

Green Seed Consultant Limited
Rotokauri North – Private Plan Change Request
Landscape and Visual Effects Assessment

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Rotokauri North – Private Plan Change Request

Landscape and Visual Effects Assessment

1. Introduction

- 1.1 LA4 Landscape Architects have been requested by Green Seed Consultant Limited (“**GSCL**”) to undertake a landscape and visual effects assessment to inform and support the proposed Private Plan Change Request (“**PPC**”) for the site at Rotokauri North, Hamilton.
- 1.2 This assessment investigates the existing character of the PPC area and surrounding environment, identifies the key landscape and visual features of the area and describes the visual and landscape implications of the PPC on the site and surrounding Rotokauri North environs.
- 1.3 Investigations of the PPC area and surrounding environment were carried out during February 2019.

2. Project Overview

- 2.1 The Private Plan Change proposes to re-zone approximately 140 hectares of Future Urban (“**FUZ**”) zoned land for urban activities. The application has been made to Hamilton City Council (“Council”) under the Resource Management Act 1991 (“RMA”).
- 2.2 Specifically, the PPC includes:
 - 137.6 hectares is proposed a Medium Density Residential zone (“**MDRZ**”);
 - 1.2 hectares is proposed as Business 6 zone (Neighbourhood) (“**B6Z**”);
 - Amending the existing Rotokauri Structure Plan (“**RSP**”) map to specifically exclude the Rotokauri North area;
 - Insert a new Rotokauri North Structure Plan (“**RNSP**”) and associated rules;
 - A planted landscape buffer along Te Kowhai Road; and
 - Retention of the existing Significant Natural Area (“**SNA**”) overlay located within the site (approximately 1.2 hectares).
- 2.3 The PPC has been prepared following best-practice urban design principles and has included a master plan-based design process. The master plan has demonstrated that the land can be subdivided in a way that will support a high-quality neighbourhood, and also remain compatible with the Council’s Rotokauri Structure Plan.
- 2.4 The PPC would provide for approximately 1,700 – 2,000 houses on sites typically ranging between 150m² up to 400m². The PPC provides for a neighbourhood centre (B6Z) to help meet daily convenience needs and respect the wider centres hierarchy and support existing centres. Provision has also been made for a green network and a number of recreation reserves.
- 2.5 The development will contain a number of new local roads and collector roads linking internal areas with Te Kowhai Road, Exelby Road and yet to be constructed roads to the south as part of the wider Rotokauri North Structure Plan area.

3. The Subject Site and Surrounding Environment

Site Context

- 3.1 The site is located at the north-western edge of Hamilton City. Te Kowhai Road (State Highway 39 ("SH39"), immediately north of the site, demarcates the boundary with Waikato District. The site is bounded by Te Kowhai Road to the north, grazed pastureland to the east (and beyond to the Waikato Expressway), farmland to the south and Exelby Road to the west. Burbush Road runs in a north-south direction in the eastern part of the site.
- 3.2 The site is located centrally within the Hamilton Basin, characterised by low rolling hills and plains with low terraces and gullies draining into the Waikato and Waipa Rivers.
- 3.3 Refer to:

Figure 1 – The Site and Viewpoint Location Map

Figure 2 – Structure Plan 01

Figure 3 – Structure Plan 02

Figure 4 – Site Landscape Character Photographs

Figure 5 – Site Landscape Character Photographs

Landform and Catchment

- 3.4 The site lies in an area that consists of flat-lying plains and rolling hill terrain. The hill terrain is located at the western and eastern edges of the site, rising up to 18m above the plains. The plains are typically at 30m ASL with the hills to the east rising to between 43m ASL and 46m ASL along the southern boundary. The hills to the west rise to a height of approximately 40m ASL along Exelby Road. The hill areas merge to the south of the site, rising to approximately 55m ASL, forming a south to north draining basin in which the majority of the site lies.
- 3.5 The plains make up the majority of the west and central portion of the site. The plains are flat and low-lying with typically less than 1m of elevation across much of the site. Numerous open drains dissect the plains, generally between 0.5m to 2m in depth and width.

Land Use

- 3.6 The majority of the land is in grazed pasture with cattle with a dairy farm and associated buildings in the north east of the site. Gravel and dirt drives and tracks traverse the site providing vehicular access. A number of rural-residential lifestyle dwellings are located on the site (approximately 17) along with hay barns, accessory sheds, garages and buildings.
- 3.7 Access to the various landholdings is from SH39, Burbush Road and Exelby Road.

Streams and Watercourses

- 3.8 An existing stream, being a tributary of the Ohute catchment, runs east-west through the western part of the site, and passes under Exelby Road via a small culvert. A second stream, being a tributary of Te Otamanui catchment, runs north across SH39.

Vegetation

- 3.9 Vegetation on the site is mainly grazed pasture grasses and exotic tree species used for hedging and shelter belts. Some native trees are present on the site but are generally located in amenity gardens surrounding dwellings.

- 3.10 There is an existing significant stand of kahikatea in the north eastern corner of the site, which is identified by the HCDP as a SNA. The SNA, known as Burbush Road Forest or Perkins Bush is a small patch of kahikatea. Kessels (2016) records it as: "The canopy is dominated by kahikatea with emergent rewarewa, with an understorey of tawa, mahoe, white maire, pohuehue and titoki. In 2011 the area was mostly fenced from stock. Weed species include woolly nightshade, Chinese privet, Tradescantia and pasture grasses are prevalent in the ground tier".
- 3.11 Vegetation patterning also comprises exotic hedgerow and shelterbelt plantings along the paddock fence lines, road boundaries and the modified watercourses. A mixture of native and exotic ornamental plants have been planted around the farm dwellings.

Soils

- 3.12 Landcare Research identifies the soils within the site to be a mix of Land Use Capabilities (ranging from 1 in the flats adjacent to Te Kowhai Road to 4 towards the southern extent of the catchment). They also identify the site as having well drained soils (along the ridges) and very poorly drained soils within the main basin. The soil moisture regime ranges from moderate (along the ridges) to very high in the main basin.

The Wider Landscape Context

- 3.13 The Rotokauri growth cell is described in the Hamilton City District Plan ("HCDP") as "an area of approximately 1000 hectares on the north west fringe of Hamilton. It was brought into the city during the 1980's to provide for long-term development and city growth. The majority of the area is zoned for future urban development within the District Plan. The vision is for "the sustainable expansion of the City into Rotokauri, through a coherent, integrated and people focused mixed use development based on best practice urban design principles."
- 3.14 The Rotokauri North area lies in the north west corner of the HCC boundaries. Land on the northern side of SH39 and west of Exelby Road fall under the Waikato District Council ("WDC") jurisdiction and are zoned under both the operative and proposed Waikato District Plans ("WDP") as 'Rural' and utilised for a mix of rural lifestyle and farming activities.
- 3.15 Land within the HCC boundary to the south and east is zoned FUZ and is also currently used for a mix of rural lifestyle and small scale farming activities. Further to the east is the Waikato Expressway beyond which is the developing Industrial area Te Rapa Park (rezoned as part of Rotokauri Stage 1). Further to the east is the extensive Te Awa and Base Shopping Complex.
- 3.16 Lake Rotokauri is located approximately 1 kilometre south of the site. Lake Rotokauri is a peat lake and is part of the Waipa peat lake complex. The catchment area surrounding the lake is a mixture of three main land uses including residential, industrial and pastoral.
- 3.17 The wider surrounding area is dominated by horticultural and agricultural land uses. There is a general patterning of smaller scale lifestyle type lots scattered along the roads surrounding the area. Further away from the site to the south, west and north, lot sizes tend to increase in size.
- 3.18 Rural and rural lifestyle land use surrounding the site has an influence on the existing character and visual amenity of the area. Pastoral grazing and horticultural activities are the predominant land uses and impart the wider landscape with a largely open spatial character. A degree of compartmentalisation is provided by exotic shelter planting on property and paddock boundaries, which enclose views to the broader landscape from some locations.

The Western Hills Landscape

- 3.19 In 2007, Boffa Miskell prepared the 'Rotokauri Structure Plan – Western Hills Landscape Study' that investigated the landscape significance of the rolling topography that characterises the western part of the Rotokauri Growth node. Subsequently, the RSP includes a series of low ridgelines that have been identified as the Rotokauri Ridgeline Character Area ("**RRCA**").
- 3.20 These have been identified as locally significant landscape features in the Western Hills of Rotokauri and are regarded as warranting special landscape management and planning provisions to retain the legibility of the ridgelines and achieve a form and density of development that enables a sense of the underlying landform to be retained.
- 3.21 The northern RRCA comprises a primary ridgeline that runs from north to south and follows the alignment of Exelby Road and secondary ridgelines aligned in a generally northeast-southwest direction following Burbush Road. The RRCA is outlined as being made up of a number of key visual and physical characteristics, including the pattern that creates a backdrop to the western edge of the City.
- 3.22 The hills are low landforms rising to a maximum height of approximately 55m ASL above the surrounding low lying basins and terrace flats that are predominantly located at approximately 30m ASL – representing an elevation of 25m.

4. Evaluation of the Proposal

- 4.1 The key to assessing the landscape and visual effects of 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 Resource Management Act (1991) this includes an assessment of the cumulative effects of the development enabled by the PPC combined with existing developments.

Natural Character Effects

- 4.2 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. 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

- 4.3 While the SNA retains a moderate level of natural character the site itself is not high in natural character values and has been highly modified through past pastoral activities. The area has previously undergone extensive agricultural activities and is modified by vegetation clearance, artificial farm drains, farm buildings and dwellings. The site is a component of the wider modified rural environment and located within an area zoned for future urban intensification.
- 4.4 The SNA is to be retained and protected. Several reserves are proposed and connected through a green-network based on the enhanced stream network and stormwater management area which will enhance the natural character values of the site. Overall, the adverse effects of the proposal on the natural character values of the site and surrounding area would be low.

Landscape Effects

- 4.5 Landscape character results from a combination of physical elements together with aesthetic and perceptual aspects that combine to make an area distinct. Landscape

effects take into consideration physical effects to 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.

- 4.6 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. Sensitivity can be determined by the degree of naturalness, land use homogeneity, landform and screening elements.

Landscape Effects Analysis

- 4.7 Development enabled by the PPC will inevitably transform the local rural character to that of mixed urban which will also have an influence on the surrounding area. It is important to note however that this type of development has been advanced by a number of planning strategies and the HDP identifies the site within the Rotokauri North Structure Plan as an area to accommodate future urban growth requirements in the area.
- 4.8 It is also important to note that although the site and local area currently exhibit rural characteristics, neither display a high degree of 'ruralness' due to a combination of the size of landholdings, the patterns of rural-residential settlement, existing infrastructure, the surrounding roading network, proximity to the Waikato Expressway and the Te Rapa industrial area.
- 4.9 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 area. The PPC site is a relatively degraded, modified rural environment lacking any significant landscape features, has low natural character values (primarily focussed around the SNA), and generally relatively low visual amenity. Therefore the only negative outcomes in landscape terms will be the loss of the remaining rural character, which is anticipated by the relevant planning strategies for the area.
- 4.10 The key methods of mitigating for this loss are to retain and enhance where possible existing landscape features and create a quality urban development. Although the proposal will result in the loss of rural character there are number of positive landscape outcomes associated with the development.
- 4.11 The establishment and enhancement of the green network, including the provision for associated open space with extensive planting, will have beneficial landscape effects including the enhancement of amenity and habitat values, and the establishment of ecological linkages.
- 4.12 An indicative masterplan has been designed in accordance with best practice and established urban design principles, which will ensure a high level of green open space and be comprehensively planted to enhance its overall amenity and assist in its integration with the surrounding rural area over time. These are addressed in more detail in the Urban Design assessment prepared by Ian Munro. The PPC development will result in a change in landscape character, but will ensure a suitable level of amenity, albeit an urban, rather than a rural character is achieved.

Visual Effects

- 4.13 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.

- 4.14 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.
- 4.15 The methodology used in this assessment is designed to assess whether or not future development enabled by the PPC would have more than minor adverse visual effects on the nature and quality of the surrounding environment.

The process of analysing such effects involves:

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

Visual Catchment and Viewing Audience

- 4.16 The visual catchment is the area from which noticeable visual effects of future development of the site are likely to be evident to any significant degree. Te Kowhai Road, Exelby Road and Burbush Road extending along the periphery of and through the PPC area result in a number of open views into the site, however existing vegetation patterns and landform variations currently provide a level of screening from many of the surrounding areas.
- 4.17 The relative openness of the site, means that it has a relatively high level of exposure, although the existing vegetation patterns and landform within the surrounding area combine to limit the extent of visibility beyond the immediate area. Consequently, Te Kowhai Road, Exelby Road and Burbush Road and the properties accessed off these roads in the vicinity define the main visual catchment.
- 4.18 Views from the land holdings to the west and south will be largely screened by the existing hill terrain spurs extending along Exelby and Burbush Roads. Views will be gained from the landholdings on the northern side of SH39. Elevated views will be gained from the adjacent landholdings immediately to the south of the site (albeit that these are similarly zoned for urban development).
- 4.19 Views towards parts of the site will be gained from the southern end of Errol Close and parts of the Brylyn Rest Home. Views will be gained from the Koura Drive on-ramp to the Waikato Expressway and from parts of the Te Rapa industrial area on the eastern side of the Expressway.
- 4.20 The viewing audience will therefore comprise the following main groups:
 - Road users on parts of the surrounding road network including SH39, Burbush Road, Exelby Road and Errol Close;
 - Residents within the properties on the northern side of SH39;
 - Residents within the properties on the western and southern side of Exelby Road;
 - Residents within the adjoining properties to the south;
 - Residents within the properties on the south eastern side of Burbush Road;
 - Residents and visitors to the Brylyn Rest Home; and
 - Road users on the more distant roads including the Koura Drive on-ramp to the Waikato Expressway and the expressway itself in the vicinity of the site.

Visual Amenity Effects Analysis

4.21 The visual effects of the PPC have been assessed from viewpoints within the visual catchment area that have potential for visual effects. Nine 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 PPC site.

4.22 The assessment has been undertaken by reference the following viewpoints:

Viewpoint 1: SH39 / Exelby Road
Viewpoint 2: 350 Exelby Road
Viewpoint 3: 212 Exelby Road
Viewpoint 4: 56 Burbush Road
Viewpoint 5: 38 Burbush Road
Viewpoint 6: Te Kowhai Road
Viewpoint 7: 304 SH39
Viewpoint 8: Errol Close / Te Kowhai Road

*Refer to: Figure 1: The Site and Viewpoint Location Map
VP01-VP09: Viewpoint Photographs*

4.23 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.

4.24 The key factors contained in that matrix are given in detail in Appendix A. 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 proposal, how well the proposal integrates with its surroundings and whether or not the proposal intrudes into any existing views.

4.25 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 'Best Practice Guide – Landscape Assessment and Sustainable Management 2010' and Auckland Council's 'Information Requirements for Landscape and Visual Effects Assessments 2017':

Negligible | Very Low | Low | Moderate | High | Very High | Extreme

Negligible Effect

The proposed development is barely discernible or there are no changes to the existing character, features or landscape quality.

Very Low Effect

The proposed development is barely discernible with little change to the existing character, features or landscape quality

Low Effect

A slight loss to the existing character, features or landscape quality

Moderate Effect

Partial change to the existing character or distinctive features of a landscape and a small reduction in the perceived amenity.

High Effect

Noticeable change to the existing character or distinctive features of the landscape or reduction in the perceived amenity or the addition of new but uncharacteristic features and elements.

Very High Effect

Major change to the existing character, distinctive features or quality of the landscape or a significant reduction in the perceived amenity of the outlook. The proposal causes adverse effects that cannot be avoided, remedied or mitigated.

Extreme Effect

Total loss of the existing character, distinctive features or quality of the landscape resulting in a complete change to the landscape or outlook. The proposal significantly affects and entirely changes the character of the surrounding area. The proposal causes extreme adverse effects that cannot be avoided, remedied or mitigated.

- 4.26 With respect to comparable planning or RMA terminology, effects:
- “High” to “Extreme” would be considered “more than minor”;
“Low to moderate” would be “minor”; and
“Very Low” or “Negligible” would be “less than minor”.
- 4.27 The proposal raises a number of visual issues, including the potential effects on visual amenity to the following key areas:
- Adjoining land holdings
 - Surrounding road network
 - Wider area
- 4.28 The assessment has been undertaken in terms of the following criteria:
- i) Sensitivity of the view – the relative quality of the view, values attached to a view, and their vulnerability to change.
 - ii) Viewpoint / perceptual factors – the type and size of population exposed to views, including the viewing distance, focus and level of exposure, and context from which they experience the view.
 - iii) Context – the degree to which the proposed development would fit into the existing surrounding environs.
 - iv) Magnitude of change – including consideration relating to prominence and legibility, size/scale, visual intrusion/contrast, the impact upon key landscape elements and patterns, geographical extent and duration.
 - v) 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

- 4.29 The adjoining properties to the site will be most affected by future development enabled by the PPC. This includes the residential properties to the rural and rural-residential properties to the south, west, east and north of the site. **Viewpoints 1, 2, 3, 6 and 7** are indicative of potential views from these areas.
- 4.30 Views towards the site from a number of these however will be moderated, filtered or screened in entirety by the landform and existing vegetation patterns within the

surrounding properties, particularly in relation to a number of established shelterbelt plantings.

- 4.31 For the immediately adjoining properties to the east, west, south and north the existing outlook will change significantly from an open rural pastoral scene into a comprehensive urban residential view. Although this will constitute a significant change to the existing 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, as the land is signalled to undergo this change by its current FUZ zoning and inclusion in the RSP. Furthermore, the adjoining southern and eastern landholdings are also subject to the same FUZ zone and will undergo the same or a similar change after re-zoning in the future.
- 4.32 Once the site is developed, the existing views will be replaced with a mixture of urban development with extensively vegetated streetscapes, open spaces and the green network. Development enabled by the PPC will not be entirely out of context and gradual in nature due to the zoning of the site and surrounding area. The green network, riparian plantings in conjunction with the open space areas, and street tree plantings will maintain a sense of spaciousness and assist in visually integrating the future development into the surrounding landscape.
- 4.33 From the surrounding areas the full effects of the change brought about by the PPC will be gradual as the land is retired from productive use, modified and staged built development extends across the landform. It is anticipated that the full progression from rural to urban will take a number of years. This will reduce the impact of the change to some degree, due to the incremental nature of the change and a general conditioning of the audience over time as development progresses.
- 4.34 The green network extending up the stream corridors, planted streets and the planted conveyance channels in the streets will assist in breaking the development into more discrete units and filter views so that although the view will have changed from a rural to essentially an urban one, the full extent of the development will not be apparent. The extensive green network will assist in breaking up the expansiveness of the development, however the proposal will entirely change the visual amenity currently experienced for the surrounding properties.
- 4.35 The planted landscape buffer proposed in the RNSP adjoining SH39 will assist in mitigating the visual effects from the rural environment to the north and establish a visual transition between the two zones.
- 4.36 The visual effects resulting from this change for the adjoining and adjacent rural and rural-residential properties would be moderate to high however the quality nature of the future urban development will ensure that a suitable level of urban amenity is achieved.

Surrounding Road Network

- 4.37 For road users on the surrounding road network, in particular those who live locally in rural situations, the development of the PPC site is likely to result in visual effects of some significance, particularly for SH39 and Burbush Road users in the vicinity of the site. **Viewpoints 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9** are indicative of the potential views from the surrounding roads. For general road users the effects are likely to be of much less significance as the development will be seen as part of a pattern of land use changes expected to occur under the RSP.
- 4.38 Although a large audience, the road users are unlikely to be particularly sensitive to future development, as they will have fleeting views of parts of the site whilst moving through a landscape. The sensitivity and the effects of the PPC will be reduced further by the fact that the development will be gradual and staged over a number of years. The extensive street tree plantings and green corridor will assist in integrating the built

development and infrastructure into the landscape and provide a vegetated framework of appropriate form and scale.

- 4.39 The planted landscape buffer proposed in the RNSP adjoining SH39 will assist in mitigating the visual effects from the highway and establish a visual transition between the anticipated residential zone and adjoining rural environment north of the RNSP area.

Wider Area

- 4.40 Views will be gained towards parts of the PPC area from land holdings within the wider area. Views from the land holdings further to the west will be largely screened by the ridge extending along Exelby Road. Similarly views from the south will be screened by the ridge extending along Exelby Road to the south of the site and views to the east screened by the spur extending along Burbush Road. Views will not be gained from Lake Rotokauri and the Rotokauri residential lifestyle area to the south. Views will not be gained from the Te Kowhai settlement to the north west of the site.
- 4.41 Views towards parts of the PPC site will be gained from peripheral areas within the Te Rapa Park industrial areas, albeit across the foreground of the Waikato Expressway. In addition, the industrial audience will be less sensitive to visual change enabled by the PPC.
- 4.42 Overall the visual effects from the wider area will be low to negligible.

Construction Effects

- 4.43 Earthworks will be necessary to facilitate the anticipated developments within the PPC area, including the preparation of building platforms, formation of roads, and construction of infrastructure and services for the anticipated developments.
- 4.44 Due to the nature and scale of the development, and the level of disturbance it will bring to the existing landscape, the visual effects will generally be high during and immediately following construction.
- 4.45 These visual effects will reduce on completion with the establishment of the green network, landscape buffer along SH39, open space and street tree plantings assisting in integrating the residential development into the surrounding landscape.

5. Relevant Planning Documents

- 5.1 The statutory context is covered fully in the application. The principles for the structure plan areas contained with the Hamilton City Operative District Plan (“**ODP**”) identify a number of requirements to manage existing features within the proposed plan change area.

Hamilton City Operative District Plan

- 5.2 The objectives and policies relevant to landscape and amenity are:

Objective 3.3.6

Development responds to land suitability including topography, landscape, natural features, soil type, natural hazards, heritage features, adjoining land uses.

Policy 3.3.6a

The loss of significant vegetation is minimised.

Policy 3.3.6b

Large-scale earthworks and modifications to landforms are avoided where possible

to ensure development retains features of the landscape identified on structure plans.

Policy 3.3.6c

Road layouts adjacent to identified natural features recognise and retain their natural form where practicable.

Policy 3.3.6d

The scale and quantum of development and land use type recognises land characteristics and suitability and adjoining land uses.

Comment:

- 5.3 Development within the RNSP area will achieve a medium density residential environment which has high levels of amenity and allows for a range of housing densities and typologies. Potential adverse effects of urban activities on the environment will be avoided, remedied or mitigated through the proposed provisions for land within the RNSP area and the existing HCDP rules.
- 5.4 No significant vegetation is to be removed and the existing SNA is to be protected and enhanced. The subdivision layout has responded to the land suitability including the topography and landscape features. The PPC is an efficient use of the natural and physical resource in that it will utilise land already earmarked for urban development under the HCDP.
- 5.5 While the east-west transport corridor indicated to the south of the proposed business zone will dissect the underlying topography perpendicular to the underlying topography, attempts will be made at the detailed design stage to minimise earthworks and integrate the road sensitively into the landscape.

Objective 3.3.7

A range of well-connected, functional public open spaces.

Policy 3.3.7a

The location and size of public open spaces is provided in accordance with Council's Open Space Plan.

Policy 3.3.7b

Recreational activities are considered for co-location with:

- i. Multi-functional stormwater management*
- ii. Walkways and cycleways*
- iii. Cultural and heritage sites*
- iv. Significant Natural Areas*

Comment:

- 5.6 The PPC incorporates a number of overarching design principles including a well-connected and walkable block and street network that recognises the road hierarchy and the needs of strategic through movement.
- 5.7 The masterplan incorporates a number of well-connected, functional public open spaces. Public access provided for along the streams through pedestrian and cycle paths and open space linkages that will create recreational opportunities.
- 5.8 The PPC also integrates public open spaces and storm water facilities into the neighbourhood to contribute to its character. The plan also anticipates at least one district-scale recreational open space of several hectares but provides for two such

large spaces. These are connected to the key road network to maximise legibility and accessibility. Not indicated but understood to be expected at the time of development, are small-scale neighbourhood reserves and parks.

- 5.9 Shared cycle-pedestrian routes are indicated as occurring along the roads and the green corridors. Local recreation reserves have been identified in two locations so as to maximise the proportion of residents that will be within a 5-minute walk of a reserve. These have also been planned to integrate logically into the wider 'green network' of open spaces in the site. It is however noted that the final location of reserves will be determined at the subdivision stage.
- 5.10 The stormwater facilities will be dominant elements across the site and it is intended that other open spaces, roads and road-based swales will directly connect to these. This will be a key contributor to new neighbourhood character. The existing SNA is to be protected and enhanced.
- 5.11 Overall, the PPC will result in well-integrated public open spaces and stormwater facilities.

Rotokauri Structure Plan (Operative)

- 5.12 In terms of the Rotokauri Structure Plan (Operative) the objectives and policies relevant to landscape and amenity are:

Objective 3.6.1.1

Preservation of key natural features and topography that are characteristic of Rotokauri.

Policy 3.6.1.1a

Development shall maintain the natural ridgelines.

Policy 3.6.1.1b

The central green corridor shall function as the principal stormwater drainage channel and a recreational and transportation corridor connecting the wider network of open spaces and natural features.

3.6.2 Structure Plan Components – 3.6.2.2 Residential

- ii. *The Ridgeline Character Area, which seeks to retain legibility of these locally important landforms in a suburban context.*

Comment:

- 5.13 The northern RRCA comprises a primary ridgeline that runs from north to south and follows the alignment of Exelby Road and secondary ridgelines aligned in a generally northeast-southwest direction following Burbush Road. The RRCA is outlined as being made up of a number of key visual and physical characteristics, including the pattern that creates a backdrop to the western edge of the City.
- 5.14 The hills are low landforms rising to a maximum height of approximately 55m ASL above the surrounding low lying basins and terrace flats that are predominantly located at approximately 30m ASL – representing an elevation of 25m.
- 5.15 I do not consider that the Western Hills represent a significant landscape feature within the local landscape or citywide context. The hills rise to a maximum height of approximately 55m ASL above the surrounding flats at approximately 30m ASL – representing an elevation of 25m. This height and characteristic of the landscape feature cannot be considered significant by any degree. Given the low elevation of the

hills, typical residential development on the lower slopes and terrace flats is likely to obstruct views to the underlying landform in any case.

- 5.16 The Western Hills are not a prominent landscape feature from the surrounding area and are viewed as an integral component of the gently rolling western landscape. They are not significant enough to command attention from a distance and are not the natural focus of view.
- 5.17 The primary western ridgeline extending along Exelby Road forms an important buffer (and territorial boundary to Waikato District) between the urban area to the east and the rural land to the west, extending down towards Lake Rotokauri. This ridgeline will be unaffected by development enabled by the PPC. Similarly, the more significant southern ridgeline along Exelby Road will be unaffected by the PPC/
- 5.18 **Viewpoint 8** is the view looking in a south westerly direction towards the secondary ridge extending along Burbush Road from the intersection of Te Kowhai Road / Errol Close. This is one of the few locations from the surrounding roads where clear views are gained towards the ridgeline. The ridgeline is not visually distinctive, is not the focus of view and does not command the viewer's attention. The viewer's eye is drawn to the vegetation on the skyline. The Burbush Road ridge extends to a height of 43m ASL, 13m above the lower flats. I do not consider that this is a significant difference in height to warrant protection. In addition, the land in the foreground is within the RSP area zoned for employment and once developed will entirely screen views towards the ridge.
- 5.19 **Viewpoint 9** is the view looking in a south westerly direction towards the secondary ridge from the Te Kouma Drive expressway on-ramp. While the ridgeline is in the focus of the view it is not legible as a significant landscape feature due to its low elevation and the diversity of elements within the view including vegetation, dwellings and the built infrastructure of the expressway. Similarly, from this viewing angle, development enabled by the structure plan process will entirely transform the foreground view in the foreseeable future.
- 5.20 The visual integrity of the hills is resultant from the current pastoral slopes contrasting with the surrounding low-lying basins and terrace flats. This contrast will inevitably be lost with the future urbanisation of the land as part of the RSP process.
- 5.21 In landscape terms the hills value is greatest as the eastern backdrop to the Waikato rural landscape to the west and in particular the Lake Rotokauri environs to the south. From these directions, Exelby Road extends along the primary ridgeline with resulting future development on the slopes to the east of the road which will retain the visual and physical integrity of the ridgeline from the west.
- 5.22 The imposition of the RRCA to cover the primary and secondary ridgelines with associated planning provisions to provide for lower suburban density based around a minimum lot size of 600m² with an average of 800m² will not in my opinion reinforce the key qualities and characteristics of the underlying landscape to any greater degree than higher density development.
- 5.23 I concur with the Boffa Miskell report that a distinctive and locally derived urban character is influenced by the qualities and characteristics of the underlying landscape character and the elements and attributes of the form. I do not consider however that the Western Hills comprise major landscape elements and features capable of defining a unique sense of place for Rotokauri North. The modest changes in topography, while locally pleasant, are not distinctive landscape features.
- 5.24 I concur that ridgeline protection is an important mechanism to ensure the visual landscape qualities and integrity of significant ridgelines are protected and maintained

in accordance with their particular context. The Western Hills do not constitute a significant landscape element or feature capable of defining a unique sense of place or identity to the RSP area. While they provide a pleasant variation in landform they cannot be considered worthy of protection afforded by the RCCA provisions.

- 5.25 I consider that if the Western Hills had been valued and considered distinct and significant enough in landscape and visual terms, in the context of the surrounding landscape to warrant protection, then this would have occurred as part of the RSP process, precluding any form of built development on them.
- 5.26 The pattern of primary and secondary ridges forming the discrete topographic feature in the western part of the northern structure plan area will still be apparent, albeit with a built form of development reinforcing the changes in landform and topography.
- 5.27 In my opinion, the most effective means to protect the significance of the Western Hills is, as outlined in the Boffa Miskell report, through defining and reinforcing the Exelby and Burbush Road roading pattern that extends along the primary and secondary ridgelines with significant street tree plantings that will preserve the legibility of the ridgeline features in views from outlying areas, provide a backdrop to future dwellings and heighten awareness of the hill landform for future residents.
- 5.28 I therefore do not consider that the imposition of the RCCA planning provisions would assist in differentiating the primary and secondary ridgelines from the surrounding landscape due to the modest changes in topographical elevation. In my opinion a distinct and locally derived urban character will result more from high quality urban design initiatives responsive to the underlying landform patterns and the establishment of a high quality open space network and linkages throughout the area than restricting development on the ridgelines.

Conclusion

- 5.29 I consider that future development enabled by the PPC is consistent with the intent of the landscape, visual, natural character and amenity objectives and policies of the relevant statutory documents and when considered in totality is entirely acceptable in landscape and visual terms.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 The proposed urbanisation of the PPC area will significantly change its current open rural landscape character. The development will however be consistent with the FUZ zoning of the site, with urban expansion envisaged under the HCDP, RPS and Future Proof Framework.
- 6.2 Although the subject site is largely in open pasture fragmented by shelterbelts, its rural character is lessened to a degree by the existing land uses, relatively degraded pasture, the proximity to the state highways (SH 39 and the Waikato Expressway), and the developing industrial area to the east within Te Rapa Park.
- 6.3 While the subject site includes land used for farming and agricultural purposes, it is a significantly modified degraded site with relatively low landscape values (except for the existing protected SNA).
- 6.4 The proposed urbanisation of the land will inevitably result in the transformation of the site from a rural area to a mixed density urban residential area. This will have implications on the surrounding rural and rural-residential land, with the urban development impacting on the rural qualities of these areas. Nevertheless, this is an area identified for urban expansion in the RSP. Consequently, it is only the timing of

that change from rural to urban which is different from the current timeframes outlined in Chapter 3 of the HCDP.

- 6.5 Because of the size and nature of the development and the anticipated eventual urbanisation of the area, rather than trying to screen the development or create significant buffers to the adjacent rural areas, 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 development with a high level of amenity, albeit an urban amenity. Additionally, a planted landscape buffer is proposed on the RNSP adjoining SH39. This is to separate development from the state highway, and to also establish a visual transition between the anticipated residential zone and adjoining rural environment north of the RNSP area.
- 6.6 The change from the existing rural character of this landscape to one dominated by the built form of a residential area will also introduce a range of beneficial effects, including:
- i. Enhancement to watercourses and stream corridors;
 - ii. Extensive framework of planting including riparian planting, vegetated swales and conveyance channels, specimen trees in streets and open space areas, which will improve the character and amenity as well as enhance habitat values, and break up the contiguous urban expanse increasingly with time and contribute to the wider surrounding area;
 - iii. Opportunities to eco-source seed stock from the Kahikatea stand within the SNA to increase the biodiversity and extent of this forest remnant; and,
 - iv. Public access provided for along the streams through pedestrian and cycle paths and open space linkages that will create recreational opportunities.
- 6.7 While the proposed development will result in a significant visual change from the site's current open and undeveloped 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 (including the existing RSP) for the area.
- 6.8 While development enabled by the PPC will result in a significant visual change from the site's current open and undeveloped state to one with urban characteristics, particularly for some of the adjoining areas, such visual change is anticipated and is in accordance with the key planning initiatives for the area.
- 6.9 Despite the relatively low landscape values and limited visual catchment area, the development will initially generate landscape and visual effects of some significance. These are inevitable with urban development in a predominantly rural area at the start of a process of urbanisation. In addition, the visual effects of the development of the site apparent from the early stages will decrease over time as proposed vegetation matures.
- 6.10 In conclusion, the PPC will fulfil the need for a greenfield housing area and provide an opportunity for an innovative and environmentally sustainable urban development in keeping with the vision and principles established within the masterplan. The PPC proposal is consistent with regional growth strategies for the area and will result in a high quality urban development with a range of positive landscape and environmental outcomes.

Rob Pryor
Director | Registered NZILA Landscape Architect
LA4 Landscape Architects
April 2019



APPENDIX A: VISUAL EFFECTS MATRIX

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**.



GREEN SEED CONSULTANT LIMITED

ROTOKAURI NORTH PRIVATE PLAN CHANGE

ANNEXURES TO ASSESSMENT OF LANDSCAPE + VISUAL EFFECTS

Prepared by LA4 Landscape Architects

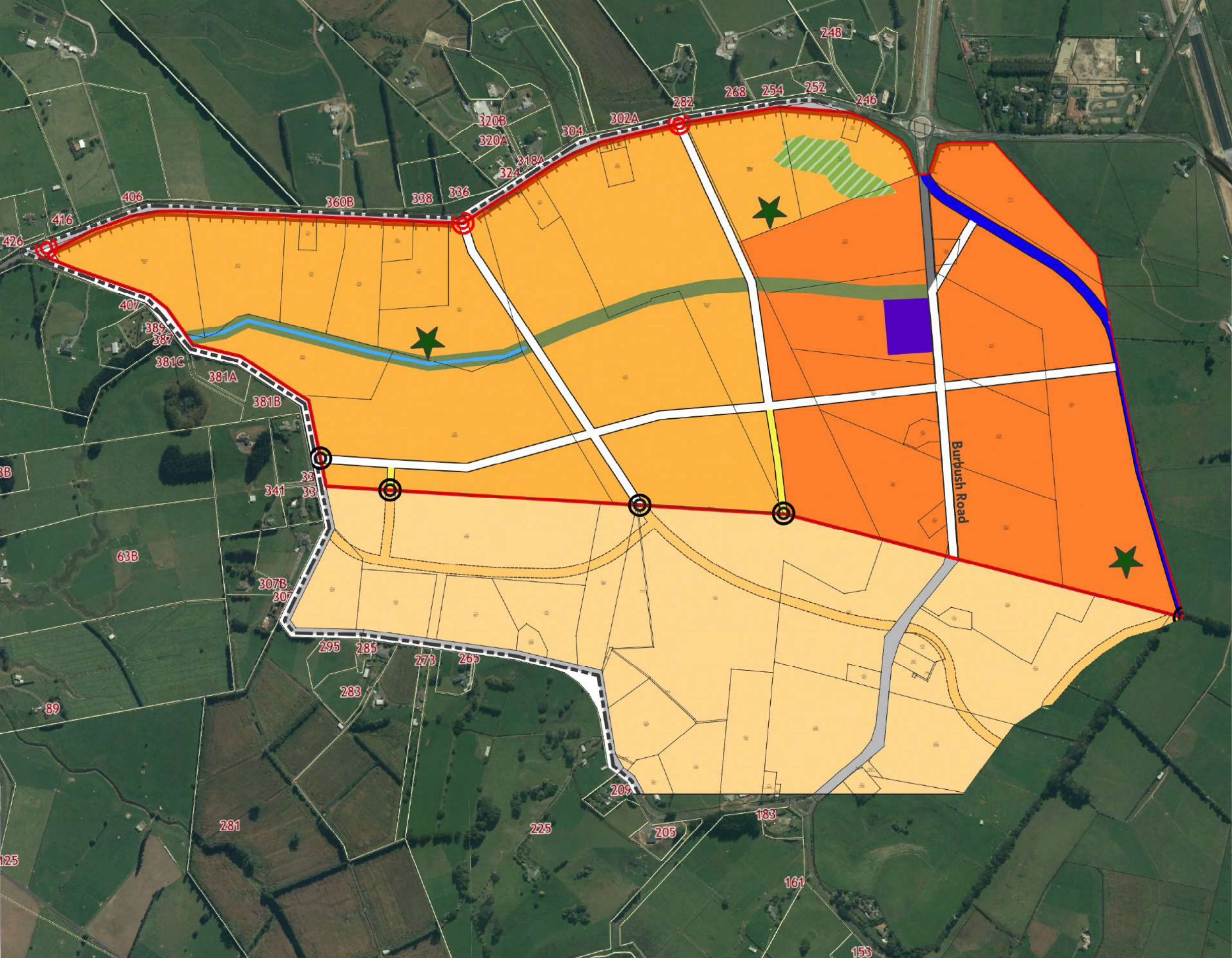
Issued 17.04.2019

Drawing Index :

DRAWING NUMBER	TITLE	REVISION	DATE
FG01	Figure 1: The Site + Viewpoint Location Map	-	27/2/19
FG02	Figure 2: Structure Plan 01	A	17/4/19
FG03	Figure 3: Structure Plan 02	A	17/4/19
FG04	Figure 4: Site Landscape Character Photographs 01	-	27/2/19
FG05	Figure 4: Site Landscape Character Photographs 02	-	27/2/19
VP01	Viewpoint 1: SH39 Exelby Road	-	27/2/19
VP02	Viewpoint 2: 350 Exelby Road	-	27/2/19
VP03	Viewpoint 3: 212 Exelby Road	-	27/2/19
VP04	Viewpoint 4: 56 Burbush Road	-	27/2/19
VP05	Viewpoint 5: 38 Burbush Road	-	27/2/19
VP06	Viewpoint 6: Te Kowhai Road	-	27/2/19
VP07	Viewpoint 7: 304 SH39	-	27/2/19
VP08	Viewpoint 8: EPPOL Vlose / Te Kowhai Road	-	27/2/19
VP09	Viewpoint 9: Waikato Expressway	-	27/2/19



Project No.	19753	
Drawing No.	FG01	Rev -



Legend

Rotokauri North
PPC Area

Zone Type

Medium Density
Residential Zone

Business 6 Zone

Medium Density
Overlay Area A

HCC Zones

Future Urban Zone

Industrial Zone

Residential Zone

Transport Corridor Zone

Natural Open
Space Zone

Future Transportation
Corridor Zone

Road Connections

State Highway
Intersection

Road Connection

Indicative Roads

Minor Arterial Road

Collector Road

Local Road

Future Road
Closing/Stopping

No Direct Access
from State Highway
/Landscape Buffer

Green Spine (could
include a road)

Ohute Stream

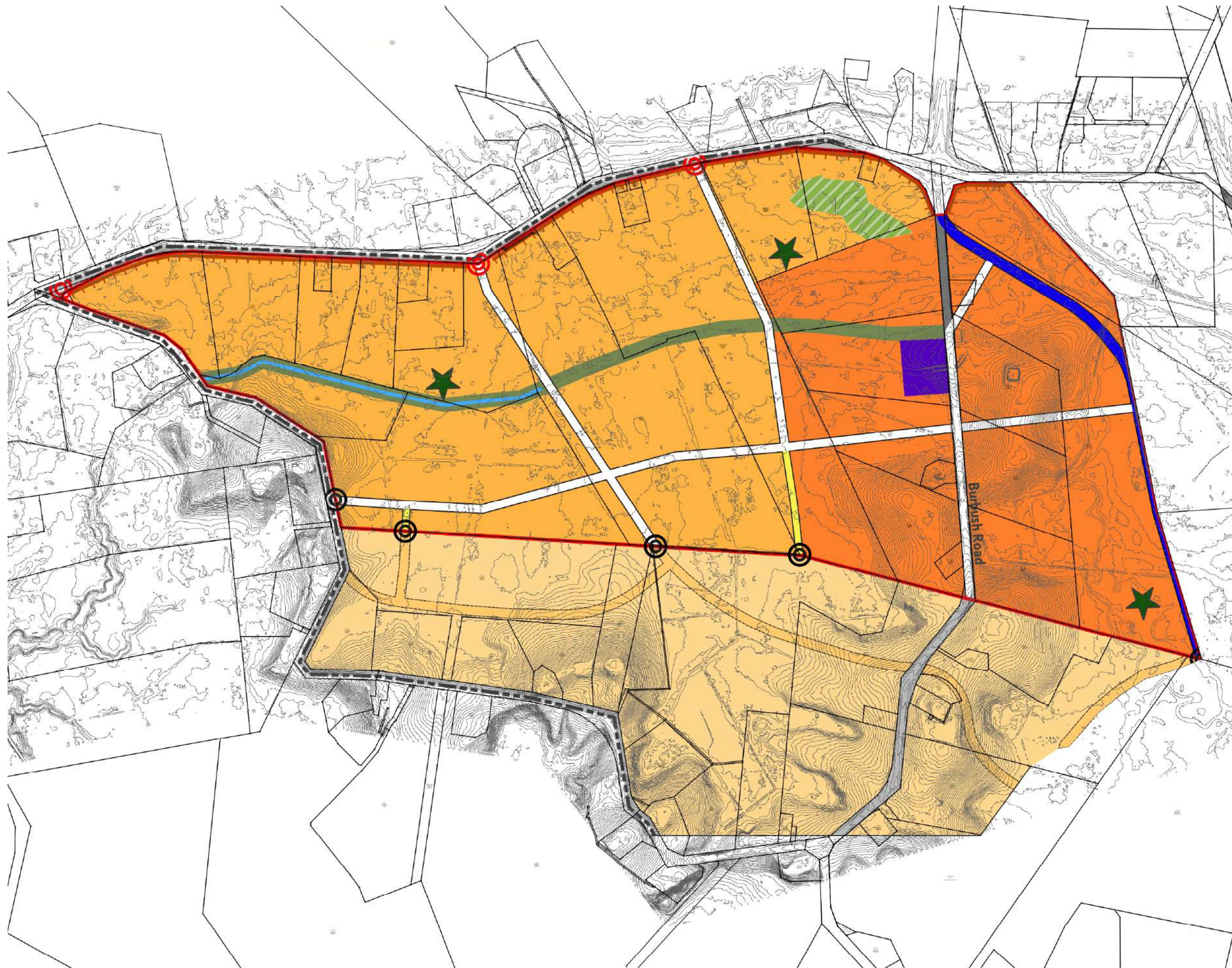
Indicative Neighbourhood
Reserve

WDC/HCC TA Boundary

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Map Projection:
**NZGD2000 / Mount Eden 2000
(EPSG: 2105)**

						 <div>LA4 Landscape Architects 26 Kitchener Street, Auckland P.O. Box 5669, Wellesley Street, Auckland p: 09 358 0904 f: 09 358 0895 e: la4@la4.co.nz www.la4.co.nz</div>	ORIGINAL @ A3	Design	RP	Client: GREEN SEED CONSULTANT LTD	Project: ROTKAURI NORTH PRIVATE PLAN CHANGE	Title: FIGURE 2: STRUCTURE PLAN 01	Project No. 19753	
								Drafting	JC				Drawing No. FG02	Rev. A
								Drafting Checked	RP					
								Approval	RP					
A	Layout Update	JC	RP	RP	17.04.19									
-	Preliminary	JC	RP	RP	27.02.19									
No.	Revision	By	Chk	Appd	Date									



- Legend**
- Rotokauri North PPC Area
 - Zone Type
 - Medium Density Residential Zone
 - Business 6 Zone
 - Medium Density Overlay Area A
 - HCC Zones
 - Future Urban Zone
 - Industrial Zone
 - Residential Zone
 - Transport Corridor Zone
 - Natural Open Space Zone
 - Future Transportation Corridor Zone
 - Road Connections
 - State Highway Intersection
 - Road Connection
 - Indicative Roads
 - Minor Arterial Road
 - Collector Road
 - Local Road
 - Future Road Closing/Stopping
 - No Direct Access from State Highway /Landscape Buffer
 - Green Spine (could include a road)
 - Ohute Stream
 - Indicative Neighbourhood Reserve
 - WDC/HCC TA Boundary

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Map Projection:
NZGD2000 / Mount Eden 2000 (EPSG: 2105)

A	Layout Update	JC	RP	RP	17.04.19				
-	Preliminary	JC	RP	RP	27.02.19				
No.	Revision	By	Chk	Appd	Date				

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ORIGINAL @ A3	Design	RP
	Drafting	JC
	Drafting Checked	RP
	Approval	RP

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Project:
ROKOKAURI NORTH PRIVATE PLAN CHANGE

Title:
FIGURE 3: STRUCTURE PLAN 02

Project No.	19753	Rev.	A
Drawing No.	FG03		



-	Preliminary	JC	RP	RP	27.02.19
No.	Revision	By	Chk	Appd	Date



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	Drafting	JC
	Drafting Checked	RP
	Approval	RP

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ROKOKAURI NORTH
PRIVATE PLAN CHANGE

Title:

FIGURE 4: SITE LANSCAPE
CHARACTER PHOTOGRAPHS 02

Project No.	19753
Drawing No.	FG05
Rev.	-

[illegible]



-	Preliminary	JC	RP	RP	27.02.19
No.	Revision	By	Chk	Appd	Date



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ORIGINAL 1: @ A3	Design	RP
	Drafting	JC
	Drafting Checked	RP
	Approval	RP

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Project:
**ROKOKAURI NORTH
PRIVATE PLAN CHANGE**

Title:
VIEWPOINT 2: 350 EXELBY ROAD

Project No.	19753
Drawing No.	VP02
Rev.	-



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- Preliminary							JC	RP	RP	27.02.19										
No.	Revision						By	Chk	Appd	Date							Drawing No. VP04		Rev. -	

[illegible]



-	Preliminary	JC	RP	RP	27.02.19
No.	Revision	By	Chk	Appd	Date



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ORIGINAL 1. @ A3	Design	RP
	Drafting	JC
	Drafting Checked	RP
	Approval	RP

Client:

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Project:

ROKOKAURI NORTH
PRIVATE PLAN CHANGE

Title:

VIEWPOINT 7: 304 SH39

Project No.	19753
Drawing No.	VP07
Rev.	-



-	Preliminary	JC	RP	RP	27.02.19
No.	Revision	By	Chk	Appd	Date



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ORIGINAL 1: @ A3	Design	RP
	Drafting	JC
	Drafting Checked	RP
	Approval	RP

Client:

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Project:

ROKOKAURI NORTH
PRIVATE PLAN CHANGE

Title:

VIEWPOINT 8: ERROL CLOSE
/ TE KOWHAI ROAD

Project No.	19753
Drawing No.	VP08
Rev.	-



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												Drawing No. VP09	Rev. -						
-	Preliminary	JC	RP	RP	27.02.19														
No.	Revision	By	Chk	Appd	Date														