



FINAL Visual Impact Assessment for a Proposed Adaptive Reuse of the former Berrima Gaol

State Significant Development Application

Prepared for the Blue Sox Group

Report Dated: 22 August 2025





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‘Dagura Buumarri’
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‘Gadalung Djarri’
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Ethos Urban acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and culture.

We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

In supporting the Uluru Statement from the Heart, we walk with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.

In March 2025, Ethos Urban took a major step toward future growth by partnering with leading professional services firm, Colliers. While our name evolves, our commitment to delivering high-quality solutions remains unchanged—now strengthened by broader access to property and advisory services and expertise.

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This document has been prepared by:		This document has been reviewed by:	
IL, JH, CB		CB CB	
Version No.	Date of issue	Prepared by	Approved by
1.0 (DRAFT)	15/08/25	IL, JH, CB, LK, NH	CB
2.0 (FINAL)	22/08/25	NH	CB
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Glossary

Abbreviation	Meaning
Applicant	Blue Sox Developments Pty Ltd
BDCP 2021	Berrima Village Development Control Plan 2021
Character	Is what makes one neighbourhood distinctive from another. It is the way a place 'looks and feels'. It is created by the way built and natural elements in both the public realm and private domain interrelate with one another, including the interplay between buildings, architectural style, subdivision patterns, activity, topography and vegetation (Planning Circular PS 21-026, NSW Government, 2021)
Characteristics	Elements, or combinations of elements, which make a contribution to distinctive landscape character (GLVIA3, Landscape Institute and IEMA, 2013)
CMP	Conservation management plan
Department	NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
EIS	Environmental impact statement
Elements	Individual parts which make up the landscape, such as, for example, trees, hedges and buildings (GLVIA3, Landscape Institute and IEMA, 2013)
Feature	Particularly prominent or eye-catching elements in the landscape, such as tree clumps, church towers or wooded skylines (GLVIA3, Landscape Institute and IEMA, 2013)
FSR	Floor space ratio
HCA	Heritage conservation area
Key characteristics	Those combinations of elements which are particularly important to the current character of the landscape and help to give an area its particularly distinctive sense of place (GLVIA3, Landscape Institute and IEMA, 2013)
Landscape	An area, as perceived by people, the character of which is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors (GLVIA3, Landscape Institute and IEMA, 2013)
LCA	Landscape conservation area
LEC	Land and Environment Court of NSW
LGA	Local government area
Magnitude	A term that combines judgements about the size and scale of the effect, the extent of the area over which it occurs, whether it is reversible or irreversible and whether it is short or long term in duration (GLVIA3, Landscape Institute and IEMA, 2013)

Abbreviation	Meaning
Photomontage	A visualisation which superimposes an image of a proposed development upon a photograph or series of photographs (GLVIA3, Landscape Institute and IEMA, 2013)
Proposal	Berrima Quarter
SDRP	NSW State Design Review Panel
SEARS	Secretary's environmental assessment requirements
Sensitivity	A term applied to specific receptors, combining judgements of the susceptibility of the receptor to the specific type of change or development proposed and the value related to that receptor (GLVIA3, Landscape Institute and IEMA, 2013)
SHR	NSW State Heritage Register
Significance	A measure of the importance or gravity of the environmental effect, defined by significance criteria specific to the environmental topic (GLVIA3, Landscape Institute and IEMA, 2013)
Site	2 – 4 Argyle Street and 30 Wingecarribee Street, Berrima
SSDA	State significant development application
Townscape	The character and composition of the built environment including the buildings and the relationships between them, the different types of urban open space, including green spaces, and the relationship between buildings and open spaces (GLVIA3, Landscape Institute and IEMA, 2013)
VIA	Visual impact assessment
Visual amenity	The overall pleasantness of the views people enjoy of their surroundings, which provides an attractive visual setting or backdrop for the enjoyment of activities of the people living, working, recreating, visiting or travelling through an area (GLVIA3, Landscape Institute and IEMA, 2013)
WLEP 2010	Wingecarribee Local Environmental Plan 2010

Executive Summary

Blue Sox Developments Pty Ltd (Blue Sox) has submitted a State significant development application (SSDA) to the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (the Department) seeking development consent for the proposed adaptive re-use of the State heritage listed former Berrima Gaol (the site) as a tourist facility referred to as the Berrima Quarter (the proposal).

Ethos Urban in collaboration with Virtual Ideas and CMS Surveyors has prepared this visual impact assessment (VIA) to support this SSDA. Its purpose is to determine whether the proposal has an acceptable visual impact through address of the secretary's environmental assessment requirements (SEARs) issued by the Department for the SSDA (SSD-66876472) on 1 March 2024 relevant to VIA.

The site and its context

The site is large and strategically located on a rise above the adjoining part of Berrima to the east which includes the Old Hume Highway.

The visual feature of the site is the 1830s former gaol, and in particular its high, sandstone external walls. The gaol can be most keenly appreciated in a visual sense from its Argyle Street frontage, where it is seen in context with its ancillary former Governor's Residence and former Deputy Governor's Residence / Warden's Cottage and associated formal gardens, and its Wilshire Street frontage where it is seen in context with the former Court House and the external walls can be seen in close range.

Berrima itself is included within the Berrima Heritage Conservation due to it being a rare example of a largely intact, Georgian era village.

The proposal

A large part of the proposal involves the adaptive reuse of the main part of the gaol and grounds within its external walls, and as such will not be visible from the adjoining public domain. The proposed interventions in the external walls to create openable, publicly accessible pedestrian entrances as well as hotel suites at the western end of the site and an grade, open to the sky carpark at the southern end of the site are most relevant to VIA.

The planning framework

The overall intent of the planning framework is to ensure development is sensitive to the visual character of the site and Berrima.

Key VIA issues

Key VIA issues to consider are:

- **Significant views:** impact on significant views obtained from the public domain
- **Streetscape:** impact on adjoining streetscapes, being Argyle Street, Wilshire Street and Wingecarribee Street
- **Townscape:** impact on the townscape character of Berrima
- **Visual amenity:** impact on the visual amenity of the site, its surrounds, and Berrima more broadly
- **Wingecarribee River:** impact on the visual character of the Wingecarribee River
- **Landscape character:** impact on the Berrima Landscape Conservation Area west of the Wingecarribee River.

Methodology

To inform the VIA, photos showing the existing visual environment and survey aligned photomontages showing the likely future environment prepared in accordance with the Land and Environment Court of NSW 'Use of Photomontages and Visualisation Tools' (17 May 2024) were prepared for 5 key viewpoints in the surrounding primary visual catchment.

Visual analysis

The site's primary visual catchment comprises Argyle Street, Wilshire Street and Wingecarribee Street, as well as the Wilshire Street & Wingecarribee Street entrances to the bush walking trail.

The pattern of viewing is largely residents at home and visitors to the site and Berrima in the closer range.

Visual impact assessment / findings

VIA showed that while the sensitivity of the site overall to the nature of change proposed is high due to its State heritage listing and inclusion in the Berrima Heritage Conservation, this sensitivity varies across the site. While the Argyle Street and Wilshire Street frontages are highly sensitive, the Wingecarribee Street frontage is less sensitive for a range of reasons including it having no visual connection to the village east of Argyle Street.

The magnitude of visual impact was assessed as ranging from perceptible to considerable.

The significance of visual impact was assessed as follows:

- Viewpoint 1 Entrance Gate (Argyle Street): low
- Viewpoint 2 The Governor's Residence and Entrance Gate (Argyle Street): low
- Viewpoint 3 Gaol Wall and western annexe (Wilshire Street): moderate
- Viewpoint 4 Wingecarribee Street: high
- Viewpoint 5 Wilshire Street: high.

As such, using the SEARs terminology the proposal is considered to have the potential for a significant visual impact on the public domain. However, a significant visual impact is not determinative of an unacceptable visual impact. Rather, this is determined by having regard to the planning framework, mitigation measures, and other relevant environmental planning grounds.

Assessment against the planning framework

The most relevant part of the planning framework is the Wingecarribee Local Environmental Plan 2010 (WLEP 2010). While not applying to SSDA, the Berrima Village Development Control Plan 2021 provides guidance in considering the merits of the proposal. The proposal is considered to be consistent with the WLEP 2010, including through

- retaining and adaptively reusing the gaol as a critical built environmental landscape element that makes up the scenic and cultural heritage value of Wingecarribee
- being in keeping with the special characteristics of the site.

Discussion of key issues

It is acknowledged that the hotel suites and carpark have visual impacts. However, with reference to the key issues, the proposal overall is not considered to have an unacceptable visual impact. In particular, it will not unacceptably impact the 6 key Conservation Management Plan views, and will not interrupt or diminish the integrity of the critically important visual relationship between the site, Argyle Street, the Court House and that part of the village to the east of Argyle Street focussed around the Old Hume Highway.

In addition, its removal of detracting visual elements and its high visual quality will improve the visual amenity of the site, and in particular the Wingecarribee Street streetscape.

Mitigation measures

The VIA has found that primary design measures, including the siting of the hotel suites and carpark at the least visually sensitive western and southern parts of the site, their setback from streets, their integration with existing topography, the height of the hotel suites being less than the gaol, the relatively small footprint of the gaol, the massing and form of the gaol and the incorporation of materiality and colours that are complementary to the existing visual landscape, adequately mitigate the visual impact of the proposal. As such, additional fundamental or large scale mitigation measures are not considered necessary.

Conclusion

While acknowledging that the proposal will have a visual impact, overall on the balance of relevant considerations, this impact is considered acceptable. As such, it is the conclusion of the VIA that the proposal can be supported on visual impact grounds.



1 Introduction

1.0 Introduction

This part identifies the purpose and structure of this VIA.

Blue Sox Developments Pty Ltd (Blue Sox) has submitted a State significant development application (SSDA) to the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (the Department) seeking development consent for the proposed adaptive re-use of the State heritage listed former Berrima Gaol (the site) as a tourist facility referred to as the Berrima Quarter (the proposal).

Ethos Urban in collaboration with Virtual Ideas and CMS Surveyors has prepared this visual impact assessment (VIA) to support this SSDA. Its purpose is to by determine whether the proposal has an acceptable visual impact through address of the secretary's environmental assessment requirements (SEARs) issued by the Department for the SSDA (SSD-66876472) on 1 March 2024 relevant to VIA (refer table below).

An unacceptable visual impact is determined by whether the proposal has a significant visual impact that is not consistent with the planning framework and cannot be adequately mitigated or justified on environmental planning grounds.

Issue	Assessment Requirements	Documentation
6. Visual Impact	- Provide a visual analysis of the development from key viewpoints, including photomontages or perspectives showing the proposed and likely future development - Where the visual analysis has identified potential for significant visual impact, provide a visual impact assessment that addresses the impacts of the development on the existing catchment	- Visual Analysis - Visual Impact Assessment

Table 1. SEARs relevant to VIA

This VIA has the following structure:

- Part 1 Introduction:** identifies the purpose and structure of this VIA
- Part 2 The site and its context:** describes the site and its context, including their character and key visual characteristics
- Part 3 The proposal:** outlines the proposal, including its character and key visual characteristics
- Part 4 Methodology:** outlines the methodology used in the VIA
- Part 5 Planning framework:** identifies relevant parts of the planning framework to VIA
- Part 6 Key VIA issues:** identifies the key issues that need to be considered by the VIA
- Part 7 Visual analysis:** identifies the visual catchment, the pattern of viewing, and key viewpoints in the visual catchment for which visual impact assessment will be undertaken
- Part 8 Visual impact assessment:** assesses the likely visual impact of the proposal informed by an evidence base of photos showing the existing view and a survey aligned photomontage from each key viewpoint, including identifying the sensitivity of the viewpoint to the nature of change proposed, the magnitude of the nature of change proposed, the significance of the visual impact, and whether the proposal has a significant visual impact overall
- Part 9 Findings:** summarises the findings of the visual impact assessment

- Part 10 Assessment against the planning framework:** assesses whether the proposal is consistent with relevant parts of the planning framework to VIA
- Part 11 Discussion of key issues:** discusses the performance of the proposal in relation to the key issues
- Part 12 Mitigation measures:** discusses whether the proposal's visual impact can be adequately mitigated
- Part 13 Conclusion:** identifies whether the proposal has an acceptable visual impact and can be supported on visual impact grounds.

The attachments provide a copy of the visual impact evidence upon which this VIA relies.

As it forms part of the larger SSDA, the VIA does not repeat matters more appropriately covered in other documents. In particular, it defers to and relies on statements in:

- planning documents addressing matters such as land zoning and permissibility
- design documents addressing matters such as design intent, strategies and measures
- heritage documents addressing heritage matters, in particular heritage values and significance.

As such, it should be read together with these other documents.



2 The site and its context

2.0 The site and its context

This part describes the site and its context, including their character and key visual characteristics.

2.1 The site

The site is located at 2 – 4 Argyle Street and 30 Wingecarribee Street, Berrima (Lots 1 and 2 in DP 1283819).

It is generally rectangular in shape, has an area of 2.155ha (approx.) and is bounded by Wilshire Street to the north, Argyle Street to the east, Wingecarribee Street to the south, and the Wingecarribee River and its open space corridor to the west (refer below figure).

The site is currently occupied by the State heritage listed former Berrima Gaol, as well as ancillary buildings, structures and spaces. Key parts include:

- the main former Gaol building in the centre of the site
- the former Governor’s Residence, Deputy Governor’s Residence / Wardens Cottage and gardens at the eastern Argyle Street frontage of the site
- the Industries Building in the north-west of the site
- former tennis courts at the south-west of the site
- former vegetable gardens in the south of the site
- Wingecarribee River corridor at the west of the site.

Elements of particular visual note include the Gaol Wall and the Entrance Gate.

The BDCP 2021 includes the site in the Gaol and Court House Precinct, and provides the following statement of character:

- ‘This precinct is dominated by the Gaol and Court House and the style and power of these two buildings, along with their elevated siting above the Old Hume Highway, influences the character of the precinct. Other heritage buildings which contribute to character are the Argyle Cottages. These are a matching pair of fine period cottages overlooking Pound Green, the verandah sandstone residence of the early Police Sergeant in Wilshire Street, Stone Cottage and the large double storey Governor’s residence. The precinct also includes the path to Lambies Well, reputedly the first water supply for Berrima’.

The NSW State Heritage Register (SHR) provides the following statement of significance for the gaol:

- ‘Berrima Correctional Centre is historically significant as it contains elements of the original Berrima Gaol, dating from the 1830s. Its original configuration was distinctive, employing a partial panopticon layout. Subsequent changes and uses reflect the changing philosophies, expectations and requirements for the incarceration of criminals in NSW, and penal architecture generally from the 1830s until the present day
- This complex and adjoining courthouse reflect the importance of Berrima as a regional centre in the early 19th century, and are directly linked to its subsequent development. Berrima Correctional Centre is aesthetically significant for its form and character; while the complex has a form and fabric from a range of periods, it retains a distinctive character through the consistent use of sandstone, dominant fence, gatehouse, adjoining stone & brick residences and landscaped setting

- At a local level, the Berrima Correctional Centre is socially significant for its role in law and order in the local area, as well as being an important local employer since the early 19th century. Berrima Correctional Centre has technical / research significance and is rare at a national level as it contains elements of the original Berrima Gaol, dating from the 1830s. Furthermore, its original configuration was distinctive, employing a partial panopticon layout, and records and fabric relating to this earlier configuration are rare
- Subject to further comparative analysis and assessment under the criteria for the National Heritage List, this site may be of National heritage significance’.

It’s complete SHR listing is shown in the below table.

SHR Criteria	Description
SHR Criteria a) Historical Significance	Berrima Correctional Centre is historically significant as it contains elements of the original Berrima Gaol, dating from the 1830s. Its original configuration was distinctive, employing a partial panopticon layout. Subsequent changes and uses reflect the changing philosophies, expectations and requirements for the incarceration of criminals in NSW, and penal architecture generally from the 1830s until the present day.
SHR Criteria c) Aesthetic Significance	Berrima Correctional Centre is aesthetically significant for its form and character, containing elements of the original Berrima Gaol, dating from the 1830s. While the complex has a form and fabric from a range of periods, it retains a distinctive character through the consistent use of sandstone, dominant fence, gatehouse, adjoining stone & brick residences and landscaped setting.
SHR Criteria d) Social Significance	At a local level, the Berrima Correctional Centre is socially significant for its role in law and order in the local area, as well as being an important local employer since the early 19th century.
SHR Criteria e) Research Significance	Berrima Correctional Centre has technical / research significance as it contains elements of the original Berrima Gaol, dating from the 1830s. Furthermore, its original configuration was distinctive, employing a partial panopticon layout, and records and fabric relating to this earlier configuration are rare. Subsequent changes and uses reflect the changing philosophies, expectations and requirements for the incarceration of criminals in NSW, and penal architecture generally from the 1830s until the present day.
SHR Criteria f) Rare Assessment	Berrima Correctional Centre is rare as it contains elements of the original Berrima Gaol, dating from the 1830s. Furthermore, its original configuration was distinctive, employing a partial panopticon layout, and records and fabric relating to this earlier configuration are rare.
Integrity/Intactness	Berrima Correctional Centre has a moderate degree of integrity and intactness.

Table 2. SHR listing for the Berrima Gaol

2.1.1 Visual character

Visual characteristics of sites are shaped by the interplay of the following attributes:

- natural environment, being topography, waterways, and vegetation
- human environment, being public domain, land use, and built form.

Topography

While overall it slopes to the south and west, when seen from the adjoining public domain the site is seen as having a varied topography as follows:

- **Argyle Street:** topography slopes gently to the south (refer figure below)
- **Wilshire Street:** topography is generally level (refer figure below)
- **Wingecarribee Street:** topography slopes steeply to the west (refer figure below).

Reflecting its former functional requirements, the natural topography of part of the Gaol within its walls (ie, the main gaol building and grounds) has been modified by human activity and has a level topography.

Notably, this establishes a strong visual contrast with the steep fall of Wingecarribee Street and the adjoining former vegetable gardens that occupies most of the southern part of the site (refer figure below).

The western end of the site falls away steeply. This includes a low, sandstone escarpment separating the site from the Wingecarribee River corridor (refer image below). Due to the escarpment, views from the river corridor to the site are in part obscured.

Waterways

While the site does not contain any above ground formed waterways, its western boundary adjoins the Wingecarribee River.

Lambie’s Well, which is a natural source of drinking water, is located at the base of the escarpment.

Vegetation

The Argyle Street part of the site east of the gaol walls comprises traditional, formally landscaped gardens.

They feature large areas of well-maintained grass, ornamental tree

and shrub plantings, low hedges, low stone fencing, and formal paths. Notably, a large, spreading and well-established cypress tree located at the main entrance to the gaol is a visually prominent feature of this area.

Conversely, much of the remainder of the site is absent of trees.

For example, the general absence of trees along the site’s Wilshire Street frontage enables the northern gaol walls to be visually prominent.

The former vegetable gardens is now an un-maintained grassed area. Un-maintained grassed areas are also located at the western end of the site aligned with steeply sloping land.

The escarpment and Wingecarribee River corridor contains trees, shrubs and grass in a bushland character.

In contrast, the western section of the site consists predominantly of open, well-maintained grassed areas, with no significant tree cover.

Reported observations from community engagement noted the intrusion of weeds in this area (Turner, 2025).

Public domain

The main street address of the site is Argyle Street. Other adjoining streets are Wilshire Street to the north, and Wingecarribee Street to the north. This arrangement creates a largely ‘island’ site. Together with other elements such as trees and vegetation, this establishes the opportunity for much of the site to be visible from the public domain. The main exception to this is the main gaol buildings and grounds enclosed by the gaol wall.

While public paths are visible at the Argyle Street frontage of the site, access is generally prevented for the general public. As such, the site does not presently have physically accessible public domain.

Land use

While now no longer used for these purposes, the site was formerly used for the Berrima Gaol (also formerly known as the Berrima Correctional Centre).

A large part of the site is occupied by the former main gaol building and its grounds. The remainder of the site was occupied by ancillary uses, including:

- dwellings formerly used by government officials at the eastern, Argyle Street frontage of the site
- outbuildings, carport and garage at the south-eastern Argyle

Street and Wingecarribee Street part of the site

- the Industries Building at the north-west, Wilshire Street part of the site
- former vegetable gardens at the southern, Wingecarribee Street of the site
- a former tennis court at the south-west part of the site.

Built form

The external wall of the former main gaol building and its grounds is the main built form and visually dominant feature of the site.

The wall screens largely screens the remainder of the Gaol buildings and grounds from view from the adjoining public domain.

In terms of key built form parameters, the wall:

- is sited to the centre north of the site, setback from Argyle Street and Wingecarribee Street however adjoining the Wilshire Street road reserve
- has a large size and apparent scale largely derived from the height and length and of its external wall, with the scale of the wall particularly appreciable from Wilshire Street due to its nil setback and from Wingecarribee Street due to its relationship with topography
- has a simple, geometric form, line and massing
- is of sandstone construction, with an associated light brown colouring.

The eastern, Argyle Street frontage of the site features the former Governor’s Residence at its southern end and the Deputy Governor’s Residence / Wardens Cottage at its northern end.

In terms of key built form parameters, the buildings are:

- setback from Argyle Street, and surrounded by traditional, formal gardens
- while the former Governor’s Residence has a two storey height and is visually prominent to Argyle Street, have an overall modest scale relative to the gaol wall (particularly in terms of site cover and floor area)
- the former Governor’s Residence is Federation style (erected 1898), while the Deputy Governor’s Residence / Wardens Cottage is Federation Queen Anne style
 - Are primarily of stone and brick construction, with an associated neutral or visually undemanding colours.

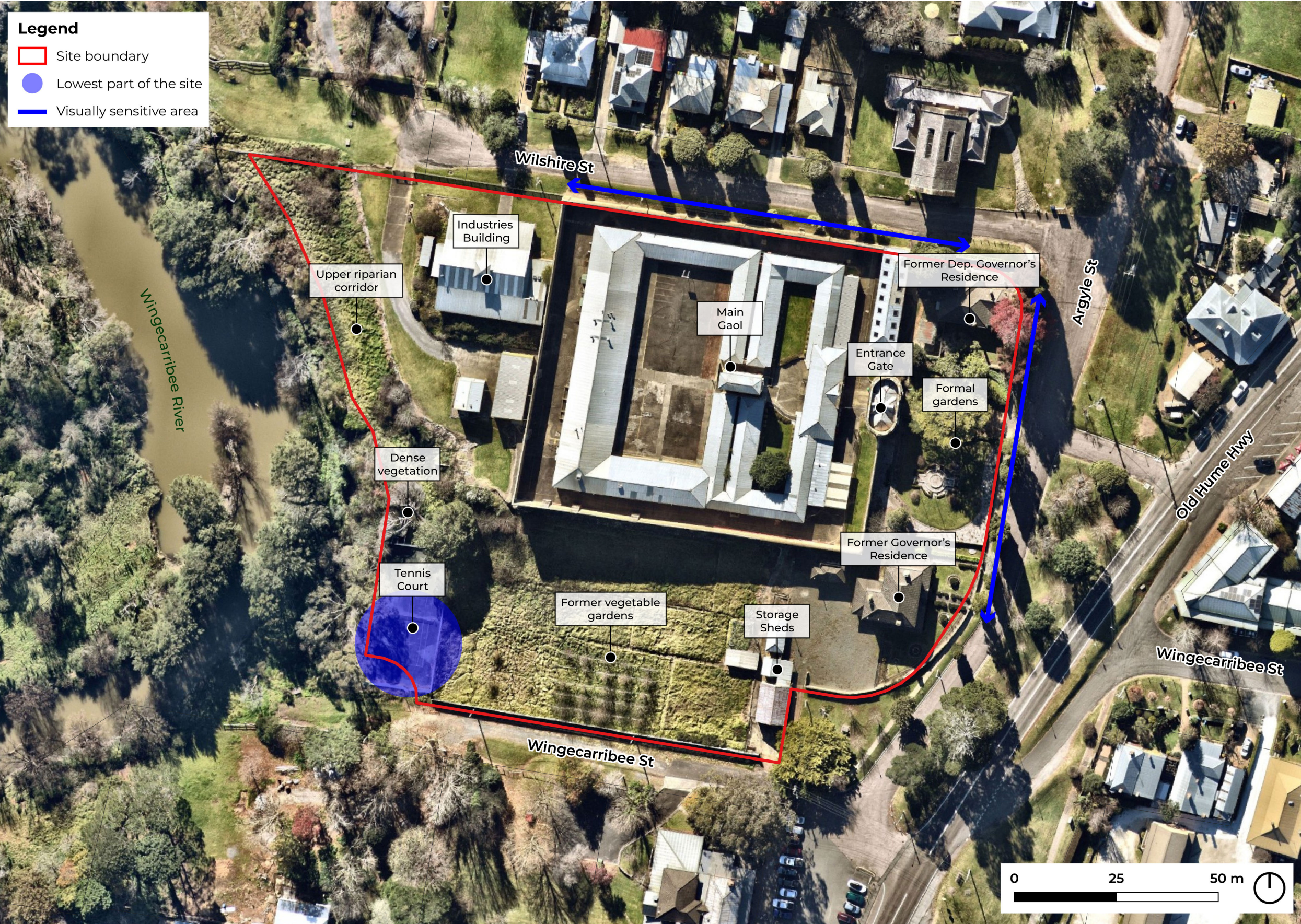


Figure 1. Map of the site
Source: Nearmap and Ethos Urban



Figure 2. Map of the site context
 Source: Nearmap and Ethos Urban



Figure 3. The Berrima Landscape Conservation Area seen from near the site
Source: Ethos Urban



Figure 4. The former vegetable garden
Source: Ethos Urban



Figure 5. The sandstone escarpment
Source: Ethos Urban



Figure 6. The Wingecarribee River adjoining the site
Source: Ethos Urban



Figure 7. Argyle Street adjoining the site
Source: Ethos Urban



Figure 8. Wingecarribee Street adjoining the site
Source: Ethos Urban



Figure 9. Wilshire Street adjoining the site
Source: Ethos Urban



Figure 10. The Entrance Gate seen from Argyle Street
Source: Ethos Urban



Figure 11. The Former Governor's Residence seen from Argyle Street
Source: Ethos Urban



Figure 12. The Gaol Wall seen from Wilshire Street
Source: Ethos Urban



Figure 13. The Industries Building seen from the western end of Wilshire Street
Source: Ethos Urban

2.2 Adjoining land

Adjoining land is as follows:

- **north:** low density residential area comprising detached houses on standard or larger sized lots, and the heritage listed former Berrima Courthouse
- **south:** part of the village centre comprising shops, cafes and notably the Surveyor General Inn And low density residential area comprising detached houses on larger sized lots,
- **east:** the main part of the Berrima village centre along the Old Hume Highway
- **west:** Wingecarribee River.

2.3 Broader context

The site is located in the village of Berrima within the Wingecarribee Shire Council local government area (LGA) in the Southern Highlands Region of NSW.

Berrima is of particular heritage significance, being ‘the last remaining, largely intact, Georgian-period town on mainland Australia’ (Wingecarribee 2040, Wingecarribee Council).

As is discussed later in this VIA, the Berrima Village DCP 2021 (the DCP 2021) includes the built up part of the village in the Berrima Heritage Conservation Area (HCA), and surrounding land in the Berrima Landscape Conservation Area (LCA).

The DCP 2021 provides the following statement of significance for the HCA:

- ‘Berrima is significant as one of the few intact villages in the State which demonstrate the characteristics of nineteenth century town development from the period of convict settlement to the end of the Victorian era. Its original layout and town limits are largely intact and the surviving stock of residential, commercial and administrative buildings along with churches and major buildings associated with the Gaol, provide evidence of the role of Berrima as an early administrative centre and a town which served generations of travellers on the South Road. The town is also significant as a collection of largely intact early buildings which are predominantly Georgian in style, the value of which is reinforced by the high quality of the surrounding natural environment and plantings within the town. The heritage attributes of Berrima are recognised by visitors from all parts of Australia who enjoy the character and history of the town which has become a cultural tourism attraction’.

2.3.1 Visual character

As with sites, the visual characteristics of contexts are also shaped by the interplay of natural and built attributes.

Topography

The topography of Berrima is overall gently undulating, and defined by its relationship to the Wingecarribee River.

For many people, and in particular visitors to Berrima, this topography is most keenly experienced moving through the village along the Old Hume Highway.

Coming from the south, topography is flat around the river and southern part of the village. Change in topography becomes more visually perceptible from where the Old Hume Highway turns in a more north north-east direction around the former Berrima Post Office.

From here, land including the highway itself is seen to rise to the north, with the eastern, Argyle Street frontage of the site visible as being slightly elevated above the highway. This is recognised in the BDCP 2021, which refers to the site’s ‘elevated siting above the Old Hume Highway’.

Conversely, land is seen to drop away from the highway to the east.

Coming from the north, land including the highway itself is seen to decline to the south. Again, the eastern, Argyle Street frontage of the site visible as being slightly elevated above the highway.

Land also falls away steeply to the Wingecarribee River in large parts of the village.

Waterways

While it is not focussed on or around it, the Wingecarribee River is nonetheless a visual influence on Berrima.

The unnamed small tributary to the east of Wilkinson Street is notable due to its influence on topography and vegetation, which shaped visibility of the site from the residential area to the east.

Vegetation

The urban part of Berrima is generally well vegetated. In particular, houses are surrounded by generously sized, landscaped private open space often featuring exotic tree plantings. These trees are often deciduous in nature, with their turn of leaves being visually notable in autumn months.

The Berrima Landscape Conservation Area (BLCA) comprises a mix of bushland, pastoral farmland and large lot residential areas.

Public domain

Berrima largely has a grid pattern of streets (BDCP 2021) arranged in a general north-south and east-west pattern.

The main exception to this is the Old Hume Highway, which is the villages main street and bisects it diagonally in a general north-east to south-west direction.

As is recognised by the BDCP 2021, streets are largely absent of ‘formed footpaths, kerb and guttering’, contributing to a generally informal street character.

The main public open space in Berrima is Berrima Market Place Park. While located to the south of the site and not within its visual catchment, it contributes to the overall informal, generously spaces character of the village . More notably for the site is the publicly accessible open, grassed space at the visually prominent Old Hume Highway and Oxley Street intersection. Together with other elements such as topography, this space enables a glimpse to be obtained to the eastern, Argyle Street frontage of the site from the main, north-east entry to the village.

Land use

Most of Berrima is largely residential in land use.

However, the village supports a number of commercial uses primarily in the form of shops, cafes and restaurants. These uses are generally visually noticeable.

Of particular relevance to the site:

- the western side of Argyle Street to the south of the site contains a small collection of non-residential uses, most notably the heritage listed Surveyor General Inn

- the eastern side of the Old Hume Highway to the east of the site between Wingecaribee Street and Oxley Street supports a largely continuous strip of ‘main street’ shops, cafes and restaurants.

The corner of Argyle Street and Wilshire Street is occupied by the former Berrima Court House.

The village also contains other residential support uses, including churches.

Built form

In terms of key built form parameters, residential built form is largely:

- setback from all site boundaries, and as such surrounded by generously sized, private landscaped open space
- modest in footprint
- single storey in height

- while varied in architectural style, includes a large proportion of buildings exhibiting the characteristics of Georgian period architecture.

Conversely, commercial buildings have a more varied built form in terms of siting, size and scale, and form and massing. There is a number of visually noticeable commercial buildings distributed throughout the village, including the nearby Old Breens Inn (former Colonial Inn), White Horse Inn and former Post Office.

Further to this, institutional (eg, churches) and former government buildings can have considerable scale. In addition to the gaol, this notably includes the large scale former Court House adjacent the site to the north.

Similar to residential buildings, these commercial, institutional and former government buildings largely exhibit the characteristics of Georgian period architecture. This is recognised by the BDCP 2021 which notes the village has ‘a collection of largely intact early buildings which are predominantly Georgian in style’.

Key points from this part

The site is large and strategically located on a rise above the adjoining part of Berrima to the east which includes the Old Hume Highway.

While generally sloping to the south and west, the site has a varied topography. Land at its northern and eastern ends is most elevated and is highly visible from nearby parts of Berrima. Conversely, land in the south-west of the site represents a low point, and is largely not visible from these areas.

The site adjoins and is located at the top of a low sandstone escarpment from the Wingecaribee River and its corridor. The escarpment screens direct views to the site from much of the corridor

The eastern, Argyle Street frontage of the site contains traditional, formal gardens. The remainder of the site is largely absent of trees, and includes un-maintained grass areas in parts. The river corridor supports bushland.

Being adjoined on three sides by public streets, the site is a visually exposed, almost ‘island site’.

The visual feature of the site is the 1830s former gaol, and in particular its high, sandstone external walls. The gaol can be most keenly appreciated in a visual sense from its Argyle Street frontage, where it is seen in context with its ancillary former Governor’s Residence and former Deputy Governor’s Residence / Warden’s Cottage and associated formal gardens, and its Wilshire Street frontage where it is seen in context with the former Court House and the external walls can be seen in close range.

Supporting the State heritage listed former Berrima Gaol, the site is a key part of Berrima Village.

Berrima itself is included within the Berrima Heritage Conservation due to it being a rare example of a largely intact, Georgian era village.



3 The proposal

3.0 The proposal

This part outlines the proposal, including its character and key visual characteristics.

The proposal involves the adaptive re-use of former Berrima Gaol as a tourist facility referred to as the ‘Berrima Quarter’.

The proposal includes the following components:

- boutique hotel
- function centre
- restaurants
- bar
- wellness facilities.

As is outlined in the planning and design documentation, the proposal has been informed by comprehensive and detailed planning and design process that has included:

- site and context analysis
- benchmarking of other Australian and global adaptive reuse of former Gaols
- community and stakeholder engagement, including with technical experts (eg, heritage specialists), government agencies, local First Nations representatives, and Berrima residents
- consideration of a variety of options
- review and address of advice and recommendations from the NSW State Design Review Panel (SDRP).

In particular, reflecting the heritage significance of the Gaol and the village, the conservation management plan (CMP) prepared by Urbis (2025) has informed all proposed changes to heritage which may impact its values and significance. In addition and recognising the site’s adjacency to the Wingecarribee River, a landscape strategy has also informed the proposal.

As is documented in the Architectural Design Report prepared by Turner (2025), this has included consideration of significant views and vistas.

Responding to this, Blue Sox’s vision for the proposal is:

- ‘to breathe new life into the former Gaol, to acknowledge the layered history, celebrate the heritage significance and open the grounds for locals and visitors to experience the iconic building and surrounding landscape’.

Turner has translated this into a series of design principles and objectives, including address of views and vistas.

Design principles

- Shared and welcoming experience for all
- Reconnect the Gaol with the local community
- Respectful adaptive reuse that acknowledges the layers of the past and engages with the future
- Create a retreat that embraces the landscape setting for all kin and kind.

Design objectives

- Respect and enhance the natural environment
- A material and finishes palette complimentary to place
- Work with the site’s unique and established features and levels
- Maximise views and vistas
- Adaptively reuse and maintain the character of the Gaol and it’s grounds.

The scope of the VIA involves consideration of all components of the proposal that are visible from the public domain.

As such, the following parts are of particular interest:

- Wingecarribee Street carpark
- Existing sheds and residences
- Eastern wall intervention for adaptive reuse
- Hotel suites
- Between the escarpment and the wall
- Wayfinding, signage and public art.

Key points from this part

A large part of the proposal involves the adaptive reuse of the main part of the gaol and grounds within its external walls, and as such will not be visible from the adjoining public domain. The proposed interventions in the external walls to create openable, publicly accessible pedestrian entrances as well as hotel suites at the western end of the site and an grade, open to the sky carpark at the southern end of the site are most relevant to VIA.



Figure 14. Site plan of the proposal
Source: Turner



Figure 15. Artist impression of the proposal as seen from Argyle Street
Source: Turner



4 Methodology

4.0 Methodology

This part outlines the methodology used in the VIA.

The purpose of VIA is to determine whether a proposal has an acceptable visual impact. An unacceptable visual impact is determined by whether the proposal has a significant visual impact that is not consistent with the planning framework and cannot be adequately mitigated or justified on other, relevant environmental grounds.

VIA is a complex and specialist technical discipline that inherently involves qualitative and professional value judgements. While there is a wealth of documents, there is currently no universally agreed, national level guideline for VIA in Australia (AILA, 2019). As noted by the Land and Environment Court of New South Wales (the LEC) in *Rose Bay Marina Pty Limited v Woollahra Municipal Council and anor* [2013] NSWLEC 1046 (Rose Bay), the key to addressing this challenge is to adopt a comprehensive methodology.

To ensure appropriate comprehensiveness and ensure address of the SEARS, the methodology adopted by this VIA comprises 3 key stages:

- Stage 1 – Visual analysis
- Stage 2 – Preparation of the evidence base
- Stage 3 – Visual impact assessment.

4.1 Stage 1 – Visual analysis

The main purpose of this stage is to identify relevant key viewpoints for which VIA can be undertaken.

This stage involves the following key steps:

- identify the visual catchment and the primary visual catchment
- identify the pattern of viewing in the primary visual catchment
- identify key viewpoints that may be used to represent the pattern of viewing in the primary visual catchment and for which an evidence base of photos and photomontages to inform VIA will be prepared.

4.2 Stage 2 – Preparation of the evidence base

The main purpose of this stage is to prepare an evidence base of photos and photomontages in accordance with the LEC 'Use of Photomontages and Visualisation Tools Policy (May 2024) to help inform VIA.

These photos and photomontages are supported by artist illustrations prepared by the project architect, where appropriate, to illustrate detailed architecture and landscaping.

Appendix A provides further detail on this stage of the methodology.

4.3 Stage 3 – Visual impact assessment

Informed by the preceding stages, the main purpose of this stage is to assess the acceptability of the proposal's visual impact.

This stage involves the following key steps:

assessment of the significance of the proposal's visual impact generally in accordance with the principles of the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – Third Edition' (GLVIA3) (Landscape Institute; I.E.M.A., 2013) as informed by the planning principle established by Moore SC and Adam SC of the LEC in their judgement in *Rose Bay Marina Pty Limited v Woollahra Municipal Council and anor* [2013] NSWLEC1046 (Rose Bay)

- assessment of consistency with relevant parts of planning framework.
- consideration of mitigation measures
- consideration of justification on relevant environmental planning grounds.

The GLVIA3 is widely referenced in VIA in Australia (AILA, 2019) and is more versatile for a range of contexts in particular those of an urban nature compared to other commonly referenced but more highly specialised guidance such as that prepared by the US Forestry Service.

Where appropriate, the VIA also has regard to concepts in other relevant guidance including 'Topic Paper 6 – Techniques and criteria for judging capacity and sensitivity' (the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, 2014) (eg, capacity of a landscape to accommodate change arising from development) and *Tenacity Consulting v Waringah* [2004] NSWLEC 140 (Tenacity) (eg, use of the term 'iconic' when considering the value of views).

4.3.1 Significance of the proposal's visual impact

Under the GLVIA3 significance is defined as:

- 'a measure of the importance or gravity of the environmental effect, defined by significance criteria specific to the environmental topic'.

The 'significance criteria' adopted by the VIA are:

- sensitivity of the view to the nature of change proposed
- the magnitude of the nature of change proposed.

4.3.2 Sensitivity of the view to the nature of change proposed

Under the GLVIA3, sensitivity is defined as:

- ‘a term applied to specific receptors (ie, people), combining judgements of the susceptibility of the receptor to the specific type of change or development proposed and the value related to that receptor’.

Noting the value of the site to the character of the surrounding area, for the purposes of comprehensiveness this VIA considers both the sensitivity of people and the landscape. On this basis, sensitivity is considered against 4 factors categorised according to whether they are primarily people or place related:

People factors

- **type of people:** the type of people ordinarily exposed to views of the visual catchment, including residents, workers, travellers and visitors
- **number of people:** the number of people ordinarily exposed to views of the visual catchment.

Place factors

- **visual characteristics:** the presence of elements and features, and the way they come together in composition
- **cultural and social value:** the value of the visual catchment recognised in planning instruments, including significant landscapes, significant views, heritage items or heritage conservation areas, or through the presence of other indicators such as representation in art and literature or provision of facilities intended to enable appreciation of views.

Sensitivity is not absolute. Rather, it is relative taking context into consideration. For example, a visual setting that already has particular elements within it will be less sensitive to the nature of change proposed where that change involves the insertion of a similar type to these existing elements.

The ability for a visual setting to accommodate change without unacceptably diminishing or changing valued existing character is also relevant to sensitivity. In general, complex visual settings comprising a range of different elements (eg, type, size and scale, style and the like) have greater capacity to accommodate change than those that have fewer elements.

4.3.3 Magnitude of the nature of change proposed

Under the GLVIA3, magnitude is defined as:

- ‘a term that combines judgements about the size and scale of the effect, the extent of the area over which it occurs, whether it is reversible or irreversible and whether it is short or long term in duration’.

In this VIA magnitude is determined by considering 3 factors:

- **scale of change:** the apparent scale of change considering matters such as size, form, contrast or compatibility with existing visual character, and the potential for the visual catchment to absorb the proposal
- **geographical extent of the area influenced:** the physical area over which the proposal will be seen
- **duration and / or reversibility of the change:** the length of time the proposal is reasonably expected to exist, and / or the ability for the impact of the proposal to be reversed and the site returned to the state in which it existed before the development occurred.

4.3.4 Factors of sensitivity and magnitude

These factors of sensitivity and magnitude are shown in the below table following table.

No pre-determined weighting is given to each factor. Rather, where one factor strongly influences the assessment, weighting is be discussed in the context of a particular view.

Item	Factor
Sensitivity	People factors • type of people • number of people Place factors • visual characteristics • cultural and social value
Magnitude	• scale of change • geographical extent of the area influenced • duration and / or reversibility of the change

Table 3. Factors of sensitivity and magnitude

4.3.5 Interpreting significance

It is noted that significance is not absolute but rather relative based on how the proposal may ordinarily be perceived by people on a five-point qualitative scale:

- negligible significance of impact
- low significance of impact
- moderate significance of impact
- high significance of impact
- major significance of impact.

There is no pre-determined definition of the difference between each of these findings. Rather, it is inherently subjective and varies according to the nature of each view. In this regard the GLVIA3 makes the following observation:

- ‘There are no hard and fast rules about what makes a significant effect, and there cannot be a standard approach since circumstances vary with the location and context and with the type of proposal’.

In making a judgement about the significance of visual effects, the GLVIA3 states that the following points should be noted:

- ‘effects on people who are particularly sensitive to changes in views and visual amenity are more likely to be significant
- effects on people at recognised and important viewpoints or from recognised scenic routes are more likely to be significant
- large-scale changes which introduce new, non-characteristic or discordant or intrusive elements into the view are more likely to be significant than small changes or changes involving features already present within the view’.

A finding of a significant visual impact does not automatically equate to adverse impact. Apart from clear situations where poor visual amenity outcomes are created, adverse impacts are not absolute. Rather, they are relative with reference to the planning framework. For example, a significant visual impact that gives effect to and is consistent with a desired future character articulated in planning instruments may be a positive visual impact.

4.3.6 Consistency with the planning framework

Similarly, determination of significance also does not automatically equate to unacceptability. Rather, acceptability is informed by consistency with relevant parts of the planning framework.

The planning framework is an appropriate reference as it represents the policy position of the NSW Government and councils on relevant matters. In addition to planning instruments, the planning framework also includes other relevant considerations such as key Government planning priorities.

4.3.7 Mitigation measures

Where a proposal has be found to have a significant visual impact and be inconsistent with the planning framework, primary or secondary mitigation measures may be recommended to achieve an acceptable visual impact.

4.3.8 Environmental planning grounds

Finally, should mitigation measures not be sufficient to achieve an acceptable visual impact, justification for the proposal may be argued on the balance of relevant planning matters. For example, an unacceptable visual impact may be offset by the weight of a large number of particularly strong, other environmental planning grounds.

4.4 Assumptions, limitations and exclusions

In addition to any others expressed in the relevant part of this VIA, the following key assumptions, limitations and exclusions apply to this VIA:

- it is assumed that all inputs from other parties, including the project architects, are accurate
- to enable a focus on assessment of scale and form, landscaping detail has not been included in the photomontages
- as with all VIA, there is considerable interplay between planning, design and visual impact matters. As such, while the VIA considers matters such as character, size and scale and amenity, due regard should be given to other relevant documents for full address of these matters
- in particular and consistent with that noted below, the VIA supports but does not override heritage assessment undertaken by others
- the evidence base of images provides an indication of visual impact informed by visual analysis that is considered to be reasonable and proportional to the likely impacts of the proposal. It does not purport represent every possible viewing condition within the visual catchment

- while photomontages provide an indication of likely future visual environment, they can only provide an approximation of the rich visual experience enabled by the human eye. As they are based on photographs, the same limitations that apply to photography, including optical distortion, apply (refer to Attachment A for further detail)
- consideration of the following matters is excluded as it is not within the scope of VIA:
 - view impact on the private domain
 - heritage, in particular impact on values and significance
 - Aboriginal cultural heritage values and connecting with Country
 - night-time impact, including lighting
 - outlook
 - visual privacy
 - general planning matters such as land zoning and permissibility.

Key points from this part

- The methodology used in the VIA is derived from the international standard GLVIA3, adjusted for the NSW context by integrating with relevant LEC planning principles and including photos survey aligned photomontages prepared in accordance with LEC policy.
- It focusses on determining the significance of the proposal’s visual impact on a selection of key viewpoints by combining judgements about the sensitivity of the view to the nature of change proposed, the magnitude of the nature of change proposed informed by consideration of factors such as visual characteristics, and geographic extent of the area influenced.
- As significance is not determinative of unacceptable visual impact, assessment is made against relevant parts of the planning framework to VIA, consideration of mitigation measure and consideration of other environmental planning matters.
- The VIA interacts with other specialist work, and in particular supports but does not override heritage assessment undertaken by others.



5 The Planning Framework

5.0 The Planning Framework

This part identifies relevant parts of the planning framework to VIA.

Section 4.15 'Evaluation' of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act) establishes the matters that the Department is to take into consideration when determining this SSDA.

The most relevant matters for VIA comprise:

- the provisions of Wingecarribee Local Environmental Plan 2010 (WLEP 2010)
- the likely impacts of that development, including environmental impacts on both the natural and built environments, and social and economic impacts in the locality.

While under section 2.10 of the State Environmental Planning Policy (Planning Systems) 2021 (the Planning Systems SEPP) development control plans do not apply to SSDAs, consideration as appropriate has also been given in this VIA to the provisions of the Berrima Village Development Control Plan 2021 (DCP 2021).

Furthermore, while the SSDA does not involve a planning proposal, for the purposes of assisting in assessing environmental impacts, consideration as appropriate has also been given to:

- the draft South East and Tablelands Regional Plan 2041 (the draft Regional Plan)
- the Wingecarribee Local Strategic Planning Statement 2040 (LSPS 2040).

It is noted that decisions on SSDA require consideration and weighing of a large number and range of relevant environmental planning matters in addition to visual impact. In this regard, particular reference is made to the separate, supporting Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) prepared by Sutherland and Associates Planning.

It is also noted that review of relevant planning instruments has shown that at times planning policy settings are expressed in different terms, providing a level of overlap and uncertainty in interpretation. As such, an emphasis in this VIA has been given to the intent of planning policy, and where appropriate reference has been made to Land and Environment Court of NSW (LEC) planning principles.

5.1 Draft South East and Tablelands Regional Plan 2041

While Berrima is not specifically referenced in the draft Regional Plan, Objective 4: 'Preserve the heritage and character of the region's towns and villages' is relevant to the proposal.

It is supported by the Strategy 4.1. This includes support for adaptive reuse:

- 'Strategic planning and local plans are to provide opportunities to protect, acknowledge, celebrate and enhance Aboriginal and non Aboriginal cultural heritage values by...adaptively re-using heritage items and interpretation to create distinctive local places'.

5.2 Wingecarribee Local Strategic Planning Statement

The LSPS 2040 outlines council's strategic planning intent for the future of Berrima.

This is most clearly outlined in the 'Precinct Plan' for Berrima under Planning Priority 6.3: 'Enhance the liveability of our towns and villages, with facilities and services to support a healthy, culturally rich and socially connected Wingecarribee community'.

The Precinct Plan establishes a 'protect' planning policy setting, and states the following:

- 'Any future development in Berrima will be tightly controlled to reflect the unique heritage character and retain the charm of the place'.

Of particular relevance to VIA it articulates key character elements of the village.

The following are identified as 'Contributory Elements':

- existing heritage listed items and conservation areas (National/ State/local significance)
- high standards of development relevant to an area of significant heritage
- rustic village character like soft road edges and pathways
- rural landscapes, undeveloped and natural areas surrounding the village

- formal heritage trails / walks
- continue to promote Berrima as a heritage tourism experience.

The following are identified as opportunities for improvement:

- enhance existing and establish new heritage trails / walks
- activation of public domain to support the viability of the centre
- review of the Berrima Landscape Conservation Area
- review and strengthen development controls for the village and surrounds.

Of relevance to VIA methodology, the Precinct Plan identifies Berrima's 'sensitivity to change' as very high.

5.3 Wingecarribee Local Environmental Plan 2010

Under the WLEP 2010 the site is included in zone SP1 – Special Activities (Correctional Centre).

It is not subject to other mapped controls relevant to VIA.

As such, the SSDA is to be largely merit assessment against relevant objectives, informed by consideration of environmental impacts.

The key sections applying to the site of relevance to VIA are:

- section 1.2 'Aims of Plan'
- section 2.3 'Zone objectives and Land Use Table'
- section 4.3 'Height of buildings'
- section 4.4 'Floor space ratio'.
- section 5.10 'Heritage conservation'.

Overall, these sections seek to ensure development is compatible with the character of the site and its context.

While consideration in this VIA has been given to section 5.10 'Heritage conservation', in accordance with the exclusions of this VIA detailed assessment against this section and heritage overall has been undertaken by heritage specialists in their report.

In this regard, the following is noted:

- the site and Berrima Village is located in the Berrima Conservation Area (C148)
- surrounding land is included in the Berrima Landscape Conservation Area (C1843).

5.4 Berrima Village Development Control Plan 2021

As has been noted, DCPs do not apply to SSDA. However, they are helpful in assisting merit based assessments.

The key sections applying to the site of relevance to VIA are:

- A2.2 Objectives of this Plan
- A2.4.2 Visual Amenity
- A9.2.4 Berrima’s Statement of Significance
- A9.7 Views and Vistas
- A13.5 Gaol and Court House Precinct (No. 4).

The DCP 2021 acknowledges that Berrima is growing (section A9.1.2 ‘Why this Development Control Plan is necessary for Berrima’), and that development will change existing conditions. As such, its intent is not to prevent change, but to ensure it occurs in a sensitive and respectful manner:

- ‘Council recognises that every new development impacts on and changes the existing environment and so each development proposal must demonstrate a positive contribution, either directly or indirectly, to the objectives and intended outcomes of this Plan’ (section A2.1 ‘Introduction’).

Section A9.1.2 ‘Why this Development Control Plan is necessary for Berrima’ further elaborates on this:

- ‘The plan requires that new infill buildings be very sympathetic to the original buildings that are in Berrima’.

Section A9.1.1 Introduction also makes the distinction between different heritage areas:

- ‘The design principles applying to all development within Berrima seek to protect the urban amenity of areas of high heritage value and enhance those areas of lower heritage value’.

This is further supported in section A9.5 ‘Principles of Minimum Acceptable Design’:

- ‘As stated in Section A4.1, Council is only interested in development which makes a positive contribution to the urban amenity of Berrima. In both the commercial and residential areas of the Village there are sections of high heritage value where new development, including renovations, must be sympathetic to the Georgian style of the town plan and essential Georgian style elements. However, new development in areas of lesser heritage value may provide more opportunity for innovative design, but such design must demonstrate, in the opinion of Council, a positive contribution to the streetscape and urban amenity of the Village’.

Key points from this part

- The most relevant part of the planning framework to assessment of VIA is the WLEP 2010.
- Overall, the WLEP 2010 seeks to ensure development is compatible with the character of the site and its context.
- The WLEP 2010 also includes the site and Berrima Village in the Berrima Conservation Area.
- While DCPs do not apply to SSDA, the BDCP 2021 nonetheless provides guidance for merit based assessment. Overall, the intent of the BDCP 2021 is not to prevent change, but to ensure it occurs in a sensitive and respectful manner.



6 Key VIA issues

6.0 Key VIA issues

This part identifies the key issues that need to be considered by the VIA.

Based on the review of the site and its context, the proposal and the planning framework, the following are the key issues that need to be considered by the VIA:

- **Significant views:** impact on significant views obtained from the public domain
- **Streetscape:** impact on adjoining streetscapes, being section of Argyle Street, Wilshire Street and Wingecaribee Street
- **Townscape:** impact on the townscape character of Berrima
- **Visual amenity:** impact on the visual amenity of the site, its surrounds, and Berrima more broadly
- **Wingecaribee River:** impact on the visual character of the Wingecaribee River
- **Landscape character:** impact on the Berrima Landscape Conservation Area west of the Wingecaribee River.

Key points from this part

- The key issues that need to be considered by the VIA are the proposal's visual impact on:
 - significant views
 - streetscape
 - townscape
 - visual amenity
 - Wingecaribee River
 - landscape character.



7 Visual Analysis

7.0 Visual Analysis

This part identifies the visual catchment, the pattern of viewing, and key viewpoints in the visual catchment for which visual impact assessment will be undertaken.

7.1 The visual catchment

The visual catchment is that part of the public domain from which the proposal may ordinarily be seen by people, either in totality or in part, and as such has a visual connection with the site.

The extent of the visual catchment is influenced by an interplay of a number of factors including topography, public domain, buildings and structures, and vegetation.

The visual catchment generally extends to:

- **north:** the Old Hume Highway north of Oxley Street
- **south:** the Old Hume Highway north of the former Berrima Post Office
- **east:** Wingecarribee River west of the unnamed waterway
- **west:** Sutton Street.



Figure 16. The visual catchment
Source: Nearmap and Ethos Urban

7.2 The primary visual catchment

The primary visual catchment is that part of the visual catchment from which the proposal is likely to be most visible, and by association likely have the greatest visual impact.

The primary visual catchment is generally bound by:

- **north:** Wilshire Street
- **south:** Wingecarribee Street
- **east:** Old Hume Highway
- **west:** Wingecarribee River.

7.3 Pattern of viewing

The way in which people (visual receptors) typically experience the visual catchment is called the 'pattern of viewing'.

Views can typically be seen at closer or longer range. There are not universal standards as to what constitutes the numerical boundaries between these ranges. Rather, they are relative to each other.

It is considered that the pattern of viewing for the proposal is generally as follows:

- residents at home on Wilshire Street in the closer range to the north
- travellers in vehicles and pedestrians using Argyle Street and the Old Hume Highway in the closer and mid-range to the east
- visitors to services and facilities and residents at home on Wingecarribee Street in the closer range to the south.



Figure 17. The primary visual catchment
Source: Nearmap and Ethos Urban

7.4 Key viewpoints

The nature and extent of visual impact changes with a person’s location in the landscape (viewpoint) based on factors such as direction, distance, angle, and duration of visibility (eg, static or moving).

As there is a near infinite number of viewpoints, a selection of viewpoints to form the basis of the VIA is required. In this regard, the GLVIA3 provides the following guidance:

- ‘The viewpoints used need to cover as wide a range of situations as is possible, reasonable and necessary to cover the likely significant effects. It is not possible to give specific guidance on the appropriate number of viewpoints since this depends on the context, the nature of the proposal and the range and location of visual receptors. The emphasis must always be on proportionality in relation to the scale and nature of the development proposal and its likely significant effects.’

As can be seen, the focus is on achieving a balance between adequacy of coverage and reasonableness.

Informed by this the following table identifies the viewpoints that have been selected for assessment as part of this VIA.

Selection of key viewpoints was informed by site and context analysis, the Conservation Management Plan 2025 (CMP 2025) (Urbis, 2025), and the BDCP 2021.

They are identified in the table and figure on this page.

Key outcomes of this part

- Due to the interplay of a number of factors and in particular topography, the site's visual catchment extends for a reasonable distance from the site. However, while the eastern Argyle Street frontage of the site is visually exposed, the south-western part is only visible from its immediate surrounds.
- The primary visual catchment extends to the surrounding streets, being Argyle Street, Wilshire Street and Wingecarribee Street, as well as part of the Wingecarribee River corridor.
- The pattern of viewing is largely residents at home and visitors to the site and Berrima in the closer range. While this is the case, the pattern of viewing, and key viewpoints in the visual catchment for which visual impact assessment will be undertaken.
- 5 key viewpoints in the primary visual catchment, align with the general pattern of viewing, and were informed by site and context analysis, the Conservation Management Plan 2025 (CMP 2025) (Urbis, 2025), and the BDCP 2021 were selected for visual impact assessment.

Ref	Name	Source document	Reason
1.	Viewpoint 1: Entrance Gate (Argyle Street)	CMP 2025	Impact of the proposed intervention in the heritage fabric on the streetscape
2.	Viewpoint 2: The Governor's Residence and Entrance Gate (Argyle Street)	CMP 2025	Impact of the proposed intervention in the heritage fabric on the streetscape
3.	Viewpoint 3: Gaol Wall and western annexe (Wilshire Street)	CMP 2025	Impact of the proposed intervention in the heritage fabric on the streetscape
4.	Viewpoint 4: Wingecarribee Street	BDCP 2021	Impact of the proposed carpark
5.	Viewpoint 5: Wilshire Street	BDCP 2021	Impact of the proposed carpark

Table 4. Key viewpoints



Figure 18. Key public viewpoints
Source: Nearmap and Ethos Urban



8 Visual Impact Assessment

8.0 Visual Impact Assessment

This part assesses the likely visual impact of the proposal informed by an evidence base of photos showing the existing view and a survey aligned photomontage from each key viewpoint, including identifying the sensitivity of the viewpoint to the nature of change proposed, the magnitude of the nature of change proposed, the significance of the visual impact, and whether the proposal has a significant visual impact overall.

8.1 Viewpoint 1: Entrance Gate (Argyle Street)

Table 5. Viewpoint 1: Entrance Gate (Argyle Street) Key parameters

Parameter	Description
Target	Gaol entrance - main entrance/entrance gate
Direction	West
Range	Immediate
Distance (approx.)	28m
Elevation	Level

8.1.1 Existing view

The main purpose of this viewpoint is to enable assessment of the proposal’s visual impact on the Entrance Gate. Its secondary purpose is to enable assessment of the proposal’s visual impact on the Argyle Street streetscape.

Description of the viewpoint

Where is the location of the viewpoint

The location of the viewpoint is within the western footpath of Argyle Street.

Who are the main types of people who will ordinarily see the view

The main types of people who will ordinarily see the view are:

- local residents engaged in outdoor active recreation such as walking
- visitors to the site, in particular those accessing the internal spaces of the gaol, and Berrima in general.

What is the number of people who will ordinarily see the view

A moderate number of people will ordinarily see the view.

This may increase on specific occasions, such as during the hosting of events.

A moderate number of people will ordinarily see the view.

Description of the view

What is the extent and nature of the view, including its elements, features and composition and what is not in the view

Extent and nature

This is close range streetscape view that takes in parts of the eastern, Argyle Street frontage of the site.

While not visible in the photo, movement of the eyes or head enables the viewer to also take in a large part of the site’s interface with Argyle Street.

As a close range streetscape view it does not take in a large physical area, take in large parts of the Berrima townscape, or otherwise have panoramic qualities in depth or width.

Elements and features

Figure 19 shows the main elements and features that comprise the view.

The Entrance Gate is the key feature of the view.

Composition

This is an axial view, with the main entrance path leading the eye from the foreground, through the midground and to the background terminating in the Entrance Gate.

The Gaol Walls extend to the left (south) and right (east) of the Entrance Gate in background of the view. In doing so, they both foreshorten and terminate the view

The large, spreading and well-established cypress tree in the centre of the path in the midground obscures visibility of part of the Entrance Gate.

The remainder of foreground and midground either side of the main entrance path is occupied by the Gaol’s formal gardens. In this view, this comprises low stone gutters, walls, and part of the Entrance Gate, grassed areas and scattered plantings.

Does the view contain iconic elements

Yes, the view contains locally iconic elements in the form of the Entrance Gate, the Gaol Walls, and the formal garden.

What is the extent of existing obstruction

Visibility of the Entrance Gate and the Gaol Walls are partially obstructed by trees in the formal garden, in particular the cypress tree.

Value of the view

What the value of the view, being clear on factors taken into account and the weight assigned to them (eg, iconic elements and features)

The value of the view is high.

Its main value is associated with the ability to see and appreciate the Entrance Gate.

Other factors contributing to its high value are that the view:

- is located in the Berrima HCA recognised under the WLEP 2010
- contains elements that contribute to the valued character of the Berrima HCA
- is considered of exceptional value by the CMP 2025
- has been represented in artwork
- despite partial obscuration by the cypress tree, the Entrance Gate is seen as a feature of the view
- includes multiple other high value elements
- enables the viewer to see and appreciate the spatial relationship between the Entrance Gate and these other high value elements
- is absent of any visually detracting elements such as outbuildings, garages and other structures
- presents in good condition, with evidence of careful maintenance
- has an aesthetically pleasing axial composition
- includes other aesthetically pleasing aspects, including simple line and form, natural materials (eg, sandstone), low impact and neutral colours
- enables a perception of the scale and nature of the Gaol Walls.

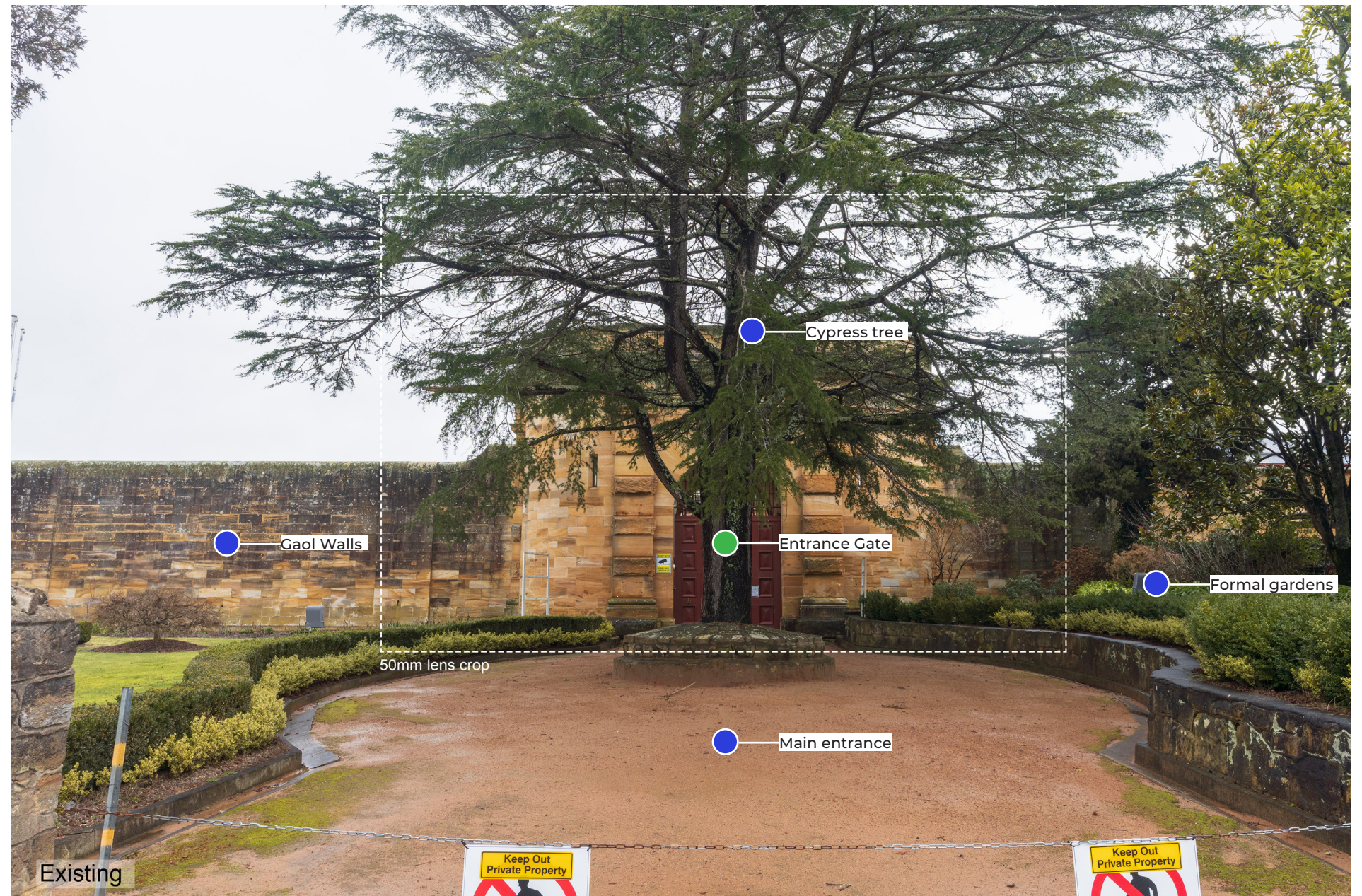


Figure 19. Viewpoint 1: Entrance Gate (Argyle Street) - existing view
Source: Virtual Ideas

Legend:

- Feature
- Key element

8.1.2 Proposed future view



Figure 20. Viewpoint 1: Entrance Gate (Argyle Street) - proposed view
Source: Virtual Ideas

8.1.3 Sensitivity of the viewpoint to the nature of change proposed

The following table assesses the sensitivity of the viewpoint to the nature of change proposed. The viewpoint is considered to have a high sensitivity of the viewpoint to the nature of change proposed.

Table 6. Viewpoint 1: Entrance Gate (Argyle Street) – Sensitivity of the viewpoint to the nature of change proposed

Factor	Level
Place Factors	
Visual characteristics	High
Cultural and social value	High
People factors	
Type of people	High
Number of people	Medium

8.1.4 Magnitude of the nature of change proposed

The following table assesses the magnitude of the nature of change proposed. The proposed is considered to represent a minor change over a restricted area that is ongoing and irreversible. As such the proposal is considered to have a perceptible magnitude of change.

		Duration and reversibility			
		Ongoing and irreversible	Ongoing capable of being reversed	Limited life (5 – 10 years)	Limited life (< 5 years)
Size and scale of change	Major change over wide area	Dominant	Considerable	Considerable	Noticeable
	Major change over restricted area, or Moderate change over wide area	Considerable	Considerable	Noticeable	Noticeable
	Moderate change over restricted area; or Minor change over a wide area	Considerable	Noticeable	Noticeable	Perceptible
	Minor change over a restricted area; or Insignificant change	Perceptible	Perceptible	Perceptible	Imperceptible
	Imperceptible change	Imperceptible	Imperceptible	Imperceptible	Imperceptible

Table 7. Viewpoint 1: Entrance Gate (Argyle Street) – Magnitude of the Nature of Change Proposed

8.1.5 Significance of the nature of change proposed

The following table assesses the significance of the nature of change proposed. Overall, the proposal is considered to have a low significance of visual impact.

		Magnitude				
		Dominant	Considerable	Noticeable	Perceptible	Imperceptible
Sensitivity	High	Major	High	Moderate	Low	Negligible
	Medium	High	Moderate	Low	Low	Negligible
	Low	Moderate	Low	Low	Negligible	Negligible
	Negligible	Low	Low	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

Table 8. Viewpoint 1: Entrance Gate (Argyle Street) – Significance of the Nature of Change Proposed

8.2 Viewpoint 2: The Governor’s Residence and Entrance Gate (Argyle Street)

Table 9. Viewpoint 2: The Governor’s Residence and Entrance Gate (Argyle Street)
Key parameters

Parameter	Description
Target	Governors Residence and entrance gate (boundary stone wall)
Direction	North-west
Range	Immediate
Distance (approx.)	10m
Elevation	Level

8.2.1 Existing view

The main purpose of this viewpoint is to enable assessment of the proposal’s visual impact on the Governor’s Residence and Entrance Gate. Its secondary purpose is to enable assessment of the proposal’s visual impact on the Argyle Street streetscape.

Description of the viewpoint

Where is the location of the viewpoint

The location of the viewpoint is within the western side of the Argyle Street carriageway near its intersection with Wingecarribee Street.

Who are the main types of people who will ordinarily see the view

The main types of people who will ordinarily see the view are:

- local residents engaged in outdoor active recreation such as walking
- visitors to the site, and Berrima in general.

What is the number of people who will ordinarily see the view

A moderate number of people will ordinarily see the view.

This may increase on specific occasions, such as during the hosting of events.

Description of the view

What is the extent and nature of the view, including its elements, features and composition and what is not in the view

Extent and nature

This is streetscape view that takes in a large part of the site’s interface with Argyle Street.

While not visible in the photo, movement of the eyes or head enables the viewer to also take in the site and Argyle Street’s relationship with the Old Hume Highway, including the commercial part of the village between Wingecarribee Street and Oxley Street.

It does not take in large parts of the Berrima townscape. While it has considerable depth, it does not represent a panoramic view.

Elements and features

Figure 21 shows the main elements and features that comprise the view.

The Governor’s Residence is the key feature of the view.

Composition

This is a linear view, with Argyle Street leading the eye diagonally across the view from the left (south) foreground to the right (north) background.

The Governor’s Residence is in the left (south) midground, and the Entrance Gate is in the centre background.

While visible, the Gaol Walls are not visually prominent in this view.

The view also includes the formal landscape garden at the eastern, Argyle Street frontage of the site, the low height stone wall separating the site from Argyle Street, and the Argyle Street road reserve which includes its carriageway, formed kerb and channel, footpath, nature strip and well established trees.

Open space is visible in the far right background of the view.

Does the view contain iconic elements

Yes, the view contains locally iconic elements in the form of the Former Governor’s Residence, the Entrance Gate, the Gaol Walls, and the formal garden.

What is the extent of existing obstruction

Visibility of the Gaol Walls are partially obstructed by trees in the formal garden and Argyle Street road reserve.

Value of the view

What the value of the view, being clear on factors taken into account and the weight assigned to them (eg, iconic elements and features)

The value of the view is high.

Its main value is associated with the ability to see and appreciate the Former Governor's Residence in conjunction with the Entrance Gate and formal gardens.

Other factors contributing to its high value are that the view:

- is located in the Berrima HCA recognised under the WLEP 2010
- contains elements that contribute to the valued character of the Berrima HCA
- is considered of exceptional value by the CMP 2025
- is absent of any visually detracting elements such as outbuildings, garages and other structures
- presents in good condition, with evidence of careful maintenance
- includes other aesthetically pleasing aspects, including simple line and form, natural materials (eg, sandstone), low impact and neutral colours.



Figure 21. Viewpoint 2: The Governor's Residence and Entrance Gate (Argyle Street) - existing view
Source: Virtual Ideas

Legend:

- Feature
- Key element
- Element