Penrith Homemaker Centre

Tract

Visual Impact Assessment

Planning Proposal

Prepared for Harvey Norman

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Penrith Homemaker Centre
Visual Impact Assessment
Planning Proposal

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of Report

Tract Consultants Pty Ltd has prepared this report for Harvey Norman. It provides a technical evaluation of the potential visual impacts of the alterations and additions to the existing Harvey Norman, Penrith Homemaker Centre located at 13-23 Pattys Place, Jamisontown (The Project).

1.2 Scope of assessment

The methodology adopted for this assessment is consistent with the *Guideline for landscape character and visual impact assessment -Environmental impact assessment practice note EIA-NO4* (Transport for New South Wales, 2020).

This visual impact assessment deals with potential effects on the visual resources of the setting from changes in composition and quality of views, people's response to likely changes and the overall impact on visual amenity.

The visual impact assessment helps define the day-to-day visual effects of a Project on people's views. To quantify these impacts, one must assess two qualities concerning a viewpoint: sensitivity and magnitude.

- Sensitivity refers to the qualities of an area, the type of number and type of receivers, and how sensitive the existing character of the setting is to the proposed change. For example, a pristine natural environment will be more sensitive to change than a built-up industrial area.
- Magnitude refers to the scale, form and character of a development Project compared to the existing condition and how far the Project is from the viewer.

Table 1 summarises the ranking of the assessment of these two criteria and how they are combined to provide an overall impact assessment.

Table 1: Visual Impact Assessment Matrix

		Magnitude			
		High	**Moderate**	**Low**	**Negligible**
Sensitivity	**High**	High Impact	High - Moderate	Moderate	Negligible
	Moderate	High - Moderate	Moderate	Moderate – low	Negligible
	Low	Moderate	Moderate – low	Low	Negligible
	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible



Figure 1: Project location

2 Project location and description

This section provides an overview of the existing conditions within the Project and the surrounding study area.

2.1 Project location

The Project is in the suburb of Jamisontown, primarily a commercial area approximately three kilometres southeast of the Penrith town centre. Mulgoa Road is the main arterial road into Penrith and borders the study site to the east. To the south and southwest, the Western Motorway is the major regional road that provides access to the Blue Mountains and beyond. The land immediately to the west and north is agricultural land on small lots, with the Nepean River located approximately one kilometre northwest of the study site.

The Project forms part of the Penrith Homemaker Centre, Australia's second-largest large-format retail precinct. The Harvey Norman landholding is zoned E3 Productivity Support. The Centre is part of the existing large-format retailing and employment area within Penrith City, serving as an essential bulky goods centre for the wider Local Government Area (LGA) and surrounding areas.

The land to the north of the Project is zoned RU4 Primary Production Small Lots, which consists primarily of a cleared pasture supporting a mixture of introduced and native grasses and herbs below scattered paddock trees dominated by remnant open forest canopy species.

2.2 Project description

The Project involves alterations and additions to the existing Harvey Norman Penrith Homemaker Centre at 13-23 Pattys Place, Jamisontown (Lot 10 DP1046110). It includes the following main components:

- Demolition of part of the existing building.
- Construction of a two-storey extension to the existing building, approximately 6,577 square metres in Gross Floor Area (GFA).
- Construction of a new external truck deck.

The proposed development will be contained entirely within the existing E3 Productivity Support zone. A planning proposal is required to amend the height of building controls for part of the lot, to facilitate an increase in height, allow for the proposed extension of up to two storeys, and address the site's topography.

As indicated in Figure 2 below, the Project will raise the height of the building to 15 metres (three metres more than currently permitted, as noted in Section 3.1) at the northwest corner of the site. The overall height of the Project will consistently maintain a relative elevation of 44.720 metres. In a limited area, there will be an estimated increase of six metres above the current building height limit, where the topography follows a localised depression; however, the natural topography and existing ground floor are positioned approximately three metres above this elevation. To account for the site conditions, the Planning Proposal seeks to increase the maximum permitted building height to a mix of 15m and 19m. A development application will be submitted to seek approval for the works.

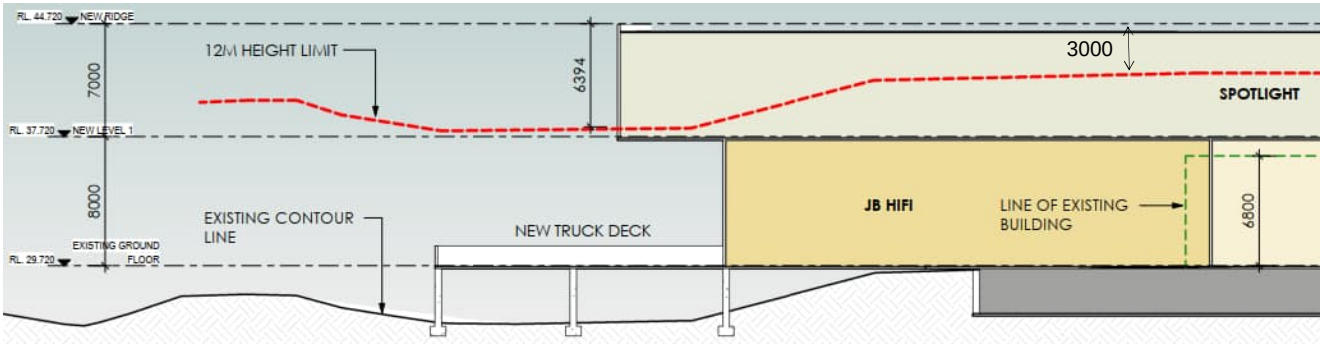


Figure 2: Typical section of the Project indicating overall building height in relation to the 12m height limit (Image source: Architectus)

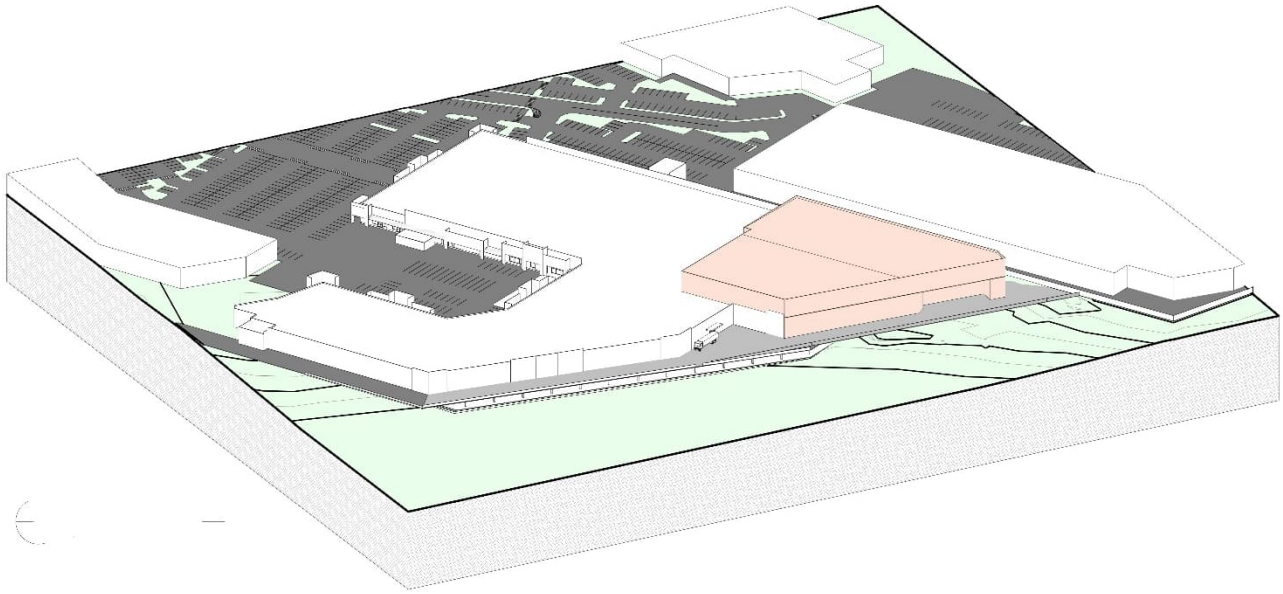
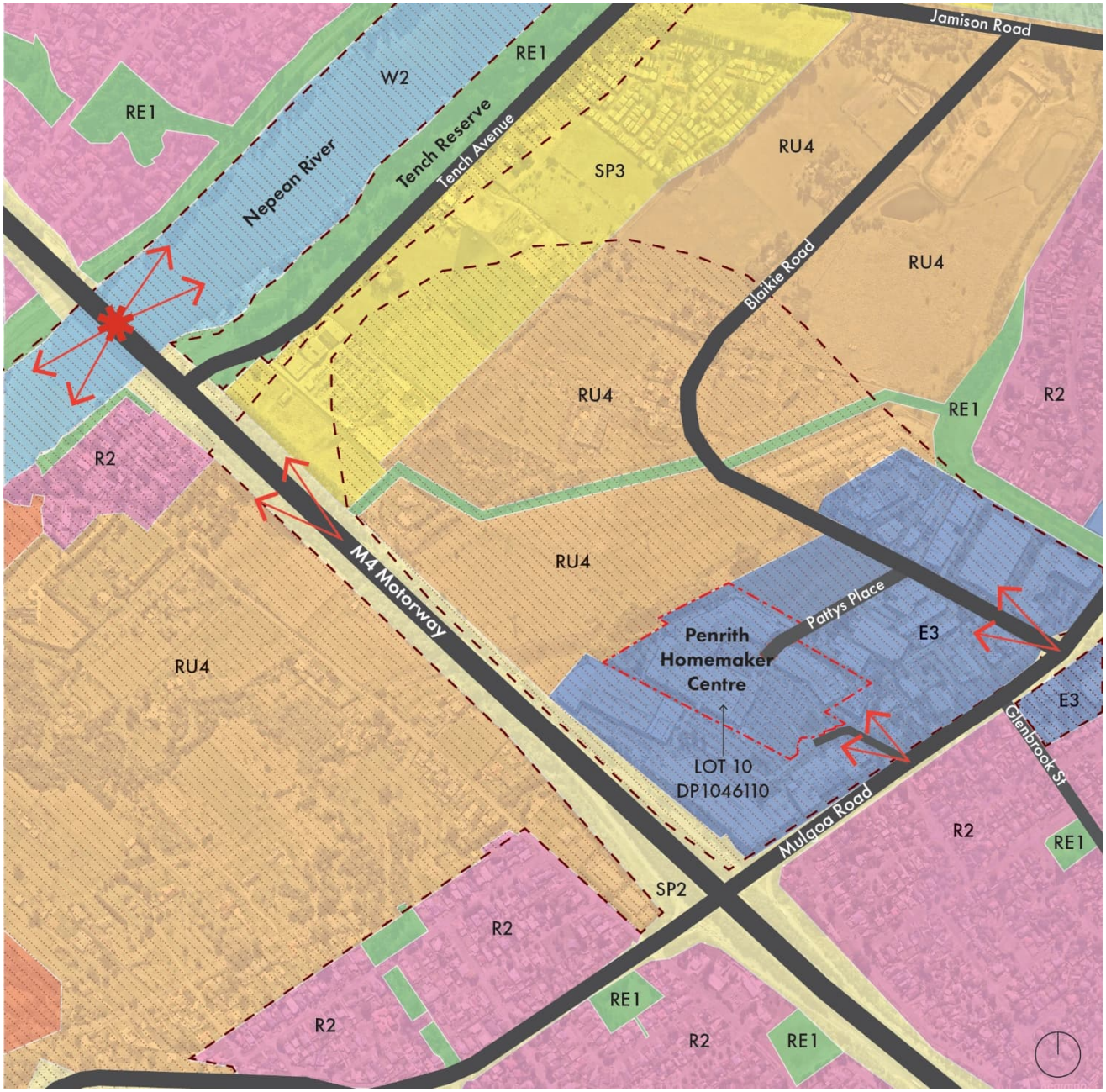


Figure 3: 3D massing model showing the proposed extension that forms the Project (Image source: Architectus)



LEGEND

Land Zoning (Penrith City Council - Local Environment Plan 2010)

- E2 - Environmental Conservation
- E3 - Productivity Support
- R2 - Low Density Residential
- RE1 - Public Recreation
- RE2 - Private Recreation
- RU4 - Primary Production Small Lots
- SP2 - Infrastructure
- SP3 - Tourist
- W2 - Recreational Waterways
- Site Boundary

Scenic and Landscape Values (Penrith City Council - Local Environment Plan 2010)

- Land with Scenic and Landscape Values

Scenic and Landscape Values (Penrith City Council - Development Control Plan 2014)

- Gateway of Visual Sensitivity
- Important Vistas and View Corridors

Figure 4: Land Zoning, Scenic and Landscape Values

3 Policy Context

This section provides an overview of the landscape and visual management policies that directly impact the Project and its surroundings. It also provides an appropriate reference for the landscape and visual assessment process. A summary of the policy context of the Project is shown in Figure 4 and Figure 5.

3.1 Penrith City Council - Local Environment Plan 2010

Land Zoning

The land use zoning of an area influences the overall character of a place. It describes the nature of development allowed and, as such, sets the principles of the built form within the landscape. The Project comprises the following land uses (refer to Figure 4) and highlights the objectives of each:

- Zone E3 Business Development:
  - To provide a range of facilities and services, light industries, warehouses and offices.
  - To provide for land uses that are compatible with, but do not compete with, land uses in surrounding local and commercial centres.
  - To maintain the economic viability of local and commercial centres by limiting certain retail and commercial activity.
  - To provide for land uses that meet the needs of the community, businesses, and industries but are not suited to locations in other employment zones.
  - To provide opportunities for new and emerging light industries.
  - To enable other land uses that provide facilities and services to meet the day-to-day needs of workers, to sell goods of a large size, weight or quantity or to sell goods manufactured on-site.
  - To maintain the hierarchy and economic strength of commercial centres in Penrith by limiting the size and scale of office and business premises development.

Protection of scenic character and landscape values

'Part 7 Additional local provisions' of the Penrith LEP 2010 apply to land identified as 'Land with scenic and landscape values' (refer to Figure 4). The objective of this clause is:

- to identify and protect areas that have scenic value either from significant roads, specified heritage items or other public places,
- to ensure development in these areas is located and designed to minimise its visual impact.

Height of buildings

The Project is located on land that is not to exceed the maximum height of 12.0 metres, as shown in Figure 5. The objectives of Clause 4.3 are as follows:

- to ensure that buildings are compatible with the height, bulk and scale of the existing and desired future character of the locality,
- to minimise visual impact, disruption of views, loss of privacy and loss of solar access to existing development and to public areas, including parks, streets and lanes,
- to minimise the adverse impact of development on heritage items, heritage conservation areas and areas of scenic or visual importance,
- to nominate heights that will provide a high-quality urban form for all buildings and a transition in built form and land use intensity.

The Project will increase the permitted height of the building to a mix of 15 metres (three metres more than currently permitted, as noted above) and 19 metres to account for the localised site conditions on part of the building in the northwest corner of the site.



Figure 5: Height of building map

3.2 Penrith City Council - Development Control Plan 2014

Key Areas with Scenic and Landscape Values (Section 1.1.2. of DCP)

The purpose of Section 1.1.2. of the DCP is to describe locations in the City of Penrith visible from major roads and other public places with significant scenic and landscape values. Specific areas identified as a gateway of visual sensitivity concerning the study site include the M4 entry over the Nepean River.

New proposals on land identified in the LEP Scenic and Landscape Values Map (including gateway sites) or on land zoned E1 National Parks and Nature Reserves or E2 Environmental Conservation are to submit a visual impact assessment with their Development Application (DA). This assessment's requirements will be addressed at the DA stage and will likely involve describing, analysing, and evaluating the proposed development's visual impacts and identifying measures to minimise the effects and ensure the development is sympathetic to the area's scenic and landscape character.

3.3 Places of Penrith - Rural Lands Strategy (Penrith City Council, August 2022)

The Rural Lands Strategy aims to provide a framework and direction for the ongoing protection, planning and management of the rural lands within the Penrith LGA. The document is based on the investigations completed as part of the Penrith Scenic and Cultural Landscapes Study (Envisage Consulting, 2022). It identifies critical priorities for Penrith City's rural lands and the outcomes they seek to achieve.

The key priority of visual amenity and outcomes is outlined below.

Priority 3 – Preserve open space, natural beauty, and cultural connections

This priority is about preserving the scenic and cultural landscapes, rural views, vistas, and entry points to Penrith City's rural landscape. Key outcomes include:

Outcome 3.1: Scenic and cultural landscapes are identified and protected

Six significant scenic and cultural landscapes have been identified in Penrith City. The Nepean River Corridor was one of these, assessed as having a regional or higher level of significance and being located near the study site.

Outcome 3.2: Quality visual outcomes are achieved in highly visually sensitive landscapes

Four additional visually sensitive landscape areas were identified within the rural lands. One is directly associated with the study site and includes the M4/Nepean River Eastern Interface. This area comprises views from the M4 Motorway crossing of the Nepean River toward Regentville, Penrith and Jamisontown.

Outcome 3.3: Important rural vistas are maintained

Important rural vistas and viewpoints have been identified and mapped. Protecting these vistas by controlling land use and development within associated view corridors will allow people to maintain visual connectivity to critical natural and cultural features, fostering a strong sense of place.

Outcome 3.4 Design outcomes are enhanced in visual gateways.

The Penrith Scenic and Cultural Landscapes Study reviewed 21 visual gateways identified in the Council's DCP to assess their ongoing relevance and provide high-level directions for managing them into the future. Critical considerations for planning the rural visual gateways concerning the study site, including the Nepean River crossing at M4 Motorway Development, managed to preserve a rural outlook southward and vistas of the Blue Mountains.

Summary

The Project is consistent with the key outcomes identified above and will not impact specific areas with scenic and landscape values, such as the M4 Gateway over the Nepean River. In addition, a rural outlook southward and vistas of the Blue Mountains from the M4 Gateway of Visual Sensitivity are preserved. Specific viewpoint locations will all maintain background views of the Blue Mountains.

4 Impact Assessment

The viewers' experience varies according to the duration, field of view and nature of exposure to the Project.

In assessing the visual impact, the visible range has been the effective distance where changes can influence a viewer. This distance varies concerning the topography and effectiveness of screening vegetation; however, the quality of detail in the landscape typically deteriorates rapidly for distances greater than 200 metres.

Typically, the viewpoints have considered the impact of those overlooking the Project. The residential users would be the most sensitive to changes of the adjoining observers. Where differences in the sensitivities of viewers exist in the worst case, assessment is the stated value in terms of Sensitivity, Magnitude, and overall visual impact.

The assessment was based on the impacts of the built form without considering the landscape improvements, which would further reduce the overall effect over time as the landscape matured.

4.1 Viewpoints

Several viewpoints have been identified that capture the critical areas of the potential visual impact associated with the project. These relate to key residential or public areas which overlook the Project. Note: This assessment has been undertaken from the public domain and does not depict specific views from individual properties.

4.2 Key viewpoints

In total, five viewpoints have been identified, which provide an overview of the level of impact and their nature. These viewpoints are placed in the viewpoint location plan shown in Figure 6. The critical views include:

- **VP01: 85-91 Blaikie Road** – view looking southwest towards the Project.
- **VP02: 96-20 Blaikie Road –** view looking southwest towards the Project.
- **VP03: Wolseley Road (near the intersection at Mulgoa Road)** – view looking northwest towards the Project.
- **VP04: 66-76 Tench Avenue** – view looking southeast towards the Project.
- **VP05: Regentville Bridge (M4 Western Motorway)** – view looking southeast towards the Project.

To aid the viewer's understanding of the Project, a simple shaded zone (semi-transparent yellow) has been indicated. In addition, trees to be retained have been left unshaded and read as per the existing and future views.

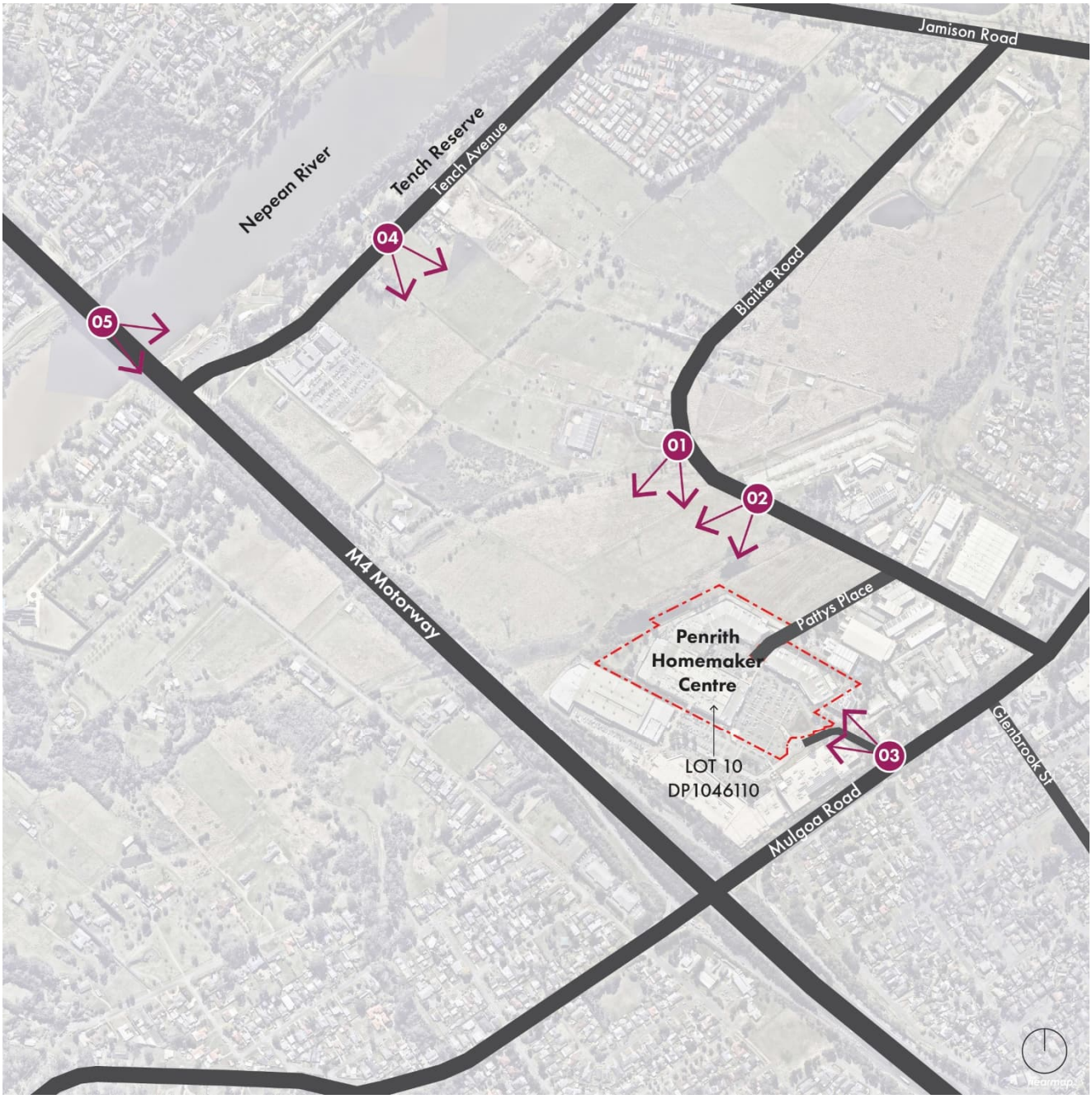


Figure 6: Viewpoint location plan

4.2.1 VP01: 85-91 Blaikie Road



Figure 7: View looking south towards the Project from 85-91 Blaikie Road.

Description: This viewpoint is in front of a residential user at 85-91 Blaikie Road, looking southwest towards the Project. The foreground shows open rural grasslands with an electrical transmission easement in the middle ground. The middle ground also comprises a temporary stockpile site at 95 Blaikie Road as part of the Mulgoa Road Upgrade (not evident within the photo). The background shows the Homemaker Super Centre, with the Project partially screened by an existing stand of vegetation.

Sensitivity: Low

While the resident will have high-amenity views across the open rural landscape on which the house is situated, the sensitivity is considered low as the view is currently terminated by the built form of the Homemaker Super Centre, and thus presents as the interface between rural and commercial uses. The Project is in the background view at a distance and is softened by intervening vegetation. This vegetation breaks up the scale and mass of the Homemaker Super Centre and partially screens the Project, providing a natural green element.

Magnitude: Moderate

From this viewpoint, the scale of change would be moderate. The built form would terminate the view and add a new, contrasting element to the horizon. The form is consistent with the castellated profile of the existing centre and does not add substantially to the scale and visual complexity of the existing structure. The existing stand of the trees is impacted by the Project, limiting the screening offered by the current vegetation cover. At 350 metres from the Project, the level of visual detail discernible would be low. This factor enables the application of mitigation measures to reduce the magnitude of change.

Summary: Moderate - low

The overall impact of the Project on this viewpoint is Moderate - Low.

4.2.2 VP02: 96-120 Blaikie Road



Figure 8: View looking southwest towards the Project from 96-120 Blaikie Road.

Description: This viewpoint is representative of road users travelling along Blaikie Road (in front of 96-120 Blaikie Road) looking southwest towards the Project. The foreground shows open rural grasslands, with an ephemeral creek running across the middle ground to the background. The background shows the Homemaker Centre with the Project screened by an existing stand of vegetation. Further to the west (right of the Project), the background view includes distant views of the Blue Mountains and the existing electrical transmission easement.

Sensitivity: Low

The sensitivity of road users travelling along Blaikie Road is low due to the transient nature of the view and the infrequent number of users who use this route. The Homemaker Super Centre is already a mid-to-background element of the view and contrasts with the rural foreground and bushland backdrop of the Mountains, providing a moderate level of complexity to the view. The view is consequently considered to be low.

Magnitude: Moderate

From this viewpoint, the scale of change would be moderate. The existing stand of trees provides partial screening for part of the Project from this location. The project's character and form will be like those of the existing building. The viewpoint is approximately 330 metres from the Project and would result in low visual detail of the proposed changes. The Project will not further impact the distant views of the Blue Mountains, which will terminate the view to the right of the facility. The opportunity to mitigate these impacts based on the existing context and distance from the viewer is high and would enable this impact to be moderated.

Summary: Low

The overall impact of the Project on this viewpoint is Moderate - Low.

4.2.3 VP03: Wolseley Road (near the intersection at Mulgoa Road)



Figure 9: View looking northwest towards the Project from Wolseley Street (near the intersection at Mulgoa Road). This view is currently under construction as part of the Mulgoa Road Upgrade. The tunnel access has been removed and will be replaced by two right-turn lanes on Mulgoa Road.

Description: This viewpoint represents road users and pedestrians entering Wolseley Street from Mulgoa Road, looking northwest. The Homemaker Super Centre is in the background, framed by mature Eucalypt trees, and the built form is located along both sides of Wolseley Road and towards the background.

Sensitivity: Low

The complexity and activity at this point prevent focus, with users in motion and focused on the road rather than the view. The Project would not be visible due to the existing built form. However, views of the Blue Mountains provide an attractive backdrop. The sensitivity of the view to change is considered to be low.

Magnitude: Negligible

The viewpoint is located approximately 430 metres from the Project but would not be visible due to the existing built form. The magnitude of change is negligible.

Summary: Negligible

The overall impact of the Project on this viewpoint is Negligible.

4.2.4 VP04: 66-76 Tench Avenue



Figure 10: View looking southeast towards the Project from 66-76 Tench Avenue.

Description: This viewpoint represents park users, pedestrians and road users travelling along Tench Avenue (in front of 66-76 Tench Avenue) looking southeast towards the Project. The foreground shows open rural grasslands, with agricultural land comprising the mid-to-background view. The background shows the Homemaker Centre with the Project screened by existing stands of vegetation. In the distant background, the ridgeline is dominated by the canopy of native trees.

Sensitivity: Low

This viewpoint's sensitivity is considered low, as park users, pedestrians, and road users are predominantly focused on the mid-to-foreground of the view, which offers a rural landscape setting. This view is largely terminated by a vegetated backdrop in which the existing built form of the Homemaker Super Centre is screened.

Magnitude: Low

The Project constitutes a discernible but minor component of the wider view. The viewpoint is located approximately 830 metres from the Project and is partially screened due to the existing vegetation. The magnitude of change is consequently considered low. The opportunity to mitigate the proposed built-form impacts based on the existing context and distance from the viewer is high and would enable this impact to be moderated.

Summary: Low

The overall impact of the Project on this viewpoint is Low.

4.2.5 VP05: Regentville Bridge (M4 Western Motorway)



Figure 11: View looking northwest towards the Project from the Regentville Bridge, travelling southeast along the M4 Western Motorway

Description: This viewpoint is identified as a significant Gateway of Visual Sensitivity in the Penrith City Council—Development Control Plan 2014. It also represents road users and pedestrians travelling along the M4 Western Motorway looking southeast towards the Project. From the middle ground, the foreground comprises the Nepean River corridor and Tench Reserve. The background features distant views of open rural grasslands and agricultural land, with occasional glimpses of the Homemakers Super Centre. Existing stands of vegetation and tree planting predominantly screen the Project.

Sensitivity: Moderate

This viewpoint is located on the M4 Western Motorway bridge across the Nepean River and is accessible to transient users. It presents a scenic and naturalistic outlook with a low level of built form in the mid-to-background of the view, so the sensitivity is considered moderate.

Magnitude: Negligible

The viewpoint is located approximately one kilometre from the Project, but would not be visible due to existing vegetation. The magnitude of change is consequently negligible.

Summary: Negligible

The Project's impact on this Gateway of Visual Sensitivity is negligible. Views of the Nepean River corridor and rural outlook are maintained and protected.

5 Mitigation

Mitigation measures are treatments developed as part of an overall integrated design process recommended to reduce a proposal's impacts.

The mitigation measures discussed here address the impacts on visual and landscape character as part of the overall planning and design response. They may relate to specific viewpoints or address the Project's overall impact. Mitigation measures also aim to reduce the effects on the existing landscape character by considering existing site features and cultural and environmental heritage.

The critical mitigation strategies are below in Table 2 address planning, design, and construction issues.

If implemented, the Project's visual outcome would be reduced to low for all views as it would be embedded into its context. As such, its impact on the overall sensitivity of scenic protection would be low and, therefore, consistent with the existing facility.

Table 2: Mitigation measures

Issue	Stage	Recommendation
Architectural	Design	The design of the extension should adopt forms and materials that are consistent with the context.
	Design	The selection of visually recessive colours on proposed external building facades and surfaces should consider blending with the surrounding landscape and avoiding obvious colour contrasts.
	Design	Materials and colour finishes for selected components should be non-reflective where possible.
Lighting	Design	Limit the extent of lighting and potential for a light spill
Landscape	Design	Provide visual screening along the northern boundary to limit the Project's visual impact.
	Design	Proposed planting along the north-western boundary should seek to screen the Project from the M4 Motorway and areas to the north.
	Design	Utilise local provenance materials and plant species that respond to the existing communities and landscape character.
Vegetation removal	Construction	Where possible, retain and protect endemic vegetation, minimise tree removal, and rehabilitate disturbed areas.
View management	Design	Framed view corridors should be maintained for important rural vistas, such as the Nepean River and the Blue Mountains, to preserve visual connectivity to critical natural and cultural features.
Lighting	Construction	Avoidance of temporary light spill beyond the construction site, where temporary lighting is required.
Maintenance	Operation	Long-term maintenance (and replacement as necessary) of screen planting associated with the Project to maintain visual filtering and screening of external views where appropriate.

6 Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This visual impact assessment has been undertaken to assess the visual impacts of the proposed extension of the Penrith Homemaker Centre. A key aspect of this assessment is the impact on the scenic and landscape protection area of the floodplain west of Mulgoa Road.

The Project comprises an extension to an existing specialised retail centre, which is set within a scenic area. The new works represent an extension of the existing built form, locally impacting both height and footprint within the precinct setting, rather than introducing a new building into the landscape. As part of a much larger bulky goods precinct, the change in scale and density of the development is considered consistent and appropriate. The height increase relates to a small central part of the site, located at the rear of the centre. The site is not visually prominent, minimising its impact on the centre and its surroundings.

As part of the assessment, a total of five viewpoints were evaluated for visual effects and summarised in Table 3 below.

Table 3 - Visual Assessment Summary

Viewpoint	Sensitivity	Magnitude	Impact
VP01: 85-91 Blaikie Road	Low	Moderate	Moderate - Low
VP02: 96-20 Blaikie Road	Low	Moderate	Moderate - Low
VP03: Wolseley Road (near the intersection at Mulgoa Road)	Low	Negligible	Negligible
VP04: 66-76 Tench Avenue	Low	Low	Low
VP05: Regentville Bridge (M4 Western Motorway)	Moderate	Negligible	Negligible

6.2 Visual Impact Summary and Findings

As part of the Project's assessment, impacts on specific areas with scenic and landscape values, as identified in Penrith City Council—Development Control Plan 2014, have been assessed. This includes areas such as the M4 Gateway over the Nepean River (viewpoint location VP05), which was assessed as having a negligible impact. In addition, a rural outlook southward and vistas of the Blue Mountains from the M4 Gateway of Visual Sensitivity are preserved. Other viewpoint locations, including VP01, VP02, and VP03, are noted as maintaining background views of the Blue Mountains, which are unimpacted by the proposed works.

Opportunities to further, reduce the visual impacts from viewpoint locations where a moderate to low impact has been assessed and is readily achievable through simple and effective treatments, including:

- The proposed external building facades and surfaces should be selected in visually recessive colours, avoiding contrasting colours, to assist with blending in with the surrounding landscape.
- The early establishment of landscape planting within the site boundary and the use of species that reflect the existing landscape context and character. will assist in screening views from the source of viewing.

6.3 Conclusion

The assessment found that the Project would generally have a moderate-low to negligible visual impact rating associated with the change in views and the associated viewpoints' visual amenity. It is considered that these ratings can be easily moderated and reduced by applying appropriate mitigation measures as identified.

The project is therefore considered responsive to the landscape in which it is found, protecting the scenic qualities of the landscape beyond and consequently consistent with the site's planning requirements.

Appendices

Appendix A Project Plans and Elevations

Appendix A Project Plans and Elevations