

**Before the Hearings Panel
At Porirua City Council**

Under Schedule 1 of the Resource Management Act 1991

In the matter of the Proposed Porirua District Plan

Between **Various**

Submitters

And **Porirua City Council**

Respondent

**Statement of evidence of John Robert Hudson, Landscape Architect, on
behalf of Silverwood Corporation Ltd (Landscape Evidence)**

Date: 18 May 2022

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

- 1 My name is John Robert Hudson. I am a landscape architect and principal of my own practice, Hudson Associates, and have been practicing in this field for over 40 years.
- 2 Hudson Associates consults on projects throughout New Zealand, with particular focus on landscape assessment, subdivision, large scale design, and infrastructure.
- 3 I am currently engaged by a number of local authorities throughout the country to provide specialist advice on consent applications and district plan assessments and provisions. I regularly appear as an expert witness at both Council hearings and Environment Court appeal hearings. I have been engaged as an independent commissioner for several large consent applications.
- 4 I have a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Geography from Victoria University and hold post graduate diplomas in landscape architecture and business administration from Lincoln and Victoria Universities, respectively. I am a registered member, fellow and past president of the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects and have also held the roles of member and chairman of the Institute's professional examination committee for ten years, as well as judge for the Institute's biennial award. I hold the Making Good Decisions certificates from the Ministry for the Environment as both a Hearing Commissioner and with the Chairing Endorsement.

Code of conduct

- 5 I have read the code of conduct for expert witnesses in the Environment Court Practice Note 2014. I have complied with the code of conduct in preparing this statement of evidence and confirm that I will do so in presenting my evidence to the hearing Commissioners. Unless I state otherwise, this evidence is within my sphere of expertise, and I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that I might alter or detract from the opinions I express.

INTRODUCTION:

- 6 Following our preparation of the Landscape Evaluation that accompanied the submission to rezone the land to Future Urban Zone (“**FUZ**”), Hudson Associates have prepared this statement of evidence on behalf of Silverwood Corporation Ltd (“**Silverwood**”) in respect of landscape matters in relation to Submission 172, on the Proposed Porirua District Plan (“**PDP**”). This submission proposes that three lots adjacent Transmission Gully’s Waitangirua Link Road be re-zoned from General Rural Zone (“**GRZ**”) to FUZ. A portion of the land proposed to be rezoned falls within the Cannons Creek Ridge Special Amenity Landscape (“**SAL**”) in the PDP.
- 7 My evidence addresses the appropriateness of rezoning the land to ‘Future Urban Zone’ in relation to the landscape, and the extent of potential development which may be achieved while maintaining the identified landscape characteristics and values.

SUMMARY

- 8 I have been asked by Silverwood to provide landscape evidence in relation to Submission 172 on the PDP, which is seeking for three lots adjacent Transmission Gully’s Waitangirua Link Road to be re-zoned as Future Urban Zone (“**FUZ**”). A portion of the land proposed to be rezoned falls within the Cannons Creek Ridge Special Amenity Landscape (“**SAL**”) in the PDP. The submission does not seek any changes to the SAL.
- 9 The Submission includes a Draft Structure Plan for the area. The Draft Structure Plan was developed to both inform and reflect the technical assessments completed to date – including the Landscape Evaluation prepared by Hudson Associates. As the Draft Structure Plan is only preliminary, and Silverwood have not sought a live-zoning, it is not necessary for a structure plan to be inserted into the PDP at this stage. The FUZ provisions set the framework for structure plan development through a future plan change process, where FUZ land is subsequently identified as a Development Area in the PDP.

- 10 My statement of evidence addresses the appropriateness of rezoning the land to 'Future Urban Zone' in relation to the capacity of the landscape to absorb change, and the extent of potential development which may be achieved while maintaining the identified landscape and amenity values. This includes the values of the Cannons Creek Ridge SAL.
- 11 My evidence concludes that 'Future Urban Zone' is appropriate given the land has capacity for urban development. While the landscape has developmental constraints, there are pockets within the topography which are well-suited for residential dwellings if implemented in a sensitive and low impact manner.
- 12 Acknowledging that planning matters are outside of my expertise, it is my understanding that FUZ zoning of the Site does not assume that the subsequent / future rezoning will comprise of blanket small lot residential development across the entire site. Comprehensive and integrated development of the Site, with bespoke provisions, could enable a well-considered development that allow for maintenance and enhancement of SAL values. When considered as part of the development as enabled through the required structure planning process, areas which are more sensitive or are unsuitable for development can be designed and protected in a manner which complements the adjacent residential activity. I understand that the planning evidence of Stephanie Blick will advise other instances where this has occurred in Porirua City.

INVOLVEMENT WITH THE PDP SUBMISSION

- 13 I was engaged by Silverwood in 2020 to provide landscape architectural input into the proposed rezoning of three lots ("**the Site**"), in the south of Whitby, Porirua. The Landscape Evaluation I prepared was one of the specialist reports within 'Silverwood Rezoning Evaluation Report', alongside the Draft Structure Plan. This formulated the Proposed District Plan Submission (172), to Porirua City Council, by Silverwood Corporation.
- 14 I visited the Site for preparation of the Landscape Evaluation in September 2020 and again for the preparation of this evidence in May

2022.

SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

15 My statement of evidence addresses the following matters:

- Proposal
- Existing Environment Characterisation
- Planning Framework
- Landscape Capacity

EVIDENCE

Proposal

16 The Silverwood submission proposed that three lots adjacent Transmission Gully's Waitangirua Link Road (Lot 2 DP 389024; Section 10 SO 475749; and Section 7 SO 475749), a total of 112.755ha, be re-zoned from General Rural Zone ("GRZ") to Future Urban Zone ("FUZ"). A portion of land falls within the Cannons Creek Ridge Special Amenity Landscape ("SAL") in the PDP.

Existing Environment Characterisation

17 The Site is located on the northern prow of the prominent, low-lying ridge known as Cannons Creek Ridge. This is the local rural backdrop for the residential areas of Waitangirua, Cannon's Creek and Aotea.

18 The rolling landform is highly visible throughout the wider Porirua area and is experienced with the backdrop of the distant Belmont Hills.

19 The Site has a rural character. It is distinguished by exotic scrub and pasture-covered, rolling to steeply sloping, ridgelines and basins. These are contrasted by the dissecting, steep and narrow gullies running back up into the hillsides.

20 The Site is also characterised as a key part of the wider Porirua basin. The prominent hillside creates a sense of enclosure to the surrounding suburbs of Waitangirua, Cannons Creek and Aotea.

- 21 From further away the ridgeline is set within the dramatic hills of Belmont Regional Park to the south-west. Combined with the Eastern Porirua ridge, it acts as a containment for Porirua City.
- 22 Due to its significance, part of this area has been identified as a Special Amenity Landscape (“SAL”). This is a district-wide overlay which identifies landscapes with characteristics, identity, and amenity unique to Porirua City, which are valued by the community. Part of the Site is within the Cannons Creek Ridge Special Amenity Landscape (“SAL004”). See [Graphic Attachment](#).

Planning Framework

- 23 The Resource Management Act 1991 (“RMA”), Wellington Regional Policy Statement (“RPS”), Porirua District Plan (“DP”), Porirua Proposed District Plan (“PDP”) provided the statutory context for the Landscape Evaluation.
- 24 The Porirua Landscape Management Strategy for Rural and Open Space Areas (2013) (“**Landscape Management Strategy**”), Draft Porirua Landscape Evaluation 2018 (Boffa Miskell) (“**Porirua Landscape Evaluation 2018**”), Porirua City Council Final Landscape Evaluation 2020 (“**Porirua Landscape Evaluation 2020**”), and Porirua Growth Strategy 2048 (“**Growth Strategy**”), provide the non-statutory context but have also informed PDP zoning and overlays.
- 25 In the Porirua Growth Strategy 2048, the Site is within an area identified as a ‘Potential Residential Area – Medium Term’ in response to the submission made by Silverwood. Council recommended, in response to that submission that:

“to adjust the urban/rural boundary in the east from the Lanes Flat interchange in the north, to Kenepuru in the south and between Waitangirua/Cannons Creek to the Transmission Gully Motorway (with the exception of Judgeford Hills). This means land to the east of Whitby/ Waitangirua and Cannons Creek up

to Transmission Gully Motorway can be considered for residential zoning through the Proposed District Plan review”

- 26 In accordance with Objective 18 of the RPS, identified landscape values of Cannons Creek Ridge SAL that contribute to amenity and the quality of the environment must be maintained or enhanced. As outlined in the PDP, informed by the Porirua Landscape Evaluation 2020, the values of the Cannons SAL range from moderate to high value (see [Table 1](#)).
- 27 I am in agreement with the scope and values associated with the Cannons Creek SAL outlined in the PDP.
- 28 I note that in Hearing Stream 2, the values associated with the landform backdropping Maraeroa Marae (Waitangirua Hill) have been refined.¹ The additional specificity will undoubtedly be helpful for interpretation when developing a structure plan at a later stage.

Table 1: Cannons Creek SAL Values in the PDP at the time of the Landscape Evaluation

<p>Natural Sciences – Moderate value</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large areas of modified landcover (pasture, exotic shelterbelts and exotic forestry); • Predominantly unmodified landform; • Pasture with some deep gullies supporting vegetated waterways is relatively typical of this area of Porirua’s rural environment.
<p>Sensory – High value</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Striking open rural backdrop with rolling landform, provides strong sense of enclosure to eastern Porirua, visible from residential areas of Waitangirua, Cannons Creek and Aotea; • Predominantly natural backdrop to the city to the east; • The mix of grazed pasture on the hills, shelterbelts and exotic forest plantations, with bush-filled gullies, has created distinctive patterns of open spaces with few prominent or incongruous structures; • Changes in light and shadow add a dramatic context to this open pastoral backdrop; • Highly visible from Transmission Gully route.
<p>Shared and Recognised – High value</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contained inland forested areas with important resources and links to other areas for Māori;

¹ Council Reply on Natural Features and Landscapes - Hearing Stream 2 - Caroline Elizabeth Rachlin on behalf of Porirua City Council. 22 December 2021

- Northern end forms backdrop to Maraeroa Marae in Waitangirua;
- Part of Belmont Regional Park which forms local backdrop for Aotea/Cannons Creek and wider area;
- Includes walkway entrance to Belmont Regional Park from Porirua through Waitangirua Farm and Cannons Creek Lakeside Reserve;
- Landcorp farm - historic values associated with Belmont Regional Park including Old Coach Road - the original route between Normandale and Pauatahanui and crosses Waitangirua Farm.

Landscape Capacity

29 Outside the SAL boundary, the landscape character and values are much less vulnerable to change, and there is a greater landscape capacity for development.

30 In my opinion, as outlined in my Landscape Evaluation, there is also potential for urban development in parts of the SAL while maintaining its characteristics and values. For example, the northern basin, and areas east of the ridgeline have potential as they are mostly screened by existing landform.

31 Enhancement of other values can also be achieved by protecting more sensitive areas and providing for open spaces, revegetation, recreation, and connectivity. This would be done at the rezoning stage with development of a structure plan but is not appropriate at this FUZ stage.

32 Ms Armstrong and I are in agreement, there is potential for this to be achieved through the:

“inclusion of sensitive, clustered development inside less sensitive parts of the SAL, with inclusion of well-located and considered roading and connections (also in less sensitive parts), and with remaining parts of the SAL left undeveloped and managed to maintain and enhance SAL values in those parts...the proposed cluster approach... has the potential to achieve a good landscape outcome for the SAL. An appropriate development, with smaller lot sizes, can provide for large parts of the SAL (including more sensitive parts) to be free of earthworks and development patterning; and the

*values in those undeveloped parts can be enhanced*²

33 As recommended in the Landscape Evaluation, at a later stage, the Draft Structure Plan should be refined and finalised to guide future development. This would be achieved by incorporating the Structure Plan into the [then] Operative Porirua City District Plan and setting provisions to control the siting of infrastructure (including roading), buildings, and planting. These should aim to:

- Maintain the prominent unmodified ridgeline, and ensure it is free from incongruous structures.
- Avoid development within deep gullies and promote revegetation of these waterways and wetlands.
- Encourage development that is low impact, integrated and designed sensitively in response to the existing terrain to limit prominence.
- Maintain open space as a characteristic land use.
- Enable public access through networks across the site and along the ridge.

Draft Structure Plan Development Areas

34 Aligned with my recommendation, the Draft Structure Plan proposed a clustered housing approach with smaller lots in some areas to incentivise the preservation of landscape values in others, e.g., covenants on the larger balance areas of some lots to achieve consistent land cover. Such consistency increases visual coherence, which in turn reinforces the perception of a “*predominantly natural backdrop to the city to the east*”³.

35 Five different development areas were outlined, each with different capacities for development due to varying topography, urban context, landscape sensitivity and character. See the [Graphic Attachment](#). These are termed:

- Development Area 1 - Hillside Living
- Development Area 2 - Whitby Views

² Statement of evidence of Rose Armstrong. 20 December 2020. Paragraph 24-25.

³ Cannons Creek SAL value identified in the PDP.

- Development Area 3 - Waitangirua Community
- Development Area 4 - Hilltop Clusters
- Development Area 5 - Bush Living

36 I recommended that as part of the future structure plan process, controls be placed around all development within the SAL to appropriately manage changes to landform and landcover. These should have higher levels of control and development guidance in the development zones which are more vulnerable to change. As further detailed in the planning evidence of Ms Blick, I understand that the future structure planning process enabled under the PDP does not preclude such an approach.

Draft Structure Plan Protection Areas

37 As pointed out by Ms Armstrong, *“in general, with intensification of existing urban areas at Eastern Porirua (re-zoned in the PDP for Medium Density Residential development), the value of the Cannons Creek Ridge SAL as an undeveloped backdrop and visual break for local communities from development, will become increasingly important.”*⁴ Because of this, I recommended that regulatory tools such as protective covenants, reserve management plans or open space covenants should be a consideration for the future structure planning process and subsequent resource consents. I also identified the opportunity for connections to existing landscape features such as walkways, lookouts, open space (e.g., Belmont Regional Park) and waterways.

38 As further described in my Landscape Evaluation, it is my view (as further reinforced in the SAL values), that the ridgeline of the Cannons Creek SAL holds significant amenity value. This means that this area is unsuitable for any structures and should be treated as open space. Consequently, as per my recommendation, this was marked as a ridgeline protection area in the Draft Structure Plan. Again, I understand that this could be reflected in a future structure plan via appropriate zoning and/or bespoke controls.

⁴ Statement of evidence of Rose Armstrong. 20 December 2020. Paragraph 28.

- 39 A current value of the SAL is the *“large areas of modified landcover (pasture, exotic, shelterbelts and exotic forestry) with indigenous vegetation/regeneration at Maara Roa Reserve”*.⁵ I am of the opinion that this value could be enhanced by converting more landcover to regenerating bush. Opportunities for this were provided in the Draft Structure Plan and could be reflected in the future structure plan and Development Area policy framework and controls.
- 40 Also pertaining to the SAL, the waterways and vegetation in gullies hold considerable value. The Draft Structure Plan intended to maintain the ecological significance of these areas and enhance them with additional planting in ‘drainage corridor protection’ areas placed around wetlands and/or riparian corridors.
- 41 A shared and recognised value of Cannons Creek SAL is accessibility to Belmont Regional Park through Waitangirua farm. The Draft Structure Plan aimed to enhance this value by providing a ridgeline walkway from Waitangirua suburb, through to walkways in the neighbouring reserve. This may be further enhanced by walkable connectivity to Whitby. The ridgeline walkway may further add value by incorporating high quality lookout points for recreational use.
- 42 If undertaken appropriately, the open spaces *“forming the backdrop to Maraeroa Marae in Waitangirua”* may be enhanced through participatory design. For example, *“inland forested areas”* could be established within this part of the SAL for *“providing important resources and links to other areas for Māori”* as described in the PDP for Cannons Creek Ridge SAL.⁶ However, it is for Ngāti Toa to comment on what landuse would be appropriate on Waitangirua Hill, where the north end of the SAL forms the backdrop to Maraeroa Marae.

CONCLUSION

- 43 ‘Future Urban Zone’ is appropriate, given the land has capacity for urban development. While the landscape has developmental constraints, there

⁵ Cannons Creek SAL value identified in the PDP.

⁶ Cannons Creek SAL value identified in the PDP.

are pockets within the topography which are well-suited for residential dwellings if implemented in a sensitive and low impact manner.

44 The FUZ zone does not require that all future zones within that area must be residential, nor does it anticipate or require “*eventual comprehensive landscape change*” as assumed by Ms Armstrong. Further, the final structure plan and associated development area provisions could enable clustering for maintenance and enhancement of SAL values.

45 As indicated in the Landscape Evaluation, more work is required at the zoning and structure planning stage to ensure the site is developed in a manner which maintains and enhances the values of the Cannons Creek Ridge SAL. This future work is guided by ‘Appendix 11 – Structure Plan Guidance’ in the PDP which includes requirements to identify, address and assess matters that include [my emphasis added]:

Natural Resources

1. The protection, maintenance and enhancement of natural resources, particularly those that have been identified:

*a. in the District Plan in relation to Ngāti Toa Rangatira, areas of Outstanding Natural Features and Landscapes, areas of Coastal High Natural Character Areas and **Significant Natural Areas**;*

....

2. Demonstrate how proposed subdivision, use, and development will protect, maintain and enhance the identified values of the resources identified above.

Use and Activity

*4. A mix and distribution of land uses within the structure plan area, as is appropriate to the area’s size and location, to provide opportunities for business activities and employment, community facilities and **open space close to where people live.***

Urban Development

....

2. A desirable urban form at the neighbourhood scale

including all of the following

.....

c. Provision of open spaces which are highly visible from streets and of a scale and quality to meet identified community needs;

d. Appropriate transitions within and at the edge of the structure plan area between different land use activities, intensities and densities;

46 In addition, Appendix 11 requires the preparation of a landscape assessment to support the structure planning and plan change process.

47 The future work required under Appendix 11 would cover the above matters that also capture the recommendations made in the Landscape Evaluation. Ms Armstrong also identifies design considerations which need to be refined:⁷

- Clustering approach of lots.
- Proposed lot sizes in the different development areas.
- Minimisation of earthworks for roads, building platforms and accessways.
- Design of built form.

48 I am in agreement with Ms Armstrong; however, I am of the opinion that the work to date is appropriate to allow a Future Urban Zone to be placed over the land and it is more appropriate for these precise matters to be addressed at the actual zoning and structure planning stages.

49 I am confident that a bespoke layout with appropriate development densities, which maintain and enhance landscape and amenity values (as required in the NFL objectives and policies), can be achieved through the future structure plan and plan change process provided for FUZ land in the PDP. With particular reference to Policy FUZ-P1, that sets out the

⁷ Statement of evidence of Rose Armstrong. 20 December 2020. Para 31.

criteria for identifying FUZ sites, for the reasons outlined in this evidence, it is my view that the future structure planning process as enabled through the FUZ provisions and Appendix 11 of the PDP, will ensure that adverse effects on the identified values of the SAL can be avoided, remedied or mitigated.

John Robert Hudson

Date: 18 May 2022

ATTACHMENT 1

**ATTACHMENT TO THE EVIDENCE OF
JOHN HUDSON:**

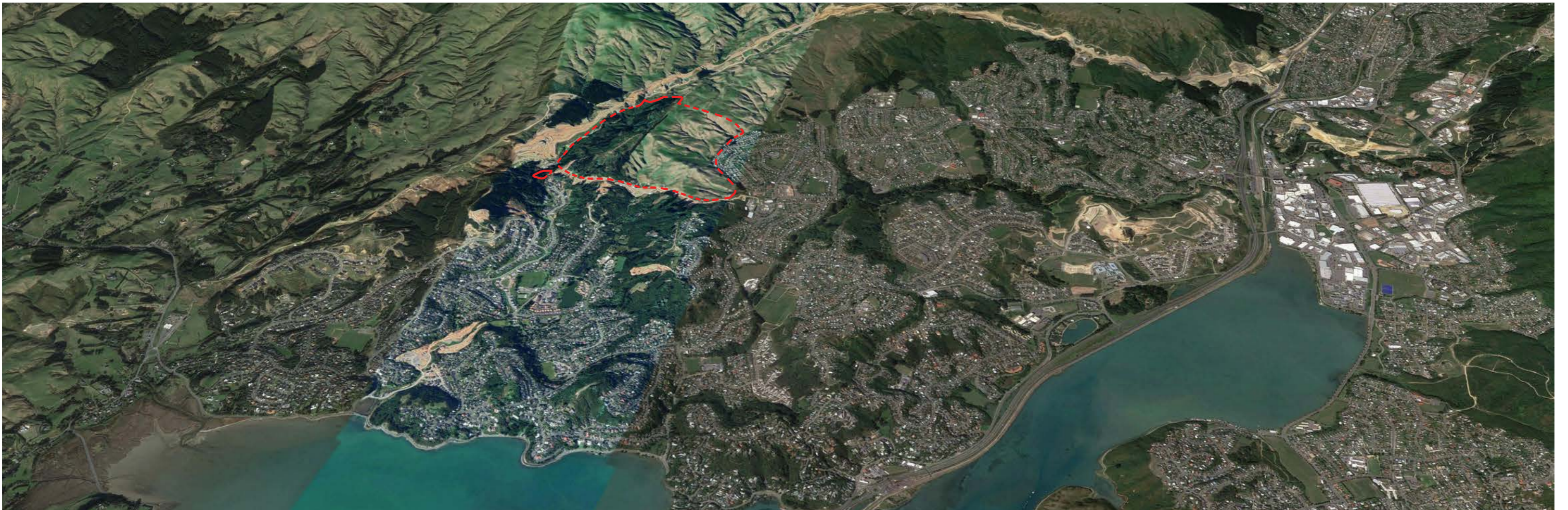
GRAPHIC ATTACHEMENT



HUDSON ASSOCIATES
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

GRAPHIC ATTACHMENT

SILVERWOOD



May 2022

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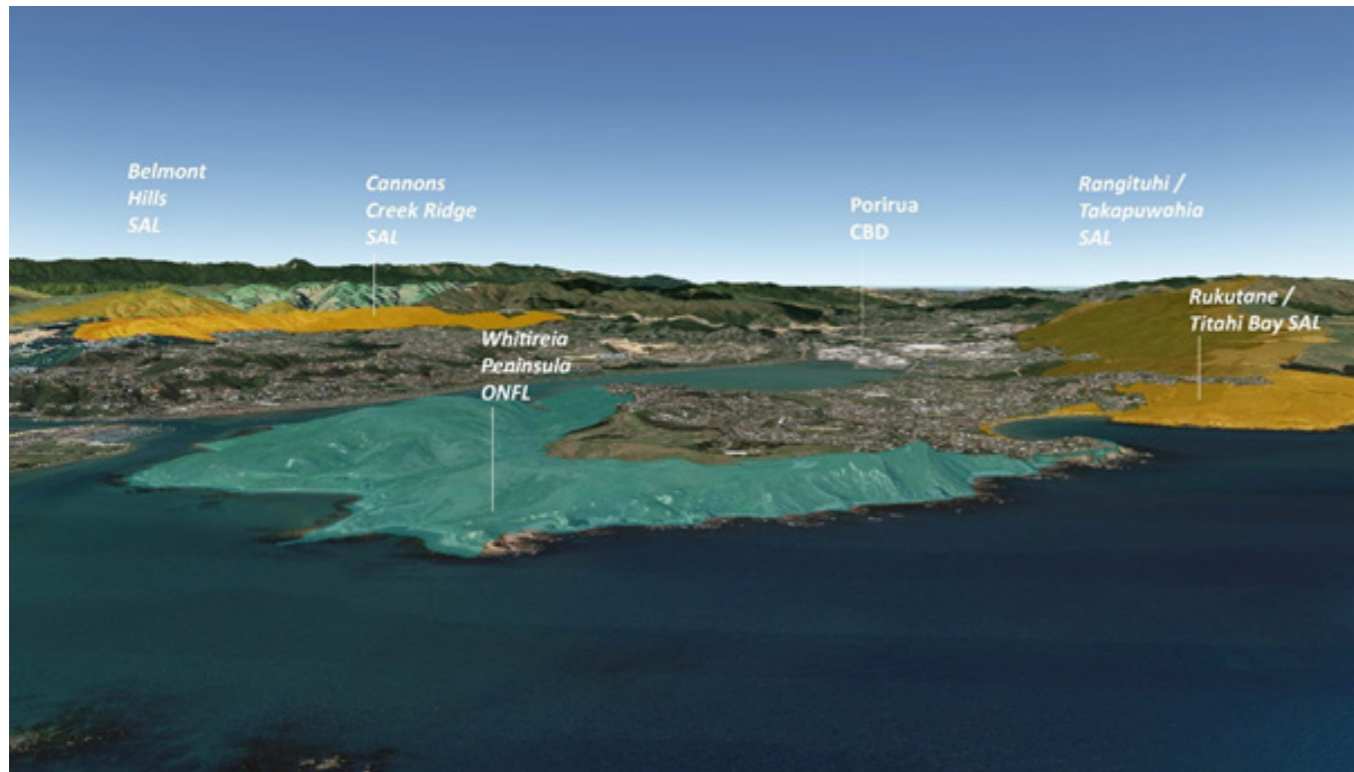


Image Above: Google Earth view looking south towards Tawa and Wellington City with Porirua's ONFLs and SALs.

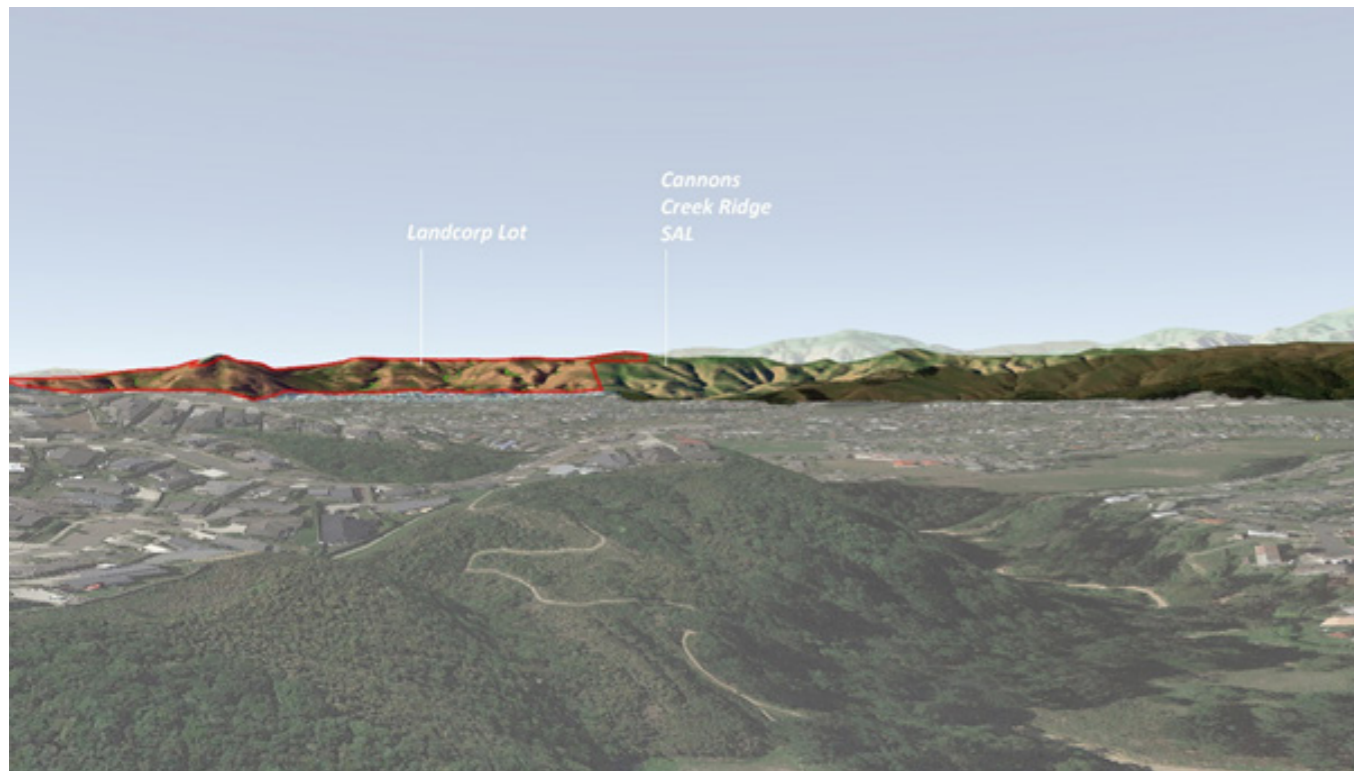
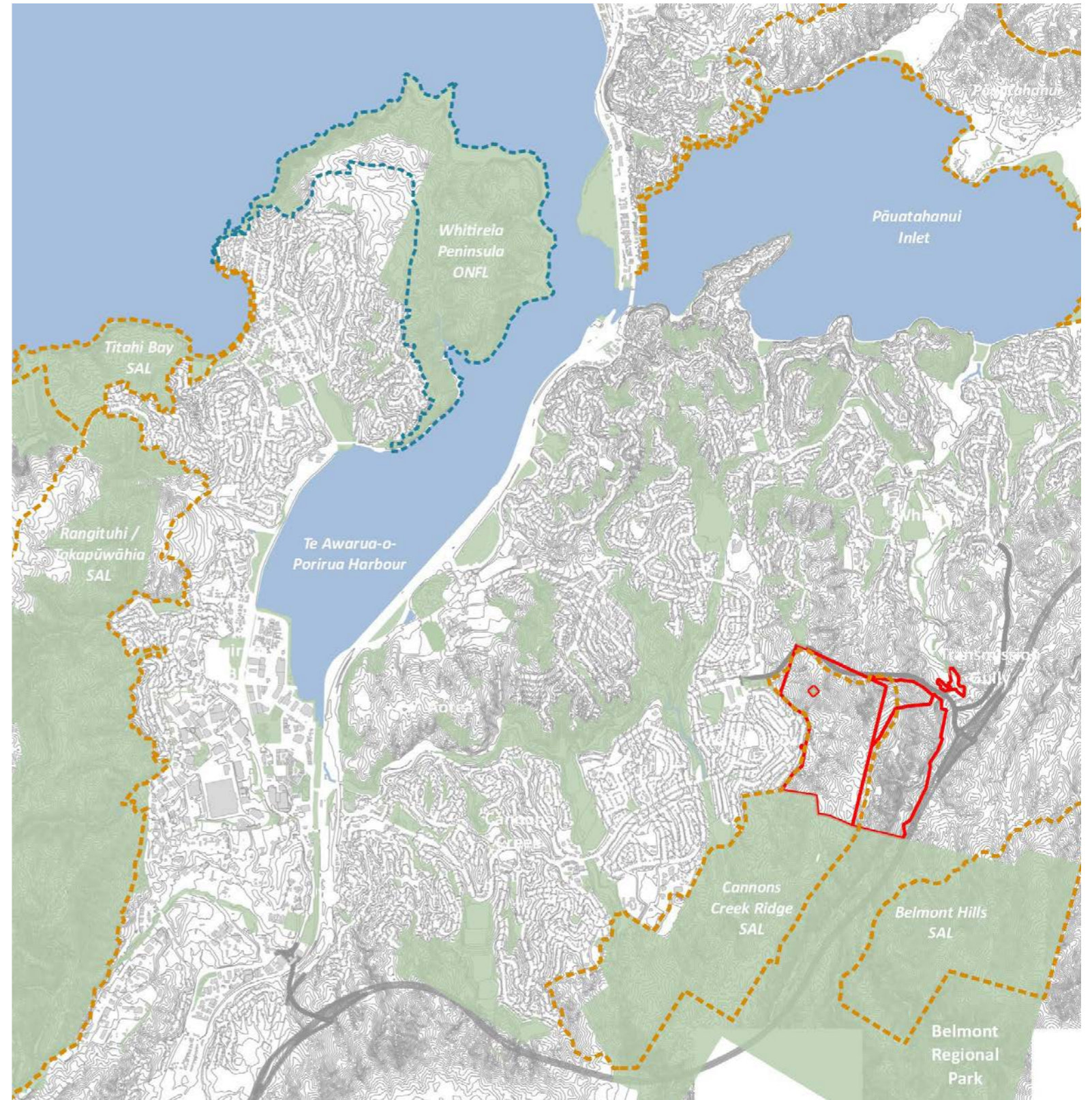


Image Above: Google Earth view of Site from Opara Way, Aotea. Landcorp Lot is within Cannons Creek Ridge SAL.



KEY

- Special Amenity Landscape (SAL)
- Outstanding Natural Features and Landscapes
- Site




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SILVERWOOD
Cannons Creek Ridge SAL

DWG #	00-01	Date	29/04/2022
Revision #	0	Scale @ A3	NTS
<small>Do not scale from plan</small>			



development areas

- ① Hillside Living
- ② Whitby Views
- ③ Waitangirua Community
- ④ Hilltop Clusters
- ⑤ Bush Living

- Marae
- Waitangirua local centre
- ridgetop lookout
- Duck Creek walkway
- ridgeline track
- other walk/cycle way
- collector road
- potential bus stop
- vehicle entry point
- pedestrian/cycle connection

open space areas

- Significant Natural Area
- ridgeline protection area
- Biodiversity Offsetting and Restoration Areas
- drainage corridor protection



Note: Drawn by Urban Acumen, image sourced from 'Silverwood Rezoning Draft Proposed Structure Plan'


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SILVERWOOD
Draft Structure Plan Development Areas

DWG #	00-02	Date	20/11/2020
Revision #	0	Scale @ A3	NTS
Do not scale from plan			