

# ROTOKAURI NORTH SHA

GEOTECHNICAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

PROJECT NO: HD631 GREEN SEED CONSULTANTS LIMITED REFERENCE: PGR/PC 25 OCTOBER 2018

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#### Executive Summary

Green Seed Consultants Limited have engaged HD Geo to conduct a preliminary geotechnical assessment for the Rotokauri North Special Housing Area (SHA) to accompany an application for plan change. The SHA is located at the northwest extent of Hamilton City and is comprised of approximately 133 ha. Green Seed propose to develop the site into a mixture of standard and medium density residential housing, a commercial neighbourhood centre, public parks and potentially a school.

While there are engineering considerations to be further defined by investigation, and designed for during planning of the site, we consider the site to be suitable for the proposed development subject to the considerations and recommendations in this report.

### Our scope included

- a summary of testing completed to date
- an overview of the ground conditions at the site
- assessment of the geology and geo-hazards
- recommendations for further work

#### What we found

- there is a moderate to high risk of liquefaction at the site
- we expect that the liquefaction risk can be mitigated for residential development with strengthened foundations and/or shallow ground improvements

#### Further work required

- investigation and assessment to further understand the liquefaction hazard at the site and outline mitigation measures where necessary (currently being undertaken by HD Geo)
- assessment of the liquefaction induced lateral spreading risk adjacent to proposed stormwater swales
- earthworks planning
- infrastructure design (ie. stormwater swales and roading)

### Contents

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HD631 | Rotokauri North SHA | Reference: PGR/PC | ii

#### Introduction

Green Seed Consultants Limited propose to develop the site known as the Rotokauri North Special Housing Area (SHA) into a mixture of standard and medium density residential housing, a commercial neighbourhood centre, public parks and potentially a school.

We have been engaged to provide a site-wide preliminary geotechnical assessment to accompany an application for plan change.

While there are engineering considerations to be further defined by investigation, and designed for during planning of the development, the site is considered to be suitable for residential development subject to the considerations and recommendations in this report.

#### Scope

The scope of this report includes:

- a summary of testing completed to date
- an overview of the ground conditions at the site
- assessment of the geology and geo-hazards
- recommendations for further work

#### Site description

The site is located at the north west extent of Hamilton City and consists of a total area of approximately 133 ha. It is bounded by the Te Kowhai Road (SH39) to the north, greenfields to the east and south and Exelby Road to the west. Burbush Road runs north to south through the eastern portion of the site. A plan showing the extent of the site is included in Appendix A.

The site lies in an area that consists of rolling hill terrain and flat-lying plains. The hill terrain (herein referred to as 'Hill Terrain') is all ground that is elevated above the flat, low-lying plains of the site (herein referred to as 'Plains').

The Hill Terrain is present at the western and eastern edges of the site, rising up to 18 m above the Plains. These hill areas merge south of the site, forming a south to north draining basin in which the majority of the site lies.

The Plains make up the majority of the west and central portions of site, while also surrounding the eastern Hill Terrain to the west, north and east. The Plains are flat with typically less than 1 m of elevation difference across much of the site. Numerous open drains dissect the Plains ranging from less than 0.5 m in depth and width up to 2 m width and depth. A Waikato River paleochannel, known as the Te Kowhai Channel lies in the northeastern corner of the site. The base of the channel lies approximately 1.5 m below the surrounding area. Parts of the low-lying areas of site are located in areas that are expected to be inundated by a 1 in 100 year flood event (Refer to Rotokauri ICMP Plan<sup>1</sup>).

The site is predominantly used as pasture for grazing cattle with a dairy farm and associated buildings in the northeast of site. There are eight rural residential dwellings and a number of sheds and barns across the remainder of the site.

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HD631 | Rotokauri North SHA | Reference: PGR/PC | 1

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Hartland Environment Limited (June, 2017) *Rotokauri – Integrated Catchment Management Plan*.

#### **Previous work**

HD Geo undertook a preliminary geotechnical assessment of the site in July 2018 to support master planning and conceptual design for the development<sup>2</sup>. This assessment included an investigation which comprised of:

- 13 hand augers up to 3 m depth
- 8 cone penetrometer tests (CPTs) up to 20 m depth
- 3 dissipation tests
- 5 temporary standpipe piezometers

The key outcomes of this assessment were:

- there was a moderate to high liquefaction hazard identified across the Plains areas of the site
- there were no other significant geotechnical constraints to development at the site

In order to further understand the liquefaction hazard at the site additional testing has been undertaken including:

- installation of 5 permanent piezometers (August 2018)
- 6 shear wave velocity tests by seismic cone CPTs up to 20 m depth (October 2018)

The results of these investigations are to be incorporated into a detailed liquefaction hazard study HD Geo is currently undertaking at the site.

#### Geological setting

The site is located roughly centrally within the Hamilton Basin which is characterised by low rolling hills (Hamilton Hills) and plains with low terraces and gullies draining into the Waipa and Waikato Rivers (Hamilton Lowlands).

The Hamilton Hills are linear, sinuous and discontinuous hills and ridges that are remnant of an older erosion surface. They consist of alluvial material and non-welded ignimbrites (Walton Subgroup) and are typically overlain by a number of metres of airfall volcanic ash (Kauroa Ash Formation and Hamilton Ash Formation). The Hamilton Lowlands are a broad, low angle alluvial fan created by the Waikato River in the Late Quaternary. The fan materials (Piako Subgroup and Hinuera Formation) are derived from rhyolitic eruptions in the central North Island and generally consist of late Pleistocene primary and secondary volcaniclastic sediments. Deposition of the fan materials ceased when the Waikato River entrenched into its current course approximately 17 ka and thin airfall tephra layers accumulated on the fan surface (Hinuera Surface).

The New Zealand Geological map (QMap) for the Waikato Region shows that Walton Subgroup, Hinuera Formation and Piako Subgroup materials are mapped at the site. The Walton Subgroup is mapped in the Hill Terrain and is described as Early Pleistocene to Middle Pleistocene alluvium dominated by primary and re-worked non-welded ignimbrite. The Hinuera Formation and Piako Subgroup are mapped on the Plains. The Hinuera Formation is mapped in the majority of the flatlying areas of site with small areas in the south and southeast of the site described as the Piako Subgroup. The Hinuera Formation is described as Late Pleistocene cross-bedded pumice sand, silt

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> HD Geo Limited, 2018. *Rotokauri North SHA Preliminary Geotechnical Report*, HD631.

and gravel with interbedded peat and the Piako Subgroup is described as Late Pleistocene locally derived mud, silt, gravel and peat.

#### Proposed development

The development will comprise a mixture of standard and medium density residential housing, a commercial neighbourhood centre, public parks and potentially a school. The development will contain numerous new local roads and five collector roads linking internal areas with Te Kowhai Road, Exelby Road, Burbush Road and yet to be constructed roads to the south.

The proposed development consists of two stages, Stage 1 in the western portion of site covering an area of approximately 53 ha and Stage 2 in the eastern portion of site which is approximately 80 ha. The proposed development concept and staging plans are included in Appendix B.

#### Ground conditions

The ground conditions at the site were typically consistent with the mapped geology. The ground conditions have been grouped into areas based on their geomorphology and the conditions encountered in the investigation. All references to soil types from the CPTs are based on the soil behaviour types as interpreted by the CPT results.

#### Hill terrain

The Hill Terrain is all ground that is elevated above the flat, low-lying plains of the site. CPT investigations predict layered clay, silt and sand deposits to 20 m. Hand auger investigations found that the upper 3 m of the hill terrain consists of stiff to hard clay and silt consistent with the Hamilton Ash Formation.

#### Plains

The Plains are areas of site that are flat and low-lying. Hand auger and CPT investigations encountered layered deposits of silt, clay and sand to 20 m depth. The deposits are predominantly sand dominated in the upper 8 m to 10 m, becoming more clay dominated with depth. Sand layers reach a maximum thickness of 6.5 m and uniform clay layers reach a maximum thickness of 6 m.

#### Groundwater

Groundwater is currently being monitored by five piezometers across the site. Since monitoring began in August 2018, the groundwater level has been very high across the site, with a maximum recorded depth of 0.9 m and a minimum recorded depth of 0 m (ie. ground level).

#### Geotechnical assessment

This assessment is a collection of general information and advice for the site's suitability for the proposed development. It is intended to provide an overview of the geotechnical elements which require consideration at the site.

#### Liquefaction

The low-lying Plains at the site contain sand and silt soils with a high groundwater table which can be susceptible to liquefaction under earthquake-induced cyclic loading. As a result, a liquefaction

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assessment of the CPT data was undertaken in accordance with NZGS guidelines<sup>3</sup>. The preliminary screening analysis indicated that under ULS (Ultimate limit state) conditions, liquefaction is anticipated to occur across the Plains. The layers that are predicted to liquefy vary throughout the soil profile, however liquefaction is typically predicted to occur within 1 m of the current ground surface. In accordance with NZGS guidelines, the liquefaction risk at the site ranges from L2 (moderate) to L4 (severe).

Preliminary screening of shear wave velocity data indicates that the assessed risk may be reduced in some areas of the site, while the risk in other areas remains unchanged. Further assessment and refinement of this data is currently in progress.

Predicted liquefaction of this magnitude is not uncommon in the Waikato. To allow for residential construction, mitigation in the high to severe risk areas will be achievable through strengthened foundations or shallow ground improvement.

#### Lateral spreading

Lateral spreading is a phenomenon were liquefied material allows the soil above to move laterally towards a free face, such as a stream bank. The site currently has an isolated lateral spreading risk adjacent to the Te Kowhai Channel in the northeastern corner of site.

Development plans show stormwater swales throughout the site which are likely to be excavated up to 2.0 m below current ground levels. Given the near surface soils have been identified as liquefiable, the formation of these swales is likely to create a lateral spreading hazard.

Specific assessment of the lateral spreading hazard will be required. Potential mitigation options of lateral spreading risks may include:

- dewatering of adjacent ground so liquefaction is unable to occur
- using a buttress of ground improvement along swale edges
- slope stabilisation methods
- specifying foundation types tolerant to lateral spreading in high risk areas

#### Soft soils and settlement

A screening analysis has been completed on the 13 CPTs that were located on the Plains to determine the susceptibility of the ground to static settlements when loaded. The preliminary analysis indicates that the site generally has a low risk of static settlement as most of the near surface soils are sand-dominated.

While not encountered during this investigation, our experience in the area has shown that organic and soft soils are commonly (but not exclusively) found in paleochannel features and close to the Hill Terrain in 'embayments'. As the risk of consolidation settlements is often greatest in these areas they should be a target area for future investigations.

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HD631 | Rotokauri North SHA | Reference: PGR/PC | Page 4

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment and New Zealand Geotechnical Society, 2016. *Earthquake geotechnical engineering practice – Module 3: Identification, assessment and mitigation of liquefaction hazards.* 

### Earthworks

Earthworks at the site are likely to consist of cut and fill operations in order to ease grades on the site, create level building platforms, fill open drains, form stormwater storage and conveyance, and to raise building platforms above flood levels.

The Hamilton Ash Formation was encountered on the Hill Terrain and is typically suitable as an earthworks material. Although not encountered in the investigations to date, our experience has shown that beneath the ash, soils of the Puketoka Formation are typically encountered. These soils are typically highly sensitive and break down on working, making them unsuitable as an earthworks material. Further investigation should define the materials to be used or exposed in earthworks.

#### Stability

There are no indications of any recent, large scale instability having occurred at the site, or in the immediate surrounding area. Active observed instability in the area tends to be shallow creep on steeper slopes and is often associated with springs, saturated soils or stock movement.

Earthworks on the site are likely to reduce the overall stability risk by reducing both the heights and grades of current slopes. Earthworks on the Hill Terrain may demand grades that will require retaining and specific design is likely to be required.

#### Pavements

A number of roads are proposed for the development, including local and collector roads. It is likely road pavement subgrades will be based on materials of the Piako Subgroup, Hinuera Formation, Hamilton Ash Formation and, depending on cut depths in the hill terrain, the sensitive materials of the Puketoka Formation.

Based on these anticipated ground conditions and the testing completed during the investigation, it is likely that natural subgrade CBR will be low. Improvement of the subgrade will likely be required by either compaction or stabilising of the insitu material or by undercutting and replacement with a hardfill subgrade improvement layer. Where organic material is encountered, removal and replacement with suitable backfill will be required. Specific investigation, testing and design will be needed for all pavements.

#### Recommendations

- the liquefaction hazard at the site should be refined through further investigation and assessment and outline mitigation measures where necessary (currently being undertaken by HD Geo)
- assessment of the liquefaction induced lateral spreading risk adjacent to proposed stormwater swales is completed

#### Future work

- as the risk of consolidation settlements are often greatest in paleochannels and Hill Terrain embayments, these areas should be targeted by future investigations
- further investigation of the potential cut areas of site should be completed to define the materials to be used or exposed in earthworks

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#### Limitation

This report has been prepared for our client, Green Seed Consultants Limited, for the purpose detailed above and may not be relied on by any other party or for any other purpose. This report contains an assessment based on a site walkover and testing at discrete locations to support plan change for the proposed development.

Further testing and assessment is required prior to finalising the development proposals for the site. Inferences about the conditions at the site have been made based on the testing undertaken and our understanding of the geological environment in which the site lies. The deposits in this area are by nature highly variable both vertically and laterally. We recommend that a geotechnical engineer is engaged to provide input into the design of the development and to undertake further testing, assessment and design. For continuity and to confirm ground conditions, geotechnical observation will also be required during site construction works.

# **APPENDIX A – SITE PLANS**

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# APPENDIX B – DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND STAGING

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# **Rotokauri North Special Housing Area**

**ROTOKAURI NORTH SHA AREA (Figure 1)** 

#### Map legend



Stages 1 and 2 sought as an SHA. Total of 133.1109ha.



Figure 1: Rotokauri North SHA area

## **ROTOKAURI NORTH SHA CONCEPT (Figure 2)**

#### Map legend



Ensure sensitive slopes can

be appreciated as landscape

TE KOWHAI ROAD B 2 EXELBY ROAD (8) 3

Figure 1: Key structuring elements of Rotokauri North SHA concept

## **ROTOKAURI NORTH SHA OPTIONS FOR STORMWATER (Figure 3)**

#### Map legend

Site area

features.

Floodway basin (conveyance and flood storage)

Swale (conveyance only)



**Discharge** locations



SH39 OUTLET

TE KOWHAI RD DRAIN OUTLET

TE KOWHAI ROAD

Figure 3: Rotokauri North SHA options for stormwater Source: CKL Stormwater Solutions

# **Rotokauri North Special Housing Area**

### **ROTOKAURI NORTH SHA REFINED MASTERPLAN (Figure 4)**







