

Landscape and Visual Effects Memorandum for a Fast Track Referral

Cannon Point Road, Totara Park, Upper Hutt (Stage 3) and 4 Colorado Road, Upper Hutt, New Zealand (Stage 4)

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Blac 2026. Landscape and Visual Effects Memorandum for Fast Track Referral: Cannon Point Road, Totara Park, Upper Hutt (Stage 3) and 4 Colorado Road, Upper Hutt, New Zealand (Stage 4).

1 OVERVIEW

The proposal by Cannon Point Development Limited (“the Applicant”) involves dense residential development on two sites currently zoned rural by the Upper Hutt City Council (“Council”). The existing character across the two sites is a mix of lifestyle, open space, and modified rural land. The surrounding environment includes established residential suburbs, rural lifestyle areas, the Hutt River corridor and trail, and Akatarawa Forest Park, all of which shape how the sites are experienced from different viewpoints.

Although the proposal will change the character, land cover, and topography of the sites, the assessment concludes that these effects are generally not significant once mitigation and landscaping measures are implemented. Nearby residents may experience changes to their current amenity and outlook, with some adverse effects remaining for a period of time, but most are expected to reduce within a reasonable timeframe through planting and design measures.

Overall, despite some non-compliance with subdivision and earthworks rules in the Council’s District Plan, the proposal is considered broadly consistent with planning objectives that support residential growth while maintaining wider landscape character and amenity values.

2 INTRODUCTION

Purpose of this memorandum

- 2.1 Blac Limited (“Blac”) has been working alongside a project team, together with Derive Consulting Group, to assist Cannon Point Development Limited (“Applicant”) with their masterplanning and design for two stages of residential development in Cannon Point, Upper Hutt.
- 2.2 Derive Consulting Group (“Derive”) is making a referral request, on behalf of Cannon Point Development Limited, under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 for resource consents in relation to the residential developments at Cannon Point Road (“Stage 3 Site”) and 4 Colorado Road (“Stage 4 Site”).
- 2.3 The purpose of this memorandum is to set out the site context, the development being proposed on each site, and the assessment of potential and known effects that the development could have on the receiving environment. This memorandum will form part of Derive’s Fast-track referral request.

Experience of the author

- 2.4 The author is a registered member of the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects (“NZILA”) and has over 12 years’ experience as a landscape architect. Blac has had previous involvement with the proposal for the subject sites in respect of advising the Applicant about how to address the potential adverse landscape effects of the proposal, and working together with the Applicant, Derive, and the wider consulting team on the landscape strategy for the proposal.

3 METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 This memorandum is based on the concepts and principles set out in the Te Tangi a te Manu: Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines (“NZILA Guidelines”) and has been tailored to the nature of the proposal and the sites.
- 3.2 The author has reviewed the relevant statutory and planning documentation, visited each site twice (with at least one year in between visits), undertaken Zone of Theoretical View (“ZTV”) mapping, considered the relevant private and public viewpoints of the sites (both within close proximity to the site and from distant locations), and then created a number of draft simulations for the proposal.
- 3.3 It is noted this is not a full landscape and visual effects assessment but such an assessment can be provided as part of a substantive application. More detailed visual assessment and finalised simulations would be provided as part of a full assessment.

3.4 A preliminary assessment has been undertaken of the effects of the proposal on the receiving environment and the people viewing the built development, as well as how the proposal could change the amenity values and character of the sites with reference to the statutory context. The methodology for assessment has been set out below.

3.5 To summarise the significance of the effects, professional judgement is applied with reference to the statutory context. The 7-point evaluation scale from the NZILA Guidelines is set out below.

NZILA	Very Low	Low	Low	Low - Moderate	Moderate	Moderate - High	High	Very High
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4 PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The Applicant has already completed two stages of their four-stage intended development in the Cannon Point and Totara Park areas. The final two stages (being stages 3 and 4) are the subject of the current proposal. These stages are shown in Figure 1 below.

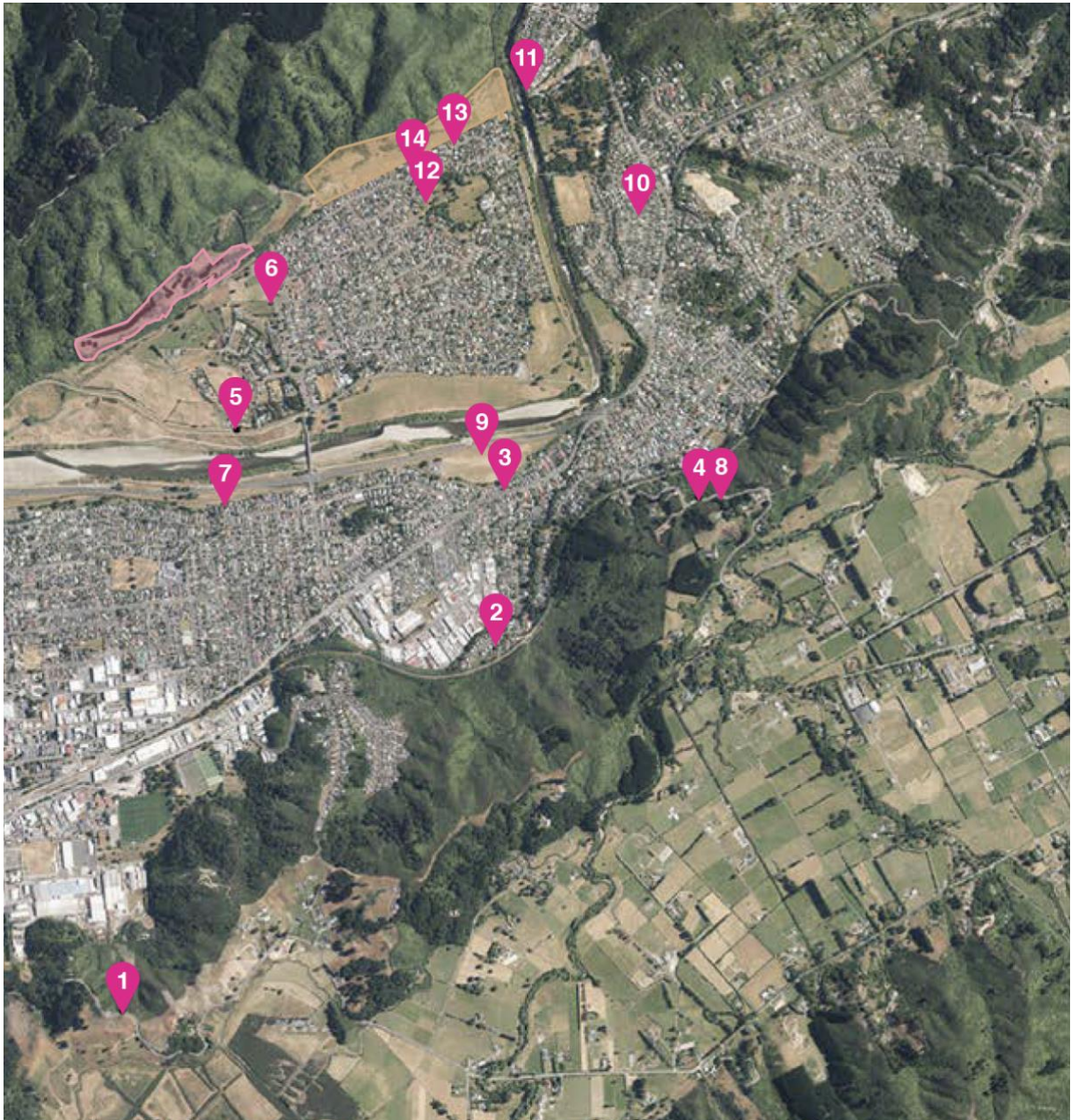


Figure 1: Showing the location of the stage 3 site (pink), the stage 4 site (orange) and the sites for stages 1 and 2 (being the area between stages 3 and 4).

- 4.2 The proposal for the stage 3 site ("Stage 3 Site") and the stage 4 site ("Stage 4 Site") are described below:

4.2.1 The stage 3 proposal ("Stage 3 Proposal") is to create:

- 65 residential lots ranging from 246m² to 902m² with an average lot size of 434m²;
- Approximately 59,800m² (5.98 ha) is proposed to vest in Upper Hutt City Council as reserve land, comprising neighbourhood open space, ecological areas, stormwater features and the existing wetland; and
- a main connecting street and a secondary street, connecting a lower terrace.

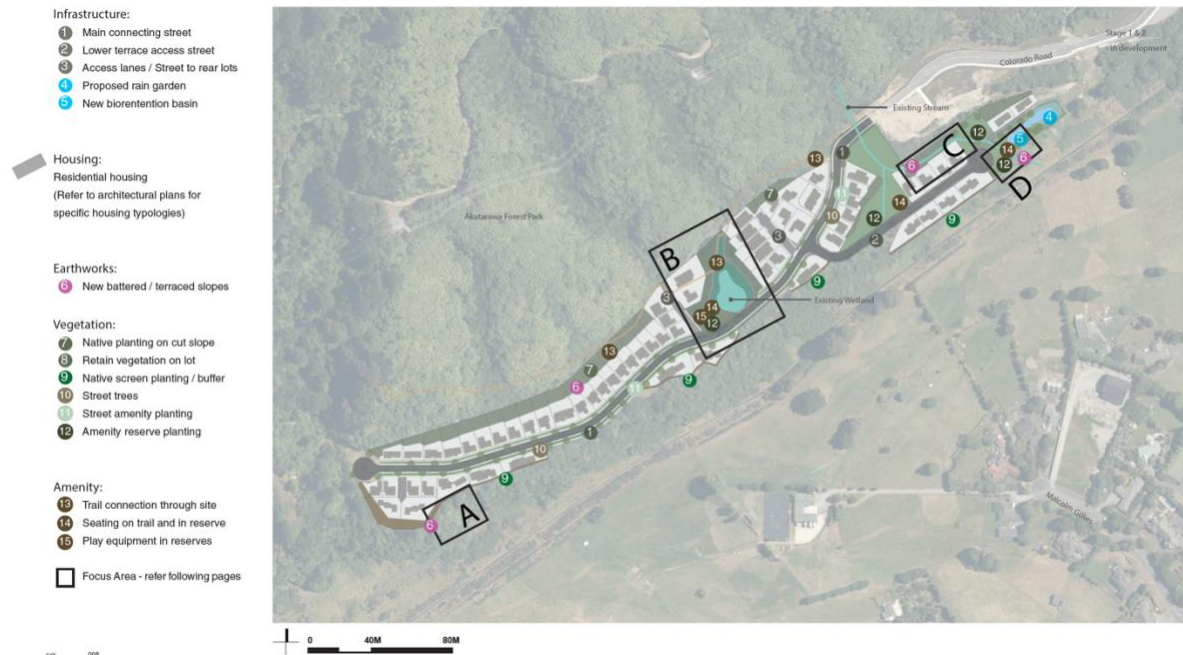


Figure 2: Concept plan for the Stage 3 Proposal on the Stage 3 Site.

4.2.2 The stage 4 proposal ("Stage 4 Proposal") is to create:

- 97 fee simple residential lots ranging from 172m² to 946m², with an average lot size of approximately 396m²;
- three roading areas;
- Approximately 12,200m² is proposed to vest in Upper Hutt City Council as reserve land, including neighbourhood open space, stormwater reserve areas and wetland/open space areas; and
- a commercial centre on 7,453m² of land which could comprise of a small superette/grocery store, a small café or retail store, takeaway outlets or retail stores, two truck delivery bays and parking spaces.



Figure 3: Concept plan for the Stage 4 Proposal on the Stage 4 Site.

- 4.3 Blac has created a landscape strategy for both stages 3 and 4. The strategy mitigates or avoids a number of the possible adverse effects of development on the two sites.
- 4.4 The landscape strategy focuses on reducing visual and environmental impacts by protecting and enhancing natural landscape features, including wetlands, streams, hillsides, and existing vegetation. It includes extensive native planting across slopes, waterways, stormwater areas, and open spaces to soften earthworks, screen development, and blend the project into the surrounding landscape.
- 4.5 Vegetation buffers and layered planting will help screen views from the adjoining residential areas, while larger native vegetation will provide long-term visual integration with the wider environment, particularly the backdrop of the Akatarawa Forest Park and the Te Awa Kairangi Hutt River corridor.
- 4.6 Stormwater features such as rain gardens, wetlands, ponds, and bioretention areas are designed to provide both ecological and visual benefits. Slope stabilisation measures, including hydroseeding and erosion controls and planting, will reduce erosion and improve the appearance of cut and fill areas over time.
- 4.7 The proposal also aims to enhance recreation and public amenity through retained (or new) walking and cycling connections, links to local trails, reserves, seating, play spaces, signage, and landscaped streetscapes with street trees. Additional controls on fencing, infrastructure placement, and development setbacks are intended to maintain openness, neighbourhood character, and minimise landscape and visual effects.

4.8 Building typologies for the residential lots range from single storey dwellings to two storeys, single dwellings and duplexes. Across Stages 3 and 4, site coverage ranges from 2.0% (Lot 99, Stage 4) to 53.0% (Lot 38, Stage 4), with an average site coverage of approximately 24%. The building typologies, in combination with the subdivision scheme plan, can be described broadly as “general residential” with aspects of “medium density residential” due to the duplex typologies.

5 RECEIVING ENVIRONMENT

Upper Hutt Generally

- 5.1 The pattern of development that has emerged in Upper Hutt is residential development of low-lying land right up to the hillsides and usually – but not in every situation – the steep hillsides are left undeveloped. The low basins in Upper Hutt can be described as highly-modified through channelisation of Te Awa Kairangi/Hutt River, the construction of State Highway 2 and local and interregional rail lines, urbanised terraces and hillsides, and broad use of exotic vegetation. By either design or coincidence, the ‘basins’ of the Hutt Valley have a number of open spaces and mature vegetation which give the perception of ‘naturalness’ continuing throughout the ‘basins’ from one hillside to another.
- 5.2 The ranges and upper hills remain largely natural in character with pockets of development occurring (generally) at the foothills of the broad landscapes. The northern terraces, at the interface to the northern escarpments and hillsides, have a broad pattern of residential development (where civil constraints have allowed) and native vegetation.
- 5.3 Much of the northern hills form part of the regionally-important Akatarawa Forest Park. The forest supports a diverse range of indigenous flora and fauna where urbanisation of the foothills and valley have, at large, removed optimal environments for such fauna and flora.
- 5.4 The northern hillside holds significant value to those who experience it up close or from the other side of the valley as it is a landscape which defines (in broad terms) the northern backdrop to the Upper Hutt Valley. The northern hills provide a difference, juxtaposition, balance, backdrop, buffer or offset to the urbanised and highly-modified landscape of the valley floor and foothills.

Stage 3 Site

- 5.5 The site is positioned on a flatter area of the base of “Cannon Point” escarpment and hill, approximately 10-20m above rural lifestyle land, within the general area of Totara Park river terrace. It can be separated into five distinct areas:
- The upper escarpment which is generally the visual backdrop to the proposed development on the Stage 3 Site. The face of the slopes is fully vegetated with native vegetation.
 - The upper terrace which is mainly covered in pasture and a roughly-formed road traverses this area.
 - A wetland with a total area of approximately 1,460 square metres in the central area of the upper terrace.
 - The lower terrace which is predominantly earthworked except for the upper slopes containing native vegetation. There is a water course and a roughly-formed road running through this area.
 - The lower escarpment which is generally the visual foreground to the proposed development on the Stag3 3 Site. The face of the slopes is vegetated.

Stage 4 Site

- 5.6 The site is at the base of the Akatarawa Forest Park. It can be separated into two distinct areas:
- The northern section of the site contains steeper hill topography and native vegetation.
 - The southern section of the site is flatter, pastured land.
- 5.7 There are transmission lines running through the centre of the site and two transmission towers located towards the middle of the site and on the eastern boundary of the site. These lines interrupt the perceived natural character of the site. There is standard farming infrastructure on the site as well such as post-and-wire fencing and gates, and a telecommunications tower.

Stage 3 Site and Stage 4 Site

- 5.8 There would be very little light emitted from the sites at present, and little noise (other than the grazing animals and the telecommunications infrastructure), but there could be smells emitted from the grazing animals and their excrement.
- 5.9 In the surrounding areas for both the Stage 3 Site and the Stage 4 Site, the landscape has been modified through various human influences such as roads, rail, stop banks, transmission lines, farming and housing, however the backdrops of the Akatarawa Forest Park and the view of the ridgelines, still remain intact.

Landscape character and amenity

- 5.10 The Stage 3 Site can be characterised as a rural landscape on the edge of rural, rural lifestyle, general residential/suburban and hillside of higher, natural character which perceptually increases the higher it extends.
- 5.11 For the Stage 4 Site, the existing structures (roading, gates and fences, transmission towers and lines, telecommunications tower), combined with the smaller size of the site and the siting in amongst an urban area and a steep, vegetated hillside:
- 5.11.1 mean that the site has more of a lifestyle character than a rural character; and
- 5.11.2 detract from the overall naturalness and visual amenity value of the site.
- 5.12 As you move further away from the Stage 4 Site, the character changes. When in close proximity to the site, the rural/rural lifestyle character is clear. As you move further away from the site though, the character becomes less discernible and is effectively 'blurred' between the clear character of the

openness and highly-vegetated state of the Akatarawa Forest Park and the densely-populated residential character of Tōtara Park.

- 5.13 Stage 2 of the Applicant’s wider development will establish a clear change in character associated with the upper terraces of the Stage 3 Site and Stage 4 Site. This development will establish a pattern where general residential development extends west along the upper terrace and bisects the rural/rural lifestyle and open space areas and the northern hills.
- 5.14 In respect of the planned character, the District Plan acknowledges that rural areas in Upper Hutt have a range of different values and are in a state of change (in terms of how the various rural areas are being utilised to best suit residents – both now and in the future). The District Plan’s main emphasis seems to be on either:
- productive land which benefits current and/or future Upper Hutt residents and which should be protected from reverse sensitivity issues. The District Plan also places an emphasis on having larger lot sizes to try and avoid situations where residential development is ‘clustered’ across farmland or the ‘openness’ of the wider rural setting is adversely effected.
 - open spaces or hillsides which should be protected so that their character and amenity values are not lost, “vegetation remains the dominant feature”, and flora and fauna can remain in their habitats.
- 5.15 The complexity with the Stage 3 Site and the Stage 4 Site are that they do not fit either of the above typologies (at least not on their lower portions and within the context of the adjacent Stage 1 and Stage 2 developments). The sites, and particularly the Stage 4 Site as a rural setting, appears to be ‘out of context’ now because of the way that the Tōtara Park has developed around it. It is more of a lifestyle block situated between a dense residential area and two highly-valued, open space areas (the Akatarawa Forest Park and the Hutt River).

6 STATUTORY CONTEXT

- 6.1 The Stage 3 Site is in both the Rural Lifestyle Zone and General Rural Zone under the Upper Hutt City Council's District Plan ("District Plan"). The Stage 4 Site is in the General Rural Zone under the District Plan.
- 6.2 The following objectives and policies, which are set out in the District Plan, summarise the general approach towards residential subdivision in the rural zones.

"GRUZ-O1 ... Many natural features and amenity values comprise the rural character. The level of amenity in the rural area is important to the quality of life enjoyed by people living and working in the area or visiting it. In order to protect rural character and amenity, the rural environment is divided into three specific zones to reflect resource objectives and particular environmental considerations.

The General Rural Zone is the largest area within the rural environment. The zone comprises the hill areas surrounding the valley floor and many open space areas which are largely undeveloped and valued for their recreation, scenic, heritage, habitat, ecological, landscape and scientific values. ..."

"GRUZ-O2 ... The Rural Zones cover the non-urban areas of the City, ranging from relatively intensively developed areas through to more extensive land holdings.

The Rural Zones provide opportunities for rural-based activities to occur. The soil and the land base of the area represent a significant resource for the City. It is important that the ability of these resources to support life is not unduly undermined. It is not a sustainable use of the resource to allow the land to be degraded or used in a manner which will significantly limit the choices of future generations."

"RLZ-I1 ... While the appearance of the rural environment is subject to considerable change and evolution, some characteristics remain constant. These are the open, expansive nature of the countryside with a relatively low density of buildings and with vegetation being the dominant feature. Open spaces, a key feature of rural character, serve to mitigate adverse effects which may be generated by farming activities, forestry and other activities commonly located in the rural environment. Loss of this open space through more intensive subdivision and subsequent residential development may create an environment in which the effects of rural activities are no longer acceptable."

"SUB-RUR-P4 ... The General Rural Zone contains some of the most scenic areas in the Wellington Region and provides significant recreational opportunities. The proximity to large urban areas increases the importance of preserving the landscape and natural values for the enjoyment of residents and visitors to these areas."

"NFL-P1 ... To discourage activities which have adverse effects on the high visual quality of the north-western and south-eastern hillsides adjacent to the urban environment. Urban development within Upper Hutt is contained, physically and aesthetically, by the adjacent hills to the northwest and southeast. These hillsides and ridges are well covered in vegetation, mainly indigenous, and generally remain free from development to provide the urban area with an identity and orientation points. These areas are recognised as an essential landscape element. Visually these areas act as a 'town belt' providing a natural visual backdrop to the City which defines the corridor of Te Awa Kairangi (Hutt River). These landscape elements are sensitive to development due to their prominent location, and could

significantly alter the character of Upper Hutt if they were developed with buildings, roads and other physical structures.”

7 VISUAL EFFECTS

7.1 Fourteen viewpoints have been selected for consideration based on initial Zone of Theoretical View mapping and subsequent visits to surrounding areas in the Upper Hutt region. These fourteen viewpoints were selected because together they are representative of views across Upper Hutt. The fourteen viewpoint locations are shown in Figure 1 above. Each viewpoint has been discussed below in relation to:

7.1.1 The nature of the viewpoint (the current situation)

7.1.2 The anticipated effect of the proposal on that viewpoint and the anticipated magnitude of change of the proposal on that viewpoint (the proposed situation)

Wallaceville Road (Viewpoint 1)

7.2 **Current:** This view is from the shoulder of Wallaceville Road. The view would be experienced by both residents on the southern hills and people travelling this road towards the urban area of Upper Hutt. When descending further down the road, the site is blocked by trees and therefore this vista is fleeting for those travelling at speed. The view is dominated by the northern hills/Akatarawa Forest complex and the cityscape – in particular the “big box” development at the base of the southern hills. It is clear the level of “naturalness” increases from the urban areas below to the top of the northern hills.

7.3 **Proposed:** The proposal on Site 3 will continue the transition seen around the lower areas of the northern hills of modified rural landscape becoming residential urban areas. This will extend the pattern already established by Stages 1 and 2. While this change will be noticeable, the dominant visual features of the area will remain the northern hills and Te Awakairangi /Hutt River. The cut face which will be required to enable the western cul-de-sac (on the Stage 3 Site) will create a noticeable clearance in the upper escarpment of that site. Those earthworks are expected to create more significant visual effects, as hydroseeding alone is unlikely to blend effectively with the surrounding bush-covered landscape. The visual effects are anticipated to be Moderate, particularly for travellers along Wallaceville Road and some elevated residents, although the broader character of the Hutt Valley is expected to remain intact.



Figure 4: Photograph from View 1. Refer Fig 1)

Oakland Grove (Viewpoint 2)

- 4.1 **Current:** The view is taken from outside 4 Oakland Drive. It represents the visual experience of the residents of this residential cluster. Here the visual experience is immediately dominated by the urban foreground with the northern hills providing a distinct contrast of an indigenous/natural landscape interrupted by the transmission lines. From this view, the mature vegetation in the urban areas blocks the landscape between State Highway 2 and the Stage 3 Site which makes the northern hills appear to finish at the upper terrace of the Stage 3 Site. This means the viewer experiences a starker contrast between urban and natural landscapes.
- 7.4 **Proposed:** From this viewpoint, the shift from rural land to urban development will be visible, with buildings being seen between mature foreground trees and the northern hills. The western cut face on the Stage 3 Site will have some effect on the natural appearance of the hills. For residents around Oakland Grove, the visual effects are considered slightly less significant than other viewpoints because the foreground is already dominated by existing urban development and the northern hills remain the main backdrop. The visual effects are anticipated to be Moderate.



Figure 5: Photograph from View 2. Refer Fig 1)

Māori Bank Park (Viewpoint 3)

- 7.5 **Current:** This view was taken from the end of the path leading from Fergusson Drive to represent the recreation corridor and the outlook to the northern hills. The upper terrace of the Stage 3 Site is barely

discernible through the willow and poplar trees. The transmission lines on the Stage 3 Site interrupt the general naturalness of the hillside. The view and experience are that of an open space grassland defined by the grass stopbank, with a backdrop of the willows and poplar trees generally associated with the Te Awakairangi/Hutt River corridor.

- 7.6 **Proposed:** From this viewpoint, two-storey buildings within the development could be visible above the riverside vegetation, while it is anticipated that most single-storey buildings would remain largely screened. The development would change the character from rural and pastoral land to residential housing, but the visual impact would be reduced because open space, mature trees, and the northern hills would remain the dominant features in the view. For park users and nearby residents, the overall visual effects are anticipated to be Low, as Stage 2 would already have introduced much of this character change and Stage 3 would only be incrementally adding to it.



Figure 6: Photograph from View 3. Refer Fig 1)

Mangaroa Hill Road (Viewpoint 4)

- 7.7 **Current:** This view is from the shoulder of Mangaroa Hill Road. When looking toward the Stage 3 Site, the view is dominated by the Awakairangi Park open space, Totara Park residential area and the northern hills/Akatarawa forest. The horizontal, grassed areas of the upper terrace are clear and defined. Stage 2 will supersede much of this with a dense, urban character, positioned between the vegetated lower escarpment of the Stage 3 Site, the rural lifestyle area, and the northern hills.
- 7.8 This view was selected to assess the likely effects on both higher-up residents on the southern hills (in particular, those to the north-east) and those who travel this road (noting it is a key, cross-valley link). The view to the Stage 3 Site when travelling Mangaroa Hill Road is not the main focal point and is limited to the top portions where large trees do not block the view and therefore it is fleeting.
- 7.9 **Proposed:** The development will noticeably change the landscape from pastureland between bush areas to urban development between bush. Again, this will be perceived as a continuation of the character change already established by Stage 2. From viewpoints near Mangaroa Hill Road, the visual

effects are anticipated to be Low to Moderate because the main visual focus will remain on the river and the Akatarawa Forest and valley beyond, rather than the development itself.



Figure 7: Photograph from View 4. Refer Fig 1)

Stopbank – Hutt River Trail (Viewpoint 5)

- 7.10 **Current:** The nature of this view is rural/rural lifestyle extending to natural, yet human-modified landform and pasture cover between two bush lines. Above this, the view is dominated by the northern hills. The view from this location aims to represent the experience of the residents on the rural lifestyle block below the Stage 3 Site and users of the Te Awakairangi/Hutt River trail.
- 7.11 **Proposed:** From this viewpoint, the Stage 3 Site will change from a rural, grassed terrace to urban residential development. The visual effects of Stage 3 are anticipated to be Moderate to High because of the rural-to-urban change, but the impact is somewhat reduced because Stage 2 has already established much of this altered character in the area.



Figure 8: Photograph from View 5. Refer Fig 1)

Tulsa Park (Viewpoint 6)

- 7.12 **Current:** This viewpoint sits directly below both Stage 2 and the Stage 3 Site. From this viewpoint the visual experience is open and rural extending toward the grassed upper terrace of the Stage 3 Site and the northern hills/Akatarawa forest. This viewpoint was selected because it is a well-utilised open space for the residents in the Totara Park residential area.
- 7.13 **Proposed:** Stage 2 will change the current view by adding dense, urban development between the open space and northern hills. Stage 2 will also establish a visual pattern of dense development extending away from the historic residential areas north-west of Tulsa Park, along the upper terrace of the Stage 3 Site, which will effectively bisect the lower rural lifestyle areas and the northern hills. This will change the perceived character of this area.
- 7.14 Because Stage 2 will have already reduced the area's rural/open-space character, the additional change to urban development from this viewpoint is anticipated to be less significant, although some nearby western residents may experience greater effects. Much of the foreground development would be screened by existing vegetation, but as that vegetation is not currently protected, the overall visual effects are assessed as Moderate.



Figure 9: Photograph from View 6. Refer Fig 1)

Riverbank Park Stopbank (Viewpoint 7)

- 7.15 **Current:** This viewpoint was selected to represent the visual experience of the users of the south banks of Te Awakairangi/Hutt River, travellers along State Highway 2, users of the Riverbank Park and adjacent residents.
- 7.16 The viewing experience from here (excluding the highway in the immediate foreground) is dominated by the poplars and willows along the south bank of the river. There are gaps in the vegetation which would expose the Stage 3 Site but in many cases the Stage 3 Site is only somewhat discernible through the trees which are not currently full of foliage due to the season. It is worth noting that although this

is a useful, conservative vantage point for this exercise, the top of the stopbank is an unlikely place to view the site as there is no path and the highway dominates the experience.

- 7.17 **Proposed:** The proposal will noticeably change the area's character from rural to urban residential, particularly during Stage 3 of the development. Stage 2 is less visible from this viewpoint and therefore a greater magnitude of change in character will result from Stage 3. While some views will be partially screened by foreground trees when in leaf, many travellers on local trails and State Highway 2 will still have clear views of the development, altering the current rural outlook. Despite the introduction of urban form, Te Awakairangi/Hutt River and the northern hills will remain the dominant landscape features. The earthworks on the upper escarpment are expected to be visually noticeable with further planting reducing this overtime, leading to an overall assessment of Moderate visual effects for people near this viewpoint.



Figure 10: Photograph from View 7. Refer Fig 1)

Mangaroa Hill Road (Viewpoint 8)

- 7.18 **Current:** The viewpoint on the Mangaroa hillside in Clouston Park was selected to assess potential visual effects on elevated residents and users of this important cross-valley road connection. From this location, the Stage 4 Site is visible within a wide panoramic view of the valley, Tōtara Park, and surrounding open spaces, but it is not a focal point due to its distance and lower elevation. While the transmission towers on the site are visible, the site's rural character is barely noticeable, and the overall landscape is perceived as a mix of natural features and human modification.
- 7.19 **Proposed:** The proposal is expected to have Very Low visual effects for both residential and public views, despite the Stage 4 Site changing from a rural/lifestyle setting to a residential development. During the earthworks stage, the changes to the site will be noticeable, but once construction and landscaping are completed, the development is expected to blend into the surrounding Tōtara Park housing area. The surrounding hillside will remain the dominant visual backdrop to the Hutt Valley, and the scale and location of the proposed houses, together with extensive planting, are not expected to significantly reduce visual amenity. Public views from roads and pathways will generally be brief and often partially screened by existing houses and vegetation, further reducing visual impacts.



Figure 11: Photograph from View 8. Refer Fig 1)

Maoribank Park (Viewpoint 9)

- 7.20 **Current:** This viewpoint is from Maoribank Park beside State Highway 2 and represents a wide range of public viewers, including motorists, cyclists, walkers, and park users. The Stage 4 Site is visible in peripheral views to both northbound and southbound traffic, although not as a direct focal point due to travelling speeds (100 km/h). Views from this location include the hillside backdrop behind the site, Bridge Park, and the Tōtara Park suburb, where residential development is interspersed with mature vegetation. Again, while the transmission towers are visible on the Stage 4 Site, the site's rural character is barely noticeable, and the overall landscape is perceived as a mix of natural features and human modification.
- 7.21 **Proposed:** The distance to the Stage 4 Site means the change from rural/lifestyle land to residential development will be largely negligible, with the proposal eventually reading as a continuation of existing Tōtara Park housing at the foothills. The dominant landscape features, particularly the surrounding hillscape, will remain the main visual focus. It is not anticipated that the proposal will significantly reduce the existing amenity value due to its (small) scale in relation to its surroundings, the lower elevation of this viewpoint, and extensive proposed landscape planting. Users of the park would typically be focused on movement or recreation, meaning the site will generally only be a peripheral element in wider valley views.
- 7.22 For people travelling along State Highway 2, views of the site will be brief and experienced at speed, making any changes difficult to perceive and not a focal point within the broader Hutt Valley landscape. Although the highway provides slightly more elevated and expansive views, foreground vegetation and Tōtara Park housing will still limit visibility, and the Stage 4 Site will only form part of peripheral views alongside the wider valley setting. Overall, the effects on both stationary public spaces and transient road users are expected to be Very Low.



Figure 12: Photograph from View 9. Refer Fig 1)

Laneway from Shanley Street to Roband Crescent, Brown Owl (Viewpoint 10)

- 7.23 **Current:** This elevated viewpoint to the east of the Stage 4 Site was selected because it provides representative views from private residences in Brown Owl. There is partial visibility of the Stage 4 Site between existing houses and mature vegetation. Although only small areas of pasture on the site are visible alongside the transmission towers, the landscape is experienced primarily as a natural setting, with vegetation linking the Akatarawa Forest Park above the site to the surrounding residential area.
- 7.24 **Proposed:** The character of this landscape is defined by the Akatarawa Forest Park, surrounding naturalness, and open skyline, which will continue to dominate views from this location. While earthworks are anticipated to temporarily reduce visual amenity, the eventual landscape mitigation (as set out in the landscape strategy) is expected to restore a natural-looking vista by integrating housing with vegetation and avoiding intrusion into key escarpment views. The main permanent change will be a modification of the Stage 4 Site's existing terrace landform into a more gradual slope, although this should not appear unnatural over time and should be further 'softened' by growing foreground vegetation. It is anticipated that the proposal will remain seen within an existing residential and natural context, resulting in Very Low effects from this viewpoint.



Figure 13: Photograph from View 10. Refer Fig 1)

Hutt River Trail (west of 63 Black Beech Street, Brown Owl) (Viewpoint 11)

- 7.25 **Current:** This viewpoint, located across the Hutt River from the Stage 4 Site, represents views experienced by residents at 63 Black Beech Street as well as users of the nearby Hutt River Trail. Because the viewpoint is at a similar elevation to the flatter part of the site and has few visual obstructions, a large portion of the site is clearly visible. The surrounding river, trail, hillside, and relatively undeveloped landscape create a strong sense of naturalness and tranquillity. Human-made features such as transmission lines, towers, and a telecommunications tower are also prominent within this view.
- 7.26 **Proposed:** The proposed residential development will be small in scale compared to the existing (and more dominant) elements in the landscape, such as the transmission towers and the escarpment. This means the change from rural land to housing will be less visually prominent from this viewpoint. There will be a reduced 'openness' to the site itself. The key qualities of the view, including the open skyline and undeveloped escarpment, will remain, with a modified but still natural-looking outlook formed by a mix of vegetation, fencing, and housing.
- 7.27 63 Black Beech Street is oriented toward the site, but existing natural features such as the river, riverside planting, and hillside should provide substantial screening and buffering between the property and the development. The proposed boundary planting and hedging along the eastern lots of the Stage 4 Site (as set out in the landscape strategy), along with a recommendation for single-storey housing, are expected to further reduce visibility of built form and help maintain a largely natural outlook over time. Given the limited extent of the view and low sensitivity of this single private viewpoint, the visual effects of the proposal are assessed as Very Low.
- 7.28 The Hutt River Trail is experienced as a blend of natural features like the river and escarpments alongside existing human-made infrastructure at present, with the site forming only a minor part of the overall landscape. Although the proposed housing will replace open paddocks and affect views toward parts of the Akatarawa Forest Park, these changes are anticipated to be brief and secondary to the dominant river and escarpment scenery. With the landscape strategy and other mitigation measures in place, the site is expected to integrate into the wider setting, resulting in Very Low effects from this viewpoint.



Figure 14: Photograph from View 11. Refer Fig 1)

California Park (Viewpoint 12)

- 7.29 **Current:** This viewpoint from California Park, located about 120 metres from the Stage 4 Site, represents views from a well-used public recreational area where sightlines to the Stage 4 Site vary due to mature trees and nearby houses. The site is seen against the backdrop of Akatarawa Forest Park, with residential housing and vegetation in the foreground. Because the site sits at a higher elevation than the park, its existing rural character is more distinguishable in contrast to the surrounding suburban and forest landscapes.
- 7.30 **Proposed:** From California Park, views toward the site are incidental rather than a focal point, as the park is not oriented toward the site or even Akatarawa Forest Park and visitors are primarily there for other purposes. Only limited areas of the park have clear views, with most of the site partially screened by trees or surrounding houses, and the site does not provide significant additional amenity value in this context. The proposed housing, set among vegetation, is expected to blend into the existing residential landscape and have little effect on the park's character or visual amenity. Overall, the visual effects from this viewpoint are considered Low.



Figure 15: Photograph from View 12. Refer Fig 1)

9 and 11 Indiana Grove, Tōtara Park (Viewpoint 13)

- 7.31 **Current:** These properties on Indiana Grove were selected because they border the Stage 4 Site and are representative of both private and public views from the area. From these dwellings, the elevated site and its existing character are clearly visible.
- 7.32 **Proposed:** From this viewpoint, the earthworks will be highly visible due to the elevation difference and the currently unobstructed views of the site. Over time, the landscape strategy will introduce native boundary planting that will help restore a more natural outlook, although it will shift the character from open pasture to a more enclosed vegetated setting. The buffer/boundary planting will create an extent of shading on these properties where there was once open space instead. Some parts of the tops of single-storey houses may be visible above the planting until it matures, but the buildings are not expected to significantly affect views of the ranges or skyline. There may also be some temporary overlooking effects on these properties, though these are expected to reduce as vegetation establishes and such effects are not considered significant. On balance, once mitigation is effective, the visual effects from this viewpoint are anticipated to be Low.



Figure 16: Photograph from View 13. Refer Fig 1)

Utah Grove cul-de-sac (Viewpoint 14)

- 7.33 **Current:** This viewpoint is representative of the views from the cul-de-sac, which includes residents and visitors either driving, walking, cycling or scootering. This viewpoint has, however, mainly been chosen to focus on the views of the Stage 4 Site from the residences that border the site.
- 7.34 **Proposed:** From this viewpoint, some earthworks and vegetation clearance will be visible through gaps between existing houses, creating a noticeable but temporary change from the current pastoral landscape. In the long term, houses on the northern side of the new roading on the Site may become visible, but proposed boundary planting along Utah Grove will help screen and soften views, thereby reducing visual effects for nearby residents and passers-by. The new houses are not expected to block views of the ranges or skyline and should integrate with the surrounding vegetation and hillside. Overall, any visual effects for most users of the cul-de-sac are expected to be brief and Low in intensity.



Figure 17: Photograph from View 14. Refer Fig 1)

Overall

- 7.35 The northern hill sequence forms a dominant backdrop to the views of each of the sites and helps visually reduce the scale of the proposed development, particularly from the more distant viewpoints. Although the proposal will permanently transform the sites from rural/lifestyle land into dense residential areas, and the earthworks and built form will be visible due to the elevated location, the landscaping, mitigation measures, and site design will help the proposed development integrate into the surrounding environment.

8 LANDSCAPE EFFECTS

Stage 3 Proposal

- 8.1 The proposed development would introduce noticeable landform modification on the upper terrace and lower terrace including retaining structures, two-storey buildings, earthworks, and associated cut and fill areas, resulting in a more visibly engineered landscape.
- 8.2 Vegetation clearance is expected to be relatively minor initially but could increase over time if existing vegetation along upper escarpments is not protected. The removal of native vegetation could be offset by new planting, street landscaping, and ecological stormwater features (as set out in the landscape strategy). The upper terrace would remain a terraced landform but would become more strongly perceived as a modified, development-led landscape rather than a rural or farming setting.
- 8.3 Positive effects are expected from retained green spaces, new planting, and recreational connections.
- 8.4 Overall, the proposal is anticipated as having Low to Moderate landscape effects because key landscape values will be largely retained, important natural features will be protected, and the broader surrounding landscape context will remain dominant.

Stage 4 Proposal

- 8.5 The proposal will result in landscape effects through vegetation removal, earthworks, and the introduction of dense residential development, along with permanent changes such as increased lighting, reflectivity, and ongoing residential activity. The greatest effects are anticipated to be experienced by nearby streets including Indiana Grove, Utah Grove, Larchmont Grove, Hartford Crescent, and Tacoma Drive.
- 8.6 While there is some risk that revegetation may not fully establish due to site conditions, which could lead to a more grass-dominated hillside, the design also includes planting and slope stabilisation measures (as set out in the landscape strategy), with expert input from relevant specialists guiding geotechnical and ecological outcomes, including potential effects on nearby ecosystems such as the Akatarawa Forest Park.
- 8.7 The proposal includes positive landscape outcomes such as proposed new public trails, increased native vegetation, and better integration of existing infrastructure (like transmission towers) into the surrounding residential context.
- 8.8 Overall, the landscape effects of the proposal are anticipated to be Very Low to Low due to the limited impact on the wider landscape, the dominance of surrounding natural features, and the mitigation and design measures incorporated into the proposal.

General

- 8.9 Artificial lighting from the proposed residential development will alter the current rural nightscape, introducing indoor, outdoor, street, and vehicle lighting that is more typical of urban environments and exceeds what is anticipated in the District Plan.

9 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 The author has set out preliminary suggestions to mitigate potential adverse effects of the proposal:
- 9.1.1 The mechanisms in the landscape strategy should be included in conditions of consent for the proposal.
- 9.1.2 There should be single-storey or staged build restrictions on lots which have a greater initial impact on neighbouring properties.

10 CONCLUSION

Stage 3 Proposal

The District Plan anticipates a rural and rural lifestyle character for the Stage 3 Site, but the proposal introduces residential development that is not consistent with this zoning. While the site remains a modified rural landscape, and some broader visual amenity is retained through mitigation, the development will still result in some Moderate - High visual and landscape effects. Key surrounding features such as the northern hills and Akatarawa Forest Park will continue to dominate the landscape, and the proposal can be viewed as an opportunity to establish a new residential form that better responds to these broader landscape values.

Stage 4 Proposal

The Stage 4 Site can be described as being in a “limbo” state where the planned rural character does not align with its current condition or likely future residential use, and its context is influenced by surrounding land uses that reduce a clear sense of rural identity. The Akatarawa Forest Park and surrounding suburban development provide strong visual and contextual mitigation, which should enable the proposal to assimilate into the wider residential landscape. Overall, the site’s character and amenity values will change and be reduced, but mitigation measures are expected to reduce effects to Low to Moderate for most nearby viewers, with only limited areas experiencing higher impacts.