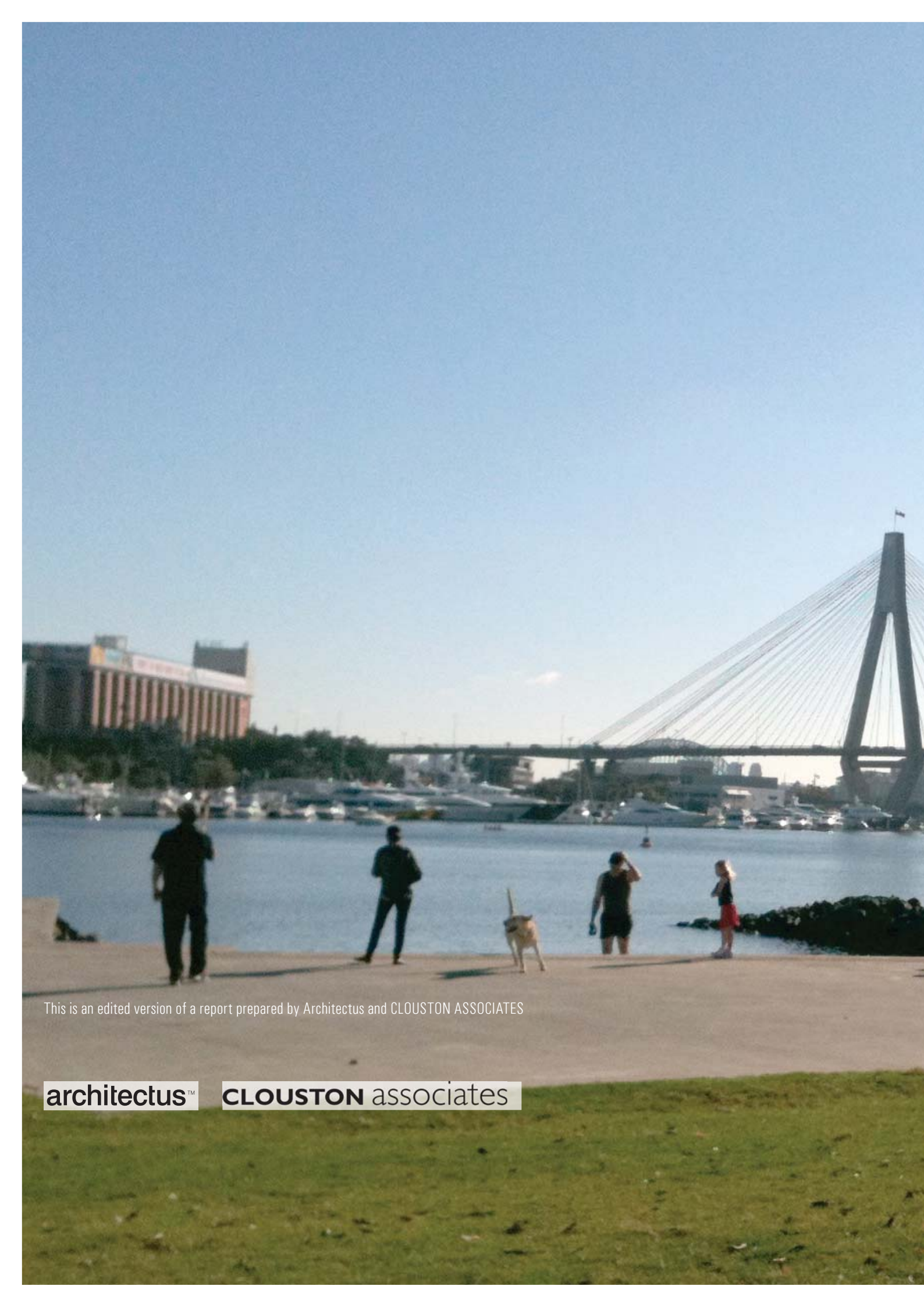




Sydney2030/Green/Global/Connected

CITY OF SYDNEY  

# Johnstons Creek Parklands Master Plan (2013)



This is an edited version of a report prepared by Architectus and CLOUSTON ASSOCIATES

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# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The 2013 Johnstons Creek Parklands Master Plan gives the City a visionary framework for delivering high-quality recreation and open space facilities over the next 25 years. It brings together existing well-loved parks and new land areas in a unified design to create a much improved cultural, environmental and recreation focus for local communities.

## **STUDY AREA**

The parklands are situated in Glebe, Annandale and Forest Lodge. The site includes the existing Bicentennial Park, Federal Park and Jubilee Park, Pope John VI Reserve, as well as The Hill - the area of land between the rail viaduct and the old Rozelle Tram Depot. It also includes two new areas including The Crescent and new open space provided from the redevelopment of the former Harold Park Paceway and historic Rozelle Tram Depot (Harold Park). The new open space areas and existing parks each possess a distinct character, reflecting its historical development or its natural features, such as tidal foreshore, rocky creek line, or the tree-covered landscape of the harbour hinterland.

## **THE PLAN'S OBJECTIVES**

The essential goal is to guide the growth and evolution of the parklands as a vibrant community open space serving a broad range of users that balances community recreation needs with the need for environmental systems and services. As well, the Master Plan must knit together and reflect the many historical layers of the area from Aboriginal heritage to a working waterfront, a major transport depot, and the Harold Park Paceway.

The Master Plan respects the existing landscape character of each separate precinct, while connecting them with new physical and visual links as well as common themes in the vegetation, materials and features. The uniting story of water throughout the parklands provides a conceptual connection from the southern boundary to the northern foreshore of the harbour.

## **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

Over the years, several master plans or designs have been prepared for areas of the parklands. In 1988, the former industrial foreshore was given back to the community with a park design by prominent Australian Landscape Architect Bruce Mackenzie. In 1994, a Community Master Plan was prepared for Bicentennial Park Stage 2 and Rozelle Bay Parklands on the western side of the canal, and a linking bridge, connecting pathways and playground was built. In 2003-2005, the Glebe Foreshore Project for the area along the Rozelle and Blackwattle Bay foreshore linking to the Boatshed in Glebe created a popular foreshore promenade. Improvements were also made to Bicentennial Park and Federal Park. The City has also recently completed improvements on the linear parklands along Johnstons Creek and Orphan School Creek to the south.

Now, with redevelopment of The Crescent on the western edge of the site and the addition of a southern corridor next to new residential development on the Harold Park Paceway land and Rozelle Tram Depot, a new era for the consolidated parklands begins.

This Master Plan provides a co-ordinated approach to managing the parklands. It creates a public precinct for local and regional users which respects and enhances the best aspects of the site. The plan uses the following planning and design themes:

- Environment
- Water
- Recreation and Community Facilities
- Traffic, Access and Circulation
- Heritage
- Character and Visual Amenity

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## PLAN STRUCTURE

This report outlines the study process, key findings and proposals.

Following the introduction and vision, key findings from analysis, investigations and community feedback are outlined in Chapter 3.0.

The Principles and Strategies in Chapter 4.0 identify how the issues and opportunities from the analysis are developed into a strategic vision for the future.

The Master Plan is presented as a comprehensive parkland design that illustrates the function, activity and character precincts within the plan. Chapter 5.0 introduces the plan and describes the major precincts; the existing parklands, The Hill, Harold Park and The Crescent.

## PROCESS

The Master Plan is founded on specialist advice, technical investigations, site analysis, site knowledge and community consultation. The process began in mid-2012 with the first round of participation to sound out the community's hopes and priorities for future development. This was supplemented by technical studies on key issues such as access, transport, environment, heritage and recreation.

From these, core planning principles and strategies were identified then tested with the community in a second round of consultation. Feedback received generally supported the emerging strategies.

Proposals were then prepared for each of the major precincts, then tested and refined to deliver the optimum design solution. They have been integrated and illustrated here as the 2013 Johnstons Creek Parklands Master Plan.

The draft plan was placed on public exhibition to again provide the community with a chance to raise questions, make contributions or comment. Feedback has been incorporated into the revised Master Plan. The Master Plan was adopted in August 2013.

## PRINCIPLES AND STRATEGIES

The quality of the expanded and enhanced Johnstons Creek Parklands is predicated on an appreciation and careful management of the six key themes of the site and the surrounding urban environment. For each theme, the Principles and the Strategies are:

### Environment

#### *Provide habitat for local fauna.*

The community wish to include more habitat for native flora and fauna, building on local bush regeneration efforts, is reflected in the plan.

The plan includes:

- naturalisation of the southern end of the Johnstons Creek canal
- revegetation of The Hill
- installation of an overland flow-path or swale through Harold Park
- amphibian habitat at the base of the Harold Park sandstone cliff
- a site-wide connection of tree canopies, as well as shrub planting for bird habitat.

#### *Improve the ecology*

The biodiversity of the Johnstons Creek network and adjacent bays will be enhanced by providing more habitat and improving and supporting environmental services such as stormwater management.

By capturing, treating, storing and recycling stormwater, the Master Plan will improve the quality of water entering the harbour and help achieve targets set by the City of Sydney to reduce the use of drinkable water to irrigate open space.

Community recreation and other uses for the parklands are balanced with the need for habitat corridors (in line with the Sydney 2030 plan) as well as a footpath network designed to ensure buffer zones next to sensitive areas.

#### *Link habitat and introduce new habitat areas*

The plan links the canopies of existing mature trees by infilling bare sections. New areas of open space will have new trees and planting to frame vistas and to expand the present vegetation corridors. The value of existing cultural landscapes and their contribution to vegetation corridors is also recognised.

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## Water

The parklands are largely built over estuarine intertidal wetlands. The central channelised stormwater canal, which drains the creek's 500 hectare catchment, rises and falls with daily tidal movements. Water is at the heart of the park character, and the Master Plan elevates it to a more visible component and manages it as a valuable resource in a sustainable way.

*Improve water quality in the park, the canal and water entering the harbour.*

The quality of water leaving the catchment is improved with treatment by vegetation-lined swales, rain gardens and freshwater wetlands. These components are incorporated into Harold Park, and new freshwater wetland across the canal in Federal Park South and near The Crescent.

*Harvest water for use in the park.*

Irrigating Jubilee Oval and Federal Park field uses 5.1ML of water a year. Following the City of Sydney's 2030 strategy to reduce drinkable water demand for irrigation, the Master Plan maximises stormwater capture, treats it and uses it for irrigation. There is provision to extend irrigation to new areas of planting.

*Help active recreation areas cope with heavy rain and flooding.*

To improve the usability of waterlogged or flood-prone active sports areas such as the Federal Park field, improved soil structure and subsoil drainage are planned. In Federal Park this is achieved by minor lifting of the lawn areas.

*Use water to unite individual parks into one foreshore parkland.*

In Federal Park South along The Crescent, a new, large freshwater wetland becomes a highly visible expression of water at a focal, heavily trafficked area of the parkland.

In Harold Park, water is now piped underground, but in a very large storm it will overflow into a turfed swale. The plan promotes a reversal of this by directing low flows through a planted swale and diverting the very high flow to the pipe network. At the lower end of this system, raingardens will treat urban run-off and tell the history of the site with sculptural terraces that interpret the tracks that fanned out from the old Tram Shed.

To create a more natural appearance and link habitat improvements along the channelised creek line, the canal sides between Bicentennial Park and Federal Park are removed, redesigned and revegetated.

## Recreation and Community Facilities

The parklands are a much-valued area for active and passive recreation, including sport, dog walking, jogging, cycling, kayaking, picnicking, play and casual ball sports. The Master Plan encourages continuation of these in harmony with new facilities for niche activities and cultural needs.

*Ensure that spaces are flexible and available for a broad range of users.*

All new open space areas in the parklands are designed for a broad range of users, rather than tailored to one group's needs.

*Identify areas for active and passive recreation.*

In balancing active and passive recreation, the Master Plan recognises there are precincts of structured activity and areas affording more passive recreation. Existing active recreation areas include Federal Park and Jubilee Oval. With the release of The Crescent and Harold Park, the Master Plan provides extra active space. These active areas are complemented by more passive lawn areas, with shade and seating, joined by shared pathways for strolling and cycling.

*Integrate community cultural activity.*

The Master Plan expands on the existing variety of community and cultural amenity in the parklands.

*Balance recreation with ecological integrity.*

The Master Plan integrates active space and environmental systems. For example, the community facility and associated outdoor areas will overlook new treatment wetlands and an improved saltmarsh area offering interpretative and education opportunity, with a water treatment and management system alongside it. The stormwater management system is also a public domain landscape feature, an aesthetically pleasing asset to be enjoyed by visitors.

*Ensure active recreation areas are designed to operate at efficient levels of use.*

Existing active recreation areas in Federal Park are often unusable because of waterlogging. This is because they are marginally above sea level, there is poor drainage and dysfunctional infrastructure. Jubilee Oval also suffers from waterlogging after heavy rain. In Bicentennial Park, the open grass areas are heavily compacted. The Master Plan offers staged solutions to these problems.

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*Consider retaining some buildings on The Crescent for community use.*

The Master Plan proposes the adaptive re-use of part of an existing building on The Crescent for much needed community facilities. This proposal is subject to further exploration of the building's condition.

*Provide accessible facilities*

The Master Plan proposes facilities, including toilets, change rooms, shelters, seating, barbecues, boat store and play areas sited across the parklands to support a wide range of activities.

### **Transport, Access and Circulation**

*Encourage visits by public transport.*

The parklands are well serviced by public transport - both light rail and local bus routes. The Master Plan encourages visits by public transport by improving access to light rail stations and bus stops.

*Provide universal access.*

Equitable access is a key issue for the parklands to ensure it can be enjoyed by all age groups and abilities. The Master Plan connects current preferred routes into the new open space areas. New facilities in The Crescent, The Hill and Harold Park include equitable access paths and facilities.

*Provide adequate visitor parking.*

The Master Plan seeks to maintain the existing parking numbers as well as supporting visits by public transport, walking and cycling. To minimise vehicle movements in the park, increase safety and improve amenity, some car parking has been relocated to the park edge.

*Establish a hierarchy of entries to the parklands.*

The incorporation of the Crescent brings the parklands to the street. A range of path entries ensures significant north/south and east/west networks link the new open spaces with existing parklands and the continuation of a greater foreshore link.

*Establish a hierarchy of routes into the parklands.*

The Master Plan connects the park to the surrounding neighbourhood by proposing new refuges, pedestrian crossings and stair access.

### **Heritage**

*Show the layered history of the site.*

The history of the area provides layers of stories that can be woven throughout the parklands. The Master Plan uses heritage elements as an overarching component to be protected and enhanced, revealed through interpretation, or integrated into the parklands design.

The Master Plan uses tools such as signs, walking tours, public art, and landscape design to show the site's history.

*Retain and enhance heritage items and landscapes.*

The parklands contain natural and cultural elements of heritage significance. The viaduct and Tram Sheds are significant and dominant architectural elements. There are also significant palm avenues and stands of mature trees that are heritage listed. The Master Plan respects these assets and reinforces them with appropriate landscape works.

These existing and newly introduced elements will link to create a strong impression of contextual history and sense of place.

### **Character and Visual Amenity**

*Recognise the value of the varied landscape and respect landscape types.*

The parklands have a variety of landscape form and character, from very established formal parklands in Jubilee Oval to more recently planted areas in Federal Park. The Master Plan recognises that the quality and appeal of the parklands is due to this rich complexity, and that these unique sections of the park contribute to its value as a whole. An important component is the parklands corridor along the foreshore linking the Sydney Fish Markets and Wentworth Park, and along the canal through to Camperdown.

The Master Plan integrates and composes this diversity in a creative way, producing a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. At a detail scale, a common design theme, a sense of order, an interpretive framework, and coordinated materials and planting provides cohesion and a new identity to the whole Johnstons Creek Parklands.







# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

# 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Johnstons Creek Parklands comprise a series of well-established parks and three new open spaces - Harold Park, The Crescent and The Hill. Figure 1.1 shows the study area, the distinct parks within it and their relationship to each other.

The 2013 Johnstons Creek Master Plan seeks to improve these existing well-loved parks and design new spaces and strategies - creating a unique foreshore parkland.

A multidisciplinary team comprising Architectus, CLOUSTON Associates and a range of expert consultants was engaged by the City of Sydney Council to prepare the 2013 Johnstons Creek Master Plan. The Plan has been developed in consultation with the community and other key stakeholders.



Figure 1.1 Study area precincts

# 1.2 CONTEXT

Johnstons Creek Parklands is the name given to a group of parks located on the western foreshore of Rozelle Bay, bordering the suburbs of Glebe, Forest Lodge and Annandale. The parklands include historic and well-known sports fields (Jubilee Park and Oval and Federal Park), listed formal gardens (Bicentennial Park and Pope Paul VI Reserve) and three significant new areas of open space - The Crescent, The Hill and part of the adjacent Harold Park development (Harold Park).

The foreshore is a prized asset that defines and characterises the parklands. The Johnstons Creek canal, which gives its name to the study area, runs through the centre of the parklands carrying stormwater to Sydney Harbour. Other features that define the site include the heritage-listed viaduct, a light rail station in the centre of the park, the former Tram Sheds, important habitat and trees and a range of well-used amenities and facilities.

The parklands have a district profile as an open space asset because they offer car parking, playgrounds, off-leash dog areas, walking and cycling paths and form part of a larger foreshore recreation trail

connecting Blackwattle Bay to the Sydney Fish Markets.

The parklands are surrounded by residential areas to the east, south and west and are well used for active and passive recreation. The redevelopment of Harold Park as medium to high density residential land will provide further demand for open space and recreation in the area.

The north-south orientation of the parklands, extending into the concentrated residential areas of Glebe and Annandale, provides good access and links between these urban areas and the amenity provided by the open spaces and the foreshore. A light rail link also services the parklands, widening the catchment to include Lilyfield, Pyrmont and the Sydney CBD. Johnstons Creek Parklands is also readily accessible from the City West Link and is a visible feature from the Anzac Bridge.

The Johnstons Creek Parklands is an important open space and recreational resource for locals and visitors.



Figure 1.2 Site context and catchment

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In developing this Master Plan a number of relevant planning instruments, guidelines and standards that apply to the study area have been reviewed. They are listed here.

### **METROPOLITAN PLAN FOR SYDNEY 2036**

The NSW Government's Metropolitan Plan for Sydney 2036 sets broad strategic directions for the future planning for Metropolitan Sydney. At a very high level, the purpose is the plan is to responsibly locate new homes and jobs to optimise Sydney's global position and improve quality of life. The plan seeks to locate 70 per cent of growth in established centres, where public transport amenity and facilities can be provided to benefit as many people as possible.

The Plan sets the following directions:

- Maintain amenity and outstanding environment that underpins Sydney's image
- Strengthen Sydney's position as a global tourism destination
- Improve mode share of public transport to 80 per cent in peak by 2016
- Sydney CBD will offer capacity for 454,000 jobs by 2036
- 61,000 new dwellings in the City of Sydney LGA by 2036
- Glebe is nominated as a 'Village'.

The following opportunities are relevant to Johnstons Creek Parklands and are considered in the development of the Master Plan:

- The City's parks become even more significant and valuable as the City becomes busier and denser
- More people are likely to use the park over time
- Johnstons Creek Parklands serve a local, regional and even global population.

### **SUSTAINABLE SYDNEY 2030**

The City of Sydney's Sustainable Sydney 2030 is a blueprint for Sydney's future; it was developed after comprehensive consultation with the community.

Sydney 2030 provides 10 strategic targets for making the City more sustainable by the year 2030, these include:

- A reduction in greenhouse gas emissions with target dates

- Capacity to meet up to 100 per cent of electricity demand by local electricity generation and 10 per cent of water supply by local water capture
- Provision of at least 138,000 homes (48,000 extra homes in the City for increased diversity of household types, including a greater share of families)
- Provide 7.5 per cent of all City housing as social housing, and 7.5 per cent as affordable housing
- The City will contain at least 465,000 jobs, including 97,000 new jobs
- Increased use of public transport for travel to work by City Centre workers
- Increased percentage of City trips will be made by bicycle and by walking
- Every resident will be within a 10 minute (800m) walk to fresh food markets, child care, health services and leisure, social, learning and cultural infrastructure
- Every resident in the City of Sydney will be within a three minute walk (250m) of continuous green links that connect to the Harbour Foreshore, Harbour Parklands, Moore or Centennial or Sydney Parks.
- The level of community cohesion and social interaction will have increased.

The plan establishes five "Big Moves" of which "Big Idea 3" for "A liveable green network" concerns the Johnstons Creek Parklands. Shown in Figure 1.3 it details 10 green corridors connecting the City and shows the study area as a key to those linkages on the far west of the local government area.



Figure 1.3 Sustainable Sydney 2030 linkages

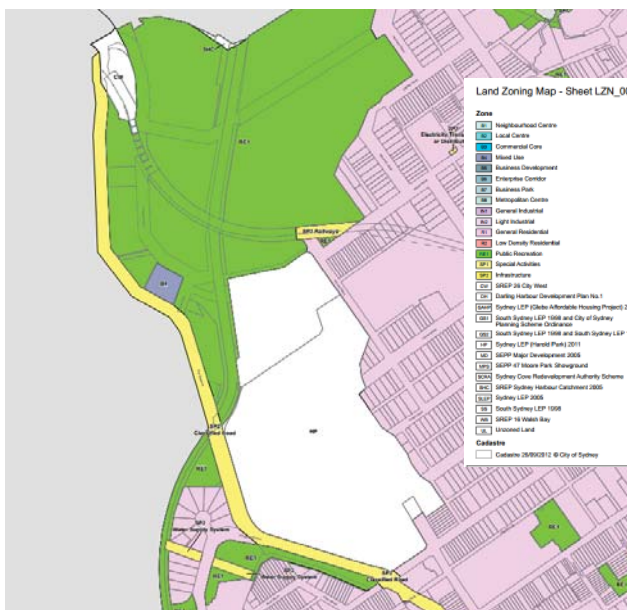


Figure 1.4 Land Zoning Plan

## LOCAL PLANNING CONTEXT

Planning instruments that apply to the Johnstons Creek parklands include:

- The Sydney Regional Environmental Plan
- The Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2012

The Sydney LEP 2012 shows the majority of the parklands as RE1 Public Recreation Zone. Within this zone, a range of land uses are permitted, including but not limited to boat launching ramps, child care centres, environmental facilities, information and education facilities, markets and research stations.

Additional local level strategies and instruments that have relevance to the study area include:

- Draft Integrated Community Facilities Plan
- Participation in Exercise, Recreation and Sport Annual Report 2010
- Play Space Design Guidelines
- Sampling, Analysis and Quality Plan Environmental Site Assessment 12 Maxwell Road, Glebe
- City of Sydney Draft Urban Ecology Strategic Action Plan
- City of Sydney Public Domain Standards
- City of Sydney Parks Technical Manual
- Open Space and Recreational Needs Study. Prepared by Stratcorp for City of Sydney in 2007, this study provides a city wide analysis of open space and recreation provision. The Johnstons Creek Parklands are contained within the north-west planning district in the study which nominates them as district and regional resources with good existing levels of connectivity. It recommends extending linkages to the parklands into southern urban areas of Glebe and Annandale
- Johnstons Creek Catchment Flood Study. This study was prepared following floods in 1984, 1991, 1989 and 2001, which caused inundation to urban areas in the catchment. The study area is located at the mouth of a 460ha catchment that covers three local government areas taking in Annandale, Camperdown, Forest Lodge, Glebe and Newtown. The flow discharges into Rozelle Bay via Johnstons Creek, the main trunk line (identified as SCW55 by Sydney Water), a large concrete lined channel. The study recommends continued monitoring of floods to advise the detailed design for flood levels and recommends a planning response to mitigate flooding in the nearby hotspots at Minogue Crescent, Coneill Place and The Crescent.

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## HAROLD PARK LEP 2011 AND DCP

In 2011, the Department of Planning and Infrastructure made a new Local Environmental Plan (LEP) and Development Control Plan (DCP) that allow for the redevelopment of the former Harold Park Paceway for primarily residential use. In July 2012, the Central Sydney Planning Committee approved the Stage 1 Development Application for the redevelopment of Harold Park.

The approved development scheme comprises:

- Residential building envelopes ranging from three to eight storeys and comprising about 1,250 homes
- 7,553 sqm of commercial floor space, mostly in the Tram Shed
- Dedication of 3.8ha of public open space
- Bulk excavation and infrastructure work
- New intersection and road widening
- Realignment of Ross Street
- Car parking for Tram Shed precinct
- Landscaping of three pocket parks
- Installation of public art and heritage interpretation.

The 3.8 hectares of public open space is to be dedicated to the City.

This Master Plan will recommend a design for the new open space.



Figure 1.5 Harold Park development shown as a background to Johnstons Creek Parklands



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# 1.3

# MASTER PLAN

# PROCESS

The 2013 Master Plan for Johnstons Creek Parklands began in June 2012. The Master Plan process comprises four stages: analysis and investigations, strategy development, draft master plan and refined master plan. Each stage draws on the input of the community and stakeholders.

The focus for Stage 1, Analysis and Investigations, was to assess the precinct, the planning context, background reports and studies, undertake technical investigations and consult with the community and stakeholders. This culminated in the identification of issues and opportunities for the parklands, principles and the overall vision.

Consultation in Stage 1 involved gathering ideas, priorities and aspirations of the community for the parklands. The result was a clear community vision.

The second stage, Strategy Development, developed strategies to test ideas, options and concepts, addressing the issues and opportunities identified in Stage 1. The strategy plans communicate the issues, strategies and the vision for the future. The key outcomes were tested with the community and form the basis for the preparation of the Draft Master Plan.

The Draft Master Plan was the third stage in this design and planning process. The Master Plan will inform the planning and delivery of these new parklands areas. The Master Plan itself is a physical solution that realises and reconciles all of the strategies.

The final stage has refined the Master Plan in response to community feedback and for formal adoption by Council.



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# 1.4

## **PREVIOUS PLANS AND STUDIES**

The Johnstons Creek Parklands has evolved in stages with several designs and strategies developed over the decades for different parts. Following is a brief description of the major plans that have shaped the study area.

### **JUBILEE OVAL 1909**

In his paper on the Creation of Jubilee Park and its oval, Historian and long-time Glebe resident, Max Solling, outlined the evolution of the grounds that are now Jubilee Oval:

“In December 1886, as Glebe was filling up with houses, ratepayers held a public meeting to urge the government to resume the bay for public recreation. Reclamation works began construction in 1893 and reclamation of the swampy land was completed about 1897 when the precinct was levelled and grassed. At the same time the Johnstons Creek brick lined canal was constructed between 1895 and 1900.”

Twelve trees were donated by the Royal Botanic Gardens and planted in 1908. Glebe Council, keen for its own Oval, constructed a picket fence creating an oval in August 1909. As part of the celebrations to mark 50 years of Local Government on the 2nd of August 1909, Glebe Council renamed their portion of the reclaimed lands “Jubilee Park” and in 1923 the rotunda was built to accommodate the Glebe Brass band.

<http://glebesociety.org.au/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/file/Eglinton/Jubilee%20Park.pdf>

### **BICENTENNIAL PARK 1988**

In 1988 the former industrial waterfront timber yards were opened up and Bruce Mackenzie designed a formal layout with grand avenues of fig trees with associated promenades. The formal symmetrical arrangement provides large grassed spaces on the broad flat site. Axial pathways are of asphalt with brick edging and are bordered by single and double-rowed planted avenues of Port Jackson Figs. A waterfront pathway was constructed of rough sandstone paved with a brick edge.

### **BICENTENNIAL PARK STAGE 2 AND ROZELLE BAY PARKLANDS 1994**

The main features of the Community Master Plan 1994 for Bicentennial Park Stage 2 and Rozelle Bay Parklands included a promenade and foreshore embankment, provision of a dingy launching ramp, pavilion, sponsorship plaque, playground and wetland pond. The plan contained a reconstructed Federal Road Bridge and the potential for a light rail station. Much of this plan has been realised in some form, with links to Bicentennial Park established through the viaduct. Proposed works to further open the viaduct arches have not taken place. This Master Plan proposed a new park entrance, located on land that currently houses the Balmain Rentals business.

### **THE HILL 2000**

An Environment Site Investigation (EIS) was undertaken by Coffey Geosciences in 2000 of a fill embankment to the north of the former Tram Shed.

The study concluded that existing contamination could affect the health of future users as well as vegetation growth. Complete removal of The Hill was deemed prohibitively expensive, so a Remedial Action Plan was developed with recommendations for remedial management measures. These measures intended to reduce the steep grades on the fill and provide a capping layer to minimise leaching. The options carried a high cost and the only works that have been carried out have been to build a gabion wall at the western end of The Hill.

### **THE GLEBE FORESHORE REDEVELOPMENT 2003-2005**

The Glebe Foreshore redevelopment (2003-05) created a continuous and universally accessible foreshore promenade around the Glebe peninsula. The foreshore links Bicentennial Park with Wentworth Park, providing new recreation facilities, extra parkland and the restoration of heritage items.

Landscape works and the upgrading of Bicentennial and Jubilee Parks were included. The project transformed the Glebe Foreshore Promenade into a regional recreation destination.

### **HAROLD PARK 2008**

Students in University of Sydney’s Master of Urban Design Program 2008 undertook a study of the Harold Park Paceway land and produced four development scenarios.

In 2010 The Government Architect’s Office undertook an Urban Design Study that proposed urban development. The study proposed about 1,200 new homes and provided 3.5 hectares of public open space, about a third of the Harold Park Paceway land. The development is serviced with leafy tree-lined streets and a pedestrian/cycle path network. Mirvac is now developing the site using plans and directions established by this study.

The Sydney Development Control Plan (Harold Park) was adopted in 2011, providing detail on the nature and size of open spaces for Harold Park. In 2012, an Embellishment Works Master Plan was developed for the site by ASPECT Studios. Key elements of the plan include multi-use open space, a habitat zone, an overland flow path and a new primary connection that runs north-south, linking Wigram Road with the Tram Shed.

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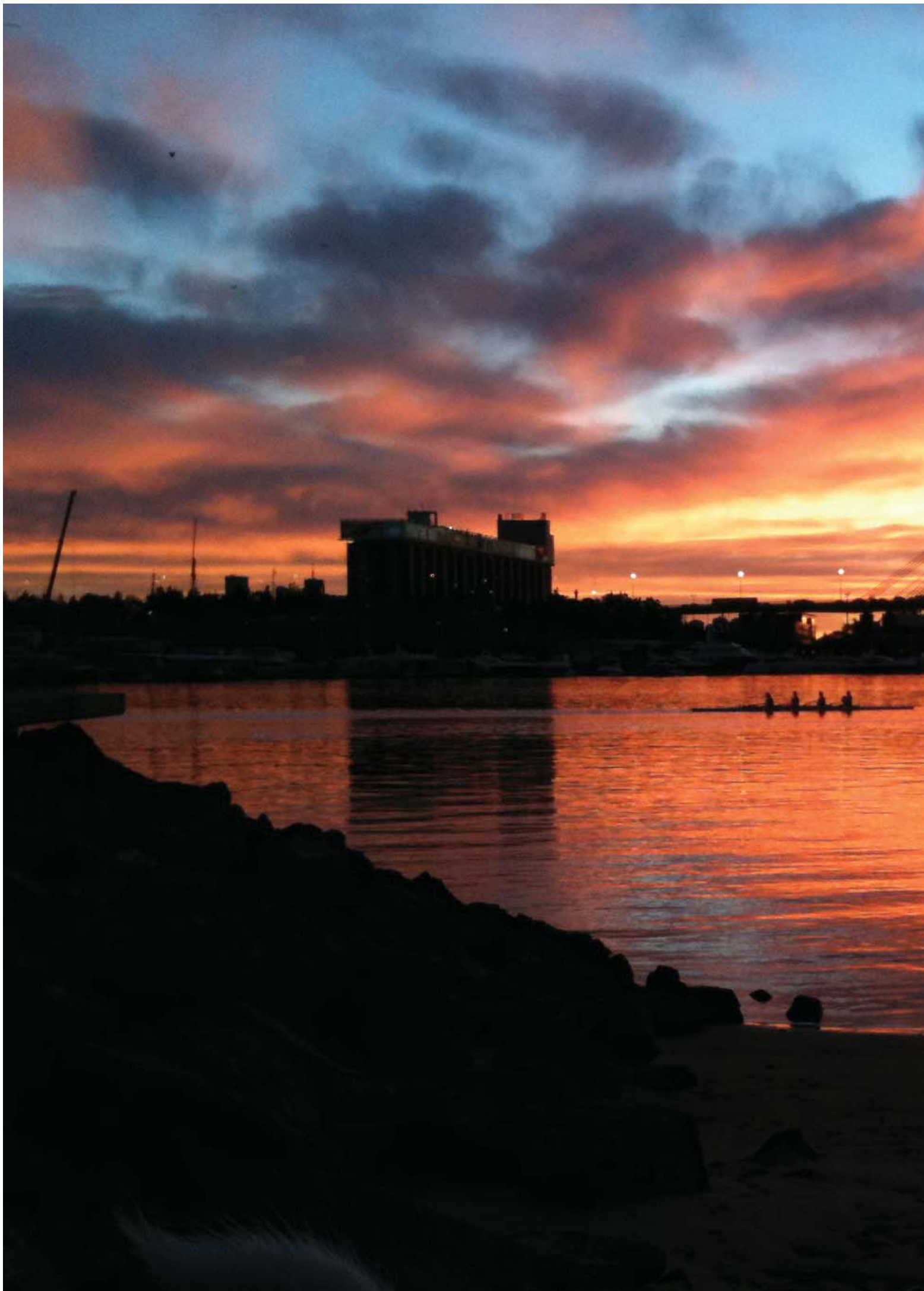
### **JOHNSTONS CANAL SHARED PATH 2011**

This project included upgrades of existing pedestrian paths and shared paths along the Johnstons Creek Canal, the Chapman Road on-road bicycle connection route and a Wigram Road to Sterling Circuit connection.

### **JUBILEE PARK PLAYGROUND 2010**

The Jubilee Park Playground is currently being replaced. The project includes new play elements for imaginary and structured play.







# 2.0 VISION

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# 2.1

## THE VISION

*This evolution of the parklands incorporates new public spaces to create a place with life and purpose for the community, encompassing an expanded range of recreation and cultural experiences and based on sound ecological principles.*

*"Rivers are the last open valleys of the urban terrain, the last remaining paths where man may reassert his rights of access and enjoyment...."*

*Roy Mann, 'Rivers in the City'*

"Up the creek" could, paradoxically, be one of the best places to be in Sydney's Inner West with the renewal of Johnstons Creek Parklands. The renewal brings the welcome addition of scarce new open space to augment Glebe and Annandale's recreational facilities along with a "green" upgrading of dated urban infrastructure and reconciling an urbanised creek with its natural landscape heritage. The area's identity will be transformed and a place with new purpose will be woven into the life of its community.

By realising once again the open valley setting of the watercourse, exploiting its natural link from harbour to hinterland, by increasing access, popular appeal and the range of opportunities for new generations of residents, Johnstons Creek and its parklands will improve the inner-urban lifestyle and help strengthen community bonds.

*"Tell me the story of the river and the valley and the streams and woodlands and wetlands, of shellfish and finfish. A story of where we are and how we got here and the character and the roles that we play....."*

*Thomas Berry, 'The Dream of the Earth'*

As the population of the "valley community" grows and changes, the use and the appreciation of the parklands will follow from its fuller understanding. By connecting people with the story of Johnstons Creek, its history, its landscape, its management and their role in it, the parklands will become more meaningful, encouraging

identification with and commitment to the sustainability of the creek corridor, its harbour foreshores and their catchment.

While the creek corridor is a relatively large open space for the inner city, it is complex, split up, and vulnerable to overdevelopment. This makes it more important to promote a shared understanding of the values and integrity of Johnstons Creek as the parklands will be challenged by increasing demand and the changing culture of the inner city. The parklands must also continue to be a source of quiet reflection and inspiration.

Its story will relate the parkland heritage from geological time to aboriginal prehistory. It will also tell a tale of impact as the city has evolved and matured over the last 200 years, with its maritime economy and harbourside industries reshaping the foreshore, then the character of the catchment beyond. Sydney's landscape, however, remains a robust foundation for the city. At Johnstons Creek, the landscape has both aided and conditioned urban development. It has restricted services, bridges and roads to practical routes, conserved pockets of natural habitat in remnant wetland or bush, and accommodated playing fields and exotic plantings tightly between cliff and now vacant industrial waterfront. Each chapter of this legacy has left its mark and can now contribute to a conscious and cohesive design narrative; a common story.

*"A Natural Harbour - a healthy sustainable environment on land and water ...."*

*NSW Government : Sharing Sydney Harbour Regional Action Plan*

Beyond its local watercourse, open space and Rozelle Bay foreshore, Johnstons Creek Parklands belong to Sydney's city wide network of harbour bays, rivers and tributary creeks. The parklands form part of the larger urban design vision and planning framework established by the Government for Sharing Sydney Harbour, the city's defining asset recognised in the Regional Action Plan as "a natural asset belonging to future generations" and intended to be shared by the community in balance with all human activities.

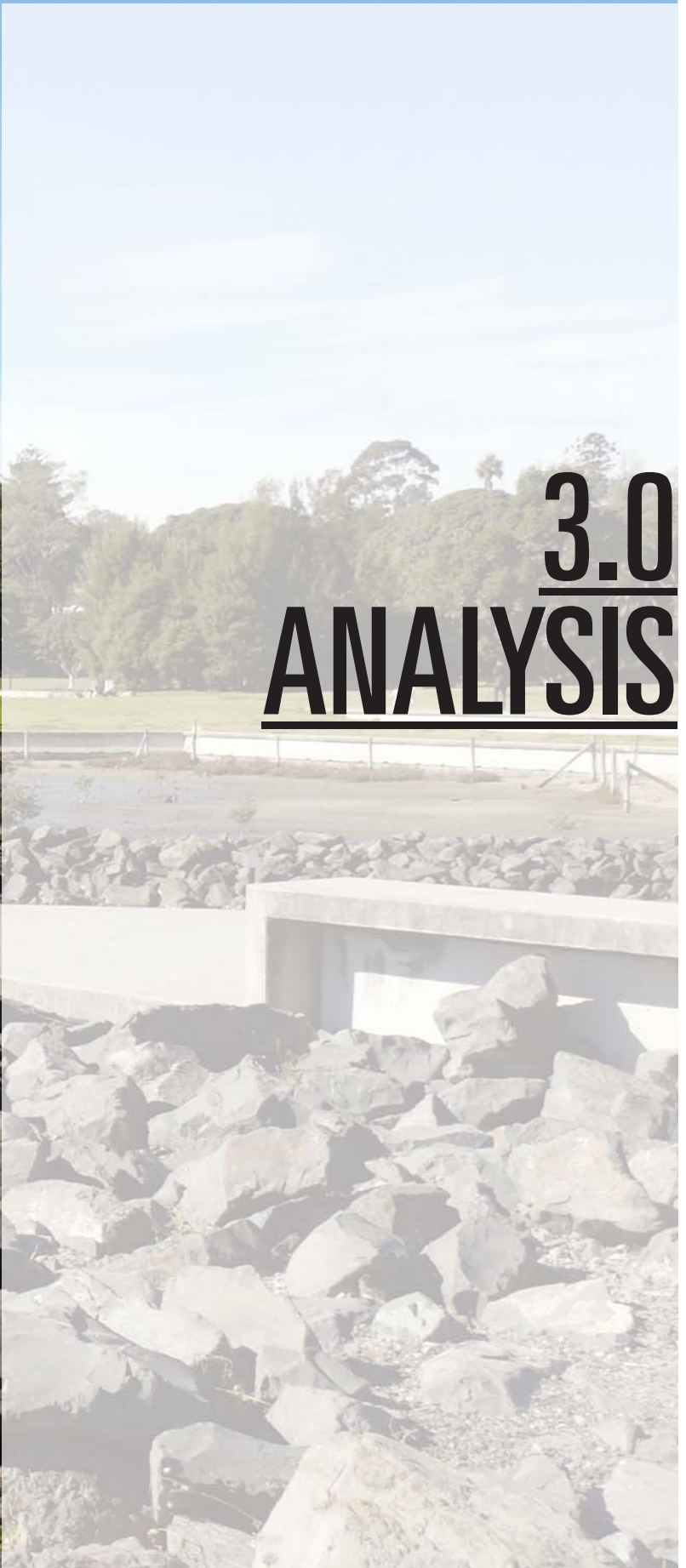
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One core value of the harbour to be shared is the creation of a healthy environment over the water and land resources of the whole harbour catchment.

It is evident that the quality of water draining through urban creeks and into the harbour will determine the quality and popularity of the surrounding parkland. Johnstons Creek Parklands, an important harbour tributary and large public open space system for the inner west, is well placed to be a leading example in environmental design and management. Catchment identification, water sensitive urban design (WSUD) treatments, constructed wetlands, soil remediation and planting programs, interpretation strategies, education and arts initiatives will all contribute to maintaining a natural harbour and the sustainability of the local parklands.







# 3.0 ANALYSIS

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# 3.1

# ANALYSIS

The initial phase of site analysis involved rigorous investigation and research into current conditions and the many background and technical studies and community feedback.

Six key themes provide a framework for assessing the qualities of the parklands. These themes are:

1. Environment
2. Water
3. Recreation and Community Facilities
4. Transport, Access and Circulation
5. Heritage
6. Character and Visual Amenity

Analysis has been undertaken around these themes, illustrating the issues and opportunities in the parklands. The Opportunities and Constraints diagrams (Figures 3.1, 3.2 & 3.3) summarise the key findings, illustrate the conflicting pressures on the parklands and prioritise opportunities.

## **ENVIRONMENT**

The study area contains an eclectic collection of environmental features and assets. Importantly, the parklands provide an expansive area of green space within a densely populated area. As referenced in the City of Sydney Urban Ecology Action Plan, Johnstons Creek parklands is a critical link in the “green corridor” connecting the foreshore to Orphan School Creek and Whites Creek.

More locally, the parklands provide a habitat corridor between Forest Lodge and the Glebe foreshore. This habitat is predominantly found in small pockets of native vegetation and the established tree canopy.

Habitat opportunities in the parklands also include a range of features and interfaces that are unusual in a highly urbanised environment. These include an estuary, a tidal watercourse, a rocky outcrop, land areas containing planted native vegetation (volunteer “bush regeneration” sites) and (potentially) sources of fresh water.

Features within the parklands important to local biodiversity include:

- Coastal Saltmarsh, which is an endangered ecological community
- Estuarine mangroves
- Several bush rehabilitation sites
- Food resources (mainly fig trees) for the grey-headed flying-fox, a threatened species
- Foraging area for waders at the mouth of the canal
- Rock crevices in the outcrop and some constructed stone walls which provide shelter for small reptiles.

The Hill could be considered to provide biodiversity in its current state. A residual area of filled land it is presently inaccessible. It has some very steep grades of about 1:1, and has over time been colonised primarily by self-sown Portuguese Elms (*Celtis sinensis*) and canary Island Date palms (*Phoenix canariensis*). It has a level asphalted platform that extends about 70 metres into the parklands that is heavily weed infested. The bottom of the slope has been stabilized with a one-metre high gabion retaining wall. On the southern side sits the Tram Shed and a row of significant moreton bay fig trees. A clutter of stairs and walls at the Maxwell Road end are remnants of once used accessways beside the Tram Shed.

## **Opportunities and Constraints**

Initial analysis revealed substantial opportunity to increase biodiversity with connected tree canopies, additional dense understorey planting, and optimisation of rock features for habitat provision, including the cliff area at Harold Park.

Two areas of contamination were identified - The Crescent and The Hill.

Numerous geotechnical and contamination investigations have been carried out on The Hill with key recommendations including stabilising the steep slopes by cutting back to 1:2 or with gabion walls, and secondly capping the waste to limit water infiltration and leaching. While two feasible remedial options for The Hill were considered - off-site disposal, or management of affected soil on-site by capping - the level and type of contamination within The Hill mean it would be prohibitively expensive to completely remove.

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## **WATER**

Areas around Johnstons Creek canal, Jubilee Oval, Federal Park and parts of the foreshore are all regularly affected by flooding. Flood records show rainfall intensities as low as the two-year ARI (average recurrence interval) storm cause flooding at many points in the catchment. Large areas of Bicentennial and Jubilee Park flood during a five-year ARI storm.

Significant flooding affects the amenity and usability of the park, especially for active sports. This is due to several issues, including elevation above sea level, compacted and poor soil quality, and aging infrastructure. This is particularly evident in Federal Park, where recovery times after rain are delayed by poor drainage.

### **Opportunities and Constraints**

Currently, the parklands make little positive contribution to treating stormwater before it enters the harbour. There is an opportunity to reveal the story of water throughout the parklands, to create an educational and functional environmental asset.

There is a small 0.2 hectare tidally-influenced saltmarsh system in Federal Park that was constructed in 2001 as part of a government grant. Two previously underground large diameter pipes were exposed and a weir constructed to dam the freshwater draining out through a sizeable 12-14 hectare catchment. There are opportunities to improve the freshwater treatment by retaining the saltmarsh and extending this drainage system.

The topography and the location at the end point of the catchment area provide great opportunities for the parklands to serve an important ecological function in treating stormwater.

The parklands also offer a great opportunity to extend the estuarine habitat that existed before the bay was filled. The concrete edges of the canal are just at the right height to allow minor inundation on high tides and this creates a perfect environment for saltmarsh to grow (see Figure 3.3).

The proposed swale through Harold Park presents opportunities for re-configuration to allow stormwater treatment and provide aquatic habitat.

However, the opportunity to collect, treat and recycle water on site must be balanced with the open space recreation pressures. To collect and treat all stormwater moving through the site, a disproportionate amount of open space would be needed for rain gardens and the like.

## **RECREATION AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

The expansive parklands offer both recreation and community facilities, and accommodate a broad range of user groups. The varied precincts of the parklands provide opportunity for a broad range of both passive and active recreation. Currently, the parklands accommodate several structured sporting programs, such as AFL, cricket, hockey, soccer and informal ball games. These occur in Federal and Bicentennial Parks, and Jubilee Oval.

These active precincts are complemented by unstructured areas for informal kick-about and passive recreation along the foreshore and The Crescent.

The internal footpath network provides circuits for strolling or running. The shady areas along the foreshore are popular for picnickers and quiet contemplation.

These land based recreation options are supplemented by the water recreation activities. The parklands offer small and paddle boat launch, water taxi access and a temporary access pontoon.

For example, Bicentennial Park and Federal Park are particularly busy with kayakers, bootcampers and personal fitness groups. As this is one of the main off-leash areas, there are also lots of dogs. The beach is a popular place to congregate, and is used for canoe and kayak launching, as well as dog walking. The jetty is used for boat pick-ups. Federal Park is used for active sport and training, although poor drainage limits this use.

In terms of community facilities on site, there are several buildings, including the Jubilee Oval pavilion, the numerous amenity buildings, and the operational spaces under the viaduct. These buildings provide a necessary community service element in the parklands.

Several of the viaduct spaces are enclosed and accommodate, amongst other things, music practice, maintenance machinery storage and a sporting team kiosk.

### **Opportunities and Constraints**

Active recreation is well represented in the Parklands. The release of The Crescent will complement this active precinct with opportunity for additional flexible multi-use spaces. The new Harold Park open space area may also afford some informal and unstructured kick-about space.

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Passive recreation could be better provided for with improved pathways, additional seating and shade. The new open space in The Crescent and Harold Park may also provide additional unstructured space.

The necessity to balance broad user group needs will limit the provision of additional formal recreation playing fields specific to one sport requirement.

There is a strong need for additional community facilities in the area, such as child care according to Council's Integrated Community Facilities Plan and review of census data and future projections.

## **TRANSPORT, ACCESS AND CIRCULATION**

**Getting to the Park:** The parklands are well-serviced by public transport. The Jubilee Park light rail stop is located in the south-eastern corner of the parklands and the Rozelle Bay light rail stop is located about 300 metres from the entry on The Crescent near Johnston Street. Buses run along the east and west boundaries with various stops along the periphery.

There are two entries on The Crescent, but the parklands cannot be seen from them. By contrast, the connection on Federal and Northcote Roads boasts an identifiable parkland quality.

Along The Crescent, vehicle and pedestrian access to the site is limited by traffic conditions. The buildings, fences, and uses at The Crescent create a significant pedestrian barrier to entering the parklands.

The Johnston Street entrance straddles two remnant foreshore industries. On the right, The Crescent Timber and Hardware one of the last remaining elements of the timber industry that once used much of the foreshore and The Devine Marine Group, Waterfront and Marine Contractors on the left.

Visibility into the site from The Crescent is limited (see Figure 3.1). by high brick walls, fences, buildings and vehicles. The Crescent is occupied by buildings and businesses, including car yards, a self-storage depot, Balmain Rentals as well as some small leases in the closed sections of the viaduct. Excluded from the site is number 1 the Crescent, which has a 99-year lease and is occupied by Webbers Carpets, and a Pet O Barn (previously was Lawson's Auction House).

Within the parklands, Chapman Road forms the edge to all these industries and has car parking both sides of the road.

**Parking:** There is currently ample unrestricted parking. Background studies revealed that parking is an issue when structured sporting programs are in operation. Consultation feedback indicates the unrestricted parking is used mainly by commuters accessing the light rail station.

**Getting Around the Park:** There are a number of areas where accessibility could be improved through the park, including ramps and paving surfaces at the park entries, links to seating and picnic facilities, worn and damaged surfaces in Jubilee Park, Bicentennial Park East and near the entrance to Harold Park.

## **Opportunities and Constraints**

Analysis revealed a need to provide a formal entry sequence, including a hierarchy of entries into the parklands. The parklands lack a "front door" or a clear wayfinding strategy to help navigate through the spaces.

To complement the entry sequence, an opportunity exists to improve the internal circulation (see Figure 3.2), by establishing connecting pathways across the site. This would include both east-west, and north-south, to better connect the varied parkland precincts.

Access between Federal and Bicentennial Parks is limited by the canal, creating a physical barrier between the two (see Figure 3.1).

The Master Plan affords opportunity to improve legibility and equitable access. This can be achieved by ensuring new pathways meet Australian Standards for equitable access. These access routes should be supplemented with ample seating and refuges.

It is important that more car parking does not intrude into the parklands. Opportunities must be found to relocate some existing parking to the periphery in order to free-up additional areas of open space.

## **HERITAGE**

Johnstons Creek Parklands has a significant number of elements with heritage significance. The most visually prominent are the heritage-listed viaduct that runs across the site, providing views through the parkland, the former Rozelle Tram Depot and Jubilee Park.

There are also several significant vegetation heritage items, including the fig trees on the north of the Tram Shed and the avenue plantings in Bicentennial Park.

Numerous heritage and cultural artefacts are located throughout the parklands.

The parklands are considered to have little potential to retain Aboriginal archaeological sites or objects due to past changes to the environment and extensive historical disturbance. There are still opportunities to identify the original landowners, the Cadigal tribe. An interpretive strategy will recommend consultation be undertaken to

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identify Aboriginal cultural heritage values and provide opportunities for how these values may be interpreted. It may be through future public art installations, permanent sculpture, remembrance and celebrations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.

The integration of the Tram Shed and Harold Park brings a significant cultural history to the parklands.

Sydney once had one of the largest and most sophisticated tram networks in the world. As it expanded rapidly in the early 20th Century more and more depots were required to manage the extensive rolling stock. The Rozelle Tram Depot was the second largest depot in Sydney, part of a network that eventually included 11 depots. Construction began in 1903 with excavation of rock that now forms the cliff face to Maxwell Road and the first stage that could house 115 trams was completed in 1904. Construction on a second stage began in 1909 and by 1918 the Tram Depot was running at full capacity with 200 cars and over 650 workers. In 1919 the tram sheds were saved from fire by a Grinnell automatic fire sprinkler system. The water was supplied by a tank located above and behind the sheds.

The Former paceway at Harold Park, founded in 1902, was Australia's premier harness racing venue until 2007. It was drawing crowds of more than 50,000 people to watch the trots in its heyday during the late 1950s and early 1960s. As community sporting aspirations, demographics and other forms of evening recreation have changed so too have the fortunes of the paceway and it was sold in 2008. The paceway has relocated and the site is now being redeveloped into a high-density residential estate.

The Harold Park Development Control Plan 2011 requires the interpretation of several elements from the former operation of the Harold Park site and Rozelle Tram Depot. This includes interpretation of the original harness track alignment and translation of the original tram line routes.

### **Opportunities and Constraints**

The Johnstons Creek Parklands offer a wealth of opportunity to interpret the gradual development of the site from its post-industrial working waterfront, major transport depot, harness racing, land reclamation, and Aboriginal cultural history. Identification, interpretation and protection of heritage values are key requirements of the Master Plan.

### **CHARACTER AND VISUAL AMENITY**

The Johnstons Creek Parklands are an amalgamation of local parks, divided by the Johnstons Creek Canal and the impressive arched features of the viaduct. Each of the park precincts illustrates a discrete character, which reflects the gradual evolution of the parklands.

There exists an identifiable formal character in Bicentennial Park, which consists of expansive managed lawn areas and fig tree plantings.

By contrast, Federal Park expresses a more naturalistic and organic planting character defining areas of active and passive recreation.

The canal introduces a hardscape infrastructure quality, synonymous with mid-late 20th Century stormwater treatment interventions.

### **Opportunities and Constraints**

Clearly, the well-defined existing character of the varied precincts is a quality to be maintained and reinforced. Indeed, the opportunity exists to embellish these qualities.

The release of the new open spaces in Harold Park, The Crescent and The Hill, offers an opportunity to knit these parklands together with unifying design measures such as paths, lighting and planting.

When considering the parkland character as a whole, what is missing is a natural bushland setting. Potentially Harold Park open space may be able to balance the foreshore formal character, with a more organic and native character. This would offer the parkland visitor a broad range of experiences, from formal and structured, to natural and organic.

### **OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS MAPPING**

The Opportunities and Constraints diagrams are shown in Sections 3.2 and 3.3.

# 3.2 SITE CONSTRAINTS

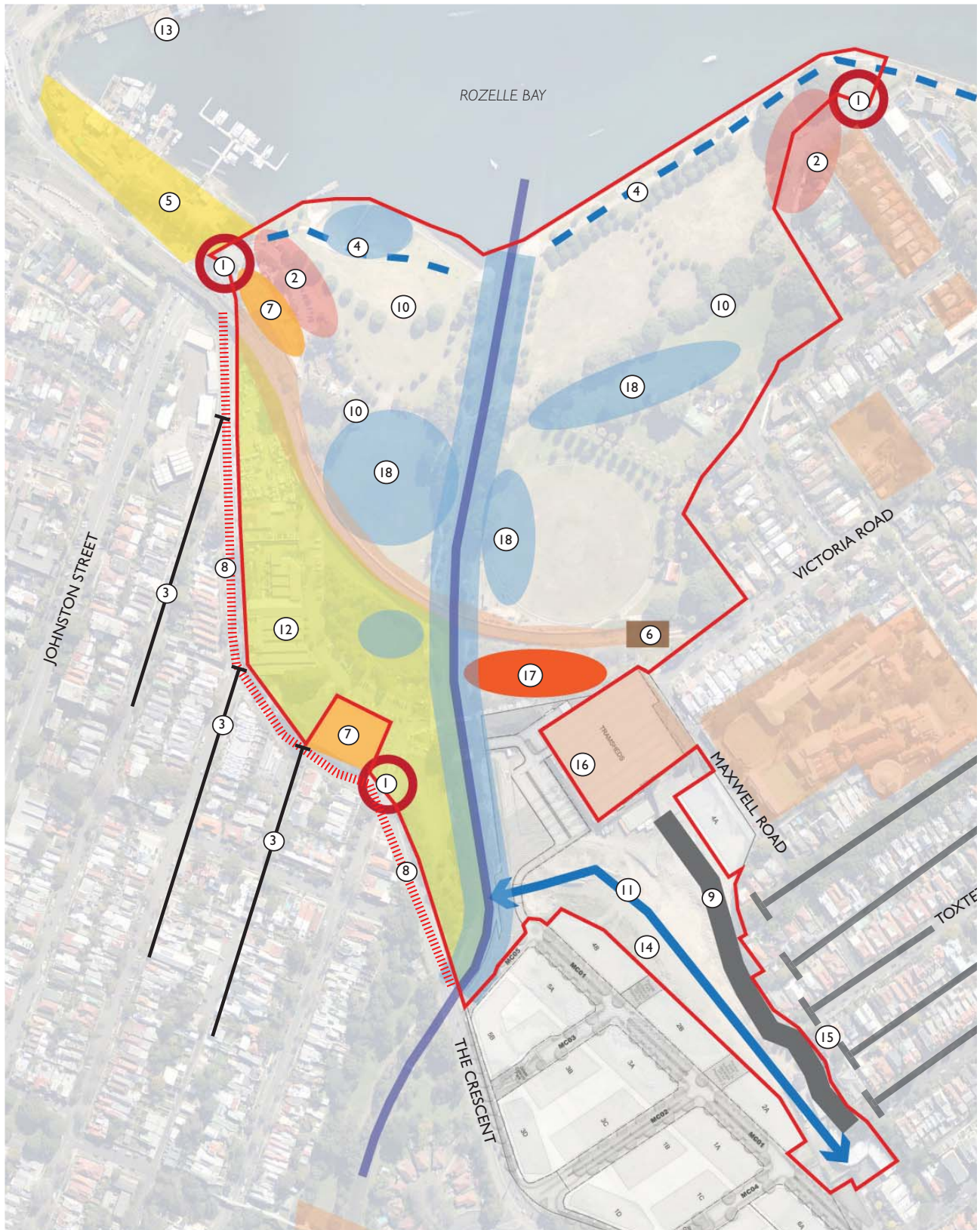


Figure 3.1 Site Constraints

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## ACCESS

- ① Primary vehicle entries to the parklands are not highly visible to visitors.
- ② Inadequate on-site parking.
- ③ Low pedestrian connectivity across The Crescent.
- ④ Disconnected foreshore walk across Johnstons Creek.
- ⑤ Future foreshore walk around Rozelle Bay prevented by surrounding industrial land uses.
- ⑥ Access to Jubilee Park Light Rail Station is not highly visible to most park users.

## OWNERSHIP

- ⑦ Lack of Council ownership of key sites along The Crescent.

## AMENITY

- ⑧ Noise generation from high traffic volumes along The Crescent.
- ⑨ Relatively narrow and overshadowed linear open space not suitable for active recreation.
- ⑩ Existing covered picnic areas are highly sought after during peak periods.

## STORMWATER

- ⑪ Alignment of overland flow path through Harold Park already approved.

## BUILT FORM/LANDUSES

- ⑫ The Crescent buildings are not being used by the City of Sydney in the most appropriate way.

## RECREATION/OPEN SPACE

- ⑬ Adjacent industrial land uses restrict recreational water activities in Rozelle Bay.
- ⑭ Adjoining residential development, access and parking factors make Harold Park an unsuitable location for active recreation.

## TOPOGRAPHY AND LANDFORM

- ⑮ Level change at cliff face prevents pedestrian access for Glebe residents.

## HERITAGE

- ⑯ Mirvac to deliver key interface with heritage tramsheds.

## CONTAMINATION

- ⑰ The Hill is contaminated and to fully remediate is not financially viable.

## FLOODING

- ⑱ Heavily flooding in low lying areas during peak rain events restricts the use in these areas.

# 3.3 SITE OPPORTUNITIES



Figure 3.2 Site Opportunities: Access and Recreation



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## ACCESS

- ① Improve legibility, clarity and character of existing park entrances along The Crescent, Johnston Street and Glebe Point Road.
- ② Provision of new primary pedestrian and vehicle access to The Crescent precinct.  
Provision of new primary pedestrian access to Harold Park.
- ③ Improve pedestrian access.
- ④ Provide clear pedestrian and cycle connections through the Harold Park residential development.
- ⑤ New primary pedestrian and cycle connection through Mirvac development from Wigram Road to the Tram Shed.
- ⑥ Improve pedestrian and visual access to Jubilee Park Light Rail station for park users and local residents.
- ⑦ A continuous foreshore link, and better connections across Johnstons Creek.
- ⑧ Efficient use of vehicle circulation and parking at The Crescent.

## RECREATION/OPEN SPACE

- ⑨ Provision of a new active recreation precinct around Federal Park north and Jubilee Oval.
- ⑩ Integrate the new 'pocket parks' into the overall Harold Park precinct.
- ⑪ Harold Park to have a range of passive recreational uses – playground, picnic areas etc.
- ⑫ Increased 'water-play' along Harbour foreshore. This includes canoes, boat sheds, kayak hire and harbour beach.
- ⑬ The Crescent to provide a diversity of recreational opportunities including indoor sports.

# SITE OPPORTUNITIES

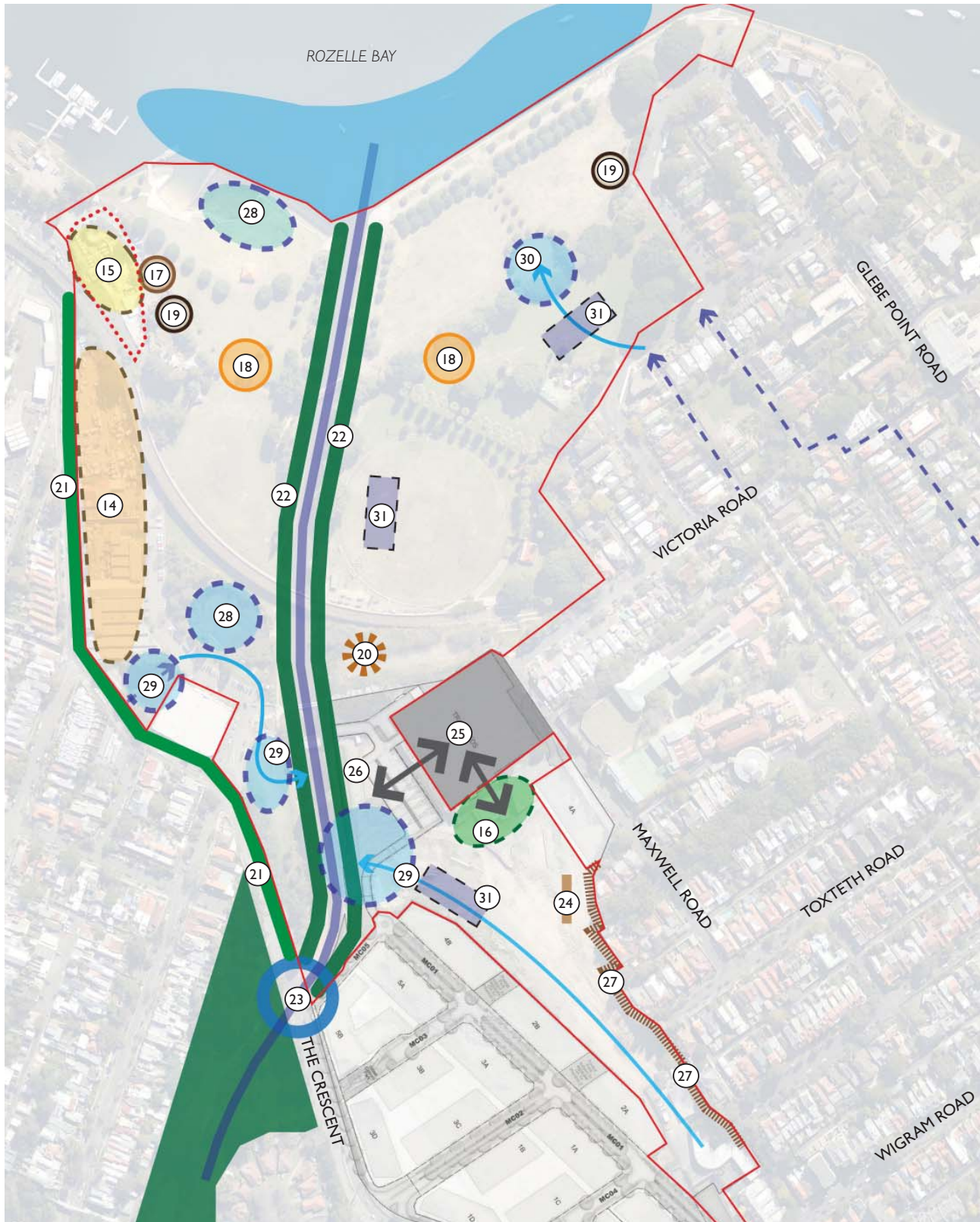


Figure 3.3 Site Opportunities: Built Form, Amenity, Character, Heritage and Environment

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## BUILDINGS

- 14 Appropriate use of buildings on The Crescent. Suggested uses could include – Community hall, educational facility (sustainability + recreation), sustainability centre, horticultural centre, cafés, low-rent start-ups, artist residences, community college, indoor sports hall/courts/cricket nets.
- 15 Develop a long term development strategy for Chapman Road (which is also a key entry site).
- 16 New multi-purpose outdoor space next to the Tram Sheds precinct. Ideas include – outdoor cinema/amphitheatre, innovative shade structure/parasol, markets, new community gathering space.

## AMENITY

- 17 Food truck parking areas/entry points for weekends, festivals, events.
- 18 More opportunities for sheltered picnic areas to suit a range of group sizes.
- 19 Increased visitor amenity – toilet blocks. An opportunity for some innovative and affordable building within the park. Also potential coffee cart.
- 20 An opportunity for an elevated lookout from The Hill to surrounding areas.

## CHARACTER AND IDENTITY

- 21 A distinctive landscape treatment along The Crescent. This highly exposed strip of land will become the new face of the parklands.
- 22 Reinforce the landscape character of Johnstons Creek. This may include naturalising certain edges with endemic species.
- 23 Maximise pedestrian connection through Johnstons Creek along The Crescent.

## HISTORY, COMMUNITY AND CULTURE

- 24 Showcase the 'cliff face' – public art, projections, lighting strategy.
- 25 Ensure a consolidated approach to the heritage tramshed precinct that balances the needs of stakeholders/community.
- 26 Emphasise view connection between Tram Sheds and The Crescent.

## ECOLOGY AND WATER

- 27 Cliff face to create a biodiversity corridor.
- 28 Expand and link existing saltmarsh community to other areas.
- 29 Stormwater and runoff from adjoining streets to provide extended wetlands, habitat and improved harbour water quality.
- 30 Opportunity for water fountain.
- 31 Opportunity to harvest run-off water from parkland areas.