

2.8 Motorway Elements and Views

Refer to Figure 2.9.

The Motorway travels through a highly populated area of metropolitan Sydney with Motorway built elements, such as noisewalls, dominating most of the corridor. Along many lengths of the motorway the views are confined to the road corridor, opening up only occasionally. Figure 2.9: Motorway Elements and Views, illustrates the Motorway elements, views and vegetated edges of the corridor. It is these elements which determine the character of the Motorway and which reflect the topography, geology and vegetation through which the Motorway passes.

The six major intersections create decision points for the motorists. These intersections are defined by large bridge infrastructure overpasses crossing the motorway, with on and off-ramps and increased directional signage and road furniture, such as street lighting. The man-made built structures dominate, with large cuttings and/or retaining walls visually limiting the motorway views.

East of Windsor Road is the undulating hilly bushland of residential Baulkham Hills and Bidjigal Reserve. The typography creates a dynamic and unique backdrop with views both north and south into the forest of Bidjigal Reserve. In most cases, the motorist is unaware of the residential housing outside the road corridor as noise walls interrupt the flow of the landscape and restrict views from the motorway.

The noise walls, despite efforts to camouflage the structures by painting them green, are visually dominant along much of the route. The stepped top edge profile and variable distance from the road edge creates a jagged and inconsistent visual line in direct contrast to the smooth flowing alignment of the motorway, the rolling hills of the area and the visual 'softness' of the vegetation.

Towards Pennant Hills Road, the Motorway alignment descends into the low-lying landform of the creek valley. Pennant Hills Road intersection is a strong, hard-edged built form, as illustrated in Photo 2.24. The motorway burrows beneath the wide bridge resulting in high vertical retaining walls. The walls are not well designed and finishes consist of shotcrete with exposed rock bolts. Planting on top of the bridge structure softens and greens the wide expanse of asphalt.

The overbridge structures along the Motorway are generally poorly resolved with the overall structural form and pier/headstock detailing creating a solid and overly bulky visual impression. At Beecroft Road intersection, visual complexity is created with the additional crossing of the Northern Rail Line, the overpass structure for buses and a series of messy, complicated noise walls and cuttings.

The Norfolk Road Tunnel is a major built form landmark and memorable experience on the Motorway journey. However, the height of the portal cuttings, the darkness and narrowness of the tunnel itself can be visually overbearing and contribute to driver anxiety. The exposed sandstone around the portal entry is attractive and creates character. (Refer to Photo 2.25)

The built form context outside the corridor, heading towards the commercial hub of Ryde, is low-scale residential housing. The residential housing is not visible from the Motorway due to large areas of vegetation, topographic changes and noise wall structures. The motorist's vision is often limited to views within the corridor framed by noise walls or rock cuttings creating a strongly defined built edge.

Large sandstone cuttings run parallel to the Motorway, where the road is lower than the surrounding topography. The natural sandstone is attractive and warmly coloured enriching the visual travel experience. The cuttings also create a hard edge contributing to restricting the motorist views of the Motorway. In multiple locations the cuttings have been stabilised with shotcrete creating a dull, colourless vertical or near-vertical wall. Often vegetation is visible at the top of the cuttings, softening the overall effect.

The urban development of Macquarie Shopping Centre, Macquarie University and Macquarie Business Park provides a strong indication of the land use and built character at the eastern end of the motorway. Larger scale commercial buildings are visible along the edges of the corridor and large expanses of sky are visible as the size and scale of the vegetation increases.

In the eastern section of the motorway, the topography is relatively flat and has a soft vegetated edge as it passes parts of Lane Cove National Park and Macquarie Park Cemetery. A slightly elevated regional view of the tree canopy is available when heading west, providing an indication of the natural environment and well-vegetated road corridor through which the motorist is passing. There are no visible noise walls in this section of the motorway and the visually dominant built items are the expanse of asphalt and the steel W-beam and concrete Type-F traffic safety barriers.



Photo 2.24 The strong built form structures at the intersection of the M2 Motorway with Pennant Hills Road



Photo 2.25 Sandstone cuttings and noise walls at the western Norfolk Road Tunnel portal

Contextual Analysis

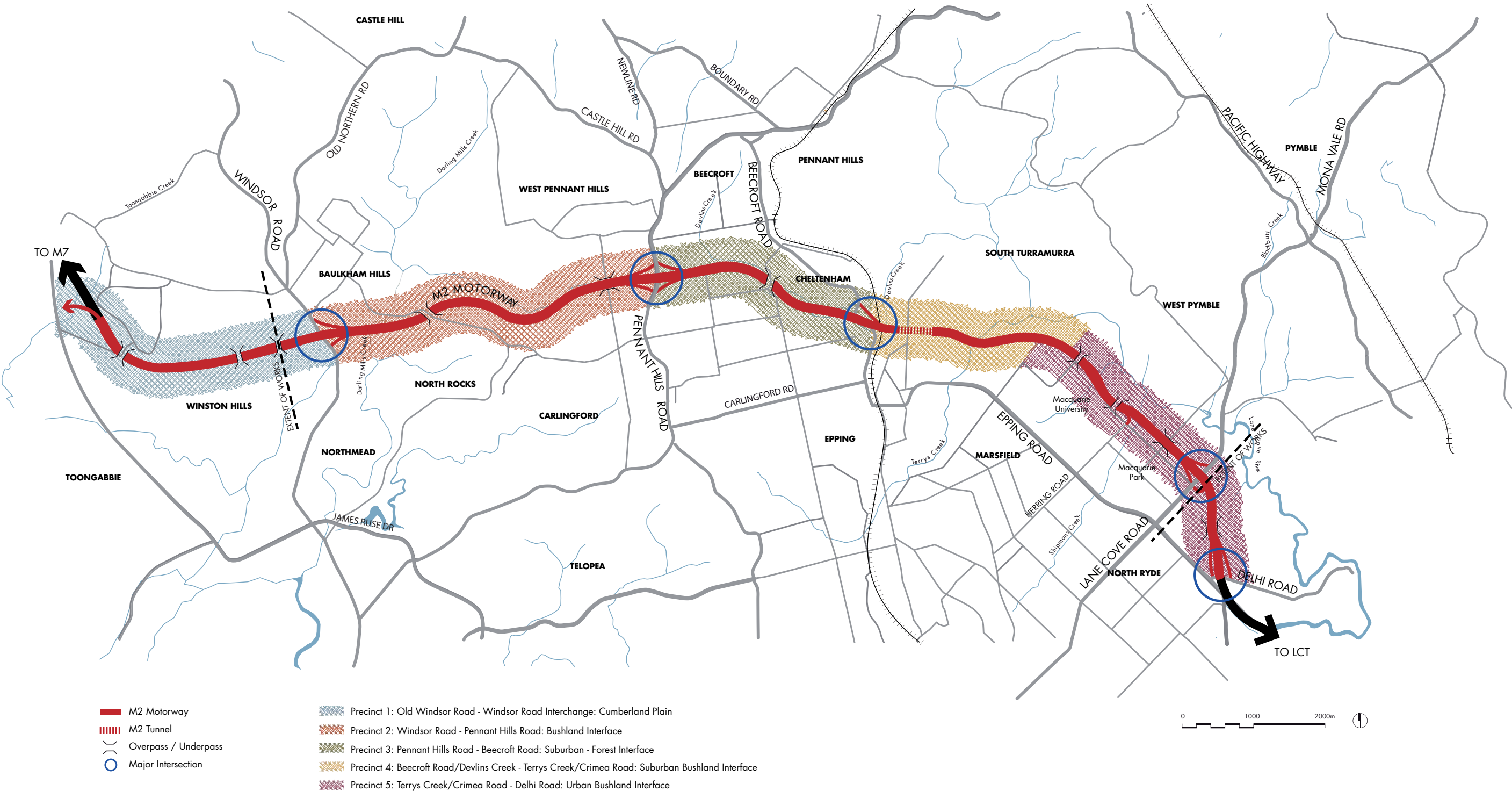


Figure 2.10 Character Precincts

2.9 Character Precincts

Refer to Figure 2.10.

The distribution and frequency of key visual qualities, built elements and vegetation along the corridor define the different character experiences. When combined with the adjoining land uses these form distinct precincts with specific visual qualities. The following four precincts have been identified through the contextual analysis:

Precinct 1 Old Windsor Road to Windsor Road Interchange – Cumberland Plain

Located at the western end of the upgrade, this section is typified by a change in vegetation and geology as it travels onto the flatter topography of the Cumberland Plain to the west.

Here the motorway vertical alignment adopts a flatter less undulating profile and becomes more open in character, despite the presence of noise walls. This in part relates to the wide grassed median which appears for the first time along the route. The flatter topography of the Cumberland Plain starts to become evident to the west as you look towards Abbott Road. (Refer to Photo 2.26)

Precinct 2 Windsor Road to Pennant Hills Road – Bushland Interface

Located in the western half of the central section, this area is characterised by the Motorway alignment curving over and around the hilly terrain associated with the Bidjigal Reserve and the bushland in Baulkham Hills. The dramatic topography provides a diverse travelling experience with some views of the surrounding bushland.

This section contrasts with the preceding precinct in that its character is more closely associated with the natural attributes of the adjacent context with less of a suburban feel. The hilly sandstone terrain adjacent to the Bidjigal Reserve creates a strong bushland edge to the corridor. (Refer to Photo 2.27)

Precinct 3 Pennant Hills Road to Beecroft Road / Devlins Creek – Suburban Forest Interface

Located in the central section of the corridor this area is characterised by the natural vegetation of a series of nature reserves, which connect along the Devlins Creek Valley and the traditional suburban development with leafy gardens associated with the suburbs of Carlingford, Cheltenham, and Epping.

Passing through the valley of Devlins Creek the Motorway moves higher up the plateau into strongly undulating terrain which rises either side of the road corridor. While heavily treed a stronger mix of exotic and native canopies is more evident than the adjoining precincts. Exotic trees are evident from their bright green foliage in summer. Beyond the noise walls the traditional suburban development with leafy gardens can be viewed outside the road corridor. (Refer to Photo 2.28)

Precinct 4 Beecroft Road / Devlins Creek to Terrys Creek – Suburban Bushland Interface

Norfolk Road Tunnel marks the western edge of this Precinct as it cuts through the ridge defining the edges of Terrys Creek and Devlins Creek catchments. East of the ridge line the road crosses the Terrys Creek valley dominated by the natural forest landscape typical of the area. (Refer to Photo 2.29)

Precinct 5 Crimea Road to Delhi Road – Urban Bushland Interface

Located at the eastern end of the corridor this area is characterised by the urban environment associated with North Ryde and Macquarie Park. Located to the south of the corridor, these corridor edges are dominated by large scale multi-storey commercial office buildings.

North of the corridor a softer edge is visible with the landscape flowing into the Lane Cove National Park. From within the corridor the strength of this edge is weakened by the presence of sports ovals and disturbed landscapes impacted by weeds and exotic plantings.

The southern edges of the corridor are dominated by large scale commercial buildings with low bushland along the northern edge. (Refer to Photo 2.30)



Photo 2.26 Precinct 1 - Western view from Windsor Road



Photo 2.27 Precinct 2 - Eastern view from Barclay Road



Photo 2.28 Precinct 3 - Western view from the top of Norfolk Road tunnel portal



Photo 2.29 Precinct 4 - Forest near Terrys Creek



Photo 2.30 Precinct 5 - Eastern view from Christie Road

Contextual Analysis

2.10 Key Visual Attributes

The M2 Motorway corridor was subjected to a critical visual analysis and this section provides a description of the key visual highway elements and landscape treatments within the corridor which will influence and provide a guide for the M2 Motorway Upgrade design response. There are three key visual attributes to the existing corridor:

1. Built Form

Built infrastructure elements presently dominate the corridor. Noise walls and bridge structures are generally poorly resolved and not integrated with their surrounds. The present built fabric is considered by the RTA as an example of “what not to do”. Small simple interventions and careful integration of any new structures, as part of the M2 Upgrade Works, could provide the opportunity to improve the M2 Motorway urban design reputation. (Refer to Photo 2.31)

2. National Parks, Forests and Reserves

The National Park, Forests and Reserves form one of the distinctive edge characteristics along the length of the corridor. The scale of this borrowed vegetation has the potential to redefine the corridor if strengthened by strategic urban and landscape design interventions as part of the M2 Upgrade Works. (Refer to Photo 2.32)

3. Sandstone

The underlying sandstone geology of the route defines the character of the road corridor where it is exposed in cuttings. (Refer to Photo 2.33)



Photo 2.31 Bridge abutment at Beecroft Road Interchange



Photo 2.32 Forest adjacent to motorway



Photo 2.33 Sandstone cutting