

PROJECT MEMORANDUM



Project: Plan Change Application RM220139, J & T Quigley Ltd **Memo:** 1/R2 **Page:** 1 of 6

Topic: Response for a Request for Further Information – Landscape and Visual Effects

Date: 20 June 2023

Attention: Louise Feathers – Feathers Planning

From: Dave Mansergh- Landscape Architect for the Applicant

INTRODUCTION

Precision Built Ltd has applied to the South Waikato District Council to rezone the property at 1861 Ongaroto Road (1/1, Lot 9 Deposited Plan 425239 and Part Lot 1 Deposited Plan 24479) from *Rural* to *Rural Residential*. Based on the land area and proposed rules, this would enable the creation of approximately 66 rural residential lots.

Mansergh Graham Landscape Architects Ltd (“MGLA”) has been engaged to assess the effects of rezoning the site on the landscape, natural character, and visual amenity values.

On 31 May 2023, South Waikato District Council issued a request for further information (Ref: RM220139). This memorandum has been prepared in response to the request for further information requests relating to landscape design and effects.

Request 6: Landscape – Development Appropriateness and Intensity

Please provide the following information/assessment:

- i) Proposed layout and intensity of future lots, including how a spatial balance of built form with an appropriate proportion of relatively continuous un-built space would be anticipated across the site and how the proposed layout complements the existing landscape.*
- ii) The LVA states “the proposed Structure Plan promotes the clustering of Lots within the site separated by local purpose reserves and planting”. Please clarify how the proposed ‘alley-like’ Local Purpose Reserve areas contribute to openness amongst lot areas.*
- iii) Please advise how the proposed roadways, footpaths and other hard-scaped areas in relation to rural character and/or infrastructure that tends to be more-associated with urban character.*

Response to Request 6 i), ii) & iii):

This proposed subdivision plan achieves a spatial balance between built form and unbuilt space while complementing the existing landscape, by specifically considering the appropriateness and placement of building platforms and building massing within the landscape. The design approach seeks to integrate the development into the surrounding rural environment, using restoration and enhancement planting to ensure a harmonious and visually appealing development. The proposed roads within the site have been carefully considered and will be sited on the flatter terrace landforms to avoid significant earthworks.

Opportunities for spatial separation are provided by the existing contours within the site and the use of landscape design and integration techniques, such as the use of bands of vegetation and clusters of trees to visually separate clusters of buildings and effectively integrate them into the wider environment has been adopted. By carefully selecting materials, colours, and architectural forms that harmonize with the natural surroundings, the future dwellings will visually blend into the landscape, maintaining the rural character of the surrounding areas while accommodating a higher density or intensity of development within the site.

While considering the higher density or intensity of development, the layout of the subdivision plan will achieve a balanced distribution of built form (dwellings and ancillary buildings) and unbuilt space (vegetation, open areas, and green corridors). The application of design recommendations and constraints on the size and placement of buildings allows for a proportional allocation of space, ensuring that the development does not overwhelm the site (at both the lot level and site level). This approach includes the creation of generous open spaces, interconnected green corridors and links, thereby maintaining a sense of spaciousness and continuity within the development and between the development and the adjacent reserve.

Furthermore, the proposal adopts the existing District Plan rules relating to site coverage and setbacks, which sets an 'acceptable' or 'balanced' ratio of built to unbuilt space in a rural residential environment, within this District.

Despite the higher density, the proposed development will enhance the existing natural character values of the site, through the introduction of native vegetation and clusters of trees which will be integrated within open spaces, enhancing its existing ecological value. The establishment of setbacks and buffers ensures that these new natural elements are protected, and species eco-selection will contribute to the overall compatibility of the development with the existing, wider landscape.

The proposed layout optimises visual aesthetics and views within the subdivision. The placement of buildings is carefully designed to maximize sightlines and vistas for all proposed lots, enabling residents to appreciate the scenic elements of the surrounding landscape. By considering the visual impact of the development and ensuring unobstructed views, the subdivision plan maintains an open and visually appealing environment despite the higher density or intensity of development.

Incorporating higher density or intensity of development does not neglect the importance of the proposed pedestrian links, green spaces (planting covenant areas), and the adjacent recreation reserve.

While accommodating higher density or intensity, the subdivision plan also integrates sustainable design features that promote environmental responsibility. These features include the use of green infrastructure, stormwater management strategies, and energy-efficient building practices. The space required for these features will be read as open space within the application site. By incorporating sustainability into the plan, the development minimizes its ecological footprint, contributes to the overall spatial balance, and supports the long-term environmental health of the site.

As shown in the concept plan and cross sections, the proposed roadways will not include kerb and channel, and will instead incorporate a green berm and swales for stormwater management. This approach serves to create a visual aesthetic that is distinctly non-urban. By avoiding the use of kerb and channels, which are typically associated with more urbanized areas, the development maintains a rural and more natural appearance. This design choice ensures that the roadway visually integrates with the rural road network while offering enough design clues to be read as a low-speed environment.

The inclusion of vegetation, such as trees, shrubs, and native plants, within the berm further softens the visual impact and reinforces the connection to the natural environment.

The Applicant's Paradise Point Design Guide also includes specific landscaping measures to achieve a rural-residential character, such as through specific fencing heights and types, and ground treatment.

It should be noted that the proposed plan change application seeks to enable additional density within the site than that anticipated by the District Plan (through removal of the averaging rule). As such any application for

resource consent sought under the new zoning (if adopted) would be assessed within the context of the density provision of the new Rural- Residential zone, rather than against the existing rural zone.

Request 7: Landscape – Site Interface and Reserve

Please provide the following information/assessment:

- i) *Assessment concerning the interface of the proposed site and relationship to Lake Whakamaru Reserve. Within this context it is considered the existing lakeside reserve, while not classified under a formal 'zoning' in the District Plan, is an area of distinctive activity and associated character including as part of the classified Outstanding Landscape Area. It is considered that sensitivity to change would be considered 'high' at the interface of the site and Reserve, particularly for proposed Rural Residential Concept intensity.*

Response to Request 7 i):

The inclusion of a buffer of native planting (identified as the vegetation covenant areas on the proposed structure plan (Revision R10 13/6/2023) between a recreation reserve and adjacent rural residential lots, offers two key practical benefits.

First, the planting area will serve as a natural barrier, effectively separating the recreation reserve from the houses within the development. This will assist in buffering activity within the subdivision from the reserve and the ONL.

Secondly, the use of native planting promotes biodiversity and will provide habitat and food sources for local wildlife. This contributes to the overall ecological health of the area, supporting the preservation of indigenous species and enhancing the natural balance within the ecosystem. It will enhance the existing natural character values associated with the Lake.

Following discussions with Council, the proposed structure plan and subdivision concept plan have been updated to show a greater depth of vegetation covenant area along the interface between the reserve and the application site at its western end and includes new areas of vegetation covenant at the eastern end (around lots 61, 62, 65, and 66).

A copy of the updated plan set is attached to this response.

Request 8: Representative Viewing Locations

Please provide the following information/assessment:

- i) *Further information should be provided on chosen view locations that are outlined within LVA to be representative for other viewing locations. For example for views toward the site from the northwest, including at Sandy Bay Reserve.*

Response to Request 8(i):

The assessment of visual effects section of the report identifies and assesses the effects of the proposed plan change, through a design proxy, from several surrounding locations. As identified in the VLE report, several potential view locations were investigated but not included in this assessment for the following reasons:

- a. While visible, the effect of the development enabled by the proposed plan change on landscape character, natural character and/or visual amenity would be well below the minor threshold of the RMA) (i.e., have no or negligible effect); and

- b. The potential view location was like another view location. This is the case for new VL10 and the Sandy Bay Reserve (discussed further below). These are shown as “investigated” in the below figure.

Representative and investigated view locations are identified in Figure 17 of the report, copied below for convenience. A new view location (VL 10 has been assessed).

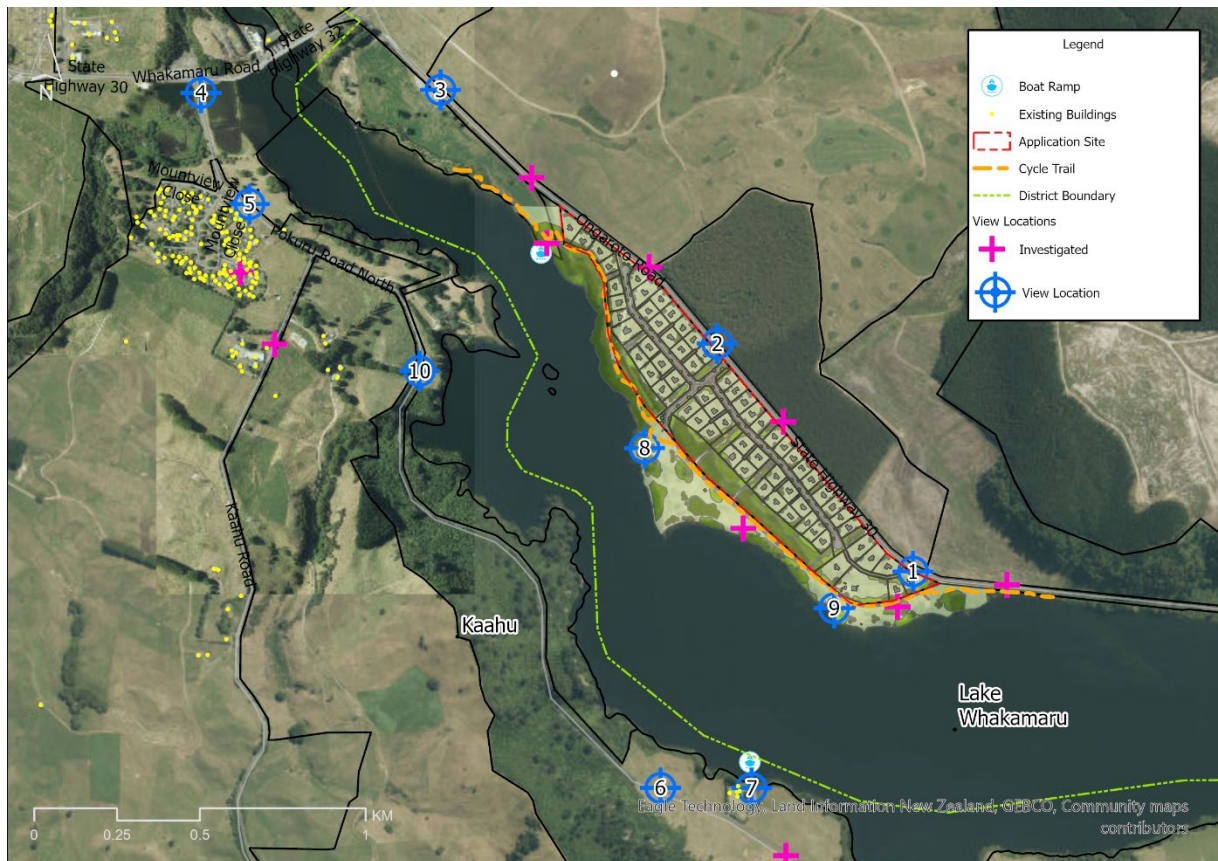


Figure 17 View Location Map

Analysis of the effects on visual amenity from view locations 4 & 5 is updated as follows to include the effects from other locations to the northwest, including the road above the Sandy Bay Reserve and the views from within the reserve. These view locations have been grouped together as they represent the various (mainly transitory) views for the west, including views from on the dam, the recreational reserve adjacent to the dam, Whakamaru Village, Pokuru Road North and Sandy Bay Reserve.

View Locations 4, 5, & 10

View locations 4 and 5 represent views attainable from Whakamaru Village near the dam, lakeside reserve and residential area. VL4 represents the first clear view of the site from the dam and VL 5 is the view from the lakeside reserve and dwellings on the northern side of the village. View location 10 represents the view from Pokuru Road North above Sandy Bay Reserve and the view from within the reserve itself near the lake.

Viewer types in these locations will be transitory (road users and visitors to the reserve) and permanent (residents). Viewer sensitivity from these locations is expected to be moderate as the site forms the backdrop to views to the east across the lake.

Amenity from these view locations is derived from views across Lake Whakamaru to the enclosing landforms beyond. Mature exotic trees along the southern side of the lake frame the views towards the proposed plan

change area, partially screening its eastern end from view. Visually complex, the mosaic of different land use patterns visible from this location is rural and includes pasture, forestry, and the lake. A few buildings can be seen in the distance on the southern side of the lake, scattered across the pastoral landscape. To the south of the lake, Kaahu rises abruptly, its jagged rocky outcrops and steep slopes providing a secondary point of focus, enhancing the visual amenity of the area. Existing visual amenity values from these locations are **moderate-high**.

From VL4 and VL5, only the western end of the proposed plan change area is visible, partially screened by topography and vegetation along the southern part of the lake. From the dam, more of the site is visible. The development enabled by the proposed plan change will alter the landscape characteristics of the site from rural to rural-residential. The screen and mitigation planting along the southern boundary of the site will integrate with enhancement planting within the lakeside reserve to partially screen development from view. This will allow the increased development densities to integrate with the wider rural character surrounding the site. While the introduction of more buildings into the backdrop of the view will change its composition, the proposed structure plan/provisions which control the development density, building materials and colours, as well as the proposed restoration/mitigation planting will ensure that the key attributes that give rise to existing visual amenity will not be affected.

Change in the characteristics of the site will be more noticeable from VL4 than from VL5 (and the houses within Whakamaru Village that this VL represents) due to the added screening afforded between VL5 and the site by the mature trees growing along the southern shores of the lake and within the Village. Distance to the site means that any change within it will be experienced within the context of the wider rural landscape and the adjacent dam and village.

From VL10, the development within the site will be visible from across the lake from the south and more prominent than from VL4 and VL5 due to proximity. This will transform the character of the site from rural to rural-residential. To mitigate the effects of the higher development density, screening and mitigation planting will be implemented along the southern boundary of the site, along with enhancement planting within the lakeside reserve. This will help by reducing the visual prominence of the development enabled by the plan change. This approach will facilitate the integration of increased development densities with the broader rural character that surrounds the site. While closer to the application site than VL10, the effect on landscape character and visual amenity from within the Sandy Bay Reserve will be similar. This is because the planting within the proposed vegetation covenant areas (within the site) will be more effective at mitigating the effects of the proposal when viewed across the lake from the lower elevation. The mitigation is further enhanced through an increase in the width of the vegetation covenant areas in response to the s92 request. Further written analysis from other locations within the Sandy Bay Reserve has not been provided because, as outlined above, the nature and magnitude of the effect will be like that described above.

Although the introduction of additional buildings will alter the composition of the view, the proposed structure plan and provisions governing development density, building materials, colours, and the proposed restoration and mitigation planting will safeguard the essential elements that contribute to the existing visual amenity, ensuring they remain unaffected.

The effect of development enabled by the plan change from VL 4 and VL 5 will be **low-moderate** reducing to **low** once the restoration and enhancement planting within the site and the adjacent reserve becomes established. From VL 10, the effect of development within the site will also be **low-moderate** reducing to **low** once the restoration and enhancement planting within the site and the adjacent reserve becomes established. The key difference is that from this location, due to proximity (and the slightly elevated location), it will take a further 1 – 2 years for the mitigation planting same level of effectiveness.



Figure 2: Photograph from VL 11 looking towards the application site (50mm full frame image. NZTM 1845597 / 5742915)

Updated Summary of Effects Ratings

Existing landscape, natural character and visual amenity values and effect ratings are summarised in the following updated table.

TYPE	EXISTING VALUE	EFFECT RATING*	RMA THRESHOLD
Landscape			
Landscape character (including rural character)	<u>Moderate - High</u>	<u>Low-Moderate</u>	
Visual Amenity			
• VL 1, VL 2 & VL 3	<u>Moderate</u>	<u>Very Low</u>	Less than Minor
• VL 4 & VL 5	<u>Moderate-High</u>	<u>Low</u>	Less than Minor
• VL 6 & VL 7	<u>Moderate-High</u>	<u>Low-Moderate</u>	Minor
• VL 8 & VL 9	<u>Low-Moderate to Moderate-High</u>	<u>Low</u>	Less than Minor
• VL 10	<u>Moderate - High</u>	<u>Low</u>	Minor
Natural Character			
Effects on Natural Character	<u>Low-Moderate</u>	<u>No Effect (Neutral)</u>	
*With the recommended mitigation/restoration measures identified in the proposed provisions and structure plan (Revision R10 13/6/2023 attached).			