WALKA WATER WORKS MASTER PLAN

PREPARED BY
TERRAS LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS, EJE & RAMBOLL
FOR

maitland
city council

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL OWNERS AND COUNTRY

We acknowledge the Aboriginal peoples as the First Peoples of this Country and the Wonnarua People as the Traditional Custodians, Owners and knowledge holders of the land and waterways within the Maitland Local Government Area. We pay respect to all Aboriginal Elders, past and present and respect the unbroken deep cultural and spiritual connection Aboriginal people have with this Country.

WHO WE ARE

The heart of the Hunter:

Maitland is a city evolving – family friendly, welcoming, and proud of its heritage. Centrally located in the heart of the Hunter region, we offer the perfect blend of city convenience with a warm country charm.

We embrace new opportunities and growth, making Maitland a dynamic place to live, work, enjoy and succeed.

Almost 96,000 people call Maitland home, and we welcome around 2,000 new people each year. By 2041, we expect about 145,000 people to call our city home.

The Wonnarua and Guringai Peoples are the Traditional Keepers and Custodians of the lands within the Maitland LGA.

It is one of the oldest regional centres in Australia, built on the banks of the Hunter River. The Hunter River winds its way through the countryside and the city, offering a beautiful backdrop to our daily lives.

OUR SHARED VISION

"A connected city with thriving communities"

We've built our shared vision for Maitland upon four key focus areas: Liveable Maitland, Sustainable Maitland, Vibrant Maitland, and Achieving Together. These focus areas form the foundation of our Maitland's Future vision and represent our Strategic Framework, guiding us toward a thriving, connected city.

Maitland's Future is the highest-level plan that we prepare. Its purpose is to identify the community's main priorities and aspirations for the future and plan strategies for achieving these goals. Maitland's Future guides all other strategies and plans and must be developed with and on behalf of the community.

Some priorities identified in the development of Maitland's Future include:

- Creating a Liveable Maitland - we are committed to creating great neighbourhoods that thrive on connectivity by offering a mix of housing, accessible open spaces, and essential services. Together, we aim to ensure a high quality of life for everyone.
- Creating a Vibrant Maitland- we honour our history while embracing the future by blending past and present, ensuring the city reflects our pride and enhances community life through vibrant arts, cultural events, and sports that celebrate diversity, foster personal growth, and strengthen community identity.
- Creating a Vibrant Maitland by ensuring a diverse local economy through investment attraction.

WALKA WATER WORKS

Walka Water Works is a much-loved site for the Maitland community, owned by Crown Lands, it has been managed by Maitland City Council since 2007. The former industrial site set on 64 hectares, is the largest publicly accessible green space in the Maitland area making it a special space in the Lower Hunter.

THE MASTER PLAN

Maitland City Council engaged Ramboll Group as Principal Planning Consultant to undertake the necessary work required to commence this planning process. Council is committed to the remediation, restoration, and revitalisation of the Walka Water Works to ensure that Walka Water Works remains a special place for everyone.

WALKA WATER WORKS

ADDRESS: 55 SCOBIES LANE, OAKHAMPTON HEIGHTS, CITY OF MAITLAND, NEW SOUTH WALES

DESCRIPTION: MASTER PLAN

VERSION: 1.0 (DRAFT)

HERITAGE LISTING: 00466, I222, 1250, 196 & NTN.05/77

PREPARED BY: RAMBOLL, TERRAS & EJE ARCHITECTURE

PREPARED FOR: MAITLAND CITY COUNCIL

ISSUE DATE: 25 March 2025

EJE ARCHITECTURE

RAMBOLL

TERRAS LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

CONTENTS

01
OVERVIEW

Background

Supporting Documents

Master Plan Overview

02
CONTEXT

Overview

History

Walka Water Works Today

Community Input

Key Policy Documents

Visitor Economy and Economic Development

03
SITE ANALYSIS

Site Context

Landscape, Ecology and Vegetation

Water

Aboriginal Heritage

European Heritage

Current Site Usage and Recreation

Connectivity and Access

Flooding and Emergency Access

Bushfire Risk

Contamination and Remediation

04
MASTER PLAN

Vision

Planning principles

Overview

Pumphouse

Pedestrian Street, Forecourt and South Lawn

Filter Beds and North Lawn

Wider Site

Adventure Play

Western Penninsula

Plantning Palette

Signage

Lighting

Site Furniture and Materials

Mobility

05
STAGING

Overview

Master Plan: Stage 0

Master Plan: Stage 1

Master Plan: Stage 2

Master Plan: Stage 3

Pumphouse Staging

RAMBOLL

EJE Integrity Innovation Inspiration

terras landscape architects

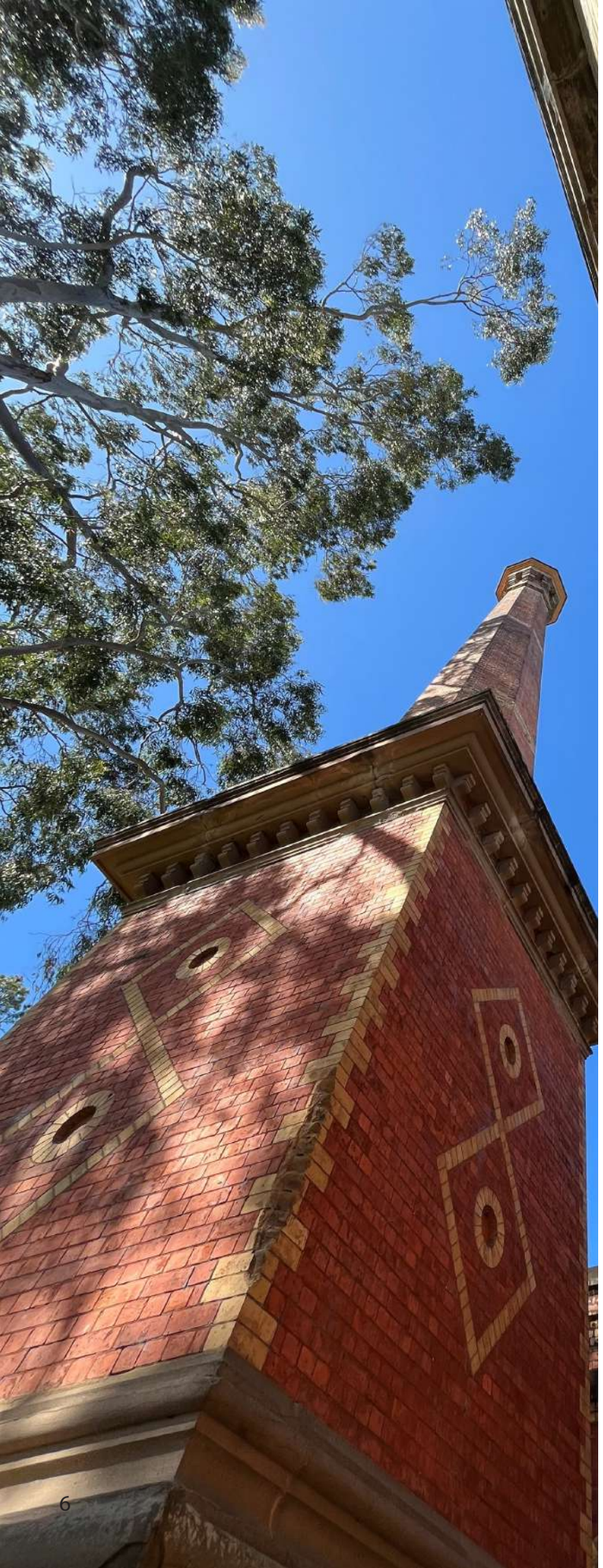
01 OVERVIEW

The Walka Water Works Master Plan establishes a new long-term vision for one of Maitland's most significant open spaces and heritage assets. Maitland City Council is committed to the remediation of Walka Water Works, restoring its former use and enhancing it as a vibrant recreational destination that balances heritage conservation, environmental protection, and community use. This plan outlines a staged approach to remediate, restore, and enhance the site, ensuring its continued significance as a recreational, cultural, and natural asset for current and future generations.

VISION

Walka Water Works: The Heart of Healthy Maitland

Walka Water Works will become a revitalised open space and community destination combining heritage, nature, and wellness. It will celebrate its past while offering diverse recreational opportunities that strengthen community connections and enhance wellbeing for both residents and visitors.



BACKGROUND

Walka Water Works is a 64-hectare Crown Reserve located approximately 2km northwest of Maitland city centre. The site comprises a heritage-listed 19th century industrial complex alongside bushland and a substantial water reservoir, creating a unique blend of cultural and natural values.

Walka Water Works provided the first reliable water supply to the Lower Hunter Valley from 1887 until 1925. This remarkable industrial complex includes a finely executed polychrome brick pumphouse and chimney and an extensive water filtration system. Following its decommissioning as a water treatment facility, the site was repurposed as a temporary power station to address post-war electricity shortages, operating from 1951 to 1976.

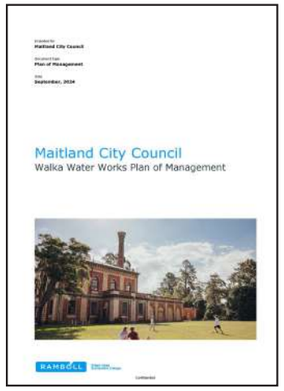
The site is listed on the NSW State Heritage Register in recognition of its exceptional historical, aesthetic, and technical significance. Beyond its heritage value, Walka Water Works has evolved into a valued recreational space for the Maitland community, offering walking trails, picnic areas, and wildlife observation opportunities around the reservoir, which is home to numerous bird species. The site has been a Crown Reserve since 1984, when it was gazetted (Reserve No. 97511) for the Public Purpose of 'Preservation of Historical Sites and Buildings.

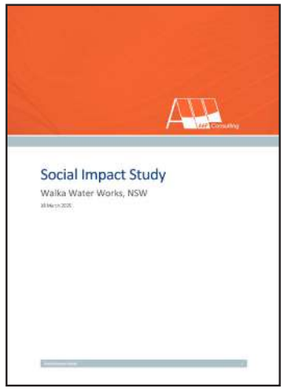
In recent years, the site's infrastructure has deteriorated, and its built fabric has not been adequately maintained. In 2022, asbestos contamination was discovered in areas between the pumphouse and reservoir, leading to the site's complete closure in February 2022. While the site was partially reopened in December 2022, several areas, along with the historic pumphouse, remain closed for public safety reasons.

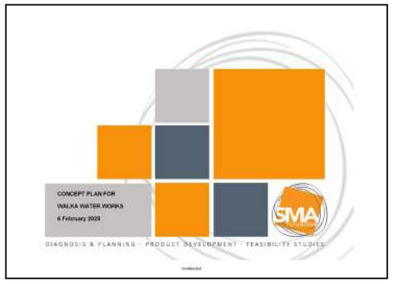
Maitland City Council is now planning for the remediation, restoration, and revitalisation of the Walka Water Works site. The immediate priority is addressing asbestos contamination to restore full site access, alongside seismic stabilisation works to enable safe use of the pumphouse building. These will be followed by broader improvements to enhance the site's amenity and usability for the community.

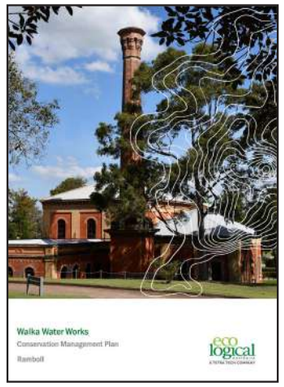
The Master Plan represents a change in direction from previous planning for Walka Water Works. The site was identified as a Priority Destination Hub in the 2020 Destination Management Plan (DMP), with a vision to become an 'iconic' visitor destination, including overnight accommodation. Reflecting feedback from the community, the new Master Plan places greater emphasis on community use and passive recreation rather than the creation of an iconic destination, and plans for overnight accommodation have been removed. The Master Plan includes more appropriate small-scale commercial elements that will help activate the site and support long-term financial sustainability.

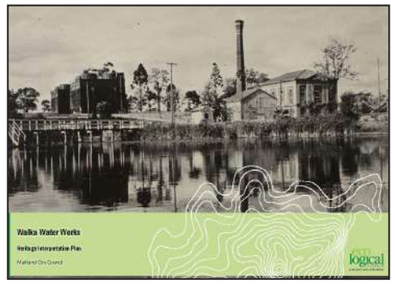
SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

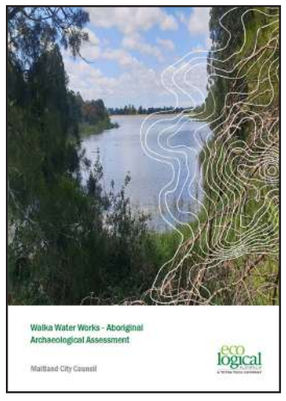


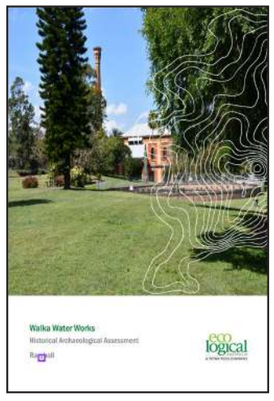












This Master Plan has been underpinned by extensive research, analysis, and community engagement. It forms part of a suite of planning documents that collectively guide the future of Walka Water Works, including:

- **Plan of Management:** Outlines governance, use, and management of the Crown Reserve.
- **Social Impact Study:** Documents community consultation outcomes and potential community benefits.
- **Concept Plan:** Outlines proposed concepts for future site use, cost estimates, and financial and visitation forecasts which have informed the Master Plan.
- **Conservation Management Plan:** Establishes heritage significance and conservation policies.
- **Heritage Interpretation Plan:** Outlines strategies to communicate cultural and historical values.
- **Aboriginal Archaeological Assessment:** Identifies and protects Aboriginal archaeological sites and cultural heritage.
- **Historical Archaeological Assessment:** Documents non-Aboriginal archaeological values and management approaches.

Community input has been integral to the Master Plan's development, and has been gathered through surveys, interviews, and community events.

MASTER PLAN

The Walka Water Works Master Plan will transform this significant historical site into a vibrant community destination where visitors can connect with nature, appreciate local history, and engage in activities promoting physical and mental wellbeing.

The revitalised pumphouse will become a focal point providing food and beverage offerings, function and community spaces, and wellness-related uses. The surroundings of the pumphouse will feature new amenities and an enhanced public realm that enables community use, including a pedestrian street and forecourt, interpretive landscaping around the historic filter beds, and improved recreational amenities. Across the broader site, the plan prioritises environmental protection while enhancing walking trails and nature-based recreation that support community health and wellbeing.

The Master Plan presents a long-term vision with a staged implementation strategy. This begins with essential remediation and public safety works, followed by restoration of former site uses and enhancement for local recreation, and then the creation of an expanded offer including food and beverage and visitor activities.

KEY FEATURES

1. **Remediation:** remediate asbestos contaminated areas as a priority to allow safe reopening of the site
2. **Revitalised Pumphouse Complex:** with adaptive reuse for café, functions, and wellness activities
3. **Pedestrian Street & Forecourt:** a new gathering space at the heart of the site, connecting the pumphouse and reservoir
4. **South Lawn Recreation Area:** family space with picnic facilities and water play
5. **Interpretive Landscaping of Historic Filter Beds:** landscape treatment revealing former water filtration functions
6. **Nature-Based Adventure Play:** potential low-impact adventure activities
7. **Reactivated Miniature Railway:** reactivation and potential extension
8. **Upgraded Path and Trail Network:** including all-weather surfaces, signage and seating
9. **Environmental Enhancements:** including riparian restoration and habitat creation
10. **Open Areas:** Spaces for large groups to meet, socialise, and enjoy recreational activities.
11. **Main Entry:** including signage and information centre
12. **New Access Points:** new entry points improving connectivity and emergency access
13. **Morpeth to Walka Shared Pathway:** connection to dedicated cycle and pedestrian path
14. **Reconfigured Parking:** including new offsite parking area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02 CONTEXT

OVERVIEW

Walka Water Works embodies multiple layers of historic significance, from its Aboriginal heritage to its industrial past as a vital water supply facility. Today it serves as a valued recreational and community space within Maitland. The Master Plan responds to community priorities for heritage conservation, environmental protection, and accessible recreation while aligning with broader policy objectives for the region.

HISTORY

Walka Water Works represents a convergence of Aboriginal heritage, European settlement history, industrial innovation, and evolving community use. From its origins on Wonnarua Country to its present status as a valued community asset, the site embodies the layered story of Maitland and the Hunter Region.

Maitland and the surrounding area has a long history and significance in Australia. The area's original inhabitants are the people of the Wonnarua Nation, 'people of the hills and the plains'. Bordering nations and clans include Worimi, Darkinjung, Kamilaroi, Geawegal, Gringai, Awabakal and Wiradjuri.
Aboriginal people have lived in the Hunter Valley for at least 20,000 years, developing deep knowledge of the landscape and its resources.

European settlement began in approximately 1818, with Maitland quickly becoming central to trade and the growth of the Hunter Region. As one of Australia's oldest regional centres, Maitland possesses a rich built heritage dating back to the early 1800s, creating a diverse tapestry of iconic heritage sites and historic villages.

Built in 1885, Walka Water Works stands as one of the most significant and intact late 19th century public industrial works in NSW. Its state heritage listing recognises its exceptional historical, aesthetic, and technical significance.
The facility provided the Lower Hunter Valley with its first permanent water supply from 1887 until 1923, marking a transformative moment in the region's development.

1830s

Lands grants for the site area was given and occupied by four landholders. Majority of the land is given to Houston Mitchell, whom ackowledged that the land was used by Aboriginal people prior to his arrival and named it Walka.

1840s

'The Gardens', a part of the Walka site, was settled by Michael Scobie in 1840s. The Scobie family lived and managed 'the Gardens' through the 19th century.

1887-1892

1881 - 1925

Walka Water Works was constructed between 1881 and 1925 under at least 14 contracts. Its engineering significance was highlighted by visits from interested groups in 1899, 1910, 1916, and 1923.

1835-1881

The Walka Estate is placed for sale in multiple times from 1835 up till 1881 when it is resumed by the State Government for the Water Works.

1885

1880s

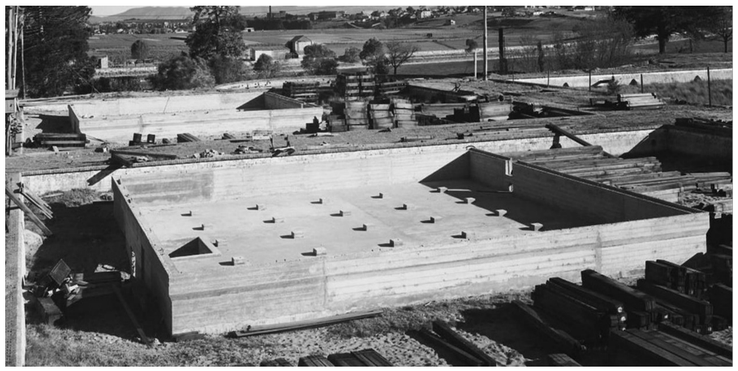
Fundings for the Walka Scheme was confirmed on 21 October 1880 after a long process. The Walka Scheme was proposed and largely driven by William Clark.

1913

Construction occurred throughout the 1880s, with the main pumping complex operating until the 1940s. The completion of Chichester Dam in 1924 rendered Walka Water Works largely redundant, though it was maintained in standby mode as a contingency water supply until 1931.

The site found new purpose in 1951 when the Electricity Commission repurposed it as a temporary power station during post-war electricity shortages, operating until 1976. Following decommissioning, the site gradually transitioned to recreational use, hosting weddings, community events, and passive recreation.

In February 2022, the discovery of asbestos contamination from power station demolition materials forced closure of the site. While most areas reopened in December 2022, the South Lawn remains closed due to asbestos contamination. The historic pumphouse also remains closed pending stabilisation works to the historic chimney to address seismic safety concerns.



1952

1950s - 1978

Dormant since the late 1930s, the site was chosen for a temporary power station in 1951 due to post-WWII power shortages. The Power Station operated from 1954, went on standby in the early 1970s, was decommissioned in 1976, and demolished in 1978.

2000s

2022

Walka Water Works area closed to the public due to asbestos contamination and later partially reopened. The pumphouse was also closed in 2022 due to deterioration of building condition.

1920s - 1950s

The completion of Chichester Dam in 1924 made Walka Water Works redundant. During World War II, it served as an emergency supply, but the machinery was in poor condition by 1943. The pumps closed in 1945, and in 1946, the site was offered for sale for potential park or guest house use.

post 1952

1970s - 2000s

The Power Station was decommissioned in 1975 and demolished in 1976. Landscaping transformed the site into a public amenity, managed by a trust formed in 1984. ‘Work for dole’ schemes in the 1990s and 2000s contributed to the effort. The pumphouse’s ground floor housed a café and a small museum with a scale model of the water works.

2000s

WALKA WATER WORKS TODAY

Walka Water Works currently serves as a vital recreational space for the Maitland community, offering cherished opportunities for recreation despite its partial closure due to asbestos contamination. As one of the few large-scale open spaces in the Maitland area, the site holds particular significance for a growing population seeking connection with nature and outdoor activity.

The site is especially known for its walking trails circling the reservoir, which have attracted regular users including the popular Park Run event, drawing approximately 400 participants weekly throughout the year.

The reservoir and surrounding natural areas provide diverse habitats, making Walka a significant destination for birdwatchers, nature photographers, and wildlife enthusiasts. The tranquil setting and variety of environments support numerous bird species, creating opportunities for nature appreciation and quiet contemplation. Educational groups have frequently utilised the site, leveraging its unique combination of historical, industrial, and ecological values for immersive learning experiences.

Prior closure in 2022, parts of the pumphouse building were also used for special events and bookings, including weddings that took advantage of the site's picturesque setting and distinctive heritage character.

The ground floor of the pumphouse formerly operated as a café and housed a small museum featuring a scale model of the waterworks. A miniature railway built in 1996 once offered visitors a twenty-minute journey winding along the reservoir edge, crossing a bridge and meandering through native vegetation, providing an engaging way to experience the site's natural beauty.

COMMUNITY INPUT

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community and stakeholder engagement has been integral to developing the Walka Water Works Master Plan and Plan of Management. This consultation – documented in full in the accompanying Social Impact Study – has gathered ideas and priorities from diverse stakeholders to ensure the Master Plan reflects community values and aspirations.

ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Multiple engagement methods captured diverse community perspectives:

- **Online Survey:** Gathered 548 responses through the Maitland "YourSay" website between September and October 2024.
- **Interactive Mapping Tool:** Received 101 contributions from 28 contributors on the Maitland "YourSay" website.
- **Community Pop-ups:** Representatives from Council and consultants engaged with 40 members of the public at the Maitland River Lights Festival and Maitland Park Run in October 2024.
- **Semi-structured Interviews:** Nine interviews were conducted with residents living closest to the site, primarily from Oakhampton Heights and Oakhampton.
- **Community Liaison Group Meetings:** Sessions held with community representatives to provide project updates, present engagement outcomes, and gather feedback on emerging Master Plan elements.

WHAT WE HEARD AND HOW WE RESPONDED

Community Feedback	Master Plan Response
Opposition to Over-Commercialisation: Strong preference for maintaining Walka as a tranquil, nature-integrated space, with significant opposition to large-scale commercial development including overnight visitor accommodation.	The Master Plan has repositioned the vision for Walka Water Works to prioritise community use and passive recreation, rather than the creation of an 'iconic' visitor destination. The Plan includes smaller-scale commercial elements that are compatible with the site's character and support its activation. Overnight accommodation is excluded.
Heritage Preservation and Interpretation: Strong attachment to Walka's history, prioritising restoration of the pumphouse and educational elements highlighting the site's industrial heritage.	The Master Plan prioritises conservation and interpretation of the pumphouse and other heritage assets. Landsacping reveals aspects of the site's industrial history through treatment of features such as the filter beds.
Recreational Use and Family-Friendly Amenities: Support for enhancing the site as an accessible, family-friendly recreational space with basic amenities including picnic areas, shaded seating, and smaller-scale food options.	The plan enhances recreational spaces with improved amenities, picnic areas, playspaces, and walking trails.
Small-Scale Community Events: Favour for small-scale, community-focused events aligned with the site's tranquil character, such as seasonal markets, outdoor picnics, and cultural performances.	The Master Plan provides spaces for small-scale community events, including a pedestrian street to accommodate markets and gathering, and function space in the pumphouse serving weddings and other events.
Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Enhancement: Protection of Walka as a natural reserve and important wildlife habitat, particularly for diverse bird species.	The Master Plan protects ecologically sensitive areas and prioritises environmental conservation, including through ongoing tree and weed management, riparian restoration, and habitat creation initiatives. Bird watching hides and interpretive elements will support nature appreciation.

KEY POLICY DOCUMENTS

Hunter Regional Plan 2041

The Hunter Regional Plan 2041 guides land use planning across ten local government areas, aiming to unlock sustainable growth opportunities, investments, and lifestyle amenities. Of its four core principles, the "Community" principle most directly relates to Walka, emphasising the importance of "weaving nature into our towns and cities" and creating "welcoming, safe streets and public spaces." The plan identifies the Hunter's potential to become a leading destination for sustainable nature-based and cultural tourism within the Six Cities Region. Walka Water Works, with its blend of heritage assets and natural landscapes, can contribute to this vision through nature- based tourism offerings and integrated walking and cycling networks that allow visitors to engage intimately with nature.

Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan

This plan guides growth across five connected urban areas (Cessnock, Lake Macquarie, Maitland, Newcastle and Port Stephens), positioning Greater Newcastle as Australia's leading regional economy. The plan's four outcomes include enhancing environment, amenity and resilience for quality of life, and improving connections to jobs, services and recreation.

Maitland is identified as part of Greater Newcastle's tourism network, with Walka Water Works having the opportunity to complement other cultural assets like the Maitland Regional Art Gallery in enhancing the area's appeal for residents and visitors alike.

Maitland Destination Management Plan 2020-2030

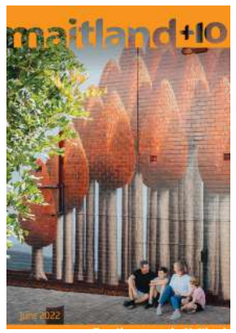
The Destination Management Plan guides the growth of Maitland's visitor economy over a 10-year period. Developed in consultation with the community, tourism operators, local businesses and the broader industry, it identifies Walka Water Works as one of five priority destination hubs for the city.

The original DMP vision for the site was for it to become an iconic visitor attraction with active day use as well as an overnight destination for nature-based tourism, weddings, functions and events. While the Master Plan has evolved from this initial concept based on community feedback, it retains elements that support the site's role in attracting visitors and enhancing Maitland's visitor economy.

Maitland Local Strategic Planning Statement 2040+

This 20-year land use vision reflects community aspirations for Maitland's future, planning for population growth of 27,400 (33%) between 2018 and 2040. The statement recognises the visitor economy as an important economic contributor built on local attractions, flagship events, and built and natural heritage. Walka Water Works is specifically identified as a key project within the Western Precinct, described as "a regional recreational space, offering parkland, bushland, and a lagoon surrounding the historic Walka Water Works, with significant opportunity for the visitor economy."

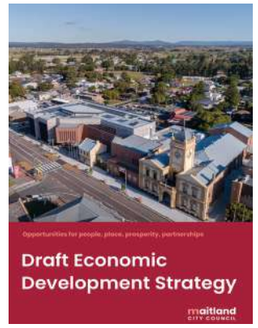
Maitland +10 (Community Strategic Plan)



The ten-year Community Strategic Plan captures the community's vision through four overarching themes. Walka offers opportunities to advance these themes by:

- Creating spaces for connection, relaxation, and celebration of cultural heritage
- Showcasing iconic attractions and hosting diverse events
- Promoting environmental education and sustainable practices
- Enabling community participation in shaping the city's future

Economic Development Strategy



The forthcoming Economic Development Strategy is expected to position Maitland as a healthy place to live, work, and visit. Walka Water Works, with its focus on wellbeing, recreation, and natural values, aligns strongly with this direction and can serve as a flagship demonstration of Council's commitment to enhancing quality of life.

VISITOR ECONOMY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

EVOLVING VISION FOR WALKA WATER WORKS

Walka Water Works is identified as one of five priority destination hubs in Council's Destination Management Plan 2020-2030 (DMP), with a vision for creating an 'iconic' visitor attraction with overnight accommodation. In response to community feedback, the Master Plan has shifted toward an approach that emphasises community and recreational use rather than creating an 'iconic' destination. Overnight accommodation will no longer be pursued on the site.

ROLE IN MAITLAND'S VISITOR ECONOMY

Despite this shift in focus, a revitalised Walka Water Works remains an important component of Maitland's visitor economy. The site's exceptional heritage significance as one of Australia's most intact 19th-century industrial complexes holds substantial appeal for cultural and heritage tourism markets, while its natural setting supports growing interest in nature-based experiences.

The site's planned offering—including the revitalised pumphouse building including café, functions and wellness uses, improved passive recreation offering, and potential outdoor adventure play—will create a complementary mix of activities that can drive visitation while supporting the site's financial sustainability.

Maitland's visitor economy currently faces challenges with an underdeveloped tourism sector dominated by domestic day trips and Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) segments. Walka Water Works can help diversify these markets by offering distinctive experiences centred around wellness, heritage and nature-based activities.

SUPPORTING MAITLAND'S GROWTH

Beyond tourism, Walka Water Works plays an important role in Maitland's economic development strategy through its contribution to quality of life and wellbeing. As one of the few large-scale public open spaces in the LGA, the site is essential for supporting Maitland's rapidly growing population, which increased by over 22,000 people between 2013 and 2023. The recreational opportunities and natural amenities available at Walka Water Works enhance the area's liveability—a critical factor in attracting and retaining residents and businesses that drive Maitland's continued economic development.

The Levee

Maitland Regional Art Gallery

03 SITE ANALYSIS

SITE CONTEXT

LOCATION

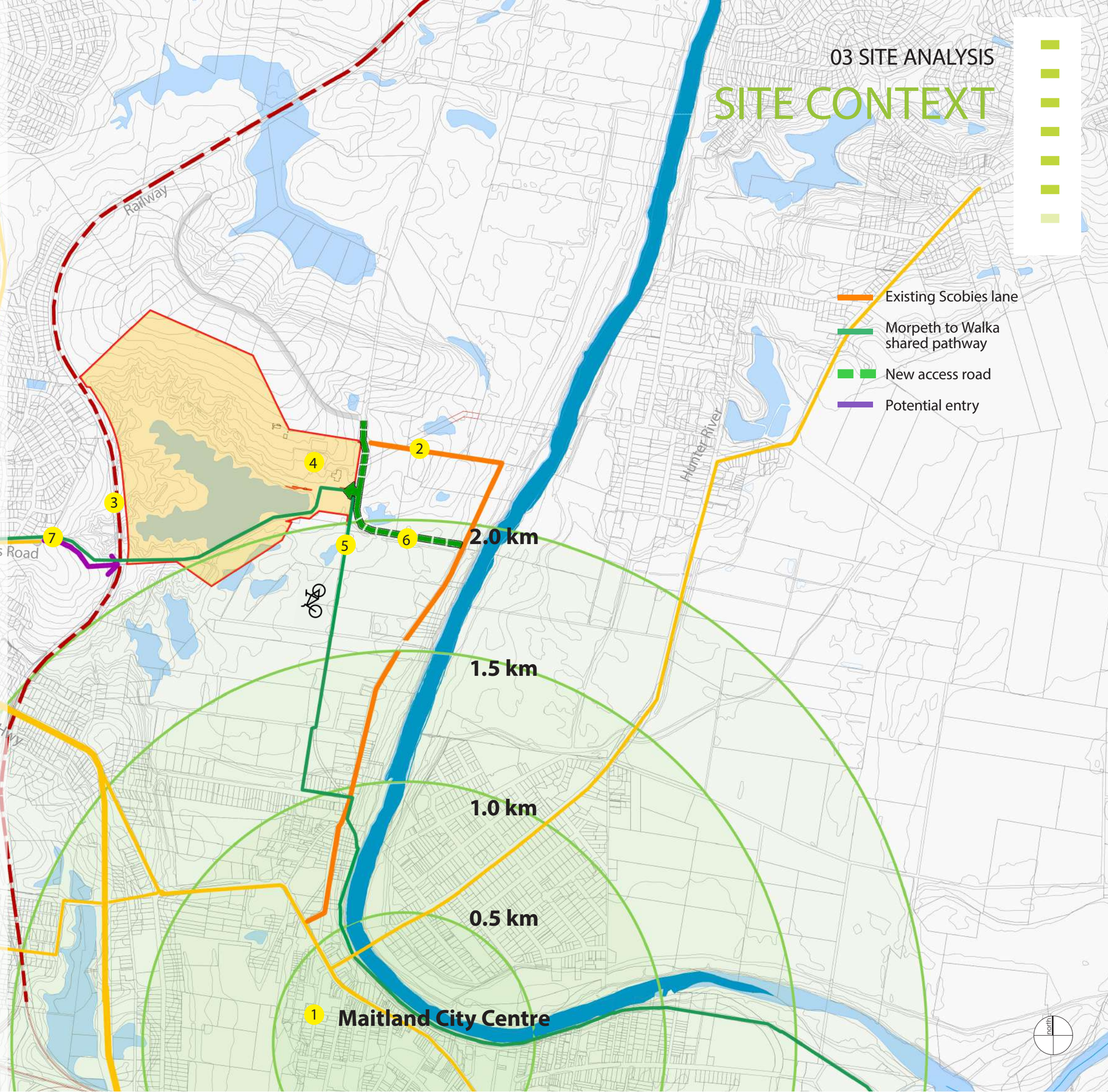
Walka Water Works is located approximately 2km northwest of Maitland Town Centre in a semi-rural setting. The 64-hectare site serves as an important natural, recreational, and heritage destination within the Maitland Local Government Area.

ISSUES

1. Distance from Maitland Town Centre and lack of public transport connectivity limits accessibility for non-vehicle users
2. Existing access to the site via Scobies Lane is narrow and flood-prone
3. Western access to the site is limited by the Western railway line

OPPORTUNITIES

4. Enhancement of site's role as a key heritage, recreational and visitor destination
5. Connection to the proposed Morpeth to Walka shared pathway
6. New access road (New Scobies Lane) proposed from Oakhampton Road
7. Potential western entry point from Waterworks Road under consideration



LANDSCAPE, ECOLOGY AND VEGETATION

The site features a gently sloping topography that descends toward the reservoir from all directions. Native vegetation is concentrated in the northern portions of the site, primarily consisting of open forest dominated by Eucalyptus maculata (spotted gum), ironbark, and forest red gums. The area supports diverse wildlife, including numerous native bird species, reptiles, and small mammals that utilise the varied habitats of forest, wetland, and open water. The eastern portion has been largely cleared and planted with non-native and ornamental species, while issues with invasive weeds and vegetation management affect the site's overall ecological condition.

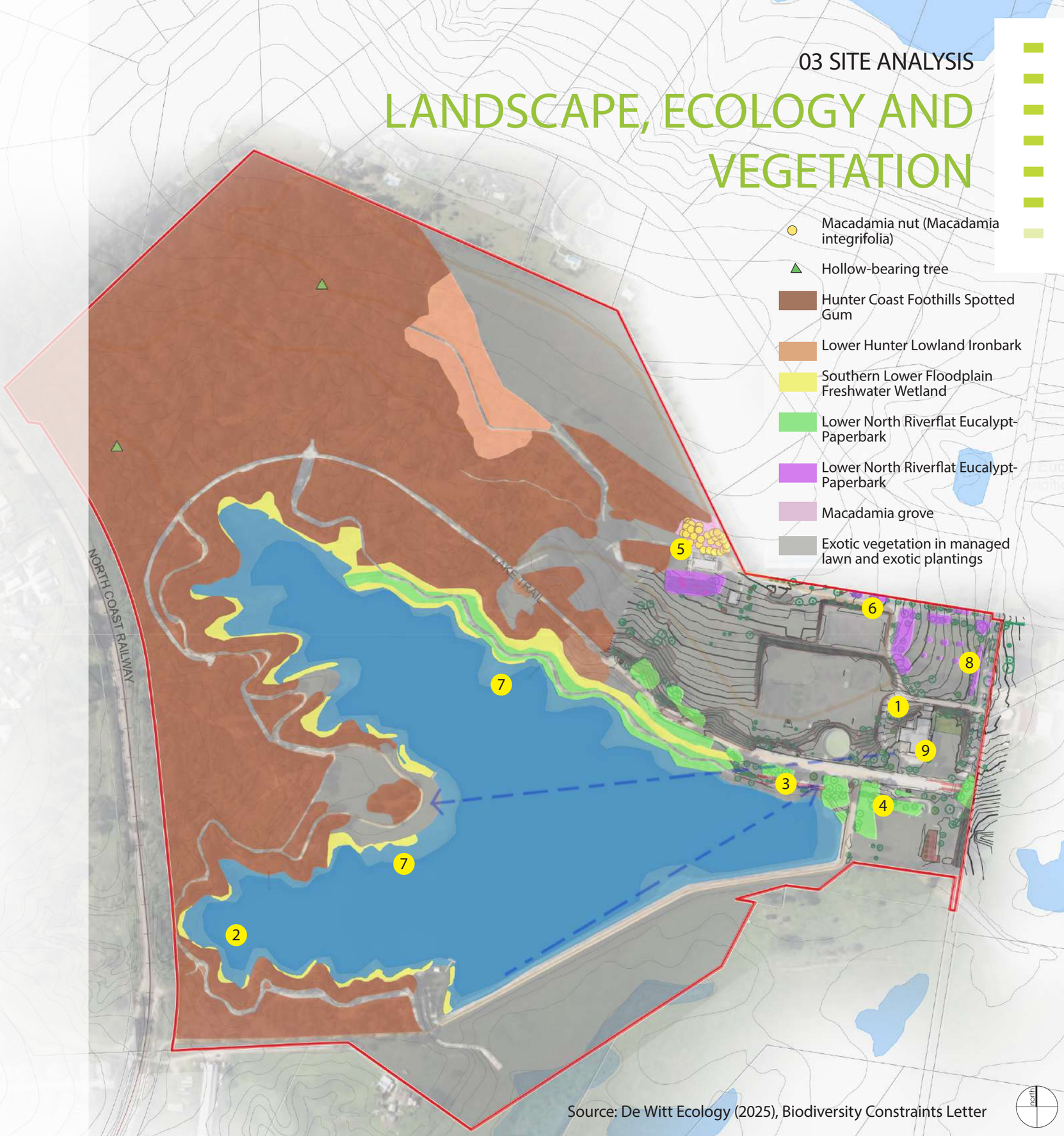
ISSUES

Extensive weed infestation, feral animals, and poor maintenance causing degraded environment

1. Hazardous trees with low life expectancy and plants damaging heritage structures
2. Poor condition of wetland fringes along western shores
3. Low-quality non-native plantings poorly positioned throughout site
4. Overgrown vegetation blocking views of historic pumphouse

OPPORTUNITIES

5. Establish Landcare program with on-site nursery for local species and community involvement
6. Remove hazardous vegetation while planting along northern boundary to screen residences
7. Create wildlife refuges, bird-watching hides, and restore wetlands for ecological improvement
8. Develop paths linking heritage trees, including 150-year-old Mango tree
9. Open vistas to historic pumphouse to restore its prominence in the landscape



Source: De Witt Ecology (2025), Biodiversity Constraints Letter

WATER

The reservoir, a natural waterbody extensively modified by the 1885 reservoir lining wall, remains a key feature of the site. Several inflows from the northern section, including small streams and drainage channels, feed into the reservoir. Historic nutrient runoff has contributed to long-term nutrient accumulation, exacerbating poor water quality and persistent eutrophication. Limited aquatic vegetation, reduced circulation, and the relatively small catchment size (approximately four times the reservoir area) contribute to seasonal algal blooms and water quality fluctuations, particularly during dry periods.

ISSUES

Legacy nutrient loading from historic runoff and limited natural filtration capacity

Stormwater runoff from surrounding areas adding nutrients

Frequent algal blooms occurring throughout both winter and summer

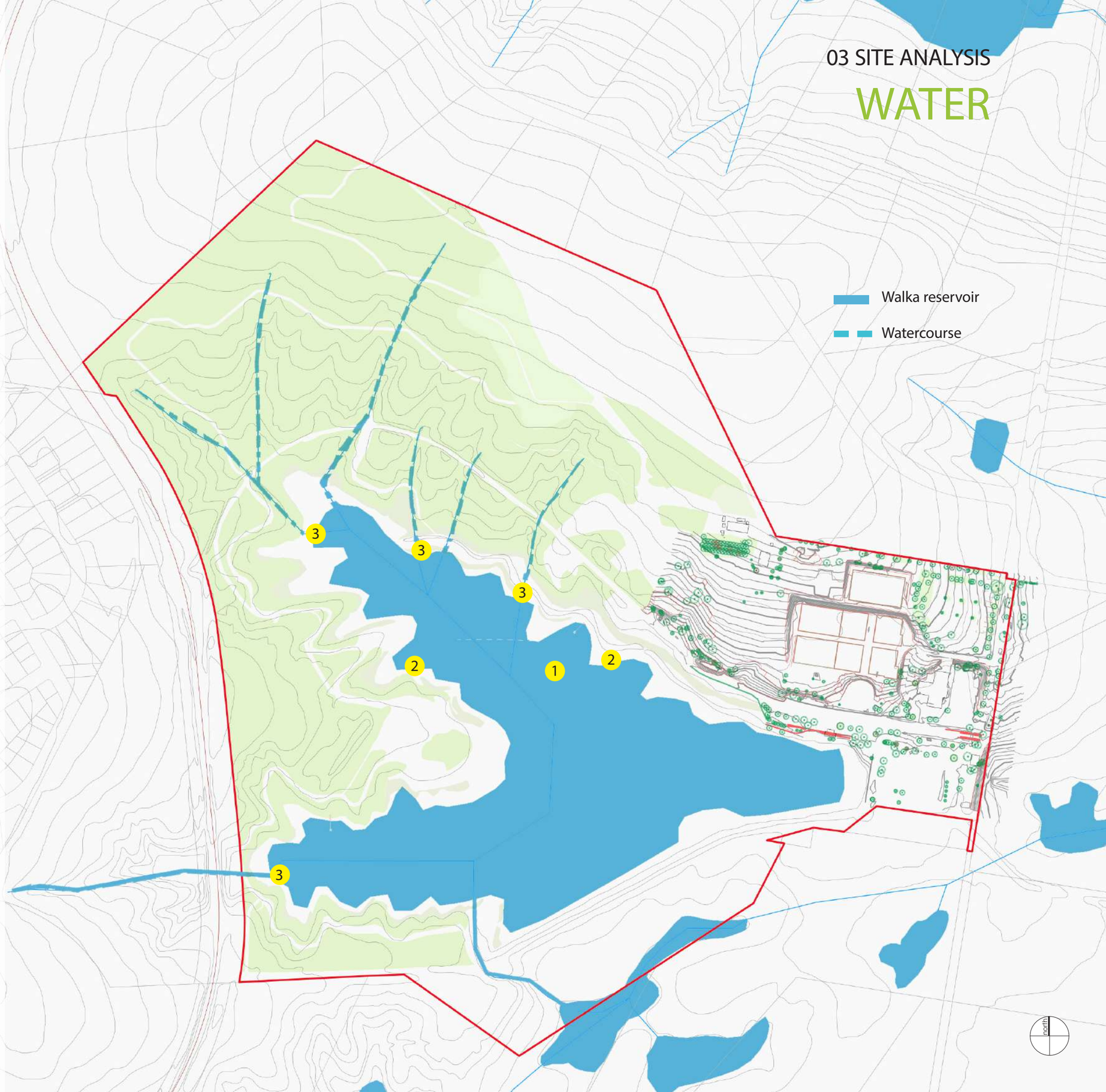
Water temperature stratification causing nutrient cycling and persistent eutrophication

Poor water quality affects potential recreational use and biodiversity

OPPORTUNITIES

1. Enhance water circulation and aeration using solar or wind-powered systems
2. Restore riparian and aquatic vegetation to improve filtration and reduce nutrient loads

   Develop interpretive programs linking water management, heritage, and ecology
3. Use targeted stormwater/wetland strategies to cut pollutant inflows



ABORIGINAL HERITAGE

The site holds cultural significance to the Wonnarua people as Traditional Owners. Several registered Aboriginal sites are present, including artifact scatters and grinding grooves, requiring careful management and protection.
While an Aboriginal Archaeological Assessment has been undertaken for the site, further engagement with stakeholders is required to validate the initial assessment.

ISSUES

There is limited current interpretation of Aboriginal cultural connections to the site

Known Aboriginal sites require protection and management

Areas of high archaeological sensitivity in close proximity to identified sites

Potential for unidentified Aboriginal cultural materials in other areas

OPPORTUNITIES

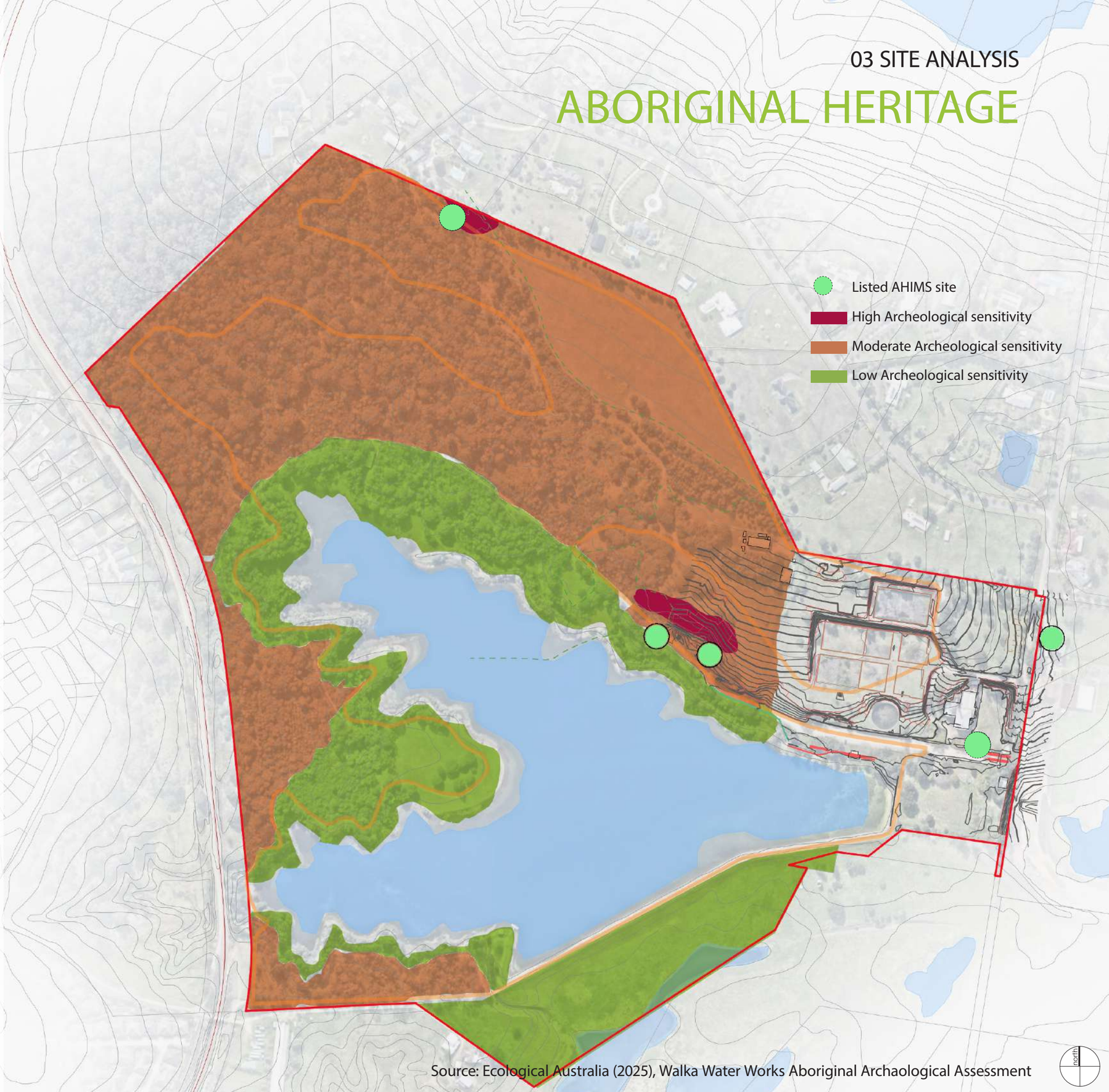
Ongoing consultation with Traditional Owners and Mindaribba LALC regarding site management

Enhancement of visitor understanding through culturally appropriate interpretation of Aboriginal heritage

Incorporation of Aboriginal connections to water and landscape in site design

Development of landscape features acknowledging Country and cultural significance

Collaboration on cultural education programs highlighting long-term Aboriginal presence



Source: Ecological Australia (2025), Walka Water Works Aboriginal Archaeological Assessment

EUROPEAN HERITAGE

Walka Water Works is listed on the NSW State Heritage Register as one of the largest and most intact 19th century industrial complexes in Australia. Key heritage elements include the finely executed polychrome brick pumphouse and chimney, extensive water filtration tanks, reservoir with sandstone wall, complex subsurface pipe network, and archaeological sites of associated houses. The interplay of these elements illustrates the industrial processes of water filtration and distribution, while the history of the people who worked at the site.
forms an important part of its social history and community connection.

ISSUES

Obscured historical relationships between buildings, filtration system and reservoir

Limited interpretation of the site's technological and industrial significance

Physical deterioration of heritage fabric requiring substantial conservation

Loss of original machinery and equipment that demonstrated operational systems

OPPORTUNITIES

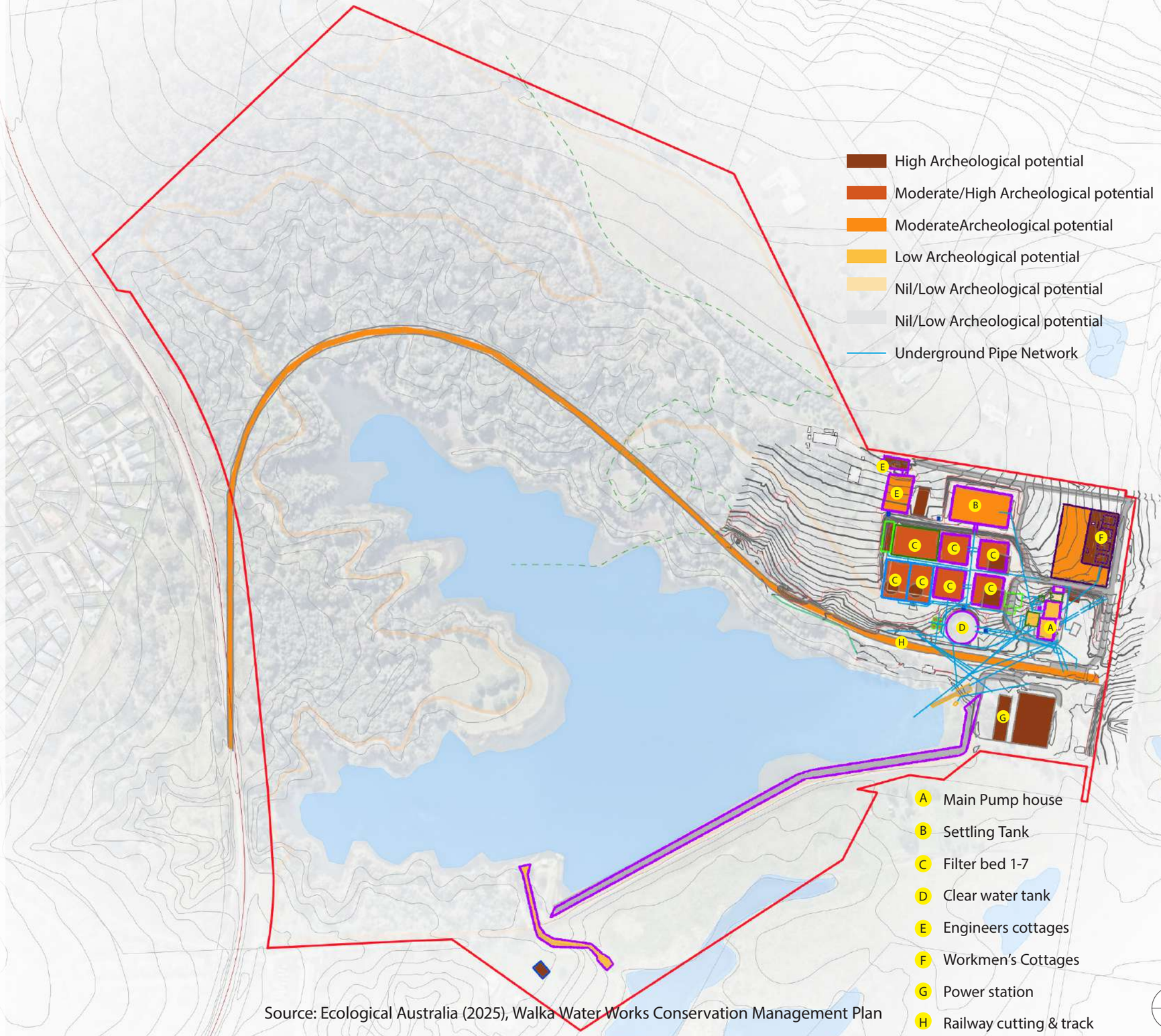
Conservation and adaptive reuse of significant heritage buildings

Enhanced interpretation of industrial processes, including the water-landscape connection in water play area

Highlight the chimney stack as a distinctive visual landmark and site identifier

Staged restoration approach aligned with remediation priorities

Integration of industrial heritage into recreational and tourism experiences



Source: Ecological Australia (2025), Walka Water Works Conservation Management Plan

CURRENT SITE USAGE AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

Walka Water Works serves as a valued community asset for the Maitland area, primarily functioning as a passive recreation space with popular walking trails around the reservoir and regular community activities such as Park Run. However, the site's recreational potential is currently constrained, with several areas closed due to asbestos contamination since February 2022. The pumphouse building, previously a vibrant venue for functions, weddings, café, and museum, remains closed along with other formerly active features such as the miniature railway.

ISSUES

1. Areas of site inaccessible due to contamination and safety concerns
2. Former uses and activities including miniature weddings and railway not currently active

Minimal visitor amenities (seating, shelter, toilets) across the site

Poor integration between heritage interpretation and recreational use

3. Undefined entrance and visitor orientation points

OPPORTUNITIES

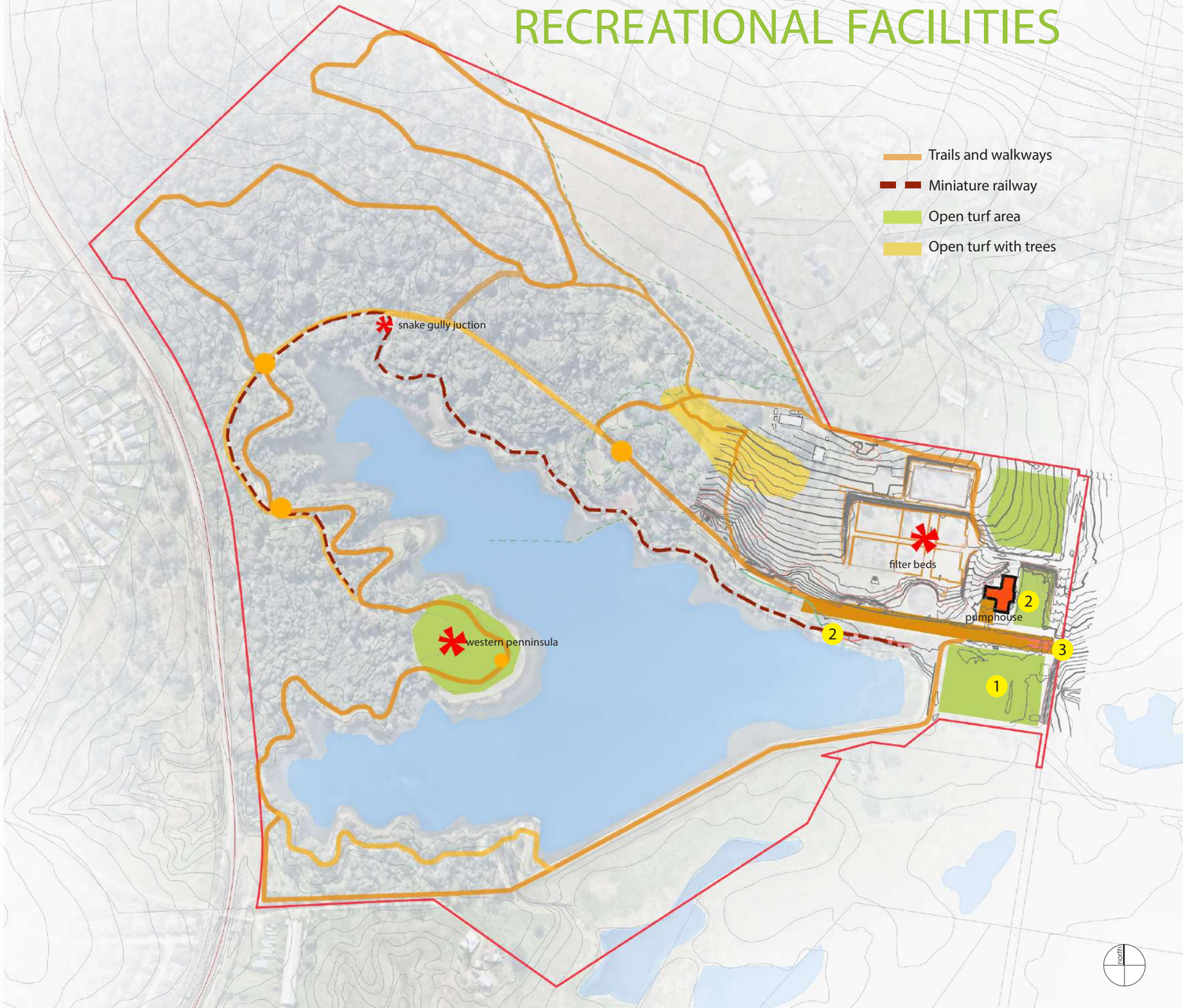
Staged reactivation aligned with site's ecological and heritage values

Enhancement of recreational offerings

Installation of high-quality contemporary site furniture and amenities

Development of arts and interpretation strategy including sculptural elements

Creation of diverse activity zones supporting community uses and events



CONNECTIVITY AND ACCESS

Access to the Walka Water Works site is currently via Scobies Lane, a narrow and flood-prone road that significantly limits site accessibility. The western boundary is defined by the North Coast Railway, creating a substantial barrier to alternative access routes. The site features existing walking paths around the reservoir and natural areas.

ISSUES

1. Constrained primary access via narrow, flood-prone Scobies Lane
2. Western access blocked by railway, with no formal pedestrian entry point

   Fragmented pedestrian network does not connect all key site features
3. Poorly-formed gravel parking lot disrupting connection between heritage assets and water
4. Absence of clear wayfinding and formal entry point

   Community events attracting larger numbers of visitors create challenges around traffic and parking management

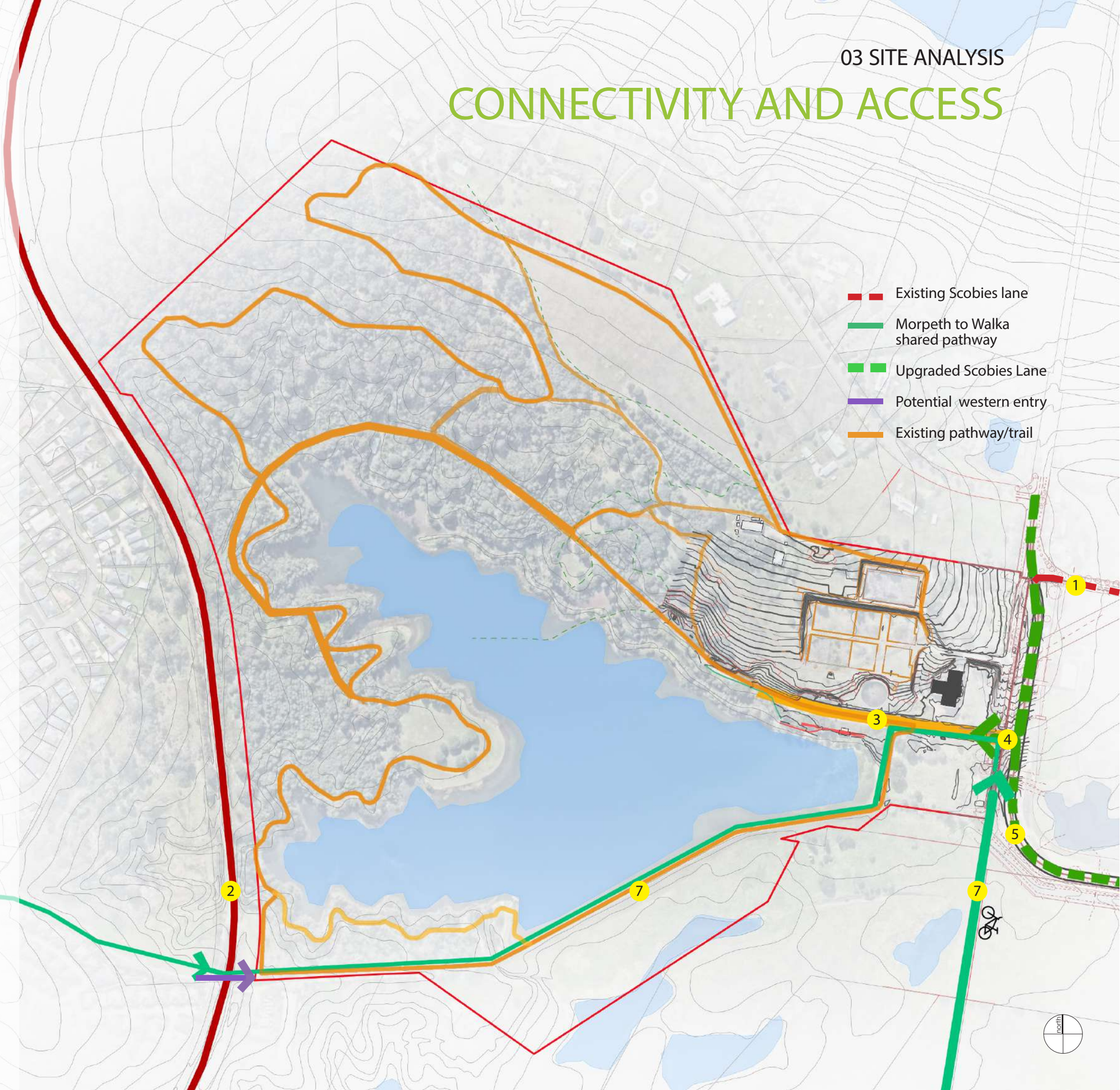
OPPORTUNITIES

5. Upgrade Scobies Lane for emergency access and improved site access
6. Develop new western access point for pedestrians and cyclists

   Improve pathway network linking heritage and recreational areas
7. Implement Morpeth to Walka shared pathway connection including link through the site

   Design integrated wayfinding and entry point with clear site identity

   Establish additional parking areas supporting visitor experience and events



FLOODING AND EMERGENCY ACCESS

The site is susceptible to flooding, with Scobies Lane—its primary access route—prone to inundation during significant rain events. Low-lying areas near the reservoir and heritage infrastructure face inundation risks from stormwater runoff. Without alternative emergency access, the site risks becoming isolated during flood events, creating safety concerns for visitors and challenges for emergency response.

ISSUES

1. Flood-prone access route via Scobies Lane
2. Vulnerability of low-lying areas to inundation

   Potential isolation of site during major flood events
3. Flood impacts on heritage infrastructure and recreation areas

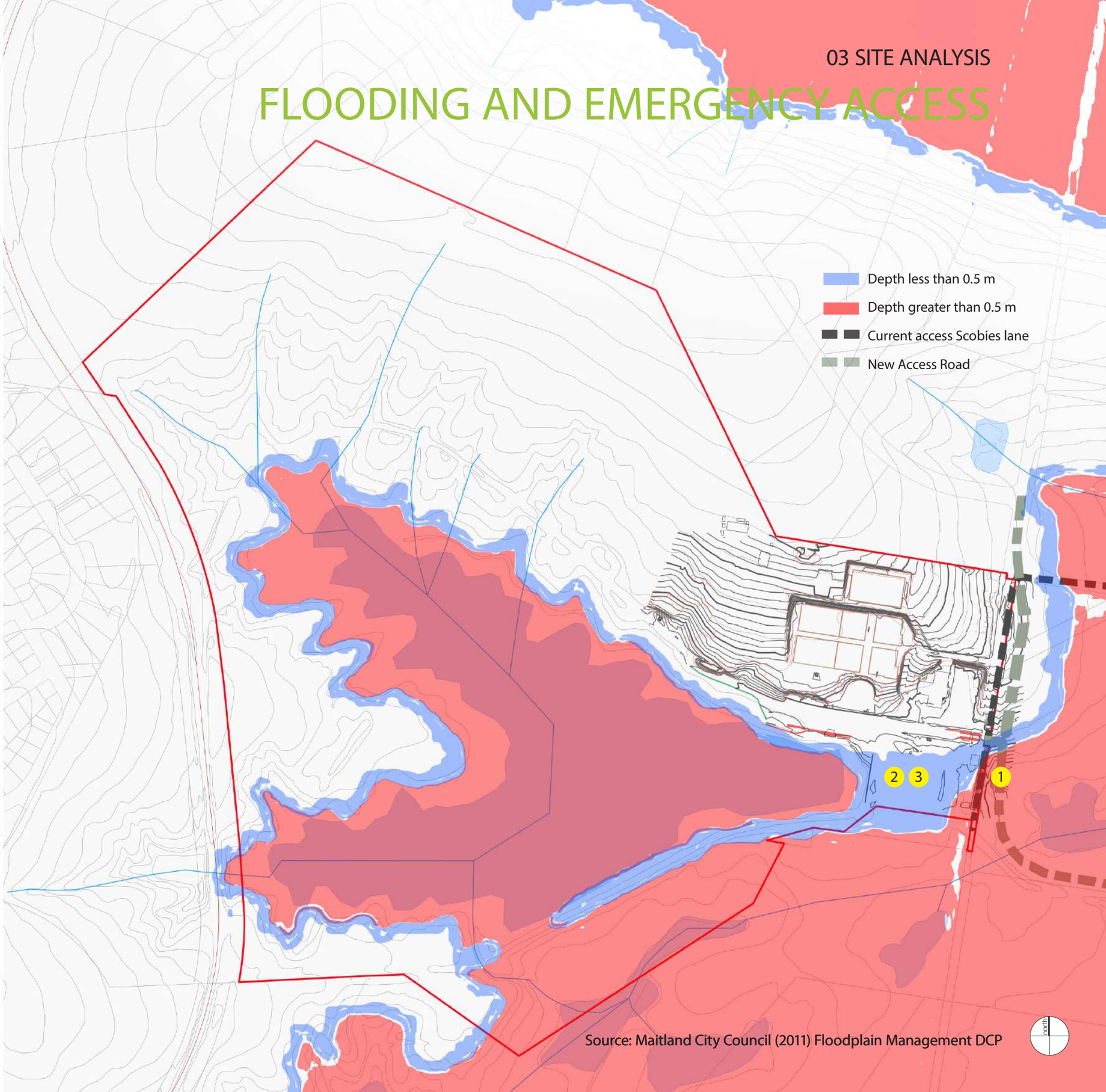
OPPORTUNITIES

Avoid placing critical infrastructure within high-risk flood zones

Integration of flood management strategies into site planning, landscape design, and public interpretation

Use of adaptive design solutions, such as raised structures and permeable surfaces, to mitigate flood risks

Clear emergency flood response planning, including visitor evacuation procedures



Source: Maitland City Council (2011) Floodplain Management DCP

BUSHFIRE RISK

The northern and western portions of the site contain high-risk bushfire prone vegetation (Category 1 forest and woodland), requiring proactive management to protect visitors, infrastructure, and ecological values. Emergency access constraints, including the no-through-road layout and narrow public roads (4-6m width), pose significant evacuation and response challenges. A strategic fire management approach must balance bushfire risk reduction with conservation objectives, particularly where vegetation clearing may be restricted due to Endangered Ecological Communities.

ISSUES

1. High bushfire risk areas in the northern and western sections
2. Limited fire breaks near key infrastructure

Restricted emergency access due to narrow roads and site isolation

Potential conflict between conservation and bushfire mitigation objectives

Visitor evacuation challenges during high risk periods

OPPORTUNITIES

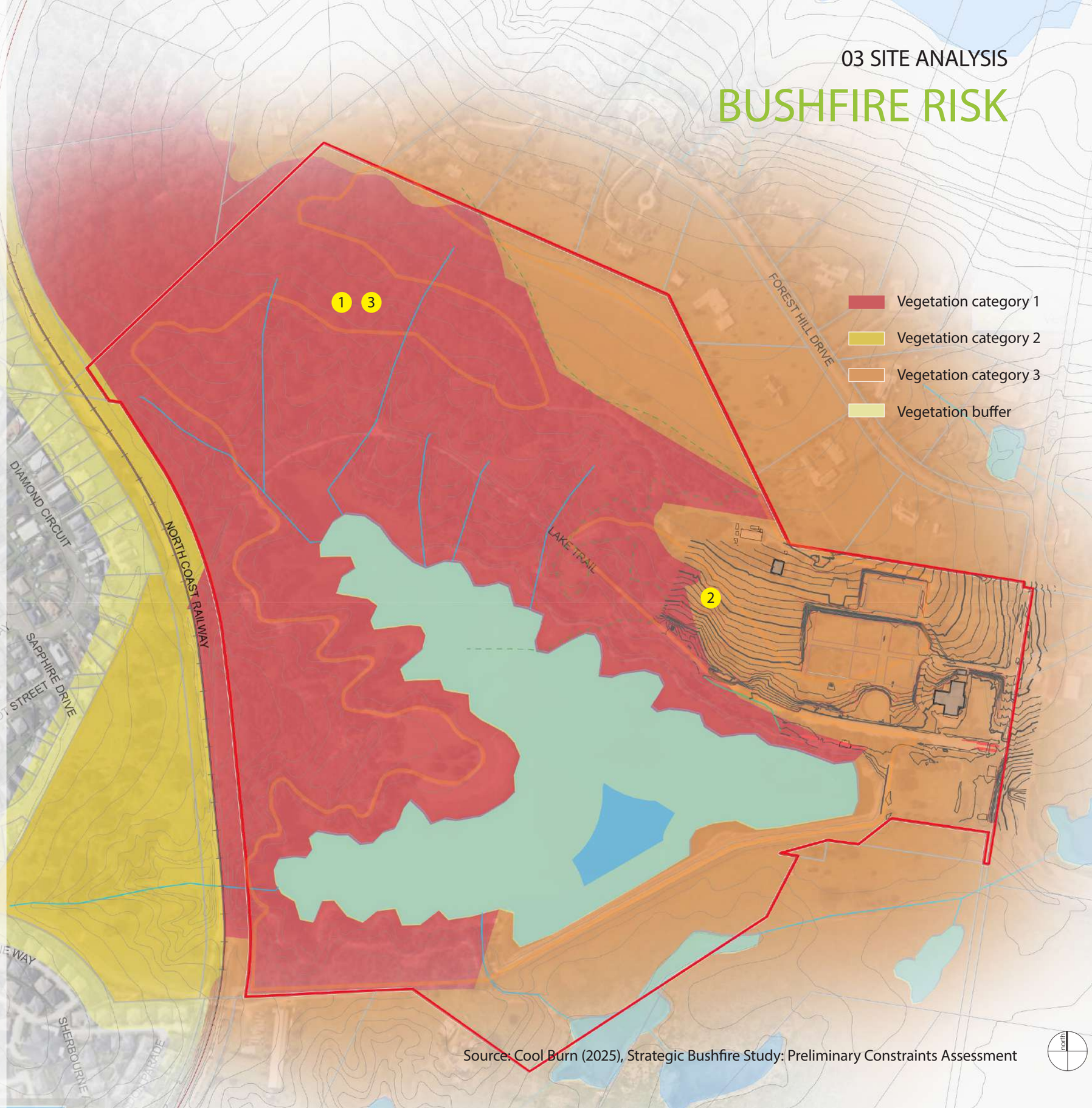
Integrated fire management in site design to reduce risk

Defendable spaces around key infrastructure

Comprehensive bushfire management plan and evacuation strategy

3. Fire-resistant plant selection in high-risk zones

Visitor education and signage on fire safety



Source: Cool Burn (2025), Strategic Bushfire Study: Preliminary Constraints Assessment

CONTAMINATION AND REMEDIATION

Historical industrial use of the site has resulted in contamination, particularly asbestos from the 1951-1976 power station operation. Staged remediation is required to enable safe public access while protecting heritage values and environmental features.

ISSUES

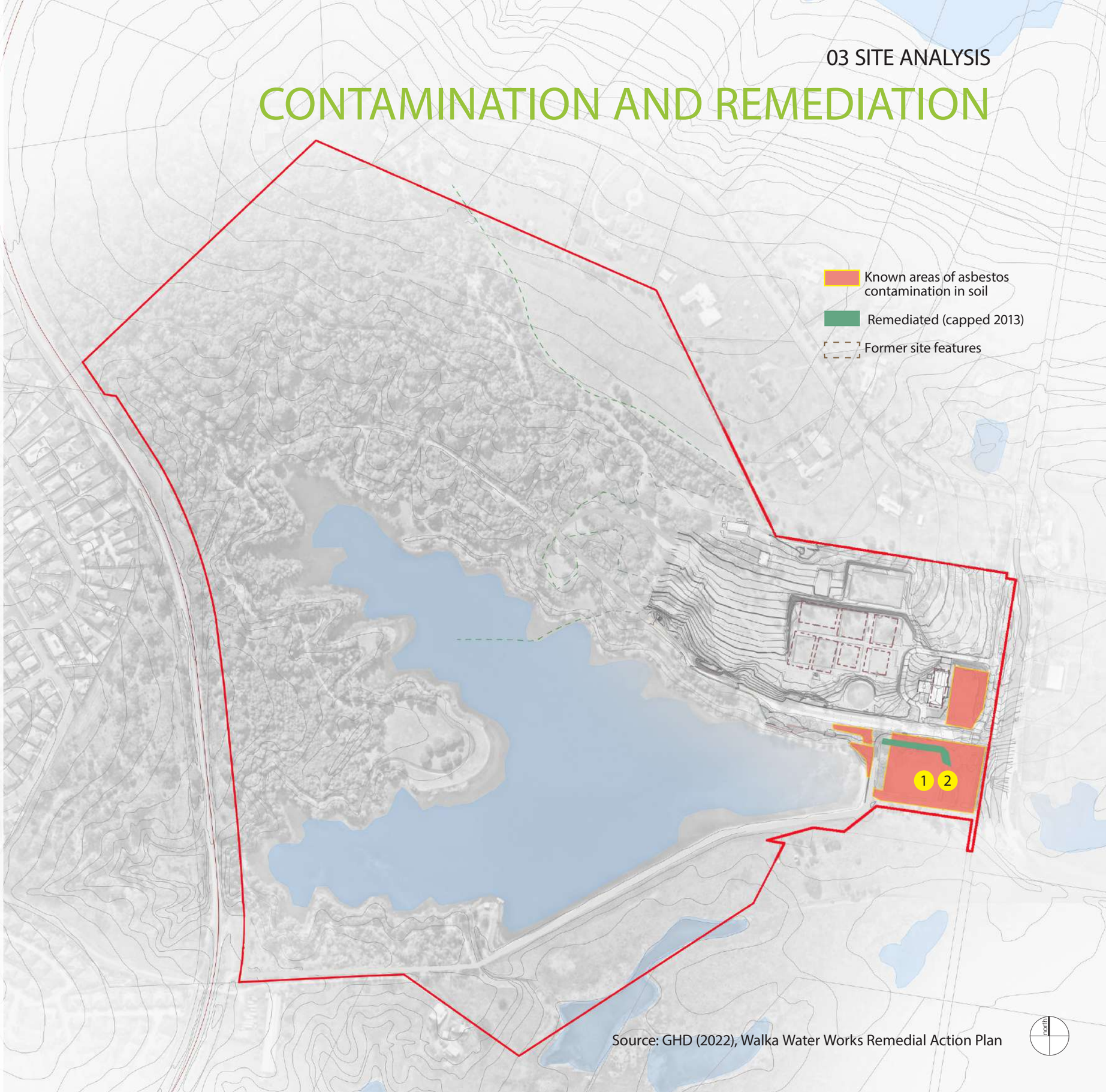
1. Asbestos contamination in vicinity of former power station
2. Limited public access due to contamination concerns

Remediation solution needs to balance future site use, landscaping and heritage considerations

Cost implications for site development and activation

OPPORTUNITIES

Staged remediation approach aligned with activation priorities



Source: GHD (2022), Walka Water Works Remedial Action Plan

04 MASTER PLAN

Walka Water Works: The Heart of Healthy Maitland

Walka Water Works will become a revitalised open space and community destination combining heritage, nature, and wellness. It will celebrate its past while offering diverse recreational opportunities that strengthen community connections and enhance wellbeing for both residents and visitors.

PLANNING PRINCIPLES

Six planning principles were established based on the site analysis and current key features to support the Master Plan.

Heritage Conservation

Preserve Walka Water Works' significant heritage values through thoughtful conservation, adaptive reuse, and interpretation that highlights the site's industrial past and cultural importance.

Biodiversity Enhancement

Protect and enhance the site's unique ecology and natural values through strategic vegetation management, habitat creation, and environmental restoration that support diverse ecosystems and wildlife populations.

Visitor Experience

Create a welcoming destination that offers diverse recreational, educational, and wellness experiences for both local residents and visitors from beyond the region.

Adaptive Reuse

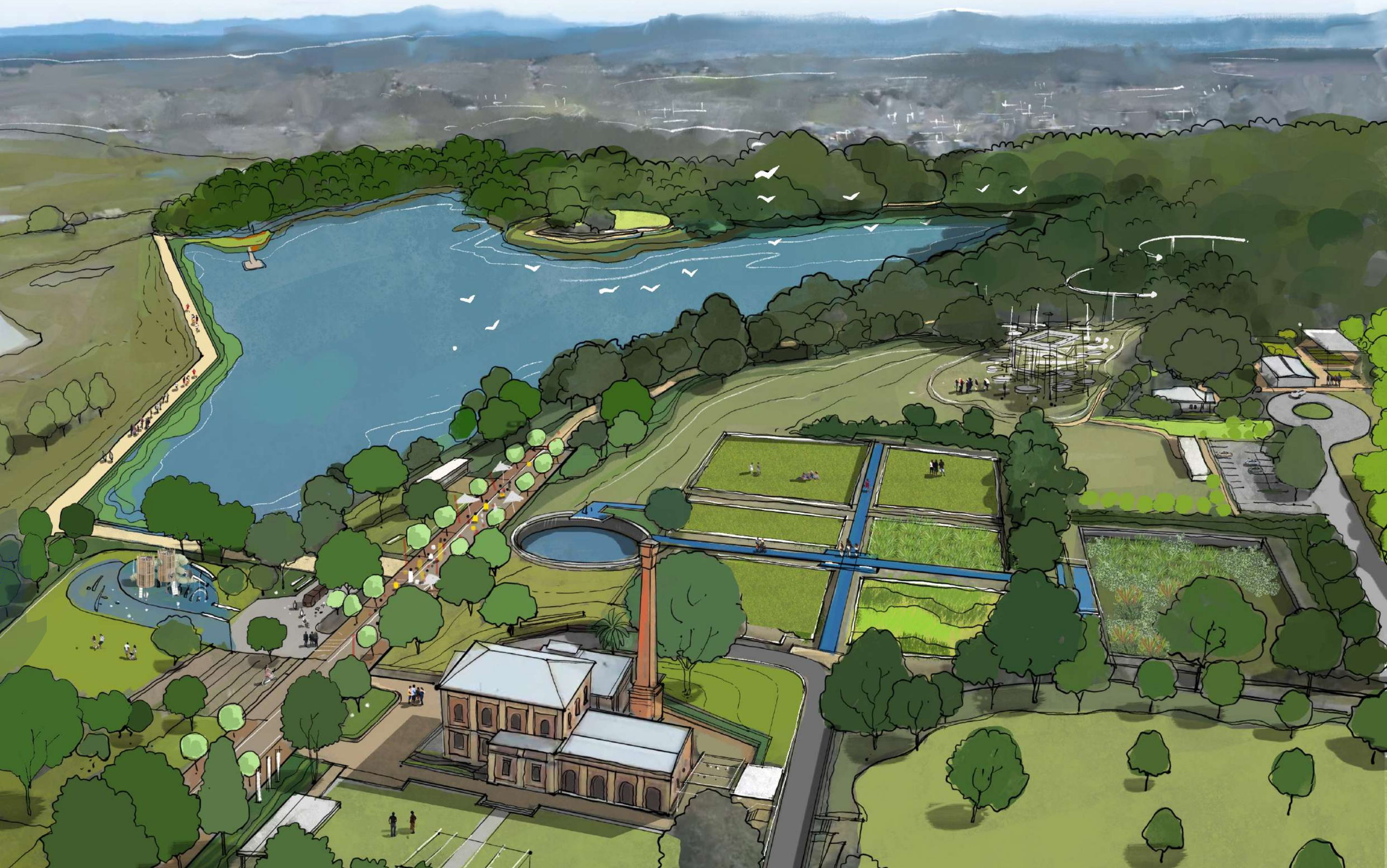
Transform heritage structures, including the Pumphouse, to support contemporary uses while respecting and showcasing their historical significance.

Water Connection

Celebrate the site's historic relationship with water through interpretive elements that reveal former water treatment functions, encourage engagement with the reservoir, and incorporate water features that enhance visitor experiences and environmental quality.

Recreational Space

Improve accessibility and enhance recreational infrastructure to support community wellbeing through passive and active recreation opportunities that cater to diverse needs and abilities.



OVERVIEW

The Walka Water Works Master Plan transforms the site into a vibrant community destination that honors its significant heritage while creating new opportunities for recreation, education, and wellbeing. The plan balances preservation with activation, creating spaces where visitors can connect with nature, appreciate local history, and engage in activities that enhance physical and mental wellbeing.

1. **Remediation:** Site rehabilitation to address asbestos contamination and ensure public safety as the foundation for all future development.

2. **Revitalised Pumphouse Complex:** Adaptive reuse creating a vibrant hub with café, function spaces, and wellness facilities that respect its heritage values.

3. **Pedestrian Street & Forecourt:** Transformation of current parking into a welcoming arrival space with sculptural elements and flexible event areas.

4. **South Lawn Recreation Area:** Family-friendly recreation space with inclusive playspace, picnic areas, and educational water play elements.

5. **Interpretive Landscaping of Filter Beds:** Creative treatment of the former filtration system revealing the site's water treatment history through landscape design.

6. **Nature-Based Adventure Play:** Low-impact adventure facilities in the western portion including obstacle course and climbing elements for active recreation.

7. **Miniature Railway:** Reactivation and potential extension of the heritage railway connecting key site areas.

8. **Enhanced Trail Network:** All-weather surfaces with seating, interpretive elements, and accessibility improvements supporting diverse recreational uses.

9. **Environmental Improvements:** Riparian restoration, tree/weed management, and habitat creation enhancing ecosystem health and biodiversity.

10. **Open Areas:** Spaces for large groups to meet, socialise, and enjoy recreational activities.

11. **Main Entry:** Entry way with signage and small information centre (when operational).

12. **New Access Points:** Multiple entry points and connections to regional networks enhancing connectivity and emergency access.

13. **Morpeth to Walka Shared Pathway:** Dedicated pedestrian and cycle path.

14. **Reconfigured Parking:** Offsite parking on MCC land reducing impact on the heritage core while providing adequate capacity for visitors and events, as well as new formalised parking at the north of the site.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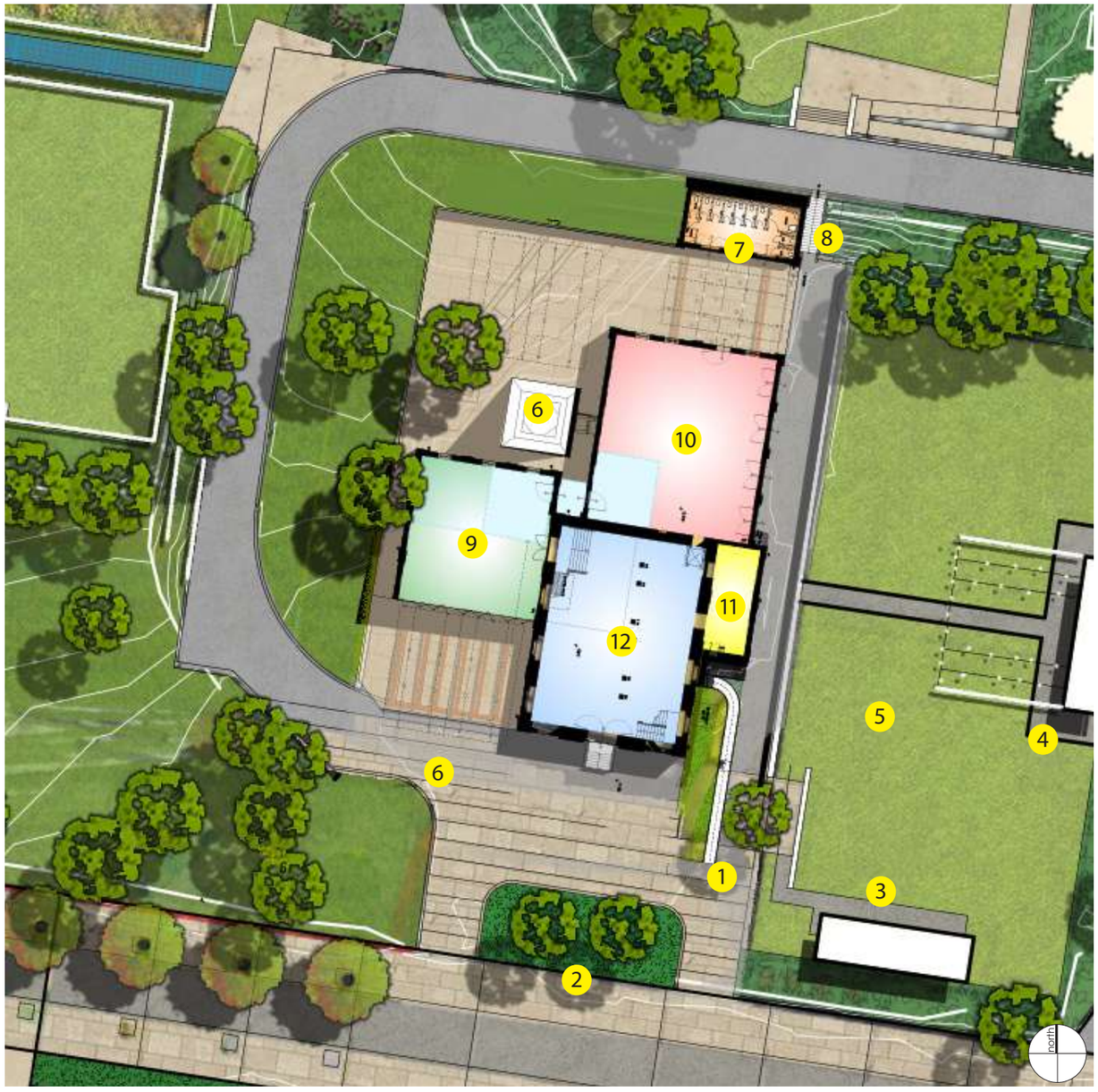
PUMPHOUSE



1. Accessible ramp
2. Forecourt area with landscape & sculpture
3. Event lawn for wedding
4. New all weather shade structure
5. Pathway to shade
6. Outdoor area for cafe/restaurant
7. Renovated amenities
8. Connection to the north lawn
9. Café
10. Function space
11. Info centre
12. Health/Wellness space

The Pumphouse building, with its distinctive chimney and polychrome brickwork, stands as the site's most significant heritage element. Its transformation will balance preservation with adaptive reuse, creating a vibrant hub that celebrates the building's industrial past while accommodating contemporary uses. Initial works will focus on structural stabilisation of the chimney to ensure public safety and long-term preservation. This essential conservation work will allow the building to be safely reopened and allow subsequent adaptive reuse.

CAFE AND FUNCTION SPACE

The ground floor will be transformed to accommodate several complementary functions. The front room will house a licensed café with up to 100 seats, offering refreshments and casual dining with outdoor areas on both sides of the building providing al fresco seating options. These spaces will be enhanced with shade structures to ensure year-round comfort. The larger rear space will be adapted as a flexible function venue capable of accommodating up to 150 seated guests. This space will support weddings, community events, and special occasions, with kitchen facilities shared between the function space and café.

WELLNESS AND COMMUNITY SPACE

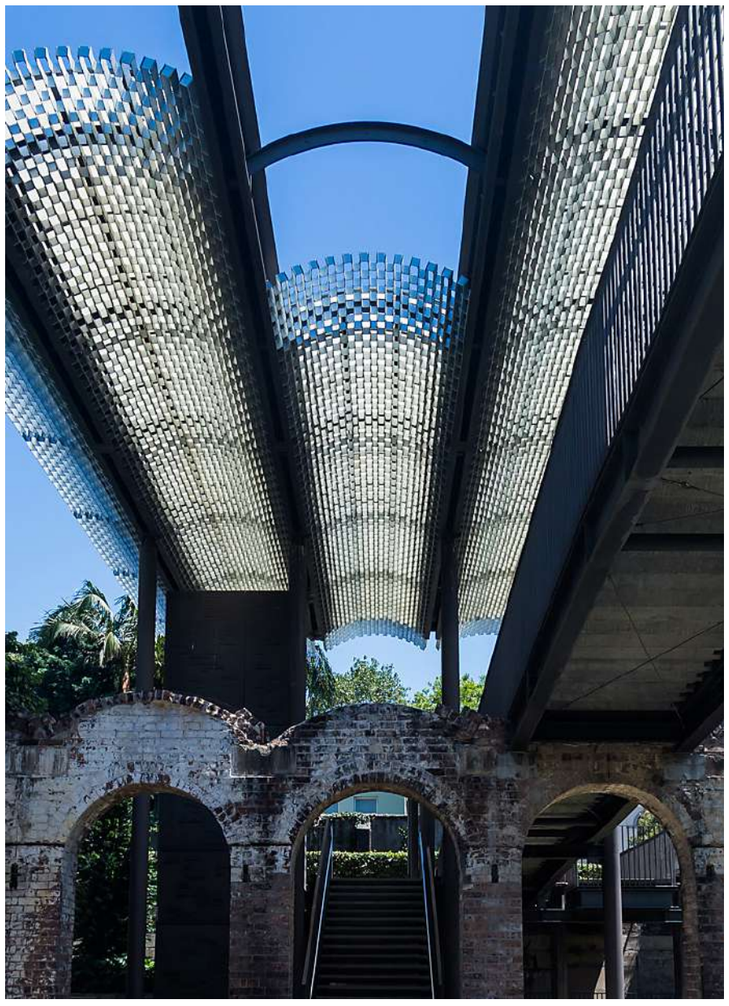
The central space—originally housing boiler equipment—will become a flexible area for wellness and community activities such as yoga, pilates, and meditation. This space honours the building's industrial heritage while introducing uses that support community health and wellbeing. In later stages of development, the wellness functions may be expanded, potentially including specialised facilities such as an onsen that creates a meaningful connection to water, reflecting the building's original purpose. Flexible wellness space would then be provided in the upper floor.

ACCESSIBILITY

An 18-meter accessible ramp will ensure the pumphouse is welcoming to visitors of all abilities, providing barrier-free access to the ground floor. In later stages, the upper floor would be made accessible via a lift. The building's entry area will include an information centre that provides orientation and interpretation of the site's heritage significance.

Example of cafés in similar buildings

Eaxmples of health and wellness services/programs at the pumphouse



Example of shaded areas near the pumphouse

Examples of indoor and outdoor event and wedding function spaces

PEDESTRIAN STREET, FORECOURT AND SOUTH LAWN

1. Pedestrian street in front of pumphouse building
2. Pop up tents/ market stalls for events
3. Area for coffee van from stage 1
4. Drop off area, building forecourt, sculptural installation
5. Accessible parking area
6. Play ground with seating area
7. Extended play ground with water play equipment
8. Reactivated miniature railway from pedestrian street
9. Renovated & upgraded amenities block
10. Accessible entry to pumphouse
11. Outdoor seating for Cafe/Restaurant
12. Lawn area for wedding with shade & storage facility

PEDESTRIAN STREET AND FORECOURT

The area between the pumphouse and the reservoir—currently used for parking—will be transformed into a vibrant pedestrian street that creates a welcoming arrival experience and strengthens the connection between the heritage building and the water. This pedestrianisation will minimise vehicles within the core area of the site, enhancing the visitor experience while protecting the setting of the pumphouse.

The pedestrian street will be designed as a flexible space capable of accommodating a range of activities and events. Features will include areas for pop-up market stalls, a designated space for a coffee van, and gathering areas for small community events. The design will incorporate appropriate materials and finishes that complement the site's heritage character while providing a contemporary, functional public space.

A building forecourt will be developed featuring a sculptural installation that references the site's water heritage, creating a focal point that enhances the sense of arrival and provides an interpretive element. The space will include an accessible drop-off area and limited accessible parking to ensure the pumphouse remains accessible to visitors with mobility challenges.

The underground pipe infrastructure in this area will be subtly referenced through creative landscaping treatments such as patterned planting or ground markings that reveal these hidden systems to visitors. These interpretive elements will help people understand the complex industrial processes that once operated at the site. Designing with Country principles should also shape interpretive elements, with direct input from local Aboriginal knowledge holders to reveal enduring connections to water and Country

SOUTH LAWN AND WATER EDGE

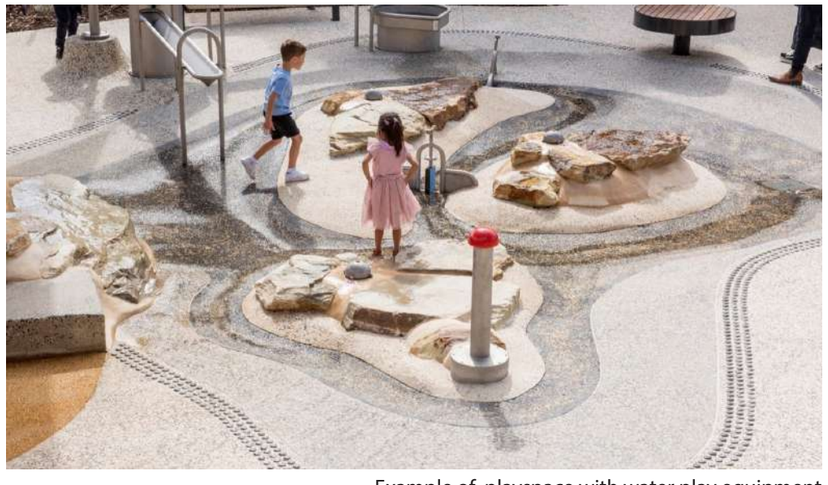
Following remediation of the contaminated area, the South Lawn will be developed into a family recreation space featuring a playspace. The play area will incorporate water features that educate children about water movement and systems, creating a playful connection to the site's historical purpose while offering engaging play experiences.

The playspace will balance active and passive recreation with generous seating and shaded areas for caregivers. Play elements can use natural materials and textures to foster connections with the environment, guided by Designing with Country principles that honor Aboriginal relationships to water and land. Water play features will provide interactive opportunities to learn about water systems in an engaging way, accompanied by interpretive and informational signage.

The southern area will also serve as the station for the reactivated miniature railway. Tree and weed management throughout the area will improve sightlines, enhancing both the visual appeal and safety of the space.

Example of shaded areas near the pumphouse

Example of market and stalls near the pumphouse



Example of playspace with water play equipment

Coffee van area

Coffee van for temporary events
Temporary seating
Shade

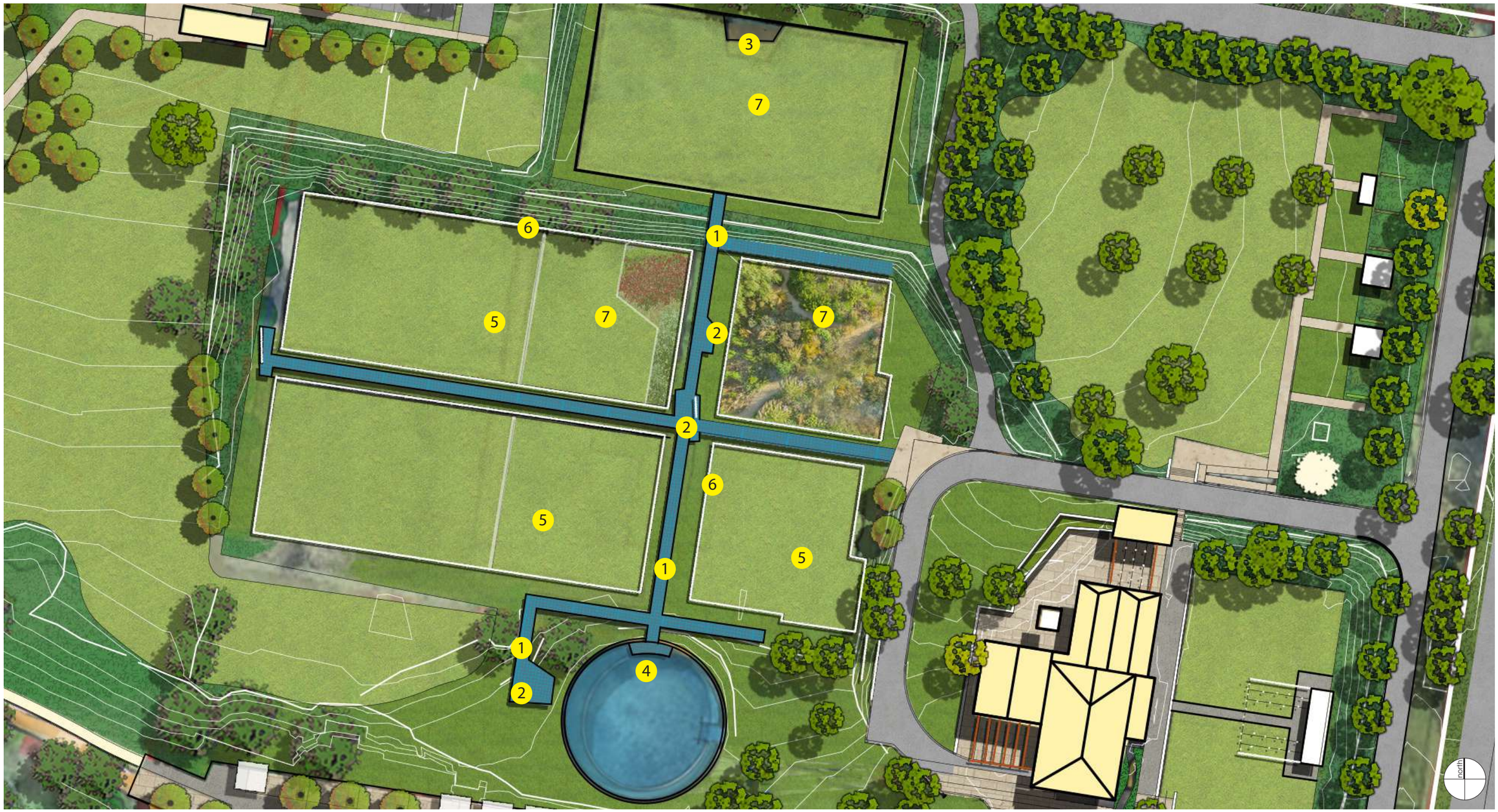
Pedestrian street

Pop up tents
Tree avenue
Accessible parking
Drinking fountain
Seating areas
Lighting & power points

Forecourt

Forecourt landscape
Sculptural installation
New paving
Drop off

FILTER BEDS AND NORTH LAWN



1. Elevated accessible boardwalk around filter beds following the underground pipe infrastructure
2. Seating nodes with signages
3. View point at north of settling tank
4. Clear water tank as water feature with viewing deck
5. Filter beds with turf as open space for events
6. Filter bed edges exposed to interpret historic tanks
7. Filter bed with densely planted native grasses and ground cover species which will minimise maintenance and suitable for rain garden

FILTER BEDS

The historic filter beds will be transformed into an engaging interpretive landscape that reveals the site's original water treatment function through creative design interventions. This approach will make a currently inaccessible feature into a valuable interpretive asset that enhances visitor understanding of the site's industrial heritage.

Rain gardens and native plantings will surround the filter beds, enhancing biodiversity while creating educational opportunities about water filtration. The clear water tank will be transformed into an engaging water feature, enhanced by artistic lighting to emphasize its importance at night. Additionally, the groundcover and native species for filter bed area will be chosen for their durability, sustainability, and dense growth to reduce long-term maintenance needs..

A dedicated viewing point north of the settling tank will offer panoramic views of the site, complemented by a accessible boardwalk around the filter beds with seating, shade structures, and interpretive panels. These amenities will create comfortable spaces for visitors to learn about the historic water treatment process while enjoying the landscape.

NORTH LAWN

The North Lawn adjacent to the filter beds will be maintained as an open space with heritage macadamia trees preserved as significant landscape elements. This area will provide flexible space for passive recreation and small gatherings, balancing the more structured interpretive areas with open green space.

Note: Irrespective of the remediation methodology, the filter beds and associated voids provide an opportunity for interpretation through landscape design with final solutions to be detailed in further design works.

Example of elevated boardwalk around filter beds

Example of raingarden

Example of raingarden and elevated boardwalk

Filter Beds
Turf area
Event space

Boardwalk
Signages
Viewing deck
Seating area

Filter Beds
Rain garden
Native massplanting
Exposed edges for heritage interpretation

WIDER SITE

1. Upgraded primary trail with seating nodes
2. Bird watching hides
3. Miniature railway
4. Seating & open turf at western penninsula
5. Adventure play area
6. Community garden nusery
7. New road roundabout for adventure park and nursery
8. Riparian restoration and habitat creation
9. Spaces design for visitors with specific needs
10. New pontoon for the model yacht club
11. Secondary trails to maintain a natural look while suppressing weed

north

The majority of the Walka Water Works site will focus on environmental conservation and passive recreation, preserving its natural character while enhancing visitor experience.

ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENT

Ongoing tree and weed management will improve ecological health and visitor safety through the removal of invasive species and hazardous vegetation. Riparian restoration work enhance the reservoir edge, supporting greater biodiversity, contributing to improved water quality, and creating opportunities for nature appreciation. There is an opportunity to implement water quality improvement initiatives, addressing the reservoir's historical nutrient loading and seasonal algal blooms through techniques such as enhanced circulation, aeration systems, and expanded aquatic vegetation that provides natural filtration.

TRAILS AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

The trail network circling the reservoir will be upgraded with improved surfaces to ensure all-weather access, with additional seating and interpretive elements creating a more engaging walking experience. These enhancements will support the popular Park Run event while improving conditions for casual walkers and wildlife obervers.

Bird watching hides will be installed at appropriate locations along the reservoir, providing unobtrusive observation points for visitors to enjoy the site's diverse birdlife. These facilities will support nature appreciation and environmental education while minimising disturbance to wildlife.

Areas of the site will be specifically designed to support visitors with specific needs, including sensory trails and adapted interpretation for people with conditions such as dementia and autism. These inclusive spaces will make Walka Water Works accessible to a broader range of community members, supporting Council's commitment to social inclusion.

A pontoon for the model yacht club could be installed to support water- based recreation as water quality improvements are implemented.

STAN PARKES MEMORIAL GROVE

Stan Parkes Memorial Grove will be developed as a contemplative space featuring sculpture installations that highlight the site's natural and heritage values. This area will offer spectacular views across the reservoir and could eventually be accessed via an extended miniature railway route, creating a distinctive destination within the broader site. The area will remain accessible to emergency vehicles.

ADVENTURE PLAY

The area west of the filter beds presents an opportunity for visitor-oriented active recreation uses that complement the site's natural setting and wellness focus. This location could be developed for adventure play experiences, providing engaging physical challenges that connect with the natural environment.

COMMUNITY GARDEN

A community garden and nursery will be established, providing opportunities for local engagement while propagating native plant species for ongoing site rehabilitation. This facility will support both recreational gardening and ecological restoration efforts, creating opportunities for community stewardship. Potential to integrate a bush tucker garden with aboriginal stakeholders for cultural awareness.

Examples of improved trails and recreational facilities

ADVENTURE PLAY

1. Obstacle course
2. Zip coaster within tree canopy
3. Upgraded trail with interpretive signage
4. Seating nodes on trail
5. Tree weed management for existing trees
6. Community garden nursery
7. Existing grove
8. New road roundabout for adventure play area and nursery
9. Pathway connecting the adventue park office
10. New birdwatching hides
11. Miniature railway
12. Improve riparian edge

The area to the west of the filter beds offers an opportunity for active recreation complementing Walka's natural setting and wellness focus. This area has lower heritage and environmental sensitivity, and could host an adventure play facility appealing to older children, teenagers, and adults seeking physical challenges. Features might include an obstacle course with climbing structures and balance elements, potentially expanding to include distinctive attractions like a zip coaster or sky cycling in later stages.

An indoor component could ensure year-round operation, while interpretative elements could connect physical activities to the site's industrial heritage and Wonnarua cultural traditions. With dedicated parking and thoughtful design using natural materials, the adventure area would operate as a distinct attraction that draws visitors and contributes to the activation of Walka.

Adventure play
Obstacle course
Zip coaster

Note: The image of adventure play is for indicative and illustrative purposes only. The final design and details will be developed in subsequent stages.

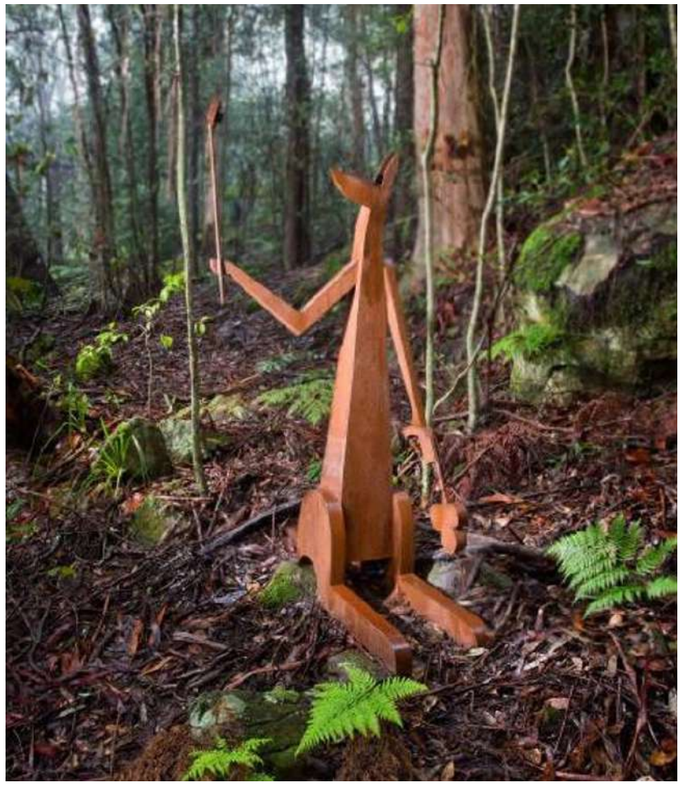
STAN PARKES MEMORIAL GROVE

1. Public art/sculptural feature installation
2. Seating around the public art area
3. Upgraded trail with interpretive signage
4. Long seating in steps overlooking the reservoir
5. Tree weed management for existing trees
6. Existing grove
7. Seating node at miniature railway station
8. New birdwatching hides
9. Improve riparian edge
10. Miniature railway

Stan Parkes Memorial Grove sits on a peninsula extending into the reservoir, creating a distinctive landscape feature offering unique perspectives across the water. This area will be enhanced as a contemplative space with sculptures responding to both environmental and industrial heritage themes, establishing a dialogue between art and nature. Comfortable seating areas positioned to capture key views will be connected by accessible pathways designed to minimise environmental impact. The PA system and lighting will be sustainably powered by solar energy, reducing environmental impact while maintaining functionality.

Pending further detailed due diligence walk over or extensive arborist or ecological assessment site assessment, initial concepts propose using native plantings to potentially enhance biodiversity while creating framed vistas and intimate spaces within the landscape. Interpretive elements may be incorporated to explore the historical relationship between built and natural environments, illustrating how the reservoir reflects both natural processes and human influence. Future development phases—subject to detailed studies—could consider extending the miniature railway to the peninsula, offering visitors a unique perspective of the Walka site.

Example of sculpture



Example of art installation along trail

Example of interpretive signage

PLANTING PALETTE

The Walka Water Works site boasts a substantial canopy cover characterised by a diverse array of tree species, including both low-risk and higher-risk specimens. The site also features a mix of weed species alongside several significant and mature trees of ecological and historical value. The proposed Master Plan aims to enhance the site's resilience to climate change by introducing additional tree plantings. These new trees will contribute to mitigating urban heat island effects, while also enhancing the site's aesthetic appeal, providing shade, supporting biodiversity, and enriching the visitor experience.

Placement of trees along pathways will ensure shaded walkways, creating comfortable and inviting spaces for visitors. At the same time, the design will maintain a balance with open lawn areas, allowing for flexible use of the space for events and recreational activities. This approach will foster a harmonious blend of natural beauty, ecological function, and community engagement, ensuring the site remains a vibrant and sustainable public asset.

As outlined in the CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) report, the planting along the trails should be maintained at a low height to ensure clear sightlines and facilitate passive surveillance throughout the site.

SIGNAGE (INFORMATIVE, INTERPRETIVE, DIRECTIONAL)

The signage strategy for the Walka Master Plan will create a cohesive, engaging, and informative experience for visitors while honouring the site's cultural, historical, and ecological significance.

Interpretive Signage: Educational elements that reveal the site's rich stories and significance through engaging content that connects visitors to both tangible heritage features and intangible values. Interpretive signage will be developed in consultation with heritage specialists, incorporating the technological story of water treatment alongside human stories, and incorporate Aboriginal perspectives.

Directional Signage: Clear wayfinding elements that help visitors navigate the site, locate key features, and understand available facilities and experiences. A prominent entry statement will establish the site's identity and set the tone for the visitor experience, with subsequent signage guiding visitors between heritage, recreation, and natural areas.

Informational Signage: Practical information about site facilities, regulations, and safety considerations that supports visitor comfort and appropriate use of the site.

Signage design will employ a unified approach with consistent typography, colour palette, and iconography to create a recognisable visual identity throughout the site. Materials will be durable and sensitively integrated with the landscape, utilising natural elements where appropriate. All signage will incorporate inclusive design principles, including considerations for visitors with visual impairments and those from non-English speaking backgrounds.

LIGHTING

Lighting and nighttime safety will be a critical focus in the ongoing design development and implementation of the Walka Water Works Master Plan. A comprehensive lighting strategy will ensure the Heritage Precinct is adequately illuminated, key features such as the chimney are accentuated, and pathways are lit in accordance with CPTED principles.

The lighting design will prioritise energy efficiency and minimise light pollution, using directed illumination to highlight architectural features while respecting the site's natural values. Security lighting will be carefully balanced with heritage considerations, ensuring visitor safety without compromising the site's aesthetic qualities or disturbing wildlife habitats.

Smart pole and solar technologies will be utilised where appropriate to reduce energy consumption and maintenance requirements. The lighting strategy will be implemented in stages, corresponding to the broaderdevelopment phasing and focusing initially on the heritage core and primary circulation routes.

SITE FURNITURE AND MATERIALS

The furniture and materials chosen for the Walka Water Works site will be of the highest quality, reflecting the cultural significance of this destination. The selections will align with the Maitland Development Control Plan and the standard material palette, ensuring a cohesive and contextually appropriate design that honours the site's heritage while creating a welcoming and functional space for visitors.

Furniture elements will be selected for durability, accessibility, and compatibility with the site's character. Materials will prioritise sustainability while complementing the historical context, using contemporary interpretations of traditional materials where appropriate. Seating will be positioned strategically to provide rest opportunities and frame views of key site features, enhancing the visitor experience.

The material palette will distinguish between different functional zones while maintaining overall cohesion. The heritage core will feature higher quality finishes that respect and complement the historical architecture, while natural areas will incorporate more rustic materials that blend with the landscape. All paving materials will be suitable for all abilities

MOBILITY

VEHICULAR ACCESS

Walka Water Works is currently accessed via Oakhampton Road, Scobies Lane, and S Willards Lane. Plans include duplicating Scobies Lane, initially with a gravel surface for emergency access, with plans for a sealed wearing course later. In future development stages, existing and duplicated Scobies Lane with S Willards Lane will form a one-way system where visitors enter from the south (new Scobies Lane) and exit north (existing Scobies Lane). The S Willards Lane frontage will become a dedicated pick-up/drop-off area. In addition, formalised road access is planned at the northern boundary to connect to the adventure play parking and northern overflow parking.

PARKING STRATEGY

The Master Plan aims to reduce parking within the heritage core and create alternate parking locations for day-to-day users and events:

- **Current Main Parking:** The existing parking area near the pumphouse (up to 90 cars) will become a pedestrian-focused space, retaining some accessible parking spaces.
- **Offsite Parking:** A new parking area in the former dairy farm across S Willards Lane will formalise existing informal parking and serve as the main day-to-day parking for heritage core visitors.The land is not currently part of the walka site.
- **Adventure Play Area Parking:** A new dedicated area adjacent to the proposed adventure play area and nursery will provide space for 120 cars, all-ability spaces, and two coaches.
- **Northern Overflow Area:** A permeable-surface area using ecocell or similar materials will handle events and busy periods.

ACTIVE MOBILITY

The Master Plan aims to transform Walka Water Works into a more pedestrian-friendly environment with improved local and regional connections:

- **Pedestrianised Heritage Core:** The existing parking area will become a dedicated pedestrian street, activating more waterfront and integrating the pumphouse with the reservoir.
- **Regional Cycle Connection:** The site will connect to the planned Morpeth to Walka shared pathway.
- **Trail Upgrades:** Walking paths around the reservoir will receive all-weather surfacing, improved drainage, and accessibility enhancements.
- **Western Access:** A new shared access point will be created via Waterworks Road, improving accessibility for western neighbourhoods.
- **Bike Repair:** Self-service bike repair stations will be installed at intervals along the trail for rider convenience.

EVENT MANAGEMENT

Walka Water Works hosts diverse events including weddings (up to 200 people), school competitions (up to 2,000 visitors), and weekly Parkrun (150-400 participants). Previous large events have caused traffic challenges with overflow parking on surrounding roads.

Future event management strategies will include:

- Utilising queuing space on Oakhampton Road/Scobies Lane
- Preventing unauthorised parking through education, signage and traffic controllers
- Using the northern overflow area during peak periods
- Use of buses/coaches for major events

Staged transport upgrades will increase capacity for different event sizes:

- **Current:** Single-route access accommodates events under 500 people.
- **Stage 0:** Scobies Lane duplication improves traffic flow for events up to 500 people.
- **Stage 1:** Formalised parking and one-way circulation enables events over 1,000 attendees.
- **Stage 2:** Northern access road and expanded parking allows events exceeding 2,000 attendees.

1. Scobies Lane duplication
2. Drop-off points along S Willards Lane
3. Northern road access
4. Pedestrian street with accesible parking
5. New offsite parking on MCC land
6. Adventure play area parking
7. Northern overflow parking with gravel surface
8. Morpeth to Walka shared pathway
9. New shared access point from West
10. Bike repair pole

05 STAGING

OVERVIEW

The Master Plan will be implemented in the following stages.

STAGE 0: SITE REMEDIATION AND REPAIR

Stage 0 addresses critical safety and access issues to create the foundation for future site activation. This stage prioritises asbestos remediation in contaminated areas, structural stabilisation of the pumphouse chimney, and installation of utilities for later stages. Initial improvements to trails, vegetation management, and basic visitor amenities will also be undertaken during this period.

STAGE 1: RECOVER SITE USAGE AND LOCAL RECREATION

Stage 1 focuses on reactivating the site for community use, restoring former functions and creating improved recreational opportunities for local residents. Key developments include renovation of existing amenities, improved public spaces for family recreation, and limited access to the pumphouse building with basic visitor services.

STAGE 2: FOOD & BEVERAGE AND TOURISM ACTIVITY

Stage 2 introduces food & beverage operations and an enhanced visitor offer that attracts increased visitation and supports greater activation of the site. This includes the transformation of the pumphouse building with a café, function spaces and wellness activities; interpretive landscaping around the filter beds; a pedestrian street in front of the pumphouse; and the first stage of the potential adventure play area. Infrastructure improvements including new off-site parking and a northern parking area will also be implemented during this stage.

STAGE 3: EXPAND OFFERING

Stage 3 further expands the site's offerings for both local recreation and visitors. This includes an expanded pedestrian street, enhanced wellness facilities in the pumphouse along with expanded outdoor food & beverage and function areas, and expansion of the adventure park.

MASTER PLAN: STAGE 0

SITE REMEDIATION AND REPAIR

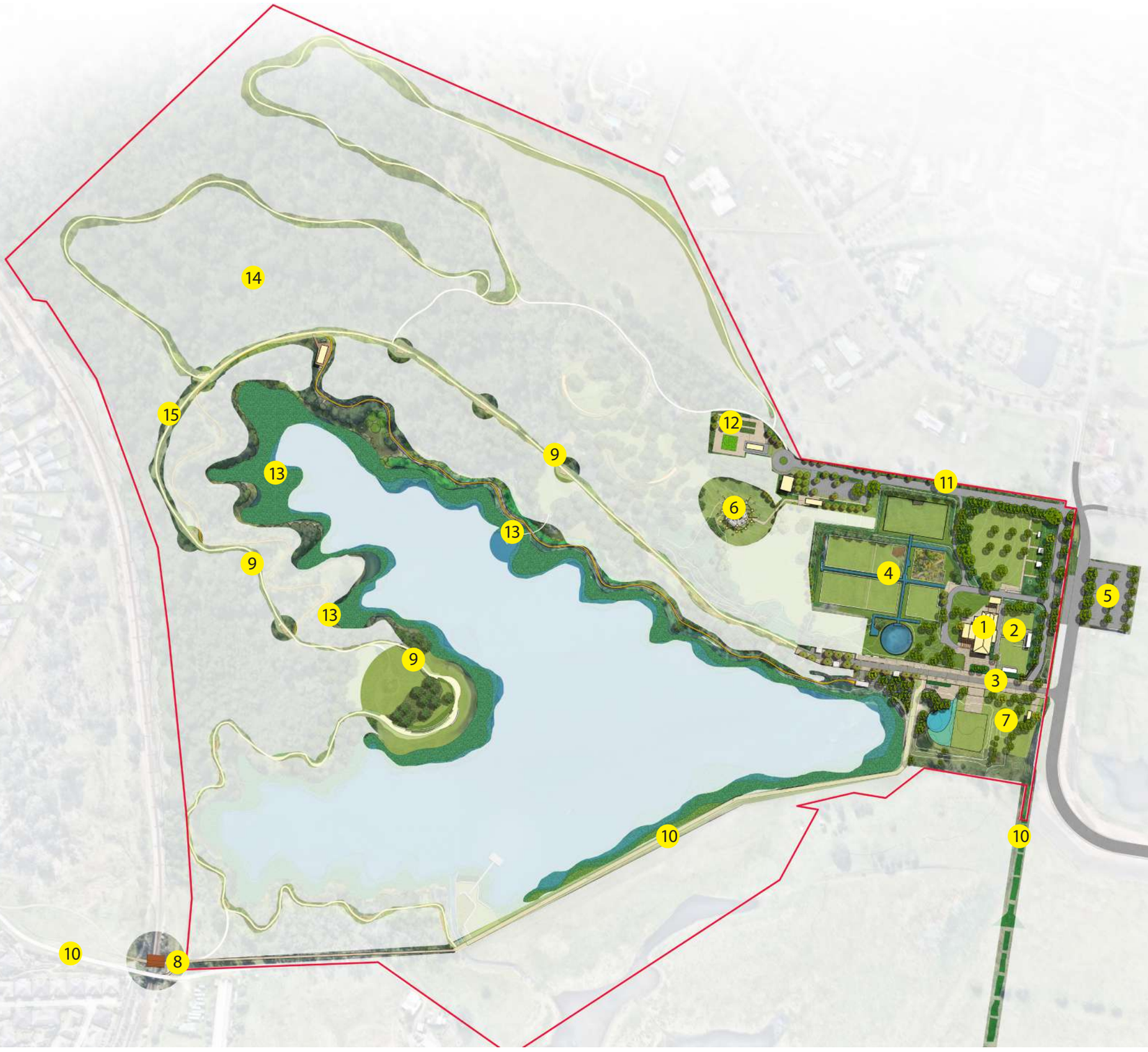
1. Pumphouse: Chimney stabilisation, enhanced lighting and projections onto wall.
2. Site remediation (asbestos).
3. Site services
4. Preliminary outdoor information point
5. New entry statement and lockable gate
6. South lawn: new turf surface and initial playspace
7. Implement QR codes for heritage interpretation
8. Initial upgrade of trail, path and passive recreation (continued throughout all stages)
9. Tree/weed management (continued throughout all stages)
10. Improve riparian areas (continued throughout all stages)
11. Water quality remediation (continued throughout all stages)
12. New emergency access
13. Existing Scobies Lane as main access
14. Utilise the existing road for temporary parking

MASTER PLAN: STAGE 1

RECOVER SITE USAGE AND LOCAL RECREATION

1. Pumphouse: access to building, shop/ information centre, services for future café kitchen, flexible space hire
2. Renovated and upgraded amenities
3. Reinstate weddings (pop-up in outdoor spaces/marquees)
4. Lawn area south of pumphouse with new turf surface
5. Light-touch improvement to street in front of pumphouse
6. Expansion of playspace including educational waterplay
7. Forecourt with sculptural installation
8. Reactivation of miniature railway
9. North lawn as a bookable space with shade and BBQ facilities
10. Continued tree/weed management, riparian improvements, water quality remediation
11. Continued trail, path and passive recreation upgrades

MASTER PLAN: STAGE 2



F&B AND TOURISM ACTIVITY

1. Pumphouse: main function space, permanent café and pop-up activity space, kitchen, flexible wellness space, staircase to top floor
2. East lawn area: new all-weather shade structures, access and lighting
3. Extended pedestrian street in front of pumphouse with entry statement
4. Interpretive landscaping around filter beds
5. New offsite day visitor parking area
6. Adventure park
7. Recreational enhancements supporting people living with disability
8. New shared access point from west
9. Embellish trail experience with interpretive signage
10. Connection to Morpeth to Walka shared pathway
11. New internal road within site (site entrance to adventure park carpark)
12. Community garden
13. Bird watching hides
14. Continued tree/weed management, riparian improvements, water quality remediation
15. Continued trail, path and passive recreation upgrades

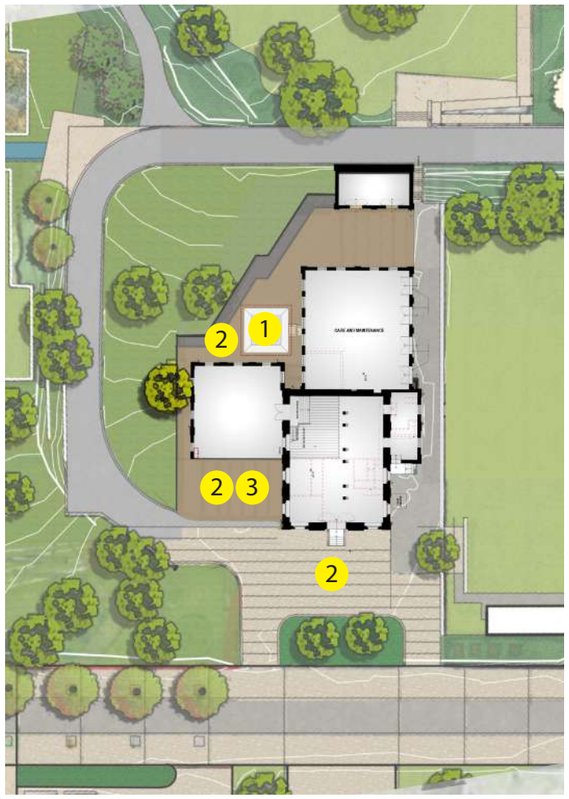
MASTER PLAN: STAGE 3

EXPANDED OFFERING

1. Pumphouse: wellness use on ground floor, flexible wellness space on top floor, outdoor covered areas, and a service area
2. Adventure park expansion
3. Miniature railway expansion to Stan Parkes Memorial Grove
4. Sculpture/public art at Stan Parkes Memorial Grove
5. New overflow parking area (north)
6. Expansion of playspace to district-level play space
7. New pontoon for model yacht club
8. Men's shed with community garden shed
9. Continued tree/weed management, riparian improvements, water quality remediation
10. Secondary trail, path and passive recreation upgrades

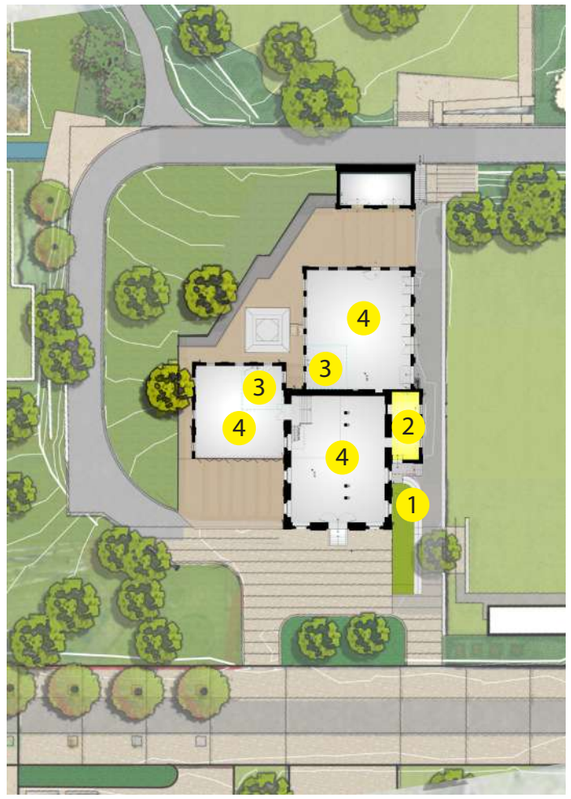
PUMPHOUSE STAGING

STAGE 0



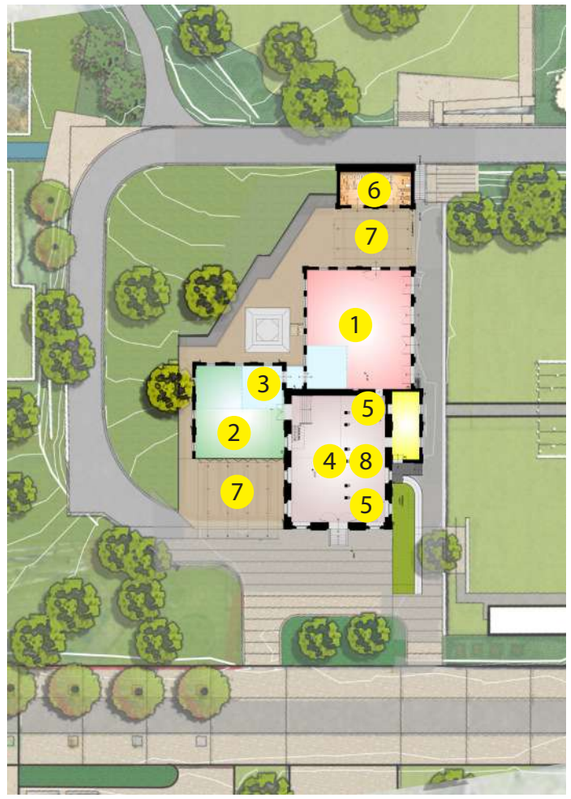
1. Chimney stabilisation
2. Enhanced lighting for significant facades and chimney
3. Video and image projections onto southern wall

STAGE 1



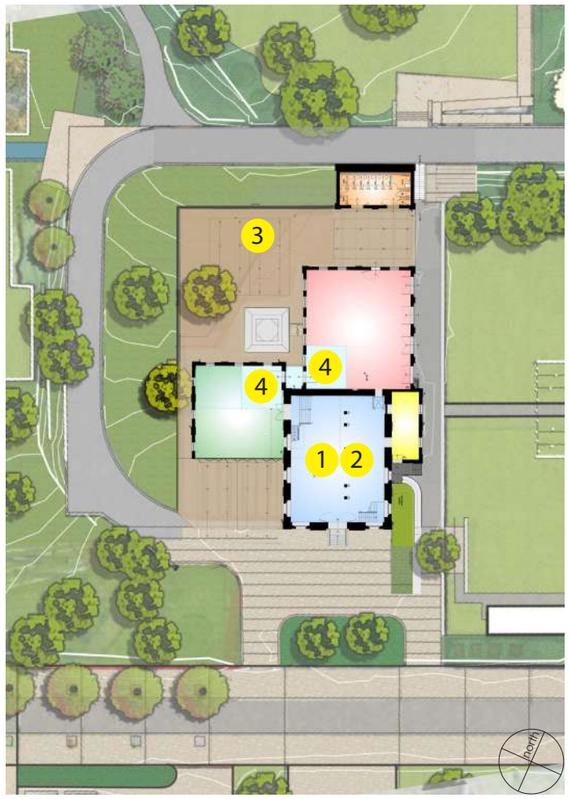
1. Access to building
2. Shop/Information centre with basic refreshments
3. Services for future kitchen for café and functions
4. Flexible hire of ground floor spaces

STAGE 2



1. Main function space
2. Permanent café and pop-up activity space
3. Kitchen, bar, dry and coolstore
4. Flexible wellness space on ground floor
5. Staircase and life to top floor
6. Amenities for café and function space
7. Covered outdoor areas
8. Flexible hire of top floor space

STAGE 3



1. Formal health/wellness use on ground floor (e.g. onsen), subject to operator
2. Flexible wellness space moved to top floor
3. Expanded north-facing outdoor F&B space
4. Expanded kitchen and bar