

PYMBLE LADIES COLLEGE
GREY HOUSE PRECINCT,

Architectural Design Statement
SSD-17424905



Pymble Ladies' College

PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT

The report had been prepared in support of the State Significant Development Application for the Pymble Ladies College Grey House Precinct, SSDA No. SSD-17424905.

This report has been prepared by BVN Architecture Pty Ltd with input from relevant other organisations and disciplines. It is to be read in conjunction with the architectural drawings, the EIS prepared by Willowtree and accompanying appendices and reports. This report forms **Appendix 9** of the EIS.

VERSION CONTROL		
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DESIGN TEAM	
ORGANISATION :	ROLE :
PYMBLE LADIES COLLEGE	CLIENT / END USER
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STANTEC	BUILDING SERVICES
TTW	STRUCTURE AND CIVIL ENGINEERING
STANTEC	ESD
WINDTECH	WIND
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TTW	FACADE
NBRS HERITAGE	HERITAGE
ARTEFACT HERITAGE	ABORIGINAL CULTURAL HERITAGE
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Acknowledgment of Country.

We acknowledge that the Grey House Precinct will stand on Guringai Land.

We pay our respects to your Country, ancestors and the community that maintains culture from the past, in the present and into the future.

We recognise that the success of this project requires us listening to the Traditional Owners of the land and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, working with you, and walking beside you on this journey.

Introduction

01

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Grey House Precinct project is located within the picturesque 52 acre College campus setting of Pymble Ladies College in the Northern District of Metropolitan Sydney within the LGA of Ku-ring-gai.

Proposed as a new home for Dance, Health Care, Out of School Hours Care (OSHC), a new ELC and Year 5 and 6 facilities including STEM spaces and outdoor learning and play areas, the Grey House Precinct will replace temporary structures and connect the Junior and Middle School.

The proposal is a response to the identified demand in the school for flexible general learning areas, specialist spaces, a new ELC and upgrades to support boarding to enable the provision of a world-class education that prepares girls for real world challenges and imbues them with the confidence to strive for a better world.

In November 2019, Pymble Ladies’ College embarked on a whole of campus Master Plan to inform and direct the site development of the College’s campus at Pymble. The final Master Plan identifies the vision and strategies for the future development of the campus, as well as key projects.

A range of drivers for change influenced the Master Plan. These include:



- The strategic focus on student engagement with real world challenges
- The changing nature of learning and teaching pedagogies
- Opportunities for institutional and industry partnerships
- Resilience and adaptation to a changing climate
- A growing co-curricular program
- A desire to provide a vibrant extended-hour campus.

The College Strategic Plan, which was launched to the Pymble Community in late 2020, rests on four key pillars; Knowledge for a better world, Diversity as the path to unity, Technologies for an innovative future, Courage to be empowered.

The Grey House Precinct (GHP) proposal is the first project identified in the master plan and reflects the essence of these pillars, sensitive to diversity in all forms, technology enabled and allows for active play, age appropriate spaces and spaces for deep learning throughout.

COLLEGE BACKGROUND

Pymble Ladies College began in 1916 with 60 students and 4 foundation buildings and since then has grown to become one of Australia’s leading girls schools for over 2250 students.

Pymble Ladies College is an independent school in the tradition of the Uniting Church. The College is non-selective, for girls of all abilities through a wide range of subjects and interest areas from Kindergarten to Year 12. Since the College’s inception, Pymble has catered for both day and boarding students from Year 7 to Year 12.

It is a single campus college comprised of five separate schools. Pymble’s five Schools are defined in precincts, each with a Head of School and following the Grey House Precinct development will also include an Early Learning Centre. The updated Schools will be defined as:

- ELC: Infants to 5-year-olds,
- K-6: Kindergarten to Year 6
- Middle School: Years 7 and 8
- Upper School: Years 9 and 10
- Senior School: Years 11 and 12

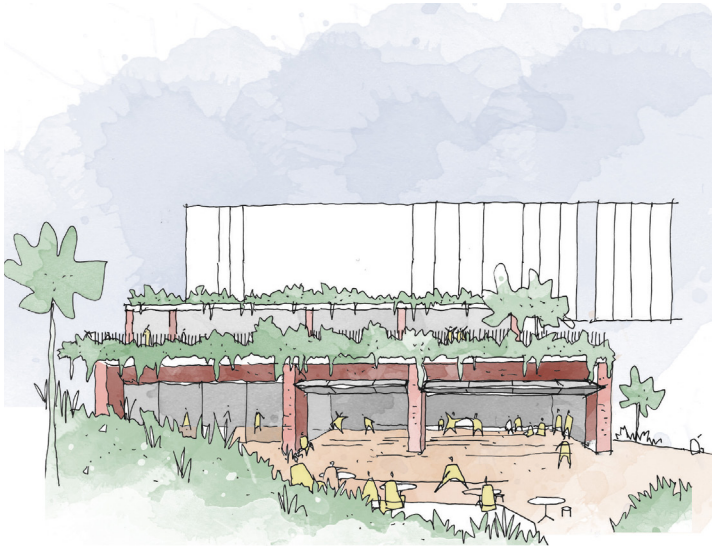
As a distinctive campus, Pymble strives to deliver exemplary learning, teaching, research and collaboration facilities, all within a setting that celebrates the site’s unique topography, bushland, history and landscape.

STUDENT & STAFF POPULATION

Currently with 2259 day and 120 boarding students, Pymble Ladies’ College has identified a desire for modest growth in student numbers in the future. The College has determined a maximum enrolment of 2,650 students inclusive of 90 ELC students. Across the K-12 Campus there are currently 400 staff.

The Grey House Precinct Building proposal will deliver classrooms and teaching space to enable the increase in ELC student numbers, but beyond this it is not designed to deliberately increase student numbers in other years.

The building will provide additional GFA to enable larger, more future focussed and flexible teaching and learning spaces to replace end-of-life assets, enable smaller class sizes to provide higher staff to student ratio and deliver exemplary learning that enables experimentation and play and engagement with the landscape.



PROJECT NEED

The following key needs were identified as part of the master plan process and the Grey House Precinct proposal will begin to address these:

- Improve student and staff experience and promote engagement with the outdoors
- Address capacity constraints
- Improve spatial arrangements of the campus
- Create fit-for purpose buildings that enable equitable access and are suitable for contemporary and evolving pedagogy

PROPOSED BUILDING WORKS

The proposed Grey House Precinct building will replace existing temporary (demountable) teaching space and provide 5 storeys of fit-for-purpose teaching space. Utilising the natural slope of the topography to step the building form and terrace into the the landscape grounds, a key element of the design is an abundance of native planting incorporated into the building itself and multiple levels of landscaped outdoor learning spaces.

SUSTAINABILITY

The project has been designed to a 5 Star Green Star design equivalence. It utilises passive solar design features, natural ventilation, high-performance envelope, rainwater collection and reuse, biophilic design principles and on-site power generation via photovoltaic panels.

DESIGN QUALITY

GANSW Design Guide for Schools and Better Placed, refers to the Education SEPP’s seven key Design Quality Principles for designing schools to identify the following priorities;

- better fit
- better performance
- better for community
- better for people
- better working
- better value
- better look and feel

The Grey House Precinct building proposal has been designed to address these design quality priorities.

COLLEGE STRATEGY

A College Strategy was developed in parallel with the master plan and outlines the College’s strategic direction. It looks to partnerships with other institutions and businesses as a vehicle to address real-world problems and provide future career opportunities for Pymble girls.

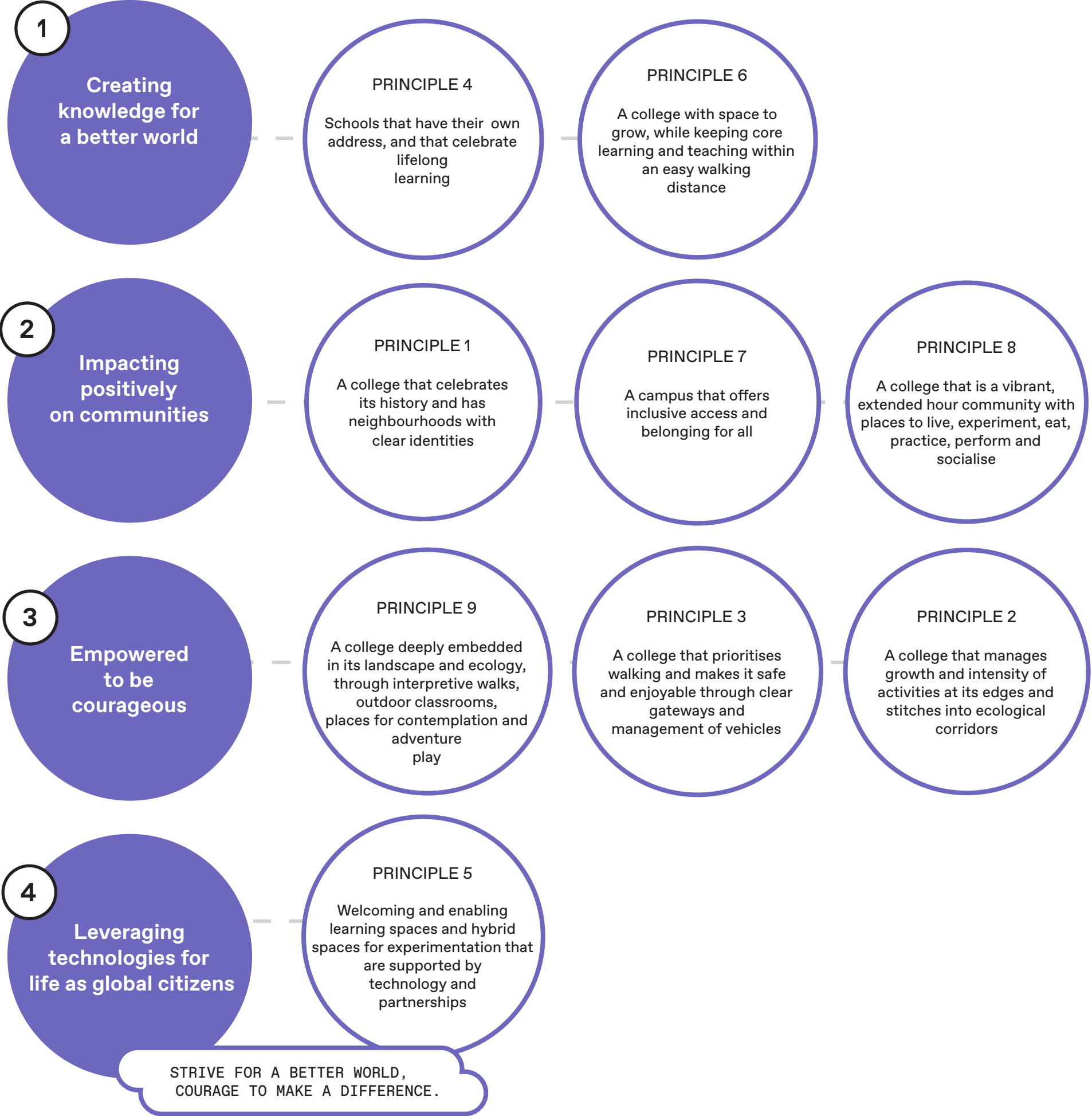
- 1. Creating knowledge for a better world
- 2. Impacting positively on communities
- 3. Empowered to be courageous
- 4. Leveraging technologies for life as global citizens

URBAN PRINCIPLES

The master plan also identified nine urban design principles with which to guide future development on the site, these were generally formed around these 3 core themes;

- 1. College context and structure
- 2. Learning, teaching and collaboration
- 3. College life

In developing the concept for the Grey House Precinct building, a Functional Design Brief was established with the College Strategy and urban design principles at its core. The design team and stakeholders continuously referred back to these principles as fundamental to the design concept.



01.03 SEARS ADDRESSED IN THIS REPORT

This report describes the architectural approach and design of the project that forms application SSD-17424905. It should be read in parallel with the architectural drawings and associated reports. It provides a general overview to the design and its development in support of the SSDA.

It specifically addresses the following SEARS requirements:

SEARS No.	DESCRIPTION	REPORT SECTION
1	Better Placed: An integrated design policy for the built environment of New South Wales (GANSW, 2017)	• 5.01
1	Greener Spaces: GANSW	• 5.02
1	SEPP Educational Establishments and Childcare Facilities & Design Guide for Schools: GANSW	• 5.04
6	Environmental Design in Schools Manual, (GANSW, 2018)	• 5.03
1	Healthy Urban Development Checklist	• 5.05
-	Draft Connecting with Country Framework, (GANSW, 2020)	• 5.06
2	Address the height, density, bulk and scale, setbacks and interface of the proposal in relation to the surrounding development, topography, streetscape and any open public spaces	• General: Section 04
2	Address design quality and built form, with specific consideration of the overall site layout, streetscape, open spaces, façade, rooftop, massing, setbacks, building articulation, materials and colour palette.	• General: Section 04
2	Address how CPTED principles are to be integrated into development.	• 4.21
2	Address how good environmental amenity would be provided, including access to natural daylight and ventilation, acoustic separation, access to landscape and outdoor spaces and future flexibility.	• 4.19
2	Address how design quality will be achieved in accordance with Schedule 4 Schools – design quality principles of State Environmental Planning Policy (Educational Establishments and Child Care Facilities) 2017 and the GANSW Design Guide for Schools (GANSW, 2018).	• 4.01, 4.02, 5.04
2	Address how services, including but not limited to waste management, loading zones, and mechanical plant are integrated into the design of the development.	• 4.23- 4.25
2	Provide a detailed site and context analysis to justify the proposed site planning and design approach including massing options and preferred strategy for future development.	• Section 03
2	Provide a visual impact assessment that identifies any potential impacts on the surrounding built environment and landscape including views to and from the site and any adjoining heritage items, including Pymble Avenue Conservation Area (C11) which is located to the south-east of the proposed works.	• 4.21-4.23
4	Assess amenity impacts on the surrounding locality, including solar access, visual privacy, visual amenity, overshadowing, wind impacts and acoustic impacts. A high level of environmental amenity for any surrounding residential land uses must be demonstrated.	• General: Section 06
8	Demonstrate attempts to interpret the Aboriginal cultural heritage significance is identified into the development	• 4.11
6	Identify how ESD principles (as defined in clause 7(4) of Schedule 2 of the Regulation) would be incorporated in the design and ongoing operation phases of the development.	• 4.20
SEARS	Demonstrate analysis of options considered to justify the proposed site planning and design approach	• 3.02
SEARS	Summary of feedback provided by GANSW and NSW State Design Review Panel (SDRP) and responses to this advice	• 1.04
SEARS	Summary report of consultation with community and response to feedback	• Section 03
4	Conduct a view analysis of the site from key vantage points	• 4.21-4.23

01.04 GOVERNMENT ARCHITECT - STATE DESIGN REVIEW PANEL FEEDBACK

On the 18 August 2021 the design team met with the Government Architect State Design Review Panel to present the Pymble Ladies College Grey House Precinct design. The proposal was commended as was the quality of the presentation and descriptions of the project.

The following elements of the design strategy were supported:

- Commitment to 5-star Green star (equivalence)
- Understanding of landscape and ecology as pedagogical devices to assist student learning and development.
- Preservation of the valuable Blue Gum plantation and plans to extend and expand this.
- Commitment to biophilic design and connection to landscape.
- Strategy of embedding the building within the landscape.
- Consultation with Indigenous students.
- Aligning the new building with the existing façades 20m from the boundary.
- The focus on children with smaller gardens and playful elements like slides.

Listed below is the advice and recommendations put forward by the SDRP for consideration. The design team responses to these recommendations are included and will be presented in more detail when the design team meet with the SDRP again on 24 November.



CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY

An understanding of Country can inform richer and more place responsive design solution. The following recommendations apply:

1. Demonstrate more rigorous consultation with Traditional Custodians and Knowledge-holders. The Connecting with Country Framework recommends engagement is undertaken and key strategies developed before sketch design, however there are still opportunities to better integrate Connecting with Country principles into the logic of the project through both the landscape and built form.

Pymble Ladies College has engaged with Uncle Laurie Bimson for a number of years to inform masterplan strategies for the college campus and he has been involved with the students as part of Indigenous studies and supporting the knowledge of the indigenous boarding students.

Since the SDRP presentation, the design team have met with Uncle Laurie to take him through the design proposal for building and landscape. Excited by the project and the opportunity to further integrate learnings from Country, Uncle Laurie has agreed to meet with the design team every 6 weeks to contribute to the design and narrative. He also provided further indigenous artist contacts including: Tracey Howie and Auntie Sheriden Bird (weaver)

2. The identification of a possible historic Aboriginal pathway near the site provides a useful metaphor to direct the design. Anchor the connection to Country by transforming the pathway metaphor into a coherent and integrated narrative to understand the new buildings and their experience. Explore other stories, and strategies so that the positive outcomes that Connecting with Country can produce are enabled.

Uncle Laurie shared a number of stories about the movement of the local Guringai people and local flora and fauna and the traditional methods of communication through seasonal flowering plants and local engravings. Through continued consultation the design team will align the journey/ pathway metaphor with Uncle Laurie's knowledge to enable this story telling to be understood from the building.

3. Consult local Traditional Custodians including Denis Folly and Susan Moylan-Combs.

The design team have met with Uncle Laurie and Pymble Ladies College has also reached out to Denis Folly and Susan Moylan-Combs as well. The design team will continue to engage with the Indigenous students and make more connections with Traditional Custodians of the area through Uncle Laurie.

4. Refer to the draft Connecting with Country Framework on the GANSW website.

Response to Connecting with Country Framework addressed in Section 6 - Policies and Frameworks as well as design section 4.



SITE STRATEGY & LANDSCAPE

The strategy of introducing more intimate, human (and child) scaled spaces and landscape elements into the site to create a rich place responsive scheme is supported. The following recommendations apply:

5. Further development of the transition between the existing larger scale formal modes and smaller spaces.

Refer to Landscape architecture report for response.

6. Demonstrate the opportunity for the landscape to tell more stories, specifically in relationship to any emergent narrative from Connecting with Country.

Refer to Landscape architecture report for response.

7. Review the landscape strategy for the central courtyard to ensure it has the necessary planting and landscape elements to fulfil its potential and its role in bringing the landscape deeply into the built form.

Central atrium space will be presented in more detail at the next SDRP presentation. The design team has continued to develop the type of planting and climbing material, location and soil zones required to ensure the potential of this space.

MOVEMENT & ACCESSIBILITY

The current proposal is an elegant response to the sloping site and its complex topography. The following recommendations apply:

8. Review the accessibility of all spaces on the project from the perspectives of comfort and legibility. Present a clear and coherent strategy for access and movement for all people around the site and into all the built spaces and associated external areas.

The complexity of the topography and the fall of the site necessitates the reliance on a lift to access the lowest and highest floors. With so many functions within this building, the concept of the outdoor room / atrium is to provide legibility and unify the entries to all of the departments across the multiple levels. By providing a clear consolidated entry point, the central circulation stair and lift adjacent to one another make the building easy to understand and the user experience for either is equally weighted.

Each floor from the college heart (Goodlet House level) is connected to the natural ground and an outdoor learning environment which has played a significant role in the RL location of each floor and the overall height of the building to enable this seamless equitable inside-outside connection.

Wayfinding and accessible path of travel from the Centenary carpark was considered with the siting of the building and ELC particularly. Wayfinding strategy and the broader college wide landscape design is continuing to be developed.



ARCHITECTURE

The built form of the project carefully negotiates a complex site with a simple form that integrates interior functionality and connections with landscape. The architectural expression of the Grey House Precinct is to be commended. The following recommendations apply:

9. Review if the overshadowing of neighbours on Pymble Ave can be minimised through changes to the corners and edge of the building. Review the northern end of the new building and consider reducing the bulk and form to increase sunlight.

Through the early design phases a number of building massing options were explored and ruled out (refer to section 03.03). The school and design team refined the design to the current building form in response to and highly conscious of overshadowing, importance of massing composition and building alignment. This design evolution was balanced with the schools need to maximise potential to create quality teaching and learning space. The significant excavation required to partially submerge dance and OSHC into the site demonstrates the school's endeavours to be responsible to neighbours. The overshadowing created by the GHP meets Ku-ring-gai LEP requirements of over 3 hours at the Winter solstice.

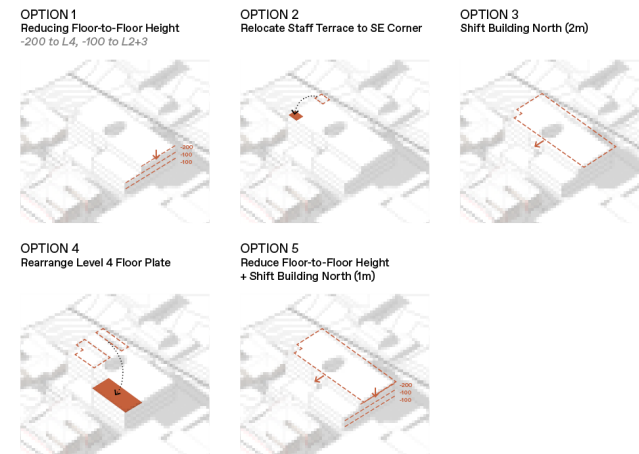
Since the SDRP presentation, in response to the comments, the design team have explored a number of other incremental design moves to ensure that any significant benefits to the overshadowing to the neighbour have been explored. These are attached in detail in Appendix Section A and outlined below.

The following options and their overshadowing benefits were explored:

1. Reducing the floor-to-floor height of the General Learning floors and Health and Wellbeing; L4, L2 & L3
2. Relocating the staff terrace to the SE corner of the building from the NE
3. Shifting the building 1m North - closer to Goodlet House
4. Rearranging the Level 4 floor plan to move the mass towards Goodlet House
5. Reducing the floor-to-floor heights and moving the building
6. Submerging the building into the ground a further 1m

The overshadowing benefits of these options range from an additional 4 minutes of sunlight to a maximum of 20 minutes of increased sunlight for Option 4.

Each of these options has been carefully considered by the College, design team and planning team and the pros and cons weighed against one another. It is the view of the team that the overshadowing benefits are relatively small for the compromise in quality of teaching space and building composition, time and cost and as such we do not propose to adopt any of these moves.



10. Re-examine the translation of the built form from sketch design to final design. Consider whether the architectural elegance has been lost in the formalisation and increase in scale of the building.

The design concept sketch referred to is included to the left for reference, this diagram speaks to the idea of the building podium terracing into the landscape and is deliberately silent about the language of the facade, to diagrammatically communicate the landscape concept. The sketch was an early concept, however the themes remain consistent within the current design and as can be seen from the overlay (above) the scale of the building remains the same. The canopy to the ELC has been changed from the brick and planted expression (which is a motif of where the building touches the ground) to a blade awning in order to lighten the building as it transitions towards the sky. More significant to the evolution of the design from this concept phase was the move to plant the 'outdoor room'/ atrium space, signalling this as an outdoor and shared space.

11. The new building has a clear formal relationship with the interior character of the site and its historic buildings. Presently this same language is carried over to the suburban side of the building that faces Pymble Ave. In relation to the previous two points, re-examine the scale, character, and architectural language of this elevation so that it might fit into its context more appropriately.

The architectural expression of the suburban elevation has been broken down and articulated through the use of four key material and compositional elements:

- **Brick base - podium brick material is experienced from south elevation predominantly (the motif of where the building touches the ground) to reduce the scale of the continuous tallest portion of the building**
- **Ceramic fins in warm sandstone colour - references the verticality and colour of the Blue Gum tree trunks which will ultimately form a buffer between the residential properties and the school. Soft natural colour and material chosen to be a recessive light element.**
- **Picture windows with interlayer - random composition of picture windows breaks down the scale of the flat section of elevation and adds an element of playfulness to the composition. Interlayer partially obscures views down from these picture windows to minimise views into neighbouring properties.**
- **Landscape elements - Climbing planters to the atrium edge and planting to each of the terraced outdoor learning areas on levels 0, 1 and 2 softens the appearance to the south. The reforestation and planting of the boundary edge landscape with significant canopy trees will also distinguish this elevation from others on the building.**









Site Context & Analysis

02

02.01 SITE LOCATION



02.02 PRECINCT AERIAL PHOTO



02.03 COLLEGE CONTEXT

SITE LOCATION

Pymble Ladies College is located in Pymble, NSW, a suburb located approximately 20 kilometres north of the Sydney Central Business District (CBD).

The property is on a block bounded by Avon Road to the northwest and northeast, Pymble Avenue to the southeast and the Avondale Golf Club to the southwest. The school site takes up approximately 50 acres, with residential areas located to the northwest and southeast, including a number of heritage items which front Pymble Avenue. The main commercial area of Pymble is located to the northeast, including the Pymble Train Station, as well as shops and cafes.

In recent years, there have been multi-residential apartment developments to the northeast of the site along Pymble Ave, towards the train station and commercial areas.

The school site, with a number of historic as well as contemporary buildings, is set within a landscaped setting. The main entry is via a gated entry off Avon Road. A secondary, pedestrian pathway referred to as the, 'GREY HOUSE WALK' is located between 57 and 59 Pymble Avenue (known as Grey House), and connects Pymble Avenue to the school site. It opens directly onto the subject area of the proposal.

ARCHITECTURAL AND URBAN CONTEXT

The College site occupies a total area of approximately 20 hectares (ha) and exhibits street frontages to Avon Road to the north and west. The eastern site boundary directly adjoins the rear gardens of the dwelling houses and residential flat buildings in Pymble Avenue, and the southern site boundary adjoins Avondale Golf course.

The campus presents itself to the neighbouring street as a collection of school buildings and sports facilities set within a bushland setting. The courtyards between buildings at the centre of site are more formal in nature and reflect the historic brick buildings within this area, with the War Memorial Chapel at its centre.

The Grey House Precinct is situated at the periphery of the central Teaching Precinct of the College site, where it adjoins the main College to the north, the eastern site boundary, the Centenary Sports Precinct to the south-west and the Boarding Precinct to its west.



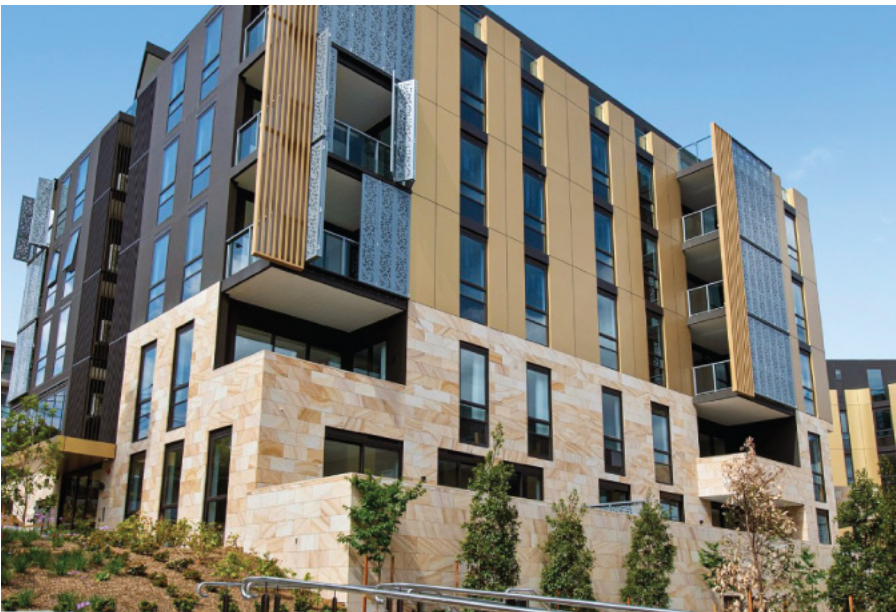
GREY HOUSE CIRCA-1939 (SOURCE: KU-RING-GAI COUNCIL)



GREY HOUSE 2014 (SOURCE: REALESTATE.COM.AU)

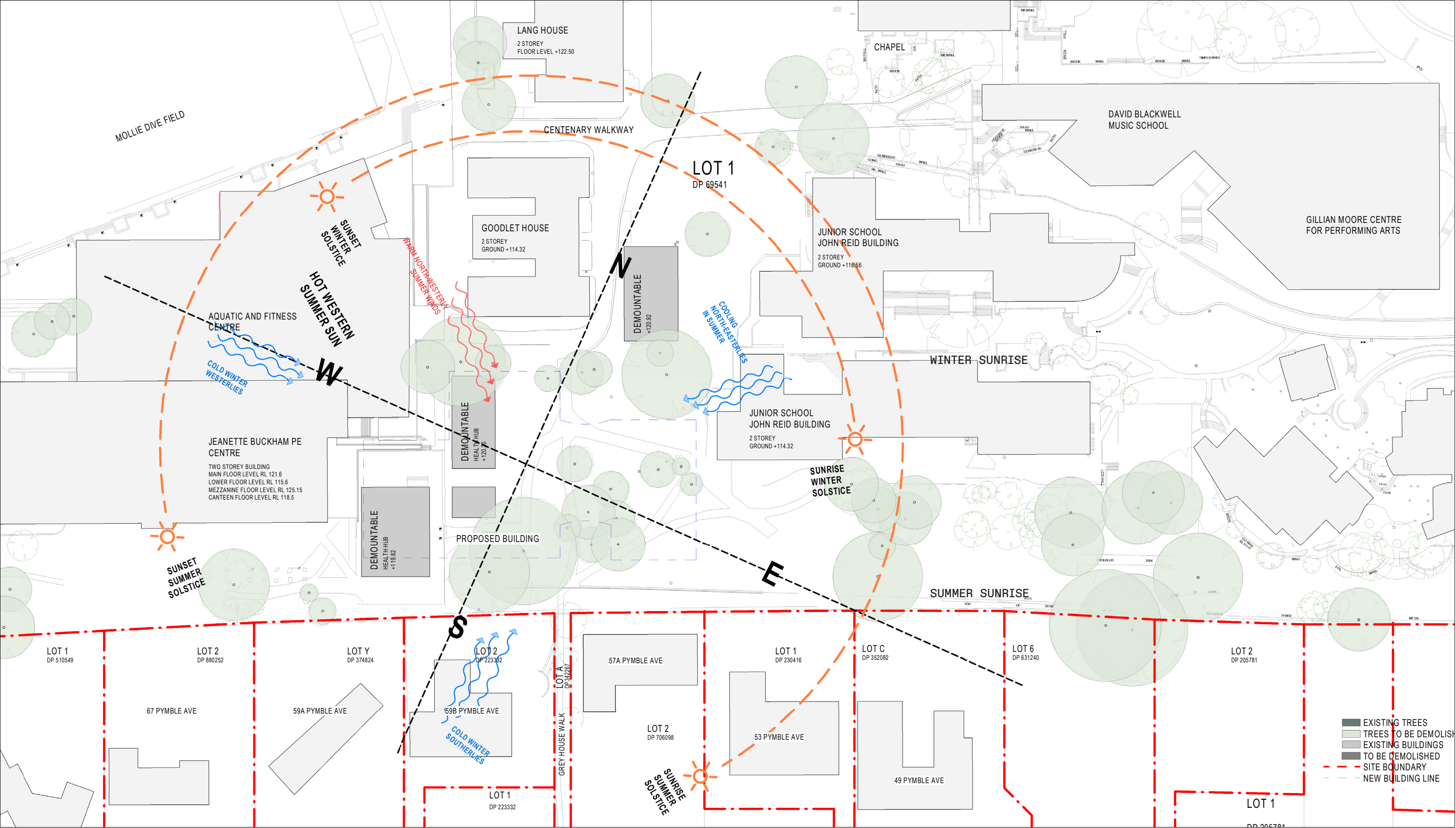


MERITON IRONBARK



CASCADE GARDENS DEVELOPMENT

02.04 ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS



NATURAL BUSHLAND CONDITION

The college campus contains natural bushland of varying conditions, ranging from fair to very poor. There are two Endangered Ecological Communities identified onsite; the Sydney Turpentine-ironbark Forest (STIF) and Blue Gum High Forest (BGHF), which continue to support a range of native flora and fauna.

The more substantial BGHF on the western boundary adjacent to Avon road is in fair condition. Patches of BGHF near Grey House Walk and east of the oval are also in fair condition. These natural bush areas show signs of resilience but are missing ground or shrub layers of vegetation.

The Sydney Turpentine-Ironbark Forest (STIF) which encompasses the agricultural plots is identified as being in poor condition as many structural attributes are absent. Similarly, two small patches of vegetation north of Grey House Walk are in poor condition as they are predominantly canopy vegetation only. Vegetation in the northeast corner

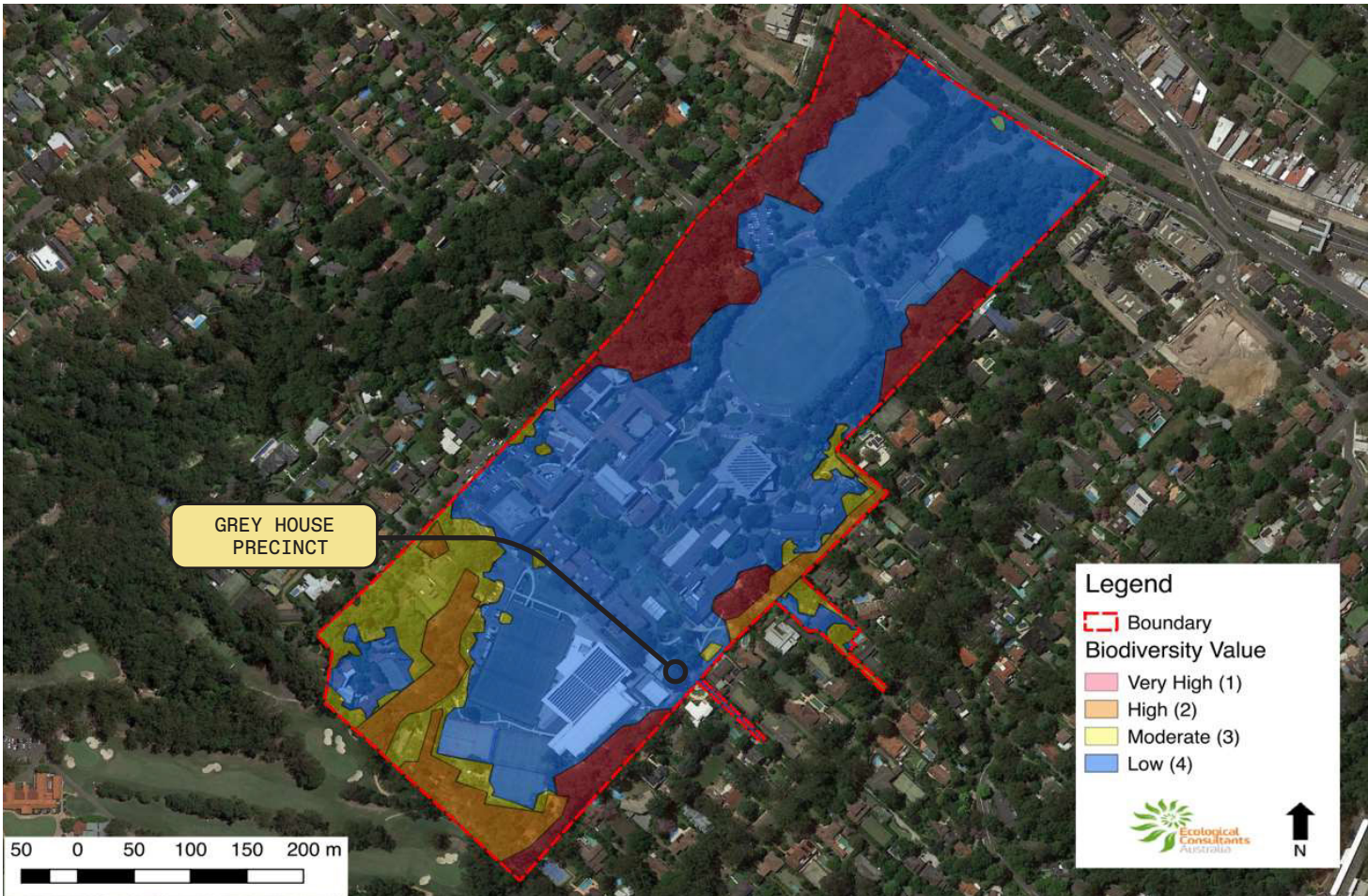
of the college is in very poor condition and is dominated by weed species, some of which are Weeds of National Significance (WoNs).

The project aims to increase the vegetation condition on-site by way of reinstating the BGHF through planting of Sydney Blue Gums in areas adjacent to the south-eastern boundary near Grey House Walk, and native ground cover to areas surrounding remnant patches of BGHF and STIF.

SELECTION OF PROJECT SITE

The college Master Plan sets out clear principles in relation to ecology; to protect, enhance and promote the biodiversity values of the college.

The proposed project site lies within an area of “low” biodiversity value, and therefore is expected to have reduced impact on ecological values of the college.



MAP OF BIODIVERSITY VALUE (SOURCE: DRAGONFLY)



MAP OF VEGETATION CONDITION (SOURCE: DRAGONFLY)

02.06 SCHOOL MASTER PLAN

The College Master Plan has been developed by MGS Architects and the college between 2019-2020. The following is the Master Plan Vision for the campus, outlining potential project sites and key circulation paths:



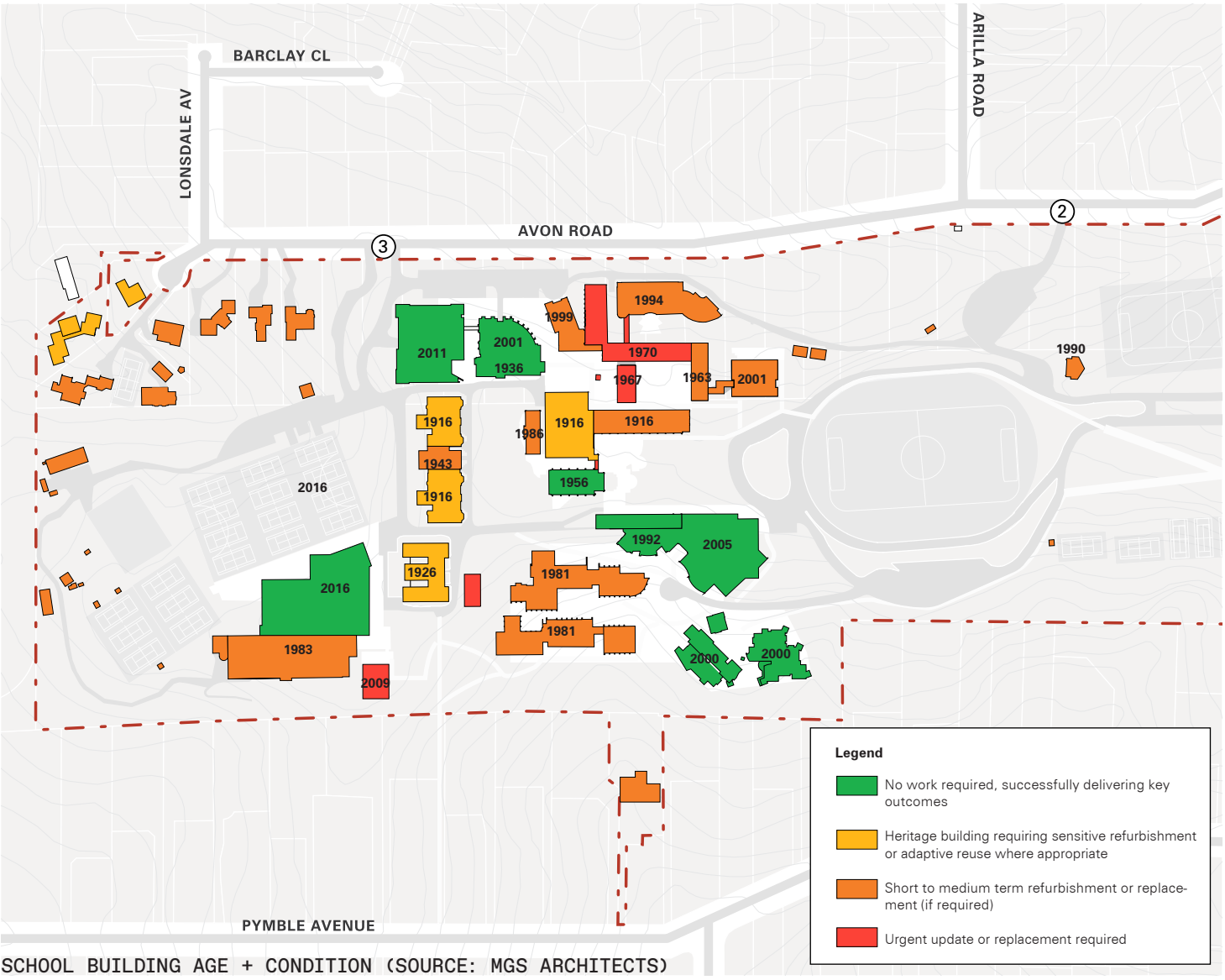
MASTER PLAN SHORT-TERM PROJECTS (SOURCE: MGS ARCHITECTS)

02.07 SURROUNDING BUILDINGS

COLLEGE BUILDINGS

Pymble Ladies' College was opened in 1916 with its four completed foundation buildings, and have since undergone periods of campus development. The campus now has over 30 buildings within its 50 acre site.

As part of the Master Plan report, a study of the existing buildings was prepared by the college and MGS Architects in 2019 to investigate their various degrees of condition, and therefore have identified key areas where urgent/short to medium term building refurbishment or replacement is required to meet the needs of the school's learning requirements.



02.08 SURROUNDING BUILDINGS



WAR MEMORIAL CHAPEL AT THE HEART OF COLLEGE GROUNDS (SOURCE: PYMBLE LADIES COLLEGE)



GOODLET HOUSE (SOURCE: PYMBLE LADIES COLLEGE)



MARDEN HOUSE (SOURCE: PYMBLE LADIES COLLEGE)



JEANETTE BUCKHAM PE CENTRE

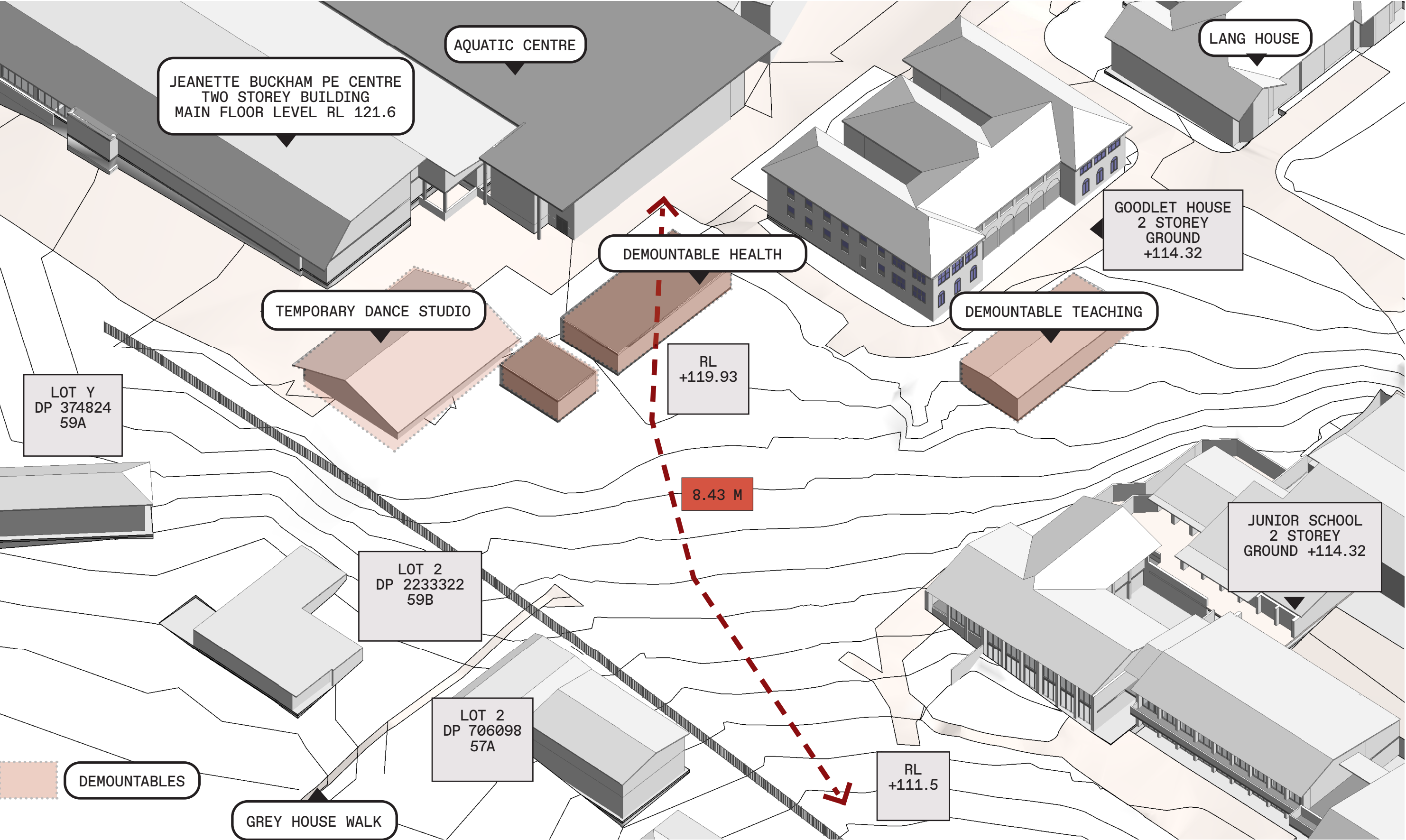


JOHN REID JUNIOR SCHOOL BUILDING



AQUATIC & FITNESS CENTRE (SOURCE: PDML ARCHITECTS)

02.09 EXISTING SITE + DEMOLITION



02.10 SITE PHOTOS

