative design process informed by recommendations of the State Design Review Panel

Site Responsive Key Moves

The key design moves established the foundation for subsequent massing studies and design refinement. Through the SDRP process, these moves were tested and further developed to reduce perceived bulk, improve visual permeability, strengthen landscape integration and maintain the prominence of the heritage gaol.



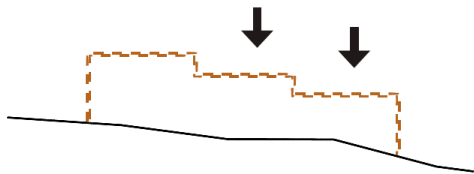
Respecting existing datums and structures



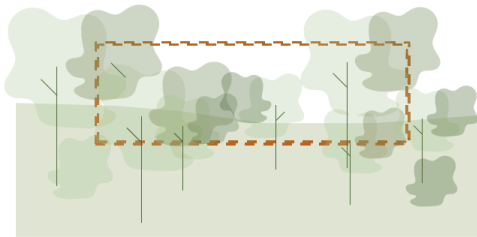
Scale and Place Identity



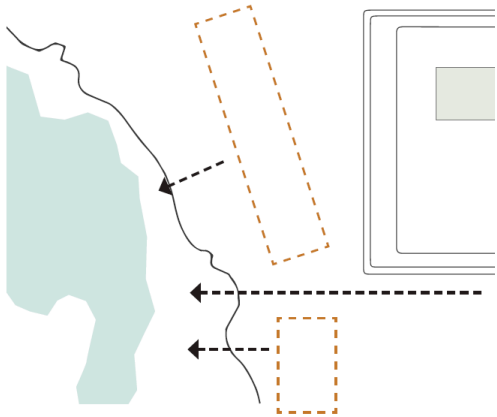
Material Circularity and Amenity Awareness



Working with the Existing Terrain



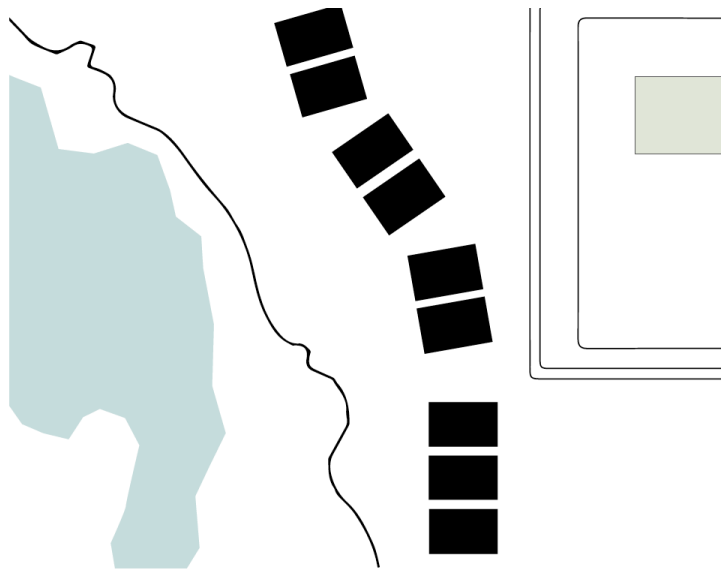
Remember, Heal and Renew



Sightlines to Wingecarribee Escarpment and River

Design Concepts

Early design investigations tested two distinct massing strategies, each responding differently to the relationship between the gaol wall, escarpment and river corridor. The comparative assessment of these approaches informed discussions with the SDRP and established the framework for subsequent design refinement.

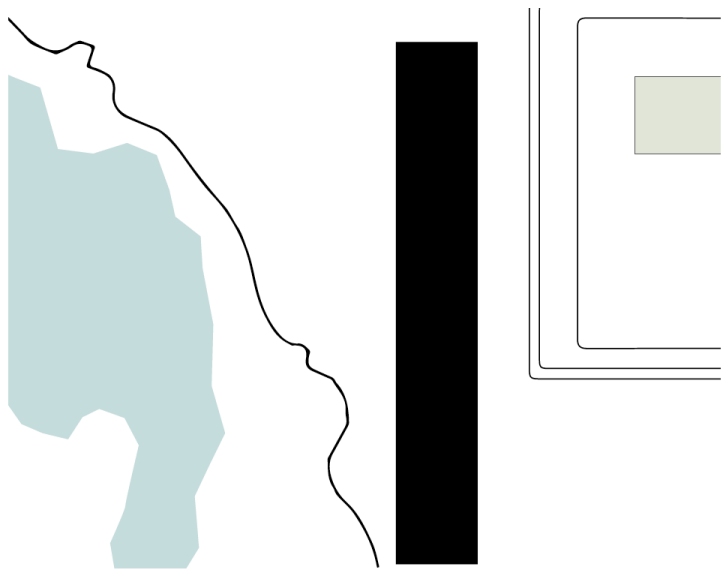


The 'Sorgenfrei' Arrangement

Sorgenfrei [carefree] - *German*

During the gaol's tenure as a German Internment Camp during World War I, the detainees constructed simple huts scattered along the Wingecarribee riverbank near the Gaol. One of these, named **Sorgenfrei**, served as a gathering place for their swimming club.

This arrangement follows the natural contours and levels of the land, oriented toward river views.



Geometric Alignment

Adopting the geometric language of the gaol walls

This linear arrangement establishes a deliberate dialogue with the imposing presence of the adjacent gaol walls.

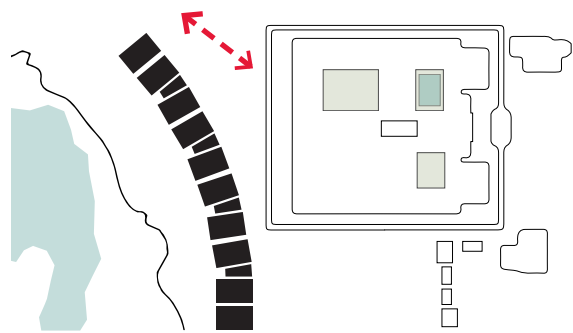
The levels of the hotel suites follow a fixed datum, enhancing the contrast between the natural site and the proposed geometric form.

Following review by SDRP Session 1, the geometric alignment strategy emerged as the preferred basis for further design development.

Design Evolution

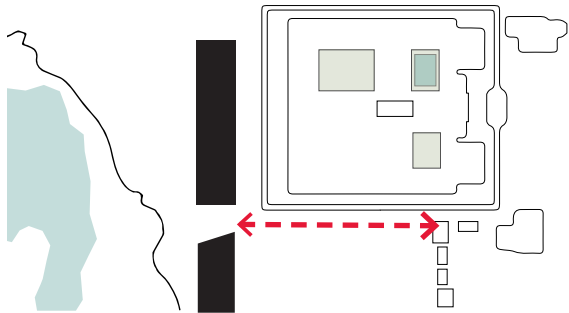
The final hotel massing did not emerge as a singular design outcome. The outcome has been a culmination of an iterative design process involving multiple massing studies, stakeholder consultation and two SDRP review sessions.

The evolution shown below demonstrates how SDRP recommendations directly informed the refinement of the built form, ultimately leading to the articulated hotel massing now proposed.



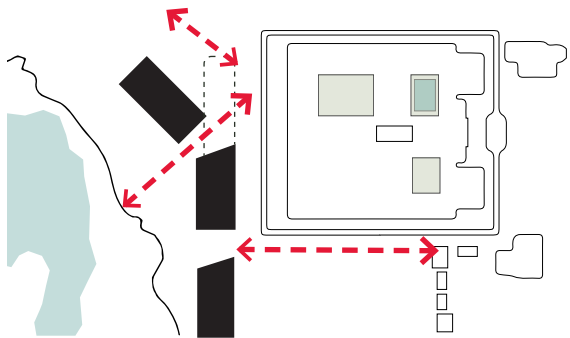
Initial Massing
‘Modulated form/clusters following the escarpment’

Presented at SDRP1 *4th December 2024*
Sorgenfrei Arrangement



Bar Form Massing
‘Geometric alignment with Gaol wall’

Presented at SDRP2 *17th April 2024*
Refined in response to panel recommendations



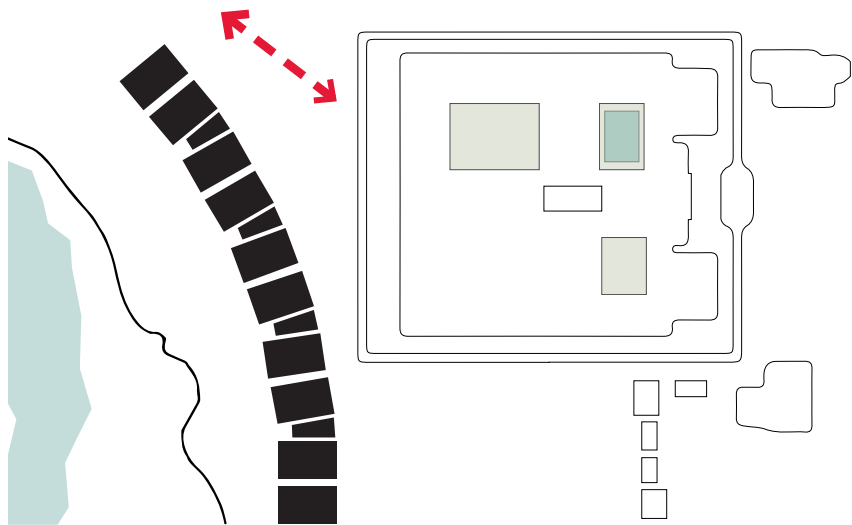
Refined Bar Form
‘Refined articulation & sightlines’

SSDA Submission *September 2025*
Refined in response to panel recommendations

Design Evolution

Hotel Suites presented at SDRP1 - Sorgenfrei Arrangement

A massing arrangement that follows the natural contours and levels of the land, orientated towards the river views



Initial Massing

‘Modulated form/clusters following the escarpment’



View Analysis

Key comments from SDRP Meeting 01

SDRP No.1 Comment Item 8.
The strong axial nature of the existing building should guide the placement and design approach of new buildings.

SDRP No.1 Comment Item 10a.
suit the scale of the surrounding context, noting that the gaol is currently the largest spatial presence in town

SDRP No.2 Comment Item 10b.
Allow framing and highlighting of views from the gaol to the river and from the opposite bank to the Gaol Wall

Key Panel Recommendations

SDRP encouraged a stronger geometric relationship with the gaol wall and greater clarity between historic and contemporary elements.

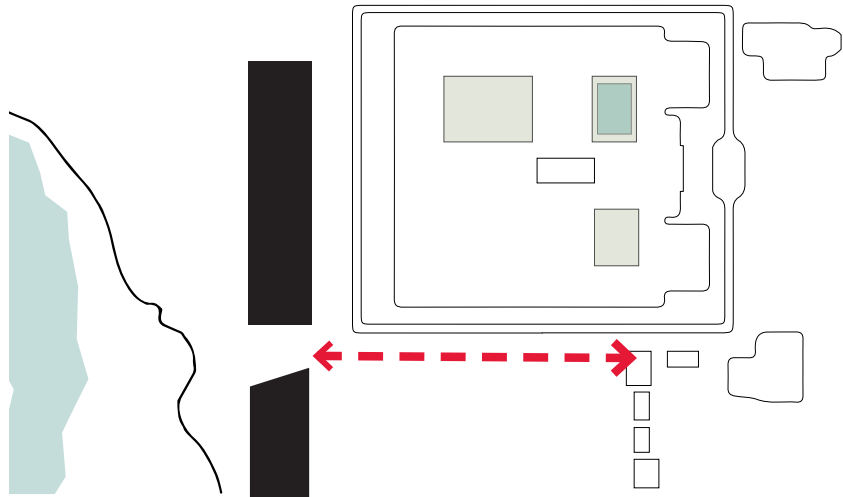
Ensure that the gaol remains the dominant element

Avoid dispersed pavilion outcomes

Design Evolution

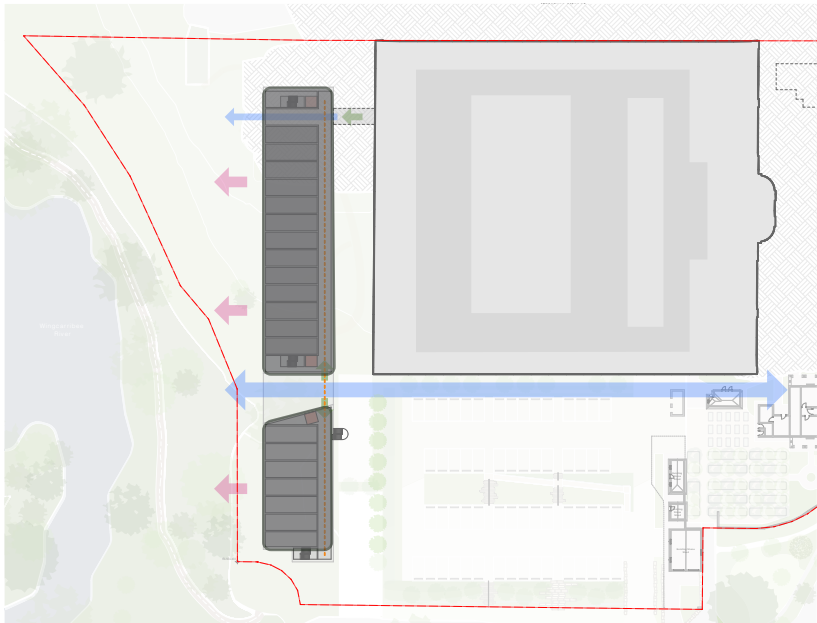
Hotel Suites presented at SDRP2 - Bar Form Arrangement

In response to SDRP 1, the design team moved away from the dispersed Sorgenfrei arrangement and adopted a more geometric relationship with the gaol wall.



Bar Form Massing

‘Geometric alignment with Gaol wall’



View Analysis

Key comments from SDRP Meeting 02

SDRP No.2 Comment Item 10. Reduce visual bulk and scale. Increase upper level setback, provide additional articulation and views between hotel suites

SDRP No.2 Comment Item 11. Interrogate opportunities for stepping the ‘Bar’ so there is greater distance between hotel suites and Gaol Wall.

Key Panel Recommendations

Reduce the visual bulk and scale

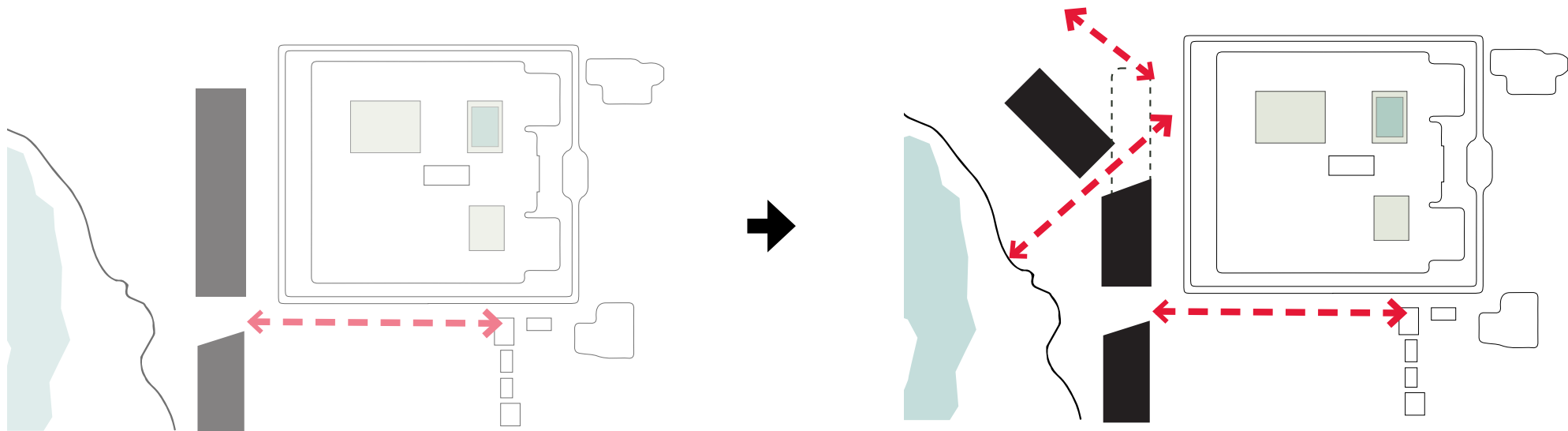
Increase the articulation and permeability between the suites

Improve the relationship with the landscape

Test stepping and separation to reveal more of the gaol wall

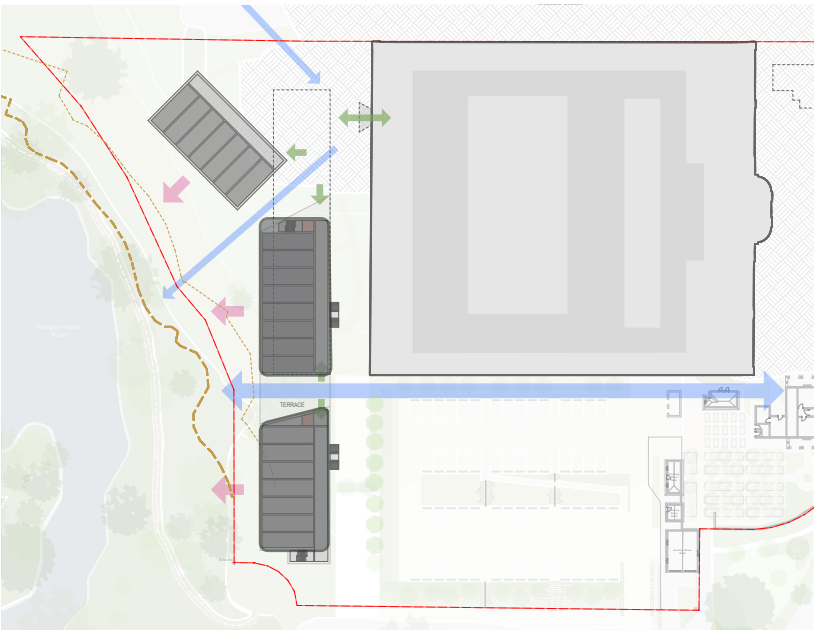
Design Evolution

SSDA Submission - Refined Bar Form Arrangement



Bar Form Massing
'Geometric alignment with Gaol wall'

Refined Bar Form
'Refined articulation & sightlines'



View Analysis

SDRP2

SSDA Submission

'Bar Form' massing, which was the preferred choice by the SDRP Panel, was refined further in response to feedback, with stepped forms that enhance the spatial buffer around the 'Secret Door,' strengthen key view corridors to the gaol wall and Governor's Residence, and introduce deeper upper-level setbacks.

Key Refinements

- Increased Articulation
- Increased Setbacks
- Increased View Corridors
- Increased Landscape Separation
- Retained hotel yield & operability streams

Refined Bar Form

Design rationale and response to the panel feedback received at SDRP1/SDRP2 directly informed the outcome.

Key Panel Recommendations (SDRP1)

The massing and arrangement should respond to the geometric relationship to the gaol wall

Ensure that the gaol remains the dominant element

Avoid dispersed pavilion outcomes

Key Refinements in response to Recommendations

Linear bar form **orthogonal** to the Gaol wall

The height of the suites are **not higher than the existing wall**

Setback maintained from the wall respecting the heritage curtilage

Linear arrangement with a deliberate dialogue with the existing walls

Key Panel Recommendations (SDRP2)

Reduce the visual bulk and scale

Increase the articulation and permeability between the suites

Test stepping and separation to reveal more of the gaol wall

Improve the relationship with the landscape

Breaks and articulation to the massing at the Northern end to **reopen framed views** of the wall from Wilshire Street and improve **visual permeability** to the river

The guest experiences a sequence of **framed and unfolding views** revealing the historic and natural landscape

10m setback maintained from the escarpment respecting the riparian ecology

Setback from the wall to provide a **landscape buffer** between the wall, suites, and beyond to the escarpment and river



Base Landscape Plan prepared by JMD Design | Not to Scale

Alignment with the **SDRP** recommendations

GUIDED BY THE
STRONG AXIAL
NATURE OF THE
GAOL

*“The strong axial nature of the existing building should guide the placement and design approach of new buildings”
(SDRP1 Advice letter)*

SSDA SUBMISSION:

- Parallel to Gaol Wall
- Reinforces historic geometry
- Legible relationship to the Gaol
- Avoids competing with the heritage fabric

EXISTING GEOMETRY
& PROPORTIONS

*“using the existing geometry and proportions to inform the new built fabric”
(SDRP1 Advice letter)*

SSDA SUBMISSION:

- Modular repetition
- Rhythm similar to cell logic
- Proportionally legible
- Elongated form resonates with the geometry of the existing wall

GAOL AS PRIMARY
SPATIAL PRESENCE

*“the gaol is currently “the largest spatial presence in town and this should be maintained”
(SDRP1 Advice letter)*

SSDA SUBMISSION:

- The stepped form reveals more of the wall from Wilshire Street reinforcing key visual connections
- The hotel suites are not higher than the existing wall
- The suites are setback from the wall to ensure adequate curtilage and landscape buffer is provided to not compete with the wall

STRONGER
RELATIONSHIP TO
VIEWS

*“allow framing and highlighting of views from the gaol to the river and from the opposite bank to the gaol wall”
(SDRP1 Advice letter)*

SSDA SUBMISSION:

- The stepped form provides clear view corridors connecting key heritage features with the river
- Controlled openings between forms
- Views are framed between the modules to the river, and back towards the wall

Alignment with the **SDRP** recommendations



*“accommodation should mediate river orientations with the strong rectilinear nature of the gaol walls”
(SDRP1 Advice letter)*

- SSDA SUBMISSION:**
- Mediates Gaol geometry + River edge
 - Linear discipline with softened landscape edge
 - Transition between the built form and the natural escarpment

*“be simple in detailing and materiality”
(SDRP1 Advice letter)*

- SSDA SUBMISSION:**
- Fewer material transitions
 - Cleaner roof scape
 - Calmer visual reading

*“the operational efficiency of moving the built form closer to the gaol”
(SDRP2 Advice letter)*

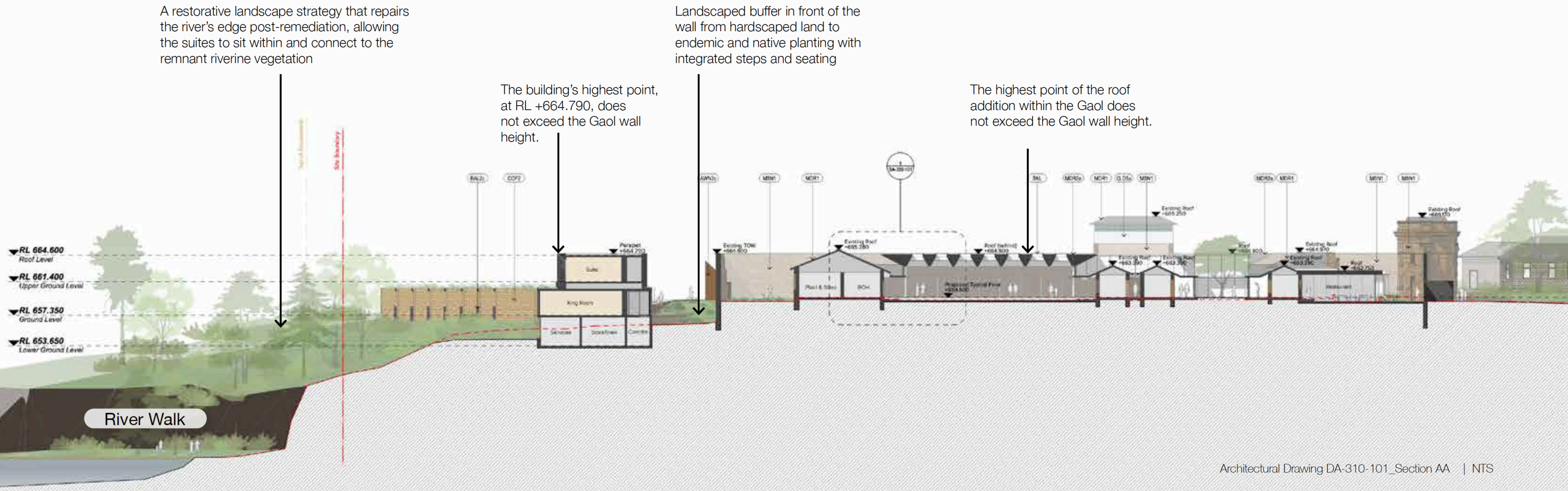
- SSDA SUBMISSION:**
- Efficient back of house servicing without impacting the guest experience
 - Consolidated circulation points
 - Legible access points and reduced infrastructure footprint

*“Bar Form Massing is considered the most successful of the options presented.”
(SDRP2 Advice letter)*

- SSDA SUBMISSION:**
- Proposed arrangement was a direct result of the recommendations made on the bar form massing

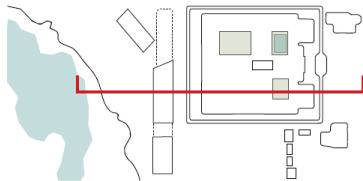
Height and Scale

Refined Bar Form



Height and Scale

The refined scheme incorporates upper-level setbacks, stepped massing, and increased separation from the Gaol Wall and escarpment to reduce visual bulk and preserve key view corridors. Proposed works inside and outside the gaol do not exceed the height of existing structures including the Gaol Wall, existing roof structures, Guard Tower and the Main Entrance. The hotel reads as a distinct contemporary addition, designed to remain recessive and subordinate at the rear of the Gaol, maintaining the hierarchy and character of the original Gaol to Berrima Village while complementing both landscape and heritage values.



Materiality
Refined Bar Form

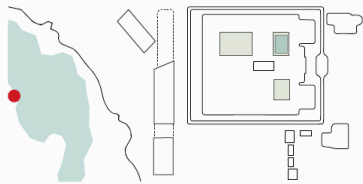
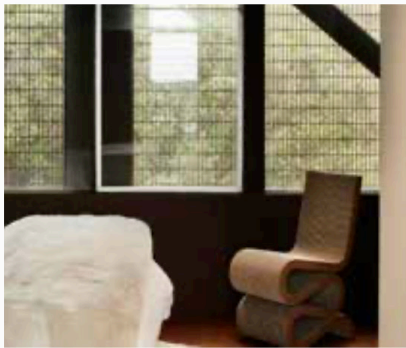


Illustrative view looking towards Hotel Suites from the Wingecarribee River

Nestled in the Landscape

Set within a back drop of the dense escarpment edge, the hotel is embedded in the landscape, the material palette responds to both the bushland edge and the historic Gaol. Its character is defined by a layered façade treatment of weathered steel screens, rammed-earth inspired concrete, and charred timber cladding, which break down the scale and introduce texture and depth. Openings and articulated screens provide shading and filtered views.

Images: St Andrews Beach House / Sean Godsell Architects
Saint James Hotel / Jean Nouvel



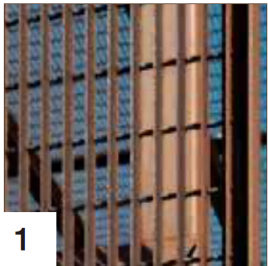
Materiality
Refined Bar Form



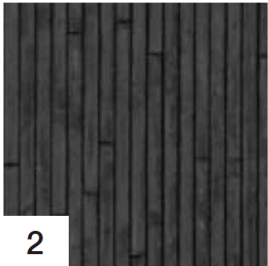
Illustrative view of Hotel Suites from escarpment

Materials Complimentary to Place

The hotel suites’ external materials and finishes have been chosen to be complementary to place, heritage context, sustainability goals, and bushfire resilience requirements. Warm-toned metal cladding and earthy finishes anchor the building into the escarpment setting, while referencing the robust sandstone walls of the Gaol. The use of ‘Shou Sugi Ban’ burnt cladding, (BAL29-rated) and weathering steel expresses permanence and resilience, allowing the building to weather naturally and further integrate into its landscape over time.



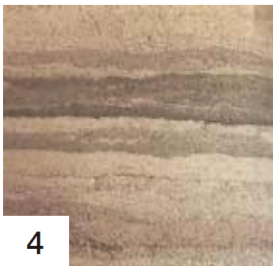
Steel Screen



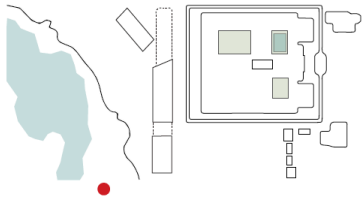
‘Sou Sugi Ban’
Burnt Cladding



Metal Cladding



Concrete
Rammed Earth Look



3. View Analysis

Visual Impact was not assessed retrospectively, it has driven the refinement of the design process

View Analysis
View from Wilshire Street

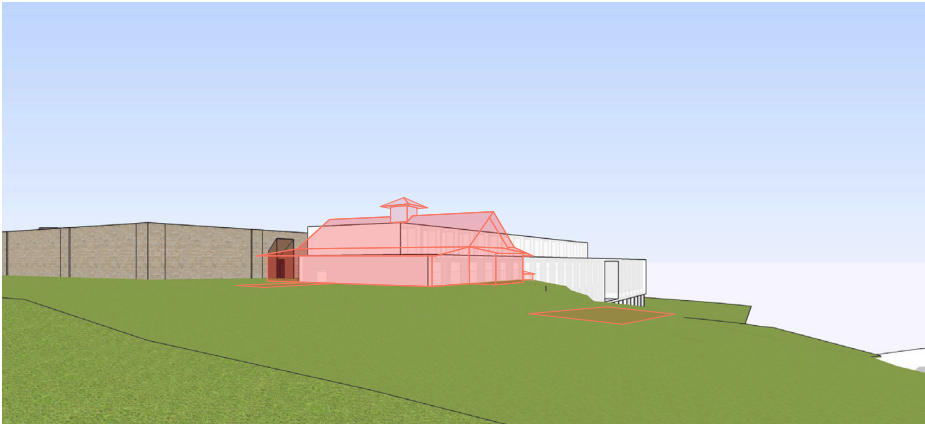
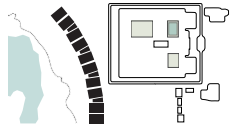
SDRP1 ➡ SDRP2 ➡ SSDA SUBMISSION



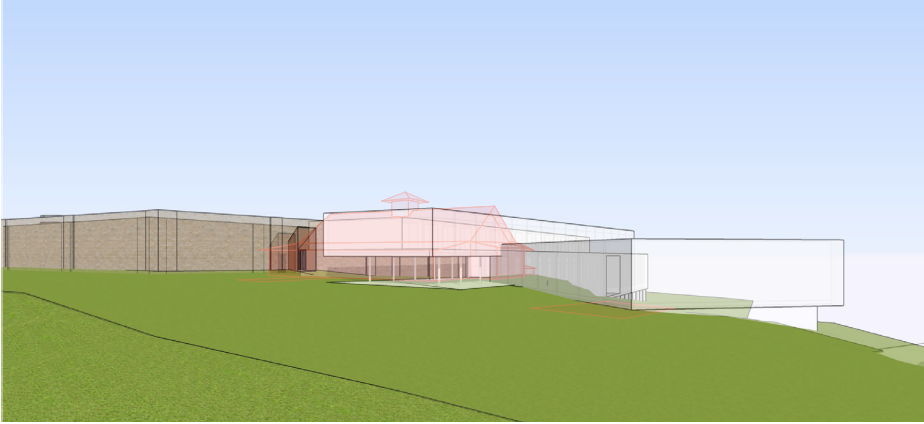
Photomontage, View from Wilshire Street



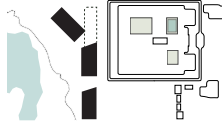
Initial Massing
Presented at SDRP No.1



Bar Form Massing
Presented at SDRP No.2



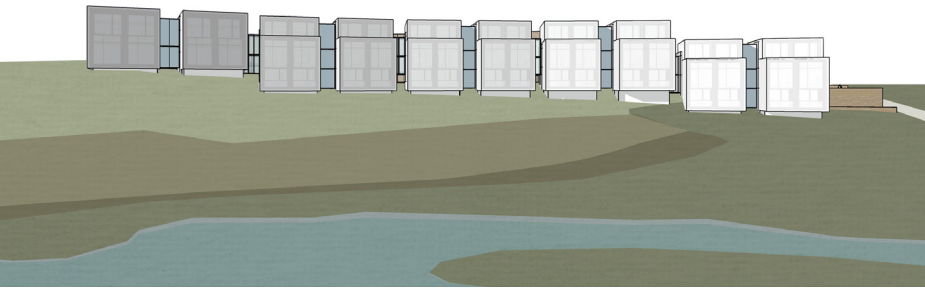
Refined Massing
SSDA Submission



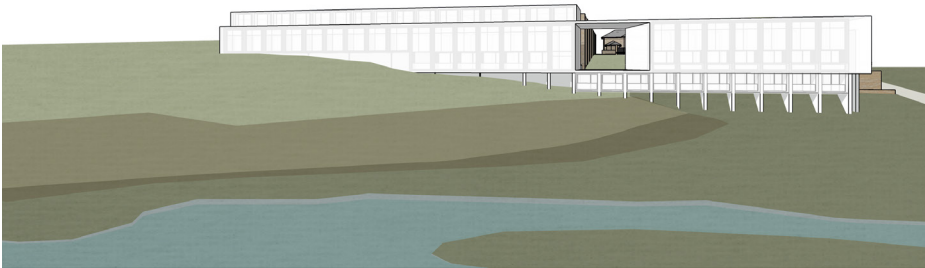
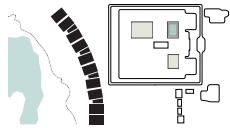
Stepping the northern end of the bar increased the setback from the gaol wall and improves visibility of the rear gaol wall from Wilshire Street, preserve the gaol as the dominant built form in Berrima.

View Analysis
View from Wingecarribee River

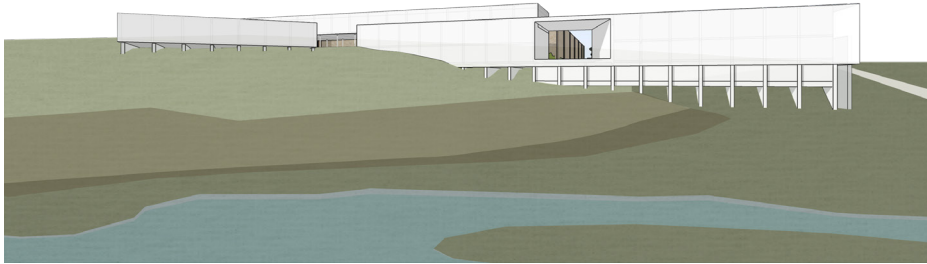
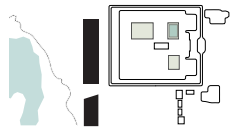
SDRP1 ➡ SDRP2 ➡ SSDA SUBMISSION



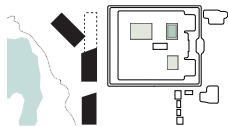
Initial Massing
Presented at SDRP No.1



Bar Form Massing
Presented at SDRP No.2



Refined Massing
SSDA Submission



The refined massing integrates more breaks within form focused around key views and sightlines revealing both visibility to the Wingecarribee River, and also views back to the wall, strengthening the presence of the Gaol wall behind.

4. Visual Impact Assessment

Additional Visual Impact assessment was undertaken to respond to the departments specific request

Visual impact Assessment

Independent Visual Verification

The department and the Heritage Council have specifically requested additional assessment of four vantage points associated with the Western Hotel Suites -

- Views from Wingecarribee River looking east,
- Western end of Wilshire Street looking south onto western hotel rooms and west onto the escarpment,
- Views along Wingecarribee Street looking north onto the western hotel suites

Refer to Addendum Visual Impact Assessment Report, prepared by Colliers for further information.

Summary of Key Findings

Addendum Visual Impact Assessment Report, prepared by Colliers

“The additional viewpoint analysis undertaken in response to the Department’s request confirms that whilst the proposed western hotel suites represents a change to the visual conditions of the site, the proposal has been assessed as **having an acceptable visual impact**. Furthermore, the proposal’s architectural and landscape expression is considered to **overall improve the visual quality of the site and its context.**”

Additional Viewpoints 1-4 captured in Addendum Visual Impact Assessment Report, prepared by Colliers

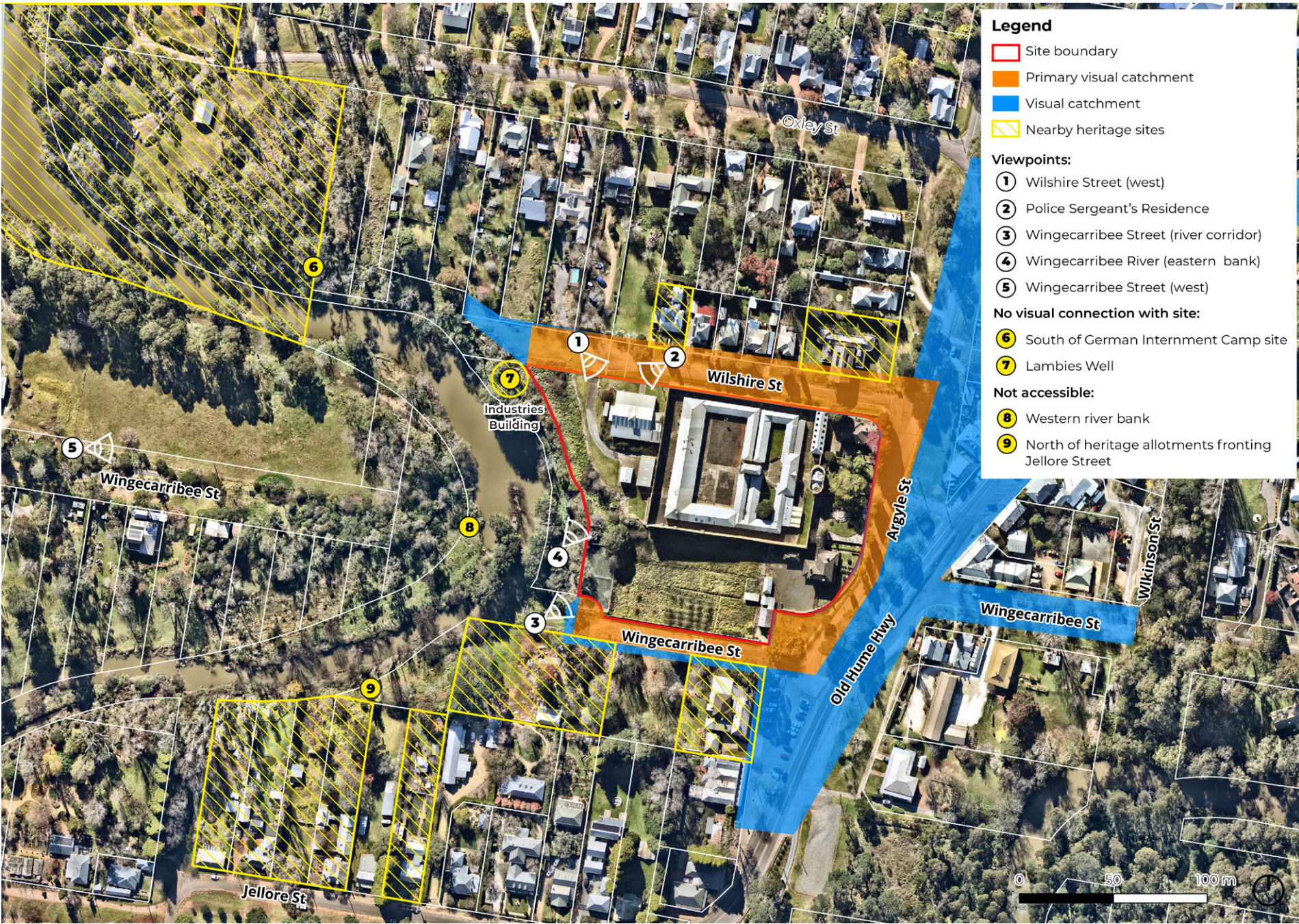


Figure 5. Key additional viewpoints
Source: Nearmap and Colliers Urban Planning

Visual impact Assessment

Independent Visual Verification

Summary of Key Findings

Excerpts from Addendum Visual Impact Assessment Report, prepared by Colliers

Viewpoint 1 & 2 From the western end of Wilshire Street looking south and west:
*The proposal is visible at close range but within an already modified visual environment (refer Viewpoint 1 and 2). The proposed built form presents as a contained and integrated outcome, with landscaping and materiality reducing visual prominence and improving the visual quality of the site. The resulting change is considerable but not dominant, ***maintaining an acceptable level of visual impact that provides an improved visual outcome.****

Photo of existing view	Photomontage of proposed view
	
Viewpoint 1: Wilshire Street (west) – existing view	Viewpoint 1: Wilshire Street (west) – proposed view
	
Viewpoint 2: Police Sergeant's Residence – existing view	Viewpoint 2: Police Sergeant's Residence – proposed view

Visual impact Assessment

Independent Visual Verification

Summary of Key Findings

Excerpts from Addendum Visual Impact Assessment Report, prepared by Colliers

Viewpoint 3 Views from Wingecarribee Street looking north:
The proposal is read as part of the broader composition that includes the gaol walls and vegetated river corridor (refer Viewpoint 3). The proposal **does not interrupt key view lines along Wingecarribee Street or diminish the visual prominence of the gaol walls, resulting in an acceptable level of visual impact.**

Viewpoint 4 From the Wingecarribee River corridor looking east:
Views toward the site are largely obscured by landform and vegetation, with only intermittent and filtered glimpses available in isolated locations (refer Viewpoint 4). In several areas, including near Lambie’s Well, there is no visual connection to the site. **Where visibility occurs, the proposal is perceived as recessive and secondary to the dominant landscape setting, resulting in a low level of visual impact.**

Photo of existing view	Photomontage of proposed view
	
Viewpoint 3: Wingecarribee Street (river corridor) – existing view	Viewpoint 3: Wingecarribee Street (river corridor) – proposed view
	
Viewpoint 4: Wingecarribee River (eastern bank) – existing view	Viewpoint 4: Wingecarribee River (eastern bank) – proposed view

5. Conclusion

Conclusion

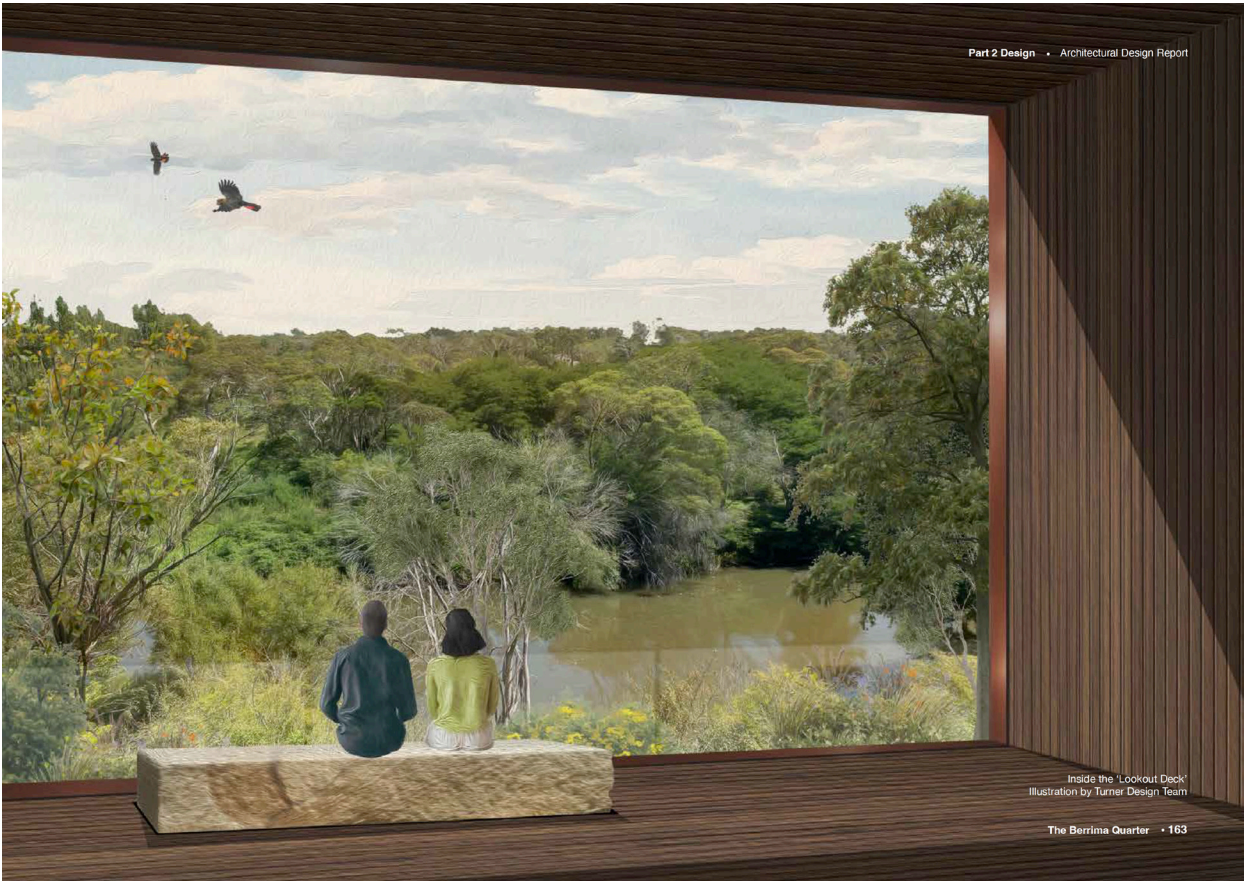
The final hotel suite design represents the culmination of an **iterative design process that has responded directly to SDRP recommendations and feedback**. The progression from the initial massing concepts to the refined articulated form demonstrates a commitment to continuous design improvement, resulting in a proposal that better responds to the heritage significance of Berrima Gaol, the landscape character of the escarpment and river corridor, and the visual amenity of the surrounding area.

The accompanying visual impact assessment confirms the appropriateness of the final outcome and supports its endorsement by the SDRP.

The evolution of the proposal demonstrates that the articulated hotel form is not a departure from the scheme reviewed by the SDRP, but the direct result of the SDRP process and subsequent refinement undertaken in response to panel recommendations.

Summary of DPHI Feedback and Response Reference

Articulated form not reviewed at SDRP	Sections 3 & 4 demonstrate evolution directly arising from SDRP feedback
Further design rationale required	Refer to Section 2 - Design Evolution
Visual Impact at Southern End	Refer to Section 3 - View Analysis
	Refer to Section 4 - Visual Impact Assessment
Consider views and curtilage	Refer to Section 2 - Design Evolution
	Refer to Section 3 - View Analysis
	Refer to Section 4 - Visual Impact Assessment



View from Lookout Deck, integrated into the Hotel Suites massing and form

Between the Escarpment and the wall •Western Hotel Rooms

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