Fernhill Estate.









Prepared by Greater Sydney Parklands © NSW Government 2023

Contributors

This document has been prepared by Greater Sydney Parklands Trust with special thanks to:

- Phillips Marler
- Yerrabingin
- WSP Australia
- Topdeck
- Frost*collective

Copyright notice

This publication is copyright. You may download, display, print and reproduce this material provided that the wording is reproduced exactly, the source is acknowledged, and the copyright, update address and disclaimer notice are retained.

Disclaimer

While every reasonable effort has been made to ensure that this document is correct at the time of printing, Greater Sydney Parklands Trust, its agents and its employees, disclaim any, and all liability to any persons in respect of anything or the consequences of anything done or omitted to be done.

Contents

	Connecting with Country	06
1.	Your Fernhill Estate	30
	About the plan	10
	Supporting a vibrant	
	Aboriginal culture	12
	Caring for Early Colonial	
	heritage	14
	Caring for our natural	
	environment	16
	Connecting people to parks	18
	What we heard from you	20
2.		22
	Landscape Master Plan	
	to 2026	24
	Ngunyul – The Big Arc	32
	Walking and cycling tracks	34
	Fernhill House setting and	
	gardens	36
	Native Farm Gate	38
	Hayshed and Orchard	39
	Northern Dam	40
	Woodland playground	42
	Mulgoa Road	43
3.	Next steps	44

Connecting with Country

Often, words of acknowledgement are given to Country, but to know and introduce yourself to Country you must sense and feel her presence – hear her stories, the sounds, the colours, the smells and engage with her spirit.

It is not the words as ritual, but the feeling that connects us to her and each other, reminding us of our custodial responsibility.

As a team, we are guided by the inspiration of Country, the stories and knowledge this place echoes and shares. We acknowledge its contribution to wellbeing both mental and physical, providing a refuge and safe place to learn and share for everyone who respects her.

Our vision is that sensing and caring for Country transcends cultural differences and highlights the many values we share across the cultures of contemporary community. We seek to support a socially inclusive, resilient and innovative community, based on honouring the wisdom and kinship of all cultures, captured through the lens of custodianship, Connected to Country.

Christian Hampson (2019) – Yerrabingin





Minister's message

Fernhill Estate will be essential to the Western Parkland City as it transforms around the new Western Sydney International (Nancy Bird-Walton) Airport over the coming decades.

Since Fernhill Estate was vested into the care of Greater Sydney Parklands, careful planning for its future has been focused on how to open it to the people of NSW.

This isn't something that will happen overnight – it needs time, research, patience and communication to achieve the best outcomes.

This is an initial landscape master plan that builds on the Foundation Plan of Management and recognises that we still have much to learn about the estate's Aboriginal and cultural landscape history and meaning.

It sets out how we can open the estate and achieve the 50-Year Vision for Greater Sydney's Open Spaces and Parklands for Sydney to be a city within a park.

This landscape holds tens of thousands of years of Aboriginal stories, Early Colonial-era history and a diversity of native plants and animals. Rather than a blank canvas for a new parkland, we see it as a layered place rich in Greater Sydney's story.

And soon, it will be a place we can all enjoy.

Fernhill Estate is rich in a natural beauty and cultural

Chief Executive's message

Fernhill Estate is rich in a natural beauty and cultural heritage, both of which we can celebrate in its next chapter as a public parkland.

The Fernhill Estate Landscape Master Plan to 2026 introduces landscape works that allow us to start creating a new public park for the people of the Western Parkland City.

It will be a place for the people of Mulgoa, Greater Sydney and visitors from afar to explore, get active, be healthy, enjoy its natural beauty, and be immersed in its history and stories.

Co-designed with First Nations designers and in consultation with community members, this plan focuses on recreational areas, allowing us to open up the estate while we learn about the landscape and its stories.

Initial works range from new walking tracks and park entrances, to Ngunyul – the Big Arc, a kilometre-long arc of indigenous plantings that, in the shape of a lyrebird, will connect the hilltop of Fernhill House to the shores of the Northern Dam.

The indigenous Native Farm Gate, Hayshed and Northern Dam will be new places for people to come together, enjoy the outdoors and better understand Fernhill Estate's unique heritage.

I look forward to continuing to work closely with the community and our stakeholders to introduce this beautiful place to Greater Sydney.

Rob Stokes Minister for Infrastructure, Cities and Active Transport **Joshua French** Chief Executive Greater Sydney Parklands



Your Fernhill Estate

About the plan

Fernhill Estate is an exceptional landscape of natural and cultural heritage significance. Located in the Mulgoa Valley, it sits at the western edge of the Cumberland Plain in the foothills of the Blue Mountains.

Fernhill Estate is on Darug Country. It is a place with deep Aboriginal culture, history and meaning, and features significant Early Colonial cultural landscapes and the beautiful sandstone Early Colonial-era Fernhill House. Most of the estate is included on the NSW State Heritage Register, with the remaining areas included on the Penrith City Council's local heritage schedule. There are also a number of Aboriginal sites recorded within the estate.

Aboriginal people had been living along the Nepean River and adjoining Deerubbin (Hawkesbury River) for at least 40,000 years before the British took possession of these waterways and adjacent plains. Much of the estate now still looks as it once did in the early days of the British colony when it was established by the early pastoralist Cox family through a series of land grants to William Cox and his sons. Today it is part of the remaining rural countryside and woodland vegetation of the Cumberland Plain before you head west over the Blue Mountains.

This Landscape Master Plan is a companion document to the Fernhill Estate Foundation Plan of Management to 2026.

It shows how we can open up the estate in a way that responds to the estate's natural and cultural heritage values. It introduces landscape works that represent early activities between now and 2026 that will, in a considered and sensitive process, lead to the creation of a new public park for Greater Sydney.

These works draw from the draft Conservation Management Plan for Fernhill Estate and the Foundation Plan of Management: estate stewardship, opening up the estate, engaging the community and sustainable and resilient management.

We have partnered with First Nations designers and community members to co-design and develop these early landscape works to incorporate First Nations design and thinking.

In the spirit of this ongoing partnership, the landscape works are proposed for the next four years. They allow us to begin work on the creation of a new public park for Greater Sydney, while we also take the time to learn more about the estate's Aboriginal and cultural landscape history and meaning.

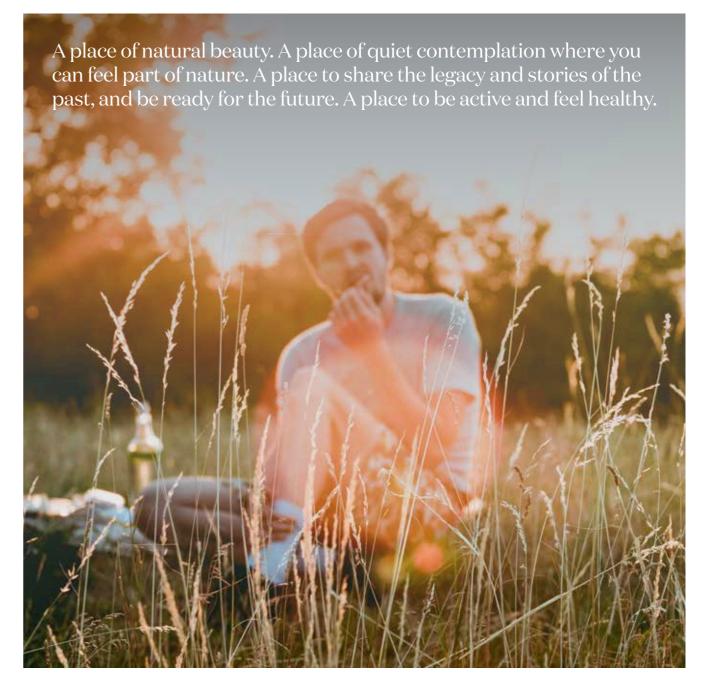
As we learn more about the significance of Fernhill Estate, we will, from 2026 onwards, revisit our management and landscape planning to incorporate this new understanding.

The landscape works also support the overall ambition for Greater Sydney to be home to quality parklands, a greater network of connections to green open spaces and an ongoing commitment to caring for the environment, as set out in the NSW Government's 50-year Vision for Greater Sydney's Open Space and Parklands.

Fernhill Estate will become a vibrant parkland opening its doors to diverse activities from walking, picnics, programs and events, and other community activities

Fernhill House will be open for tours or special events and the community will be able to attend events such as a community fair, music or equestrian event or outdoor gallery to celebrate the estate's significance.









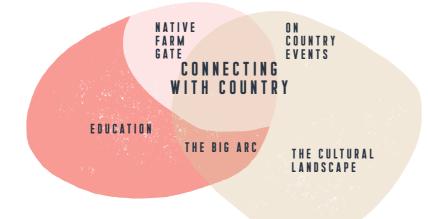
Supporting a vibrant Aboriginal culture



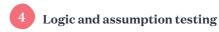
We partnered with Yerrabingin on the landscape planning for Fernhill Estate. Using Yerrabingin's Wanganni Dhayar - Listen to Country - design methodology, our design and planning involved the steps of sensing, imagining, shaping and caring for Country. This means that Country and its custodians are active codesigners of the landscape planning for Fernhill Estate to 2026. We also engaged with the local Darug community to create authentic biocultural narratives that underpin these landscape works.

SOCIAL

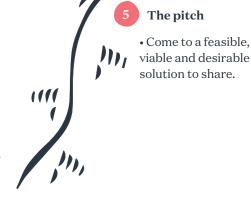
FERNHILL — SHARING AND HEALING DARUG COUNTRY



THE DESIGN PROCESS



- Close the feedback loop with internal and external stakeholders.
- · Check cultural logic.
- Is Country appropriately represented in the design?



2 How might we...

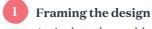
- $\bullet \ Revisit \ our \ thoughts \ or \ ideas?$
- Identify the audience or user?
- Understand their experience?



3 Design jam

- Push for the widest possible range of ideas.
- Embrace divergent styles of thinking.
- Converge to combine and refine insights.
- Use rapid prototypes as themes, principles and features of the Indigenous Design Principles.





- Articulate the problem or opportunity.
- Identify the benefits or outcomes we want to achieve.



I'd like to see a centre for learning about First Nations peoples and culture for students and to upskill teachers.

- Community member

2021 Yerrabingin PTY LTD ©





Caring for Early Colonial heritage

Fernhill Estate includes Fernhill House, a grand sandstone historic house and one of Australia's finest examples of Colonial-era Greek Revival architecture.

Fernhill House is central to the estate's Colonial-era cultural landscapes. The broad open pasturelands on the valley slope below the house, the bushland in the foothills of the Blue Mountains behind, the Early Colonial southern drive with its winding approach and select views of the grand house on the hill, and Early Colonial stone bridges on approach make up one of the most intact significant cultural landscapes of this era in NSW.

Our heritage conservation program continues across the estate. This includes ongoing conservation works to the Fernhill House and its garden setting and the estate's Early Colonial-era stone bridges.

Over the following year we will prepare a considered succession plan for the highly significant trees along the Early Colonial era southern entrance drive to Fernhill House.

In preparation for the final issue of the Conservation Management Plan, we will:

- finalise the Landscape Settings, Routes and Views Analysis for the estate following new learnings on the landscape designer Paul Sorensen's work on the estate
- commission from First Nations consultants an Aboriginal history and Reading of Country for the estate.

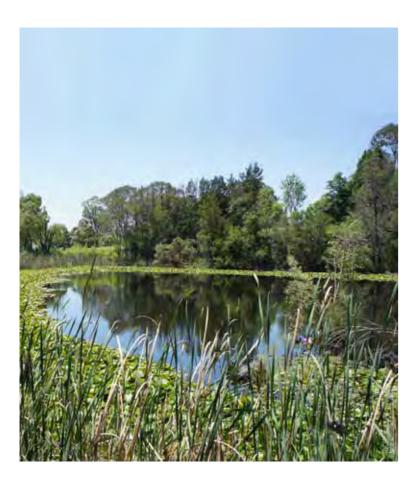
Between now and 2026, our focus is to open up the areas of the estate where there is the least impact on the heritage significant Early Colonial landscapes of Fernhill House, its broader rural setting and historic approach.

The main focus of this stage of landscape works will be the Northern Dam and adjacent pastures, with only light trails introduced elsewhere to provide further access into the estate.

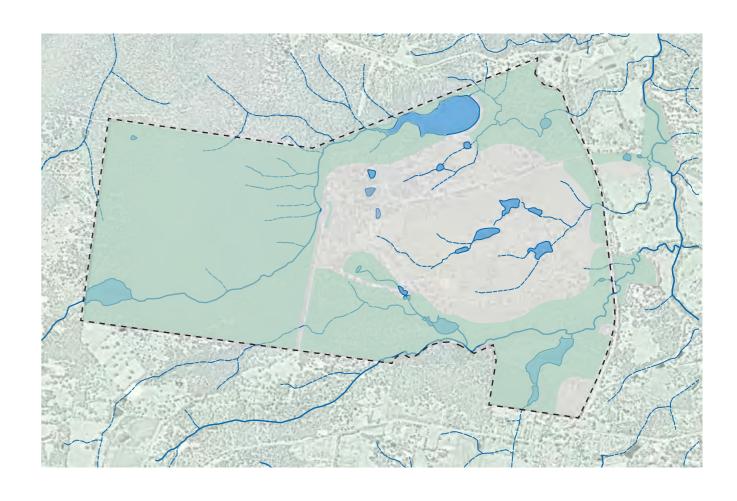
We will incorporate the final Conservation Management Plan in our management and landscape planning from 2026 and prepare an interpretation strategy to help us to share the estate's many stories with a wider audience.



FERNHILL ESTATE'S NATURAL ASSETS







Caring for our natural environment

Fernhill Estate has diverse geology and soil types including sandstone escarpments, deep incised gullies and the clay plains of the Cumberland Plain. It is part of a vast interconnected and sensitive ecosystem and critical corridor from the Cumberland Plain to the Blue Mountains.

Two biodiversity stewardship agreements cover nearly two-thirds of Fernhill Estate. Known as 'biobanking', these agreements make sure the Sandstone Hinterland Forest, Cumberland Plain Woodland, River Flat Eucalypt Forest and pockets of rainforest are protected in perpetuity.

Greater Sydney Parklands Trust manages the biobanked areas as well as areas of important habitat that fall outside these agreements. This includes the riparian corridor along Mulgoa Creek, and the old growth trees along the driveway and in paddocks.

The landscape works and tree management approaches respond to the estate's critical habitats as well as the location of existing tracks and trails in these areas. Careful management, bush regeneration and selective replanting will help to protect and enhance each vegetation type. We will also work to maintain critical open woodland habitats for endangered species including the Regent Honeyeater and Swift Parrot.

Water is a major asset to any public park. Fernhill Estate's natural creeks and network of farm dams will help to irrigate and cool the estate, improving water quality and forming riparian zones for plants and animals.

Connecting people to parks

Fernhill Estate is a unique and special part of the Mulgoa Valley's cultural heritage and history.

The valley sits within the Western Parkland City, an area that will see vast change over the next 20 to 40 years as the Western Sydney (Nancy-Bird Walton) International Airport and Sydney Metro line from St Marys to the airport open and Bradfield City Centre evolves.

This transformation is underpinned by an ambition to make green open spaces, parklands and protected landscapes the underlying assets that will shape the design and location of new suburbs, employment hubs and transport connections, as well as a cohesive network of open spaces, including the Penrith Green Grid.

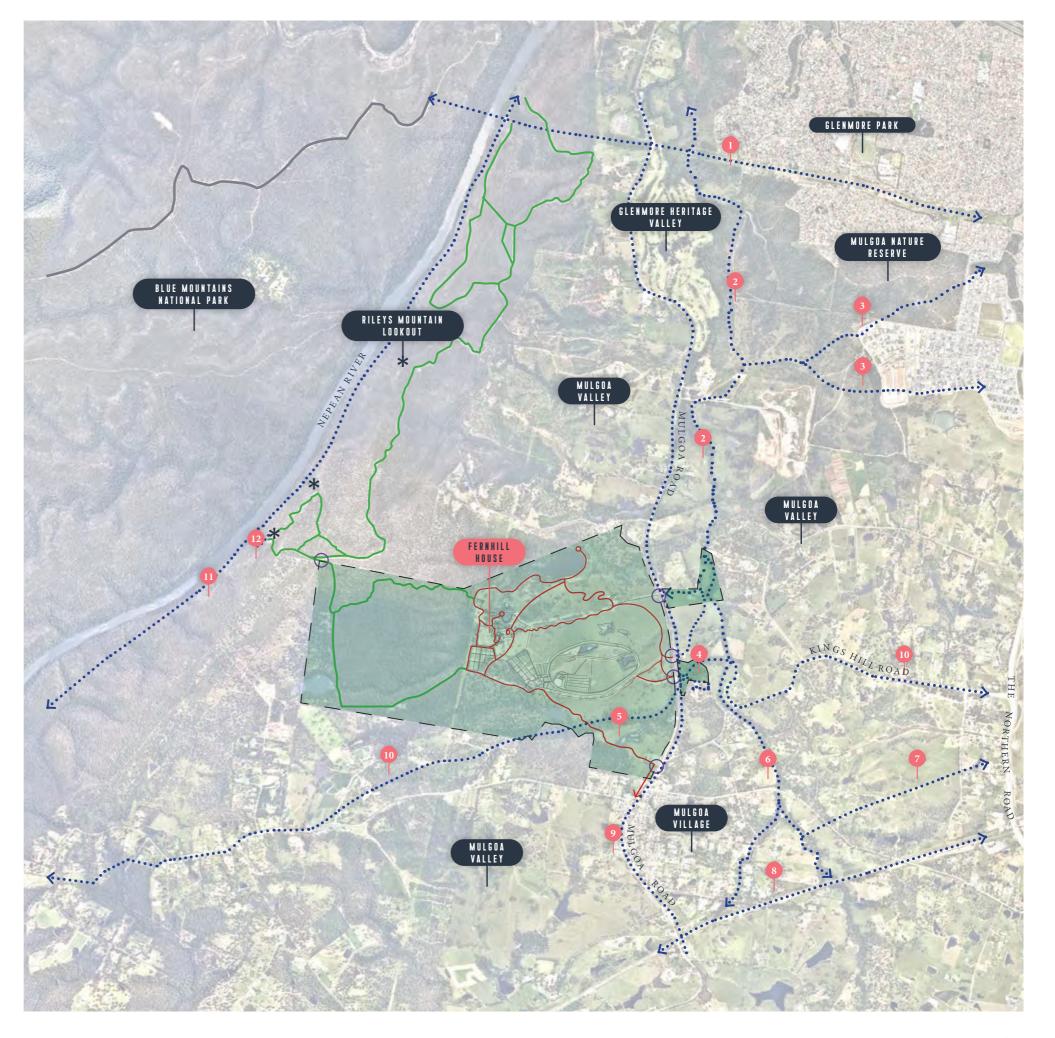
The special rural qualities of places like the Mulgoa Valley will be celebrated within the context of this change – in this way, Fernhill Estate, as a natural landscape, will offer a respite from a growing busy city and surrounding suburbs. It will be a place where people can get outdoors – feel healthy and active within a network of green spaces and waterways. This network will be informed by the objectives of Penrith City Council's Green Grid Strategy and Government Architect NSW's Sydney Green Grid.

LANDSCAPES

- Glenmore Park open space corridor
- 2 Coxs Track/Mulgoa Creek
- 3 South Creek cross connections
- 4 St Thomas' Church link
- 5 Littlefields link to Mulgoa Village
- 6 Nepean Creeks Trail
- 7 Blaxland Creek Bushland Reserve
- 8 Warragamba Pipeline Corridor
- Proposed walking and cycling link
- 10 East-west connection Northern Road to Nepean River Walk
- 11 The Great River Walk
- 12 Lookout to Nepean River link

KEY

- --> Potential future open space link
- Existing walking/cycling trail
- Proposed path connection
- Fernhill Estate
- Estate entry point
- * Existing lookout



What we heard from you



We've been in touch with the community over several years, and to inform our activities we held a community drop-in session at the estate in early 2021. We have been in regular contact with local stakeholder groups, First Nations community members and Penrith City Council.

We prepared the draft Landscape Masterplan in response to community and stakeholder feedback and the policies and key moves set out in the draft Conservation Management Plan and Foundation Plan of Management to 2026. This draft Landscape Master Plan was open for community feedback from late 2021 to early 2022.



I'd like to see a space to have an art show or hold exhibitions. It would be great to have day- or week-long seminars at Fernhill with conference accommodation. A nice restaurant would be good. Have a section of the site that shows people 'what to grow to support the local environment.'

- Community member



It is important that all elements of the site's many layered history are shared with the public.

- National Trust NSW

Throughout our consultation, we've heard the following:

- People would prefer to see low impact recreation activities that are sensitive to the character and heritage of the estate.
- Access to and around the estate should be a key focus, including from and between Mulgoa Road, and new opportunities for walking and cycling.
- There is strong support to deliver the First Nation codesigned projects as a priority.
- The heritage of the estate is important and alive, especially Fernhill House, its cultural landscapes and the Aboriginal history.
- People want to see works that protect the natural environment including the extensive bushlands and creeks and critical bird and animal habitats.
- There is a desire for appropriate re-use of existing buildings and structures such as the Hayshed for smallscale commercial, social and community uses.
- Planning needs to consider the types of equestrian facilities and activities available for the community.
- People want to see a stronger connection between Fernhill Estate and Mulgoa village.
- The staged opening up of the estate should be informed by the final conservation management plan.

We have considered community feedback in proposing these initial landscape works to 2026 and will continue to work with stakeholders as Fernhill opens up a public park.





Exploring Fernhill Estate

Landscape Master Plan to 2026

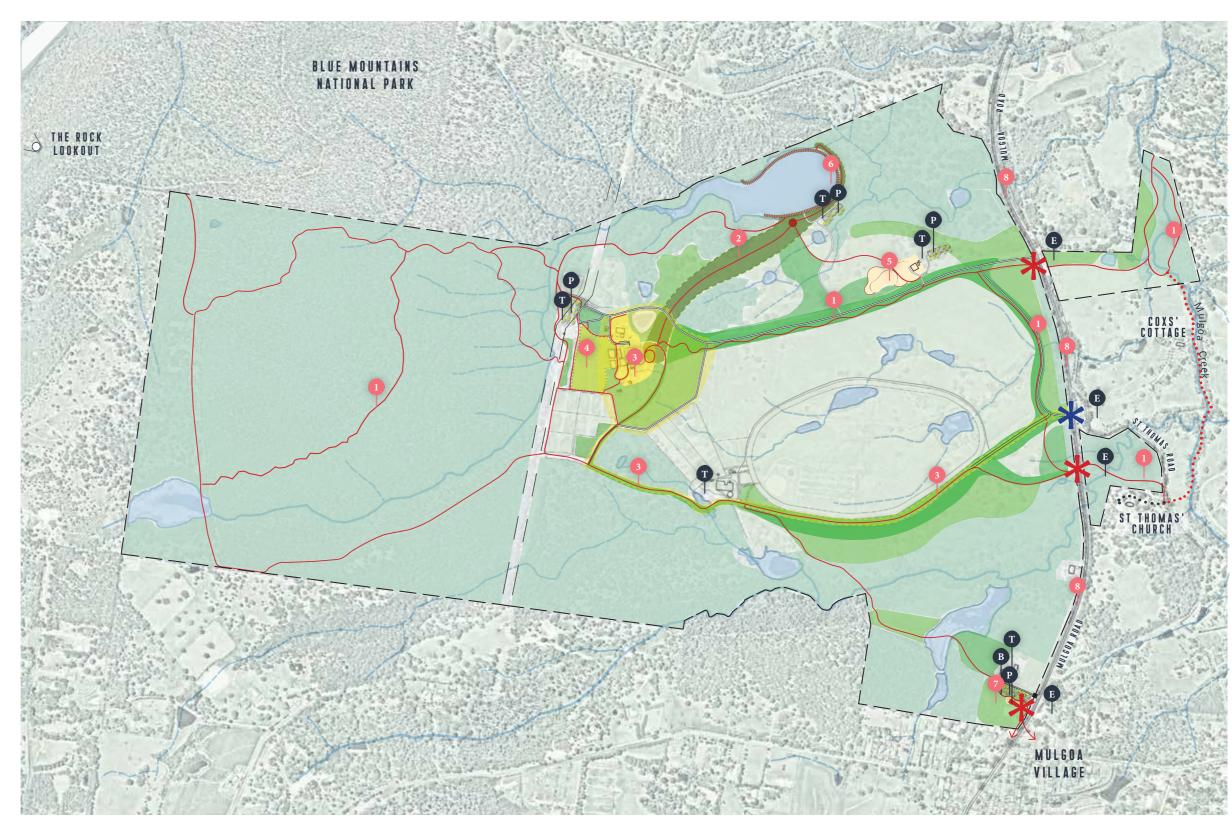
PLACES TO EXPLORE

- Walking and Cycling tracks
- 2 Ngunyul The Big Arc
- 3 Fernhill House Drive and Setting
- 4 Native Farm Gate
- 6 Hayshed & Orchard
- 6 Northern Dam
- Woodland Playground
- 8 Mulgoa Road

KEY

- Estate drive
- Walking tracks
- ····· Potential walking tracks
- P Car parking
- Toilets
- Park*
- * Proposed main vehicle entry
- 🜟 Pedestrian entry
- Bus drop off and pick up
- Woodland and bushland conservation
- Recreational bushland and paddocks
- Key Early Colonial landscape settings

^{*}Park entries are concept only and detailed design to progress on Mulgoa Road with Transport for NSW, including considering aligning the new southern vehicle entry with St Thomas Road





Fernhill House setting and gardens

The Early Colonial landscape setting of open grassed slopes to the majestic east and south elevations of Fernhill House will be restored, informed by early pictorial representations of Fernhill House.

We have carefully considered the restoration of the carriage loop to the former porte-cochere. Detailed plans for these restoration works will be informed by new learnings about the estate from the final Landscape Settings, Routes and Views Analysis.

Conservation works to the Paul Sorensen gardens and other landscape elements will also be informed by this analysis including the Fernhill House northern pergola, sunken garden and garden bed replantings.

A car park will be provided behind the Native Farm Gate away from the significant immediate setting of Fernhill House.

We will focus on restoring and refurbishing Fernhill House and establishing a major tourism or arts and culture destination.





Native Farm Gate

The western slopes behind Fernhill House will be transformed into an indigenous garden for food production and foraging around the theme of 'Coolamon to hearth'.

Abundant with bush tucker, and with pathways to take visitors around the site to forage for native ingredients, the garden will offer opportunities and places to experience native cultural plantings and food production.

The Native Farm Gate will be a landscape of endemic food and medicinal species, and a cultural resource.

It will balance cultural and environmental sustainability and foster a reciprocal relationship between people and Country, where both can thrive and be resilient.

These gardens will provide more than a resource: they will create opportunities for the Darug community to flourish on Country and re-establish custodial practice at the estate, supporting the intergenerational transfer of knowledge.

The gardens will also support the Darug community's design and delivery of education programs for regional schools.







Hayshed and Orchard

The Hayshed will be activated as a café and community event space, with improved amenities, parking and a new inclusive play space in the nearby Orchard.

People will be able to access a walking track to The Big Arc and the Northern Dam, providing a circuit walk from the Hayshed to Fernhill House.

A car park will be set down behind the hayshed so that it is not be visible from Mulgoa Road or the Northern Drive and set back from the Northern Dam track.

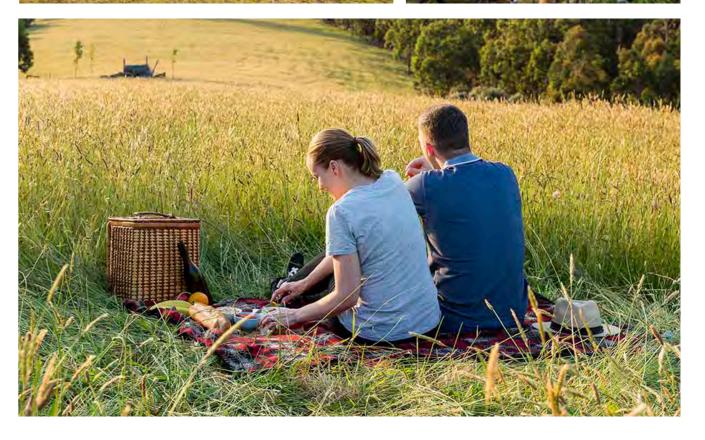
66

I would like to see farmers markets, cheese or wine festival, concerts ...
People need great outdoor places like this more.

- Community member









Woodland Playground

We will provide a visitor arrival space into the estate next to Mulgoa Public School with an inclusive playground and a walking and cycling track that meanders through the bushland and woodland setting leading to Fernhill House. This will be an entrance to the estate from Mulgoa village with sightlines to Fernhill House across the broad rural and bushland landscapes characteristic of the estate and Mulgoa Valley.

This entrance will provide an opportunity to introduce the estate from Mulgoa village and communicate and interpret the estate's values and relationship to the village. A safe place to drop off and pick up children will also be provided for cars and buses to support the playground and the adjacent Mulgoa Public School.





Mulgoa Road

Mulgoa Road is the tree-lined rural road that winds its way through Mulgoa Valley. It offers access to Fernhill Estate.

Mulgoa Road between Winbourne Road and Mayfair Road will need to balance the needs of the local community, road users and future park visitors.

Working with Transport for NSW we are investigating how to improve the safety around the estate entrances by slowing traffic on Mulgoa Road and relocating the two-way exit and entry to the estate to the former location of the Early Colonial Fernhill Drive, with clear sightlines north and south along Mulgoa Road.

The existing northern drive entrance will remain with no right-hand turning across Mulgoa Road. Working with Transport for NSW, we are investigating a potential pedestrian and cycling crossing link to the Mulgoa Creek south precinct.

A new entrance to the estate near to Mulgoa Public School will create access to the new walking trail across Littlefields Creek and provide a safe place for school bus drop-offs and pick-ups. This new park entry will be designed with Transport for NSW for safe access off Mulgoa Road. It will terminate at a small car park next to the school, set back from the road and screened by plantings. This will also provide safe parking for visitors wanting to walk the Littlefields Track or visit the new inclusive playground next to the school. It will not provide vehicular access to the main estate.



Walking and cycling tracks

0.5

0.25

1 K M

A network of walking and cycling paths throughout the park will create loops, longer walking experiences and connections to the Blue Mountains National Park, Mulgoa Creek, St Thomas' Church, Mulgoa Village and onto the Penrith Green Grid.

WALKING AND CYCLING TRACKS

- Northern Drive
- Northern Dam track
- Fernhill Drive
- Rural Drive
- Bridges walk
- Fernhill House Garden walk
- Bushland tracks
- Littlefields Creek track
- Mulgoa Creek track
- St Thomas' track

KEY

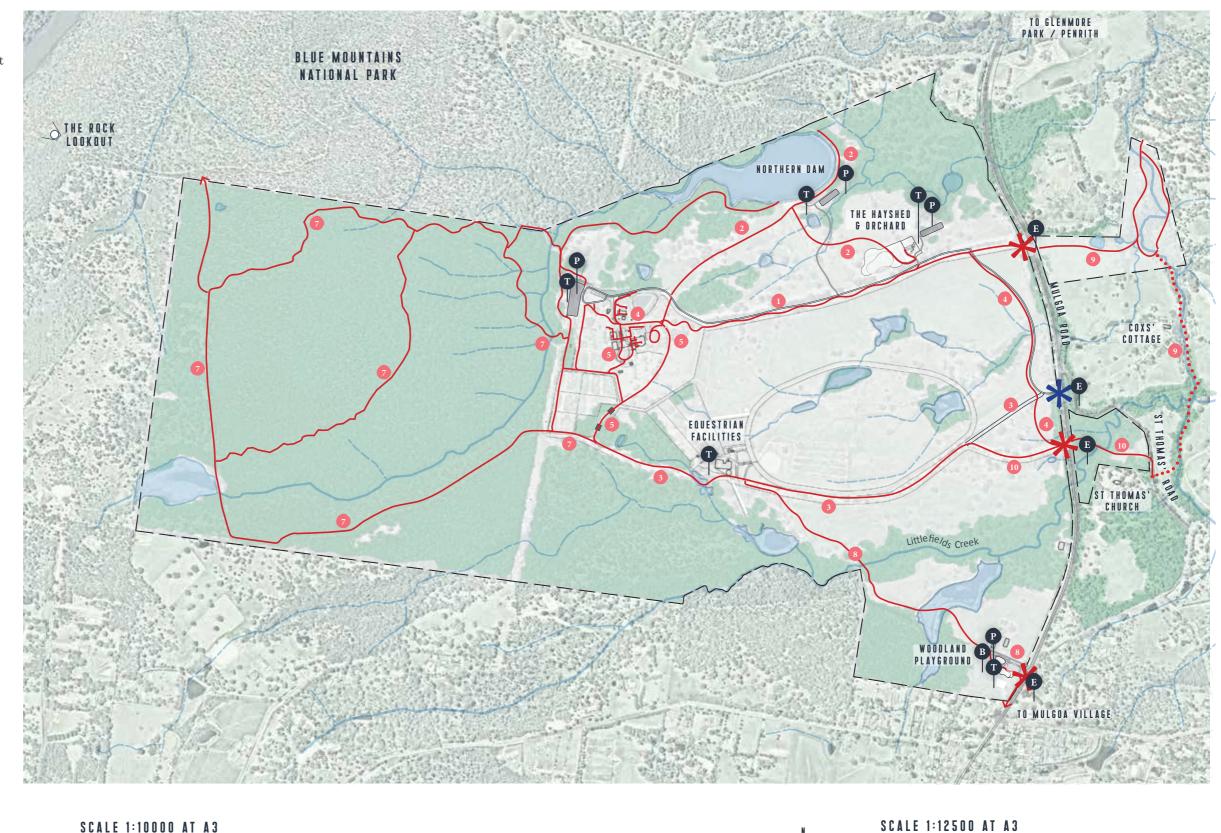
Estate drive

Walking tracks

Potential walking tracks

- Car parking
- Proposed main vehicle entry
- Pedestrian entry
- Bus drop off and pick up

*Park entries are concept only and detailed design to progress on Mulgoa Road with Transport for NSW, including considering aligning the new southern vehicle entry with St Thomas Road



34 LANDSCAPE MASTER PLAN TO 2026

0 0.1 0.25

0.5

NORTHERN DRIVE

The Northern Drive will be transformed into a promenade where people can stroll or stop and enjoy a picnic.

It will feature a pedestrian path connecting Fernhill House to the Hayshed and Orchard. This new path will offer magnificent views across the landscape with places for rest provided at key points of interest and vistas.

66

Fernhill Estate should be a family-friendly place where you can come and be safe.

- Community member





NORTHERN DAM TRACK

A new track will take people from the Hayshed through woodland and eucalypt forest to the Northern Dam and Nguyul – The Big Arc. This track forms part of a new loop trail linking the Hayshed, Northern Dam, Nguyul and Fernhill House.



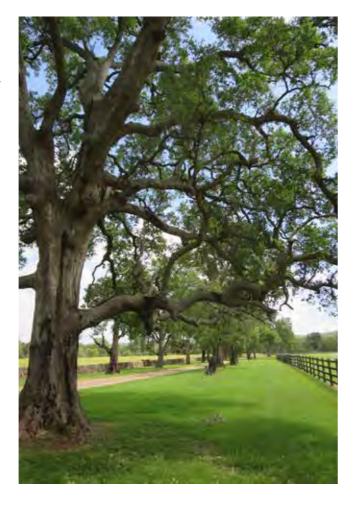


FERNHILL DRIVE

The historic Early Colonial-era Fernhill Drive will be dedicated as a shared pedestrian and cycle path with restricted vehicular access. We will restore the Early Colonial alignment of this drive to Mulgoa Road.

This historic approach to Fernhill House was consciously set out in the early 1800s to reveal key views and vistas of the estate and Fernhill House – it is, therefore, already a lovely place for the public to enjoy in this first stage of opening up the estate. We will include places for rest along the existing drive at key vistas.

The restoration of key historic views of the house, including across the reflection pond below the stone bridges, is part of the heritage conservation program for the estate.



RURAL DRIVE

The open rural parkland of the estate below the house and into the valley is significant as a remnant Early Colonial rural estate landscape. A new two-way pedestrian, cycleway and vehicular drive will traverse the paddock grasslands from the restored alignment of the Early Colonial Fernhill Drive to the Northern Drive leading to the Hayshed.

The design will consider the existing topography and plantings so that it will not be visible from Fernhill House. We will provide additional woodland plantings and places for rest at key points of interest and views.

This drive will also extend as a walking and cycling track to the existing modern south drive alignment at Mulgoa Road, creating a loop back to Fernhill Drive and linking up to the St Thomas' track.



BRIDGES WALK

This walk will take people across the Early Colonial era stone bridges in the approach to Fernhill House from Fernhill Drive. The stone bridges were constructed as a key architectural feature in the approach to the house and were carefully sited to be viewed from Fernhill Drive in the final approach to the house.

The restoration of this view of the bridges from Fernhill Drive is part of the heritage conservation program for the estate.



FERNHILL HOUSE AND GARDEN WALK

People will continue to enjoy the existing formal and self-guided walks around Fernhill House and its Paul Sorensen Gardens. Guided tours will also be available for Fernhill House, one of Australia's finest examples of Colonial-era Greek Revival architecture and the centre point of the estate's Colonial-era cultural landscapes.





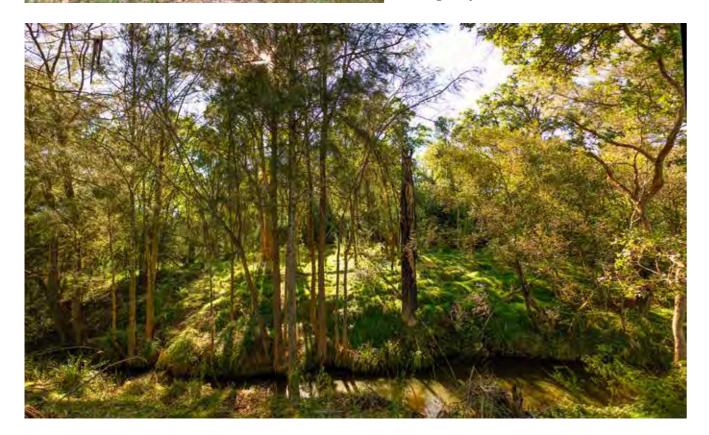
BUSHLAND TRACKS

The existing access trails through the gully rainforest, hinterland forest, open plain woodland and pocket of scribbly gum forest in the foothills of the Blue Mountains behind Fernhill House will be open to the public for the first time.

We will carefully manage these access trails to protect the biodiversity conservation areas and will work closely with the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service to provide a linking track to The Rock lookout over the Nepean River next to the estate.

LITTLEFIELDS CREEK TRACK

A new track, designed to limit impacts on the surrounding environment, will link Mulgoa village to Fernhill House with a walkway across Littlefield Creek through the eucalypt forest, woodland and paddocks up the restored carriage loop at Fernhill House.



MULGOA CREEK TRACK

The estate lots across Mulgoa Road are significant as remnants of the Early Colonial Fernhill Estate with evidence of early vineyard terracing and views of the bucolic Coxs Cottage beyond the estate. New tracks will be provided across the paddock down to the woodland and eucalypt forest of Mulgoa Creek with potential for a future possible linking track along Mulgoa Creek to the St Thomas' track.



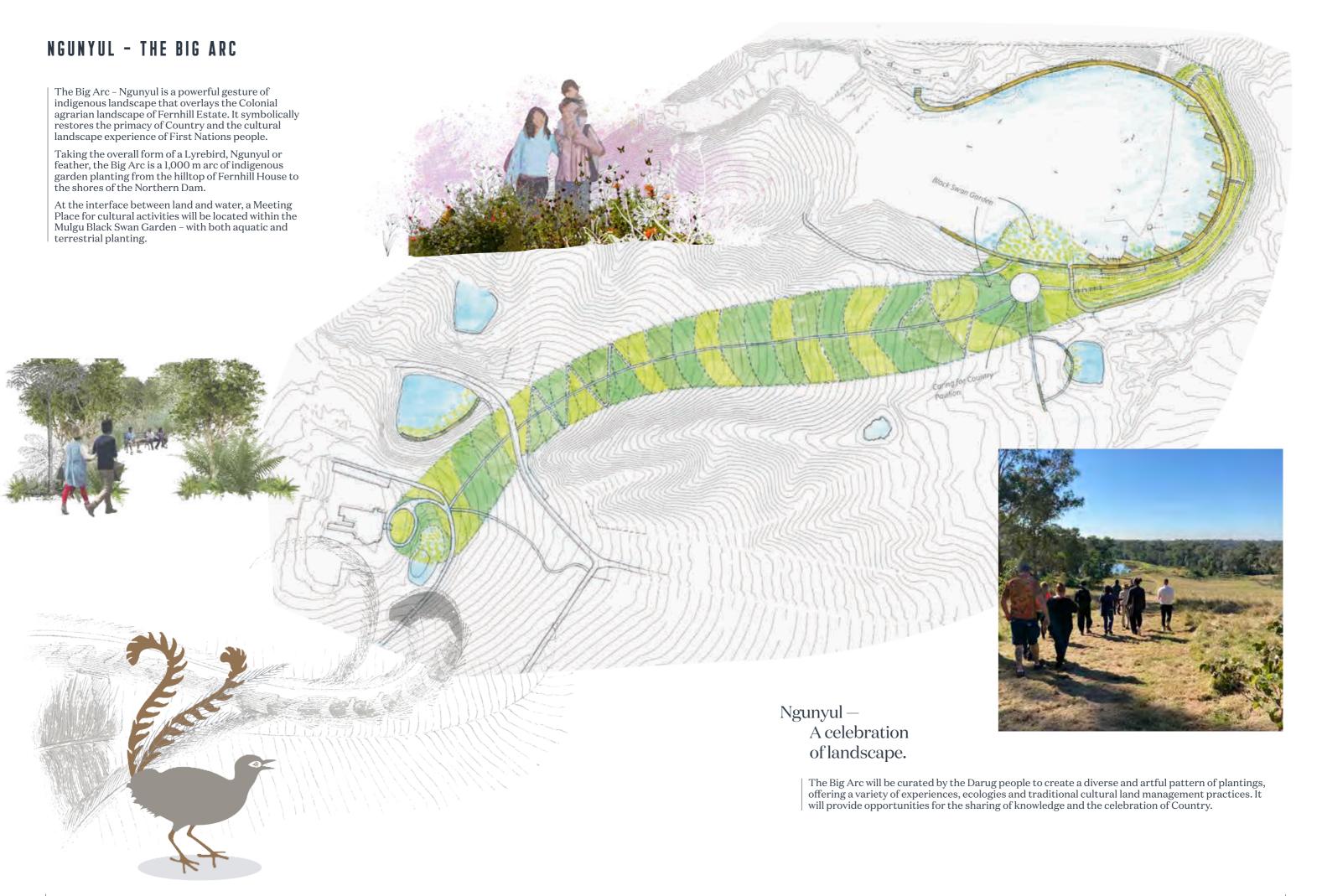


ST THOMAS' TRACK

A new pedestrian and cycling link from the main estate across Mulgoa Road, along the modern alignment of the south drive, will connect to new tracks through the woodland and eucalypt forest of Littlefields Creek east of Mulgoa Road. This could offer views of the Early Colonial St Thomas' Church beyond the estate.

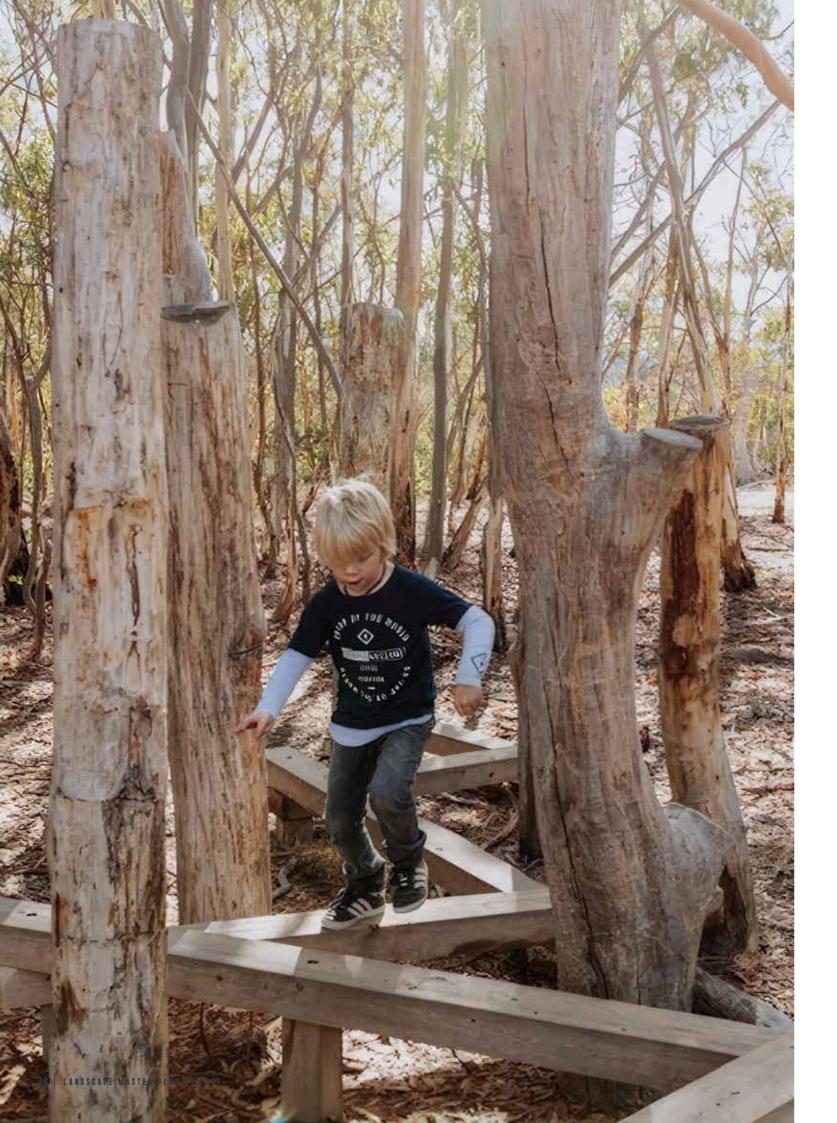
A car park will also be provided away from Fernhill Drive off this track on the main estate. The location and detail design of this car park will be carefully considered in terms of the heritage-significant visual setting of Fernhill Drive.







Next steps



Next steps

This Landscape Master Plan sets out the improvements and activations to 2026 that will move us towards the creation of a new public park for Greater Sydney.

To bring these ideas to life, we will continue to work with the community, stakeholders and local and state agencies to prepare detailed designs for each of the works.

Some of next steps will include:

- 1. continued engagement with the community and stakeholders on what is important to them
- 2. working with Penrith City Council to improve walking and cycling connections between the estate and surrounding areas, including paths along the Nepean River
- 3. expanding the walking track network in a way that is sensitive to the landscape and adding signage to help people understand and navigate the estate
- 4. improving and providing safe access for pedestrians, cyclists and drivers to enter and exit the estate, including a new vehicle access point from Mulgoa Road and a new entrance closer to Mulgoa village
- 5. seeking and securing funding for the works outlined in this Landscape Master Plan.



For all

