

LA4

**Whenuapai Green – Private Plan Change**  
98-102 Totara Road – Whenuapai, Auckland

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**Assessment of Landscape and Visual Effects**

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**Assessment of Landscape and Visual Effects  
Quality Assurance Statement**

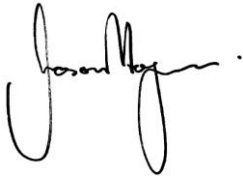
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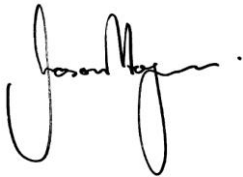
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Client	Neil Construction Limited

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- 1. Private Plan Change Precinct Plan**
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## **Assessment of Landscape and Visual Effects**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 LA4 Landscape Architects ('**LA4**') have been engaged by Neil Construction Limited ('**applicant**') to undertake an Assessment of Landscape and Visual Effects ('**LVA**') for a proposed Private Plan Change ('**PPC**') for the urbanisation of 16.3697 hectares of land at 98-102 Totara Road, Whenuapai, Auckland ('the **Site**').
- 1.2 The site is zoned 'Future Urban Zone' ('**FUZ**') within the Auckland Unitary Plan (Operative in Part) ('**AUP**'). The site also falls within the area subject to Auckland Council's Whenuapai Structure Plan 2016 ('**WSP**'), which identifies the site as suitable for rezoning for medium density residential development.
- 1.3 This assessment investigates the existing character of the site and surrounding environment, identifies the key landscape and visual features of the site and describes the visual and landscape implications of the PPC on the site and surrounding area. Investigations of the site and surrounding environment were undertaken in December 2023.

### **2. The Proposed Plan Change**

- 2.1 The site covers an area of 16.3697 hectares. The proposal seeks a Private Plan Change to rezone the land as Residential – Mixed Housing Urban Zone ('**MHU**') in its entirety. A Precinct Plan has been prepared by Urban Acumen and is included in **Annexure 1**.

### **3. Assessment Methodology**

- 3.1 The key to assessing the landscape character and visual amenity effects of the PPC on this landscape is first to establish the existing characteristics and values of the landscape and then to assess the effects of this proposal on them. In accordance with the Resource Management Act (1991) ('**RMA**') this includes an assessment of the cumulative effects of the PPC combined with existing developments.
- 3.2 The methodology used in this assessment is in accordance with Te Tangi a te Manu Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines 2022, and designed to assess whether or not the proposal would have adverse landscape character and visual amenity effects on the site and surrounding area. The following methodology has been used in this assessment.

#### ***Background Review***

- 3.3 A review of the background information was undertaken in relation to the landscape character and visual amenity aspects of the proposal. Key landscape and environmental factors which could potentially be affected by the PPC were identified and reviewed.

#### ***Statutory Context***

- 3.4 A review of the relevant statutory provisions was undertaken to identify the key landscape and visual related objectives, policies and assessment criteria in order to assess the proposal against them.

### ***Site and Landscape Evaluation – Landscape and Visual Environment***

- 3.5 Detailed site investigations and an analysis of the site and surrounding Whenuapai environment were undertaken. The landscape character, natural character, visual and amenity values were identified and outlined, and a photographic record of the site and surrounding environment compiled. Key landscape features and elements were identified, and an analysis of the landscape values and the landscape's ability to accommodate future development enabled by the PPC was undertaken.
- 3.6 An analysis of the existing landscape and urban/rural character of the site and surrounding environment was undertaken. The analysis identified how vulnerable the site and surrounding environment would be to change. This included:
- i) aesthetic value (vividness, complexity, cohesion, legibility, and other less tangible values);
  - ii) urban/rural character values;
  - iii) natural processes, patterns and elements;
  - iv) rarity;
  - v) visual absorption capability including land uses, vegetation cover and type and topographic diversity and type; and
  - vi) exposure and visibility.

### ***Visual Catchment and Viewing Audience***

- 3.7 The physical area that would be visually affected by development enabled by the PPC was determined (visual catchment). In turn, this indicated the range, type and size of viewing audiences that would potentially be impacted upon.

### ***Viewpoint Selection***

- 3.8 The next step was to establish a platform from which detailed analysis could be carried out. The most practical platform for carrying out such analysis is a series of viewpoints, strategically located within the visual catchment in order to assess the impact of the proposal for most of the potential viewing audiences.

### ***Landscape Character and Visual Effects Assessment***

- 3.9 A specific analysis and assessment were undertaken, and key questions addressed derived from the very nature of anticipated effects on landscape character and visual amenity on the site and surrounding area. This process assessed the effects of the proposal and identified the aspects which were likely to have high or adverse landscape character, physical or visual amenity impacts.

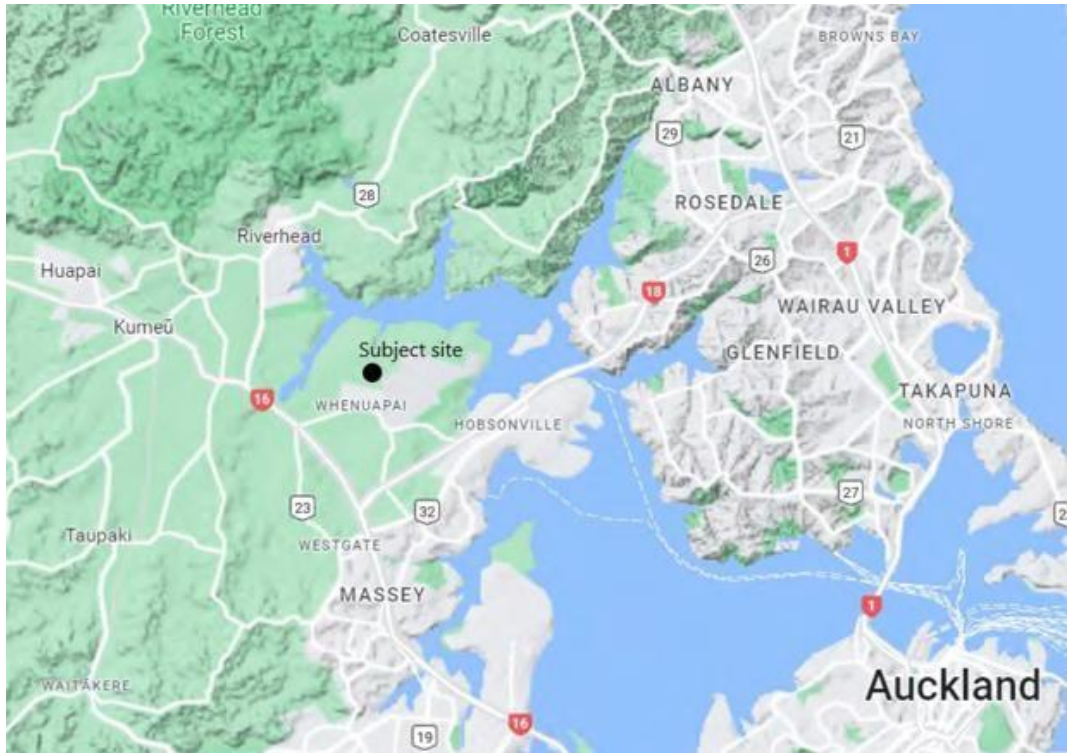
### ***Conclusions***

- 3.10 An evaluation of the proposal as a whole taking into account all the preceding analysis was then undertaken in relation to potential effects on landscape character and visual amenity values. Conclusions were made in relation to the potential landscape and visual effects, landscape character, physical or visual integrity impacts of the proposal on the site and surrounding area, including recommendations for avoiding, remedying or mitigating these effects.

## **4. The Site and Wider Landscape Setting**

### **The Site**

- 4.1 The site comprises 16.3697 hectares of land with frontages to the west to Totara Road and south to McCaw Avenue. The site is largely rectangular in shape, with the exception of the northern portion of the site where the boundaries converge into a triangular point. A rectangular arm extends to the east, traversed by the Ratarua Stream.



**Figure 1:** Site location within the wider context



**Figure 2:** Site aerial

- 4.2 The topography of the site slopes gently with a south to north gradient falling from RL 25.5m along McCaw Avenue to RL 15m in the central western side adjacent to Totara Road and east in the vicinity of the Ratarara Stream. The site is largely open pasture, with some areas of mature trees and a small number of buildings. There is a single dwelling with a detached garage located in the northern tip of the site with access from Totara Road, a dwelling with a barn located in the south-west corner of the site with access from Totara Road, and a second dwelling also accessed from Totara Road close to the southern boundary.



Figure 3: 3D Site aerial (Google Maps)

- 4.3 Several streams and watercourses traverse the site including a permanent stream, Ratarara Stream, several modified intermittent streams and an ephemeral overland flow path. Vegetation is largely restricted to the western McCaw Avenue frontage where a mixed species shelterbelt has established with karo (*Pittosporum crassifolium*), casuarina (*Casuarina cunninghamiana*), totara (*Podocarpus totara*) and cabbage tree (*Cordyline australis*). Some large eucalyptus trees (*Eucalyptus globulus*) are located along the western boundary.



**Figure 4:** The south-eastern part of the site



**Figure 5:** The southern part of the site





**Figure 6:** The south-western part of the site



**Figure 7:** The northern part of the site

### **The Wider Landscape Context**

- 4.4 The wider Whenuapai area is defined and well contained by the North-Western Motorway ('SH16') and the Upper Harbour Motorway ('SH18') to the south and east, and the upper reaches of the Waitematā Harbour, including Brigham Creek to the west, around to the Waiarohia Inlet to the east.
- 4.5 The most elevated topography within this defined area is located toward the southern end of Trig Road, with the landform continuing to rise to the local high point beyond the motorway near the intersection of Hobsonville Road and Luckens Road. From this location the land

generally falls to the north and east toward the coastline of the Upper Waitematā Harbour. The coastal edge is typified by variable low escarpments combined with sloping land interfacing with the tidal areas of the Waitematā Harbour.

- 4.6 The central part of Whenuapai is characterised by the broad, flat central plateau associated with the Royal New Zealand Air Force ('RNZAF') Base Whenuapai. Beyond this, the landform ranges from gently undulating to more rolling terrain, particularly in areas associated with the wider stream network. The interface with the upper harbour is characterised by a variable indented coastline with numerous small inlets. To the north the elevated landform associated with Paremoremo and Riverhead Forest provide a distinctive backdrop and sense of scale to the wider area.
- 4.7 The wider landscape setting is highly modified. Land use was previously based around pastoral, horticultural and equestrian pursuits. The RNZAF Base and associated activities covering an area of around 300ha, operating solely for defence force use, also have a considerable influence on the character of the wider setting. To the southwest of the RNZAF Base, along Brigham Creek Road, is the Whenuapai Township. Located on the southern side of the road, the township is characterised by a traditional strip of commercial development consisting mainly of convenience stores, cafes, and takeaway establishments, along with a service station and associated small-scale business activities. On the northern side of the road is Pinepac's Whenuapai timber mill which presents a large-scale industrial facility that appears increasingly incongruous in this location with the recent rapid establishment of new housing in the immediate vicinity to the north and west.
- 4.8 Along with the intensive housing, further commercial development is starting to appear with a BP service station next to the timber mill and a commercial development currently under construction on the corner of Brigham Creek Road and Totara Road which will contain a mixture of retail, hospitality, medical centre, and office space. On the northern side of Brigham Creek Road are the Whenuapai 1 and 2 Precincts covering an area of approximately 50ha. These are Special Housing Areas ('SHAs') currently under development comprising comprehensive and integrated residential developments in addition to some retail and commercial activities. Whenuapai 1 Precinct covers an area of 31.4 ha and will by the end of 2022 comprise 651 residential lots. Currently, 7 of the 8 stages have been completed with housing well established over the first 5 stages. The development includes an already completed Town Park on the corner of Totara Road and Brigham Creek Road and a large central drainage reserve.
- 4.9 Whenuapai 2 Precinct comprises 16.8ha and includes a mixture of residential land use combined with retail and commercial development which will include the neighbourhood centre. The development of this entire area is complete with housing development well-advanced across the entire site. The establishment of these housing areas has instigated rapid change, transforming the local area from semi-rural to urban in a short timeframe and initiating imminent similar transformation throughout much of the wider area.
- 4.10 The northern part of Whenuapai beyond the RNZAF Base retains more of a semi-rural character, influenced by the rural residential and lifestyle activities and the open space characteristics, in combination with vegetation types and patterns. Plan Change 69 ('PC69') has recently been approved to zone approximately 50ha of land to the southeast, on Spedding Road, from FUZ land to Business – Light Industrial Zone ('LIZ'). Plan Change ('PC86') is currently being processed by Auckland Council and a hearing was held in November 2023. PC86 seeks to rezone 5.2 Hectares of land at 41 -43 Brigham Creek Road, Whenuapai from Future Urban Zone to Residential – Mixed Housing Urban zone, to enable up to 260 dwellings.
- 4.11 Although there are some localised areas within wider Whenuapai that retain a relatively high level of rural, and, or general landscape amenity, apart from sections of the coastline, the landscape values and sensitivity is generally relatively low. This is a consequence of the level

of modification to the rural environment, which has in many instances been degraded by land use practices, retains limited significant indigenous vegetation, and generally exhibits few particularly distinctive rural characteristics, or significant landscape features.

## 5. Statutory Context

- 5.1 A comprehensive outline of the proposed PPC relating to statutory and non-statutory provisions is provided within the AEE documentation prepared by Campbell Brown Planning. This section of the assessment outlines, by way of background, the provisions most relevant to landscape character and visual amenity matters.
- 5.2 As outlined previously the PPC seeks to rezone the land as MHU zone. This zone provides for residential buildings up to three storeys and 11m in height. The PPC proposes to use the existing provisions associated with the MHU zone under the AUP. These have been tested and proved as appropriate for residential development as part of the establishment of the AUP. The PPC application is for rezoning only and any further matters would be dealt with as part of future resource consent applications.
- 5.3 The following statutory documents are of particular relevance to this assessment:
- Resource Management Act 1991 ('RMA')
  - National Policy Statement: Urban Development (2020) ('NPS-UD')
  - Auckland Unitary Plan (Operative in Part)

### **Resource Management Act 1991**

- 5.4 Part 2 of the Resource Management Act 1991 sets out the purpose and principles of the Act. Section 5 states that the purpose of the RMA is to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources. Section 6 of the RMA sets out matters of national importance that must be recognised and provided for.
- 5.5 Section 7 identifies a range of matters that shall be given particular regard to in achieving the purpose of the RMA, including Section 7(c) the maintenance and enhancement of amenity values and Section 7(f) the maintenance and enhancement of the quality of the environment. Effects relevant to Sections 7(c) and 7(f) of the RMA are addressed in this assessment.

### **National Policy Statement: Urban Development (2020)**

- 5.6 The NPS-UD directs councils to provide for sufficient development capacity and plan for growth, both up and out. Councils also have to respond to changes in demand by allowing denser housing in areas where people want to live, that are well-connected to jobs, transport and community facilities. The policies are focused on requiring Council plans to enable greater height and density, particularly in areas of high demand and access. The Council has notified Plan Change 78 – Intensification ('PC78') to give effect to the NPS-UD but this is currently on hold.

### **Auckland Unitary Plan (Operative in Part)**

- 5.7 The main relevant sections of the AUP relating to the landscape character and visual amenity are:

#### **B2. Tāhuhu whakaruruhau ā-taone – Urban growth and form**

##### B2.2. Urban growth and form

##### **B2.2.1. Objectives**

- (1) A quality compact urban form that enables all of the following:
- (a) a higher-quality urban environment;

- (b) greater productivity and economic growth;*
  - (c) better use of existing infrastructure and efficient provision of new infrastructure;*
  - (d) improved and more effective public transport;*
  - (e) greater social and cultural vitality;*
  - (f) better maintenance of rural character and rural productivity; and*
  - (g) reduced adverse environmental effects.*
- (2) Urban growth is primarily accommodated within the urban area 2016 (as identified in Appendix 1A).*
  - (3) Sufficient development capacity and land supply is provided to accommodate residential, commercial, industrial growth and social facilities to support growth.*
  - (4) Urbanisation is contained within the Rural Urban Boundary, towns, and rural and coastal towns and villages.*
  - (5) The development of land within the Rural Urban Boundary, towns, and rural and coastal towns and villages is integrated with the provision of appropriate infrastructure.*

### B2.3. A quality built environment

#### **B2.3.1. Objectives**

- (1) A quality built environment where subdivision, use and development do all of the following:*
  - (a) respond to the intrinsic qualities and physical characteristics of the site and area, including its setting;*
  - (b) reinforce the hierarchy of centres and corridors;*
  - (c) contribute to a diverse mix of choice and opportunity for people and communities;*
  - (d) maximise resource and infrastructure efficiency;*
  - (e) are capable of adapting to changing needs; and*
  - (f) respond and adapt to the effects of climate change.*

#### **B2.3.2. Policies**

- (1) Manage the form and design of subdivision, use and development so that it does all of the following:*
  - a. supports the planned future environment, including its shape, landform, outlook, location, and relationship to its surroundings, including landscape and heritage.*

### **H5. Residential – Mixed Housing Urban Zone**

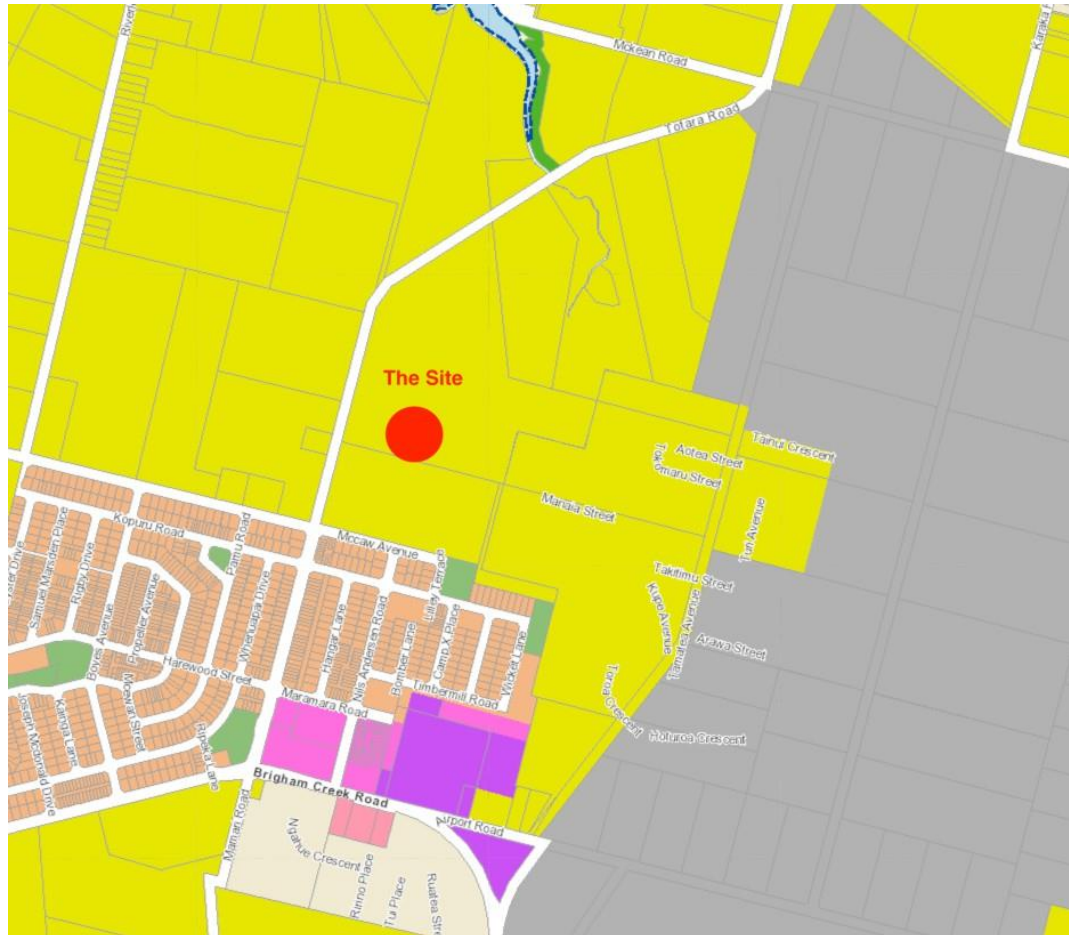
- 5.8 The MHU zone is a reasonably high-intensity zone enabling a greater intensity of development than previously provided for. Over time, the appearance of neighbourhoods within this zone will change, with development typically up to three storeys in a variety of sizes and forms, including detached dwellings, terrace housing and low-rise apartments. This supports increasing the capacity and choice of housing within neighbourhoods as well as promoting walkable neighbourhoods, fostering a sense of community and increasing the vitality of centres. Up to three dwellings are permitted as of right subject to compliance with the standards. This is to ensure a quality outcome for adjoining site and the neighbourhood, as well as residents within the development site.

#### **H5.2. Objectives**

- (1) Land near the Business – Metropolitan Centre Zone and the Business – Town Centre Zone, high-density residential areas and close to the public transport network is efficiently used for higher density residential living and to provide urban living that increases housing capacity and choice and access to public transport.*

- (2) *Development is in keeping with the neighbourhood's planned urban built character of predominantly three-storey buildings, in a variety of forms and surrounded by open space.*
- (3) *Development provides quality on-site residential amenity for residents and adjoining sites and the street.*

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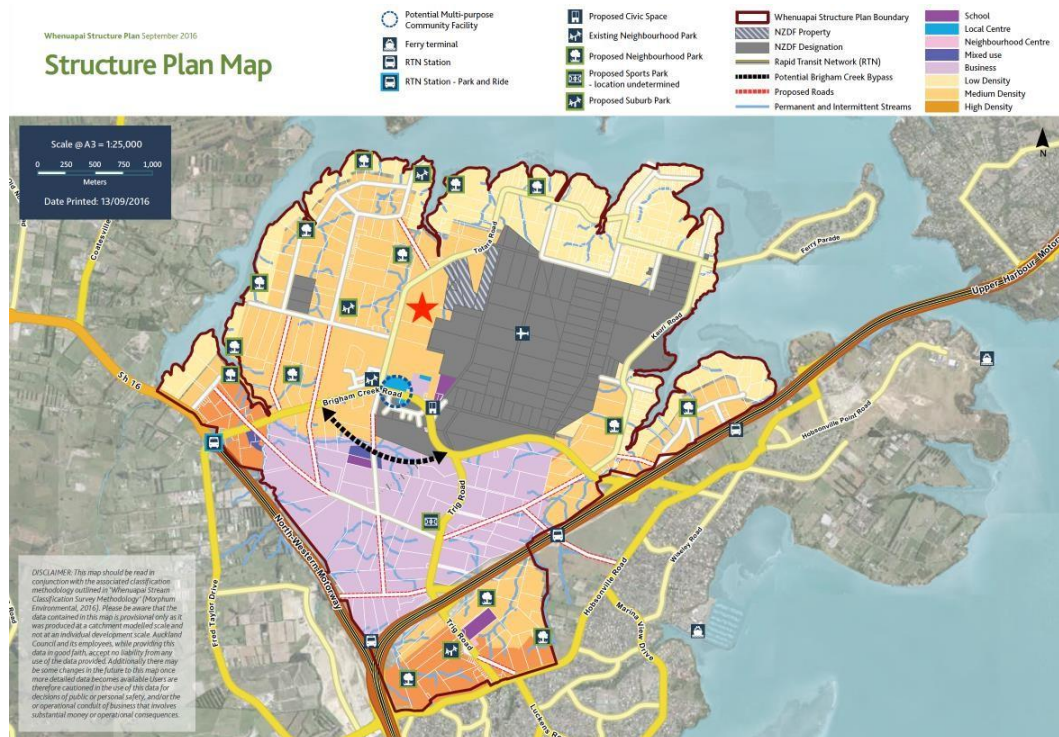


**Figure 8:** AUP zone map

### **H5.3. Policies**

- (1) *Enable a variety of housing types at higher densities, including low-rise apartments and integrated residential development such as retirement villages.*
- (2) *Require the height, bulk, form and appearance of development and the provision of sufficient setbacks and landscaped areas to achieve an urban built character of predominantly three storeys, in a variety of forms.*
- (3) *Encourage development to achieve attractive and safe streets and public open spaces including by:*
  - (a) *providing for passive surveillance*
  - (b) *optimising front yard landscaping*
  - (c) *minimising visual dominance of garage doors.*
- (4) *Require the height, bulk and location of development to maintain a reasonable standard of sunlight access and privacy and to minimise visual dominance effects to adjoining sites.*
- (5) *Require accommodation to be designed to meet day to day needs of residents by:*

- (a) providing privacy and outlook; and
  - (b) providing access to daylight and sunlight and providing the amenities necessary for those residents.
- (10) Recognise the functional and operational requirements of activities and development.
- (6) Encourage accommodation to have useable and accessible outdoor living space.
- (7) Restrict the maximum impervious area on a site in order to manage the amount of stormwater runoff generated by a development and ensure that adverse effects on water quality, quantity and amenity values are avoided or mitigated.
- ....
- (9) Enable more efficient use of larger sites by providing for integrated residential development.



**Figure 9:** Whenuapai Structure Plan map

5.9 With respect to the matters addressed in these objectives, policies and assessment criteria, I comment as follows:

- i) Development within the PPC area would achieve a comprehensive residential environment and allow for a range of housing densities and typologies. Potential adverse effects of urban activities on the environment would be avoided, remedied or mitigated in accordance with the operative AUP provisions.
- ii) Development enabled by the PPC would be largely in keeping with the area's planned urban built character and the site has the capacity to visually absorb development enabled by the PPC. The surrounding land to the north and west is similarly zoned FUZ and therefore an appropriate transition would be achieved. Adjoining land to the south is zoned residential and has rapidly undergone intensive residential development.
- iii) The large size of the site means greater co-ordination can be achieved both internally and to the wider surrounds through a comprehensively designed masterplan. Development

enabled by the PPC would result in a quality compact urban form with increased residential densities.

- iv) Development enabled by the PPC would provide for a range of quality housing choices to meet the needs of a growing and diverse community and enable a variety of housing types at higher densities.
- v) Future development within the PPC site would be in keeping with the neighbourhood's planned urban built character of up to three-storey buildings, in a variety of forms such as detached, duplex and terraced dwellings.
- vi) The PPC site is not located within or in close proximity to any outstanding natural features, or character or landscape overlays of the AUP, and it is not identified as a high natural character area.
- vii) The FUZ zoning of the site provides a clear indication that the land is intended to be urbanised in the future and redeveloped for urban purposes, so such a change to the physical locality is clearly contemplated in the AUP planning framework.
- viii) Development enabled by the PPC would be consistent with the planned future character of the area as forecast within the WSP.

#### **Statutory Context Summary**

- 5.10 I therefore consider that the proposed PPC would be generally consistent with the intent of the landscape, visual, natural character and amenity objectives and policies of the AUP and when considered in totality would be entirely acceptable in landscape character and visual amenity terms.

## **6. Evaluation of the Proposal**

- 6.1 The key to assessing the landscape character and visual amenity effects of development enabled by the PPC is first to establish the existing characteristics and values of the landscape and then to assess the effects of the proposal on them. In accordance with the RMA this includes an assessment of the cumulative effects of the proposal combined with existing development within Whenuapai.
- 6.2 The purpose of this section is to provide an assessment of the nature and degree of potential landscape effects and the appropriateness of the proposal. The assessment responds to matters related to landscape character and visual amenity.
- 6.3 The zoning sought under the PPC would enable development opportunities pertaining to the provisions associated with the anticipated AUP's MHU zoning. This application is for rezoning only and any further matters can and would be dealt with as part of future resource consent applications.
- 6.4 An assessment of landscape effects takes into consideration physical changes to the landscape as a resource which may give rise to changes to its character and quality and perceived landscape values. Visual effects are a consequence of landscape effects as this is how we mainly perceive effects on landscape values. Landscape and visual effects are therefore inextricably linked and are influenced by the sensitivity of the receiving environment combined with the type and magnitude of change associated with the proposal.
- 6.5 Matters to be addressed in this landscape assessment in relation to the landscape character and visual amenity include the following:
- i) Natural character effects

- ii) Landscape effects
- iii) Visual amenity effects
- iv) Construction effects
- v) Cumulative effects

**Natural Character Effects**

- 6.6 Natural character relates to the degree of ‘naturalness’ of a landscape. It is primarily determined by the nature and extent of modification to a landscape and can be expressed in relation to natural processes, patterns and elements in the landscape.
- 6.7 Natural character relates to the degree of ‘naturalness’ or modification of a landscape. Assessments of natural character therefore broadly assess:
- i) Natural processes – the underlying formative processes that have shaped and given expression to the landscape (geological, volcanic, ecological, fluvial etc.)
  - ii) Natural elements – features within the landscape that are products of natural processes (landform, vegetation, waterbodies etc.)
  - iii) Natural patterns – the natural expression or distribution of un-manufactured elements and features within the landscape; and
  - iv) Development / land use – the presence or absence of development such as structures and buildings and the level of modification as a result of land use and management.
- 6.8 The highest levels of natural character are where there is the least modification. Natural character effects relate to the degree to which a proposal alters the biophysical and / or perceived naturalness of a landscape.

***Natural Character Effects Analysis***

- 6.9 The PPC site is not high in natural character values and has been extensively modified through previous and current pastoral activities. The area has undergone extensive agricultural activities and is highly modified by vegetation clearance, modified streams, the dwellings, and other buildings, accessways and associated farm structures. The site is a component of the highly modified Whenuapai urban and peripheral rural environment in an area zoned for future urban intensification within the AUP and WSP.
- 6.10 Overall, the adverse effects of development enabled by the PPC on the natural character values of the site and surrounding area would be very low.

**Landscape Effects**

- 6.11 Landscape effects take into consideration the physical effects on the land resource. Assessments of landscape effects therefore investigate the likely nature and scale of change to landscape elements and characteristics. Landscape effects are primarily dependent on the landscape sensitivity of a site and its surrounds to accommodate change and development. Landscape sensitivity is influenced by landscape quality and vulnerability, or the extent to which landscape character, elements/features and values are at risk to change.
- 6.12 ‘Landscape characterisation’ is the term used to encapsulate the process of identifying and describing landscape character areas. Each character area has a distinguishing combination of biophysical and cultural factors that make it distinctive. Characterisation provides a basis for the understanding of landscape diversity and change.
- 6.13 Landscape character is derived from a combination of landscape components that make up the landscape of the site that distinguishes one area from another including:



- i) The elements that make up the landscape including:
  - physical influences – geology, soils, landform, drainage and waterbodies;
  - land cover, including different types of vegetation and patterns and types of tree cover; and
  - the influence of human activity, including land use and management, the character of settlements and buildings, and pattern and type of enclosure.
- ii) The aesthetic and perceptual aspects of the landscape including its scale, complexity, openness, tranquillity or wilderness; and
- iii) The overall character of the landscape in the area including any distinctive landscape character types or areas that can be identified, and the particular combinations of elements and aesthetic and perceptual aspects that make each distinctive, usually by identification as key characteristics of the landscape.

6.14 Landscape character results from a combination of physical elements together with aesthetic and perceptual aspects that combine to make an area distinct. The wider Whenuapai landscape to the south has and is still undergoing rapid change and development with the urbanisation of the area transforming the previously semi-rural landscape to one of highly modified characteristics through earthworks, ground shaping, roading construction, associated infrastructure for urban residential development and the construction of dwellings and commercial activities. The land to the north and west is similarly zoned FUZ in anticipation of future urbanisation and the land to the east is characterised by the RNZAF Base operations and associated buildings, aircraft hangars and other structures.

6.15 The existing attributes that contribute to the existing 'rural' character of the area would become progressively less pervasive as the site is developed with the future urbanisation of the area. Development enabled by the PPC would inevitably transform the local semi-rural character to that of more intensive and mixed urban development which would have an influence on the surrounding area. It is important to note however that this type of development is not unanticipated and the AUP identifies the site as an area to accommodate future urban growth requirements in this part of the region.

6.16 It is also important to note that although the site and local area currently exhibit semi-rural characteristics, neither display a high degree of 'ruralness' due to a combination of the size of landholdings, existing infrastructure, the proximity to the RNZAF Base, and the highly urbanised area of Whenuapai adjacent to the south of the site. Consequently, distinctly urban influences are highly evident in the surrounding area, which further reduce the sensitivity of the site and surrounding environment to change as anticipated by the PPC.

#### ***Landscape Effects Analysis***

6.17 Based on the preceding description and analysis of the site and surrounds it is clear that there are relatively low landscape values and sensitivity associated with the site. The site is a relatively degraded, highly modified environment lacking significant landscape values, in close proximity to existing residential areas and RNZAF Base. Therefore, the only negative outcomes in landscape terms would be the loss of the remaining semi-rural character, which is anticipated by the relevant AUP planning strategies and current FUZ zoning that applies to the site. Development enabled by the PPC would result in a change in landscape character, but would ensure a suitable level of amenity, albeit an urban, rather than a semi-rural character is achieved.

6.18 Overall, development enabled by the PPC would have low adverse landscape effects, particularly in relation to the character and quality of the site and surrounding area given that:

- i) The site does not contain, and development enabled by the PPC would not adversely affect, any significant landscapes or features. The site and surrounding area are a distinctly modified environment.
- ii) The landscape values associated with the site itself are not high due to the modified nature of the site and the agricultural activities and land use within the site and surrounding area. The landscape character of the site is not high due to these characteristics. As such the landscape sensitivity of the site to change as enabled by the PPC is low.
- iii) The landscape character, amenity values and biodiversity values of the site and surrounding area would not be adversely affected by development enabled by the PPC. The form, scale and nature of the proposal would be similar to the pattern of residential development occurring within the surrounding environment to the south and future planned environment to the west and north and would therefore not appear out of character. The character, intensity and scale of the proposal would be in keeping with the local characteristics.
- iv) Development enabled by the PPC would not introduce new elements or features that would adversely affect the landscape values and character of the site and surrounding area with residential settlement being prevalent in the area.
- v) Any potential landscape effects would be localised due to the type and scale of change and the existing settlement, landform, and vegetation patterns.

6.19 The proposal would not adversely affect the landscape character and would ensure a suitable level of amenity is achieved. Overall, the adverse effects of development enabled by the PPC on the site and surrounding area would be low. Potential exists to enhance the landscape character values of the site through ecological enhancement and riparian planting of the Ratarā Stream banks, which is provided for by the PPC.

#### **Visual Amenity Effects**

6.20 The assessment of visual amenity effects analyses the perceptual (visual) response that any of the identified changes to the landscape may evoke, including effects relating to views and visual amenity. Visual sensitivity is influenced by a number of factors including the visibility of a proposal, the nature and extent of the viewing audience, the visual qualities of the proposal, and the ability to integrate any changes within the landscape setting, where applicable.

6.21 The nature and extent of visual effects are determined by a systematic analysis of the visual intrusion and qualitative change that a proposal may bring, specifically in relation to aesthetic considerations and visual character and amenity. The methodology used in this assessment is designed to assess whether or not the proposal would have adverse visual effects on the nature and quality of the site and surrounding urban and semi-rural environment.

The process of analysing such effects involves:

- i) Identification of the physical area or catchment from which development enabled by the PPC would be visible;
- ii) Identification of the different viewing audiences that would be affected by future development enabled by the PPC; and
- iii) Evaluation of the visual amenity effects taking into account the preceding analysis.

### **Visual Catchment and Viewing Audience**

- 6.22 The visual catchment is the area from which noticeable visual effects of development enabled by the PPC are likely to be evident to any significant degree. Totara Road, extending along the western boundary of the site, results in close views being gained into the site (albeit currently screened in parts by roadside vegetation). McCaw Avenue along the southern boundary, also results in close views into the site (beyond the existing shelterbelt). Unobstructed views would be gained through the removal of this vegetation to enable development.
- 6.23 The semi-rural properties on the western and north-western side of Totara Road would be exposed to views into the site. Views from the RNZAF Base would be highly variable due to the vegetated characteristics and built structures within parts of the Air Force Base.
- 6.24 Views from the rural properties to the north-east would be largely screened by the shelterbelt within the adjoining property at 94 Totara Road. Distant views may be gained from some of the landholdings to the north-west in Riverlea Road. Motorists and pedestrians travelling in a northerly direction along Nils Anderson Road in the vicinity of the site would gain views.
- 6.25 The viewing audience would therefore encompass the following groups:
- i) Residents and visitors to the adjoining properties to the south in McCaw Avenue;
  - ii) Residents and visitors to the adjoining properties to the west and north-west in Totara Road;
  - iii) Motorists and pedestrians travelling along Totara Road and McCaw Avenue;
  - iv) Motorists and pedestrians travelling in a northerly direction along Nils Anderson Road in the vicinity of the site;
  - v) Staff and visitors in the Whenuapai Air Force Base;
  - vi) Residents and visitors in some of the landholdings to the north-west in Riverlea Road; and
  - vii) Distant viewers within parts of the wider surrounding area.

### **Visual Amenity Effects Analysis**

- 6.26 The future development of the site enabled by the PPC raises a number of visual issues, including the potential effects on visual amenity to the following key areas:
- i) Adjoining properties
  - ii) Surrounding road network
  - iii) Wider surrounding area
- 6.27 The visual effects of development enabled by the PPC have been assessed from representative viewpoints within the visual catchment area that have potential for visual effects. Five viewpoints have been identified in order to assess the potential visual effects. The viewpoints were selected as locations that capture and fairly represent the range of public and private views towards the site.
- 6.28 The assessment has been undertaken by reference to the following:

#### **Adjoining Properties Wider Surrounding Area Surrounding Roads**

*Refer to: Annexure 2 – Viewpoint Photographs*

- 6.29 Photographs have been taken with a 35mm SLR camera with a fixed 50mm lens from the viewpoints, stitched together in panorama format, and a detailed assessment and analysis of

potential effects have been carried out using a Visual Effects Matrix, which ensures that each view and changes within each view are evaluated thoroughly and consistently.

- 6.30 The key factors contained in that matrix are given in detail in **Annexure 3**. It covers aspects such as the sensitivity of the view to change, the size of the viewing audience that would be affected, the legibility of the proposed development, how well the proposal integrates with its surroundings and whether or not the proposal intrudes into any existing views.
- 6.31 The total score given in the descriptions denote the overall visual effects rating. The following seven-point scale has been used to rate effects, based on the guidelines contained within the NZILA Te Tangi a te Manu 'Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines 2022':

**Very Low | Low | Low-Moderate | Moderate | Moderate-High | High | Very High**

Very Low Effect

*No appreciable change to the visual character of the landscape, its landscape values and/or amenity values.*

Low Effect

*Limited change to the visual character of the landscape, with a low level of effect in relation to landscape values and/or amenity values.*

Low-Moderate Effect

*Evident visual change to the visual character of the landscape with a low to moderate level of effect in relation to landscape values and/or amenity values.*

Moderate Effect

*Appreciable change to the visual character of the landscape with a moderate level of effect in relation to landscape values and/or amenity values.*

Moderate-High Effect

*Marked change to the visual character of the landscape with a moderate to high level of effect in relation to landscape values and/or amenity values.*

High Effect

*Significant change to the visual character of the landscape with a high level of effect in relation to landscape values and/or amenity values.*

Very High Effect

*Fundamental change to the visual character of the landscape with a very high level of effect in relation to landscape values and/or amenity values. The proposal causes significant adverse effects that cannot be avoided, remedied or mitigated.*

- 6.32 In assessing the significance of effects, the assessment also considers the nature of effects in terms of whether this would be positive (beneficial) or negative (adverse) in the context within which it occurs. Neutral effects can also result where the visual change is considered to be benign in the context of where it occurs.

- 6.33 The assessment has been undertaken in terms of the following criteria:

- i) **Quality of the view** – the relative quality and sensitivity of views into the site, including landscape character and visual amenity values.
- ii) **Viewpoint | perceptual factors** – the type and size of population exposed to views into the site, the viewing distance to the site, and other factors which indicate its sensitivity in terms of both viewing audience and the inherent exposure of the view towards the site due to its physical character.

- iii) **Urban | rural amenity** – the impact of future development on the wider surrounding urban and rural amenity.
- iv) **Urban | rural form** – the degree to which future development would fit into the existing urban and rural context of the surrounding environs.
- v) **Visual intrusion | contrast** – the intrusion into, or obstruction of views to landscape features in the locality and beyond and the impact upon key landscape elements and patterns.
- vi) **Mitigation potential** – the extent to which any potential adverse effects of the development could be mitigated through integration into its surrounds by specific measures.

### **Adjoining Properties**

- 6.34 The adjacent properties to the site would be most affected by future urban development enabled by the PPC. This would include the adjoining residential properties to the south in McCaw Avenue and west in Totara Road. Views towards parts of the site however would be moderated, filtered or partially screened by existing vegetation patterns within the surrounding properties, buildings and structures, and orientation of the view.
- 6.35 For the immediately adjoining properties, the existing outlook would change noticeably from a relatively open semi-rural scene characterised by pastoral activities, into a comprehensive urban view. Although this would constitute a distinctive change to the existing character and a loss of the spaciousness, it is not the type of change which is totally unexpected within the planning context of the AUP and WSP, and the quality nature of the future urban development would ensure that a suitable level of amenity is achieved.
- 6.36 Once the site is developed, the existing views would be replaced with a mixed housing urban development with planted streetscapes and other planting, such as the planting of the riparian areas and planting associated with the residential dwellings. Development enabled by the proposal would not be out of context due to the surrounding residential settlement pattern within Whenuapai and FUZ zoning of the site and surrounding area to the north and west. The future form would be read as part of the surrounding wider Whenuapai urban context.
- 6.37 From these close viewing locations, the full effects of change brought about by the PPC would be gradual as the land is retired from pastoral use, modified, and staged built development extends across the landform. It is anticipated that the full progression from semi-rural to urban would logically take a number of years, in line with similar urban development of greenfield sites within the surrounding Whenuapai area. This would reduce the impact of the change to some degree, due to the incremental nature of the changes and a general conditioning of the audience over time as urban development progresses. Development would also be viewed as a logical extension to the current Whenuapai residential intensification occurring locally.
- 6.38 Development enabled by the PPC, however, would change the landscape character and visual amenity currently experienced for the surrounding properties. Overall, the adverse visual amenity effects for the adjoining residential and semi-rural properties would be moderate, albeit anticipated through the zoning of the site for urban development given that the land has been identified as suitable for urbanisation through the FUZ and WSP. Effects on landscape values must be assessed against the existing environment and the outcomes sought in the relevant statutory provisions which anticipate change, and within this context the effects on the landscape values would be appropriate.

### **Wider Surrounding Area**

- 6.39 Distant views towards parts of the site would potentially be gained from parts of the wider surrounding area. Where visible from the surrounding area, views of development enabled by the PPC would be highly variable due to distance, orientation of the view, diversity of elements

within the view and screening elements (buildings, landform, shelterbelts, and prevailing vegetation patterns). While a noticeable level of built form would be introduced into the landscape, it would be viewed in the context of the surrounding residential settlement pattern within Whenuapai and therefore not appear incongruous.

- 6.40 Development enabled by the PPC would integrate sensitively into the semi-rural and urban landscape due to the scale of the proposal relative to the site context and appearance and visual compatibility with existing built development within the surrounding environs. Any potential adverse visual effects of the proposal would be localised and would have minor implications on the quality, character, and aesthetic values of the surrounding area.
- 6.41 While development enabled by the PPC would be visible from parts of the wider surrounding area, I consider that the adverse visual effects would be low to very low and entirely acceptable within the context of the existing and planned future urban environment.

#### **Surrounding Roads**

- 6.42 The site's location adjoining two roads, results in a high level of exposure towards the PPC site. For road users, in particular those who live locally, the future development of the site is likely to result in visual effects of some significance. For general road users, the effects are likely to be of much less significance as development enabled by the PPC would be seen as part of the pattern of land use change occurring locally within the surrounding Whenuapai environs.
- 6.43 Although a large audience, the general road users are unlikely to be particularly sensitive to future development, as they would have fleeting views of only portions of the site whilst moving through a landscape, which already exhibits diverse characteristics adjoining Whenuapai's residential environs. The sensitivity and the effects of development enabled by the PPC would also be reduced further by the fact that development would be gradual and staged over a number of years.
- 6.44 Overall, the adverse visual effects from the surrounding road network would be low.

#### **Construction Effects**

- 6.45 Construction effects are temporary in duration with the most noticeable changes and resultant effects on visual amenity arising from earthworks associated with roading and associated infrastructure. The construction stage includes impacts on the physical landscape, including vegetation removal and landform modification and visual amenity from public and private locations. Due to the nature and scale of development, and the level of change it would bring to the existing landscape, the visual effects would generally be high during and immediately following construction. These visual effects would however be viewed in the context of the existing residential intensification occurring locally.
- 6.46 Overall, there would be low adverse construction effects given:
- i) The temporary nature of the construction works;
  - ii) The context of the existing and emerging urban landscape; and
  - iii) The extent of the construction works and development being anticipated in this urban environment (as sought by the respective AUP planning provisions).

#### **Cumulative effects**

- 6.47 The cumulative effects of the PPC, in combination with the existing settlement pattern, would not detract from the landscape values of the surrounding area. Overall, I consider that in the context of the established urban and semi-rural environment, development enabled by the PPC could be implemented without adversely affecting the landscape values, physical and visual integrity, and character of the surrounding area.

## 7. Conclusions

- 7.1 The proposed urbanisation of the site resulting from development enabled by the PPC would significantly change its current open and semi-rural landscape character. The development would however be consistent with the site being zoned FUZ with urban expansion envisaged in the AUP and WSP.
- 7.2 Although the subject site is largely in grazed pasture, its semi-rural character is lessened to a degree by the existing land uses including grazing, the dwellings and ancillary farm buildings and structures, accessways and drives, adjoining Whenuapai's residential area to the south, FUZ zoned land to the north and west, and the RNZAF Base to the east. While the site includes productive grazing land, it is a highly modified site with relatively low landscape values. In light of these considerations the site is well suited to the type of urban development proposed.
- 7.3 The proposed urbanisation of the land would inevitably result in the transformation of the site from a fringe rural area to one with urban residential characteristics. This would have implications on the surrounding semi-rural land, with the urban development impacting on the rural quality of this area. Nevertheless, this is a landscape in transition and is an area identified as suitable for urban expansion under the AUP and WSP.
- 7.4 Because of the nature of development enabled by the PPC and the anticipated eventual urbanisation of the site and surrounding area to the north and west, rather than trying to screen the development or create significant buffers, the approach has been to accept the change and attempt to develop the site in accordance with accepted urban design principles to create a quality residential development with a high level of amenity, albeit an urban amenity as anticipated by the AUP and WSP.
- 7.5 While development enabled by the PPC would result in a significant visual change from the site's current open semi-rural state to one with urban characteristics, particularly for some of the immediate neighbours, such visual change is anticipated and is in accordance with the key planning initiatives for the area both within the AUP and WSP.
- 7.6 Development enabled by the PPC would initially generate landscape and visual effects of some significance. These however are inevitable with urban development at the start of a process of urbanisation. In addition, the visual effects of the development of the site apparent from the early stages would decrease over time as street tree plantings and landscape plantings typically associated with the urbanisation of an area become established.
- 7.7 In conclusion, development enabled by the PPC would fulfil the need for residential and urban intensification and provide an opportunity for an innovative and environmentally sustainable urban development. The PPC would be largely consistent with the regional growth strategies for the area and would result in a high-quality urban development.
- 7.8 Overall, I consider that in the context of the established environment the proposal could be visually accommodated without adversely affecting the character, aesthetic value and integrity of the surrounding environment.

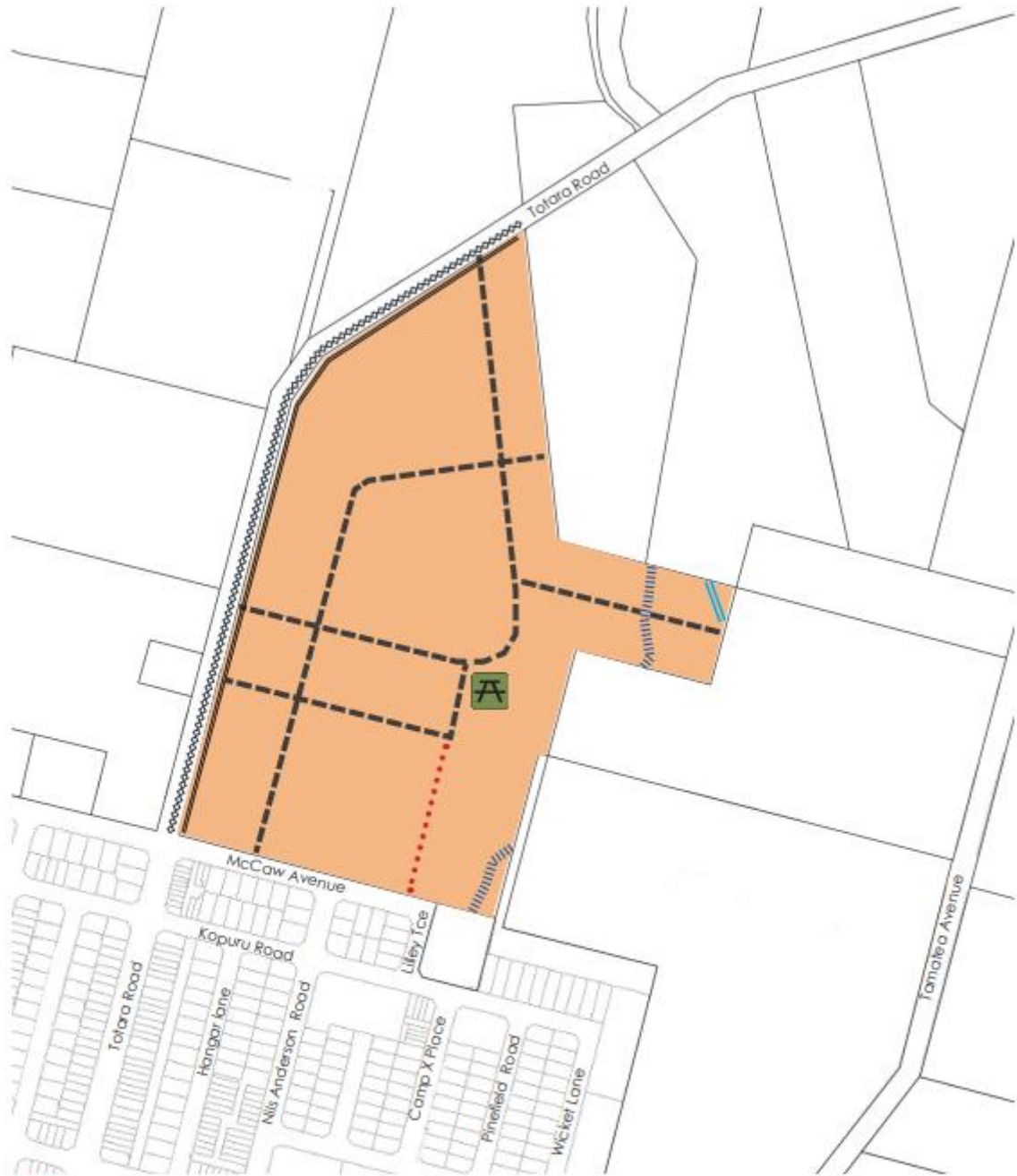
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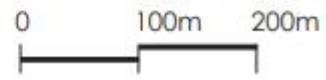
**LA4 Landscape Architects**

January 2024

# Annexure 1: Whenuapai Green Precinct Plan



-  Precinct Boundary
-  Mixed Housing Urban Zone
-  local road (indicative location)
-  road widening (3m)
-  stream
-  neighbourhood park (indicative location)
-  pedestrian and cycle link (indicative location)
-  10m riparian corridor
-  berm upgrade to include footpath and cycleway



## WHENUAPAI GREEN PRECINCT PLAN 1



## **Annexure 2: Viewpoint Photographs**



Viewpoint 1: McCaw Avenue | Lilley Terrace



Viewpoint 2: Kopuru Road | Nils Anderson Road



Viewpoint 3: Totara Road | Kopuru Road



Viewpoint 4: 137 Totara Road



Viewpoint 5: 119 Totara Road

## Annexure 3: Visual Effects Matrix Methodology

Use of a matrix offers one way in which the various facets of visual change – qualitative change, visual contrast etc. – can be pulled together and evaluated in a way which gives due weight to each. This matrix was designed to measure the scale of no or low visual effects through to high visual effects.

The assessment matrix is broken into two stages. The first involves looking at the existing situation and assessing the visual quality and sensitivity of the present view to change. This is followed by an evaluation of the changes associated with the proposed development. Key issues or variables are addressed within each stage and ratings for these are eventually combined to provide a composite visual effects rating. Set out below is the basic structure, showing what these key variables are and how they are arranged:

### PART A - SENSITIVITY OF THE VIEW AND SITE TO CHANGE

- A1. Analysis of the view's **Visual Quality** is carried out on the basis that higher quality views are more sensitive to potential disruption and degradation than poorer quality views.
- A2. Analysis of the view's **Visual Absorption Capability** is an evaluation of the degree to which a view is predisposed, or otherwise, to change by virtue of its land uses and/or screening elements and will either accommodate change or make it stand out from its setting.
- A3. Analysis of **Perceptual Factors**. In this section the type and size of population represented by the viewpoint, the viewing distance to the development site and other factors which indicate its sensitivity in terms of both viewing audience and the inherent exposure of the viewpoint to the site because of its physical character is assessed.

### PART B - INTRUSION AND QUALITATIVE CHANGE

- B1. Analysis of **Intrusion | Contrast**: the degree to which a proposal's location and specific structural content and appearance make it either blend into its surroundings or be made to stand out from them in terms of form, linearity, mass, colour and physical factors. Whether or not the proposal would intrude into existing views.
- B2. Analysis of the proposal's **Aesthetic Characteristics**: exploring the degree to which it would relate aesthetically and in terms of general character to its surroundings.

Ratings are combined for each viewpoint via a system of averaging and multiplying of ratings to progressively indicate each viewpoint's **sensitivity**, followed by levels of **intrusion and qualitative change**, and culminate in an **overall visual effects rating**.