

Appendix J

Specialist's Evaluation – Urban Design

Memo

To:	Paul Ryan – Principal Planner, Urban and Spatial Planning Unit (USP)		
From:	Colin Hattingh, Senior Urban Designer, USP	Date:	12 May 2025
cc:			
Subject:	Rotokauri Strategic Infrastructure Requirement – Technical Specialist Report for Section 42A Reporting		
Technical Area:	Urban Design		
Version:	Version 2 - Final		

Purpose

1. This memorandum has been prepared to provide technical assessment under section 42A of the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA), in respect of urban design matters in relation to the Rotokauri Strategic Infrastructure Requirement (the Requirement).

Introduction

2. My name is Colin Hattingh and I hold the position of Senior Urban Designer within the Urban and Spatial Planning Unit at Hamilton City Council (HCC).
3. I hold the qualifications of Bachelor in Town and Regional Planning (Pretoria University, South Africa) and Master of Urban Design (University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa).
4. My role in preparing this memo is that of an expert urban designer. I am an associate member of the New Zealand Planning Institute.

Code of Conduct

5. I have read the Environment Court Code of Conduct for expert witnesses contained in the Environment Court Practice Note 2023 and agree to comply with it. I confirm that the opinions expressed in this memorandum are within my area of expertise except where I state that I have relied on the advice of other persons. I have not omitted to consider materials or facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions I have expressed.

Scope

6. This memorandum covers the following:
 - a. An assessment of the relevant urban design elements and outcomes of the Requirement.
 - b. Relevant matters raised and relief sought by submitters.
 - c. Relevant statutory considerations.
7. The focus is on urban design elements only. I am not an expert in landscape assessments and do not comment on the Landscape and Visual Effects Assessment.

Executive Summary

8. The purpose of the Notice of Requirement (NOR) is to designate land for strategic transportation and three waters infrastructure. The goal is to enable a multimodal transport network that aligns with best practice urban design principles, supports modal shift and accommodates future growth. The proposal is underpinned by strong urban design objectives, including integration with existing communities, enhancing cultural identity and delivering a legible and accessible street network.
9. The Urban and Landscape Design Framework (ULDF), provides detailed guidance for achieving these outcomes and outlines five core principles namely - Design for People; Sustainable Environments; Character and Amenity; Integrated Design and Connectivity.
10. The urban design assessment supports the NOR and the ULDF, highlighting the project's alignment with the Operative District Plan (ODP), particularly Chapter 25.15. The proposed network will help promote sustainable travel patterns, enhance ecological outcomes, and facilitate high-quality public spaces.
11. A submission from landowners Godley and Marsh raised concerns regarding the designation's impact on development potential and urban quality. While these concerns are acknowledged, the assessment concludes that the NOR provides sufficient direction, flexibility and design guidance to ensure high-quality outcomes over time. Overall, the project demonstrates good urban design practice and is expected to deliver several positive outcomes for the Rotokauri growth area.

Documents Considered

12. I have considered the following documents:
 - a. Rotokauri Strategic Infrastructure Designation – Notice of Requirement Final Report, 19 September 2024, BECA Ltd (the NOR).
 - b. Rotokauri Strategic Infrastructure Designation - Design Report, 19 September 2024, BECA Ltd. (Appendix D to the NOR.)

- c. Rotokauri Arterials, Rev. 3 – Urban and Landscape Design Framework, June 2023, BECA Ltd. (Appendix J to the NOR.)
- d. Hamilton City Operative District Plan (ODP).
- e. VISTA – Hamilton City Design Guide, HCC, Nov 2007.
- f. Summary of submissions provided by HCC and the submission from Steve Godley & Adam Marsh (submitter 7).

Site Visit

- 13. Together with colleagues from the USP Unit, I undertook a site visit on Friday 7 March 2025. Various parts of the area were viewed including Lake Rotokauri in the west, the intersection of Te Kowhai and Burbush Roads to the north and the proposed location of the future intersection with Te Wetini Drive in the south.

Assessment

Defining Urban Design

- 14. Urban design is often misunderstood and incorrectly applied.
- 15. Where architecture deals with individual buildings, urban design seeks to address the wider context and is concerned with the relationship between buildings, streets, public spaces, and neighbourhoods to help ensure that they are both functional and attractive.
- 16. As discussed under 25.15.1 (ODP, Volume 1) “*Urban design applies not only to the appearance but also the function and feel of buildings and public spaces including streets*”. It focuses on public frontages and spaces and addresses elements such as streetscape, walkability, sustainable design, mixed-use development, active edges, and people’s safety and accessibility.
- 17. Within the local government context, urban design can be defined as “*The art of designing the public environment of a city, including the interface between private properties and the public environment*” (ODP, Volume 2, Appendix 1).

Project Description

- 18. As per the public notice, the purpose of the NOR is to designate land for Strategic Transportation and Three Waters Infrastructure.
- 19. One of the stated **aims** of the work is to “*provide opportunities for a high-quality urban design environment and enables a balanced ‘place and function’ transportation outcome that responds to adjacent land use. The corridor provides the ability to accommodate growth by prioritising sustainable active-transport modes such as walking, cycling, micro-mobility and public transport over private vehicles*” (the NOR, page 2).
- 20. In terms of location, the proposed designation is situated in the northwest of Hamilton, within the Rotokauri Structure Plan Area, as defined within Chapter 3 of the ODP.

21. Development within the cell is to be guided by the following **vision**: *“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”* (ODP, Vol 1, Chap. 3).
22. The designation covers a combined 5.8km length of corridors with the following stated **outcome**: *“A key multimodal transportation and infrastructure network that supports an integrated and people-focused mixed-use development, providing for the associated spatial requirements of necessary infrastructure, network utilities, three waters and stormwater treatment, conveyance, and storage functions”* (the NOR, p20).
23. The NOR lists several project **objectives**. The following are relevant for the purposes of this memorandum:
 - a. **Integration** - To enhance the accessibility within the network for people by achieving cohesion between the proposed development and existing communities in a well-planned and legible way. By applying urban design principles, the network should:
 - integrate to the future urban land use context,
 - provide connectivity between the Rotokauri Structure Plan area and the existing Hamilton City infrastructure network,
 - promote strong people-focused connections to the street environment.
 - b. **Cultural Values, Character, and Amenity** - To enhance the vitality of public spaces in a way that interacts positively with the multi modal transportation network and acknowledges the cultural identity of the area. A strong sense of community identity for Rotokauri is created through:
 - responding to the cultural identity and values of Rotokauri and the wider area,
 - creating a distinctive sense of place for Rotokauri,
 - promoting safe and enjoyable use of public space through the quality and design of the public open spaces.
24. The report describes the proposed arterial network, dividing the area into several zones depending on the relative **movement** or **placemaking** functions anticipated. The idea being that people and place will be prioritised over vehicle movements.
25. Section 8 of the report provides an assessment of effects on the environment (AEE) and considers the scale and significance of the actual and potential effects. In terms of positive effects, the following can be highlighted:
 - a. The designation will support an integrated and people-focussed mixed-use development within the area,
 - b. It provides a central corridor for transport and infrastructure utilities,
 - c. It responds to the structure plan and contributes to the vision for Rotokauri,
 - d. It will result in high quality urban design outcomes that respond to adjacent land uses.

Comment:

26. From an urban design perspective, I support the NOR.
 27. It clearly articulates the overall aim of the project, the intended outcomes and provides several objectives, which I consider demonstrate the application of best practice urban design principles.
 28. I consider that, over time, the various elements described will help ensure an appropriate entrance and sense of arrival to the city from the west. This includes tree lined road corridors and the establishment of an extensive open space network that is integrated and accessible to a wide range of users. The approach described will help ensure that the current traffic-dominated commercial and industrial nature of the western edge is softened to provide a more welcoming transition.
 29. I consider that the project represents good quality planning and design and do not consider that there are any significant errors in, or omissions from, the information provided.
30. Two further documents, that specifically deal with urban design matters, have been submitted in support of the NOR. These are:
 - a. The Design Report, 19 September 2024, BECA Ltd¹ and,
 - b. The Urban and Landscape Design Framework, June 2023, BECA Ltd² (the ULDF).
 31. For the purposes of this memorandum, the ULDF is more relevant and in the following paragraphs, I refer to sections of the ULDF that explain the urban design approach taken.
 32. Broadly speaking, the outcomes for the project include (refer page 6 of the ULDF):
 - a. creating a transport network that promotes modal uplift³
 - b. mode shift and transport options
 - c. enabling good stormwater and ecological outcomes
 33. The purpose of the ULDF is to provide measurable guidance for the above and a design structure to inform future design phases⁴. Further it includes⁵ a series of design measures and moves to assist in achieving the outcomes.
 34. The ULDF includes an extensive analysis of the area.⁶ From this, several objectives and principles for the project were defined.
 35. The ULDF lists the following five urban design **principles**⁷:

¹ Appendix D to the NOR

² Appendix J to the NOR

³ ULDF, s1.2, p6 - I interpret this term to mean that the project will improve the quality and/or functionality of the transport network.

⁴ ULDF, s1.2, p6

⁵ ULDF, Appendix 5.2

⁶ ULDF, s2.2, pp13- 22

⁷ ULDF, s3.1, pp25-29

- a. Design for People
 - b. Sustainable Environments
 - c. Character and Amenity
 - d. Integrated Design
 - e. Connected
36. Each of the above principles are then linked to several **outcomes** and the following are highlighted:
- f. Design for People:
 - The provision of a **safe** and inclusive network of walking and cycling routes **accessible** to people of all ages, life stages and abilities⁸
 - g. Sustainable Environments:
 - The protection of existing ecological areas such as Lake Rotokauri, Waiwhakareke Natural Heritage Park, Rotokauri Drain and pockets of native trees.⁹
 - h. Integrated Design:
 - Creating **positive relationships** between the built form, open space and the transport corridor by providing a clear, direct, overlooked, well connected edge and,
 - Facilitating opportunities for **place** (for e.g. retail/shopping, alfresco dining, play, public art, cultural landmark), as well as movement functions in corridors.¹⁰
 - i. Character and Amenity:
 - Acknowledging the identity or **sense of place** as unique to the inherent built, natural, and cultural qualities of a place¹¹
 - j. Connected:
 - Enhancing **integrated** crossing points to better engage with the Greenway - several new road crossings over the Rotokauri Greenway will be required, to connect the suburb with the city.¹²

⁸ ULDF, s1.2, p26

⁹ ULDF, s2.1, p26

¹⁰ ULDF, s3.3, p27

¹¹ ULDF, s4.1, p28

¹² ULDF, s5.1, p28

Comment:

- 37. From an urban design perspective, I support the ULDF. I consider it to be comprehensive, presenting a cohesive and well-considered approach to the matter at hand.
- 38. I support the five urban design principles that underpin the project.
- 39. Cities are a collection of places and spaces, each with their own special character and each site has its own opportunities and challenges that need to be considered to ensure that change over time is appropriate.
- 40. I am of the opinion that the approach and principles described in the framework will help ensure that the Rotokauri growth cell continues to grow in an appropriate manner and in a way that responds to and reflects the local context.

Submissions

- 41. I have read each of the submissions received.
- 42. In my opinion, only one submission – the submission from Steve Godley & Adam Marsh (Number 7) touches on urban design matters.
- 43. The submitters oppose the NOR in its entirety and seek that it:
 - a. Be withdrawn; or
 - b. Amended to respond to their concerns; or
 - c. That the alignment and location of the NOR be amended to properly respond to the title boundaries and surrounding roading network in a safe and efficient manner.
- 44. In terms of the submission points that are relevant to urban design, the submitters oppose the NOR and are of the opinion that *“The current boundary of The NoR significantly reduces the development and subdivision potential and value of the remainder of Lot 7 DPS 15255 such that it is unable to contribute to a well-functioning urban environment, as it will be severed from the remainder of the emerging Rotokauri North development/community and is of insufficient size to achieve a high quality living environment”*. The designation boundary in relation to the submitter’s property is shown in **Figure 1** below.



Figure 1 Extent of the designation over the property of submitter 7

45. Further, the submitters consider that the concept design for the road layout and the designation boundary/location will not enable a high-quality urban environment to develop in Rotokauri North and that it:
 - a. *“Will not deliver an attractive ‘gateway’ into Rotokauri North, and*
 - b. *That there is no certainty on the interface expected between urban development and the arterial roads.”*
46. Lastly, the submitters oppose the proposed conditions as they consider that (amongst other concerns) *“The Landscape Management Plan conditions are insufficient to ensure high quality environments and should also require urban design input and requirements to ensure integration with the surrounding urban (or future urban) environment (i.e. the objective is clear that it only relates to landscape matters)”*.
47. The concerns therefore are:

- a. The loss of **developable area**.
- b. That the road layout will not produce a **high-quality urban environment** (or attractive gateway) to Rotokauri North.
- c. That there is no certainty regarding the **interface** expected between urban development and the arterial roads

48. In response, I consider the following are relevant:

- a. I acknowledge that the designation, if confirmed, will impact the property in question. The plans indicate a proposed minor arterial over the property.
- b. The primary purpose of the NOR is to secure the land and the planning authorisation necessary to deliver the transportation and infrastructure network. This will then allow for more detailed designs to be developed and implemented.
- c. The designation provides direction and certainty for future development. In effect, it allows for integrated planning to occur and helps ensure the transport and infrastructure networks will positively contribute to the delivery of a quality, connected urban and natural environment.
- d. Whilst some of the future land use components and details are outside the scope of the NOR, the ULDF (as it concerns the submitters landholding) provides a great deal of guidance regarding the nature of the arterial, key moves, the integration of active modes along the corridor, the suggested location of a gateway feature or structure and associated guidance and even provides direction and guidance regarding the interface with other land uses. Some of this guidance is shown in **Figures 2 and 3** below:

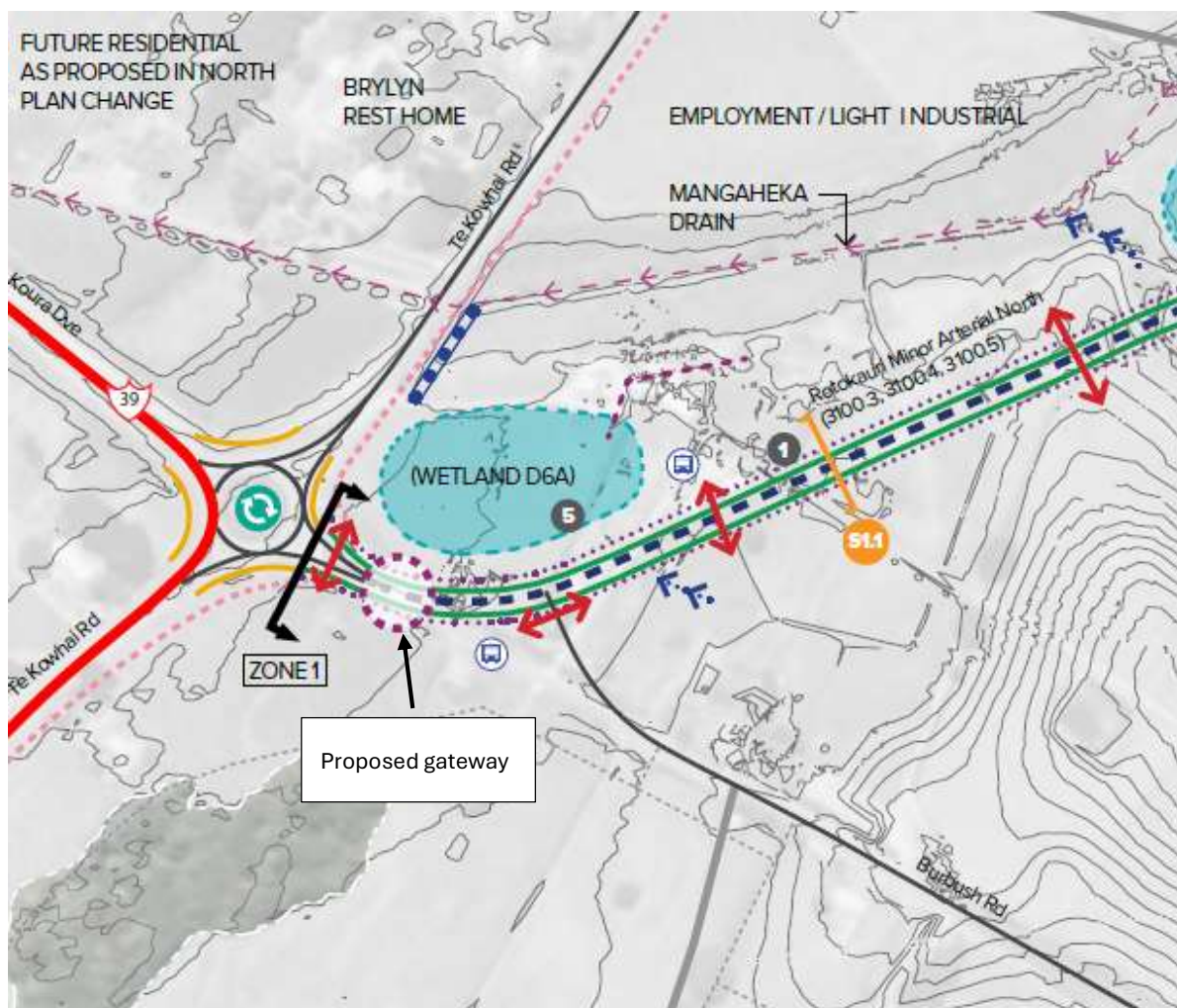


Figure 2 Proposed design approach - Plan¹³

SECTION 1.1 - MINOR ARTERIAL -
ROKOKAURI MINOR ARTERIAL NORTH FACING NORTH WEST (3100.4, 3100.5) OPTION A, WIDTH 29.4 - ZONE 1

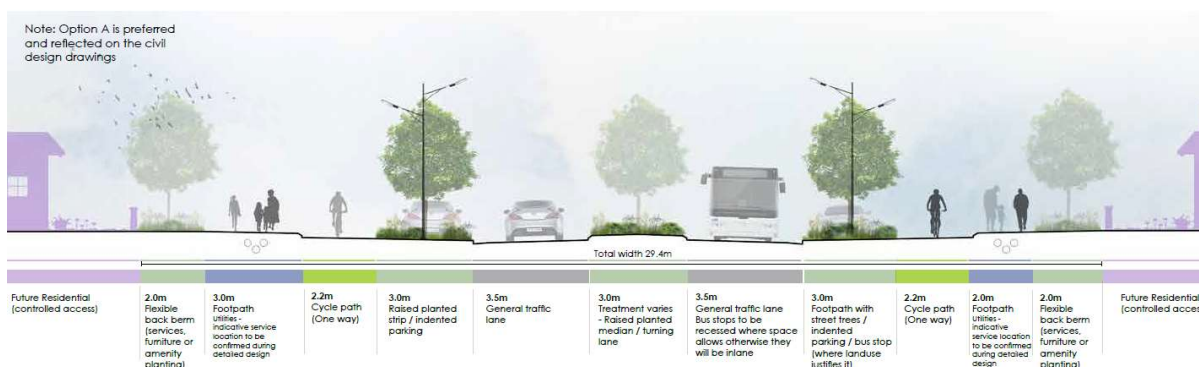


Figure 3 Proposed design approach - Cross section¹⁴

¹³ ULDF, s4.1, p31

¹⁴ ULDF, s4.1, p32

49. Key moves for this stretch or corridor include¹⁵:
- a. Separated walking and cycling facilities both sides of the minor arterial to encourage the use of active modes
 - b. Bus facilities located close to community facilities and key transport nodes.
 - c. A high amenity network through the use of planting and materials which draws inspiration from the underlying landscape and cultural narratives reinforcing the character of Rotokauri.
 - d. The provision of connections across the road at a maximum spacing of 400m.
 - e. Incorporate recreation, amenity, and biodiversity into stormwater storage facilities.
50. The ULDF (page 46) provides further guidance regarding the primary gateways and associated thresholds. I support these from an urban design perspective.
51. Given the above, I believe the information provided, including the proposed conditions, will help ensure that the area will, over time, develop and be viewed as a high-quality urban environment. While some detailed elements are beyond the scope of this work and are yet to be determined, I recommend that the submission points discussed above are rejected.

Statutory Considerations

52. As outlined in the NOR (pp87 – 96), several ODP chapters are particularly relevant to the Requirement: chapters 2, 3 and 25.
53. I concur with the commentary provided in the NOR, including that the project:
- a. *“is being undertaken in accordance with the RSP. If confirmed, the designation will enable the development of strategic infrastructure to appropriately service land planned for urbanisation in accordance with the RSP and the growth management policies of the WRPS” (p88),*
 - b. *“has been informed by a comprehensive ULDF ... which has guided the assessment of options to deliver a proposed transport and infrastructure network which responds to best practice urban design and sustainable development principles” (p88),*
 - c. *“provides opportunities for enhanced connectivity to the many natural features, landscapes and ecosystems in the Rotokauri growth cell” (p89), and*
 - d. *“The ULDF provides a design philosophy for the Project to respond to the natural, ecological, cultural and heritage features in the area” (p92), and*
 - e. *“The ULDF sets out how the Project provides opportunities for the integrated land use and transport network can positively contribute to this objective and policy” (p96).*
54. Chapter 25.15 of the ODP describes the various urban design principles and provisions (objectives and policies that should apply to all new development in the city. The provisions

¹⁵ ULDF, s4.1, p31

reflect best practice approaches and reflect New Zealand's national Urban Design Protocol of which Hamilton City has been a signatory since 2006.

55. One of the key principles or approaches is the integration of land use, subdivision, and development design as this can have positive impacts on residents - economically, socially, and culturally, as well as benefitting the natural environment.
56. In my opinion, the project is aligned with the various provisions of chapter 25.15 as it integrates land use and transportation planning. More sustainable travel patterns will be realised through the integration of the proposed transportation corridors, cycleways, public reserves, and green corridors.

Conclusions

57. In my opinion, the designated works, managed by appropriate designation conditions:
 - a. Can be supported from an urban design perspective
 - b. Demonstrate the application of several best practice urban design principles and approaches
 - c. Are consistent with the relevant urban design provisions of the ODP
 - d. Will not result in any adverse urban design effects that are more than minor. In fact, the project will likely result in several positive urban design outcomes to the benefit of the residents living and interacting with the infrastructure and,
 - e. Comply with the relevant statutory requirements discussed in paragraphs 52 to 56 above.

Recommendations

Modifications to the Requirement

58. I do not recommend any modification to the Requirement.

Designation conditions

59. I do not recommend any amendments to the proposed designation conditions.

Colin Hattingh

12 May 2025