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Kurmond and Kurrajong - View Classification and Design Guidelines

date of meeting: 10 September 2019 location: council chambers time: 6:30 p.m.



Hawkesbury City Council KURMOND AND KURRAJONG

View Classification and Design Guidelines S18-0024 Issue G 1 August 2019

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

This report has been developed to guide design controls and assist Hawkesbury City Council with evaluation and assessment of development applications and the planning proposal process.

Planning to conserve the scenic qualities of the Kurmond and Kurrajong area should consider how the district will change over the next few decades.

Planning and design controls can ensure new residential development in Kurmond and Kurrajong reflects and retains the existing landscape character and does not impact views and view corridors.

This study includes:

- · principles of view evaluation
- a system for classifying views to determine those views of high significance
- · diagrams to support design-related controls

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this study combines desktop studies and infield investigation. An associated review of aerial photography, historical information, topographical features, and various planning and strategy documents explored patterns and scale of landform, land cover and built development.

Site visits were conducted to review, record and analyse the existing landscape typologies and the way the landscape is experienced. This report includes a combination of objective and considered judgments supported by clear evidence and reasoned arguments.

The adopted methodology also draws on national and international best practice in the field of visual quality assessment (see Principles of View Evaluation).

PLANNING FRAMEWORKS

A number of planning policies and strategies at State and Local Government level have been drawn on to inform this report, including:

| Framework | Relevance |
|---|--|
| Greater Sydney Region Plan 2018 | Recognises that Greater Sydney's scenic landscapes are world renowned – including natural waterways, ridgelines, the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area and rural landscapes Views and vistas of ridgelines, waterways and the urban skyline help foster distinctive local character and can strengthen an appreciation of Greater Sydney's landscape. The aim is to enhance and protect views of scenic and cultural landscapes from the public realm. The plan also sets a five-year housing target for the Hawkesbury LGA of 1,150 new homes between 2016 to 2021. |
| Western City District Plan 2018 | Sustainability planning priorities include protecting and enhancing bushland and biodiversity, and protecting and enhancing scenic and cultural landscapes The plan also identifies a growing tourism opportunity, focused on colonial history, rural character, agriculture and environmental assets including the Hawkesbury River and surrounding agricultural lands. |
| Hawkebury Tourism Strategy 2015 | Highlights the need to integrate tourism marketing and development potential for key towns in the Hawkesbury LGA such as Kurrajong. |
| Hawkesbury Destination Management Plan and Action Plan 2017-2021 | Highlights the importance of leveraging the region's assets to develop a stronger visitor economy while recognising the needs of the local community. Pillars identified as presenting opportunities for the Hawkesbury region include food, heritage & culture and nature. |
| Hawkesbury Residential Land Strategy 2011 | Seeks to preserve the high quality natural environment and maintain viability of rural villages whilst accommodating 5000-6000 additional dwellings by 2031. |
| Structure Planning - Kurmond and Kurrajong Investigation Area 2015 | Sets out development principles and a local planning approach for the Kurmond and Kurrajong Investigation Area |
| Kurmond and Kurrajong Landscape Character Study 2018 | A detailed assessment of landscape character to inform amendments to planning guidelines and controls Outlines a suite of objectives and guidelines applying to themes of access, land use, natural environment, cultural heritage, character and identity, amenity and safety, built form and layout, infrastructure. Found that allowing rural lot sizes as low as 2,000m² would lead to a form of development at odds with the landscape character of this area. |
| Peter Leyshon Assessment of Retail Needs 2018 | Indicates limits to further expansion of Kurmond and Kurrajong retail centres. |

PRINCIPLES OF VIEW EVALUATION

The elevated topography of the Kurmond Kurrajong area provides spectacular, far-reaching views of the Blue Mountains, Sydney Basin, the river lands around Richmond and beyond. It is important to identify which views are significant to protect and manage these valued views.

Set out below if a brief overview of the state, national and international best practice principles in this field that have been applied to this study.

NSW LAND AND ENVIRONMENT COURT PRINCIPLES

There are some general principles when assessing views. The Land and Environment Court of New South Wales has developed relevant principles in visual assessment case judgments to guide future decision-making in development appeals.

These include separate but related principles for private views (Tenacity Consulting v Warringah Council 2004) and public domain views (Rose Bay Marina Pty Limited v Woollahra Municipal Council 2013).

Key points from these principles are as follows:

Tenacity Consulting v Warringah Council (2004)

- Water views are valued more highly than land views.
- Iconic views (eg of the Opera House, the Harbour Bridge or North Head) are valued more highly than views without icons.
- Whole views are valued more highly than partial views, e.g. a water view in which the interface between land and water is visible is more valuable than one in which it is obscured.

Rose Bay Marina Pty Limited v Woollahra Municipal Council (2013)

- Identify the nature and scope of the existing views from the public domain:
 - the nature and extent of any existing obstruction of the view
 - relevant compositional elements of the view
 - what might not be in the view such as the absence of human structures in the outlook across a natural area
- Identify the locations in the public domain from which the potentially interrupted view is enjoyed and the extent of obstruction at each relevant location. Planning principles give primacy of views from the public domain over views from private land.

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS GUIDELINES

Key points from this guidance note are:

- · Water and natural elements are preferred over urban scenes
- · Mountains and hills are preferred over flat land
- Views are preferred which include both mid-ground elements and a background
- Views with skyline features and focal points are preferred
- · Diversity is generally preferred over uniformity
- Heritage is generally preferred over modernity
- Views from accessible public spaces are more valued than views from private residences

A number of terms and definitions are commonly used in describing landscape and visual conditions:

- Character A distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, and often conveys a distinctive 'sense of place'
- Landscape An all encompassing term that refers to areas of the earth's surface at various scales, combining biophysical elements with the cultural overlay of human use and values
- Values Any aspect of landscape or views that people consider to be important, as reflected in local, state or federal planning regulations, other published documents, established through community consultation or as professionally assessed.
- View Any sight, prospect or field of vision as seen from a place, and may be wide or narrow, partial or full, pleasant or unattractive, distinctive or nondescript, and may include background, mid ground or foreground elements or features.
- Viewpoint The specific location of a view, typically used for assessment purposes.

The guidance note has been developed by members of the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) Queensland Regional Landscapes Group, a group of Registered Landscape Architects with extensive experience in the field of Landscape and Visual Assessment. While not formally adopted by government agencies, it is considered best practice and provides a practical framework for the practice of Landscape and Visual Assessment.

VIEW CLASSIFICATION

Based on the foregoing best practice principles, the following table outlines a recommended method of classifying the significance of a particular view as a contribution to the scenic value of the Kurmond and Kurrajong area at a district or regional level¹.

| Factor | Description | Low significance | Moderate significance | High significance |
|---------------------|--|---|--|--|
| Subject value | Any aspect of landscape or view that people consider to be important | Nondescript or discordant elements of the landscape (eg power lines, urban developments, infrastructure) | A minor or distant proportion of attractive elements of the landscape eg water and natural elements, hills, valleys, remnant vegetation, pastoral landscape, dams, rural villages | A high proportion of attractive features eg water and natural elements, hills, valleys, remnant vegetation, pastoral landscape, dams, rural villages Rare/unique/iconic elements of the landscape eg Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage area, sandstone escarpments, the Richmond lowlands, Sydney Basin A discernible focal point or skyline Features in the mid-ground and background |
| Breadth of view | The field of vision seen from the viewpoint | Narrow, filtered or obscured view | Partial view corridor | Whole view, unobstructed or framed view |
| Distance of view | The distance that can be seen from the viewpoint | Local views ¹ , typically with a viewing distance up to 500m | District views, typically with a viewing distance 500m to 2km | Regional views, typically with a viewing distance over 2km |
| Period of view | The length of time the viewer is exposed to the view | Short length of time, typically from driving along a road | Moderate length of time, typically from walking past | Long duration, typically from a static destination area or designated viewing point |
| Context of view | The popularity of the viewpoint and its ease of accessibility | View seen from private residential and commercial properties | View seen from public roads and verges | View seen form public open space, parks, town centres, footpaths, walking trails, lookouts, tourist walking or driving routes |

The overall significance of a particular viewpoint can be classified as Low, Moderate/Low, Moderate, Moderate/High or High.

¹ Local views may be significant at a local level, but for the purposes of these guidelines view assessment is evaluated at a district/regional level in establishing the area's wider visual catchment

The following pages show example view classifications from different viewpoints in Kurmond and Kurrajong. They have been selected to show a range of viewpoints in publicly accessible areas. Annotations on each photograph identify elements that contribute to and/or detract from the scenic quality.



Figure I. Example viewpoints - Kurmond and Kurrajong

EXAMPLE VIEW CLASSIFICATION

VIEWPOINT A - Longleat Rd, Kurmond looking west

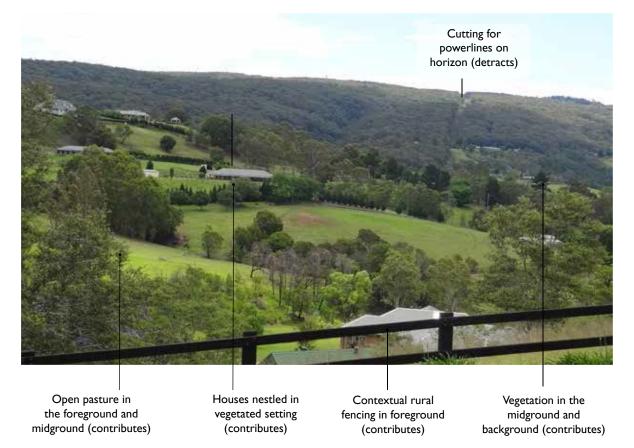


Open pastoral landscape in the foreground (contributes) Extensive and panoramic distant views (contributes) Heavily vegetated midground (contributes)

| Factor | Description | Significance |
|-----------------------------|---|--------------|
| Subject value | A view of pastoral landscape in the foreground with vegetation in the midground and views of the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area in the background | High |
| Breadth of view | Wide open unobstructed view with features in the foreground, midground and background | High |
| Distance of view | Regional views over 5km | High |
| Period of view | Moderate length of time | Moderate |
| Context of view | The view is seen from a public road with a verge | Moderate |
| Summary view classification | | |

EXAMPLE VIEW CLASSIFICATION

VIEWPOINT B- Grose Vale Rd, Kurrajong looking west



| Factor | Description | Significance |
|-----------------------------|--|--------------|
| Subject value | A view of pastoral landscape in the foreground with native vegetation in the midground and views of the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area in the background | High |
| Breadth of view | Wide open panoramic view with features in the foreground, midground and background | High |
| Distance of view | Regional views over 2km | High |
| Period of view | Moderate length of time | Moderate |
| Context of view | The view is seen from a public road with a verge | Moderate |
| Summary view classification | | |

EXAMPLE VIEW CLASSIFICATION

VIEWPOINT C - Old Bells Line of Road, Kurrajong looking south



Geometric planting in foreground does not complement rural landscapes (detracts)

Views of Richmond lowlands and beyond (contributes) Vegetation in the midground (contributes)

| Factor | Description | Significance |
|------------------|---|--------------|
| Subject value | Nugget Hill subdivision land in the foreground with views of the Richmond lowlands and city skyline in the background | High |
| Breadth of view | Wide open panoramic view with features in the foreground, midground and background | High |
| Distance of view | Regional views over 30km | High |
| Period of view | Moderate length of time | Moderate |
| Context of view | The view is seen from a private road | Low |
| Summary view c | ategory | High |

EXAMPLE VIEW CLASSIFICATION

VIEWPOINT D - Kurrajong Town Centre looking west



Distant views to surrounding rural area (contributes)

Continuous uninterrupted street front parking with no breaks (detracts)

Poorly coordinated street planting (detracts) Attractive garden style frontages (contributes)

| Factor | Description | Significance |
|-----------------------|---|--------------|
| Subject value | Historic Kurrajong village shops, footpath and street in the foreground with glimpses of the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area in the background | High |
| Breadth of view | Narrow view corridor | Moderate |
| Distance of view | Local and regional views | High |
| Period of view | Long duration of time | High |
| Context of view | The view is seen from the public footpath | High |
| Summary view category | | High |

EXAMPLE VIEW CLASSIFICATION

VIEWPOINT E- Old Bells Line of Road, Kurrajong near Memorial Park looking west



Streetfront planting on residential property (contributes)

Power lines on streetfront and in view to horizon (detracts)

Distant framed views to horizon (contributes)

| Factor | Description | Significance |
|--|--|--------------|
| Subject value | Residential street, houses and power lines in the foreground and views of the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area in the background | Moderate |
| Breadth of view | Partial view corridor | Moderate |
| Distance of view | Regional views over 3km | High |
| Period of view | Moderate length of time | Moderate |
| Context of view The view is seen from a public road or footpath from Memorial Park | | Moderate |
| Summary view category | | |

EXAMPLE VIEW CLASSIFICATION

VIEWPOINT F- 552 Bells Line of Road, Kurmond looking north



Vegetation and pastoral landscape in the midground (contributes)

Power line easement dissects landscape and interferes with long distance views (detracts) Tree canopy pruned to permit powerlines (detracts)

Power line towers (detracts) Trees in foreground frames view (contributes)

| Factor | Description | Significance |
|-----------------------|---|--------------|
| Subject value | Pastoral landscape in the foreground with views of vegetated hills in the background. An overhead power line easement cuts through the scene. | Moderate |
| Breadth of view | Open panoramic view only partially obscured with vegetation and power infrastructure. Features in the foreground, midground and background | Moderate |
| Distance of view | Local views 400m | Low |
| Period of view | Moderate length of time | Moderate |
| Context of view | The view is seen from a private road | Low |
| Summary view category | | Moderate/Low |



Figure 2. Developments around town centres

DESIGN CONTROLS - LOCAL CENTRES

OBJECTIVES

To maintain and enhance the compact character of existing villages and neighbourhoods.

- Focus principal residential populations in and around compact neighbourhood centres and prevent subdivision from sprawling at town/ village edges
- Maintain a clear distinction and landscape buffer between retail/ commercial and rural land uses
- Focus retail and commercial within neighbourhood centres and encourage farm gate providers in other areas

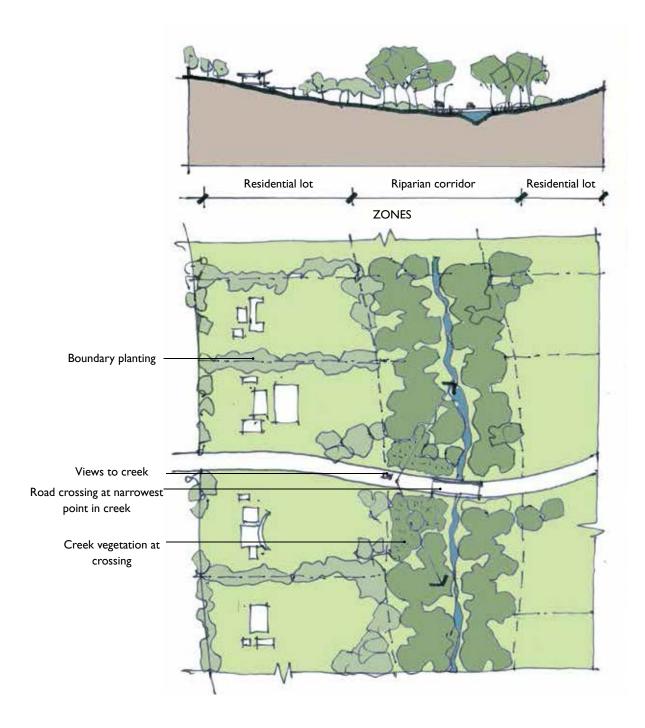


Figure 3. Design controls to protect the natural environment

DESIGN CONTROLS - NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

OBJECTIVES

To ensure the area's natural topography is conserved, riparian systems are maintained and vegetation corridors are protected and enhanced.

- Keep development away from the creek line & minimise road crossings (complying with riparian corridor controls by NSW Office of Water)
- Use built form that responds to the terrain and minimises cut and fill
- Locate development with topography and natural features off ridgelines, behind higher ground and below vegetation lines
- Retain, protect and regenerate vegetation/riparian corridors
- Maintain tree canopy cover on roads

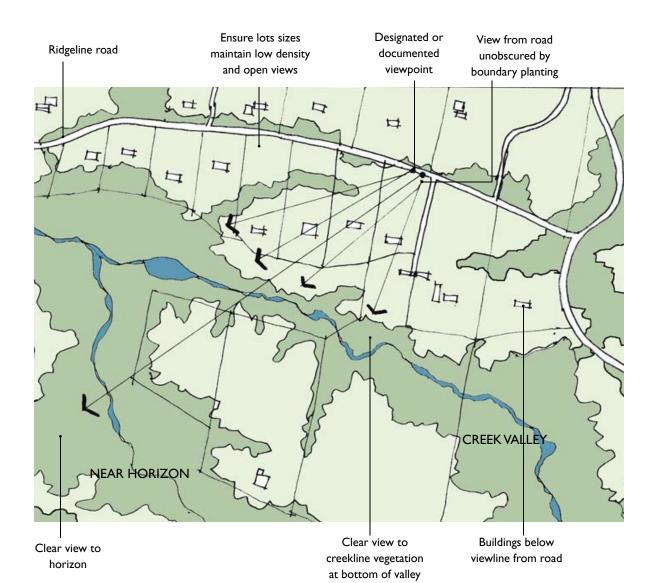


Figure 4.View management

DESIGN CONTROLS - VIEW MANAGEMENT

OBJECTIVES

To conserve and protect key views and vistas of the undulating landscape.

- Protect ridge line profile, sweeping pastoral views and view corridors
- Ensure natural topography is conserved by using built form that responds to the terrain and minimises visual impact a small footprint that steps down with the contours
- Formalise lookouts with wide district/regional views
- Prevent rezoning of critical land parcels that provide significant view corridors
- Integrate development on prominent hillsides or hilltops with the landscape, topography and long distance views of the hill

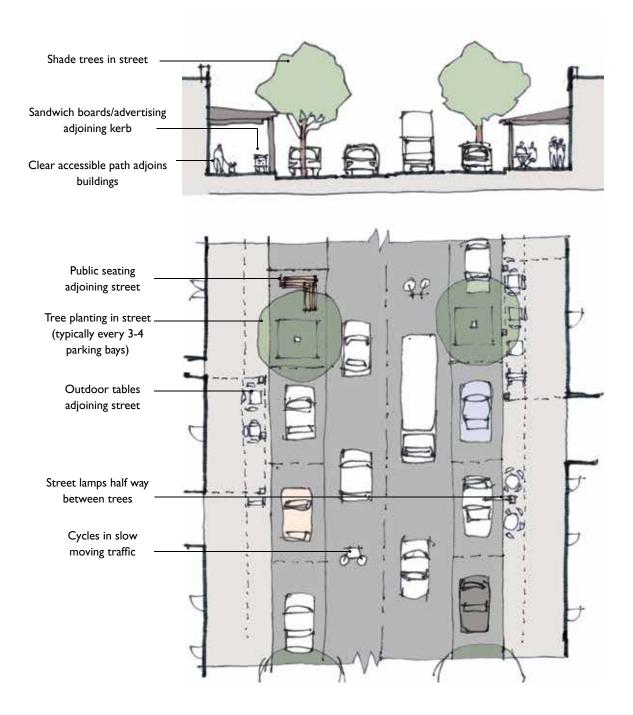


Figure 5. Public domain

DESIGN CONTROLS - PUBLIC DOMAIN

OBJECTIVES

To promote a pleasant, safe and social public domain in neighbourhood centres.

- Create small social spaces with seating and shade
- Keep a clear level paved area for pedestrians
- Shade paths to encourage walking
- Maintain even grades where practical for universal access
- Ensure street parking does not hinder critical views between buildings

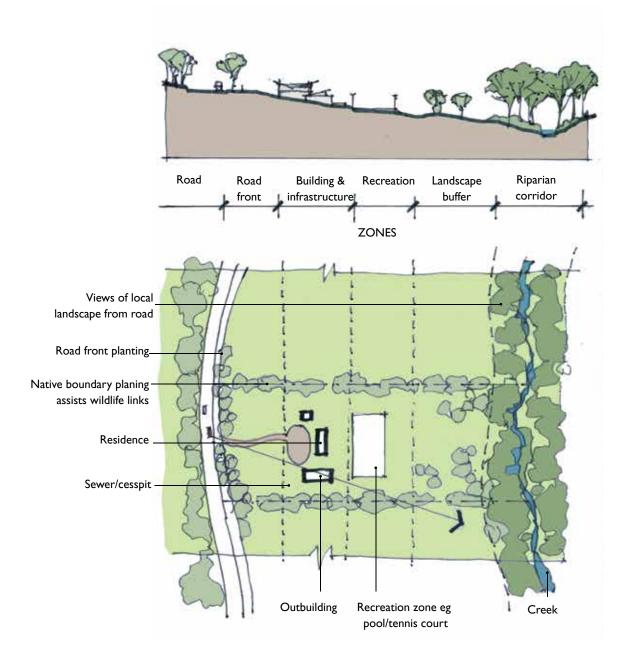


Figure 6. Lot layouts

DESIGN CONTROLS - LOT LAYOUT

OBJECTIVES

To ensure lot layouts don't interrupt views and vistas and detract from the landscape character of the region.

- Retain existing scale and form of buildings
- Consolidate building footprints
- Prevent loss of views from roads through controls of private boundary fences/shrubs
- Coordinate infrastructure and services to common corridors

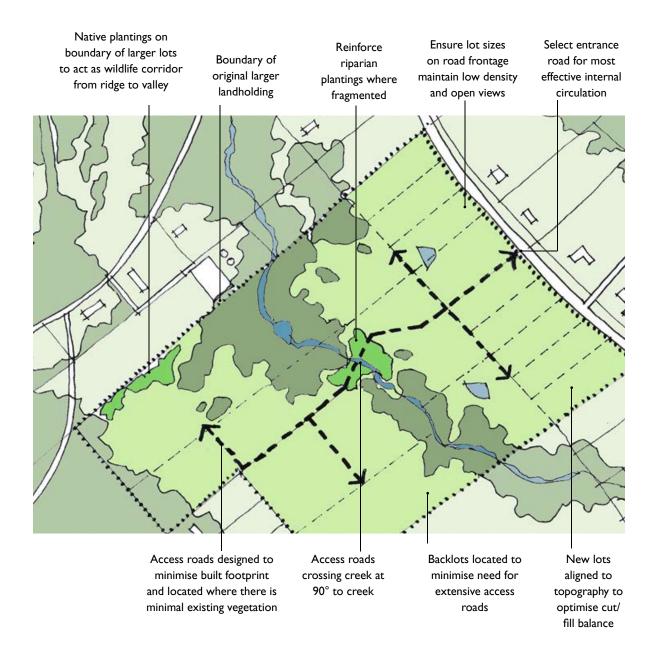


Figure 7. Large lot subdivisions

DESIGN CONTROLS - LARGE LOT SUBDIVISION

OBJECTIVES

To ensure large lot subdivisions are sensitive to the existing landscape character don't negatively impact the scenic or environmental qualities of the locality.

- Ensure lot sizes maintain low density and open views
- Conserve natural topography by using built form that responds to the terrain, minimises cut & fill, and minimises visual impact
- Consolidate built form and access driveways
- Coordinate and minimise the need for access roads
- Locate access roads where there is little existing vegetation
- Minimise the number of road crossings over creeks
- · Reinforce indigenous vegetation along the creeklines



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