

Attachment C1

Visual Impact Assessment

VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Development Application
1, Onslow Place, Elizabeth Bay.
Visual Impact Assessment Report



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Alterations & Additions to Approved DA D/2022/456 1 Onslow Place, Elizabeth Bay - Residential Flat Building Visual Impact Assessment Report, May 2025.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope and Purpose of Report.

This Visual Impact Report has been prepared by Urbaine Design for CPG Onslow Pty Ltd. The report is provided to accompany a Development Application for additional landscaping to the approved development of a Residential Flat Building at 1 Onslow Place, Elizabeth Bay (the site).

Urbaine Design, and its Director, John Aspinall, BA(Hons), BArch(Hons) have been preparing 3d imagery and Visual Impact Assessments, both in Australia and Internationally for over 25 years. Their methods are regularly published in planning and architectural journals and John Aspinall has lectured in Architectural Design at both the University of Technology Sydney and The University of New South Wales.

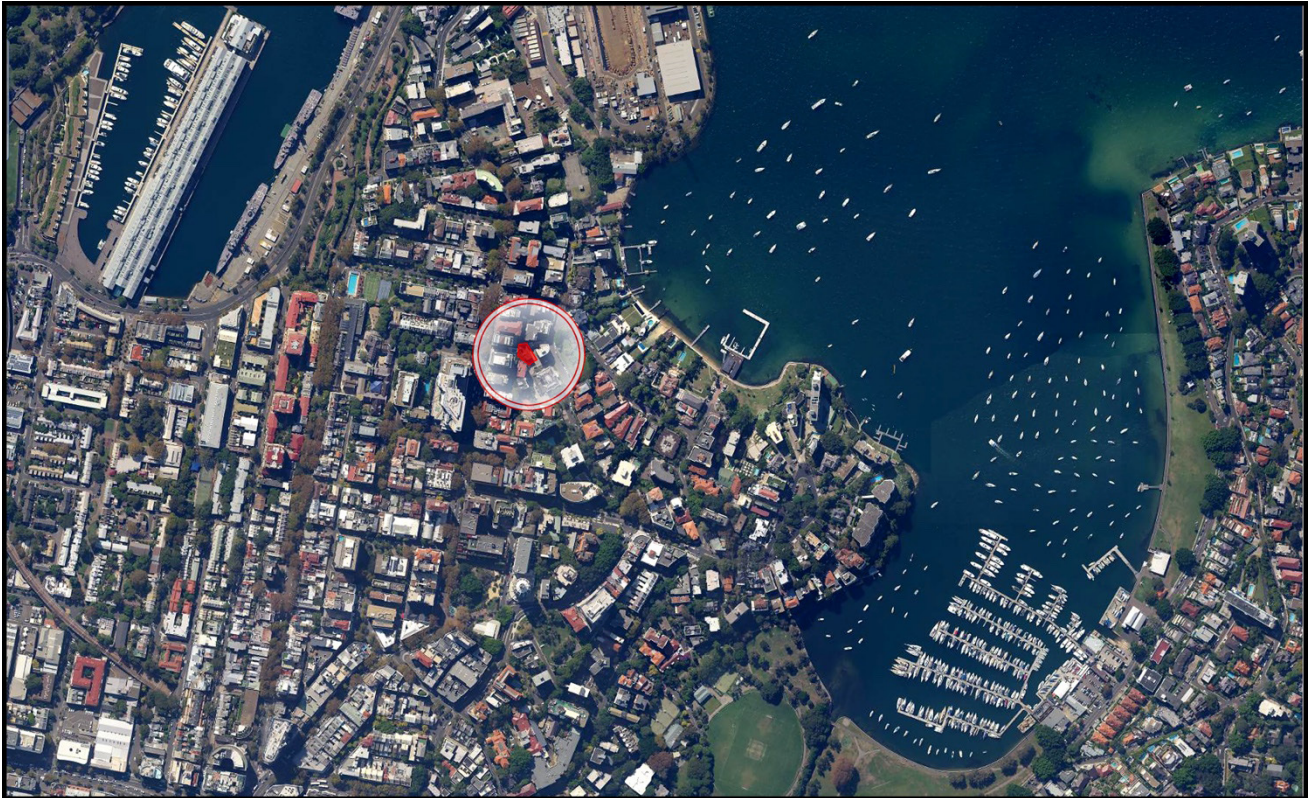


Figure 1 – site location shown in red overlay.

1.2 The Proposed Development

1.2.1 The Site and existing property:

The site is located at 1 Onslow Place, Elizabeth Bay within the City of Sydney Council Local Government Area (LGA). The site is approximately 1.5km East of the Sydney CBD and 500m east of Woolloomooloo Bay, which contains a variety of commercial and dining venues adjacent to the Woolloomooloo finger wharf. Rushcutters Bay is also located approximately 450m southeast of the site. The site sits within a dense residential locality, with access to open space and proximity to Elizabeth Bay House.

The site is legally described as SP10112 and is trapezoidal in shape, with an area of 470.2m². The site has a single street frontage to Onslow Place and is surrounded by medium to high density residential development at all other property boundaries. The site was previously occupied by an ageing four storey residential flat building that has been demolished to make way for a six storey building which was approved by City of Sydney Council on the 29th August 2023 (D/2022/456). An aerial photo of the site is shown at Figure 2, with a typical section of the proposal shown at Figure 3

The site is predominantly characterised by residential development surrounding the key State Heritage Item of Elizabeth Bay House. The immediate surrounding urban backdrop to Elizabeth Bay House comprises a combination of a medium rise, curvilinear residential flat buildings from the mid-20th century.

To the north, is 3 Onslow Avenue which comprises a part-five, part-six storey residential flat building. Further to the north is an eight-storey residential flat building raised above a ground level garage at 19, Billyard Avenue.

To the east, is 5 Onslow Avenue which comprises an eight-storey residential flat building known as 'St Ursula'. Further

to the east is Arthur McElhone Reserve, which comprises a small public park with grassed and landscape areas. To the southeast, is the State Heritage listed Elizabeth Bay House. To the south is 3 Onslow Place which comprises a large nine storey inter war residential flat building. To the west and northwest, a cliff runs along Onslow Place and beyond. This land rises up to the Macleay Street ridge, with several 8-10 storey residential flat buildings beyond fronting Macleay Street

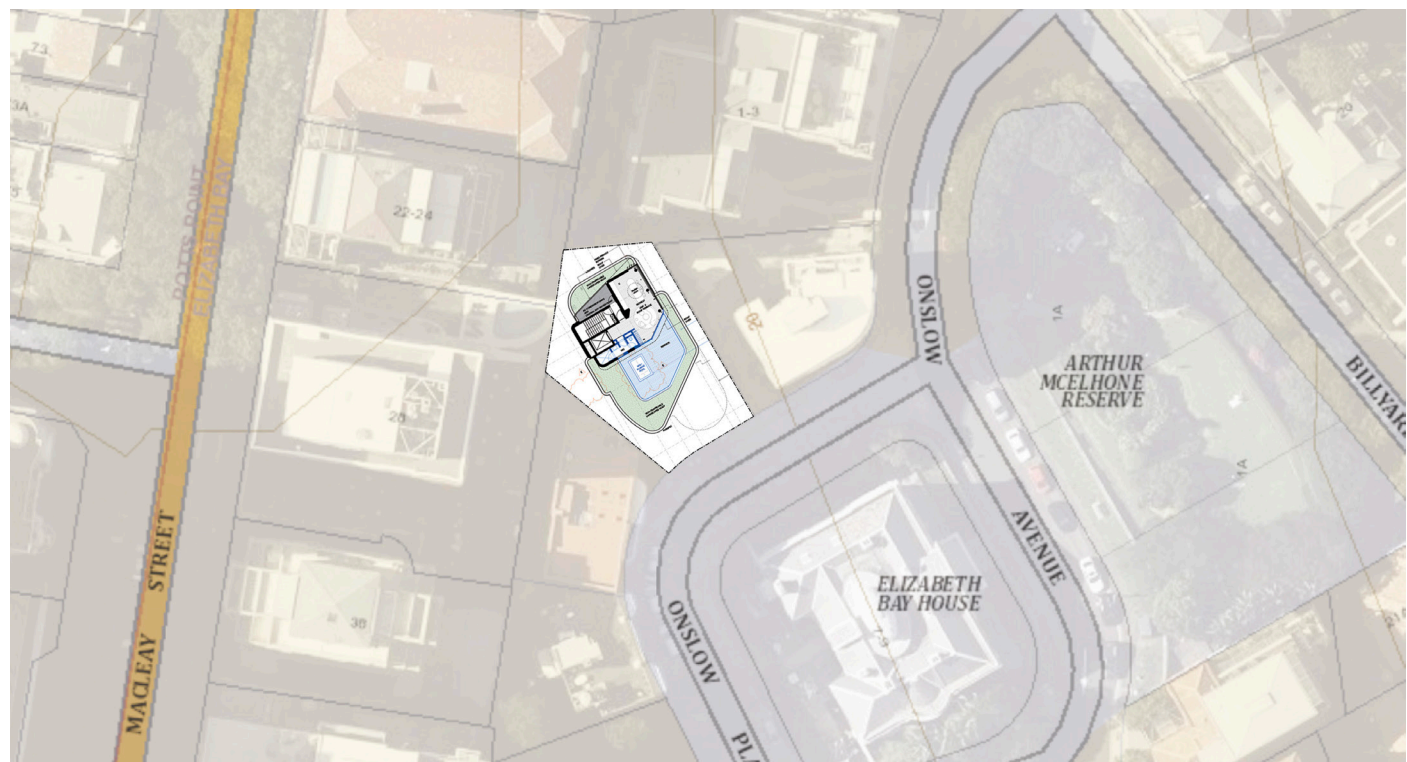


Figure 2 – site location shown in red overlay.

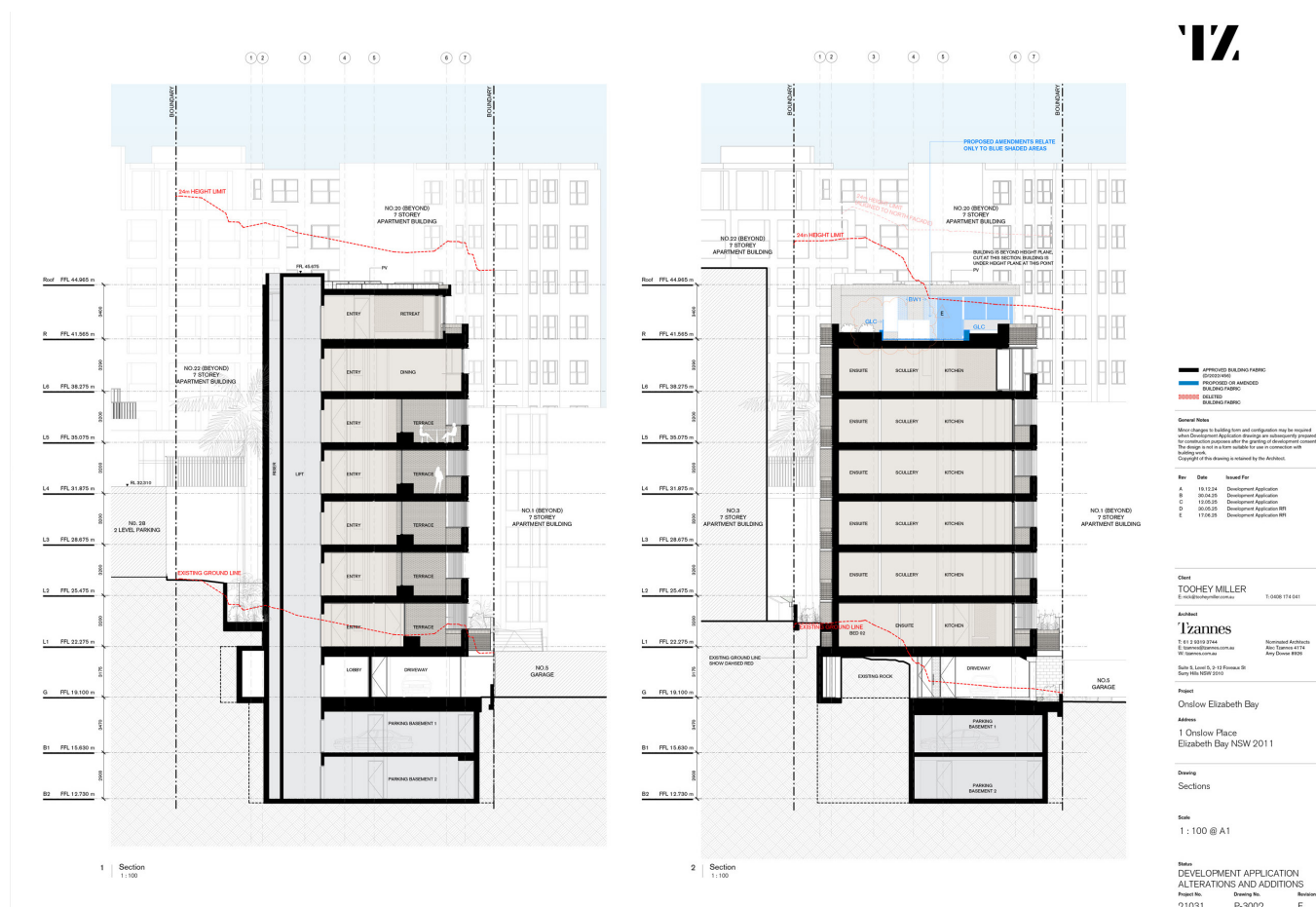


Figure 3 – Typical sections through the proposal. Tzannes Architects.

1.2.2 Proposed Land Use and Built Form:

Addition of landscaping around pool on the roof of existing approved building.

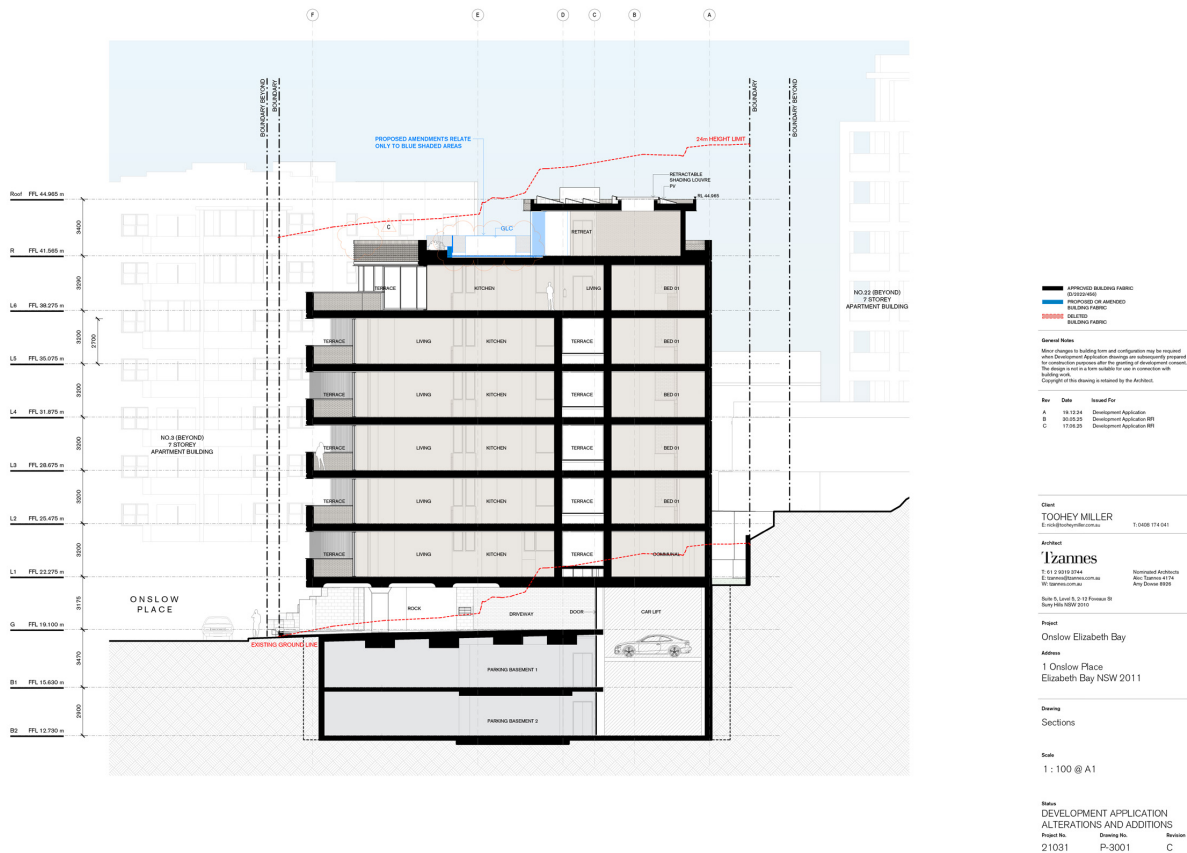


Figure 4 – Typical sections through the proposal. Tzannes Architects.

1.3 Methodology of Assessment:

The methods used by Urbaine, for the generation of photomontaged images, showing the proposed development in photomontaged context are summarised in an article prepared for New Planner magazine in December 2018 and contained in Appendix B. A combination of the methods described were utilised in the preparation of the photomontaged views used in this visual impact assessment report, below.

1.3.1 Process:

Initially, a fully contoured 3d model was created of the site and surrounding buildings to the extent of the designated viewpoints. Detailed models matching the previously approved and current proposed Tzannes building were inserted. Virtual cameras were placed into the 3D model to match various selected viewpoints, in both height and position. These locations were measured on-site, relative to known, existing physical elements, such as trees, light poles, walls etc. From these cameras, rendered views have been generated and photomontaged into the existing photos, using the ground plane for alignment (allowing 2 set camera heights, where necessary, for standing and sitting positions being at 1600mm and 1100mm respectively). Several site location poles were placed, both physically and also into the 3d model to allow accurate alignment with the original photo. The final selection of images shows these stages, including the block montage of the original development application and concluding with an outline, indicating the potential visual impact and view loss. The images within the report are of a standard lens format, as are the views contained within Appendix A. The Visual Impact Assessment includes detailed evaluation of views from several neighbouring properties at various levels, as described further below.

1.3.2 Assessment Methodology:

There are no set guidelines within Australia regarding the actual methodology for visual impact assessment, although there are a number of requirements defined by the Land and Environment Court (LEC) relating to the preparation of photomontages upon which an assessment can be based (Appendix C).

Where a proposal is likely to adversely affect views from either private or public land, Council will give consideration to the Land and Environment Court's Planning Principle for view sharing established in *Tenacity Consulting v Warringah Council* [2004] NSWLEC 140. This Planning Principle establishes a four-step assessment to assist in deciding whether or not view sharing is reasonable:

Step 1: assessment of views to be affected.

Step 2: consider from what part of the property the views are obtained.

Step 3: assess the extent of the impact.

Step 4: assess the reasonableness of the proposal that is causing the impact.

It is noted that the preliminary proposal complies with the development standards of the City of Sydney Council LEP 2012 and some private view loss is unavoidable within a highly urbanised environment, such as Potts Point.

An additional source of reference in relation to view sharing and visual impact in this area is found within the neighbouring Woolahra Council DCP, 2012. This states:

'View sharing concerns the equitable distribution of views between properties. The view sharing controls in this DCP seek to strike a balance between accommodating new development while providing, where practical, reasonable access to views from surrounding properties. Development should be designed to reflect the view sharing principles in Tenacity Consulting v Warringah Council [2004] NSWLEC 140.'

However, although these reference documents provide guidelines for assessment, there is no peer review system for determining the accuracy of the base material used for such visual impact assessments. As a result, Urbaine Design provides a detailed description of its methodologies and the resultant accuracy verifiability – this is contained within Appendix B.

The methodology applied to the visual assessment of the current design proposal has been developed from consideration of the following key documents:

- Environmental Impact Assessment Practice Note, Guideline for Landscape Character and Visual Impact Assessment (EIA-N04) NSW RMS (2013);
- Visual Landscape Planning in Western Australia, A Manual for Evaluation, Assessment, Siting and Design, Western Australia Planning Commission (2007);
- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, (Wilson, 2002);

In order to assess the visual impact of the Design Proposal, it is necessary to identify a suitable scope of publicly, or privately accessible locations that may be impacted by it, evaluate the visual sensitivity of the Design Proposal to each location and determine the overall visual impact of the Design Proposal. Accessible locations that feature a prominent, direct and mostly unobstructed line of sight to the subject site are used to assess the visual impact of the Design Proposal. The impact to each location is then assessed by overlaying an accurate visualisation of the new design onto the base photography and interpreting the amount of view loss in each situation, together with potential opportunities for mitigation.

Views of high visual quality are those featuring a variety of natural environments / landmark features, long range, distant views and with no, or minimal, disturbance as a result of human development or activity. Views of low visual quality are those featuring highly developed environments and short range, close distance views, with little or no natural features.

Visual sensitivity is evaluated through consideration of distance of the view location to the site boundary and also to proposed buildings on the site within the Design Proposal. Then, as an assessment of how the Design Proposal will impact on the particular viewpoint. Visual sensitivity provides the reference point to the potential visual impact of the Design Proposal to both the public and residents, located within, and near to the viewpoint locations.

Site Inspections:

Site inspections were originally undertaken to photograph the site and surrounding area to investigate:

- The topography and existing urban structure of the local area
- The streetscapes and houses most likely to be affected by the Proposal
- Important vistas and viewsheds
- Other major influences on local character and amenity

The site map, see figure 5, indicates chosen locations for site photography – also shown in Appendix A.

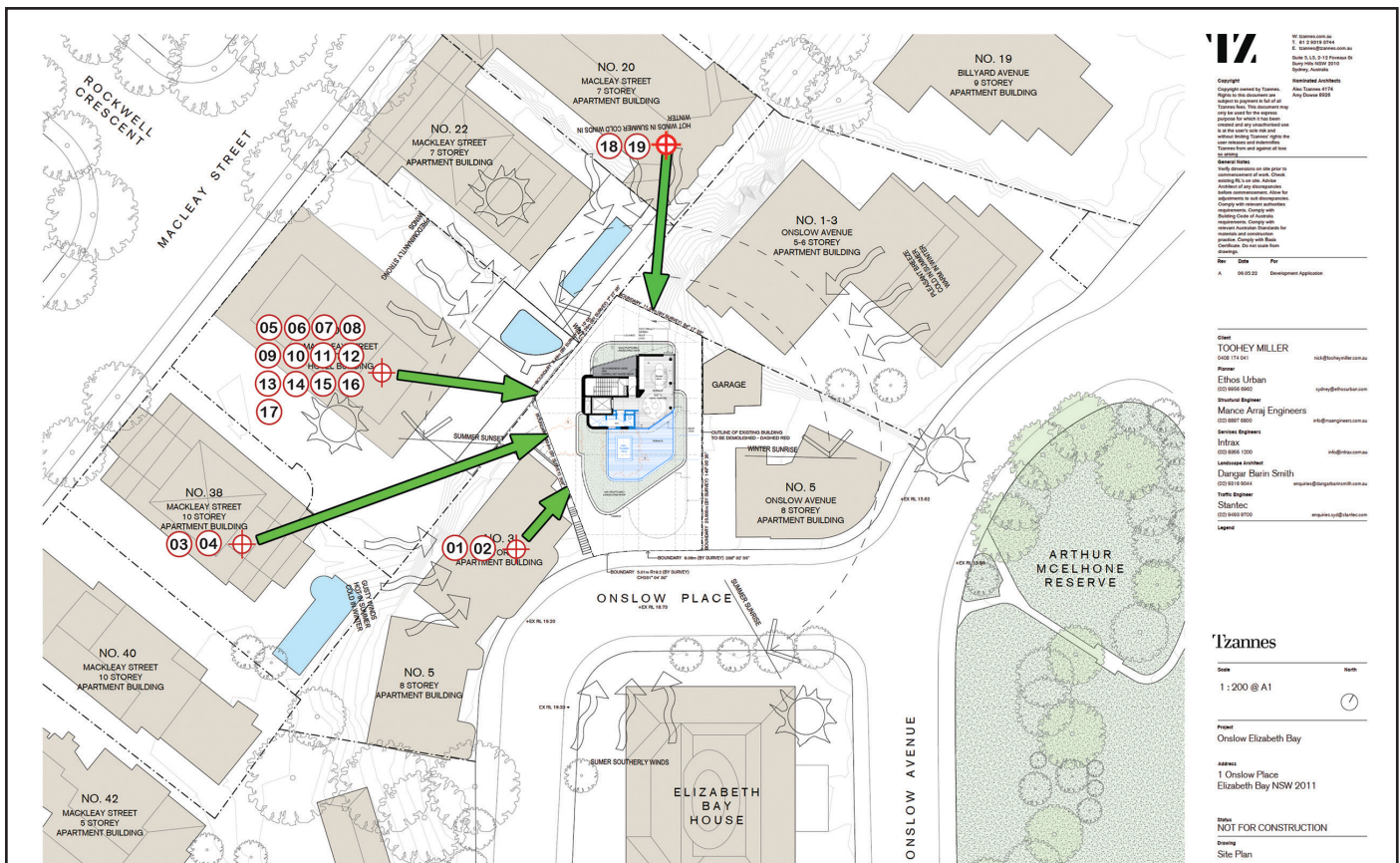


Figure 5: Selected neighbouring property viewpoint locations for visual impact assessments.

Contextual Analysis

An analysis was undertaken of the visual and statutory planning contexts relevant to the assessment of visual impacts in a Development Application.

Visual Impact Analysis

The visual impacts of the proposed development were analysed in relation to the visual context and assessed for their likely impact upon the local area and upon specific residential properties.

Statutory Planning Assessment

The results of the local view impact assessment are included in Section 3 of this report, with large format images included in Appendix A.

1.4 References:

The following documentation and references informed the preparation of this report:

- The design drawings and information relied upon for the preparations of this report were prepared by Tzannes Architects .
- City of Sydney Council DCP, 2012.
- Creating Places for People - An Urban Design Protocol for Australian Cities: www.urbandesign.gov.au/downloads/index.aspx/
- Australia and New Zealand Urban Design Protocol: www.mfe.govt.nz/publications/urban/design-protocol-mar05/urban-design-protocol-colour.pdf
- The Value of Urban Design: www.designcouncil.org.uk/Documents/Documents/Publications/CABE/the-value-of-urban-design.pdf
- Fifteen Qualities of Good Urban Places: www.goldcoast.qld.gov.au/planning-and-building/fifteen-qualities-of-good-urban-places-3774.html
- The Image of the City (1960), Kevin Lynch

2. THE SITE AND THE VISUAL CONTEXT.

Visual impacts occur within an existing visual context where they can affect its character and amenity. This section of the report describes the existing visual context and identifies its defining visual characteristics. Defining the local area relevant to the visual assessment of a proposed development is subject to possible cognitive mapping considerations and statutory planning requirements. Notwithstanding these issues, the surrounding local area that may be affected by the visual impact of the proposed development is considered to be the area identified on in the topographical area map, Figure 6.

Although some individuals may experience the visual context from private properties with associated views, the general public primarily experiences the visual context from within the public realm where they form impressions in relation to its character and amenity. The public realm is generally considered to include the public roads, reserves, open spaces and public buildings. This shows the rising landform to the south and east of the subject site.

The visual context is subject to “frames of reference” that structure the cognitive association of visual elements. The “local area” (as discussed above) provides one such frame of reference. Other “frames of reference” include the different contextual scales at which visual associations are established and influence the legibility, character and amenity of the urban environment. Within the scope of this report three contextual scales are considered relevant to the analysis of the visual context and the visual impact of the proposed development.

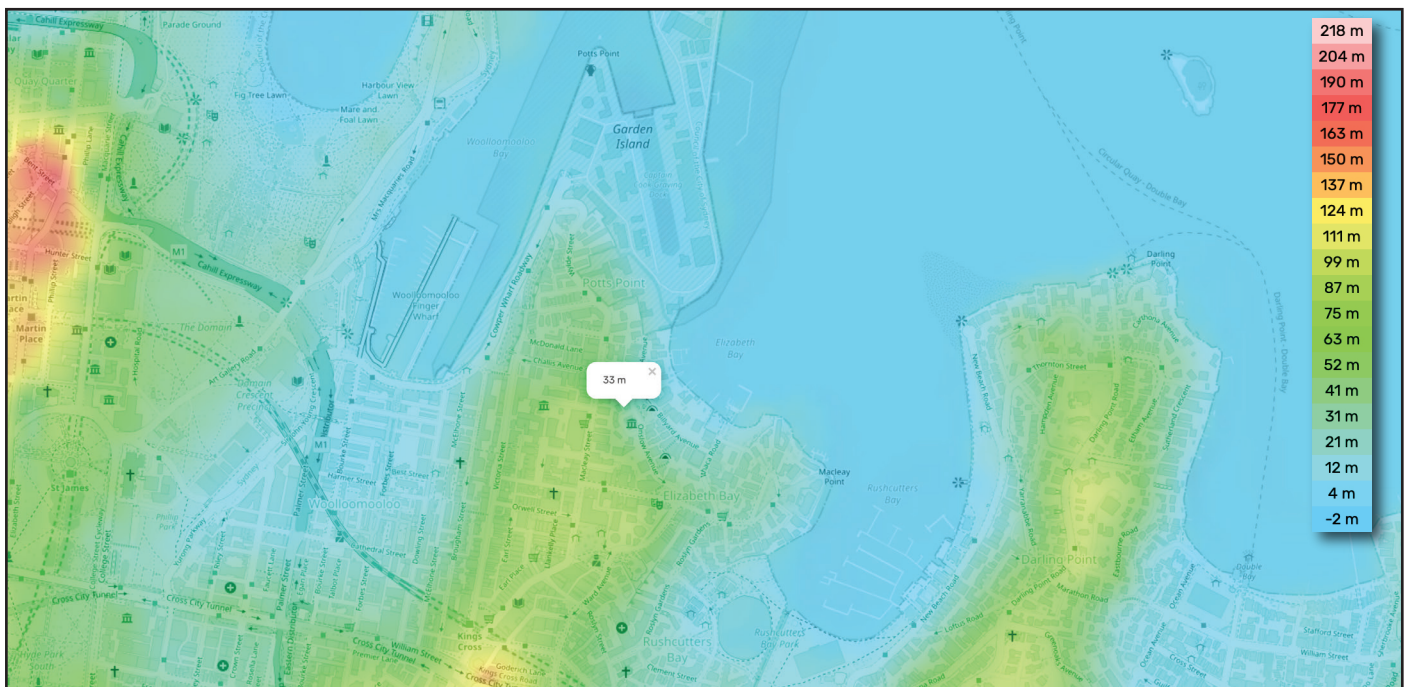


Figure 6: Onslow Place - subject area topographical map.

The ‘Street Context’ provides a frame of reference for reviewing the visual relationship of the new development (and in particular its facades) in relation to the adjoining pedestrian spaces and roads. Elements of the development within this frame of reference are experienced in relatively close proximity where, if compatible with the human scale they are more likely to facilitate positive visual engagement and contribute to the “activation” of adjoining pedestrian spaces.

The ‘Neighbourhood Context’ provides a broader frame of reference that relates the appearance of the development as a whole to the appearance of other developments within the local area. As a frame of reference, it evolves from the understanding gained after experiencing the site context and the low density of development. Within this context the relative appearance, size and scale of different buildings are compared for their visual compatibility and contribution to a shared character from which a unique “sense of place” may emerge. This frame of reference involves the consideration of developments not necessarily available to view at the same time. It therefore has greater recourse to memory and the need to consider developments separated in time and space. The neighbourhood context is relevant to the visual ‘legibility’ of a development and its relationship to other developments, which informs the cognitive mapping of the local area to provide an understanding of its arrangement and functionality.

The ‘Town / City Context’ provides a frame of reference that relates the significance of key developments or neighbourhoods to the town as a whole. The contribution that distinctive neighbourhoods make (or may potentially make) to the image of the city can be affected by the visual impact of an individual development through its influence on the neighbourhood’s character and legibility. Within this context, it is also important to be aware of other proposed developments in the area.

2.1 The Visual Context:

Within the street context, there is a mix of property types, sizes and architectural styles, most of which maximise view-lines to the north and west in their orientation.

Within the urban context, there is a very diverse fabric, in terms of planning and scale, consisting of a mix of Residential properties of many varying architectural designs and styles. There are also several heritage listed buildings in this area, Elizabeth Bay House in particular.

2.2 Visual Features and Local Landmarks:

Particular elements in the urban pattern, through either location and/or built form provide visual nodes and landmarks that assist in differentiating locations within the broader visual context. The following visual nodes are considered to be of the greatest significance in terms of their contribution to the character and legibility of the local and surrounding area:

Views are observed from this area to Sydney Harbour, Rushcutters Bay, Elizabeth Bay, Garden Island, Clark Island, lower North Shore Harbour suburbs and the far distant locations of Manly, Watsons Bay and the Harbour Heads.

2.3 Streetscapes:

Within the immediate and surrounding areas, the streetscapes are typical of the suburbs of Elizabeth Bay, being a mixture of individual houses and apartments blocks of varying scales. There are several heritage buildings within the area and the landscaping is predominantly mature and well established.

2.4 The selected view locations for the local view analysis:

As a result of the site's topography, the visual impact is primarily relevant to the residential properties to the south and west of the subject site.

A large number of site photos were taken and a smaller number of specific views selected from these, relevant for private viewing locations, as described above. These are all static viewpoints, namely, fixed locations where potential view loss could be considered significant

The selected photos are intended to allow consideration of the visual and urban impact of the new development at a local level and, specifically, from the neighbouring properties on Macleay Street. They incorporate private viewing locations with more distant, elevated, or panoramic views, where the subject site falls within, and impacts on the midground and background views.

2.5 Context of View:

The context of the view relates to where the proposed development is being viewed from. The context is different if viewed from a neighbouring building, or garden, as is the case in parts of this assessment, where views can be considered for an extended period of time, as opposed to a glimpse obtained from a moving vehicle.

2.6 Extent of View:

The extent to which various components of a development would be visible is critical. In this case, the proposal is for the addition of a rooftop pool on a previously approved residential apartment building. It is therefore considered to have a negligible impact, since this is only for a pool.

The capacity of the landscape to absorb the development is to be ranked as high, medium or low, with a low ranking representing the highest visual impact upon the scenic environmental quality of the specific locality, since there is little capacity to absorb the visual impact within the landscape, apart from within the existing street trees surrounding the subject site.

3. VISUAL IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT.

3.1 Visual Impact Assessments from 19 viewpoint locations – in and around the private apartments and environs of the site, particularly from apartments buildings on Onslow Place and McLeay Street.

3.1.1 Method of Assessment:

In order to allow a quantitative assessment of the visual impact, photos were selected that represented relevant viewing locations from the specific locations likely to be affected. Within these areas, photographs were taken from the property boundaries, equating to standing height views within the relevant buildings.

A Canon EOS Full Frame Digital Camera with fixed focal length 35mm lens was used to take all viewpoint photos, at an eye level of 1600mm. This was tripod-mounted and levelled.

The photos include location descriptions, to be read in conjunction with the site map, contained in Appendix A. Additionally, information is supplied as to the distance from the site boundary for each location and the distance to the closest built form is provided in Section 3.1.2 below.

To assess the visual impact, there are 2 relevant aspects - view loss of actual substance (landscape, middle and distance view elements etc.) and also direct sky view loss. To a large extent, the value associated with a view is subjective, although a range of relative values can be assigned to assist with comparing views. Figure 7 is a scale of values from 0 to 15, used to allow a numeric value to be given to a particular view, for the purposes of comparison. On the same table are a series of values, from zero to 15, that reflect the amount of visual impact.

The second means of assessment relates to assigning a qualitative value to the existing view, based on criteria of visual quality defined in the table – also in figure 7.

The % visual content is then assessed, together with a visual assessment of the new development's ability to blend into the existing surroundings.

Scale	Value	Visual Quality	Visual Impact	Tenacity Value
0	Negligible	N/A	No negative impact on the pre-existing visual quality of the view.	Nil
1	Low	Predominant presence of low quality manmade features. Minimal views of natural formations (e.g. cliffs, mountains, coastlines, waterways, ridges etc). Uniformity of land form.	A minor negative impact on the pre-existing visual quality of the view. Examples: – Minor impacts on natural landscapes. – No impact on iconic views – Impacts on a small number of receivers. – Significant distance between the development and receiver.	Negligible
2				
3				
4				
5				
6	Medium	Presence of some natural features mixed with manmade features. Some views of distinct natural formations (e.g. cliffs, mountains, coastlines, waterways, ridges etc).	A medium negative impact on the pre-existing visual quality of the view: Examples: – Moderate impacts on iconic views or natural landscapes. – Impacts on a moderate number of receivers. – Located nearby the receiver.	Minor
7				
8				
9				
10				
11	High	Predominantly natural features. Minimal manmade features, however if present of a high architectural standard. Significant views of distinct natural formations (e.g. cliffs, mountains, coastlines, waterways, ridges etc). Presence of iconic regional views or landmark features.	A high negative impact on the pre-existing visual quality of a view: Examples: – Loss of iconic views. – Impacts on a significant number of receivers. – Overshadowing effect. – Directly adjacent the receiver.	Moderate
12				
13				
14				
15				
				Severe
				Devastating

Figure 7 – Urbaine Design Visual Assessment Scale