

3.9 Visual amenity

This Section describes the visual character of the existing landscape in the vicinity of the rail corridor. A visual impact assessment, describing the potential effect of changes to the existing landscape as a result of the Project, is detailed in Section 9.1.

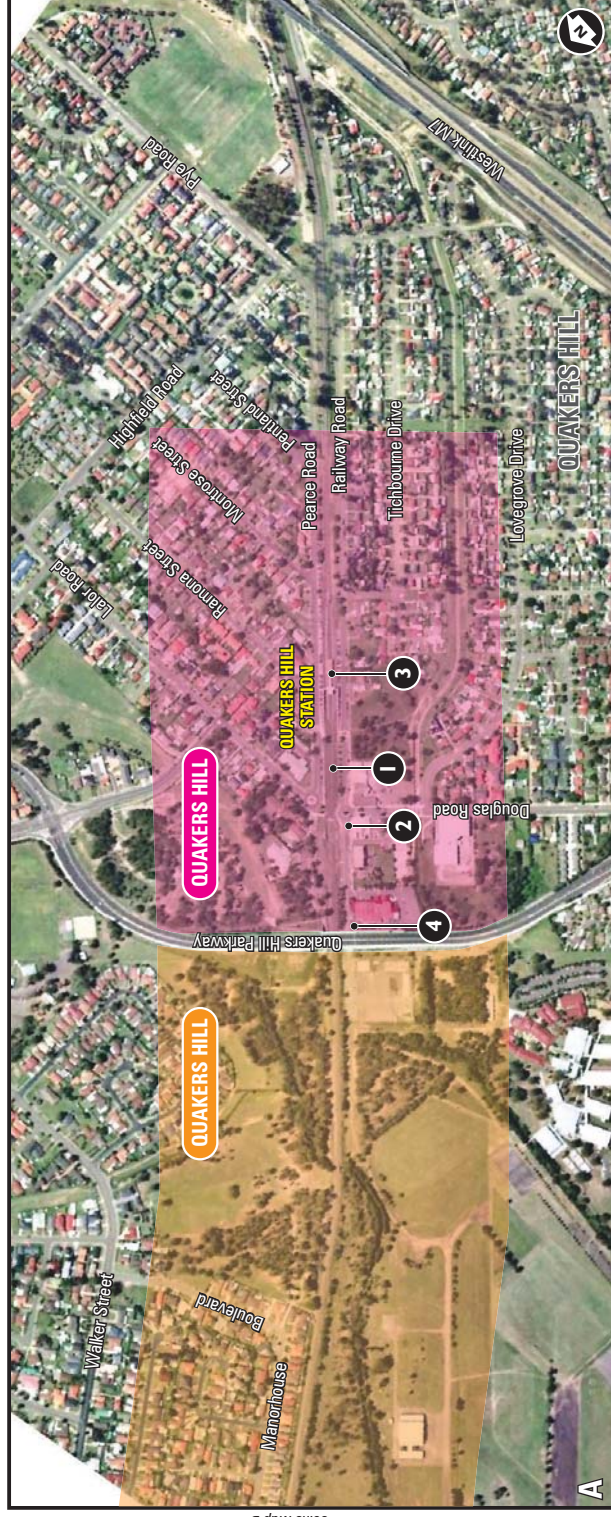
3.9.1 Assessment approach

The Project area was divided into four broad landscape units (refer Figure 3-24) for the purpose of assessing the existing visual environment. These units were based on identifiable differences between landscape character types and geographical boundaries. Landscape character refers to aspects of the landscape such as landform, land use, tree cover and location; features that together form a homogenous landscape distinguishable from adjacent landscapes (Brodbeck 2005). The scenic quality of each landscape unit was also considered and ranked as high, medium or low. Scenic quality refers to the degree to which the visual aesthetics of a landscape are valued from a human point of view (Brodbeck 2005).

As the Project is located predominantly within the NWGC, the future visual environment was also considered.

The landscape units identified within the study area are broadly described as:

- Unit 1 — Town centre
 - Quakers Hill
 - Riverstone
- Unit 2 — Suburban residential
 - Quakers Hill
 - Schofields
 - Riverstone
- Unit 3 — Rural-residential
 - Schofields
 - Vineyard
- Unit 4 — Industrial/commercial
 - Riverstone (Hobart Street to Victoria Street).



Joins Map B

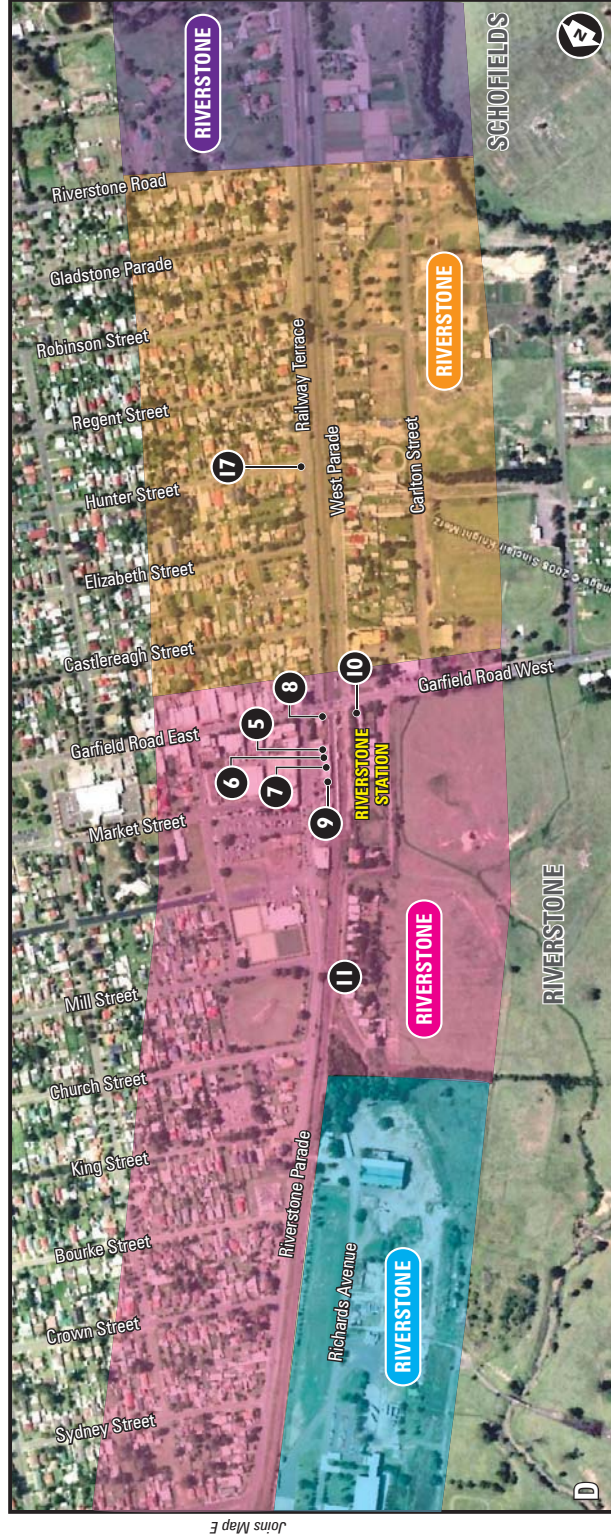
- Legend:**
- Town centre
 - Suburban residential
 - Rural residential
 - Industrial/commercial
 - Location of visual landscape units
 - Location of photographs



Joins Map C

Joins Map A

Figure 3-24a Landscape units in the study area and location of photographs



- Legend:**
- Town centre
 - Suburban residential
 - Rural residential
 - Industrial/commercial
 - Location of visual landscape units
 - Location of photographs

Figure 3-24b Landscape units in the study area and location of photographs

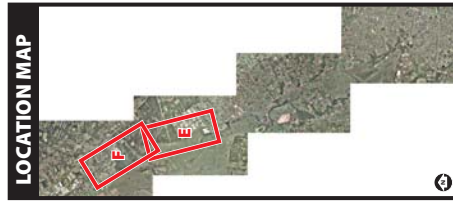


Figure 3-24c Landscape units in the study area and location of photographs

3.9.2 Existing visual environment

A detailed description of each visual unit is provided below; a summary of the existing visual environment for each visual unit is included in Table 3-32 at the end of this section.

Unit 1 — Town centre

Quakers Hill

This landscape unit extends from the southern end of Quakers Hill Station to Quakers Hill Parkway and is characterised by local shops and transport facilities. The commercial centre of Quakers Hill comprises one- and two-storey buildings along both sides of Douglas Road and facing the rail corridor along Railway Road. The shops along Railway Road are shown in Photograph 3-1. As shown in Photograph 3-1, there are few trees lining the rail corridor, therefore, the rail line is generally visible from the premises facing the rail corridor along Pearce Road and Railway Road. However, as the topography is relatively flat, properties set further back than these streets are unlikely to have views of the rail line.



Photograph 3-1 Shops along Railway Road on the western side of Quakers Hill Station

Photograph 3-2 shows the main shops along Douglas Road (taken from the eastern side of the station) comprising one-storey commercial premises, including real estate agents and small supermarkets.



Photograph 3-2 Main shops along Douglas Road (taken from Railway Road facing south-west)

Due to the low-rise nature of the town centre, Quakers Hill Station is a dominant feature of the landscape, mainly due to the height of the concourse and associated facilities such as ramps, lighting and overhead wiring, as shown in Photograph 3-3. Quakers Hill Parkway overbridge also forms a dominant feature in the area, as shown in the background of Photograph 3-4.

Based on the extent of development and the dominance of the Quakers Hill Station concourse and Quakers Hill Parkway, the scenic quality of this area is considered low.



Photograph 3-3 Quakers Hill Station facing south-east (note the height of the concourse, platforms and overhead wiring)



Photograph 3-4 Quakers Hill Parkway viewed from the Quakers Hill footbridge (facing north-west)

Riverstone

The topography of the Riverstone town centre is relatively flat, sloping up gradually to the east. The landscape of the Riverstone town centre is predominantly characterised by transport facilities. Riverstone Station is a significant visual feature due to the presence of several distinctive heritage-listed station buildings (refer Section 3.5). These buildings are listed as the Riverstone Railway Station Group on the SHR and include the Railway Station, Former Station Master's Residence, Former Railway Barracks and the War Memorial in front of the station. Photograph 3-5 shows one of the heritage-listed platform buildings as viewed from Platform 2. Photograph 3-6 shows the same building as viewed from Riverstone Parade. Adjoining this building is a redbrick building, which includes a dry cleaning business (refer Photograph 3-7). This building tends to detract from the visual heritage qualities of the original station building.



Photograph 3-5 Heritage listed platform building at Riverstone Station, as viewed from Platform 2



Photograph 3-6 Heritage listed platform building at Riverstone Station, as viewed from Riverstone Parade



Photograph 3-7 The dry cleaners building constructed adjacent to the heritage-listed platform building

Garfield Road level crossing is a significant visual feature of the Riverstone town centre, providing uninterrupted views of the rail corridor. As a result of the operation of the level crossing, regular traffic queues on the main street (Garfield Road) are a common visual feature within the town centre. Photograph 3-8 shows a view of the Garfield Road level crossing from Garfield Road East just after the crossing has been reopened. This photograph shows mixed traffic queued back along Garfield Road West.



Photograph 3-8 Traffic along Garfield Road (facing west)

The Riverstone town centre is characterised by commercial buildings primarily concentrated on the eastern side of the station, comprising one- and two-storey shops and commercial offices. The Riverstone Shopping Centre is a dominant visual feature of the Riverstone town centre opposite the station and is clearly visible from the heritage-listed platform building at Riverstone Station (refer Photograph 3-9).

The scenic quality of Riverstone town centre is considered low to moderate. The heritage-listed station buildings provide some aesthetic value; however, the dominance of the Garfield Road level crossing and associated traffic queues, along with several buildings with poor aesthetic qualities, detracts from the visual quality of this area.



Photograph 3-9 Riverstone shopping centre, as viewed from the heritage listed platform building at Riverstone Station

A number of one-and two-storey shops are located on the southern side of Garfield Road East, including a large hamburger shop on the corner of Garfield Road East and Railway Parade (refer Photograph 3-10). A supermarket and large car park are located opposite the station on Riverstone Parade. These are prominent visual features for passengers entering and exiting the station, and for vehicles driving along Riverstone Parade. The car park slopes up gradually to the north-east, and when full, is highly visible from the road and the station.

Adjacent to the town centre, residential properties line Riverstone Parade between Church Street and Hobart Street. These houses face directly onto the rail corridor and have unscreened views of the track and overhead wiring.



Photograph 3-10 One- and two-storey commercial development on the eastern side of Riverstone Station (facing north-east across Garfield Road level crossing)

The western side of the rail corridor is much less developed in comparison to the eastern side, and includes a hotel and a Scout hall. Photograph 3-11 shows a row of single-storey houses along Richards Avenue that front the rail corridor from its western side. These houses have an uninterrupted view of the rail line as there are no trees providing any visual screening. The existing track is duplicated between Garfield Road and Church Street; therefore, the majority of the houses along Richards Avenue face duplicated track. The four houses at the northern end of Richards Avenue face single track.

The trees on the western side of the rail corridor provide some shielding of the 'Meatworks' industrial estate but not the rail corridor.



Photograph 3-11 Houses along Richards Avenue facing the rail corridor (taken from Riverstone Parade)

Unit 2 — Suburban residential

Quakers Hill

The aerial photograph in Figure 3-24a provides a good indication of the landscape character along the eastern side of the rail corridor between Quakers Hill Parkway and Seldon Street, Quakers Hill. As shown in the photograph, the landscape is characterised by clusters of suburban residential development and open space. The residential development predominantly comprises one and two-storey medium-density premises abutting the rail corridor (Manorhouse Boulevard, Seldon Street and Reycroft Avenue). The residential development is surrounded by open space, including Oppy Reserve (Quakers Hill Parkway to Manorhouse Boulevard) and rural land.

The topography is flat, hence the rail line is visible only from homes facing the rail corridor, and also from the second storey of some two-storey homes within approximately 20 metres of the rail corridor and from Oppy Reserve. Along Manorhouse Boulevard, the western side of the rail corridor is lined with tall, native trees. While these trees do not screen the houses from the rail corridor, they do provide a pleasant outlook, lessening the impact of the overhead wires. There are few trees along the rail corridor at Reycroft Avenue and Seldon Street.

The Nirimba Education Precinct and Department of Defence land are located on the western side of the rail corridor (refer Figure 3-1). As the rail corridor is sufficiently screened by tall trees to restrict most views from these locations, these sites are considered not to be sensitive visual receivers.

Considering the availability of views of vegetated or open rural land, the scenic quality of the landscape along the rail corridor is high. Further back from the rail corridor, in the suburban streets, the scenic quality is low as views are typically limited to the surrounding streets and houses.

Schofields village centre

The section of the rail corridor between Schofields Road and Kensington Park Road contains Schofields village centre. This area is classified as suburban residential, comprising low-density single-storey detached houses. The village is older than the Quakers Hill suburban development and the houses are spaced further apart.

As shown in Photograph 3-12 (taken from Westminster Street overbridge facing towards Schofields Station), vegetation screens the rail line from Railway Terrace (on the eastern side of the rail corridor) and Bridge Street (on the western side).



Photograph 3-12 View of the rail corridor taken from Westminster Bridge, facing towards Schofields Station

Schofields Station is at the centre of Schofields village and forms a significant visual feature of the village centre. Photograph 3-13 shows the single-storey station building and car park, which are located on the eastern side of the rail line, opposite the shops (refer Photograph 3-14). At the northern end of the platform, a pedestrian level crossing, as shown in Photograph 3-15, provides access to the western side of the rail corridor. This photograph is taken from the western side of the rail corridor and shows the pedestrian level crossing in the foreground, platform and sheds (refer Photograph 3-15) in the middle ground and Railway Terrace and Schofields shops in the background.



Photograph 3-13 Schofields Station building and car park on the eastern side of the rail corridor



Photograph 3-14 Looking north west towards shops on Railway Terrace, opposite Schofields Station



Photograph 3-15 Schofields Station pedestrian level crossing and station platform (Railway Terrace and the Schofields shops are in the background)

Photograph 3-16 shows a group of three co-joined sheds located adjacent to the station. These sheds are known as the former Schofields stock feed and fertiliser store. The sheds have a poor aesthetic quality, appearing abandoned and dilapidated, and are highly visible from Railway Terrace (as seen in Photograph 3-16), the station platform (as seen in Photograph 3-15) and Bridge Street on the western side of the rail corridor (as seen in Photograph 3-17).



Photograph 3-16 View of the old sheds at Schofields Station (from Railway Terrace)



Photograph 3-17 Looking south east from Bridge Street towards Schofields Station

Some houses in Tain Place and Lane Grove adjoin the western side of the rail corridor (refer Figure 3-24b). Some of these properties have fencing and trees bordering the rail corridor; however, as the rail line is built on an embankment approximately 2–3 metres above ground level, the overhead wiring and trains are clearly visible from these properties.

The scenic quality of the landscape in this area is moderate. Tall, native trees provide significant visual screening of much of Schofields Station, providing a pleasant aesthetic quality to the village centre. The abandoned sheds detract from the quality of views from Railway Terrace.

Riverstone

The Riverstone suburban residential landscape unit extends from Riverstone Road to Castlereagh Street. Photograph 3-18 shows the typical residential development in this area, comprising mainly older, single-storey homes facing the rail corridor. This area is similar to Schofields in terms of the type and density of residential development. As the topography is relatively flat and few trees line the rail corridor (unlike at Schofields), the rail line is generally visible from the road and from properties fronting Railway Terrace or West Parade (on the western side of the rail corridor). Some parts of West Parade are more sparsely developed, bordering on rural-residential in character.

The scenic quality of this landscape is considered moderate. Views across the rail corridor range from open, rural land, to housing on the opposite side of the rail corridor.



Photograph 3-18 Houses facing the rail corridor along Railway Terrace, Riverstone

Unit 3 — Rural-residential

Schofields

This landscape unit is located in Schofields between Seldon Street and Schofields Road. Photograph 3-19 and 3-20 show the typical rural views available from Railway Terrace. As shown in these photographs, the landscape is characterised by open rural lots with scattered trees. A small number of homes are visible from Railway Terrace. Given the lack of development, the rail line is highly visible from Railway Terrace and from the properties fronting the rail corridor. The rail line has no significant visual features apart from overhead wiring and fencing.

Based on the availability of rural views, the scenic quality of this landscape is considered high.



Photograph 3-19 Looking north-west along Railway Terrace, Schofields



Photograph 3-20 View to the south-east from Railway Terrace towards the rail corridor at Schofields

Vineyard

On the eastern side of the rail corridor between Victoria Street and Bandon Road, the Project area is characterised by vegetated rural lots and scattered homes. The western side of the rail corridor is characterised by open, rural land sloping gently down to the west. This is shown in Photograph 3-21 (taken from Riverstone Parade facing south), which shows tall, native vegetation on the eastern side of the road, some trees lining the eastern side of the rail corridor and more open, rural land on the western side of the rail corridor.

The landform at Vineyard is gently undulating, as seen in Photographs 3-21 and 3-22, the latter of which shows the view from Bandon Road, facing east, up toward the station. Viewing opportunities of the rail corridor from Riverstone Parade are moderate, due to the undulating topography and vegetation. The extent of tall, native trees on properties along Riverstone Parade means that views of the rail corridor from private properties are limited. While the western side of the rail corridor is less screened by vegetation, there are no sensitive visual receivers on the western side of the rail corridor.



Photograph 3-21 View of the rail corridor and Riverstone Parade (taken from Riverstone Parade facing south)



Note: The yellow dotted line shows the location of rail corridor.

Photograph 3-22 Open rural land sloping down to the west away from Vineyard Station

Photograph 3-23 shows Vineyard Station (taken from Bandon Road facing south east), which comprises a shelter and single platform on the western side of the rail line. As shown in the photograph, the station is well screened from Riverstone Parade by tall trees that line the rail corridor at this location. Moderate screening is provided by the trees on the western side of the rail corridor. As shown in Photograph 3-24, the station building, platform and rail line are highly visible from the vehicle level crossing at Bandon Road.

The scenic quality of this landscape is considered high based on the availability of bushland and rural views from both sides of the rail corridor.



Photograph 3-23 Looking south-east towards Vineyard Station



Photograph 3-24 Vehicle level crossing at Bandon Road, facing south-east towards Vineyard Station

Unit 4 — Industrial/commercial

Riverstone

The industrial/commercial landscape unit from Hobart Street to Victoria Street in Riverstone is characterised by one- and two-storey warehouses, garages and commercial premises along Riverstone Parade on the eastern side of the rail corridor. Photograph 3-25 shows a number of two-storey warehouses on the eastern side of Riverstone Parade facing the rail corridor. The photograph also shows the land sloping gently up from the rail corridor to the north-east, and very few trees lining the rail corridor. Consequently, the rail line is highly visible from properties along Riverstone Parade.



Photograph 3-25 View to the south showing industrial and commercial development along Riverstone Parade

The 'Meatworks' industrial estate (now occupied by a freight haulage company) is located on the western side of the rail corridor to the south of Riverstone Station. This area comprises a number of large warehouses, which are visible from Riverstone Parade, as shown in Photograph 3-26, taken from the corner of Riverstone Parade and Wellington Street. The rail corridor is visible from the Meatworks estate, although the estate is of low visual sensitivity, and the rail line has no significant visual features aside from overhead wiring and fencing.

The scenic quality of the landscape is considered low. While some views of rural land are available from Riverstone Parade, the dominance of industrial and commercial buildings along Riverstone Parade and also within the Meatworks estate detracts from the quality of the views in the area.



Photograph 3-26 Looking west across Riverstone Parade and the rail corridor towards warehouse buildings at the 'Meatworks' industrial estate

Table 3-32 provides a summary of the four landscape units and their main characteristics.

Table 3-32 Landscape units and their main visual characteristics

Landscape unit	Main visual characteristics
Unit 1 — Town centre	
Quakers Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ landscape character — low density (one- and two-storey) commercial buildings, dominance of transport facilities (e.g. Quakers Hill Station and Quakers Hill Parkway) ▪ scenic quality — low ▪ visibility of rail corridor — moderate (highly visible from roads and buildings adjacent to rail corridor)
Riverstone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ landscape character — traffic queues on Garfield Road, heritage listed Riverstone Station, low density (one- and two-storey) commercial buildings (several with poor aesthetic quality) ▪ scenic quality — low to moderate ▪ visibility of rail corridor — high
Unit 2 — Suburban residential	
Quakers Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ landscape character — modern, closely spaced, residential development (one- and two-storey) surrounded by open space land ▪ scenic quality — low (away from the rail corridor) and high (adjacent to the rail corridor where rural views are available) ▪ visibility of rail corridor — high visibility adjacent to the corridor, but low visibility from houses set back from the rail corridor

Landscape unit	Main visual characteristics
Schofields	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ landscape character — low density, established residential area with some local shops, Schofields Station and old sheds ▪ scenic quality — moderate ▪ visibility of rail corridor — low to moderate (some vegetation screens the rail corridor)
Riverstone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ landscape character — low density, established residential ▪ scenic quality — moderate ▪ visibility of rail corridor — moderate (some vegetation screening of rail corridor, flat topography)
Unit 3 — Rural residential	
Schofields	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ landscape character — rural properties with scattered homes and farm structures ▪ scenic quality/landscape significance value — high (rural landscape) ▪ visibility of rail corridor — high from the road and from properties adjacent to rail corridor
Riverstone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ landscape character — rural properties with scattered homes and farm structures ▪ scenic quality — high (rural landscape) ▪ visibility of rail corridor — high from the road and from properties adjacent to rail corridor
Vineyard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ landscape character — rural/bushland properties with scattered homes (eastern side), open rural land (western side) ▪ scenic quality/ landscape significance value — high (rural/bushland landscape) ▪ visibility of rail corridor — moderate due to vegetation screening and flat topography (eastern side); moderate due to some vegetation screening sloping topography
Unit 4 — Industrial/commercial	
Riverstone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ landscape character — medium density commercial/industrial development ▪ scenic quality — low (rural views interrupted by commercial/industrial development) ▪ visibility of rail corridor — high

3.9.3 Future visual environment

Assessing the likely future visual environment within the Project area following the proposed development of the NWGC is problematic, as planning for the precincts are still in progress (refer Section 3.1.3). Based on planning information from the GCC (2008a, 2008c, 2009a, 2009b), the NWGC will be developed to include a mix of major centres, town and village centres, local neighbourhoods and industrial/employment land. The development of the different precincts will not occur simultaneously; therefore, the future visual environment along the rail corridor is likely to vary over time and space. An overview of the likely visual changes within the vicinity of the Project as a result of the development of the NWGC is provided in Section 9.1.3.