

SITE IMAGE



Welles Thomas Plaza – Thomas Street, Chatswood

Landscape Design - Environmental Assessment Report

PREPARED BY: Site Image Pty Limited – Landscape Architects
PREPARED FOR: PTW Architects / Welles Thomas Pty Ltd
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ISSUE: A - FOR APPROVAL CONSIDERATION
OUR REFERENCE: SS08-1772

1. BACKGROUND

Site Image Landscape Architects have been commissioned by Welles Thomas Pty Ltd to assist PTW Architect's multi-disciplinary team in the preparation of design and supportive documentation associated with the project civic spaces, landscape, streetscapes and associated areas. As a Landscape Architectural specialist consultancy, we are duly qualified to provide advice on the urban design, public art, and landscape components of the proposed project. The author, Ross Shepherd, is a duly qualified Landscape Architect, is an Associate Member of the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects, and is a Registered Landscape Architect.

This report is to be read in conjunction with the documents of the consultant team, and specifically relate to the landscape documents prepared by Site Image (NSW) Pty Ltd, including:

Landscape Analysis:

- Microclimate and Physical Environment Analysis
- Spatial and Functional Analysis
- Visual Analysis

Plans:

- Landscape Plan
- Landscape Plan (colour)
- Landscape Design Imagery (colour with supportive photos and discussion)

In preparing these documents we have made reference to Willoughby City Council's codes and policies, relevant statutory codes and standards, and visited the site and surrounds and investigated the context and conditions, and liaised with Council's Planning officers.

2. CONTEXT AND EXISTING SITE

The existing site is a large on-grade carpark that is L-shaped, with dimensions approximately 70 metres from north to south, and 80 metres east to west. The site faces onto Thomas Street to the north (approximately a 40 metre frontage) and Albert Avenue to the south (approximately a 80 metre frontage), and has Fleet Lane crossing the site east-west, with this lane connected by Albert Lane to Thomas Street. The large open space of the existing carpark dominates the south-western edge of the Chatswood CBD, with residential apartments occurring to the south of the site across Albert Avenue. Chatswood Station occurs some 50 metres to the east of the site, although the access point to the station is further north by about 150 metres. Varying heights of commercial buildings occur on lands that directly adjoin to the east and west of the site. Two 2-storey commercial buildings adjoin the site to the east on Thomas Street.

The existing site currently provides pedestrian access from areas south and west of the site, north to the station and to the main West-Chatswood CBD retail and commercial areas further north. Katherine Street leads to the north from Thomas Street, and provides a pedestrian link, and visual axis directing views to the site.

The site slopes from west to east, falling from levels of approximately RL 102 down to RL 99, with a generally even levels from north to south. Drainage and flooding are not significant issues given the mid-slope location of the site. The site soils are loams derived from a sandstone substrate. A report on the likely wind conditions has been prepared by Windtech, and has been closely considered in the design, including developing the landscape design in liaison with them so that the landscape ameliorates likely winds to ensure pedestrian comfort.

3. STREET TREES AND SITE VEGETATION

There are trees on the site and in the adjacent street which we have reviewed and suggest that they have are suitable for removal and replacement with trees to provide suitable amenity in the new configuration of the site. The impact of creating a basement across the site of course requires their removal.

The trees on the site are shown in the 'Google Earth image' below, with a couple of large Casuarina and Eucalyptus species in the area of the carpark, and another in the grassed road verge on Albert Avenue. Across Albert Avenue a dense stand of large scale Eucalypts provide a high quality visual screen against the residential apartment buildings, which will continue to assist privacy after the change of the subject site to more active use. Close to the Thomas Street frontage are some low quality smaller trees including Callistemon spp., and a Melaleuca spp. The remainder of the site has no vegetation, given it is a bitumen paved carpark.

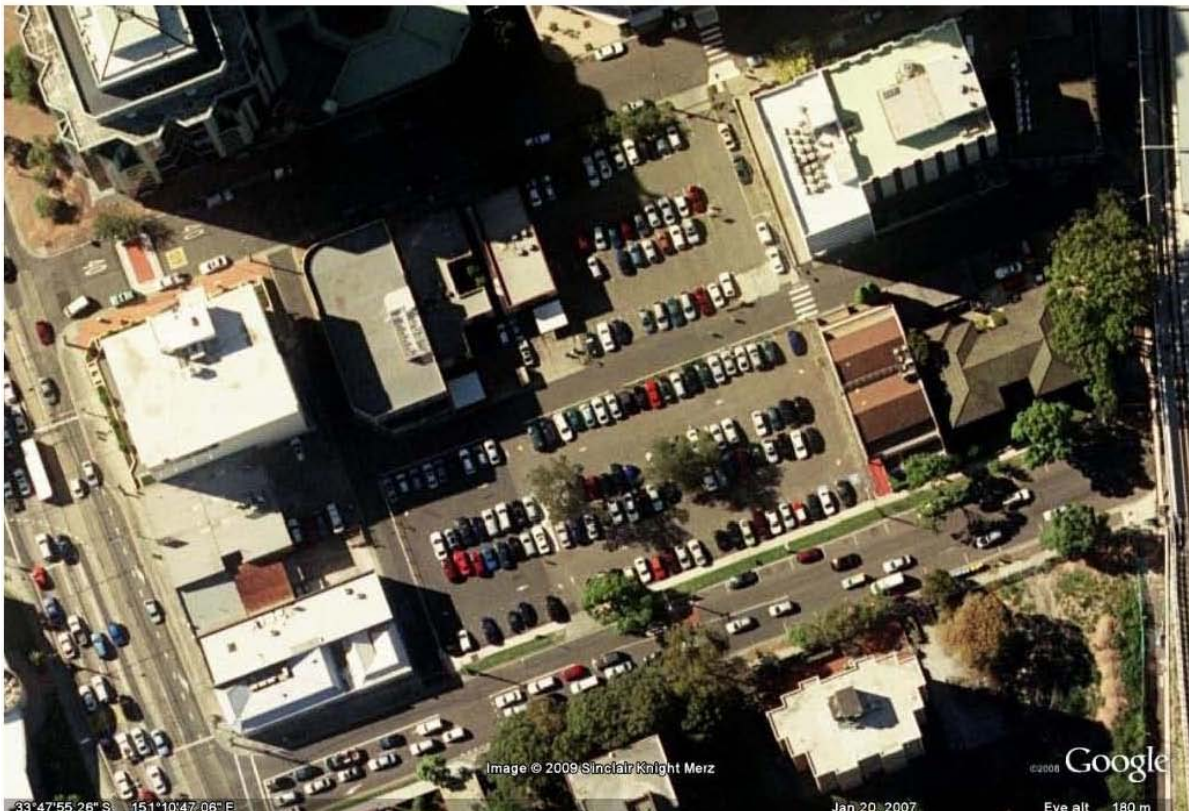


Figure 1.: 'Google Earth' image of the site showing existing tree locations



Figure 2.: Photographs of existing site trees



Figure 3.: Photographs of existing site trees on Thomas Street frontage

4. OUTLINE OF DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

The Architectural, Engineering and Planning documents describe the proposals in detail. For the purposes of this report, the development comprises:

- a commercial tower on the south-west area of the site ;
- a residential tower on the north east area of the site;
- a central open space spine across the site running north-south with landscaping and active plaza spaces and retail frontages. Lobbies and retail outlets will open onto this open plaza space that links to Thomas Street and Albert Avenue. Outdoor seating relating to cafe's and retail / commercial premises will activate the area;
- upgrading of Fleet Lane frontage with the site along the southern boundary with a cafe terrace, and at the junction with the open space spine across the site, with a feature civic sculpture proposed on the alignment with the laneway to reinforce this as a laneway / pedestrian link.
- A basement carpark is proposed across the majority of the site, with principal access from Albert Avenue.

In landscape terms, the central open space area is of course the focus of the design proposals, with the feature spaces and elements providing a high level of practical amenity for passive recreation, retail related spaces, and an interesting and vibrant cross-site pedestrian link.

5. LANDSCAPE DESIGN ANALYSIS

Summary diagrams are provided in Appendix A that highlight the key considerations relating to:

- Microclimate and Physical Environment Analysis
- Spatial and Functional Analysis
- Visual Analysis

Design analysis has considered the orientation of the space to sun and wind, and the character and context of the space relative to the Chatswood CBD and adjoining areas. The site will complete a significant missing piece of this area of Chatswood, and has the potential to create a lively, dynamic civic space activated by the residential and commercial population on the site and from adjacent areas. It is important to create an appropriate balance that respects the different needs of the residential and commercial user groups, as well as the general public. We believe the proposals show a suitable mix of passive lawn area, lunchtime seating areas, whimsical and creative public art components, formal forecourt spaces, and active retail frontages with potential cafe seating areas.

Other significant considerations that have been considered and addressed include:

- Streetscape identity and relationship as part of the CBD and residential environs;
- Sun and Shade patterns and influence on character and appropriate use of the space;
- Wind characteristics and potential to ameliorate this to the benefit of the possible use of the space;
- Lighting, security monitoring and general design for safety and comfort, and ensuring it is a suitably comfortable, welcoming hospitable space generally suitable for purpose;
- Accessibility, and also links to other sites, railway and CBD area, and nearby open space;
- Pedestrian and vehicular sightlines for arrival and identity, and issues associated with retail and commercial building signage.

Consideration has also been given to the character and functioning of the space at night. Given the linear form of the main space, consideration of lighting to ensure that at night the space joins with, and contributes to the overall environs of adjacent streets, and creates a safe and inviting area with appropriate lighting and consideration of CPTED principles. Design of paving and walls is to include design and elements to discourage skateboards and similar inappropriate activities.

It is envisaged that the area provides a positive focal space, with lighting and sculpture elements to dramatically contribute to the role of the space as a feature of the overall Chatswood CBD. A specialist lighting consultant will be engaged in order that the plaza and building forecourt lighting is fully coordinated with the lighting scheme for the adjacent lobbies and the building areas as a whole.

6. SPECIFIC LANDSCAPE DESIGN DISCUSSION

The following specific discussion and descriptions of design elements is also included as notes on the Landscape Plans. Please refer to those plans to identify the specific locations and elements discussed.

North Western Boundary

The blank wall of the existing two-storey building on the adjacent site is to be significantly screened by boundary native shrubs and canopy trees as shown on the plan. The planter elevates the planting above the adjacent lawn. A quality fence will be reinstated to the boundary where appropriate, and fire egress stairs are located to open onto Thomas Street.

Seating Lawn, Wall and Benches

A broad lawn (approximately 12 x 3.5 metres) is provided for passive recreation, with the slight elevation assisting the comfort for users by elevating their position relative to passing pedestrians. The lawn is in a sunny location, and the trees are selected and located to reduce wind. The edging wall and the solid bench elements that intersect 'into' the lawn area will all provide seating.

Fleet Lane Frontage

Upgrading of Fleet Lane junction with the site along the southern boundary with a cafe terrace, and at the junction with the open space spine across the site, with a feature civic sculpture proposed on the alignment with the laneway to reinforce this as a laneway / pedestrian link.

Terrace

The cafe terrace will have sun through the majority of the day, ameliorated by being just under the edge of the building in a colonnade type arrangement. The slope of Fleet Lane requires small flights of stairs at each end, with flush access midway along the lane. Low boundary planters will separate vehicles from pedestrian areas, whilst allowing visual access and views out from the terrace.

Forecourt

A formal apron of paving marks the entry to the building and creates an appropriate sense of address and setting for this significant building, linking it into the adjacent plaza space. Paving pattern making continues the rhythm of benches and paving inlays down the space.

Ramp and Stair to Albert Avenue

The broad pedestrian stair creates an address to the street, with it's offset from the main alignment of the plaza above placing the large tree as a terminating element on the main visual axis down the space. The residential apartments opposite on Albert Avenue are screened by large trees already, but it was felt it was appropriate to contain the space with landscape as part of the civic space. The ramp adjacent provides equitable access.

Council Footpaths

The line shown delineates Council's paving from site paving, showing that the footpath widens to suitably engage with the large civic space. This also occurs on Albert Avenue. Street trees are not yet shown, but it is understood that they will be located appropriately in consultation with Council to suit species and tree spacings in the street.

Residential Entry

Select paving will mark this entry creating a minor forecourt that is integral with the broader pattern making of the plaza paving. The forecourt paving extends across to the open lawn area, providing a suitable setting and amenity for the residents. Extensive open space near to the site will provide a high level of amenity.

Sculptural Paving Inlay and Flush Lights

A light coloured paver is to provide a linking, linear element along the length of the space, providing a signature design element that will provide interest and distinctive identity to the site. Motion sensors will detect passing pedestrians, and lighting will respond and then slowly fade, giving the effect of a 'jet trail' to each person. This has been trialled in a project in Scotland, and would provide a unique feature in Australia. Developing of an interpretive layer to the design will refer to the passing generations of people in Chatswood.

Broad Canopy Trees

Select native trees will be installed to provide a high and broad canopy of foliage at the three locations shown on the plan. A tree species such as *Ficus rubiginosa*, (but selected with aid of current best available stock and for best result in these conditions) will provide shade that will punctuate the space, and will of course green the view down the plaza, as well as reduce wind to assist pedestrian comfort. Uplighting will highlight the trees at night.

Public Art / Sculpture

A substantial public art piece will provide a central feature to the civic area, also being located to feature in views down Fleet Lane. The artwork sits in front of the commercial tower, and will reinforce the setting of the building as being in a significant public space. An artist will be engaged to develop a site specific response.

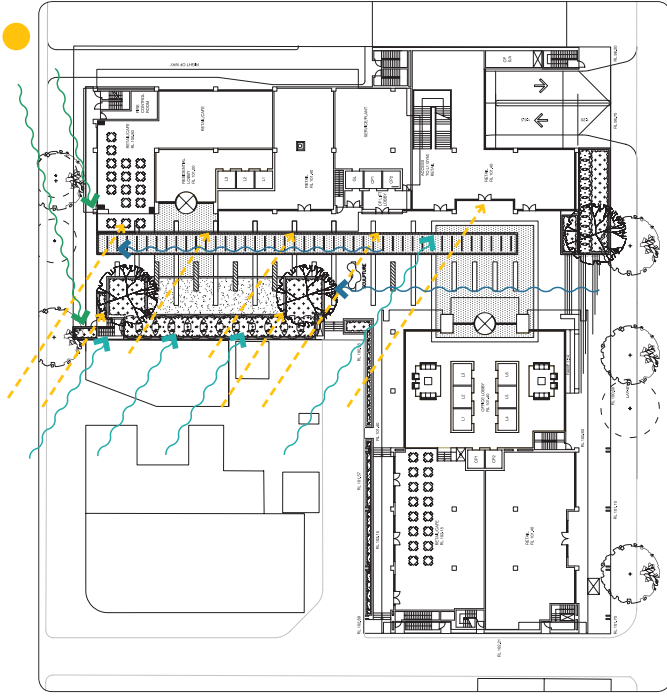
Paving Materials and Colour

Councils footpath paving is a honed concrete paver with a mid-range cream colour. A similar material, or quality stone is proposed on the site, with stone cladding to planter walls. The paving design shows a number of 'overlapping' forms, with the background intended as a light grey; the linear feature inlay as a very light colour; the longer perpendicular paving strips to be a mid-gray; and the benches and shorter inlays to be dark grey.

7. CONCLUSION

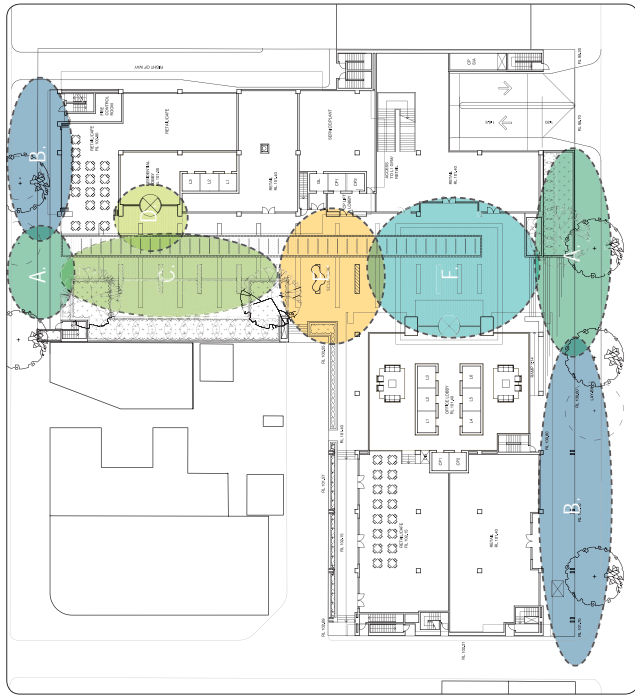
The design proposals have given due consideration to the specific site character, setting, functions of the buildings, and context within the CBD. The proposals consider the issues of achieving suitable connectivity with the adjacent streetscape, and other nearby public spaces, and practical consideration of the constructability and sustainable maintenance of the landscape and artwork. The proposals have been prepared to be cognisant of Council's relevant codes and guidelines for urban design, public domain and landscape. In response to potential impact of wind on the users of the space, a wind consultant has confirmed that the wind levels anticipated are suitable and will meet Council's guidelines. As such, we confirm our understanding that the proposals are suitable for consideration for approval.

APPENDIX A – LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS DIAGRAMS



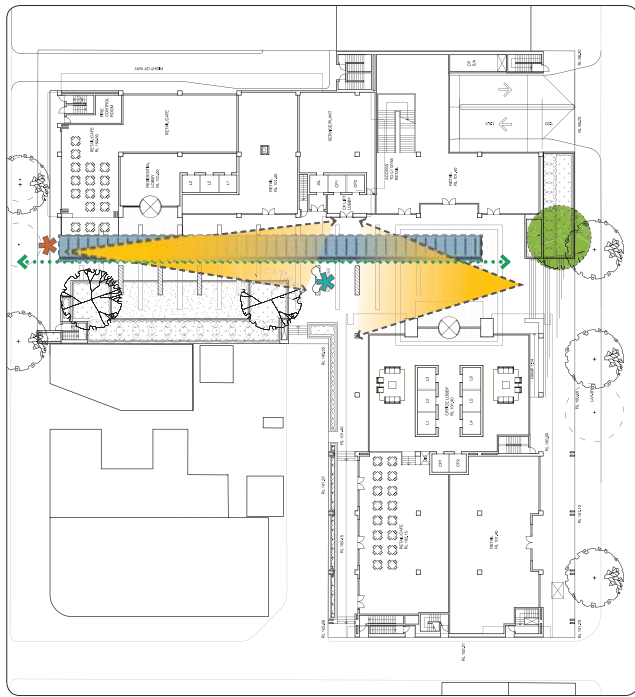
Microclimate and Physical Environment Analysis
LEGEND:

- A Sun access
- B Wind opportunity along space, buffered by trees
- North Easterly
- Westerly
- Southerly



Spatial and Functional Analysis
LEGEND:

- A. Street address to civic spine
- B. Retail / cafe street address
- C. Passive recreation / seating area
- D. Residential lobby forecourt
- E. Central Identity node and seating area
- F. Commercial Tower forecourt
- G. Retail / Commercial street address



Visual Analysis
LEGEND:

- ↔ A. Principal visual axis down civic space
- ★ B. View down Katherine St creates focal point on street front
- ★ C. Central focal point created by vertical sculpture
- ★ D. Linear pavement artwork / lighting to reinforce visual axis
- E. Large tree to terminate vista and screen residential opposite



APPENDIX B – LANDSCAPE PLANS