

4.3 Balmain Neighbourhood

4.3.1 Aboriginal Cultural Heritage

Balmain is located on the traditional lands of the Wangal. Wangal lands extend approximately from the south side of Darling Harbour, around the Balmain Peninsula including Memel (Goat Island), reaching from Iron Cove toward Parramatta in the west, with the Parramatta River lying where the northern boundary approximately falls.

Wangal Country in Balmain consists of rugged sandstone *headlands*, steep foreshores surrounded by several bays that enriched this part of Country. This Country is surrounded by saltwater. The topography in Balmain East is undulating to rolling rises and low hills on Hawkesbury Sandstone, a ridgeline going west to east divides the suburb in two, this ridgeline is the highest point of the area. The original ecological communities present in Balmain East are Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest in the higher parts, and in the other sections Sydney Coastal Sandstone Foreshores Forest. This Country has been cared for by thousands of generations of Wangal who utilise the saltwater landscape seasonally to collect *fish*, oysters, and cockles which have left behind the middens in the area.

Today Balmain is still remembered as an important place of fishing. The traditional name Baludarri means Leather Jacket *Fish*. The saltwater area remains an important place to establish and continue connections to Country. In the 2021 Census, the Australian Bureau of Statistics published that 0.8% of the population of Balmain identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

4.3.2 Existing Character

Two main forces have been instrumental in the development of Balmain: its geography and its industrial history. The rugged topography has largely determined the street and lot patterns, and the siting of *buildings*, related to slope and prospect. The deep-water edge provided both the opportunity for water transport and water-based *industry* that was the mainstay of the economy until recent times, and the environmental advantages of views and climate make it an attractive residential location. The area's proximity to the city gave it locational advantage in the early days, with water access, and centrality in the modern city. Balmain's development began early in the life of Sydney, and has grown steadily and incrementally, hence its diversity reflects the many phases of its development.

Its low-rise, medium-density urban form blends historic terraces with repurposed industrial sites, while narrow, walkable streets and excellent public transport foster connectivity. Planning priorities focus on heritage conservation, sustainable development, and integrating green spaces with public waterfront access, creating a lively, village-like atmosphere within an urban setting. The entire suburb is contained within a *Heritage Conservation Area*.

4.3.3 Desired Future Character

The *Desired Future Character* of Balmain relies on the successful integration of its heritage streetscapes with its evolution as a dense and vibrant harbourside suburb. Prioritising a people centred, village heart that supports a safe, pedestrian-friendly environment, a diverse *night-time economy*, and an "eat street" culture is key to local cultural identity.

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New development is to respect the established scale while complementing core character elements through sympathetic design. Maintenance of canopy trees, high amenity open space and green infrastructure is essential as increased density is realised at the southern interface with the Bays West Precinct and Glebe Island.

Objectives

- O1. To maintain and enhance the character of each *heritage conservation area*, while allowing redevelopment that is complementary to the existing heritage streetscape, character, and scale of the *neighbourhood*.
- O2. To retain and strengthen the distinctive canopy of high trees, particularly eucalypts, as a backdrop that significantly enhances *neighbourhood* character and streetscape amenity.
- O3. To support the Balmain Special Entertainment Precinct in fostering creative and cultural industries that rely on the *night-time economy*, including entertainment and live music.
- O4. To encourage varied uses of Loyalty Square that promote social and economic activity in the village centre, while remaining sensitive to its memorial nature.
- O5. To preserve and enhance pedestrian links along Darling Street.
- O6. To preserve and promote the establishment of trees in front gardens to strengthen green character and amenity.

Controls

- C1. Development, including land uses and urban design, is to enhance and achieve the *desired future character* of the *neighbourhood* while retaining elements that contribute to that character and meeting all relevant DCP requirements.
- C2. New commercial development along Darling Street shall maintain a sympathetic connection with the 1800s/early 1900s commercial streetscape. Contemporary *buildings* are not to mimic the traditional architecture but are to retain complementary scale and materials.
- C3. Shopfronts for contemporary *buildings* are to maintain the traditional rhythm and scale of the street, preserving the proportions and openings of the established streetscape.
- C4. Conserve the remaining maritime service industries around the Mort Bay shoreline.
- C5. Maintain dense native tree cover on public and private land. Replacement trees are to be native species, of a size and canopy suitable to maintain the amenity of the area.
- C6. Maintain differentiation between front *setbacks* in residential and commercial uses to permit *landscaping* in residential areas.
- C7. Design development visible from the water to protect and enhance the conservation values of the area when viewed from the water. Include visual details of the proposal from the water with development applications to demonstrate compliance.

4.3.4 Site specific precincts

Site specific controls apply to the precincts identified in the following list and Figure 4.3.1 below.

- The Valley (Balmain) Precinct apply to the land marked 'A'
- Gladstone Park Precinct apply to the land marked 'B'
- Jane Street Precinct apply to the land marked 'C'

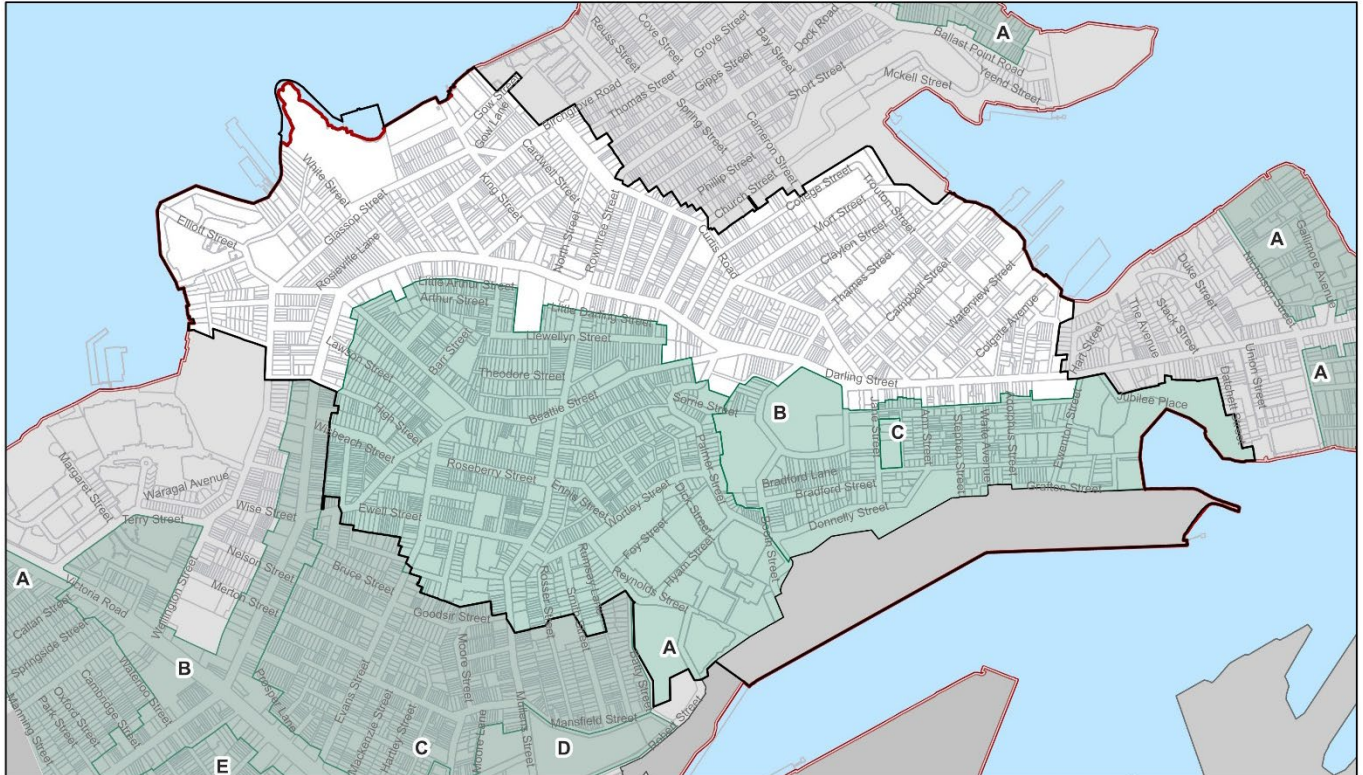


Figure 4.3.1. Balmain *Neighbourhood* – Site specific areas

4.3.4 (A) The Valley (Balmain) Precinct

Objectives

07. To ensure development respects the historic patterns in terms of topography, scale, character, siting, materials, and the landscape of the precinct.
08. To preserve significant view lines within the precinct.

Controls

- C8. Maintain the diversity of housing styles that define the area's character, including modest timber cottages and Victorian terraces.
- C9. Retain established scales and built forms as established on each street.
- C10. Design roof forms to maintain view lines for adjoining properties.
- C11. Use traditional materials and finishes—timber, stone, masonry, corrugated iron roofing, and timber windows—wherever possible.

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- C12. Reuse any sandstone removed during redevelopment or additions within new structures on the site.
- C13. Encourage reconstruction or restoration of original hanging or posted balconies/verandahs where evidence exists.
- C14. Do not support laneway development unless the applicant clearly demonstrates that it is suitable for the site and surrounding context.
- C15. High walls and *garages* that intrude on *neighbourhood* character are not supported.

4.3.4 (B) Gladstone Park Precinct

Objectives

- O9. To ensure that development is consistent with the character of the precinct.
- O10. To preserve significant view lines within the precinct

Controls

- O11. Retain visual access from the *public domain* for all structures built before 1860.
- O12. Step *buildings* with the prevailing topography to preserve view lines to the south and east.
- O13. Design roofs to follow the natural slope of the land and match the roof styles common in the street. Avoid challenging major skyline elements such as St Augustine's at Gladstone Park and Ewenton House at Jubilee Bay/Camerons Cove.
- O14. Maintain established street *setbacks*. Where no established *setback* exists, provide front *setbacks* generally between 0m–2m, except where context requires a deeper *setback*. A zero *setback* is generally appropriate for narrow streets such as Gladstone and Ann Streets.
- O15. Keep consistency and simplicity in built form, style, and materials across the *neighbourhood*.
- O16. Use walls and roof materials suited to the context—generally cut stone, rendered or bagged masonry, painted timber walls, and custom orb, slate, or unglazed terra cotta roofs.
- O17. Construct verandahs and balconies in timber, metal, or a mix of both; do not include masonry elements.
- O18. Use fencing and balustrading in simple vertical metal or timber picket styles without ornamentation.

4.3.4 (C) Jane Street Precinct

Objectives

- O19. To protect and enhance the historic townscape of this precinct particularly with respect to the views from the east and south, to the focal point of St Augustines.

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- O20. To ensure development respects the historic patterns in terms of topography, scale, character, siting, materials, and the landscape of the precinct.
- O21. To encourage restoration and conservation of the historic fabric of the former Convent, with any new development being complementary.
- O22. To conserve the shared landscape of mature trees.

Controls

- C16. Development is to be consistent with the objectives and controls for Gladstone Park Precinct as listed in part 4.3.4(B) of this DCP.
- C17. Incorporate an Interpretation Plan to convey the site's *heritage significance*, including a plaque or artwork on the Jane Street frontage explaining the history of the Church *buildings*.
- C18. Ensure modern *buildings* are complementary in design and detail, using recessive tones and colours. Do not use stone for the main wall claddings of any new *buildings*.
- C19. Maintain key views of the Balmain townscape focused on St Augustine's tower from the city, *waterways*, and eastern and southern bridge approaches.
- C20. Protect and enhance views south down Jane Street and east to the city skyline, ensuring the skyline remains visible above the Brush Box tree line.
- C21. Design development fronting Jane Street as single-storey, stepping with the slope, and using detached or *semi-detached* forms with a rhythm of roofs, hips, or frontal gables. Align *buildings* closely to the frontage, stepping back only where tree *curtilage* is required.
- C22. Use a two-storey terrace form in Vincent Street, aligning *buildings* closely to the frontage except where substantial trees require adjustment.
- C23. Design development fronting Fawcett Street to:
 - a) Retain the neutrality of Fawcett Street/lane as a one-sided street with a walled and treed edge opposite
 - b) Retain the stepped stone wall along the Fawcett Street frontage
 - c) Reinforce the wall by continuing a higher wall to Vincent Street in matching common brick
 - d) Maintain low-scale terracing with the slope through a stepped form, with a two-storey maximum, upper floors stepped back, and flat or low rooflines
 - e) Design any *garage* entry from Fawcett Street as a single, flush door with recessive treatment

4.3.5 Heritage

This section contains objectives and controls that apply to the *Heritage Conservation Areas* listed below and shown in Figure 4.3.2

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- Iron Cove *Heritage Conservation Area* apply to the land listed as C26
- The Valley *Heritage Conservation Area* apply to the land listed as C27
- Waterview Estate *Heritage Conservation Area* apply to the land listed as C28
- Town of Waterview *Heritage Conservation Area* apply to the land listed as C31

The objectives and controls for the following *Heritage Conservation Areas* can be found elsewhere in this DCP:

- Iron Cove HCA (C26) – Part 4.19 – Rozelle *Neighbourhood*
- East Balmain HCA (C29) – Part 4.4 – Balmain East *Neighbourhood*

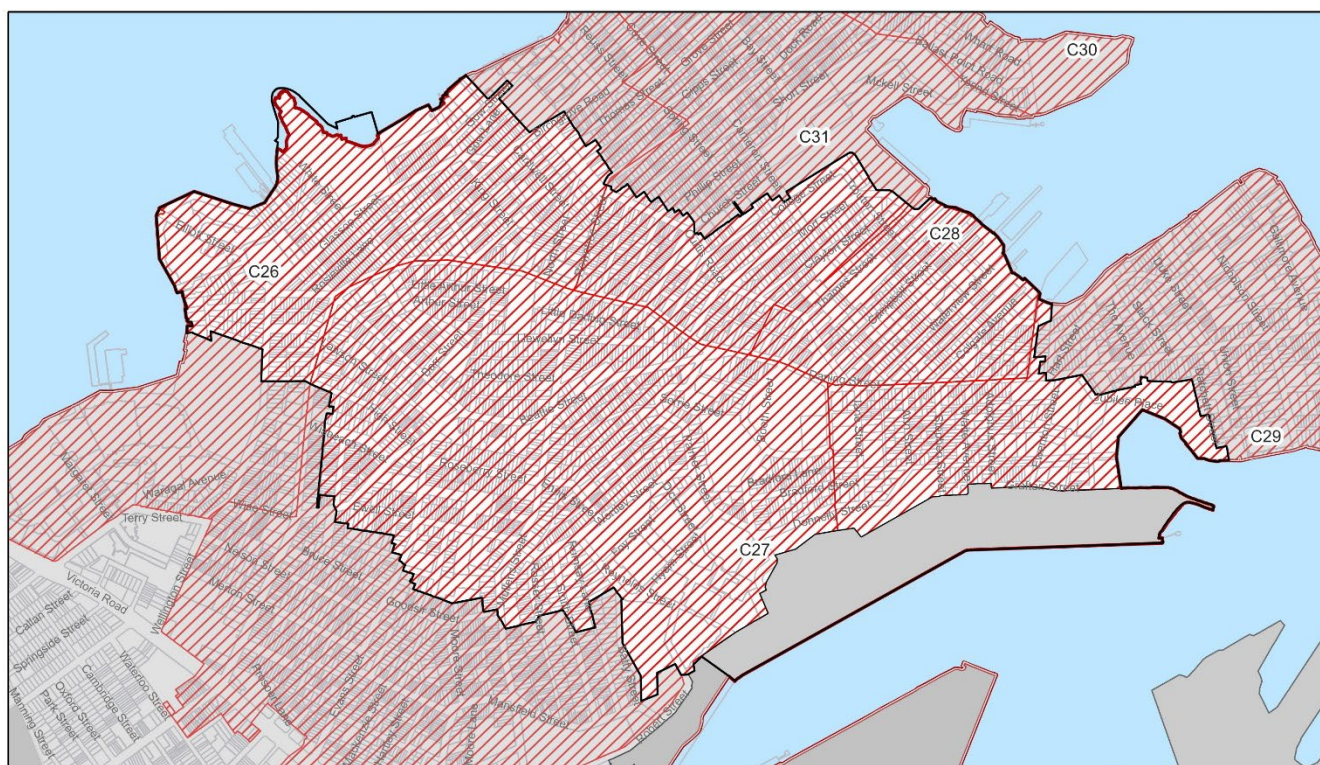


Figure 4.3.2. Balmain *Neighbourhood* – *Heritage Conservation Areas*

4.3.5 (C27) The Valley Heritage Conservation Area

The Valley is one of several HCAs that collectively illustrate the character of Sydney's early suburbs and suburban growth, particularly between 1871 and 1891, with some infill development up to the late 1930s (prior to World War II). It is important for demonstrating workers' and artisan housing from 1871–1891, which forms the major element of its identity, and for retaining evidence of all layers of growth within that period.

Key Features:

- Surviving development from the late 1870s through to pre-1939
- Important collection of weatherboard *buildings*, including rare timber terraces, reflecting the use of timber as a major construction material and proximity to Booth's sawmill and *timber yards* in White Bay.

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- Mixture of *shops, pubs*, and industrial *buildings* demonstrating the close physical relationship between *industry* and housing in Victorian suburbs before urban reform and land-use separation
- Irregular subdivision pattern illustrating the small-scale nature of speculative builders
- Evidence of private subdivisions prior to the Width of Streets and Lanes Act 1881, which required *roads* to be at least one chain wide

Objectives

O23. To facilitate development that maintains and enhances the existing *neighbourhood* character, ensuring alignment with the Statement of Significance for the Valley *Heritage Conservation Area*.

Controls

Note: These controls apply in addition to the general heritage provisions in Section 2.12 of this DCP. Applicants are to address both the general heritage controls and the locality-specific controls below.

C24. Retain the following elements of particular importance to The Valley HCA:

- a) Pre-1939 timber *buildings*
- a) Uninterrupted sandstone kerbs and gutters
- b) Corner stores, *pubs*, and industrial *buildings* within residential areas
- c) Original plaster finishes and unplastered face brick walls

4.3.5 (C28) Waterview Estate Heritage Conservation Area

The Waterview Estate *Heritage Conservation Area* is one of several that collectively illustrate the nature of Sydney's early suburbs and suburban growth, particularly between 1871 and 1891, with pockets of infill up to the late 1930s (prior to World War II). It is significant for its layered development, from pre-suburban marine villas of the 1850s–60s to small-scale workers' housing from the 1870s through to the late 1930s.

Key Features:

- Evidence of layered development from marine villas (1850s–60s) to workers' housing (1870s–1930s)
- Demonstrates the close physical relationship between *industry* and housing (both middle-class and workers' housing) in nineteenth-century cities
- Illustrates private subdivision patterns prior to the Width of Streets and Lanes Act 1881, which required *roads* to be at least one chain wide

Objectives

O24. To facilitate development that maintains and enhances the existing *neighbourhood* character, ensuring alignment with the Statement of Significance for the Waterview Estate *Heritage Conservation Area*.

Controls

Note: These controls apply in addition to the general heritage provisions in Section 2.12 of this DCP. Applicants are to address both the general heritage controls and the locality-specific controls below.

C25. Retain the following elements of particular importance to The Waterview Estate HCA:

- a) Pre-1939 timber and stone *buildings*
- b) Maritime and industrial *buildings* significant to the area's history
- c) Original plaster finishes on external walls (generally pre-1890s *buildings*)
- d) Original unplastered face brick walls
- e) Narrow streets
- f) Continuous sandstone kerbs and gutters

4.3.5 (C31) Town of Waterview Heritage Conservation Area

The Town of Waterview *Heritage Conservation Area* is one of several that collectively illustrate the nature of Sydney's early suburbs and suburban growth, particularly between 1871 and 1891, with pockets of infill up to the late 1930s (prior to World War II). Through its intact street layout, allotment shapes, houses, corner *shops*, and *pubs*, the area demonstrates a remarkably intact example of early workers' housing from the 1850s to 1890s, with later infill development prior to World War II. It is significant for its surviving development and strong historical associations with *industry* and labour movements.

Key Features:

- Intact street layout and allotment patterns reflecting early subdivision and workers' housing, incorporating evidence of Surveyor Reuss's subdivision design.
- Density of *pubs* (and former *pubs*) associated with the growth of the urban labour movement, including examples of national *heritage significance* linked to union history (e.g., Ships Painters and Dockers Union).
- Housing that illustrates the role of Morts Dock as a magnet for workers, together with links to Thomas Mort's provision of 'appropriate' housing for employees, comparable to Bodalla Village on the NSW South Coast.
- Rendered and painted brickwork typical of Sydney construction before the widespread use of hard-pressed face bricks.
- Associations with prominent local entrepreneurs and land developers, including former aldermen of Council.

Objectives

O25. To facilitate development that maintains and enhances the existing *neighbourhood* character, ensuring alignment with the Statement of Significance for the Town of Waterview *Heritage Conservation Area*.

Controls

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Note: These controls apply in addition to the general heritage provisions in Section 2.12 of this DCP. Applicants are to address both the general heritage controls and the locality-specific controls below.

- C26. Retain the following elements of particular importance to the Town of the Waterview Estate HCA:
- a) Pre-1939 *buildings*, especially timber *buildings*
 - b) *Pubs*, preferably as public houses or adapted for related uses (*boarding houses*, small-scale commercial)
 - c) Remaining sandstone kerbs and gutters
- C27. Design development visible from the water to protect and enhance the conservation values of the area when viewed from the water. Include visual details of the proposal from the water with development applications to demonstrate compliance.