

To: Listed Projects Team – Ministry for the Environment

From: Joseph McCready – Barker & Associates Limited

Date: 15 April 2025

Re: Landscape and Visual Effects Memorandum for Brymer Referral Application

1.0 Introduction

Brymer Farms Limited engaged Barker & Associates (B&A) for landscape and visual assessment services related to the master planning, consenting, and design of Brymer — a residential development of around 1,650 varied housing units, a mixed-use neighbourhood centre, open spaces, and supporting infrastructure. Two masterplan options have been proposed (refer below) to account for natural wetlands identified in the eastern part of the Site, which require further ecological assessment.

1.1 Project Description

Brymer Farms Limited, as the applicant, engaged B&A to provide landscaping services for the master planning, consenting and design of Brymer. Brymer is a residential development that comprises circa 1,650 residential units of varying typologies, such as detached, duplexes, terraces, apartment units and retirement village units, along with a supporting mixed-use neighbourhood centre, open spaces, and infrastructure. The Brymer Masterplan is shown in **Figure 1**, and contained within the Urban Design Memorandum.

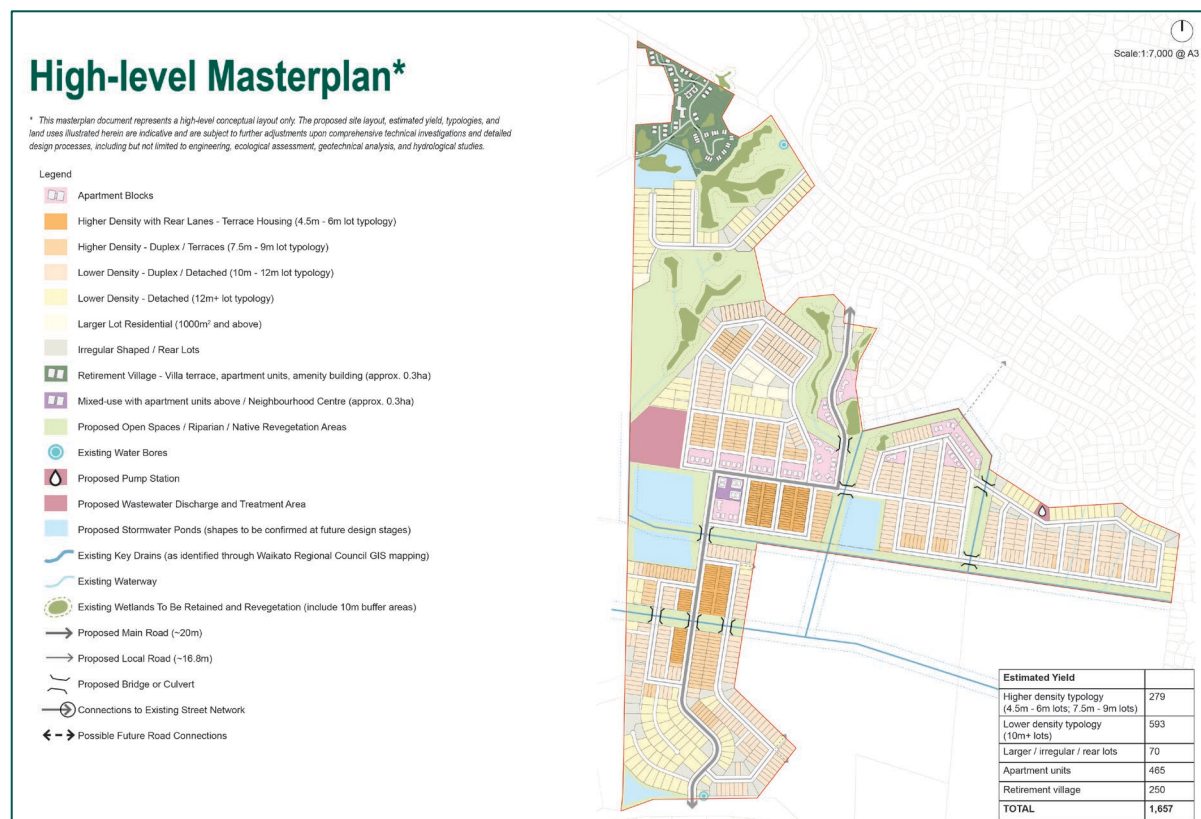


Figure 1: Brymer Masterplan.

The residential community is underpinned by a series of design principles, which focus on creating a well-connected, legible and diverse community on Hamilton City's urban fringe. The proposed transport network, with a 20-metre-wide spine road running north-to-south, is supported by local roads, cycle connections and pedestrian pathways to create an accessible and legible development. As aforementioned, a range of housing typologies and densities are proposed to meet the growing and changing needs of the housing market to ensure there are options for future residents. Each typology has been thoughtfully located, based on opportunities and constraints, with density ranging from terraces, duplexes and standalone dwellings to ensure integration with the adjoining urban footprint.

In the heart of Brymer is a 0.3 hectare mixed-use neighbourhood centre that will provide a range of amenities and services to support the residential development. This mixed-use neighbourhood centre will likely include commercial properties, cafés and a local superette. Apartment units are provided above the neighbourhood centre. The commercial element of the residential development has been scaled to support the density proposed, located directly adjacent to the majority of apartment building typology.

Sitting at the higher, northern point of the site is a retirement village, that comprises approximately 3.4 hectares, and provides villa terraces, apartment units and an amenity building. This will be serviced by its own private transport network, infrastructure, and high amenity open spaces.

Integrated throughout the residential development are a number of open spaces that are well distributed to create a highly amenable community that will be a pleasant and enjoyable place to live for future residents. The open spaces support ecological restoration through the retention of a number of natural wetlands and riparian revegetation.

The development will be appropriately serviced via a robust infrastructure strategy, which includes a new pump station, wastewater discharge and treatment area, stormwater ponds, and utilisation of the existing water bores.

1.2 Existing Site Description

The subject Site, comprising approximately 81 hectares, is located on the western edge of Hamilton City within the Waikato District. It encompasses five land parcels: Lot 3 Deposited Plan 385271, Lot 1 Deposited Plan South Auckland 87291, Lot 22 DPS 79526, Part Lot 2 DP 18355, and Allotment 365 Parish of Pukete. The Site forms part of a peri-urban transitional landscape, where rural land use patterns meet the expanding urban footprint of Hamilton.

The landform is gently undulating and predominantly pastoral in character, with open paddocks, occasional shelterbelts, and a network of drains reflective of long-term rural modification. A notable feature is a central drain that runs east–west through the Site, bisecting it and forming a subtle natural division between the northern and southern areas. While the Site has been heavily modified for rural and lifestyle uses, ecological features such as remnant wetlands and low-lying areas remain—particularly in the eastern extent—offering potential for future restoration and integration into green-blue infrastructure networks.

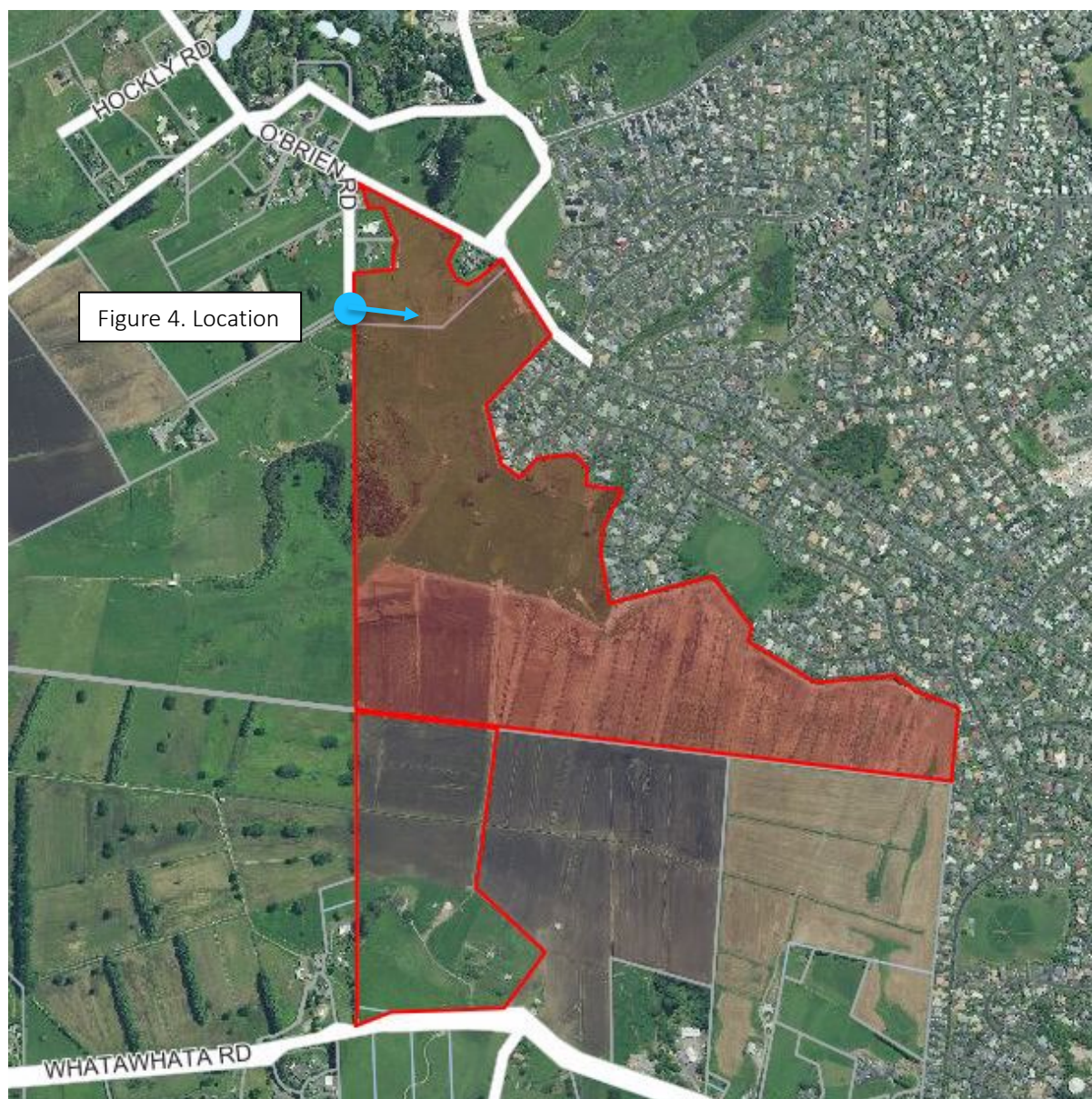


Figure 3: The Site (WDC Online maps).

The Site is bound by Brymer Road to the north and Whatawhata Road / State Highway 23 to the south, with established residential areas of Grandview Heights and Western Heights immediately to the east. To the west and south, the Site adjoins larger rural landholdings, reinforcing its transitional spatial role between urban and rural environments. Its proximity to key amenities, including the Dinsdale Centre, education facilities, and open space reserves (e.g. Waiwhakareke Heritage Park, Hamilton Zoo), enhances its contextual value within the broader urban landscape.

In terms of sensory and perceptual qualities, the Site currently exhibits an open, semi-rural character with long views toward Pirongia Maunga and the Hakarimata Ranges. While current land uses generate a subdued and pastoral sensory experience, the proximity of urban development introduces subtle cues of change, such as vehicle movement, fencing, and infrastructure.

From a cultural landscape perspective, the Site lies within the rohe of Waikato-Tainui, and is likely to hold values of significance to mana whenua. While no specific features are identified on the Site at present, the presence of wetlands and historic land modification indicate the potential for deeper cultural narratives associated with whenua, wai, and mahinga kai. These values are important to acknowledge and respond to through landscape planning, design, and ecological enhancement.

In summary, the Site occupies a key position within Hamilton’s urban growth interface. It contains a modified but legible rural landscape structure, offers opportunities for ecological and cultural restoration, and has strong visual and spatial relationships with both the existing urban fabric and wider natural features of the Waikato region.



Figure 4: Photo from O'Brien Road looking eastwards to the Site (Google Streetview).

2.0 Receiving Environment

2.1 Landscape Character

The Site sits within a transitional peri-urban landscape, where rural land uses are increasingly giving way to residential development. The dominant landscape character is rural-pastoral, typified by open fields, boundary planting, and infrastructure associated with small-scale farming or lifestyle blocks. The area is under increasing pressure from urban growth, leading to a blending of character elements from both rural and urban settings. Key attributes of the local landscape character include:

- A simple, modified landform with open paddocks and drainage features;
- Sparse built form with isolated dwellings and farm infrastructure;
- Shelterbelts and informal planting that structure space but do not heavily enclose it;
- Increasing visual and functional connections to urban Hamilton; and
- Distant views to prominent landmarks such as Pirongia Maunga and Hakarimata Ranges.

This character is dynamic and in a state of transition. The influence of Hamilton’s urban expansion is visible, yet rural qualities still dominate the immediate Site. Future development will alter this balance, requiring careful integration of landscape and urban design to retain identity and legibility.

2.2 Visual Catchment Description

The visual catchment of the Site includes both near-field and wider contextual views, enabled by the Site’s gently undulating topography and elevated aspects. Its position on the transitional fringe between urban and rural land uses contributes to a high degree of visual permeability. To the east, visual connectivity is immediate with the adjoining Grandview Heights and Western Heights residential areas. These established suburbs are situated on elevated ground, and many dwellings—particularly along the upper ridgelines of Brymer Road, Grandview Road, and Newcastle Road—have direct visual access into the Site across shared boundaries. The residential interface is visually porous due to minimal fencing and the limited maturity of boundary planting in some areas, allowing clear views into the Site from both private properties and local road corridors.

To the north, visual exposure is moderate from Brymer Road, which functions as a key local connector between the Dinsdale area and rural outskirts. Road users travelling along this route—particularly those heading south—experience open views into the Site, especially where boundary shelter planting is sparse or low in height. Adjacent rural-residential dwellings on larger lifestyle blocks along Brymer Road also maintain filtered to open views over the Site, depending on the extent of existing hedgerows or shelterbelts. While there is some vegetation along boundaries, the dominance of open paddocks, lack of large-scale built form, and the elevated position of the Site enhance its visual presence from the north.

To the west and south, views are expansive across adjoining pastoral landholdings and peri-urban properties, many of which retain a working rural character with grazing paddocks, scattered trees, and outbuildings. On clear days, long-range visibility extends to Pirongia Maunga to the southwest and the Hakarimata Ranges to the northwest, visually anchoring the Site within the broader Waikato landscape context. These distant ranges contribute to a sense of place and reinforce the Site’s connection to the regional natural environment.

Internally, the Site maintains a highly open visual character. Vegetation is limited to a few established shelterbelts, scattered trees along fence lines, and a central drainage swale that meanders through the Site. Minor topographical undulations and vegetation elements provide subtle visual texture and layering, but there are few vertical structures to obstruct internal or external sightlines. As a result, the Site remains legible and transparent from multiple vantage points.

The visual catchment also incorporates nearby public spaces, including Waiwhakareke Natural Heritage Park to the northeast and Te Kootii Park to the east. Waiwhakareke, a significant ecological and recreational asset, is situated within walking distance and features elevated walkways and viewing platforms from which the

Site may be glimpsed through tree canopies. From Te Kootii Park, the Site is perceived as forming part of the rural edge of the city, transitioning between urban density and the wider rural landscape.



Figure 5: Wider context (WDC Online maps).

2.3 Key Viewpoints

The following key viewpoints have been identified to assess potential visual effects and inform future design responses (refer to Figure 6.):



Figure 6: Key Viewpoints (B&A).

2.3.1 Viewpoint 1 - Brymer Road (Northern Boundary)

- **Viewer sensitivity:** Moderate to high (residents, road users).
- **View type:** Oblique and direct views across open paddocks.
- **Effect:** Introduction of urban form, roads, and built structures alters the rural outlook.
- **Potential visual change:** Introduction of built form and roading will alter the rural edge but can be softened with landscape buffers and interface design.
- **Magnitude of Change:** Moderate



Figure 7: VP1 (Google Streetview).

2.3.2 Viewpoint 2 - Western Heights Residential Edge (East)

- **Viewer sensitivity:** High (residents).
- **View type:** Elevated direct views across shared boundary.
- **Effect:** Elevated direct views of higher density development and urban form.
- **Potential visual change:** High; mitigation through carefully located open space, varied building heights, and vegetative screening will be essential.
- **Magnitude of Change:** High.



Figure 8: VP2 (Google Streetview).

2.3.3 Viewpoint 3 - Whatawhata Road / SH23 (South)

- **Viewer sensitivity:** Low to moderate (road users, passing views).
- **View type:** Long-range views with glimpses into Site.
- **Effect:** Fleeting, filtered views from passing vehicles.

- **Potential visual change:** Moderate; low visual sensitivity but design must consider gateway treatment and landscape integration at this key southern interface.
- **Magnitude of Change:** Low



Figure 9: VP3 (Google Streetview).

2.3.4 Viewpoint 4 - Public Open Spaces (Waiwhakareke Heritage Park, Te Kootii Park)

- **Viewer sensitivity:** Moderate (recreation users).
- **View type:** Distant views contributing to perceived rural backdrop.
- **Effect:** Distant views of development may slightly alter rural backdrop.
- **Potential visual change:** Low to moderate; distant development could influence landscape backdrop—design should maintain green corridors and vegetative structure.
- **Magnitude of Change:** Low



Figure 10: VP4 (Google Streetview).

3.0 Key Effects & Approaches to Address Key Effects

3.1 Changes to Local Character

The transformation of the site from a rural, open landscape to a residential neighbourhood will significantly alter the existing landscape character. The shift will be particularly evident at the interface with surrounding rural properties and the urban edge of Hamilton. Key effects include the loss of rural openness, the introduction of built form, and a denser urban structure which may be perceived as incongruent if not sensitively designed.

3.1.1 Approach to Addressing Effects on Character

- Retain and integrate key landscape elements such as shelterbelts, drainage corridors, and view corridors to maintain continuity with the rural past;
- Apply a gradation in housing density and form where appropriate, with lower-density housing and green edges at sensitive boundaries;
- Use locally appropriate materials, colours, and planting palettes to visually integrate new development with its surroundings; and
- Preserve viewshafts to distant landmarks such as Pirongia Maunga and the Hakarimata Ranges to maintain a sense of place.

3.2 Impacts on Visual Amenity

The proposed development may alter views for nearby residents (particularly those in Western Heights and Grandview Heights) who currently enjoy open rural vistas. New roads, built form, and the mixed-use centre could create visual dominance if not appropriately designed. There is also potential for reduced amenity for users of public open spaces if development creates a hard or discordant visual backdrop.

3.2.1 Approach to Addressing Effects on Visual Amenity

- Retention Incorporate generous landscape buffers with layered, predominantly native vegetation along key view-sensitive boundaries;
- Design open space corridors and pocket parks to break up built form and maintain a sense of openness;
- Position higher-density and taller built forms internally within the site where appropriate, away from sensitive edges and elevated viewpoints; and
- Ensure the public realm is high quality, using trees, low-impact stormwater infrastructure such as swales, and design continuity to enhance visual appeal.

3.3 Impacts on Mana Whenua Values

The site is part of a wider cultural landscape significant to mana whenua, and changes to the land—particularly water systems (e.g. drains, wetlands), viewshafts, and natural features—may impact cultural values. The development has the potential to disconnect the mauri of the landscape if ecological and cultural elements are not respected and integrated.

3.3.1 Approach to Addressing Effects on Mana Whenua Values

- Engage with mana whenua (e.g., Ngāti Wairere, Ngāti Mahanga) to inform landscape design and decision-making processes, particularly around wetlands, water, and planting – this engagement is underway;
- Restore and enhance waterways and wetland areas using indigenous plant species and tikanga-based practices;
- Incorporate Te Aranga Design Principles where appropriate—such as Whakapapa (naming), Tohu (landmarks), and Mauri Tū (environmental health)—into streetscape and reserve design; and
- Include interpretive elements, signage, and design narratives that reflect the cultural history and identity of the site.

3.4 Impacts on Ecology

The development will lead to the loss of pasture-dominated open space, and while these areas may not be highly biodiverse, there are several natural wetlands, existing riparian corridors, and drainage features with ecological value. There is potential to disturb habitat, reduce connectivity, and impact water quality through earthworks and urbanisation.

3.4.1 Approach to Addressing Effects on Ecological Values

- Refine the ecological investigations to identify natural wetlands and drainage channels, where possible seek to protect and enhance these through fencing, planting and ecological restoration;
- Integrate stormwater management with green infrastructure solutions (e.g. swales, rain gardens, stormwater wetlands) that support habitat and treat runoff;
- Establish green corridors to maintain ecological connectivity across the site and to adjacent natural areas (e.g. Waiwhakareke Heritage Park); and
- Use locally appropriate native species for revegetation and encourage habitat diversity.

4.0 Conclusion

The proposed Brymer development will result in a range of visual effects, with the degree of impact varying according to the location and sensitivity of viewers. The most notable visual changes will occur along the urban-rural interface, particularly where elevated residential areas (such as Western Heights and Grandview Heights) overlook the site, and where open rural character currently defines the outlook from roads and nearby properties. In these locations, the introduction of a denser urban form—comprising various residential typologies, a mixed-use centre, and associated infrastructure—will represent a significant transformation of the visual environment.

Despite these potential impacts, the development can be thoughtfully designed to respond to the surrounding landscape character and to minimise adverse effects wherever possible. Through a combination of carefully located open spaces, strategic landscape buffers, and a clear transition in built form from low to higher densities, the visual integration of the development can be significantly improved. In particular, the use of planting along site boundaries and internal streets, the retention and restoration of natural features

such as wetlands and riparian corridors, and the incorporation of cultural and ecological values into landscape design, will all serve to reduce the scale and prominence of new built elements.

Importantly, the approach to open space planning, including the distribution of neighbourhood parks and green corridors, can contribute to a visually permeable and legible environment. This will not only soften the visual effects of intensification but also enhance amenity for both future residents and the wider community. When combined with a landscape strategy that supports biodiversity, water quality, and cultural recognition, the result is a well-balanced and sustainable urban environment. Over time, the proposed mitigation measures will mature and embed the development into its setting, ensuring that visual impacts are not only reduced but are offset by meaningful landscape and amenity gains.

5.0 Qualifications and Experience

- Joseph McCready is a registered landscape architect with more than 15 years of practice experience including as a team leader.
- He has worked for various firms including Beca, Jasmax, Auckland Council, Thomas Consultants Ltd and Barker & Associates. He has varied experience across a wide range of projects at various scales from large scale infrastructure to subdivisions and parks carrying out both landscape design and landscape and visual assessment roles.

5.1 Qualifications

- BCom, University of Auckland.
- BLA (hons), Unitec.
- NZILA Registered Landscape Architect.

5.2 Relevant Projects

- Drury East Residential Masterplan, Auckland, encompassing approximately 102 Ha and accommodating up to 1500 dwellings, a new school, small neighbourhood centre and parks (Fulton Hogan Land Development Ltd).
- Wellsford North Masterplan, Auckland, encompassing approximately 48 Ha and accommodating up to 1,000 dwellings, small neighbourhood centre and parks (Wellsford Welding Club Ltd).
- Rotokauri Masterplan, Hamilton, encompassing approximately 130 Ha and accommodating up to 3,100 dwellings and several neighbourhood parks and esplanade reserves (multiple clients).
- Frankton Ladies Mile Masterplan, Queenstown, encompassing 17 Ha and accommodating up to 750 dwellings in terraced housing and apartment typologies (Maryhill Ltd).



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