

Visual Impact Assessment

Proposed Advertising Billboard Signage
on land located at the M2 Motorway,
Epping.

Submitted to Department of Planning,
Industry and Environment
On behalf of Sydney Trains

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A	Visual amenity package
	Ethos Urban

Terms and abbreviations

Key term or abbreviation	Meaning	Source
Characteristics	Elements, or combinations of elements, which make a contribution to distinctive landscape character	GLVIA3
Council	Ku-ring-gai Council	N/A
DA	Development application	EP&A Act
DCP	Development control plan	EP&A Act
Designated landscape	Areas of landscape identified as being of importance at international, national or local levels, either defined by statute or identified in development plans or other documents	GLVIA3
Elements	Individual parts which make up the landscape, such as, for example, trees, hedges and buildings	GLVIA3
Feature	Particularly prominent or eye-catching elements in the landscape, such as tree clumps, church towers or wooded skylines OR a particular aspect of the project proposal	GLVIA3
Filtered glimpse	A glimpse that is partially obscured by vegetation, often the leaves of trees, between the viewer and the target of the view. See also - glimpse	Ethos Urban
Glimpse	A highly constrained, partial view of an element or feature or a view of an element or feature that is either in the long range or not prominent relative to other elements in the view. See also – filtered glimpse	Ethos Urban
Key characteristics	Those combinations of elements which are particularly important to the current character of the landscape and help to give an area its particularly distinctive sense of place	GLVIA3
Landform	The shape and form of the land surface which has resulted from combinations of geology, geomorphology, slope, elevation and physical processes	GLVIA3
Landscape	An area, as perceived by people, the character of which is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors	GLVIA3
Landscape character	A distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse	GLVIA3
Landscape character areas	These are single unique areas which are the discrete geographical areas of a particular landscape type	GLVIA3
Landscape character types	These are distinct types of landscape that are relatively homogeneous in character. They are generic in nature in that they may occur in different areas in different parts of the country, but wherever they occur they share broadly similar combinations of geology, topography, drainage	GLVIA3

Key term or abbreviation	Meaning	Source
	patterns, vegetation and historical land use and settlement pattern, and perceptual and aesthetic attributes.	
Landscape value	The relative value that is attached to different landscapes by society. A landscape may be valued by different stakeholders for a whole variety of reasons	GLVIA3
LEP	Local environmental plan	EP&A Act
Magnitude	A term that combines judgements about the size and scale of the effect, the extent of the area over which it occurs, whether it is reversible or irreversible and whether it is short or long term in duration	GLVIA3
Narrow view	View of a narrow area in the horizontal field of view created by the combination of negative space at the ground level (often a road or path) adjoined by elements (often closely spaced) in the vertical plane such as building or trees that constrain the natural field of view and direct the eye to a single point in the distance. The view may take in a large area in the vertical field of view, such as in a highly urban setting. Synonym – focal view	Ethos Urban
Perception	Combines the sensory (that we receive through our senses) with the cognitive (our knowledge and understanding gained from many sources and experiences)	GLVIA3
Sensitivity	A term applied to specific receptors, combining judgements of the susceptibility of the receptor to the specific type of change or development proposed and the value related to that receptor	GLVIA3
Significance	A measure of the importance or gravity of the environmental effect, defined by significance criteria specific to the environmental topic	GLVIA3
Vista	A view that is considered to have high visual amenity	Ethos Urban
Visual amenity	The overall pleasantness of the views people enjoy of their surroundings, which provides an attractive visual setting or backdrop for the enjoyment of activities of the people living, working, recreating, visiting or travelling through an area	GLVIA3
Visual impacts	Effects on specific views and on the general visual amenity experienced by people	GLVIA3
Visual receptor	Individuals and/or defined groups of people who have the potential to be affected by a proposal	GLVIA3
Wide view	View of a wide area, often long range, in the horizontal field of view enabled by an absence of obstructing elements in the foreground or midground and elements in the vertical plane that constrain the natural field of view. The view may also take in a large area in the vertical field of view. Synonyms – panorama, prospect	Ethos Urban

Executive Summary

Sydney Trains proposes to erect advertising (outdoors) on the eastern and western faces of the M2 Motorway in Epping.

In accordance with State Environmental Planning Policy No 64—Advertising and Signage (SEPP64), a visual impact assessment of this proposal was undertaken.

The proposal will be visible from a relatively small area of the public domain (the viewshed) mainly confined to M2 motorway and immediately adjoining areas. The viewshed is associated with the Epping M2 motorway and surrounding homes and infrastructure.

Due to the role of the M2 motorway in the road hierarchy and Epping being a regional attractor, a large proportion of people exposed to the view can reasonably be considered to be travellers heading from Lane Cove tunnel and connects to Westlink M7 (east to west) for purposes other than local trips.

Two (2) viewpoints were selected to give an indication of sensitivity, magnitude and significance of visual impact:

1. Eastern side
2. Western side

Due to their visibility from well used public open space, the sensitivity of the viewpoints to the nature of change proposed is low.

The proposal is considered to be an ongoing change that is able to be readily reversed. The scale of change for is considered to represent a noticeable change over a restricted area.

Combining sensitivity with magnitude, the significance of visual impact is considered low from all viewpoints.

The following table provides an overview of sensitivity, magnitude and significance of visual impact

Viewpoint	Sensitivity	Magnitude	Significance
1 – Eastern Side	Low	Noticeable	Low
2 – Western Side	Low	Noticeable	Low

When assessed against SEPP64 and its supporting Transport Corridor Outdoor Advertising and Signage Guidelines (the guidelines) (in the SEE), the proposal is considered:

- to be consistent with the existing prevailing visual character of the viewshed
- not to obscure or compromise important views
- not to dominate the skyline or reduce the quality of vistas
- not to adversely impact the viewing rights of other advertisers
- enable continued appreciation of the bridge.

On this basis, the significance of the proposal's visual impact is considered to be negligible to low and the proposal is assessed as being consistent with SEPP64 and the guidelines.

The proposal can therefore be supported on visual impact grounds.

1.0 Introduction

This report is a visual impact assessment (VIA). Its purpose of this report is to identify, describe, analyse and assess the acceptability of the likely visual impact of a proposal by Sydney Trains (the applicant) to erect advertising (outdoors) at the railway overpass across the M2 Motorway in Epping.

It has been prepared by Ethos Urban on behalf of Sydney Trains (the applicant) to support a development application (DA) made to the NSW Department of Planning (the consent authority) seeking development consent for the proposal.

The document is structured as follows:

- **Part 1: introduction** – identifies the nature of this document
- **Part 2: the site and its context** – identifies and describes the site and its context
- **Part 3: the proposal** – describes the proposal
- **Part 4: the development application** – describes the development application and its assessment and determination process
- **Part 5: the planning framework** – identifies the relevant parts of the planning framework applicable to the assessment of visual impact
- **Part 6: methodology** – outlines the methodology used in this VIA, including how sensitivity and magnitude combine to determine significance of impact
- **Part 7: existing visual environment** – identifies and describes the existing visual environment, including viewshed, visual receptors, viewpoints and overall visual character
- **Part 8: visual impact** – identifies and describes the potential visual impact of the proposal on views obtained from the viewpoints, and assesses the significance of these impacts against the factors of sensitivity and magnitude
- **Part 9: assessment against the planning framework** – assesses the appropriateness of the potential visual impacts against the planning framework
- **Part 10: mitigation measures** – identifies any mitigation measures to address any adverse visual impacts
- **Part 11: conclusion** – identifies whether the proposal in its current form can be supported on visual impact grounds, and summarises the basis for this determination.

2.0 The site and its context

This part of the VIA identifies and describes the site and its context

2.1 The site

The site is located on the eastern and western faces of the rail overpass crossing the M2 Motorway. The M2 motorway, is a three lane road travelling east to west. The rail line overpass will have the signage on the eastern and eastern faces, the line travels north to south. railway corridor is owned and operated by Sydney Trains and the land on which the asset is located is owned by Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) NSW.

There are no existing boards on the eastern or western sides of the overpass.

Table 1 provides a high-level outline of the visual characteristics of the M2 motorway distributor overpass.

The site's aerial and locational context is shown in **Figure 1** and **Figure 2**. Photographs of the development site are provided in subsequent figures.

Table 1: Visual characteristics of the bridge

Element	Description
Line	Straight, horizontal lines dominate the formation of the bridge asset, marking the underside of the railway bridge. Elongated vertical lines comprise the top portion of the rail overpass.
Shape and form	Geometric pattern form dominates
Colour	Predominantly dark grey
Texture	Primarily expressed as concrete and metal elements



Figure 1: the site

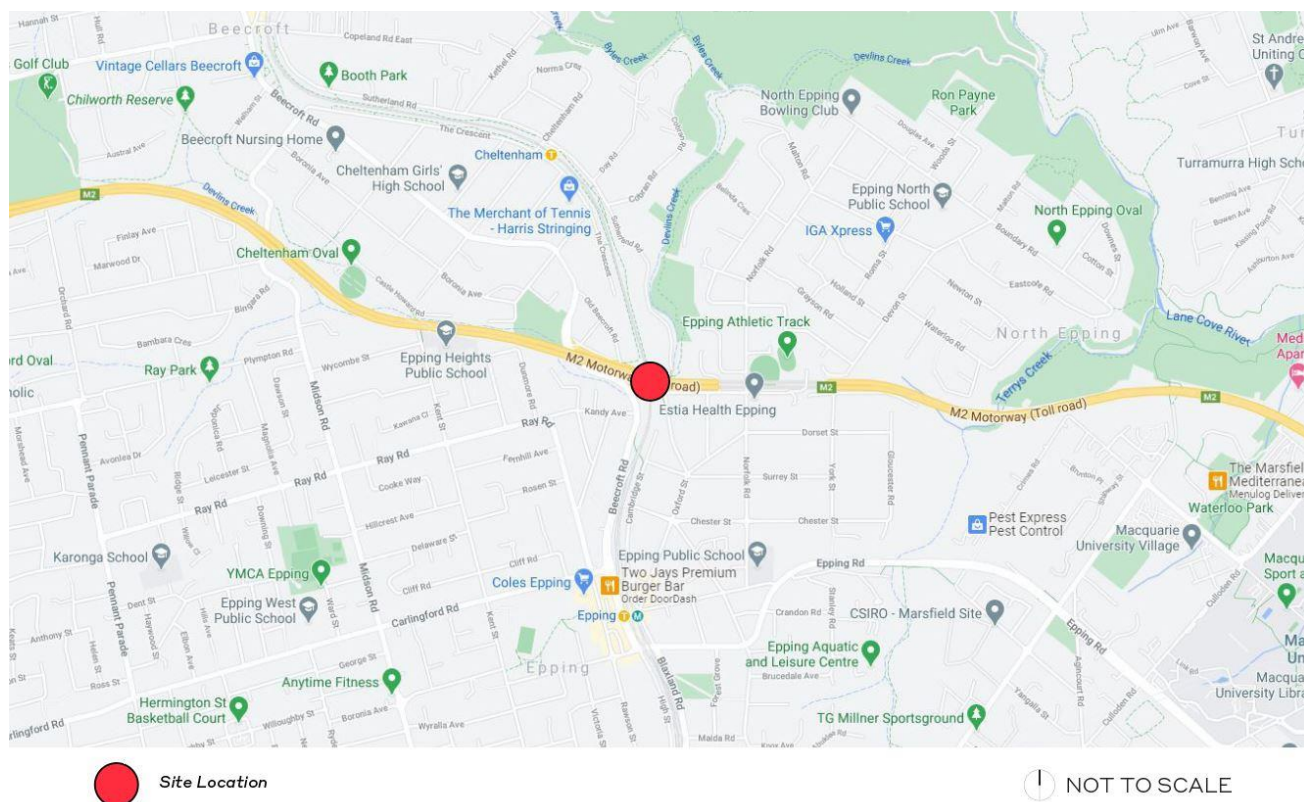


Figure 2: locational context



Figure 3: View of the eastern sign location on the eastern side of the bridge looking west



Figure 4: View of the existing western sign location from the western side of the bridge looking east



Figure 5: View from the Constance Close looking west



Figure 6: View from Beecroft road green space looking west

2.2 The context

Table 2 identifies and describes surrounding land use, built form and public domain.

Table 2: the context

Direction	Use	Built form	Public domain
North	Suburban area – private housing, rail line, Cheltenham train station	Low density detached residential housing	Well paved public footpath, multiple pedestrian connections, high level of engagement with built form
South	Suburban area, rail line, scattered green spaces, Epping train and Metro station	Single to two storey dwellings	Nature reserve
East	M2 Motorway	Road, suburban forms and park land	Open green space
West	M2 Motorway and housing along perimeter	Road, two storey housing, reserves	Narrow footpath

3.0 The proposal

This part of the VIA describes the proposal and the development application

3.1 The proposal

The associated Statement of Environmental Effects outlines the proposal. The following table identifies key information relevant to visual impacts.

Table 3: the proposal

Matter	Description
Demolition	No
Construction	Yes
Use	Advertising (outdoors)

Type	Advertising on rail line overpass
Format	Digital sign (static and non-static)
Mode	Fixed
Size	Greater than 20sqm
Height	Less than 8m above ground
Direction of sign face	North and South

4.0 The development application

This part of the VIA describes the development application and its assessment and determination process

The following table provides key information on the development application.

Table 4: the development application

Matter	Key information
Applicant	Sydney Trains
Level of assessment	Development that needs consent (SEPP64, part, 3, division 12, clause 12)
Assessment manager	NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
Consent authority	Minister for Planning (SEPP64, part, 3, division 12, clause 12)
Consultation	Design panel; council; relevant transport agencies
Public exhibition	No

5.0 The planning framework

This part of the VIA identifies the relevant parts of the planning framework applicable to the assessment of visual impact

5.1 Applicable parts

Table 5 identifies the applicable parts of the planning framework relevant to the assessment of visual impact. It is noted that:

- pursuant to SEPP64, as the consent authority is the Minister for Planning, local environmental plans and development control plans are not applicable
- as the planning framework provides sufficient guidance for the assessment of the proposal, it is not considered necessary to consider Land and Environment Court planning principles for views.

Table 5: applicable parts of the planning framework

Matter	Key information
Acts	Environmental Planning Act 1979
Strategic plans	N/A
Environmental planning instruments	State Environmental Planning Policy: State Environmental Planning Policy No 64—Advertising and Signage (SEPP64)
Guidelines, policies or other planning documents	Transport Corridor Outdoor Advertising and Signage Guidelines

5.2 Relevant parts

The following **Table 6** identifies the relevant parts of the applicable planning framework.

Table 6: relevant parts of the planning framework

Matter	Key information
Environmental Planning Act 1979	Part 4, division 4.3, section 4.15
State Environmental Planning Policy No 64—Advertising and Signage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Part 1, clause 3 (1) (a) – objectives Schedule 1 – assessment criteria
Transport Corridor Outdoor Advertising and Signage Guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 3 – Advertisements and Road Safety Section 4 – Public Benefit Test for Advertisement Proposals

6.0 Methodology

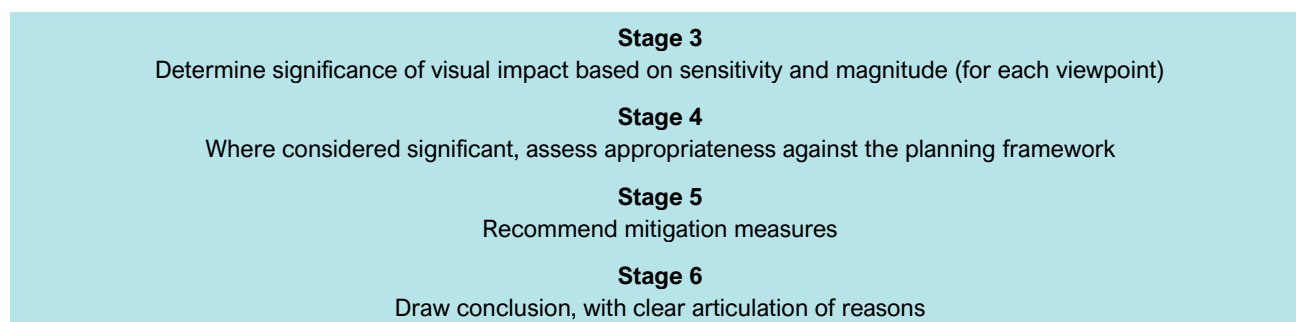
This part of the VIA outlines the methodology used, including how sensitivity and magnitude combine to determine the significance of the likely visual impact on the existing visual environment

The methodology undertaken by this VIA is generally accordance with that set down in the ‘Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment’ (GLVIA3) published by the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment in 2013 adjusted to better reflect the local NSW context by including consideration of:

- the requirements of the NSW planning system under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979; and
- NSW Land and Environment Court planning principles.

The GLVIA methodology is broadly outlined in **Figure 7**.

<p>Stage 1</p> <p>Identify and describe the existing visual environment</p> <p>Stage 2</p> <p>Identify and describe potential visual impacts (for each viewpoint)</p>

**Figure 7: methodology**

6.1 Assumptions, limitations and exclusions

The following assumptions apply to this VIA:

- development will occur generally in accordance with plans provided in the associated Statement of Environmental Effects (SEE).

The following limitations apply to this VIA:

- the proposal is represented by photomontages prepared in accordance with Land and Environment Court photomontage policy. While such photomontages provide an indication of likely future visual environment, they can only provide an approximation of the rich visual experience enabled by the human eye. As they are based on photographs, the same limitations that apply to photography, including optical distortion, apply.

The following exclusions apply to this VIA:

- consideration of impact on the private domain is excluded
- consideration of night-time impact, including lighting, is excluded
- detailed consideration of heritage matters is excluded
- consideration of impact on Aboriginal cultural heritage values associations with landscape is excluded. This is only appropriately undertaken by a member or qualified representative of the Aboriginal community.

7.0 Visual catchment

This part of the VIA identifies and describes the existing visual environment, including the viewshed and visual receptors

7.1 Viewshed

The viewshed is that part of the public domain most exposed to views of the proposal. The physical extent of the viewshed will be relatively large and primarily focused to the M2 Motorway and immediate surrounds.

The following table identifies the viewshed for the proposal.

Table 7: viewshed

Direction	Boundary	Distance (approx.)
North	M2 Motorway road	30m

Eastern	M2 Motorway tunnel (Sydney Orbital Network)	260m
South	M2 Motorway road	30m
West	Beecroft Road Overpass	320m



Figure 8: viewshed – eastern extent (M2 Motorway tunnel exit)



Figure 9: viewshed – western extent (Beecroft Road overpass)



Figure 10 viewshed - northern extent (M2 Motorway)



Figure 11 viewshed - southern extent (Beecroft road exit)



Figure 12 viewshed – north western extent (Beecroft road overpass)

7.2 Existing visual character

The existing visual character of the viewshed can be considered to exhibit the following perceptual attributes:

- **scale:** the dominant scale is substantial, including both the overpass and the size and visibility of the motorway which dominates the site.
- **movement:** the elevated railway bridge combined with the high speed M2 motorway, provide for a perception of movement.

The following table provides a high level consideration against formal aesthetic attributes:

Table 8 aesthetic attributes

Element	Description
Line	Horizontal lines dominate
Shape and form	Geometric form dominates
Colour	Predominantly dark grey, neutral colour dominate as it sits in the viewshed of the existing motorway.
Texture	Primarily concrete cladding associated with metal structural elements above

7.3 Preferred future visual character

While under SEPP64, local environmental plans and development control plans are not applicable to the assessment of the proposal, they nonetheless provide an indication of the preferred future visual character of the site and area.

7.3.1 The site

As the land is located in the Hornsby local government area, it is subject to the:

- Hornsby Local Environmental plan 2013 (HLEP2013); and
- Hornsby Development Control Plan 2013 (HDCP2013).

Hornsby Local Environmental Plan 2013

Under the HLEP2013, the railway bridge is subject to the following provisions relevant to character:

Table 9: Hornsby Local Environmental Plan 2013 – the site

Matter	Key information
Zone	SP2 – Infrastructure
Floor space ratio	N/A
Height	N/A
Heritage	N/A
Other	N/A

7.3.2 Surrounding land

Under the HLEP2013, the surrounding land is subject to the following provisions relevant to character:

Table 10: Hornsby Local Environmental Plan 2013 – the context

Direction	Zone	Floor space ratio	Height	Heritage	Other
North	R2, E1 and RE1	N/a	8.5m	Beecroft, Cheltenham Heritage Conservation Area – predominately Northwest and southeast, approximately 200 metres away	N/a
South	R3, R4 and RE1	N/a	12m	Stone causeway over Devlins Creek – South of site	N/a
East	R2 and RE1	N/a	8.5m	East Epping Conservation Area	N/a
West	RE1 and R2	N/a	8.5m	N/a	N/a

7.3.3 Hornsby Development Control Plan

Under the HLEP2013, the site is subject to the following provisions relevant to character:

Table 11: Hornsby Development Control Plan – the site and context

Matter	Applicability	Provision
General Controls	Yes	1C.2.11 Signage
Rural	No	N/A
Residential	No	N/A
Business	No	N/A
Industrial	No	N/A
Subdivision	Yes	N/A
Community	No	N/A
River Settlement	No	N/A
Heritage	No	N/A

7.4 Visual receptors

Table 12 identifies the visual receptors exposed to views of the proposal.

Table 12: visual receptors

	Close range (<150m)	Medium to long range (150m and greater)
North	Rail line and private housing	Rail Line, private housing – Lane Cove Valley Walk
South	Rail line, Beecroft Road exit	Beecroft Road Reserve, Epping Train and Metro Station
East	M2 Hills Motorway	Constance Close (Overpass), Epping Park
West	M2 Hills Motorway	Devlin's Creek – Lyne Road Reserve

8.0 Visual impact

This part of the VIA identifies, describes and analyses the likely visual impact of the proposal on the existing visual environment based a selection of viewpoints and assesses the significance of these impacts against the factors of sensitivity and magnitude

8.1 The viewpoints

The following figure identifies the viewpoints within the viewshed selected as the basis for assessment of visual impact.



Figure 13: Viewpoints



Figure 14: Viewpoint 1 (Eastern Side) - visual impact



Figure 15: Viewpoint 2 (Western Side) - visual impact

8.2 Assessment

Due to the nature of the site being a main road, visibility is low. The immediate site context however is surrounded by private housing, and so must be taken into account when reviewing this site. As shown by the viewpoints above, the immediate surrounding housing is sheltered from the majority of noise and light impacts by way of a large wall which follows the perimeter of the road, thus obscuring the suggested signage from view. It can therefore be valued that the site will have little to no impact and be of low sensitivity and magnitude. The only visibly impacted areas for the site are from the motorway and immediate off road (Beecroft Road).

The proposal is considered to be an ongoing change that is able to be readily reversed. The scale of change for viewpoint 1 and 2 is considered to represent a minor change over a restricted area.

Combining sensitivity with magnitude, the significance of visual impact is considered low from all viewpoints.

Table 13: Assessment of visual impact

Viewpoint	Sensitivity	Magnitude	Significance
1 – Eastern Side	Low	Noticeable	Low
2 – Western Side	Low	Noticeable	Low

9.0 Mitigation measures

This part of the VIA identifies and describes mitigation measures considered appropriate to address likely visual impact

Under the GLVIA3, there are three broad types of mitigation measures:

1. avoid
2. minimise
3. offset.

There are a number of stages in the development process when mitigation measures should be considered. Of relevance to this proposal are the following:

- primary measures: considered as part of design development and refinement
- secondary measures: considered as part of conditioning a development consent.

As has been outlined in the associated SEE, the proposal has been the subject to a technical process that has included consideration of visual impact matters. This has resulted in the incorporation of a number of primary measures that seek to avoid and minimise any potential significant adverse visual impacts.

As has been determined by this VIA, the incorporation of these mitigation measures have been critical to the determination of acceptable visual impact. On this basis, it is not considered necessary to make further fundamental or otherwise large-scale amendments to the proposal in its current form to satisfactorily manage visual impact.

10.0 Conclusion

This part of the VIA identifies whether the proposal can be supported on visual impact grounds

The significance of the proposal's visual impact is considered to be negligible to low and the proposal is assessed and being consistent with SEPP64 and the guidelines.

The proposal can therefore be supported on visual impact grounds.