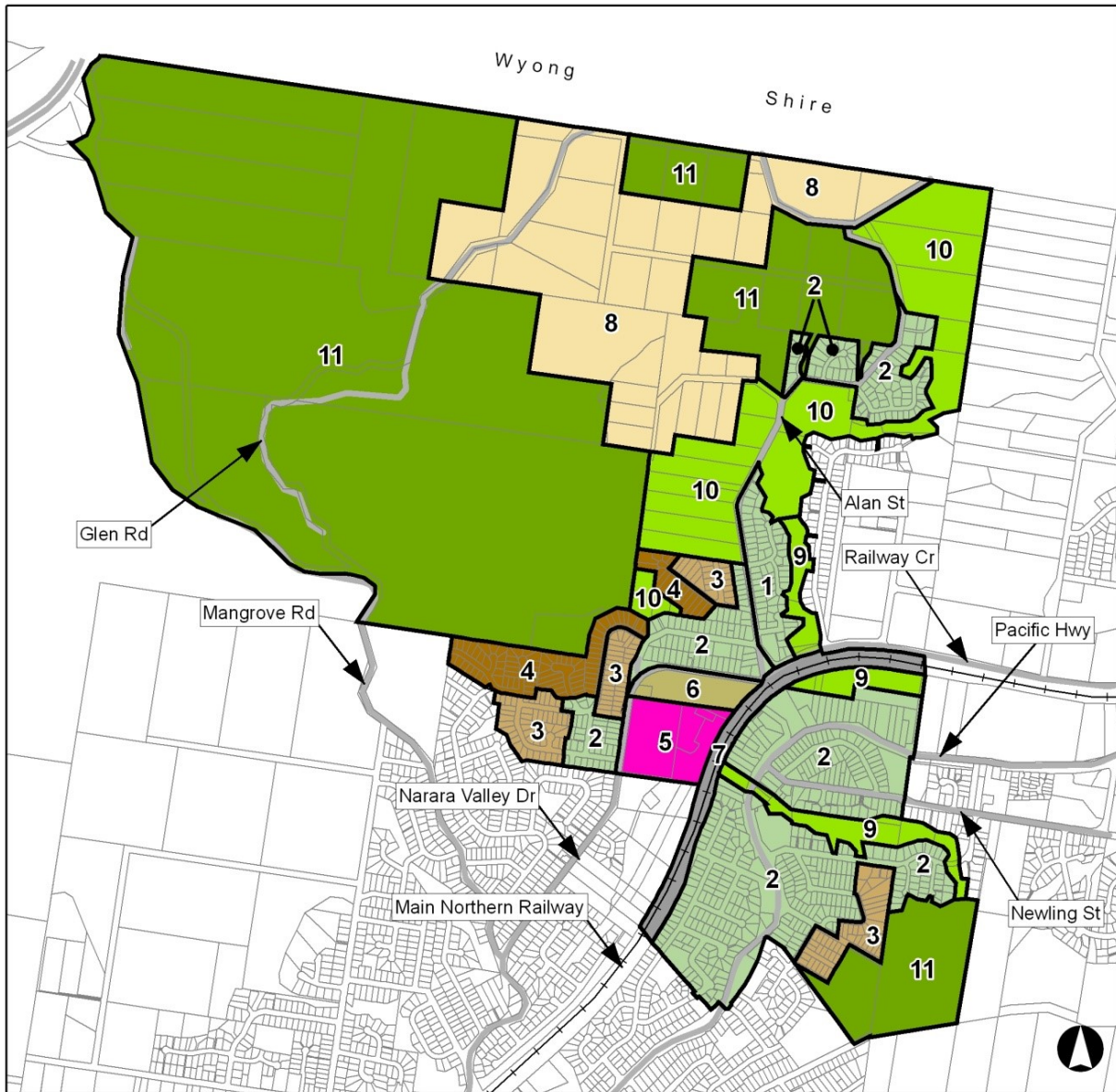













# Niagara Park



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|--|---|
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## Niagara Park 1: Open Parkland - Existing

### **Existing Character**

A low-lying neighbourhood of regular residential allotments on flat lands that have been almost entirely cleared of original vegetation, adjoining a watercourse reserve that provides a backdrop of tall bushland remnants, but where residential where gardens are planted with shrubs and small trees that have matured to create a leafy but open parkland character.

Medium-sized allotments face straight streets with medium-width pavements, flanked by kerbing and broad turfed verges that extend into front gardens. Houses are brick-and-tile designs, almost all of a single storey, sited close to their neighbours and creating the appearance of near-continuous walls of buildings lining each street.

Street frontages generally are not dominated by wide garages.

### **Niagara Park 1: Open Parkland - Desired**

#### **Desired Character**

These should remain low-density residential neighbourhoods where existing streetscape quality and amenity are enhanced substantially by further “greening” of gardens and street verges, enhancing the present leafy settings around each dwelling.

Minimise disturbance to any existing trees that are visually-prominent, and avoid the appearance of a continuous wall of development along any street. Locate buildings behind front setbacks that appear similar to their surrounding properties, and provide at least one wide side setback or step the shape of front and rear facades. Plant clusters of trees and shrubs throughout each garden to screen buildings and driveways, as well as to provide shady backdrops to the roadway. Plantings in front gardens and along street verges should include some taller trees that are indigenous. Facing the street, emphasise a leafy garden character by limiting the width of driveways, using front fences that are low or see-through or hedges of shrubs.

Minimise scale and bulk by stepped floorplans and building forms. Front or rear facades that are taller than neighbouring dwellings should be screened by balconies, verandahs, stepped forms or extra setbacks. Roofs should be gently-pitched to minimise the height of ridges, and flanked by wide eaves to disguise the scale of exterior walls.

Construction should be predominantly brick-and-tile, varied by some board or sheet cladding. All dwellings should display a traditional “street address” with verandahs or decks, and living rooms or front doors that are visible from the roadway. Avoid wide garages that would visually-dominate any front façade or block views from the dwelling to the street. Locate and screen all balconies or decks to maintain the existing levels of privacy and amenity that are enjoyed by neighbouring dwellings.

### **Niagara Park 2: Open Parkland Hillside - Existing**

#### **Existing Character**

Neighbourhoods of residential allotments situated on gentle to moderate slopes that have been almost entirely cleared of original vegetation, where gardens planted with shrubs and small trees are maturing to create a leafy but open parkland character. Also, frontages to an arterial thoroughfare that carries a significant and growing volume of business, commuter and tourist traffic, where a sweeping alignment is flanked by a variety of older dwellings and some traditional corner stores.

Varying in age and configuration, these areas include older subdivisions with regular allotments flanking straight streets, as well as newer areas with a variety of allotments along curving streets with narrow pavements flanked by kerbing. Turfed street verges extend across front gardens that are dotted with planted trees and shrubs, partly screening houses that vary from timber-framed weatherboard cottages to newer brick-and-tile designs, almost all of a single storey and often with at least one wide side setback. In some areas, gardens and street verges conserve conifer wind-row plantings from original farms.

Frequently enjoying local valley views, the newer dwellings have broad facades that open onto verandahs or decks, but street frontages generally are not dominated by garages. Older dwellings are typical traditional timber-framed bungalows dating from the mid-Twentieth Century.

The arterial road sits within a road reserve that varies considerably in width, and regional population pressures are

likely to demand widening of the existing two-lane pavement. Currently flanked by sloping embankments, widening of this road would affect tall forest remnants that are currently set close to the roadway, providing scenically-distinctive landmarks that are remnants of the former semi-rural setting.

## **Niagara Park 2: Open Parkland Hillsides - Desired**

### **Desired Character**

These should remain low-density residential hillsides where existing streetscape quality and amenity are enhanced substantially by further “greening” of gardens and street verges.

Minimise disturbance to natural slopes and any existing trees that are visually-prominent. Retain existing ground levels along all boundaries, and on the steeper slopes, use low-impact construction such as suspended floors and decks rather than extensive cut-and-fill.

Avoid the appearance of a continuous wall of development along any street or hillside. Locate new buildings behind front setbacks that are similar to their surrounding properties. Provide at least one wide side setback or step the shape of front and rear facades, and plant clusters of trees and shrubs throughout each garden to screen buildings and driveways, as well as to provide shady backdrops to the roadway. Facing the street, emphasise a leafy garden character by gardens and street verges planted with taller trees that are indigenous plus hedges of shrubs, and avoid wide driveways, tall fences or multiple retaining walls.

On hillsides that are scenically-prominent, minimise the scale and bulk of buildings by stepping floor-levels to follow natural slopes and by using irregular floorplans to create well-articulated forms. For example, divide floorspace into linked pavilions that are capped by individual roofs and separated by courtyards. Front or rear facades that are taller than neighbouring dwellings should be screened by balconies, verandahs or extra setbacks. Roofs should be gently-pitched to minimise the height of ridges, and flanked by wide eaves to disguise the scale of exterior walls.

Minimise the scale of prominent facades by using extensive windows and verandahs plus a variety of materials and finishes rather than expanses of plain masonry. All dwellings should display a traditional “street address” with verandahs or decks, and living rooms or front doors that are visible from the roadway. Avoid wide garages that would visually-dominate any front façade or block views from a dwelling to the street. Locate and screen all balconies or decks to maintain the existing levels of privacy and amenity that are enjoyed by neighbouring dwellings.

## **Niagara Park 3: Open Woodland Hillsides - Existing**

### **Existing Character**

Low density neighbourhoods situated on slopes that range from gentle to moderate, mostly in visually-prominent locations near the edge of urban areas, where original vegetation has been thinned or has been cleared from street frontages, but maintaining a scattered bushland canopy that is scenically-distinctive.

Allotments are mostly medium-sized, facing medium-width paved streets that are flanked by kerbing, with grassed verges extending across open front gardens that have been substantially cleared but are dotted with a variety of planted trees plus isolated bushland remnants, partly screening buildings and contributing to leafy streetscapes. Along rear boundaries, corridors of tall bushland remnants are visible above rooftops, providing visually-prominent neighbourhood features, contributing to the scenic quality of neighbouring reserves and buffers between urban areas. Street and side boundaries are often marked by low retaining walls or shrub-beds

Houses are mostly project-style brick and / or weatherboard construction, modestly-scaled single storey dwellings set into hillsides, sometimes with basement garages. Siting varies according to slope and the individual design of each dwelling, producing streetscapes that are relatively uniform on the gentler more-open slopes with greater variety on slopes that are moderate or that are more-densely vegetated. Street facades incorporate a mix of balconies and verandahs, living rooms plus garages, facing gardens that retain the scenic qualities of natural slopes.

## **Niagara Park 3: Open Woodland Hillsides - Desired**

### **Desired Character**

These should remain low-density residential areas where the existing scenic quality and amenity of prominent hillsides are enhanced substantially by further “greening” of gardens and street verges in order to screen new development and to complement the open bushland canopy that surrounds most dwellings.

Maintain the semi-natural character of hillsides by retaining existing natural slopes throughout gardens and along street verges, and by conserving bushland trees that are visually-prominent features. Complement the established canopy by planting trees and shrubs that are predominantly indigenous throughout all garden areas and along street verges. Do not plant identified noxious or environmental weeds in any garden that is close to a bushland reserve. Facing all boundaries, emphasise a leafy garden character by avoiding tall retaining walls, elevated structures such as terraces or pools, and steep driveways that would visibly compromise the leafy hillside character.

In areas that are defined as bushfire prone, hazard must not be increased by inappropriate new plantings or structures. Minimise the extent of cleared asset protection zones by fire-resistant siting, design and construction for all new structures plus effective management of gardens. The ideal compromise between desired scenic quality and hazard-reduction would limit clearing to thinning of the canopy to establish breaks between existing trees. Screen or shield all verandahs, windows, roofs and suspended floors to prevent the entry of sparks and flying embers.

Avoid disturbing natural slopes and trees by appropriate siting of structures plus low-impact construction such as suspended floors and decks, rather than extensive cut-and-fill. On the steeper sites, locate parking next to the street in structures that are designed to blend with their desired bushy setting. Avoid the appearance of a continuous wall of development along any street or hillside by locating buildings behind front and rear setbacks similar to their surrounding properties, and providing at least one wide side setback or stepping the shape of front and rear facades.

Minimise the scale and bulk of buildings by stepping floor-levels to follow natural slopes and by using irregular floorplans to create well-articulated forms. For example, divide floorspace into linked pavilions that are separated by courtyards and capped by individual roofs. Front or rear facades that are taller than neighbouring dwellings should be screened by balconies, verandahs, stepped forms or extra setbacks. Roofs should be gently-pitched to minimise the height of ridges, and flanked by wide eaves to disguise the scale of exterior walls.

Minimise the scale of prominent facades by using extensive windows and verandahs plus a variety of materials and finishes rather than expanses of plain masonry. All dwellings should display a traditional "street address" with verandahs or decks, and living rooms or front doors that are visible from the roadway. Avoid wide garages that would visually-dominate any front façade or block views from a dwelling to the street. Locate and screen all balconies or decks to maintain the existing levels of privacy and amenity that are enjoyed by neighbouring dwellings.

#### **Niagara Park 4: Woodland Hillsides - Existing**

##### **Existing Character**

Hillside locations where bushland has been thinned or partly cleared, where low density residential development is sheltered beneath a canopy of forest remnants that extend across both front and rear gardens, partly-concealing buildings and either providing scenically-distinctive backdrops to major roads and to centres or contributing to the natural qualities of adjoining bushland reserves that are visible from nearby vantage points.

Allotments are generally medium-sized, facing access streets that are paved and flanked by kerbing with grassed verges extending into front gardens that are dotted with canopy trees, partly-screening houses from their street frontage as well as from immediate neighbours.

Dwellings vary from one to two storeys, medium-to-large in size, with designs and siting that range from regular alignment of conventional brick-and-tile structures on the gentler slopes to irregular siting of pole-structures on the steeper slopes.

Gardens generally have a cleared understorey planted with turf and shrubs beneath the bushland canopy. Decks are common, providing outdoor living space directly accessible from indoors. Carparking is provided by carports or basement garages.

#### **Niagara Park 4: Woodland Hillsides - Desired**

##### **Desired Character**

These should remain very leafy low-density residential hillsides, conserving natural and scenic qualities of the bushland backdrops that are fundamental features of Gosford City's identity, where landscape settings that adjoin bushland reserves are not dominated by new development.

Conserve natural and scenic characters of wooded hillside properties plus unformed road verges by retaining natural slopes and the continuity of tree-canopy that is provided by existing bushland remnants. Complement the established tree canopy by new plantings that are predominantly indigenous, and do not plant any identified noxious or environmental weeds. Facing all boundaries, emphasise a leafy garden character by avoiding tall retaining walls, fences that are not see-through, elevated structures such as terraces or pools, and steep driveways that would visibly compromise the existing bushy hillside character.

In areas that are defined as bushfire prone, hazard must not be increased by inappropriate new plantings or structures. Minimise the extent of cleared asset protection zones by fire-resistant siting, design and construction for all new structures plus effective management of gardens. The ideal compromise between desired scenic quality and hazard-reduction would limit clearing to thinning of the canopy to establish breaks between existing trees. Screen or shield all verandahs, windows, roofs and suspended floors to prevent the entry of sparks and flying embers.

Avoid disturbing natural slopes and trees by appropriate siting of structures plus low-impact construction such as suspended floors and decks rather than extensive cut-and-fill. On the steeper sites, locate parking next to the street in structures that are designed to blend with their natural setting. Avoid the appearance of a continuous wall of development along any street or hillside by locating buildings within setbacks that are similar to their surrounding properties, and by providing at least one wide side setback or stepping the shape of front and rear facades.

Minimise the scale and bulk of buildings by strongly-articulated forms that sit beneath the canopy, with floor-levels that step to follow natural slopes and irregular floorplans, such as linked pavilions that are separated by courtyards and capped by individual roofs. Front or rear facades that are taller than neighbouring dwellings should be screened by balconies, verandahs, stepped forms or extra setbacks. Roofs should be gently-pitched to minimise the height of ridges, and flanked by wide eaves to disguise the scale of exterior walls.

Minimise the scale of prominent facades by using extensive windows and verandahs plus a variety of materials and finishes rather than expanses of plain masonry. Where dwellings would be visible from their road frontage, display a traditional "street address" with verandahs or decks, and living rooms or front doors that are visible from that roadway. Avoid wide garages that would visually-dominate any front façade. Locate and screen all balconies or decks to maintain the existing levels of privacy and amenity that are enjoyed by neighbouring dwellings.

## **Niagara Park 5: Community Centres + Schools - Existing**

### **Existing Character**

Surrounding and overlooking a large reserve, a major indoor sporting and entertainment complex plus a primary school face a major collector road adjacent to the rail corridor and station. Providing significant gathering places for the community, these facilities also offer green backdrops that are visible from surrounding residential areas and transitways.

Scattered around these properties, corridors and copses of tall trees that are mostly bushland remnants provide continuous shady backdrops to playing fields and buildings, as well as screening the railway.

The indoor recreation facility is entered from a carpark that serves the adjoining neighbourhood retail centre, accommodating significant week-end gatherings and events in a substantial industrial-style structure with tall walls that provide a backdrop to the playing fields.

The school sits on a narrow sloping property along the collector road frontage, with a variety of single and two storey brick pavilion structures plus demountable classrooms set behind a canopy of planted trees.

## **Niagara Park 5: Community Centres + Schools - Desired**

### **Desired Character**

These properties should continue to provide community, educational and recreation services according to the needs of their surrounding residential population. The scenic and civic qualities of prominent vegetated backdrops to Gosford City's waterfronts, major roads and residential areas should be protected as well as enhanced by future development, infrastructure or landscape improvements, and by open space management.

Protect the habitat and scenic values of remnant bushland, wetland or salt marsh by retaining natural slopes and by avoiding further fragmentation of the tree canopy, particularly mature bushland remnants along any ridge, slope, waterway or road frontage that provide scenically-prominent backdrops.

Enhance the recreation and scenic potentials of playing fields by masterplanned improvements that satisfy a wide range of recreation needs, including clustered shelter plantings around existing ovals and pitches, walking trails and seating, and amenities buildings. Around carparks and along street frontages in general, protect the safety of children by footpaths that are flanked by landscaped barriers to channel pedestrian traffic towards defined road crossings.

Ensure that new developments (including alterations to existing buildings and infrastructure works) do not dominate their natural or landscaped settings, or their predominantly low-rise residential surroundings. Surround buildings with landscaped settings that maintain the scenic quality of prominent bushland backdrops or existing corridors of planted trees. Ensure that the height and siting of new structures also preserve levels of privacy, sunlight and visual amenity that are enjoyed by neighbouring dwellings and their private open spaces. Complement the bushland canopy by planting all setbacks, courtyards and parking areas with shrubs and trees that are predominantly indigenous. Along front boundaries, provide for surveillance and safety by planting hedges or using fences that are low or see-through.

Promote high levels of visible activity around buildings by adopting elements of traditional “mainstreet” shopping villages, including extensive windows and building entrances that are located to reveal indoor activity. Incorporate footpaths, verandahs or colonnades to concentrate pedestrian access between clearly-identified building entrances and surrounding streets or carparks.

Minimise the scale and bulk of new buildings and avoid the appearance of uniform building heights along any street by well-articulated forms. Divide floorspace into separate pavilion structures that are surrounded by landscaped courtyards, and vary the shape and height of facades, particularly to identify major entrances. For visually-prominent facades, incorporate extensive windows that are shaded by framed verandahs or exterior sunscreens, and display some variety of materials or finishes rather than expanses of plain masonry or metal cladding. Roofs should be gently-pitched to minimise the height of ridges, and flanked by wide eaves or verandahs that disguise the scale of exterior walls.

## **Niagara Park 6: Main Road Centre - Existing**

### **Existing Character**

Located on a substantial corner property facing a major collector road and the railway, a substantial single storey retail centre accommodates a variety of shops and offices. A highly-visible location, this property is surrounded by widely-spaced trees, but its local retail role has been superseded by other centres nearby.

Sited on a busy two-lane road flanked by kerbing and footpaths, a substantial single storey building has a row of shopfronts and arcade entrances facing an open carpark area that also serves the adjacent community recreation building and playing fields.

## **Niagara Park 6: Main Road Centre - Desired**

### **Desired Character**

This should remain a mixed-use centre that provides a range of services to the surrounding district and also incorporates some accommodation, where the civic quality of prominent backdrops to Gosford City’s major arterial thoroughfares are enhanced by “greening” of the road frontages, and where new developments in leafy landscaped settings achieve a co-ordinated standard of presentation and also display high levels of indoor activity.

Enhance the civic presentation of main road backdrops and achieve an improved setting for retail and business activities by siting buildings behind leafy front gardens and parking courtyards that provide a buffer to traffic and noise. Ensure that neighbouring developments promote a co-ordinated network of landscaped setbacks, retail frontages plus pedestrian and vehicle access. Landscape all setbacks and parking courtyards using hedges and rows of tall trees that are predominantly indigenous, with elevated canopies that maintain the visibility of shopfronts and commercial signs.

Promote high levels of visible retail-type activities along the main roads. Adopt a traditional “main street” configuration for new developments, maximising the number of retailers or businesses plus the continuity of shop-windows that

face the road and surround each parking courtyard. Incorporate footpaths with verandahs, colonnades or balconies that emphasise retail activity and provide sheltered pedestrian access from carparks to clearly-identified building entrances. Avoid delivery entrances that would disrupt the continuity of shopfronts. Provide sheltered footpaths between neighbouring buildings, and link the driveways and parking upon neighbouring properties to allow convenient access for customers and deliveries.

Facing the major roads, promote improved standards of urban design for all new buildings. Avoid the appearance of uniform building heights facing any street or driveway frontage, and vary the shape of all visible facades by terraces or balconies, as well as by stepping the line of roofs or parapets, and by emphasising prominent building corners or road intersections by taller forms.

Disguise the scale and bulk of new buildings by applying a variety of finishes to all front and side facades, including extensive windows that are shaded by balconies, verandahs or exterior sunshades, plus painted finishes over a mixture of masonry and sheet cladding, rather than expanses of plain masonry or metal cladding. Roofs should be gently-pitched to minimise the height of ridges, flanked by wide eaves that disguise the scale of exterior walls.

Civic presentation of road frontages should be supported by the co-ordination of building colour schemes and commercial signs. Signs should be limited in both size and number, attached to buildings in consistent locations but limited in height to create continuous horizontal bands along awnings or parapets, rather than covering an entire facade. Pylon signs at the street frontage should complement the design of landscaped areas, and should be limited to one per property.

## **Niagara Park 7: Transit Corridor - Existing**

### **Existing Character**

A broad corridor containing the coastal railway plus a reserve for future extension of a major collector road, with vegetated verges that contribute to a scenically-prominent landmark winding along valley floors, as well as providing a barrier between neighbouring residential hillsides and employment areas.

Set within a broad corridor that is partly fenced, wide verges support corridors of forest remnants. The twin-track railway runs across embankments and at grade.

Stations and over-bridges provide significant gathering places for the community, but they generally demonstrate poor levels of urban design, consideration of commuter amenity, and they fail to contribute to the identity of valley suburbs.

## **Niagara Park 7: Transit Corridor - Desired**

### **Desired Character**

This corridor should remain a primary regional and state transit link, where future infrastructure maintains the scenic qualities of frontages that are prominent backdrops to Gosford City's tourist and commuter routes, and where improved standards of scenic-and-urban design quality are achieved.

Maintain the informal scenic characters of verges and their surroundings by retaining existing slopes and trees wherever possible, or by contouring cuttings and embankments to complement the landscape character of surrounding scenically-distinctive natural backdrops and revegetating cleared areas to recreate indigenous plant communities. Control noxious or environmental weeds along all road and railway reserves.

Around station buildings, promote high levels of visible activity and safety by adopting elements of traditional "main street" shopping villages, with walls of windows and building entrances located to reveal indoor activity, adjoining carparks and set-down areas that are shaded by trees and have effective security lighting. Provide sheltered pedestrian access from surrounding streets and carparks to clearly-identified building entrances along footpaths and verandahs that contribute to the desirable concentration of outdoor activity.

Promote a local identity for new buildings by reflecting the modest scale and character of Gosford City's traditional mid-Twentieth Century houses, including walls of windows that are shaded by framed verandahs or exterior sunscreens, a variety of materials and finishes rather than extensive areas of plain masonry or metal cladding, and roofs that are gently-pitched with wide eaves or verandahs to disguise the scale of exterior walls.

For infrastructure compounds, provide a screen of shady trees wherever space is available.

Along significant pedestrian “desire lines”, provide crossings above or below the transit corridor located and designed to minimise visual impact and to blend with natural surroundings, as well as providing safe all-weather and after-hours access.

## **Niagara Park 8: Rural Hamlets - Existing**

### **Existing Character**

Situated on gentle to steep slopes that are concealed from residential areas and major roads, the subdivision of original coastal farms has created clusters of rural-residential properties that range from one to two hectares.

Flanking culs-de-sacs or facing access streets that do not carry through-traffic, these clusters of properties contribute to the scenically-distinctive buffers that separate neighbouring valley suburbs.

Concealed behind forested ridgetops and rural-residential areas that are scenically-prominent and distinctive, these properties support very low density residential developments, and landscape settings are not dominated by buildings.

Although the majority of gentler slope have been cleared substantially, bushland remnants survive as substantial copses across the steeper slopes, plus corridors and isolated trees along street frontages as well as the side and rear boundaries, often next to forested properties that are a significant bushfire hazard.

Winding along ridgetops, access roads display an informal scenic quality that is typical of traditional rural areas, with pavements that are often narrow or gravelled, flanked by grassed swales or embankments that support tall forest remnants overhanging the roadway, or avenues of deciduous trees and shrubs planted to screen dwellings.

Dwellings are mostly medium to large one and two storey houses, capped by pitched roofs, surrounded by extensive verandahs, and associated with outbuildings.

Dwellings are either set close to the road, screened by a dense mix of planted shady trees and shrubs, or are sited well back from the road frontage and surrounded by extensive gardens or paddocks. Gardens range from an open canopy of bushland remnants above turfed natural slopes, to open paddocks. Along the road frontages, fences are mostly traditional rural-style post-and-rail that complement the informal streetscape character.

## **Niagara Park 8: Rural Hamlets - Desired**

### **Desired Character**

These should remain rural-residential buffers between surrounding urban areas, where the scenically-distinctive qualities and amenity of existing secluded settings are preserved by very-low density residential development plus low-impact rural activities or businesses that are associated with a dwelling.

Retain natural slopes and prevent further fragmentation of the tree canopy in order to maintain habitat values and informal scenic characters of hillside or valley properties, plus meandering roads with unformed verges. Along creeks, ridges, slopes or road frontages, conserve all mature bushland remnants that provide scenically-prominent backdrops visible from any road or nearby property. Limit intrusion of structures upon their landscape setting by concentrating new buildings in existing clearings, and using low-impact construction such as suspended floors and decks rather than extensive cut-and-fill, particularly on elevated slopes or near bushland.

In areas that are defined as bushfire prone, hazard must not be increased by inappropriate new plantings or structures. Minimise the extent of cleared asset protection zones by fire-resistant siting, design and construction for all new structures plus effective management of gardens. The ideal compromise between desired scenic quality and hazard-reduction would limit clearing to the understorey plus thinning of the canopy to establish breaks between existing trees.

Maintain the informal character of existing semi-rural hillsides by avoiding tall retaining walls, extensive terraces or broad driveways that would be visible from any road or nearby property, and provide boundary fences that are see-through such as traditional post-and-rail designs. Surround all buildings with extensive garden setbacks, planted with new trees and shrubs that are predominantly indigenous to complement the established canopy. Noxious or environmental weeds must not be planted, and existing infestations should be controlled.

In order to minimise their scale and bulk, all new structures that would be visible from a road or nearby property should reflect the modest character and simple articulation of traditional farm buildings. For example, divide floorspace into a series of linked pavilion structures or wings of rooms that are surrounded by landscaped courtyards, and preferably, provide parking in carports or separate garages. Roofs should be simple hips or gables without elaborate articulation, gently-pitched to minimise the height of ridges and flanked by wide eaves or verandahs to disguise the scale of exterior walls. (In bushfire prone areas, all verandahs, roofs and suspended floors must be screened to prevent the entry of sparks and flying embers.)

Disguise the scale of facades that are visible from the street by incorporating extensive windows and verandahs, some painted finishes rather than expanses of plain masonry, and avoid wide garages that would visually-dominate any frontage. Ensure that outbuildings are compatible with the scale and design of their associated dwelling, particularly by using a similar roof pitch and wide eaves.

## **Niagara Park 9: Scenic Buffers (Floodway) - Existing**

### **Existing Character**

Narrow corridors of bushland flanking creeklines that are watercourse reserves passing between residential subdivisions, providing visually-prominent backdrops to major roads, as well as scenically-distinctive neighbourhood landmarks and backdrops.

Between neighbouring residential areas, watercourse reserves support tall bushland remnants in a condition that varies from thinned to near-natural. However, the configuration of these reserves with a high ratio of edge-to-area, adjoining back boundaries of residential properties, inevitably compromises the condition and long-term management of bushland, with the understorey inevitably replaced by corridors of noxious or environmental weeds that often have escaped from adjoining residential gardens. Assisted regeneration, clearing of accumulated weed, refuse and silt is complicated by limited access points.

## **Niagara Park 9: Scenic Buffers (Floodway) - Desired**

### **Desired Character**

These floodways should remain rural-residential buffers where the distinctive semi-rural and natural qualities of prominent backdrops to Gosford City's major roads and subdivisions are preserved by low density residential development that is protected from flooding.

Retain natural slopes and prevent further fragmentation of the tree canopy in order to maintain the informal scenic characters of valley properties and meandering roads with unformed verges. Maintain mature bushland remnants along creeks and road frontages that provide scenically-prominent backdrops to major tourist routes or nearby properties. Avoid disturbing natural slopes and stream banks by siting buildings away from watercourses, primarily within existing clearings, with habitable floors elevated above the flood level by low-impact construction such as suspended floors and decks rather than extensive cut-and-fill.

In areas that are defined as bushfire prone, hazard must not be increased by inappropriate new plantings or structures. Minimise the extent of cleared asset protection zones by fire-resistant siting, design and construction for all new structures plus effective management of gardens. The ideal compromise between desired scenic quality and hazard-reduction would limit clearing to the understorey plus thinning of the canopy to establish breaks between existing trees.

Maintain the informal character of existing semi-rural floodplains by avoiding retaining walls, extensive terraces or driveways that would be visible from any road or nearby property, and provide boundary fences that are see-through. Surround all buildings with extensive garden setbacks, planted with new trees and shrubs that are predominantly indigenous to complement the established canopy. Noxious or environmental weeds must not be planted, and existing infestations should be controlled.

In order to minimise their scale and bulk, all new structures that would be visible from a road or nearby property should reflect the modest character and simple articulation of traditional farm buildings. For example, divide floorspace into a series of linked pavilion structures or wings of rooms that are surrounded by landscaped courtyards, and preferably, provide parking in carports or separate garages. Roofs should be simple hips or gables without

elaborate articulation, gently-pitched to minimise the height of ridges and flanked by wide eaves or verandahs to disguise the scale of exterior walls. (In bushfire prone areas, all verandahs, roofs and suspended floors must be screened to prevent the entry of sparks and flying embers.)

Disguise the scale of facades that are visible from the street by incorporating extensive windows and verandahs, some painted finishes rather than expanses of plain masonry, and avoid wide garages that would visually-dominate any frontage. Ensure that outbuildings are compatible with the scale and design of their associated dwelling, particularly by using a similar roof pitch and wide eaves.

## **Niagara Park 10: Scenic Buffers - Existing**

### **Existing Character**

The subdivision of original valley farms has created broad bands of rural-residential properties that range from one to two hectares, providing bushland and semi-rural backdrops to residential areas and roads that carry substantial volumes of through-traffic.

Situated on gentle to moderate slopes, these areas are elevated and they contribute to the scenically-distinctive buffers that separate neighbouring valley suburbs

Although original forest has been cleared substantially from the majority of gentler slopes on rural-residential properties, bushland remnants survive as substantial copses on the steeper slopes, with corridors and isolated trees along street frontages, side and rear boundaries. Providing scenically-distinctive local landmarks as well as habitat, bushland remnants are often associated with an understorey of noxious or environmental weeds. Generally supporting very low density residential development, these landscape settings are not dominated by buildings.

Dwellings vary widely in size and style, from early-Twentieth Century timber-framed farm cottages, to medium and very large one and two storey brick houses set upon extensive benched foundations. Most dwellings are capped by pitched roofs, surrounded by extensive verandahs, and associated with outbuildings.

Dwellings are either set close to the road, generally screened by a dense mix of planted shady trees and shrubs, or are sited well back from the road frontage and surrounded by extensive gardens or paddocks. Gardens range from an open canopy of bushland remnants above turfed natural slopes, to open paddocks, and natural landforms on some properties have been extensively modified to create terraces that are surrounded by avenues or dense screens of planted shady trees. Along the road frontages, fences are mostly traditional rustic post-and-rail designs that complement the informal streetscape character.

Winding along ridgetops, access roads serving the rural properties display an informal scenic quality that is typical of traditional rural areas, with pavements that are often narrow or gravelled, flanked by grassed swales or embankments supporting tall bushland remnants that overhang the roadway, or avenues of deciduous trees and shrubs planted to screen dwellings that are set close to their street frontage.

## **Niagara Park 10: Scenic Buffers - Desired**

### **Desired Character**

These should remain rural-residential buffers where the scenically-distinctive semi-rural and natural qualities of prominent backdrops to Gosford City's major roads and tourist routes are preserved by appropriate very-low density residential developments associated with low-impact rural activities, and by small-scale businesses or community and educational facilities that have a modest impact.

Retain natural slopes and prevent further fragmentation of the tree canopy in order to maintain habitat values and informal scenic characters of hillside or valley properties, plus meandering roads with unformed verges. Along creeks, ridges, slopes or road frontages, conserve all mature bushland remnants that provide scenically-prominent backdrops visible from any road or nearby property. Limit intrusion of structures upon their landscape setting by concentrating new buildings and pavements in existing clearings. Use low-impact construction such as suspended floors and decks rather than extensive cut-and-fill, particularly on elevated slopes or near bushland.

In areas that are defined as bushfire prone, hazard must not be increased by inappropriate new plantings or structures. Minimise the extent of cleared asset protection zones by fire-resistant siting, design and construction for

all new structures plus effective management of gardens. The ideal compromise between desired scenic quality and hazard-reduction would limit clearing to the understorey plus thinning of the canopy to establish breaks between existing trees.

Maintain the informal character of existing semi-rural hillsides by avoiding tall retaining walls, extensive terraces or broad driveways that would be visible from any road or nearby property, and provide boundary fences that are see-through such as traditional post-and-rail designs. Surround all buildings with extensive garden setbacks, planted with new trees and shrubs that are predominantly indigenous to complement the established canopy. Noxious or environmental weeds must not be planted, and existing infestations should be controlled.

In order to minimise their scale and bulk, all new structures that would be visible from a road or nearby property should reflect the modest character and simple articulation of traditional farm buildings. For example, divide floorspace into a series of linked pavilion structures or wings of rooms that are surrounded by landscaped courtyards, and preferably, provide parking in carports or separate garages. Roofs should be simple hips or gables without elaborate articulation, gently-pitched to minimise the height of ridges and flanked by wide eaves or extensive verandahs to disguise the scale of exterior walls. (In bushfire prone areas, verandahs, roofs and suspended floors must be screened to prevent the entry of sparks and flying embers.)

Disguise the scale of facades that are visible from the street by incorporating extensive windows and verandahs, some painted finishes rather than expanses of plain masonry, and avoid wide garages that would visually-dominate any frontage. Ensure that outbuildings are compatible with the scale and design of their associated dwelling, particularly by using a similar roof pitch and wide eaves. Any commercial signs should be limited in size and number.

## **Niagara Park 11: Scenic Conservation - Existing**

### **Existing Character**

Primarily properties that are extensively forested, located along ridgetops plus adjacent slopes that are moderate-to-steep, conserving scenically-distinctive backdrops to residential areas and major thoroughfares, as well as providing buffers that separate neighbouring valley suburbs.

Forming part of Council's reserve network, or private residential properties, these areas remain in a substantially-natural condition, and they conserve indigenous plant communities as well as contributing to fauna corridors that have regional ecological significance.

On private properties, any buildings are confined to very small clearings. Due to the overall vegetation density, all properties are exposed to a significant bushfire hazard.

Public access roads have the informal character of gravelled tracks or narrow pavements that are hemmed between dense stands of tall trees and a natural understorey.

## **Niagara Park 11: Scenic Conservation - Desired**

### **Desired Character**

These should remain near-natural buffers where the ecological and scenic qualities of Gosford City's distinctive ridgetop reserves are conserved by very-low impact residential development upon existing private properties supported by active environmental management.

Conserve the natural qualities of hillside properties and reserves by minimising further clearing of bushland, and avoid any land-management activities that would compromise the long-term diversity, vigour and habitat value of natural plant communities that are associated with public reserves. New structures should be sited within existing clearings. Only where there is no reasonable alternative to accommodate a new structure upon an existing property, minor clearing might be acceptable in locations with a lesser ecological value, provided that effective long-term management of bushland ecology would not be compromised and where the extent of bushland backdrops that are visible from major roads, waterways or surrounding neighbourhoods would not be diminished. Avoid cut-and-fill construction, and employ very-low impact techniques such as light-weight framed structures with suspended floors and decks. Control existing infestations of noxious or environmental weeds, and progressively repair any existing disturbance to landforms or natural vegetation using bush-regeneration techniques.

In areas that are defined as bushfire prone, hazard must not be increased by inappropriate new plantings or structures. Minimise the extent of cleared asset protection zones by fire-resistant siting, design and construction for all new structures plus effective management of gardens. The ideal compromise between desired scenic quality and hazard-reduction would limit clearing to the understorey plus thinning of the canopy to establish breaks between existing trees. Regular garden management should maintain separation between canopies and remove accumulated leaf litter by ecological best-practice techniques such as mosaic burns that strike a balance between conservation, scenic quality and public safety.

Minimise the scale and bulk of any new building that would be visible from a road or nearby property. For example, divide floorspace into linked pavilion structures that are surrounded by shady verandahs, and preferably provide parking in separate garages or outdoors. Roofs should be simple hips or gables without elaborate articulation or extensive valleys, gently-pitched to minimise the height of ridges and flanked by wide eaves and verandahs that disguise the scale of exterior walls. All verandahs, windows, roofs and suspended floors must be screened to prevent the entry of sparks and flying bushfire embers.

Disguise the scale of facades that are visible from the street by incorporating extensive windows and verandahs, some painted finishes rather than expanses of plain masonry, and avoid wide garages that would visually-dominate any frontage. Ensure that outbuildings are compatible with the scale and design of their associated dwelling, particularly by using a similar roof pitch and wide eaves.

