

3 SIGNIFICANCE OF PLACE

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3.1 OVERVIEW

This section provides a discussion and analysis of the significance of place, which includes both a description of the visual significance of the bridge surrounds, Thompson square, river foreshore and landscape setting as required by the DGR's. It provides a broad overview of the built form and heritage, evolution over time, and the experience of place, and outlines key design considerations which need to be addressed within the context of this project.

3.2 THE STUDY AREA

The study area, as illustrated in Figure 3.1, is located to the north east of the Windsor town centre, incorporating the existing Windsor bridge river crossing and the approach roads on both sides of the river.

The study area can be broadly divided into three distinct precincts, as illustrated in Figure 3.2:

- The area incorporating Thompson Square and the built environment immediately surrounding it including George Street, Bridge Street, Old Bridge Street and The Terrace.
- The Hawkesbury River including Windsor bridge and the riverbanks on the northern and southern embankments
- The northern intersection of Wilberforce Road and Freemans Reach Road and the entry road to Macquarie Park.

The following sections describe the unique characteristics of the study area and provides a details analysis of its key attributes.

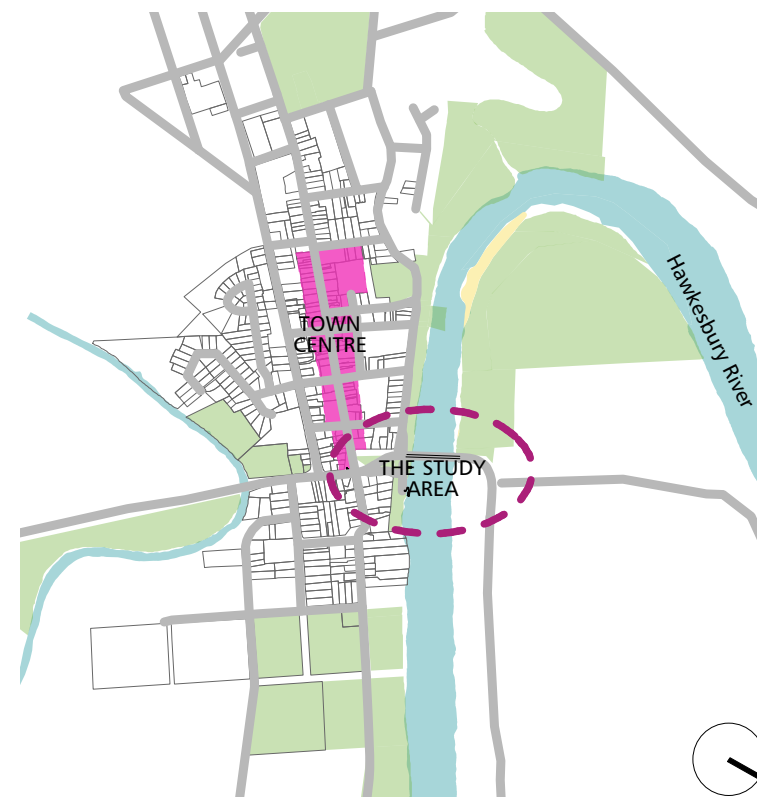


Figure 3.1: The study area in the context of Windsor town centre.

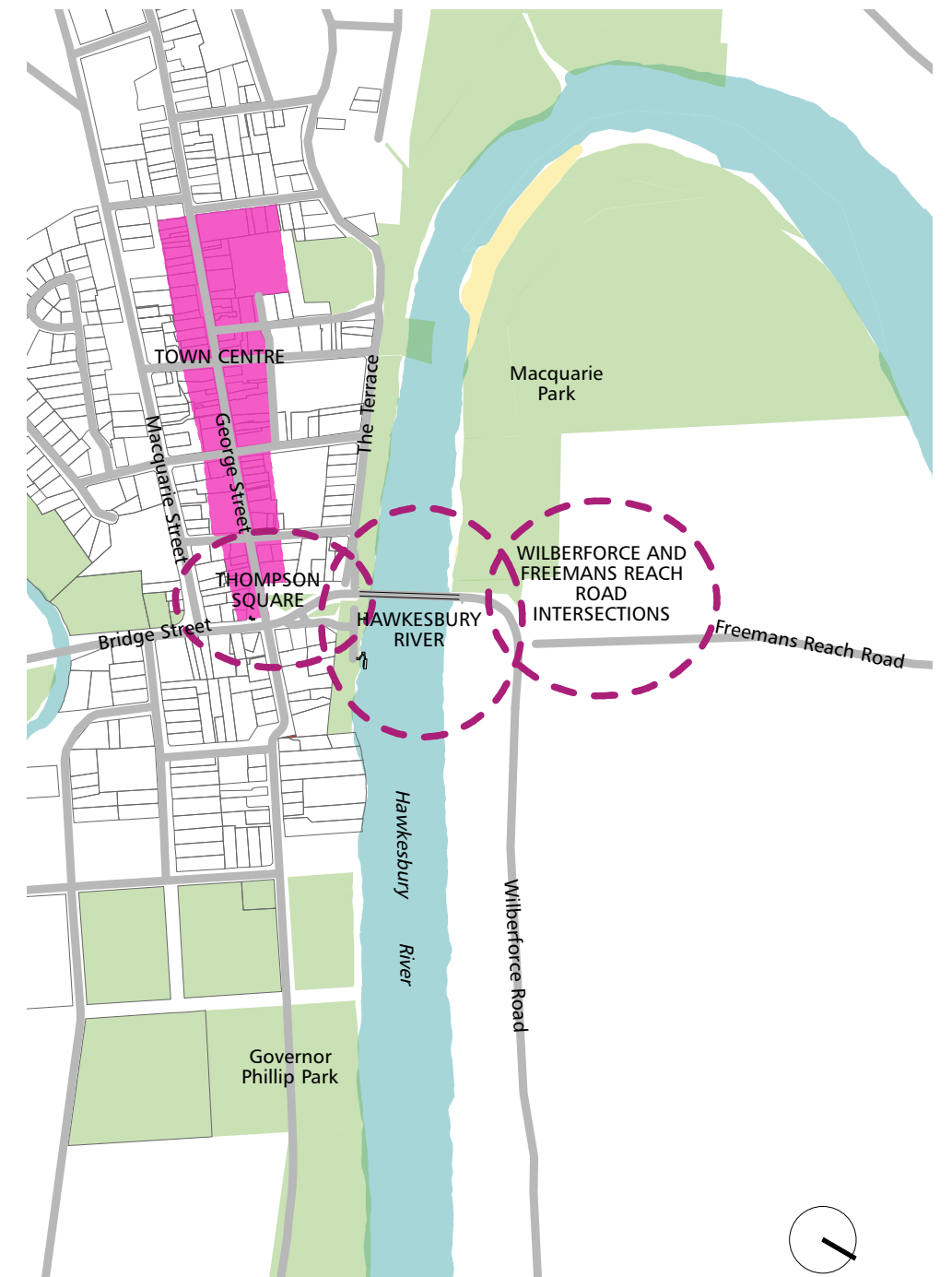


Figure 3.2: The study area comprises three distinct zones.

3.3 BUILT FORM AND HERITAGE

BUILT FORM AND HERITAGE

The built form of Windsor is substantially governed by the grid pattern laid out by Governor Macquarie in 1810. The area around Thompson Square conforms to this rectangular pattern. It comprises a series of single and two storey colonial buildings set around three sides of the rectangular open space.

These recently restored buildings provide not only a physical edge and a sense of containment of the space but also establish a powerful and unified heritage quality which defines the character of the space. The buildings and their curtilages combine with the open space of Thompson Square to form the Thompson Square Conservation Area. (Refer to Figure 3.3).

The open space area of Thompson Square is generally defined by private property boundaries to the south, east and west and the Hawkesbury River to the north. George Street, Thompson Square road, Bridge Street, Old Bridge Street exist within the area that defines Thompson Square.

Bridge Street, crosses the square diagonally from east to west, providing the current access to the Windsor bridge. Bridge Street which forms part of the arterial road connecting Parramatta to Singleton, is set into a deep cutting as it travels through the centre of Thompson Square, creating a strong physical division within the square. This division creates a distinct upper open space area associated with George Street and a lower open space area associated with The Terrace and the river foreshore.

Within the remaining spaces of Thompson Square are a series of landscaped areas ranging from substantial areas of attractive parkland to small grassed islands adjacent to roadways and property boundaries. A range of mature trees occupy these landscaped areas creating a strong verdant character to the area. Some of these trees may form part of the historical plantings within the square, dating back to the early 1900s, however many are more recent plantings and some are seedlings that have naturally regenerated in the available spaces. Whilst the square contains a range of park elements including picnic facilities, fencing and a memorial, there is a very informal and unstructured form to the parkland areas which reflects a history of unplanned uses for these areas, borne out of the primary need to accommodate road access between the town and the river.

Beyond Thompson Square, the Windsor bridge provides the physical link to the northern foreshore. Constructed in 1874, the bridge is another heritage item in this historic town. It provides both vehicular and pedestrian crossing facilities, although both are narrow by today's standards and restrict the safe and efficient movement of vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians. The bridge deck is aligned to match the height of the river bank on the southern foreshore and lands in a deep cutting on the northern foreshore which visually integrates the bridge into the River setting. This low alignment however typically subjects the bridge to a 1 in 2 year flood event.

The northern foreshore contrasts with the southern side of the river being more rural in character. It comprises a number of turf farms with associated buildings and infrastructure. The single storey residence, 'Bridgeview', adjacent to the intersection of Wilberforce and Freemans Reach Roads, is also classified as a heritage item of the area. Macquarie Park to the south of the intersection of Wilberforce and Freemans Reach Roads is a large and popular recreational area for Windsor and the surrounding area. As well as having a restaurant and a number of other recreation facilities, it is one of the few locations in the area where people can access the river at a large sandy beach.

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

The protection of the significant heritage values of Thompson Square is a fundamental element to be considered in all design decisions. The opportunity exists to rationalise the extent of roadways in the square to reduce the amount of paved surfaces and increase the amount of green space.

Another key opportunity is to re-establish the physical and visual connections between the town and the river foreshore by creating a continuous green open space between George Street and The Terrace. The creation of safer and more accessible access across Bridge and George streets for pedestrians is an important consideration.

The potential for an improved open space area within Thompson Square could provide improved amenity for users of the area and potential increase the range and frequency of use. These opportunities must be considered within the context of the significant heritage value of the square and adjoining areas, and where possible, seek to interpret the history of the area in appropriate ways.



Plate 3.1: The Doctor's House.



Plate 3.2: Howes House.



Plate 3.3: Heritage buildings on George Street, from left, former Moses Bakery & Hawkesbury Stores, former Hawkesbury Motor Garage, and AC Stern Building.



Plate 3.4: Thompson Square looking south towards George Street and the intersection of Bridge Street and George Street.



Figure 3.3: Heritage values and built form of the study area.



Plate 3.5: Windsor bridge.



Plate 3.6: Bridgeview.

LEGEND

- THOMPSON SQUARE CONSERVATION AREA
- 1 HERITAGE ITEMS:
- 2 Thompson Square
- 3 Windsor Bridge
- 4 The Doctors House
- 5 Howes House
- 6 Macquarie Arms Hotel
- 7 AC Stern Building
- 8 Former Hawkesbury Motor Garage
- 9 Former Moses Bakery & Hawkesbury Stores
- 10 School of Arts
- 11 No. 10 Bridge Street
- 12 Original Windsor Wharf
- 13 Bridgeview

3.4 EVOLUTION OVER TIME

EVOLUTION OF THOMPSON SQUARE

Thompson Square was dedicated by Governor Macquarie in 1811 in memory of Andrew Thompson, whom had been appointed as Magistrate of Green Hills in 1796. Thompson's one acre lease was immediately adjacent the northeast side of Thompson Square, and is identified in the Meehan plan of the early 1800's. Refer to Figure 3.4.

Figure 3.5 illustrates the Plan of Windsor about 1827, the Macquarie Arms Hotel (1) was built, and still defines the corner of Thompson's Square today.

The School building (2) and the Commissariat Stores (3) buildings appear to be responsible for the flared geometry at the intersection of George Street and Bridge Street on the Armstrong Plan of 1842. This plan also shows the old inn that occupied the site of the Doctor's house (4).

The 1894 plan illustrated in Figure 3.8 shows the resumption of the foreshore for the creation of The Terrace, and the final allotment of the Doctor's House, the fine colonial sentinel building that defines the north western corner of the square on its elevated terrace. It also shows the formalisation of the allotments on the Bridge Street side, which finally enclosed the square.

Throughout time, Thompson Square has had thoroughfares in various configuration that cut through its curtilage throughout time. A sinuous route that allowed drays to move up the hill from the punt is visible in the 1842 plan. A diagonal route that allowed for access to the wharf and bridge from Thompson Square road is visible in the 1894 plan including an area of land resumed from No. 4 Bridge Street to facilitate turning, and the opposite diagonal route from Bridge Street to the existing Windsor bridge, is of course visible today.

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Future works in Thompson Square open space should seek to develop the character of Thompson Square as a unified civic square for recreation, defined by streets and buildings on its three built edges.



Figure 3.4: Meehan Plan of Windsor - Early 1800's.



Figure 3.7: Armstrong Plan of Windsor - 1842.

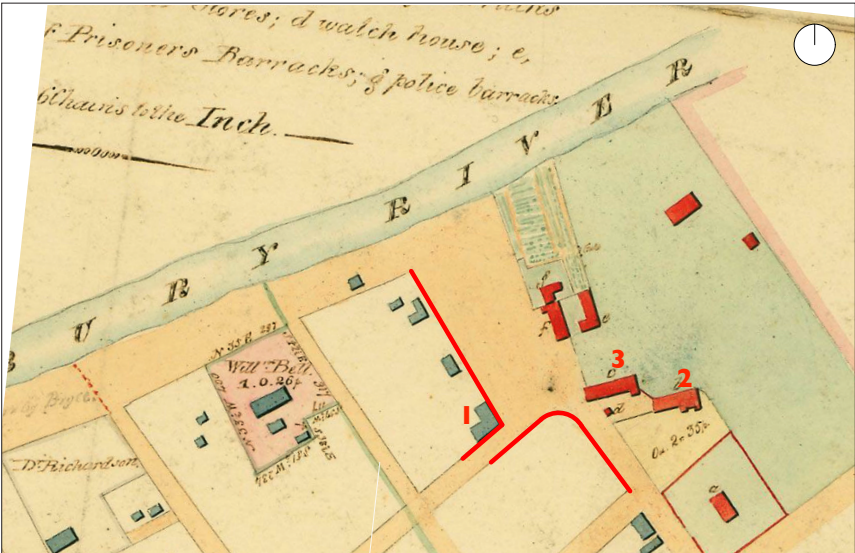


Figure 3.5: Plan of Windsor - About 1827.



Figure 3.8: Plan of Windsor - 1894.



Figure 3.6: Abbott Plan of Windsor - 1831.



Figure 3.9: Aerial photograph of Windsor - 2012.

EVOLUTION OF STREETS THROUGH THOMPSON SQUARE

Throughout its history Thompson Square has had a series of roads and street reservations in varying configurations that have provided access to the riverfront punt, ferry and wharves over time. The streets have served as the address for properties.

The drawings on the right show the approximate position of tracks and streets as they have evolved over time, based upon the historic maps on the previous page.

In 1842 a sinuous path crossed Thompson Square to form the gentlest grade possible for access to the punt.

By 1894 street reserves had been formalised along both sides of the Thompson Square open space - to the west forming Thompson Square road and to the east forming Bridge Street. The topography prevented direct access to the water along Thompson Square road, so a diagonal track was still required to provide a gentle grade to the new wharf and bridge positions.

Today, Thompson Square road is connected to the foreshore by a split road profile on The Terrace. A diagonal path cuts Thompson Square open space in two to provide access to the bridge. The wharf is accessed via Bridge Street, as The Terrace is not continuous.

EVOLUTION OF THE TERRACE AND RIVER PARK

The reservation of land on the waterfront for public uses began in 1875, when a portion of land along the riverfront at the base of Cable and Baker Streets was dedicated for public recreation uses in 1875, and proclaimed as a river park in 1887. (See adjacent plan from 1894 showing these reservations along the river foreshore).

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Currently The Terrace and Windsor Wharf Reserve remain disconnected by the access road to the bridge.

Proposed works should look for opportunities to allow the parkland and The Terrace to be continuous and more strongly defined. Opportunities should be made to unify Windsor's river frontage and connect important parks and spaces including Thompson Square.

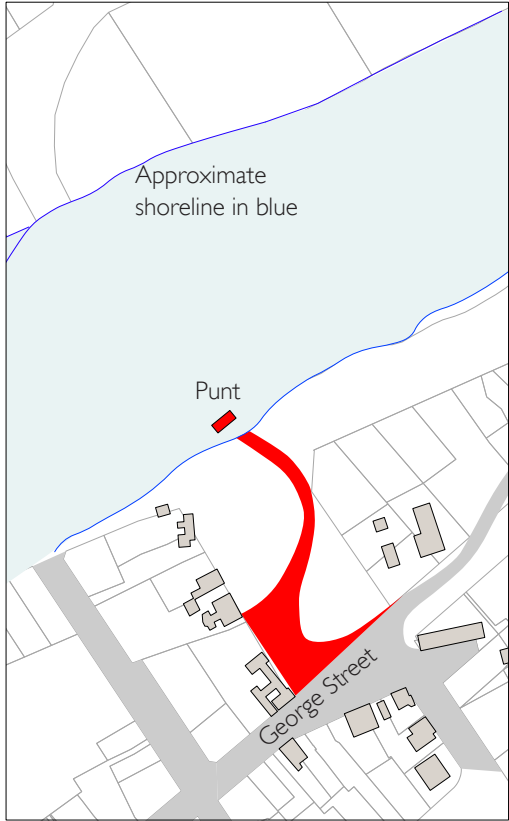


Figure 3.10: Approximate configuration of tracks based upon 1842 plan.

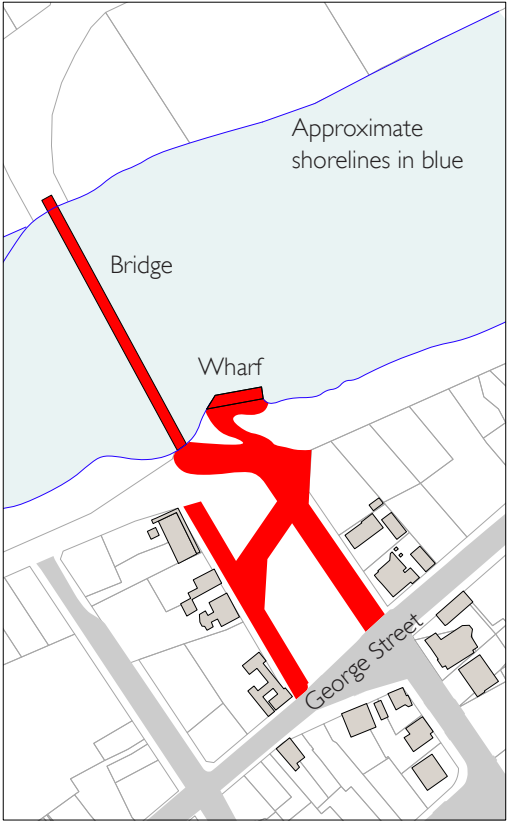


Figure 3.11: Approximate configuration of tracks based upon 1894 plan.

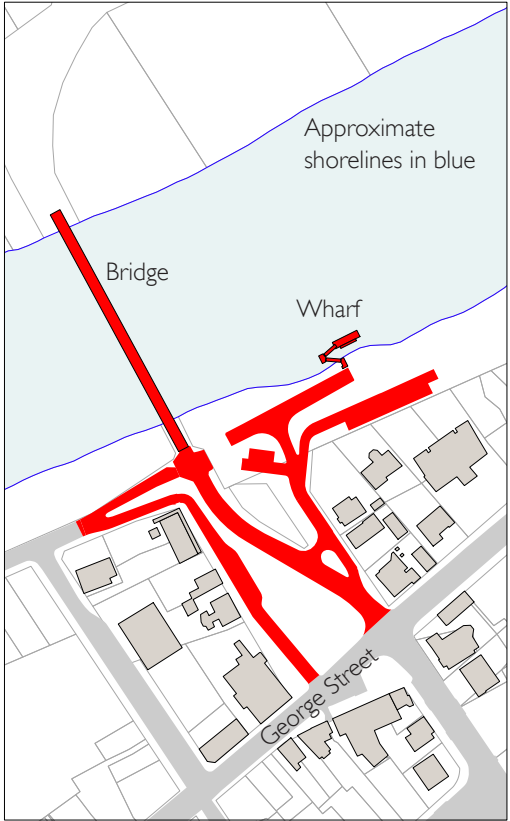


Figure 3.12: Alignment of streets today (2012).



Plate 3.7: Photograph of Windsor c1888 showing Bridge Street extending to water on curved alignment, and The Terrace not yet formalised.

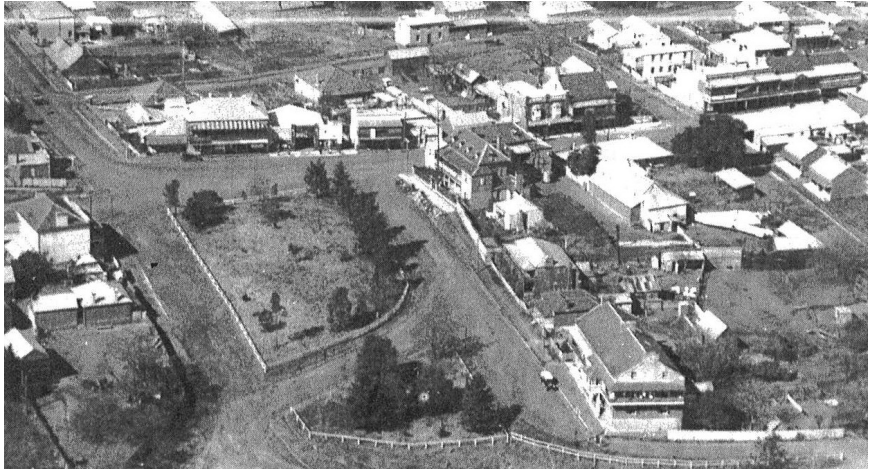


Plate 3.8: Photograph of Windsor c1929 showing the diagonal path across Thompson Square.