



LA4

Private Plan Change  
9 – 49 Heights Road, Pukekohe

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**Assessment of Landscape and Visual Effects**



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## Assessment of Landscape and Visual Effects Quality Assurance Statement

Prepared by:



Director

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Reviewed by:



Director

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Approved for Issue by:



Director

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# Private Plan Change 9 – 49 Heights Road, Pukekohe

## Assessment of Landscape and Visual Effects

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 LA4 Landscape Architects ('**LA4**') have been engaged by GBar Properties Limited to undertake an Assessment of Landscape and Visual Effects ('**ALVE**') for a proposed Private Plan Change ('**PC**') for the site at 9 – 49 Heights Road, Pukekohe ('the **Site**').
- 1.2 The site is zoned 'Future Urban' ('**FUZ**') within the Auckland Unitary Plan (Operative in Part) ('**AUP**') and the site also falls within the area subject to Auckland Council's Pukekohe – Paerata Structure Plan ('**PPSP**') with a Business – Light Industry zone across the FUZ.
- 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 PC on the landscape values of the site and surrounding area. Investigations of the site and surrounding environment were undertaken in December 2022.

### 2. Proposed Plan Change

- 2.1 The site is located within the Auckland Unitary Plan ('**AUP**') Future Urban Zone ('**FUZ**') and covers a total area of 5.3547ha. The proposal seeks a Private Plan Change to rezone the land as Business – Light Industry ('**LI**').

### 3. Assessment Methodology

- 3.1 The key to assessing the landscape character and visual amenity effects of the PC 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) this includes an assessment of the cumulative effects of the proposal combined with existing developments.
- 3.2 The methodology used in this assessment is based on the based on the guidelines contained in the Tuia Pito Ora NZILA 'Aotearoa Landscape Assessment Guidelines 2022' and designed to assess whether or not development enabled by the PC would have adverse landscape effects on the nature and quality of the surroundings. The following methodology has been used in this assessment.

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

- 3.3 A review of the existing background information and plans has been undertaken in relation to the landscape and visual amenity aspects of the proposal. Key landscape and environmental factors which would potentially be affected by the proposal were identified and reviewed.

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

- 3.4 A review of the relevant AUP statutory provisions was undertaken to identify the key landscape and visual related objectives and policies 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 environment were undertaken. The landscape 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 change as a result of development enabled by the PC undertaken.

- 3.6 An analysis of the existing visual amenity and landscape character of the site and surrounding environment was undertaken. The analysis identified how vulnerable the site and surrounding environment is to change. This included:
- i) aesthetic value (vividness, complexity, cohesion, legibility, and other less tangible values)
  - ii) natural processes, patterns, and elements
  - iii) rarity
  - iv) visual absorption capability including land uses, vegetation cover and type and topographic diversity and type
  - v) exposure and visibility.

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

- 3.7 The physical area that would be visually affected by development enabled by the PC was identified. In turn, this indicated the range, type and size of viewing audiences that would 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.
- 3.9 Detailed analysis of the implications of the proposal was then carried out using a Visual Effects Matrix, which ensures that each view and changes within each view are evaluated thoroughly and consistently.

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

- 3.10 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. This process assessed the effects of the proposal and identified the aspects which were likely to have high or adverse visual, landscape or visual amenity impacts.

#### ***Conclusions***

- 3.11 An evaluation of the proposal as a whole considering 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 and amenity effects of the development including recommendations for avoiding, remedying, or mitigating these effects.

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

- 4.1 The site comprises 5.3547ha and is bounded to the north by Heights Road, east by Paerata Road (SH22) and the to the south and west by Heights Park Cemetery. The topography of the site falls generally in a southeasterly direction from Heights Road at RL60m in the west to RL50m in the east to the southern boundary at RL55m in the west to RL50m in the east. The developed eastern part of the site comprises two terraces at RL50m and RL45m where the existing industrial activities are located.
- 4.2 The site is presently utilised for a variety of commercial activities including the Tractor Centre – tractor sales and repairs, farm equipment repairs, Totalspan garages and sheds, and an agricultural spray equipment company. Large storage yards, access

drives and manoeuvring areas are located throughout the site. A two-storey residential property is located at 49 Heights Road, in the western part of the site with vegetated and grassed grounds. A number of established trees are within this property including oaks, magnolias, maples, rimu, ginkgo, conifers, totara, and copper beech. A mature Japanese cedar shelterbelt extends along the western and southern boundary of this part of the site.



**Figure 1:** Looking southwest towards the site from Paerata Road



**Figure 2:** Looking northwest towards the site from 1173 Paerata Road



**Figure 3:** Looking southeast across the site from Heights Road



**Figure 4:** Looking west across the site from Heights Road

### **The surrounding landscape context**

- 4.3 The surrounding landscape comprises a varied mix of activities including rural lifestyle and commercial and glasshouse type horticulture. Rural lifestyle is predominant with pasture as the dominant landcover. Immediately to the south and west of the site is the Heights Park Cemetery with burial plots, gardens, toilets, access drive and car parking areas. The cemetery is characterised by a large number of mature tree plantings located throughout the gardens. The North Island Main Trunk Railway ('NIMT') line extends to the west of Paerata Road, and the Glenbrook railway branch line is to the south of the cemetery, traversing east to west. State Highway 22 is located to the east

of the site with a continuous stream of trucks, cars and vans travelling along the main access road into Pukekohe.

- 4.4 The site lies within the Pukekohe North tuff ring which consists of three sections of arcuate ridge (elevation RL55m-RL75m) partly encircling a 1 km-diameter, flat-floored basin (45 metre elevation). Paerata-Pukekohe Road and the NIMT railway run through the middle of the flat-floored crater. While the Pukekohe North Tuff Ring is included within the Pukekohe-Paerata Structure Plan it is not identified in the AUP as an Outstanding Natural Feature ('**ONF**') or Outstanding Natural Landscape ('**ONL**'). Nga Hau E Wha O Pukekohe marae is located to the southwest in Beatty Road. The hapū is Ngāti Tamaoho of the Waikato-Tainui.
- 4.5 Rural residential properties characterised by smaller landholdings, typically 1ha – 6ha, with lifestyle activities extend further to the west and south of the site, beyond which is the urbanised area of north Pukekohe. Balle Brothers large vegetable crop packing facility is located to the southwest, in Beatty Road, along with a number of glasshouses and cropping fields. These landholdings are also zoned FUZ. The Pukekohe north light industrial zone is located to the southeast, with a number of large format buildings and storage yards.
- 4.6 Rural landholdings extend along the northern side of Heights Road within the Rural Production zone with pastoral grazing activities and stands of indigenous bush within the gullies and stream corridors.

## 5. Statutory Context

- 5.1 A comprehensive outline of the proposal relating to statutory and non-statutory provisions is provided within the AEE documentation prepared by Woods. This section of the assessment outlines, by way of background, the provisions most relevant to landscape character and visual amenity matters.
- 5.2 The site is identified within the Pukekohe – Paerata Structure Plan ('**PPSP**') with a Business – Light Industry zone across the FUZ. As outlined previously the PC seeks to rezone the land as Business – Light Industry. This enables industrial buildings up to 20m in height.
- 5.3 The PC proposes to use the existing provisions associated with the LI zone under the AUP. These have been tested and proved as appropriate as part of the establishment of the AUP. This PC application is for rezoning only and any further matters can and will be dealt with as part of future resource consent processes for the respective sites.
- 5.4 The following statutory documents are of particular relevance to this assessment:
  - Resource Management Act 1991
  - Auckland Unitary Plan (Operative in Part)
  - Pukekohe – Paerata Structure Plan 2019

### **Resource Management Act 1991**

- 5.5 Part 2 of the Resource Management Act 1991 ('**RMA**') 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. Section 6(a) is not relevant as the site is not located within the coastal environment. 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.

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

- 5.6 The main relevant sections of the AUP relating to the landscape and visual effects are as follows:

#### **H17. Business – Light Industry Zone**

- 5.7 The Business – Light Industry Zone anticipates industrial activities that do not generate objectionable odour, dust or noise. This includes manufacturing, production, logistics, storage, transport and distribution activities. The anticipated level of amenity is lower than the centres zones, Business – General Business Zone and Business – Mixed Use Zone. Due to the industrial nature of the zone, activities sensitive to air discharges are generally not provided for.

##### **H17.2. Objectives**

- 1) *Light industrial activities locate and function efficiently within the zone.*
- 2) *The establishment of activities that may compromise the efficiency and functionality of the zone for light industrial activities is avoided.*
- 3) *Adverse effects on amenity values and the natural environment, both within the zone and on adjacent areas, are managed.*
- 4) *Development avoids, remedies or mitigates adverse effects on the amenity of adjacent public open spaces and residential zones.*

##### **H17.3. Policies**

- 1) *Enable light industrial activities to locate in the zone.*
- 2) *Avoid reverse sensitivity effects from activities that may constrain the establishment and operation of light industrial activities.*
- 3) *Avoid activities that do not support the primary function of the zone.*
- 4) *Require development adjacent to open space zones, residential zones and special purpose zones to manage adverse amenity effects on those zones.*
- 5) *In identified locations enable greater building height than the standard zone height, having regard to whether the greater height:*
  - (a) *is an efficient use of land; and*
  - (b) *can be accommodated without significant adverse effects on adjacent residential zones; considering the size and depth of the area.*
- ...
- 8) *Restrict maximum impervious area within the riparian yard in order to ensure that adverse effects on water quality, water quantity and amenity values are avoided or mitigated.*

## **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*

#### **Comment:**

- 5.8 With respect to the matters addressed in these objectives and policies, I note as follows:
- i) Potential adverse effects on amenity values and the natural environment, both within the PC site and on adjacent areas would be avoided, remedied or mitigated in accordance with the operative AUP provisions. Existing light industrial activities are currently operating within the eastern part of the site and development enabled by the PC would be seen within this established context.
  - ii) The scale and generally utilitarian design of the future light industrial buildings would be visually appropriate for the rural properties to the north where similar scale buildings are also permitted within the zone.
  - iii) Development enabled by the PC would be largely in keeping with the area's planned built character as anticipated within the PPSP, with the site identified as

suitable for light industrial activities. The adjoining landholdings to the south (beyond the cemetery) and west are similarly zoned for future urban development.

- iv) Existing mature tree plantings within the entrance to the Heights Park Cemetery to the west of the site would provide an appropriate vegetative buffer to the FUZ zoned land to the west, identified in the PPSP as Residential – Mixed Housing Suburban.
- v) Existing mature tree plantings within the Heights Park Cemetery to the south would form an effective buffer to the site from within the cemetery grounds.
- vi) The 2m planted front yard along the Heights Road frontage would provide a suitable interface with the road and rural properties to the north.

### **Summary**

- 5.9 I therefore consider that future development enabled by the PC 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 and visual amenity terms.

### **Pukekohe-Paerata Structure Plan**

- 5.10 In 2017, Auckland Council engaged Opus Consultants to undertake a landscape and visual assessment of the Pukekohe-Paerata Structure Plan area which had been identified as being suitable for urbanisation in the Auckland Unitary Plan<sup>1</sup>. This report was prepared to identify and provide an evaluation of existing landscape attributes and the likely effects of urbanisation on landscape character and visual amenity. It also identified ways in which the landscape can positively contribute to the area's future urbanisation. The main purpose was to recommend landscapes to be protected, opportunities to enhance landscape character and visual amenity and opportunities for new landscape interventions to help shape a quality urban environment.
- 5.11 Within the report the site is located within Landscape Character Area 7 – Pukekohe North, characterised by gently-moderately undulating rural lifestyle land. The character area was evaluated as having a low sensitivity to change.

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

- 6.1 The key to assessing the landscape character and visual amenity effects of development enabled by the PC is first to establish the existing characteristics and values of the landscape and then to assess the effects of development enabled by the PC on them. In accordance with the Resource Management Act 1991 this includes an assessment of the cumulative effects of the proposal combined with existing urban and light industrial development within Pukekohe.
- 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 PC and development opportunities. The assessment responds to matters related to landscape and visual amenity. It also considers the anticipated outcomes of the LI zone proposed (in relation to the AUP provisions) and their suitability in this setting.
- 6.3 The zoning sought under the PC will enable development opportunities pertaining to the provisions associated with the anticipated AUP zoning. This application is for rezoning and any further matters can and will be dealt with as part of future resource consent processes for the respective sites.

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<sup>1</sup> *Pukekohe-Paerata Structure Plan, Landscape and Visual Assessment, Opus International Consultants, August 2019*

- 6.4 The 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 assessment relate to the urban landscape and visual amenity include the following:
- i) Landscape effects
  - ii) Visual amenity effects
  - iii) Construction effects

### **Landscape Effects**

- 6.6 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.
- 6.7 '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.
- 6.8 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.
- 6.9 Landscape character results from a combination of physical elements together with aesthetic and perceptual aspects that combine to make an area distinct. The wider Pukekohe landscape is 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 and associated infrastructure for urban residential development.
- 6.10 It is also important to note that although the wider area currently exhibits rural characteristics, there is not a high degree of 'ruralness' due to a combination of the size of landholdings, the patterns of rural-residential and countryside living settlement, existing infrastructure, SH22, the NIMT railway line and the proximity to the urbanised

area of Pukekohe. Consequently, distinctly urban influences are highly evident in the area, which further reduce the sensitivity of the site and surrounding environment to change as anticipated by the PC.

- 6.11 While the Pukekohe North Tuff Ring is included within the Pukekohe-Paerata Structure Plan it is not identified in the AUP as an Outstanding Natural Feature ('ONF') or Outstanding Natural Landscape ('ONL').

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

- 6.12 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 highly modified and relatively degraded environment lacking any significant landscape and natural character values, comprising a number of light industrial activities.
- 6.13 The landscape values associated with the site itself are low due to the existing light industrial activities in the eastern part of the site, constructed platforms and accessway and lack of significant vegetation (apart from the western end of the site). The surrounding road network and proximity to the NIMT further degrade the landscape values of the area. As such the landscape sensitivity of the site to change as enabled by the PC is low.
- 6.14 Development enabled by the PC would not introduce new elements or features that would adversely influence the landscape values and character of the area. There would be short term effects associated with earthworks and construction activities, however these would be for a brief duration.
- 6.15 While the landscape receptors within the surrounding area currently comprise a number of residents within rural lifestyle properties, the site is zoned for future urban development including land to the south and west. Change is therefore anticipated on the site by the AUP and PPSP. In consideration of the above, the proposal would therefore have low adverse landscape effects on the site and surrounding urban area.

### **Visual Effects**

- 6.16 The assessment of visual 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.
- 6.17 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.
- 6.18 The methodology used in this assessment is designed to assess whether or not future development enabled by the PC would have adverse visual effects on the nature and quality of the surrounding environment.

The process of analysing such effects involves:

- i) Identification of the physical area or catchment from which development enabled by the PC would be visible
- ii) Identification of the different viewing audiences that would be affected by future development enabled by the PC; and

- iii) Evaluation of the visual amenity effects taking into account the preceding analysis.

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

- 6.19 The visual catchment is the area from which noticeable visual effects of future development enabled by the PC within the site are likely to be evident to any significant degree. Paerata Road and Heights Road surrounding the northern and eastern boundaries of the site result in a number of open views into the site, however buildings within the site, the lower elevation of the site relative to Heights Road, existing vegetation patterns and landform variations currently provide a level of screening from parts of the surrounding area.
- 6.20 Consequently, Heights Road and Paerata Road and properties accessed off these roads, define the main visual catchment. Heights Park Cemetery to the south of the site would gain views into the site from a number of areas, albeit filtered to a degree by existing mature tree plantings within the cemetery. Elevated views would be gained from the rural residential landholdings to the north, lessened however by the lower elevation of the site in relation to the view.
- 6.21 The residential property to the east at 1173 Paerata Road would gain views towards parts of the site albeit largely screen by the existing activities within the site. Travellers on trains on the NIMT and Glenbrook railway line would experience fleeting and transient views.
- 6.22 The viewing audience would therefore encompass the following groups:
  - i) Road users on the surrounding roads including Paerata Road and Heights Road
  - ii) Residents and visitors within the residential property at 1173 Paerata Road
  - iii) Residents and workers within the rural residential properties to the north of the site at 12 and 30 Heights Road
  - iv) Passengers travelling along the NIMT and Glenbrook railway line
  - v) Visitors to Heights Park Cemetery; and
  - vi) Distant viewers within the wider surrounding area.
- 6.23 Overall, the anticipated level of audience exposure would be large due to the location of the site adjacent to the surrounding roads and in particular Paerata Road, being the main thoroughfare into Pukekohe from northern locations.

### **Visual Amenity Effects Analysis**

- 6.24 The proposed future development of the site enabled by the PC 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
- 6.25 The visual effects of development enabled by the PC have been assessed from representative viewpoints within the visual catchment area that have the 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.
- 6.26 The assessment has been undertaken by reference the following viewpoints:

**Viewpoint 1:** Paerata Road – Heights Road

**Viewpoint 2:** Paerata Road

**Viewpoint 3:** 1173 Paerata Road

**Viewpoint 4:** Heights Road

**Viewpoint 5:** Heights Park Cemetery

**Adjoining properties**

Refer to: **Annexure 1** – The Site and Viewpoint Location Map  
Viewpoint Photographs

- 6.27 Photographs have been taken with a 35mm SLR camera with a fixed 50mm lens from the viewpoints 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.
- 6.28 The key factors contained in that matrix are given in detail in **Annexure 2**. 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.
- 6.29 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.*

- 6.30 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.
- 6.31 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) **Rural amenity** – the impact of future development on the wider surrounding rural amenity.
  - iv) **Rural form** – the degree to which future development would fit into the existing 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.

#### **Viewpoints 1 and 2: Paerata Road**

- 6.32 Viewpoint 1 is taken from the intersection of Paerata Road and Heights Road looking in a southwesterly direction and Viewpoint 2 from Paerata Road immediately to the southeast of the site looking northwest. These views are representative of views gained from motorists travelling along the road in the vicinity of the site. Beyond these locations to the north and south views are screened by the orientation of the road, vegetation, and the railway embankment. There are no footpaths in the vicinity.
- 6.33 The view has very commercial characteristics due to the existing business activities operating within the site. Signage is prominent and built development reinforces the commercial node. The tractor sales yard is an appropriate activity within the semi-rural context. The utilitarian characteristics of the roading network are apparent with the wide carriageway, busy intersection, streetlights, and overhead wires. To the left of the view is the NIMT railway line on an elevated embankment, prior to crossing Paerata Road.
- 6.34 The viewing audience from here would be very large due to the high traffic volumes travelling the road. For general road users, the visual effects of development enabled by the PC are likely to be less significant as the proposal would be seen as part of the pattern of land use change occurring locally within the surrounding Pukekohe environs. 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 within the vicinity.
- 6.35 As illustrated in the view, the existing buildings at the eastern end of the site largely screen views towards the remainder of the site. From here, once developed, there would be an additional level of built structures within the view, located behind the existing buildings. They would be viewed as a logical extension of the existing facility and would not appear incongruous. Overall, the visual effects of the proposal from here would be low and entirely appropriate within the context of the existing environment.



### **Viewpoint 3: 1173 Paerata Road**

- 6.36 Viewpoint 3 is taken from the ROW accessing the residential property at 1173 Paerata Road looking in a northwesterly direction towards the site. The outlook is similar to viewpoint 2, albeit more elevated. This view is representative of views gained from parts of the property.
- 6.37 Again, from here the view has very commercial characteristics due to the existing business activities operating within the site. The view extends across the site to the grazed pastoral slopes on the northern side of Heights Road. Immediately to the rear of the view is the NIMT railway line which passes over Paerata Road in the vicinity. Roadside vegetation and the rising landform to the left of the view screens the western part of the site.
- 6.38 Development enabled by the PC would be viewed within the context of the existing commercial characteristics of the site. The majority of built development would be to the left of the view and largely screened by landform and vegetation. Redevelopment towards the eastern end of the site would be viewed sitting below and against the backdrop of the grazed slopes. They would be viewed as a logical extension of the existing facility and reinforce the commercial characteristics at this node. Overall, the visual effects of the proposal from here would be low and development would not appear incongruous.

### **Viewpoint 4: Heights Road**

- 6.39 Viewpoint 4 is taken from Heights Road looking in an easterly direction across the site. This is the first viewing location travelling east along the road where views are exposed as prior to here the orientation of the road and vegetation within the western end of the site and cemetery grounds screens views. These views are representative of views gained from motorists travelling along the road in the vicinity of the site. There are no footpaths in the vicinity.
- 6.40 As illustrated, the lower elevation of the site screens large areas of the site. The recently constructed GMC Engineering building sits low within the site, towards the road frontage. The view extends across the site towards the NIMT railway line and embankment and beyond to the rural properties accessed off Cape Hill Road. To the right of the view is the mown eastern end of Heights Park Cemetery.
- 6.41 Although a large viewing audience, the 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 exhibits diverse characteristics within the vicinity.
- 6.42 Development enabled by the PC would extend existing built infrastructure in a westerly direction across the site. Heights Road in the vicinity is at an elevation of approximately RL60m and the existing building platforms within the site are at RL50m. As illustrated with the recently constructed building, development would sit low within the site. The LIZ provisions require a 2m front yard planted with a mixture of trees, shrubs, or ground cover plants within and along the full extent of the yard. This would assist to soften and partially screen the built development.
- 6.43 Overall, the visual effects of development enabled by the PC from here would be low-moderate and viewed within the context of the existing commercial activities.

### **Viewpoint 5 – Heights Park Cemetery**

- 6.44 Viewpoint 5 illustrates the view from the eastern end of Heights Park Cemetery looking in a northerly direction across the site. From here the commercial characteristics of the site are prominent with the built development, retaining walls, earthworked building

platforms, manoeuvring areas and storage yards. The recently constructed GMC Engineering building, while large, fits very sensitively into the landscape setting through its dark recessive colour and sitting below the backdrop ridge.

- 6.45 For users of the cemetery, the existing outlook would change noticeably from a partially developed outlook into a comprehensive light industrial view. Although this would constitute a distinctive change to the existing semi-rural character and a loss of the existing spaciousness, it is not the type of change which is totally unexpected within the planning context of the area within the AUP and PPSP. Views from with the main section of the cemetery would be screened by the mature tree plantings within the cemetery grounds, and sightlines to the site would be limited due to the lower elevation of the site in relation to the cemetery.
- 6.46 Overall, the visual effects would be low-moderate with views from large parts of the cemetery screened or filtered by the mature tree plantings.

#### **Adjoining Properties**

- 6.47 The adjoining rural residential properties to the north at 12 and 30 Heights Road would be exposed to views to varying degrees. These properties however are located approximately 16-18m above the site, away from the road and oriented in a northerly direction away from the site. I therefore consider that these properties would not be adversely affected by development enabled by the PC.

#### **Construction Effects**

- 6.48 Due to the nature and scale of the development, and the level of disturbance it would bring to the existing landscape, the visual effects would generally be high during and immediately following construction. The most noticeable changes and resultant effects on visual amenity would arise from earthworks associated with building platforms, retaining walls and associated infrastructure. These visual effects would however be viewed in the context of existing activities within the site.

## **7. Conclusions**

- 7.1 The site and surrounding environment have a good capacity to accommodate development enabled by the Plan Change. Existing commercial activities are occurring within the site and have been an established component of the Pukekohe environs for a number of years.
- 7.2 While the proposal would result in a significant visual change from the site's partially developed state to one with light industrial 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 PPSP.
- 7.3 I consider that the proposed Plan Change is appropriate in this rural setting from a landscape character and visual amenity perspective.

Rob Pryor  
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**LA4 Landscape Architects**  
February 2023



## **Annexure 1: The Site and Viewpoint Location Map and Viewpoint Photographs**



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— Proposed Heights Road Plan Change Boundary

## Heights Road Plan Change - The Site + Viewpoint Location Map



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Heights Road Plan Change - Viewpoint 1 – Paerata Road



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Heights Road Plan Change - Viewpoint 2 – Paerata Road



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Heights Road Plan Change - Viewpoint 3 – Paerata Road



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Heights Road Plan Change - Viewpoint 4 – Heights Road





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Heights Road Plan Change - Viewpoint 5 – Heights Park Cemetery

## Annexure 2: 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**.