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Landscape Effects Evaluation Report

11 & 31 Ngongotahā Road
Ngongotahā
Rotorua 3010

Document Quality Assurance

11 & 31 Ngongotahā Road, Ngongotahā – Landscape Effects Evaluation Report Greenwood Associates Landscape Architecture Ltd Report prepared by Greenwood Associates Landscape Architecture Ltd for Watchman Capital Ltd.		
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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Greenwood Associates has been requested by Watchman Capital Ltd. ("the applicant") to prepare a Landscape Effects Evaluation report in respect of the applicants proposal to erect 196 Household Units across the eastern half of the site.

The proposal is for the construction of a comprehensively master planned residential development ("the Project") at 31 Ngongotahā Road (State Highway 36), Ngongotahā, Rotorua being Lot 2 DP 337743 ("the Site"). It will see the construction and subdivision of 196 Household Units. Associated works include earthworks; and the construction and vesting of roading, three waters infrastructure, stormwater management devices (ponds and wetlands) and public open space. Approximately 392 residential car parks will be provided across the site.

This evaluation provides high level support from a landscape and Visual effects perspective for the project to be identified as a referred project under the Covid-19 Recovery (Fast Track Consenting) Act 2020. Should the project be successful in entering the Fast-Track pathway for resource consent a full Landscape Assessment, including visual effects, will be prepared (if required) at the EPA stage.

As per the Rotorua District Plan (herein after referred to as RDP), the site is located within the 'RURZ2 - Rural Lifestyle Zone'.

This document should be read in conjunction with 'BDG Architects' architectural drawings, McKenzie & Co civil engineering drawings and Greenwood Associates landscape architectural drawings.

Assessment Process

- 1.2. Should the project be successful in entering the Fast-Track pathway for resource consent a comprehensive Landscape Effects Assessment will be prepared for the proposal. This proposal will be undertaken as per the Tuia Pito Ora / The New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects *Te Tangi a te Manu: Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines*, which were approved at 5th May 2021 NZILA AGM and published in August 2022.

During the assessment the significance of effects are based upon a seven-point scale ranging from very low; low; low-moderate; moderate; high; very high; ratings.

As per section 6.21 of the Te Tangi A Te Manu - Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Institute Guidelines for Landscape Assessment the following ranking scale will be used for the assessment of landscape effects (both physical and visual).

Table 1: Seven-Point Rating Scale

very low	low	low-mod	moderate	mod-high	high	very high
low		moderate			high	

As per section 6.22 of the Te Tangi A Te Manu - Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Institute Guidelines for Landscape Assessment no descriptor of these ratings is given in this report based on the summation of the following environment court decision;

*"We think that [people] are likely to be able to understand qualitative assessment of low, medium and high, and combinations or qualifications of those terms without the need for explanation. We do not consider rating of that kind to constitute a fully systematic evaluation system in a field as complex as landscape: in this context, the system **depends far more on the substantive content of the assessment**, especially the identification of attributes and **values**, than on the fairly basic relativities of low-medium-high..."* ('Matakana Island' [2019] NZEnvC 110, paragraph 25) (emphasis added)

However, to provide some context below (sourced from section 6.37 of the Te Tangi A Te Manu - Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Institute Guidelines for Landscape Assessment) aligns the seven-point rating scale listed above in against the 'less than minor' to 'significant' ratings scale of the Resource Management Act (RMA).

Table 2: Seven-Point NZILA Rating Scale Measured Against the RMA Rating Scale

very low	low	low-mod	moderate	mod-high	high	very high
less than minor	minor		more than minor		significant	

"Effects are identified by establishing and describing the prevailing landscape character by identifying the landscape values of the site and the perception of the site within the wider landscape, (reference may be made in this regard to existing statutory documents and previous landscape assessments undertaken by others) and assessing the effects of the proposal in either enhancing or degenerating from these values. These effects will be measured using the seven-point rating scale given above in Table 1 and Table 2."

2. Site Context

- 2.1. The site currently contains a small amount of Cattle (c.20) that graze the middle third of the site. The site is bordered to its north and west by the Tupapakuraa Stream.
- 2.2. Farther afield to the west and north the site is bordered (at the opposite banks of the Tupapakuraa Stream) by rural land that currently operates as a working farm.
- 2.3. Farther afield to the east, the site sits directly opposite an established residential area that is characterised by single level standalone Household Units.

- 2.4. The site is bordered to the south by a rail corridor, that is currently disused and contains a high number of invasive plant species. Immediately adjacent to the southern boundary of this rail corridor sits an established residential area of the same general appearance and character as that sitting immediately east of the site.
- 2.5. Based on the above (sections 2.1-2.4) and in conjunction with the observations of the author it can be concluded that the site sits at a rural-urban boundary.

Existing Site and Immediate Surrounds Description

- 2.6. The site is bordered on its northern and western boundaries by the Tupupakurua Stream. This waterway is a locally significant feature due its status as a Trout fishing river, it meanders through the rural landscape and flows into Lake Rotorua, for the final part of its meandering journey it passes alongside the northern edge of the Ngongotahā's urban extents and thus serves a linking element between the rural and residential environments. The development that forms part of this application does not occur near this stream.
- 2.7. An additional intermittent water course runs through the centre of the site and is lined with predominantly native vegetation. The development that forms part of this application does not occur near this intermittent watercourse.
- 2.8. Outside of the watercourses no substantial vegetation exists save for small pockets of scrub with all standalone trees having been cut down and removed from site.
- 2.9. The Site is predominantly flat with the exception of a knoll in the south, this knoll raises above the site and is cut at the boundary with the commercial/industrial property located at 45 Ngongotahā Road. This creates an interface where the subject site sits higher than the neighbouring site at its south-eastern extremities.
- 2.10. The rail reserve to the south of the site contains invasive species which partially encroach at portions of the southern boundary.

Landscape elements

- 2.11. This section will discuss significant landscape elements both within and near the site, for the purposes of this document these will be divided into two subcategories, natural and cultural. Natural elements broadly consist of vegetation, landforms and coastlines. Cultural elements consist of manmade structures that could be considered to be potentially character defining such as walls, residential and commercial built form and pieces of infrastructure (bridges, pathways).

Natural elements

- 2.12. The site has little notable topography, being predominantly flat with a small knoll, that has been modified (through cut) at its south-eastern corner, this knoll is largely imperceptible outside of the immediate site and is dwarfed by the mountain ranges that are visible as a backdrop to the site.

- 2.13. The key natural features of the site are the Tupapakuraa Stream at its north and south boundaries and the watercourse at the centre of the site. These riparian corridors feature significant native vegetation.
- 2.14. Outside of the riparian corridors vegetation is sparse and has mostly been removed from site, that remaining is of negligible aesthetic and ecological value.
- 2.15. The rail corridor directly neighbouring the site is disused and contains a dense covering of exotic tree and shrub species with the majority considered invasive species.

Cultural elements

- 2.16. Cultural elements within the site are limited to elements typically associated with rural amenity such as post and wire fencing and water troughs, there are no larger rural elements such as barns or implement sheds present.
- 2.17. Immediately adjacent to the knoll (refer section 2.12) the site is bordered by a small commercial / industrial operation which features utility buildings commonly associated with light industrial activities. The presence of industrial activity can be viewed from the high point of the site when looking south-east.

Landscape Character

- 2.18. Whilst the site as a standalone entity can be classified as rural, elements commonly associated with rural amenity, such as wire fencing, livestock, landscape divided into geometrically arranged paddocks and naturally occurring vegetation at watercourses all present at site and readily perceptible. The site also sits in close proximity to established residential suburbs and borders areas of light industry. When approaching the site from the south one will pass through established residential and light industrial areas.
- 2.19. As the site sits opposite an established residential area, it does not necessarily create a 'hard' rural-urban boundary as perceptible urban elements are still present within this landscape, this contrasts to the rural areas to the north of the Tupapakura Stream where the main perceptible character elements are almost exclusively rural in nature.
- 2.20. Therefore, whilst the site itself has a high amount of rural amenity the environment in which it sits cannot be considered exclusively rural due to the high level of non-rural elements perceptible within the landscape and the lack of a 'hard' rural-urban boundary.
- 2.21. Whilst the site and its immediate surrounds cannot be considered to be exclusively 'rural' they do share several characteristics typical of rural villages within New Zealand;

- High amount of single level Household Units,

- High variance in bulk and architectural style throughout residential areas,
- Areas of light industrial located in close proximity to (former) major transport corridors, in this instance the nearby rail corridor,
- Small scale rural activity (small flocks / herds of sheep / cows) in close proximity to residential areas.

Landscape Character Summary

2.22. Whilst in isolation, the site can be considered to have a high degree of 'ruralness' due to readily perceptible elements of rural amenity, the presence of nearby established residential and light industrial areas combined with the lack of a 'hard' rural-urban edge dilutes this sense of 'ruralness' particularly at the areas close to Ngongotahā Road contribute to the landscape character of the site and its immediate surrounds to be defined as **rural-residential with characteristics of a typical New Zealand Rural Village.**

3. Proposal

- 3.1. The proposal is clearly illustrated in the set of architectural and civil plans prepared by the project architects and civil engineers respectively.
- 3.2. The proposed development consists of 196 Household Units, which are serviced by 392 carpark spaces, some of which are located in communal parking areas outside of the private lots.
- 3.3. The western edge of the development borders a permanent watercourse that runs through the centre of the wider site. landscape architectural proposal responds to the contemporary receiving environment by providing a plant palette across the site that has a high proportion of native species, with the area bordering the existing stream at the mid-point of the site utilises a plant palette to match that is currently present across the riparian corridor. This usage of native planting allows for trace elements of rural character to be present across the site. The planting at the open space bordering the existing riparian corridor provides for the strengthening of this character defining landscape asset.
- 3.4. This use of predominantly native planting is also carried through to the landscape architectural response to the private lots, with a minimum of one (1) native tree proposed per site.
- 3.5. The open space area located adjacent to the existing riparian corridor at the mid-point of the site contains a cycle track which provides recreational opportunities at one of the sites character defining landscape assets and provides opportunities for future linkages to the wider site, especially Tupapakurua Stream.

- 3.6. The interface with Ngongotahā Road is addressed through a series of tall hedges (>1.5m) and native trees that allows the proposed household units to be absorbed into the landscape and provide visual and aural relief for future residents of the development. This treatment also provides a degree of visual screening for the occupants of the existing residential lots located directly opposite the site.

4. Visual Catchment and Viewing Audiences

- 4.1. Due to its position within the site and alignment with Ngongotahā Road the site is primarily visible from within this road corridor to the south and north of the site. Outside of this corridor views to the site are obscured by existing built form with potential views available from an elevated position at the head of Bruce Street.

- 4.2. It is considered that the primary potential public and private viewing audiences comprise the following:

Potential Public viewing audiences

- Ngongotahā Road: Views to the site are available when travelling northwards, with the approximate initial view available from where the rail corridor crosses Ngongotahā Road. When travelling southwards on Ngongotahā Road the site is initially visible from the intersection with Waitiet Road.
- Wikaraka Street: Views to the site are available from the areas of this corridor that sit in close proximity to the intersection with Ngongotahā Road.
- Bruce Street: Partial views to the site are available from the northern extent of this street.

Potential Private viewing audiences

Due to the high elevation of the site relative to the surrounding residential areas, the proposed apartment building will be visible from a number of nearby residential properties, those considered to have the greatest potential for adverse effects are listed below

- Ngongotahā Road: Lots 30, 36, 38, 40, 42, 44, 46, 48 and 50 will have the greatest exposure to the site as they sit opposite the site. The general view of the site from these Household Units is represented via a panoramic photo.
- Wikaraka Street: Lots 88 sits in the same alignment as the Ngongotahā Road lots listed above.
- Harris Street: Lots 27 sits in the same alignment as the Ngongotahā Road lots listed above.

- Bruce Road: Lots 29 and 30 have the potential for views to the southern portion of the development, lot 30 is visible from within portions of the site outside of the development area.
- 45, 60 and 62 Ngongotahā Road: These lots have views to the site, however they are light industrial lots and thus the potential for adverse visual impacts would be considered less than those for the residential lots on Ngongotahā listed above.
- 61 Ngongotahā Road: This lot houses the Ngongotahā NZCM park which houses tourist campervan vehicles. Any views from within this lot would be largely obscured by the vegetation within the rail corridor.

5. Preliminary Landscape and Visual Assessment

Effects on the immediate site - Physical landscape effects

- 5.1. As the development occurs away from the existing riparian corridors, no significant vegetation is required to be removed from the site, with any and all vegetation to be removed of little aesthetic and ecological value.
- 5.2. The main physical effect occur upon the site is the excavation of the knoll to accommodate the proposed Household Units at the southern edge of the site. As stated in section 2.12 the existing knoll is considered, by the author, to not be notable in the context of the wider landscape, therefore its removal can be considered to have a negligible effect on the prevailing landscape character values of both the site and its immediate surrounds.
- 5.3. The landscape proposal will see an increase in trees across the site, the majority of which are natives. (Refer landscape architectural drawings for further information)

Effects on the surrounding areas - Physical landscape effects

- 5.4. All works occur within the boundaries of the site with no physical modification required to the surrounding landscape to accommodate the proposal.
- 5.5. The only potential effect on the surrounding landscape is the removal of some on-site boundary planting. As these species are considered to be invasive, exotic specimens and thus of no aesthetic or ecological value, there removal can be considered to have negligible effects on the prevailing landscape character values of the surrounding landscape.

Visual effects generated by the proposal

- 5.6. The greatest effect on visual amenity will be encountered from within the private lots sitting directly opposite the development area (i.e.: at the eastern verge of Ngongotahā Road). The outlook from these residences will change from one that can

be considered (from a perceptual point of view) to be traditionally rural to one that can be considered to be more 'urban' in appearance.

- 5.7. The proposed private lot landscaping at this interface with Ngongotahā Road will provide a softening effect upon these proposed dwelling by providing an 'organic edge' to the proposed development and whilst this will not screen the entirety of the proposed built form at this interface the variance in plant signature will provide a remnant element of rural character to this vista when experienced from within these lots that sit opposite the site.
- 5.8. It should be noted, however that the presence of built form upon the site will not obscure views to the mountain ranges that form a backdrop to the site. It is also worth consideration that these views from within these private lots are obtained from within an environment that contains strong, identifiable urban characteristics and thus can be considered an extension of the loose 'urban-rural edge' that runs the length of the western verge of Ngongotahā Road.
- 5.9. The site is visible when approaching from the south and north on Ngongotahā Road, strong boundary planting across both the public and private interfaces of the site will screen a large amount of the proposed built form from view.
- 5.10. When approaching from the south it should be noted that any potential viewing audience will have passed by elements of urban and industrial built form, therefore the presence of built form upon the site can be considered an expectant visual outcome at this juncture.
- 5.11. When approaching from the north the site is not visible until being in close proximity to the bridge crossing Tupapakurua Stream. This stream is lined with tall trees that can be considered, from a perceptible point of view, to define the rural-urban edge, as built form becomes does not become readily visible until passing over this bridge and thus the trees that line Tupapakurua Stream. Therefore the presence of built form upon the site will not have an effect upon the perceived rural-urban edge as currently experienced by the transient viewing audience approaching the site from the north.

6. Conclusion

The proposal will see the partial conversion of semi-working farm into a landscape with identifiable urban characteristics.

The landscape response to the site will see an increase in native tree coverage over the site with native planting adjacent to the existing mid-site stream strengthening a key landscape feature of the site.

Consideration is also given to the interface with Ngongotahā road (and the existing properties that sit directly opposite the site) by providing sufficient setbacks of built form

elements to allow for high level hedging and trees to provide absorption of future built form into the landscape.

When viewed in the context of the surrounding landscape, the proposed development can be seen as a visual continuation of the irregular rural-urban edge that can be seen as a key constituent local landscape character element and thus, from a landscape effects perspective, the proposed development can be seen as appropriate within the contemporary receiving environment.