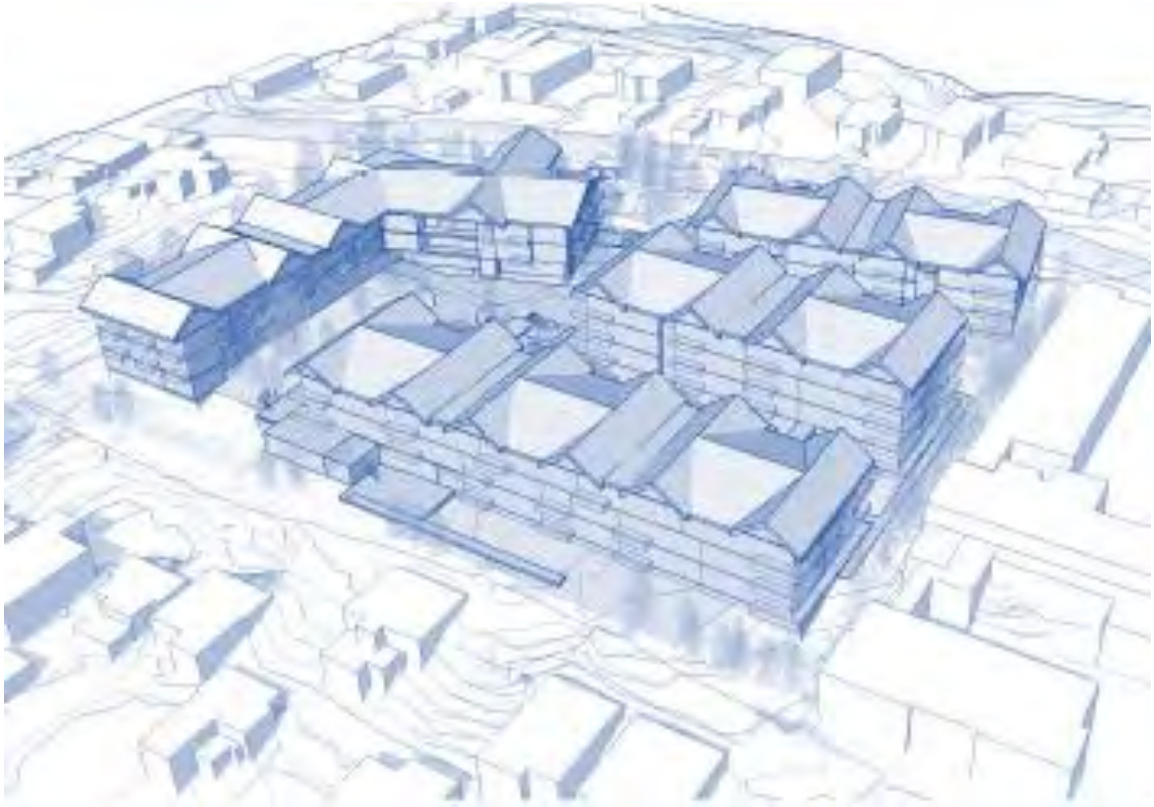
Metlifecare Karori Village
29 Messines Road, Karori

# Urban Design Assessment



for
Metlifecare

by
McIndoe Urban Ltd

## CONTENTS


| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | **Introduction** | |
| 1.1 | Scope | 3 |
| 1.2 | Project description | 3 |
| 1.3 | Site and context | 4 |
| **2** | **Assessment** | |
| 2.1 | Design integration | 6 |
| 2.2 | Appropriateness of location | 6 |
| 2.3 | Massing and vertical scale | 7 |
| 2.4 | Horizontal scale | 9 |
| 2.5 | Boundary conditions | 9 |
| 2.6 | On-site amenity | 10 |
| 2.7 | Off-site shading effects | 11 |
| 2.8 | Privacy and potential visual dominance | 13 |
| **3** | **Conclusions** | 15 |



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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Scope

MUL has undertaken this high-level, professional Urban Design assessment for the purpose of direct referral to the EPA. Prior to making this assessment, MUL provided advice on design refinements culminating in the current proposal.

*Assessment criteria*
This assessment makes with reference to the Proposed District Plan (PDP) as well as best-practice Urban Design. Special reference has been made to Residential Zone Objectives and Policies along with the associated Residential Design Guide. For succinctness, assessment matters are grouped under a series of project-specific issues, which prioritise key outcomes for the proposal and its context.

## 1.2 Project description

This assessment relates to the proposal as described in the Designgroup Stapleton Elliott drawing set of 13 December 2022. These drawings describe site planning and the general arrangement and indicative design of buildings and open spaces. The drawings also include perspective views and shading analysis diagrams.


*Figure 1 Location Plan: Overview of the proposal in context*

*Key Elements of the Proposal*

Three apartment buildings on a north-south alignment are located on the northern part of the site. To the south of these the main entrance from Messines Road gives access to a central space providing for vehicle circulation and access to the Care Building, which aligns with Messines Road and the site's southern boundary. The latter building also has direct entry from Messines Road. Buildings are generally three storeys except for the central apartment building which rises to four storeys. These heights exclude parking levels which are basements beneath Apartment Buildings B and C and an undercroft under the Care Building. 96 carparks are provided beneath buildings in addition to 11 at-grade visitor carparks. These are located in three small clusters close to building entries.

The project is at an early conceptual stage of design. The drawings show building bulk, location and form intentions but do not precisely describe the detail of the architecture nor the final open space and landscape design. Instead, they indicate general intent which is to be carried through into later stages of design. For example, roof form and facades are indicative, showing the intended general extent of roof form and façade modulation. The treatment depicted is not necessarily the final composition.

## 1.3 Site and context

The Messines Road area is characterised by gridded subdivision on moderately hilly terrain. Most houses conform to the orthogonal layout established by streets and lot boundaries. Combined with modest lateral separation distances, the consistent alignment means that neighbouring dwellings are often perceived as clusters rather than free-standing structures. These groupings typically have dynamic silhouettes. The vigorous articulation results from a mix of one and two-storey construction with offset ground planes and pitched roofs.

Another unifying element is the matrix of vegetation, which frequently mediates between one cluster of dwellings and the next. Frontage planting is most dense at the northern end of the Messines Road, where there is an almost continuous ribbon of foliage along both sides of the thoroughfare.

The contrasting form of the 63m long two-storey St John of God Hauora Trust building is located immediately to the north of the site and the institutional form of the Russian Embassy is located approximately 100m south along Messines Road. In combination with the existing Metlifecare buildings on the subject site, these buildings establish a variation of form and scale in the local context.

Local properties display evidence of extensive subdivision. Between Messines Road and Duthie Street, which is further to the east, the original large parcels have typically been subdivided front and rear. In many cases, there has been further lengthwise subdivision of the forward portion of the lot. Frontage setbacks are a relatively uniform 10-12m. There is greater variation south of the site, where the terrain is steeper and Messines Road adopts a more pronounced curve.

Lots are narrower and more regular on Ponsonby Road, which appears to have retained its original subdivision pattern. However, front setbacks vary in response to terrain. Typically, houses sit further forward on their lots where the gradient is steeper. So, the streetscape has an informal character despite the rigorous cadastral order. This impression is reinforced by vegetation, because the eastern side of Ponsonby Road is heavily treed.

Messines Road is distinctive in that its trajectory responds to landform. In the vicinity of the Site, this route inscribes a series of diagonals on the underlying cadastral grid. As the road climbs towards the south, these diagonals become shorter and more contorted.

Messines Road properties address the street architecturally. However, most outdoor living areas are at the rear where they receive afternoon sun. The orientation of outdoor living is even more consistent on Ponsonby Road, where all but a handful of properties have west-facing lawns and patios. As a result, Messines Road properties are less prone to shading and overlooking. By comparison, amenity issues are potentially more significant along the site's eastern boundary, where there is an immediate relationship with private gardens.

# 2 ASSESSMENT

## 2.1 Design integration

The proposal comprehensively redevelops a large site, much of which has already been flattened to form a building platform. A co-ordinated and integrated approach to site planning, architecture and landscape produces a campus environment with coherent circulation, high-amenity open spaces and considered relationships between buildings.

The extensive site allows efficient use of land in an established, well-resourced neighbourhood. If the development proceeds, site occupancy will increase significantly. At the same time, the property's exceptional size – relative to surrounding house lots – means that many of the impacts of intensification can be internalised within the project boundaries. Managed change is particularly evident in the generous, landscaped perimeter and in the central location of the taller building volume.

## 2.2 Appropriateness of location

The Messines Road site is an appropriate location for residential intensification of this kind. The property is already occupied by an aged care facility. To the north, the adjacent St John of God Hauora Trust building presents its service-dominated, rear elevation to the proposed development. Elsewhere, the site is framed by detached single-family housing. The relationship with Messines Road properties is mediated by the 20m width of the street. In visual terms, all neighbouring properties are 'distanced' from the development by the hilly terrain. Specifically, a 15m (approx.) crossfall between Messines Road and Ponsonby Road limits sightlines into the proposed Karori Village. To the south, properties at 35-39 Messines Road are elevated some 5m above the site's prevailing ground plane.

The distancing effect of vertical off-sets is reinforced by the landscape design, which retains five mature trees at the northern end of the Messines Road frontage. Further south, new planting continues the pattern of substantial, street-edge vegetation. The indicative Landscape Masterplan also consolidates existing planting along the southern and eastern boundaries. In addition, surrounding residential properties are characterised by well-established front and rear gardens. These have a significant screening effect when combined with on-site vegetation and the influence of topography.

*Perspective views*
A series of perspectives show views towards the proposed building from public vantage points. All of the distant views were taken at key street intersections where viewers, especially pedestrians, might pause and look towards the site.

- The proposal is not visible/obscured in views from points 01-04. These vantage points are located east of the site at the edge of the adjacent suburb of Northland. The proposal is partially visible in views 05 and 06, which look south and north along Messines Road. The closest perspective is view 07 on Ponsonby Road. The top of the existing Metlifecare facility is in view from Ponsonby Road and the upper two floors of the proposal are visible on the skyline in this view. Roofscape articulation can be seen, and this can be expected to integrate the new building with its urban setting.
- The visual effect of close-range views from Messines Road directly opposite the proposal can be interpreted from the 'Overview Perspective – SW View'. Here, the three-storey form of Apartment Building A is set back and angles away from the street edge. At its northern end, the structure is partially concealed by a group of five existing trees, which are retained. New planting has a screening effect along the rest of the Messines Road boundary. The top floor of the proposed Care Building appears close to the street edge. This introduces a new element to the streetscape, which currently features extensive vegetation. However, the building is low and articulated with forms that relate well to the height and dimensions of existing dwellings. Proposed street edge planting also integrates the structure with its surroundings.

*Figure 2: Perspective 06 – view north on Messines Road with entry to Care Building just in view*

*Figure 3: Perspective 07 – view on Ponsonby Road with eastern facade of Apartment Building C in view*

These view studies demonstrate that notwithstanding its height and dimensions, the proposal is not readily viewed from most of the wider neighbourhood. This is due to the effects of topography along with intervening dwellings and landscape elements. It will be most prominent in view from the east i.e., from a section of Ponsonby Road. However, the introduction of the building to close-range views from Ponsonby Road can be successfully mitigated with façade and roofscape articulation.

## 2.3 Massing and vertical scale

Site layout acknowledges the interaction between orthogonal and diagonal lines in the surrounding residential fabric. Mid-block Apartment Buildings B and C conform to the grid that

governs local property boundaries and the alignment of existing dwellings. Closer to Messines Road, Apartment Building A is angled to match the alignment of the street. Care suites are housed within an L-shaped structure that combines both geometries. Its eastern wing is parallel to the site's southern boundary, while its eastern wing is cranked to align with Messines Road. This arrangement produces a series of splayed or rectangular open spaces, which are open to the north. Aligning the buildings with property boundaries prevents awkwardly shaped, residual outdoor areas.

Three-storey apartment buildings occupy the perimeter of the site. Their vertical scale is similar to that of 11m high dwellings anticipated by the Proposed District Plan. Indicative roof forms project beyond the 11m height limit. However, because the prevailing ground level is several metres below Messines Road, the buildings' apparent stature is reduced and becomes comparable with that of 2-storey dwellings. Houses of this scale are relatively common within the Messines Road/Ponsonby Road neighbourhood.

With four above-ground floors, Apartment Building B exceeds the height of projected medium-density housing. However, this structure is located near the centre of the site where the impact of additional height and bulk is reduced. The top of Building B is plainly visible from elevated vantage points within properties on the western side of Messines Road. However, these viewpoints are some 90-100m from the uppermost floor of apartments. While the top of this building will be visible, it will not be visually dominant. All three apartment buildings present end-on to the south façade of the adjacent St John of God Hauora Trust buildings. As presented to the north, the gaps between apartment buildings measure approximately 22.2m and 13.9m. So, from the northern neighbour's perspective, the effects of height and bulk are reduced by setbacks and open spaces.

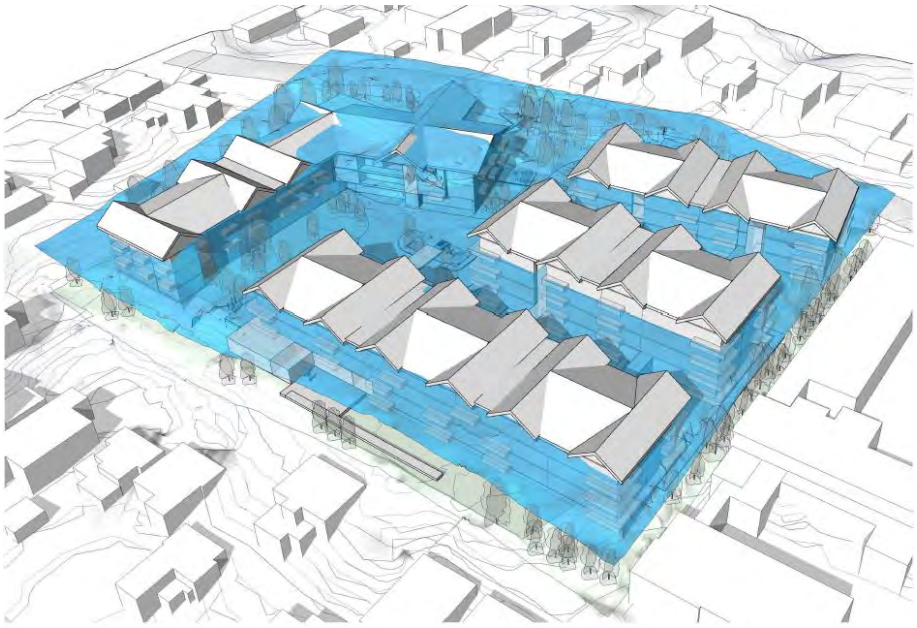

*Figure 4 3D view of proposal relative to PDP 11m height plane*

## 2.4 Horizontal scale

Plan dimensions could potentially be more problematic than building height because lengthy side elevations face Messines Road and the site's southern and eastern neighbours. However, the indicative design avoids the visually discordant effect of long, unbroken horizontal lines:

- The complex comprises four separate buildings.
- Projecting balconies and expressed vertical circulation produce strong 3D façade articulation.
- Carefully modulated roof forms will ensure that the upper levels of each building read as composite structures.

In combination, these architectural features produce an intermediate scale that bridges between the size of detached dwellings and the overall dimensions of the Karori Village buildings.

On-site open spaces also help to reduce horizontal scale. Because Apartment Buildings A, B and C present end-on to the site's northern boundary their north elevations are comparatively short. These are separated by broad areas of landscape, and there is also a significant gap mid-way along the Messines Road frontage. For observers in the street, perimeter vegetation conceals much of Apartment Building A. Karori Village is more uniformly built up along its southern and eastern boundaries, where existing vegetation is also less extensive. Here, mitigating the impact of plan dimensions depends on strongly expressed modules within roof forms and elevations.

## 2.5 Boundary conditions

On the Care Building, a porte cochère extends almost to the edge of Messines Road. Otherwise, deep setbacks occur along all site boundaries:

- The west façade of Apartment Building A is approximately 6.5m from the Messines Road boundary at its north-west corner and approximately 12.4m away at both its midpoint and its south-west corner. This setback allows five mature trees to be retained and complemented with new street-edge planting.
- The Care Building is generally 9.5m from the south boundary. Here, the structure adjoins a public walkway and the vehicle right-of-way to numbers 37 and 35 Messines Road. The neighbouring dwellings are elevated and set back behind a further line of vegetation.
- The end of the Care Building and the side of Apartment Building C are set back approximately 10.1m and 11.3m respectively from the eastern boundary. A one-storey amenity block projects from the ground floor of the apartment building at its southern end. The lower volume is approximately 6.0m from the eastern boundary.
- Along the northern boundary, the ends of the apartments are set back approximately 6.3m. Collectively, these

buildings occupy approximately half the depth of the site. They are complemented by intervening garden spaces and boundary planting.

These setbacks prevent encroachment through the PDP recession planes that project above sensitive southern and eastern boundaries. The intended strongly articulated roof forms produce modest encroachments along the less sensitive northern boundary. Here, the upper half of the top storey of Apartment Building B is also above the recession plane.

The Care Building has a strong address to Messines Road. In the indicative design, the gable end of a porte cochère signals a public entrance and drop-off area. In other respects, Karori Village's campus-like environment means that perimeter landscape supersedes the more typical built edge of residential streets. In other words, deep setbacks with intensive planting are the principal means for achieving a positive interface with the adjacent public realm. Helpfully, Messines Road is already characterised by densely landscaped frontages. As a result, the Village's campus environment merges with the wider streetscape.

## 2.6 On-site amenity


*Figure 5: Extract from Location Plan*

Key components that contribute to on-site amenity are listed below and can be seen in figure 5 above:

- Building orientation combines orthogonal (nominally north-south) and diagonal alignments
- Most residential accommodation has good solar access (although some care suites face south)
- Planned configuration of buildings and open spaces achieves coherency, functionality and good sun
- Basement parking ensures that cars are out of sight except for visitors' vehicles.
- Structured parking allows the greater part of site to be landscaped and available for communal use.
- Circulation is legible and efficient with a single, shared vehicle entrance and an additional public drop-off area.
- Ranging from approximately 22.2m to 13.9m, separation distances between apartment buildings achieve favourable outlook and amenity.

## 2.7 Off-site shading effects

Shading increases relative to existing conditions, because the proposed buildings are taller than those currently on the site. However, height and recession planes within the Proposed District Plan (PDP) provide another critical reference when assessing shading effects. The new planning standards anticipate 11m high buildings on the site.

Shading studies have been prepared for 9am, 12noon and 4pm at the solstices and the spring equinox. The studies indicate likely shading effects relative to the PDP envelope. Midsummer shading at 7pm has also been described. These studies do not show the shading effects of existing vegetation:

- *Shading at mid-summer*
  During the morning and at midday, no shade is cast over the boundary except for small areas of morning shade on the eastern edge of Messines Road. At 4pm, some shadows just reach the backs of four neighbouring dwellings on Ponsonby Road. However, this is considerably less shade than that cast by the PDP envelope. At 7pm, shadows extend beyond Ponsonby Road. However, trees on the eastern side of the street will already be casting shade here.

- *Shading at the spring equinox*
  Morning and midday shadows remain within site, or they are confined to the eastern edge of Messines Road and the footpath and accessway that border the development's southern boundary. At these times, the extent of shading is significantly less than that produced by the PDP envelope. At 4pm, shadow meets or envelopes adjacent Ponsonby Road dwellings. However, the extent of shading is appreciably less than that produced by the PDP envelope.

- *Shading at mid-winter*
  When the morning sun is low, shadow covers the street and reaches the fronts and/or sides of dwellings at 20, 22 and 26 Messines Road. However, this is considerably less shade than that cast by the PDP envelope. At midday, most shadows are contained within the site. Across the southern boundary, the footpath and accessway lose sun, but existing dwellings remain well clear of the shadow (refer to figure 6). At 4pm, the proposal fully or partially shades most adjacent Ponsonby Road dwellings. Compared with the effect of the PDP envelope, there is additional shade on the backs of dwellings that are located south-east of the Site. However, when compared with the PDP envelope, the proposed development casts less shade over a smaller number of dwellings towards the south-west and the northeast of the Site.

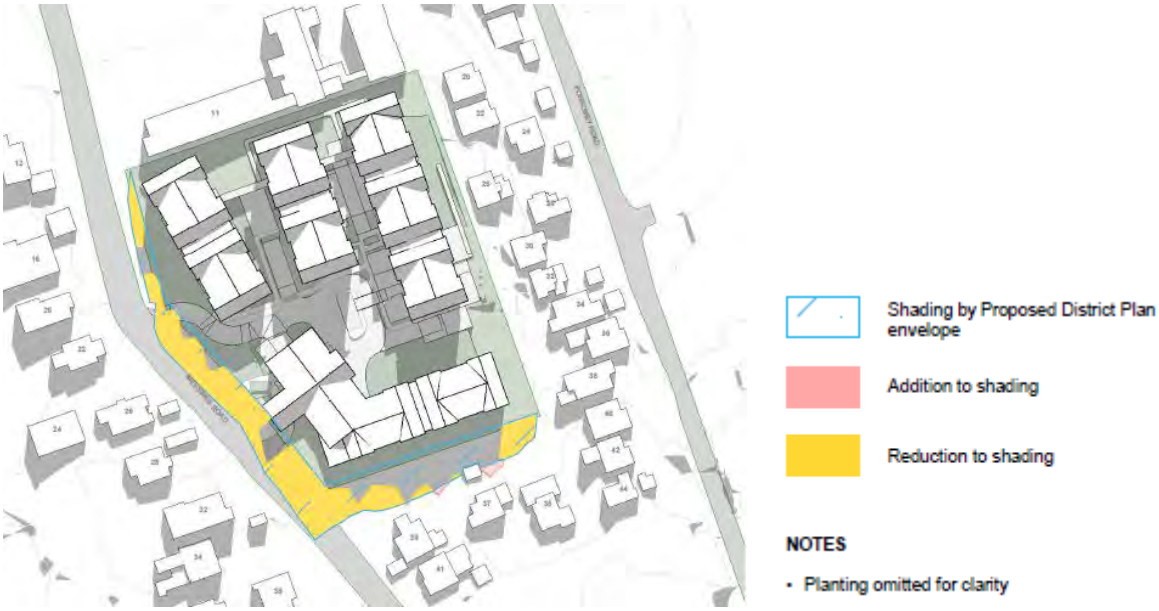


*Figure 6 Example of shading diagram*
*12noon, 21 June – Proposal relative to PDP Envelope*

*Legend*

These studies demonstrate:

- Shading effects vary from nil to very low. The proposal produces a similar or lesser degree of shade than the PDP envelope.
- At any time of year, afternoon shade affects only a few of the dwellings to the east. These effects are limited in extent and fleeting in duration.
- The approximately 17.6m wide gap between the south of Apartment Building C and the north of the Care Building opens a window of sunshine to the east relative to what would occur with the PDP envelope.
- Over-height Apartment Building B casts no shade beyond the site boundary. This results from the building's central location and a position due south of immediate neighbours.

## 2.8 Privacy and potential visual dominance

The proposal combines generous building setbacks with proposed boundary planting which supplements existing trees. This establishes a positive relationship to adjoining properties:

- *Relation to dwellings to the south*
  Most of the south façade of the Care Building is set back 9.5m from the south boundary. A public walkway and private right-of-way are within a further 13.8m (approx.) separation between this structure and the closest dwellings. The total separation distance of 23.3m contributes to excellent privacy. Privacy is further enhanced by existing and proposed trees including a line of intensive mature vegetation with adjoining properties. Finally, neighbouring dwellings are elevated above the Metlifecare site. This combination of horizontal and vertical separation ensures there are no privacy or visual dominance effects.

- *Relation to dwellings to the east*
  The closest dwellings to the east are between 3m and 20m from the site boundary. Given the 11.3m setback of Apartment Building C, the total separation distance between facades therefore ranges from 14.3m to 31.3m.

  The PDP requires a 4m Outlook Space to adjoin a principal living room. Although this does not apply to retirement villages, it indicates the acceptability of 8m horizontal separation between opposed living areas in medium-density housing. By comparison, Building C's minimum separation distance (14.3m at number 26 Ponsonby Road) is nearly 80% greater than this PDP standard. The next closest dwellings (20 and 22 Ponsonby Road) are 6m from the boundary. Here, the separation distance is more than double the PDP minimum requirement.

  The proposal replaces an existing 2-level retirement village with 3-level structures in more-or-less the same location. So, relative to current conditions, the proposal introduces an additional level of residential accommodation and therefore some additional potential for overlook. However, given the combination of boundary planting (much of which is existing and likely to remain) and separation distances, we consider that the proposal will not unduly compromise privacy. Nor will it visually dominate neighbouring dwellings to the east. In terms of privacy and potential visual dominance, outcomes along the eastern boundary are reasonable and acceptable.

  *Relation to dwellings to the north*
  The neighbouring St John of God Hauora Trust building to the north presents a rear elevation to the site and is characterised by very small windows and external plant.

Several aspects of the proposed development prevent visual dominance and ensure that privacy is not compromised along this interface. Apartment Buildings A, B and C are set back some 6.3m from the adjoining property. Additionally, these structures are separated by generous, landscaped areas. Setbacks and on-site open spaces also ensure that Apartment Building B remains visually compatible despite having additional height.

# 3 CONCLUSIONS

The proposed Metlifecare Karori Village is an appropriate architectural and urban design response to development in this context.

1. Intensification of the existing retirement village use on site is a positive urban design outcome.

2. A campus concept integrates site planning, architecture and landscape thereby producing high-quality open spaces and amenities.

3. The visual effects of massing and vertical scale are mitigated by nestling buildings into the contours and by introducing setbacks and other open spaces to the perimeter of the site.

4. The proposal is not readily viewed from the wider neighbourhood. This is due to the effects of topography and intervening dwellings or landscape elements. The proposal will be most prominent when viewed from a nearby section of Ponsonby Road. However, planned façade and roofscape articulation can successfully mitigate visual effects for viewers in this location.

5. Karori Village is split into four separate buildings. When combined with modulated facades and roofscape, this treatment successfully modulates horizontal scale. In conjunction with the screening and softening effect of trees, building massing and articulation ensure the development integrates well with this urban context.

6. The tallest over-height volume (Apartment Building B) is centrally placed. It is also located to the rear and south of the neighbouring Hauora Trust property. Positioning Building B in this manner avoids off-site visual and shading effects.

7. The top storey of Apartment Building B extends through the PDP height limit along with the roof forms of most other buildings. Given generous setbacks and compliance with PDP recession planes, these roof forms contribute positively to visual quality and scale articulation.

8. The development provides for a high degree of on-site amenity. Basement carparking enables the production of high-quality, ground-level open spaces.

9. Generous setbacks and general adherence to height-to-boundary controls mean that off-site shading effects are

mostly avoided. When they do occur, shading effects are nil to very low. The proposal produces a similar or lesser degree of shade than the PDP envelope.

10. The potential for off-site privacy effects and visual dominance is avoided by a combination of building setbacks and intensive boundary landscaping.

11. The proposal is consistent with the general principles of the PDP Residential Design Guide.