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ROBIN THOMAS AND JAMES RUSE RESERVES

FINAL MASTER PLAN REPORT

FOR CITY OF PARRAMATTA

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01. INTRODUCTION

01.1 THE PURPOSE OF THE MASTER PLAN

This report has been prepared by consultants GroupGSA for the City of Parramatta Council. The aim of this study is to review the physical and planning considerations of the site in order to provide an underlying direction to the future design and implementation of park improvements.

This design report provides a summary of the site analysis, history and master plan design for Robin Thomas & James Ruse Reserves.

The purpose of the revised masterplan is to review the existing masterplan in light of the impacts and opportunities presented by Parramatta Light Rail.

01.2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This master plan report supersedes the previous plan for Robin Thomas Reserve and James Ruse Reserves produced by GroupGSA and adopted by Council in 2014 in order to consider impacts and opportunities resulting from the implementation of the Parramatta Light Rail along the periphery of the site.

The proposals will aim to accommodate the Light Rail with minimal compromise on the recreational amenity of the existing space whilst providing a vision for the overall improvement of the space as an urban park in the context of increasing surrounding residential densities.

01.3 KEY DESIGN OBJECTIVES FOR THE PARK

The park is valued as a retreat and recreation opportunity for an increasingly urbanised community. It offers experiences not available within smaller parks, further strengthened by its connection to the Parramatta River corridor. Retaining and developing these values relies on a significant portion of the park remaining unstructured. At the same time, there is clear community demand for improved landscape quality, flexible park facilities, aesthetic, ecological and amenity values.

The following design principles have been developed during the course of the master planning process.

Civic Green Park

Create a civic and active park setting with a mix of trees, sports provision and grasslands, incorporating ornamental specimen planting in a framework that enhances the ecological values of the park.

Re-connect the Past and Present with the Future

Recognise, interpret and integrate the historical layers that have shaped Robin Thomas Reserve & James Ruse Reserve, including their natural and river heritage.

Reveal the Unique Riverside Setting

Recognise and integrate the unique contextual relationship between the park and the nearby river by maximising view opportunities and providing appropriate connections.

Social and Recreational Facilities

Develop flexible park facilities that cater for a range of social and recreation uses providing for a diversity of ages, abilities, social groups and individuals.

Sporting Park and Events Park

Enhance the quality and functioning of the sports facilities in the park to provide for a range of organised sports activities and community events.

Public Art

Integrate art and local interpretation into the landscape and incorporate creative and artistic expression throughout the site.

Safe and Accessible Park

Create a park that is accessible and safe for visitors of all ages. Maximise links with adjacent neighbourhoods and create opportunities for active and passive surveillance.

A Sustainable Design

Create a sustainable design that recognises and incorporates best practice in ESD, maintenance and management, including potential re-use of stormwater.

01.4 PLANNING CONTEXT

Parramatta Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2017 (ESS)

Parramatta is undergoing a period of rapid growth which provides opportunities for the enhancement and improvement of natural settings. The key strategies related to the parks are to:

- > Protect, enhance and increase our parks and green spaces to make them a community feature.
- > Maximise quality green and open space in new growth precincts.
- > Protect and enhance the health of our unique Natural ecosystem of plants and animals and increase canopy cover to 40% by 2050.
- > Plant more diverse street tree species to withstand pests, disease and the changing climate
- > Continue to activate our parks and open spaces via our bike and walking network.
- > Improve livability by cooling the city and protecting people and communities from heat stress.
- > Recognition of Aboriginal Peoples and the cultural significance of the place.

Parramatta Social Infrastructure Strategy (DRAFT) (2017)

This strategy guides the Council’s long term direction for social infrastructure provision for the benefit of the growing population. Key strategic objectives directly influencing Robin Thomas Reserve & James Ruse Reserve include:

- > Increase the utilisation and hours of use of Council’s existing parks and outdoor recreation facilities.
- > Increase usability and accessibility of natural areas throughout City of Parramatta for outdoor recreation whilst maintaining their natural values

Competing uses and demands on sports fields for both formal and informal sporting uses as the way people utilize sporting fields is changing. These large open spaces are being relied on for an increasing diverse array of activities. Increasing housing densities and cultural diversity means that sports field need to accommodate a diversity of activities to meet a variety of needs through adaptable, multi- purpose design principles that allow the space to change according to shifting community needs.

Heritage Act 1977

Robin Thomas Reserve is listed on the State Heritage Register under the Heritage Act 1977 in recognition of its archaeological heritage significance relating to the Parramatta Sand Body and former site of c.1790 Military Barracks and Soldiers Garden.

Detailed design will be required to seek further approvals once the masterplan is adopted.

National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 (NPWA)

The National Parks and Wildlife Act provides for the protection of Aboriginal objects and places across all tenures. Aboriginal relics cannot be disturbed or destroyed except with a permit under section 90 of this Act.

The master plan will enhance the relevance of the park by recognising and protecting its heritage.

Detailed design will be required to seek further approvals once the masterplan is adopted.

01.5 THE EXISTING RESERVES

Robin Thomas & James Ruse Reserves currently provide amenity and recreational space to the east of the Parramatta CBD. The reserves form part of a group of open spaces with Queens Wharf Reserve in the north and Harris Park in the south. Hambledon Cottage and Experiment Farm create additional amenity in the area, to the south east and south respectively. Whilst this master plan focuses on Robin Thomas and James Ruse Reserves, the visual and physical connections to these other green spaces and attractions are essential in providing users with seamless access to the wider green infrastructure network as identified in the 2012 Parramatta City Centre Public Domain Framework Plan.

Robin Thomas Reserve contains popular sporting fields used extensively by local schools and clubs on week nights and weekends, and increasingly by CBD workers for lunchtime sport.

The Reserve is the home ground of the Granville Waratah Soccer Club which seasonally hires the fields and holds a lease over the club house located in Robin Thomas Reserve to the north of the site. The fields are also seasonally hired by the NSW Churches Cricket Union, The Northern District Cricket Association Inc, The Rosehill Public School and Our Lady of Lebanon Catholic School. However, with forthcoming development and the expansion of high density, mixed use buildings spreading east from the existing CBD, demands for recreational open space, age groups and use of the park will likely change.

The Reserves currently provide a number of active recreation and sporting facilities including a cricket pitch, soccer fields, a skate bowl, a children’s playground, water play zone and an amenities building. Metered off street car parking is provided in a dedicated car park accessed from Parkes / Hassall Street with additional metered parking along George Street.





EXISTING SPORTS FIELDS



EXISTING PLAY AREA



VIEW TO GAS WORKS BRIDGE



QUEENS WHARF RESERVE ADJACENT

02. ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT

02.1 LOCATION

Robin Thomas and James Ruse Reserves are a combination of Crown and Community Land. The City of Parramatta Council is the Reserve Trustee with full care and control for the crown land. The remaining land is owned by Council and managed as community land under the Local Government Act 1993.

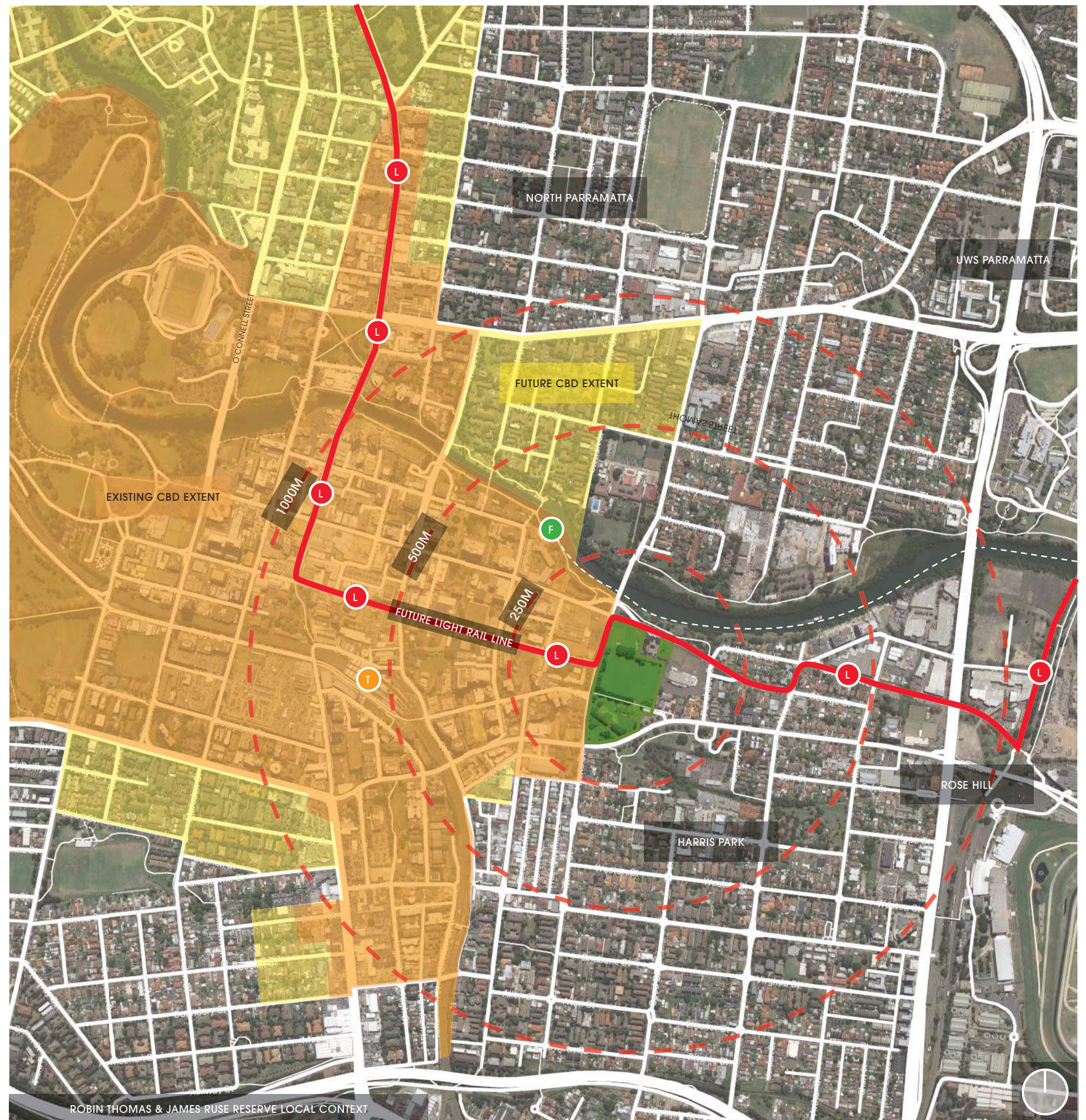
All land within the masterplan area is zoned for public recreation (RE1) under the City of Parramatta Council Local Environmental Plan 2011.

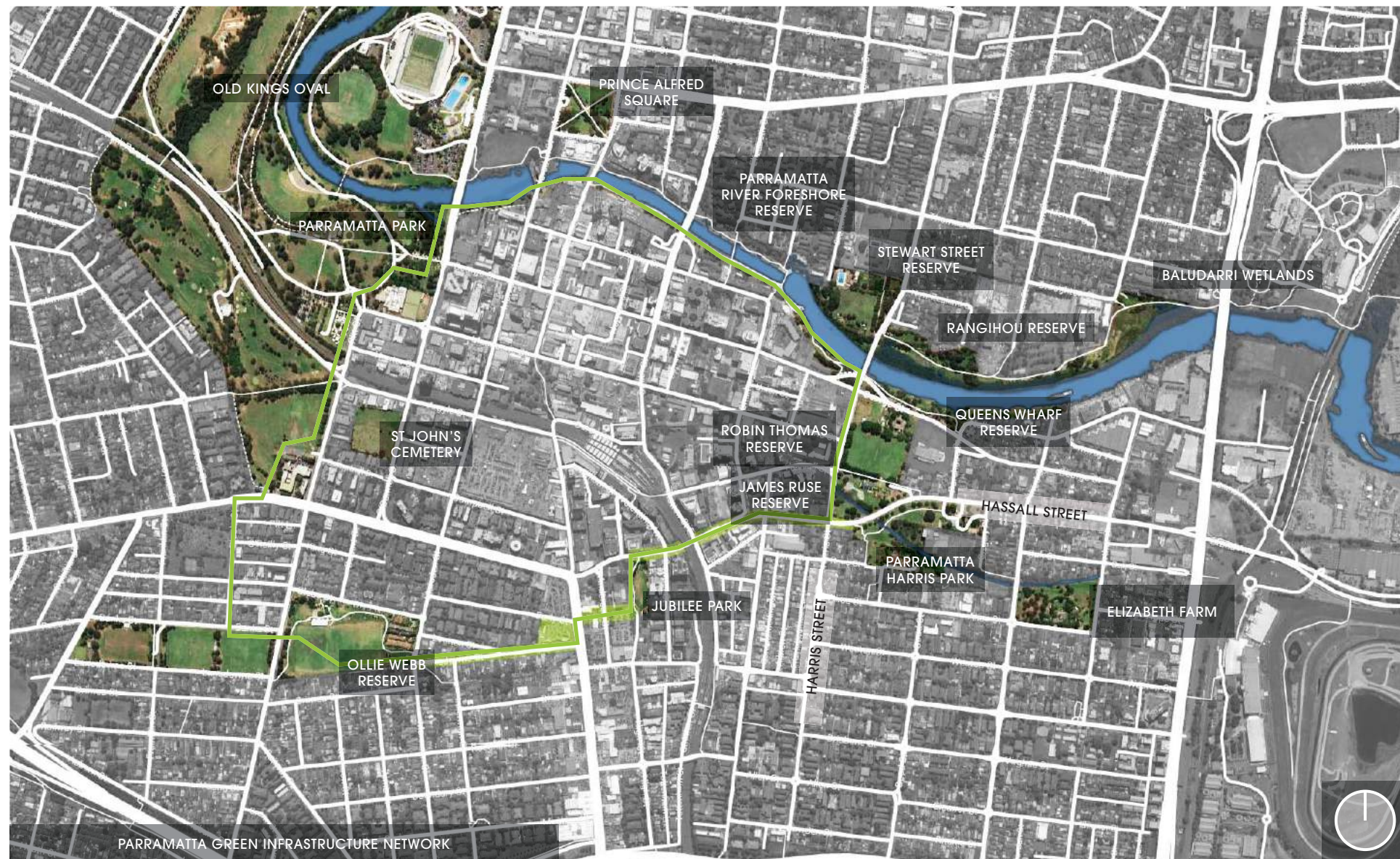
The Parramatta Economic Development Strategy (2011-2016) notes that as commercial development spreads east, the area will develop a creative character defined by media, communications and IT companies. This may influence the future character and use of the reserves.

Together Robin Thomas Reserve and James Ruse Reserve form a 4.4ha mixed sports ground and active recreation space located approximately 500m east of the Parramatta Rail Station. The site is bound by George Street in the north, Harris Street to the west, Hassall Street to the south and the Ioannis Greek Orthodox Church to the east. The reserve is located directly across George Street from the Queens Wharf Reserve which fronts the Parramatta River.

Robin Thomas Reserve contains a sporting field complex with club house and amenities building. The park is split by a heritage listed property located at 153 George Street. James Ruse Reserve exists within the southern portion of the site and contains a skate park, water play and a children's playground.

Robin Thomas Reserve has heritage significance including both Aboriginal and European archaeological sites. These include, for example, Aboriginal objects found within the Parramatta Sand Body running beneath the site and evidence of the pre -1800 Military Barracks and soldiers gardens being located here.





02.2 EXISTING COUNCIL STRATEGIES

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Robin Thomas & James Ruse Reserve fits into an existing green infrastructure network which City of Parramatta Council will enhance as the city develops. This network is called the Clay Cliff Creek Parklands.

Enhancement of the Clay Cliff Creek Parklands is a proposal for several new neighbourhood parks to form a much needed local recreational focus and create an open space network around the CBD, with Robin Thomas & James Ruse Reserves forming the largest component to the east.

The Clay Cliff Creek Parklands attempt to address three major global challenges while at the same time providing exciting new local experiences. These global challenges include:

- > Food production
- > Water management
- > Heat island effects

The parklands can be seen to play a major part in the Parramatta 2038 Community Strategic Plan which aims to create a connected series of parks and recreation spaces.

In the Reserve itself, Clay Cliff Creek has been canalised and runs through the southern portion of the site.

PUBLIC DOMAIN STRATEGY

The 2012 Parramatta City Centre Public Domain Framework Plan outlines a vision for the development of the streets and parks in Parramatta.

There are four key aspects of the Plan which interact with the Robin Thomas and James Ruse Reserve.

- 01. George Street Civic Spine: reinforcing the important heritage civic street
- 02. Macquarie Street Boulevard: developing a tree lined city street
- 03. Clay Cliff Creek Parklands: developing a chain of parklands linked along creek and river corridors
- 04. Parramatta City Ring Road: creating a legible and pedestrian friendly loop of the city

02.3 ROAD AND PEDESTRIAN NETWORK

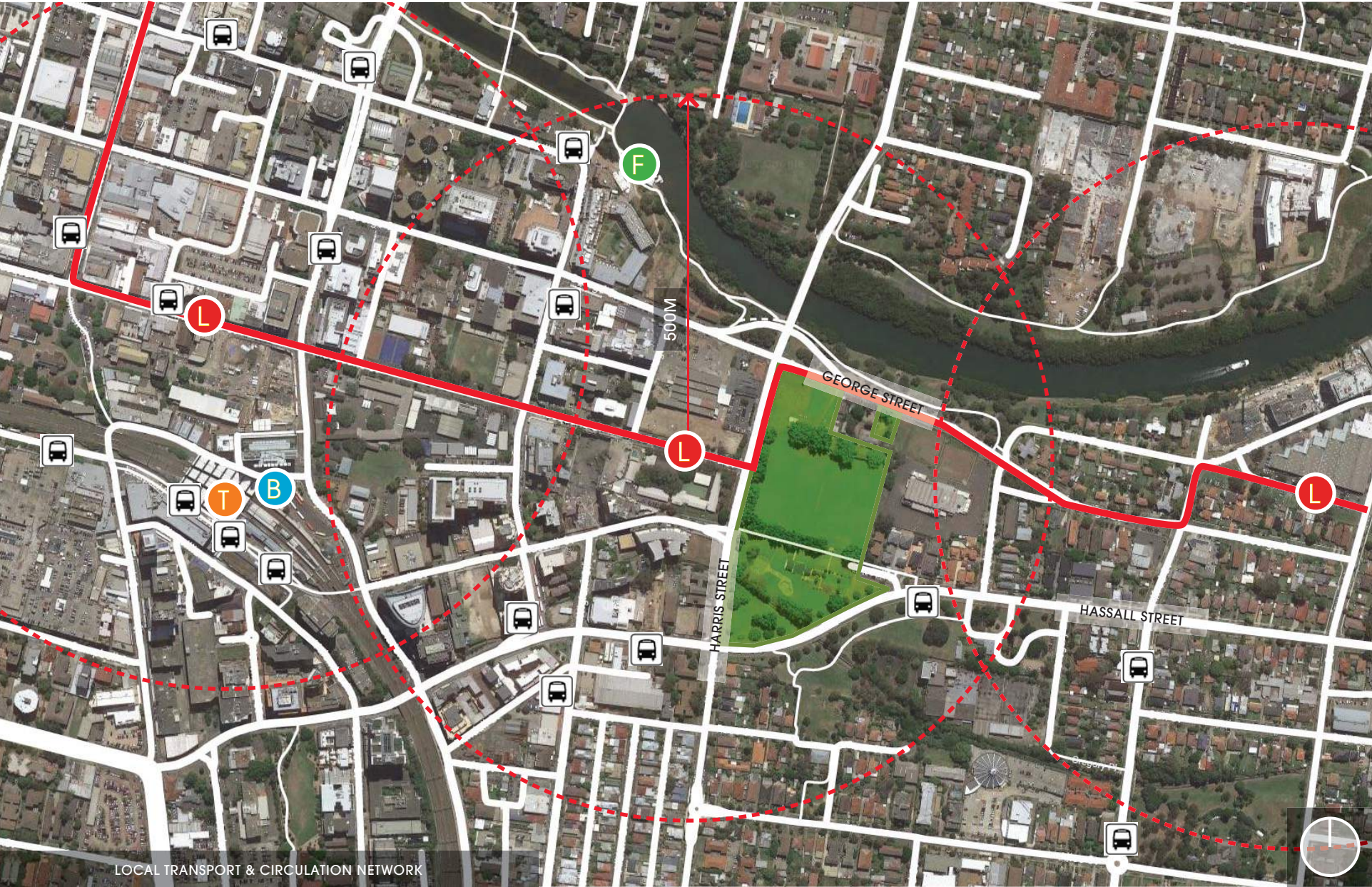
The Reserves are located at the end of two main civic streets, George Street and Macquarie Street. This connection provides an important link for pedestrians to access the site from the CBD.

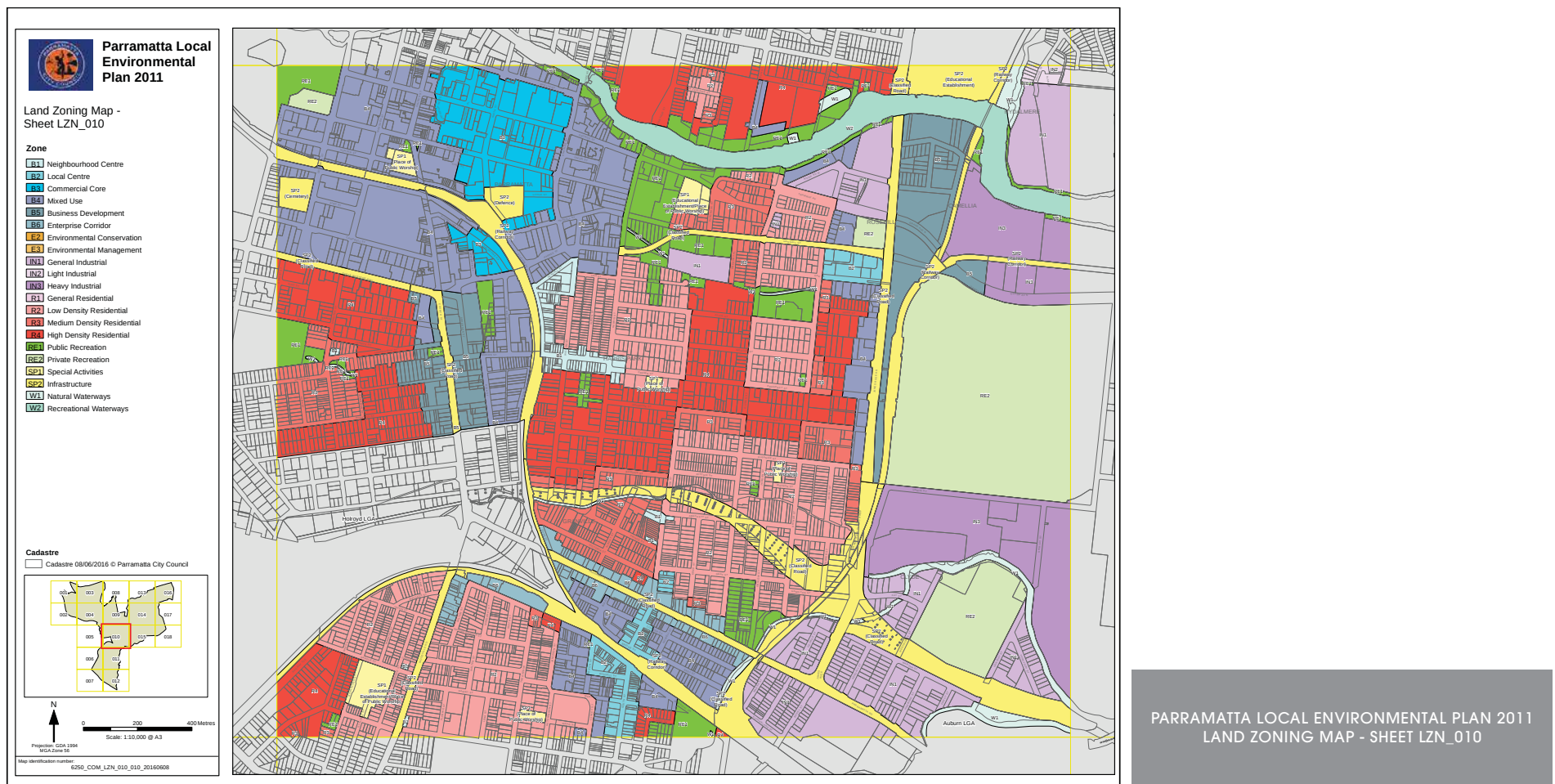
The Reserves are bound by Harris Street to the west, Hassall and Parkes Street to the south, and George Street to the north. Harris and Parkes Streets are important connector streets into Parramatta.

The close proximity of the Reserves to the Parramatta Ferry Terminal, River foreshore and the CBD makes it an attractive destination for workers and visitors.

02.4 LIGHT RAIL PROPOSALS

The alignment for the Parramatta Light Rail (PLR) project was announced by the state government in February 2017. The alignment connects Westmead to Carlingford via the Parramatta CBD. TfNSW have located the PLR alignment along Harris Street and George Street, impacting the north and western edges of the Robin Thomas Reserve.





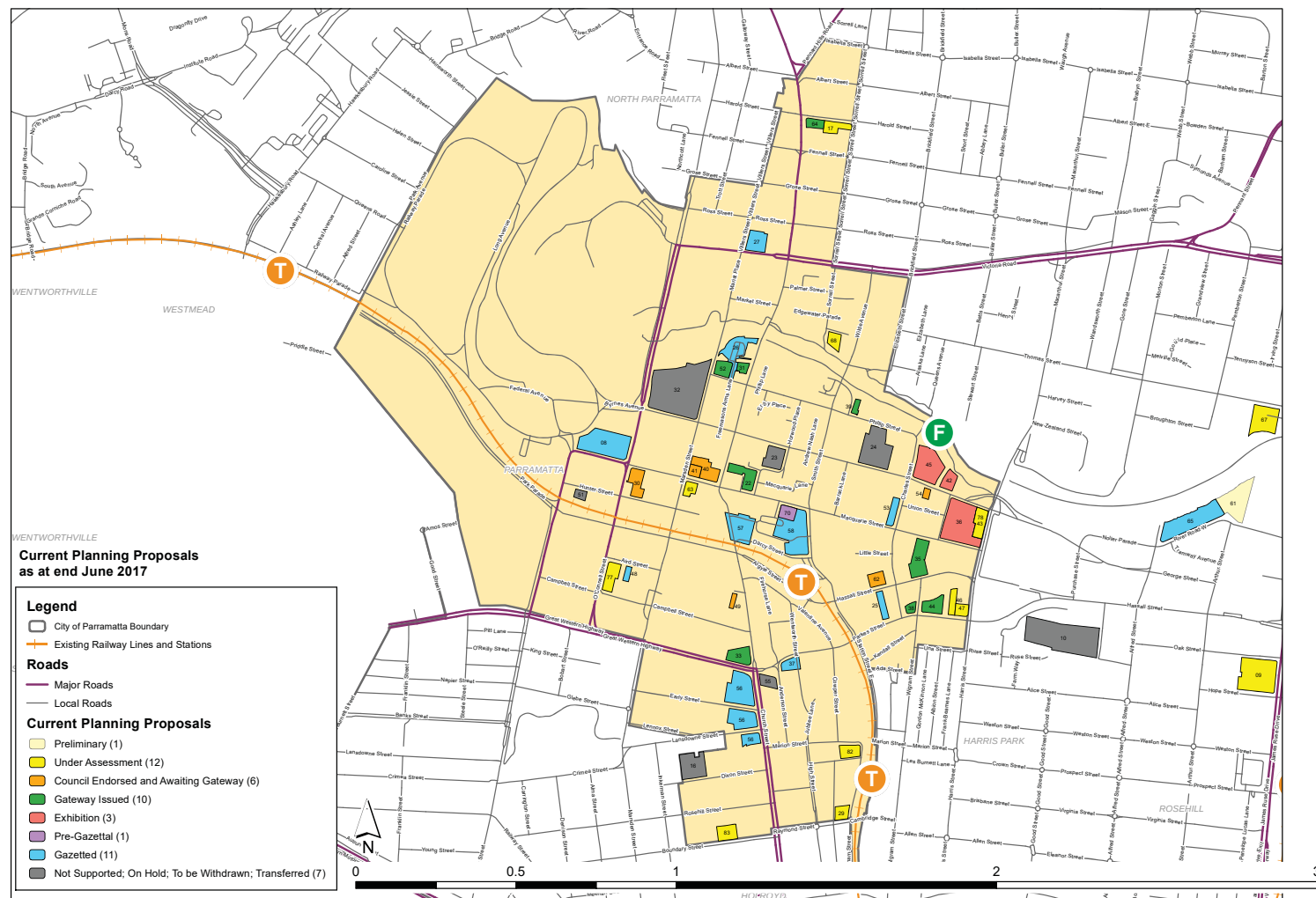
02.5 FUTURE LAND USE AND ZONING

Robin Thomas & James Ruse Reserves lie on the eastern border of the Parramatta CBD. City development is projected expand to the west edge of the park - with land zoned for mixed use, high rise development.

To the north, across the river, land is zoned for high density residential development. This will bring prominence and pressure to the river foreshore, Robin Thomas and James Ruse Reserves to perform as a usable, flexible, high quality open space. Connections and access between the river foreshore and the Reserves are key to the successful integration of development and the open space network.

To the east, much of the zoning is classed as medium density residential.

PARRAMATTA CURRENT PLANNING PROPOSALS
AS AT END JUNE 2017



02.6 ADJACENT DEVELOPMENTS

The increase in commercial and residential density will create a significant increase in nearby workers and residents. This brings ever more importance to providing residents and visitors with visual openness for a break from the surrounding built form and giving opportunities for informal and formal recreation in the city.

Pedestrian connections to the CBD will be of prime importance in ensuring workers and residents are able to easily access the park throughout the day.

03. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

03.1 HISTORY OF USE

As the second oldest European settlement in Australia, Parramatta is rich in historical buildings, landscapes, parks and trees. To the south of the site exist three significant heritage conservation areas. These include Experiment Farm, Elizabeth Farm and Harris Park West. Significant archaeological sites have also been discovered at a number of locations across Parramatta, providing important evidence of local history and the development of the city.

The portion of the reserve fronting George Street is the site of several early historic buildings including Military Barracks that were built in 1791. Dating as far back as the 1820's Parramatta was home to a vigorous fruit growing industry and commercial plant nurseries supplying the orchards with stock. In the 1870's six acres of the site was owned by Samuel Purchase who established Somerset Nursery. The Nursery, located on the block of land bound by Harris, George & Hassall Streets grew a large number of fruit and street trees as well as shrubs, roses, and ferns.

By the mid 1880's a number of brick terraced cottages were located to the east and a small corner shop located on the north west corner. The site was also home to Somerset Cottage, a larger stone residence with stables, sheds, storerooms and flower houses. The nursery closed in 1902. Interpretive signage currently exists within the reserve fronting George Street and describes the significance of the site's history, buildings and use.

In 1961 the north west corner of the site bound by George Street and Harris Street had been cleared and was occupied by a petrol station. This was later demolished and the land returned to the City of Parramatta.

The southern half of the reserve on the flats of Clay Cliff Creek now known as James Ruse Reserve, was used for market gardens from the late 1890's to the 1920's. The land on the northern side of Clay Cliff Creek was used for dairy farming and cattle grazing from 1917 to 1958. Clay Cliff Creek is thought to have been straightened and moved south in the 1930's and had been contained in a concrete channel by the 1950's.

Hassall Street, originally a track separating the two reserves was formalised to a road in the late 1800's.



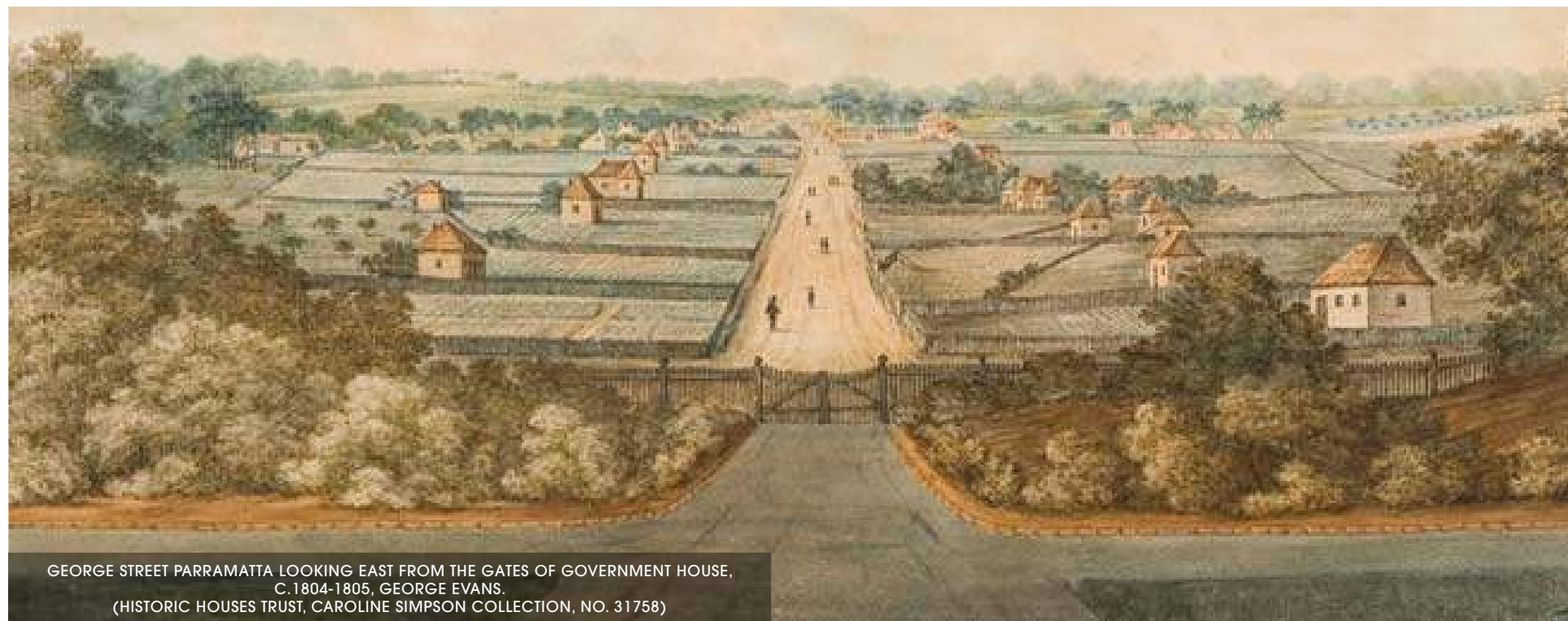
HISTORICAL MAP - TOWNSHIP OF PARRAMATTA (1814)



AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH (1943)



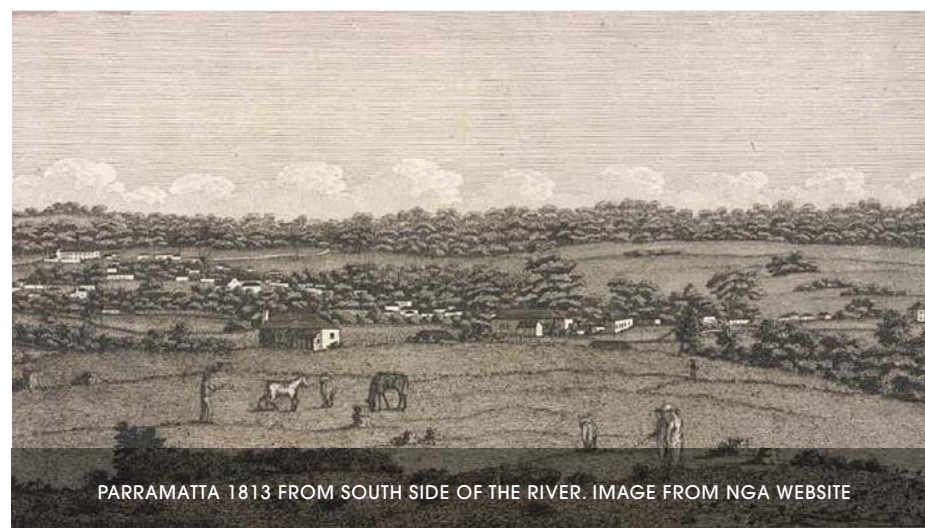
AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH (1978)



GEORGE STREET PARRAMATTA LOOKING EAST FROM THE GATES OF GOVERNMENT HOUSE, C.1804-1805, GEORGE EVANS. (HISTORIC HOUSES TRUST, CAROLINE SIMPSON COLLECTION, NO. 31758)



BIRDS EYE VIEW OF PARRAMATTA. IMAGE FROM MITCHELL LIBRARY



PARRAMATTA 1813 FROM SOUTH SIDE OF THE RIVER. IMAGE FROM NGA WEBSITE



SOUTH WEST VIEW OF PARRAMATTA. IMAGE FROM HISTORIC HOUSES TRUST. CAROLINE SIMPSON COLLECTION



VIEW AT ROSE HILL 1792. IMAGE FROM INTERPRETIVE SIGNAGE DOC. PREPARED BY STEDINGER ASSOC. FOR PARRAMATTA CITY COUNCIL (2008)

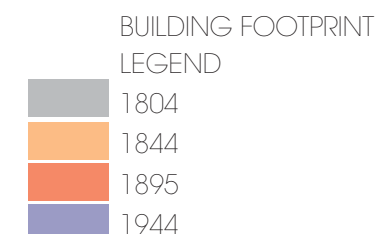
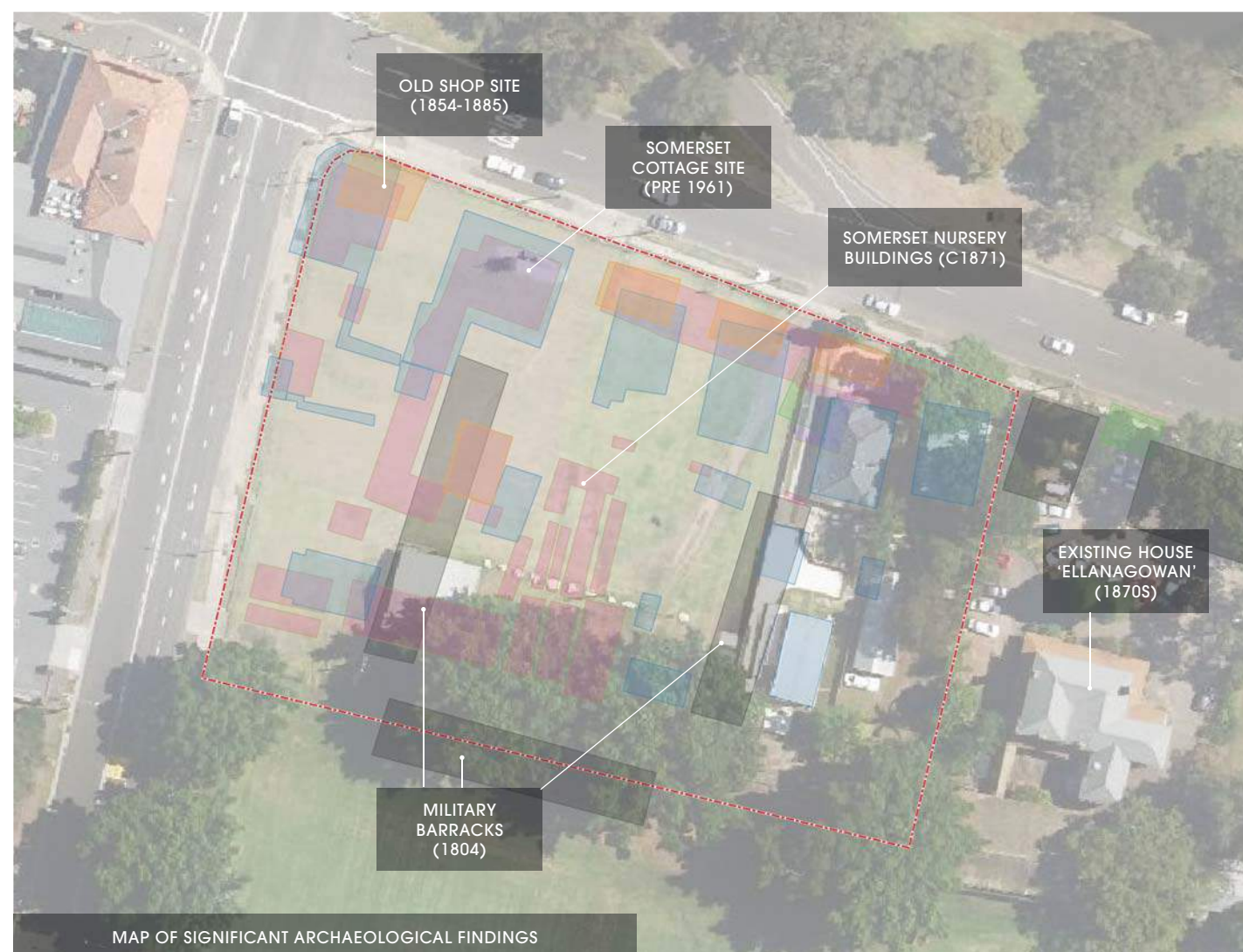
03.2 ABORIGINAL HISTORY

Recent excavations and archaeological investigation carried out in close proximity to the reserve have identified an extensive alluvial sand deposit containing archaeological remains associated with Aboriginal history. Robin Thomas Reserve is located within the same deposit. Therefore the potential exists for it to contain remains associated with Aboriginal occupation of the Parramatta area, over the last 10,000 years.

03.3 JAMES RUSE

James Ruse (1760-1837) arrived in Australia in 1788 as a convict on the First Fleet. He was an industrious Cornish farmer and was permitted by Governor Arthur Phillip to occupy an allotment - an acre and a half at Experiment Farm, on the outskirts of the Rose Hill settlement (later renamed Parramatta). It was here that Ruse produced the first successful wheat harvest in New South Wales and was able to prove his ability to become self-sufficient, thus furthering agricultural knowledge in the colony. Governor Phillip rewarded him by increasing his allotment to 30 acres, and granting him the title to his land in 1791 (another first in New South Wales).

In 1793, Ruse sold his land to John Harris, who owned a large amount of neighbouring property including Experiment Farm, and later moved to become a successful farmer along the Hawkesbury River. A significant figure in the early settlement of Sydney, a number of key locations bear his name including James Ruse Reserve. James Ruse Agricultural High School in Carlingford, James Ruse Drive, and Ruse, a suburb in south west Sydney.



Sub surface radar scan of historic artefacts / archaeology shows the extent to which the site what used in the past.

(Plan by CRM Consultants)

03.4 HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

Significant archaeological studies have been carried out within the reserve including:

- > Archaeological Assessment of the corner of Harris & George Streets, (2003); and
- > Archaeological Assessment of the Skatepark, James Ruse Reserve (2004)
- > Aboriginal and Historic Period Archaeology & GPR Survey, Robin Thomas Reserve Parramatta (CRM Consultants 2017)

The reserve contains a portion of the Parramatta Sand Body, the site of the Military Barracks established circa 1790 as well as a Nursery established in the late 1800s. A portion of the reserve is listed on the State Heritage Register to protect and recognise these significant sites. The listing advice states the following:

Military Barracks

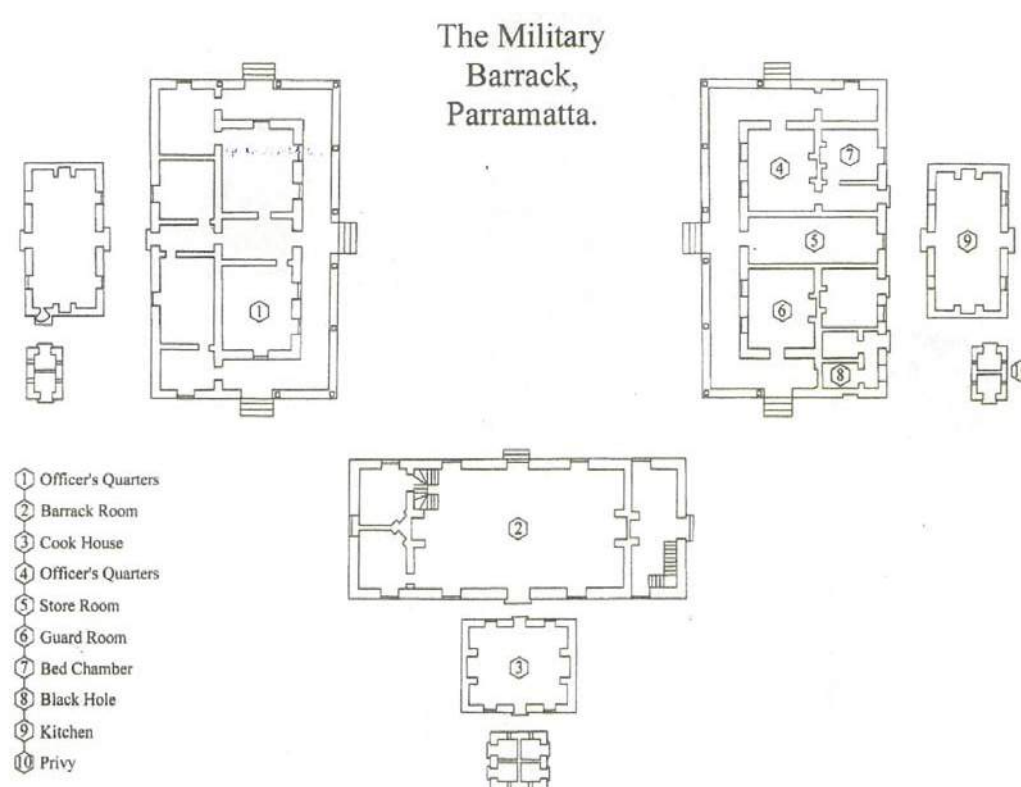
Historical documentation and archaeological evidence indicates that the military barracks were located in the northern end of the Robin Thomas Reserve, fronting what is now known as George Street. The barracks comprised three wings in a 'U' shape around a central parade ground.

Parramatta Sand Body

Archaeological investigation of the sand body has uncovered a substantial archaeological record that has contributed to our understanding of pre-colonial Aboriginal occupation of the Parramatta area and more broadly, the Cumberland Plain.

Somerset Cottage & Somerset Nursery

The site was encompassed within a large and important commercial nursery throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. The property stocked fruit trees, box plantings and landscaped pleasure gardens amongst other things.



PLAN OF MILITARY BARRACKS. IMAGE FROM INTERPRETIVE SIGNAGE DOC. PREPARED BY STEDINGER ASSOC. FOR PARRAMATTA CITY COUNCIL (2008)



EXISTING REFERENCE TO SITE HISTORY LIMITED TO INTERPRETIVE BOARDS



VIEW ACROSS SOMERSET NURSERY (1899)



ELLANGOWAN HOUSE VIEWED FROM GEORGE STREET

04. SITE ANALYSIS

04.1 EXISTING SITE CONDITIONS

GENERAL

The northern section of Robin Thomas Reserve currently stands as an open sided field, with dimensions limiting its formal use. Its exposure to the surrounding roads create an unwelcoming environment with a lack of interest to attract users, although school groups sometimes use the space for informal recreation.

The central portion of the park takes the form of sports field and cricket pitches - soccer in the winter and cricket in the summer, and is widely used by local schools. The condition of the fields is reasonable, but the amenities are in need of improvement.

James Ruse Reserve has recently been improved through the addition of a popular water play facility. There is also parking provision, a play area for young children and a skate park, all of which are in good condition.

AMENITIES

- > One amenities block, located in Robin Thomas Reserve, serving the sports pitches on match days/organised events only. Provides changing rooms, toilets, showers and kiosk.
- > The amenities block is in poor condition and architecturally outdated.
- > Very shaded location, poor setting with little seating for spectators.

SPORTS CLUB BUILDING

- > Leased by Granville Waratah Soccer Club
- > Contains small kitchen, sitting room, toilets & office
- > Built from recycled sandstone



EXISTING AMENITIES BUILDING AND LANDSCAPE IN POOR CONDITION



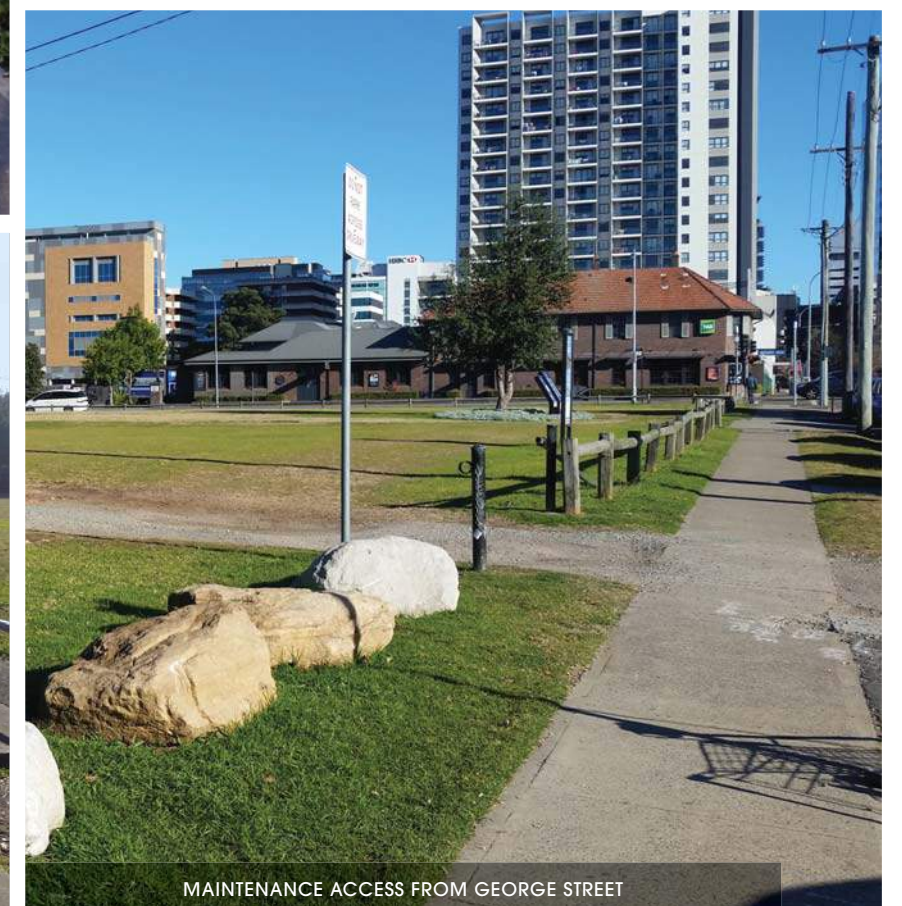
LOW QUALITY INTERFACES BETWEEN HARRIS STREET & THE PARK



EXPOSED NORTHERN INTERFACE BETWEEN GEORGE STREET & THE PARK



EXISTING SPORTS CLUB BUILDING



MAINTENANCE ACCESS FROM GEORGE STREET



SPORTS FIELDS

- > Extensively used by clubs, schools and workers for lunchtime sport
- > High demand for use of fields for cricket & soccer
- > Home-ground to Granville Waratah Soccer Club
- > Used by:
 - Rowland Hassall School
 - Rosehill Public School
 - Our Lady of Lebanon College
 - Parramatta Public School
 - Arthur Phillip High School

PLAY FACILITIES

- > Skate park constructed in 2000/2005
- > Play facilities include a playground and water play area
- > The play facilities are a destination for the local community

FLOODING

- > Canalised stormwater drain that is Clay Cliff Creek runs through southwest corner of site
- > Low level flooding in areas around the channel
- > Waterlogging on junior soccer field

PARKING

There is a high demand for parking on weekends and for organised events.

In the north, Robin Thomas Reserve is served by on street parking along George Street.

In the south, James Ruse reserve is served by metered off street parking adjacent to Parkes Street. Longer time limits for these spaces mean that cars may often stay parked for much of the day, leading to a lack of parking availability.

GENERAL AMENITY

Throughout the site there is a lack of seating, with few opportunities for comfortable relaxation. The trees around the periphery of the site offer shade but otherwise the park is exposed to the sun.

NORTH EASTERN CORNER OF THE SITE

This area of the park to the east of Ellangowan House is very isolated due to the privately owned land between it and the park.

SOUTH WEST CORNER

This section of James Ruse Reserve is isolated from the rest of the reserve by Clay Cliff Creek and forms an area of landscape offering little amenity opportunity.

PEDESTRIAN LINKS

Although the park is easy to access from the west, with three signalised crossing points across Harris Street which lead directly into the park, access from Parkes Road is more difficult with no pedestrian crossings other than at the junction of Parkes and Harris.

Likewise, there is little to delineate access points in the north, connecting the park to Queens Wharf Reserve.

PLANTING & BIODIVERSITY

The park currently offers little in terms of biodiversity due to much of the site being turf. Existing park trees comprise mature Ficus sp., typically located along main circulation routes.

A lack of understorey planting is clearly evident. Implementing a diverse planting scheme would soften hard edges and provide improved biodiversity and habitat.



EXISTING UNDER UTILISED AREA EAST OF ELLANGOWAN HOUSE



LACK OF DIRECT CONNECTIONS BETWEEN QUEENS WHARF RESERVE AND THE PARK



LACK OF FORMALITY TO MAINTENANCE ACCESS



LINEAR BENCHES ALONGSIDE CENTRAL FIELDS



LOW QUALITY BUILDINGS ALONG BOUNDARY OF ELLANGOWAN HOUSE



INTERPRETATION SIGNAGE AND CORK OAK

The Cork Oak located near George Street is important as a historic reference to the ship building and corking industries evident around Parramatta. It should be retained or transplanted if required.

HERITAGE INTERPRETATION

There is limited reference to the heritage of the site. Existing information boards are located in an inadequate position surrounded by planting and separated from the George Street footpath by a low fence.

MAINTENANCE & VEHICULAR ACCESS

Vehicular access to Robin Thomas Reserve is located at two points, one in the north and one in the west along Harris Street. Both feature steel gates which are locked when not in use to prevent unwanted access.

Access to James Ruse Reserve is limited to an access gateway located within the parking area in the east of the site.

SITE PERIPHERY

The periphery of the site is protected by low, timber or steel rail fencing. Both of these solutions are relatively low quality and in parts damaged.

There are several poor quality buildings to the north of the sports fields at Robin Thomas Reserve (on private land). These buildings are not particularly well screened and provide a negative outlook from the park when combined with the security fence.

05. SITE OPPORTUNITIES

6.1 SITE USE

There is potential to develop the site into three main precincts, a Cultural Heritage and Civic Precinct in the North, an Active Recreation Precinct in the centre and a Community and Environment Precinct in the South. The distinction of these three different areas allows for an improved range of activities and experiences to occur while creating a variety of open spaces within the reserve.

6.2 CULTURAL HERITAGE & CIVIC PRECINCT

- > Establish a cultural heritage and civic precinct in a park setting that recognises previous site uses such as market gardens and farming and identify previous locations of historic buildings and infrastructure.
- > Inform and enrich the experience for visitors through the use of interpretive signage and incorporating historic elements into the landscape
- > Identify the intersection of George and Harris Street as a key entrance to the site
- > Reinforce pedestrian links across Harris Street to the CBD and across George Street to the Parramatta River and Queen's Wharf Reserve.
- > Remove existing council owned buildings and the existing Granville Soccer Clubhouse and build a new amenities block.
- > Provide a new off-street car park from George Street
- > Connecting George Street to Heritage Trail
- > Connect the historic precinct with the existing Heritage trail to include references to historic houses. eg. Experiment Farm, Elizabeth Farm and Hambledon Cottage



6.3 MEDIUM TERM - 0-5 YEARS

01. Re-establish the park threshold
02. Develop circuit paths & through path connections
03. Connection to river
04. Cultural & civic precinct
05. Organised sports use and club facilities
06. Event use flexibility
07. Play & recreation
08. Habitat/WSUD
09. Recognise George St spine by refining edge treatments
10. Recognise Hassall St spine by refining circulation
11. Parking opportunities to Parkes St & George St
12. Private land to be purchased
13. Cafe to serve active recreation areas

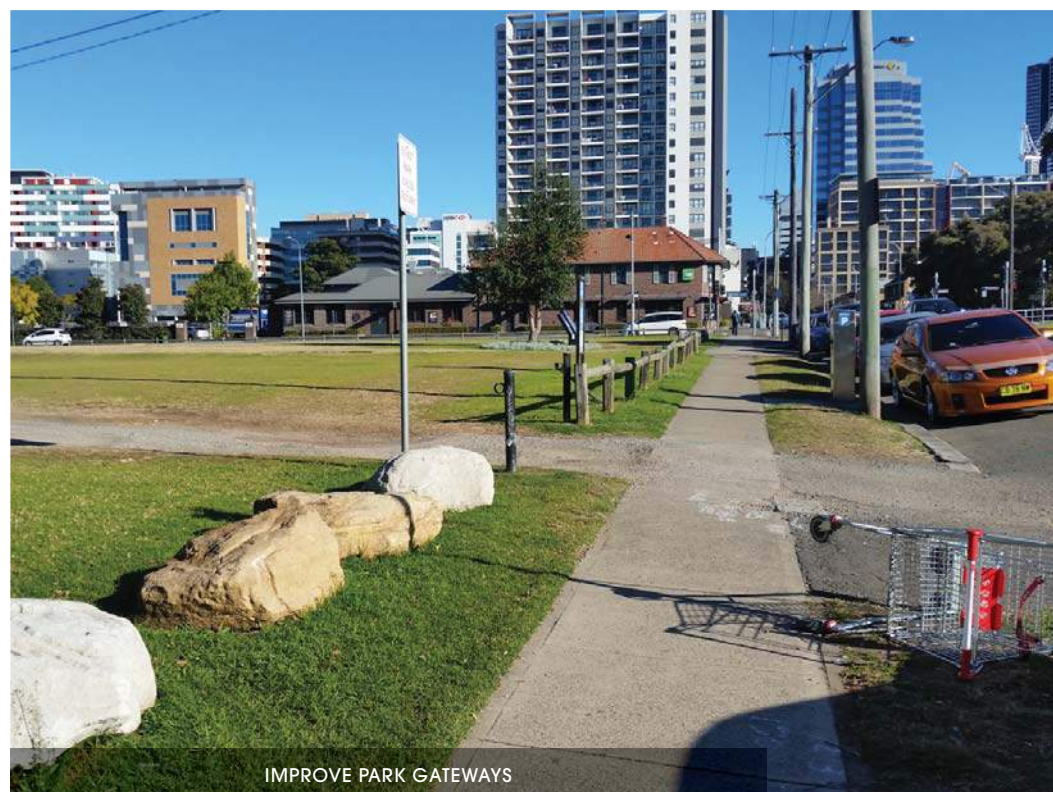


6.4 POTENTIAL LONG TERM

01. Enhance green links between the park and waterside
02. Develop circuit paths & through park connections
03. Further connection to river
04. Cultural & civic precinct with anchor
05. Community open space/sports fields with recycled water irrigation system
06. Event and informal recreation use flexibility
07. Play & recreation
08. Habitat/WSUD, naturalisation of channel
09. Recognise George St spine by refining edge treatments
10. Recognise Hassall St spine by refining circulation
11. Parking opportunities on Parkes St & George St
12. Connect Ellangowan to the park
13. Cafe to serve active recreation areas



REDEFINE PATHWAYS & INTERFACES



IMPROVE PARK GATEWAYS



DEVELOP HERITAGE REFERENCES & INTERPRETIVE SIGNAGE



REBUILD MULTIPURPOSE SPORTS AMENITIES



MAXIMISE OUTLOOK & EDGE TREATMENTS

6.3 ACTIVE RECREATION PRECINCT

- > Reconfigure and enlarge the existing off-street car park from Parkes Street
- > Propose a reduced time limit to existing off street car park to allow a higher turn over of car parking, particularly on weekends
- > Maintain the current use for soccer and cricket and encourage use of the sports fields for corporate competitions at lunch time
- > Develop a management plan for the use of sports fields to organise the demand at peak times from corporate competitions, local schools and clubs
- > Recycled water system to be considered as a long term solution to pitch irrigation

6.4 COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT PRECINCT

- > Establish a new pedestrian link between the south west corner of the site via a bridge across Clay Cliff Creek to the playground and skate park area
- > Additional tree planting to pedestrian pathways and selected areas of open space to provide more shade
- > Provide more seating, BBQ & picnic facilities
- > Provide a flexible space for event use allowing service vehicle access and the opportunity to set up a stage and similar temporary structures
- > Consider naturalisation of the concrete channel to Clay Cliff Creek
- > Develop a landscaped habitat and water management area adjacent Clay Cliff Creek
- > Establish a new recreational route around the park perimeter as a fitness and walking trail.
- > Identify key entrances to the site from Parkes Street, Harris Street and George St.
- > Expand play facilities

06. VISION

06.1 URBAN RETREAT

Robin Thomas and James Ruse Reserves will continue to develop as a vibrant hub for recreation and socialisation for this area of Parramatta, with proposals merging seamlessly with the mature character of the existing Reserves.

Parramatta Light Rail will increase accessibility to local residents and visitors. A variety of different recreational opportunities will be provided to accommodate their needs.

The growth of the CBD to the west of Robin Thomas Reserves will, as well as bringing in additional users of the Reserves, bring enhanced life to the area and increase popularity and evolution of the park.

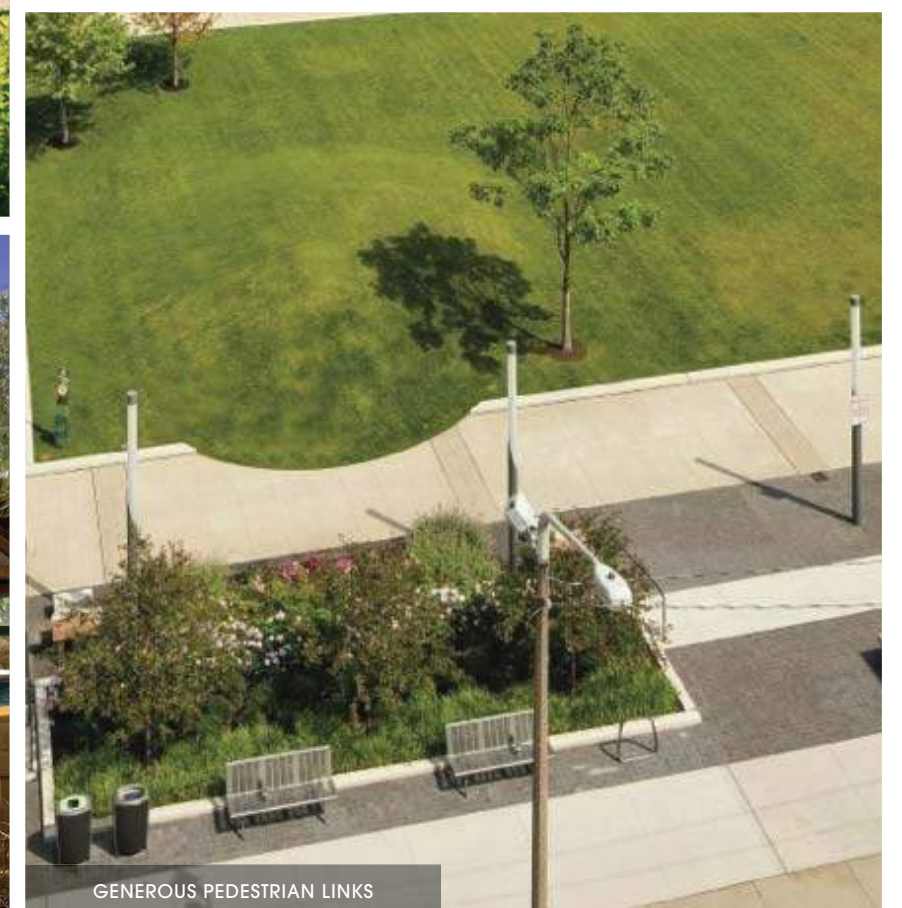
A destination will be created for new residents and workers within close proximity to the CBD, providing space to break out during lunches / after work hours and weekends.

Biodiversity throughout the park will be reinforced, creating a haven for flora and fauna within the city whilst giving users contact with nature and open space.

06.2 GATEWAYS

Robin Thomas Reserve and James Ruse Reserve will become the eastern active green gateway into to the CBD.

Entrance nodes into the park will be enhanced to provide a bold and identifiable character whilst creating a memorable destination.





EXPANDING PLAY SPACES



MULTIPLE ACTIVE USES



LIGHT RAIL LINK



RECOGNITION OF HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE



FORMAL SPORT FIELDS



INFORMAL PLAY AREAS

06.3 PRECINCTS & CHARACTER AREAS

Robin Thomas and James Ruse Reserves will become a recreational destination for all ages and abilities. Different sections of the park lend themselves to be used by a broad spectrum of age groups and users, with play features primarily located to one end of the park and sports located centrally. The master plan will look to unite these precincts to form a legible and connected sequence of spaces.

By following the principles of Council's Playground Policy, successful, formal play spaces will be created. Space has been allocated to expand upon the existing play area and water play facilities to form a hub of community recreation, combining structured play and sports with informal opportunities.

06.4 HERITAGE REFERENCE

Users of the Reserves will be exposed to the heritage of the site either through signage, installations or discrete references integrated within the park environment. The Reserves will form a key part of the Parramatta Heritage Trail offering a further layer of historic interpretation.

06.5 EVENTS

As a key part of the open space network for Parramatta CBD, Robin Thomas and James Ruse Reserves will play host to regular events such as summer fetes, community and charity events. Provision will be available for temporary structures to facilitate these events.

07. MASTER PLAN

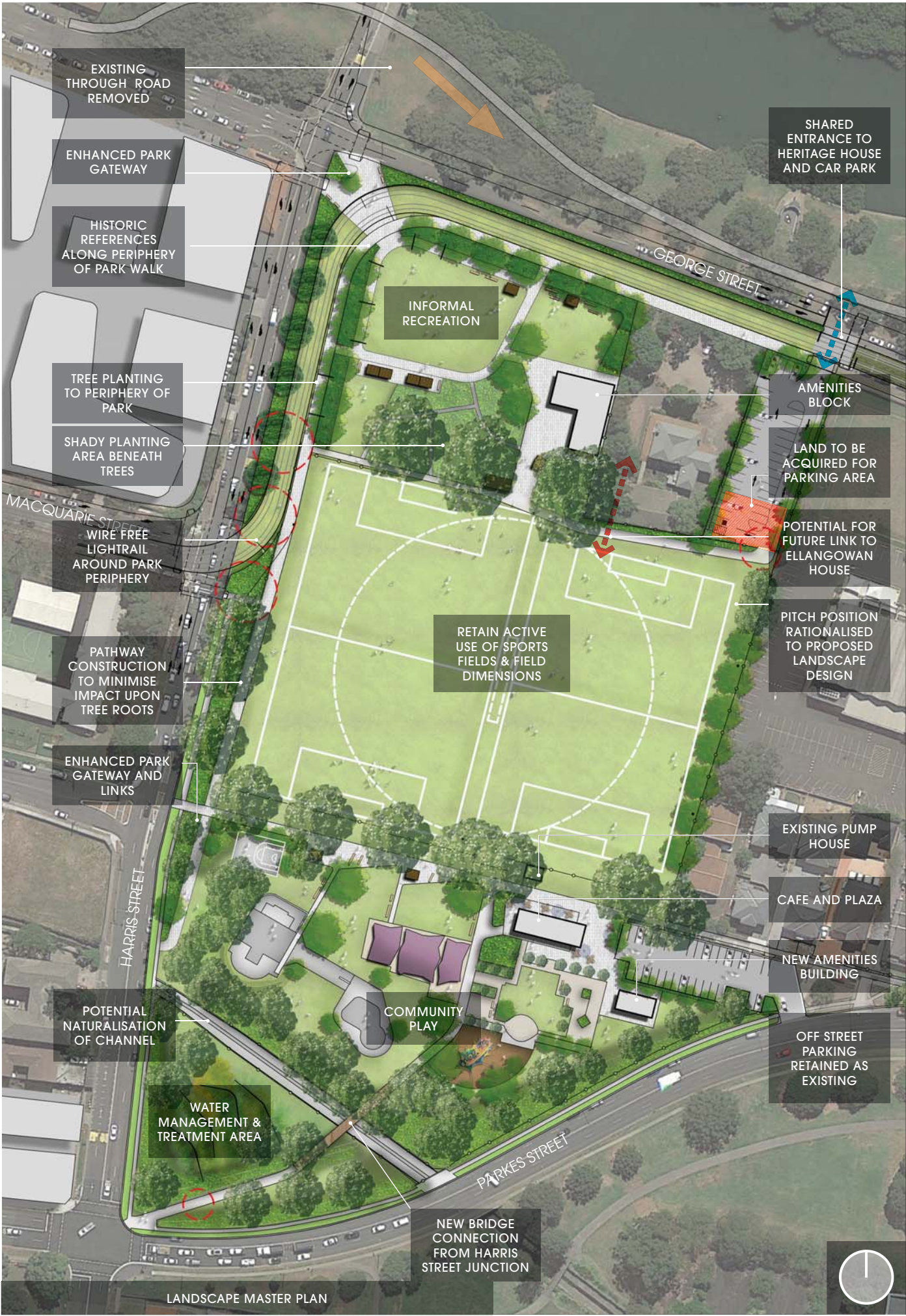
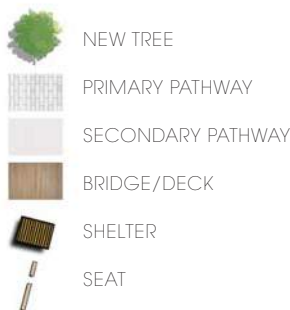
07.1 SUMMARY

Robin Thomas and James Ruse Reserves provide important areas of open space within a developing urban environment. The Reserves provide for a wide range of recreation from organised sport to more informal recreation and play. These uses have been enhanced within the master plan.

The master plan provides a framework for the future development of the reserves in order to provide improved facilities, including a new amenities building, cafe, development of a cultural and civic heritage precinct and an overall higher quality of landscape amenity.

The master plan has been developed from:

- > An understanding and evaluation of existing site conditions and outlining key directions arising from these
- > The incorporation of community desires for the park
- > Responding to the developing urban context
- > An understanding of the park in context regarding ecology frameworks, recreation and sports uses and understanding how the park contributes to the river corridor network of open space
- > Establishing a design that is realistic, achievable and can be implemented progressively over time
- > Understanding that the demands on the park are likely to change over time, so the master plan must provide a strong framework, but can be flexible
- > The desire to make a distinctive and memorable landscape





LEGEND

- 01 Cultural and Civic Precinct
- 02 Active Recreation Precinct
- 03 Community and Environment

07.2 MASTER PLAN PRECINCTS

There are three distinct character precincts proposed within the Reserves. Each of these precincts will be enhanced through design form and community function.

Cultural and Civic Precinct

This precinct will be the cultural and civic core of the park, offering formal lawns, ornamental planting within a formal structure. References to the site heritage will be evident through interpretive signage, public art and built form.

Active Recreation Precinct

A flexible space for organised sports, recreation and events.

Community and Environment Precinct

A socially active and energy filled space with opportunities for play. A southwestern interface with Clay Cliff Creek offering opportunities for naturalisation, biodiversity and habitat.

08. PRECINCT CHARACTER

08.1 THE CULTURAL HERITAGE & CIVIC PRECINCT

The northern precinct of the park provides a defined park space for informal recreation, picnicking and as a gathering space. It will become a contemporary urban green park with a variety of opportunities for relaxation, meeting points and escape from the urban grain.

The northern edge of the park is an important park space linking to the Parramatta CBD and to the Parramatta River through to Queens Wharf Reserve. It is rich in site history and archaeology, and has a strong visual connection to ‘Ellangowan’. As such strong connections to the north west corner entry to the park have been created, encouraging visitors from the CBD.

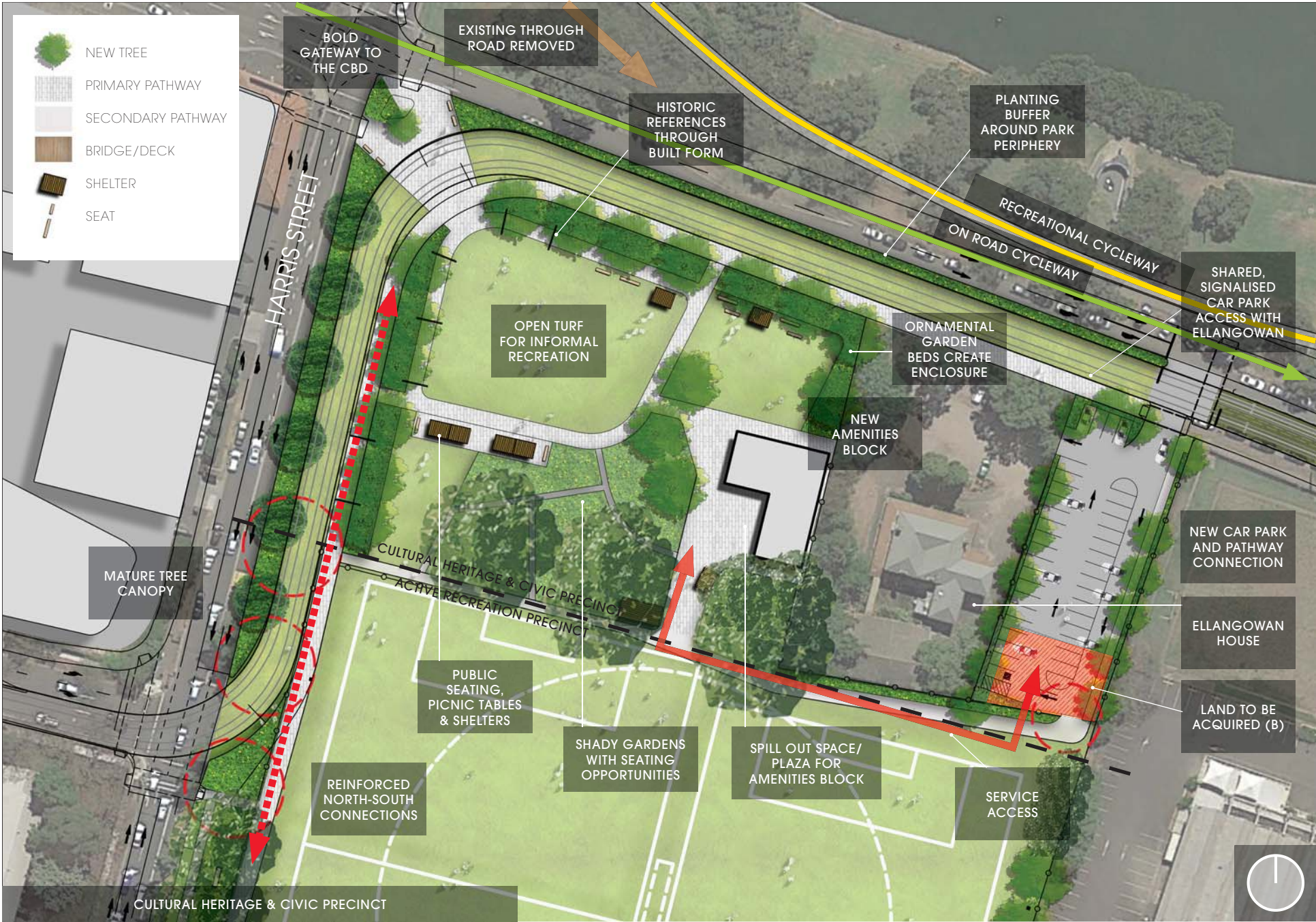
Gateways into the precinct are reinforced through planting, seating nodes and the use of quality natural materials which enhance the civic character of the park.

Other links to the rest of the park have been reinforced through the upgrade of materials, plaza/arrival spaces and creation of a path hierarchy.

Reference to hidden archaeological remnants can be seen through introduction of art elements and interpretation within the landscape. Informative signage provides visitors with further information.

Picnic and small social gathering opportunities have been provided in the form of shade shelters around the periphery of the central lawn, encouraging informal use of the area.

Ornamental planting creates extra depth and interest around the edges of the lawns, whilst also reflecting back upon the species once provided by the 1890s Nursery once located on the site.



Larger tree species create enclosure to the lawns and separation from Harris Street and George Street is provided by the Light Rail line and verge planting.

The Parramatta Light Rail alignment is created through use of grass track and minimal vertical structures.

To modernise the park, contemporary architectural style to the amenities block visible from Harris and George Street, provides additional amenity and a destination to the north east corner of the park.

The formalised entry into Ellangowan House and connection to the proposed public car parking area has allowed for 39 new parking spaces to service the park on land which is currently disconnected.

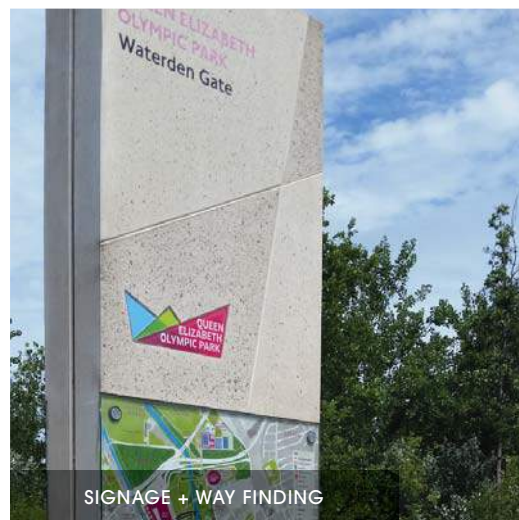
LAND ACQUISITION

A) Area identified for acquisition, to provide public vehicle access to council land from planned crossing.

B) Area identified as land beneficial to expansion of the park, enhancing pedestrian movement into the park and area for public car parking.



INFORMAL RECREATION



SIGNAGE + WAY FINDING



SPILLOUT SPACES



MOVEABLE SEATING



URBAN LAWN



LIGHT RAIL LINK

- ACTIVE RECREATION PRECINCT KEY FEATURES:
- OPPORTUNITY FOR MORE INFORMAL RECREATION
 - URBAN LAWN AND ORNAMENTAL PLANTING
 - IMPROVED GATEWAYS
 - PLAZA AND SPILLOUT SPACES CREATED
 - IMPROVED PATHWAY CONNECTION AND PARK STRUCTURE

08.2 ACTIVE RECREATION PRECINCT (SPORTS FIELDS)

The Active Recreation Precinct contains two sports fields and a cricket pitch suitable for organised sports use and flexible temporary cultural and event uses.

The precinct maintains the current provisions for soccer and cricket and encourages use of the sports fields for corporate competitions at lunch time or fitness activities.

New connections are provided to the amenities block located between the active and civic precincts, providing easy access between different areas of the park.

Additional seating areas with shelter are provided to the north of the fields, which have views overlooking the precinct. Spectators are provided shade by the existing dense canopy of the mature fig trees.

To prevent stray balls entering the Light Rail route, three metre high rebound fencing has been provided to the north western corner of the pitches. Containment is provided elsewhere with tree and shrub planting.

To accommodate the needs of the city's new residents there will be an increase in use of the park for events and entertainment. The fields will provide opportunity for open air events such as markets and concerts.

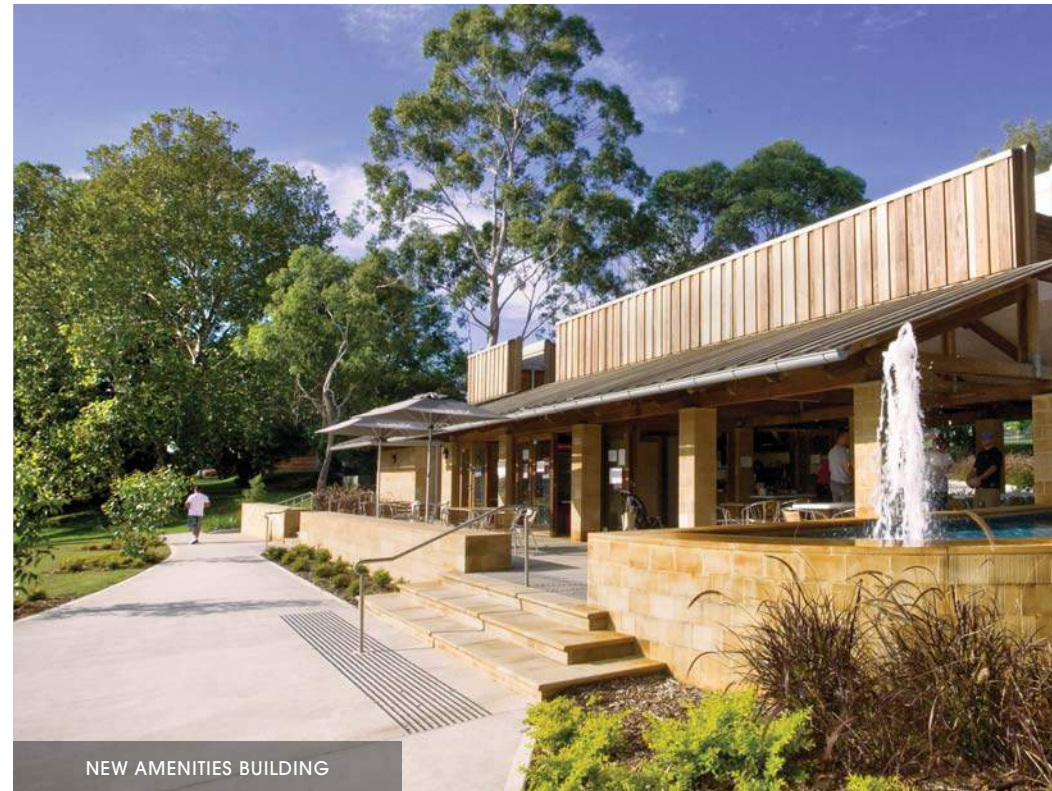




ACTIVE RECREATION



OPPORTUNITIES FOR VIBRANT CAFE



NEW AMENITIES BUILDING



ACTIVE RECREATION



ORGANISED SPORTS/TRAINING



INFORMAL RECREATION

- ACTIVE RECREATION AND COMMUNITY PLAY
AND RECREATION PRECINCT KEY FEATURES:
- NEW AMENITIES BUILDING
 - EXPANDED RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES
 - SPILL OUT SPACE TO CLUB AMENITIES
 - REINFORCED CONNECTIONS BETWEEN PRECINCTS

9.4 COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT PRECINCTS

COMMUNITY PLAY AND RECREATION AREA

James Ruse Reserve is the main focus of the play and active uses in the park. The active play area is important for the developing residential population of the local area and will be developed over time to enhance the recreation diversity in the park and catering to different age groups.

A new cafe forms an anchor to the area, creating a place for adults to relax as their children play. An amenities building is also provided adjacent to the play areas.

Key routes are reinforced to delineate the space and provide containment, whilst smaller pathways provide links to the play elements featured in the area and divide social lawns.

Several shelters provide shelter and opportunity for small social gatherings, with small trees offering additional shade.

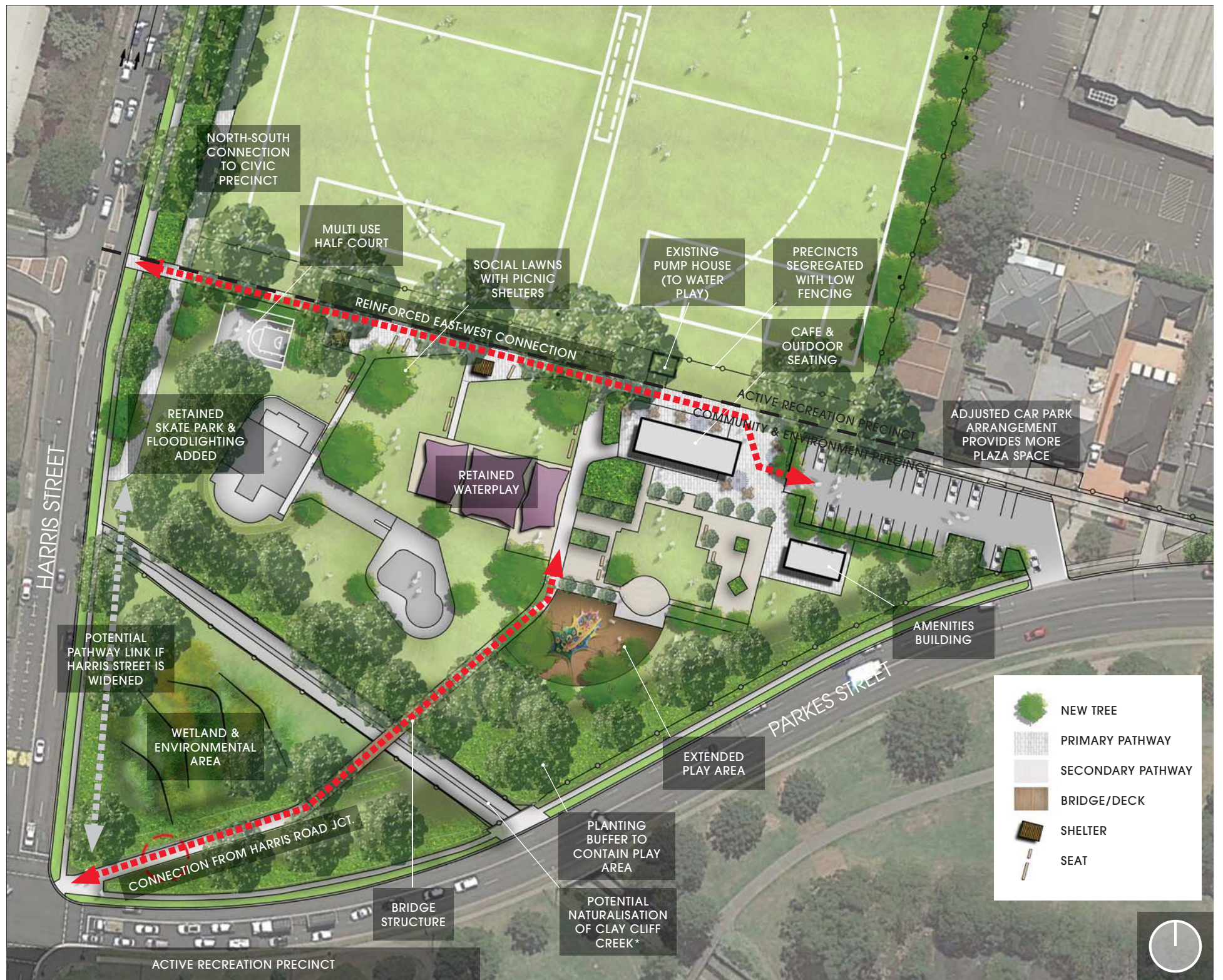
Links to the fields in the north area are retained as existing with the new north-south connection along the western edge of the park providing good access to the Cultural Heritage and Civic Precinct in the north.

ENVIRONMENTAL AREA AND WSUD

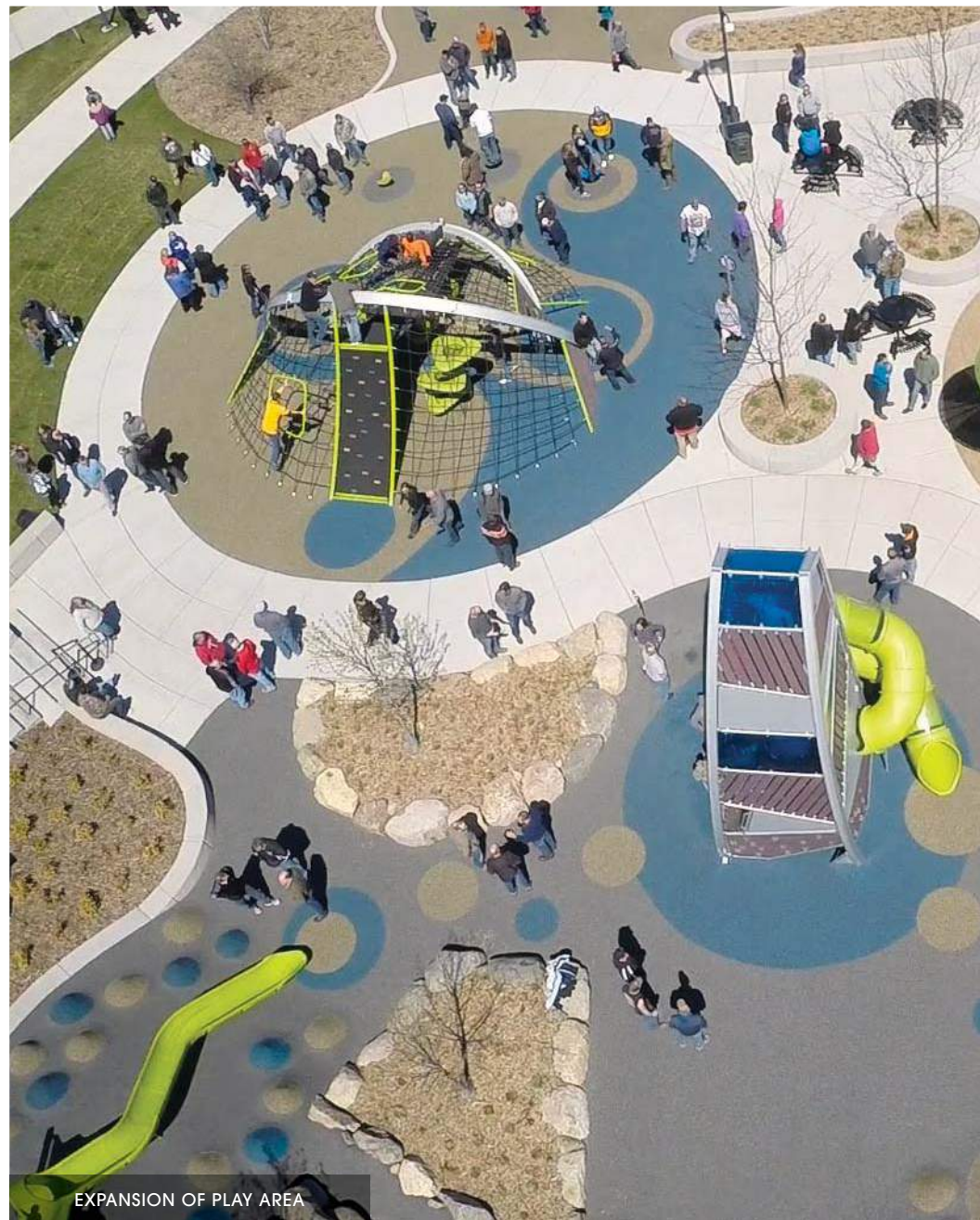
The southern area of the park provides an opportunity for water treatment and habitat enhancement adjacent the stormwater channel. Implementing this WSUD here would complement the objectives for City of Parramatta Council's Clay Cliff Creek parkland enhancement vision.

Planting will provide a buffer around the area, promoting a feeling of a retreat from the surrounding infrastructure. A tiered wetland treatment and diverse planting species offering habitat and contact with a natural environment rarely seen within dense urban areas.

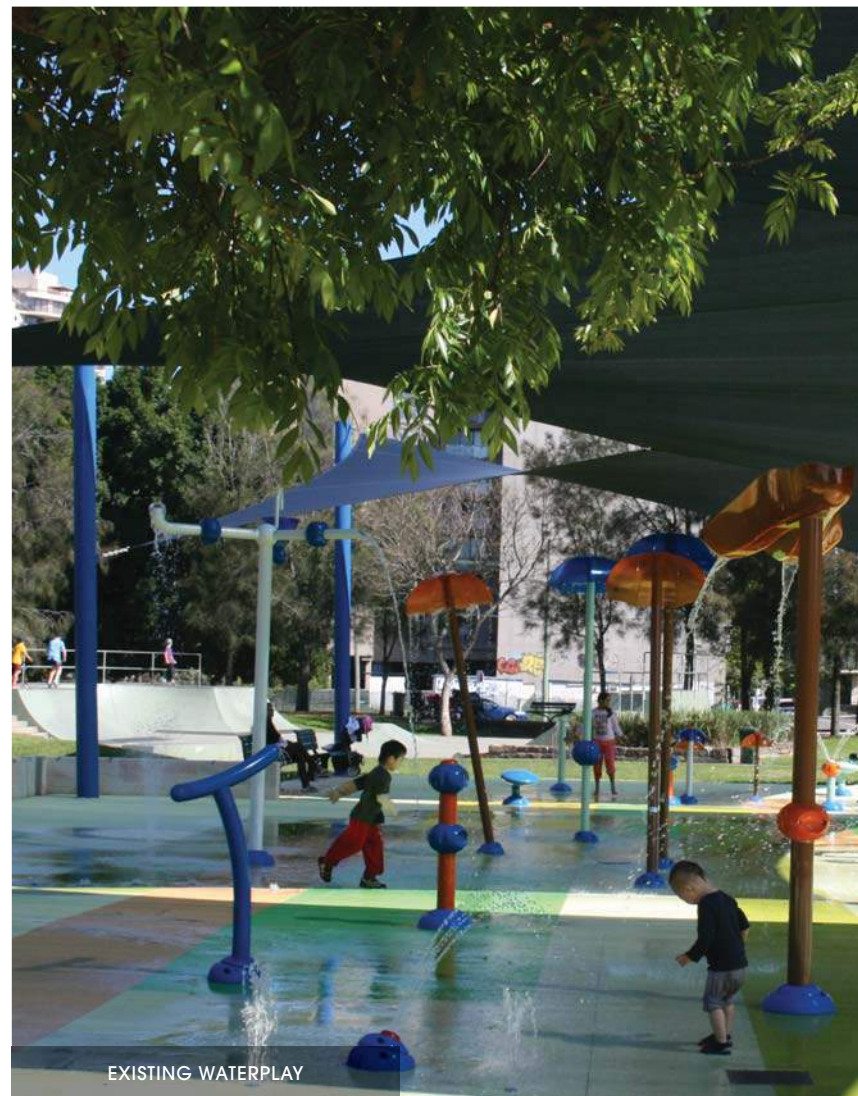
A new pathway and bridge over the existing concrete drainage channel forms the main pedestrian link from Harris Street and Parkes Street intersection, providing direct access to the play area and cafe within the community area.



*Note: Feasibility of naturalisation of Clay Cliff Creek to be undertaken by City of Parramatta Council as part of a whole catchment study subsequent to the masterplan.



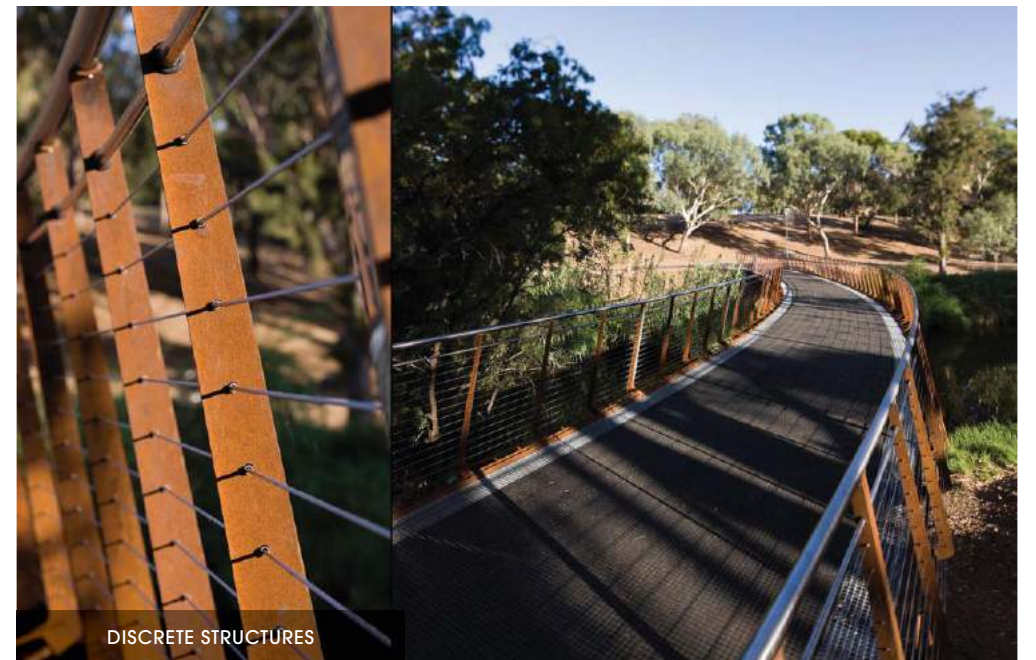
EXPANSION OF PLAY AREA



EXISTING WATERPLAY



TERRACED WETLANDS



DISCRETE STRUCTURES



COMMUNITY HUB & CAFE



DIVERSIFY PLAY OPPORTUNITIES

- COMMUNITY & PLAY KEY FEATURES:
- EXPANSION OF PLAY AREA
 - RETAINED WATER PLAY
 - NEW COMMUNITY CAFE & OUTDOOR SEATING
 - MIX OF FORMAL AND INFORMAL PLAY OPPORTUNITIES

- ENVIRONMENTAL AREA KEY FEATURES:
- WATER SENSITIVE URBAN DESIGN INITIATIVES
 - TERRACED WATER TREATMENT AREA
 - TIMBER BOARDWALK AND BRIDGE

09. DESIGN STRATEGIES

09.1 MATERIALITY & INTERFACES

PRIMARY PATHWAYS

To promote a high quality character to the park primary pathways will be surfaced in stone. This will also provide a durable surface which can be used by small maintenance vehicles when required.

The stone will be a contemporary mix of grey and buff, with the buff reflecting the remnant shale and sandstone tones beneath the surface of the park. These materials and tones will be used within structures and other elements throughout the park to provide a consistent approach.

SECONDARY PATHWAYS

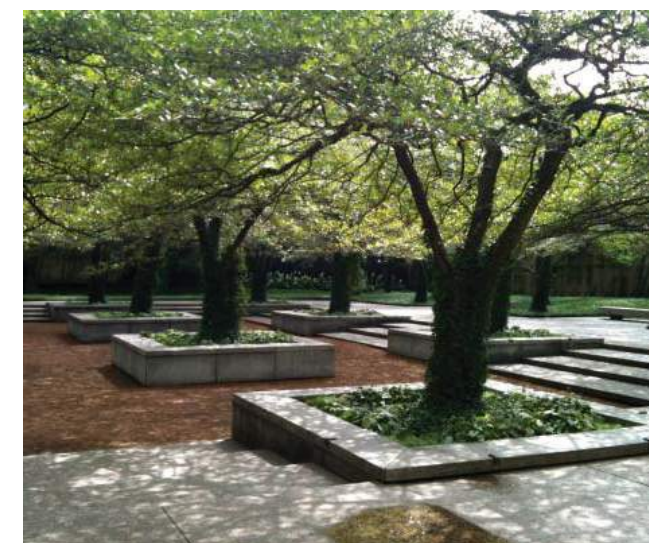
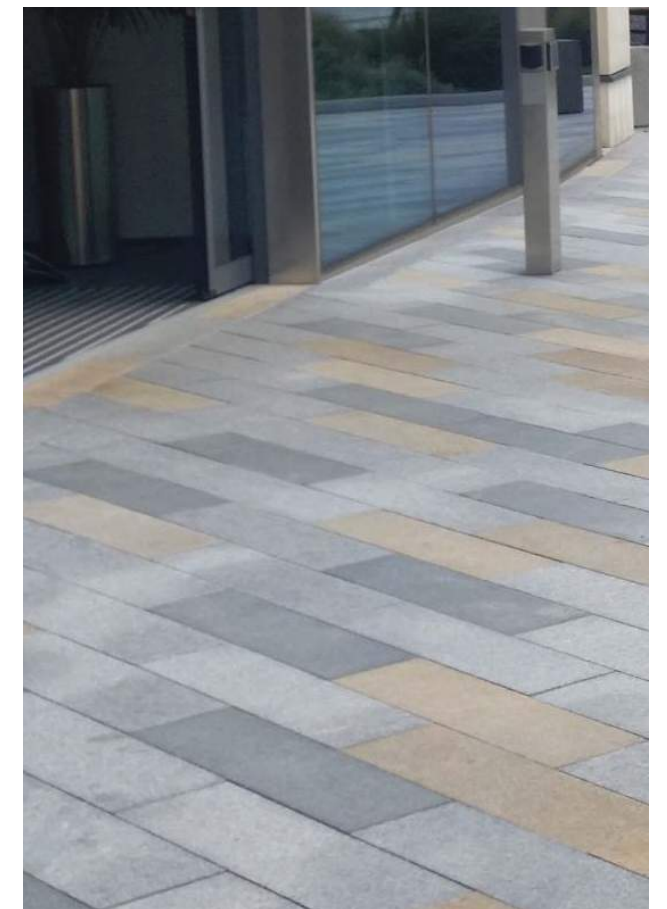
Secondary pathways will be in-situ, broom finish concrete with a natural stone trim. This will provide a low maintenance solution whilst complimenting the primary footpaths. Edge trim colour to match the grey tones of the primary footpath.

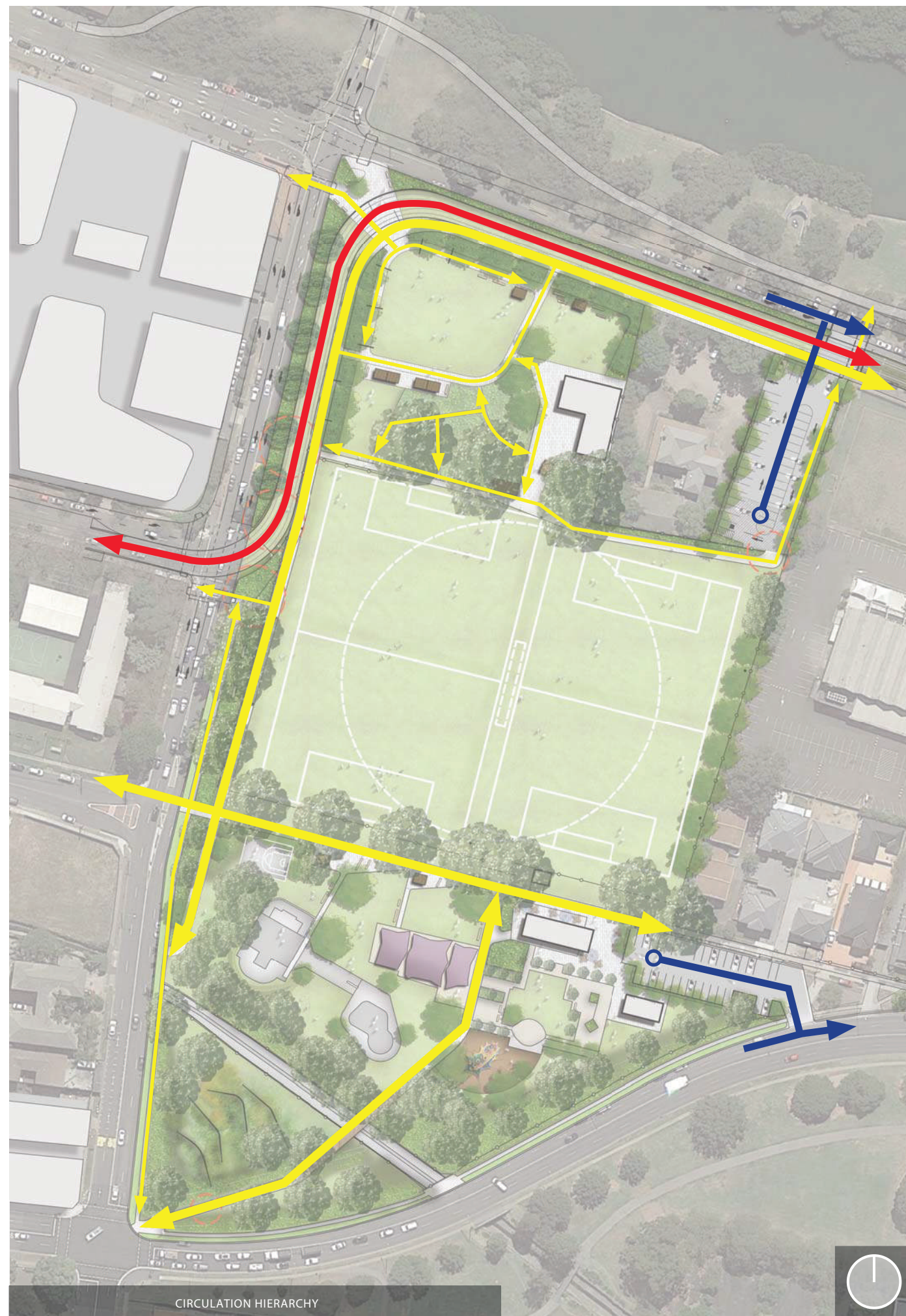
ACCENT MATERIALS

As well as the base palette of natural stone and concrete, accent materials such as stainless steel, timber and corten will be used to construct public art and furnishings in order to create an interesting, high quality and robust environment.

GATEWAYS & PLAZAS

The main gateways into the park will feature a combination of the primary pathway materials, along with a smaller paving unit size in selected areas to created interest in the detailed design of the spaces. Clear visual and physical routes into the rest of the park will be promoted through placing of furnishings, trees and planting, creating a welcoming environment.





CIRCULATION HIERARCHY

LEGEND

- Pedestrian Circulation
- Vehicular Circulation
- Light Rail Route

09.2 CIRCULATION

A hierarchy of pedestrian pathways will provide a clearly defined circulation system. Primary pathways will focus on major pedestrian movement around and through each reserve. Secondary pathways will provide for minor and experiential pedestrian movements within the reserves.



09.3 RECREATION & PLAY

Whilst much of the recreation and play facilities have been introduced in recent years, any future additions should further enhance the park for a variety of user groups, building on what is already offered.

Improvements should focus on expanding the existing play area to create a contemporary family recreation hub.

There is additional opportunity for more informal sports and family use in the north of Robin Thomas Reserve, where an open space will provide space away from the play area and sports field, flanked by comfortable barbecue shelters.

Fitness use of the park could be developed through the introduction of outdoor gym equipment which would create additional opportunity for both group and individual training.

09.4 SPORTS

Currently Robin Thomas Reserve plays host to several sports teams and provides space for physical education lessons for nearby schools. If possible these facilities should be retained into the future to provide much needed formal open space within the developing city centre.

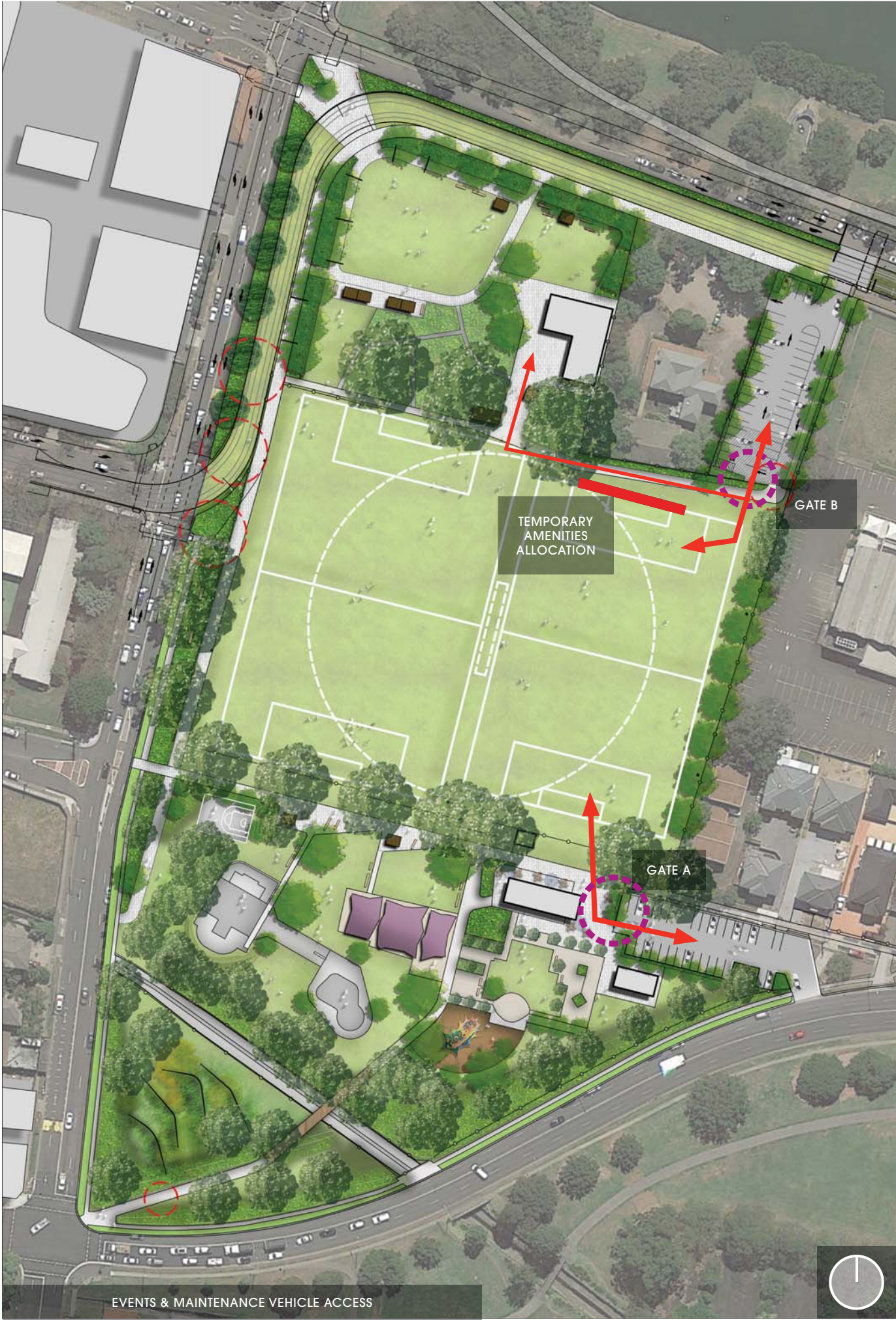
The provision of new amenities buildings will enhance the usability of the site, whilst introduction of additional tree planting around the periphery will provide shade and protection throughout the year.

09.5 EVENTS & MAINTENANCE

In order to fully utilise the open space it must be able to facilitate events such as seasonal markets and small concerts. Provision has been allocated for the positioning of temporary amenities. Access routes for occasional vehicles used to set up events has been made via three access gates.

Electrical provision will be available from pop up services located within the perimeter of the park, in the base of walls and furnishings or within lighting columns.

Maintenance access vehicles will use the same entrances as events vehicles. Removable/drop bollards or discrete gates will prevent unwanted vehicular access into the park. Primary pathways around the Reserves will be built to accommodate heavy maintenance trucks up to 18 tonnes.





09.6 BIODIVERSITY

To improve the overall biodiversity of the site, the southern most section of James Ruse Reserve has been allocated as an area of wetland which adds to the opportunity for different species to be sited. This area removes a lesser used region of open grassland which is segregated from the rest of the reserve by Clay Cliff Creek drainage channel and creates space habitable by wildlife. There is also the potential to naturalise the drainage channel as part of a broader strategy for Clay Cliff Creek.

An increase in the amount of planting to the periphery of the park, in addition to adding biodiversity, creates privacy and enclosure to some of the more exposed elements of the park such as the play area near to Parkes Street.

Planting in these peripheral areas will predominantly be native species which provide a rich understorey to the existing, mature Fig trees.

In the more formal areas of the park, such as the main entrance from George Street, the planting will be a mixture of native and tropical species to promote additional interest, colour and variety.



09.7 ARTS & HERITAGE

As part of the Parramatta Heritage Trail, the history of the park is to be reinforced through both discrete interventions, bold statement pieces and interpretive information.

A reference is made to the underlying barracks buildings of the early 1800s through introduction of sheltered canopies located where the position of the old buildings crosses the new pathway. Interpretive information is located within the surface of the pathway, providing information on the history of the buildings. The locations of the building walls are represented in the areas not crossing the path with stone placed within the turf.

Several areas of walling is reconstructed to a low height within some of the planting beds, acting as additional recognition of the site heritage.

An arts and heritage interpretation strategy shall be prepared to inform appropriate representation of heritage elements and site specific artworks.

09.8 ARCHITECTURE

Several architectural elements are to be added to the park which will enhance the usability of each precinct. Each of the buildings will contemporary in appearance and compliment the materials palette of the park to create a coherent environment, through use of natural stone, timber and steel.

Amenities Block

This building provides high quality amenities for local clubs and other users of the fields. Access will be regulated depending upon match days and events. Hard surfaced spill out space is provided around the buildings to reduce maintenance and prevent damage to turf caused by heavy footfall. Facilities may include:

- > male and female changing facilities
- > toilets
- > storage
- > meeting rooms
- > park maintenance / staff lunch room
- > community space
- > kitchen
- > kiosk and storage

The design of the building will create a functional external space in its surrounds, allowing space for both fixed and flexible seating when required. Connections through to Ellangowan House will be explored at the development stage of the master plan without the sacrifice of adjacent tree routes.

Cafe & Plaza

The cafe will be located close to the community and play precinct to provide opportunity for relaxation and dining for parents and children whilst using the recreational facilities. Spill out space around the cafe periphery ensures a pleasant and lively space is created.

Amenities Building

Toilets are provided to the east of the community and play precinct and can be easily accessed by users of the play areas.



09.9 FURNISHINGS

Seating

Benches throughout the site will be constructed from a mixture of concrete, steel and timber, providing a robust environment. Seating is positioned in logical locations around the park to provide a mixture of both sheltered and exposed environments.

Shelters

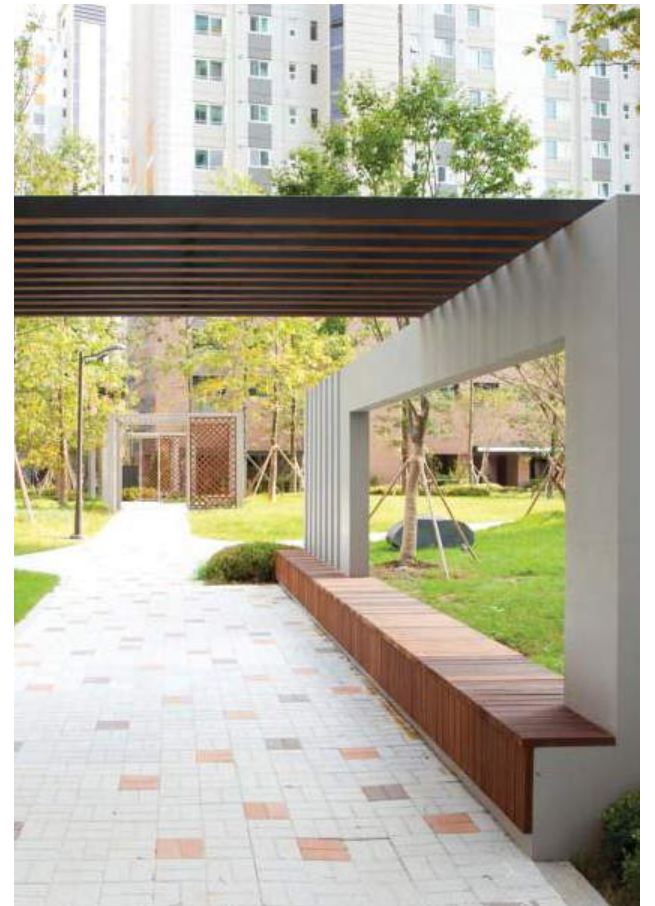
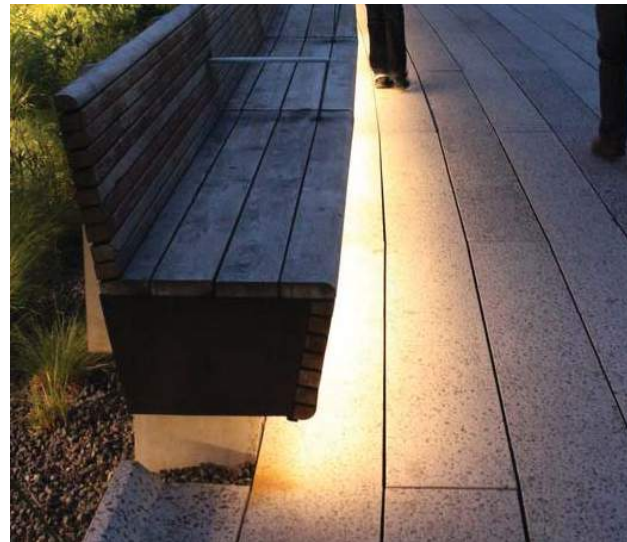
Several shelters are provided across the park. In the north, shelters are located to provide recognition of the location of the early 1800s barracks once located there. In the south, shelters provide opportunity for barbecues and socialisation around the edge of the community precinct. In both cases they will be constructed of a mix of concrete, steel and timber, complimenting the architectural forms of the new buildings.

Fencing

To prevent both unwanted vehicular access and to provide safe enclosure to sports pitches two types of fencing will be required.

- > Sports rebound fencing lining the western side of the sports pitches to prevent escape of balls onto the Light Rail track.
- > Low rail fencing to the periphery of the park where vehicles can otherwise gain access.

Note: Fencing within the Reserves should not form a barrier to access, permeability or multi-functional use of the park. Where deemed necessary for safety reasons, fencing will be minimised and sensitively designed to respond to the heritage parkland setting and located with due consideration of pedestrian connections.



09.10 LIGHTING

Lighting to the periphery of Robin Thomas and James Ruse Reserves will be upgraded to meet Australian Standards and the requirements identified in the City of Parramatta’s Public Domain Guidelines. The sports fields will be flood lit and carparks lit to Australian Standards. Pedestrian lighting will be provided in both Reserves along primary pathways. Feature lighting will be limited to key social locations, such as the Civic and Cultural Precinct and the Active Recreation Precinct.

- LEGEND
- Pedestrian Lighting
 - Proposed Flood Lighting
 - Existing Flood Lighting (Retained)
 - Feature Lighting
 - Car Park Lighting

Note: Column spacing indicative only. Final positions to be resolved by lighting designer / engineer

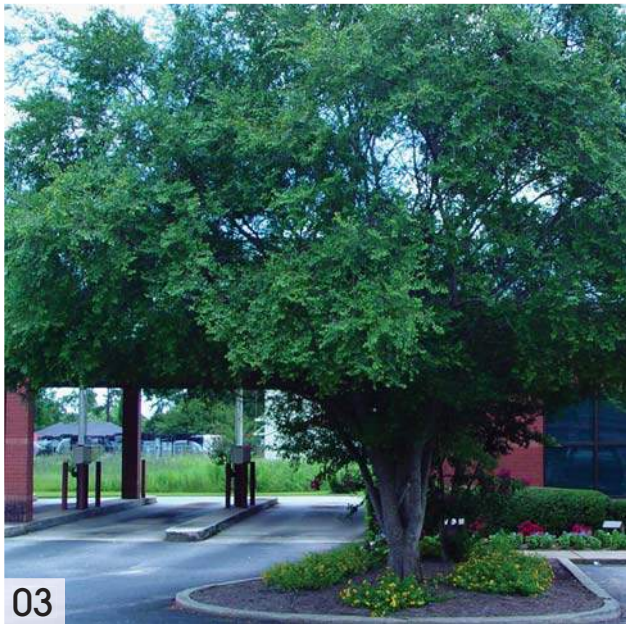


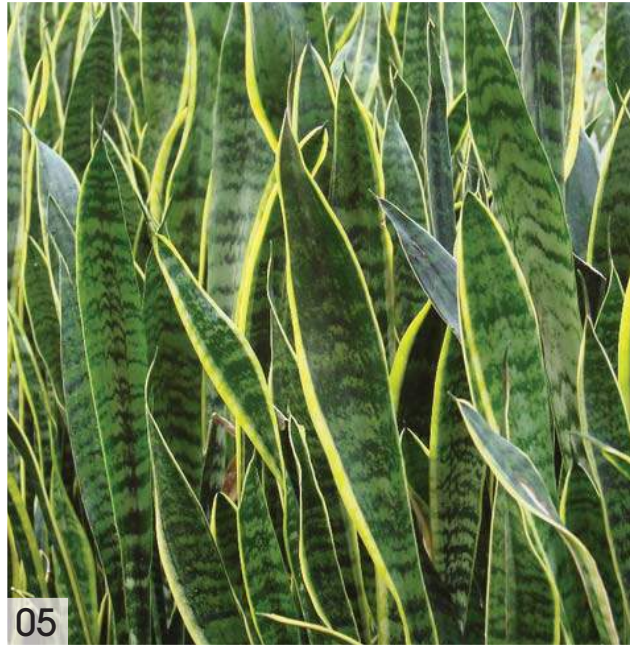
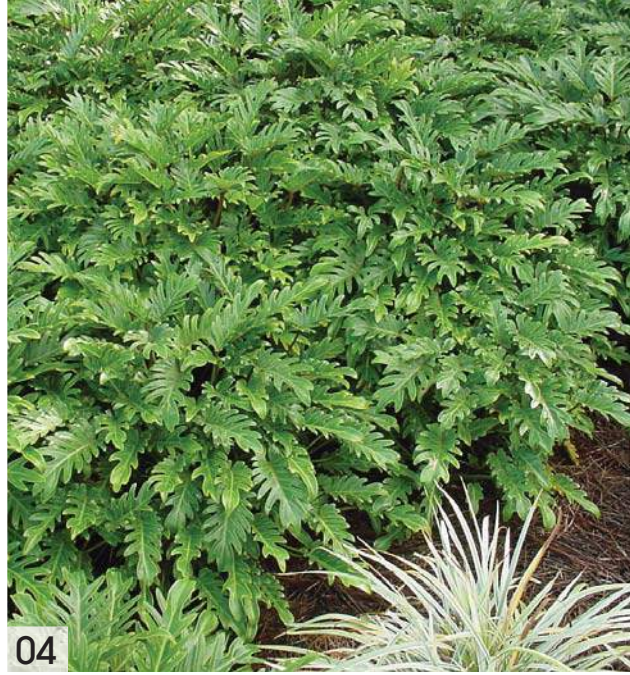
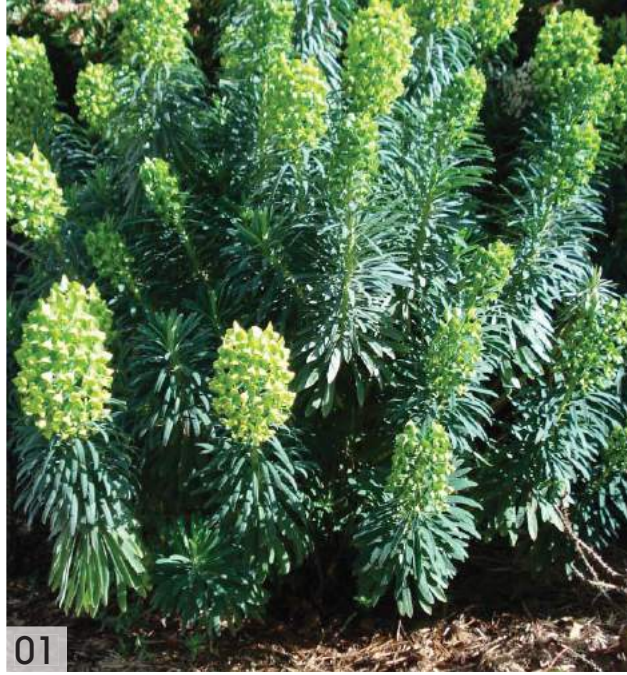
10. PLANTING

Planting across the site shall be selected to be robust, tolerant of sun exposure, winds and with low irrigation and maintenance requirements. Planting to public areas selected to have scent, colour, shape and tactile qualities.

10.1 TREES

NO.	SPECIES	NATIVE/ EXOTIC	SIZE	ULTIMATE HEIGHTS	EVERGREEN/ DECIDUOUS
01	Fraxinus 'Raywood'	Exotic	Medium	15m	Deciduous
02	Pyrus calleryana	Exotic	Small	7m	Deciduous
03	Ulmus parvifolia	Exotic	Medium	12m	Deciduous
04	Angophora costata	Native	Medium	20m	Evergreen
05	Elaeocarpus reticulatus	Native	Medium	10m	Deciduous
06	Ficus microcarpa var hillii	Native	Medium	15m	Evergreen
07	Lophostemon Confertus	Native	Large	28m	Evergreen
08	Melaleuca decora	Native	Small	5m	Evergreen
09	Waterhousia floribunda	Native	Medium	15-20m	Evergreen
10	Eucalyptus microcorys	Native	Medium	15-20m	Evergreen





10.2 ORNAMENTAL PLANTING

NO.	SPECIES	APPROX. SPREAD	ULTIMATE HEIGHT	TYPE
01	Euphorbia wulfenii	0.8m	1m	Evergreen
02	Pennisetum advena 'Rubrum'	1m	1m	Semi-Evergreen
03	Zamia furfuracea	2m	1m	Evergreen
04	Philodendron 'Xanadu'	2m	1m	Evergreen
05	Sansevieria	N/A	0.5m	Evergreen
06	Westringia fruticosa	4m	2m	Evergreen
07	Agave desmetiana 'Variegata'	0.5m	1m	Evergreen
08	Strelitzia reginae	1m	1.5m	Evergreen
09	Brachycome multifida 'White Delight'	0.4m	0.3m	Evergreen
10	Cycas revoluta	2m	3m	Evergreen

10.3 WETLAND PLANTING

NO.	SPECIES	APPROX. SPREAD	ULTIMATE HEIGHT	TYPE
01	<i>Dodonea viscosa</i>	1-2.5m	1.5-3m	Perennial
02	<i>Leptospermum continentale</i>	1.5m	1-2m	Perennial
03	<i>Leptospermum trinervium</i>	2m	3m	Perennial
04	<i>Pultenaea microphylla</i>	1m	1m	Perennial
05	<i>Danthonia racemosa</i>	1m	1.2m	Perennial
06	<i>Microlaena stipoides</i>	1m	0.8m	Perennial
07	<i>Carex appressa</i>	1m	0.8m	Perennial
08	<i>Dianella longifolia</i>	1m	1m	Perennial
09	<i>Geranium solanderi</i>	0.5m	0.6m	Perennial
10	<i>Hardenbergia violacea</i>	1m	N/A	Perennial





10.4 PERIPHERY PLANTING

NO.	SPECIES	APPROX. SPREAD	ULTIMATE HEIGHT	TYPE
01	Convolvulus cneorum	0.8m	1m	Perennial
02	Dianella caerulea 'Little Jess'	0.3-0.5m	0.3-0.5m	Perennial
03	Doryanthus excelsa	0.5m	1-5m	Perennial
04	Westringia fruticosa 'Zena'	4m	2m	Perennial
05	Ctenanthe "Grey Star"	1m	1m	Perennial
06	Clivia miniata	0.5m	0.5m	Perennial
07	Kalanchoe thyrsifolia	0.2m	0.3m	Perennial
08	Rhoeo spathacea	0.3m	0.6m	Perennial
09	Scaevola 'Mauve Clusters'	0.2m	1.5m	Perennial
10	Neomarcia gracilis	0.5m	0.5m	Perennial

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