

To: Ministry for the Environment (MfE)  
From: Katherine Hu – Barker & Associates Limited  
Date: 11 December 2025  
Re: Urban Design Memorandum – Orchard Grove Masterplan

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## 1.0 Introduction

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Gordon Litt Farms Limited proposes to lodge an application for a referral project under the Fast Track Approvals Act (2024) to utilise the fast-track consenting process via an expert consenting panel. This application, known as **Orchard Grove Masterplan**, relates to the subject site located at 155 Kay Road (the 'Site').

To support the referral application, this memorandum provides a high-level assessment of the urban design aspects of the development, including:

- Summary of the proposal and the Site's key characteristics;
- Preliminary assessment of the proposal against relevant policy documents;
- Urban design response;

This memorandum should be read in conjunction with **Appendix 1 - Urban Design Consultation Package**, prepared by Barker & Associates and dated December 2025.

Should the project be successful in referring to the Fast-track EPA process, a full Urban Design Assessment will be prepared and lodged as part of the full resource consent application.

## 2.0 Project Description and Summary

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Gordon Litt Farms Limited engaged Barker & Associates ('**B&A**') to provide planning services for the master planning, consenting and design of the Site. The subject site is in the Waikato District although directly adjoins the boundary with Hamilton City Council and established suburb of Flagstaff. The site is accessible via Reynolds Road to the north, Resolution Drive to the east, Kay Road to the south, and Osborne Road to the west. Kay Road lies within the shared jurisdiction of the Waikato District Council and Hamilton City Council, while Resolution Drive has been identified as an arterial route extending from Hamilton City. The Site is also adjoining several existing rural lifestyle residential properties, particularly to its southwestern corner. The Site is approximately 10 kilometres from the Hamilton City Centre and

The Site is made up of four lots of land ranging in size from 1.3171ha to 50.5214ha. The combined land area is approximately 68.8 ha. The Site is part of the HT1 growth area as identified in the 2024 Future Proof Strategy and Waikato District Plan.

Orchard Grove is a proposed residential development that comprises circa 815 residential lots with varying site sizes, along with a supporting neighbourhood centre (approx. 4,000m<sup>2</sup>), open spaces and infrastructure. The lot dimension and size have been designed in a way that it can accommodate different housing

typologies, such as detached, duplexes or terraced units. The high-level masterplan is shown in Figure 1 below.

The proposed transport network, with a 23m wide collector road running north-to-south, is supported by local roads, cycle connections and pedestrian pathways to create an accessible and legible development.

The neighbourhood centre has been centrally located and has been sized to accommodate a small grouping of buildings that can support provide a number of amenities and services to support the residential development. This element of the development has been scaled to support the density proposed and is located directly adjacent to the key collector road and the higher-density typologies, as well as adjacent to proposed areas of public open space.

Integrated throughout the residential development are several open spaces that have been distributed to support the amenity of future residents. The open spaces are also intended to support ecological restoration through the retention of several natural wetlands and riparian revegetation and a landscaping strategy, which prioritises the use of native planting throughout the development.

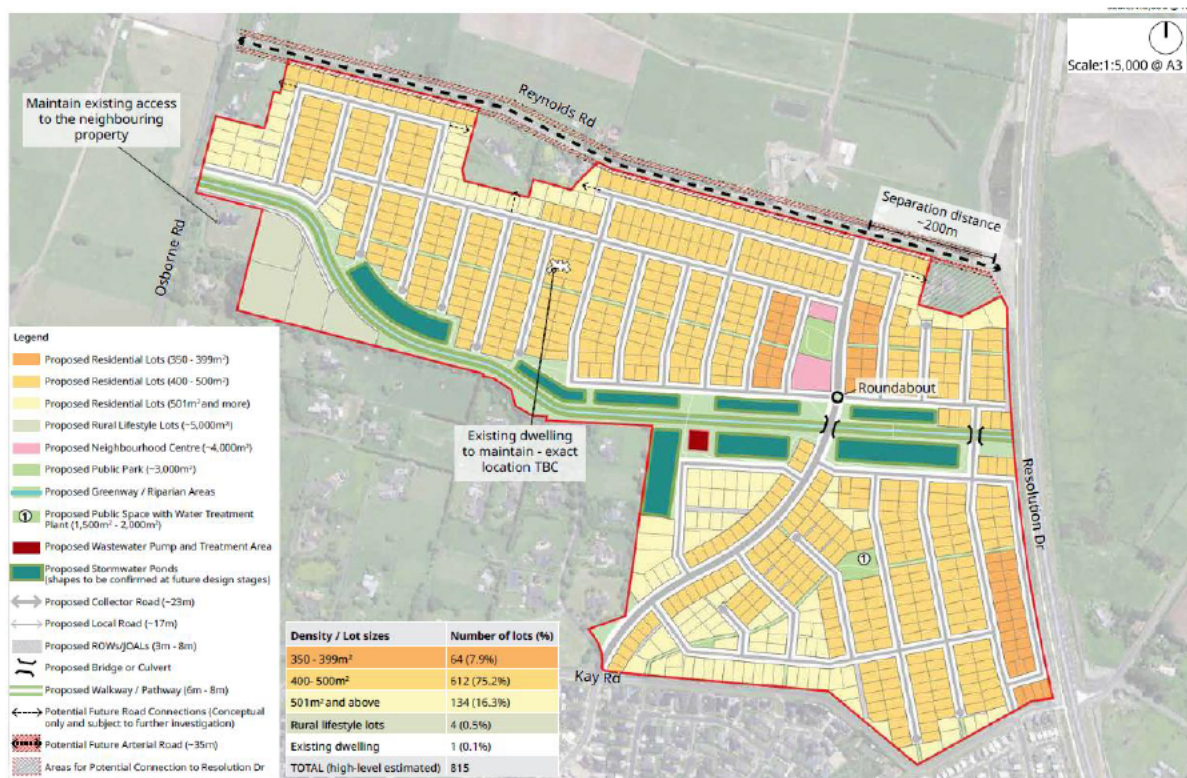


Figure 1 Overall High-level Masterplan

### 3.0 Site and Context Analysis Summary

B&A has undertaken a site and context analysis, which has been included in Appendix 1.

The Orchard Grove Development site covers approximately 68.8 hectares and is strategically located as part of the wider HT1 growth area, as identified in the 2024 Future Proof Strategy and Waikato District Plan. The Site is located at the northern urban edge of Hamilton City, immediately adjacent to the residential communities of Flagstaff and Rototuna. The Site consists of four lots, cumulatively forming an extensive greenfield area intended for urban growth.

The topography of the Site is predominantly flat in the central part from the eastern boundary to the northwestern corner and has a gradual sloping topography towards the western boundary. Two moderately steep hills are located along in the southeast along Kay Road and at Reynolds Road.

The site contains several hydrological features, including an existing drain that runs east-west across the site and a shallow gully system located along the western boundary, forming a potential barrier to internal site connectivity. The flows from the drain and the gully system are via a culvert located under Osborne Road and are directed towards the Otama-ngenge Stream, then ultimately into the Waikato River.

In terms of vegetation, the site is dominated by exotic vegetation, shelterbelts, and grazed pasture, except for individual native saplings and small trees located within the shelterbelts of the old orchard site located on the northwestern side of the site. In this regard, there is nothing particularly noteworthy that would need to inform a design response. There are also a number of small wetlands located in the southeast corner, which potentially would provide natural habitats that are ecologically sensitive, providing opportunities for ecological rehabilitation and biodiversity enhancement through careful design. These wetlands are currently under investigation to further confirm their ecological status and conditions.

In terms of surrounding land uses and amenities, the site is well-situated relative to existing amenities and community infrastructures. In particular, the Site is in close proximity to Destination Playground and sports field, Borman Road Neighbourhood Centre and Rototuna Suburban Centre with café and restaurants, supermarkets and medical services, primary, intermediate schools and secondary schools, and several local childcare facilities supporting future residential growth on the site.

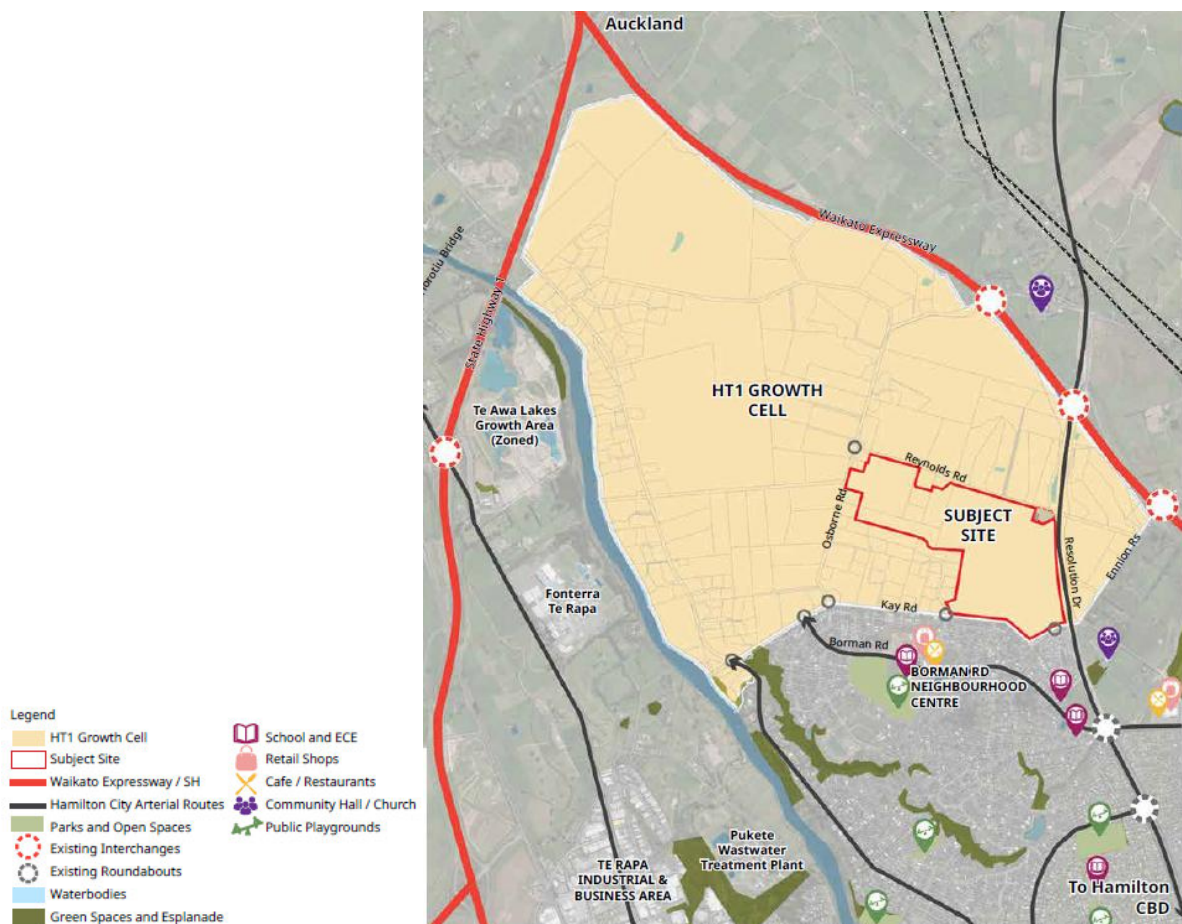


Figure 2 Local Site Context and Orchard Grove Masterplan Area

## 4.0 Statutory Policy Documents

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### 4.1 National Policy Statement on Urban Development

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The National Policy Statement Urban Development (**NPSUD**) identifies the Waikato District as a Tier 1 territorial authority. This requires Council to take a strategic approach and determine future needs for the short, medium and long terms to meet the expected demand for housing and provide the development capacity to meet expected demand for business land.

This high-level Masterplan is generally consistent and in alignment with the NPSUD in the following ways:

- The Site is a large landholding on the edge of the existing Hamilton urban area, where a holistic approach is being taken to deliver a well-functioning urban environment. It will enable people to provide for their social, economic, and cultural wellbeing now and into the future. In particular, the Site can assist with delivering a good level of development capacity to meet the demand for housing and business land. It is anticipated that the Site can deliver over 800 residential units and 4,000m<sup>2</sup> of business land.
- Range of site sizes and typologies are provided, in particular, the lot dimensions and shapes will be able to accommodate a range of housing typologies, sizes and design. This will provide choices and flexibility to future resident, preventing a one-size-fits-all approach across the site.
- Intensification outcomes are being enabled through the provision for higher-density housing around the key movement routes, commercial nodes and public amenities. This is consistent with Objective 3 and Policy 3 of the NPSUD.
- The masterplan illustrates the opportunities for accessibility and connections with the existing urban fabric and roading network. It encourages and promotes active transport through a range of walking and cycling options to housing, jobs, community services, natural spaces and open spaces.
- The provision of infrastructure in terms of the development capacity that will be enabled has been considered. It is intended that infrastructure will be delivered through a staged approach and could be funded privately but also alongside and in conjunction with the territorial authority.

### 4.2 2024 Future Proof Strategy

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The Future Proof Strategy is a 30-year growth management and implementation plan for the Hamilton, Waipā, Waikato and Matamata-Piako sub-regions. The Strategy is essential to managing growth in a staged and coordinated way while addressing complex planning issues. The Strategy incorporates seven transformational moves for change:

- Iwi aspirations;
- Waikato River at the heart;
- A comprehensive and fundamental evolution of our transport system;
- A vibrant metro core and lively metropolitan centres;
- A strong and productive economic corridor;
- Thriving communities and neighbourhoods; and

- Water-wise and water-sensitive communities.

The site sits within the Future Proof–identified HT1 growth cell for planned urban expansion. Enabling this masterplan gives effect to the sub-regional growth strategy by directing new housing to a signalled greenfield node contiguous with Hamilton’s urban edge. The design principles and design process followed in the Orchard Grove Masterplan will give effect to the relevant transformational moves. In particular, enabling the development will achieve the vision of the Strategy by improving housing choices, providing access to new employment opportunities, providing resilience to the natural environment and landscape, and enabling quality-built environments.

### 4.3 Waikato District Plan and Hamilton City District Plan

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The site is currently zoned General Rural under the Waikato District Plan, indicating its current primary use for rural activities and highlighting the need for rezoning or special planning processes to facilitate urban development. The adjacent residential areas along the Hamilton City boundary are zoned as General Residential and Medium Density Residential Zone, which indicates potential for cohesive urban integration subject to planning changes.

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 memorandum does not systematically assess against the relevant objectives, however, a summary of key District Plan matters (both Waikato District Plan and Hamilton City District Plan) for consideration is outlined below.

- Providing for intensified urban development in an existing rural context where it supports a quality compact urban form and a range of housing typologies.
- Enabling lower residential density around some edges will provide an appropriate transition between the rural residential area to the Site while enabling higher levels of intensification and growth along public transport corridors and near open space.
- Subdivision and development respond to the physical characteristics and underlying qualities of the Site and achieve attractive and safe streets.
- Providing quality on-site amenities for residents and meeting their day-to-day needs by providing practical lot shapes and dimensions to accommodate privacy, outlook, daylight, sunlight, and necessary amenities.
- Ensuring that infrastructure is in place or can be provided to support new development.
- Promotes the efficient use of land and enables a range of built forms to support choice for a diverse and growing population. Recognising that design quality is increasingly important as the scale of development increases.

## 5.0 Urban Design Response

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The Orchard Grove Masterplan has been informed by high-level technical inputs from a range of specialists and has been designed to provide for a well-functioning urban environment. Key design aspects of the masterplan are discussed further below.

## 5.1 Movement and Connectivity

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The proposed masterplan is aimed to create a connected, easy-to-navigate street network linking with Kay Road, Reynolds Road, Osborne Road and Resolution Drive. The network is structured around a key spine collector road (~23m) and a series of local/reserve-edge streets (~17m). To support a well-functioning urban environment, the masterplan has adopted the following design measures:

- The provision of short, walkable blocks that provide for multiple route choices by arrange of modes.
- Vehicular cul-de-sacs have been paired with 6m+ wide pedestrian accessways to maintain connectivity and help prioritise movement by pedestrians and cyclists.
- Perimeter streets are provided to all principal open spaces and the greenway, ensuring passive surveillance and convenient maintenance access.
- A two-way cycleway is provided for along the collector road, whilst shared paths along the greenway and reserve-edge streets will form a recreational loop and an off-road cycling route to support alternative modes of transport.
- The greenway's shared paths have been designed to connect directly to the proposed commercial centre and public open space, as well as link to the existing Resolution Drive walking paths, and allow for a future Kay Road connection, strengthening wider-area permeability.
- Safe crossings (for example, raised tables/refuges) will be provided at key locations along the collector road and around interfaces with open spaces, shared paths and pedestrian accessways.

## 5.2 Densities, built form and typologies

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The introduction of over 800 residential lots and more intensified residential typologies (such as duplexes/terraces) within a previously rural context can result in visual changes to the existing environment. However, this change is already anticipated by the site's classification as a future growth cell in the Future Proof Strategy. As such, this change is not considered an adverse effect of the development.

In terms of housing provision, the proposal distributes lot sizes across the Site, ranging from 350m<sup>2</sup> to over 500m<sup>2</sup>. This is to help provide variety in lot sizes and will allow flexible layouts (e.g., home-office/studio) and different housing typologies and eventual dwelling sizes, to help meet more diverse household needs.

- 350–399 m<sup>2</sup> (with ≥16m lot width) are mainly positioned near the centre/park/greenway for walkable living. Some of them are also positioned along Resolution Drive, forming an extension of the established medium density residential development on Tennille Street.
- 400–500m<sup>2</sup> (with ≥16m lot width and ≥25m lot depth) represent the majority lots for the development, enabling typical single-storey to two-storey detached homes.
- ≥501m<sup>2</sup> and rural-residential lots (≥5,000m<sup>2</sup>) are located in irregular-shaped areas, in locations affected by topographic change, or adjacent to existing rural and lower-density dwellings. Four rural-residential lots are also proposed to provide a clear transition to the surrounding rural lifestyle residential interfaces.

As the development is located on land currently zoned for rural activities, a substantive application will need to be supported by a series of Comprehensive Development Controls and Design Guidelines to

control building form, bulk, and scale, ensuring sensitive integration into existing landscapes and minimising potential visual dominance and privacy concerns.

### 5.3 Compact commercial centre

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The masterplan proposes a small commercial centre (approx. 4,000m<sup>2</sup>). that has been located across two lots, fronting a central public open space and the collector road, creating a node and everyday destination within a 5–10 minute walk for most homes across the Masterplan area. This will have the benefit of:

- Enabling active frontages to address the public open space and collector road.
- The provision of local amenities (e.g., café, superette, childcare/health) which can support everyday social interactions amongst future residents.
- The street network has been utilised to separate future commercial uses from the proposed residential lots, in order to reduce potential reverse sensitivity effects (noise, delivery hours, lighting).

### 5.4 Open space provision, response to natural features and infrastructure

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In terms of open spaces, the masterplan identifies several different types of open spaces. Notable features:

- A central greenway with eight stormwater ponds will function as the neighbourhood's key feature of the open space network, combining water-sensitive urban design with ecology, recreation and identity.
- Naturalised drains and wetland edges will be enhanced through riparian planting tailored to moisture gradients (wet margin, mid-bank, upper canopy) to improve biodiversity and water quality.
- All of the proposed open spaces have been sized to accommodate potential walking loops, lookouts, shade trees, seating and lighting, which will make the spaces more usable and safer.
- Indicative stormwater ponds have been sized to enable the use of gentle batters and safety shelves, integrated paths and specimen trees, so stormwater infrastructure reads as parkland rather than becoming or 'inactive spaces' which serve limited amenity benefits for future residents.

## 6.0 Conclusion

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Having undertaken a high-level urban design assessment, it is considered that Orchard Grove development delivers a coherent street and open space framework, a local centre co-located with a public park, and a blue-green network that manages stormwater while shaping a high-amenity public realm. Lot sizes have been designed to enable a mixed of housing choice, which could be eventually developed with detached, duplex and terrace homes at suburban intensities. Larger lots are placed in areas that are either irregular in shape, subject to existing topographic slopes or adjacent to existing rural / lower density dwellings. Subject to the development of comprehensive design controls and guidelines, the proposal will support a well-functioning urban environment consistent with contemporary New Zealand urban design practice and the FTAA purpose.

## 7.0 Qualifications and Experience

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**Katherine Hu** (BPlan (hons); MUDes) is an Associate – Urban Designer at Barker & Associates. Katherine has had over ten years of professional experience as an urban planner and urban designer in both the public and private sectors in New Zealand. Katherine has experience working on urban design review, spatial and strategic planning, master planning, as well as non-statutory place-making projects. Her experience also includes plan changes, resource consenting and development of key design documentation and urban design guidelines.