ianmunro
[redacted]
AUCKLAND

5 DECEMBER 2025

MATAMATA PIAKO DISTRICT COUNCIL
ATTN.: MARIUS RADEMEYER
BY E-MAIL

Dear Marius

ASHBORNE FAST TRACK CONSENT APPLICATION – URBAN DESIGN QUERIES IN MINUTE 4 OF THE EXPERT PANEL

1. Thank you for providing me with the Panel's Minute 4, dated 3 December 2025. You have asked me to consider and comment on paragraph 21:

   MPDC to advise on the Applicant's response on urban design considerations in respect of the number of rear lots.

2. I can confirm that I considered the subdivision layout and the proposed rear lots as part of my earlier urban design assessment. I was not concerned with that aspect of the proposal.

3. The Panel queried rear lots with the Applicant in its Minute 3 dated 21 November 2025. The Applicant responded in a memo prepared by B&A Ltd, dated 27 November 2025. I have read this correspondence.

4. I offer the following commentary in the hope it assists the Panel:

   a. Rear lots present a number of potential effects of urban design interest. It is often difficult to design less than 3-4% of lots as rear lots, such as at road corners / tight turns or along irregular site boundaries. In most cases 10% or less of rear lots as a proportion of the total would be regarded as reasonable. More than 20% of total yield would likely raise concerns.

   b. In subdivisions based on larger lots (approximately 600m2+), a significant amount of rear lots can be an indicator of over-sized blocks and a lack of permeability. Although often allowing a more efficient use of land (the ratio of saleable lots to access space), fewer roads and larger blocks can negatively detract from connectivity and in particular pedestrian route choice or convenience / directness. But the size and frontage width of

allotments usually means that rear lane accessways coupled with driveways for front lots will be able to be accommodated in a manner that allows streets to remain uncluttered and pleasant.

c. In subdivisions based on smaller lots (approximately 300m2-), a significant amount of rear lots can be an indicator of insufficient inter-site amenity (dwellings crowded around one another with insufficient outlook or general separation, noting how much visual amenity and outlook the width of streets can provide), and the likelihood of streets becoming overrun with vehicle crossings based on narrow-frontage width allotments. Many of these concerns can be alleviated if JOALs are designed with sufficient amenity and width to function as a de-facto street (see below).

5. In this instance the allotments are fairly spacious and do not raise 'crowding in' concerns (the response in such circumstances is to reduce rear lots and/or require the rear allotments to be larger so as to compensate for the lack of adjacent street-width).

6. I am also not concerned that the use of rear lots and dead-end JOALs may be being used to avoid an appropriate provision of connected street or movement network. My analysis is that the blocks and block dimensions proposed are unremarkable (sitting in the general range of 40m-80m (depth) x 200m-250m (width)). Most of the block lengths proposed are less than 200m. I have no concerns that there may be a lack of connectivity, permeability, or convenient route choice available as a result of the rear lots. For reference, consistent use of block lengths less than 120m-150m can become an indicator of *too much* connectivity being proposed (inefficient use of land relative to incremental movement benefit of additional access + the significant overall costs of roads).

7. In terms of the design of JOALs themselves:

   a. Regardless of lot sizes proposed, access design is of key interest. Primarily this is a function of the number of lots serviced by a shared accessway. With thoughtful design, JOALs can be designed with sufficient visual and pedestrian amenity that they can function equivalently to a public street. In some situations a JOAL can offer a superior urban design outcome to a public street.

   b. There are no industry-agreed standards on this matter but based purely on my own experience and the thousands of JOALs and streets I have helped design or have assessed, I offer the following guidelines (they are the basis of professional advice I give clients in my own project work):

      i. For up to 3-4 allotments, a standard 3m / 3.5m wide driveway is acceptable – the overall scale of traffic generated (all modes) is sufficiently low that users are unlikely to frequently be in conflict with one other. Long JOALs over around 40m or where there are blind corners may require occasional passing bays or pedestrian refuge spaces.

      ii. For up to 8-9 allotments, I would expect a JOAL with sufficient width for 2-way traffic to pass in a low-vehicle speed environment, typically around 6m / 7m in width. Long JOALs over around 40m or where there are blind corners may require occasional pedestrian refuge spaces (in some cases by way of narrowing the vehicular

carriageway to 1-vehicle width and designing the chicane as the refuge space as a means of also maintaining slow vehicle speeds). Build-outs for occasional JOAL lighting are also often needed to ensure the area is well-lit and pedestrians feel comfortable at night time.

iii. For beyond 10 allotments my professional opinion is that JOALs should be designed to include a dedicated pedestrian space clear of vehicle access space (except where vehicles must cross the pedestrian space to gain property access). This is a result of the total amount of all-mode traffic generated This can usually be accommodated in a JOAL width of 9m-10m. JOAL lighting is required to ensure the area is well-lit and pedestrians feel comfortable at night time. In terms of adjoining allotments, at this scale I would also encourage a minimum setback similar to the applicable front yard standard of any building from the JOAL boundary to accommodate additional visual buffering and privacy by way of landscaping. I would also encourage low-height front fencing along allotment boundaries so as to reinforce the impression that the space was closer to a mini-street than a functional driveway.

iv. For beyond 15 allotments or where 10+ allotments have a JOAL over approximately 100m in length, additional width again for landscaping and occasional on-JOAL parking should be provided and this is where the JOAL will start functioning closer to a private street than a driveway. This configuration needs JOAL widths of 11m-12m+. JOAL lighting is required to ensure the area is well-lit and pedestrians feel comfortable at night time. A de-facto front yard setback is necessary for any buildings from the JOAL edge.

8. In light of the above, the proposed rear lots:

   a. Are overall not of an unusual or concerning proportion of the overall number of lots proposed.

   b. Have been configured in groups that are generally consistent with my advice regarding JOAL width + design vs number of lots served.

   c. Have been configured in a generally appropriate way with the JOAL being usually used in the same way a cul-de-sac would have been used if the access space was wider.

   d. Are each of a sufficient size, shape and area that I have no concerns that each allotment may not enjoy a sufficient sense of spaciousness or privacy from other adjacent allotments.

9. The Site does have an irregular shape and placing roads so as to align logically with external roads and features does go some way to justifying the overall layout and creation of spatial ‘gaps’ filled with rear lots.

10. But in fairness I see no reason why the number of rear lots proposed could not have been substantially reduced if that had been a design objective. In some instances I do agree that rear lots are logical – such as Lots 419 and 420 as a classic use of left-over space. In others, a moderate reconfiguration could

reduce the number of rear lots proposed – such as if Lots 124 / 125 / 130 / 131 were adjusted to become narrower and deeper, so that 4 x lots fronted the street instead of 2.

11. For the majority however, materially reducing the number of rear lots from what has been proposed would require substantial changes to the subdivision design. I would have no urban design opposition to such changes, but do not consider that the adverse effects of the proposal are so pronounced, or could not be otherwise more-readily further mitigated, that it would seem a proportionate or necessary outcome.

12. In the event that the Panel remains concerned with the rear lots proposed, I offer the following mitigation options noting B&A Ltd's comments dated 27 November that "*detailed design will include coordinated landscape treatment, fencing and development controls to ensure that dwellings present front doors and windows towards the JOAL. These measures, together with the low traffic volumes and capped number of lots off each JOAL, will support good passive surveillance, a positive pedestrian experience and a safe, slow-speed shared environment consistent with good urban design practice*". I have not been able to identify the conditions of consent that would achieve what B&A Ltd has stated. The following could remedy that.

    a. The key concern would be the JOALs serving 5+ dwellings, namely JOAL Lots 3016, 2017, 3018, 3021, and 3025. For at least these, if not all JOALs serving rear lots, the Panel could require any or all of the following and in my opinion all could be reasonably justified on the basis of mitigating potential amenity or safety effects:

        i. That the allotment boundary adjoining the JOAL could be required by condition of consent to be treated as if it were a front boundary. This would formally engage development controls and design guideline outcomes along the JOALs that equated to street frontages. This would better-assure passive surveillance and visual interest and low-height fencing.

        ii. Landscaping could be required *within* the JOAL but my experience is that a more effective solution is to require landscaping *alongside* the JOAL within the yards of allotments. A requirement of at least one specimen tree within the 'front yard' (see above) of each allotment adjoining a JOAL can add substantial visual amenity akin to a 'street tree' without cluttering or impeding the JOAL.

        iii. Lighting could be required within the JOAL so as to assure safe, inviting and comfortable night-time use by pedestrians (notably JOALs longer than 30m).

        iv. Periodic chicanes could be required within the JOALs, narrowing he width down to 1-vehicle width only (where the JOAL served 5+ dwellings) and assuring slow, considerate driver behaviour. Variations in surface finish or texture may allow a similar result.

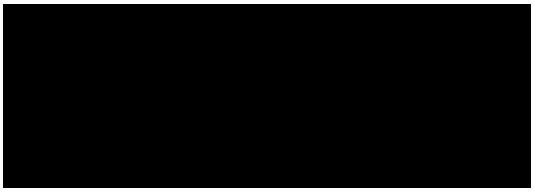
        v. Signage could be required at the entry to each JOAL setting a speed limit (recommended at 20km/h or less) and requiring drivers to give way to pedestrians and cyclists (or similar wording).

13. The above could be subject to either an up-front concept design provided prior to the granting of any consent, or could be the subject of a time-of-Building-Consent Council certification requirement.

14. In the event that the Panel is not satisfied by my suggestions above, it would seem that the only other recourse would be to require the Applicant to submit a revised design that significantly reduced the number of rear lots proposed. My advice is that Stages 1-4 would offer the best 'bang for buck'. I remain available to assist the Panel should it arrive at that position.

Please feel welcome to contact me should you wish to discuss any aspect of the above further.

Yours sincerely,



IAN MUNRO
urban planner and urban designer
B.Plan (Hons); M.Plan (Hons); M.Arch [Urban Design] (Hons); M.EnvLS (Hons); M.EngSt [Transport] (Hons); MNZPI
(e) ian@ianmunro.nz
(m) 021 900 993