

5 August 2021

17156

Mr Jim Betts
Secretary
Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
12 Darcy Street,
Parramatta NSW 2150

Attn: Andy Nixey (Key Sites Assessments)

VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Stage 2 SSD DA for Ivanhoe Estate, Macquarie Park (SSD-15822622)

This Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) has been prepared to support a State Significant Development (SSD) application for the next stage in the delivery of the approved Ivanhoe Estate Concept Masterplan (SSD 8707). This VIA specifically considers the identification, description and assessment of the significance and acceptability of potential visual impacts for this next detailed Development Application (DA) in the context of the approved Masterplan.

This VIA has been prepared to address the following Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirement (SEAR), as detailed in the SEARs issued 6 April 2021.

4. Visual impacts

The EIS must include a Visual Impact Assessment, with photomontages, justifying potential visual impacts associated with the proposal when compared to the existing situation and a compliant development (if relevant), when viewed to and from key vantage points.

This VIA assessment accompanies the photomontages prepared by Virtual Ideas, and is to be read in conjunction with the Environmental Impact Statement dated August 2021 and the accompanying plans and technical assessments. Reference should also be made to the Visual Impact Assessment that accompanied the Masterplan (SSD 8707)

1.0 Context

Consent was granted by the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces on 30 April 2020 for the Ivanhoe Estate Concept Masterplan (SSD 8707), which establishes the overall planning and assessment framework for the staged redevelopment of the Ivanhoe Estate. The approved Masterplan comprises:

- A mixed use development involving a maximum of GFA of 268,000m², including:
 - residential flat buildings comprising private, social and affordable housing (approximately 3,300 dwellings including 950 social and 128 affordable dwellings);
 - seniors housing comprising a residential care facility and self-contained dwellings;
 - a new primary school;
 - childcare centres;
 - retail; and
 - community uses;
- Maximum building heights and GFA for each development block;
- Public domain landscape concept, including parks, streets and pedestrian connections;
- Establishment of the Ivanhoe Estate Design Guidelines and Design Excellence Strategy to guide the detailed design of the future buildings;
- Vehicular and intersection upgrades, and pedestrian access improvements; and

- The removal of all required trees on the site, and system for the purchase and retirement of biodiversity offsets. The approved Masterplan envisages that the site is to be redeveloped in stages over a 10-15 year period, with the site divided into a number of Development Blocks. The approved staging plan is shown in **Figure 1** below, with the Stage 2 area (Blocks C2, C3 and C4) highlighted in red.

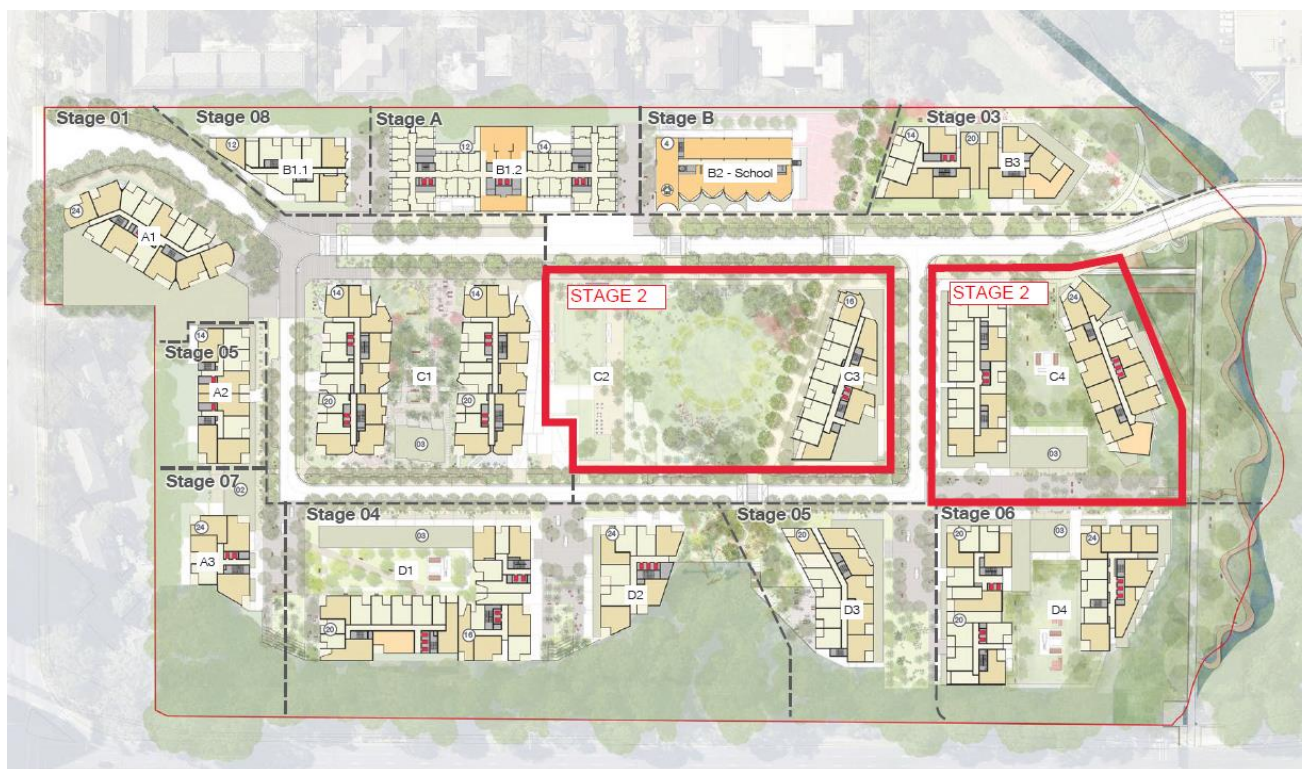


Figure 1 Ivanhoe Concept Masterplan staging plan, with the Stage 2 area highlighted

Source: Bates Smart, edits by Ethos Urban

Importantly, the Masterplan establishes building envelopes for each of the buildings within the Estate. These envelopes define the heights and scale of development on the site and have informed the Stage 2 buildings proposed as part of this DA.

2.0 Proposed development

This Stage 2 SSDA seeks consent for the following works:

- The detailed design, construction, and operation of Blocks C2, C3 and C4:
 - C2 comprising the community centre, pool, gym, and central open space area known as the 'Village Green';
 - C3 comprising a 17-storey mixed use building with 170 market housing residential apartments, 7 ground floor retail tenancies, and 3 levels of basement parking; and
 - C4 comprising 4 walk-up townhouses, a 24-storey building with 268 market residential apartments, and a 17-storey building comprising 216 social housing apartments with 3 shared levels of basement parking.
- Relevant excavation and detailed earthworks, including for building basements and to achieve the required levels for the community centre and Village Green.
- Utilities and services infrastructure to tie into the requirements of the proposed buildings.
- New driveways and public domain areas to tie into the approved internal road network and road reserves.
- Stratum subdivision to correspond with the proposed buildings.

The detailed Architectural and Landscape Plans and Design Reports are included at **Appendices B and C** of the EIS.

3.0 Methodology

There is currently no national level guideline for VIA in Australia (AILA, 2018). However, there are a number of key international documents that are commonly referred to in Australian VIAs. One of these is the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (GLVIA3) published by the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment in 2013. Unlike other documents which are largely focussed on natural and rural landscapes, the GLVIA provides more broadly applicable guidance that is able to be applied to urban contexts. On this basis, it has been adopted as the methodological basis for this VIA.

The methodology has also been adjusted to better reflect the local NSW context by including consideration of:

- the requirements of the NSW planning system under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979;
- NSW Land and Environment Court planning principles; and
- NSW Land and Environment Court policy.

The core methodology follows three key steps:

1. visual effect – assessment of the nature and scale of the proposal on the existing visual catchment
2. visual impact – assessment of the impact of the visual effect following application of other, relevant considerations
3. acceptability of the visual impact – assessment of the visual impact against a balance of other, broader considerations relevant to the proposal.

Based on the findings of this core methodology, a determination is then made as to whether the proposal can be supported in its current form from a visual impact perspective, and if so, whether any elements are critical to ensure its continued acceptability as it evolves from concept to detail design and development.

4.0 Visual effect

The Masterplan Visual Impact Assessment dated December 2017 made an assessment of the visual environment to assess the visual effect of the proposal, including against baseline and variable factors. For consistency, the selected locations for assessment have also been utilised for this assessment (see **Figure 2** below).

This preceding assessment of the visual environment remains relevant to this assessment, and is summarised as follows:

- **Visual catchment:** The visual catchment for the site comprises parts of the suburbs of Macquarie Park, North Ryde and Marsfield.
 - The site has low to high visibility from points within the local catchment. Largely due to the existing landform of this area, with the site having high visibility to Epping Road. This visibility is mitigated by the presence of dense low to medium storey vegetation and regularly spaced, semi-mature eucalypts along the sites boundary with the road.
 - The presence of this development, the nearby Macquarie Village development and the ability for a similar form of development in the area under the Macquarie University Station Priority Precinct will significantly alter the visual character of the surrounding area. The urban form and skyline will change from having a solely low to medium rise, widely spaced visual profile to being punctuated by clusters of higher rise development. This change will, in particular, be highly visible for people travelling on Epping Road, as people will readily experience these clusters due to their proximity to the road.

- Of all surrounding areas, land to the south-west has the most suburban visual character. This includes one and two storey houses and townhouses set in landscaped private domains. Where fronting Epping Road, engagement between the public and private domain is significantly diminished through the presence of either high, solid fencing or greater street setbacks. The visual character of the Epping Road part of the catchment is further strengthened by the large, raised and grassed embankment of Booth Reserve to the south-west of the site, the substantial grassed setback to the Avaya building, vegetation along Shrimptons Creek and the Epping Road boundary of the site, and the width of Epping Road itself.
- Scenic quality:** Overall, the scenic quality of the visual catchment is low to moderate. The site will have low visual exposure to important public viewing locations. However, due to a number of factors, including the absence of foreground features, the site will have high visual exposure to Epping Road for people travelling to the north-west. To a lesser degree, the site will also have visual exposure to Herring Road and parts of the Shrimptons Creek reserve.
- View place sensitivity:** The main public locations in the visual catchment from which a view to the site can be obtained are roads and parks. Due to the large number of people who have the opportunity to obtain close and middle distance views to the site, Epping Road has high view place sensitivity. Due to people potentially being able to obtain close to middle distance views to the site during sustained periods of time associated with recreation activities, parts of the Shrimptons Creek corridor such as Booth Reserve and Cottonwood Park also have a high view place sensitivity. Other public locations have low view place sensitivity.
- Viewer sensitivity:** The Peach Tree Road area is the only area that contains properties that directly borders the site. Views from these properties to the site, in particular at lower levels, will be mitigated by contiguous, semi-mature eucalypts on the site's boundary. Similarly, views to the site from the south western side of Epping Road will be mitigated by the sites boundary vegetation. Views from the adjoining Booth Street precinct will be mitigated by the intervening built form.



Figure 2 View locations*Source: Virtual Ideas***4.1 Viewpoints assessment**

The photomontages prepared by Virtual Ideas provide a cumulative assessment of the Ivanhoe Estate redevelopment. They incorporate the approved building envelopes as per the Masterplan (SSD 8707), the approved Stage 1 Buildings A1 and C1 (SSD 8903), and the proposed Stage 2 buildings C2, C3 and C4 being considered in this SSD DA.

As shown in **Figure 2** above, a large number of views were considered as part of the approved Ivanhoe Estate Masterplan (SSD 8707). Review of these views has identified that only four of these views will potentially be affected by the proposal:

1. Camera Position 7 (in this report referred to as viewpoint 1)
2. Camera Position 8 (in this report referred to as viewpoint 2)
3. Camera Position 9 (in this report referred to as viewpoint 3)
4. Camera Position 10 (in this report referred to as viewpoint 4)

No other views will likely be affected. On this basis, consideration in this VIA has been given to these views only.

4.1.1 Viewpoint 1: Epping Road, east of Shrimptons Creek

Overall, the proposal will have a medium effect on the existing visual environment visible from this viewpoint. This is largely due to:

- medium range of the viewpoint
- visual exposure to a large part of the proposal
- counter balance to the scale of the development provided by visually prominent Avaya building in the foreground, and a similar scale reference provided by the south-western edge of the Macquarie Park Village in the background.

| Viewpoint 1 | |
|------------------------|---|
| Category of view | Public domain, main road |
| View composition type | Restrictive feature |
| Relative viewing level | Relative level |
| Viewing period | Short with opportunities for regular |
| Viewing distance | Medium |
| View loss or blocking | No loss of valuable views of landscape features from ground level |



Figure 3 Viewpoint 1 – former site conditions



Figure 4 Viewpoint 1 – modified site conditions

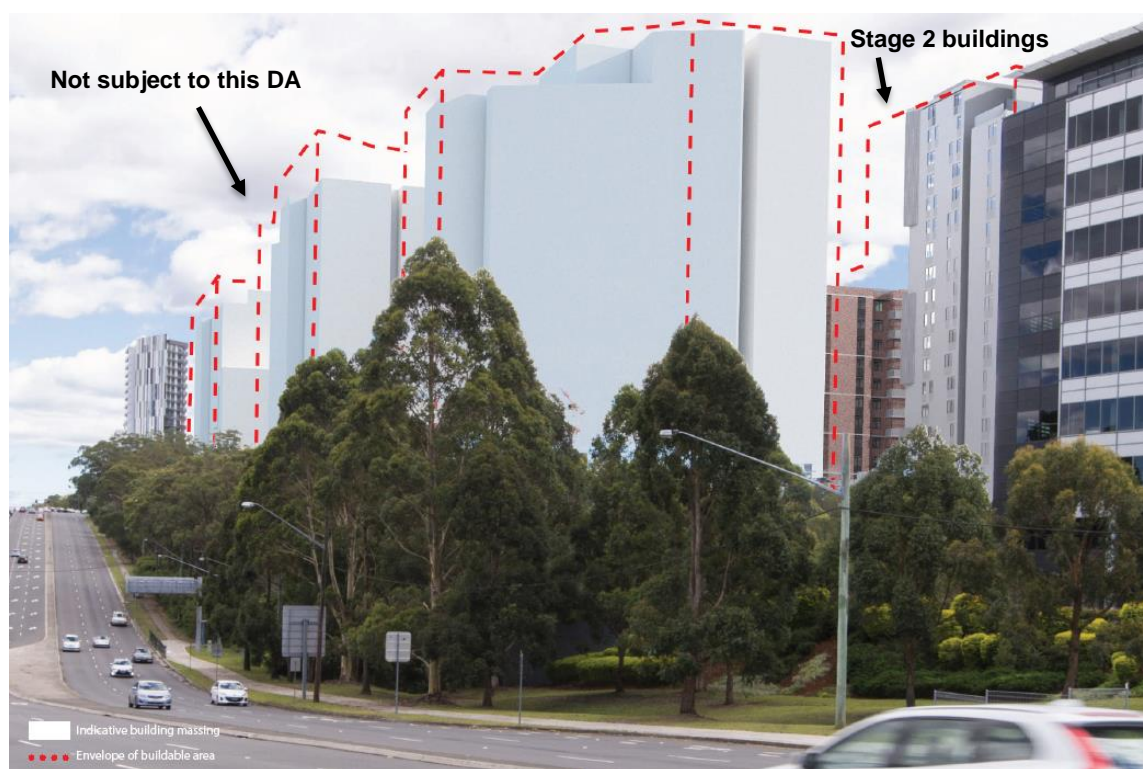


Figure 5 Viewpoint 1 – zoomed modified site conditions, including approved building envelopes (red outline) and Stage 2 detailed buildings C3 and C4 (C2 not visible)

4.1.2 Viewpoint 2: Epping Road, north of Lane Cove Road

Overall, the proposal will have a low effect on the existing visual environment visible from this viewpoint. This is largely due to:

- long range of the viewpoint
- presence of buildings and vegetation that blocks or screen the proposal.

| Viewpoint 2 | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Category of view | Public domain, main road |
| View composition type | Restricted |
| Relative viewing level | Above level |

| Viewpoint 2 | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Viewing period | Short with opportunities for regular |
| Viewing distance | Long |
| View loss or blocking | No loss of valuable views of landscape features from ground level |



Figure 6 Viewpoint 2 – former site conditions



Figure 7 Viewpoint 2 – modified site conditions

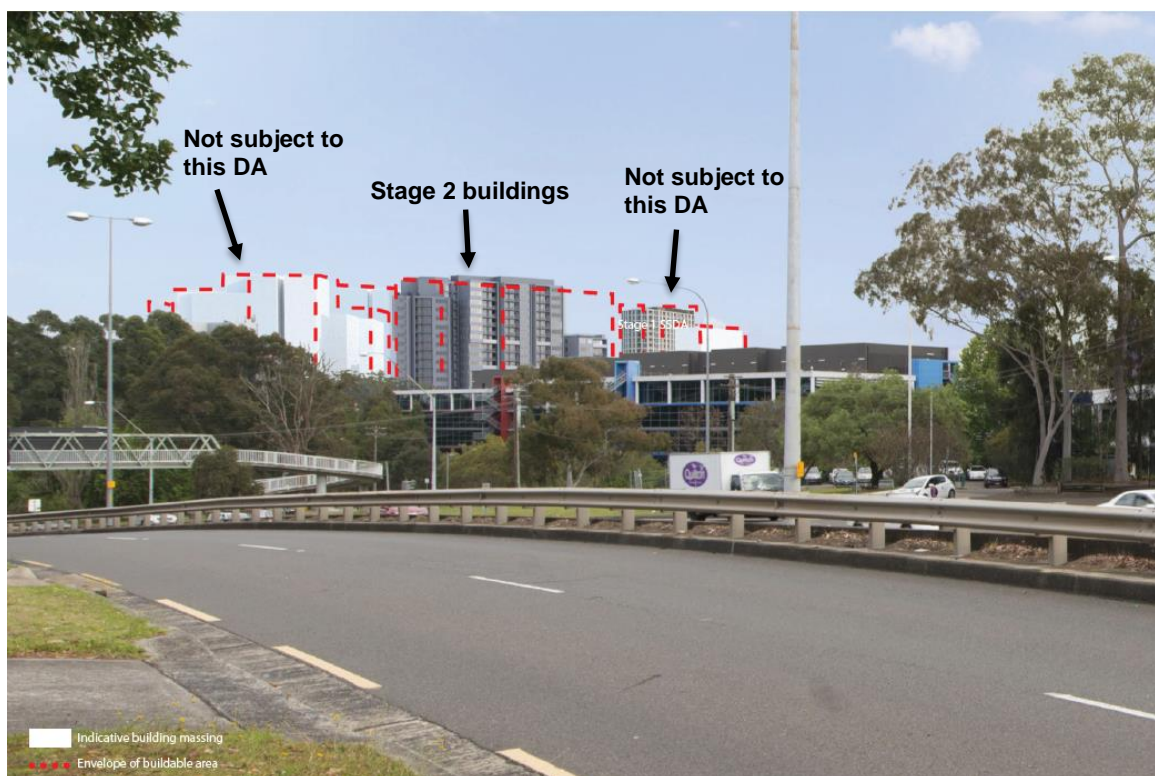


Figure 8 Viewpoint 2 – zoomed modified site conditions, including approved building envelopes (red outline) and Stage 1 buildings, and the proposed Stage 2 detailed buildings C3 and C4 (C2 not visible)

4.1.3 Viewpoint 3: 6-8 Lyonpark Road

Overall, the proposal will have a low effect on the existing visual environment visible from this viewpoint. This is largely due to:

- the medium range of the viewpoint

- the visually prominent building in the foreground on 2-4 Lyonpark and vegetation that blocks or screen the proposal.

| Viewpoint 3 | |
|------------------------|--|
| Category of view | Public domain, local road |
| View composition type | Restricted |
| Relative viewing level | Relatively level |
| Viewing period | Short with opportunities for regular |
| Viewing distance | Medium |
| View loss or blocking | Limited loss of valuable views of landscape features from ground level |

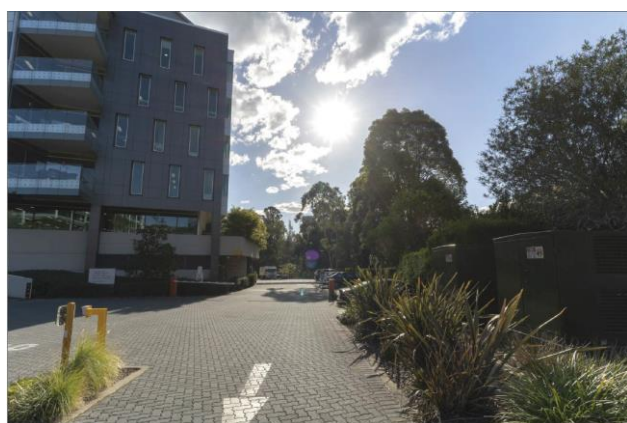


Figure 9 Viewpoint 3 – former site conditions



Figure 10 Viewpoint 3 – modified site conditions



Figure 11 Viewpoint 3 – zoomed modified site conditions, including approved building envelopes (red outline) and Stage 1 buildings, and the proposed Stage 2 detailed buildings C3 and C4 (C2 not visible)

4.1.4 Viewpoint 4: Epping Road, near Booth Reserve bus stop

Overall, the proposal will be perceived as being distinct and prominent in the landscape. On this basis, it will have a high effect on the existing visual environment visible from this viewpoint. This is largely due to:

- close to medium range of the viewpoint
- visual exposure to a large part of the proposal
- relative level below the site that increases perception of visual effect.

| Viewpoint 4 | |
|------------------------|---|
| Category of view | Public domain, main road |
| View composition type | Restricted feature |
| Relative viewing level | Below |
| Viewing period | Short with opportunities for regular |
| Viewing distance | Close to medium |
| View loss or blocking | No loss of valuable views of landscape features from ground level |



Figure 12 Viewpoint 3 – former site conditions



Figure 13 Viewpoint 3 – modified site conditions



Figure 14 Viewpoint 4 – modified site conditions, including approved building envelopes (red outline) and the proposed Stage 2 detailed building C3 (C4 and C2 not visible)

4.1.5 Summary

The degree of impact assessed and determined under the Masterplan (SSD 8707) remains appropriate for this subsequent Stage 2 SSD DA. Specifically, the detailed design of Buildings C3 and C4 are a consistent scale to the approved building envelopes and through setbacks, refinement, and articulation occupy a lesser volume than the envelopes. Buildings C3 and C4, being contained at the heart of the Estate, are largely shielded by surrounding buildings and Building C2, being minor in scale, is not visible from any viewpoint. While varying with each viewpoint, noticeable elements comprise partial views of the southern, eastern and western façades of Buildings C3 and C4 where a natural break is created by the Shrimptons Creek and building setbacks. The building designs are of a high-quality and contribute to the developing Estate.

5.0 Visual impact

The visual impact of the proposal is also considered to remain the same as that assessed and determined at the Masterplan stage.

- **Physical absorption capacity** – the physical absorption capacity ranges from low to high. For most viewpoints, the proposed Stage 2 buildings will be screened by landscape, topography, existing buildings in foreground or skyline, or more relevantly other buildings within the Estate that are to be delivered in subsequent stages. Accordingly, while from some viewpoints from Epping Road the proposal is prominent or has a high contrast to the existing setting, the Stage 2 buildings will be comfortably absorbed by the comparable form, scale and height of other future development within the Estate demarcated by the approved building envelopes as well as other existing and future development within Macquarie Park.
- **Compatibility** – the Stage 2 buildings are contained within the developing Estate and as such are compatible with the future surrounding built form approved under the Masterplan. Compatibility with the greater surrounding area continues to range from low to high. It will have a low compatibility with the low density residential area to the south-west around Booth Street, low overall compatibility with the adjoining medium density residential area around Peach Tree Road, and a high compatibility with the visual character of new development on the northern

side of Herring Road, as well as that further south along Epping Road at Lachlan's Line. Overall, it is considered that the Stage 2 buildings are comfortably contained within the Estate and are compatible with the preferred future visual character of the Macquarie Station Priority Precinct and the broader Macquarie Park Corridor in key planning documents.

6.0 Acceptability

The findings of the Visual Impact Assessment are that the overall development will have a medium visual effect, and from certain viewpoints a high effect, on existing visual conditions. The assessment of the physical absorption capacity and compatibility results in an overall medium to low visual impact. The proposal is nonetheless acceptable on a balance of considerations. In particular, the proposal is consistent with, and promotes relevant, key planning documents that seek to guide the transition of Macquarie Park to a more dense, urban place with significant built form scale and height. In addition, the proposal adheres to the planning framework approved for the site under the Masterplan.

7.0 Conclusion

In the assessment report for the Ivanhoe Estate Masterplan DA (SSD 8707), DPIE concluded that:

"Although there would be some visual impacts to existing viewpoints, a degree of impact is inevitable when transitioning from a low-density residential estate to a high-density mixed-use estate. The Department considers the proposed visual impact of the future building forms would be acceptable for the following key reasons:

- *the concept proposal is consistent with the strategic planning objectives for the site and the desired future character of the area. In particular, the concept proposal is compatible with the preferred visual character of the Herring Road Priority Precinct and the designation of the site and broader surrounding area to the northeast as an area that is to undergo significant change as it transitions to a more urban, high-density place*
- *the proposed variations to the RLEP 2014 height controls are limited in the context of the overall scale of development and would not result in a greater visual impact compared to a fully complying scheme*
- *the concept proposal relates to maximum building envelopes. The actual bulk and scale of the individual buildings would be smaller than the envelopes depicted in the VIA and would adhere to the proposed Design Guidelines to achieve acceptable design outcomes"*

As opposed to representing a major change for which a new VIA is required, the detailed design of the Stage 2 buildings (C2, C3 and C4) will provide a more developed and refined built form in this location than the approved building envelopes. On this basis, an assessment of consistent viewpoints from the original selection is appropriate.

Where visible from the selected viewpoints, the proposal will be seen as articulated buildings that are consistent with the developing scale of Macquarie Park and the redevelopment of the Ivanhoe Estate itself.

Accordingly, the visual impacts of the proposal are consistent with the visual impacts that were approved as part of the Masterplan (SSD 8707). On this basis, the proposal in its current form is acceptable on visual impact grounds.

Yours sincerely,



Anna Nowland
Principal Planner



Chris Bain
Director