



# Integrating nature and culture

## Landscape Assessment Report

Proposed Retirement Village  
Ashbourne Development  
Station Road  
Matamata 3472

## Document Quality Assurance

Proposed Retirement Village, Ashbourne Development, Station Road, Matamata– Landscape Assessment Report Greenwood Associates Landscape Architecture Ltd Report prepared by Greenwood Associates Landscape Architecture Ltd for Unity Developments		
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## APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Viewpoint Location Map (Public Realm)

Appendix 2.1-2.3 : Viewpoints 1-2 (Public Realm)

# 1. Introduction

## *The proposal*

- 1.1. Unity developments (**the Applicant**) is seeking to establish a retirement village on an approximate 20.2ha portion of the 111.7ha block of land that they own that will also contain, a solar farm (referred to in accompanying documentation as the 'southern solar farm'), residential community, commercial centre and a series of walking tracks centred around a vegetated stormwater corridor (referred to in accompanying documentation as the 'greenway').

## *The subject site*

- 1.2. The majority of the proposed retirement village sits across a single parcels of land within the wider site, this parcel of land is identified as LOT 2 DP 21055.
- 1.3. The layout / positioning of the retirement village relative to the rest of the proposed development is outlined below in Figure 1.



Figure 1: Location Plan showing proposed retirement village in context of current environment and wider Ashbourne development<sup>1</sup>

- 1.4. The proposed retirement village is bordered to its north by Station Road, to its east by a developing rural-residential community (Highgrove Sub-division).
- 1.5. The proposed retirement village will be partially bordered to its east by a residential community that is being developed by the applicant, the proposed 'greenway' (a collection of native planting and a walking track across a stormwater reserve) will border the proposed retirement village to the south and an existing paddock will border the proposed retirement village to the west, at this stage this paddock will be undeveloped.

#### *Planning context*

- 1.6. The proposed retirement village within the 'Rural Zone' of the Matamata-Piako District Plan (MPDP).
- 1.7. The land to the east of the proposed retirement village ( i.e.: where the proposed residential community will be established) is zoned a combination of 'Rural Residential' and 'Rural Residential 2' zoning.

#### *Scope of assessment*

- 1.8. Provisions in the MPDP relevant to this assessment relate to visual impacts in terms of layout, character of the zone, and wider amenity values. Alignment with these provisions is covered through an assessment of the proposed development in context with relevant 'issues' and 'policies'.
- 1.9. This report will provide an overview of the existing environment, a description of the change proposed, and identify how such change will affect the physical landscape, landscape character and/or visual amenity values of the site and surrounding area. This assessment is based on the current receiving environment. Although this report contains references to various planning provisions it is not intended to be a planning assessment.
- 1.10. This report should be read in conjunction with the project architectural, civil engineering and landscape architectural drawings.
- 1.11. A visual simulation have been prepared for the proposed retirement village by Greenwood Associates and will be utilised as a reference when assessing the level of potential landscape effects.

## 2. Methodology

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Greenwood Associates – 'Resource Consent Landscape Package for Unity Development', drawing 2148/02 – Project Scope Plan – dated 17/04/25

- 2.1. This assessment of landscape and visual amenity effects has been undertaken with reference to the Te Tangi A Te Manu Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines<sup>2</sup> ('The Guidelines').
- 2.2. The significance of effects identified within this assessment are based upon a seven-point scale ranging from very low; low; low-moderate; moderate; moderate-high; high; very high; ratings.
- 2.3. As per section 6.21 of the Guidelines the following ranking scale will be used for the assessment of landscape effects (both physical and visual).

**Table 1: Seven-Point Rating Scale**

VERY LOW	LOW	LOW-MOD	MODERATE	MOD-HIGH	HIGH	VERY HIGH
LOW			MODERATE		HIGH	

- 2.4. As per section 6.22 of the Guidelines no descriptor of these ratings (i.e. of what low means) is given in this report based on the summation of the following Environment Court's "Matakana Island" decision (*Western Bay of Plenty District Council v Bay of Plenty Regional Council* [2019] NZEnvC 110) at [25] (note **emphasis** added):

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

- 2.5. However, to provide some context, Table 2 below, and the subsequent paragraph (sourced from section 6.37 of the Guidelines) aligns the seven-point rating scale in Table 1 above against the 'less than minor' to 'significant' ratings scale typically used when assessing effects under the Resource Management Act 1991 ("RMA").

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

					SIGNIFICANT	
LESS THAN MINOR		MINOR		MORE THAN MINOR		
VERY LOW	LOW	LOW-MOD	MODERATE	MOD-HIGH	HIGH	VERY HIGH

*"Effects are identified by establishing and describing the prevailing landscape character by identifying the landscape values of the site and the perception of the site within the wider landscape, (reference may be made in this regard to*

<sup>2</sup> Te Tangi A Te Manu – Aotearoa New Zealand landscape Assessment Guidelines – Published July 2022

*existing statutory documents and previous landscape assessments undertaken by others) and assessing the effects of the proposal in either enhancing or degenerating from these values. These effects will be measured using the seven-point rating scale given above in Table 1 and Table 2<sup>3</sup>*

2.6. This landscape assessment follows section 10 of the Guidelines.

2.7. In this case, prior to conducting the assessment, a desktop study was completed which included a review of the relevant information relating to the landscape and visual amenity aspects of the proposal. This information included:

- Architectural plans and elevations
- Civil engineering plans and elevations
- Landscape architectural plans and elevations
- Matamata-Pikao District Plan (MPDP) including relevant planning maps
- Aerial photography
- Ground contours

2.8. Site visits were undertaken on the 24<sup>th</sup> of June 2024 and the 8<sup>th</sup> of November 2024 in order to further understand the site and the surrounding context. The site visits focused on the potential physical impact the proposal would have on the landscape, what changes there would be to the landscape character of the site and surrounding area and the identification of viewing audiences to inform potential visual (landscape and amenity) effects.

2.9. Two (2) viewpoints within the public realm, comprising three (3) individual photographs were selected from sixty (60) photographs taken during the site visit. These views were selected from locations within the wider landscape where it was considered conceivable, based on site observations, that the proposal would be visible (refer appendix 1 for viewpoints map).

### 3. Existing Environment

3.1. The purpose of this section is to provide a description of the site as it currently sits, both in a local and wider context. This analysis allows for a definition of the existing landscape character and serves as the basis for the analysis of potential effects of the proposal upon the prevailing landscape values.

#### *Site Location and Site Description / Wider Landscape Description*

##### *Site Location and Description*

3.2. The site for the proposed retirement village is accessed from Station Road, this will remain the main access point for the proposed retirement village, although access

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<sup>3</sup> Section 6.7 - Te Tangi A Te Manu – Aotearoa New Zealand landscape Assessment Guidelines – Published July 2022



will also be available 'internally' from within the wider site, specifically through the proposed residential community to the east.

- 3.3. A developing rural-residential community (Highgrove subdivision) sits to the east of the proposed retirement village with both sharing a common boundary with one another.
- 3.4. The Highgrove Subdivision contains thirty-four (34) sections ranging in size from 2970m<sup>2</sup> – 5921m<sup>2</sup>.
- 3.5. The Highgrove subdivision contains a number of exotic trees across the aforementioned thirty-four (34) sections, the subdivision is bounded at its external boundaries by a black stained post and rail fence, behind which sits a hedge and a series of Magnolia trees to provide screening from the wider site on which the retirement village will be established.
- 3.6. The two images below in Figure 2 show the boundary interface of the Highgrove subdivision at the eastern boundary of the site of the proposed retirement village (left image – taken from Station Road) and at the southern boundary of the Highgrove subdivision, which will directly border the proposed residential community.



Figure 2: Image showing boundary treatments at Highgrove Subdivision at common boundaries with wider site<sup>4</sup>

- 3.7. This portion of the site that borders Station Road contains a hedge, that at the time of the site visit, sits approximately 3m high, this hedge is of such a density that it serves as both a visual screen and wind break for the wider site from Station Road. This hedge is shown below in Figure 3 in an image taken from Station Road.

<sup>4</sup> Source: Image taken by myself 08/11/2024



Figure 3: View towards southern solar farm from Station Road – showing obscuration by existing shelter belt<sup>5</sup>

- 3.8. This site of the proposed retirement village and the wider site currently function as a working Dairy Farm.
- 3.9. The site that will house the proposed retirement village contains fourteen (14) large trees ('field trees') and an additional six (6) smaller trees behind the aforementioned hedge on Station Road.
- 3.10. The profile of the site that will house the proposed retirement village is flat with no appreciable topographical variation.

#### *Wider Context*

- 3.11. This sub-section addresses the visual appearance and subsequent landscape character of the wider landscape.
- 3.12. The settlement of Matamata that sits to the north / east of both sites can be considered to represent a typical 'New Zealand Rural Village' with the following features present;
  - An architectural signature with appreciable variance in residential built form in terms of bulk and architectural style.
  - Established trees spread across private lots.
  - Variable planting across the public realm

<sup>5</sup> Source: Image taken by myself 08/11/2024

- Remnant areas of native vegetation spread through residential neighbourhoods, primarily located at riparian margins.

3.13. Like other towns through New Zealand there is a natural transition between older dwellings (c.1960s-1970s) and newer dwellings (2020s), reflecting the changing statutory provisions where the urban edge is pushed farther into traditional rural land to facilitate more housing. Figure 4 below provides an example of this transition at Jellicoe Street, approximately 700m from the Peakedale Drive entrance to the site.



Figure 4: Panoramic image showing transition between c.1960s -1970s residential (left of image) and 2020s residential (right of image)<sup>6</sup>

3.14. Matamata is surrounded by rural land, with the transition between the traditional 'New Zealand Rural Village' and rural land managed at the edges of the settlement largely through the use of rural-residential lifestyle properties that ease this transition by gradually reducing the density of built-form before opening up to a traditional rural landscape.

3.15. The rural land surrounding Matamata is predominantly flat with small localised rolling landforms and gullies, the predominant landscape features visible within the wider landscape are the Kaimai ranges to the east and Te Tapui to the west.

3.16. The surrounding rural land can be considered a typical 'New Zealand rural landscape' with the following natural and cultural elements present that have a readily perceptible association with rural amenity and hence, rural character;

- Rectilinear planting (shelter belts / hedge rows) present at internal and external boundaries
- Naturally distributed planting located at riparian corridors (stream edges, gullies and overland flow paths)
- Larger standalone trees present through open stock paddocks
- Standalone dwellings surrounded by ornamental planting and bounded by open paddocks
- Rural amenity buildings (sheds)
- Land divided in rectilinear fashion into paddocks with post and wire fencing, which is occasionally reinforced with rectilinear planting (refer above).

3.17. The rural and urban edges are well defined through a change in building density with a transition from traditional medium density housing to rural lifestyle lots evident at the margins of Matamata, and in the context of the site this is evident at Station Road.

Figure 5 below provides a transitional series of photographs taken along Station Road

<sup>6</sup> Source: Image taken by myself 26/04/2024



when travelling in a westerly direction showing the transition from traditional medium density residential lots to rural-residential lots.



Figure 5: Transitional imagery showing residential to rural-residential<sup>7</sup>

3.18. In the sense of a change from an urban to a rural environment, the rural-residential properties shown above act as a 'staged transition' by decreasing housing density but maintaining elements of both rural and urban character.

3.19. Figure 6 below shows the transition between rural-residential and traditional rural environments. The third and fourth images in this sequence show the transition between the neighbouring Highgrove subdivision and the site of the proposed retirement village.



Figure 6: Transitional imagery showing rural-residential to rural<sup>8</sup>

3.20. This transition is also apparent in the residential areas to the north of the wider site of the proposed northern solar farm with Eldonwood Drive acting as a transition between traditional medium density residential lots and lifestyle lots, Figure 7 below is an aerial photo showing this transition between medium density residential and rural-residential lifestyle blocks.



<sup>7</sup> Source: Image taken by myself 24/06/2024

<sup>8</sup> Source: Image taken by myself 24/06/2024

Figure 7: Aerial image showing transition from residential to rural-residential adjacent to site (note: open field at left of image is the site where the proposed residential and retirement communities will be established)<sup>9</sup>

3.21. The aerial image below (Figure 8) shows the neighbouring Highgrove subdivision in the context of the site of the proposed retirement village and neighbourhood shown above in Figure 7.



Figure 8: Aerial image showing the neighbouring Highgrove sub-division in context of the site and surrounding established neighbourhoods.<sup>10</sup>

## *Landscape Elements*

3.22. This section discusses the notable landscape elements both within the subject site and local context, and for the purposes of this document these have been divided into two subcategories, natural elements and cultural elements. Natural landscape elements broadly consist of vegetation, landforms and coastlines. Cultural landscape elements consist of manmade structures that could be considered to be potentially character defining such as walls, residential and commercial built form and pieces of infrastructure (bridges, pathways).

### *Natural elements*

3.23. The sites of the proposed retirement village currently functions as a working farm, and as such is predominantly flat.

3.24. The site of the proposed retirement village contains fourteen (14) large trees across the site, the majority of which are arranged in separate linear arrangements, potentially to act as shelter belts to the wider site.

<sup>9</sup> Source: Google Earth – retrieved 23/09/2024

<sup>10</sup> Source: Google Earth – retrieved 13/05/2025 (Image date: 09/03/2024)

3.25. As outlined in section 3.5, the neighbouring Highgrove subdivision contains a number of trees within the sub-division itself, of relevance to this assessment are the trees located within the Highgrove Subdivision that sit at the common boundary with the site of the proposed retirement village (refer sections 3.5 and 3.6 and Figure 2).

3.26. A 3m height hedge sits at the northern boundary of the site (refer section 3.7 and Figure 3)

#### *Cultural elements*

3.27. Cultural elements across the sites of both proposed solar farms are consistent with those that can be reasonably expected to be found across a working farm;

- Post and wire farm fences,
- Farm gates,
- Water troughs.

3.28. All internal fences will be removed from site with the common post and rail fence at the boundary with the Highgrove subdivision retained, additional fencing will be added at the external boundaries of the proposed retirement village.

3.29. I do not consider any of these identified cultural elements to be deemed as notable.

#### *Landscape Character*

3.30. Landscape character describes peoples visual or cogitative perception of both natural and developed landscapes. It is also synonymous to a “sense of place” and represents an attitude concerning one’s environs.

3.31. Landscape character is also informed by the amenity of the area; amenity<sup>11</sup> describes peoples visual or cogitative perceptions of activities that occur in an area. For example, a large open pastured area punctuated with ancillary buildings would lead to the perception that the area is used for farming activities and thus having a rural amenity. Therefore, in terms of landscape character this example area would be perceived as having a rural character.

3.32. It should be noted that landscape character and amenity are not mutually exclusive and certain physical landscape elements may be both considered defining elements of both landscape character and amenity.

3.33. Taking the preceding analyses through sections 3.2-3.29, I consider that the site of the proposed retirement village does not contain any features that distinguish them from the surrounding rural and rural-residential landscape, with both sites largely

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<sup>11</sup> As per RMA **amenity values** means those natural or physical qualities and characteristics of an area that contribute to people’s appreciation of its pleasantness, aesthetic coherence, and cultural and recreational attributes.



congruent with the surrounding environment in terms of visual appearance, land use and distribution of landscape elements.

3.34. I consider that the greatest character defining element, that gives the landscape its greatest 'sense of place', is the measured transition, outlined in the preceding analyses, between the urban area and the surrounding rural landscape, with the site playing a key role in this by effectively representing the rural edge by containing a number of the landscape elements listed in sections 3.16 and 3.23-3.29.

3.35. In terms of surrounding built-form, as outlined in the preceding analyses this is a combination of both traditional medium density residential built form, laid out in single house lots and larger rural-residential properties.

3.36. Within the residential areas surrounding eastern portions of the wider site the extension of the urban edge can be witnessed at Jellicoe Road and at Eldonwood Drive.

3.37. Taking the above into account and based upon site observations the landscape character of the site and its immediate surrounds to be **defined as rural-residential**, with the 'ruralness' increasing around the area of the western extents of the proposed retirement village due to the distance from residential and rural-residential built-form.

### *Landscape Sensitivity to Absorb Change*

3.38. This section outlines actions that would potentially adversely affect the landscape character described above. In broad terms, if a landscape is highly sensitive to change then relatively minor actions could have a high level of effect on the prevailing landscape character, whereas if a landscape has a lower sensitivity to change then any actions that potentially adversely affect the prevailing landscape character would need to be greater and more deliberate in nature.

A landscape's sensitivity to absorb change reflects the ability of the landscape to accept change to its original state. This level of sensitivity is influenced by the following, previously discussed factors:

- position within the wider landscape (including degree of visibility);
- landscape elements; and
- landscape character.

3.39. As outlined through sections 3.30-3.37, I consider the key landscape character element to be the measured transition from the urban environment (Matamata township) to the surrounding rural landscape, a transition that is managed through the presence of rural-residential developments acting as sort of transition zone between the rural and urban landscapes.

3.40. The proposal (refer section 5 for further detail) for the proposed retirement village (refer Figure 1) can be considered to be deemed as 'non-rural' in appearance, due

the presence of built-form at a density that would, perceptibly, be associated more with a traditional urban environment.

3.41. Whilst the proposed retirement village will not necessarily appear to be rural in the traditional sense, a collection of single level dwellings and associated buildings is comparable in terms of patterning to the established residential and rural-residential areas to the east of the site and with that of the Matamata township.

3.42. Therefore, integrating the proposed retirement village into the landscape through using means that can be readily associated with a rural character will be critical to absorbing these elements into the wider environment and will also be critical to managing the effects on the immediate neighbours (these effects will be primarily visual and aural). This process can be referred to as 'managing the landscape values'.

#### *Managing the landscape values*

3.43. The proposed retirement village sits at the northern edge of the wider site, and as such directly fronts Station Road.

3.44. As outlined in section 3.19 and Figure 6, the site of the retirement village currently represents the initial, from a visual perspective, the start of the rural edge when travelling westwards on Station Road.

3.45. The proposed retirement village sits in the northern portion of 'the site with its northern boundary running parallel to Station Road, and thus, as outlined in sections 3.17- 3.19 and in Figure 6 the northern boundary of the proposed retirement village currently represents the rural edge having transitioned from an urban edge to the rural edge by way of a rural-residential sub-division that sits at the eastern boundary of the proposed retirement village. The northern boundary of the proposed retirement village does not run for the full extent of the wider site boundary with Station Road but rather for approximately one third of this distance, however the proposed layout of the retirement village provides for future expansion of the village and thus greater extension along this boundary.

3.46. Figure 9 below shows the transition from this rural-residential sub-division to the northern boundary of the site, that is currently defined by a tall hedge row/shelter belt, such planting can be readily defined as being of rural character, hence why this portion of the landscape can be identified as the rural edge.



Figure 9: Transitional imagery showing rural-residential to rural<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Source: Image taken by myself 26/04/2024



3.47. Whilst the initial design response may be to simply retain the existing hedge that would potentially obscure the retirement village and effectively continue this rural edge, this must be counterbalanced with the outcome for future residents of the retirement village, this hedge would obscure views towards the rural landscape and block sun from the north, which would result in a poor outcome for future residents, in terms of outlook and thermal comfort, of these 'northern edge' units. Figure 10 below provides an image of the existing hedge from within the site.



Figure 10: View of existing hedge at Station Road from within site<sup>13</sup>

3.48. Therefore, I am of the opinion that the rural-residential edge should be extended at this interface, with the rural edge effectively being shifted to the north-western corner of the site (i.e.: where the proposed Greenway interfaces with Station Road), this can be achieved by implementing the following;

- Ensuring that residential built-form within the retirement village is set back from the road reserve in a manner and distance akin to the existing rural-residential lots on Station Road,
- Provide the mechanism to ensure that there is variance in the residential built-form at the 'northern edge' of the proposed retirement village in terms of building form, external finish and setback from Station Road. This will ensure that this built-form does not present as 'ribbon development' within the landscape,

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<sup>13</sup> Source: Image taken by myself 26/04/2024 – note that this hedge is periodically trimmed, therefore the height varies, what is shown is the approximate maximum height of the hedge

- Retain a portion of the existing mature trees that will sit within the retirement village, these allow for some trace elements of rural character to remain (refer Figure 11 below for image of these existing trees),



Figure 11: Example of existing mature trees within retirement village area<sup>14</sup>

- Continue the post and rail fence of the neighbouring Highgrove sub-division, if not for the entirety of the Station Road interface at least to 10m past the future entrance signage to allow for a transition to edge planting,
- Planting at the edge can be planted in clusters of native species with a combination of trees and small shrubs to provide partial screening, this planting does not need to extend the entire length of the frontage with Station Road, as I do not consider it inappropriate to view built-form within a rural-residential environment,

3.49. In terms of effects on the neighbouring Highgrove subdivision to the east, the provision of tree planting should mitigate the impact of future built-form within the retirement village.

## 4. Relevant Statutory Context

<sup>14</sup> Source: Image taken by myself 26/04/2024

- 4.1. This section will outline relevant clauses from national, regional and local policy and/or statutory regulations that impact the analysis of landscape effects generated by the proposal (refer section 5).

#### *Resource Management Act 1991*

- 4.2. Part 2 of the RMA sets out its purpose and principles. Part 2, section 5 states that the purpose of the RMA is to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources. Section 6 sets out the matters of importance that must be recognised and provided for in achieving the purpose of the RMA. Section 7 contains other matters that must be given particular regard to, and section 8 states that the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi must be taken into account in achieving the purpose of the RMA.
- 4.3. The protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes from inappropriate subdivision, use and development is identified as a matter of national importance in section 6(b).
- 4.4. Section 7 identifies a range of matters that shall be given particular regard to in achieving the purpose of the RMA. Of relevance to this proposal is section 7(c) the maintenance and enhancement of amenity values. This is considered in this report in relation to potential effects on landscape elements, character, and visual amenity.

#### *Matamata – Pūkaki District Plan*

- 4.5. As per section 1.6 the sites of both proposed solar farms sit within the 'Rural Zone' of the MPDP.
- 4.6. Having reviewed the MPDP, I consider the following objectives and policies to be pertinent to this assessment, in that they have relevance to the implementation of a solar farm and refer to issues of visual amenity and landscape character.

**Table 3: Pertinent objectives and policies from the MPDP**

MPDP – Objectives and policies pertinent to landscape assessment – Section 2.4 Sustainable Management Strategy				
1 – Residential and rural-residential growth				
Obj. I.D	Objective Description	Pol. I.D	Policy Description	Reason for selection
O1	To avoid inappropriate residential and rural-residential growth in the rural environment so as to protect the use of the District's rural land resource for rural production.	P1	To direct and ensure consolidation of residential development within appropriate existing zone boundaries of all settlements subject to the availability of infrastructure services, contiguous growth and the constraints of the environment.	References contiguous development, which is applicable to this assessment as the proposed retirement village directly borders a developing rural-residential community.
6 – Integrating land-use and infrastructure				

O1	<p>Land-use, subdivision and infrastructure are planned in an integrated manner that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not compromise the function, operation, maintenance, upgrading or development of infrastructure, including regionally significant infrastructure;</li> <li>Recognises the need for the provision of infrastructure; and subdivision, land-use and development to be co-ordinated; and</li> <li>Ensures the sustainable management of natural and physical resources while enabling people and communities to provide for their economic, social, and cultural wellbeing.</li> </ul>	P1	<p>Rezoning, new development, and expansion/ intensification of existing development shall take place where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The operation, maintenance, upgrading, or development of infrastructure, including regionally significant infrastructure, is not compromised;</li> <li>There is sufficient capacity in the infrastructure networks to cope with the additional demand, or where the existing networks can be upgraded cost-effectively to meet that demand;</li> <li>The networks have been designed to carry the type of service including the type and volume of traffic required to support the development; and</li> <li>Adverse effects on the natural and physical environment can be appropriately avoided, remedied, and mitigated.</li> </ul>	The final point refers to effects on the natural and physical environment.
<b>MPDP – Objectives and policies pertinent to landscape assessment – Section 3.5 Amenity</b>				
<b>1 – Development Standards</b>				
<i>Obj. I.D</i>	<i>Objective Description</i>	<i>Pol. I.D</i>	<i>Policy Description</i>	<i>Reason for selection</i>
O1	To maintain and enhance a high standard of amenity in the built environment without constraining development innovation and building variety.	P1	To ensure that development in residential and rural areas achieves adequate levels of daylight admission, privacy and open space for development sites and adjacent properties.	References issues of privacy (in terms of this proposal a more reverse sensitivity activity)
O2	To minimise the adverse effects created by building scale or dominance, shading, building location and site layout.	P3	To maintain the open space character of residential and rural areas by ensuring that development is compatible in scale to surrounding activities and structures.	References issues of character and scale within the landscape
		P5	To provide for development within the District in a manner that encourages flexibility and innovation in design and variety in the built form while achieving the anticipated environmental results.	
<b>2 – Design, appearance and character</b>				
<i>Obj. I.D</i>	<i>Objective Description</i>	<i>Pol. I.D</i>	<i>Policy Description</i>	<i>Reason for selection</i>
O1	To ensure that the design and appearance of buildings and sites is in keeping with the character of	P1	To encourage a high standard of on-site amenity in residential, business, recreational and industrial areas.	References the maintenance of amenity and rural character.

	the surrounding townscape and landscape.			
O3	To ensure that the design of subdivisions and the potential future development maintains or enhances the rural character, landscape and amenity of the zone and the surrounding area.	P5	To encourage a varied and interesting built form by supporting initiatives and providing development amenity incentives for comprehensive and innovative subdivision and development design.	References the maintenance of amenity and rural character.
		P7	To ensure that the rural landscape, character and amenity values are maintained by avoiding inappropriate adverse effects, including cumulative adverse effects, from subdivision and potential future development.	References the maintenance of amenity and rural character.
4 - Signage				
<i>Obj. I.D</i>	<i>Objective Description</i>	<i>Pol. I.D</i>	<i>Policy Description</i>	<i>Reason for selection</i>
O1	To minimise the adverse effects of signage on the character of rural, residential, industrial and business areas.	P1	To restrict the number and size of signs in rural, residential, industrial and business areas to avoid cluttering of the landscape.	Signage will be used at the proposed retirement village. Additionally, as the proposed retirement village will sit near the edge of the 'rural edge' any signage on Station Road should be sympathetic to the prevailing character values

4.7. Taking the above 'issues' and 'objectives' into account it can be concluded that preserving the local amenity character values within the rural environment are key outcomes within the rural zone, therefore the assessment through section 6 will take this into account when considering the final rating of assessment of effects.

4.8. The following standards from section 3.2.1 – Building envelope from section 3.2 Rural and Rural-Residential Zones can be considered applicable to this assessment as they address issues of yard separation, thus any infringement of these yards could be considered to have potential adverse effects on the amenity values of the neighbours.

*i. Maximum height - 10m*

*ii. Height relative to site boundary*

*No part of any building shall exceed a height of 3m plus the shortest horizontal distance between that part of the building and the nearest site boundary.*

*iii. Yards*

*Rural front yards.....25m*

4.9. The following standards from section 6.5.5 – Rural subdivision from section 6 Subdivision, can be considered applicable to this assessment as they address issues of rural amenity and character (note: my **emphasis** added as these elements relate directly to rural amenity and character).

*ii Rural amenity and character*

- a. *Effect on the rural environment, including **character, amenity and visual effects**.*
- b. *The potential location of future development and the effect on the surrounding environment.*
- c. *The extent of existing vegetation which is to be retained.*
- d. *A variety of lot sizes is provided in accordance with the rural provisions. The clustering of lots will only be considered in specific circumstances where it can be demonstrated that a more appropriate form of rural amenity and design is achieved, cumulative effects are avoided and appropriate mitigation is provided.*

*iii Visual*

a. The **visual effects** of a subdivision will be assessed **in terms of the likely effect** on:

- The **surrounding environment and general landscape character** (including ridgelines and view planes) with particular consideration of public roads, public reserves, identified significant features, Residential zones, dwellings in Rural zones, or marae in the vicinity of the proposed facility;
- Design elements in relation to the locality, with reference to the existing landscape character of the locality and amenity values;
- The **mitigating effects of any proposed landscaping**.

b. **In making an assessment of visual impact** for a subdivision consent potential building platforms shall be identified and regard shall be had to the following and conditions may be imposed in respect of these matters:

- The scale of a potential building;
- Height, cross sectional area, colour and texture of possible buildings on the building platforms identified;
- **Distance of structures to site boundaries, the degree of compatibility with surrounding properties;**
- **Site location in terms of the general locality**, topography, geographical features, adjoining land use, **i.e. landscape character**, rural houses;
- **Proposed planting, fencing** and other landscaping treatments.

c. In **assessing any proposed landscaping** regard shall be had to:

- Whether existing landscape features are integrated into the new subdivision layout;
- **Whether the layout and design are of a high standard, and provide a visual environment that is interesting** and in scale with the proposed subdivision and possible future development;
- **Size and type of trees to be planted at the time of planting and at maturity having considered:**
  - The **character** of the site;
  - The **character** of adjacent properties;
  - **Potential shadowing in winter of adjacent properties** or reserves;
  - Underground and overground services;
  - Suitability of the species to the location;

- *Suitability of the maintenance plan and watering programme to the species.*
- *The timing of implementation of the landscape plan and the maintenance of approved planting;*
- *Whether the type and the location of planting promotes public safety;*
- *Whether the Landscape Plan is certified by an appropriately qualified person as consisting of hardy plants suited to the location and capable of achieving the appropriate screening or enhancement purposes desired in the circumstances;*
- *The Preliminary Visual and Landscape Study, October 1992 (Volume I);*
- *Whether any landscaping or screening adversely affects the safe and efficient operation and function of the transportation networks.*

*iv. Reverse sensitivity*

- a. The **avoidance of conflicts between activities and potential reverse sensitivity effects on lawfully established activities**.*
- b. Where conflict or reverse sensitivity effects cannot be avoided, the effectiveness and appropriateness of mitigation measures to protect lawfully established activities.*

## 5. Proposal

### *Layout*

- 5.1. The layout of the proposed retirement village is provided on the project architectural, landscape architectural and civil engineering drawings
- 5.2. The layout of the proposed retirement village is shown below in Figure 12.





Figure 12: Layout of proposed retirement village<sup>15</sup>

5.3. The proposed retirement village will comprise 218 villas alongside an aged care hospital and a central amenity building that will act as a hub for social and recreational activity.

5.4. Whilst each villa is separate from one another there are no formal boundaries between villas, rather the villas sit across communal landscape with informal boundaries demarcated by hedging and planting, and as such fencing through the retirement village is largely restricted to the external boundaries.

<sup>15</sup> Source: Greenwood Associates – 'Ashbourne Development, Matamata, Waikato', drawing 2170/05 – Overall Site Plan– dated 26/05/25





Figure 13: Typical layout of proposed villas in retirement village<sup>16</sup>

- 5.5. The care facility is a single-storey building located at the southern boundary of the site and will be accessed by a future (to be constructed) road within the wider site.
- 5.6. This building is of a comparative larger bulk than the aforementioned villas, corresponding with this larger bulk the surrounding landscape (around the care facility) contains a greater density of tree planting than the remainder of the site. The landscape layout of this building is shown below in Figure 14.

<sup>16</sup> Source: Greenwood Associates – 'Resource Consent Landscape Package for Unity Development', drawing 2170/27 – Planting Plan 02– dated 26/05/25



Figure 14: Proposed landscape layout around proposed care facility building<sup>17</sup>

- 5.7. The proposed retirement village contains a central access road, that can be accessed (via a gate) from Station Road and internally from within the site, this central road (and the other feeder streets) are lined with trees.
- 5.8. The frontage with Station Road contains a post and rail fence of the same type / finish as the neighbouring Highgrove subdivision, a rendered elevation of this interface at Station Road is shown below in Figure 15.

<sup>17</sup> Source: Greenwood Associates – 'Resource Consent Landscape Package for Unity Development', drawing 2170/12 – Care facility Landscape Plan– dated 26/05/25



Figure 15: Proposed elevation at Station Road<sup>18</sup>

5.9. Buffer planting is also provided at the western and eastern boundaries of the proposed retirement village, the western boundary directly fronts the portion of the wider site that will remain a paddock, whereas the eastern boundary directly fronts the Highgrove subdivision, therefore the potential for reverse sensitivity effects can be considered to be greater at the eastern boundary.

5.10. This has been addressed through the architectural and landscape architectural responses to the site by setting the dwellings at the eastern boundary 12.5m back from the fence line and providing a buffer of planting, that comprises an approximate 8m strip that is periodically planted with trees in a staggered fashion that allows for partial screening but also allows for light penetration to the site from the east. Sections at both the western and eastern boundaries are provided below in Figure 16.

<sup>18</sup> Source: Greenwood Associates – 'Resource Consent Landscape Package for Unity Development', drawing 2170/10 – Station Road Boundary Elevation – dated 26/05/25



Figure 16: Cross-sections at the western and eastern boundary<sup>19</sup>

5.11. In addition to the aforementioned villas and associated buildings, the proposed retirement village contains two (2) stormwater detention ponds at the south-western and north-eastern corners of the site (refer Figure 12), the north-eastern pond also provides a dual function of increasing the separation of villas in the retirement village from the neighbouring Highgrove subdivision, with the distance between the villas adjacent to the north-eastern stormwater detention pond and the neighbouring Highgrove subdivision increasing to 80m at this point.

### *Building external finishes and heights*

5.12. All buildings within the proposed retirement village are single storey structures.

5.13. There are thirteen (13) villa types proposed across the retirement village, in terms of visual appearance these dwellings can be considered to be relatively similar, with all containing pitched roofs, with the majority at a pitch angle of 25°, with type DW containing a pitch of approximately of 30°.

5.14. In terms of GFA, typologies BE and BW are 125m<sup>2</sup>, typologies CE and CW are 125m<sup>2</sup> and DE and DW are 187m<sup>2</sup>.

5.15. All proposed villas have green steel profile roofing, this finish is continued through the aged care facility and main facility buildings.

<sup>19</sup> Source: Greenwood Associates – 'Resource Consent Landscape Package for Unity Development', drawing 2170/10 – Station Road Boundary Elevation – dated 26/05/25



- 5.16. Villa typologies BE and BW are finished in a combination of horizontal grey weatherboard cladding and white/cream 'Resene Construction Systems Texture', the arrangement of these finishes varies through the four skews of this typology (BE(N), BE(S), BW(N), BW(S) to provide a degree of variation within the typology itself.
- 5.17. Villa typologies CE and CW are finished in a combination of vertical grey weatherboard cladding and white/cream and light grey 'Resene Construction Systems Texture', the arrangement of these finishes varies through the four skews of this typology (CE(N), CE(S), CW(N), CW(S) to provide a degree of variation within the typology itself.
- 5.18. Villa typologies DE and DW are finished in a combination of horizontal grey weatherboard cladding and white/cream 'Resene Construction Systems Texture', the arrangement of these finishes varies between the two typologies.
- 5.19. The main facilities building utilises a combination of horizontal cedar cladding and white/cream and medium grey 'Resene Construction Systems Texture'. The roof pitches on this building are a combination of 25° and 30° slopes.
- 5.20. The aged care facility utilises a combination of horizontal and vertical weatherboard cladding ranging in colours from white/cream to light grey and medium grey.

### *External Fencing*

- 5.21. The majority of external fencing is post and rail, of the type and finish utilised at the neighbouring Highgrove subdivision.
- 5.22. A small area at the southern boundary (at the interface with the proposed 'greenway') is fenced using a 1.2m open aluminium fence.
- 5.23. The entrance way from Station Road is proposed as a stone wall with an entrance sign, this stone wall will be of a similar style to that present at the neighbouring Highgrove subdivision.
- 5.24. A second vehicular gate is proposed at the southern end of the main road through the proposed retirement village, thus restricting vehicle access to the villas and main facility building within the proposed retirement village, however vehicular access will still be possible from within the wider site to the aged care building.

### *Vegetation retention / removal*

- 5.25. Five (5) of the existing fourteen (14) large trees within the site will be retained, with the remainder to be removed. The six (6) smaller trees will be removed from site.
- 5.26. Any other plant material will be removed from site.

## *Landscape architectural response to the site*

- 5.27. The full extent of the landscape response to the site can be found on the project landscape architectural drawings.
- 5.28. As outlined through sections 5.1-5.11 the proposed site will contain trees across the site, with internal 'boundary' demarcations defined with a combination of hedge and shrub plantings.
- 5.29. The northern boundary with Station Road is planted with a buffer of planting that will allow for screening of the villas at Station Road and will also provide some aural relief for the residents at the boundary with Station Road. This buffer planting consists of trees and shrubs, with the shrubs anticipated to reach height of approximately 3m (either naturally or being kept at this height via maintenance) which will provide screening but ensure that these villas are not 'shaded out' and have the potential for views to the north across the wider landscape.
- 5.30. The western and eastern boundaries of the site contain buffer planting comprised of trees, creating a looser screen whilst allowing for sunlight penetration and views out across the surrounding landscape.
- 5.31. Larger trees (heights of up to 10m) are located at the southern boundary of each proposed solar farm, this limits their casting of shadows over the adjacent solar panels and allows for additional screening, and from a visual perspective, allows for a continuation of the 'shelter belt' patterning across the wider rural landscape.
- 5.32. The main road through the proposed retirement village is adorned with street trees and shrub beds.
- 5.33. In terms of shrub beds, these are located around villas, on the main road and at the aged care and main facility buildings.
- 5.34. Hardscape is minimised through the site, with a number of arterial streets functioning as combined vehicular / pedestrian spaces, allowing for the majority of surfacing to be lawn beds.

## *Car parking*

- 5.35. Each dwelling contains spaces for a minimum of two (2) car parks inside a garage, with the proposed driveways providing spaces for an additional two (2) vehicles.
- 5.36. The site will contain two (2) main surface car parking areas, at the main facilities and aged care buildings respectively, the combined amount of parking spaces at these two (2) car parks is 122 car parks<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> Note: If this number differs from the project traffic impact assessment then that document shall prevail over this report in terms of all figures relating to car park numbers.

## *Lighting*

5.37.No specific landscape lighting plan has been prepared, this would typically be proposed at the detailed design stage, although based on the proposed layout, I am of the opinion that outside of lighting on buildings any landscape lighting would be minimal and would likely be limited to the entrance sign up lighting and potentially at recreational areas surrounding the main facilities building.

5.38.A street lighting plan has been prepared and I consider the layout of poles and their associated light fields / brightness to be congruent with what would be expected at a similar sized residential sub-division, with the brightest lights being placed at the Station Road entrance.

## *Staging*

5.39.The proposed retirement village is proposed to be built in ten (10) stages from north to south, starting at the interface with Station Road and moving southwards towards the central area of the wider state, therefore the proposed aged care unit would be the last element of built-form to be installed within the site of the proposed retirement village, the timing of these stages will be dictated by market demand. A diagram of this staging is provided below in Figure 17.



Figure 17: Staging of proposed retirement village<sup>21</sup>

## Infringements

5.40. I have been informed by the project planner that infringements are likely to consist of the front yard setbacks and also side yard setbacks to the south and west. These infringements will be considered in the subsequent assessments.

## 6. Assessment of landscape effects

6.1. The following assessment of effects will be separated into three (3) sub-sections, physical landscape effects, effects on visual amenity and effects on landscape character. Physical landscape effects will address the physical changes to the site (both direct and in-direct), effects on visual amenity will address the effects on visual amenity from both the public and private realms and will utilise viewpoints to

<sup>21</sup> Source: <TO BE UPDATED>



aid in these assessments and effects on landscape character will surmise the both the physical effects and effects on visual amenity with regards to the prevailing landscape character as addressed in sections 3.30- 3.37.

### *Physical landscape effects*

6.2. This section considers the physical effects of the proposal outlined in section 5 upon the natural landscape elements of the site and its immediate surrounds. The effect of the proposal upon the landscape elements of the site is linked to the landscape's sensitivity to change.

6.3. Physical landscape effects are not necessarily limited to the site itself, but also to immediately surrounding areas. For example, if a site was sitting on a slope that formed part of a greater landform, flattening that portion of the slope could be considered to be an adverse effect not only on the site itself but also the surrounding landscape.

### *Effects on the immediate site - Physical landscape effects*

6.4. The flat nature of the site ensures that earthworks are minimised with no requirement for structural retaining across the site.

6.5. As outlined in section 5.25, five (5) of the existing fourteen (14) large trees within the site will be retained, with the remainder to be removed. The six (6) smaller trees will be removed from site.

6.6. All existing farm fences will be removed from site to accommodate the proposal.

### *Effects on the surrounding areas - Physical landscape effects*

6.7. All physical works will occur within the boundaries of the site with no alteration to the landscape outside of the site boundaries required to accommodate the proposal.

6.8. As the site will contain 218 villas alongside and an associated aged care building, the amount of vehicular traffic in the surrounding areas can be reasonably expected to increase. In terms of the retirement village this will comprise primarily of residents moving to/from Matamata and visitors / staff at the aged care facility.

6.9. In terms of the surrounding landscape and the wider site masterplan (i.e.: the proposed residential portion of the wider site) there are three main access points from which the proposed retirement village will be accessed;

- Station Road – This entry provides direct access to the proposed retirement village.
- Chestnut Lane – This existing residential lane will be extended to form a main road through the residential community, this access point is entered off Station Road and entering the proposed Retirement Village would necessitate passing through the proposed residential community.

- Peakedale Drive – As per the Chestnut Lane entrance, this represents the extension of any existing roadway into the site and entering the proposed retirement village would necessitate passing through the proposed residential portion of the site.

6.10. The project traffic impact assessment report prepared by Commute states that 55 vehicular trips are project each during AM peak and PM peak hours resulting in 110 trips (average) per day during peak hours from the proposed retirement village. This was split into 22 trips in and 33 trips out of the proposed retirement village.

6.11. This figure for the proposed retirement village was based on the following assumptions;

- *'All retirement village trips were assumed to enter/exit the village via Station Road, noting that the intent is for the retirement village to be built from the north to the south.'*
- *'The retirement village trips with an origin/destination in the north/east were assumed to travel via Smith Street, noting the volume of retirement village trips are low (less than 50 peak hour trips).'*

6.12. Therefore, in terms of landscape effects of increased traffic, those on Peakedale Drive and Chestnut Lane can be discounted and only those on Station Road considered.

6.13. Landscape effects arising from traffic are related to landscape character, with the effects predominantly related to noise. For example, in a traditional rural area if a subdivision were to be established that is accessed from a rural land, the increased traffic movements may create additional noise within the local area creating effects that could be related to an urban environment than a traditional rural environment.

6.14. In terms of this assessment, whilst Station Road could be considered a rural road in that it does not contain any formed footpaths and has a speed limit in excess of 50km/hr, it experiences traffic flows that can be considered more akin to an urban setting due its role as a feeder road to the Matamata township and SH27 (Firth Street).

6.15. The effects of this increased vehicular traffic generated by the proposed retirement village will be experienced within the rural-residential areas to the east of the site of the proposed retirement village rather than the more traditional rural areas to the west.

6.16. By their nature of the land use predominantly catering to residential activities rather than rural ones, there is an expectation that these areas will experience a greater level of vehicular traffic than rural areas, therefore in terms of the potential effects on the landscape character I consider that these are largely negligible and will have little impact on the perception of the existing rural-residential character of the area.

6.17. In terms of noise, whilst the additional traffic movements will generate additional road noise due to the nature of a retirement village I consider that most of these will be

outside of early morning and night-time hours when increases in ambient noise levels would be most keenly felt by residents of these areas. Additionally, based on my site observations I consider that the effects of road noise have been considered by the majority of occupants on the effect portion of road corridor, through either dwelling setbacks or use of roadside vegetation to reduce noise levels within these lots.

### *Effects upon visual amenity*

- 6.18. Visual amenity is another key component to people's identification and perception of landscape character. Visual amenity effects result from changes to specific views and the visual amenity experienced by people. The magnitude (or level) of change must be considered in relation to the sensitivity of the viewing audience when evaluating the significance of an effect. The sensitivity may be influenced by a number of factors, which include but are not limited to the number of people who may see it, the reason for being at the viewpoint or looking at the view, the existing character of the view, the duration for which the proposal may be seen and the viewing distance.
- 6.19. Through individual public realm viewpoint analysis, I will comment on the effects upon visual amenity and landscape character and will provide a subsequent analysis on the effects upon landscape character (which takes into account both physical alteration to the landscape and effects upon visual amenity) in section 7 of this report.
- 6.20. As outlined in section 1.11, Greenwood Associates have prepared a visual simulation of the proposed retirement village, I will utilise this viewpoint for the following assessment, as well as additional viewpoints obtained during my site visit.

### *Visual catchment and Viewing audiences*

- 6.21. Viewpoints for analysis of effects on the localised landscape character were determined by analysing key public locations (reserves, public parks), nearby static viewpoints (bus stops, car parks) and, where possible, public areas near potential private viewing audiences.
- 6.22. Based upon my site visit and analysis I consider that the primary public and private viewing audiences comprise the following:

#### *Public viewing audiences*

- 6.23. Based on my observations during the site visits undertaken on the 24<sup>th</sup> of June and 8<sup>th</sup> of November 2025, I consider that the views to the proposed retirement village (when considered in the context of developments across the wider site – i.e.: the proposed residential community, the greenway and the southern farm) are limited to Station Road and Highgrove Road (although these will eventually be obscured by residential built-form established within the Highgrove sub-division).

6.24. Outside of these areas the proposed retirement village will be obscured from view by a combination of both existing off-site vegetation and the prevailing topography as well as the future built-form and vegetative elements within the wider site.

6.25. Therefore, based on my site visit, I consider the areas of the public realm to have views towards the site to encapsulate the following;

- Station Road: The proposed retirement village will be visible from Station Road when travelling both westwards and eastwards, when travelling westwards, the proposed retirement village will represent the last urban/residential area of land use before transitioning towards a more 'traditionally rural' environment, whereas when travelling eastwards the opposite occurs, with the proposed retirement village representing one of the initial elements of urban / residential built-form when coming from a traditionally rural environment. (Represented by viewpoints 1 & 2)

6.26. I have omitted the views from Highgrove Road, as these will eventually be obscured by built-form with the Highgrove subdivision, I also consider that the potential effects upon visual amenity generated by the proposal are better assessed as 'private viewing audiences' as any potential effects would be more keenly felt from within the private lots at the common boundary with the site.

#### *Private viewing audiences*

6.27. As outlined through section 3, the proposed retirement village is bordered on its northern boundary by Station Road, on its western and southern boundaries by the wider site and on its eastern boundary by the Highgrove subdivision. Therefore, the site in effect only has one direct neighbour, which constitutes seven (7) lots.

6.28. Whilst not directly neighbouring the site, properties opposite the northern boundary of the site may have views to the northern aspect of the village, although these views are largely screened due to planting within these lots, this planting has presumably been added to provide visual and aural screening from Station Road.

6.29. Therefore based on the above and my site observations, I consider the 'private viewing audience' to constitute the following;

- Highgrove subdivision: Seven (7) lots directly border the eastern boundary of the site of the proposed retirement village. These seven (7) lots are addressed as follows (as located north to south); 181 Station Road, 12 Olive Place, 15 Olive Place, 11 Olive Place, 38 Highgrove Avenue, 40 Highgrove Avenue and 50 Highgrove Avenue<sup>22</sup>. Greenwood Associates have prepared a visual simulation showing this common boundary (Viewpoint 02 – Drawings 2170A/09 – 11).
- Station Road: As outlined in section 6.28, some properties opposite / diagonally opposite the northern boundary of the site of the proposed

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<sup>22</sup> Note: Address information not available on LINZ maps or MPDC planning maps. Address information is sourced from real estate information listed at <https://www.highgrove-matamata.co.nz/available-sections> (sourced: 14/05/2025)

retirement village, I consider that these properties are (from east to west)  
172, 190, 200A and 206 Station Road

6.30. As these private areas on Station Road were not accessible during the site visit, I will rely on 'reverse views' from within the site and imagery from near these locations.

6.31. As the images used for the private realm assessment were not obtained from within these respective neighbouring lots, I will not prepare formalised viewpoint images in the appendices of this report but rather will use in-line images to support the analyses. I will also make use of the visual simulations prepared by Greenwood Associates, as these were simulated from Station Road and provide progressed simulations on the screening effects of the proposed planting at the northern edge.

### *Assessment Viewpoints – Public Realm*

6.32. The assessment viewpoints are described in more detail in below with a map indicating the location of these viewpoints located in appendix 1. The photographs, which represent these viewpoints, are shown in appendices 2.1 - 2.2.

6.33. Note that 'degree of visibility' within the below table refers to the visibility of the proposal (refer section 5) and 'distance to site' refers to the distance to the closest point of the site.

**Table 4: Assessment viewpoints**

VP No.	Direction of View	Distance to site	Degree of visibility (Full / Partial / Obscured)	Reason for Selection
V01-1 Station Road – Travelling Westwards	West	Approx. 45m	Partial	Represents view towards northern boundary of site when travelling westwards on Station Road, with the Highgrove subdivision in foreground.
V01-2 Station Road – Travelling Westwards	West	Approx. 30m	Partial	Represents view towards northern boundary of site when travelling westwards on Station Road, with the Highgrove subdivision in foreground, taken from opposing verge of V01-1. This view was selected for visual simulation as it best conveys the extension of the rural-residential edge.
V02 Station Road, travelling eastwards	East	Approx. 60m	Partial	Represents view towards northern boundary of the site when travelling eastwards, represents the view when coming from a traditional rural environment towards a rural-residential and then urban environment.



## *Assessment of Visual Amenity Effects – Public Realm*

6.34. The visual effects likely to result from this proposal are described below in relation to the respective viewpoints. 'Existing View' refers to the contemporary view as it is presented in the supplied viewpoint images that append this report (i.e.: without the proposal present), 'Proposed View' refers to the view that is anticipated when the proposal is established.

### *Viewpoint V01 Station Road travelling westwards*

6.35. This viewpoint is represented by two (2) images showing the view towards the proposed retirement village with the neighbouring sub-division in the foreground. I consider that this point is where the proposed retirement village becomes discernible when travelling westwards on Station Road.

The journey prior to reaching this point is shown in Figure 5 and Figure 6 on page 11, these images are reproduced below in Figure 18.



Figure 18: Transitional imagery showing residential to rural-residential<sup>23</sup>

#### **Existing View:**

The view currently consists of an open paddock which can be considered a typical rural environment.

The neighbouring sub-division contains an element of built-form at its north-west corner, however this is set back from Station Road at an approximate distance of 22m and is obscured by a series of ornamental trees and hence is only visible at the peripheral edges of the view.

#### **Proposed View:**

Greenwood Associates have prepared a visual simulation utilising the supplied image for viewpoint 1-2 (V01-2), the purpose of this simulation is to show the

<sup>23</sup> Source: Image taken by myself 24/06/2024

proposed boundary planting in various stages of growth/establishment (at establishment / + 5 years / +15 years), these simulations are shown below in



Figure 19: Simulations of northern edge of proposed retirement village<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Source: Greenwood Associates – 'Retirement Village Visual Simulation Landscape Package for' drawings 2170A/04-06 – dated 29/05/25

As outlined in section 5.39 and Figure 17, the northern portion of the proposed retirement village will be established in 'stage one'. Therefore the specimen trees within the site shown in foreground of the supplied viewpoint photographs will be removed to facilitate the establishment of the proposed villas and associated stormwater detention basin, the hedge at this boundary will also be removed.

The proposed post and rail fence will be established at this stage and as shown in the supplied visual simulation images, represents a logical visual continuation of the existing post and rail fence.

When installed the proposed shrubs and trees at the northern edge buffer planting, will offer little in the way of screening, therefore the view will initially comprise dwellings across the site. During night-time hours ambient light from the proposed street lighting will be visible from this viewpoint.

The visible built-form elements will be of a greater density than that immediately visible (i.e.: the rural-residential properties) prior to reaching this viewpoint, however when travelling on this corridor denser built-form (within the Matamata township) will most likely have been observed a short time before having reached this viewpoint, therefore an association should remain with the viewing audience of denser built-form within the landscape, thus a degree of expectation will exist that built-form would be present at this juncture in the landscape.

As the proposed buffer planting matures the proposed retirement village becomes obscured from view with a buffer of native planting, this layout of this buffer is congruent with those located in the surrounding landscape, although the species diversification is greater than the other buffer plantings found within the wider landscape, which are largely monoculture in nature. This species diversity, in terms of buffer planting provides the retirement village with a 'sense of place' within the surrounding landscape, that is partially defined along the road corridor by the various buffer / screen plantings.

Taking the above factors into account, and considering the transitional nature of the view, I am of the opinion that the effects upon visual amenity of the proposal from this viewpoint (represented by four images) can be considered to be **Low-Moderate**<sup>25</sup> upon initial removal of the existing large trees and hedge and subsequent establishment of the proposed villas within 'phase one' across the site moderating to a **Very Low**<sup>26</sup> level after five (5) years of the proposed buffer planting having been installed and a screen is created. (Note: these ratings are ascribed under the assumption that the proposed boundary plantings are installed concurrently with the 'stage one' establishment, if the buffer plantings were established prior to stage one and a screen is established, the initial rating would be lowered, potentially to 'low' or 'very low').

#### *Viewpoint V02: Station Road travelling eastwards*

<sup>25</sup> Te Tangi A Te Manu – Aotearoa New Zealand landscape Assessment Guidelines – Published July 2022

<sup>26</sup> Te Tangi A Te Manu – Aotearoa New Zealand landscape Assessment Guidelines – Published July 2022

6.36. This viewpoint represents the view when travelling eastwards, the gravel driveway seen at the right side of the image represents the existing entrance to the site from Station Road.

The wooden fence shown at this driveway represents the approximate point of the western boundary of the proposed retirement village.

When looking beyond this wooden fence (in the supplied viewpoint image) the boundary with the neighbouring Highgrove subdivision is visible (black fence with juvenile trees), this represents the eastern boundary of the proposed retirement village.

It should be noted that the supplied viewpoint image was obtained in June 2024, in the intervening period the existing hedge (the majority of which is seen in the supplied image will be removed and replaced by buffer planting) has been trimmed and in terms of height is more akin to the image below (Figure 20), obtained in September 2024.



Figure 20: Image of roadside hedge at Station Road when clipped (September 2024)<sup>27</sup>

The image below (Figure 21) obtained in November 2024 shows the growth in the hedge after being clipped over two (2) months. Therefore, the extent of the existing paddock visible within the current landscape setting varies dependent on the height of the hedge.

<sup>27</sup> Source: Google Street View – Image dated 09/2024 – obtained 15/05/2025





Figure 21: View towards southern solar farm from Station Road – showing obscuration by existing shelter belt<sup>28</sup>

#### Existing View:

The existing hedge currently dominates the view and obscures the existing paddock from view.

However, as outlined in the preceding paragraphs, the extent of the existing paddock visible varies dependent on the height of the hedge.

Prior to reaching this viewpoint any viewing audience will have passed through an environment that can be described as being 'traditionally rural'. With few elements of residential built-form visible and working farms being the dominant land-use visible within the landscape prior to reaching this viewpoint.

However, rural-residential properties do start to become visible when passing by the intersection of Station Road and Bowlers Road.

#### Proposed View:

The hedge shown in the supplied viewpoint will be removed, although the small portion visible to the right of the aforementioned gravelled driveway may remain until such time as that portion of the wider site is developed.

<sup>28</sup> Source: Image taken by myself 08/11/2024

As outlined in section 5.39 and Figure 17, the northern portion of the proposed retirement village will be established in 'stage one'. Therefore the specimen trees within the site shown in mid-ground of the supplied viewpoint photograph will be removed to facilitate the establishment of the proposed villas and associated stormwater detention basins, although some will remain (refer section 5 for further detail over retained vegetation)

The proposed post and rail fence will be established at this stage and will to the point of the aforementioned gravel driveway.

When installed the proposed shrubs and trees at the northern edge buffer planting, will offer little in the way of screening, therefore the view will initially comprise dwellings across the site at both the northern edge and western boundaries. During night-time hours ambient light from the proposed street lighting will be visible from this viewpoint.

The visible built-form elements will represent the initial elements of built-form that can be described as sitting within an urban arrangement (i.e.: of a density / layout that would be expected within a township / village).

Whilst ostensibly, this may seem like an abrupt change, such a change in patterning is a common occurrence in rural environments where a town / settlement begins at a line that may have little reference to natural features, an example of this can be seen at the southern entrance point to Matamata at the northern entrance to Matamata on Waharoa Road East, as shown below in Figure 22.



Figure 22: Image of roadside hedge at Station Road when clipped (September 2024)<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Source: Google Street View – Image dated 09/2024 – obtained 15/05/2025



Therefore the presence of built-form of the proposed density within the landscape can be considered an expectant outcome within an environment that could be perceived as ‘traditionally rural’. Keeping all built-form within the proposed retirement village at a single-storey level is also achieves a degree of conformance with the surrounding rural-residential dwellings and ensures that no large blocks of built-form (i.e.: the main facilities and aged care building) are visible within the landscape.

As the proposed northern and western buffer planting matures the proposed retirement village will becomes obscured from view with a buffer of native planting on the northern edge and partially obscured on the western edge (where the buffer consists of a ‘looser’ line of trees).

The proposed linear layout of this buffer is congruent with those located in the surrounding landscape, although the species diversification is greater than the other buffer plantings found within the wider landscape, which are largely monoculture in nature. This species diversity, in terms of buffer planting provides the retirement village with a ‘sense of place’ within the surrounding landscape, that is partially defined along the road corridor by the various buffer / screen plantings.

Taking the above factors into account, and considering the transitional nature of the view , I am of the opinion that that the effects upon visual amenity of the proposal from this viewpoint (represented by four images) can be considered to be **Low-Moderate**<sup>30</sup> upon initial removal of the existing large trees and hedge and subsequent establishment of the proposed villas within ‘phase one’ across the site, moderating to a **Very Low**<sup>31</sup> level after five (5) years of the proposed buffer planting having been installed and a screen is created. (Note: these ratings are ascribed under the assumption that the proposed boundary plantings are installed concurrently with the ‘stage one’ establishment , if the buffer plantings were established prior to stage one and a screen is established, the initial rating would be lowered, potentially to ‘low’ or ‘very low’).

### *Summary of Effects on Visual Amenity - Public Realm*

6.37.A summary of visual effects anticipated from each scheduled viewpoint is provided in Table 5 below:

**Table 5: Assessment of Effects Viewpoints**

VP No.	Level of effect on visual amenity
V01	Low-Moderate upon initial installation, moderating to Very Low after five (5) years of the proposed buffer planting being installed. (Note: that if buffer planting is installed prior to stage one being established and is able to grow to a sufficient height to act as a visual screen, then the initial rating of effects could potentially reduce down to Low/Very Low upon the initial establishment of the villas in ‘Stage One’

<sup>30</sup> Te Tangi A Te Manu – Aotearoa New Zealand landscape Assessment Guidelines – Published July 2022

<sup>31</sup> Te Tangi A Te Manu – Aotearoa New Zealand landscape Assessment Guidelines – Published July 2022

V02	Low-Moderate upon initial installation, moderating to Very Low after five (5) years of the proposed buffer planting being installed. (Note: that if buffer planting is installed prior to stage one being established and is able to grow to a sufficient height to act as a visual screen, then the initial rating of effects could potentially reduce down to Low/Very Low upon the initial establishment of the villas in 'Stage One')
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6.38. The proposed retirement village whilst introducing an element that may not be, initially, readily associated with the existing rural and rural-residential environment does represent a logical conclusion of the existing urban-rural edge, through the extension of the existing neighbouring post and rail fence, and establishment of buffer planting. Therefore, taking this as the preceding individual viewpoint analyses, formulates my opinion that the cumulative effects of both solar farms on visual amenity from within the public realm are **Low-Moderate**<sup>32</sup> upon initial installation moderating to **Very Low**<sup>33</sup> five years on from the initial installation of the proposed boundary planting.

### *Assessment of Visual Amenity Effects – Private Realm*

6.39. The neighbouring properties to both the northern and southern solar farms, which have the potential to have views towards the proposal that may have impacts upon visual amenity are outlined in sections 6.29 - 6.31 and respectively.

6.40. The potential infringements outlined in section 5.40 are considered in the subsequent assessments.

### *Highgrove Subdivision (Seven lots bordering the site)*

6.41. Seven (7) lots directly border the eastern boundary of the site of the proposed retirement village. These seven (7) lots are addressed as follows (as located north to south); 181 Station Road, 12 Olive Place, 15 Olive Place, 11 Olive Place, 38 Highgrove Avenue, 40 Highgrove Avenue and 50 Highgrove Avenue.<sup>34</sup>

6.42. As per available on-line real estate information, of these seven (7) lots, one (1) has been sold. Based on site observations and available aerial photography, this single lot contains a garage style building. The unsold lots are currently vacant.

6.43. As outlined in sections 5.10, 5.11 and Figure 16 these seven lots will sit against a boundary where the proposed villas within the retirement village are set back at distances of 12.5m or 80m (where the proposed stormwater detention basin will sit), against the boundary an 8m width buffer will be present (that sits within the aforementioned setbacks) and will comprise of trees. This buffer of tree planting is similar to the treatment employed within Highgrove subdivision itself, therefore any future built-form on these lots will, in effect, have a double screen of trees that will ensure that views to/from the proposed villas are obscured.

<sup>32</sup> Te Tangi A Te Manu – Aotearoa New Zealand landscape Assessment Guidelines – Published July 2022

<sup>33</sup> Te Tangi A Te Manu – Aotearoa New Zealand landscape Assessment Guidelines – Published July 2022

<sup>34</sup> Note: Address information not available on LINZ maps or MPDC planning maps. Address information is sourced from real estate information listed at <https://www.highgrove-matamata.co.nz/available-sections> (sourced: 14/05/2025)

6.44. Greenwood Associates have prepared a visual simulation of this interface, this shown below in arranged sequentially from top to bottom, showing the date of planting installation, + 5 years after initial planting installation and 15 years after installation, the Magnolia trees within Highgrove have also been aged up accordingly to show both lots of buffer planting working in conjunction to provide a screen between built-from either side of the boundary.



Figure 23: Simulations of proposed retirement village at common boundary with Highgrove subdivision<sup>35</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Source: Greenwood Associates – 'Retirement Village Visual Simulation Landscape Package for' drawings 2170A/09-11 – dated 29/05/25

6.45. The large size of the lots in Highgrove sub-division also allow for the future occupants to set back their dwellings from this boundary at a distance greater than the 10m outlined in the MPDP if they wish for a greater setback from the proposed retirement village.

6.46. Initially, the proposed buffer planting within the site will provide little screening of the proposed villas from the aforementioned seven (7) lots. As the proposed tree planting matures the density of this screen will increase, eventually providing a partial screen to the proposed retirement village (the density of which, will be increased as the screen planting within Highgrove subdivision matures), thus the westerly outlook will contain a foreground of tree planting, with the proposed retirement village at the mid-ground and, potentially, a mid-ground of the proposed greenway and traditional rural landscape at the background.

6.47. Therefore, taking the preceding analyses into account, I am of the opinion that the effects upon visual amenity upon the seven (7) lots within the Highgrove subdivision brought about by the proposal to be **Low-Moderate**<sup>36</sup> upon the initial installation of the proposal moderating down **Very Low**<sup>37</sup> upon maturation of the proposed boundary planting.

#### *Four Station Road properties opposite the site*

6.48. As outlined in section 6.28, some properties sit opposite / diagonally opposite the northern boundary of the site of the proposed retirement village, I consider that these properties are (from east to west) 172, 190, 200A and 206 Station Road.

6.49. The images below show the frontages of these four (4) properties as of September 2024.



Figure 24: From L to R; 206, 200A, 190 and 172 Station Road (September 2024)<sup>38</sup>

6.50. The four (4) properties opposite the proposed retirement village will have varying degrees of exposure to the site due to varying setbacks and frontage planting. However it can be ascertained from my site visit, supported by the above images, that views towards the proposed retirement village will be available from within these properties, particularly in areas close to Station Road.

<sup>36</sup> Te Tangi A Te Manu – Aotearoa New Zealand landscape Assessment Guidelines – Published July 2022

<sup>37</sup> Te Tangi A Te Manu – Aotearoa New Zealand landscape Assessment Guidelines – Published July 2022

<sup>38</sup> Source: Google Street View – Image dated 09/2024 – obtained 15/05/2025

6.51. I consider that the assessment for viewpoint 1 (refer section ) and the visual simulation associated with this assessment are applicable to an assessment of effects on visual amenity of the proposal from these properties as viewpoint 1-2 sits near opposite the proposal and the assessment for this viewpoint primarily concerns the northern elevation of the proposed retirement village and the associated buffer planting.

Therefore, taking the preceding analyses and that for viewpoint 1 into account, I am of the opinion that the effects upon visual amenity upon 184 Station Road brought about by the proposal to be **Low-Moderate**<sup>39</sup> upon initial removal of the existing large trees and hedge and subsequent establishment of the proposed villas within 'phase one' across the site moderating to a **Very Low**<sup>40</sup> level after five (5) years of the proposed buffer planting having been installed and a screen is created. (Note: these ratings are ascribed under the assumption that the proposed boundary plantings are installed concurrently with the 'stage one' establishment , if the buffer plantings were established prior to stage one and a screen is established, the initial rating would be lowered, potentially to 'low' or 'very low').

## 7. Effect on prevailing landscape character values

- 7.1. As outlined through this report, the proposed retirement village sits at a position within the landscape, where it currently represents the transition between the rural-residential landscape and a traditional rural landscape.
- 7.2. The proposal will essentially see a shift of this edge westwards along the Station Road corridor.
- 7.3. This shift in the 'transition point' within the landscape is addressed through the provision of a post and rail fence at the interface with Station Road and the provision of buffer planting that provides visual screening of the proposed retirement village whilst allowing views out from the retirement village across the wider landscape.
- 7.4. An entrance statement on Station Road will be provided to highlight the entrance to the retirement village, the treatment of this entrance statement (which will contain an automated gate) will be of a similar manner to that at the neighbouring Highgrove subdivision.
- 7.5. Whilst, ostensibly, the proposal to screen the proposed retirement village to mitigate effects on visual amenity could be considered a blunt instrument with little appreciation of the landscape values. However, in the context of a surrounding rural and rural-residential environment the presence of buffer planting can be considered congruent to the surrounding landscape patterning / character, with the surrounding landscape containing a number of shelter belts and buffer planting areas that occur at external and internal boundaries and are utilised to shield areas of built-form.

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<sup>39</sup> Te Tangi A Te Manu – Aotearoa New Zealand landscape Assessment Guidelines – Published July 2022

<sup>40</sup> Te Tangi A Te Manu – Aotearoa New Zealand landscape Assessment Guidelines – Published July 2022



- 7.6. The internal landscape response to the site sees the retention of a number of existing mature trees and sees the implementation of a number of trees across the site, which will combine to absorb the one-storey structures (that will be installed in stages as the market dictates) into the landscape by creating a loose vegetative canopy across the site.
- 7.7. Whilst the proposed retirement village will create more traffic increasing vehicle movements along Station Road, these will primarily take place in the rural-residential portion of this road corridor (or the 'managed transition' area), which I am of the opinion, can absorb these additional vehicle movements, without undue effect on the character values due to the proximity of this portion of the Station Road corridor to the Matamata township.
- 7.8. I am satisfied that the proposed landscape architectural response to the site addresses the issues raised in the 'managing the landscape values' section of this report (refer sections 3.43-3.49).
- 7.9. Overall, I am satisfied that the proposed retirement village moves the urban / rural edge in a manner that takes into account the prevailing landscape character values by using a fencing style sympathetic to the rural / rural-residential surrounds and using planting to providing screening, whilst using a variety of plant species to provide a sense of place to the proposed retirement village.
- 7.10. Therefore, taking the above and the preceding analyses through section 6 the effect of the proposal on the prevailing landscape character values can be considered as **Low**<sup>41</sup> when examined in the context of the wider landscape.

## 8. Conclusion

- 8.1. The proposal will see the establishment of a retirement village, within a wider site that will also see the establishment of a solar farm (the 'southern solar farm') and a residential community and an associated area of green space that serves as a stormwater corridor and a recreational area. A paddock to the west of the proposed retirement village will be left undeveloped at this stage.
- 8.2. Five (5) existing 'field trees' within the site will be retained and complemented with additional tree and shrub planting, with denser buffer planting at the northern interface and looser screens at the western and eastern boundaries.
- 8.3. This buffer planting allows for the proposed retirement village to be partially screened within the landscape, with the method of screening, using a variety of shrub and tree species, providing a 'sense of place' to the retirement village within the wider landscape.

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<sup>41</sup> Te Tangi A Te Manu – Aotearoa New Zealand landscape Assessment Guidelines – Published July 2022

8.4. Overall, for the reasons outlined in detail in this report, I consider that the level of cumulative adverse landscape effects generated by the proposal in its completed form (+ 5 years from initial installation) will be **Low**<sup>42</sup>

8.5.

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<sup>42</sup> Te Tangi A Te Manu – Aotearoa New Zealand landscape Assessment Guidelines – Published July 2022















