

Transport for NSW

Proposed Croydon Station Easy Access Upgrade

Visual Impact Assessment

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Contents

Executive summary	3
1. Introduction	6
1.1 Purpose of this report	6
1.2 Existing station.....	6
1.3 Project overview	6
1.4 Report format	7
2. Assessment methodology	8
2.1 General.....	8
2.2 Assessment of effect on visual character	8
2.3 Assessment of effect on key viewpoints.....	8
2.4 Project illustration	10
2.5 Input to design process and final recommendations	11
3. Context of existing visual environment	12
3.1 General context of location	12
3.2 Land use	12
3.3 Heritage	14
3.4 Vegetation	15
3.5 Visual environment.....	15
3.5.1 Visual character	15
3.5.2 General visibility	16
3.5.3 Landmarks and wider views	16
4. Project description	17
4.1 Demolition	17
4.2 New station components	17
4.3 Car parking, pedestrian/cyclist facilities and landscape works	19
4.4 Effect on existing vegetation	19
4.5 Temporary Construction works	19
4.6 Lighting.....	19
5. Visual impact assessment	20
5.1 Effect on existing visual character	20
5.2 Effect on key viewpoints	20
5.2.1 Public viewpoint A: Corner of Meta Street and PLC.....	22
5.2.2 Public viewpoint B: Paisley Road (west).....	22

5.2.3	Public viewpoint C: The Strand (upper)	27
5.2.4	Public viewpoint D: The Strand (mid to lower).....	28
5.2.5	Public viewpoint E: Paisley Road (eastern side)	31
5.2.6	Public viewpoint F: Hennessy Street.....	32
5.2.7	Public viewpoint G – from station	33
5.3	Construction impacts	33
5.4	Summary of visual impact to surrounding viewpoints	34
6.	Design outcome and further recommended measures	36
6.1	Positive visual attributes of Project.....	36
6.2	Recommendations to further improve visual outcome.....	36
6.2.1	Area between new station operations building and The StrandCafé	36
6.2.2	Northern station entry at corner of Meta Street and Hennessy Street.....	37
6.2.3	Trees on Paisley Road east	37
6.2.4	Edges along northern and southern sides of rail corridor.....	38
6.2.5	Building form and colours.....	38
6.2.6	Lighting	38
6.3	Construction phase.....	38
6.4	Operation phase	39
7.	References.....	40

Table of Figures

Figure 3-1:	Existing booking office and The Strand Cafe.....	12
Figure 3-2:	Visual context	13
Figure 3-3:	Heritage buildings on station platforms	14
Figure 4-1:	Project plan of general arrangement.....	18
Figure 5-1:	Key viewpoints and photomontage locations	21
Figure 5-2:	Viewpoint A - existing view.....	23
Figure 5-3:	Viewpoint A - image showing likely visual changes (Photomontage V1)	24
Figure 5-4:	Viewpoint B - existing view.....	25
Figure 5-5:	Viewpoint B - image showing likely visual changes (Photomontage V2).....	26
Figure 5-6:	Viewpoint C - existing view.....	27
Figure 5-7:	Viewpoint D - existing view	29
Figure 5-8:	Viewpoint D - image showing likely visual changes (Photomontage V3)	30
Figure 5-9:	Viewpoint E - existing view east along Paisley Road east.....	31
Figure 5-10:	Viewpoint F - existing view from corner of Hennessy Street and Edwin Street South	32
Figure 5-11:	Viewpoint G - existing view from platforms of footbridge and booking office.....	33
Figure 6-1:	Existing area outside The Strand Café and station	37

Executive summary

This report provides a visual impact assessment of Transport for NSW's (TfNSW) proposed Croydon Station 'easy access upgrade' in Sydney (referred to in this report as 'the Project'). The assessment forms part of the requirements for a Review of Environmental Factors under Part 5 of the *NSW Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, 1979*.

The assessment focusses on the effect on the existing visual character and key viewpoints that surround the station, including the main shopping area, surrounding streets and the station itself. The report incorporates an assessment methodology that has been tailored to address the particular characteristics of the Project and is based on widely accepted professional standards.

The primary reason for the Project is to improve the current station by providing one that is more accessible, modern and secure. The main visual changes proposed are:

- demolition and reconstruction of overhead booking office to a new station operations building
- new wider and raised new pedestrian bridge and concourse spanning from Paisley Road to Hennessy Street with new lifts and stairs to the platforms
- canopies above the new station entrances, pedestrian bridge, lift landings, stairs and along platforms to the existing station buildings (platform 3/4 and 5 only)
- other changes including car parking, ramps, undercover bicycle racks and landscaping.

The Project incorporates a number of key measures designed to mitigate potential visual impacts. In particular, these measures respond to the existing height and scale of the main street and are intended to enhance the visual outcome:

- The new station operations building is of a similar height, scale and dimension to the existing building which currently relates well to the main street.
- The integration of the three lift shafts into the concourse canopy to prevent protrusions higher than the canopy and thus minimise the height above the existing wall of the Meta Street road bridge.
- The use of butterfly roof features at either side of the concourse to delineate the entrance, yet these structures have been designed to not overwhelm the surrounding scale and character.
- Design of the station stairway and platform canopies to be as low as possible and be integrated into the concourse in a seamless way, whilst also reducing the canopy length on Platform 1-2 where it is not necessary.

- Retention of the heritage station buildings on each of the platforms, with those buildings contributing to the attractive and pedestrian-like scale of the station.

The Project has a relatively confined area of visibility due to a large part being confined within the railway corridor cutting, with views to it generally only possible when in close proximity. The solid wall along the existing railway Meta Street road bridge, which would be retained, also blocks many potential views of the Project.

The potential area of visibility includes the main shopping area along The Strand, the railway overbridge and Meta Street that runs over it, the front of PLC school, the commercial area along Hennessy Street and the railway station.

The new station operations building is of similar height and scale to the existing building which relates well to the main shopping street of Croydon. This similarity would allow the new building to replace the old building with one that is compatible with the established cluster of nearby buildings that includes the historic Croydon Post Office and The Strand Café.

As is intended, there would be a more contemporary new station operations building and concourse to replace the existing structures, with the design visually delineating these from the heritage elements. Yet, the design has specifically focussed on retaining the key essence of the built character and the relationship of the station to the main street.

On the northern side, at the corner of Meta and Hennessy Streets, there would be a change to the existing character as the new concourse and entry opens up direct access to the station. Although the new built elements would be visually obvious, they would be of a scale compatible with the surrounding buildings along Hennessy Street.

A number of further design measures have been recommended in this report to ensure the best possible visual outcome can be achieved. The most important of those being:

- Area between the new station operations building and The Strand Café - This existing public space is attractive and contributes to the amenity and vitality of the street and station. It is recommended that the detailed design of this future area strive to reflect the current setting and character as far as possible, and include improvements like trees, seating and quality paving.
- Northern station entry at corner of Meta Street and Hennessy Street - There may be an opportunity to provide some landscape planting and street furniture such as seating close to the entrance to increase the attractiveness and general amenity of this entry point.
- Trees on Paisley Road East - There is an avenue of mature Plane Trees along the railway corridor edge on Paisley Road on the eastern side. Current proposals are to lop branches from some of these trees and remove the two most eastern trees to allow for construction activities. It is suggested that the proposed branch lopping appears excessive,

and that the proposed removal of the Plane Trees is particularly negative. It is therefore recommended that alternatives should be further investigated.

It is acknowledged that the new station and concourse would represent a distinct change to this part of Croydon which would contrast somewhat with the existing character when it is first constructed. However, over time, as viewers become more familiar with the changes, it is suggested that it would become a more integrated and compatible part of the overall character and one appreciated as a modern public facility.

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this report

This report provides a visual impact assessment of Transport for NSW's (TfNSW) proposed Croydon Station 'easy access upgrade' in Sydney (referred to in this report as 'the Project'). The assessment forms part of the requirements for a Review of Environmental Factors under Part 5 of the *NSW Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, 1979*.

It is to be noted that there are no specific parameters for a visual impact assessment under existing NSW legislation or government policy. In response, this report incorporates an assessment methodology that has been tailored to address the particular characteristics of the project and based on widely accepted professional standards.

The assessment focusses on the visual changes that will be seen from key viewpoints that surround the station, including the main shopping area, surrounding streets and the station itself.

1.2 Existing station

The booking office is at the corner of Meta Street and Paisley Road, Croydon, on T2 Inner West and the Southern line between Ashfield and Burwood Stations, and approximately 9.4 kilometres from Central Station.

The existing station is above ground and was first constructed in approximately 1875. The station is listed on the State Heritage Register, the RailCorp Section 170 Heritage and Conservation Register and the heritage schedules of the *Burwood Local Environmental Plan 2012* and the *Ashfield Local Environmental Plan 2013*.

All platforms are currently accessed via stairs spanning from the existing footbridge to the platforms. The footbridge is linked to the existing station entrance at Meta Street and Paisley Road, yet does not link across the railway corridor to Hennessy Street.

1.3 Project overview

A key objective for the Project is to improve the current station by providing one that is more accessible, modern and secure. The main visual changes proposed are:

- demolition and reconstruction of the overhead booking office to a new station operations building
- new wider and raised pedestrian bridge and concourse spanning from Paisley Road to Hennessy Street with new lifts and stairs to the platforms
- canopies above the new station entrances, pedestrian bridge, lift landings, stairs and along platforms to the existing station buildings (platform 3/4 and 5 only)

- other changes including car parking, ramps, undercover bicycle racks and landscaping.

It is also noteworthy that the proposed new pedestrian bridge would not only serve the railway station but also provide a safer, sheltered route for pedestrians traversing over the railway corridor, than the existing narrow footpath along the roadside.

1.4 Report format

The principal tasks of the visual impact assessment process are set-out in the report's format:

- Task 1: Define the methodology for the assessment (**Section 2.0**)
- Task 2: Establish baseline conditions and describe the context of the site, including the visual environment and site visibility (**Section 3.0**)
- Task 3: Describe the main visual changes associated with the Project (**Section 4.0**)
- Task 4: Assess the likely landscape and visual effects to character and surrounding key viewpoints (**Section 5.0**)
- Task 5: Describe design and mitigation measures that have been, and could be, incorporated into the design to improve the visual outcome (**Section 6.0**).

2. Assessment methodology

2.1 General

The applied methodology has been developed based on professional experience with similar projects, and existing guidelines used by government authorities in Australia such as the *Environmental Impact Assessment Guidance Note – Guidelines for Landscape Character and Visual Impact Assessment* (NSW Roads and Maritime Services, 2013), *Visual Landscape Planning in Western Australia* (Western Australian Planning Commission, 2007) and the United Kingdom's well-regarded *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment* (The Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013).

Visual impact assessments generally focus on two main types of visual effects (or impacts) as detailed further below:

- effect on the visual character
- effect on key viewpoints.

2.2 Assessment of effect on visual character

This the main changes to the visual character of the general area surrounding the Project, taking into account the magnitude of visual change and aspects such as the difference in scale of new structures, compatibility with the existing visual character, contrast in colour and materials, heritage considerations, vegetation loss and change to any views to landmarks or vistas.

2.3 Assessment of effect on key viewpoints

Two main factors are identified for each key viewpoint during the assessment process:

- the visual sensitivity (of the viewpoint)
- the magnitude of visual change.

Consideration of both of these factors is necessary to arrive at an overall level of effect or impact to the viewpoint, which is effectively the combination of visual sensitivity and magnitude of visual change.

The four steps in the visual impact assessment process on viewpoints are as follows:

Step 1: Identification of key viewpoints

Key viewpoints usually include those from locations such as public roads, parks, shopping areas, schools and residential areas. The key viewpoints for Croydon Station were identified via a site inspection to determine potential visibility of the Project from surrounding locations, with an emphasis on those with the highest 'visual sensitivity'.

Step 2: Determine visual sensitivity of key viewpoints

Visual sensitivity is related to the type of viewpoint (whether it is public, private, permanent or transient), the distance away and the number of viewers. Generally the closer the viewpoint, the more sensitive the viewpoint is to change. Viewpoints within 300m are generally considered to be 'close foreground' views and normally the most sensitive.

Taking into account the context of the site and the scale and type of the Project, for this assessment the following definitions have been used:

- Very high – a public viewpoint with a very high number of viewers (note that this category was not used in this assessment)
- High – a public viewpoint with a high number of viewers (e.g. The Strand and Meta Street)
- Moderate – a public viewpoint with a medium number of viewers (e.g. the lower end of the eastern side of Paisley Road)
- Low – a public viewpoint with low number of viewers (note that this category was not used in this assessment).

Step 3: Determine 'magnitude of visual change'

Once the level of visual sensitivity of the key viewpoints is determined, then the 'magnitude of visual change' needs to be described. Magnitude of visual change relates to aspects such as the difference in scale of new structures to the surrounding area, compatibility with the existing visual character, contrast in colour and materials and any vegetation loss.

- Very high – large change that overwhelms existing context
- High – large change that is substantially larger in scale and contrast
- Moderate – moderate change that is somewhat larger in scale and contrast
- Low – low change that is similar, or of less scale and contrast.

Step 4: Assess overall effect on key viewpoints

The relationship of 'visual sensitivity' and the 'magnitude of visual change' together determine the likely effect, or 'level of impact' on the existing key viewpoints, as shown in the matrix in **Table 2.1**.

It is to be noted that the table provides a general understanding of the level of impact, with further commentary then included to describe any predicted impacts. Where relevant the effect of time is also considered.

Table 2-1: Matrix of relationship between 'visual sensitivity' and 'magnitude of visual change'

Matrix illustrating relationship between 'visual sensitivity' and 'magnitude of visual change'					
Potential level		Magnitude of change			
		Very High	High	Moderate	Low or Insignificant
Visual sensitivity	Very High	Very high impact	High impact	High impact	Moderate impact
	High	High impact	High impact	Moderate impact	Low impact
	Moderate	Moderate impact	Moderate impact	Moderate impact	Low impact
	Low	Moderate impact	Low impact	Low impact	Low or insignificant impact

2.4 Project illustration

Photomontages

Photomontages have been prepared to illustrate the likely visual changes from a number of key viewpoints and are included in **Section 5.0**. These images focus on viewing the Project in its wider setting, at a pedestrian view-level, which is particularly relevant to visual impact assessment.

To achieve this, a 3D model of Croydon Station was developed using 3DStudioMax software and supplied 2D plans, elevations and sections. A survey plan prepared by Cardno Pty Ltd was then used as a reference and the 3D model was aligned to the survey model. Viewpoint locations were selected and photography was undertaken by Envisage Consulting. Photographs were supplied and corrected for distortion using specific camera and lens profiles in Adobe Photoshop and camera co-ordinates were then merged with the 3D model and virtual cameras were setup using these co-ordinates. Camera matching was then undertaken using reference points common to the 3D model and physical features in the photographs. The model was then rendered with the photograph and edits to foreground elements were made in photoshop.

2.5 Input to design process and final recommendations

The visual impact assessment process formed an integral part of the overall design development.

Initial feedback was given to Transport for NSW in terms of possible design considerations that could improve the visual outcome at the preliminary design stage. Additional comments were then made on a revised design, which again led to some further refinement. The assessment was undertaken on revised plans current at the time of this report.

This report has also made a number of additional recommendations that could be considered as part of the next more detailed design process.

3. Context of existing visual environment

3.1 General context of location

Croydon Station is at the heart of the local shopping area and surrounding suburb, forming a focal point that draws together the opposite sides of the railway corridor. The existing station is well-integrated into the urban fabric in terms of its pedestrian-like scale and the way it provides ready access to and from the main shopping street along The Strand.

In particular, the cottage-like, weatherboard station building at the corner of The Strand and Paisley Road enhances the look of the main street and fits seamlessly within it. It is to be noted, however, that this building was built in 1995 and is not of heritage significance.

Figure 3-1 is a photograph of the existing station building and **Figure 3-2** illustrates the visual context.



Figure 3-1: Existing booking office and The Strand Cafe

3.2 Land use

The area surrounding the station is the main shopping area of Croydon and under the *Burwood Local Environmental Plan (LEP) 2012* is zoned B1 Neighbourhood Centre. This zone extends along both sides of The Strand and over the railway along Meta Street to the opposite side around the intersection with Hennessy Street. The maximum building height possible within this zone is 10m. A 10m height limit effectively allows for buildings up to three storeys, with most buildings currently being two.

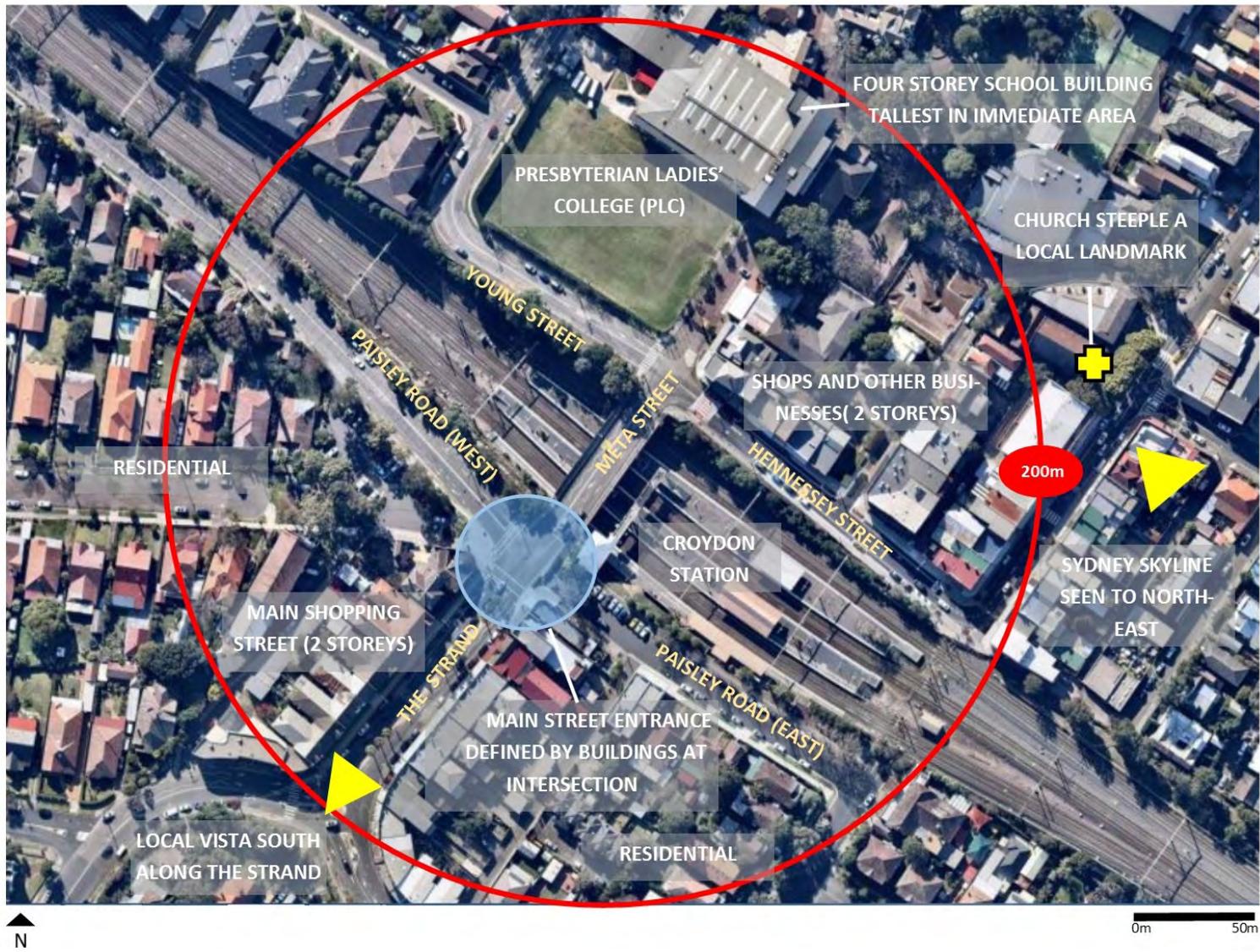


Figure 3-2: Visual context

The neighbourhood centre is ringed with an R1 Low Density Residential zone and is within the Malvern Hill Conservation Area.

Ashfield LEP 2013 applies to the area on the eastern side of Meta Street. Under this instrument the commercial area along Hennessy Street is a B2 Local Centre business zone (with a 10m height limit) and the residential area along Paisley Road east an R2 Low Density Residential zone (with an 8.5m height limit).

Therefore little change to the urban form and scale is planned for the foreseeable future in the area around the railway station.

3.3 Heritage

A Statement of Heritage Impact (SoHI) (AECOM) has been prepared for the Project and includes the statement of significance for the station from the State Heritage Register listing:

'Croydon Railway Station is historically significant as the existing station arrangement with extant railway structures dating from the 1892 quadruplication and 1927 sextuplication of the line is able to clearly illustrate the expansion of the railways in the late 19th and early 20th century undertaken to accommodate suburban development along the line and to the west. The extant 19th and 20th century platforms, buildings, footbridge and overbridge are collectively able to demonstrate a former era of travel.' (refer **Figure 3-3**).



Figure 3-3: Heritage buildings on station platforms

The design development has taken into account advice from the heritage consultants and seeks to minimise heritage impacts. The following is part of the report's main conclusion (note refer to report for a definition of the assessment 'criterion'):

'In summary, the demolition of the footbridge will result in impacts to the historical (criterion a), technical (criterion c), social (criterion d), research (criterion e) and rarity (criterion f) significance. The construction of the proposed footbridge and lifts will impact on the aesthetic (criterion c) significance, however, this has been minimised through sympathetic design and the selection of materials and finishes. The construction has the potential to have a positive impact on the social (criterion d) significance through increased access and the potential for interpretation of the station's history to be integrated into the upgrade. The temporary enabling works will have no long-term impacts on the assessed significance."

A Heritage Interpretation Strategy has also been prepared by Caldis Cook Group to identify opportunities to create informative and creative heritage interpretation through presentation of information and to integrate this into the new station design.

3.4 Vegetation

There are some patches of vegetation inside the railway corridor in the vicinity of Croydon Station, which generally include a mix of native species, exotics and weeds. In terms of visual concerns, this vegetation provides some landscape screening of the corridor.

There is also some vegetation on and around the main station and platforms such as planter boxes and a large Date Palm on Platform 1/2. There are also other trees in close proximity to the outside of the railway corridor that are relevant to this assessment, with the main ones being:

- an avenue of quite mature Plane Trees along the railway corridor side of Paisley Road east
- a mature Plane Tree and two large Bottlebrush Trees between the new station operations building and The Strand Café.

More detail on the biodiversity environment is provided in the Project's Ecological Impact Assessment (Biosis). A summary of the main changes to vegetation that is relevant to this visual impact component is provided in **Section 4.4**.

3.5 Visual environment

Visual impact assessments usually classify locations in terms of factors such as visual character (the main 'look' of the area) and visibility (how often and easily a site is seen).

3.5.1 Visual character

The dominant character of the surrounding area is urban and consists of a neighbourhood shopping centre that services the surrounding low density residential area. The buildings along the main street of The Strand, and those across the railway corridor around the intersection of Meta Street and Hennessy Street, are of low height and overall scale, with most two storeys. The Croydon Presbyterian Ladies' College (PLC) at the corner of Meta Street and Young Street

dominates the northern side of the railway bridge, with the four storey school the tallest nearby building, which is setback by a large sporting field.

The Strand shopping street has a distinct character that is formed from elements that include a central median of native Cabbage Tree Palms and two storey, small-scale retail shops and cafes along each side topped with flats. There is also a consistent presence of dark brick along the upper storey on both sides, with a series of pitched roofs along the western side emanating a cottage-like character. The northern end of The Strand, at the station site, has a strong visual character created by the combination of The Strand Café, heritage post office and existing station building.

On the northern side, along Hennessy Street, is a secondary commercial area that extends along the northern side of the street down to Edwin Street South, where another smaller shopping area runs perpendicular to the railway corridor. This area has an attractive streetscape and recent tree planting.

The effect of the Project on visual character is described in **Section 5.1**.

3.5.2 General visibility

The site of the Project has a relatively confined area of visibility due to a large part of it being confined within the railway corridor cutting and views generally only possible when in close proximity. The solid wall along the existing Meta Street road bridge, which will be retained, also blocks potential views of the Project.

The potential area of visibility includes the main shopping area along The Strand, the railway overbridge and Meta Street that runs over it, the front of PLC school, the commercial area along Hennessy Street and the railway station.

The key potential viewpoints to the proposed development are identified and assessed in detail in **Section 5.2**.

3.5.3 Landmarks and wider views

The upper station and rail overbridge are situated on a slight rise, with the landform falling away gently to the north and south. The topography allows for some views toward the main Sydney skyline, which can be seen at a distance to the north-east. The tall spire of St. Christophorus church is a local landmark on the northern side of the railway, along Edwin Street South, which can be seen from the upper part of The Strand near the existing station.

The Strand also creates a local view corridor that focuses views from the shopping area down to the south and a number of Federation-like houses with pitched roofs which terminate this vista.

4. Project description

This section describes the main components of the Project that have the potential for visual impact during establishment and operation. A Project plan of the general arrangement is shown in **Figure 4.1**, photomontages in **Section 5.2**.

4.1 Demolition

The following components of the existing station would be demolished:

- existing heritage footbridge including all existing and redundant columns on platforms 1 to 5 and stairs
- existing overhead station buildings at the intersection of Paisley Road and Meta Street including the booking office building and station entrance.

4.2 New station components

New station operations building

A new station operations building would be constructed at the corner of Meta Street and The Strand, in a similar location to the existing station building to be removed. At concourse level facilities would include a multi-purpose staff office, customer information window and a family accessible toilet for customers.

The building would have an outer façade of large tiles and a colourbond hipped roof. The main station entry would be located at the corner of the building. It would be approximately 1m higher than the existing station building and of a similar size.

Pedestrian bridge and concourse

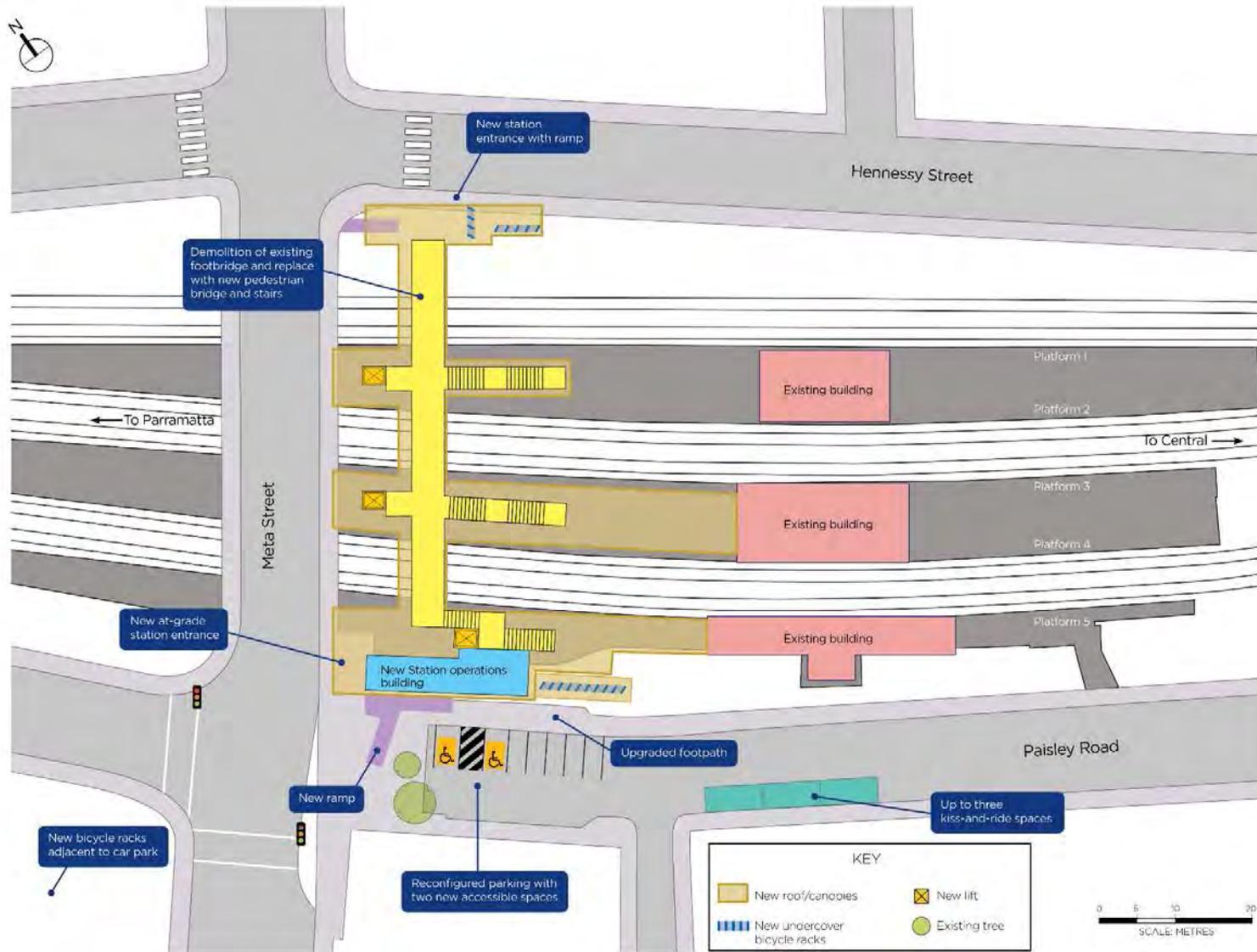
The new pedestrian bridge and concourse would span from Paisley Road to Hennessy Street and include a canopy and three lift shafts. A positive outcome of this component is that the lift shafts have been minimised in height and incorporated so that these do not protrude above the canopy.

The height of the lift shafts and concourse would be approximately 1.5m above the height of the sidewall of the Meta Street road bridge.

Platform stairs and platform canopies

Three new sets of stairs, covered with canopies, would provide access to the station platforms. Canopies would then extend onto platforms 3/4 and 5.

It is to be noted that as platform 1/2 is rarely used, new pedestrian canopies are not proposed along that platform. That also has a positive outcome of reducing visual bulk (and any associated heritage impacts).



4-1: Project plan of general arrangement

Figure

4.3 Car parking, pedestrian/cyclist facilities and landscape works

Changes include:

- reconfiguration of sections of Paisley Road to allow for two accessible parking spaces outside the station and up to three kiss and ride spaces on the southern side of Paisley Road, kerb realignments accessible footpath, ramps, undercover bicycle racks and landscaping
- reconfiguration to sections of Hennessy Street including accessible footpath, ramps, undercover bicycle racks and landscaping
- adjustment of all boundary fencing and pedestrian fencing
- wayfinding elements.

An Urban Design and Landscaping Plan would be prepared for the Project that would address landscaping at both station entrances.

4.4 Effect on existing vegetation

The main changes currently proposed to existing vegetation are as follows:

- removal of the patches of vegetation inside the railway corridor on the northern and southern edges of the railway corridor, on the main station side
- removal of the two most eastern Plane Trees along Paisley Road east
- branch lopping of other Plane Trees along Paisley Road east, to 3m high
- branch lopping of the mature Plane Tree near The Strand Café, and removal of the two nearby large Bottlebrush trees.

More detail on the biodiversity environment is provided in the Project's Biodiversity Report.

4.5 Temporary Construction works

The following temporary visual changes would occur during the construction phase, focussed around the lower end of Paisley road east:

- temporary pedestrian bridge and stairs including lighting
- temporary station entrance and access path
- temporary booking office fitted with equipment and staff facilities
- establishment of a project site office and construction machinery such as a crane.

4.6 Lighting

Lighting would be designed in accordance with relevant standards to be as minimal and unobtrusive as possible and directed away from any nearby receivers.

5. Visual impact assessment

5.1 Effect on existing visual character

The new station operations building is of a similar height, scale and dimension to the existing building which currently relates well to the main shopping street of Croydon. This similarity would allow the new building to continue as a compatible element of the established triangle of buildings with the historic Croydon Post Office and The Strand Café.

As is intended, there would be a more contemporary new station operations building and concourse to replace the existing structures, with the design visually delineating these from the heritage elements. Yet, the design has specifically focussed on retaining the key essence of the built character and the relationship of the station to the main street.

On the northern side, at the corner of Meta and Hennessy Streets, there would be a change to the existing character as the new concourse and entry opens up direct access to the station. Although the new built elements would be visually obvious, they would be of a scale compatible with the surrounding two-storey buildings along Hennessy Street.

It is acknowledged that the new station and concourse would represent a distinct change to this part of Croydon which would contrast somewhat with the existing character when it is first constructed. However, over time, as viewers become more familiar with the changes, it is suggested that it would become a more integrated and compatible part of the overall character and one appreciated as a modern public facility.

5.2 Effect on key viewpoints

The assessment describes the predicted changes in views that would occur during the life of the Project to particular viewpoints, following the methodology described previously, that is:

- identification of the visual sensitivity of each viewpoint
- an assessment of the likely magnitude of visual change
- an overall assessment of the potential visual impact.

The assessed viewpoints are identified in **Figure 5-1**.

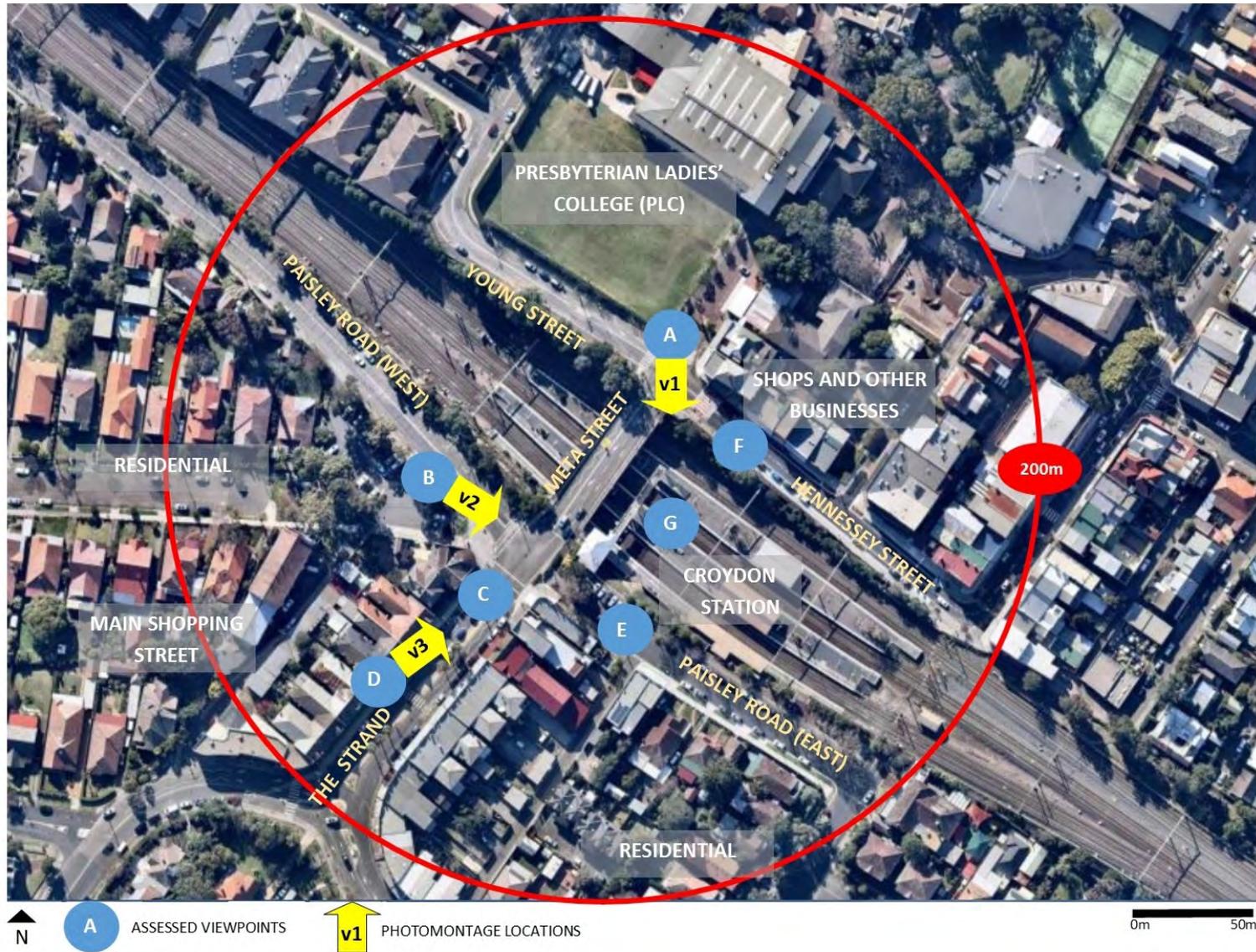


Figure 5-1: Key viewpoints and photomontage locations

5.2.1 Public viewpoint A: Corner of Meta Street and PLC

The existing view from this viewpoint is illustrated as **Figure 5.2**, and a photomontage showing the likely visual changes, is provided as **Figure 5-3**.

Visual sensitivity

This viewpoint is at the corner of Meta Street and Young Street, representing the view that would be possible from the existing retail and commercial area at this corner and the top of Hennessy Street. It incorporates views from PLC, those traversing from near the school to the railway station and travellers heading east along Young Street. Due to the high number of users the visual sensitivity of the viewpoint is high.

Magnitude of change

From this viewpoint there would be clear views of the northern entry point to the station, with the butterfly roof of the entry forecourt the most dominant element. The covered concourse would also be evident, with views seen along it when directly approaching the entry. In the distance would be the edge of the butterfly roof of the new station operations building on the opposite side of the railway corridor.

Magnitude of visual change: moderate.

Overall visual impact level

The magnitude of visual change ranking, combined with the visual sensitivity ranking of high, leads to a visual impact level to this viewpoint of moderate.

5.2.2 Public viewpoint B: Paisley Road (west)

The existing view from this viewpoint is illustrated as **Figure 5.4**, and a photomontage of that same view showing the likely visual changes, is provided as **Figure 5-5**.

Visual sensitivity

This viewpoint is along the western part of Paisley Road where viewers look east toward the existing booking office. The road has a lower use than the busier Meta Street and The Strand, yet use is still relatively high, giving a visual sensitivity of moderate.

Magnitude of change

Only part of the new station would be seen from this viewpoint as existing vegetation alongside the railway corridor, on the northern side of Paisley Road, would continue to block views to the north of the new main building. Even without this vegetation, the slope of Paisley Road away from Meta Street also means that views of most of the new concourse area would not be possible as the existing brick sides of the Meta Street road bridge would be in the foreground. Magnitude of visual change: moderate.



Figure 5-2: Viewpoint A - existing view



Figure 5-3: Viewpoint A - image showing likely visual changes (Photomontage V1)



Figure 5-4: Viewpoint B - existing view



Figure 5-5: Viewpoint B - image showing likely visual changes (Photomontage V2)

Overall visual impact level

The magnitude of visual change ranking, combined with the visual sensitivity ranking of moderate, leads to a visual impact level to this viewpoint of moderate.

5.2.3 Public viewpoint C: The Strand (upper)

Figure 5.6 illustrates the existing view.



Figure 5-6: Viewpoint C - existing view

Visual sensitivity

This viewpoint is from the upper section of Croydon's main street, The Strand, where there are clear and close views toward the station. Currently the existing station building is evident and an integral part of this view, marking the station entry and southern side of the railway corridor. The number of viewers from this viewpoint is high due to its main street location and station entry role, leading to a visual sensitivity of high.

Magnitude of change

From this viewpoint the existing station building would be replaced with a new building in a similar location, and of a similar height and scale. The new building would also have a pitched roof that would also closely reflect the existing roof. The most noticeable change would be the butterfly roof feature to denote the entry. It is considered appropriate that a feature such as this new roof is incorporated, as it would highlight the station as a community focus, yet in a way that does not overwhelm the existing setting.

When immediately to the south of the building, such as near The Strand Café, there would be no views of the new concourse canopy as it is at a lower height and would be concealed behind the building. This is seen as a positive outcome as the new station operations building would be the main feature rather than the concourse potentially detracting from it. When on the western side of The Strand, the upper part of the concourse canopy, and the three lift shafts, would be visible. Importantly the new structure would sit quite low, with

the lower portion blocked from view by the brick wall of the Meta Street road bridge.

Other changes relate to the removal of the two large Bottlebrush trees near the station building, and other elements such as a universal access ramp and new bicycle racks. It is planned that this area between the station entry and The Strand Café be landscaped to create an attractive setting, with new elements assumed to include new street trees, quality paving and seating.

Magnitude of visual change: moderate.

Overall visual impact level

The magnitude of visual change ranking, combined with the visual sensitivity ranking of high, leads to a visual impact level to this viewpoint of moderate.

5.2.4 Public viewpoint D: The Strand (mid to lower)

The existing view from this viewpoint is illustrated as **Figure 5.7**, and a photomontage showing the likely visual changes, is provided as **Figure 5-8**.

Visual sensitivity

From the lower part of The Strand there are views along the palm-lined main street in the direction of the station at the high end of the street. The view of the station is partially obscured by the palms and intervening buildings and awnings.

Due to the high number of viewers on the main street, yet a greater separation distance, the visual sensitivity of this viewpoint is moderate.

Magnitude of change

The new station main building and concourse would be on the far right of this view, and as currently occurs, a large part of the station area would be obscured by vegetation and structures. The scale and height of the closest area of change, that being the new main building, would not be particularly obvious from this viewpoint. Open views to the high end of the main street, and over the Meta Street road bridge, would remain.

The magnitude of visual change would be low.

Overall visual impact level

The magnitude of visual change ranking, combined with the visual sensitivity ranking of moderate, leads to a visual impact level to this viewpoint of low.



Figure 5-7: Viewpoint D - existing view



Figure 5-8: Viewpoint D - image showing likely visual changes (Photomontage V3)

5.2.5 Public viewpoint E: Paisley Road (eastern side)

Figure 5.9 illustrates the existing view.

Visual sensitivity

This viewpoint covers the views available from the lower section of Paisley Road east. This is a no-through road that runs from the intersection with Edwin Street south at its lower eastern end, up to meet the public space outside the station near The Strand Café. This road has a much lower usage than others directly surrounding Croydon Station. Potential viewers include vehicle users accessing the road and small car park outside the station, local residents of the street and pedestrians walking to and from the station. The visual sensitivity is low.



Figure 5-9: Viewpoint E - existing view east along Paisley Road east

Magnitude of change

There is an existing mesh fence along Paisley Road east that allows quite open views of Croydon Station for those using the pathway, particularly of the heritage building on Platform 5. There is also an avenue of relatively mature Plane Trees along the station side of the road which provide partial filtering of views of the station for users of the road and residents along the opposite side. These trees are deciduous so during the warmer months views of the station would be far less.

The new visual changes that would be seen would include the new station building at the top of the road, views of the new platform and stair canopies and view of the canopied concourse. These views would be partially filtered by the existing Plane Trees during the winter months, and largely blocked by the trees during the warmer months.

The screening the trees could provide also depends on the extent of proposed branch lopping and whether the two most eastern trees occurs as currently proposed. If these trees are removed there would be a loss of visual amenity at this end of the street and the views of the station and rail corridor

would be open to the nearest residents and street users. Recommendations to minimise impacts on the trees have been made in this report.

Magnitude of visual change: moderate.

Overall visual impact level

The magnitude of visual change ranking, combined with the visual sensitivity ranking of low, leads to a visual impact level to this viewpoint of low.

5.2.6 Public viewpoint F: Hennessy Street

Figure 5.10 illustrates the existing view from the corner of the lower end of Hennessy Street and Edwin Street South.

Visual sensitivity

This viewpoint covers the mid to lower part of Hennessy Street that includes the commercial and retail premises along the northern side. Hennessy Street has a relatively low usage compared to other surrounding streets and therefore the visual sensitivity has been assessed as moderate.



Figure 5-10: Viewpoint F - existing view from corner of Hennessy Street and Edwin Street South

Magnitude of change

There is currently substantial vegetation along the station edge of Hennessy Street, with this vegetation blocking most views of the station for users of the street. The vegetation is mostly shrubby, with some larger trees at the higher end. Most of this vegetation would be removed as part of the Project and thereby open up views of the new station.

Through the existing wire mesh fence there would be clear views of the new canopies over the platforms and new stairs, and the concourse and entry at the corner of Hennessy Street. From this viewpoint the new structures would dominate the view, particularly the horizontal concourse element. The exception would be at the lower end of Hennessy Street where an existing row of four Olive Trees would be retained that would continue to screen part of the station view.

Magnitude of visual change: low.

Overall visual impact level

The magnitude of visual change ranking, combined with the visual sensitivity ranking of low, leads to a visual impact level to this viewpoint of moderate.

5.2.7 Public viewpoint G – from station

Figure 5.11 illustrates the existing view of upper station from platforms.



Figure 5-11: Viewpoint G - existing view from platforms of footbridge and booking office

Visual sensitivity

There is a high usage of Croydon Station, and therefore the visual sensitivity of viewpoints within the station are considered to be high.

Magnitude of change

Regular users of the station would notice a substantial visual change yet one that is consistent with its use. Users would see the new entry buildings on approach, the new concourse, new lifts, stairs and platform canopies. Some users may also notice the removal of some vegetation along the rail corridor edge and some of the structures associated with the earlier footbridge and stairs. Travellers passing through the station on trains may also notice the main changes seen from the platforms.

Magnitude of visual change: moderate.

Overall visual impact level

The magnitude of visual change ranking, combined with the visual sensitivity ranking of high, leads to a visual impact level to this viewpoint of moderate.

5.3 Construction impacts

To allow for construction to occur, a temporary entry would be established at the lower end of Paisley Road east where a temporary ticketing office would

be accessed on Platform 5. The other two platforms would be linked via a temporary pedestrian bridge and two sets of stairs.

Users of the station, and those viewers passing and living close to it, would see various demolition and construction activities during the construction period depending on their viewpoints and the changes over time. The most visible locations would be around the new station building and at the corner of Meta and Hennessy Street, and views from the temporary station facilities back towards the new concourse. These changes would be temporary and therefore not have a long term visual impact.

5.4 Summary of visual impact to surrounding viewpoints

Table 5.1 summarises the likely visual impact level to surrounding viewpoints from where parts of the Project would be seen. Where appropriate further mitigation has been recommended to reduce visual impact and improve overall amenity, as described further in **Section 6.2**.

Table 5-1: Summary of visual impacts and recommended further mitigation

Assessed viewpoints	Approximate distance	Visual sensitivity	Magnitude of visual change	Overall visual impact	Recommended further mitigation
Viewpoint A: Corner of Meta Street and PLC	0 – 25m	high	moderate	moderate	There may be an opportunity to provide some landscape planting near the street corner to soften this area
Viewpoint B: Paisley Road (post office side)	0 - 50m	moderate	moderate	moderate	Ensure an attractive public space, that acknowledges both The Strand Café and station entrance and includes landscape improvements (paving, street trees, seating), is achieved
Viewpoint C: The Strand (upper)	0 - 20m	high	moderate	moderate	Ensure an attractive public space, that acknowledges both The Strand Café and station entrance and includes landscape improvements (paving, street trees, seating), is achieved
Viewpoint D: The Strand (mid to lower)	75 – 120m	moderate	low	low	None required
Viewpoint E: Paisley Road (eastern side)	10 -120m	low	moderate	low	Ensure minimal effect on existing trees. Proposed lopping of Plane Trees (branches below 3m) appears excessive and the proposed removal of two Plane Trees is particularly negative and alternatives should be further investigated
Viewpoint F: Hennessy Street	0-5m	moderate	low	low	None required
Viewpoint G: from station	0m	high	moderate	moderate	None required

6. Design outcome and further recommended measures

6.1 Positive visual attributes of Project

The Project incorporates a number of key measures designed to mitigate potential visual impacts. In particular, these measures respond to the existing height and scale of the main street and are intended to enhance the visual outcome:

- The new station operations building is of a similar height, scale and dimension to the existing building which currently relates well to the main street.
- The integration of the three lift shafts into the concourse canopy to prevent protrusions higher than the canopy and thus minimise the height above the existing wall of the Meta Street road bridge.
- The use of butterfly roof features at either side of the concourse to delineate the entrance, yet these structures have been designed to not overwhelm the surrounding scale and character.
- Design of the station stairway and platform canopies to be of a height as low as possible and be integrated into the concourse in a seamless way, whilst also reducing the canopy length on Platform 1/2 where it is not necessary.
- Retention of the heritage station buildings on each of the platforms, with those buildings contributing to the attractive and pedestrian-like scale of the station.

6.2 Recommendations to further improve visual outcome

As summarised in **Table 5-1**, a number of further mitigation measures are recommended to ensure the best possible visual outcome can be achieved, with these defined further below.

6.2.1 Area between new station operations building and The Strand Café

The existing public space in this location is attractive and contributes to the amenity and vitality of the street and station (refer **Figure 6-1**). The two large Bottlebrush trees are proposed to be removed, yet the large Plane Tree would be retained although some branch lopping is proposed to occur. It is recommended that the detailed design of this future area strive to reflect the current setting and character as far as possible, and include improvements like trees, seating and quality paving. It is also important that the planned addition of a universal access ramp be designed so that it does not substantially reduce the main area of public space.

There is also currently a low hedge along Meta Street which serves to visually separate the road edge from the pavement and station building, achieving a more aesthetic result than fencing alone. This type of measure should be considered in the future detailed design of this open space.

It may also be possible to increase the existing avenue of Plane Trees along Paisley Road east with new street trees planted near the new car parking at the upper end of the road.



Figure 6-1: Existing area outside The Strand Café and station

6.2.2 Northern station entry at corner of Meta Street and Hennessy Street

There may be an opportunity to provide some landscape planting and street furniture such as seating close to the entrance to increase the attractiveness and general amenity of this entry point.

It is also recommended that if possible that no additional pedestrian fencing occur along Hennessy Street. If such a barrier is required, then alternatives such as planting should be considered, or a combination of planting and low fencing. Any fencing should be of as simple a design as possible (e.g. fine palisade fencing with no decorative inserts) so as not to detract from the entry.

6.2.3 Trees on Paisley Road east

There is an avenue of mature Plane Trees along the railway corridor edge on Paisley Road on the eastern side. These trees currently provide a valuable natural screen to the railway for residential properties on the opposite side. These trees are deciduous, so screening increases during the warmer months when there are leaves on the trees.

Current proposals are to lop branches below 3m from all of the Plane Trees, apart from the two most eastern trees, which are proposed for removal. These works are intended to allow for construction activities, including the placement of a large crane. The impact to these trees is therefore for a temporary purpose, yet would have a long term effect.

It is suggested that the proposed branch lopping appears excessive, and that the proposed removal of two Plane Trees is particularly negative. It is therefore recommended that alternatives should be further investigated.

It is also recommended that where an existing space occurs in the avenue, toward the top of Paisley Road, that a new tree replace what appears to be a previously lost one (in consultation with Ashfield Council).

6.2.4 Edges along northern and southern sides of rail corridor

The edges along the northern and southern sides of the rail corridor currently consists of mesh fencing and varying amounts of vegetation, most of which appears to be self-established. This composition means that along both sides of the corridor there are places where quite open views over the station are possible, yet other places where this existing vegetation almost completely blocks views. Most of the existing vegetation is proposed to be removed, which in general could produce a positive outcome as the vegetation is dominated by weeds and shrubby - like vegetation.

However, it is suggested that this vegetation does have a valuable role in providing some landscape softening to the built environment of the corridor, and that it would be appropriate to establish new low shrub planting (up to 1.2 m high) that would enhance the street edge and create some green relief, yet whilst also being low enough to allow for views of the station so that a relatively open feeling is produced.

6.2.5 Building form and colours

It is recommended that a range of alternative potential building colours be trialled to establish the best possible design and relationship to the surrounding area. The currently proposed colours are quite light and dominated by light greys. The use of a greater area of darker recessive colours, such as darker greys on elements like the lift shafts, may create a more harmonious look against the adjacent dark bridge.

It may also be beneficial to make the proposed louvre features along the top of the lift shafts and the concourse less dominant. However, any changes to form or colours would need to be tested and also discussed with heritage specialists as to the most desired result in that regard.

6.2.6 Lighting

It has been assumed that lighting would be designed in accordance with relevant standards and be as minimal and unobtrusive as possible and directed away from any nearby receivers. It would be appropriate to consider some well-placed feature lighting around the entry points.

6.3 Construction phase

Mitigation measures during the construction period should include:

- installation of screen hoarding and/or shade cloth screens
- retention and protection of existing trees to be retained
- consultation with a qualified Arborist to minimise impact on the long term health of any affected trees
- avoidance of temporary light spill beyond the construction site where temporary lighting is required

- rehabilitation of disturbed areas
- removal of graffiti in accordance with TfNSW standard requirements.

6.4 Operation phase

Mitigation measures during ongoing operations should include:

- ongoing maintenance, repair and replacement of any damaged built elements
- long term maintenance of landscape planting and replacement of any failed plants.

7. References

Ashfield Council. *Ashfield Local Environmental Plan (LEP) 2013*.

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