

Delmore Fast-Track

25/06/2025 – Auckland Council Response

Annexure 28:

Landscape

Helen Mellsop



Landscape memo

APPLICATION REFERENCE: **BUN60444768** Delmore Fast Track Approvals Act application, 88 Upper Orewa Road, Upper Orewa

FROM: Helen Mellsop – Registered NZILA Landscape Architect, Helen Mellsop Landscape Architect

TO: **Carly Hinde** – Principal Project Lead – Planning & Resource Consents – Premium Unit, Auckland Council

DATE: 18 June 2025

DOCUMENTS REVIEWED: Vineways Delmore Fast-track AEE, dated 17/02/25
Appendix 10 – Landscape Drawings, dated 14/02/25
Appendix 13 – Indicative Wainui-Orewa Structure Plan
Appendix 14 – Record of Engagement and Feedback, dated 11/02/25
Appendix 15 – Architectural Drawings, Revision A
Appendix 16 – Earthworks Final Contours & Retaining Walls, dated 5/02/25
Appendix 19 – Landscape Assessment, dated 11/02/25
Appendix 20 – Consultation Overview Report, dated 13/02/25
Appendix 22 - Delmore Fast Track – Proposed Consent Conditions
Appendix 23 – Rules Assessment
Appendix 27 – Urban Design Assessment, dated 14/02/25
Appendix 35 – Indicative Timeline
Further information
Landscape Addendum, dated 11/06/25
Example Planting Implementation & Maintenance Specification for wetland & riparian margin landscaping works
Terra Studio RFI Response – Rev B
Terra Studio RFI change plan and sections, dated 11/06/25
Accessibility/Connectivity Analysis, dated 11/06/25

RELEVANT STATUTORY CONTEXT

1. The proposal has been reviewed with reference to the following statutory matters:
 - RMA Section 6 (a) in relation to the preservation of the natural character of rivers and their margins;
 - RMA Section 6 (d) in relation to enhancement of public access to and along rivers;
 - RMA Section 7 in relation to maintenance and enhancement of amenity values;
 - Policy 1 of the NPS-UD in relation to well-functioning urban environments and accessibility between housing, natural spaces and open spaces, including by way of public or active transport;

- Objectives and policies of AUP Chapter B Regional Policy Statement B2.2 Urban Growth and Form in relation to a quality urban environment that responds to the intrinsic qualities and physical characteristics of the area, reduced adverse environmental effects, and promotion of the health and safety of people and communities (including through provision of a range of quality open spaces and recreation facilities and public access to rivers and wetlands);
- Objectives and policies of AUP H4.2 Residential – Mixed Housing Suburban Zone and E38.2 Subdivision – Urban, particularly in relation to maintaining or enhancing natural features and landscapes that contribute to the character and amenity values of the area, providing a walkable and connected neighbourhood, providing prominent and accessible open spaces of sufficient size and number, and providing pedestrian and/or cycle linkages.

OVERALL SUMMARY

2. The proposal would result in a complete change of landscape character from rural to urban. The urban character would be consistent with that of adjacent and nearby urban development at Ara Hills, West Hoe Heights and Strathmill.
3. The visual and rural amenities of adjoining properties directly south of the proposal would be significantly compromised by the proposal, particularly during the construction period.
4. The proposal would result in moderate-high adverse effects on landscape character and values during construction and moderate adverse effects on completion, reducing to low-moderate over time as street tree and revegetation planting matures.
5. The development has poor connectivity (vehicular and pedestrian/cyclist) both within the site and with surrounding rural and urban areas. While pedestrian connectivity has been improved in the RFI plans, additional pedestrian connections are recommended.
6. The steep topography of the site means that substantial earthworks would significantly modify the natural landform. However retention and protection/revegetation of intermittent and permanent water courses and wetlands means that the natural patterns of the landscape would be retained to some extent and linkages created to Nukumea Scenic Reserve and other bush areas to the north. The naturalness of wetlands and streams within the site would be enhanced and some public access would be provided to and along stream courses.
7. Roads and development have in the main been located to follow land contours and to minimise the extent of earthworks required. The decision to provide level building platforms on each proposed residential lot has increased the extent of earthworks and associated retaining walls and resulted in steep batters above stream gullies. These even steep batters, managed as mechanically stabilised earth (MSE) retaining walls would detract from the naturalness of the gullies.
8. The strategy for retaining walls, with public-facing walls to be masonry block construction and walls greater than either 1.5 or 2.5m (this height has not yet been confirmed) to be stepped with intermediate planting, should adequately mitigate the adverse visual amenity and visual dominance effects of these structures from public places. If stepping of walls only occurs above 2.5m in height,

substantial planting would be required below the walls for adequate mitigation of visual amenity impacts.

9. Proposed street tree, amenity and revegetation planting is generally appropriate in location, size and species mix. A greater proportion of taller growing species is required in the Lower riparian planting mix to provide shade to stream courses and wetlands.
10. Detailed landscape design plans would be required for communally and privately owned bush and riparian areas, the Significant Ecological Area, walkways and any other community facilities. These plans would need to be implemented prior to issue of titles for each stage of the development.
11. The proposed conditions of consent do not currently provide sufficient certainty that revegetation areas, existing bush, walkways and any other community facilities on communally or privately owned land would be consistently maintained and protected in perpetuity.

Landscape assessment peer review (refer Appendix A for peer review methodology)

Methodology

12. The Landscape Assessment Report and Addendum from Greenwood Associates have been prepared in general accordance with Te Tangi a te Manu NZILA Aotearoa Landscape Assessment Guidelines. The methodology is generally appropriate – it includes a description and analysis of the receiving landscape attributes, character and values and an evaluation of potential effects on landscape values. However, construction effects and cumulative effects have not been considered fully. The relevant statutory context has been briefly identified but there is no assessment of the landscape-related matters. In particular there is no consideration of landscape-related matters in AUP B2 Urban Growth and Form, AUP H4.2 Residential – Mixed Housing Suburban Zone, or E38.2 Subdivision – Urban.

Landscape attributes, character and values

13. The landscape attributes are accurately described in the Greenwoods report and addendum, and the overall landscape character correctly identified. I agree that the key elements contributing to landscape character are the patterns of gullies and ridgelines, the rolling to steep topography, the patches of regenerating native vegetation and exotic forestry interspersed with open pasture, and the relative rural quietness and isolation (albeit influenced by existing and consented development west of SH1). Panoramic public views over the wider rural and urban landscape from the Upper Ōrewa Road ridge also contribute to the aesthetic attributes of the area. In my assessment the immediate landscape context of the site is valued for its rural character, the contrast with nearby urban areas, the naturalness of indigenous and exotic vegetation patterns, the unmodified and legible landforms, and the remaining level of rural amenity (quietness, spaciousness and rural activities). The associative cultural values of the landscape to mana whenua are set out in the Cultural Impact Assessments from Ngaati Whanaunga and Te Kawerau ā Maki.

Physical changes as a result of the proposal

14. The physical changes likely as a result of the proposal are, in the main, accurately described in paragraphs 6.4 to 6.15 of the Greenwoods report. The large number of retaining walls and the steep

batters adjacent to riparian corridors are identified but the significant modification to the natural landform is not discussed.

Effects on visual amenity values

15. The visual catchment identified for the proposal is mostly accurate, although future views from the Te Ara Hills subdivision immediately adjacent to the site have not been included. The representative public and private viewpoints identified in the report are appropriate and cover most of the range of potential visibility.
16. The rural character and naturalness of views towards the site from Upper Ōrewa Road and Russell Road would be substantially reduced by the proposal. However, given the extent of existing and zoned urban development west of SH1 at Milldale and Te Ara Hills, the change would not be unexpected to locals and visitors. I consider that adverse effects on the amenity of transient views from the roads would be low-moderate in extent once revegetation planting on the site matures. Exposed earthworks and loss of vegetation mean that temporary effects during the staged construction period (which could extend over at least 8 years) would be moderate in magnitude. From more distant viewpoints, I agree that adverse visual amenity effects would be low or very low in the longer term.
17. In my opinion, potential adverse effects on the visual and rural amenities of properties to the immediate south of the proposal have been underestimated in the Greenwoods report. A number of these properties (including 90, 100 and 118 Upper Ōrewa Road and 3, 11, and 35 Russell Road) have primary residential outlooks over the site and could anticipate continued rural uses for some time under the Future Urban zoning. The rural character, pleasantness and naturalness of these outlooks would be significantly altered by development, with moderate-high adverse effects during earthworks and construction and moderate adverse effects remaining even when street and riparian planting becomes established. The privacy, relative quiet and spaciousness anticipated in a rural environment would be significantly compromised. From the consultation records, it appears that the majority of these properties may be land-banked for future urban development.

Effects on landscape character and values

18. These effects are discussed in paragraphs 3.32 to 3.38 and Section 7 of the Greenwoods report and in the June addendum.
19. The obvious outcome of the proposal would be a change from rural to urban character, as stated in the report, and an associated loss of rural amenity for surrounding properties. I agree that the density and style of development, with predominantly standalone single or two-storey dwellings, would be consistent with that in the adjoining Ara Hills subdivision and across the motorway at West Hoe Heights and Strathmill. For people not familiar with the locality, I agree that it would be perceived as a logical continuation of greenfields urbanisation.
20. The retention and enhancement of the wetlands, gullies and streams would retain the landscape pattern of gullies, ridgelines and patches of native vegetation and would enhance the naturalness and public accessibility of these natural features. There is also potential for enhancement of the naturalness, aesthetic and experiential attributes of the SEA in the north-west area of the site.

21. However the flattening of the ridges to provide level building platforms and outdoor spaces means that steep 1:1 batters (I assume these are mechanically stabilized earthfill MSE walls) would be created on the upper slopes of the gullies. The earthworks plans and the representative cross sections provided as further information show that in many cases these batters are of substantial vertical height (more than 6 metres). Proposed planting on these MSE walls is largely Lot Revegetation Mix (PM), which is predominantly shrubs capable of reaching a height of 2m. The steepness and evenness of these slopes would still be legible with this type of planting and would detract from the naturalness of the wetland/stream gullies. In addition, growth and survival of shrubs and trees may be difficult on the MSE walls. As a result I do not agree with the Greenwoods assessment that the cut and fill strategy is largely sympathetic to the local topography.
22. The addendum to the landscape assessment states that the western 'urban-rural' edge would be a vegetated rather than a hard built edge, with larger lots near the boundary. However, the density of built form enabled along the western edge is very similar to that in the remainder of the proposed development. And while a vegetated edge would be enabled in the upper west boundary (Stage 2B-2), development in Stage 2C is largely raised above the boundary and proposed PM shrub planting would not provide a backdrop or foreground to housing adjoining this boundary.
23. I agree that in the main, proposed development would not be perceived as ribbon development of identical built form atop a ridgeline. The exception to this could be the Stage 2B-2 built development in the upper part of the site.
24. In my opinion, the conclusion of a 'low' overall effect on landscape character and values is not credible or justifiable. It appears that this conclusion is based on comparison with an expected urban outcome, rather than effects on the landscape as it is currently. In my assessment, the proposal would result in moderate-high adverse landscape effects during construction and moderate adverse effects on completion, reducing to low-moderate over time as street tree and revegetation planting matures.

Landscape plans

Open space and pedestrian/cyclist connectivity

25. The provision of neighbourhood parks in both Stages 1 and 2 of the proposal is supported. Both proposed parks adjoin existing or proposed bush covenant areas or SW ponds and have good road frontage for passive surveillance. Pedestrian and cyclist access to these parks is provided on the roads and JOALs and via some proposed pedestrian connections.
26. There is poor pedestrian connectivity between some parts of the development. The proposed connections across gullies and bush areas shown on the original landscape plans and in the Terra Studio RFI plan are positive, but additional connections from Road 03 to Road 04 and from Road 24/JOAL 38 to Road 22 are recommended.
27. In order to reduce adverse effects on the ecological integrity of the existing bush covenant area between Stage 2A-1 and Stage 2B-3, I recommend that this proposed walkway connection be constructed as a 1.5m wide compacted gravel path with no lighting. This would minimise vegetation

clearance and maintain permeability within the bush area. An alternative route would be available along the roads, with good passive surveillance and lighting in the evening/night.

28. The proposed pedestrian connection with the westernmost part of Ara Hills is positive, but a road connection between the two developments in this location would be of greater value for connectivity. Proposed walkway connections eastward to Ara Hills from Stage 1A-3 and southwards to Russell Road from Stage 1A-4 are also beneficial, although overall the development has poor vehicular and pedestrian/cyclist connectivity with the current urban and rural environment.

Revegetation planting

29. The native revegetation of wetlands, gullies, riparian areas and upper hill slopes is supported. This planting would enhance the natural character of wetlands and streams and provide a buffer/extension to the SEA. The proposed native species are appropriate, although I have recommended a greater diversity of taller growing species in the 'Lower riparian planting mix' to provide shade to wetlands and water courses. I understand that revised plans to be submitted on the 19/06/25 will include additional taller growing species but I have not reviewed those plans.
30. Finalised landscape design drawings are required by proposed land use Condition 41. In order to allow monitoring of implementation and certainty that native revegetation areas would be established and maintained, it is recommended that this condition contain additional detail. A potential condition is included below.
31. Conditions of consent (Conditions 80 and 82) require formation of an incorporated society that would own the larger bush covenant lots (Lots 1901, 1904, 1905, 1908, 1920 and 1922) and be responsible for protecting the vegetation and the ecological health of the bush covenant areas. It appears that Lot 1910 in Stage 2A-2 has been mistakenly left out of the condition. The conditions do not currently require the incorporated society to maintain the native vegetation, walkway connections and lookouts shown on the plans in accordance with an approved specification, or to undertake any specified ongoing pest control programme. I recommend that conditions be included requiring provision of a long term bush covenant management plan, and ongoing implementation of that plan.
32. Many of the proposed riparian revegetation areas are within private properties, but subject to bush covenants (NB. this is not shown correctly on the landscape plans dated 14/04/25 and scheme plans should be referred to instead). There are currently no mechanisms to ensure consistent maintenance and management of these areas, including replacements of dead or diseased plants and ongoing management of plant and animal pests. Greater consistency of management could be achieved if ongoing maintenance of these areas was the responsibility of the incorporated society rather than individual landowners. At the least, ongoing maintenance should be required in accordance with a plant and animal pest management plan approved by Council prior.
33. The 14/02/25 landscape drawings do not include any weed control and infill planting within the SEA on the site. Part of this area is currently weed-dominated (predominantly gorse). I understand that this will be addressed within the revised Proposed Consent Conditions and landscape plans to be submitted on 19/06/25, but I have been unable to review these documents.

Additional screen planting

34. The Greenwoods Landscape Assessment, in discussing effects on the visual amenity of residents at 118 Upper Ōrewa Road, states that additional planting has been provided at the intersection of this road and proposed Road 17 to screen the road and traffic movements. However the landscape drawings only show two street trees in this location. I recommend that additional native screen planting be added to the plans to mitigate adverse visual effects experienced from this property.

Retaining wall and fencing design

35. I understand that retaining walls facing streets and publicly accessible spaces are proposed to be of masonry block construction. I also understand that walls greater than 1.5m in height would be stepped, with intermediate planting. This proposal would ensure that the potential visual dominance of these retaining walls was adequately mitigated. However, these details are not currently shown in the application plans or ensured by conditions of consent. The 14/02/25 landscape drawings only show a stepped wall typology for walls greater than 2.5m in height, with hedge planting to screen walls less than 2.5m.
36. A wide palette of fencing types is proposed in the landscape drawings, with frontage fences being powdercoated or with a dark stain or paint finish. Front yard fences appear to comply with Standard H4.6.14 in the MHSZ where they are not combined with retaining walls (1.2m). However, drawings of combined retaining walls and fences on Dwg 2180/44 Typical Retaining Sections show non-compliance with Figure H.4.6.14.1, which requires the combined height of retaining and fence on side boundaries to be 2.0m. I recommend that the finalised landscape drawings to be submitted pursuant to conditions of consent specify compliance with a combined height of 2m, except where a safety from falling barrier of 1.1m in height is required. The MHSZ standard is intended to minimise the visual dominance of combined retaining and solid fencing, and this is an important consideration given the use of retaining walls on most residential boundaries.
37. The landscape drawings show 1.8m open security fences on side boundaries within the 'Lot Revegetation Mix' PM planting areas and between this planting and the private or communally owned riparian planting. Many of the PM planting areas are steep 1:1 batters with MSE retaining walls and fencing in these areas would unnecessarily compartmentalise these planting areas, without any substantial benefit for dwelling security. I recommend that these fences be deleted where they are within or on the boundary of PM planting areas, except where prevention of access to wetlands or SW treatment devices is required for safety.

Recommended conditions

38. Amendment to Condition 41 (which is for drainage reserves and vested road reserves only) to require additional planting within the vested road reserve that would screen the intersection of Road 17 and Upper Ōrewa Road from the dwelling at 118 Upper Ōrewa Road.
39. A new condition requiring submission of finalised landscape design drawings for Lots 1901, 1904, 1905, 1908, 1910, 1920 and 1922 and all bush covenant areas on individual lots. For example:

Landscape Design Plans

Prior to . . . the Consent Holder must provide to the Monitoring Team Leader for certification a finalised set of detailed soft and hard landscape design drawings and supporting written documentation prepared by a landscape architect or suitably qualified person. The submitted information must be in general accordance with the Landscape Plans referred to in Condition 1. The landscape design drawings, specifications and maintenance requirements must, at a minimum, include the following matters:

- (a) The location of all areas to be planted.*
- (b) A plant schedule based on the submitted planting plan(s) which details specific plant species, plant sourcing, the number of plants, and height and/or grade (litre) / Pb size at time of planting.*
- (c) Specifications for site preparation, including methods for weed control and protection of retained indigenous vegetation, soil preparation, planting implementation, mulching, and irrigation.*
- (d) Specifications and a programme for active maintenance of planting areas over a period of at least 5 years, including plant replacements, weed control and pest animal control.*
- (d) Plans denoting the design of retaining walls, fences, steps, walkways, wayfinding signage and lookouts.*
- (e) The final location, height, materiality and treatment of retaining walls, both within private lots and communally-owned areas.*
- (f) In respect of retaining walls and fences specifically demonstrate that:*
 - a) Where retaining walls are provided along external boundaries, the combined wall and fence height must not exceed 2m, except where railings are required for safety from falling.*

40. A new condition requiring submission of finalised landscape design drawings for individual lots, with submission requirements similar to those above, but also including requirements for:
 - retaining walls visible from public places to be constructed from a high quality material/finish;
 - retaining walls to be stepped with intermediate planting beds if greater than 1.5m in height;
 - no boundary fencing to be provided within the 'Lot Revegetation Planting Mix' PM areas shown on the Landscape Plans referred to in Condition 1, except where prevention of access to wetlands or SW treatment devices is required for safety.
41. Amendment to Condition 42 to ensure that implementation of drainage reserve, road reserve and covenant bush area planting on communally and privately owned lots is undertaken prior to approval under s224(c) of the RMA for each stage of development.
42. Amendment to Condition 43 to require submission of a long term vegetation management plan for Lots 1901, 1904, 1905, 1908, 1910, 1920 and 1922 and all bush covenant areas on individual lots, along with methods for ensuring the revegetation planting areas and SEA are maintained in perpetuity in accordance with the approved plan. The vegetation management plan should include a programme and specifications for ongoing control of pest plants and animals, and specifications for maintenance and replacement of retaining walls, fences, steps, walkways, wayfinding signage and lookouts.
43. Amendment to Condition 80 to include Lot 1910.

44. Amendment to Conditions 81 and 82 to require the vegetation and freshwater features to be maintained in accordance with the approved vegetation management plan (refer Paragraph 42 above), and protected in perpetuity.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H Mellsop', written in a cursive style.

Helen Mellsop
BLA, BHB, Dip Hort (Distinction)
Registered NZILA Landscape Architect

Appendix A

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

I am a consultant landscape architect, registered with Tuia Pito Ora, the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects (NZILA). I hold the qualifications of Bachelor of Landscape Architecture from UNITEC Institute of Technology, Bachelor of Human Biology from University of Auckland and Diploma of Horticulture (Distinction) from Lincoln University. I have been practicing as a landscape architect for over 23 years, with a focus on landscape planning and landscape and visual assessment over the past 18 years. I have appeared frequently as an expert witness at Council Hearings and have also participated in numerous Environment Court mediations and prepared numerous briefs of evidence for appeal hearings in the Environment Court. I am accredited to sit on RMA hearing panels under the Ministry for the Environment's 'Making Good Decisions' programme and was appointed to Auckland Council's independent commissioner panel for the 2021-2023 and 2024-2026 terms.

LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT PEER REVIEW METHODOLOGY

An assessment of the landscape and visual amenity effects of the proposal has been provided in the Greenwoods Associates report. The peer review section of this memo evaluates the adequacy of the submitted assessment and specifically addresses the following aspects:

- Whether the assessment methodology is appropriate and robust;
- Whether the analysis of the landscape context of the site is robust and corresponds to the landscape attributes and values.
- Whether any key issues or considerations have been missed in the assessment;
- Whether the assessment has correctly interpreted the nature and magnitude of visual and landscape effects;
- Whether the conclusions of the assessment are credible and justifiable.

In undertaking my review, I have used the same 7-point scale of landscape and visual effects set out in Section 2 of the Greenwoods Associates report. This scale is consistent with the latest NZILA guidelines¹. The guidelines recommend that where the terms minor, less than minor and more than minor apply to non-complying activities or to notification decisions, the following table demonstrates how these terms could apply to the 7-point scale.

Very low	Low	Low-mod	Moderate	Mod-High	High	Very high
Less than minor		Minor		More than minor		

1 Te Tangi a te Manu, Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines, Tuia Pito Ora New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects, July 2022.