

Ōtaki Māori Racecourse
Village Development

Urban Design Assessment Memo



For The Ōtaki Revisited Ltd
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INTRODUCTION

Project description

1. The project is for 400-580 residential units constructed in six zones around Ōtaki Māori Racing Club racecourse all as described on the Moller Architects and Wraight and Associates drawings. To complement the proposed residential development, existing and new non-residential activities are proposed within existing racecourse buildings. Vignettes from the drawing sets are included to illustrate issues, attributes and assessment.

Urban design input

2. McIndoe Urban involvement in the masterplanning process includes urban design review of and inputs into and review of work in progress; facilitating 3D block modelling workshop with stakeholders; and working with other members of the design team on developing and refining the layout through a number of iterations.

Scope of Assessment

3. This assessment focuses on neighbourhood planning and urban design measures to ensure a high-quality development will be achieved. It is in three parts:
 - Development Concept
 - Neighbourhood Design
 - Dwelling Design

Relevant District Plan content

4. While urban design assessment is informed by urban design principles and practice, urban design-related content in the District Plan provides a further frame of reference. Note that this short report does not systematically assess against the relevant objectives – that is covered in the Referral Application prepared by Scope Planning Limited. The Medium Density Housing Design Guide (APP2, 17/02/2022) is also considered. My summary of key District Plan matters for consideration is appended.

DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

Relation to context

Suitability of this site for intensive residential development

5. This is an unusual large open site which allowing comprehensively designed development. It is suitably close to the centre of Ōtaki and important amenities including shops, schools and a supermarket.



Figure 1 Ōtaki Racecourse development site in context. The centre of the 500m, 1.0km and 1.5km radius circles is the intersection of Dunstan Street and Mill Road.

6. Figure 1 shows the site in context. This demonstrates the following:
 - a. The close proximity of the site to the SH1 town centre zone and other essential service and community facilities.
 - b. Development around the part of Ōtaki close to SH1 is currently one-sided. The town extends across SH1 to the north-east, but has yet to expand to the south-east. The racecourse site provides for that expansion, filling a gap in the quadrant of land to the south-east.
 - c. The proposed residential development is well located on a major cross-axis and similarly suitably placed relative to the town centre as the existing residential area due north between Rahui and Waitohu Valley Roads.

Connections and access to external facilities

7. External connections are favourable, with the site bounded on two sides by Te Roto and Rahui Roads and connected into existing streets footpaths and cycleway infrastructure. It is connected to and suitably close to the following facilities:
 - a. The New World supermarket is 900m away from the north-west corner of the development and accessed via Rahui Road and the existing SH1.
 - b. The entrance to Ōtaki College is 900m away via Rahui and Mill roads.
 - c. Waitohu School is approximately 900m away from the intersection of Rahui Road and Freemans Road via local streets: Freemans Road and Te Manuao Road.

Relation to the racecourse

8. Co-location with the racecourse contributes a unique identity to the proposed village development. It provides an expansive green space at the centre over which many residents will enjoy direct views. The planned pedestrian and cycle path around the perimeter of the race course ensures all residents will be able to walk around and experience this feature at the centre of their neighbourhood.
9. The planned community hub adds a café and plaza and provides for pop-up markets to the area around the racecourse buildings. These complement the existing racing club facilities and pottery gallery/studio and ensure extended use of currently underutilised areas and facilities. The addition of these new community and commercial activities in this accessible central location will provide some local services for residents, create a visible sense of centre and a potentially lively setting for community events and interaction.

Cross-boundary effects

10. There is a neighbouring house at the westernmost corner of the site, on Rahui Road. This, the closest to the site, is set behind its own large existing trees. The nearest proposed houses to the north are both one storey, type H1 houses. These will change the aspect from the neighbouring house. However subject to sensitive boundary treatment and planting, the setback and low scale of the proposed dwellings means they will have no other appreciable effects on the existing house.

11. The proposal also achieves a comfortable fit with the open farmland across the south and east boundaries for the following reasons:
 - a. Most of the south boundary of Zone A is defined by a line of existing mature trees which will be retained. These are much taller than the tallest proposed buildings and will both allow filtered views through and partially screen new development. These trees provide an appropriate buffer to the farmland behind. There is minimal change at the southern corner of the site (Zone G and the horse training area) where apart from minor building additions and additional activity around the old totalisator building, the existing condition and use remains.
 - b. Proposed houses will be visible from the farmland along the eastern boundary, including from the only house here which is some 400m away from the boundary. The setback of Zone D housing from the boundary in combination with existing mature trees and proposed planting at and near the boundary will ensure suitable visual integration.

The character of the view across through planting and /or across the boundaries will change and setbacks are such that shading will not be problematic.



Figure 2 Existing trees along the south boundary of Zone A with open pasture on the farmland behind (source: Google Streetview)

General design approach

12. This large site in predominantly single ownership has allowed comprehensive and coordinated planning and design of sites, buildings and landscape.
13. The racecourse contributes a memorable identity to the planned residential neighbourhoods, with residents benefitting from views over and access around this large open space. It is also a planning focus, with the intensity of development around the edge of the racecourse balanced by the openness of the course itself.
14. Integrating neighbourhood design with dwelling design and construction has allowed for a bespoke design solution for residential units that will respond sensitively to the spaces around and other dwellings.
15. The specific design and siting of dwelling types gives certainty on the quality of living environment that will be achieved.
16. The proposed modular factory produced building system provides for a range of building types, and the development configuration offers

flexibility and ability to swap-in and swap-out development types to refine the configuration and dwelling mix as required.

17. Mixed dwelling typologies around the site and within each of the zones will provide for a range of household configurations and types. This contributes to providing for people of all ages and at all stages of life.
18. A high amenity network of public spaces and places provides the setting for relatively small dwellings with small, well-located private open spaces and no garages. This combination of economy in dwelling size with generosity in public and community spaces is a valid means of making this a high amenity, attractive and affordable place to live.
19. Attractiveness and liveability are further ensured by high quality planning, form and design of the proposed dwellings.

NEIGHBOURHOOD DESIGN

Structure, access and connections

20. The range of street types including collectors, local streets and shared lanes is provided. These are configured in an interconnected network for excellent connectivity and choice.



Figure 3 The concept viewed from high level (extract from Moller Architects drawing set)

21. In addition to providing convenient access between different zones within the development and assisting the journey for pedestrians and cyclists to and from the town centre, the racecourse perimeter path will provide a recreational and exercise circuit. This will also allow residents to engage with the special character of their neighbourhood.
22. The geometry of the street network relates appropriately to existing elements and landscape features and delivers intended qualities of both legibility and informality.

Street design

23. High quality public realm provides a high level of amenity for pedestrians and cyclists and an appropriate setting for residential activity:
- Indicative street sections show potential to integrate footpaths, parking and street trees as appropriate to location, and have been designed as an integrated family of thoroughfares. This will give coherence through the network. At the same time, geometric and streetscape variation between the various street types expresses a visual hierarchy, contributing to legibility and wayfinding for visitors.
 - Lanes as proposed in low speed 'destination' locations have a 'place' function. These both provide for low-speed vehicle access and extend the amenity of the dwellings. These contribute to the intended relaxed informal character for the neighbourhood.

Open space

24. Three types of open space are provided:
- Public open spaces including parks, pocket parks, 'parklets', streets, lanes and walkways. These are distributed throughout the development and are available to all residents and the general public.
 - Communal private open space. This is open space contiguous with groups of units, which are for the use of the residents of those units and their guests.
 - Private open space which is dedicated to each unit.
25. All dwellings benefit from close proximity to one or more public open spaces and the racecourse perimeter walking/cycling track. This combination provides a suitably high level of recreational amenity.
26. The precise extent, configuration and boundary definition of 'communal private' and 'private' open spaces will be further described and refined for all areas at the next stage of design. This is shown in the sample areas in the landscape drawings. The indicative configuration for the remainder of the zones shows levels of spatial generosity, definition, access and exposure to sun to allow this to result in a successful, high amenity outcome.

Parking provision

27. At least one car parking space per unit is to be provided with scope for two spaces for some units plus visitor parking along the street edge. Strategies for ensuring convenient but suitably unobtrusive location include:
- placing down the side of or behind dwellings, and
 - if at the street edge, long runs of parking are subdivided into groups separated and partially screened by landscape elements.
- These approaches will need to be applied in future design development of the Vertical Cluster housing blocks in Zone E.
28. Garages are not provided for as those would not be consistent with affordable offering, although in some instances and on some sites stand-alone garages could be installed later.
29. Sufficient vehicle parking will also be provided to the new and proposed non-residential activities.

Landscape

30. Landscape design, detailing and planting addresses streetscape and residential amenity, ecology, recreation and water management in a fully integrated way. The approach is to create an attractive and highly liveable urban setting that is location-specific and displays design coordination and coherence. The proposed landscape design also includes retaining selected mature trees. The design and its logic are addressed in detail by Wraight and Associates.
31. The landscape approach to parts of some zones is shown, with the full landscape, public realm and open space design to follow. Ongoing work provides an opportunity for refinement as every area is designed in detail for the fast-track resource consent.



Figure 4 Zone A landscape approach (extract from the Wraight and Associates drawing set)

Neighbourhood character and aesthetic quality

32. The development will be characterised by diversity notwithstanding the modular systems building approach. This is with the variety of building types and heights, and the visual richness added to this by planned landscape and public realm treatments. Figure 4 shows the anticipated approach and the quality that is intended.
33. Standardisation of modular units presents potential challenges of monotony and this has been further overcome by offsets of form, variation of dwelling alignments and a kit of parts approach to add on façade elements (refer to Figure 5).

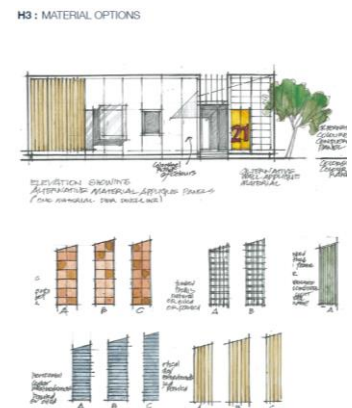


Figure 5 Extract from Moller Architects drawing showing the kit-of-parts approach to customisation of the dwelling with applied wall finishes

Boundary definition

34. Amenity in the private open spaces around houses and management of private vehicle parking will be achieved with subtle physical and symbolic boundaries.

- The architectural drawings describe an approach to low fencing and the landscape plan shows how low planting may be used for boundary definition.
- Elevation above ground of private terraces also contributes to boundary definition.
- Low fences will maintain an overall sense of openness and avoid risk of compartmentalisation. By allowing informal surveillance these will also contribute to good CPTED outcomes.
- Short 1.8m high screening walls between adjacent private open terraces may be used to provide for privacy.

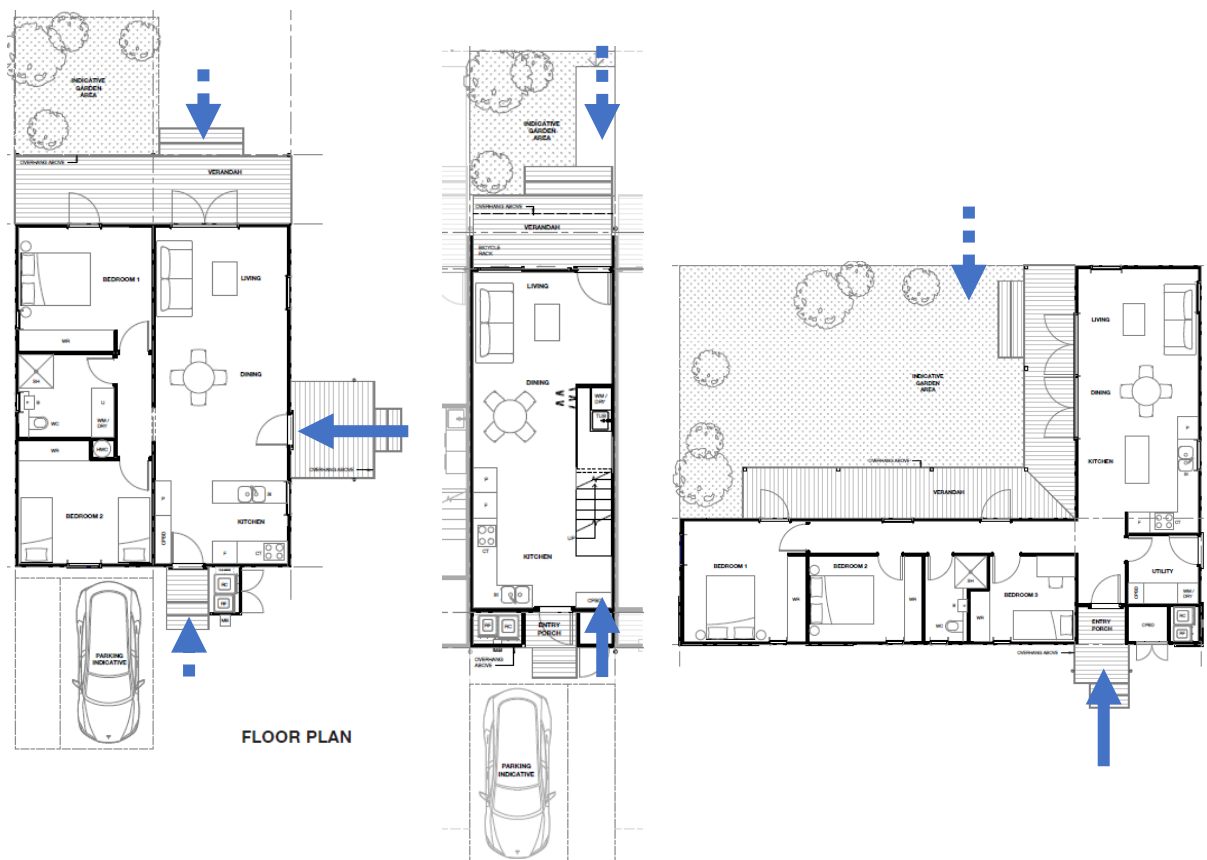
35. The approach to boundary definition for selected sample areas is described in the landscape drawings, and this suitably addresses matters of territorial definition, liveability and privacy raised at right by KCDC's Medium Density Housing Design Guide. The precise configuration of boundary defining elements in all parts of all zones will be determined as the plan is further developed.

"As living arrangements increase in density, so too does the potential for negative conflict between people and the use of space. The management of these spaces becomes crucial to ensure that they are still able to provide people with the standard of living, privacy, and choice they need to fully participate in the community."

(KCDC Medium Density Housing Design Guide, p3)

Relationship of dwellings to the street

36. The intention is that there will be streets, lanes complemented by a series of informal paths through blocks. For good outcomes there should be frontages to the street, legible dwelling entries and appropriate relationships between building fronts and backs.



House type H1

Terrace House Type TH-1

Courtyard House Type H3-2

Figure 6: Examples of dwelling types marked up to show potential for entry from multiple directions (Extract from Moller Architects drawing set with overlays)

37. The potential for dual-aspect entries for most of the unit types allows appropriate front-back relationships to be achieved. (Refer to Figure 6 for examples.) The multiple dwelling entries provided for in the unit plans allow flexibility and a variety of locations and orientations for entry. These will always have good presentation to the street and provide convenient and legible entry to the dwelling. When the entry is approached down the side of the dwelling, the landscape treatment will further signal location of entry.

DWELLING DESIGN AND AMENITY

38. There are nine housing types include detached, semi-detached, courtyard, terraced houses, three storey apartments, and cluster housing with shared facilities. This range of housing types and sizes will provide choice, and support community diversity including people at all stages of life.
39. All dwellings are compact, with compactness compensated for by careful planning to maximise space efficiency and utilise connection to the outdoors for a greater sense of space as well as outdoor living.
40. Compactness, planning and construction efficiency, and absence of built-in garages all contribute to affordability. In providing for affordable houses built using a prefabricated modular system, the dwellings also depart from some District Plan standards. This departure is recognised with particular consideration being given to careful location and orientation of units to optimise sun and views in combination with access to different types of open space.

Residential amenity

41. The units are aesthetically attractive and architecturally well resolved. Features include:
- a. 15 degree roof pitches contribute to a sense of generosity;
 - b. windows are well-proportioned for aesthetic effect and daylight;
 - and
 - c. the kit of parts approach to adding surfaces and elements to the basic form allows personalisation by the homeowner.
- The “guiding principles of good design and proportions, colour, texture and materiality” noted by Moller Architects are evident here.

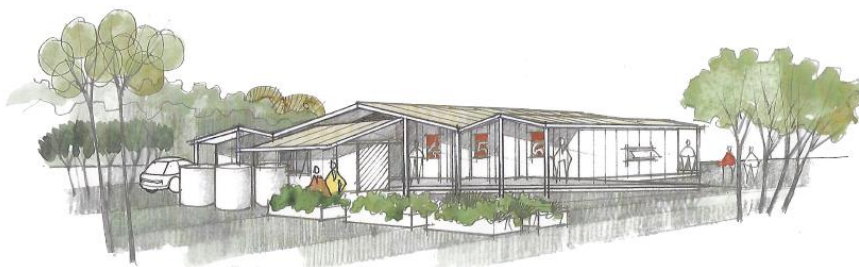


Figure 7 Sketch by Gordon Moller of a typical cluster house (type CL-CC)

42. The unit types demonstrate logical planning with good relationship between interior spaces for convenience and privacy to deliver a high level of liveability. In summary:
- a. The planning compensates for compactness with efficient use of space, simplicity and good space proportions.
 - b. Shelter is provided at the entrance to the units signalling entry location and assisting comfortable entry.
 - c. Verandas at the edge of outdoor living areas enhance potential for use of these spaces and will contribute to the potential for and attractiveness of indoor/outdoor living.
 - d. Units are suitably appointed with storage including provision for servicing, rubbish and recycling.
 - e. These modular units have been designed with consideration of orientation to the sun, and are placed on site for sun to both indoor and outdoor living areas.
 - f. Inter-unit privacy is achieved with careful sizing and placement of windows, orientation of entrances and private open spaces to which 1.8m high screening elements may be applied.

Private open space

43. The 4m wide housing module ensures that all private open spaces of at-ground units can accommodate a 4m diameter circle. Above ground apartment balconies are smaller. That notwithstanding, considering the development as a whole, each resident will have access to good outdoor amenity. This will be to a private open space immediately connected to the living area of the dwelling, supplemented by access to larger communal private open space, or nearby public open spaces, or both.

CONCLUSIONS

44. The site, adjacent land uses and its wider context means that it is suitable for the planned village development, being conveniently close to the centre of Ōtaki and important amenities including shops, schools and a supermarket.
45. The development achieves a comfortable fit with both its wider context and its immediate neighbours.
46. The network of local streets, lanes and walkways is fine grained, safe and attractive. This provides a choice of routes for comfortable access throughout the neighbourhood and a high degree of amenity.
47. A high amenity suite of public spaces and places provides the setting for relatively small dwellings with small, well-oriented private open spaces.
48. A combination of economy in dwelling size with generosity in public and community spaces is a valid means of making this a high amenity, attractive and affordable place to live.
49. Potential for monotony in affordable housing using modular 'systems building' techniques is avoided by the variety of building types, variation in alignment and scale through the development, add-on kit

of parts for each dwelling and integrated landscape design which will contribute to a pleasant residential setting.

50. The units are aesthetically attractive, architecturally well resolved and expertly planned to provide a high level of liveability.
51. Recognising this project is currently at an advanced conceptual stage, a number of matters and areas remain to be further described and/or refined at the next stage of planning and design. This notwithstanding, these plans and drawings describe a robust and complete concept and the approach that will be taken to deliver a suitably high amenity outcome in all areas.
52. On this basis, it is considered that the development will not give rise to adverse urban design related effects. While further design refinement is required, there are no critical urban design issues that remain unresolved.

APPENDIX: Relevant District Plan content

1. Urban design-related content in the District Plan provides a frame of reference for assessment. Note that the assessment above does not systematically assess against the relevant objectives – that is covered by others. The Medium Density Housing Design Guide (APP2, 17/02/2022) is also considered.
2. Concepts described in the District-Wide Subdivision Matters and which are relevant to both the development concept as a whole and neighbourhood design include:
 - Consolidated urban form
 - Efficient servicing and integration with existing townships
 - Variety of living and working areas which reinforce the function and vitality of centres
 - Higher residential densities in locations close to centres and public open spaces with good access to public transport.
 - Manage and where practicable enhance special character or amenity
 - Relaxed, unique and distinct village identities
 - Predominantly low-density residential with mature vegetation and variety of built forms
 - Well-managed interfaces between different land uses
 - Housing choice and affordability
 - High amenity living environments
3. Matters of particular relevance to the design of this development are raised by the Medium Density Housing Design Guide. These matters apply at the neighbourhood and dwelling design levels and include:

General site design

 - Retain significant natural features and vegetation
 - Design for sun
 - Consider building fronts and backs and privacy issues
 - Utilise views
 - Ensure visual and aural amenity and privacy

Frontages

 - Front to the street and onto parks and reserves
 - Visual interest and interaction at street edges
 - Socially active and safe public environments
 - Keep front fences low (max. 800mm)

Building fronts and backs

 - Minimise conflict between residents' neighbours and visitors
 - Ensure privacy, safety and security
 - Living, dining or kitchen to the street edge

Open space

 - Provide good on site amenity
 - Useable, comfortable and attractive open space
 - Broaden experiences possible for residents
 - Maximise private, high amenity and useable outdoor living space at the rear
 - Private outdoor living space (30m² + 4m dia circle + 2.5m min.)

Access, cycling and pedestrians

- Create environments that are safe, interesting and easy to walk and cycle around
- Safety, legibility and comfort for pedestrian and cyclists.

Servicing, deliveries and waste

- Accommodate servicing while protecting neighbourhood amenity

Diversity and choice

- Each dwelling is responsive to the needs of various user groups

Energy efficiency and water conservation

- Passive solar design
- Water sensitive urban design

Character

- Creation of rich and memorable neighbourhoods

Finishing and detail design

- Express a sense of high quality

Building mass

- Ensure buildings are attractive and well-designed
- Create visual interest
- Articulate building entries
- Express individual units
- Vary unit types to contribute to visual amenity

Garages

- Street as place for people, avoid vehicle dominance

Landscape design

- Contribute to character, functionality, comfort and ecology