

# Sutherland Entertainment Centre Refurbishment

## Urban Design Report

# Introduction to the Design

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The Sutherland Entertainment Centre (SEC) holds an important place in the collective memory of the Sutherland community. Originally known as the ‘Sutherland Civic Centre’, the building was designed and built in the 1970s primarily as a musical venue. Peace Park to the building’s north was not yet established, so the original design of the SEC failed to take advantage of this key public open space. It provided instead a narrow public address to Eton St, and a foyer space that is both inflexible, small and difficult to access.

Fast forward to the present day – what we now find is a 40+ year old building which is in relatively good physical condition. Yet, as a modern day public venue, it must cater to a diversity of cultural and technical needs. It needs to have a more open outlook and offer more to its community, not only in terms of its relationship with its immediate surrounds but also in relation to its spatial and programming flexibility.

The refurbishment seeks to offer a new and more engaging address for the Entertainment Centre by virtue of a more welcoming and integrated relationship with Peace Park. This speaks to an opportunity to re-affirm Peace Park as the Civic heart of Sutherland. A place with stronger connections not only to already established civic institutions but also with future developments within the Sutherland Town Centre.

The discrete spaces within Peace Park such as the War Memorial and the Chuo City Garden function as a series of connected landscape rooms, each with their own identity and public purpose. Accordingly, the SEC will feel like it is much more a part of the park and, conversely, the park will also feel as though it is an extension of the building. It follows then that where the building and park come together there should be an open and inviting interface that breaks down the distinction between public and private space. The various elements that make up the park should read as extensions of the indoor spaces they serve, so that visually there is no clear delineation between indoors and outdoors.

To that end we propose an active interface with Peace Park – a ‘verandah’ – which serves as a connective threshold between park and building and between inside and out, where both the park and building benefit from each other. This interface will help mediate the change in level between park and building and provide an at-grade connection between Merton Street and Eton Street. The verandah space, with its future opportunity for a café/kiosk offering, will activate the park’s southern edge and create a more visible and accessible entry for the Entertainment Centre.

The new foyer will be an extension of this ‘verandah’ space, envisioned as a new Civic Room or ‘pergola’, providing a better address for the Entertainment Centre and, in turn, an appropriate public address for the Park to Eton Street. In this way it will read clearly as the latest addition to the array of public structures within Peace Park, a structure that belongs as much to the park as the theatre. The foyer will encourage and facilitate this interactive potential, able to act as a flexible theatrical space in its own right for a host of less formal events that may not suit the Theatre itself. It will serve its traditional role as gathering place at performance times but also be a venue for a diverse range of community uses from banquets and exhibitions to intimate musical performances. The design of the Foyer is therefore the key to achieving this new welcoming interface, and the point at which the open unprogrammed spaces of the park merge with the carefully curated events within the theatre.

The Foyer will be designed to provide a vibrant activated space that is a clear and decisive entry point into the SEC facility from the adjoining outdoor forecourt, verandah space and Peace Park. The foyer will provide a sense of anticipation for visitors arriving to see a show or participate in the various other activities in the SEC precinct. It should provide opportunities to showcase and reflect the cultural vibrancy created within the facility. The Foyer will to assist in clear wayfinding and provide obvious locations for the Box Office/Reception as well as the other key functional areas that it connects too. Given that numerous activities will run simultaneously within the facility the Foyer needs to provide sufficient size and flexibility to separate or partition off spaces to enable these disparate activities to occur without disruption to one another.

Just as there is much spatial potential between the building and the park there are also wonderful opportunities to re-use and celebrate much of the building’s current fabric. The structure of the proposed Foyer space takes its cues directly from the existing brick columns, adding to and reinterpreting the original structural narrative without overwhelming it: the existing western façade is put on display. The existing black box space and administration building will be retained and re-purposed to be theatre bar/café and foyer on the Ground Floor and multi-purpose community room and rehearsal space on Level 1, accessed by the existing main entry stair. Likewise, the structure and facade on the northern side of the building will be adapted for new uses such as café, kitchen and store on the Ground Floor and Administration spaces and Green Room on Level 1, each with a view of the park and connected by the existing ivy clad egress stair.

The auditorium also retains much of its surrounding envelope but will become an entirely new and lively space, with the addition of a full flytower allowing the theatre to host major theatrical productions and diversifying its range of functions. The existing flat-floor auditorium will be transformed into a more immersive tiered seating arrangement and all acoustics, accessibility and back of house functions will be revitalised to provide a venue with broad appeal for audiences and performers alike. The necessary back of house functions have been designed as a discrete and compact addition to the less visible east and south facades, visually interpreting and complementing the existing aggregated brick forms of the theatre and materially linking the building with the adjoining heritage listed church and presenting an appropriate scale to the park.

The design for the new theatre is designed to meet or exceed national benchmarks for Performing Arts Centres, achieving a four star rating for theatres on the local, regional and national touring circuit. As such the refurbished SEC will provide an important cultural heart to the broader Sutherland Shire region and a significant community and cultural asset for future generations.



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# Better Placed: An Overview

The seven design objectives outlined in the Government Architect's Better Placed document have acted as a valuable checklist as the design has progressed. Whilst the following report uses its own framework that evolved as the most suitable way to describe the project, these objectives have nevertheless been applied rigorously. The broad response to each objective, and where that discussion is continued in the report, is described below.

## **Better fit** contextual, local and of its place

- The historical development of the site shows the gradual evolution of Peace park as an important public open space over time. The proposal is consistent with this evolution as a logical next step that further improves and activates the park. (see 1.2)
- The report identifies key contextual relationships between the SEC and the Sutherland Town Centre and the opportunities they present (see 1.1), and goes on to show how the new SEC will sit within that context. For instance the current SEC lacks an address to Peace Park, a key green spine through a densifying town centre, which is clearly redressed in the new design in both a present and future scenario (see 2.1)
- An analysis of key planning strategies for Sutherland Town Centre shows an ambition to increase activation and densification around an extended Peace Park, with current council assets earmarked for substantial mixed-use developments with 30-40m height limits (See 1.4). The role of the new SEC in this potential future context has been carefully considered, with new additions like the foyer and flytower acting as scale moderating devices to suit current and future context alike. (See 2.4)

## **Better performance** sustainable, adaptable and durable

- Key to the adaptability and sustainability of the project was the decision to retain the majority of the existing structure. Predominantly a brick and concrete structure, the structural rigour, material honesty and inherent durability have informed the design of the proposed new additions. In this way the refurbished SEC looks to act as a model for sustainable adaptive reuse over knockdown-rebuild alternatives (See 2.8).
- Existing glazing will be replaced with more thermally efficient systems. Thermal insulation will be appropriately added to improve the thermal envelope. Outdated and inefficient building services will be replaced with high performance energy and water efficient services.
- In the spirit of structural honesty, the refurbished SEC will feature a new foyer using expressed Australian hardwood glue-laminated timber beams and columns. This will highlight the use of timber as a cost-competitive, visually appealing and more sustainable alternative to clad steel and concrete standards, and contribute to a competitive market for Australian made engineered timber products and engineering services (See 2.8).

## **Better for community** inclusive, connected and diverse

- The SEC is one venue in a network of cultural venues across the Sutherland Shire that contribute to a thriving arts scene and create a distinct local character and sense of community (See 1.6).
- The driving ambition for the new SEC is for an expanded and flexible performing arts venue that can cater for a more diverse array of shows and user groups. The proposed additions in the form of a new foyer, increased seating, full flytower and expanded back of house facilities all contribute to this flexibility (See 2.7).
- The foyer in particular has been designed to act as a outdoor room or 'pergola' that brings the park into the theatre and vice versa. This space is able to operate in different modes to accommodate theatrical shows, public exhibitions, banquet dining and more, whilst Peace Park is similarly redesigned to increase the amount of useable open space and host outdoor performances, markets and ceremonies in conjunction with the adjacent memorial (See 2.6).
- Spaces within the existing 'black box' fronting Eton St will be converted to a bookable meeting room (ground floor) and dance rehearsal room (first floor), providing cost effective community rooms for a range of different uses.

## **Better for people** safe, comfortable and liveable

- The existing SEC access and egress strategy is inadequate for user groups that may include elderly or mobility-impaired patrons. The new SEC has been designed to provide a more varied and flexible approach to access and egress to suit all user groups and a broader range of events, with a larger main entry to Peace Park forecourt, 2 passenger lifts, ramp access off Eton St, mobility scooter parking and an increased number of entry points all making the building more comfortable, porous and transparent (See 1.10 & 2.11).
- Improved access to the building will be complimented by improved accessible facilities, including accessible and ambulatory WC facilities, wheelchair accessible spaces spread throughout the theatre, a viewing room for parents that can also be used by the profoundly disabled, along with full accessible access to the stage and back of house spaces for performers
- The high degree of transparency through the new foyer space makes for an inviting and inclusive 'front door' to the SEC, with good passive surveillance opportunities both around and within the space, as well as a holistic approach to public domain lighting around the building which will make SEC and Peace Park vibrant and attractive spaces at night.
- The new SEC provides a variety of spaces for people to meet and greet and enjoy their surroundings. A new first floor terrace and bar space allows for views down over Peace Park and Eton St, tiered concrete seating is included both along the interface with Peace Park and immediately adjacent the main entry point, the existing ground floor 'black box' space has been converted to a publicly accessible bookable meeting room, and space has been allowed for ground floor cafe fitout subject to future DA.

# Better Placed: An Overview (cont.)

## Better working functional, efficient and fit for purpose

- The initial project brief put an emphasis on flexibility and adaptability, pre-empting changing useage patterns into the future. Following the design competition a detailed return brief was established to track changes to the brief as it evolved, through stakeholder engagement feedback, community consultation, advice from a theatre consultant and general design development. This careful process ensured that the design met the requirements of the various user groups and Council. For example, the inclusion of the full flytower, whilst not in the original project brief, was the result of a number of information sessions with the Sutherland Arts and Culture working group and feedback from the design team's theatre consultant. It was decided a full flytower was critical to meet the performance Benchmark for major regional and outer Metro Theatres and attract the desired variety of performances (in both type and scale), as well as providing flexibility and rapid adaptability for venue bookings.
- Key to a well-functioning performance roster is an efficient back of house and loading arrangement. It was determined early on that the existing back of house and loading would not be sufficient to meet the requirements of larger and more modern shows outlined in the performance Benchmark. The proposed back of house facilities include a new loading and scenery dock, dressing rooms, a green room with accompanying terrace overlooking Peace Park, stage door and security point amongst others. By retaining entry off Merton St, disruption to the public domain and disruption to pedestrian flows is kept to a minimum (See 2.4).

## Better value creating and adding value

- The facility will be operationally and environmentally sustainable by not placing a massive drain on the community's resources to operate and minimising reliance on external resources. The new SEC has an opportunity to stimulate the local economy through provision of employment and training opportunities in relevant fields. The arts community will be invigorated and the increased performances and events that the new facility can provide will draw in wider and larger audiences to create revenue and opportunities for local business such as cafes and restaurants.
- The design process ran hand-in-hand with a Value Management process that carefully analysed value for money against the evolving brief. Design decisions were informed by Life Cycle Analysis of different options to arrive at a durable and sustainable solution. A good example is the structure of the new foyer space: options including glulam timber, concrete and clad steel were carefully analysed in collaboration with a Quantity Surveyor, and it was determined that the timber with a strict maintenance regime was an attractive and economically viable option over the life cycle of the structure.

## Better look and feel engaging, inviting and attractive

- Community feedback from the competition phase suggested that the community responded strongly to the use of timber in the new foyer structure. The proposed Australian hardwood glulam members create a warm and inviting aesthetic in keeping with the bushland setting of Sutherland Town Centre.
- The design response for the new SEC looks to embrace and celebrate the existing building by retaining as much of the existing fabric as possible. Where new elements are inserted they take inspiration from and complement the structural rhythm and materials of the existing building. For example, the existing Eton St facade has a strong structural logic and a clear material language. The addition of the 'pergola' or new foyer structure adds to the narrative of this structure by making it an interior element for the first time, displaying the rhythm of the brick piers to theatre-goers and allowing the removal of bulky window frames and banners. The foyer structure takes its cues directly from the existing, with the new glulam timber columns replicating the existing column spacings to establish a dialogue between the two. The new foyer roof visually slides over the existing roof, showing deference to existing boardform concrete beams and box gutters (See 2.6).
- Fielders 'Aramax' metal cladding was used to break down the scale of the large planar facade elements, the large corrugations allowing deep shadows to enliven the facade during daytime and be animated via subtle uplighting during the evening, evocative of a stage curtain and drawing a metaphorical link to the theatrical setting.

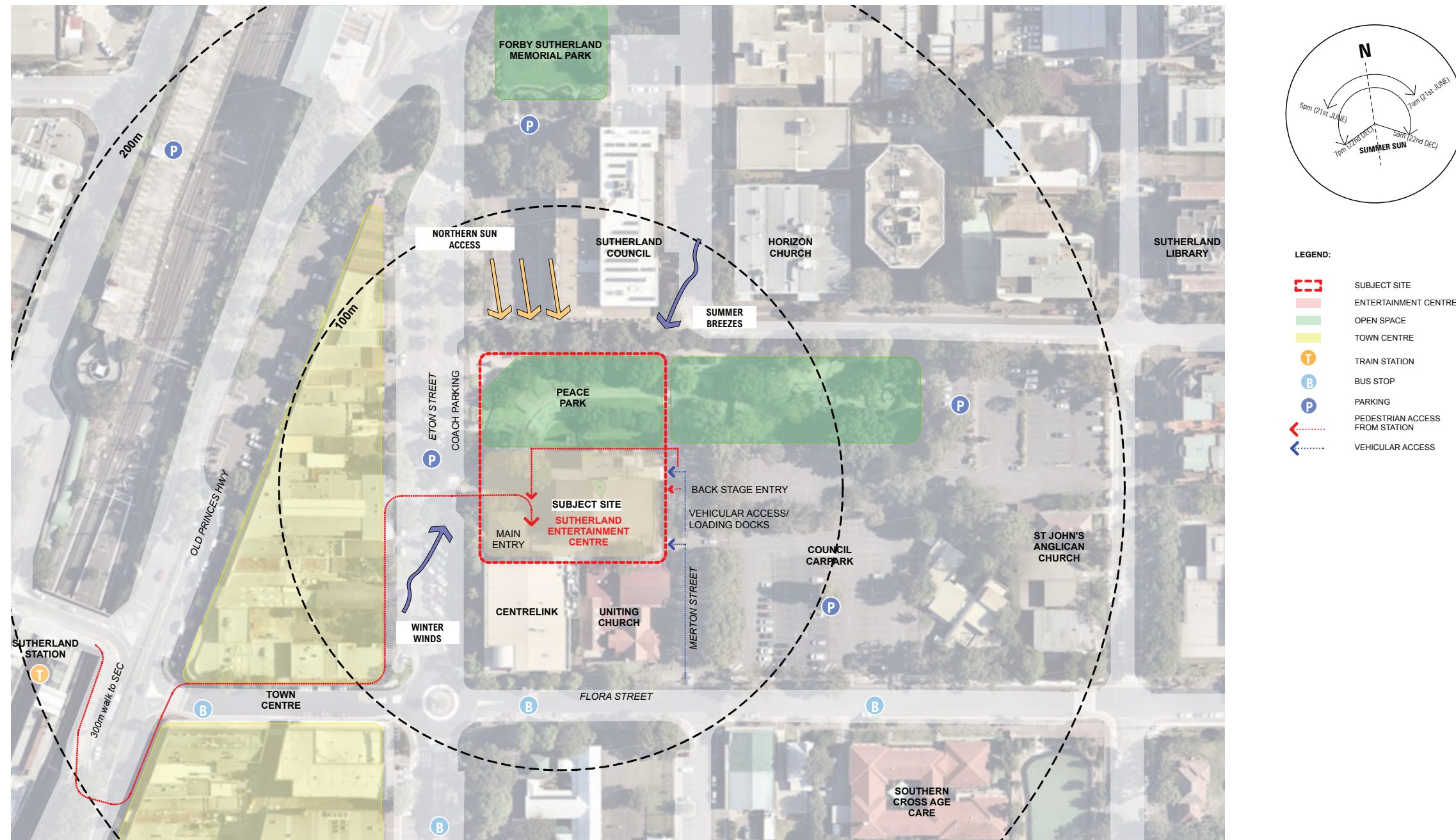
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# 1.0 SITE ANALYSIS



# 1.1 Site Location and Context

The site, including the SEC and Peace Park, is perfectly placed within Sutherland Town Centre, both in terms of its orientation and potential connections to important surrounding buildings and transport nodes.



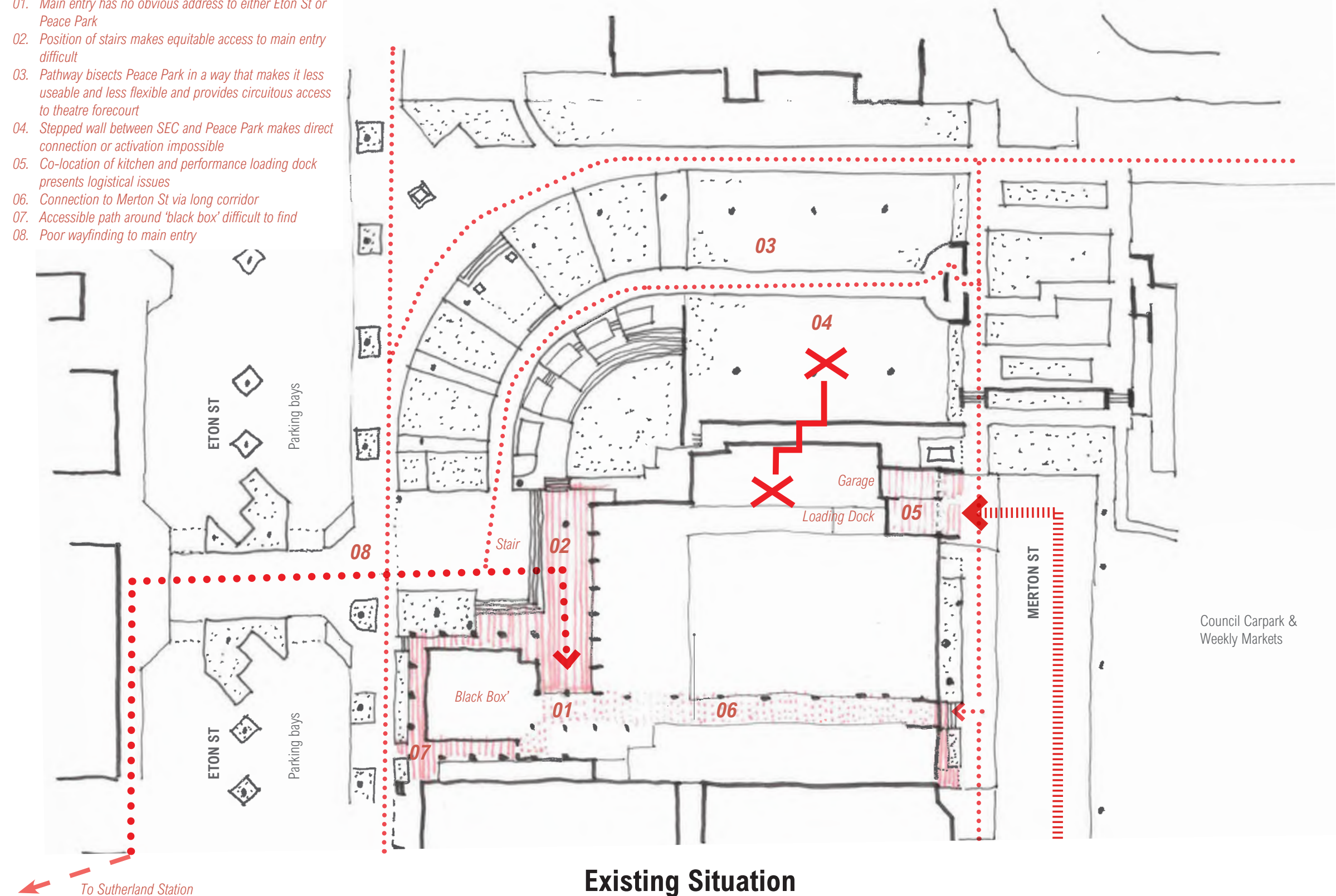


## 1.1 Site Location and Context (cont.)

A number of primary approaches and circulation spaces, both to and within the existing SEC, define its relationship to the Town Centre and Peace Park. These are investigated to reveal potential opportunities for better connectivity and amenity.

### OBSERVATIONS

01. Main entry has no obvious address to either Eton St or Peace Park
02. Position of stairs makes equitable access to main entry difficult
03. Pathway bisects Peace Park in a way that makes it less useable and less flexible and provides circuitous access to theatre forecourt
04. Stepped wall between SEC and Peace Park makes direct connection or activation impossible
05. Co-location of kitchen and performance loading dock presents logistical issues
06. Connection to Merton St via long corridor
07. Accessible path around 'black box' difficult to find
08. Poor wayfinding to main entry



Existing Situation



## 1.1 Site Location and Context (cont.)

*There are a number of key contextual relationships that define the existing SEC's place in the town centre. The new design should be mindful of these relationships, taking advantage of opportunities where they present themselves.*



### Sutherland Station

The top of the existing SEC's roof is currently visible as you exit the station but does not stand out. There is an opportunity for the building to announce itself from this key approach, as this is where many theatre-goers are likely to be coming from.

Image Credit: Google



### Peace Park

Whilst the existing SEC closes itself to Peace Park, a gradual densification of the sites surrounding the park and a diversification of the program at its edges will make this approach through Peace Park from the east a vital one. The new SEC should have a presence that reflects the new role of the adjacent park.



### Peace Park and Eton St junction

The corner of Eton St and Peace Park will remain a critical view regardless of future changes to the built form around it. This is where the commercial core of the town centre and important open spaces converge.



### Corner Flora and Merton Sts

The presence of the heritage-listed Uniting Church here will inform the scale and materiality of the proposed Merton St facade.

Image Credit: Google



### Merton St Loading & Service Functions

The existing Merton St facade presents primarily as a services and logistics entry point. These loading and back of house functions are key to the successful operation of any theatre, and it is likely that this facade will have a similar emphasis in a refurbished SEC.



### Eton St Pedestrian Crossing

The existing SEC has a significant setback to Eton St. Whilst this provides for a large forecourt, it also arguably diminishes the presence of the theatre from the bustling shopfronts across Eton St. Existing wayfinding to the main entry is confused.



## 1.2 Site History

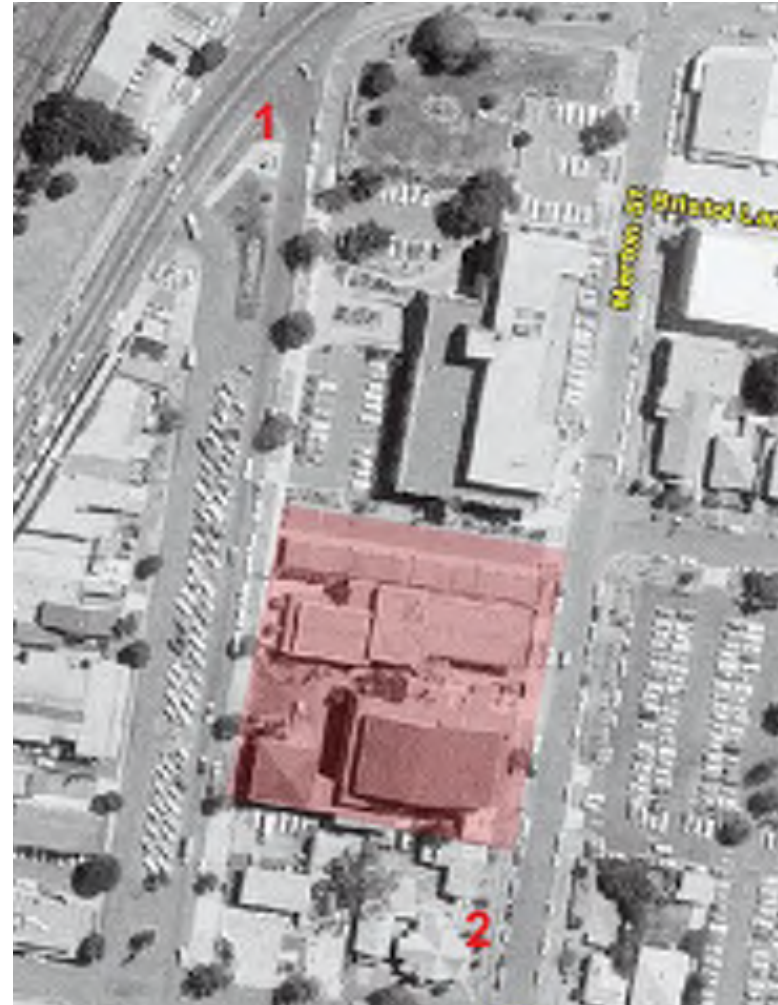
*The historical development of the site shows the gradual evolution of Peace Park as an important public space in an evolving Sutherland town centre, and explains why the SEC has no direct connection to it: it didn't exist when the SEC was first built, bounded instead by built form to its north.*



Source: ShireMaps, 1961 Aerial Photo

### 1961

This aerial photograph shows the approximate extent of the subject site shaded red. The War Memorial (1), Council Chambers (3) and Methodist Church (2) are indicated. The northern portion of the subject site contained the new SCC (Sutherland Civic Centre as it was then known) Showroom & Offices, and several smaller buildings were located in the southern portion. The town centre commercial hub is in place but the area to the east of the site is primarily residential.



Source: ShireMaps, 1978 Aerial Photo

### 1978

Here we see the War Memorial (1) and Methodist Church (2), by then part of the Uniting Church. The Sutherland Civic Centre now occupied the southern portion of the subject site (shaded red). The carpark to the east of the site has emerged and open space is at a premium. An addition has been made to the north of the Uniting Church.



Source: ShireMaps, 1994 Aerial Photo

### 1994

By now the War Memorial (1) has been relocated to the newly created Peace Park at the subject site (shaded red), to the north of the Sutherland Entertainment Centre. This is much the same condition as we see the site today, with the exception of the Centrelink building bordering Eton St to the SEC's south. It is clear that initial ambitions for Peace Park were as a civic heart for the densifying town centre, a role that can continue to be expanded upon.



## 1.3 Current Planning Status

Together the following 3 conditions establish the future for Sutherland Town Centre and the SEC's place within it.



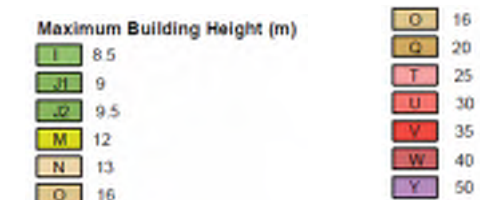
Source: RFP for consultant design services, p.15



Source: Extract from the SSLEP 2015 Land Zoning Map



Source: Extract from the SSLEP 2015 Height of Buildings Map



### 01 Council-owned Land in the Town Centre

In addition to the SEC site itself, Sutherland Shire Council owns a significant amount of land around the SEC, including Peace Park, the Council Administration building to the north of the site, the commercial building to its south and the carpark to its east. This means that Council has a unique opportunity to deliver the long-term vision to Sutherland Town Centre. As the 'first cab off the rank' the SEC also has the power to act as a catalyst to guide future development in the area, and provide critical community infrastructure to inform the Civic Domain.

### 02 Land Zoning

The initial brief called for an integrated precinct where Peace Park and the SEC would have a closer relationship. This precinct encompasses the B3 Commercial Core (the SEC) and RE1 Public Recreation (Peace Park) zones. The colonnade of the new SEC foyer will overlap into the RE1 zone, creating a covered link for the park and extending the park and public domain into the foyer space.

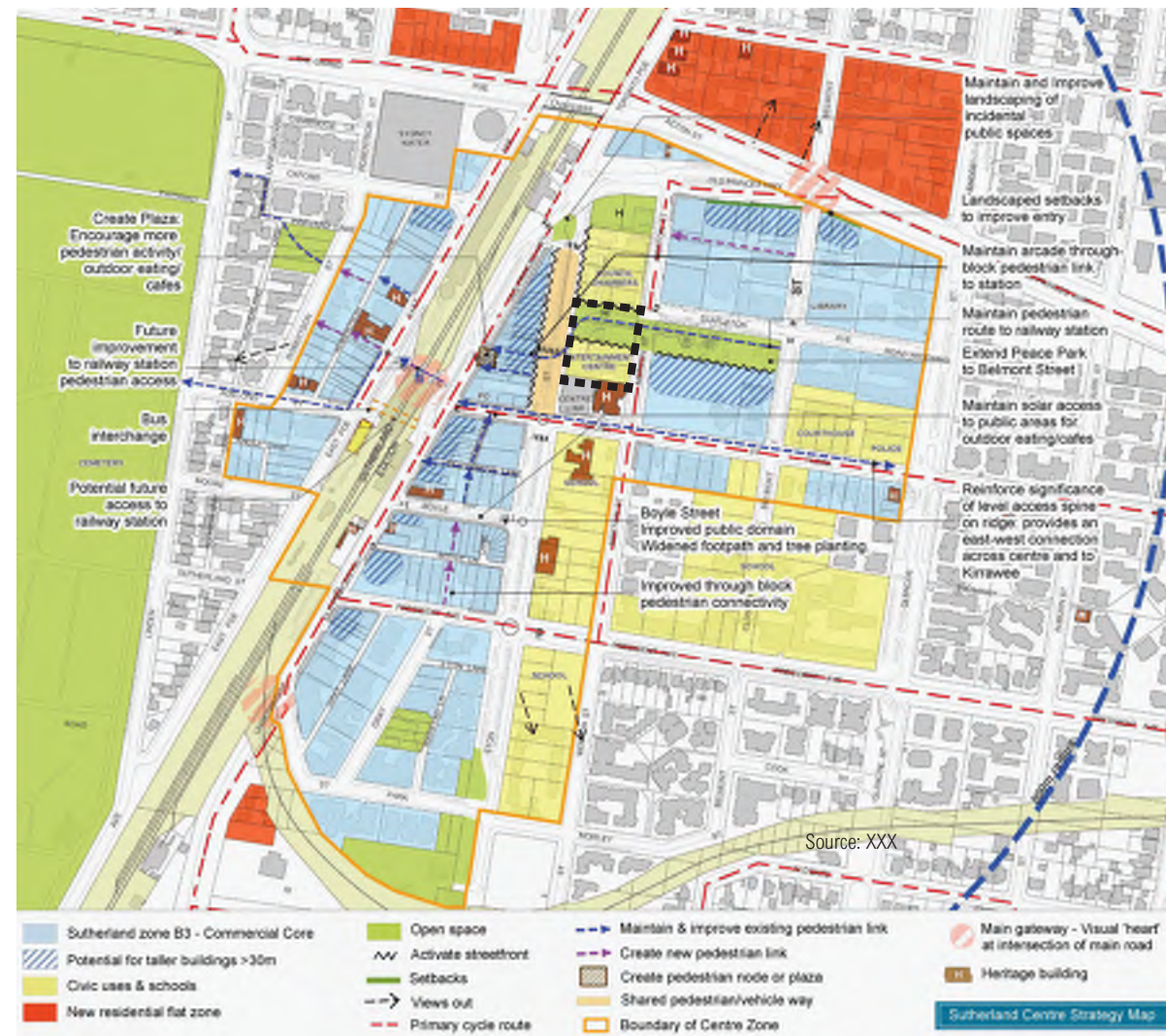
### 03 Current Building Heights

The height of buildings immediately adjacent the SEC suggests that a future Sutherland Town Centre may look very different to the town centre we see today. This future context has informed the approach to urban design for the site and the new flytower should be considered within this future context. Council have further elaborated on the potential for this B3 Commercial Core in Chapter 24 of the DCP, described on the following page.



## 1.4 Town Centre Urban Strategy

The images on the following 2 pages together describe the future context in which the new SEC could sit and the importance of Peace Park and the SEC as open space and cultural destination in a denser context dominated by commercial and residential development.

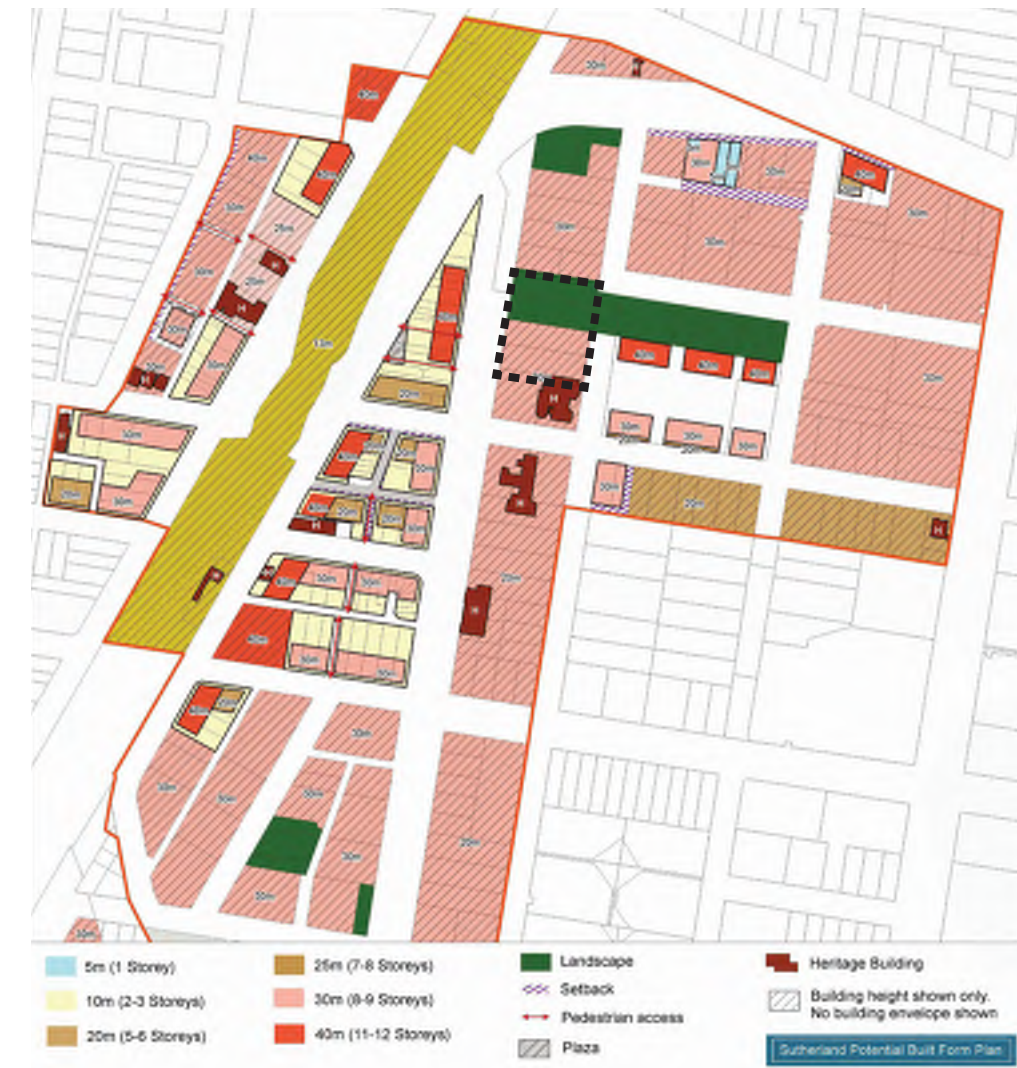


Source: Sutherland DCP Chapter 24 B3 Commercial Core p.4

### 01 Broad Strategy

The salient points in regards to the future of the SEC are:

- An improved pedestrian link through Peace Park between Belmont St and Eton St (and beyond)
- An active frontage to Peace Park from both the new SEC and from potentially larger developments on what is now the council-owned carpark that together would form a new urban edge.



### 02 Potential Built Form

The potential built form diagram clearly describes the importance of Peace Park in a much denser potential future context, with 30-40m developments (assumed mixed-use) to the current council carpark and higher shop-top developments to the western side of Eton St.



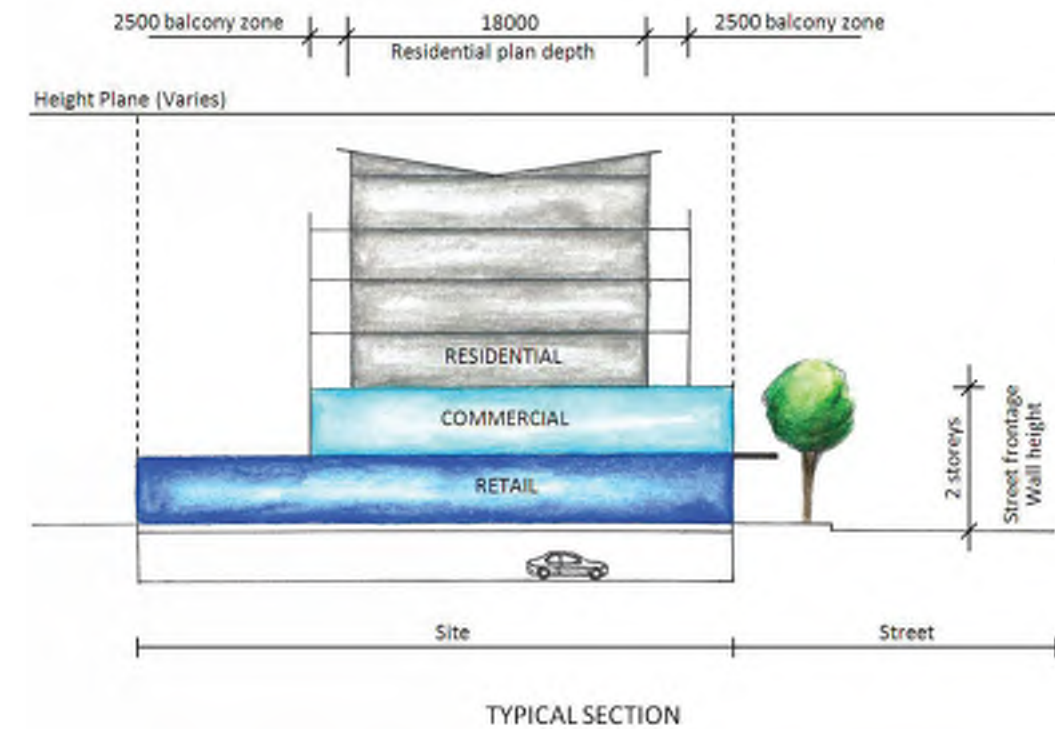
## 1.4 Town Centre Urban Strategy (cont.)



Source: Sutherland DCP Chapter 24 B3 Commercial Core p.34

### 03 Active Street Fronts

This diagram describes the frontage between the new SEC and Peace Park as 'semi-active'. Such is the importance of the SEC in defining and activating Peace Park, the new heart of the town centre, that it was considered that the approaches to Eton St and the Park could be reversed: that the focus of the SEC should shift to address the park as its primary point of entry. This would be particularly important if there are civic or community uses contained within the Flora St carpark redevelopment.



THE SITE

Source: Sutherland DCP Chapter 24 B3 Commercial Core p.30

### 04 Potential Typical Section

The section above illustrates the potential future relationship between mixed-use developments on the existing council carpark to the east of the SEC and Peace Park. The SEC could form part of an activated edge to a consolidated Peace Park, its new strengthened address to the park sitting comfortably amongst retail and commercial offerings to its east and feeding off a more vibrant pedestrian promenade.



## 1.5 A Landscaped Town Centre

A defining attribute of Sutherland Town Centre is its bushland setting, how the presence of the Royal National Park can be felt right at the heart of the township. This page describes the unique relationship between built form and parkland and open space, with the SEC sitting in the middle of a leafy 'finger' darting out from the bushland beyond.



Source: Unknown



Source: Sutherland DCP Chapter 24 B3 Commercial Core p.6

THE SITE

### A Bushland Setting

A defining attribute of Sutherland Town Centre is its bushland setting, the fact that the presence of the Royal National Park can be so keenly felt even in the middle of the commercial precinct. The SEC currently sits in a green 'finger' that starts in the adjacent national park and culminates in Forby Memorial Gardens. The new SEC directly addresses this network of open spaces, blurring the distinction between built form and landscape in a way that complements the existing character of the town centre.

### Green Planning Strategies

The idea that landscaping is key to the character of Sutherland is inscribed in Chapter 24 of the DCP that shows Eton St and the lots on its eastern edge as a key green linear chain. As density increases within Sutherland town centre, the importance of community green spaces will be brought to the fore. The new development should reinforce existing green space.



## 1.6 A Network of Cultural Venues

*The SEC is one of several cultural destinations in a connected network across Sutherland Shire. Together these venues create a distinct local character and sense of community.*



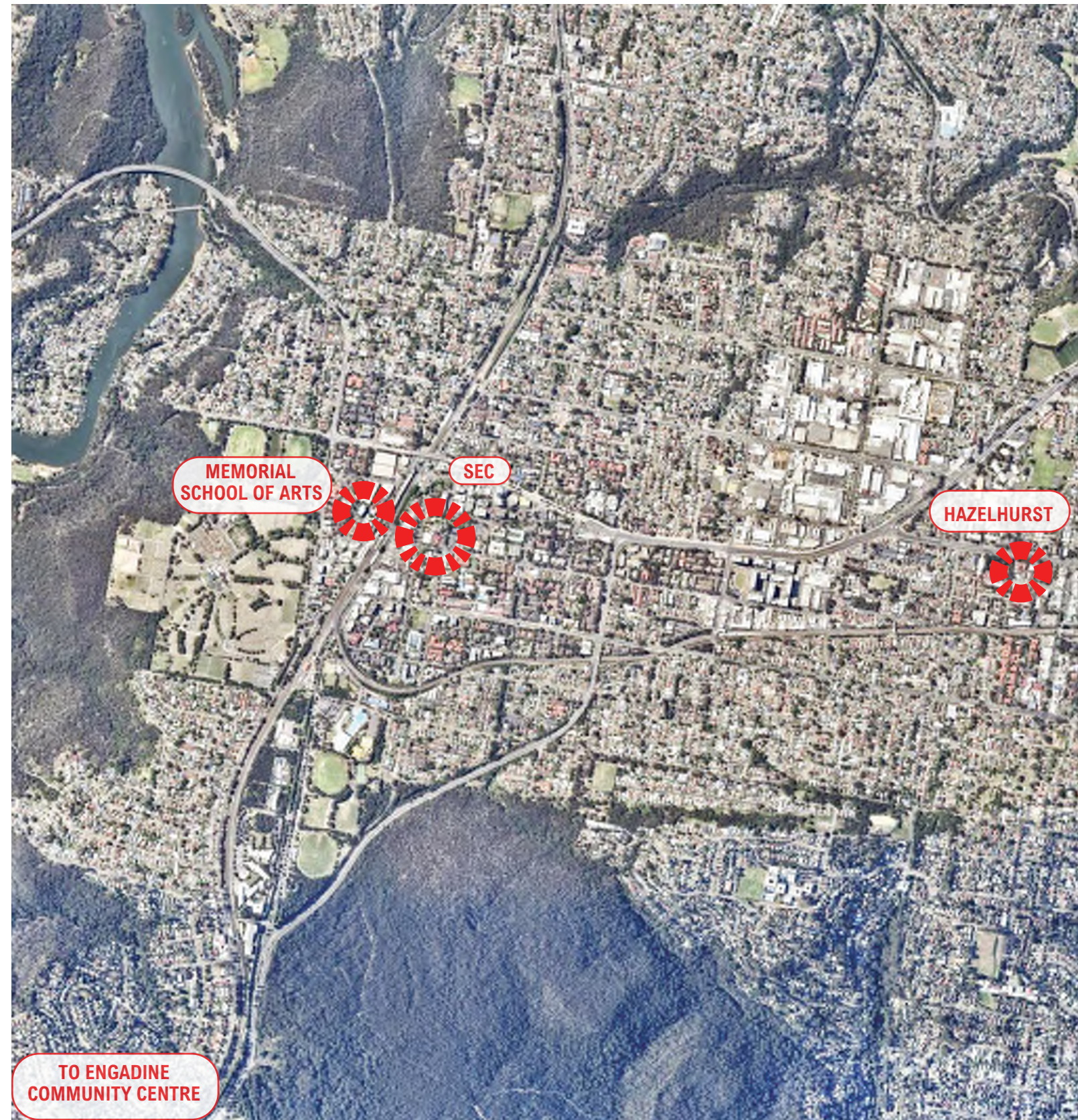
Sutherland Memorial School of Arts



Engadine Community Centre



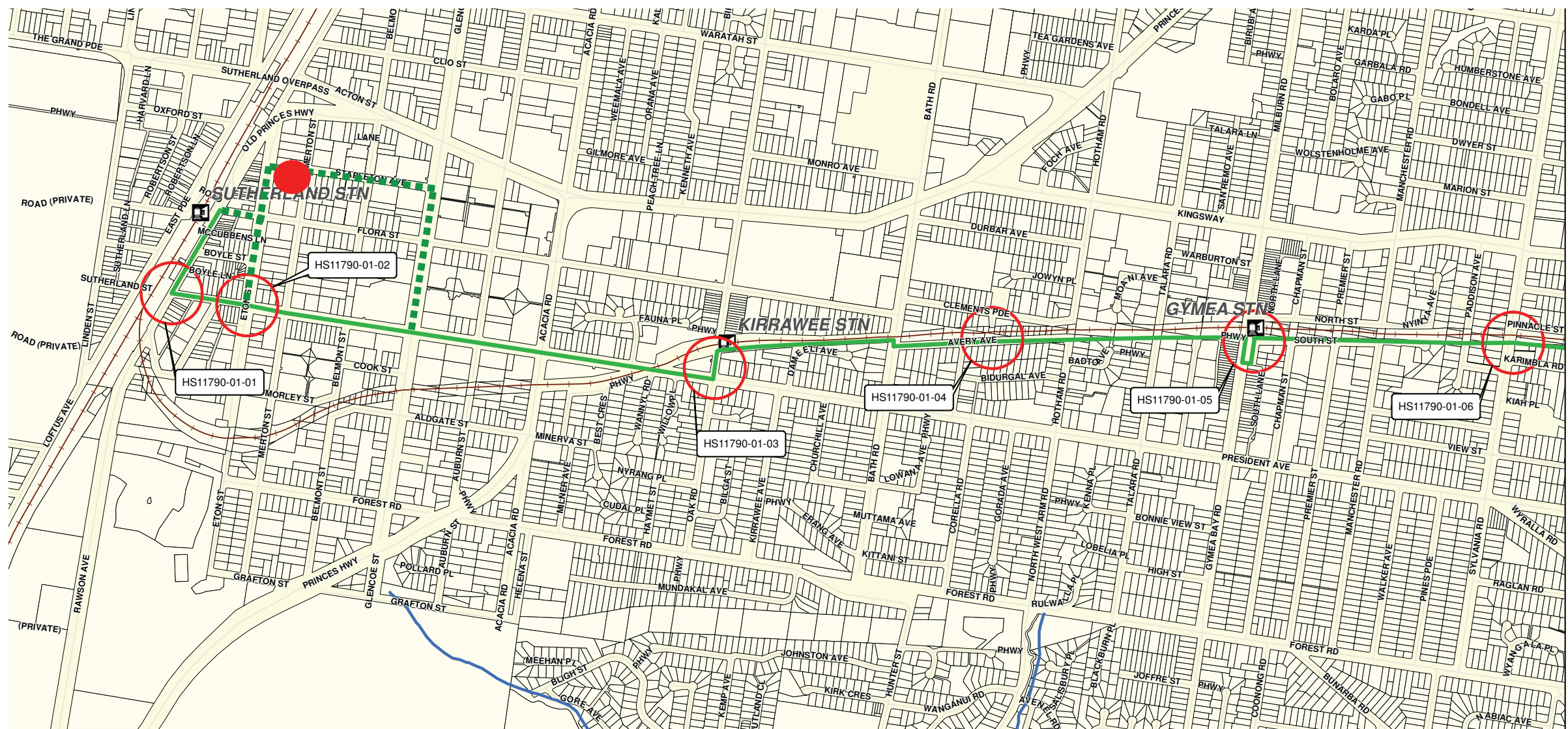
Hazelhurst Arts Centre






# 1.7 Sutherland to Cronulla Active Transport Link


The new SEC will be in close proximity to the proposed Sutherland to Cronulla Active Transport Link (SCATL) which will provide a vital alternative means to reach the SEC and improve connections between destinations in the Sutherland Shire.





Source: GTA Consultants, Sutherland to Cronulla Cycleway Final Report


Transport for NSW lists the SCATL as In Progress and states that the project 'is a pedestrian and bicycle path between Sutherland and Cronulla to help make walking and bike riding a more convenient, safer and enjoyable transport option'. Stage 1 will be between Sutherland and Kirrawee with projected completion early 2020, likely now late 2020 with the impact of Covid-19. This vital link should therefore be available at the completion of works at the new SEC.


- Legend
-  Railway Stations


 Railway Line


 Waterway

 Property Boundaries

 SEC

 Preferred Cycleway Route

 Detail plans

 Potential local connection to Cycleway



## 1.7 Opportunities to Enhance, Upgrade and Replace

*For over 40 years many generations of Sutherland locals and others from further afield have gathered at the SEC to celebrate, to enjoy performances and to perform themselves. However, in looking to the future, this robust but ageing building needs to become something more than a single purpose venue and must evolve to become a flexible place with broader cultural and social appeal. It must become a place for the entire community.*



### The Theatre

The existing flat-floor theatre has some wonderful elements that could be retained and celebrated, but its capacity and seating arrangement is currently unable to meet the demands of the proposed Benchmark and thereby incapable of attracting a diverse array of performances. Sightlines, accessibility and general audience experience is currently highly compromised.

### The Entry

The existing theatre entry is compressed and lacks a sense of anticipation and excitement key to any good performance. There is an exciting opportunity to bring a new element to the theatre-going experience that has not been on offer at the venue before.

### Back of House

The existing Back of House entry and facilities do not offer performers the kind of amenity or experience expected for a major regional venue in 2020. This provides scope for greater flexibility for a broader variety of shows, able to cater for different show types and community groups.



## 1.7 Opportunities to Enhance, Upgrade and Replace (cont.)

### FOYER

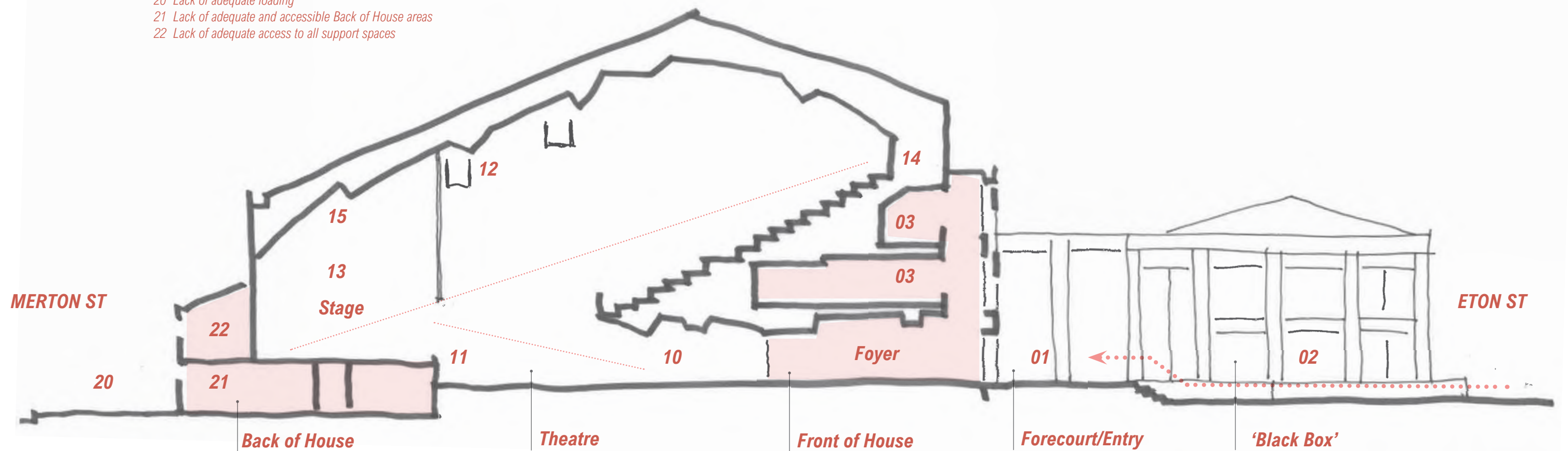
- 01 Main entry lacks connection to Peace Park
- 02 Main entry is only accessible from narrow path along Black Box
- 03 Levels 1 & 2 are not accessible

### THEATRE

- 10 Compromised sight lines, especially on Ground Floor
- 11 High stage & lack of adequate Orchestra Pit
- 12 Compromised position and connection to lighting bridges
- 13 Lack of adequate wing space
- 14 Lack of sound proof viewing room
- 15 Limited options for scenery

### BACK OF HOUSE

- 20 Lack of adequate loading
- 21 Lack of adequate and accessible Back of House areas
- 22 Lack of adequate access to all support spaces



## 1.8 Existing Character and Materiality

*While the existing building's style and expression may not be to everyone's taste, it has an honesty which isn't always found in contemporary buildings. With this building, what you see is what you get, and this allows it to be easily understood, for its flaws but also for its wonderful transformative potential.*



### Materiality

The 'soft brutalist' 1970s SEC has a powerfully expressed structural grid and a refreshing honesty when it comes to materials. Its language is brick and board-formed concrete, materials built to last and in good condition for a building approaching its 50th year. This structural rigour and material honesty has been celebrated in the proposed design.

### Interior Spaces

The existing foyer spaces are characterised by a dialogue between floors using open voids. There is a theatrical quality to this play with height and volume that has informed the approach to the refurbishment.

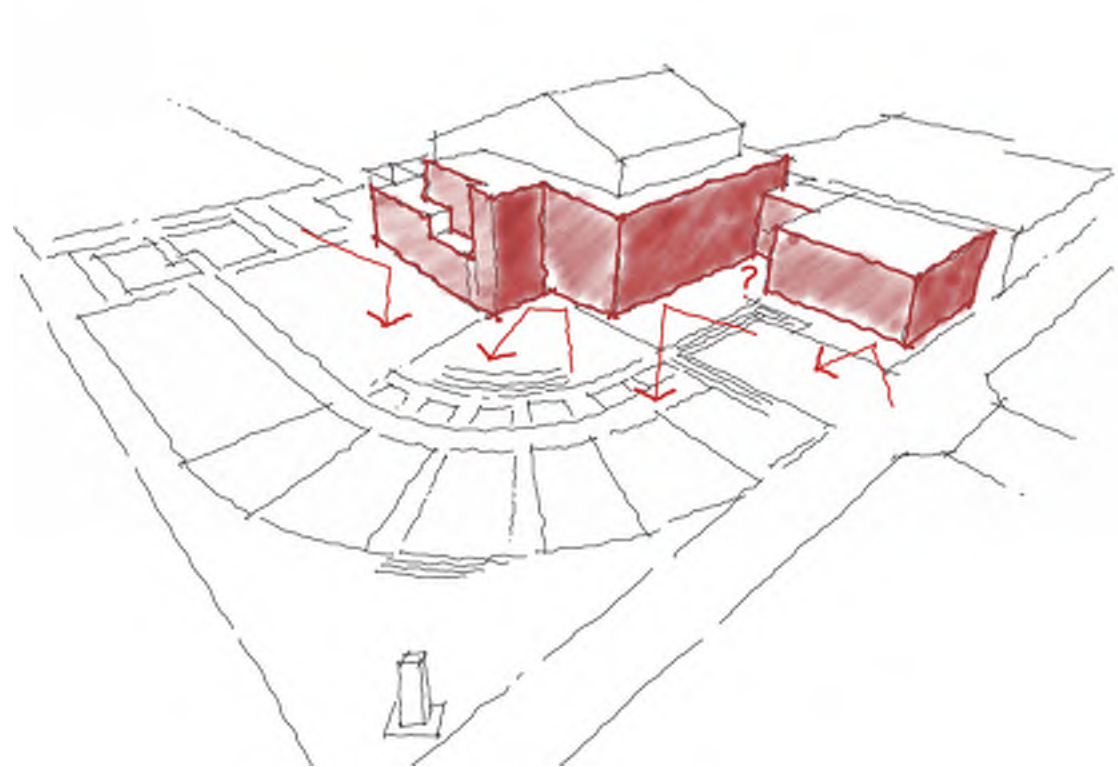
### Visual Connections to Peace Park

There are limited opportunities in the existing building to engage visually with Peace Park. The balconies that exist off the private apartment offer tantalising glimpses of the park and have inspired the design of the proposed terraces, the ambition being to make these available to a much larger audience.



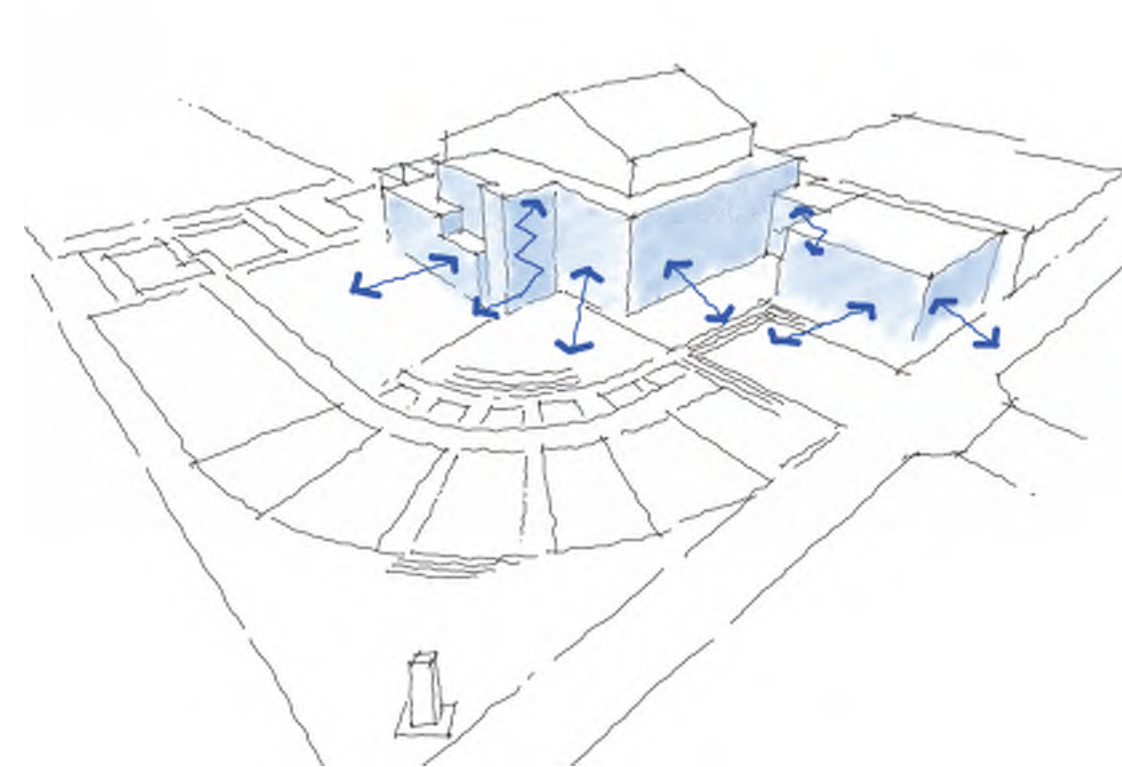
## 1.9 An Address to Peace Park

*The current SEC turns its back on peace park. Redevelopment of the SEC presents a clear opportunity to redress this design shortcoming so that the SEC addresses this critical green spine through the town centre.*



### **Introspective and Opaque**

Where many may see an outdated entertainment venue with dark foyer spaces and a hard-to-find front door there also lies tremendous opportunity for the building to reach out and have a more open dialogue with the Sutherland Town Centre and in particular with Peace Park.



### **Opportunities**

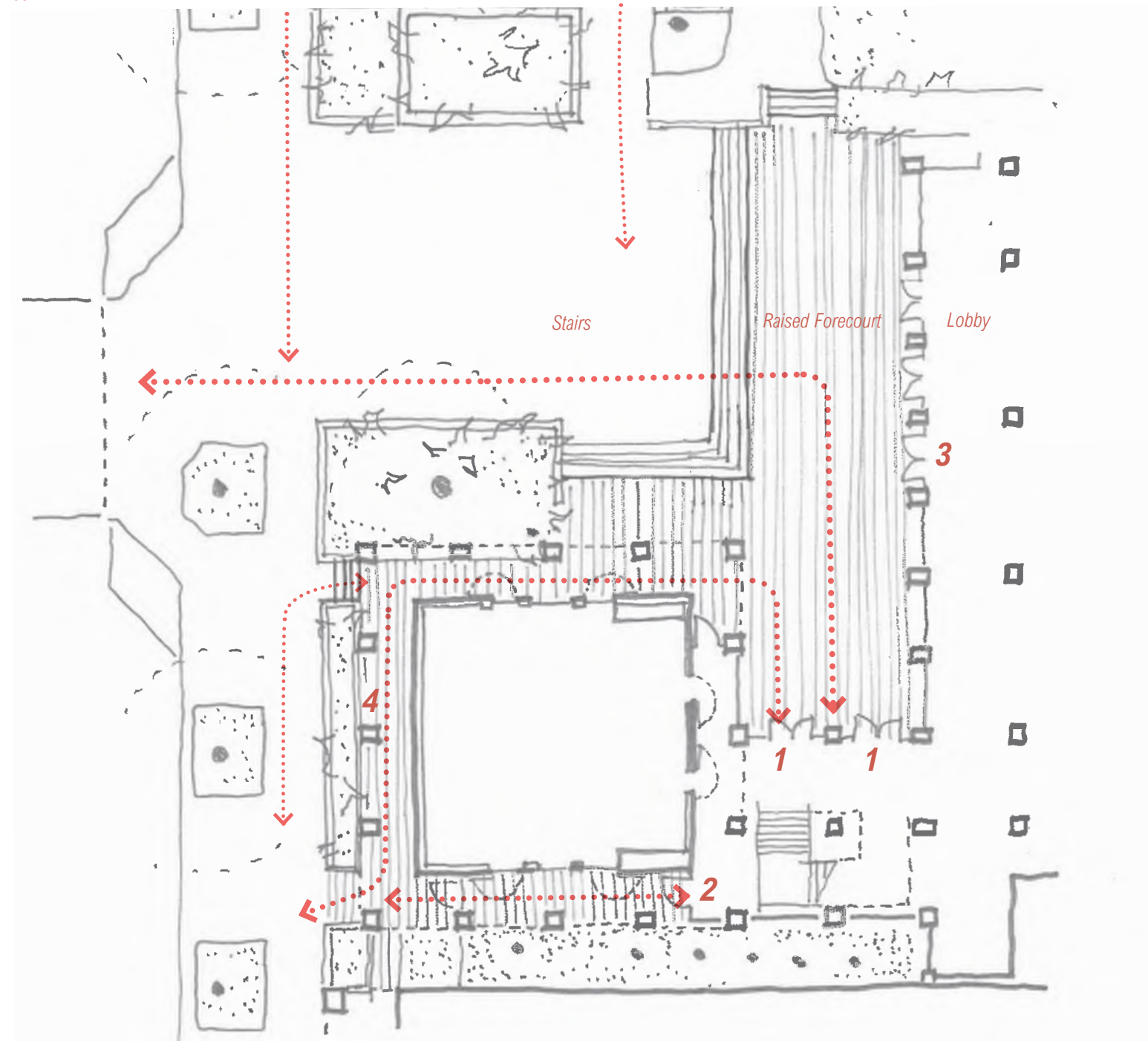
By opening up the new SEC to the Park there are a number of opportunities generated for activation. For example, community events that overlap between the park and SEC. Activation of the park edge will also increase passive surveillance and a sense of security in the park at night. Activities in the foyer space can generate a wider participation from the broader community.



## 1.10 Access and Egress to the Theatre

A consistent criticism of the existing SEC in the modern age is the lack of access for the elderly and those with limited mobility. There are currently no lifts and only 1 accessible path of travel to the theatre foyer. This excludes an important part of the community and limits the flexibility of the space in general.

- 1 Auto-slider with break-out function
- 2 Hinged door
- 3 Egress doors
- 4 1.5m wide accessible path around 'black box'





# Design Principles from Site Analysis

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1. *The site of the SEC is well positioned in the centre of the Sutherland Town Centre and has excellent connections to local public transport. There are strong potential connections to nearby open space, key buildings and active streetfronts.*
2. *The historical development of the site shows the gradual evolution of Peace park as an important public space. The proposal should be consistent with this evolution as a logical next step.*
3. *The refurbished SEC is the first piece of a broader planning scheme seeking to extend and strengthen Peace Park as the green heart of Sutherland, and develop the buildings that surround it to activate that open space. and extend the public domain.*
4. *The scale of the new SEC should integrate with existing low to mid-rise built fabric but pre-empt a future potential built form that is significantly higher and denser.*
5. *The SEC is a key asset for a strong arts community within Sutherland Shire. The new SEC should be more flexible and facilitate a broader array of performances and user groups to strengthen those connections. It should foster a reinvigoration of the arts and promote higher participation and audience base from a broader cross section of the local community.*
6. *The new SEC should acknowledge the role the existing building has played in that community, but also embrace opportunities to enhance, upgrade and replace where necessary to achieve that broader cultural and social appeal. It should showcase sustainable design initiatives, promote accessibility and inclusion and enable Sutherland Shire Council to lead by example best practice development principles.*
7. *The existing SEC has a clear and strong material expression that should inform and be complemented by the new additions.*
8. *The unique bushland setting of Sutherland Town Centre should play a key role in the new SEC, informing landscaping, form and materials.*
9. *The new SEC has the potential to act as a landmark from a number of different approaches, including Sutherland train station.*
10. *The existing building turns its back on Peace Park, and the views, light and activity that accompany it, in favour of an Eton St address only. The proposal should redress this imbalance and investigate a more dynamic address to Peace Park.*
11. *The current access and egress strategy is inadequate for user groups that may include elderly or mobility-impaired members. The new SEC should provide a more varied and flexible approach to access and egress to suit all user groups and a broader range of events*



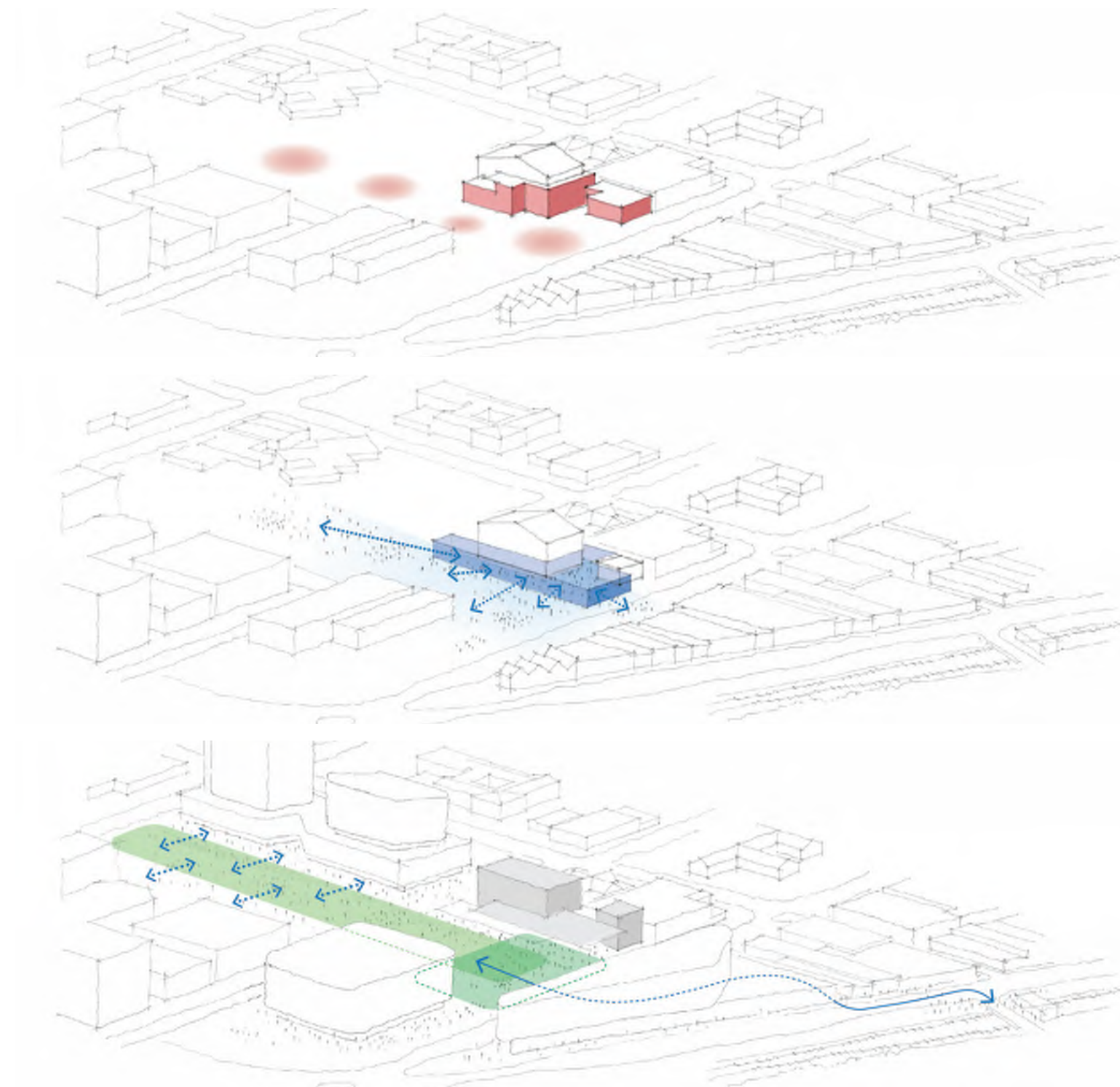
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# 2.0 URBAN DESIGN RESPONSE



## 2.1 Evolution of a Town Centre

The design response begins with a broad stroke summary of the place-making potential of the new SEC. From isolated to activated to precinct catalyst, the proposed design improves existing connections and forges new ones in accordance with **Design Principles 1-4**.



### 01 Existing Condition

*“A Town Centre looking for an open and inviting dialogue”*

- The existing SEC shares little with the public domain with a rather opaque, introspective demeanour – existing landscape and levels also contribute to this;
- The public domain is discontinuous and lacks legibility

### 02 New SEC Condition

*“A more engaging contributor to the Town Centre”*

- The refurbished SEC will be more generous in its relationship with the public domain;
- There is an opportunity to reach out via a more permeable and open threshold, with less definition between public and private domain
- An active edge condition and dialogue will be created with the B3 Commercial Core DCP vision in mind

### 03 Future DCP Vision

*“A cohesive, legible and active Town Centre”*

- A more cohesive, legible public domain can be created through a continuous civic ‘green’
- Active edges already established by SEC can be further enhanced by additional form and uses to the east
- Connectivity with Sutherland train station is reinforced via Eton Street and Old Princes Highway and can be further enhanced through future site links



## 2.2 A Chain of Open Spaces

*The SEC and a rejuvenated Peace Park could be the catalyst that connects a series of what are currently disparate open spaces: Peace Park, the Japanese Garden, Eton St pedestrian zone, Council Chambers forecourt planting and the Forby Memorial Gardens. The current and potential future scenarios read as a clear evolution of the historical site development according to **Design Principle 2**.*



### 01 Current Condition

As described in the Site Analysis, the existing SEC does not take full advantage of the network of open spaces that surround it, including Peace Park and the Forby Memorial Gardens to the north. Significant community events such as Anzac Day services, Jazz in the Park and weekend markets currently occur in the park or neighbouring carpark.



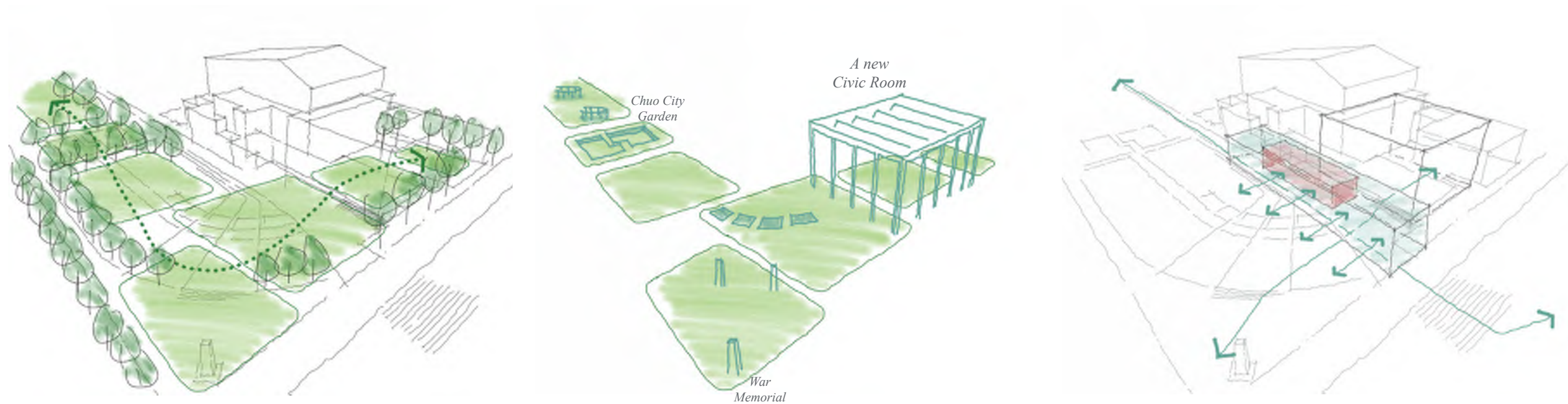
### 02 Potential Future Condition

At a broad scale, the urban design response of the new SEC hinges on creating robust and symbiotic relationships with this chain of open spaces, presenting as a public building *in* the park as opposed to merely adjacent to it. Rather than being a backdrop, the new SEC can be an active participant and catalyst for the current roster of activities. This change of address from Eton St to Peace Park strengthens the potential for a series of interlinked spaces that tap into the broader bushland setting of the town centre as illustrated in the Site Analysis.



## 2.3 A New Relationship with Peace Park

*This page zooms in on the previous diagram to the current scope of works. It establishes the new SEC foyer and new pedestrian frontage to Peace Park as a 'pergola' and 'verandah' respectively, landscaped built elements that are at once a part of both park and theatre space. The two are one and that is at the core of the urban design response, in accordance with **Design Principles 3 & 10**.*



### 01 The Park as Focal Point

The discrete spaces within Peace Park such as the War Memorial and the Chuo City Garden can be understood as a series of connected landscape rooms each with their own identity and public purpose.

Accordingly, the Entertainment Centre should feel much more a part of the park and, conversely, the park should also feel as though it is an extension of the building, meaning that where the building and park come together there should be a much more open and inviting interface than that provided by the current interface between the building and the park.

### 02 A New Park Structure

The new foyer roof and the suspended levels within the foyer space could be interpreted as the latest addition to the array of structures within the park, a 'pergola' that draws the park into the theatre itself.

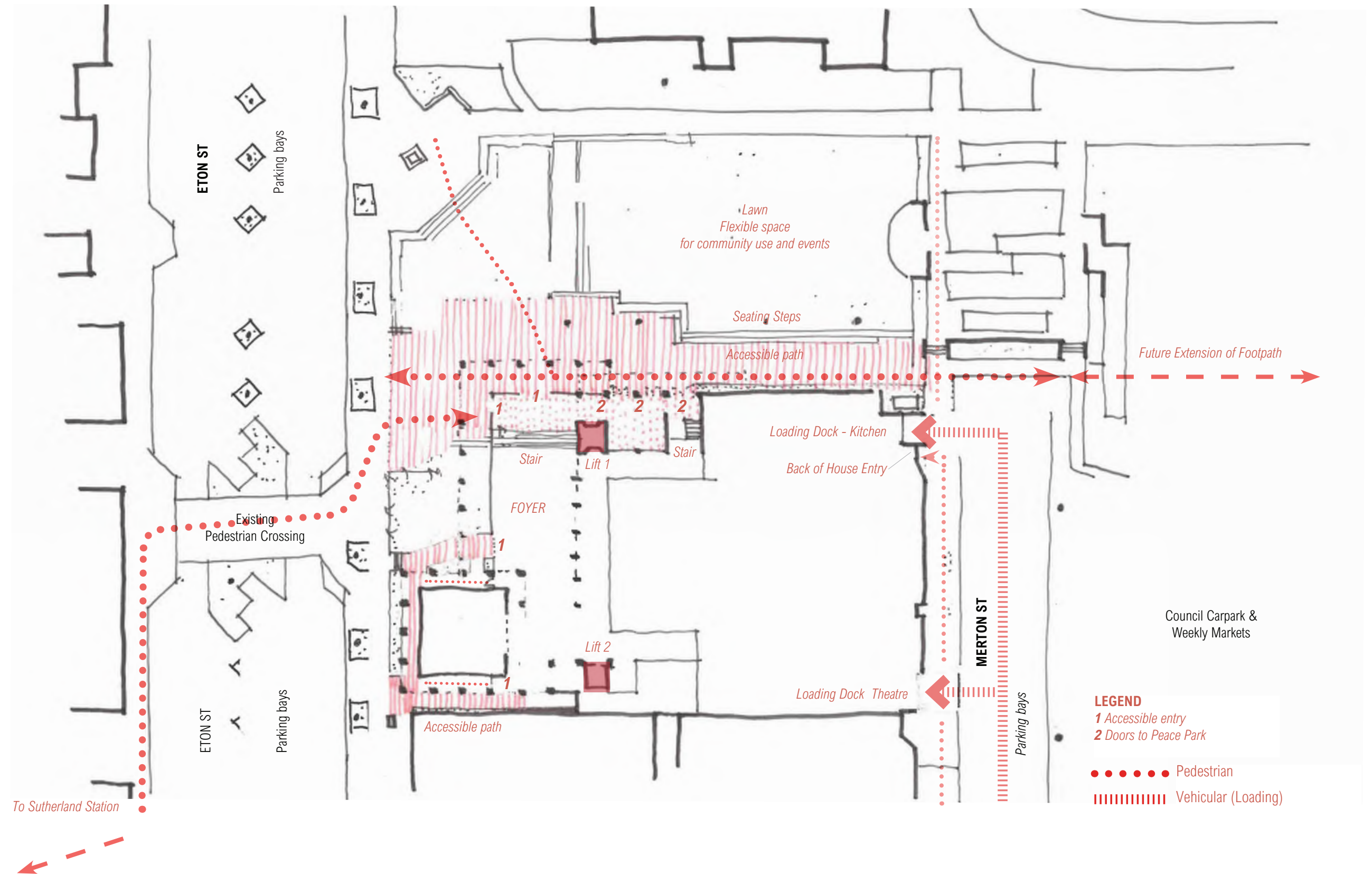
### 03 A Verandah

This interface provides an opportunity for the southern edge of the park to be more permeable and active, and feel both inside and outside at the same time. This space will serve as a protected, lively and welcoming threshold which activates both the building and park - a space very much like the verandah on a house.



## 2.4 Connections: Improved and Reoriented

The new SEC re-orientates itself toward Peace Park, providing an expansive 'verandah' to the park in the form of a direct accessible connection between Eton St and the existing council carpark. This allows scope for a future potential scenario wherein this active edge is continued along an extended Peace Park. Theatre and kitchen loading docks are split on Merton St to improve efficiency and flexibility. Peace Park lawn is consolidated, with the central pathway removed and tiered concrete bench seating provided along its edges. **See Design Principles 1 & 10.**







#### View from Peace Park toward the new SEC foyer space

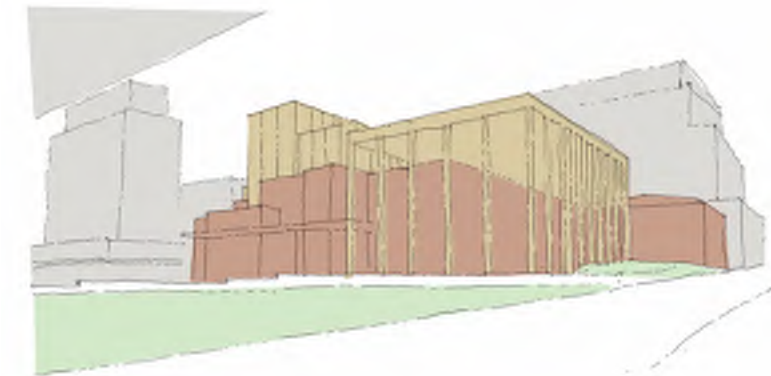
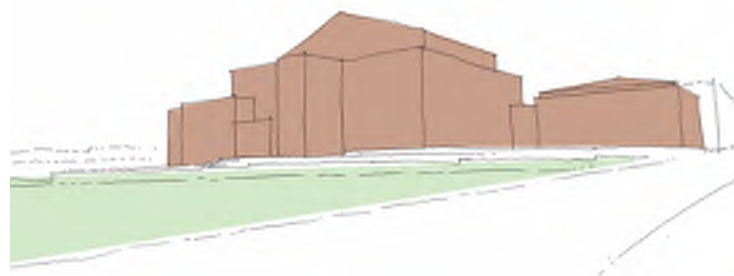
An active and engaging interface is created with Peace Park through the use of the 'verandah' and first floor public terraces. A tiered concrete edge to the park provides a space to meet, relax and watch outdoor performances. Fielders 'Aramax' metal cladding was used to break down the scale of the large planar facade elements of the flytower and theatre roof, the large corrugations allowing deep shadows to enliven the facade during daytime and be animated via subtle uplighting during the evening, evocative of a stage curtain and drawing a metaphorical link to the theatrical setting.



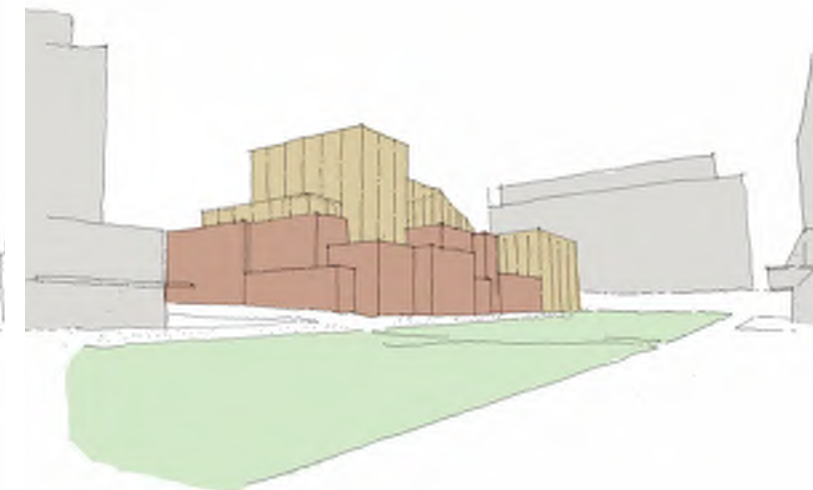
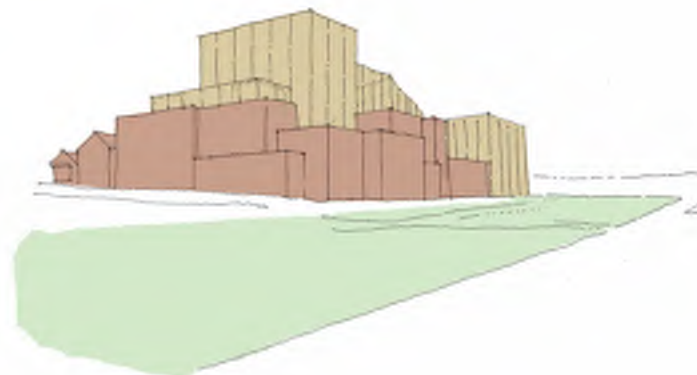
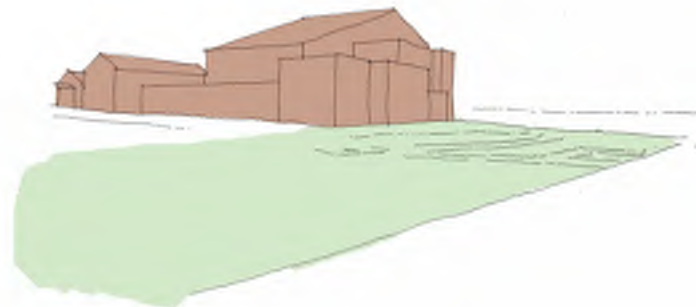
## 2.5 Urban Conditions: Existing, Proposed, Future Potential

*This page investigates the proposed massing of the SEC in relation to existing and future urban conditions. It presents an argument for a more defined but materially sympathetic infill to the block bounded by Eton, Flora, Merton Streets and Peace Park and articulates a response to **Design Principles 4 & 7**.*

Eton St Approach  
(see Key View 3)



Peace Park Approach  
(see Key View 2)



### 01 Existing Massing

The current massing of the SEC fails to provide a strong definition to the city block bound by Eton, Flora and Merton Streets and Peace Park, and misses out on opportunities for streetfront activation. The Merton St facade carries the brick language of the church precinct through but its scale is confused and reads clearly as an inferior services 'back door'.

### 02 Proposed Urban Edge to Park

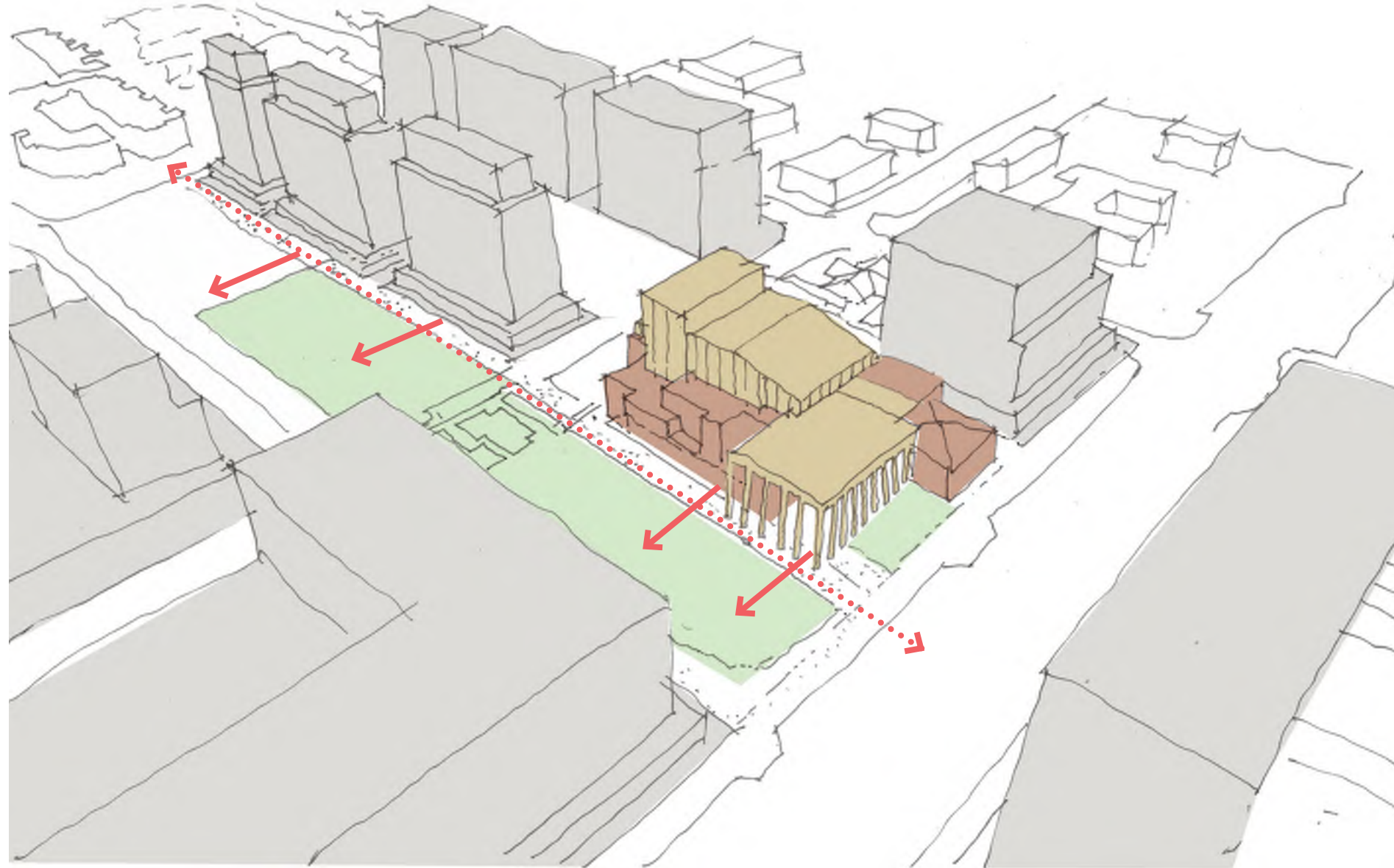
The new elements of the SEC have been designed to accentuate the brick base and reduce the bulk of the flytower to the park. The new Merton St facade alignment will help define and complete the city block with the heritage church on one corner and the SEC on the other.

### 03 Potential Future Urban Condition

The higher proposed elements of the SEC now sit in the context of higher mixed use structures built to the B3 Commercial Core LEP building heights, changing its relationship with the park from an object in open space to one of several structures that define a civic edge to a new linear green space at the heart of the Sutherland Town Centre. The open nature of the foyer and visible public spaces on the elevated terraces and planters extends the public domain into and onto the SEC.

## 2.5 Urban Conditions: Existing, Proposed, Future Potential (cont.)

*An aerial view of the future potential town centre shows how the new SEC will function as a transitional built form element in a new denser skyline in Sutherland.*

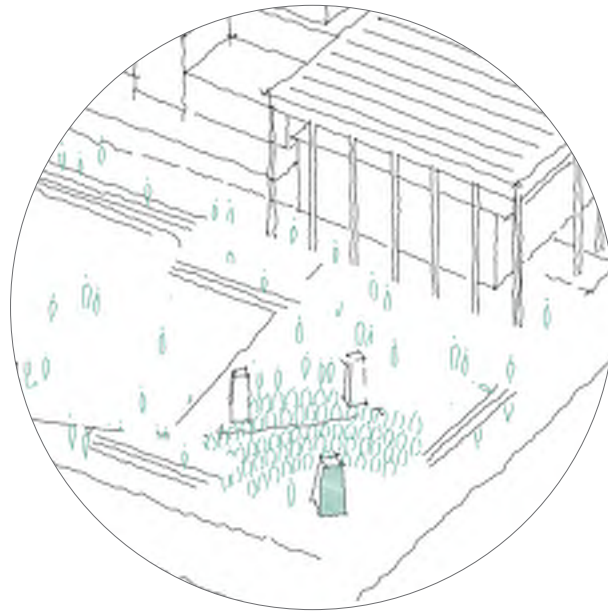


The new SEC will eventually act as a scale moderator, helping to transition from the higher potential developments on the council carpark to the east of the site to the more intimate and human scale of Eton St. The possibility for community uses at podium level of any development of the Flora St carpark highlights the significance of an activated social 'verandah' running east west that promotes connectivity between public space and community assets.

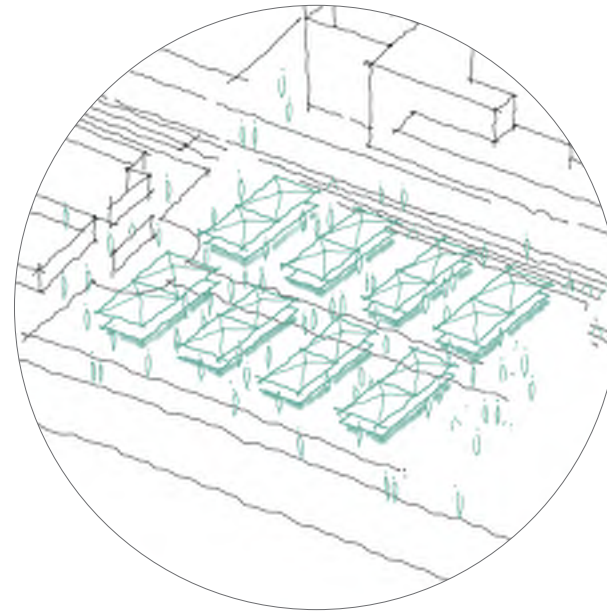


## 2.6 A Flexible Catalyst for Public Events

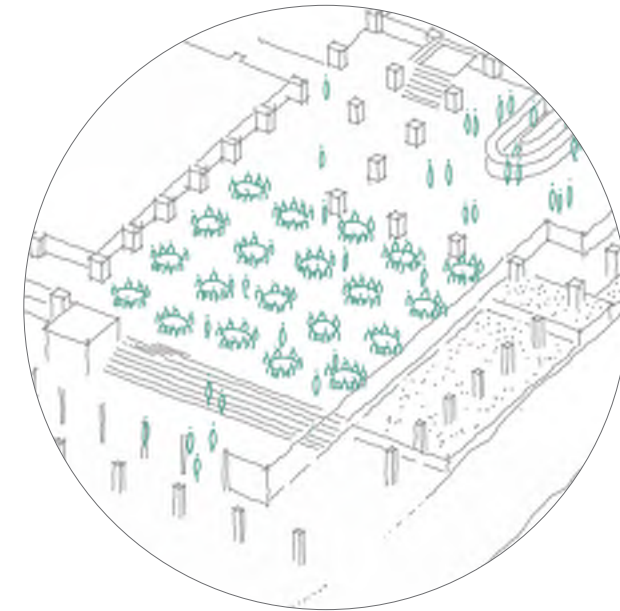
The new SEC and Peace Park have been designed to accommodate a broad range of events and functions in the urban realm, creating a destination for larger public activities and meeting the demand outlined in **Design Principle 5**.



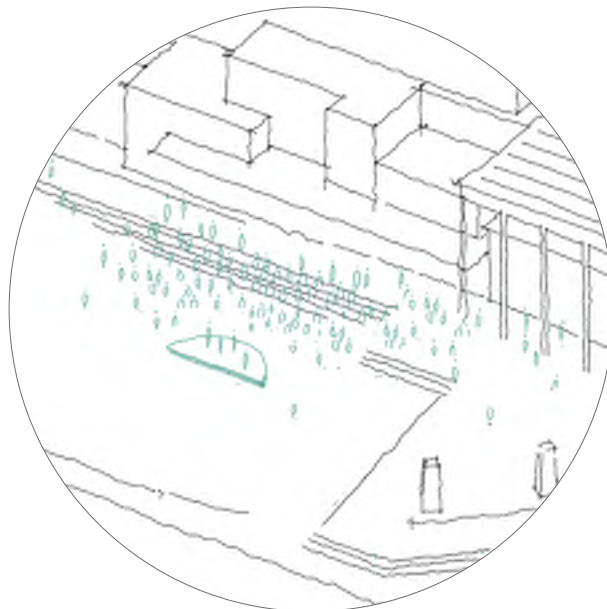
*ceremony*



*markets*



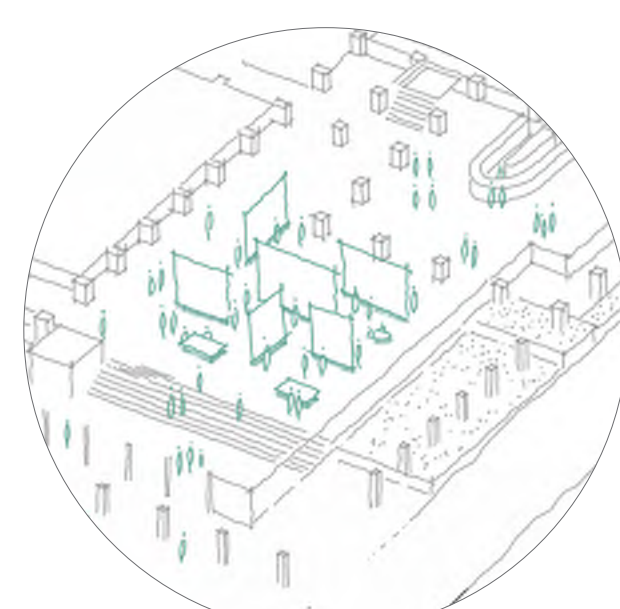
*banquet - 200 people*



*outdoor performance*



*in-performance (before & after)*



*exhibition*

The park and verandah provide the setting for a myriad of social possibilities where aspects of public life - celebration, ceremony, recreation and entertainment - can all have their place.

At times, the foyer will be the place for audiences to gather before, during and after performances. At other times it would also be the venue for smaller, informal shows or large banquets, exhibitions or speaking tours





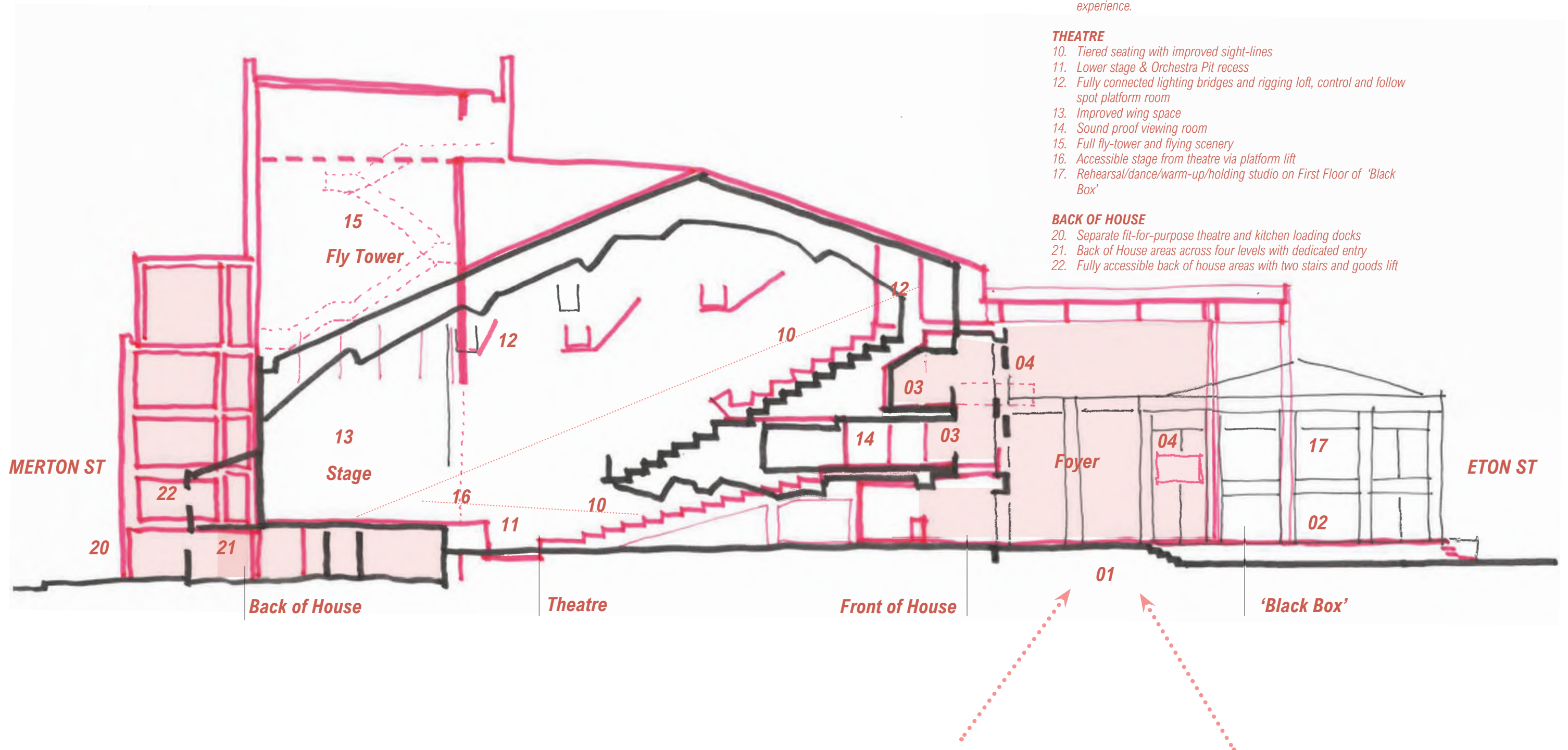
#### View of SEC foyer space upon entry

The new foyer acts as a versatile display case for the existing Eton St facade, maintaining a structural symbiosis with it and blurring the line between inside and outside. Dramatically cantilevering 'Juliette' balconies provide for a dialogue between levels and spaces for impromptu theatrical performances within the foyer itself.



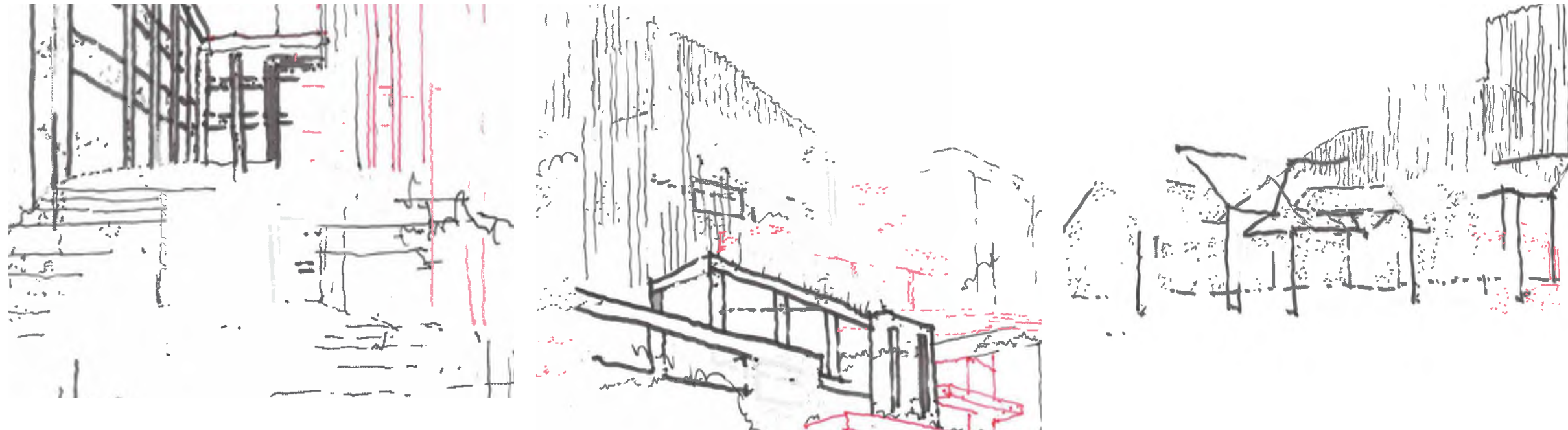
## 2.7 A More Versatile Performance Space

The driving ambition for the new SEC is for an expanded and flexible performing arts venue that can cater for a more diverse array of shows and user groups. The proposed additions in the form of a new foyer, increased seating, full flytower and expanded back of house facilities all contribute to this versatility. These revised proportions and new raked gallery will significantly improve sight lines and audience experience as well as performance connection,



## 2.8 Retaining and Interpreting the Narrative of the Existing Building

*The design response for the new SEC looks to embrace and celebrate the existing building by retaining as much of the existing fabric as possible. Where new elements are inserted they take inspiration from and complement the structural rhythm and materials of the existing building. Here are 3 key examples of this approach at work. See **Design Principles 6 & 7**.*



### 01 Existing Eton St Brick Facade

The existing Eton St facade has a strong structural logic and a clear material language. The addition of the 'pergola' or new foyer structure adds to the narrative of this structure by making it an interior element for the first time, displaying the rhythm of the brick piers to theatre-goers and allowing the removal of bulky window frames and banners. The foyer structure takes its cues directly from the existing, with new glulam timber columns replicating the existing column spacings to establish a dialogue between the two. The new foyer roof visually slides over the existing roof, showing deference to existing boardform concrete beams and box gutters.

### 02 Existing Northern Facade

The existing defining aesthetic of the northern facade is one of aggregated bricks forms, stepping in both plan and elevation with boardform concrete band beams providing a horizontal balance and contrast. New elements on this facade are proposed to increase activation to Peace Park, allowing spaces to gather at both ground and first floors. A new first floor terrace and awning take inspiration from the existing horizontal concrete elements, varying their finish to clearly describe them as new interventions but replicating the vertical height of these bands to maintain visual continuity. The new park edge seating continue this stepped aesthetic down to the park itself. The new flytower and existing theatre roof extension are set well back from this public face and separated visually through the use of a vertically oriented metallic facade treatment. The stepping and material change to the flytower breaks down the visual dominance of this element.

### 03 Proposed Merton St facade

Where a new facade is required to accommodate the necessary back of house program as in the case of the Merton St elevation, the aggregated brick language of the northern elevation has been wrapped around the corner to meet the neighbouring heritage listed brick church at a height datum that binds the city block together. This facade is deliberately muted, reflecting its nature as a critical service and logistics entry, but also letting the adjacent church express itself without detracting from it. Fenestration has been carefully executed to provide natural light whilst maintaining privacy and discretion to change rooms.



## 2.9 Sustainability Initiatives

The design for the new SEC is underpinned by a number of key sustainable features that directly inform and are inseparable from the design. Given that a key sustainability feature is the ability of a new building to inform and educate its users, here are 3 of the most publicly visible initiatives that help fulfill **Design Principle 6**.



### Retain Durable Fabric, Replace Inefficient Glazing and Services

By retaining the majority of the existing building, the refurbished SEC looks to act as a model for sustainable adaptive reuse over knockdown-rebuild alternatives. Existing glazing will be replaced with more thermally efficient systems, likewise outdated and inefficient building services that can be replaced with modern, efficient and durable ones.

### Advance the Use of Sustainably Sourced Engineered Timber

The engineered timber (glu-laminated and cross-laminated) industry is currently in its infancy in Australia. Mass timber construction is recognized as a significant initiative in reducing the carbon footprint of the construction industry. Timber has low embodied energy in production and stores carbon within wood fibre. When appropriately sourced it is a renewable and sustainable resource. In the spirit of structural honesty, the refurbished SEC will feature a new foyer using expressed Australian hardwood glulam timber beams and columns. This will highlight the use of timber as a cost-competitive and visually appealing alternative to clad steel and concrete standards, and contribute to a competitive market for Australian made engineered timber products and engineering services.

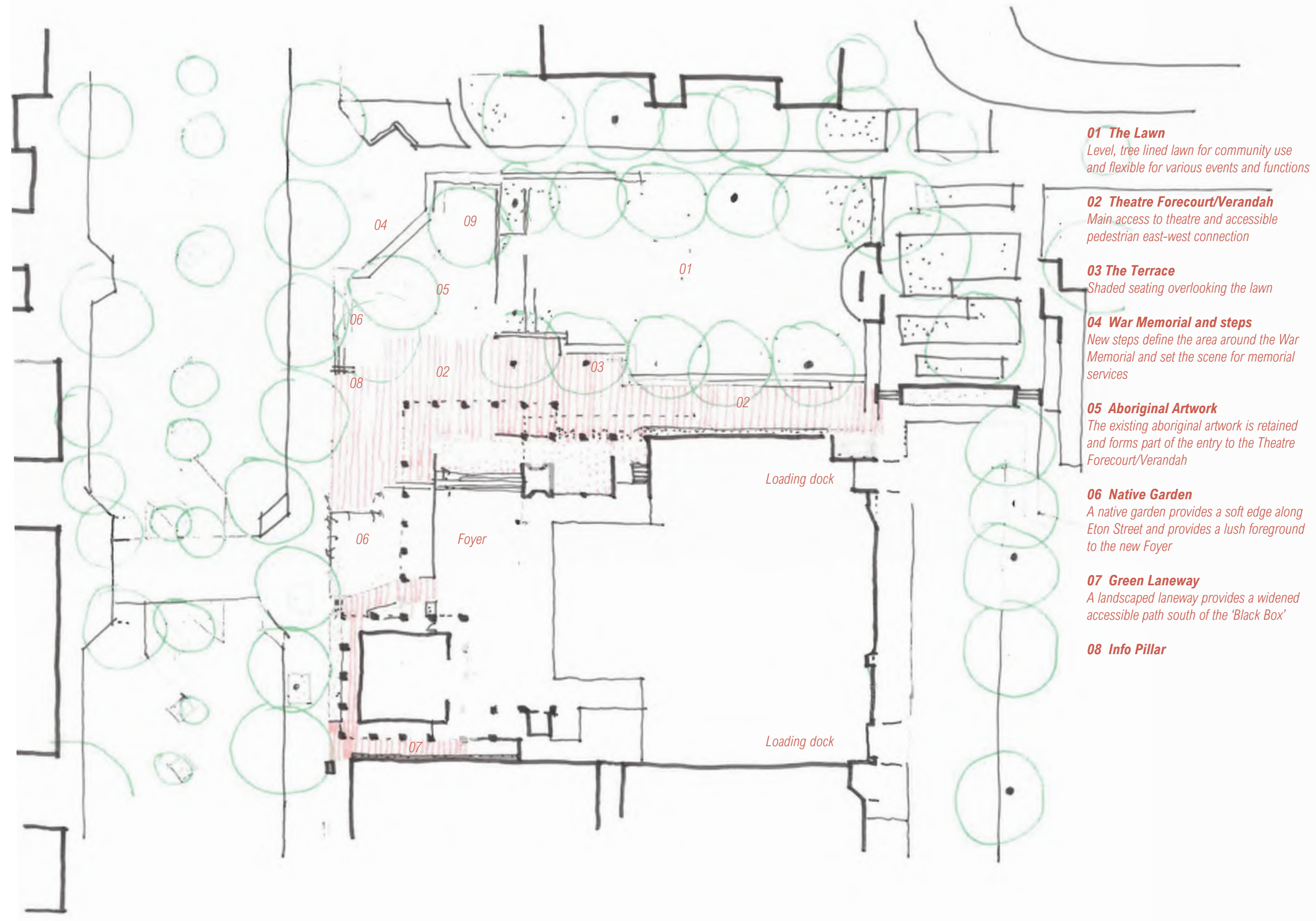
### Use Smart Integrated Shading Devices

The theatre banner has a proud history as a colourful and visually distinctive means of advertising upcoming shows to the public. Custom banners on the Eton St facade will be used as shading devices to protect the foyer glazing against western solar heat gain in summer. These will be a permanent feature addressing the current Eton St crossing.



## 2.10 An Active and Vibrant Peace Park

The landscaped spaces around the SEC are conceived as a series of interlinked rooms, with their own individual character and function. Peace Park is consolidated as an inviting open space whilst the bushland setting of the town centre is carried through in native garden beds to Eton St as described in **Design Principle 8**.

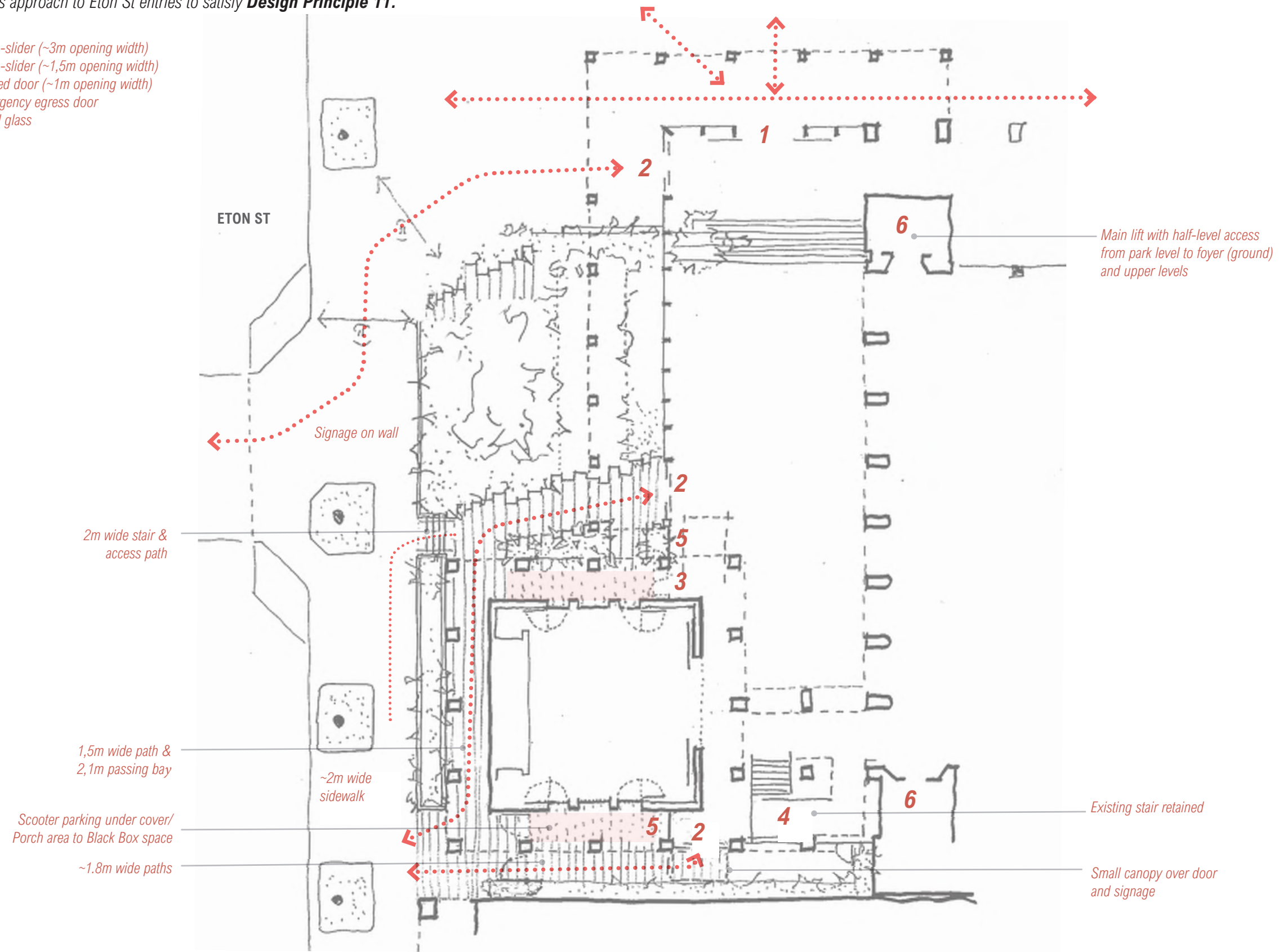




## 2.11 A Flexible Approach to Access and Egress

The new SEC foyer design provides improved and varied access from Peace Park and Eton St to the theatre. New lifts are carefully integrated to provide vertical access, a main entry is proposed to Peace Park with a porous approach to Eton St entries to satisfy **Design Principle 11**.

- 1 Auto-slider (~3m opening width)
- 2 Auto-slider (~1,5m opening width)
- 3 Hinged door (~1m opening width)
- 4 Emergency egress door
- 5 Fixed glass
- 6 Lift







#### View of SEC Eton St facade

The glulam foyer structure creates metaphorical links to Sutherland's bushland setting, and planting in and around the SEC will similarly take cues from endemic species and reference sandstone outcrops with the use of large boulders. The role of the new foyer as a 'verandah', or covered link through Peace Park is well illustrated in this image. The glulam columns rest on concrete pedestals pigmented with a sandy colour to maintain a visual continuity with the timber.