

Richard Knott Limited

Urban Design | Masterplanning | Built Heritage
Town Planning | Landscape and Visual Assessment

To: Keren McDonnell, Mt.Hobson Group
From: Richard Knott
Date: 6th August 2024
Re: Waipu Gateway Service Station, 47 Millbrook Road, Waipu
Updated Landscape and Visual Effects Assessment - 6th August 2024

Please find attached my Updated Landscape and Visual Effects Assessment.

This updated report supersedes my previous report dated 25th November 2023. Relative to my earlier report it includes the following key updates:

- It responds to landscape and visual effects matters raised in the Council s42A report (27 March 2024), and specifically to the 'Specialist Review Advice – Assessment Of Landscape Effects' prepared by KPLC (Peter Kensington) attached as Appendix E to the s42A report. These matters are addressed in the new Section 9 of my report.
- Updates have been made throughout the report to refer to the now two stage development proposed by the applicant and to the updated list of uses (and restrictions proposed on the uses) as set out in the updated AEE.
- Reference is made to the Government's recent announcement that work on a new four-lane expressway between Auckland and Whangārei is to be progressed utilising an accelerated delivery model.¹
- Updated landscape plans have also been provided, with extracts in my report, which reflect the now proposed two stage development.



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¹ <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/accelerating-northland-expressway>

Waipu Gateway Service Station
47 Millbrook Road, Waipu

Updated Landscape and Visual Effects Assessment

6th August 2024

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1. Introduction

Vaco Investments (Waipu Project) Limited are seeking consent to construct a new service centre at the intersection of Millbrook Road with SH1, Waipu.

The updated application plans, submitted July 2024, show the site being developed in two stages, with two options being shown for Stage 2. The difference between the two options being within the northern portion of the site, adjacent to Millbrook Road. This report assesses Stage 1 and Stage 2 (Option 1) together. Stage 2 (Option 2) is not assessed.

The service centre will provide a range of facilities and uses, contained within nine buildings:

- (a) Stage 1 Activities include Petrol station and truck stop service centre, 2 x Fast food outlets, 2 x Café or general food outlet
- (b) Stage 2 Activities include Rural/home services and supplies, warehousing, marine or vehicle sales and service, Farming agricultural supplies, Marine and vehicle sales and service

Full details of the uses (and the restrictions proposed by the applicant) are as set out in the AEE.

The report has been updated (July 2024) – the principal change being the addition of Section 9 which responds to matters raised in the Specialist Review Advice – Assessment of Landscape Effects, prepared by KPLC for Whangarei DC.

Preparation of this Report

This report has been prepared by Richard Knott. Richard has worked in the areas of urban design, landscape and visual assessment, planning, heritage and special character for 34 years and established his own consultancy in 2014.

Richard is an Independent Planning Commissioner and has sat on hearing panels for a number of Councils, including Hamilton City Council, Whangārei District Council, Tauranga City Council, Taupo District Council, South Wairarapa District Council and Auckland Council.

In preparation for the report, Richard has made specific visits to the site and surrounding area on two occasions. Prior to the site visits, he was generally familiar with the local area.

Qualifications

- MA Urban Design, 1995
- PG. Diploma Building Conservation, 2002
- Bachelor of Planning, 1989
- BA(Hons) Town and Country Planning, 1988

Professional Memberships (full membership)

- New Zealand Planning Institute
- Royal Town Planning Institute, UK
- Institute of Historic Building Conservation, UK
- Institute of Highway Engineers, UK

Accreditations

- Ministry for the Environment Making Good Decisions Accredited, with Chairs Endorsement

Relevant Training

- Planning Institute of Australia, Landscape and Visual Assessment (October 2019)
- NZPI Planning for Maori Values (Advanced) (October 2019)
- NZPI Conference (2024, 2023 and 2018)

2. Methodology

This assessment follows the concepts and principles outlined in *Te Tangi a te Manu - Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines*; Tuia Pito Ora New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects (July 2022).

It has also been informed by Richard's knowledge of other good practice, including Auckland Council's *Information requirements for the assessment of Landscape and Visual Effects* (September 2017) and the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment's *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – Third Edition*' (2013).

In line with *Te Tangi a te Manu - Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines*¹, the adopted methodology has been tailored to meet the specific requirements and circumstances of the proposal, context, and relevant provisions. It recognises that the **primary purpose** of the assessment is to establish the landscape and visual effects of the proposed service station, and in particular consider the effects of change and development on the views available to people and their visual amenity, and in turn on the rural character and amenity of the area.

Key Steps

- Site visits:
 - To inform an understanding of the existing landscape character of the site and its surroundings.
 - To gain an understanding of the viewing audience.
 - To identify the visual catchment of the site and the viewpoints to be considered in the assessment.
- The report is structured to:
 - Establish the Existing Landscape Character of the area and its surroundings, considering its physical, associative, and perceptual characteristics and values.
 - Identify the Visual Catchment and Viewing Audience.
 - Provide a brief description of the Proposed Development, recognising that this report should be read alongside the AEE, application plans and other reports.
 - Identify the Statutory Context for the consideration of the application and to establish key issues which should be considered.
 - To confirm the selected Viewpoints and the reasons for these.
 - Provide a Visual Assessment of proposed service station. This considers the nature of the effect at each viewpoint and then establishes the magnitude of this.
 - Provide conclusions and recommendations

Magnitude of Effects

In establishing the magnitude of the effect on the visual amenity of passersby/travellers at each viewpoint, the *Te Tangi a te Manu - Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines* seven-point scale is utilised, as set in Table 1.

¹ Te Tangi a te Manu. Pg.41

In considering the long-term effects of the proposed development, regard has been given to the final height of trees and planting noted on page WAIPU -L-3.0 and illustrated on page WAIPU-L-2.1 of the previously submitted landscape plans.

Table 1: Seven Point Scale utilised for the assessment (based upon the seven point scale included in Te Tangi a te Manu - Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines)

Magnitude of Effect	Description of Effect
VERY HIGH (significant adverse effect)	<i>Total loss of the existing character, distinctive features or quality of the landscape resulting in a complete change to the landscape or outlook</i>
HIGH (significant adverse effect)	<i>Major change to the existing character, distinctive features or quality of the landscape or a significant reduction in the perceived amenity of the outlook</i>
MODERATE-HIGH (more than minor)	<i>Noticeable change to the existing character or distinctive features of the landscape or reduction in the perceived amenity or the addition of new but uncharacteristic features and elements</i>
MODERATE (more than minor)	<i>Partial change to the existing character or distinctive features of the landscape and a small reduction in the perceived amenity</i>
LOW-MODERATE (minor adverse effect)	<i>A slight loss to the existing character, features or landscape quality</i>
LOW (less than minor / minor adverse effect)	<i>The proposed development is barely discernible with little change to the existing character, features or landscape quality</i>
VERY LOW (less than minor adverse effect)	<i>The proposed development is barely discernible or there are no changes to the existing character, features or landscape quality</i>

Preparation of Photo Montages

The photomontages have been prepared taking account of the best practice advice in *BPG 10.2 - Best Practice Guide Visual Simulations*, Tuia Pito Ora New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects (2010)

All photographs were taken with a Fujifilm X-E2S camera. Various lenses were utilised to fit the particular circumstances.

In view of health and safety concerns regarding working within the State Highway, the decision was taken that single frame images would be utilised for each photomontage. This reduced the time needed within the State Highway and took away the need to set up a tripod at each location. The

camera was handheld and the internal level used to ensure that it was held horizontally. The camera position represents eye level of a 1.8m tall adult.

The location chosen for all images were adjacent to clear physical features, such as road signs or field entrances, so that they could be simply marked on a map as a record of where each photograph was taken, along with a short-written description to further pinpoint the position.

The montages were prepared by Christchurch based 3D visualisation specialists VirtualRift.

VirtualRift first built a 3D digital model of the development, based on the updated CAD plans and utilising the provided finished floor levels of each proposed building and finished levels across the site. GIS contour data was used for the surrounding land and viewpoints.

Taking the clearly identified position of each viewpoint, and with data regarding the field of view of each chosen photograph, the 3D model was used to accurately populate the montages with representations of the proposed development from each viewpoint, in line with Industry best practice.

In preparing the montages, it was assumed that all buildings will be finished in the colours shown on the updated plans.

The landscaping shown in the montages was informed by the proposed landscaping shown on the previously submitted landscape plans; in particular page WAIPU -L-3.0 and illustrated on page WAIPU-L-2.1, except where noted for Viewpoint G where the updated layout for Option 1 deviates from that shown on the original landscape plan. The trees were randomised from about 3m - 8m in height. Groundcover was kept around 1m in height.

Full size copies of the original photograph and montage for each viewpoint are included as Appendix-1.

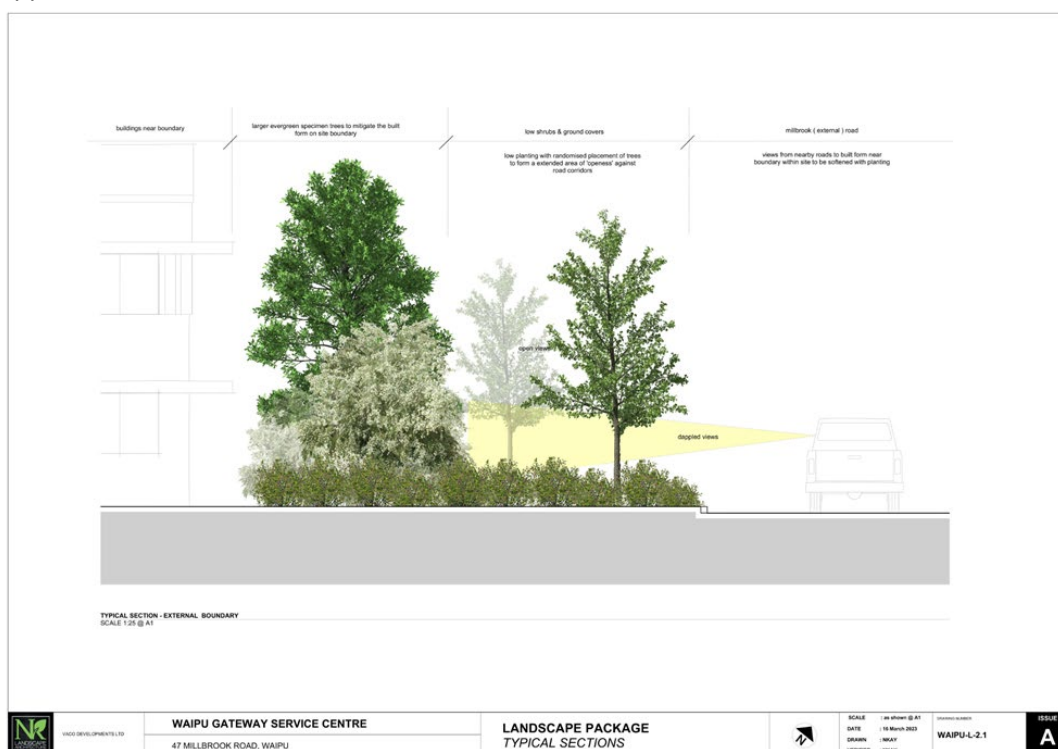


Figure 1: Reduced copy of page WAIPU-L-2.1A of the original landscape plans.

3. Existing Landscape Character



Figure 2: NZ Topo Map identifying location of site.

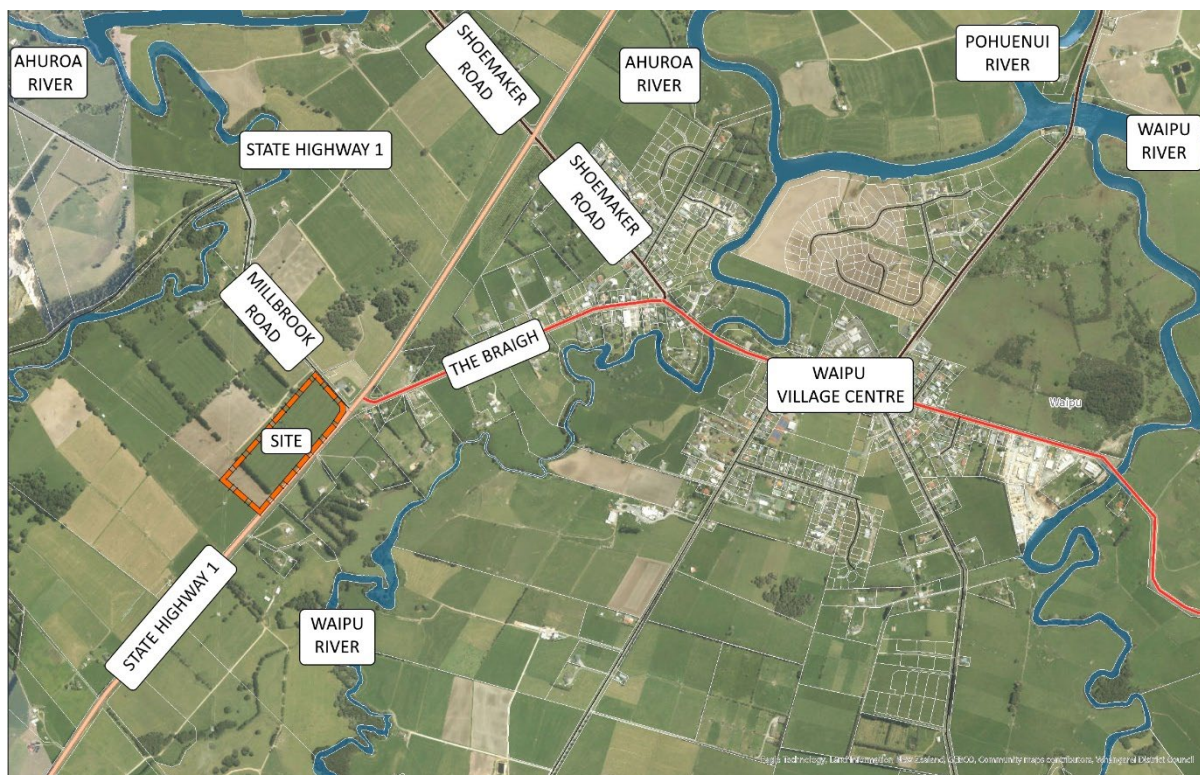


Figure 3: The local area (based on aerial photo base from <https://gismaps.wdc.govt.nz/GISMapsGallery/>)

*'Landscape embodies the relationship between people and place. It is the character of an area, how the area is experienced and perceived, and the meanings associated with it.'*²

The site is located immediately to the west of State Highway 1 (SH1), to the south of the intersection with Millbrook Road. It has an (approximately) 400m frontage to SH1 and a 150m frontage to Millbrook Road.

The site and its surroundings are an area of coastal plain surrounded by the higher Brynderwyn Hills to the south and Mareretū Forest to the west. The area is bisected by the Waipu River, and its tributaries, the Pohuenui Rover and Ahuroa River (which is located to the west of the site). There are views towards the Brynderwyn Hills, Mareretū Forest and Whangārei Heads (north) from the site. These visual connections are an important feature of the area.

The general character of the immediate surroundings is rural land, bisected by SH1, and local roads.

SH1 is a dominant feature of the area; it is a busy road with fast moving vehicles passing by the site. This includes a large number of heavy vehicles. Whilst of national significance, it provides a barrier to east-west movement though the local area. The heavy vehicles, cars and other vehicles moving at pace through the area, alongside the site, have a significant impact on the character and values of the area; the vehicles make the area alongside the road noisy and feel unsafe for pedestrians and other non-vehicle users. The majority of drivers pass through the area; they associate it with movement and travel, rather than a place to stop and spend time.

In the future, the road will be an even more significant feature in the area, with its form, design and footprint likely to alter significantly with the Government's announcement that work on a new four-

² Te Tangi a te Manu. Pg.76, informed by the NZILA Landscape Assessment Methodology workshops (November 2017)

lane expressway between Auckland and Whangārei is to be progressed utilising an accelerated delivery model to deliver it faster and more efficiently³, see Figures 3 and 4.

The site and surrounding land is in pasture, with field boundaries formed by wire fences. There are areas of trees in groups and lines alongside SH1, and within the landscape generally, forming field boundaries or freestanding. Given the otherwise open and flat appearance of the landscape, these trees are an important feature, and make a significant contribution to the overall character of the area.

Dwellings and farm buildings are scattered alongside SH1, mainly some distance from the road frontages. Many have areas or lines of trees associated with them.

The main Waipu village is located 'off line' from SH1, to the east. The village centre is approximately 1.5 km from the site, with fingers of development stretching from the main village to SH1 along The Braigh (which forms the fourth leg of the intersection of Millbrook Road with SH1) and along Shoemaker Road (which intersects with SH1 approximately 1km to the north of the site). Dwellings in these streets come close to SH1; the final dwelling in The Braigh faces towards SH1, and is clearly viewed from the state highway. In addition, the edge of the main village is seen in views across pastoral land at Shoemaker Drive. Together these provide travellers along SH1 with an understanding of the location and scale of the village.

Most dwellings along SH1, and seen within these views, are single storey. Some of the farm buildings viewed from SH1 are large in scale (for instance the buildings/tunnels at 4245 SH1 Waipu), arranged in large groups (for instance the buildings at 3930 SH1 Waipu), or with no setback from the road (for instance those close to 3971 SH1 Waipu).

Waipu village was originally established by Scottish settlers, who after the Highland Clearances (the forced evictions of tenants in the Scottish Highlands and Islands) initially followed Reverend Norman McLeod, an ordained Presbyterian Minister, initially to St Ann's in Nova Scotia and then Melbourne and Adelaide, and on to Waipu. They chose to establish their home in Waipu as it was suitable for fishing, ship building, and farming and allowed the Gaelic speaking community to remain together. Whilst this heritage is important to the community, with community events held celebrating it, this history is not immediately obvious to travellers on SH1, who may only become aware of it by seeing signs to the Waipu Scottish Migration Museum.⁴

Immediately to the north of the site, close to the intersection of Millbrook Road with SH1 is a veterinary practice; this single level building is currently undergoing alterations and is being significantly extended. It has a simple overall shape and form; lean-to extensions with cat-slide roofs are being added either side of the gable roofed original building, significantly increasing the floorspace and adding to the overall bulk and form of the building (albeit that the extensions are lower in height than the original building). Whilst there is landscaping around the site of this building, it is currently a dominant form within the context of the site, being clearly seen in views along SH1 from both the south and north.

There are high voltage transmission lines passing over the southwest corner of the site, running approximately north-south, with the closest pylon to the north being about 140m from the site boundary, and the closest pylon to the south being only approximately 50m from the site boundary. The pylons and lines are a dominant feature in the landscape. The pylon to the south is seen in conjunction with the site for travellers travelling both north and south along SH1.

Overall, the site has an open character, which is not disrupted by the existing fences and vegetation along (or close to) the existing and proposed site boundaries:

³ <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/accelerating-northland-expressway>

⁴ <https://www.waipumuseum.com/>

- to SH1 - wire fence with some overgrown vegetation within the swale outside of the boundary
- to Millbrook Road - wire fence with some overgrown vegetation within the swale outside of the boundary
- to the west – the new boundary will be to the east of the existing boundary which is marked by a wire fence with some tree planting to its east. Both the existing fence and trees will not be within the site
- to the south – a wire fence

Conclusion Overall Values

- SH1 is the most dominant feature in the area, bringing significant traffic movement and noise to the area.
- In the future SH1 will become an even more dominant feature of the area.
- The majority of viewers will as a result be passing by the site at speed.
- Whilst the land has a rural appearance, passerby will be aware of the proximity of Waipu Village, with development stretching towards, visible from and, in the case of the veterinary building, jumping across the State Highway.
- The route of the pylons and overhead lines across the area and the corner of the site have a negative impact on the character of land.
- The groups of trees within the landscape are also important features which contribute to the overall character of the land and the area as a whole.
- The views towards the Brynderwyn Hills, Mareretū Forest and Whangārei Heads (north) from the site are an important feature of the area.



Figure 4: Left - Existing SH1 adjacent to the site. Right – Section of new four lane SH1 west of Warkworth (from www.google.com/maps)

4. Description of the Visual Catchment and Viewing Audience

As there are no existing footpaths or cycle paths in the local area, the most likely viewers of the proposed development are:

- Travellers passing by, both north and south, along SH1. Viewpoints along SH1 are likely to be the most travelled viewpoints of the site.
- Vehicles exiting The Braigh, coming from Waipu village and Waipu Cove, and the residents of the dwellings who live in close proximity of this (in particular the residents of 107 The Braigh who will have some views towards the site).
- Vehicles entering Millbrook Road and passing by the site along Millbrook Road (in both directions). This is likely to be the least travelled viewpoints of the site.

Travellers passing by, both north and south, along SH1

Travelling South

The site visit identified that when approaching the site from the north, existing areas of trees on either side of SH1 significantly limit views of the site; see Figures 2 (1km) and 3 (540m). It is only when a traveller passes by these trees that the site comes fully into view.

Travelling North

Approaching from the south, the site is viewed against a backdrop of trees. Whilst the surrounding topography is generally flat, the existing dwelling and associated tree planting (including along the site frontage) approximately 370m south of the site disrupt clear views of the site. It is only after passing this that travellers have a clear view of the site (see Figure 4 and 5). On a clear day it is possible to see the Whangārei Heads beyond the site.

Vehicles exiting The Braigh (and residents of 107 The Braigh)

The Braigh approaches SH1 at an angle. The carriageway turns at its end to better align with SH1, to provide visibility to drivers wishing to turn onto the state highway.

There are established trees within the triangular area formed where the carriageway turns. These disrupt views of the site for drivers, until such time as they are close to the intersection and about to turn.

The dwelling at 107 The Braigh does not directly face the site, but it is likely that residents will have some views of the site from the dwelling and will have views of the site from their land.

Vehicles entering Millbrook Road and passing by the site along Millbrook Road.

Vehicles entering Millbrook Road and travelling in either direction on Millbrook Road will have clear views of the site. Whilst the land is generally flat, the curve in Millbrook Road around 350m to the west and the existing trees on land alongside the road will limit views for drivers travelling from the west until they are closer to the site.

Photographs⁵



Figure 5: East side of SH1 close to the intersection of Shoemaker Road with SH1; approximately 1000m north of the north-east corner of the stie (photo RKL - 19 03 2022)



Figure 6: On the east side of SH1, approximately 540m north of the north-east corner of the site (photo RKL - 19 03 2022)

⁵ All photographs RKL 19.035.2022. Camera Fujifilm X-E2S with 35mm lens (equivalent of 53mm lens on a full frame camera) .



Figure 7: From the west side of SH1, approximately 330m south of the south-east corner of the site (photo RKL - 19 03 2022)



Figure 8: From the west side of SH1, approximately level with the south-east corner of the site (photo RKL - 19 03 2022)



Figure 9: From south side of The Braigh, approximately 115m from the north-east corner of the site (photo RKL - 19 03 2022)



Figure 10: From north side of Millbrook Road, approximately 200m west of the site boundary (photo RKL - 19 03 2022)

5. The Proposed Development



Figure 11: Extract from updated landscape plans showing the Stage 1 and Stage 1/Stage 2 (Option 1) layout for the site (provided by client)

The proposed development includes:

- A roundabout and new road providing access to the site from SH1, approximately 175m from the site's southern boundary.
- South of the new road into the site, a petrol filling station, consisting of freestanding shop building, freestanding canopy over petrol pumps and various other structures.
- North of the new road into the site:
 - o A new north south access road
 - o A series of freestanding buildings along the west boundary of the site, facing the new access road, with car parking between the buildings and the road
 - o To the east of the new access road, a series of building arranged across the site, with their end elevations facing SH1, with areas of car parking and yard between them.

- A comprehensive landscaping scheme, including planting along the boundaries of the site, specimen trees and areas of lawn.
 - The landscape scheme consciously does not seek to provide lines of continuous trees along the site boundaries, but instead places specimen trees and other planting along boundaries and within the site individually or in small groups to provide a natural appearance. This directly responds to the landscape values of the area, where groups of trees and freestanding trees are an important feature of the local landscape.
 - Built stone walls are proposed at the entrance from SH1 to provide a 'gateway' into the development.
 - The stormwater ponds, SW-01 and SW-02 are intended to be dry ponds; they are therefore able to be maintained grass or can be planted with grasses which do not need to be mowed but are tolerant of drought, stress and inundation. They are shown as maintained grass on the landscape plans to reflect the pastoral use of the site and surroundings as existing.
 - The landscaping plans were not updated to reflect Option 1 prior to the preparation of the photo montages prepared to support this visual assessment report. However, discussions with the landscape architect informed the planting shown on the montages (see sketch included as Figure 12). Subsequently, updated landscape plans have been prepared.



Figure 12: Sketch plan prepared by NK Landscape Architecture - October 2023

6. The Statutory Context

The land is zoned Rural Production Zone in the Whangārei District Plan (operative in part). The land is not identified as an outstanding natural feature or landscape; it is therefore not a matter of national importance under s6(b) of the RMA and it is therefore not a requirement to recognise and provide for the protection of the land from inappropriate subdivision, use, and development.

Whilst the Objectives for the Rural Production Zone seek to protect the land for rural production activities (Objective RPROZ-O1), they do anticipate commercial and industrial activities which support rural production activities and rural communities (Objective RPROZ-O2). This includes recreation and tourist based activities.

Notwithstanding this, Objective RPROZ-O3 seeks to recognise, maintain and where appropriate protect the rural character and amenity of the zone (in line with the need to ensure the maintenance and enhancement of amenity values, in s7(c) of the RMA).

The associated policies, require (amongst other things) consideration of whether the development:

- Will contribute to the protection of rural productive land, rural character and amenity
- Has a direct connection to rural production activities, rural communities, and recreation and tourist activities.
- Requires a rural location.
- Will contribute positively the economy of the District
- Maintains amenity and character by ensuring new buildings are of a scale and character appropriate to the zone, are set back from boundaries and avoid ribbon development.

In this instance, the proposed development will deliver:

- Facilities which will support recreation and tourism in the wider area and businesses which support rural production activities:
 - o Petrol station/truck stop
 - o Restaurants/Cafe
 - o Agricultural and rural/home supplies (with an example being Farmlands)
 - o Warehousing
 - o Marine and vehicle sales and service (such as rural machinery and sales - not general car sales)
- The pure retail elements previously included in the proposal have now been removed.
- Requires a rural location, in so much as SH1 is passes through rural land and a number of the facilities provided on the site, including the petrol filling station and restaurants are intended to meet the needs of travellers on SH1
- Will deliver employment and investment in the local community
- Buildings, particularly at the north end of the site, which are of a scale and character appropriate to the zone.

In view of this, the development can be viewed as a form of development which could be anticipated in the area, supported by Objective RPROZ-O2.

For the purpose of this report, the statutory issue considered is whether the development will protect the rural character and amenity of the area.

7. Provided Viewpoints



Figure 13: Plan identifying the six selected viewpoints (plan prepared by VirtualRift)

Whilst a wider number of locations were visited and considered as potential viewpoints, based upon the 'Description of the Visual Catchment and Viewing Audience' (section 4 above), six key viewpoints were chosen to illustrate the visual impact of the development in views from:

- The north along SH1.
- The Braigh (east), for drivers exiting Waipu Village.
- On the east side of SH1 close to the intersection of The Braigh with SH1, where drivers will be pausing to join SH1 (and also representing views from 107 The Braigh).
- The south along SH1.

8. Visual Assessment of Proposed Service Station

Viewpoint D



- As noted above, in selecting this viewpoint, consideration was given to other viewpoints further to the north. From these other viewpoints existing trees on land to either side of SH1 would obscure much of the proposed development. The visual impact from these locations would therefore be less. Viewpoint D was therefore selected as it represented a worse scenario than these other viewpoints.
- From this viewpoint, SH1 is the most dominant feature in the area, bringing significant traffic movement and noise to the area. The majority of viewers will be approaching and passing by the site at speed.
- Whilst the land has a rural appearance, passerby will be aware of the proximity of Waipu Village, with development stretching towards, visible from and, in the case of the veterinary building, jumping across the State Highway.
- The route of the pylons and overhead lines across the area and the corner of the site have a negative impact on the character of land.
- The groups of trees within the landscape, which drivers will have passed by, are an important feature which contribute to the overall character of the land and the area as a whole.
- The proposed buildings at the northern end of the site are visible in views across the open land to the north of the veterinary building. They are viewed in the context of the pylon and overhead lines to the south. The buildings are lower than the backdrop of the Brynderwyn Hills to the South and Mareretū Forest to the west – they do not break the skyline.
- In the foreground the veterinary building and the associated shed will be viewed as though they are part of the new group of buildings.
- The shape and form of the buildings is not out of keeping with the shape and form expected of agricultural buildings within this landscape, and will not appear out of place given viewers appreciation of the relatively close proximity of Waipu village.
- Overtime the proposed landscaping scheme will break the shape and form of the development in this view. The trees around the boundary and within the site will reflect the groups of trees already existing to the north (as noted in Section 9, the applicant is willing to revisit the density and mix of planting along the boundaries of the site should the Council have concerns regarding this).
- In the short term the proposed development will cause a partial change to the existing character of the landscape and a small reduction in the perceived amenity from this viewpoint, and therefore has MODERATE visual and landscape effect. This effect would be equal to a more than minor adverse effect.
- Over time, as the trees and landscaping become established the planting will achieve significant height and density, as illustrated on page WAIPU-L-2.1A of the previously submitted landscape plans. This will significantly decrease the visibility of the buildings. The trees will by this stage better reflect the groups of trees which characterise the area, reducing the visual and landscape effect to LOW-MODERATE with the development only having a slight loss to the existing character and landscape quality of the area. This effect would be equal to a minor adverse effect.

Viewpoint E



- From this viewpoint, drivers will have driven past the existing dwellings and commercial buildings along The Braigh, will be aware of the dwellings alongside them and have the existing vets building firmly within their view. They will be aware of the proximity of Waipu Village and be aware of commercial development jumping across the State Highway, with the veterinary building being located on the north side of Millbrook Road.
- Vehicle travelling at speed along SH1, including many heavy vehicles, make a significant impact upon the amenity and quality of this area.
- A pylon can be seen in the centre of the view and has a negative impact on the character of land.
- Relative to Viewpoint D, this area already feels more urban in character.
- The groups of trees within the landscape, including those at the end of The Braigh, are an important feature which contribute to the overall character of the land and the area as a whole.
- The proposed buildings at the northern end of the site are visible in views, although the existing trees on the triangle of land at the intersection of The Braigh with SH1 will provide instant screening of all but the northern end of Building 28.
- The development is viewed in the context of the Mareretū Forest to the west – the buildings do not break the skyline.
- The large stormwater field at the intersection of Mill Road with SH1 ensures that the buildings are stepped well back from the intersection, so decreasing their prominence in this view. The shape and form of the buildings is not out of keeping with the shape and form expected of agricultural buildings within this landscape.
- Overtime the proposed landscaping scheme will further break the shape and form of the development in this view, and significantly reduce the visibility of the buildings. In addition, the trees around the boundary and within the site will reflect the groups of trees already seen behind the buildings and at the intersection.
- As noted above, this viewpoint already appears more urban in character than others, due to the existing dwellings and commercial buildings along The Braigh, the high visibility of the existing vets building and the vehicles travelling at speed along SH1. As such, the development will only cause a slight loss to the existing character of this area, and therefore has LOW-MODERATE visual and landscape effect. This effect would be equal to a minor adverse effect.
- Over time, as the trees and landscaping become established the planting will achieve significant height and density, as illustrated on page WAIPU-L-2.1A of the previously submitted landscape plans. This will further decrease the visibility of the buildings, better respond the significance of trees in the local landscape and further reduce the visual and landscape effect, although the effects are likely to remain LOW-MODERATE with the development still leading to a slight loss to the existing character and landscape quality of the area. This effect would remain equal to a minor adverse effect.

Viewpoint G



Figure 14: Stitched photograph from viewpoint G.

- As with Viewpoint E, many drivers will have driven past the existing dwellings and commercial buildings along The Braigh, and will be aware of the dwellings alongside them and of existing vets building to the north of Millbrook Road.
- Other drivers will be glancing towards the site whilst passing along SH1. They too will be aware of the dwellings in The Braigh and the vets building.
- Vehicle travelling at speed along SH1, including many heavy vehicles, make a significant impact upon the amenity and quality of this area.
- Relative to Viewpoint D, this area already feels more urban in character, with the dwelling at 107 The Braigh (behind the viewpoint) and the vets building both being prominent features of the area.
- Building 28 is clearly in view, although the large stormwater field at the intersection of Mill Road with SH1 ensures that it is stepped well back from the intersection, so decreasing its dominance in this view.
- In this close view the building breaks the skyline. However, the shape and form of the buildings is not out of keeping with the shape and form expected for agricultural buildings within this landscape.
- Overtime the landscape planting along the boundary and the trees closer to building 28 will in time become the dominant feature. The trees around the boundary and within the site will reflect the groups of trees already seen in the local area and beyond.
- The original landscape plan is not up to date for this part of the site. An updated sketch plan was prepared, to inform the preparation of the Montage of this viewpoint and to assist with the consideration of the landscape and visual effects (see Figure 11). These updates are now included on the updated landscape plan attached as Appendix 5 to the AEE.
- In the short term, the development will cause a partial change to the existing character of the landscape and a small reduction in the perceived amenity of the area, and therefore has MODERATE visual and landscape effect. This effect would be equal to a more than minor adverse effect.
- Over time, as the trees and landscaping become established the trees and planting will achieve significant height and density, as illustrated on page WAIPU-L-2.1A of the previously submitted landscape plans. This will significantly decrease the visibility of the buildings and also better reflect the significance of trees in the local landscape. Whilst this will still be a change from the existing appearance of the site, the visual effects of the proposal will lessen with the reduced visibility of the buildings; the visual and landscape effect will be LOW-MODERATE, with the mitigation provided by the planting reducing the effects such that the development will bring only a slight loss to the existing character of the area. This effect would be equal to a minor adverse effect.

Viewpoint H

- *From this viewpoint, the proposed development will be viewed in the context of the pylon and overhead lines to the south. It will sit lower than the backdrop of the trees to the north, and will not break the skyline. Whangārei Heads can be seen above it. As a result of their colours and their low scale relative to their backdrop of trees and landscape beyond, the proposed buildings will only be partly visible in views across the open land to the south of the site.*
- *The development will not be a dominant feature in this view. From this viewpoint, the proposed development is barely discernible with little change to the existing character, features and landscape quality of the area. Views over open land and the surrounding groups of trees remain the dominant feature, maintaining the existing landscape character of the area. It would therefore have a LOW visual and landscape effect. This effect is equivalent to a less than minor adverse effect.*
- *Overtime, as the trees and landscaping become established the trees and planting will achieve significant height and density, as illustrated on page WAIPU-L-2.1A of the previously submitted landscape plans. This will further decrease the effects of the development, although the visual and landscape effects of the development will remain LOW – equivalent to a less than minor adverse effect.*

Viewpoint I

- *Relative to Viewpoint H, the buildings are more visible, although in general are no taller than their backdrop of trees.*
- *The overhead lines and pylon are a very significant element in this view; in particular the pylon is significantly more dominant in this view than the proposed development. It has a significant negative impact on the character of the view.*
- *The colours and their low scale relative to their backdrop of trees reduces the potential dominance of the proposed building, and allows the views across open land and the trees forming the backdrop to these to remain a dominant feature.*
- *The proposed development will cause a partial change to the existing character of the landscape and a small reduction in the perceived amenity from this viewpoint, and therefore has MODERATE visual and landscape effect. This is equivalent to a more than minor adverse effect.*
- *Overtime, as the trees and landscaping become established the trees and planting will achieve significant height and density, as illustrated on page WAIPU-L-2.1A of the previously submitted landscape plans. Trees will again form the main backdrop to this view. This will decrease the effects of the development, such that relative to the existing situation, it would lead to a slight loss to the existing character and landscape quality of the area, and would therefore have a LOW-MODERATE visual and landscape effect. This is equivalent to a minor adverse effect.*

Viewpoint J

- *In this close up, wide angle, view, the proposed roundabout will represent a significant change, although is not out of keeping with the existing roundabout at the intersection of SH1 with SH15 (Port Marsden Highway). It is therefore a feature which could be expected by travellers.*
- *The shapes and forms of the buildings seen in the backdrop to the roundabout are more complex than those viewed at the north of the site, and as such have less in common with the agricultural buildings which could be expected in the area. In this close view the buildings break the skyline.*
- *In the short term the development will represent a noticeable change to the existing character of the landscape and a reduction in the perceived amenity of the viewpoint, through the addition of new uncharacteristic features and elements. It would therefore have a MODERATE-HIGH visual and landscape effect. This is equivalent to a more than minor adverse effect.*
- *Over time, as the trees and landscaping shown on the original landscape plan and illustrated in the montage become established, they will more effectively shield and break the form of the buildings, such that their complex shape and forms are less visible and the trees become a more dominant feature. As such their effects will be reduced, so that relative to the area as existing the development will bring only a partial change to the existing character of the landscape and a small reduction in the perceived amenity of the area, such that the development will have a longer term MODERATE visual and landscape effect.*
- *I consider that with additional specimen trees to the front of the buildings, adjacent the entrance to the Service Centre, and hedging along the drive through (as set out in the updated landscape plan attached as Appendix 5 to the AEE), any visual and landscape amenity effects will be mitigated to an extent that the effects of the development would be reduced to only a slight loss to the existing character and landscape quality of the area, and would therefore have a LOW-MODERATE visual and landscape effect. This is equivalent to a minor adverse effect.*

9. Response to KPLC Assessment Of Landscape Effects

Relevant Statutory Provisions

- In his paragraph 11 to 13 Mr Kensington discusses relevant statutory provisions. He focuses on RPROZ-O3 – Rural Character and Amenity, RPROZ-O4 – Adverse Effects and RPROZ-P1 – Rural Character and Amenity. He concludes that:

13. The theme that emerges from these relevant statutory provisions, is the District Plan's aim to provide for continued rural land use in this zone to maintain rural character and amenity; through low intensity development and the avoidance of adverse effects from subdivision and development on productive land.

- This fails to take account of *Objective RPROZ-O2 Land Use Activities* and *Policy RPROZ-P2 Land Use Activities* which confirm that commercial and industrial activities which support rural production activities and rural communities, including recreation and tourist-based activities, are anticipated in the zone:

Objective RPROZ-O2 Land Use Activities

Enable a wide range of rural production activities and provide for commercial activities and industrial activities that support rural production activities and/or rural communities including recreation and tourist based activities to establish and operate in the Rural Production Zone to contribute to the District's economy.

Policy RPROZ-P2 Land Use Activities

To protect rural productive land, rural character and amenity and to encourage consolidation of activities within Whangarei City by:

- 1. Only providing for commercial activities and industrial activities in the Rural Production Zone where it is demonstrated that the activity:*
 - a. Has a direct connection with the rural resource and supports rural production activities and/or rural communities, including recreation and tourist based activities.*
 - b. Requires a rural location for its operational function.*
 - c. Will minimise the potential for reverse sensitivity effects between incompatible land use activities.*
 - d. Will contain and manage adverse effects on-site.*
 - e. Will contribute positively to the economy of the District.*
 - f. Can meet and fund local infrastructure requirements.*
- 2. Not directly regulating outdoor agricultural and horticultural activities, excluding intensive livestock farming.*
- 3. Permitting farming and activities ancillary to farming or forestry.*
- 4. Requiring larger allotments sizes to retain productive rural options.*

- As outlined in section 6 above, the development can be viewed as a form of development which could be anticipated in the area, supported by Objective RPROZ-O2 and Policy RPROZ-P2.

Service centre adjacent to the SH1, east of Taupiri

- Mr Kensington provides the existing Taupiri service centre as an example as a form of development similar to the proposal. The service centre is located adjacent to SH1 - Waikato Expressway, at 2189 Gordonton Road, Taupiri, approximately 5km north of Hamilton.
- The image at Mr Kensington's Plate 3 is an image from a drone; whilst this is useful to provide an overview of the layout of the site, it is not useful for a comparison of visual effects.
- Mr Kensington's Plate 4 is a Google Streetview image; due to the viewing height and angle of the view of the camera this should also only be used to provide general information rather than for comparison purposes.

- Mr Kensington's nighttime image, Plate 5, is a view within the site, rather than being a view of the service centre from the state highway or other external viewpoint. This is therefore of limited use as a comparator for the assessment of the visual effects of the application site.
- I am very familiar with this service centre; I regularly travel to Hamilton, and both pass-by and use this service centre during both daytime and nighttime. I last visited on the 25th July 2024, during both the daytime and nighttime.
- The elevation of the Taupiri service centre and its location adjacent to a bridge allows greater views of the site from the south than would be the case with the proposed development, but limits views from the north. It cannot therefore be seen as a direct comparison. However, it does provide valuable lessons
- Having viewed the landscaping at the Taupiri service centre, I consider that the landscaping proposed as part of the current application would better screen the proposed service centre from external views than that existing at Taupiri. There are large gaps in the planting at Taupiri which allow north bound traffic to have clearer views of the development than would be anticipated from the planned landscaping at the application site. It appears that this is in part due to the topography of the borders of the site and the limited space provided for planting at the top of a bank. The flat elevation of the proposed service centre assists in this regard and ensures that a similar issue is unlikely to arise there.
- The lighting within the site appears well contained and does not have a significant impact on the rural character of surrounding land.
- Whilst Mr Kensington notes that *'one of the key differences between the two sites is that the Taupiri service centre is located adjacent to an established motorway corridor⁶, which has a very different character and impact on the landscape character and values of the area than does the existing SH1 road corridor at Waipu'*, I consider that in time, given the Government announcement that work on a new four-lane expressway between Auckland and Whangārei will be progressed utilising an accelerated delivery model, the setting of the proposed service centre will be little different to that of Taupiri. This is particularly the case with Stage 2 of the proposed development, which could well be delivered around the same time as the new four lane highway.

Proposed Landscape Scheme

- Mr Kensington indicates that it is his opinion that the proposed landscape design has responded as best that it can to the proposed layout of the built and vehicular circulation areas; and it includes some good design features, such as stone walls and timber fences at the site entrance, with grassed stormwater retention areas to the south and north, providing 'unbuilt' setbacks from these site boundaries.
- Whilst I accept his view that the storm water areas are likely to be retained as grass, I consider that they could be managed such that they are not regularly mown and could be fenced to the SH1 and to Millbrook Road as existing, to assist with maintaining their existing rural character.

Māori cultural landscape values

- Mr Kensington is critical that this report has not addressed Māori cultural landscape values. I consider that it would be inappropriate for me to do so, as I do not represent mana whenua or tangata whenau.
- I note that Mr Kensington nevertheless accepts that the AEE includes a Cultural Effects Assessment by the Patuharakeke Te Iwi Trust Board, and that the proposal will not give rise to adverse effects on Māori cultural landscape values.

That high reliance is placed on the establishment of the proposed planting

- The planting is intended to provide mitigation against the visual effects of the proposal. It is therefore appropriate that reliance is placed upon it.

⁶ The site is adjacent to the Waikato Expressway, rather than a motorway.

That this assessment is focused on chosen representative public viewpoints, not private properties

- In line with Te Tangi a te Manu - Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines, the assessment focuses on the 'typical audiences' who will view the proposed development. As set out in section 3 above, the most likely viewers of the proposed development are drivers/passengers of vehicles passing by, both north and south, along SH1, vehicles exiting The Braigh, and vehicles entering Millbrook Road and passing by the site along Millbrook Road (in both directions). It is these public viewpoints which have been considered in this report.
- There are limited private properties which view the site:
 - o The Vets in Millbrook Road – this is a commercial site/premises. I consider that the susceptibility of this to effects from the changes to the site are less than those experienced by general passersby on SH1. This was therefore not chosen as a viewpoint to assess.
 - o Dwellings in The Braigh, close to the intersection with SH1 – these viewpoints are not dissimilar to viewpoints E and G, albeit that these dwellings are all orientated to have views away from the site and there is planting and trees along their boundaries (disrupting views beyond their boundaries). The visual effects on them would therefore be less than seen at Viewpoint E (low-moderate visual effect equal to a minor adverse effect) and G (once the planting is established, a low-moderate visual effect equal to a minor adverse effect)
 - o Dwellings to the south on both the east and west sides of SH1
 - The closest dwelling on the west side of SH1 is located further from the site than viewpoint H, and would experience visual effects less than the Low experienced at H, equivalent to a less than minor adverse effect.
 - The dwellings on the east side of SH1 (3785 State Highway 1 and 3817 State Highway 1) would experience visual effects similar to viewpoint J. With additional specimen trees to the front of the buildings, adjacent the entrance to the Service Centre, and hedging along the drive through (as set out in the updated landscape plan attached as Appendix 5 to the AEE), any visual and landscape amenity effects would be reduced to have a Low-Moderate visual and landscape effect. This is equivalent to a minor adverse effect.

The effects of signage

- Mr Kensington indicates that he considers that signage and activity branding will add to visual clutter and the plinth signage does not have a rural aesthetic. He also points to the effects of urban elements such as vehicle parking and circulation areas, kerb and channel, lighting, refuse storage areas, water tanks and the presence of vehicles, including trucks, parked and circulating through the site.
- The planting along the site boundaries has been designed to reach a height which will disrupt view of the buildings, signage on buildings, low height freestanding signage and other 'urban' features within the site; as illustrated in the montages. I consider that this planting will to reduce the visual effects of this signage on the wider local area to the levels set out in Section 8 above.
- If the Council still considers that there are adverse effects beyond the site from the building signage and low height freestanding signage within the site, the applicant is willing to revisit the density and mix of planting along the boundaries of the site to reduce these effects, as has already been done in relation to viewpoint J (discussed above).
- I accept that Signs 1 and 2 would be visible in views along SH1, and will add to the visual effects of the development. Sign 3 is set offline from the existing SH1 alignment and will become more visible as passersby reach the roundabout (although passersby travelling south would need to consciously look towards the sign for it to be more than in their peripheral view). The BP pylon sign is located within the site (on the inside of the proposed stone walls).

- Signage is not an entirely unexpected feature along the Warkworth to Whangarei section of SH1; including large signs at commercial sites such Atlas Concrete (at the south of the Brynderwyn Hills and at various petrol filling stations. However, recognising Mr Kensington's concerns, the applicant has removed signs 2 and 3 from the application. The only remaining sign close to the SH1 frontage is therefore Sign 1.
- In common with other service areas on SH1, including those at Taupiri (as discussed above) and the two sites at Bombay, it is usual practice to have at least a single large pylon sign to highlight and mark the location and entrance of the service area. The retained Sign 1 will perform this function, whilst the lower BP sign will ensure that the operator is able to meet their obligations to display the prices of diesel and petrol to a person at, or passing by, the site.
- At nighttime, the intersection of The Braigh and Millbrook Road with SH1 is already well lit by streetlights. There will also be new street lighting at the proposed roundabout. Within this context, the proposed Sign 1, and more distant BP sign, would only bring a slight loss to the existing character and landscape quality of the area, and would therefore have a Low-Moderate visual and landscape effect. This is equivalent to a minor adverse effect. The visual effects would be of a similar magnitude during the daytime.
- Overall, further consideration of the signage does not cause me to alter my overall conclusions.

Veterinary practice building at the at the corner of Millbrook Road and SH1

- Mr Kensington disagrees that the existing vets practice building is a dominant building within the context of the site. Whilst I do not agree with this view, I do not consider that whether or not this existing building is dominant has an impact on my overall conclusions.

Archaeological Site – McGregors Blacksmith Shop

- I accept Mr Kensington's criticism that I could have made direct reference to the recorded archaeological site Q08/652, McGregors Blacksmith Shop which has been confirmed as being located on the site. However, the identification of this does not change any of my conclusions.

Setbacks

- Whilst Mr Kensington suggests that the 8.0m distance proposed between the closest buildings and the SH1 road reserve boundary is not a 'meaningful building setback' from the SH1 road boundary, I note that 8.0m is required as the minimum setback for buildings and major structures in the Rural Production Zone. The setbacks are therefore in keeping with what would be expected in the zone.

Lighting

- In relation to the effects of the general lighting within the proposed service area, having further considered the Taupiri service area, as discussed above, I am content that modern lighting fixtures and careful attention to the design of lighting at the site will ensure that there will not be obvious light spill and glare from the site at nighttime, so ensuring that effects from this on the rural amenity of the surrounding area are low.
- Whilst there will likely be new roadside lighting poles associated with the development, there are many other locations within rural settings along SH1 (north of Auckland) where this is the case, including at the intersection of Millbrook Road and The Braigh with SH1. New lighting poles will therefore not be out of character in this location, given the national significance of SH1.
- I anticipate that the with the upgrade of the State Highway to four lanes, there will be many areas where new lighting poles will be installed to aid road safety. Lighting poles will therefore become an even more common feature of the area than existing.
- My overall conclusions do not alter as a result of my further consideration of lighting matters.
- **Scale and Cumulative Effects.**
- With the proposed landscaping around the perimeter of the site, passersby will not be aware of the large areas of hard surfacing and views of the buildings will also be disrupted.

- In addition, it is likely that the delivery of Stage 2 will be around the same time or after the proposed four lane state highway.
- As established above, SH1 is already a dominant feature of the area; it is a busy road with fast moving vehicles passing by the site, including a large number of heavy vehicles.
- As illustrated by Figures 3 and 4, in the future, the road will be an even more significant feature in the area, with its form, design and footprint likely to alter significantly with the Government's announcement that work on a new four-lane expressway between Auckland and Whangārei is to be progressed.
- Relative to the road as existing, and based upon other projects to upgrade SH1 to four lanes (such as SH1 past Warkworth, and the Waikato Expressway), it is likely that the improved road will include:
 - A significantly wider footprint than existing.
 - Areas with large concrete barriers.
 - Areas of flush median with wire barriers.
 - Overhead gantry signs.
 - Safe areas for emergency vehicles and (speed) cameras with armco or wire safety barriers.
 - A large number of streetlights to provide significantly improved nighttime lighting.
- Based on the factors above the Stage 2 buildings will not together create cumulative effects, or create cumulative effects with the Stage 1 buildings, whether delivered before or after the upgraded four lane state highway.
- Within the context of the upgraded road, Stage 2 will have an even lesser impact on the character values of the local area.

KPLC Assessment Findings and Conclusions

- I accept that the proposed development will bring change. However, I do not believe that it will adversely impact people's appreciation of the wider rural landscape character and values, as suggested by Mr Kensington. It will be a brief moment for people travelling past the site.
- Whilst it will have some impacts on the views of the Mareretū Forest, it will not overcome the overall significance of the views of this from SH1.
- Notwithstanding the matters raised by Mr Kensington, I maintain my opinion that the development will in the long term, with the implementation of the updated landscape plan, have a minor or less than minor adverse effect on the rural character and amenity of the local area.

10. Conclusion and Recommendations

Viewpoint	Immediate Landscape and Visual Effect	Long Term Landscape and Visual Effect
D	Moderate	Low-Moderate
E	Low-Moderate	Low-Moderate
G	Moderate	Low-Moderate
H	Low	Low
I	Moderate	Low-Moderate
J	Moderate-High	Low-Moderate

Having visited the site on two occasions, selected representative viewpoints and considered the landscape and visual effects of the development against a seven point scale, I have found that the development will in the long term, with the implementation of the updated landscape plan, have a minor or less than minor adverse effect on the rural character and amenity of the local area.

Overall, I consider that with the implementation of the updated landscaping scheme, the proposal will satisfactorily protect the rural character and amenity of the area (as expected by the objectives and policies for the Zone).

However, to ensure that the anticipated level of effects from all viewpoints, it is recommended that a condition be placed on the consent requiring that the landscaping scheme be implemented and maintained, and that materials and colours for buildings generally be recessive colours.

All signs and lighting should comply with the relevant District Plan standards, unless otherwise agreed by way of a resource consent.



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6th August 2024

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UPDATED Landscape and Visual Effects Assessment

Richard Knott Limited

Urban Design | Masterplanning | Built Heritage
Town Planning | Landscape and Visual Assessment

Appendix 1 – Full Size Original Photographs and Photo Montages























