

Weiti Precinct: Village 1 Fast Track Consent Application

Landscape Assessment
Prepared for Ara Weiti Development Limited



13 May 2022





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Cover photograph: Karepiro Bay beach with WeitiBay housing development and Village 1 site in valley beyond © Boffa Miskell, 2019

Executive Summary

The Weiti Village 1 Fast Track proposal would facilitate the development of 220 dwellings, 1 super lot earmarked for a retirement village and a small commercial area within Policy Area 2 (Village 1) of Sub-precinct B, an approximately 33.5ha parcel of land located within the Karepiro catchment and the Auckland Unitary Plan's Weiti Precinct.

The development will increase modification to the existing landform and watercourses and remove additional areas of wilding pine, weed species and regenerating native vegetation. While these changes will result in changes to these existing landscape elements the character will be consistent with that anticipated in the Sub-precinct B area. In addition, the areas which retain the highest degree of naturalness within and immediately surrounding the development, including the existing catchment ridges, native bush areas and Okura Bush Scenic Reserve will remain protected or enhanced by the proposal. Proposed revegetation to connect the modified stream corridors to existing Significant Ecological Areas, and the Karepiro Stream, will provide a strong landscape framework for the expanded development. This will continue to reinforce the protective "greenbelt" vegetation and maintain the key open space function of the Precinct.

The overall magnitude of change proposed is considered to result in only low to very low adverse effects on the perceived natural character of the coastal environment and the overall landscape character of the Property and its relationship to surrounding areas.

While the proposed additional development would result in adverse visual amenity effects, these are also considered to be low in significance due to the limited extent of visibility and that the main views, which are from the Long Bay Regional Park / Te Ararua walking trail, contains the existing Weiti Bay development (Sub-precinct A) in the foreground / context. Importantly from these off-site publicly accessible areas development of Village 1 will not protrude above the backdrop ridgelines.

In terms of the key landscape matters within the Weiti Precinct provisions the proposal will maintain the greenbelt and vegetative cover between the Okura River and the urban Hibiscus Coast; protect the landscape, skyline and coast when viewed from Long Bay Regional Park, East Coast Road and the Whangaparaoa Peninsula; protect the key natural features and the distinctive character of the precinct; and avoid or mitigate the adverse effects of land modification, development and land use activities on the landform, water courses, significant vegetation and the CMA.

In addition, the proposal will provide a number of public amenities and environmental enhancements within the Village 1 (Policy Area 2) boundary and along the coastal foreshore adjacent to the existing walking track from Okura to Stillwater.

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1.0 Introduction and Background

This assessment of potential landscape and visual amenity effects has been prepared by Boffa Miskell Limited (“**BML**”) for Ara Weiti Development Limited (“**AWDL**”), the applicant, as part of a request for referral under the Covid-19 Recovery (Fast-track Consenting) Act 2020 by the Minister for the Environment for development of ‘Village 1’ within Sub-precinct B of the Weiti Precinct as defined in the Auckland Unitary Plan (“**AUP**”). This landscape assessment summarises the potential natural character, landscape and visual amenity effects of development that would result from the development. A separate urban design assessment report, also prepared by Boffa Miskell, addresses the effects of the proposal and considers them in relation to the plan provisions for Sub-precinct B.

Boffa Miskell and the author of this report have had a long history with this site, having been involved in developing designs and associated provisions for Weiti since 2005, including advising on master planning and resource consent matters and developing the Special 8 zone for the former Rodney District Council. More specifically this has included:

- a. background landscape assessments of the Property and its relationship to the surrounding area, prepared between 2005 and 2019;
- b. the preparation and presentation of site planning, landscape, and ecology evidence to a joint Rodney District Council and Auckland Regional Council hearing to establish a 150 lot subdivision in the Special 8 (Weiti Forest Park) zone, located within Sub-precinct A;
- c. provision of expert opinion in relation to the settlement of appeals to the Special 8 Weiti Forest Park zone in 2009 which resulted in a Consent Order for 400 dwellings within Village 1 and Village 2 (now Sub-precinct B) with a total of 550 household units across the Property;
- d. master planning, subdivision layout and landscape design for Village 1 and preparation of a land use and subdivision resource consent application (June to November 2013);
- e. preparation of Weiti Bay (Karepiro Policy Area) Landscape Plan and Ecological Management Plans to meet landscape related consent conditions for the 150 lot development in Weiti Bay (September 2014 – 2017);
- f. Weiti Bay landscape implementation and ecological monitoring (2015-2018); and
- g. preparation and presentation of landscape, ecology and planning evidence to the Proposed Auckland Unitary Plan (“**PAUP**”) hearings committee in 2016.

In 2015 the applicant undertook a comprehensive analysis and structure planning process to determine and understand how the site may be developed and zoned. This process resulted in the development of a bespoke set of provisions in the AUP (I547.Weiti Precinct) and three precinct plans - Weiti Precinct Plan 1 (for the whole Property), Weiti Precinct Plan 2 (for Sub-precinct A) and Weiti Precinct Plan 3 (for Sub-precinct B).

The aim of the proposal is to enable the development of medium density residential development whilst allowing for the creation of areas of public open space, revegetation and additional public facilities and amenities. The proposed Village 1 plan layout illustrates the

development within the proposed precinct. The outcomes sought are designed to meet the objectives, policies and other provisions that relate to landscape and visual amenity matters. These are outlined in Section 6.0 of this assessment which summarises relevant statutory matters.

It is recognised that the layout of the development may be refined through further detailed design and assessment as part of the preparation of the application for resource consent if the project is referred. However, it is considered that for the purpose of this assessment, the **Indicative Scheme Plan for Village 1** prepared by Woods (dated 18 March 2022) within Sub-precinct B, which depicts the general layout of the primary roads, development areas, indicative pedestrian walkways and open space, existing protected native vegetation and proposed re-vegetation areas sufficiently illustrates the distribution and extent of development.

This plan and other drawings and maps assembled as an **A3 Folio of Drawings to Accompany the Fast Track Application** (“**A3 Folio**”) should be referred to in relation to this report.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Methodology - Guidance

This preliminary assessment has been undertaken and peer reviewed by NZILA registered landscape architects with reference to the Te Tangi A Te Manu, Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines (2021) and Quality Planning Landscape Guidance Note¹ and its signposts to examples of best practice.

2.2 Methodology – Effects Ratings

This assessment provides ratings, based upon the professional judgement of the author, in relation to the level of landscape and visual effects that would result from the proposal. These range from Very High to Very Low on a 7 point scale.

Assessing natural character, landscape and visual effects requires an understanding of the landscape character and importance or value of the landscape. Using this baseline, a determination of landscape sensitivity and the magnitude of change which results from a proposed development (along with other factors such as the quality and use) can be made to inform the overall significance of natural character landscape and visual effects.

In combination with assessing the significance of effects, the landscape and visual effects assessment also considers the nature of effects in terms of whether this will be positive (beneficial) or negative (adverse) in the context within which it occurs. Neutral effects can also occur where landscape or visual change is considered to be benign in the context of where it occurs.

This natural character, landscape and visual effects assessment considers the effects of the Village 1 proposal on a rural and coastal environment. While each of the effects are assessed separately, they are also considered together in relation to the wider Weiti Property and

¹ <https://www.qualityplanning.org.nz/node/802>

surrounding areas. Following a description and analysis of the landscape within which the proposal is located, and an understanding of the planning context, the assessment addresses potential natural character effects, then landscape effects and visual amenity effects. The natural character and landscape assessment is carried out to determine effects on an environmental resource (i.e. coastal and rural landscape elements, features and character). The assessment of visual effects considers how changes to the physical elements, features and character may affect the viewing audience and visual amenity.

3.0 Landscape and Visual Context

The 864 ha Weiti property ("Property") is strategically located between the Okura River to the south and the Weiti River to the northeast. The Property, which was largely covered in pine forest between the early 1980's and 2010, provided a "greenbelt" or rural separation between the urban settlements within the previous North Shore City and Rodney District local authority areas. (refer to **Figure 1** in the A3 Folio of Drawings).

In its wider context Weiti is surrounded by a mix of urban, countryside living, rural and conservation land uses. To the north is the settlement of Stillwater and beyond this, urban areas associated with the developing Whangaparaoa Peninsula. To the east is Karepiro Bay and the Long Bay-Okura Marine Reserve and to the south the Okura Bush Department of Conservation ("**DOC**") Scenic Reserve, the Okura Estuary and Okura residential settlement. South-east of the Okura settlement is the Long Bay Regional Park and Long Bay Structure Plan Precinct and between Vaughans Road in the south and the Okura River to the north the land is zoned Rural Countryside Living.

The Long Bay Regional Park extends to the northern headland beyond Piripiri Point. The Okura River estuary and Karepiro Bay out beyond Piripiri Point and down past Long Bay to Toroa Point is classified as a Marine Reserve. Part of this area also contains an Outstanding Natural Landscape ("**ONL**") which includes the DOC Okura Scenic Reserve, the Okura Estuary and the coastal edge of the Long Bay Regional Park. To the north-east of the Property is an Outstanding Natural Feature ("**ONF**") associated with the Weiti River shell spits (refer to **Figure 2** in the A3 Folio of Drawings). Immediately adjacent to the Property and the Weiti River from Stillwater to Karepiro Bay and around the Okura River, including the DOC Scenic Reserve the coastal land has been identified as having High Natural Character values.

Within the DOC Reserve is a public walkway, which extends around the coast some 6.1 kms from Haighs Access Road to Stillwater. The northern part of the walkway from Dacres Point at the southern end of Karepiro Bay to Stillwater is part of the Te Araroa National Trail.

To the east beyond Karepiro Bay lies the Whangaparaoa Peninsula. Areas of land in close proximity to the Property around Wade Heads are zoned for large lot residential activities.

To the north is the residential settlement of Stillwater and beyond this rural land zoned for Countryside Living which flanks the western banks of the Weiti River up to the Silverdale Industrial Estate. This includes land owned by Hugh Green Group which is zoned Rural Countryside Living.

Immediately to the west of the Property out to East Coast Road lies rural land which is also zoned for Countryside Living which includes the adjacent clean fill activity which is also zoned Rural Countryside Living.

Also, to the north and west of the property lies the land designated for Penlink. The designation associated with this road now forms the western boundary of the 840 ha Weiti property and two lanes of the eventual 4 lane highway have been developed to provide access to the Weiti Bay development adjacent to the Village 1 development site (refer to **Figure 2** in the A3 Folio).

4.0 Landscape Description and Character

Located to the west of the Northern Motorway transport corridor the Property is accessed off East Coast Road via a section of the Penlink arterial route and then Ara Weiti Road. This was constructed as access to the Weiti Bay settlement in Sub-precinct A. The existing precinct areas, and the balance of the land which is Sub-precinct C are depicted on **Figure 3 and 4** in the A3 Folio.

As depicted in **Figure 3** the Property contains three main water catchments – the Okura, Karepiro and Weiti. The Okura and Weiti catchments both extend beyond the Weiti property whilst the Karepiro catchment is located wholly within the Property. Within the Property these catchments have the following approximate areas - Okura 265 ha, Weiti 168 ha, Karepiro 407 ha.

The landscape character of the Property can be best understood by analysing the topography / slope, land cover and landuse as outlined in the following sections and with reference to the following figures.

4.1 Topography and Slope

The topography on the site forms a prominent and distinct feature within the landscape and is characterised by steep slopes, spur and valley sides, ridgelines and valley floor areas. The topography of the site acts as a natural delineating feature separating and defining the three main catchment areas - the Weiti River catchment to the north, the Okura catchment to the south and the centrally located Karepiro catchment.

The ridgelines of the 407 ha Karepiro catchment provide enclosure to the valley and stream from the north, south and west with the only external views into the area from the southeast across Karepiro Bay and around Piripiri Point. As such this area is well contained within the surrounding steepplands and valley sides which limits views in and out of the landscape.

The majority of the proposed Sub-precinct B is characterised by moderately steep north facing slopes and a series of north facing flat to undulating broad lower spur slopes and valley areas nearer the road and stream with upper steepplands and bush areas to the south and steeppland slopes to the north-west beyond the valley and road.

4.2 Land Cover and Hydrology

Up until around 2010, approximately 800 ha of the property was in pine forest. Since logging the land has been lying fallow, with the only woodlots remaining consisting of small blocks of Eucalyptus, Blackwood and Conifer, as well as some mature pine tree specimens in the Weiti catchment. The majority of the Property now contains wilding pines, weed fields and regenerating native vegetation.

The majority of the vegetative cover within Village 1 (Sub-precinct B) also comprises exotic wilding pines, regenerating native shrubland and pampas grass which have colonised after the harvesting of the radiata pine plantation forest. Two indigenous forest stands which are classified as SEA's are present in the upper catchment slopes and gullies to the south of the precinct area (refer to **Figure 5** in the A3 Folio).

The upper reaches of the Karepiro Stream follow the Ara Weiti access road from the existing pond located at the western end of the proposed Sub-precinct B area to the east. Two streams lie within the Village 1 (Sub-precinct B) area as depicted in **Figure 3**. Other streams within the Karepiro, Okura and Weiti catchments and wider Property are also depicted in **Figure 3**.

4.3 Built Form

Recently the WeitiBay subdivision has been developed in the lower southern part of the Karepiro catchment in line with that provided for in the AUP Sub-precinct A provisions. This includes 150 lots on 27 ha and the planting of over 150,000 native plant species throughout the balance of the 81 ha WeitiBay (Sub-precinct A) site. The development plan for the recently completed Weiti bay subdivision is depicted in **Figure 3** and **Figure 4** of the A3 Folio, which also includes the land ownership within the site. The public Ara Weiti Road which provides access from the western portion of Penlink to WeitiBay through the Karepiro valley adjacent to the Karepiro Stream terminates at the northern end of the WeitiBay subdivision where a public carpark has been established. From this carpark there is a newly constructed 1.4km public walking track that crosses the Karepiro Stream and continues along the north-eastern side to Karepiro Bay as depicted in **Figure 5** of the A3 Folio.

4.4 Key Landscape Issues

A number of the key landscape issues identified in the original landscape assessment work in 2005 for the Property are still relevant in considering the future use of the land. These are outlined below and updated to reflect the change in land use following the removal of the pine plantations, and changes surrounding the property.

4.4.1 Natural Character of the Coastal Environment

Natural character of the coastal environment is the result of the combined levels of indigenous nature (i.e. biophysical values) and perceived nature (i.e. sensory values), which are typically defined by the extent to which natural elements, patterns and processes occur and are legible, and the nature and extent of existing human modifications. As such the highest degrees of natural character occur where there is the least modification within an area and its context.

Although separated by the DOC Reserve and an Esplanade Reserve, the Weiti Precinct has approximately 4 kms of coastal edge land within or closely associated with the coastal environment. This includes: estuarine areas within the upper Okura River (flanked by indigenous bush within and adjacent to the DOC Reserve); coastal cliffs and escarpments at either end of Karepiro Bay; sandy beaches and tidal mudflats backed by an open valley within Karepiro Bay; and, internationally recognised Chenier shell spits at the entrance to the Weiti River.

Although these features are currently protected and will not be directly affected by changes to the area or development potential within Village 1, recognition of their values and the contextual relationship to the Property is an important issue in any future development. With the removal of

the pine trees across the majority of the Property the overall perception of natural character in relation to the context of coastal environment has been reduced. This is largely due to the level of intactness that the single age pine forest provided as a backdrop to the coastal environment. Following removal of this pine forest the Property has become more open and the remnants of the pine clearance (forestry roads, skid sites, pine slash and weed fields) has left parts of it looking discordant.

While the natural regeneration of wilding pines now masks much of the forestry clearance that occurred between 2010 and 2015 the most prominent natural elements associated with the site are still the pockets of native bush (including the Okura Bush Scenic Reserve, to the south-east of the site), natural escarpments, stream valleys and the ridgelines and spurs across the undulating landform. The natural patterns and processes which are most notable, within the Property are linked to the steep and undulating topography with particular regard to the drainage and hydrological patterns across the landscape.

The level of indigenous or perceived naturalness within the coastal environment and Karepiro catchment has also been reduced by the WeitiBay development. However, the retention of large areas of open space (over 50 ha or approximately 66% of Sub-precinct A) and revegetation of much of this with native plant species, provides a retained “greenbelt” of vegetation through and around the developing residential areas.

In relation to Village 1 (in Sub-precinct B) it is located approximately 800m from the CMA at Karepiro Bay and at a similar elevation to the existing development within the mid and lower slopes of WeitiBay. The Village 1 development will be seen within the context of Weiti Bay and integrated through provision of open space, and vegetation to provide a strong natural context to the development as seen from the coastal edge and CMA.

4.4.2 Landscape Quality and Landscape Sensitivity

As outlined above there are areas identified as ONF and ONL within the surrounding coastal environment.

There are no areas within the central part of the Property (including Village 1) itself that have a landscape protection rating, and this is as a result of the former production forest land cover and land use (at the time when these landscape assessments were carried out), and the recognition that the pine was to be harvested, which has now occurred.

While the pine forest provided a contiguous land cover this resulted in a landscape character with higher landscape and perceived amenity values. As outlined above, the clearance and lack of active restoration and management to date has resulted in the majority of the property now being of a much lower landscape quality. Recent development and native planting within Sub-precinct A has recently enhanced this area of property with it now having higher landscape and visual amenity values. In time (once all the construction activities are complete and the plantings have matured) WeitiBay will develop into a well-integrated, high quality residential environment with a strong interconnected landscape framework.

The overall sensitivity to change in the Village 1 area of the Karepiro catchment is not a lot different, with similar challenges in relation to designing a subdivision taking into account the existing topography / slope and watercourses. In this area there is also the opportunity for landscape enhancement following the removal of wilding pines, and the assorted weed species with a staged programme of restoration, and the provision of open space and walking tracks.

4.4.3 Visibility and Potential Visual Effects

As part of the background assessment work, Boffa Miskell undertook a detailed visibility analysis to determine which parts of the Property are potentially visible from off-site locations.

Based on this analysis it became apparent that large parts of the Property are concealed from external view and this remains the case following the removal of the pine plantations. This is particularly so within the large 400 ha Karepiro catchment, where Village 1 (within Sub-precinct B) is located. From existing nearby settlements such as Stillwater and Okura, there is no visibility of the Village 1 area with views largely limited to the external margins of the Property.

5.0 Statutory Context

5.1 Weiti Precinct Provisions

As outlined in the AUP the Wēiti Precinct is an important landscape area and contributes to achieving the maintenance of a greenbelt between the North Shore and the urban extent of the Hibiscus Coast. A key purpose of the Wēiti Precinct is to provide for an intensive village settlement while protecting the “greenbelt” and open space character of the area. The Wēiti Precinct contains Significant Ecological Areas (SEAs) that are to be enhanced by additional planting.

The Wēiti Precinct has three sub-precincts:

- (1) Sub-precinct A – Karepiro: This sub-precinct has larger site sizes, provides for residential activities and is zoned Residential - Rural and Coastal Settlement.
- (2) Sub-precinct B – Village: The sub-precinct provides for a mix of residential and commercial activities near its geographical centre, with lower intensity residential activities towards its outer edges. The sub-precinct is also zoned Residential - Rural and Coastal Settlement. Precinct Plan 1 identifies two development areas within the sub-precinct – Policy Areas 1 and 2.
- (3) Sub-precinct C - Conservation and Forestry: The sub-precinct forms the balance of the area. It provides for activities that are consistent with the open space character including conservation, outdoor recreation, farming and small-scale forestry activities. This sub-precinct is zoned Rural - Rural Conservation.

The following proposed objectives are relevant to landscape and visual amenity matters:

Objectives (I547.2)

- (1) *The greenbelt and vegetated cover in the area between the Okura River and the Hibiscus Coast is maintained.*
- (2) *The landscape, skyline and coast are protected from development when viewed from Long Bay Regional Park, East Coast Road and the Whangaparaoa Peninsula*
- (4) *Key natural and heritage features and the distinctive character of the precinct are protected from inappropriate subdivision and development.*
- (5) *Phased and progressive enhancement and expansion of existing significant ecological areas is required and their long term preservation and management is ensured.*

(9) Adequate and appropriate land for public open space is provided and these areas are treated as integrated features in any sub-precinct B – Village Development

(10) Public access within the precinct and to and along the Coastal Marine Area, rivers and adjoining public reserves is enabled and managed.

(12) Adverse effects of land modification, development and land use activities on the natural environment, including land form, water courses, significant vegetation and the Coastal Marine Area are avoided, remedied or mitigated.

5.2 Key Statutory Matters

In summary the key landscape matter to be addressed is whether the proposed Village 1 development within Policy Area 2 of Sub-precinct B can be accommodated within the Karepiro catchment in a manner which would still enable the relevant objectives outlined above to be achieved. In particular:

- will the landscape, skyline and coast be protected from the additional development when viewed from the Long Bay Regional Park, East Coast Road and the Whangaparaoa Peninsula?
- can the land be developed in a manner that avoids or mitigates adverse effects on the landform, significant vegetation and watercourses?
- can the key natural heritage features and distinctive character of the overall precinct be protected from the proposed development?
- will the proposed changes still ensure that the greenbelt and vegetated cover can be maintained within Weiti to provide a link between the Okura River and the Weiti River / Hibiscus Coast / Whangaparaoa Peninsula?

These questions are addressed below.

6.0 Proposed Village 1 Scheme Plan

6.1 Proposed Development Characteristics



Policy Area 2 (Village 1) slopes down from the southwest to Ara Weiti Road and is predominantly vegetated with wilding pine trees and weed species of limited ecological or landscape value. Within the area, no existing vegetation is proposed to be retained. The precinct area contains two main valleys which are oriented in a general northeast to southwest direction. Much of the precinct is comprised of generally steep contours.

A combination of cut and fill is required to establish the proposed village topography. The proposed village grading establishes a much gentler topography, while still retaining the slope down from the southwestern boundary of the policy area. The proposed topography establishes an embankment to the Ara Weiti Road boundary. This proposed planted buffer between the residential development and Ara Weiti Road (as depicted on the Indicative Scheme Plan below) will assist to integrate and screen the residential buildings from the road and pedestrian walkways linking to the internal parts of the village site.

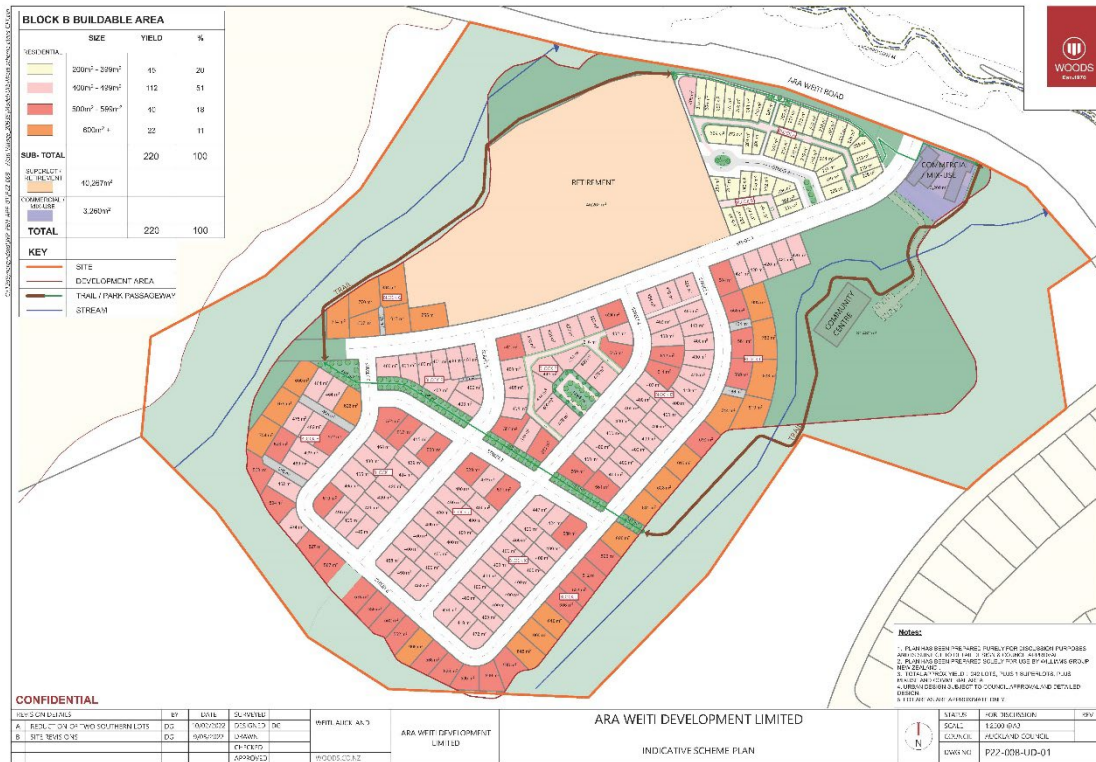


Plate 1: Indicative Scheme Plan

The proposed topography will establish a series of elevated building platforms that follow the contour and enable these to be predominantly north-facing. The lower density residential areas are located on the more gentle slopes. By locating the small village centre on the northeast corner of the site adjacent to Ara Weiti Road it can service both Weiti Bay residents and those residing in Village 1. This location at a lower elevation within the Village 1 area will also reduce the potential visibility of the development when viewed from Long Bay Regional Park, Karepiro Bay and the CMA.

In addition to the residential development and associated surface and below ground infrastructure a water reservoir and associated pump is proposed off the end of one of the residential streets towards the top south-western part of the site. The reservoir will be similar in size to a residential building (i.e. 100m² by 4.5m high) adjacent to 500-600m² lots. Given the sloping landform the reservoir is likely to be cut into the contour and can be screened with planting.

Protecting the streams and enhancing water quality is a key design driver for the sub-precinct. Riparian planting is proposed to the two streams within Village 1 as outlined in the Ecological report. The proposed walkways will be designed to enable these streams to be accessed by residents and the wider community from the public carpark.

Overall, the Village 1 development will require changes to the existing site conditions and topography. From a landscape perspective, the modifications will result in an outcome that integrates the key open space corridors into the village layout and establishes an appropriate contour for residential development adjacent to a small commercial centre.

7.0 Natural Character Effects

Natural character effects relate to the degree to which a proposal alters the biophysical and / or perceived values of a landscape, within the coastal environment or lakes, rivers and wetlands and their margins.

7.1 Biophysical Effects

The Property overall and Village 1 is regarded as a modified environment, due to the clearance of plantation pine forest and extensive recolonised exotic wilding pine and exotic weed species. Within WeitiBay, the construction of an access road and residential lots within sub-precinct A has also affected the natural character values to an extent. Karepiro Bay and foreshore and the Okura Bush Scenic Reserve, outside the Property, have the highest degree of naturalness and are designated as areas of High Natural Character in the Auckland Unitary Plan.

Areas of exotic plants within the Village 1 site will be replaced with housing development set within a largely native vegetated setting along the existing two streams which will have a beneficial effect on the biophysical natural character values of the wider coastal area. As such it is considered that effects on the bio-physical values of the watercourse and coastal environment resulting from the Village 1 development will be **neutral**.

7.2 Perceived Effects

Any potential perceived adverse effects would be in relation to a reduced perceived naturalness of the slopes which backdrop a part of Sub-precinct A (WeitiBay) and the contrast that may have with the natural landform areas within the lower slopes of the Karepiro catchment.

However, the proposed location of the development will largely avoid any adverse effects on the coastal areas of the Property which have the highest degree of naturalness and given it will be seen beyond the built infrastructure and dwellings erected in sub-precinct A the level of perceived adverse effects resulting from the expanded development on the coastal environment is considered to be **very low**.

8.0 Landscape Effects

8.1 Introduction

Landscape effects result from natural or induced change in the features or overall character of the landscape. Usually these are the result of landform or vegetation modification or the introduction of new structures, facilities or activities necessary to facilitate a proposal. Landscape effects can occur without being seen by a viewing audience. Landscape character is the distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occur consistently in a particular landscape. It reflects particular combinations of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use and human settlement.

In assessing the significance of landscape change, it is necessary to consider the values associated with or derived from the landscape (e.g. its biophysical, sensory and associative values), the susceptibility of these to change, and the type and level of change proposed. The level of change, with regards to this proposal, accounts for not only the physical change to the existing landscape (i.e. stream modification, earthworks / landform modification and vegetation clearance), but also the additional development proposed in terms of its area coverage, density / numbers of built elements and the proposed activities associated with a residential living environment.

Development within Policy Area 2 cannot be accommodated without a change to the existing configuration of the landscape and its characteristics. This will always be the case where development is proposed within a part of the landscape that is either undeveloped or developed but at lesser intensity. Having accepted that there will be a change to the existing landscape character of the area, the level of landscape effects will be determined based on two main factors:

- the effect on any landscape features of value within the Village 1 site; and
- the effect on the wider landscape character, i.e. how well can the development be integrated into the wider rural and coastal landscape.

The proposed Village 1 development will be located wholly within Policy Area 2 of the Sub-precinct. The key changes to the landscape as a result of the development will be:

- modification to a tributary of the Karepiro Stream;
- earthworks and alteration to the existing landform to create finished levels that have a reduced slope angle in some areas and steeper slopes in others;
- creation of stormwater ponds and wetlands to manage water runoff from infrastructure and housing areas;
- removal of vegetation which includes wilding pines, invasive weed species and some regenerating shrub species;
- revegetation with indigenous plant species of the two stream riparian margins and adjacent slopes; and
- the expansion of roading and other infrastructure to accommodate 220 dwellings.

In terms of landscape character, the expansion will change an area of predominantly unkempt weed fields to a structured pattern of residential and small commercial development, with

access roads and a framework of indigenous vegetation and publicly accessible open space. While this will result in a high magnitude of change on the site area itself, the change to the character is not considered to be adverse, as it will be well contained within the catchment, surrounded by existing topography, native bush and proposed planting, located adjoining and within sight of the Weiti Bay development.

In summary due to the contained nature of the Village 1 Sub-precinct B site, the retained highly valued natural features (i.e. SEA's and catchment ridgetops) and proposed enhancement to the area, adverse effects to the most sensitive areas of the Property are avoided.

Overall, taking into account the additional changes to the landform and the expansion of the residential character within the Karepiro catchment it is considered that there will be up to **low** adverse effects on the existing landscape elements, features and landscape character of the Policy 2 area.

9.0 Visual Catchment and Viewing Audiences

9.1 Visibility – Desk Top Analysis and Site Survey

The potential viewing locations of a development within Policy Area 2 have been identified by a computer-generated analysis (using ArcGIS 10.3.1) known as a zone of theoretical visibility ("ZTV").

These analyses are generated from above ground LIDAR^[1] data using a series of points to determine the areas from which a proposed development would theoretically be visible. These points are spread throughout the precincts at high points located at a height above ground level relative to the maximum height permitted in the precinct provisions for each of the housing type – Area 3 (9m), Area 4 (11m), and Area 5 (15m).

The ZTV analyses are used as a guide to aid identification of the visual catchment and viewing audiences and to determine locations where proposed development may have an effect upon the visual amenity experienced by people and the sensory qualities of the landscape.

Theoretical visibility does not equate to visual effect but assists with identifying areas which should be visited to ground truth potential visibility and to obtain representative photographs.

9.2 Visual Catchment

As result of the location, context, topography of the site (as indicated above) the Sub-precinct B areas are located within a relatively contained visual catchment. In particular Village 1 is within an enclosed basin largely bordered by steep to very steep slopes and ridgelines and scarps to the north and south. Due to the topography the open aspect is predominantly out towards the Long Bay Regional Park on the southern side of the Okura River / Estuary approximately 1.8km away.

Visibility is confined to the northern part of the Long Bay Regional Park, and the water within Karepiro Bay. Views to the west, north west and south west are also limited by the low lying

^[1] LIDAR is a Light Detection and Ranging survey method that measures the distance to a target by illuminating the target with a pulsed laser light

nature of the Karepiro Catchment area and the steep surrounding ridgelines and as such no views of the Village 1 development are available from East Coast Road.

9.3 Viewing Audiences

From information gathered from maps and the numerous site visits to the area the primary public and private viewing audiences for Policy Area 2 and Village 1 comprise:

9.3.1 Public Viewing Audiences

- People walking / jogging and enjoying the views on the formed publicly accessible tracks within Long Bay Regional Park, at distances of between 2kms and 4kms looking north-west. This track is part of the Te Araroa (New Zealand's National Trail) which connects Long Bay Regional Park with Dacres Point (via a water crossing over the Okura River) and the Okura Scenic Reserve Walkway.
- People walking along the Karepiro Beach portion of the Okura Bush Walkway towards Stillwater.
- People boating within approximately 1km of the Karepiro beach frontage including across the Okura River to Dacres Point.

9.3.2 Public Viewing Audiences

- People located in more elevated areas of WeitiBay who have views to the west.
- Views from other private viewing locations surrounding the Weiti Precinct in Okura, Stillwater and Whangaparaoa Peninsula are all obscured due to the enclosed nature of Karepiro Bay and the low elevation of Village 1.

10.0 Visual Amenity Effects

Visual effects result from changes to specific views and the visual amenity experienced by people. The magnitude (or level) of change must be considered in relation to the sensitivity of the viewing audience, when evaluating the significance of effect. The sensitivity may be influenced by a number of factors, which include but are not limited to, the number of people who may see it, the reason for being at the viewpoint of looking at the view, the existing character of the view, the duration for which the proposal may be seen and the viewing distance.

The visual effects which are likely to result from the proposal are described in relation to the above mentioned representative viewpoints and viewing audiences.

Many of the views from the above visual catchment represent views from walkway users on the existing Long Bay / Te Araroa trail. Some of these views are oriented north west towards the Property. Despite the relatively elevated positions of views along the coastal edge and within the Long Bay Regional Park, it is not possible to see the entirety of the Property, however viewing audiences have a relatively clear view of parts of the Karepiro catchment, which

includes the recently completed WeitiBay infrastructure and planting and the current construction of houses within this development. Currently the proposed Sub-precinct B expansion area is part of an enclosing sequence of ridges which creates a natural skyline element when viewed from Long Bay. Also, from this location the rising landform and vegetation within the Okura Scenic Reserve which descends to the Okura River in the middle distance provides context to the more distant views of the property. Noticeable within these views are the existing areas of established native bush and the escarpments which are a feature between Karepiro Bay and the Weiti River.

The proposed Village 1 development will be located at the lower elevation of the Sub-precinct B area and although it will extend the development within the Karepiro catchment this will appear as a relatively small additional area. While this change in the view will to an extent alter the perceived character of the site, in the wider context of the view this will be limited due to the expansive nature of the views and the existing development. This will include the water reservoir which although on a more elevated part of the site will be set down into the ground and surrounded by residential development of a similar scale. Furthermore, the additional development will be maintained well below the skyline ridges and in the context and nature of the view the effects from the expanded development are considered to be **Low** adverse.

As part of the Village 1 development a range of public amenities and environmental enhancements are proposed within the village and along the Okura to Stillwater walking trail. These are depicted on Figure 7 of the A3 folio and include:

- Indigenous vegetation planting along the eastern and western stream corridors within the Village 1;
- A connected walking trail along the stream margins which connects to through an open space area within the village and to the existing public carpark which connects to Karepiro Bay;
- A Whare Manaaki / Community Centre on land within Policy Area 2 which will be adjacent to the village development;
- Interpretation / Toilets / Rest areas at either end of the coastal walking track at Okura and Stillwater, as well as at Karepiro Bay; and
- Additional rest areas and track upgrades along the coastal walkway as agreed with DOC.

These facilities and enhancements will result in beneficial visual amenity outcomes.

11.0 Review Against AUP Provisions

As outlined above in Section 5.3 of this assessment report the key landscape matter to be addressed is whether the proposed Village 1 development can be accommodated within the Karepiro catchment in a manner which would still enable the relevant objectives and policies of the Weiti precinct to be achieved. With reference to the above analysis, it is considered that the development can be achieved while:

- maintaining the greenbelt and vegetative cover between the Okura River and the urban Hibiscus Coast (Objective I547.2 (1));

- protecting the landscape, skyline and coast when viewed from Long Bay Regional Park, East Coast Road and the Whangaparaoa Peninsula (Objective I547.2 (2));
- protecting the key natural features and the distinctive character of the precinct (Objective I547.2 (4)); and
- avoiding or mitigating the adverse effects of land modification, development and land use activities on the landform, water courses, significant vegetation and CMA.

12.0 Conclusion

In conclusion it is considered that the proposed Village 1 development within Policy Area 2 of Sub-precinct B will result in no more than low adverse natural, landscape or visual effects on the existing natural elements, features and character within the property or the surrounding high valued natural landscape and amenity areas. The provision of public facilities and environmental enhancements within the village and Policy Area 2, and along the coastal walkway between Okura and Stillwater will result in beneficial effects on the landscape and visual amenity.



About Boffa Miskell

Boffa Miskell is a leading New Zealand professional services consultancy with offices in Whangarei, Auckland, Hamilton, Tauranga, Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin, and Queenstown. We work with a wide range of local and international private and public sector clients in the areas of planning, urban design, landscape architecture, landscape planning, ecology, biosecurity, cultural heritage, graphics and mapping. Over the past four decades we have built a reputation for professionalism, innovation and excellence. During this time we have been associated with a significant number of projects that have shaped New Zealand's environment.

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