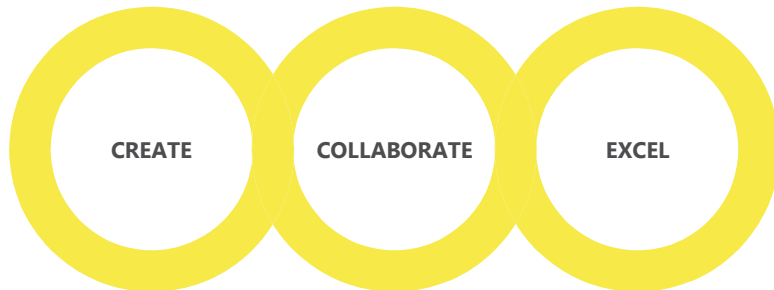
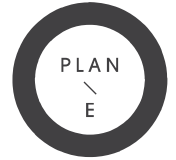


# WOOLSTORES PLACE MT ELPHINSTONE, ALBANY

VISUAL LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (B)



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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 General

### 1.1 General

Plan E have been appointed by Rowe Group and Mainbeam Pty Ltd (as the land owner) to undertake the Visual Landscape Analysis and Visual Impact Assessment of the proposed Local Structure Plan of the Mount Elphinstone 'Woolstores' (MEW) site in Albany. This report has been included in the proposed structure plan, focusing on future use and development of the Mainbeam landholding plus potentially other State, Commonwealth or private owned land.

This report may also be referred to in other technical documents such as the Local Water Management Strategy (LWMS), and Bushfire Management Plan (BMP).

Plan E will provide advice on the existing visual amenity, the potential impact and key considerations of redevelopment which will assist in developing the proposed masterplan to convey the design intent for future development on the site. Plan E have prepared this document with reference to:

The Department of Planning and Infrastructure and Western Australian Planning Commissions Nov 2007 Visual Landscape Planning in Western Australia, a manual for evaluation, assessment, and siting design.

The purpose of this report is to identify and evaluate the visual landscape values of the subject site, and provide recommendations for managing the visual landscape values.



Plate 1: Site image looking from Mt Melville to the MEW site

## 1.2 Subject Site

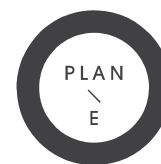
The subject site is in the City of Albany, in the Great Southern Region of Western Australia, 418 kilometers southeast of Perth. The Mount Elphinstone Woolstores (MEW) site is located 3.5 km west of the Albany Business District within the area bound by Frenchman Bay Road, the Princess Royal Harbor waterfront, and the Princess Royal Drive Albany-Wagin Rail Corridor. The site boundary has been determined following liaison with the City of Albany and Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage (DPLH) as well as relevant land owners or government stakeholders.

The total area of the subject site assessed is 163ha with a site width (east-west) approximately 600m and length (north-south) of 485m. The landform at this site gently slopes from a high point of +8.0m above sea level (north) to a low point of just +0.4m above sea level (south). The MEW site includes reclaimed land from Princess Royal Harbour contributing to its relatively flat profile.

Mt Melville is located to the north-east of the site and Mt Elphinstone to the north west of the site which form the key visual backdrops. The foreground of the site is dominated by Princess Royal Harbour water body as the other key visual element.

The subject site comprises of lots:

LOT	LANDOWNER
11	Main Roads
492	Main Roads
140	Mainbeam Pty Ltd
141	Mainbeam Pty Ltd
895	Mainbeam Pty Ltd
1104	Mainbeam Pty Ltd
1209	Mainbeam Pty Ltd
1156	Mainbeam Pty Ltd
1157	Mainbeam Pty Ltd
501	Crown Land - City of Albany
529	Crown Land - State Of Western Australia



530	Crown Land - State Of Western Australia
1350	Crown Land - City of Albany
44	Crown Land – State of Western Australia
583845, 583843	Crown Land - State Of Western Australia

Lots 1209 and 1104 currently owned by Mainbeam Pty Ltd are the larger industrial lots that had the functioning Woolstores sheds. The north side of Woolstores Place includes lots 140, 141 and 1157 that have cleared post pastoral use.

Current use of the subject site is closed to the public and includes two (2) large non-operational Woolstores sheds and infrastructure that are currently being demolished.

Refer Figure 1: Site Location Plan

### 1.3 Contextual Significant Infrastructure

The below infrastructure exists in close proximity to the MEW subject site:

- Albany-Wagin rail line (freight rail) on the north-east boundary of the subject site;
- Albany City Centre (3.2km east of subject site);
- Albany Port (3.9km east of subject site);
- Albany Primary School (4.5km north-east of subject site);
- Albany Day Hospital (5km north-east of subject site);
- Albany Airport (12km north-west of subject site);

Further surrounding amenity to this site includes the following:

- Bibbulmun Track and Munda-Biddi Track located within the subject site;
- Albany Anzac Peace Park / Town Jetty (4km east of subject site);
- Mt Melville and Lookout Tower (4.4km north of subject site);
- Albany Leisure and Aquatic Centre (5.5km north-east of subject site);
- Mt Clarence, Avenue of Honour, and Heritage Parks (5.4km east of subject site);
- The Gap and Natural Bridge (15.2km south of subject site);

The subject site is surrounded by a variety of existing regional level commercial, health and transport infrastructure as well

as a variety in community facilities, residential and open space amenity (both natural and manufactured). This lends the subject site to providing attractive tourism and lifestyle opportunities.

Refer Figure 2: Greater Contextual Location Plan

### 1.4 Pre-requisites for Visual Impact Assessment

This report including all technical information, drawings, figures and photographic recording has been reviewed or undertaken by one Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) registered Landscape Architect plus one Landscape Architect with over 7 years professional experience and supporting qualified Landscape Architects.

Landscape Architects critically assess the natural and urban landscape character to determine the best opportunities the subject landscapes present. As part of this study Plan E have completed the following:

1. Comprehensive site analysis of the subject site as of 21st July 2022;
2. Desktop Review of background documents and reports including:
  - a. Strategen/JBSG Pre-development vegetation classification and effective slope, July 2022;
  - b. Strategen/JBSG Environmental Assessment Review Document, September 2022;
  - c. MRWA Albany Ring Road Stage 2 & 3b Environmental Referral Supporting Document, May 2020;
  - d. City of Albany Policy; Albany Woolstores Redevelopment Site;
  - e. Albany Regional Vegetation Survey, Extent, Type and Status 2010, authored by E.M Sandiford and S Barrett.
3. Contextual analysis of the visual landscape character as seen from surrounding key vantage points. Photographic records and key site assessment plans are included in this report to document the findings graphically and to support the descriptive text analysis.

## 2. LANDSCAPE EVALUATION: VISUAL ANALYSIS BY PLANE

### 2.1 Existing Landform & Topography

The landform of the subject site has been altered from its original condition, and at this time ranges from +8.0mAHD at the north to +0.4mAHD at the foreshore. Generally, the site presents as a gentle grade with little undulation. Approximately 38% of the site is reclaimed land from Princess Royal Harbor. This re-claimed land is set generally at or just below 3.0mAHD above sea level and is flat with little undulation.

Refer Plates 2 & 3

Currently as part of the MRWA Albany Ring Road works, the interface along the north of the subject site is being earth worked as part of the associated road upgrades along Frenchman Bay Road, Lower Denmark Road, and Princess Royal Drive. These works remain outside the subject site however will have an eventual visual impact adjacent the subject site with elevated road and flyover crossing. This report does not include any visual impact assessment of these specific road upgrade works however any potential development of the subject site should be considered with this road infrastructure to the periphery (refer site sections information).

We do also understand these earthworks will raise the current ground levels from the existing with additional road flyover to +16.0mAHD including significant batters grading from elevated road levels down to the existing landscape and larger road footprint for new roundabout.

The remainder of the subject site has no significant physical landform features either existing or manmade.

Very low estuarine dunes occur along the waterfront which are subject to seasonal fluctuation from tidal movement. As such these are limited to +0.4m - +1.0m in elevation. These dune formations provide little coastal protection to the site due to their low height however they present with established native vegetation growth so are stabilised.

Refer Plate 4

Refer Figure 3: Site Opportunities Plan

Refer Figure 4: Site Constraints Plan



*Plate 2 Site image generally flat subject site looking to Mt Melville behind*



*Plate 3 Site image reclaimed land along southern boundary to waterfront*



*Plate 4 Site image low estuarine dune along south of lot 1209*

## 2.2 Existing Soil and Geology Type

The Soil and Geology type within the subject site has been heavily influenced by industrial, transport, rural and pastoral activities, as well as the reclaimed land along the waterline.

Historically this area would have included a transect of estuarine sands to support coastal swamp (light grey to light yellow calcerous sands) defined as Torbay System Sands (source Strategen/JBSG). However, the manipulation of the landform and soils within the subject site has created a manufactured outcome where importation of yellow sands with potential uncontrolled fill in the reclaimed area has changed the soil profile. There is the potential of this historical uncontrolled fill being of poor or contaminated quality that will require detailed geotechnical surveys. Refer Plates 5 & 6.

There is a moderate risk that soils at this site are of an Acid Sulfate type, and from appearance is weed seed bank heavy and lacking in organic material. Salinity tests have not been undertaken but it is evident depth to saline soils and groundwater may be shallow.

Gravels are also present which were installed for transport access but over time have spread across the topsoil in combination with dumped waste.

Refer Plate 7

There are no identified Karst formations, underground caves or natural rocky outcrops that may affect the visual or sub surface landform or soils, however these cannot be ruled out until detailed geotechnical reporting is completed.

Similarly, no detailed contaminated soil testing has been undertaken, however there is visual evidence of fly tipping, asbestos, concrete, steel and general industrial rubbish stockpiles so it is imperative that further site investigations for contaminants are undertaken. Test results may have significant visual and environmental impacts (such as clearing, soil remediation or structural soil profile creation) that could alter the landform.



**Plate 5 Site image Calcerous sands mixed with gravel, rubbish and containing heavy weed seed**



**Plate 6 Site Image Calcerous sands mixed with gravel, rubbish and containing heavy weed seed**



**Plate 7 Site Image gravel, rubbish and containing heavy weed seed bank**

### 2.3 Existing Vegetation

Clearing of existing vegetation to facilitate the pastoral and industrial activities associated with the Woolstores and private landholdings is extensive. There is minimal coverage of native vegetation due to the industrial activities on lots 1209 and 1104, and this area is described as completely degraded of endemic species. The large footprint of the existing industrial scale sheds dominates the site and cleared gravel access tracks around the buildings have denuded the landscape of endemic vegetation and natural character. Refer plate 8. Transport routes (rail and truck) around the sheds extends into lot 402 which is Crown Land and currently outside the subject site. Refer plate 9.

Much of what is left of the existing vegetation is of poor visual quality, appears of low health due to neglect, exposure to wind and saline conditions, and no weed management. The coastal fringe and small pockets within the site that have the best quality and significance of vegetated species are;

- Small pocket of *Melaleuca priessiana* low woodland;
- Threatened Ecological Community (TEC) Coastal Saltmarsh to tidal areas west of the subject site.

Refer Figure 3: Site Opportunities Plan

Lots 140 and 1157 north of Woolstores Place is completely degraded as identified by the biological survey undertaken between 2018-2020 by Southern Ecology and Plan E agree that this remains the case from the site analysis. Refer plate 10. This area remains post pastoral glade with grass coverage and only small pockets of *Melaleuca* trees.

As an overview, the visual assessment of the vegetation can be described as:

- Young, self-seeded, and opportunistic growth where conditions have been made available (outside MEW activities);
- Introduced weed growth is the dominant vegetation type, with open grassland for historical grazing left in parts of the site;
- Sporadic specimens of native shrubs can be found with minimal density or site coverage;
- Small pockets of native trees which are of poor form and growth habit exist.



**Plate 8 Site Image taken between the two main buildings with gravel access tracks (rail and road).**



**Plate 9 Site image Lot 402 Crown Land**



**Plate 10 Site image of lots 140 & 1157**

The dominance of introduced and hard to manage weed species seen on this site includes;

- Arum Lily; Zantedeschia aethiopica
- Blackberry; Rubus species
- Bridal creeper; Asparagus asparagoides
- Gorse; Ulex europaeus
- Ivy; Hedera
- Lantana; Lantana camara
- Nasturtium; Tropaeolum
- Pampas Grass; Cortaderia species
- Pelargonium
- Pteridium esculentum – Bracken Fern

And the visually dominant weed species is;

- Pampas Grass; Cortaderia species

Refer plates 11 & 12



**Plate 11 Site image visual dominance of Pampas Grass within subject site east of main buildings**



**Plate 12 Site image variety of weed coverage on eastern edge of site**

From the pockets of endemic vegetation viewed, the subject site does include:

- isolated pocket of Coastal Yate Woodland;
- Small pocket of Melaleuca priessiana low woodland;
- Threatened Ecological Community (TEC) Coastal Saltmarsh to tidal areas bordering the south of the subject site.

Refer Figure 3: Site Opportunities Plan

The Yate Woodland is so sparse, with exposed form of vegetation due to proximity to the waterline and winds (Refer plate 13). The species identified in this small complex include:

- Agonis flexuosa
- Hibbertia furfuracea and Hibbertia cuneiformis
- Leucopogon obovatus
- Lepidosperma species
- Rhagodia baccata

The vegetation in this pocket appears slightly denser with rounded canopies and thicker foliage coverage. Tree species in this zone shows less wind exposure and provide shade canopy worthy of conservation.



**Plate 13 Site image remnant Coastal Yate Woodland on site boundary with lot 52**



The (TEC) Coastal Saltmarsh being very open and low lying has tidal water coverage so will have a constant varying appearance, and movement of growth if tidal zones shift. This area provides stabilization to the edge of the waterline and habitat for small marine fauna and bird life foraging in this zone.

A list of the visually identified species within the Coastal Saltmarsh are:

- Atriplex hypoleuca
- Juncus kraussii
- Samolus repens
- Sarcocornia quinqueflora
- Wilsonia backhousei

The (TEC) Coastal Saltmarsh is of conservation value visually and environmentally and needs to be considered for retention. This zone needs to be protected in any proposed development plans. Refer plate 14

**2.4 Existing Trees**

The tree species identified across the site are a mix of European exotic species, Australian species and WA native species. Most trees appear to be planted around the Woolstores sheds or have been opportunistic through self seeding growth. Exotic trees are found in small groups north of the main buildings and along Woolstores Place. Even though these species are exotic they do offer some visual aesthetic as the site is so sparsely vegetated. Refer plates 15 & 16

Trees along the Woolstores site periphery have been severely pruned not to the benefit of the trees health.

Tree species identified at this site are captured on Figure 5; Site Vegetation Plan and are listed as follows:

**Exotic or introduced species to WA:**

- Eucalyptus sideroxylon
- Eucalyptus globulus
- Norfolk Island Pine
- Weeping Willow
- Metrosideros excelsa
- Lophostemon confertus
- Acemna smitthii



*Plate 14 Site image TEC Coastal Saltmarsh on southern tidal zone.*



*Plate 15 Site image Weeping Willow (exotic trees species)*



*Plate 16 Site image Lophostemon confertus (introduced trees species)*

**WA Native species seen included:**

Agonis flexuosa

Melaleuca linearifolia

Melaleuca quiquinervia

Eucalyptus gomphocephala

Eucalyptus marginata

Eucalyptus megacarpa

A visual assessment of the tree species can be described as:

- Young tree specimens mostly planted by human activity with only small clusters of endemic trees most likely grown from self seeding. Refer plates 17 & 18
- Sporadic specimens with minimal density and site coverage. Small pockets of groups of trees with most of poor form and growth habit, low shade canopy and spindly wind exposed branches. Refer plate 19
- Minimal WA native evergreen trees are of the south west sclerophyll colour palette (greens-grey browns). Exotic trees are deeper green tones, deciduous, and seasonal flowering.

With reference to the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage 'Guidelines for Planning in Bushfire Prone Areas' Version 1.4, December 2021, and the Strategen JBSG Bushfire Management Plan, the density of trees and canopy cover on this site is classified as a 'low threat' rating. This combined with slope assessment does indicate low fuel loads and low fire risk as the site exists.



**Plate 18 Site image looking onto southern shed site showing limited tree coverage on lot 1209**



**Plate 17 Site image lot 895 along Woolstores Place**



**Plate 19 Site image remnant Agonis of poor form and wind exposure on southern boundary of lot 1209**

## 2.5 Existing Waterways or Bodies

Princess Royal Harbour is the significant water body adjacent to the subject site. Refer plate 20. This tidal and estuarine coastline includes fringing habitats with a Threatened Ecological Community that has conservation value.

The Coastal Hazard and Risk Assessment Plan is being prepared with initial investigations revealing that the Princess Royal Harbour coastline adjacent the MEW site would be affected by sea level rise in the future.

Princess Royal Harbour is a shallow natural basin that has a sheltered wave climate adjacent to the MEW site. There is some wind generated wave action which is seasonal due to westerly to north-westerly winter winds and easterly to south-easterly spring and summer winds.

The subject site has low tidal surge and low storm surge with little evidence of storm damage or fluctuating tides eroding the shoreline however further assessment needs to be undertaken to determine the exact coastal morphology.

The dune formations are low with gentle slopes and are more tidal flats adjacent the MEW site. The specific environmental and visual value identified along the waterline is the vast body of generally static water and the TEC coastal saltmarsh vegetation on these tidal flats that provides habitat to fauna.

The quality of the water was clear with little evidence of pollution or sedimentation from the previous industrial activities. There were no coastal hazards evident when visiting the site with no exposed rocks, infrastructure or man made hazards (ie jetty). Refer plates 21 & 22.



Plate 21 *Site image view of Princess Royal Harbour adjacent subject site from Mt Melville*



Plate 22 *Site image quality of water and shoreline*



Plate 20 *Site image looking towards subject site from the south, water body of Harbor dominates the view corridor looking north to the subject site*

The water body has a generally static nature with very low swell adjacent the MEW site due to the sheltered position in the bay. Views of the subject site looking north (from the south and south-west foreshore of Princess Royal Harbour) are dominated by the water creating a serene view.

The foreshore area does not currently encourage public access and use along the shoreline, however the site does not restrict use and can be accessed from adjacent sites informally (wanderers are seen walking along the sand).

## 2.6 Existing Drainage Infrastructure

An existing stormwater drainage channel traverses the subject site as an open road side channel along Woolstores Place. This channel has no treatment of stormwater and caters for movement of road runoff through the subject site at source. There are also subsurface existing drainage channels from surrounding sites directing drainage into Princess Royal Harbour. The site does not present with significant drainage challenges, erosion from significant overland flow paths or sheeting water movement, or any significant ponding.

Refer plate 23.

Hyd2o and Stantec are reviewing the existing open and underground drainage infrastructure and will provide separate engineering proposals for upgrades to the existing works if needed. Current best practice for water sensitive urban design approaches have not been adopted at this site, with no water harvesting, re-use or quality filtering.

## 2.7 Existing Rural Activities

Lots 140 and 1157 north of Woolstores Place depict the most evident post pastoral land use with open grassland yet no livestock were present at the time of site inspection.

The paddocks here are overgrown and appear generally unmanaged with very low visual benefit. Infrastructure from historical rural activities was not present however sheds and homesteads were evident in 2015 and have been removed. Small sections of post and wire fence remain on site.

Refer plates 24 and 25.



Plate 23 *Google Street View existing open drainage channel along Woolstores Place*



Plate 24 *Site image lot 140 post pastoral land*



Plate 25 *Google Street View of lot 1157 with previous livestock present*

## 2.8 Existing Industrial Activities and Infrastructure

In 1923, the mill construction started and it was the first woollen mill to be built in the state of Western Australia with the site chosen over other regional settlements (such as Bunbury), on Mill Street in Albany town center. The Woolstores Site was the location of sheep/ livestock transport and trade, plus wool store to supply the woollen mill. History has indicated that the wool stores were instrumental in increasing economic viability of Albany in 1950s and that the buildings were the largest storage sheds in regional WA.

Refer plates 26 -28

This site is dominated by the 2 large storage sheds which remain present but in varying stages of demolition or disrepair. These sheds were constructed from brick, concrete, asbestos, corrugated iron and steel frames and have a distinct industrial form combined with their massive scale. Large concrete pads and associated rail infrastructure lead to the sheds as well informal roads constructed that surround the built form.

The sheds cover 5.5Ha of the subject site leaving a huge visual impact that is detrimental to the site and bears little connection to the surrounding visual landscape (Albany Port remains the only visual connection for this scale of Industrial built form).

The visual dominance of these structures can be seen from Mt Melville Lookout, and around Frenchman Bay Road at many locations from the south side of Princess Royal Harbor.

Within the subject site there are many locations of stockpiled and wasting building material requiring removal, which are contributing to a visually detrimental environment.



*Plate 26 Site image existing Woolstores shed (southern) lot 1209*



*Plate 27 Site image internal view of existing shed (southern) lot 1209*



*Plate 28 Site image looking towards northern shed with partial demolition underway*

However, there are several visual features that provide key historical gestures that do provide a visual aesthetic and story connected to the site. These are identified in the embedded railway tracks found located between the buildings Refer plate 30, plus the form of the canopies that originally extended from the south building to the waterfront Refer plate 31. By embracing these ideas in future design there could be merit with wayfinding elements and key shade canopies for community use.

The remaining infrastructure present at the time of the site visit is listed as:

- 1 x remaining Woolstores Shed (to be demolished)
- 1 x partially demolished Woolstores Shed
- 1 x internal local road (Woolstores Place)
- Overhead power lines
- Numerous large stockpiles of building waste

Limited modern infrastructure such as utilities, phone towers, wind turbines, or solar infrastructure exist.

The existing built form infrastructure dominates the landscape making the subject site unsightly due to excess material, demolition activities and construction fencing.



Plate 30 *Site image of embedded railway tracks*



Plate 29 *Site image of building waste stockpiles*



Plate 31 *Site image of remaining canopy structure form*

## 2.9 Existing Transport Routes

The subject site is surrounded by key transport routes including the current Albany Ring Road upgrade, Frenchman Bay Road, Lower Denmark Road, and Princess Royal Drive.

The main transport route will be Lower Denmark Road connecting to the Albany Ring Road upgrade with high frequency vehicle movement. Similarly, the Albany-Wagin Rail located to the north of the site will remain as a key rail transport route.

Woolstores Place is a low order road that is a dead end, narrow, un-kerbed local road providing residential access to lots 52-55 and the MEW site.

Refer plate 32.

It has been noted that the existing transport infrastructure within the site does not comply with current planning policies (particularly bush fire for emergency exit) and will need review for any future development proposals.

The existing transport routes within the subject site that form part of the visual landscape include

- Embedded old railway tracks (refer plate 30)
- Livestock races
- Asphalt access roads
- Gravel access roads (refer plate 33)
- Urban scale local road - Woolstores Place

The amount of traffic movement remains limited to local traffic and and contractors appointed for the Woolstores demolition works.



Plate 32 *Site image of Woolstores Place (eastern end)*



Plate 33 *Site image of access roads within the subject site*

# 3. THE EXISTING VISUAL CHARACTER

## 3.1 Landscape Character

The vegetated landscape character within the subject site is of minimal visual dominance. Single tree specimens do offer some visual amenity in this degraded environment but the dominant natural visual character is the water body of Princess Royal Harbour on the south which interfaces with the subject site.

Refer plate 34. Behind and to the north east of the subject site, Mt Melville is the dominant natural vegetated and landform character with lower order ridgelines and Mt Elphinstone. Refer plate 35.

Both the Harbour and Mt Melville frame the site as the foreground and background with huge visual and environmental importance. The subject site as it stands has no natural visual relationship, or manufactured relevance or aesthetic connection to the surrounding natural landscape character.

To the east, Albany town center is the key visual urban centre and Albany Port is the key visual industrial infrastructure. These areas do not form part of this landscape character assessment, but are mentioned for context and scale in comparison to the existing built form within the subject site. The Albany Port infrastructure is extremely dominant when viewed from Princess Royal Harbour and reveals that the existing Woolstores site, albeit a blight is of much lower order and scale. There is a historical and visual relationship between the Woolstores sheds and the Port infrastructure but this purely a functionality relationship.

Within the subject site the existing visual landscape character is described as degraded with an industrial landscape character. The large scale shed buildings, cleared areas for transport and minimal fringing vegetation create a visual blight.

Refer plate 36.



Plate 34 *Site image Princess Royal Harbour landscape character*



Plate 35 *Site image Mt Melville landscape character, natural granite*



Plate 36 *Site image subject site example of dominant industrial landscape character*



### 3.2 Significant Sites

The subject site has had an investigation under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972 Version 04-h0-00 Dec 2021 assessment, and it has been determined that there are no listed indigenous sacred sites of significance that include spiritual or culturally sensitive importance. There are however 2 heritage sites within proximity of the subject site listed as Point Melville Campsite and Frenchman Bay Road Camp.

The subject site forms part of the greater Bibbulmun Track and Munda-Biddi Track which do need to be maintained as part of the greater regions trail connections.

Refer plates 37 & 38.

Refer Figure 3: Site Opportunities Plan

The Menang people have been the traditional custodians of country around Albany and should be included in consultation of any development proposals.

### 3.3 Overall Landscape Experience of the Subject Site

Based on the assessment by the landscape architects that attended site, it is our view that the existing visual character can be described as:

- Poor, depressing and abandoned. Most of the land is cleared from native vegetation and the landform has been altered for industrial activities with a portion reclaimed from the natural harbour.
- The scale of the sheds is large and dominant for the size of the subject site (albeit they are being demolished). Concrete pads are vast.
- The south edge of the site is open with expansive views of the waterfront and harbour yet no defined accessibility is provided.
- There is little diversity and the site presents as uniform industrial and post pastoral land that is in disrepair.
- Textures are harsh, rough, and abrasive. The industrial man made structures are overbearing. Refer plate 39..
- The landform is flat, uninteresting, and dominated by the shed structures.
- Grid shapes and linear patterns are present from road and rail activities.



Plate 37 Mt Melville Lookout Image. various trails that have cultural significance



Plate 38 Site Image Bibbulmun and Munda Biddi Track sign



Plate 39 Site Image example of harsh textures

- Colours are industrial (asbestos, red brick and corrugated iron), and in high contrast to what would have been the natural environment here.
- The balance of the landscape is chaotic and disrupted with a huge influence from Woolstores activities. Native vegetation coverage is minimal and of poor health and form.
- The site is quiet and has a minimal human population, yet trucks dominate the vehicle movement pattern from demolition works and the Albany Ring Road construction. This is a temporary situation.
- The site as it exists has been left in a state of neglect and has little environmental or visual value. Refer plate 40.
- Key views of the site show no regard for the industrial sheds, roads or rail line having any relationship to the surrounding landform or landscape. The historical development has had no regard to environmental assets with no protection of the harbour due to the reclaimed land being installed. Key view from the subject site of Princess Royal Harbour are of extremely high value. Refer plate 41.
- The subject site is currently viewed as degraded with poor visual amenity and needs redevelopment to be site sensitive and responsive.

Refer Plate 42

Refer Figure 9 Photo Location Plan



Plate 40 *Site Image of current neglect*



Plate 41 *Site Image views south of Princess Royal Harbour*



Plate 42 *Site image Subject Site example of general site neglect and poor visual experience*

# 4. KEY VISUAL INDICATORS

## 4.1 Viewing Locations of Significance

Landscape indicators are visually dominant physical landmark objects that embody the landscape character whilst covering a high percentage of a persons visual perception.

The formulae for how this site is viewed is generally from moving vehicles around the periphery of the site, or from static vantage points around Princess Royal Harbour and the key static view from Mt Melville lookout. There is little to no ability to view the site as a pedestrian and public site access is restricted.

There are certain locations that a 'snapshot' of the site can be seen as encapsulating its key visual indicator or landmark. Plan E identified a number of areas that were deemed of high visual value and presented clear view sheds of the site.

*Refer Figure 7: Key Views of Site*

The subject site is highly visible from the following vantage points:

- Princess Royal Harbor
- Mt Melville lookout
- Princess Royal Drive
- Frenchman Bay Road and Woolstores Place west

Views from Princess Royal Harbor and Mt Melville are unobstructed views and will be maintained with no visual barriers proposed in the future. As such views of the site from these main vantage points need to be maintained with a sensitive response that relates to the context of surrounding character.

Views of the site from Princess Royal Drive are from moving vehicles and currently have visual buffers from the Albany-Wagin Rail, vegetation and built infrastructure outside the subject site. These elements are intended to remain in place. *Refer Plate 43.*

Views from Frenchman Bay Road will be altered after the Albany Ring Road upgrades are completed, and the main intersection with Woolstores Place show the landscape character of Mt Melville dominating the background of the subject site. *Refer Plate 44.*



**Plate 43 Google Street View of Woolstores Sheds as identified by the community (from Princess Royal Drive)**



**Plate 44 Site Image Woolstores Sheds as identified by the community (Woolstores Place (west))**

#### 4.2 Key Visual Landmark 1 - Woolstores Sheds

From all viewing locations listed in section 4.1, the Woolstores sheds remain the dominant physical feature. As stated they are currently under demolition but they are visually identifiable due to the large mass, contrasting building material to the surrounding landscape, consistent height and wide landtake over the subject site.

The industrial nature as already stated has no visual connection to the surrounding landscape of Mt Melville or Princess Royal Harbour, yet has the historical connection to the Albany Port, and an economical connection to Albany Town Centre.

The demolition of this key landscape indicator is not opposed, however the industrial landmark once removed will erase the significant history of this site. A possible response is the aim for retention of some of the infrastructure for re-use in future architectural built form or public realm (artwork/sculptures). Generally, the Woolstores sheds presence defines the recent history of the site. Although extremely visually poor, the industrial form, scale and materiality have been identifiable by the community as a hub of activity, employment and economic stability for the town of Albany which should not be completely lost in any redevelopment proposals. Refer plate 45.

#### 4.3 Key Visual Landmark 2 - Princess Royal Harbour (boundary of subject site)

The MEW site is viewed from numerous vantage points around Princess Royal Harbour. As one travels along Frenchman Bay Road there are many locations the shed structures can be seen across the water body as there are no visual barriers to prevent direct views.

Two key locations of these direct views are Rushy Point Reserve and the Princess Royal Sailing Club as they are current nodes of activity. As the existing shed structures are mainly light tones, they stand out against the vast water body that dominates the foreground of the subject site. As the water in Princess Royal Harbour can differ in clarity and shade seasonally, and throughout the day, the static nature of the sheds as they exist do not relate visually to this foreground landscape feature.

Once the sheds are removed, the state of the land will remain bare and unsightly from Princess Royal Harbour which still identifies this view of significance as extremely important for any future proposals for this site.

*Refer Figure 5: Key View Location and Surrounding Landform*

*Refer section 2.5*



*Plate 45 Site Image of current Woolstores Sheds as key visual landmark*

#### 4.4 Key Visual Landmark 3 - Mt Melville (outside subject site)

Mt Melville provides the best landform and landscape context unique to Albany which is closest in proximity to the subject site.

Mt Melville has a unique and site specific character with colours, natural elements (stone and endemic vegetation) and general height of the landform that contrasts with the subject site.

As the Mt Melville landform and landscape is protected, the colours and textures that exist here should exude out into the surrounding landscape which includes the MEW subject site.

Mt Melville should be viewed as the main visual tool and indicator for development to nestle into, as well as any proposed landscape designs to conform with.

By recognising this key natural landscape character, a visual connection could be created as part of future development proposals.

The view from Mt Melville lookout across the subject site could be softened from the existing scenario by adopting similar colour and materiality to Princess Royal Harbour and Mt Melville alike.

# 5. MANAGING THE VISUAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

## 5.1 Landscape Values

The landscape characteristics we believe the local community values are spaces of public realm with accessibility, shelter, recreation and being environmentally conscious or sensitive to their surroundings. Any private development including changes to land use zoning and built form generally also need to align with the ability for accessibility, safety, being environmentally conscious or sensitive to their surroundings.

This site has fantastic visual and potential physical connections to its surroundings. Princess Royal Harbour and Mt Melville being the dominant landscape characters (yet outside the subject site) can be harnessed in proposed redevelopment by adopting their visual characteristics.

The provision of an area of public realm that provides a connection to the water front is a key landscape value that needs to be managed through future design.

The subject site also has potential for visual cues related to the heritage of the site, and the opportunity to better connect to the natural landscape character of Mt Melville.

## 5.2 Site Responsive Design vs Best Practice

Plan E believe that any proposed development plans or designs for this site will need to be weighed carefully between the highly valued visual characters against current best practice urban design.

Some of the best practice urban design framework areas would include:

- Site responsive urban design with roads and development areas aligned to the contouring of the site. Refer plates 46 & 47. This does not preclude earthworks, but would prevent a flat cookie cutter approach applied to the entire site.
- Water Sensitive Urban Design, with on site drainage contained in swales and rain gardens, and limited detention basins proposed within public open space.
- Consideration of the asset lifespan that can cope at this exposed environment. Typical built form materials, or public realm and streetscape assets may not be suitable to the salt and wind exposure, nor be well used due to the exposed nature of the site. Sea level rise or areas of inundation need to be considered to prevent loss of public realm or built assets.
- Australian Standards for tree retention and protection. Tree and Root Protection Zones to be identified and retained in areas of public open space or conservation where possible.

- Bush Fire Management, increased construction standards for housing and the mitigation of fire risk through managed landscape buffers and low fuel zones.

- Universal access for all abilities and ages. Any development plans should promote public access for all ages and abilities.

Stakeholder input will be critical to help manage the visual landscape character with any proposed development applications lodged. Site responsive design may mean typical standards need to be assessed for a compromise between site values and local council or government agency standards.

Engagement with local community groups and indigenous groups to keep them informed of any development proposals and how these have been determined with the visual landscape character at the helm will need to be communicated and actioned.



Plate 46 **Example of site responsive design, Albany The Gap by DBCA**



Plate 47 **Example of site responsive design, Albany Entertainment Centre by Cox Architects**

### 5.3 Outline the Visual Management Objectives

Plan E have determined that by subdividing the existing landholdings, demolition of all industrial sheds, waste and material removal and increased road network legibility, the redevelopment of this site would offer numerous community and visual benefits. The degraded nature of this site could be better utilised by the local community and increased visual outlook from key locations could be created.

The following outlines what Plan E believe should form the visual management objectives for redevelopment of the site;

1. The standard 10% allowance of land dedicated for public open space should be adopted as a minimum to open this site to the community, with connection to Princess Royal Harbour foreshore being a key objective. New pedestrian links with an enhanced connectivity network through the subject site and to surrounding sites where possible would benefit the community. The use of landscape to soften built form, and to provide natural shade and shelter in an exposed environment needs to be adopted for public realm comfort.
2. Any development proposals for this site will need to consider the existing condition of the sites soil, and condition of existing trees and vegetation. Contamination of topsoil may require alteration to existing levels impacting on the ability to retain trees particularly adjacent lot 52. Retention of existing trees needs to be assessed in further detail through arborist inspections. Retention of trees should be prioritised where possible.
3. Retention of the foreshore zone with protective setbacks to development and protection of the TEC Saltmarsh is required. Visual connectivity to the foreshore is needed with education of the TEC environment. It is understood that DWER would support this outcome.
4. Coastal inundation is a key assessment for the longevity of any future redevelopment and levels of the existing site need to be reviewed against potential future inundation. If major level alterations are needed, this could impact key view sheds and usability of the site.
5. Changes to the current road network within the subject site aiming to increase connectivity and legibility is essential. Key views directed towards Princess Royal Harbour, one of the main visual assets should be maintained through more north-south connections (pedestrian and vehicle).
6. Local context and the provision of design guidelines to control built form and landscape design with materials to be complimentary to the surrounding natural landscape character of Mt Melville and Princess Royal Harbour. Separate visual assessments for future development applications should be mandated to ensure this objective is managed. Any built form proposed should aim to blend into the surrounding natural landscape and have a narrative with the site's history or the greater Albany context.
7. View sheds from Mt Melville lookout, Rushy Point and Princess Royal Harbour need to be protected and maintained where possible. As with any proposed structure plan development, the urban design and built form outcome will need to respond to the key views of the subject site.
8. Responds to the surrounding scale and harbour built form styles or port infrastructure. Stepped heights, apertured massing and varying facade protrusions for built form needs to be considered to prevent massed building form and height development.
9. Use a colour and material palette that ties into the surrounding landscape of Mt Melville towards the north with neutral tones, greys and greens. The south side should have a colour palette of more grey tones to align with the water or Princess Royal Harbour. By adopting similar colours and tones of these natural landscapes proposed development should blend into the existing landscape. By using natural materials such as stone and timber this reflects the natural landscape character of Albany. This could also encourage local materials being used with a lower carbon footprint.
10. Use a variety of textures such as cladding, perforated materials and etched finishes to soften hard built structures. Built form to have variations in facade profile to prevent any solid massing (preventing similar form the sheds previously exhibited). The industrial vernacular can be referenced through the use of textural architectural finishes that can reference the history of the site but need to be selectively located and applied.
11. Limit use of bright or reflective materials preventing glare from vantage points outside the subject site.
12. use landscape features to soften built form where possible, including landscape features at height (roof top, balcony terraces) again assisting to blend structures with the surrounding landscape.

# 6. THE PROPOSED STRUCTURE PLAN

## 6.1 General

Rowe Group have prepared a Local Structure Plan (LSP) that includes the location of new medium-high density development sites, public open spaces and streetscape or public realm connectivity to create a destination centre.

The location of public open space and development sites are driven by the identified visual landscape character with key connection and views directed towards Princess Royal Harbour. These are identified by the north-south links between development sites that will be pedestrian oriented spaces and maintained view sheds to the water.

The structure plan is divided into two key precincts, the southern area contains mixed use (R160) sites proposed on the south closest to the water frontage, with further mixed use sites (R50-R100) as the secondary zoning.

The southern precinct is proposed as a visitor destination zone providing accommodation, entertainment, cultural, commercial, retail and tourism uses. This includes a key activity node sited in the protected south east corner adjacent the crown land reserve lot 402.

The second precinct to the north of the subject site proposes two larger Neighbourhood Centre sites which would include employment generating commercial development with potential supporting low to medium density development.

Pockets of open space are proposed to soften development sites and encourage public use and circulation between and around the proposed development sites.

The development plan also includes retention of the existing foreshore area and a widened public open space zone along the waterfront. This addresses the retention of the tidal Saltmarsh area, providing a buffer to the development sites and the ability to provide a key visual connection to the harbour.

*Refer Rowe Group Proposed Structure Plan*

*Refer Plate 48*

## 6.2 Possible Visual Impacts for Development Sites

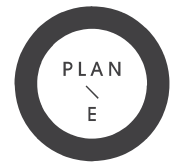
The proposed local structure plan development sites located in the southern zone fronting Princess Royal Harbour indicates built form heights varying up to 6-8 storeys. This is subject to meeting further requirements including compliance with design guidelines and a separate visual assessment at development application stage.

This height of 6-8 storeys is of a larger scale compared to the existing built form shed heights and the visual impact needs to be managed carefully for this scale. A positive to this height of development is the creation of a landmark that can be identified by the community as a destination if the visual outcome of built form is managed appropriately with the landscape character of Mt Melville and surrounding landscape character.

Built form of 6-8 storeys can have a lower visual impact for the key views (Princess Royal Harbour and Mt Melville lookout), with development marginally higher than the Albany Ring Road works but not of a scale that will prevent views being obstructed from the key view locations. Compared to the ridgeline to the north of the site, development of 6-8 storeys will be lower and thus has a low impact when viewed from Princess Royal Harbour and Rushy Point. It is recommended that proposed built form fronting the waterline is managed through design outcomes to limit the visual impact and prominence. The main view shed of Princess Royal Harbour and views of the site from the southern key locations (Rushy Point) should at development application stage address the objectives outlined in section 5.2 and 5.3.



*Plate 48 Example of landscape buffering and softening density sites. Plan E*



Similarly, proposed development sites adjacent Princess Royal Drive and in the northern end of the subject site will need to be managed from the key view shed at Mt Melville lookout. Portal views between and around built form must be considered to protect the view shed of the harbour from Mt Melville lookout.

### **6.3 Landscape response to mitigate Visual Impacts for Development Sites**

To minimise the visual impact of proposed development sites, Plan E have prepared a concept landscape masterplan that will assist to soften proposed built form, increase connectivity and community visitation plus enable a visual character to be considered that will minimise the visual impact of development internally and from surrounding vantage points.

*Refer Landscape Masterplan and General theming approach and imagery sheets*

As an overview, there is the provision of 12.4% of open space dedicated for public realm use in the proposed LSP. Open space, pedestrian routes and streetscapes have been located to increase legibility and connectivity within the site. Numerous north-south links are included to increase connectivity to the water front with the north-south view sheds being maintained between density sites. The width of these access ways provide sufficient space to protect the views of the Harbour whilst also encouraging pedestrian resting nodes and sheltered spaces that should be designed with the private space setbacks to buildings matching the public realm landscape treatments.

The western edge of the LSP is dominated with public realm and landscape opportunities that will provide a visual buffer as viewed from the intersection of Frenchman Bay Road and Woolstores Place. By having a dedicated landscape buffer in this areas, it will encourage retention of existing trees where viable, water sensitive urban design measures with roadside swales, meandering pedestrian links and community gathering spaces with new amenity. As the western and south western edge is the most exposed from wind, having this edge heavily vegetated to provide protection would increase the comfort level of these open space areas.

The proposed east-west streetscape links are also designed to be heavily dominated by landscaping with street trees to provide shade and wind protection, further roadside or median island swales and pockets of retained trees again where viable. All streetscapes have clear pathways providing universal access to the key public realm amenity and could cater for pedestrians and bikes.

The southern edge of the site proposes a public realm promenade elevated from the tidal coastal vegetation that offers seated viewing nodes, shaded and protected resting areas and the ability for signage or interpretive information on the sites history or environmental importance of the TEC Saltmarsh area.

A key activity node being proposed on the south-east corner of the site would benefit with an upgrade to the adjacent Crown Reserve on lot 402 which could provide a further public open space for active recreation to support the activity node. This space would again provide a buffer to built form from views along Princess Royal Drive and Princess Royal Harbour. New shade tree planting could make this site much more inviting and comfortable encouraging community use, however this will be subject to ongoing native title negotiations. This proposal should be developed in consultation with indigenous groups, DPLH and coastal engineers to ensure a well considered outcome.

Meandering road pavements are also proposed in the landscape masterplan to slow traffic, encourage shared spaces with pedestrians and increase tree planting within the road reserve. Meandering road pavements will also provide changing view corridors and also prevent standard grid like road infrastructure outcomes which could have an impact on visual outcomes.



# 7. THE VISUAL MANAGEMENT MEASURES

## 7.1 General

The Rowe Group Local Structure Plan includes the following design considerations to increase the visual aesthetic which is imperative for a good visual and site design outcome:

1. Site Responsive Design: retaining the general fall of the land where possible, and urban design integrates with, and enhances connectivity to the foreshore.

Limited earthworking or manipulation of the landform has been considered to limit visual impact against peripheral sites.

2. Environmentally Responsive Design: retaining the TEC tidal Saltmarsh vegetation on the west and including interpretive signs and education to ensure this area remains protected.

3. Water Sensitive Urban Design including, designing streetscapes to cater for initial first flush storm events and minimising drainage basins in open space areas.

4. Increasing community visitation to this site with creation of tourism sites, better physical connectivity through legible street and pedestrian networks, and enhancing the visual connectivity with Princess Royal Harbour through retaining views of the waterfront.

5. Providing amenity to benefit the Albany community through variety in mixed use and open space sites. A variety in built form height and scale has also been considered with the visual character (Princess Royal Harbour and Mt Melville) at the forefront.

## 7.2 Risks for increased Visual Impacts

The areas where risk of increased visual impact within the proposed structure plan and masterplan design have been identified as;

1. Local council design policies around public open space provisions could alter the ability to soften built form through landscape treatments. The proposed upgrade to lot 402 Crown Land would hugely benefit the redevelopment however this could be constrained by policy and native title negotiations.

2. Lack of clear Design Guidelines for any development sites, and lack of mandated or reviewed architectural or public realm proposed detail designs would have a significant impact on the visual character.

Any future design proposals would need strict adherence to site responsive design measures and management objective outlined in section 5.3.

3. Engineering or service driven design responses altering existing site levels, or introducing significant infrastructure creating visual blights.

4. Lack of further visual impact assessments during development application stage.

5. Climate Change creating impacts on tidal or sea level rise, bush fire management or designing for extreme events may limit a great visual outcome.

## 7.3 Local Structure Plan 'Part 1'

The Rowe Group Local Structure Plan 'Part 1' includes the following recommendations from a Planning perspective to manage risks for increased visual impacts;

1. Requirement for visual impact assessment to be submitted with any development application proposing development at greater than six (6) storeys.

2. Any development above six (6) storeys is limited to a floor plate maximum representing 35% of site area which along with point 1, would respond to the objectives of section 5.3.

3. Requirement for development to demonstrate an aesthetic that responds sensitively to its surrounding environment and landscape character through building design, form and materiality, consistent with the objectives of section 5.3.

4. Requirement for streets to be designed to respond to this visual landscape assessment, proposed landscape intent and design principles included within the Structure Plan (Part 1 and 2) and objectives in section 5.3.

# 8. FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

## 8.1 General

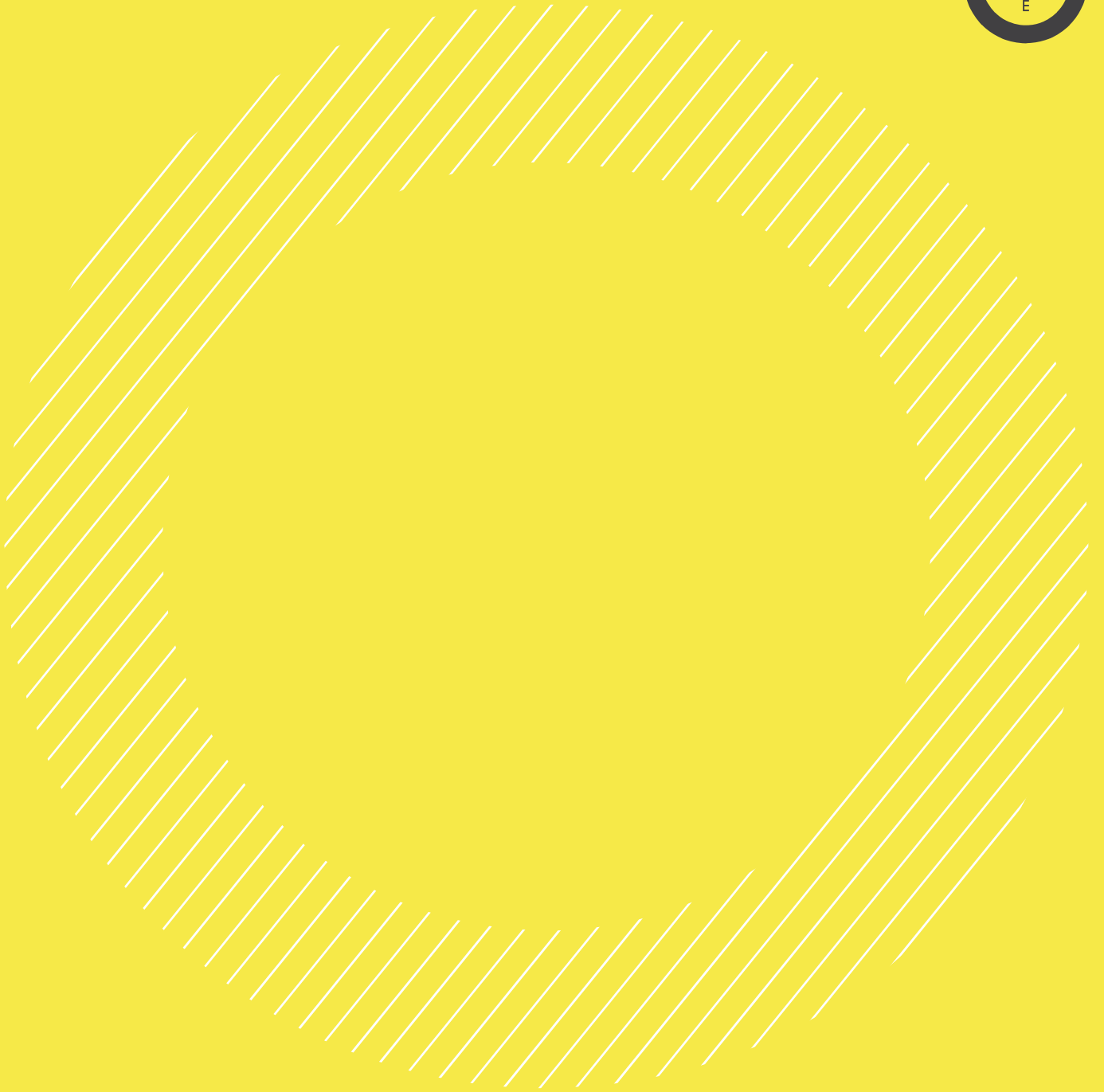
The MEW site is a key site within the greater Albany town centre due to its history and economic importance. The site is well recognised by locals and tourists alike due to its location along the major tourist route from Albany town centre to The Gap. The site is visually identifiable and recognised from well used vantage points but the perception of the site as a neglected eyesore for many years after providing great economic benefit to the town has created a sad recent history.

The neglect of the site has created a visual blight but also a restricted key location which if re-developed could create a new and unique destination for the community and tourists. This would provide huge benefits locally with the provision of new public realm amenity and potentially regionally through commercial opportunities. This would have a flow on effect for local employment and possible retention of youth in this community.

As with any visual study perceptions, personal views and opinions will generally ignite debate on what is best for any site. For a minimised visual impact for this site and its surroundings the information in this report provides guidance and recommendations from a Landscape Architectural profession. These recommendations may change over time as standards, policies and innovative design responses are developed. As such, responses for recommendations or guiding objectives to minimise visual impact will need to be negotiated with all relevant and involved stakeholders for and surrounding the subject site.

Plan E would like to acknowledge the traditional Whadjuk owners of this land, past, present and emerging. We strive to achieve the best landscape architectural outcomes for all within our communities.

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