





3.0

ANALYSIS

3.1 CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT & TOPOGRAPHY

The site is located within the low-lying coastal fringe, away from the steep slopes and forested terrain of the Illawarra Escarpment.

Within the boundaries of the project, three cultural values were identified in the Cultural Values Assessment Report:

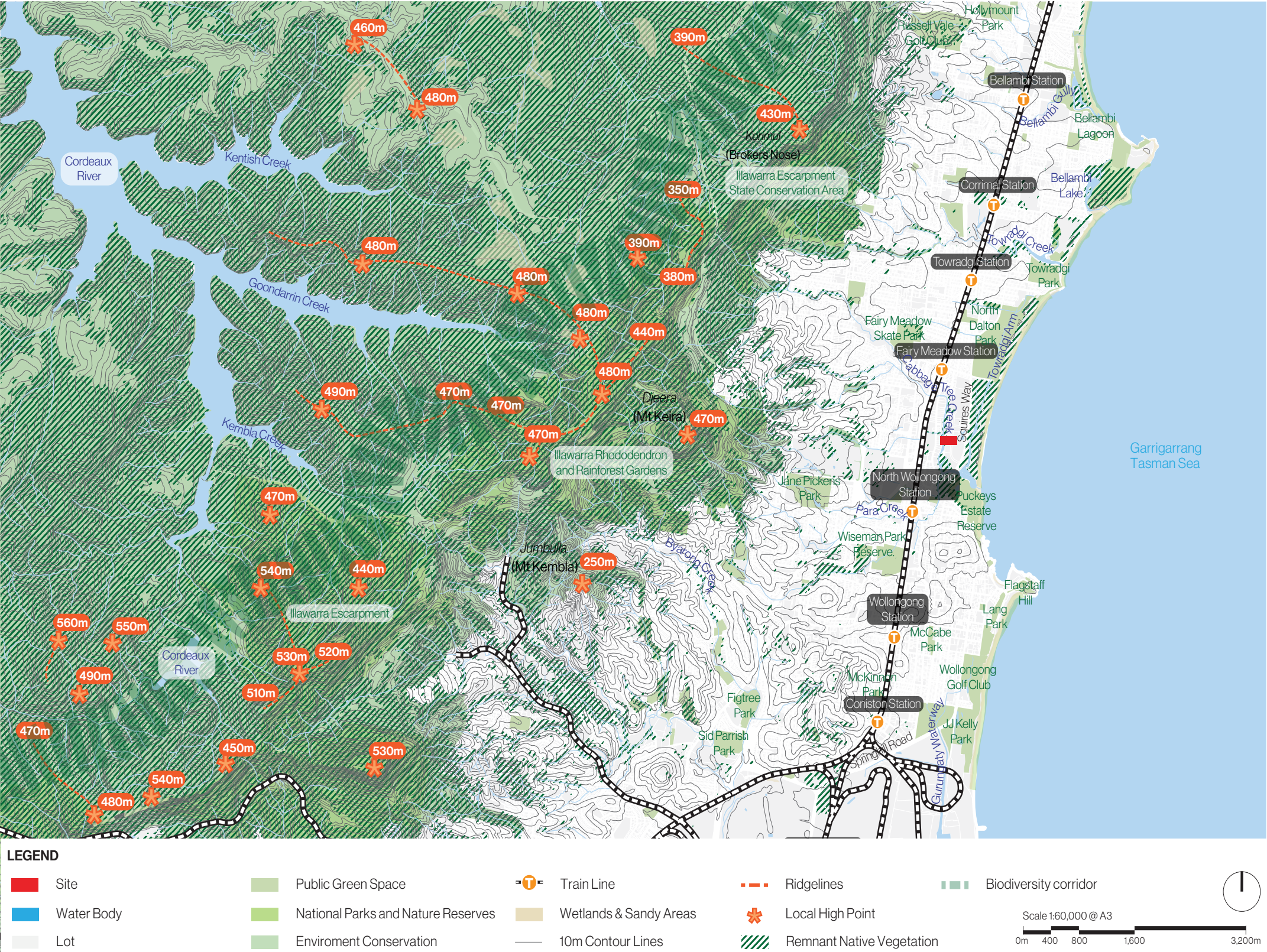
Cultural Value 1: Waterways

- The site is surrounded by culturally significant waterways, including Cabbage Tree Creek, Para (Fairy) Creek, and the Towradgi Arm
- A fine network of creeks flows from higher ground down to the coastal fringe, draining through Puckeys Lagoon just south of the Innovation Campus
- The local hydrology is characterised by flash flooding, resulting from the steep escarpment meeting the flat coastal plains
- Cabbage Tree Creek provides vital habitat for a wide range of aquatic life
- Puckeys Reserve holds strong ecological significance as a rare coastal habitat, featuring rainforest pockets, dunes, and saltmarsh that support diverse birdlife and endangered plant communities

Cultural Value 2: View Line to Djera (Mt Keira)

- The site is visually connected to the escarpment and to Mount Keira (Djera) and Mount Kembla (Djembla)—a distinctive and culturally important backdrop
- This view line holds deep cultural significance, supporting ongoing connection between Escarpment Country and Sea Country

‘The Illawarra Escarpment is a bio-diversity ‘hot spot’ and a key component of a critical regional biodiversity corridor that act as a vital link between the Royal National Park and the South Coast, crucial for species movement and genetic diversity in the Sydney basin’



3.2 CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY - GREATER CONTEXT

BROADER CULTURAL NARRATIVES

The site sits within the lands of the Wodi Wodi (Dharawal) people and lies in close proximity to the Illawarra Escarpment—an area of deep cultural significance for First Nations peoples, forming multiple Songlines and Dreaming Tracks.

- Traditional movement corridors extend both along the coastline and along the length of the escarpment, connecting Inland Country to Escarpment and Sea Country
- The site is visually connected to three key landforms—understood as embodiments of Ancestral Beings: Djeera (Mount Keira), a place of important women's business; Djembla (Mount Kembla), a site of men's business; and Korimul (Brokers Nose)
- Djeera (Mount Keira) and Djembla (Mount Kembla) are part of a Dharawal freshwater and saltwater creation story associated with the Five Islands clustered off the coast near Port Kembla.

Cultural Value 3: Cultural Resource, Camping & Meeting Area

- This area is recognised as a traditional place of gathering and ceremony, where low-lying coastal and estuarine systems provided abundant food, medicinal plants, and other cultural resources

‘The Illawarra area is connected through a complex web of traditional movement corridors that facilitated social, ceremonial, and economic networks that linked Country and people.’

UOW H&WP: Cultural Values Assessment Draft Report
Waters Consultancy, June 2023



3.3 POST SETTLEMENT

European settlement in Wollongong began in 1815 when Dr Charles Throsby established the first cattle station in the area.

A large proportion of the early population were convicts, and military presence was significant during the years of occupation.

By 1844, the region had transformed from a series of dispersed land grants for cattle into a thriving agricultural community. Wollongong became known as 'the Garden of New South Wales' due to its botanical richness and its major role in supplying food and commodities to Sydney.

Heavy industry grew rapidly with the ready availability of coal. Hoskins, later Australian Iron & Steel, established a steelworks at Port Kembla in 1928, marking the beginning of the region's industrial identity.

The current Wollongong Local Government Area was formed in 1947 when the smaller councils of Wollongong, Central Illawarra, Bulli, and Northern Illawarra were amalgamated.

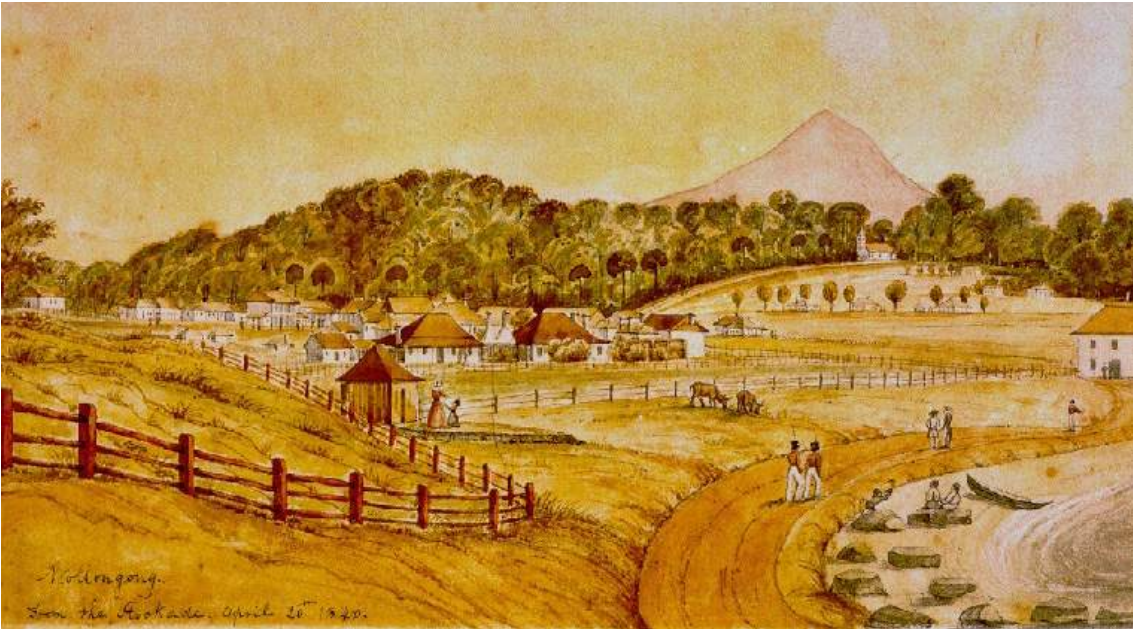
The University of Wollongong was founded in 1951 as a division of the New South Wales University of Technology. Its merger with the Wollongong Institute of Higher Education in 1982 initiated a period of rapid expansion and the growth of a strong reputation for excellence in teaching and research.

Today, Wollongong is the third-largest city in New South Wales. It is recognised for its heavy industry and port activity, with Port Kembla becoming the largest single concentration of heavy industry in Australia.

Established in 2008, the UOW Innovation Campus is a 33-hectare research and commercial precinct designed to bridge the gap between research and real-world applications.



Illawarra Planning Authority, 'Fairy Meadow', 1956
Source: From the collections of the Wollongong City Libraries and the Illawarra Historical Society



Robert Marsh Westmacott, 'Wollongong from the Stockade', April 20, 1840
Source: National Library of Australia



'Fairy Meadow', 1904
Source: From the collections of the Wollongong City Libraries and the Illawarra Historical Society. P01736

3.4 ECOLOGY

The site sits within a diverse coastal landscape shaped by the Illawarra Escarpment and the low-lying coastal plain. This setting supports a mosaic of wetland, riparian, and heathland ecologies that contribute to the strong natural character of the Innovation Campus. These interconnected systems play a vital role in local hydrology, biodiversity, and cultural values on Dharawal Country, forming an essential foundation for understanding and responding to the site.

Fairy Creek and Cabbage Tree Creek

Fairy Creek and Cabbage Tree Creek form a continuous ecological corridor extending from the Illawarra Escarpment down to the coastal fringe. These waterways support a mosaic of saline, freshwater, and forested wetland communities, along with patches of coastal heathland. Their riparian zones provide habitat for aquatic species, birds, and small mammals, while also regulating stormwater flow as the steep escarpment transitions to flat coastal plains.

Together, these creeks shape the natural character of the northern Illawarra and play an essential role in sustaining biodiversity, cultural connection, and hydrological health across the Innovation Campus and surrounding landscape. abundance of micro-invertebrates, crustaceans, fish, frogs, and water birds. They have been dramatically altered by humans, via draining and aeratio of fertile soils into productive cropping lands or urban development.

Saline Wetlands

Saline wetlands occur where tidal movements and elevated salt levels influence the landscape — typically along estuarine mudflats, coastal lake edges, and intertidal flats.

They are among the most productive ecosystems in coastal NSW, functioning as critical nursery grounds for marine fish, molluscs, crustaceans, and migratory bird species. The presence of saline wetlands near the site reflects the strong tidal and estuarine influences that characterise the broader coastal edge of Wollongong.

Forested Wetlands

Forested wetlands are defined by canopy-forming tree species that thrive in nutrient-rich alluvial soils at low elevations. These systems rely on periodic flooding to replenish the soil, regulate nutrient cycles, and maintain ecological productivity. Typical vegetation includes swamp oak forest, swamp mahogany, paperbark communities, and other flood-tolerant species.

Historically, many forested wetlands in the Illawarra have been cleared for agriculture, timber production, or urban growth due to their fertile soils. Surviving patches such as those surrounding riparian corridors near the site — remain critical ecological assets.

Freshwater Wetlands

Freshwater wetlands occur where surface water collects seasonally or permanently, creating shallow basins, billabongs, and low-lying swamp environments.

They support diverse fauna including frogs, freshwater fish, crustaceans, waterbirds, micro-invertebrates, and specialised wetland plants. Although many freshwater wetlands have been altered by drainage or suburban development, they remain key ecological systems in the region.

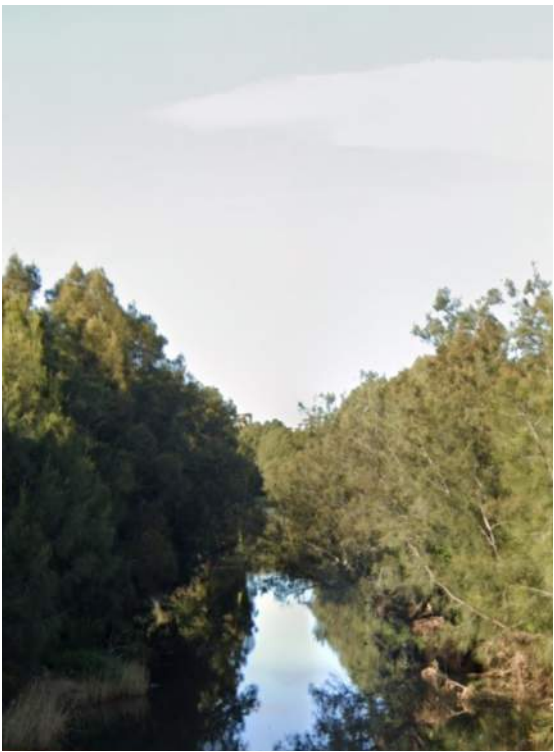
Heathlands

Heathlands develop where harsh coastal conditions — salt spray, strong winds, and nutrient-poor soils — limit the growth of tall vegetation. These low, dense, and often spiky plant communities include banksias, tea-tree, hakeas, and heath species that provide excellent habitat for birds, reptiles, and small mammals.

In the Illawarra region, heathlands contribute to the rugged ecological character of the coastal fringe, offering high biodiversity despite their low stature.



Para (Fairy) Creek in Puckeys Estate
Source: The Illawarra Flame



Cabbage Tree Creek
Source: Google Streetview



LEGEND

- Site Boundary
- Lots
- Waterways
- Ocean
- Saltmarsh in Estuaries
- Saline Wetlands
- Coastal Swamp Oak Forest
- Forested Wetlands
- Alluvial Swamp Mahogany Forest
- Forested Wetlands
- Estuarine Alluvial Wetland
- Freshwater Wetlands
- Coast Banksia - Coast Tea-tree
- Low Moist Forest - Heathlands
- Biodiversity Values

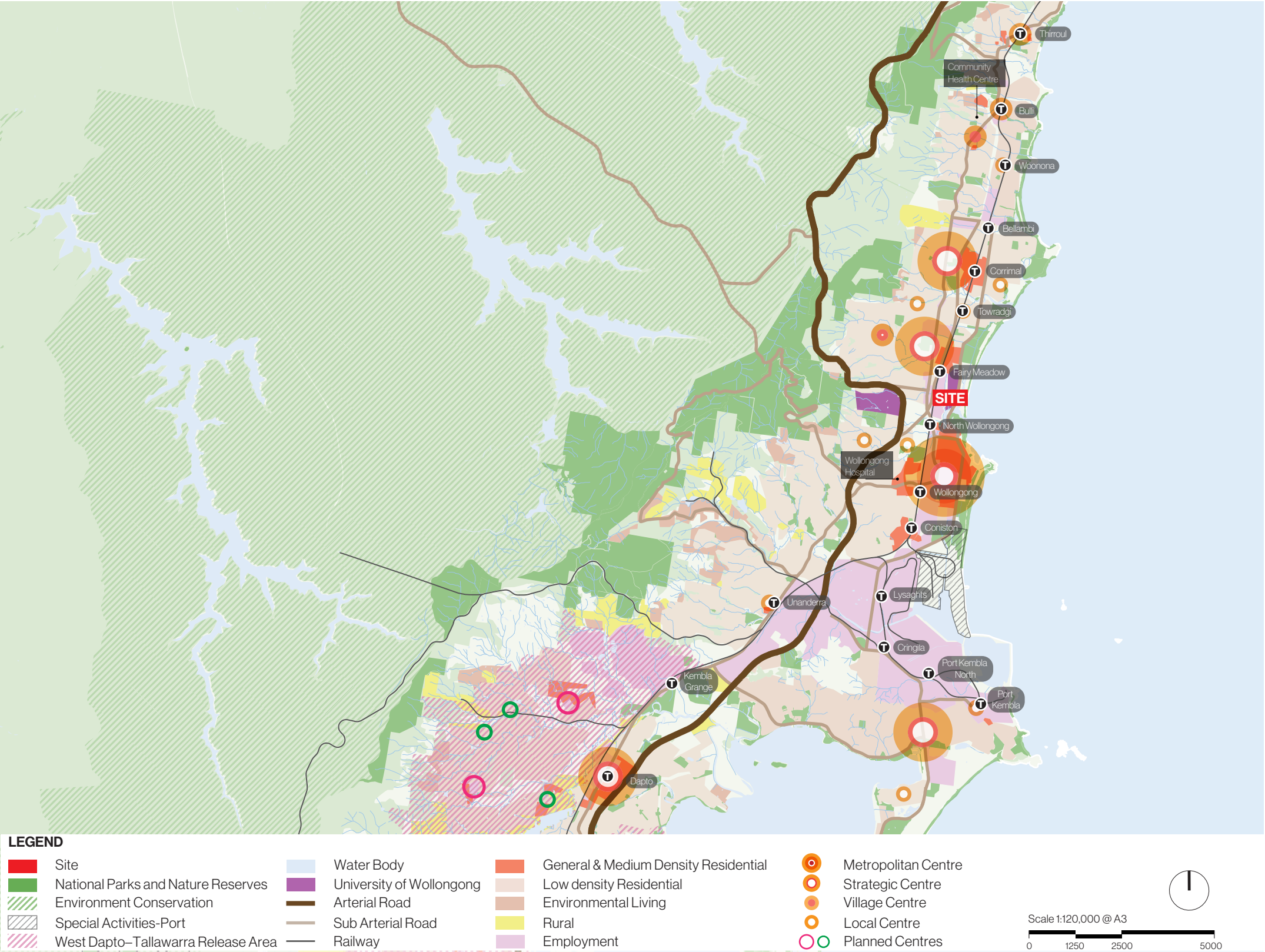
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3.5 REGIONAL AND STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The site sits within the UOW Innovation Campus, Health and Wellbeing Precinct, strategically located just 3 km north of Wollongong City and well supported by transport, recreation, and social infrastructure

- The site is approximately 1.2 km from the M1, 350 m from major arterial roads, and 500 m south of Fairy Meadow Station, and just north of Wollongong, a key metropolitan centre
- It sits between North Wollongong and Fairy Meadow—both nominated as key growth areas supporting increased jobs, housing, and health services
- The site forms part of the Wollongong University Innovation Precinct, serving as a hub for cutting-edge health research and innovation, and acting as a catalyst for economic development in the Illawarra region
- The inclusion of a Health and Wellbeing Precinct within the Innovation Campus responds directly to unprecedented demand emerging from the aged care sector

The precinct is envisioned to combine the strengths of research and education with seniors' housing and co-located community facilities, becoming Australia's first intergenerational university community

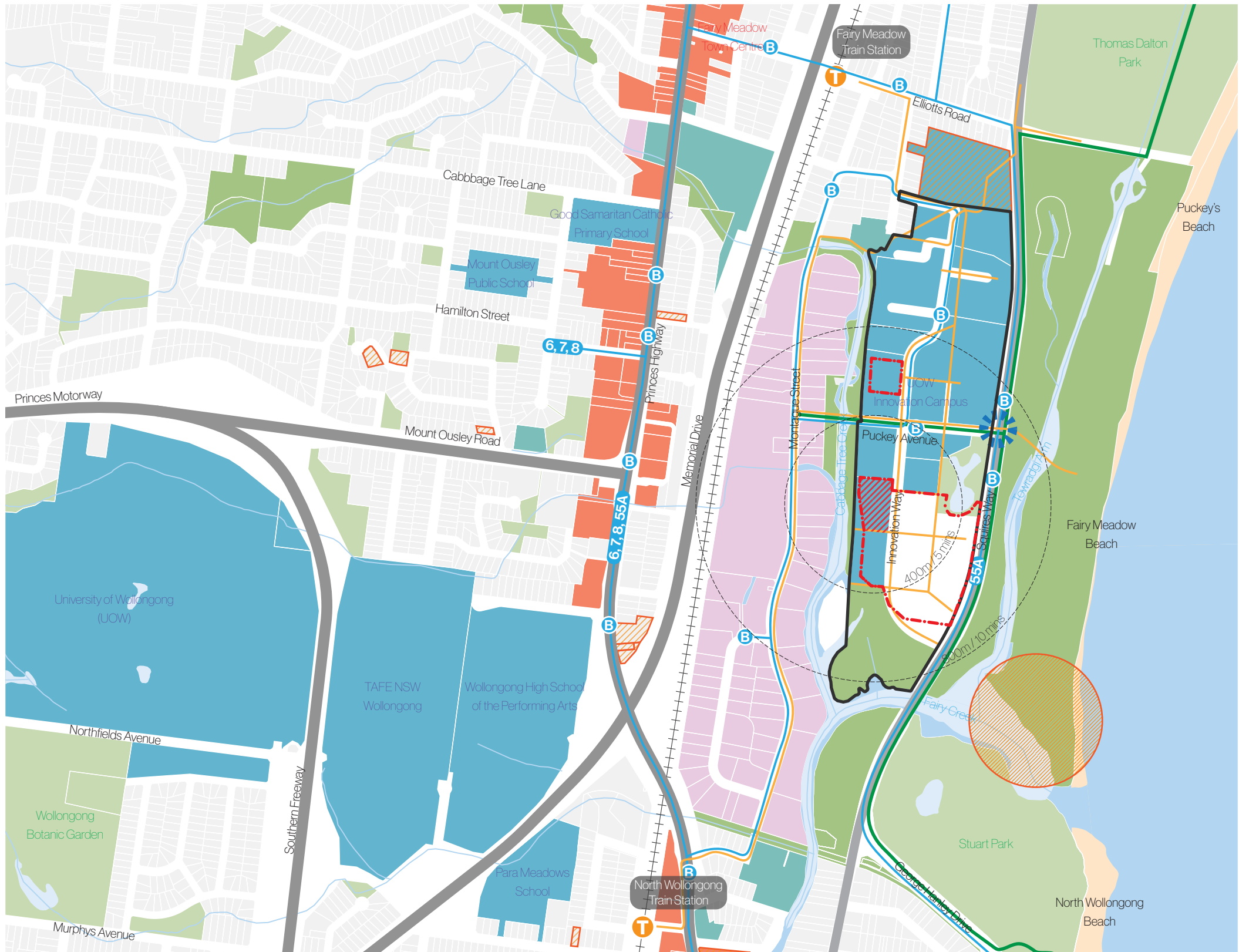
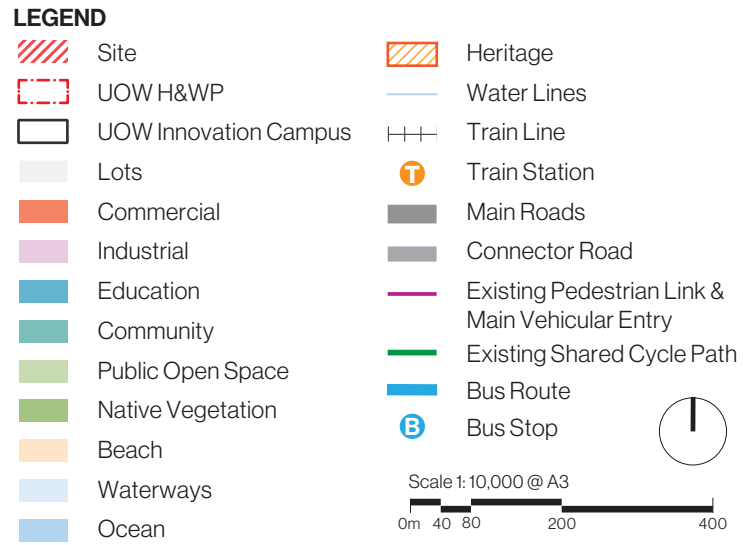


3.6 LOCAL CONTEXT

LAND USE, ACCESS AND CONNECTIVITY

The site presents significant opportunities for sustained growth as part of the renewal and revitalisation of the University Campus

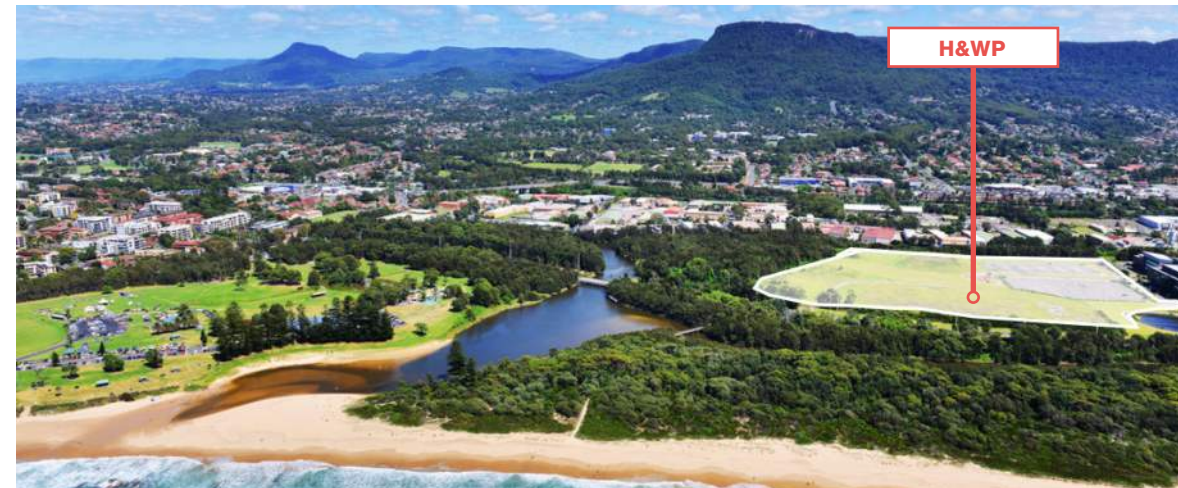
- The UOW Innovation Campus is located less than 1 km from the University's main campus at the foot of Mount Ousley
- Several other educational institutions are also located in close proximity to the site
- The precinct is positioned between the two small local centres of North Wollongong and Fairy Meadow, which contain a mix of commercial uses and bulky goods retail
- Light industrial employment lands sit along the creek immediately west of the site
- The northern part of the campus directly adjoins a residential area consisting of single- and double-storey detached dwellings
- The precinct is well connected by roads and public transport and active transport links - sitting within 900 metres of the Fairy Meadow and 1km from North Wollongong stations.
- The main entry to the campus is via Squires Way, a major connector road linking the local centres, and close to Memorial Drive, a major arterial linking Wollongong to the Southern Freeway, a regional route between Sydney, the Illawarra, and the South Coast
- Several bus stops are located north of the campus and along Squires Way, providing links to surrounding suburbs, the Wollongong CBD, and the main UOW campus
- An active transport link runs along the eastern edge of Squires Way, offering continuous connections for coastal communities
- The site is located close to several large open spaces, including the Wollongong Botanic Gardens and coastal parks, both of which connect to Fairy Meadow Beach and Puckey's Beach



3.7 PRECINCT CHARACTER

The distant views to the escarpment and key landscape features, combined with the immediate natural setting and the 4–5 storey built form of the Innovation Campus, create a distinctive natural and built character that must be respected and celebrated

- The Health and Wellbeing Precinct is located between the coastal lowlands, vegetated estuaries, and the Illawarra Escarpment, just north of the Wollongong CBD, within a highly naturalised setting
- The escarpment and key landscape features—including Mount Keira and Mount Kembla, as well as the coastline—form a highly valuable visual backdrop to the site
- The surrounding 4–5 storey, large-lot built form contributes to a distinctive commercial campus character
- Buildings sit within large vegetated and landscaped setbacks, enhancing public domain amenity and reinforcing the campus' landscape-driven identity
- Narrow footpaths currently offer limited pedestrian amenity, with main building entries providing the only small opportunities for seating



View looking west with site sitting between Fairy Creek, Towradgi Arm, Fairy Meadow Beach and escarpment



View looking north from Squires Way towards Mount Keira and Escarpment



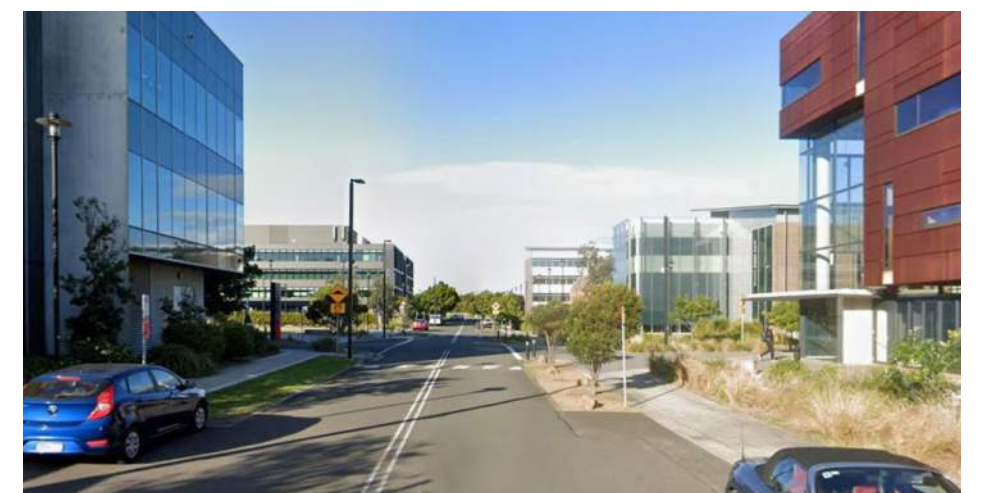
View looking south- east with Fairy Creek, Fairy Meadow Beach, Wollongong CBD in the background



3-4 Storey campus buildings in landscape setting with large landscape setback



4-5 storey campus built form character, large landscape setbacks including seating areas at entries to buildings

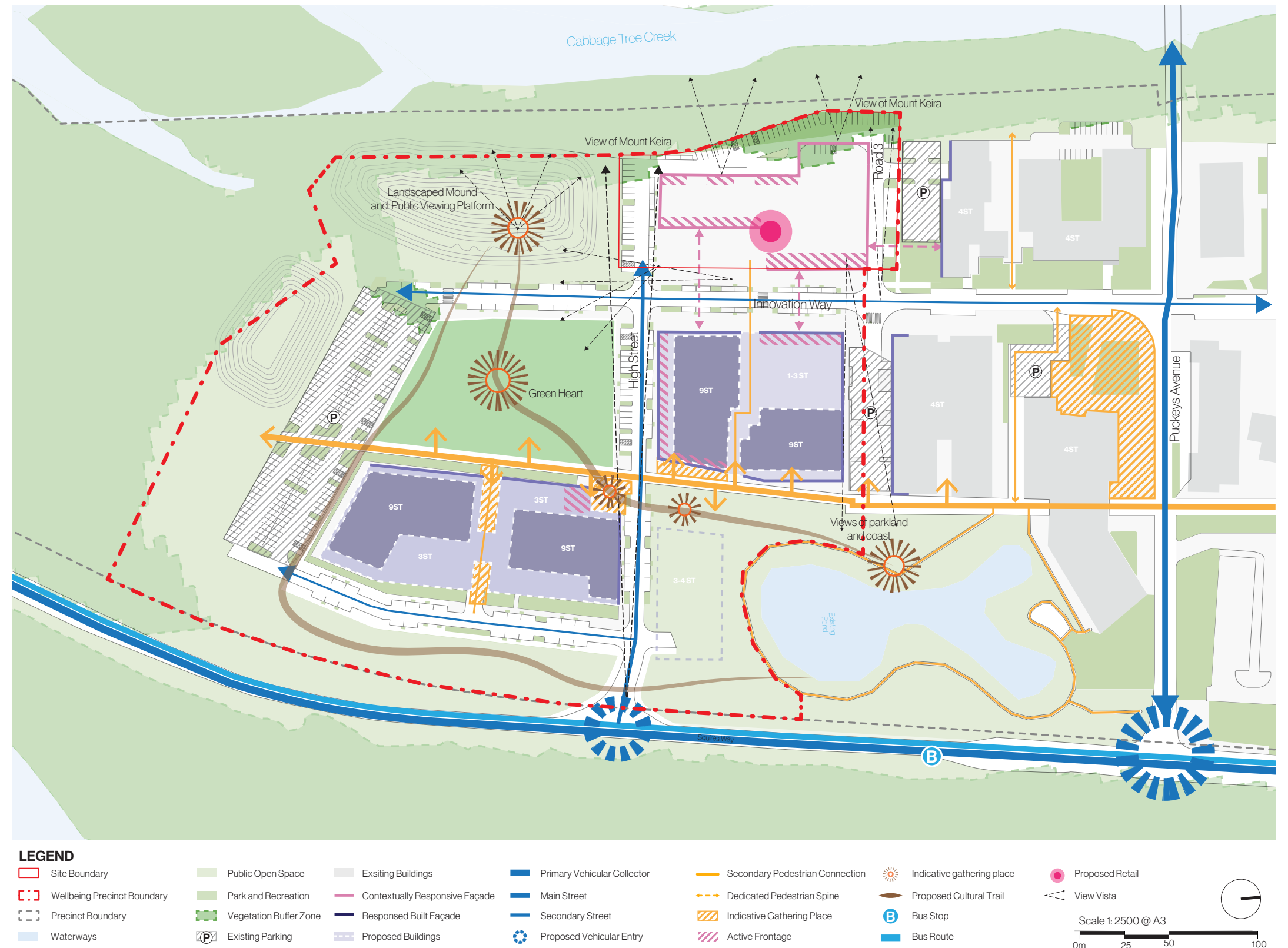


Innovation Way with varied setbacks, street tree planting and planted verges, landscape termination

3.8 PRECINCT LEVEL ANALYSIS

The precinct needs to respond to the broader built and environmental constraints of the University Campus and align with the objectives of the Wollongong DCP, which emphasise buildings set within a landscape setting.

- Built form, height, and massing must respond to the existing and future context and character of the Health and Wellbeing Precinct and the broader campus
- Setbacks should be carefully considered to preserve the landscape quality of the existing campus character
- Proposed built form should provide a consistent, human-scale street wall across the precinct
- Key views, vistas, and sightlines to both immediate and regional landscape features including the creek, escarpment, mountains, and natural open space areas should be preserved and enhanced
- Connections to and contributions toward broader ecological corridors, riparian zones, open space networks, and cultural landscape elements should be strengthened and enhanced
- Primary existing and proposed pedestrian and vehicular connections should be accommodated as part of the precinct-wide movement network
- Ground floor activation should be maximised along High Street and Innovation Way, creating lively edges with strong pedestrian amenity and connecting the existing campus to the H&WP.



3.9 SITE CHARACTER AND SURROUNDS

The site sits within a largely open and expansive setting dominated by surface carparking, bordered by riparian vegetation, the escarpment, and nearby university buildings. Strong views to Mount Keira and Mount Kembla create a distinctive natural backdrop, shaping the site's visual character and its interface with the broader campus landscape.

- The site sits within a broad open area that is primarily used for surface carparking.
- A riparian corridor along the western edge provides a natural setting and vegetated backdrop, particularly when viewed from Innovation Way.
- Views toward Mount Keira and Mount Kembla are strong defining features. These prominent landforms form a highly visible natural backdrop, contributing to the site's identity and sense of place.
- Dense street tree planting and vegetated verges along Innovation Way and the northern boundary help introduce human scale, shade, and greenery. These landscape elements also visually break up large areas of asphalt and enhance the overall amenity of the campus.
- A large earth mound to the south of the site provides a sense of containment within an otherwise expansive open area. It acts as a natural edge and contributes to the landscape character experienced upon entry to the site.



1. Looking west, the site opens toward Cabbage Tree Creek and the escarpment, highlighting the strong natural backdrop



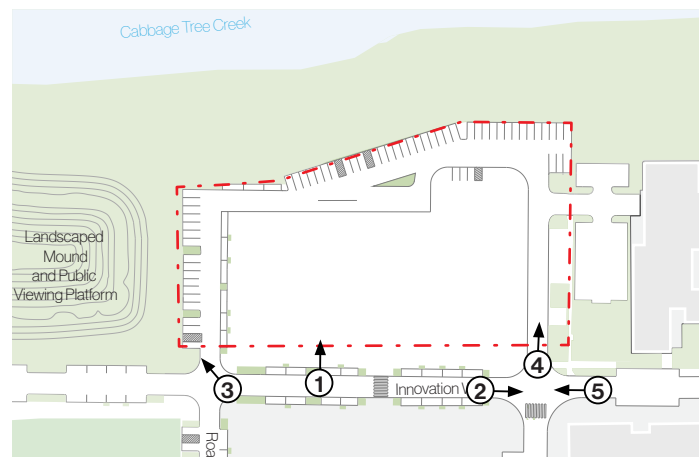
2. View looking north towards 4-5 storey university buildings setback from road - dense street tree plantings



3. View looking west along High Street with reveal the foreground mound with Mount Keira beyond



4. View west along northern boundary of site towards Creek and Mount Keira

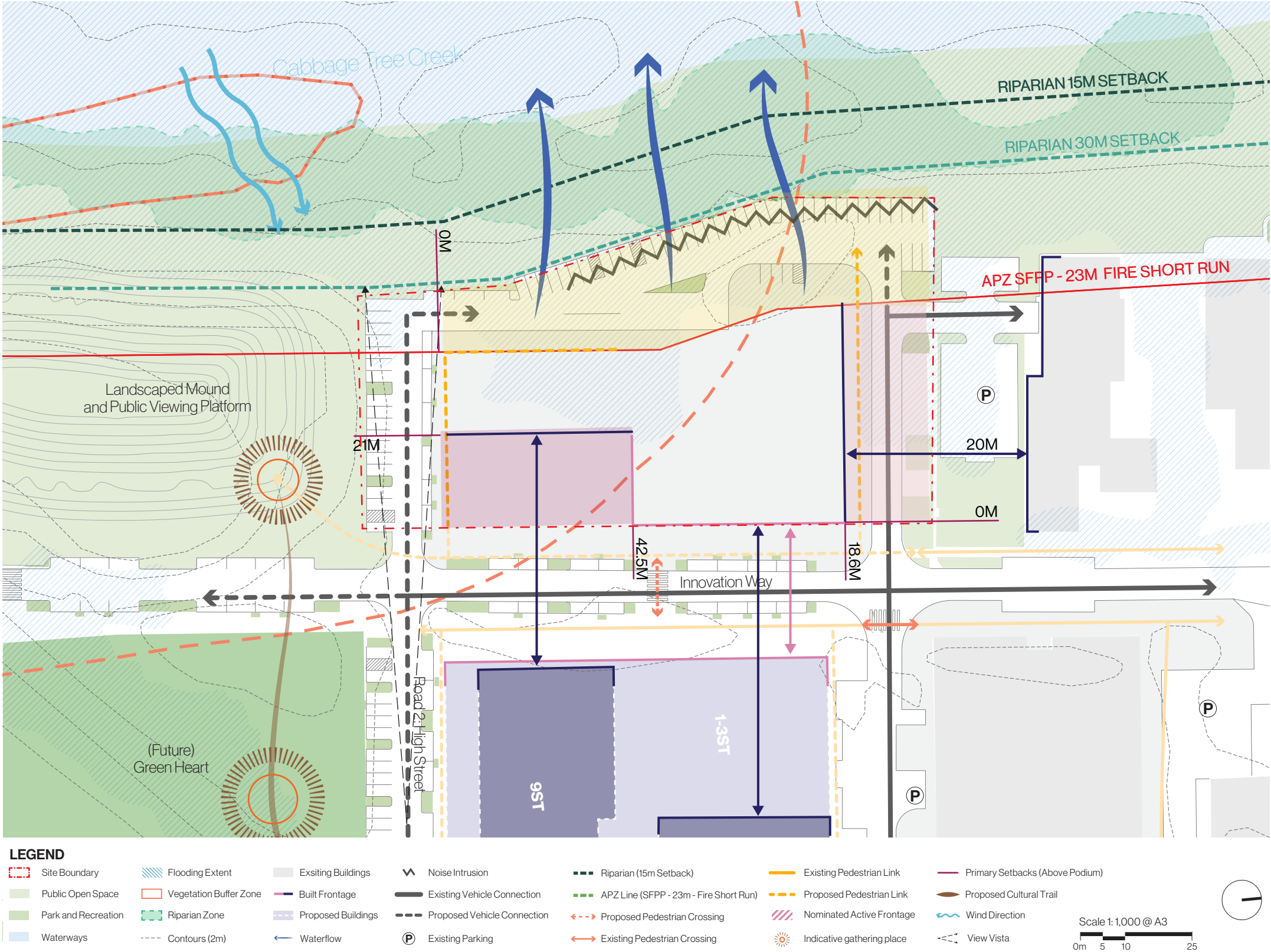


5. View looking southern entry views show the combination of riparian backdrop, mounding, and large areas of surface parking as dominant site elements

3.10 SITE CONSTRAINTS

The existing natural and built context presents a number of constraints that need to be respected and addressed within the proposed development.

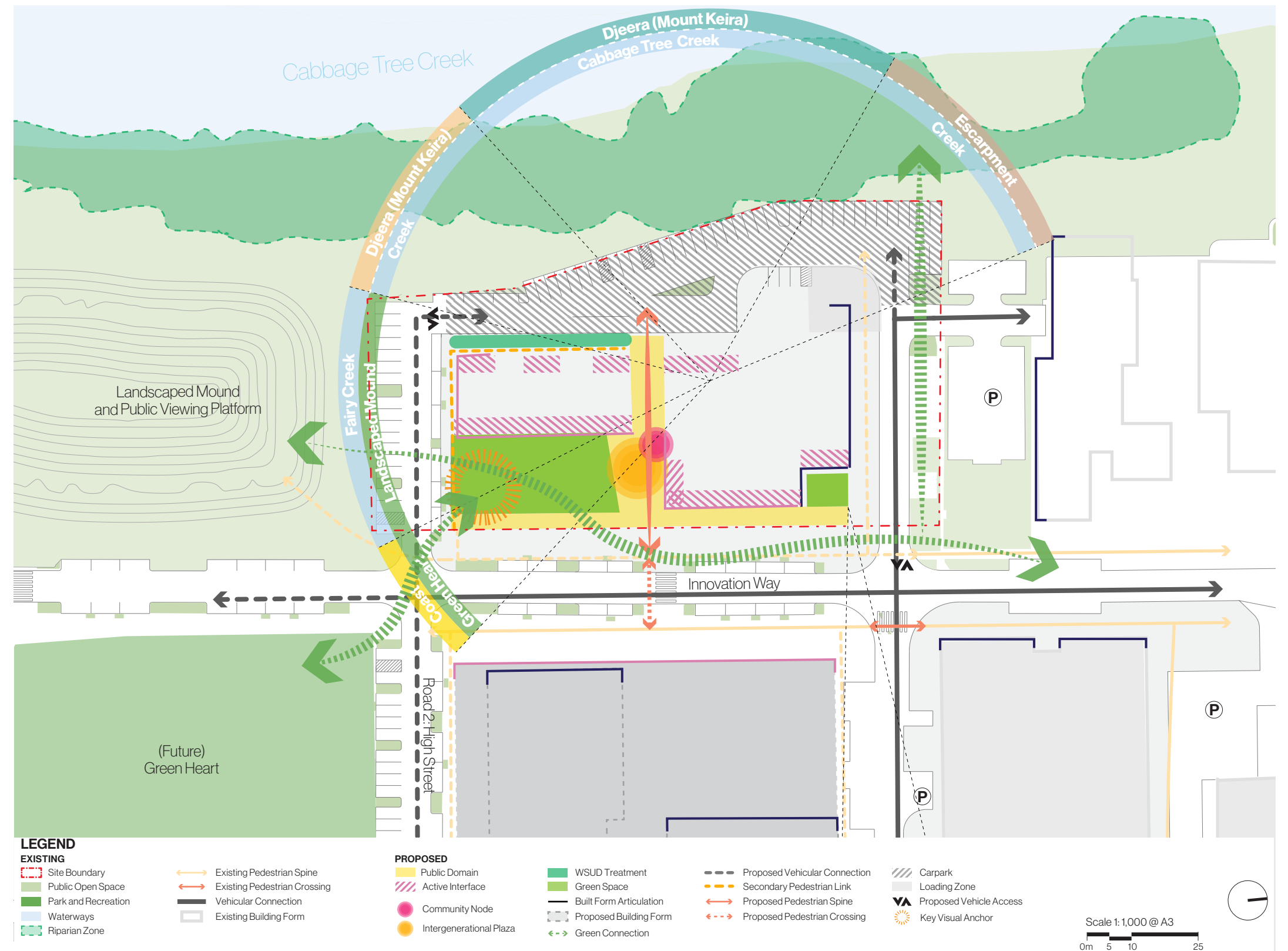
- Ensure no built form sits within the nominated 23m APZ's
- The northern and eastern interfaces require careful consideration to ensure visual privacy for existing dwellings
- Maintain primary and secondary setbacks to ensure a human-scaled interface with the public domain
- Façades should respond to prevailing winds
- The Vegetation Buffer Zone affecting the site requires bushfire-sensitive design
- Adhere to the minimum floor level of 5.46 m AHD to accommodate the 100-year flood level
- Integrate overland flow paths into a site-wide WSUD strategy
- Address potential noise intrusion from the western industrial zone
- Open space areas should retain visual and physical connection to the Green Heart
- Accommodate vehicular and pedestrian connections and maximise pedestrian permeability
- Enhance public domain and pedestrian amenity along Innovation Way
- Provide ground floor activation along both High Street and Innovation Way
- Allow for future road extensions along the northern boundary



3.11 OPPORTUNITIES

The site presents opportunities to draw on its unique natural setting to maximise visual and physical connections and contribute to the activation of the precinct as a whole.

- Use built form modulation to respond to the precinct's character
- Highlight key corners to create visual anchors
- Orient buildings to maximise visual connectivity to surrounding landscape features
- Capture views of the creek, escarpment, prominent landforms, and adjoining open space areas
- Ensure primary open space areas extend the public domain along Innovation Way, strengthening the precinct-wide open space network, contributing to greening, and reinforcing the landscape setting
- Provide enhanced green corridor connections that link to existing ecologies
- Provide a mid-block connection to maximise site permeability and support precinct-wide connectivity, legibility, and wayfinding
- Strengthen and accommodate pedestrian connections along Innovation Way and Road 2 as part of the broader precinct pedestrian network
- Establish the primary street address along Innovation Way to create a clear and legible main access point
- Locate the primary vehicular entry from High Street, with access along both the northern and southern interfaces of the site, tying into the existing and proposed vehicular network
- Position primary car parking, pick-up, and drop-off areas to the rear along the western edge of the site to remove cars from the main street interface
- Activate interfaces with the public domain along both Innovation Way and High Street
- Explore opportunities to create a community node along the key east-west pedestrian link associated with the main entry points



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