

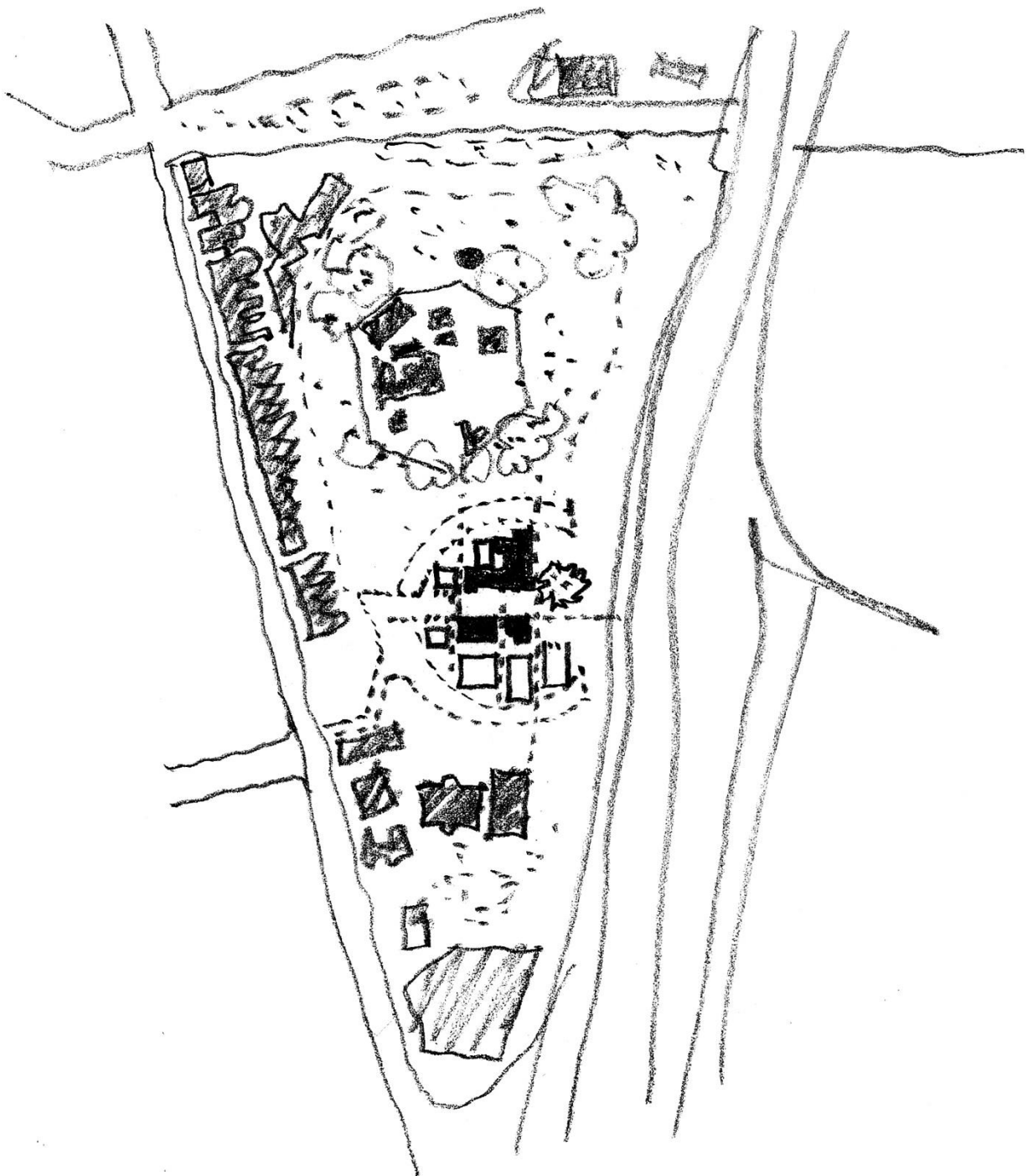
# Fort Street Public School Visual Impact Assessment

SSD 10340

Prepared by Ethos Urban

For School Infrastructure NSW

17 January 2020



# ETHOS URBAN

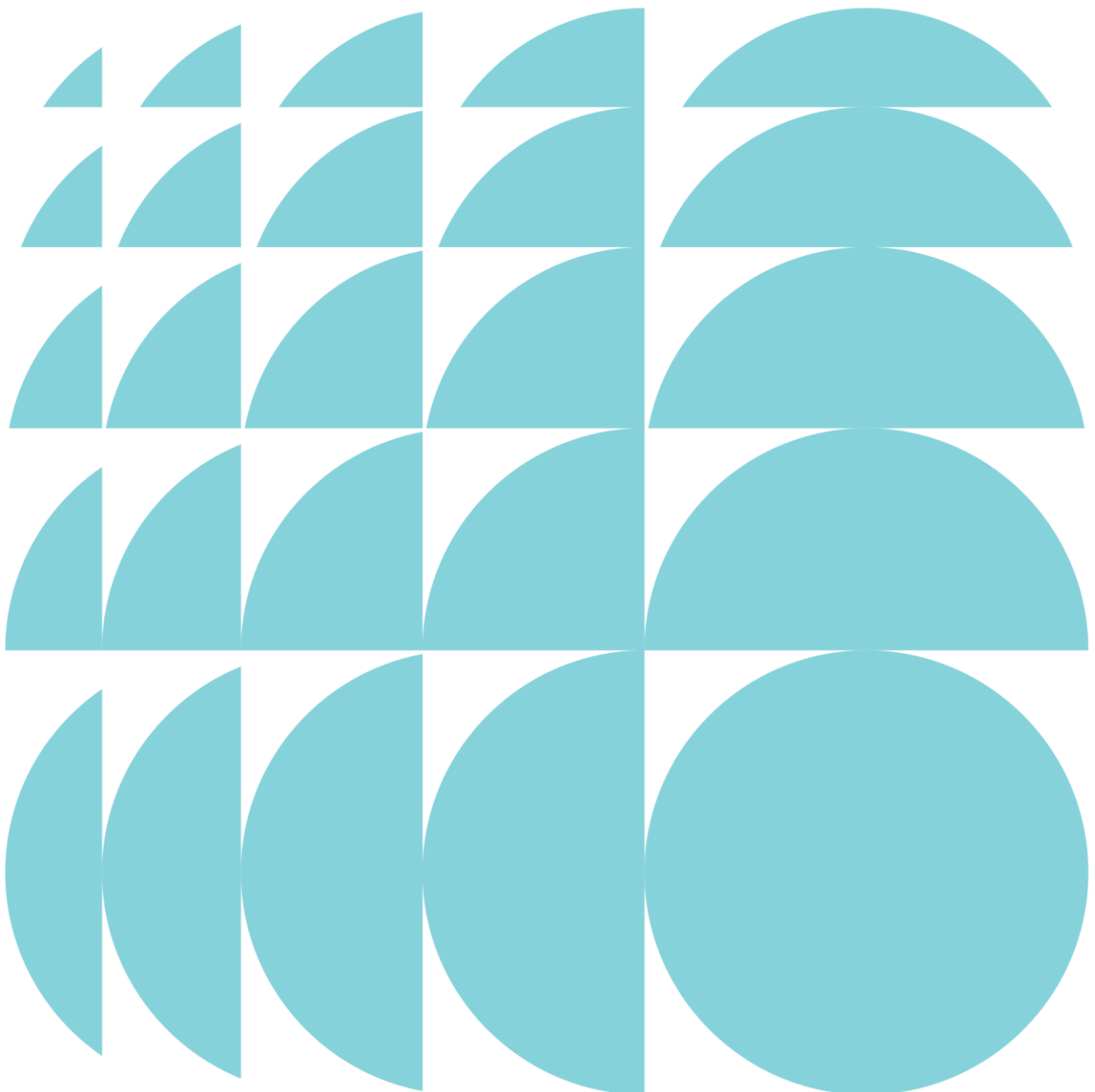
## Visual Impact Assessment

Upper Fort Street, Millers Point  
Fort Street Public School

Submitted to Department of Planning, Industry &  
Environment

On behalf of NSW Department of Education -  
School Infrastructure NSW

January 2020 | 218945



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This document has been prepared by:



Daniel Pantelas 17 January 2020

This document has been reviewed by:



Chris Bain 17 January 2020

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VERSION NO.	DATE OF ISSUE	REVISION BY	APPROVED BY
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### Appendix A. Land and Environment Court Policy

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## Terminology

Terminology used in this report is shown in **Table 1**. Terminology is adapted from a number of NSW and national sources, including:

- Local Character and Place Guideline (NSW Government, 2019)
- Understanding Neighbourhood Character (Victorian Government, 2018)
- Guideline for landscape character and visual impact assessment, Environmental impact assessment practice note EIA-N04 (NSW Roads and Maritime Services, 2018).

**Table 1: Terminology**

Term	Meaning
<b>AHD</b>	Australian Height Datum
<b>Character</b>	Character is a specific term that is defined by the relationship of the physical elements of a place. This includes the public domain e.g. (streets and open space) the private domain e.g. (scale and architectural style) and matters that cross both the public and private domains e.g (landform and vegetation)
<b>CSPS</b>	Central Sydney Planning Strategy
<b>DA</b>	Development application
<b>DCP</b>	Development Control Plan
<b>Desired future character</b>	The preferred future outcome for an area as identified by an applicable planning instrument
<b>CSPS</b>	Central Sydney Planning Strategy
<b>EIS</b>	Environmental Impact Statement
<b>EP&amp;A Act</b>	Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979
<b>Fabric</b>	Urban design term used to define the characteristics of urban form
<b>GNSS</b>	Global Navigation Satellite System. A form of surveying using GPS
<b>L&amp;E Court</b>	Land and Environment Court
<b>Magnitude</b>	Refers to the physical scale of the project, how distant it is from a viewpoint and the contrast it presents to the existing condition
<b>Place</b>	Place is a broad term that is defined by the relationship between people and social, environmental and economic elements. These elements include land, built form, public domain, history, culture and tradition. Places are multi-layered and diverse environments within the broader context of society. Individual places can be described or understood by people in different ways and at different scales. It includes the sense of belonging a person feels to that place, the way people respond to the atmosphere, how it impacts their mood, their emotional response to that place and the stories that come out of peoples' relationship with that place
<b>SEARs</b>	Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements. These provide the terms of reference for this VIA
<b>Sensitivity</b>	Refers to how sensitive the existing character of the setting is to the proposed nature of change
<b>SI NSW</b>	School Infrastructure New South Wales

Term	Meaning
<b>SSD</b>	State Significant Development
<b>SCIMS</b>	Survey Control Information Management Systems. Commonly known as system in NSW controlling state survey marks.
<b>Visual impact</b>	The nature of change created by the proposal as determined by considering the factors of sensitivity and magnitude. Visual impact can be positive, negative or neutral
<b>VIA</b>	Visual impact assessment

## Executive Summary

This report considers the visual impact of the proposed expansion of Fort Street Public School.

To determine the visual impact, assessment was undertaken of a number of matters, including:

- the existing place character of the primary visual catchment and school to establish a baseline.
- identification of key viewpoints from public places. Due to the proposals scale and bulk we are not of the opinion that the impact of private views is needed
- assessment of visual impact based on the sensitivity of these viewpoints and the magnitude of change resulting proposal's insertion into the view
- assessment of this visual impact against relevant parts of applicable planning instruments to determine appropriateness
- consideration of mitigation strategies and measures
- residual impact once mitigation strategies and measures have been incorporated

The site is visually prominent and located at the northern road entrance to the Sydney CBD. The site sits in a landscape unit which is representative of the inner Sydney landscape. This is dominated by a complex, layered and varied topography and built form with a strong presence of trees. In some instances, water forms part of this visual character which have a high level of scenic amenity. Within this broader whole, the site is most closely linked to the foreshore landscape unit comprising Millers Point and The Rocks.

Fort Street Public School is characterised by low rise red brick buildings that individually agglomerate as a collection of parts. Heritage buildings include the Bureau of Meteorology Building (Met building) the Messenger's Cottage. Hard paved ground cover and vegetation is scattered throughout the site. Based on scenic amenity criteria, Fort Street Public School cannot be regarded as a highly valued visual element within the primary visual catchment.

Based on the consideration of place, any relevant planning instruments and a site inspection, 11 viewpoints in the primary visual catchment were selected upon which to base the visual impact assessment. Photography, surveying and photomontages prepared in accordance with Land and Environment Court Policy was undertaken for each viewpoint. This provided two images – an existing baseline and an indication of the likely proposed future outcome.

Based on consideration of factors such as distance of the proposal from the viewpoint, the composition and dominant features in the view and the purpose of people being at the viewpoint, the sensitivity of all viewpoints ranged from low to high. Based on consideration of factors such as amount and type of new fabric visible and its relationship to the existing view, the magnitude of change at all viewpoints was also ranged from negligible to moderate. It is noted that the photomontages showed that the proposal was likely to be or not to be visible from a number of viewpoints.

The greatest visual impact is likely to occur at Viewpoint 1: Sydney Observatory, Viewpoint 3: National Trust, Viewpoint, Viewpoint 4: Agar Steps and Viewpoint 7: Harbour Bridge – Cahill Expressway. The nature of change is derived from introduction of a collection of low scale horizontal elements that protrude and recess relative to each other. While view composition and prominence is moderate from these viewpoints, it is consistent with the place character at the viewpoints and does not fundamentally alter the visible nature or the use or meaning of the school.

On this basis and considering the criteria established by the SEARs, it is concluded in its current proposed form that while the nature of visual change is moderate from a small number of viewpoints, the impact of this change is appropriate having regard to the provisions of relevant parts of applicable planning instruments.

In particular, it will not obstruct or fundamentally alter the nature of views obtained from key vantage points as identified in the primary visual catchment and will not result in view loss from locations in the public domain.

On this basis it is not considered necessary to implement mitigation strategies and measures to reduce visual impact.

The conclusion of this VIA is that in its current form, the proposal has an acceptable visual impact.

## 1.0 Introduction

This Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) is submitted to the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (the Department) pursuant to Part 4 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act) in support of an application for State Significant Development (SSD).

The redevelopment of Fort Street Public School is identified as State Significant Development (SSD) in accordance with Schedule 1 of *State Environmental Planning Policy (State and Regional Development) 2011* (SRD SEPP). Development of educational establishments for the purposes of alterations or additions to an existing school with a capital investment value of more than \$20 million is SSD for the purposes of the EP&A Act. As the proposed development will have a capital investment value exceeding \$20 million it is SSD. A CIV statement is provided under separate cover.

The report has been prepared by Ethos Urban on behalf of NSW Department of Education - School Infrastructure NSW, and is based on photography by Ethos Urban and photomontages by FJMT in accordance with Land and Environment Court Policy (see **Appendix A**)

This VIA has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of Part 4 of the EP&A Act, Schedule 2 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000* (EP&A Regulation), and the SEARs for the preparation of the EIS, refer to **Section 4.0**.

### 1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this report is to determine whether the SSD DA (the proposal) has an acceptable visual impact, considering all relevant factors.

### 1.2 Structure

The report is structured as follows:

- **Part 1: Introduction** – covers the purpose, scope and method of the visual impact assessment;
- **Part 2: Background** – provides background information relevant to the site and visual impact assessment
- **Part 3: Site description** – outlines the site
- **Part 4: Overview of proposed development** – outlines the proposal
- **Part 5: Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements** – identifies the matters that the visual impact assessment must consider
- **Part 6: Place character** – identifies the place character of the surrounding locality, the primary visual catchment and the school to establish a baseline
- **Part 7: Applicable planning instruments** – identifies relevant parts of applicable planning instruments;
- **Part 8: Viewpoints and Assessment** – identifies relevant viewpoints, shows current and an indication of the likely future outcome with the proposal, and undertakes an assessment of sensitivity and magnitude factors
- **Part 9: Assessment against applicable planning instruments** – assesses the proposal against relevant parts of applicable planning instruments and the SEARs;
- **Part 10: Summary assessment** – provides an overall summary amalgamated with the proposal's performance against the assessment criteria;
- **Part 11: Mitigation strategies and measures** – discusses mitigation strategies and measures to reduce visual impact;
- **Part 12: Residual impact** – identifies the residual visual impact after application of mitigation strategies and measures
- **Part 13: Conclusion** – provides a conclusion on the appropriateness of the proposal's visual impact

- **Appendices** – identifies how photos and photomontages are prepared in accordance with Land and Environment Court Policy (see **Appendix A**)

### 1.3 Scope

The NSW planning system does not currently have a government endorsed standard visual impact assessment policy. Given this, in undertaking this visual impact assessment consideration has been given to a number of recognised national and international guidance documents. These include:

- Guideline for Landscape Character and Visual Impact assessment (the RMS Guide) (RMS, 2018);
- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Landscape Institute and IEMA, 2013);
- Local Character and Place Guideline (DPIE, 2019); and
- European Landscape Convention.

Consideration has been given to the Land and Environment Court (L&E Court) planning principle for public domain views established by *Rose Bay Marina Pty Limited v Woollahra Municipal Council and anor* [2013] NSWLEC 1046.

Consideration has also been given to the following L&E court planning principles as relevant to the proposal:

- *Veloshin v Randwick Council* [2007] NSWLEC 428 for height, bulk and scale, and in particular with regard to reasonable expectations, predominant existing character and ‘fit’ or ‘look’
- *Project Venture Developments Pty Ltd v Pittwater Council* [2005] NSWLEC 191 for compatibility of proposal with surrounding development, and in particular how compatibility does not automatically equate to sameness.

Of broader note for visual impact assessment, the judgement handed down in *Project Venture Developments Pty Ltd v Pittwater Council* [2005] NSWLEC 191 notes that:

- *‘22 There are many dictionary definitions of compatible. The most apposite meaning in an urban design context is capable of existing together in harmony. Compatibility is thus different from sameness. It is generally accepted that buildings can exist together in harmony without having the same density, scale or appearance, though as the difference in these attributes increases, harmony is harder to achieve*
- *23 It should be noted that compatibility between proposed and existing is not always desirable. There are situations where extreme differences in scale and appearance produce great urban design involving landmark buildings. There are situations where the planning controls envisage a change of character, in which case compatibility with the future character is more appropriate than with the existing. Finally, there are urban environments that are so unattractive that it is best not to reproduce them’.*

Detailed consideration has not been given to cultural heritage. However, the Barra Charter sets out general conservation principles relevant to the proposal:

- The building should continue to be used, preferably for the purpose for which it was built.
- Generally, new additions should be sympathetic to the existing building.
- Good practice clearly distinguishes new work from the original.
- Significant views of the building should be identified and maintained.

Consideration has not been given to the following matters:

- case law;
- cultural heritage matters;
- private views;
- future RMS cycleway.

Schools and neighbourhood serving infrastructure are often designed with the purpose of being visible. Fort Street Public school is no exception located in a highly visible and prominent location not just for functional reasons such as educating young minds, but also as a physical expression of the city's aspirations and cultural heritage. This intent should be kept in mind when considering the appropriateness of the visual impact of such items.

## 1.4 Methodology

The Methodology used for this VIA has been based on desktop and field analysis and involves the following main steps:

1. local character: identify local character, including its sensitivity to change and ability to absorb change;
2. visual catchment: identify the visual catchment (a subset of local character) based on consideration of matters such as landform, built form and vegetation;
3. viewpoints: identify key viewpoints from where the proposal may be visible;
4. visual impact: assessment against sensitivity and magnitude criteria (see **Table 2 and 3**);
5. acceptability of visual impact: consideration of the visual impact against applicable and relevant planning instruments to determine acceptability. assessment of the visual impact against the planning framework;
6. mitigation: what measures are needed to ensure acceptability of impact; and
7. recommendation: prepare a recommendation based on the findings of the method.

Central to the assessment of visual impact are three (3) main criteria:

1. sensitivity;
2. magnitude; and
3. consistency with applicable and relevant planning instruments.

This report adopts the meaning and of 'sensitivity' and 'magnitude' from the RMS Guide. In this regard:

- sensitivity: refers to how sensitive the existing character of the setting is to the proposed nature of change'
- magnitude: refers to the physical scale of the project, how distant it is and the contrast it presents to the existing condition.

### Sensitivity

Sensitivity is influenced by a number of factors. It is often important to identify not only what is happening at the viewpoint (e.g. use) but also what is being seen. Common influences of sensitivity include (refer to **Table 2**):

- distance from viewpoint (close, medium or long range);
- relative viewing level (level, below or above);
- number of viewers (few, moderate or many);
- use at the viewpoint (residential, business, recreation, industry, special use);
- purpose of being at the viewpoint (passing through such as a commuter, or dwelling such as resident or a tourist);
- viewing period (short or long);
- elements in the view (value and dominance); and
- view composition type (obstructed, general, focal or panoramic).

In particular, we give particular consideration to the value of the features in the view or the overall setting.

In the case of Sydney, highly valued views are those of iconic landmarks such as the Sydney's harbour, the Sydney Opera House and the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Based on the findings of scenic amenity studies, other valued features include water, parks, other natural features and visually interesting skylines such as that of the Sydney CBD, Parramatta or Chatswood. We also give consideration to dominance of the feature the view.

Overall settings that are often considered more sensitive in Sydney are heritage conservation areas or other areas (often residential in use) that have a cohesive, attractive character.

**Table 2: Sensitivity**

Rating	Common influences
<b>High</b>	Close, below, many viewers, residential or recreation, dwelling, long period, highly valued and dominant, focal or panoramic
<b>Moderate</b>	Medium, level, moderate viewers, business or special use, passing through, short period, highly valued and not dominant, valued, general, focal or panoramic
<b>Low</b>	Long, above, few viewers, industry, passing through, short period, valued and not dominant, not-valued, obstructed or general
<b>Negligible</b>	The proposal cannot be seen

### Magnitude

Considerations for magnitude include (refer to **Table 3**):

- the amount of new fabric visible compared to the existing situation, which may include a loss or addition;
- changes to the composition of the view;
- the prominence of the new fabric, or the extent to which its type, role, size, colour, materials and other elements are compatible with the existing view; and
- the ability of the view to absorb the change. For example, a context that is dominated by horizontal elements may limit the ability of the view to accommodate change. Conversely, vegetation may significantly increase the ability of the view to accommodate change.

**Table 3: Magnitude**

Rating	Common influences
<b>High</b>	Large amount of fabric added or lost, high change to view composition in particular with regard to focus of view, highly prominent in the field of view
<b>Moderate</b>	Moderate amount of fabric added or lost, moderate change to view composition, visible in the field of view but not prominent
<b>Low</b>	Limited amount of fabric added or lost, low change to view composition, visible in the field of view but not noticeable to the casual observer
<b>Negligible</b>	The proposal cannot be seen

### Consistency with applicable and relevant planning instruments

- Even if the visual impact of a proposal is considered to be high when considered against sensitivity and magnitude, it may be acceptable based on applicable and relevant planning instruments, or through the mitigation measures (either include in the proposal that forms the development application or through the consent authority applicant or conditions of development approval).
- For example, the introduction of an element that has high magnitude of visual impact may be positive where it better aligns with the desired future character.



## Visual impact matrix

The judgement handed down in *Rose Bay Marina Pty Limited v Woollahra Municipal Council and anor* [2013] NSWLEC 1046 notes the importance of context specific, qualitative assessment:

- ‘First, we observe that the analytic stage we propose does not mandate derivation of any formal assessment matrix. Consistency of evaluation of the acceptability of impacts on a public domain view is not a process of mathematical precision requiring an inevitable conclusion based on some fit in a matrix. However, some may find their preparation of a graduated matrix of assistance to them in undertaking an impact analysis’.

While acknowledging that context specific, qualitative assessment is key, the visual impact matrix shown in **Table 4** has been used to guide a more objective VIA.

**Table 4: Visual impact matrix**

		Magnitude			
		High	Moderate	Low	Negligible
Sensitivity	High	High	High – Moderate	Moderate	Negligible
	Moderate	High – Moderate	Moderate	Moderate - Low	Negligible
	Low	Moderate	Moderate - Low	Low	Negligible
	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

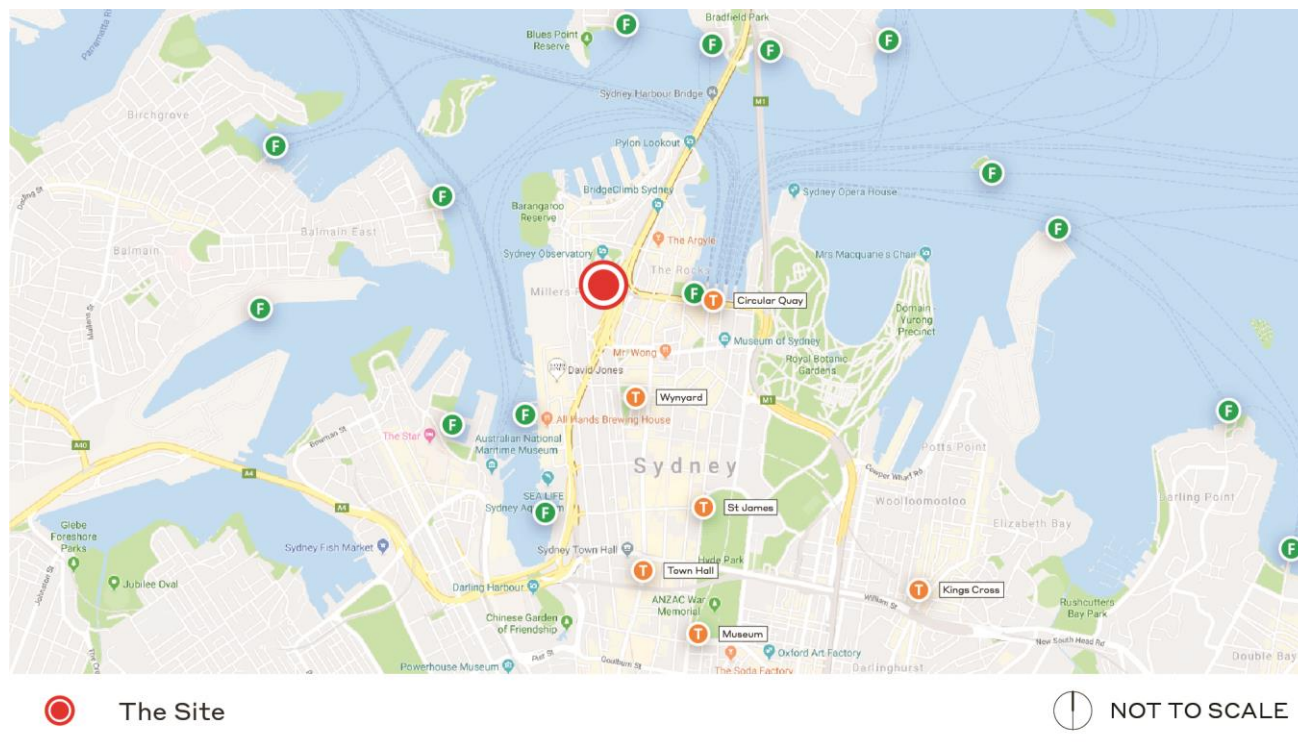
## Land and Environment Court Policy

Requirements for photomontages to be relied on as or as part of expert evidence in Class 1 appeals must be prepared in accordance with L&E Court policy. Ethos Urban has further defined the necessary process which can be referred to in **Appendix A**.

## 2.0 Site description

The site is located in the north of the Sydney CBD within the City of Sydney Local Government Area (LGA). The site is located south west of the southern landing of the Sydney Harbour Bridge and adjacent to the Sydney Observatory. The site is surrounded on all sides by the Cahill Expressway as it becomes the on-ramp to the Bradfield Highway. The site is connected to the surrounding areas by one road bridge and two pedestrian bridges.

A site context map is provided at **Figure 3** and an aerial photograph of the site is shown at **Figure 4**.



**Figure 1 Site context map**

Source: Google Maps + Ethos Urban



**Figure 2 Site aerial photograph**

Source: Nearmap + Ethos Urban

The site falls under the *Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2012* (SLEP 2012), however is located outside of Central Sydney (as designated by SLEP 2012). It is not affected by the Sydney Cove Redevelopment Authority (SCRA) Scheme.

The site is zoned B8 Metropolitan Centre. A broad range of uses, including educational establishments, are permitted with consent in the zone. The site is not affected by any height or floor space ratio development standards.

### 3.0 Overview of the proposed development

Approval is sought for the expansion of Fort Street Public School to accommodate a total of 550 primary school students. Specifically:

#### **Site preparation, demolition and excavation**

- Site remediation.
- Demolition of the southernmost school building, the garage and storage shed west and east of the Bureau of Meteorology Building (the Met/the Met Building), and the toilet block adjoining the main school building.
- Selective removal of various elements of the main school building, as well as minor and insignificant elements of the Met Building and the Messenger's Cottage to facilitate refurbishment and future use of these buildings.
- Bulk excavation works to facilitate the new southern buildings and onsite detention.
- Tree removal.
- Installation of hydraulic and electrical services.

#### **Land use**

- Use of all buildings for the purpose of a school.

#### **Existing buildings**

- Retention, refurbishment and extension of the existing Fort Street Public School, including construction of a new roof and rooftop additions.
- Retention and refurbishment of the Met Building and internal alterations and additions.
- Retention and minor alterations and additions to the Messenger's Cottage.

#### **Construction of New buildings**

- Construction of one new building on the western part of the site for a staff room.
- Construction of two new, interconnected school buildings on the southern third of the site.
- Construction of a new communal hall and canteen building.

#### **Landscaping**

- Retention of the existing large fig tree.
- Landscaping works throughout the site, including construction of a new amphitheatre, new central plaza, and a multi-purpose forecourt.
- Landscaping of roof gardens on top of the new southern buildings and the existing Met Building.



## Other works

- Works to the existing entrance road, including alterations to the Bradfield Tunnel Services Building.
- Modifications to existing pick-up / drop-off arrangements.
- Provision of signage zones.
- Installation of on-site detention.

A site plan of the proposed expansion of Fort Street Public School is shown at **Figure 3**.



**Figure 3** Site plan of the proposed school expansion

Source: FJMT

## 4.0 Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements

On the 28<sup>th</sup> June 2019, the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) issued Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) to the applicant for the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed development. This report has been prepared having regard to the relevant SEARs as shown in **Table 5**.

Table 5: SEARS

SEAR category	SEAR requirement	Ethos Urban response
<b>4. Built Form and Urban Design</b>	<p>The EIS/VIA shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a visual impact assessment that identifies any potential impacts on the surrounding built environment and landscape including views to and from the site and any adjoining heritage items. Provide views to the development from key vantage points in the surrounding context.</li> </ul>	<p>This VIA addresses these requirements, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visual impacts on the surrounding built environment and landscaping.</li> <li>• Significant views within the visual catchment surrounding the Site.</li> </ul>
<b>5. Environmental Amenity</b>	<p>The EIS/VIA shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess amenity impacts on the surrounding locality, including solar access, visual privacy, visual amenity, overshadowing and acoustic impacts.</li> <li>• Detail amenity impacts including solar access, acoustic impacts, visual privacy, view loss, overshadowing and wind impacts</li> <li>• Conduct a view analysis to the site from key vantage points and streetscape locations (photomontages or perspectives should be provided showing the building envelope and likely future development).</li> </ul>	<p>This VIA addresses these requirements, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Considered significant views with the visual catchment surrounding the Site.</li> <li>• produced existing and proposed photomontages showing the future development.</li> </ul>

## 5.0 Place character

Local character is a fundamental element of place. Based on the importance of place to communities, the NSW planning system seeks to ensure that development considers local character. Identification of local character is therefore an important step in determining the visual appropriateness of the proposal.

In accordance with the Department's Local Character and Place Guideline (2019) (the Guideline), local character comprises a broad range of elements, including the environmental, social and economic aspects of a place. However, for the purposes of guide development it is best considered as a combination of the important physical aspects of a place. These physical aspects can be organised under three main themes:

1. public domain
2. private domain
3. cross domain.

The RMS Guideline for landscape character and visual impact assessment (2018) provides guidance on what matters to consider in identifying local character. While used interstate, the Victorian Government's Understanding Neighbourhood Character Planning Practice Note (2018) also provide guidance on local character.

Importantly, the Guideline acknowledges that it is not always appropriate to keep a places existing local character. It identifies that planning instruments can seek to change, enhance or maintain existing local character.

Under public domain, the following matters often represent important physical aspects of a place:

- movement
- open space.

Under private domain, the following matters often represent important physical aspects of a place:

- land use
- built form, including siting, bulk and scale and detailed design.

Under cross domain, the following matters often represent important physical aspects of a place:

- landform
- street, block and lot patterns
- trees and other vegetation in the public and private domains.

## 5.1 Primary visual catchment and physical setting

The primary visual catchment surrounding Fort Street Public school is a unique place that is founded in colonial heritage and landscape; all with a backdrop of the highly contrasting CBD skyline. The number of people using the primary visual catchment varies dramatically from few visitors at Observatory Hill to many along the Opera House's western boardwalk.

The experience of landform and harbour views is one of the defining characteristics of the area and the rise and fall of topography creates views and variety. The land rises steadily to the south from Circular Quay with knolls at Observatory Hill and the Macquarie Street government precinct, and rises more dramatically from Darling Harbour, following the contours of the valleys and waterways known by the local Aboriginal peoples and the First Settlers.

Due to elevated location on a peninsula jutting into Sydney Harbour, the site has a large visual catchment. However, topographic variation and the presence of landscape elements such as buildings and vegetation significantly reduce the visibility of the site within this catchment. In particular, the near wall of tall buildings to the immediate south of the site representing the CBD effectively screens longer range views from the south. Views to the site heading northbound from the highly trafficked Western Distributor are compromised by a difference in elevation as well as structures, e.g. overhead signage gantries, and vegetation. In any event, the primary focus of views is toward the Harbour Bridge and its approach, which is a highly prominent visual feature, with the consequence of reducing the perception of other elements.

The site is visually prominent and located at the northern road entrance to the Sydney CBD. The site sits in a landscape unit which is representative of the inner Sydney landscape. This is dominated by a complex, layered and varied topography and built form with a strong presence of trees. In some instances, water forms part of this visual character which have a high level of scenic amenity. Within this broader whole, the site is most closely linked to the foreshore landscape unit comprising Millers Point and The Rocks.

Fort Street Public School is characterised by low rise red brick buildings that individually agglomerate as a collection of parts. Heritage buildings include the Bureau of Meteorology Building (Met building) the Messenger's Cottage. Hard paved ground cover and vegetation is scattered throughout the site. Based on scenic amenity criteria, Fort Street Public School cannot be regarded as a highly valued visual element within the primary visual catchment.

The visual catchment is dominated by older buildings, generally smaller in scale than the adjoining CBD. While the unit has a reasonable physical absorption capacity, a CBD scale tower would be incompatible with this visual character and would have the effect of extending the CBD northwards. This would generally be inappropriate on visual impact grounds. Smaller scale, well designed development is appropriate. However, strong connections with Millers Point and The Rocks do not occur due to topography and landscape elements. In particular, the rising topography between the water's edge to Observatory Hill and the alignment of the Harbour Bridge approaches effectively interrupts such a connection.

Nevertheless, the catchment is highly sensitive for the below reasons:

- Heritage setting
- Representative of inner Sydney landscape - complex, layered and varied
- Relationship to Millers Point and The Rocks
- Human scale, varied built form and massing
- Prominence of trees, in particular fig trees
- Views from the Bradfield Highway heading south into the CBD are the most important longer range views
- Views from the Opera House and Balmain East





A – Observatory Hill Park, B - The Observatory, C – National Trust Centre, D – Fort Street Public School, E – Sydney Harbour and Skyline, F – Fort Street Public School (Met Building), G – Harbour Bridge, H – Cahill Expressway and CBD, I – School Entrance, J – View from Balmain



## 6.0 Applicable planning instruments

### 6.1 Strategic plans

#### **A Metropolis of Three Cities - the Greater Sydney Region Plan and the Eastern City District Plan**

Under A Metropolis of Three Cities - the Greater Sydney Region Plan (the Region Plan), together with the Sydney CBD and other adjoining areas, the CBD forms the Harbour CBD Metropolitan City Centre. It also forms part of the Eastern Economic Corridor. Given these designations, the focus for the CBD under the plan is for economic and jobs growth. This is reflected in content such as Objective 18: Harbour CBD is stronger and more competitive, and Strategy 18.1 – Prioritise public transport projects to the Harbour CBD to improve business-to-business connections and support the 30-minute city.

The Eastern City District Plan (the District Plan) provides a finer grain level of detail for the CBD. Consistent with the Region Plan, the focus is also on economic and jobs growth.

- further growing an internationally competitive commercial sector to support an innovation economy
- providing residential development without compromising commercial development
- providing a wide range of cultural, entertainment, arts and leisure activities
- providing a diverse and vibrant night-time economy, in a way that responds to potential negative impacts.

Visual impact is reflected in both plans through objectives and strategies relating to scenic landscapes. Objective 28 of the Region Plan is as follows:

- Scenic and cultural landscapes are protected.

This is supported by two strategies in the Region Plan:

- Strategy 28.1: Identify and protect scenic and cultural landscapes
- Strategy 28.2: Enhance and protect views of scenic and cultural landscapes from the public realm.

Due to its high visibility and its role as a backdrop to views obtained from the Harbour foreshore, the Sydney CBD makes a contribution to the identity and character of Sydney. This has implications for planning for the CBD, in particular when viewed from the public realm.

The District Plan confirms the directions of the Region Plan in relation to scenic landscapes, and stipulates that further work on this topic will be the responsibility of councils, other planning authorities and State agencies. No further additional guidance is provided.

#### **Sydney Regional Environmental Plan (Sydney Harbour Catchment) 2005**

The Sydney Regional Environmental Plan (Sydney Harbour Catchment) 2005 (Sydney Harbour REP) seeks to ensure that the catchment, foreshores, waterways and islands of Sydney Harbour are recognised, protected, enhanced and maintained for existing and future generations. The Sydney Harbour REP includes the following relevant planning principles for land within the Sydney Harbour Catchment:

- development that is visible from the waterways or foreshores is to maintain, protect and enhance the unique visual qualities of Sydney Harbour,
- the number of publicly accessible vantage points for viewing Sydney Harbour should be increased.

Clause 26 requires the following matters to be taken into consideration by the consent authority when granting consent to development in relation to the maintenance, protection and enhancement of views:

- development should maintain, protect and enhance views (including night views) to and from Sydney Harbour,

- development should minimise any adverse impacts on views and vistas to and from public places, landmarks and heritage items,
- the cumulative impact of development on views should be minimised.

### **City Plan 2036 - Draft Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS)**

The City of Sydney's Draft LSPS sets the priorities to guide future changes to the planning controls in the City's local environmental plan (LEP). In relation to VIA matters, the LSPS states under Priority L2 - Creating great places:

Protecting and enhancing cultural landscapes:

- *The city has a privileged position on Sydney Harbour with its foreshore and parklands and many important buildings and structures. This creates view corridors with some considered 'iconic', including those of the Sydney Opera House and the Sydney Harbour Bridge.*
- *The draft Central Sydney Planning Strategy proposes preserving significant view corridors. These include the Town Hall tower viewed from Hyde Park and the Lands Department tower viewed from Sydney Cove. Others are important historically, for example, the view from the signal station on Observatory Hill to the South Head Lighthouse. Others are associated with special places over a long period of time – for example the view down Bent Street from the steps of the Mitchell Library. These public views from public places are worthy of conservation. The continued protection of our cultural landscapes is important for the liveability of our area.*

## **6.2 Environmental planning instruments (LEPs)**

### **Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2012**

We have reviewed and conclude that the LEP does not provide any specific guidance on VIA matters for this site. This is addressed and considered in the DCP and Central Sydney Planning Strategy.

## **6.3 Development Control Plan (DCPs)**

### **Sydney Development Control Plan 2012**

The DCP is a guidance document that sets out principles in relation to character areas. Special Character Areas nominated within Central Sydney are considered to be of significance and important to the identity and quality of Central Sydney. Fort Street Public School is located with the Millers Point locality as shown in **Figure 4**.



**Figure 4 Millers Point locality**

Source: Sydney DCP 2012 – Section 2.8

As per Sydney DCP 2012, the following principles have been stated relating to views, scale and proportion for the Millers Point locality:

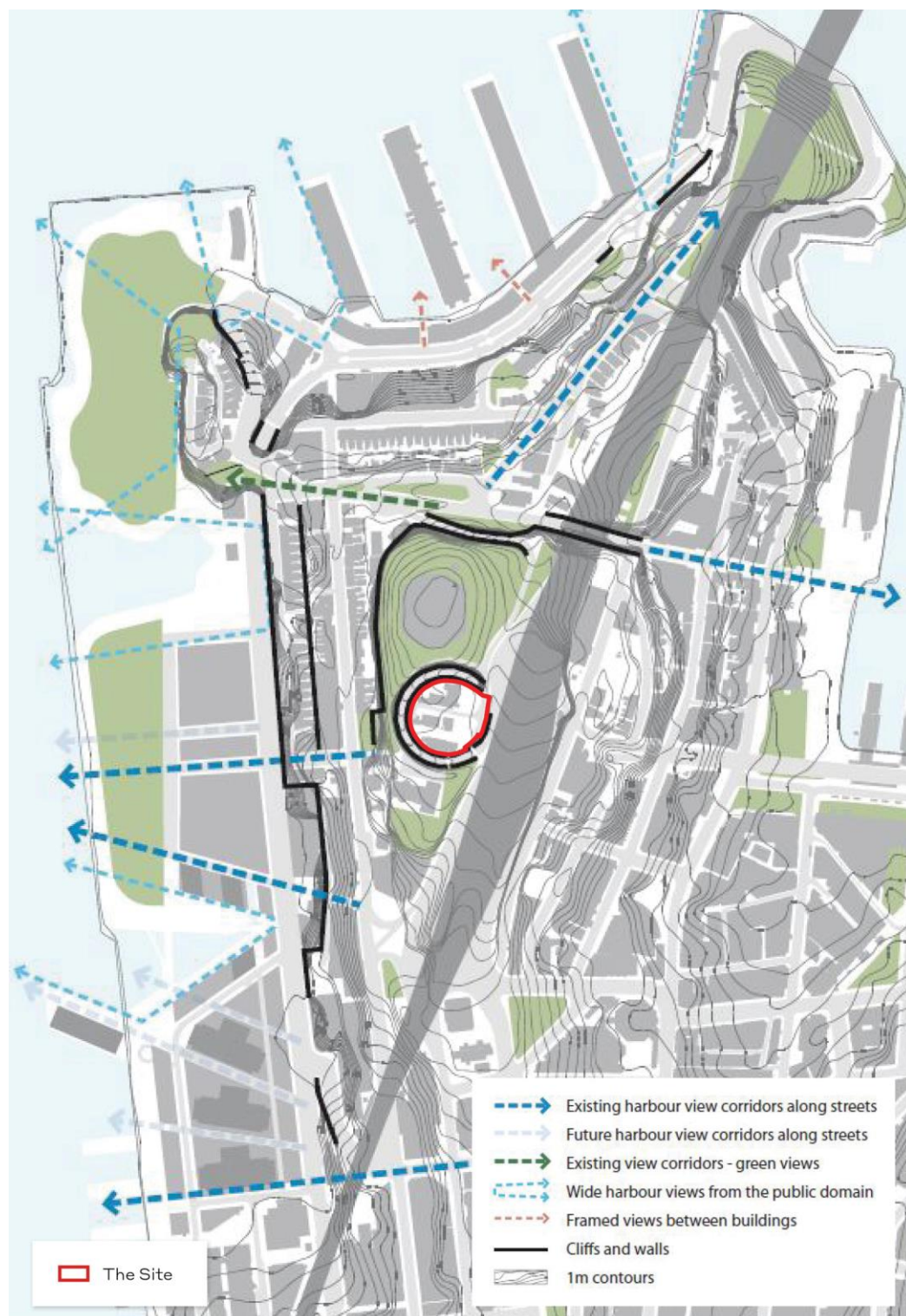
- Ensure that new development respects the scale, character and significance of existing buildings.
- Maintain existing views and vistas into and out of the precinct to the water and Harbour Bridge north and to the city south, and Observatory Park.

## 6.4 Other

### Harbour Village North Public Domain Study

The Harbour Village North Public Domain Study established the ideas which can be used as a guide for future development. The improvements recommended in this study are intended to be taken into consideration when delivering new infrastructure or urban renewal projects and builds on ideas from the community as well as discussions with key stakeholder groups

A guiding principle set out in this report is to celebrate landform and harbour views. The report mentions the significance of historic panoramic views from Observatory Hill to Sydney Harbour which must be protected. There is particular emphasis is on public domain areas (footpaths, streets, open space, parks and laneways) as to where these views should be maintained (refer to **Figure 5**)



**Figure 5 Landform and harbour views**

Source: Harbour Village Public Domain Study





## Central Sydney Planning Strategy (CSPS)

The CSPS is a non statutory document that reviews current planning controls against the City's Sustainable Sydney 2030 program. The documents supports opportunities for additional height and density in the right locations balanced with environmental sustainability and urban design excellence.

As a guidance document, there are a number of identified key views within the Central Sydney catchment. These views are to and through parks and other well-used public spaces towards the harbour or key buildings such as Town Hall clock tower, Customs House, the Harbour Bridge and the Opera House.

Directly north of Fort Street Public School are views to and from Observatory Hill. It is noted that these views are to the north and west as views east are confined by the Bradfield Highway. Views south to historic and notable buildings and spaces such as the town hall clock tower and Hyde park fountain are completely obstructed by the existing CBD fabric. The dashed line directly south of Fort Street Public school signifies a division between the varied layering of Sydney's low scale heritage setting (to the north) and the highly varied high-rise buildings which form the CBD skyline (to the south)

Views from Observatory Hill – north of Fort Street Public School are significant due to its strategic role in the city's history, in milling, defence, communications, astronomy and time keeping. These functions have required the surrounding views and visual alignments to remain open. Any proposal on the site should be mindful of Observatory Hill's physical prominence relative to city development.



**Figure 7 Public view protection map**

Source: Central Sydney Planning Strategy



**Figure 8 View protection planes and Sydney harbour views**

Source: Central Sydney Planning Strategy

## 7.0 Viewpoints

Viewpoints were selected based on a combination of desktop review and a site inspection. It is considered that these viewpoints are representative of the current experience of the primary visual catchment, capturing:

- public domain, in particular those that are highly visited
- all distances – close, medium and long range
- all directions.

**Table 6** identifies the viewpoints representative of the visual character of the primary visual catchment that were selected for further analysis. **Figure 8** identifies the location of these viewpoints.

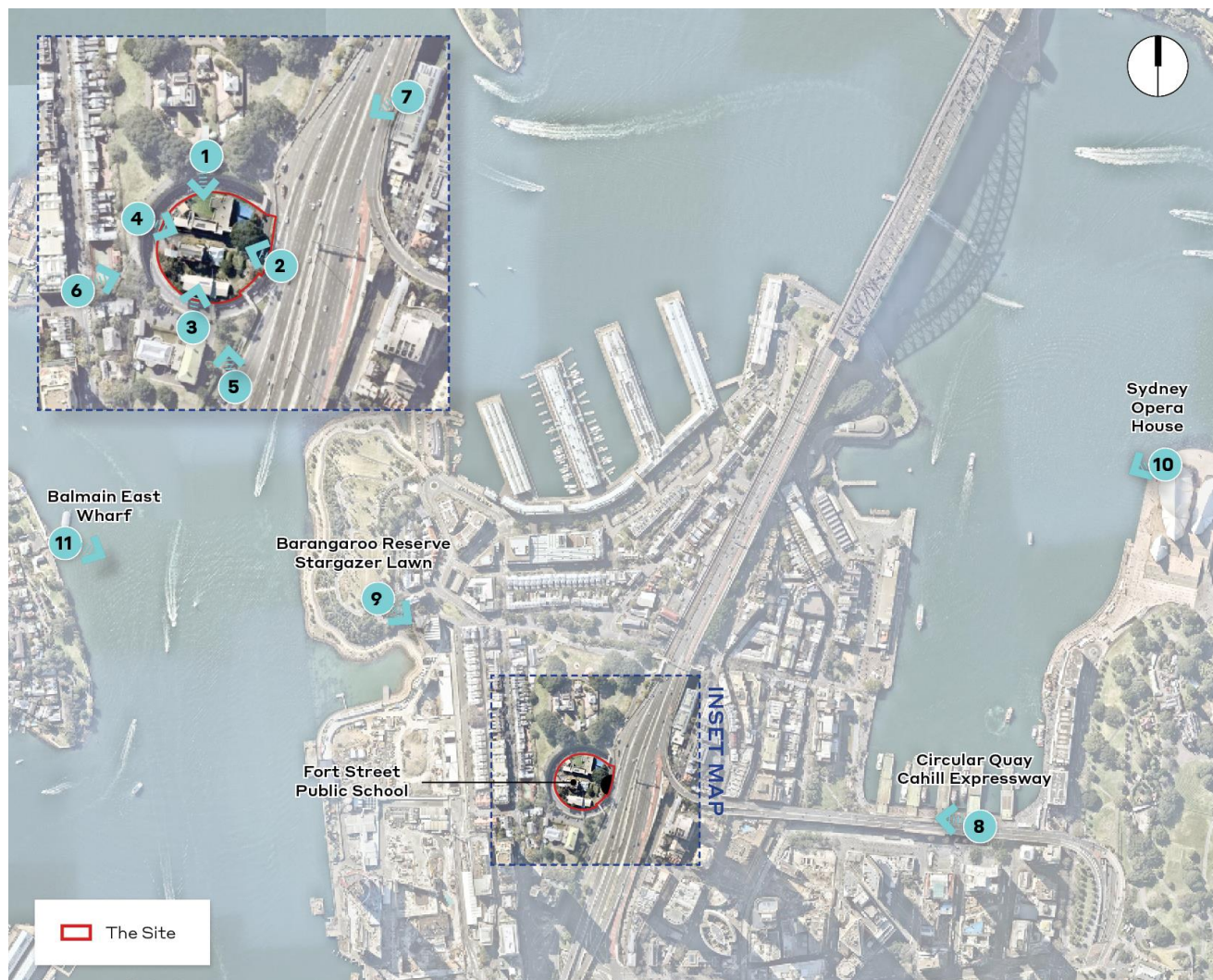
FJMT has used the underlying survey data to align and produce the proposed photomontages in accordance with L&E Court policy show in **Figures 9-30**. Refer to **Appendix A** for further information.

RMS is considering building a new cycle way along Upper street in the future. As the cycleway is in future planning and to be 'built by others' it has not been included in the following proposed photomontages.

**Table 6: Viewpoints**

View	Location
1.	Sydney Observatory
2.	Upper Fort Street
3.	National Trust
4.	Agar Steps
5.	Harbour Bridge - Western Distributor
6.	Kent Street – Tennis Courts
7.	Harbour Bridge - Cahill Expressway
8.	Circular Quay - Cahill Expressway
9.	Barangaroo Reserve – Stargazer Lawn
10.	Sydney Opera House
11.	Balmain East Wharf





**Figure 9** Location of viewpoints and direction

## 7.1 Viewpoint 1: Sydney Observatory



Figure 10 Viewpoint 1: existing





**Figure 11**    **Viewpoint 1: proposed**

## Sensitivity

Characteristic	Comment
Distance from site	Close range (approximately 30m)
Relative viewing level	Level with the site
Number of viewers	Moderate
Use at the viewpoint	Public Recreation – Observatory Park
Purpose of being at viewpoint	Transiting across Observatory Park to and from Millers Point to the rocks and CBD. Physical exercise or relaxation. Sitting and viewing Sydney harbour, visiting Sydney Observatory including Boer War Memorial, Bandstand and landscaping.
Viewing period	Short
Dominant elements	Vegetation in the foreground is the most dominant element closely followed by existing school buildings. The CBD skyline is a highly noticeable element, with varied built form ranging in scale.
View composition type	Focal, with the school occupying a larger part of the central frame of view, albeit partially obscured by the existing vegetation. View composition is varied due to CBD skyline occupying majority of the background.
Overall rating	Moderate

## Magnitude

Characteristic	Comment
Amount of fabric change	Moderate
View composition change	Low. The proposal maintains the existing visual composition through the additions of protruding and recessing elements that are of a similar scale.
Prominence	The new fabric is readily noticeable compared to the existing fabric
Overall rating	Moderate

## Discussion

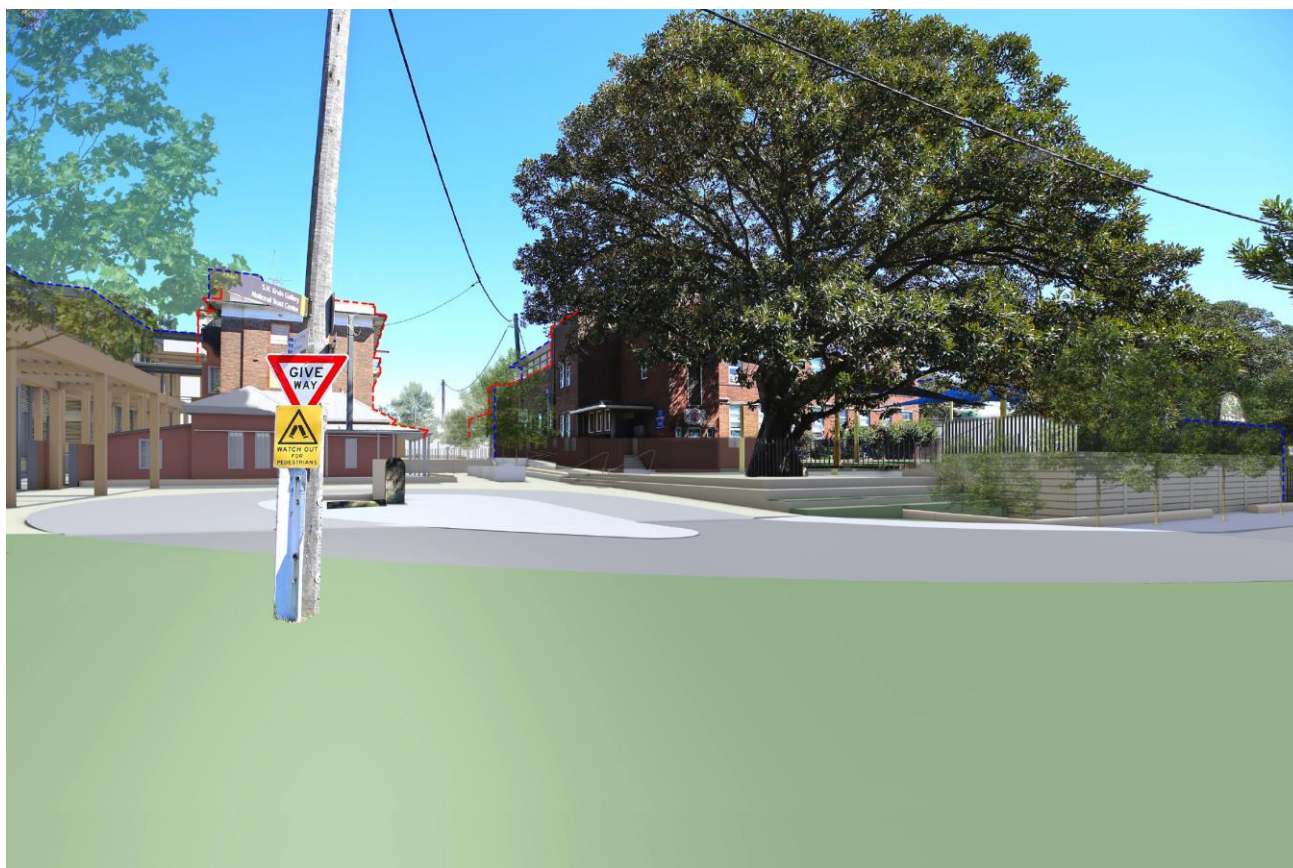
What is visible is a prominent contemporary addition. However, the proposal does not fundamentally alter the existing visual composition, in particular how it reads as a collection of low scale horizontal elements that protrude and recess relative to each other. The CBD skyline in the background mediates the appearance of the school's scale. Therefore, the visual impact at this viewpoint is moderate.

## 7.2 Viewpoint 2: Upper Fort Street



Figure 12 Viewpoint 2: existing





**Figure 13**    **Viewpoint 2: proposed**

## Sensitivity

Characteristic	Comment
Distance from site	Close range (approximately 15m)
Relative viewing level	Level with the site
Number of viewers	Moderate
Use at the viewpoint	Metropolitan Centre – Fort Street Public School
Purpose of being at viewpoint	School drop off zone and main entry gate into Fort Street Public School. Common cycling route from North Sydney over the Harbour Bridge into the CBD. Transiting to and from the CBD to Fort Street Public School, the National Trust Centre and S.H Ervin Gallery.
Viewing period	Short
Dominant elements	A large mature Moreton Bay Fig in the middle ground is the most dominant element followed by the existing school buildings. View is partially obstructed by existing signage and electricity poles.
View composition type	Focal, with the school occupying a larger part of the central frame of view, albeit partially obscured by a Moreton Bay Fig. The cul-de-sac is an interesting compositional element that marks a transition from an on-road shared street to a pedestrian only path connecting through to the CBD.
Overall rating	Low

## Magnitude

Characteristic	Comment
Amount of fabric change	Low
View composition change	Negligible
Prominence	While new fabric is visible in the field of view, it is not noticeable by the casual observer, nor is it prominent
Overall rating	Low

## Discussion

The proposal is mostly obscured by existing vegetation including a large mature Moreton Bay Fig. The proposal does not alter the view composition and is not noticeable by the casual observer, nor is it prominent. Therefore, the visual impact at this viewpoint is low.

### 7.3 Viewpoint 3: National Trust



Figure 14 Viewpoint 3: existing





**Figure 15**    **Viewpoint 3: proposed**

## Sensitivity

Characteristic	Comment
Distance from site	Close range (approximately 25m)
Relative viewing level	Level with the site
Number of viewers	Low
Use at the viewpoint	Metropolitan Centre – National Trust Centre
Purpose of being at viewpoint	Private carparking for staff and visitors of the National Trust Centre, café and S.H Ervin Gallery. Used as a secondary pedestrian link when walking from Millers Point and the Rocks via Agar steps to National Trust Centre and S.H Ervin Gallery and CBD.
Viewing period	Short
Dominant elements	The most dominant element this view is the bitchumen carpark followed by existing vegetation (shrubs) that boarder the National Trust Centre Carpark. This existing school is a noticeable element in the background and is partially obscured by the shrubs.
View composition type	Focal, with the school occupying a larger part of the central frame of view, albeit partially obscured by existing shrubs.
Overall rating	Low

## Magnitude

Characteristic	Comment
Amount of fabric change	High
View composition change	High. The visual composition is altered through the introduction of elements of greater human scale when compared to the existing condition. This is largely due to elements protruding and recessing, which creates a rhythm that is not featured in the existing view.
Prominence	The new fabric is readily noticeable compared to the existing fabric
Overall rating	High

## Discussion

The school building is replaced with contemporary building. The magnitude of change is high as the proposal has a composition (which is modular in form) that is different from the relatively low scale flat and horizontal existing building.

However, the magnitude is offset by the low sensitivity of the viewpoint, where it is used as a private carpark and no significant elements are present in the background. Therefore, the visual impact at this viewpoint is moderate.

## 7.4 Viewpoint 4: Agar Steps



Figure 16 Viewpoint 4: existing





**Figure 17**    **Viewpoint 4: proposed**

## Sensitivity

Characteristic	Comment
Distance from site	Close range (approximately 25m)
Relative viewing level	Below the site
Number of viewers	Moderate
Use at the viewpoint	Public Recreation – Observatory Park
Purpose of being at viewpoint	Transiting across observatory park to and from Millers Point to the rocks and CBD via Agar steps. Physical exercise or relaxation. Sitting and viewing Sydney harbour views west towards Balmain.
Viewing period	Long
Dominant elements	Vegetation and fencing in the foreground are the most dominant element closely followed by existing school buildings and the cliff face cutting of the Cahill express way. The CBD skyline is a highly noticeable element, with varied built form ranging in scale.
View composition type	Focal, with the school occupying the central frame of view, albeit partially obscured by the existing shrubs. Vegetation frames and draws attention to central school building. As the viewpoint location is below looking up towards the school, an interesting view composition is created where the school is given emphasis and stature as the hill in which it is located is exemplified. View composition is varied due to CBD skyline partially occupying the background.
Overall rating	Moderate

## Magnitude

Characteristic	Comment
Amount of fabric change	High
View composition change	High. The visual composition is altered through the introduction of elements in the middle ground that surround and partially obscure the heritage school building (Met building). When compared to the existing condition, the proposal reduces the prominence of the Met building.
Prominence	The new fabric is readily noticeable compared to the existing fabric
Overall rating	High

## Discussion

Contemporary additions are prominent in this view. This is largely due to the camera location below looking up at the proposal and the collection of elements ranging in scale. Existing horizontal elements such as the path, fencing and exposed cliff face moderate the visual significance of the Met building from this viewpoint.

Further more from a visual perspective, it is not a 'intact' building in a 'intact' setting, in particular in contrast against the CBD skyline. Therefore, the visual impact at this viewpoint is moderate.

## 7.5 Viewpoint 5: Harbour Bridge - Western Distributor



Figure 18 Viewpoint 5: existing





**Figure 19** Viewpoint 5: proposed

## Sensitivity

Characteristic	Comment
Distance from site	Medium range (approximately 70m)
Relative viewing level	Below the site
Number of viewers	Moderate
Use at the viewpoint	Metropolitan Centre – Cycling and pedestrian route
Purpose of being at viewpoint	Common cycling route from North Sydney over Harbour Bridge along the western distributor into the CBD. Transiting to and from the CBD to Fort Street Public School, the National Trust Centre and S.H Ervin Gallery.
Viewing period	Short
Dominant elements	Landscaping and retaining walls are the most dominant element followed by the National Trust Centre building. The Harbour Bridge is a highly noticeable element in the background. Visual clutter
View composition type	Obstructed, with the existing vegetation and the National Trust Centre building and landscaping elements. Direct gaze towards the Harbour Bridge.
Overall rating	Low

## Magnitude

Characteristic	Comment
Amount of fabric change	Low
View composition change	Negligible
Prominence	While new fabric is visible in the field of view, it is not noticeable by the casual observer, nor is it prominent
Overall rating	Negligible

## Discussion

This viewpoint is highly cluttered by streetscape elements (signage) as well as the National Trust Centre and vegetation. While the Harbour Bridge is present in this view, the proposal does not obstruct this item, nor does it alter the view composition. Therefore, the visual impact at this viewpoint is negligible.

## 7.6 Viewpoint 6: Kent Street



Figure 20 Viewpoint 6: existing





**Figure 21** Viewpoint 6: proposed

## Sensitivity

Characteristic	Comment
Distance from site	Medium range (approximately 70m)
Relative viewing level	Below the site
Number of viewers	Low to Moderate
Use at the viewpoint	Metropolitan Centre – Pedestrian crossing near entry to The Langham Hotel
Purpose of being at viewpoint	Transiting along Kent street to and from Barangaroo to the east, Millers point to the north and the CBD to the south. Commonly used pedestrian crossing due to activation of local cafes along Kent Street. Crossing from Langham Hotel to use the hotel tennis courts.
Viewing period	Short
Dominant elements	A pedestrian crossing and garden bed are the dominant elements in the foreground followed by the tennis court and cliff face in the middle ground. Vegetation is a highly noticeable feature of this view.
View composition type	Obstructed, with foreground and middle ground elements. Focus in draw to the streetscape, in particular the pedestrian crossing that directs sight towards the tennis court.
Overall rating	Low

## Magnitude

Characteristic	Comment
Amount of fabric change	None
View composition change	None
Prominence	None
Overall rating	Negligible (The proposal is not visible from this viewpoint)

## Discussion

The proposal is completely obscured by existing vegetation and heavily impeded by significant elevation due to the cliff face. As the proposal is not visible from this viewpoint, it has a negligible visual impact.



## 7.7 Viewpoint 7: Harbour Bridge - Cahill Expressway



Figure 22 Viewpoint 7: existing



**Figure 23**    Viewpoint 7: proposed

## Sensitivity

Characteristic	Comment
Distance from site	Medium range (approximately 120m)
Relative viewing level	Level with the site
Number of viewers	Moderate
Use at the viewpoint	Infrastructure / Bridge – Pedestrian path
Purpose of being at viewpoint	Walking to and from circular key to the harbour bridge and bridge stairs.
Viewing period	Short
Dominant elements	A road barrier and multilane expressway in the foreground in the most dominant element where traffic intermittently obstructs views of the site. This is followed by large fig trees which surround the site against the CBD skyline backdrop.
View composition type	Expansive with fast moving traffic in foreground and CBD skyline in background. Middle ground elements become blurred as occasional glimpses can be made.
Overall rating	Moderate

## Magnitude

Characteristic	Comment
Amount of fabric change	Low
View composition change	Low. There is little to no composition change due to the scale and bulk of new elements. Existing vegetation is given prominence with negligible built form past the eastern vegetation line.
Prominence	Red brick of the existing school is maintained as a strong contrasting element against the CBD skyline.
Overall rating	Low

## Discussion

This viewpoint is highly cluttered by streetscape elements (traffic and barriers) with the majority of the proposal obscured by a large fig. The eastern vegetation line which has been established by a line of existing Fig trees has been preserved.

The proposal does maintain a strong material characteristic such as the contrasting red brick against the CBD skyline resulting in low composition change. Therefore, the visual impact at this viewpoint is moderate-low.



## 7.8 Viewpoint 8: Circular Quay – Cahill Expressway

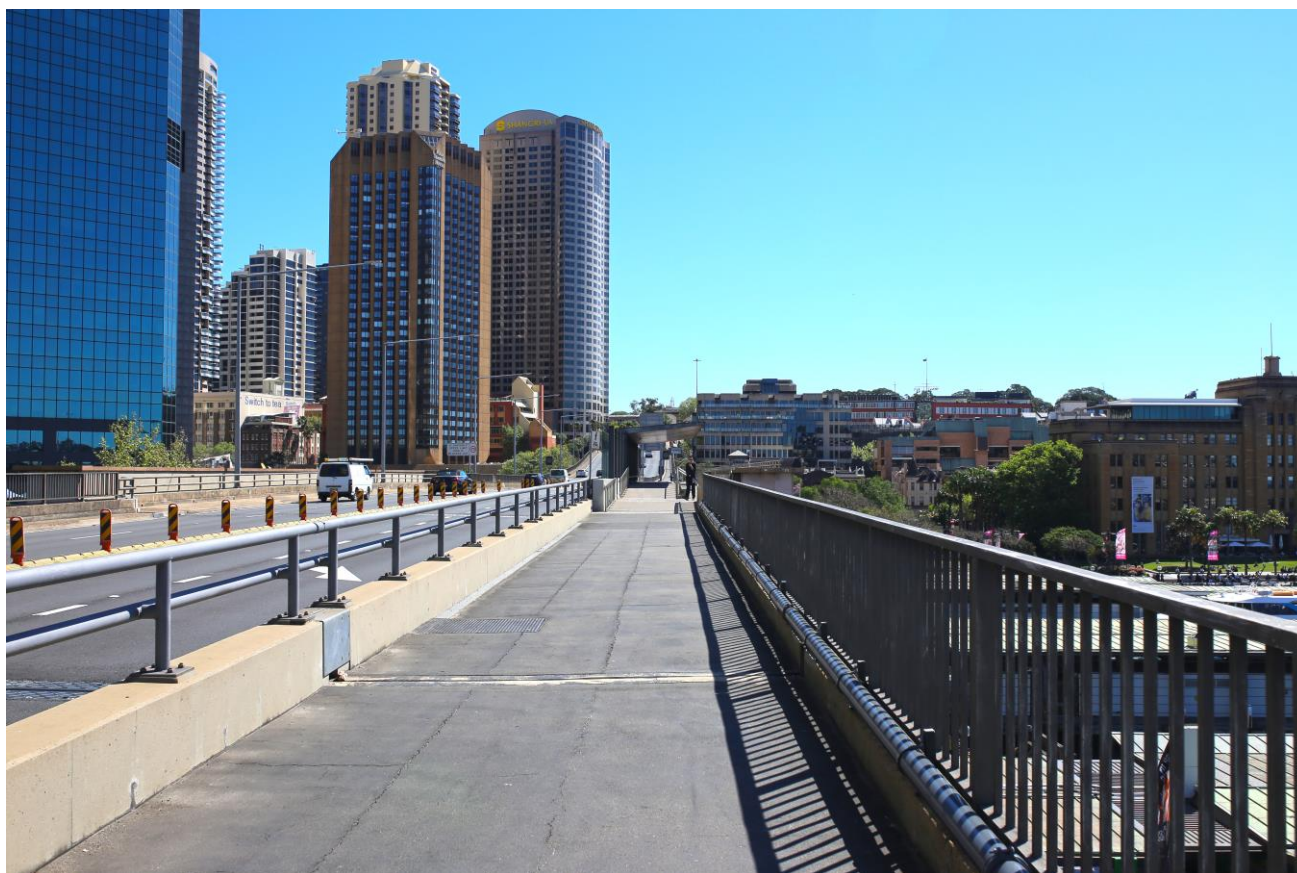
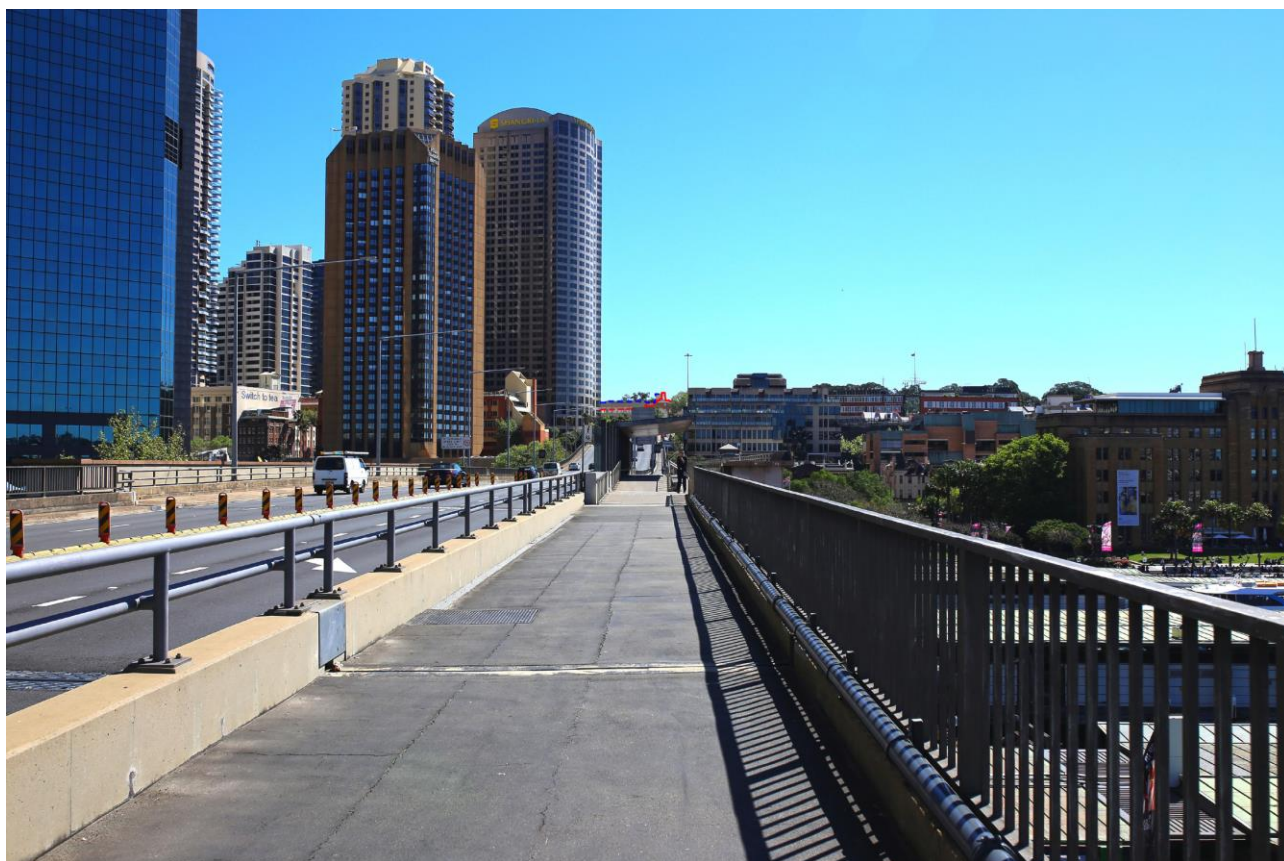


Figure 24 Viewpoint 8: Existing





**Figure 25**    **Viewpoint 8: Proposed**

## Sensitivity

Characteristic	Comment
Distance from site	Long range (approximately 550m)
Relative viewing level	Below the site
Number of viewers	Moderate to High
Use at the viewpoint	Infrastructure / Railway and Road Bridge – Pedestrian path
Purpose of being at viewpoint	Walking to and from circular key to the harbour bridge and bridge stairs.
Viewing period	Long
Dominant elements	The most dominant elements in this view include the CBD skyline and intervening low scale / landscape elements of the rocks.
View composition type	Expansive view composition. The wide elevated pathway creates a strong delineation between the existing high-rise CBD fabric and low-rise historical character of the rocks. This is an interesting composition element that draws the viewer to the centre of the frame.
Overall rating	Moderate

## Magnitude

Characteristic	Comment
Amount of fabric change	Low
View composition change	Negligible
Prominence	While new fabric is visible in the field of view, it is not noticeable by the casual observer, nor is it prominent
Overall rating	Negligible

## Discussion

The moderate sensitivity of the viewpoint is offset by the low magnitude of change once the proposal is inserted. The strong delineation between the existing high-rise CBD fabric and low-rise historical character of the rocks is maintained. While new fabric is visible in the field of view, it is not noticeable by the casual observer, nor is it prominent. Therefore, the visual impact at this viewpoint is negligible.

## 7.9 Viewpoint 9: Barangaroo Reserve – Stargazer Lawn



Figure 26 Viewpoint 9: Existing





**Figure 27**    **Viewpoint 9: Proposed**



### Sensitivity

Characteristic	Comment
Distance from site	Long range (approximately 310m)
Relative viewing level	Below the site
Number of viewers	Many during all times, public parkland
Use at the viewpoint	Public Recreation – Barangaroo Reserve
Purpose of being at viewpoint	Walking, sitting and enjoying views of the harbour and CBD skyline. That Park is used for markets, community events, filming and photography and picnics.
Viewing period	Long
Dominant elements	Existing vegetation within the reserve is the most dominant elements followed by the CBD skyline.
View composition type	Expansive view composition. The viewpoint offers broad views back towards the CBD and the rocks.
Overall rating	Moderate

### Magnitude

Characteristic	Comment
Amount of fabric change	Low
View composition change	Negligible
Prominence	While new fabric is visible in the field of view, it is not noticeable by the casual observer, nor is it prominent
Overall rating	Negligible

### Discussion

The moderate sensitivity of the viewpoint is offset by the low magnitude of change once the proposal is inserted. While new fabric is visible in the field of view, it is not noticeable by the casual observer, nor is it prominent. Therefore, the visual impact at this viewpoint is negligible.

## 7.10 Viewpoint 10: Sydney Opera House



**Figure 28** Viewpoint 10: Existing



**Figure 29** Viewpoint 10: Proposed

## Sensitivity

Characteristic	Comment
Distance from site	Long range (approximately 850m)
Relative viewing level	Below the site
Number of viewers	High
Use at the viewpoint	Metropolitan Centre – Public Foreshore
Purpose of being at viewpoint	Western boardwalk of Sydney Opera House. Iconic walk and views of Sydney Harbour Bridge and CBD skyline.
Viewing period	Long
Dominant elements	The most dominant elements of this view include the harbour, CBD skyline and the Harbour Bridge further to the east. Historic buildings, spires and consistent roof patterns are a noticeable element in the background.
View composition type	Broad and panoramic. Wide foreshore promenade and unobstructed harbour views reinforce the significance of this viewpoint.
Overall rating	High

## Magnitude

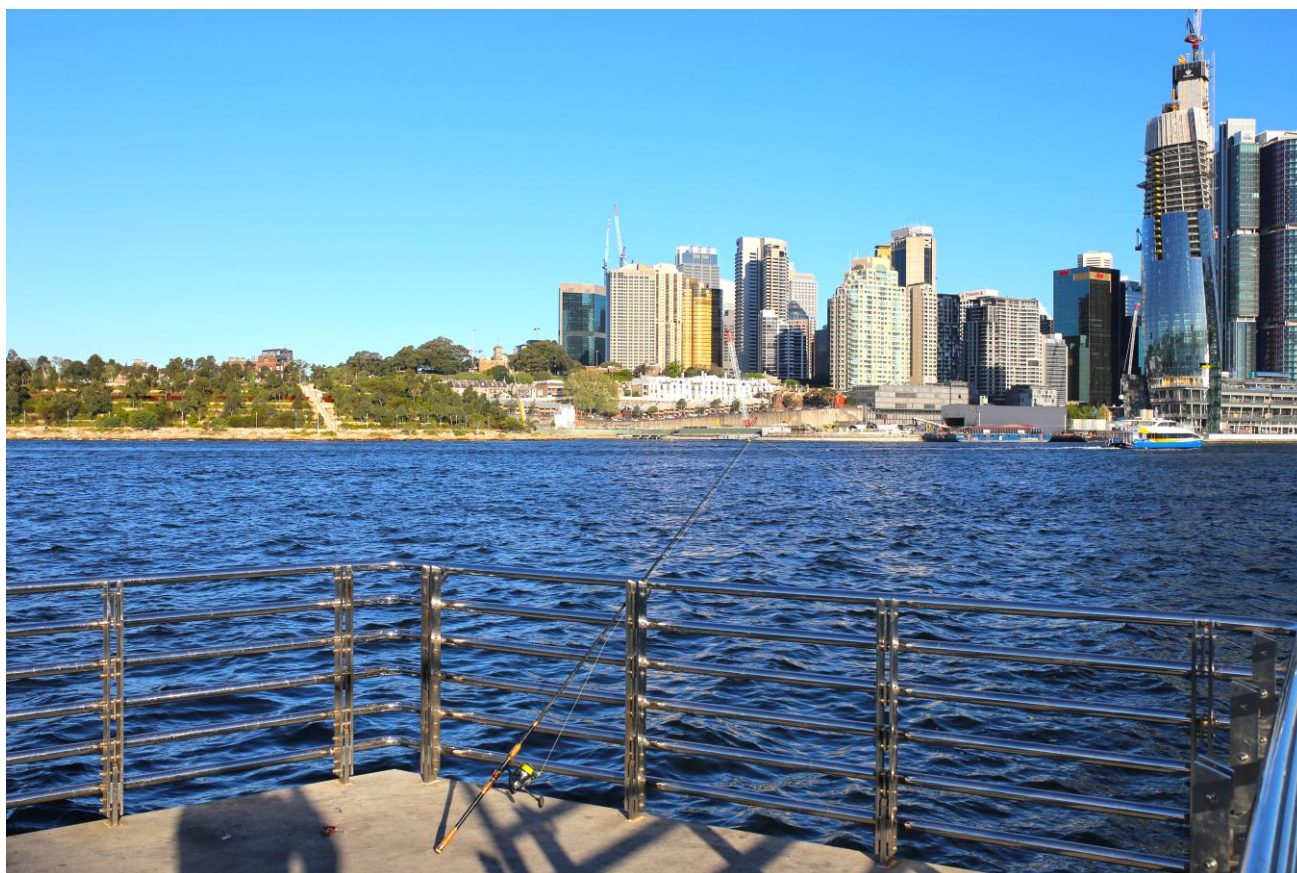
Characteristic	Comment
Amount of fabric change	Low
View composition change	Negligible
Prominence	While new fabric is visible in the field of view, it is not noticeable by the casual observer, nor is it prominent
Overall rating	Negligible

## Discussion

The highly sensitive setting of this viewpoint is offset by the low magnitude of change once the proposal is inserted. This viewpoint offers broad panoramic views of the harbour including views of Circular Quay, the Rocks and the Harbour Bridge to the east. Due to a combination of viewing distance and a highly varied environment, the proposal does not alter the view composition and is not noticeable by the casual observer as the harbour and CBD skyline are the most dominant elements. Therefore, the visual impact at this viewpoint is negligible.



## 7.11 Viewpoint 11: Balmain East Wharf



**Figure 30** Viewpoint 11: Existing



**Figure 31**    **Viewpoint 11: Proposed**

## Sensitivity

Characteristic	Comment
Distance from site	Long range (approximately 800m)
Relative viewing level	Below the site
Number of viewers	High
Use at the viewpoint	Combination of Public Recreation and maritime transport
Purpose of being at viewpoint	Catching ferry to Circular Quay, Watsons Bay via Barangaroo and along the Parramatta River.
Viewing period	Short
Dominant elements	The most dominant elements of this view include the harbour and CBD skyline.
View composition type	Broad and panoramic. Views towards Barangaroo reserve and Hickson Road highlight that varied topographic changes which a highly contrasted to the CBD skyline.
Overall rating	High

## Magnitude

Characteristic	Comment
Amount of fabric change	Low
View composition change	Negligible
Prominence	While new fabric is visible in the field of view, it is not noticeable by the casual observer, nor is it prominent
Overall rating	Negligible

## Discussion

The high sensitivity of the viewpoint is offset by the low magnitude of change once the proposal is inserted. This viewpoint offers broad panoramic views of the harbour and CBD skyline including Barangaroo reserve, King Street wharfs and Darling Harbour further to the east. Due to a combination of long viewing distance and a varied environment the proposal does not alter the view composition and is not noticeable by the casual observer as the harbour and CBD skyline are the most dominant elements. Therefore, the visual impact at this viewpoint is negligible.

## 8.0 Assessment against applicable planning instruments

### Discussion

Key themes identified through our understanding of applicable planning instruments include:

- New development is to respect the scale, character and significance of existing buildings.
- Existing views and vistas into and out of the precinct to the water and Harbour Bridge north and to the city south, and Observatory Park are to be maintained.
- There is particular emphasis is on public domain areas (footpaths, streets, open space, parks and laneways) as to where these views should be maintained. Where there are not broad views, they are typically framed by street corridors.

As shown in the proposed photomontages and documented in the below table, each viewpoint and resulting visual impact is consistent with applicable planning instruments.

## 9.0 Summary assessment

**Table 8** provides a summary assessment of the proposal considering relevant criteria.

**Table 7: Summary assessment**

View	Location	Sensitivity	Magnitude	Visual impact	Consistent with planning instruments
1.	Sydney Observatory	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	✓
2.	Upper Fort Street	Low	Low	Low	✓
3.	National Trust	Low	High	Moderate	✓
4.	Agar Steps	Moderate	High	Moderate	✓
5.	Harbour Bridge - Western Distributor	Low	Negligible	Negligible	✓
6.	Kent Street – Tennis Courts	Low	Negligible	Negligible	✓
7.	Harbour Bridge - Cahill Expressway	Moderate	Low	Moderate-low	✓
8.	Circular Quay - Cahill Expressway	Moderate	Negligible	Negligible	✓
9.	Barangaroo Reserve – Stargazer Lawn	Moderate	Negligible	Negligible	✓
10.	Sydney Opera House	High	Negligible	Negligible	✓
11.	Balmain East Wharf	High	Negligible	Negligible	✓



## 10.0 Mitigation strategies and measures

We note that the existing school has mitigation measures in place and is sympathetic to the place character of the visual catchment. Based on the summary assessment, it is not considered necessary to implement further mitigation strategies and measures to reduce visual impact.

## 11.0 Residual impact

As no mitigation strategies and measures are necessary, the residual impact of the proposal is the same as that identified in the summary assessment.

## 12.0 Conclusion

Assessment of the proposal as represented in photomontages prepared in accordance with L&E Court policy has been made against relevant factors such as existing place character of the primary visual catchment, sensitivity, magnitude, applicable planning instruments, the need for mitigation strategies and measures and consideration of residual impact.

On this basis, this VIA concludes that considering all relevant factors, in its current form the proposal has an acceptable visual impact.

## Appendix A. Land and Environment Court Policy

Requirements for photomontages to be relied on as or as part of expert evidence in Class 1 appeals must be prepared in accordance with L&E Court policy. Ethos Urban has further defined the necessary process with consideration of the following:

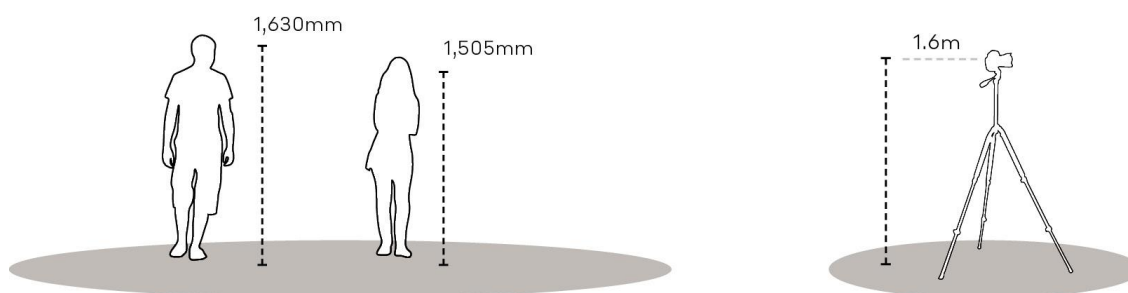
- The human perspective
- Location of viewpoint
- Surveyed elements
- Camera type and lens
- Software, limitations and assumptions

### Human perspective

Anthropometrics is the science concerned with the measurement of human kind. While many people vary in height the average dimensions for both male and female adult eye heights are shown below (Metric Handbook, David Adler)

- Male Eye height: 1630mm
- Female Eye height: 1505mm

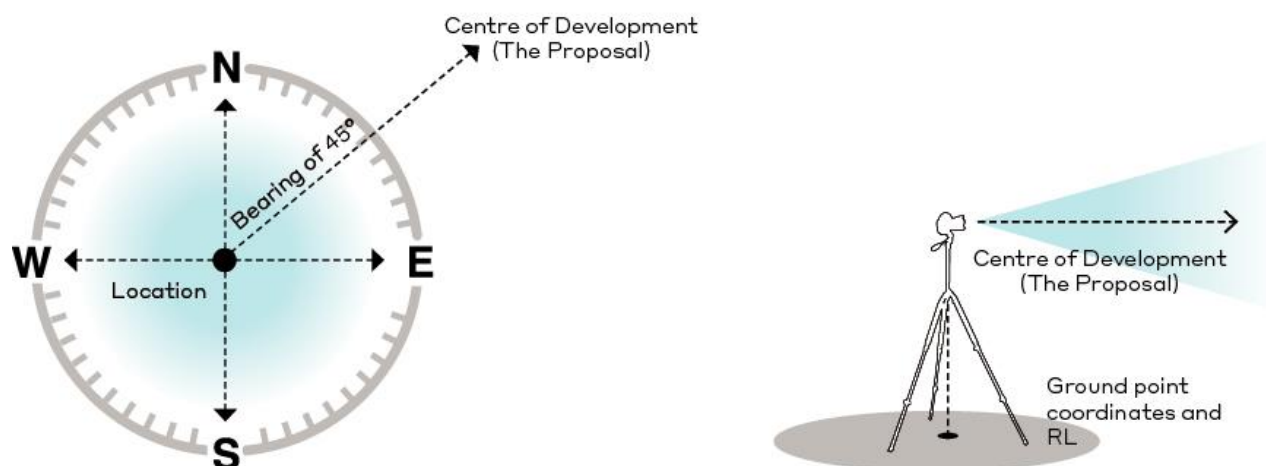
On the basis of the above dimensions and for the purpose of this view impact assessment, the camera has been fixed on a tripod at 1.6m above ground level. This is illustrated in **Figure 1**.



**Relationship of average human height and the height of the camera above ground**

### Location of viewpoints

Due to the existing features of the urban fabric and landscape the subject site or proposal is not always readily noticeable being so far away or obstructed. A bearing in which the camera faces the centre of the development is used to determine the camera direction prior to a site inspection and confirmed with a surveyor. The Camera bearing ensures that the proposal is the focus of the image. In accordance with L&E Court Policy the viewpoint node is surveyed to establish an accurate camera location and RL of the camera. This is illustrated in **Figure 2**.



### Viewpoint location and centre of the development

### Surveyed elements

As outlined in L&E Court Policy specific elements such as eaves, parapets, roof pitches, telegraph poles, trees and fencing must be surveyed by a surveyor. Three or more surveyed elements that range from foreground, middle ground and background is sufficient. Surveyed data is used to align a 3D digital model to an untouched photograph in order to accurately depict the scale and bulk of the proposal. Elements have been surveyed and recorded by a registered surveyor from CMS on the 1st of October 2019.

Point co-ordinates are to MGA Zone 56 and RL elevations to Australian Height Datum (AHD). Measurements were taken by Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) and Theodolite and both verified against The Survey Control Information Management System (SCIMS) most commonly known as state survey marks.

FJMT has used the underlying survey data to align and produce the proposed photomontages in accordance with L&E Court policy.

### Viewpoints

View	Location	Field of View*	AHD		MGA Zone 56	
			Ground Level RL at camera location	RL of Camera above ground*	Easting	Northing
12.	Sydney Observatory	16mm	41.863	43.463	333928.800	6251914.161
13.	Upper Fort Street	16mm	38.794	40.394	333983.524	6251833.906
14.	National Trust	16mm	37.088	38.688	333921.444	6251778.573
15.	Agar Steps	16mm	38.167	39.767	333880.873	6251878.864
16.	Harbour Bridge - Western Distributor	16mm	33.136	34.736	333952.646	6251735.498
17.	Kent Street – Tennis Courts	16mm	23.060	24.66	333827.456	6251819.042
18.	Harbour Bridge - Cahill Expressway	35mm	41.301	42.901	334087.190	6251963.130
19.	Circular Quay - Cahill Expressway	35mm	17.367	18.967	334550.167	6251778.745
20.	Barangaroo Reserve – Stargazer Lawn	35mm	20.485	22.085	333594.787	6252148.268
21.	Sydney Opera House	35mm	3.510	5.11	334843.868	6252350.600
22.	Balmain East Wharf	35mm	1.976	3.576	333122.778	6252223.154

\*35mm considered to capture perspective similar to the human eye. A 16mm lens has been used when shorter viewing distance warrants a wider field of view \*The height of camera is 1.6m above ground level.

### **Camera type and lens**

In order to accurately depict the proposal, the primary lens that Ethos Urban has used is a 35mm lens. This is considered to capture a perspective similar to that of the human eye. A 16-24mm lens is used as a secondary lens when a shorter viewing distance warrants a wider field of view (for example to better align with the human-eyes perceptions)

- Camera Body: Full frame Canon 6D
- Primary Field of view: 35mm lens
- Secondary Field of view: 16-24mm lens, used when appropriate.

### **Software, limitations and assumptions**

The software used to match the photographs and the proposal at Fort Street Public School is ArchiCAD 20 and Cinema 4D. The software allows you record views with a specific location, target and focal length. The Location is set to the coordinates, R.L.'s and a bearing which has been surveyed. The focal length is then assigned to match the lens used.

All other modelling has been prepared with the following assumptions and limitations:

- A 3D representation of the built and natural environment has been modelled from a combination of survey data and GIS data from multiple sources.
- A site survey provided correct R.L.'s on the site.