

To: Ministry for the Environment (MfE)

From: Easson Shen & Alicia Lawrie – Barker & Associates Limited

Date: 18 March 2026

Re: Urban Design Memorandum – Awanui Links Masterplan

1.0 Introduction

Swordfish Projects Limited proposes to lodge an application for a referral project under the Fast Track Approvals Act (2024) to utilise the fast-track consenting process via an expert consenting panel. This application, known as **Awanui Links**, relates to the subject site located at 28 Telephone Road (**'the Site'**).

To support the referral application, this memorandum provides a high-level assessment of the urban design aspects of the development, including:

- Summary of the proposal and the Site's key characteristics;
- Preliminary assessment of the proposal against relevant policy documents;
- Urban design response.

This memorandum should be read in conjunction with **Appendix 1 - Awanui Links Masterplan**, prepared by Barker & Associates Limited and dated March 2026.

Should the project be successful in referring to the Fast-track EPA process, a full Urban Design Assessment will be prepared and lodged as part of the full resource consent application.

2.0 Project Description and Summary

Broadly speaking, the Awanui Links Masterplan (**'the Masterplan'**) comprises a centrally located 18-hole-golf course with complimentary facility buildings (e.g. Clubhouse) and 62 visitor accommodation villas, a retirement village with 135 units, 70 rural residential lots, and 9 industrial lots, along with stormwater management facilities and amenity landscaping. The high-level masterplan is shown in **Figure 1** below.

The proposed golf course will form a key recreational and landscape component within the Site, establishing a precinct that integrates sport, leisure, and hospitality. The 18-hole-golf course will be centred around a contemporary clubhouse, proshop, driving range, wellness centre, fine dining restaurant, and boutique hotel with associated event and conference facilities. The golf course will be accessed via a local road which links the centre of the site to Telephone Road. Visitor accommodation will be set amongst the proposed fairways and artificial wetlands. Extensive planting, ecological restoration, and integrated water features have been proposed throughout the development to support amenity for future residents and visitors.

135 retirement living units are intended to support the growing demand for retirement living in Hamilton. A mix of independent living villas will be provided and supported by a central care facility, healthcare and community facilities.

The rural residential lots are proposed at the north-eastern, and north-western boundaries of the site. Access to the rural residential lots and retirement village is proposed via a 20-metre-wide local road entering the Site over an existing culvert to the west of the site and extending parallel to the northern and eastern boundaries. The local road is supported by two 10-metre-wide private roads to provide accessibility and circulation throughout the development. Allotments are generally sized at approximately 3,000 sqm, allowing for a variety of housing forms and landscape outcomes.

The proposed industrial area comprises nine lots ranging from 2,300 – 5,700 sqm (approximately 3.99 ha in total), all served by a 10 m right-of-way that partially utilises the existing farm access and one of the existing culverts along Telephone Road. A 3,000 sqm solar farm is also proposed adjacent to the industrial area along the southern boundary providing on-site renewable energy generation.

2.0 Master Plan



Figure 1 High-level Masterplan

3.0 Site and Context Analysis Summary

B&A undertook a site and context analysis, which has been included in **Appendix 1**.

The Site is located in the Waikato District and is accessible via Telephone Road (SH1B) to the south-west. The Site also adjoins several existing rural lifestyle residential properties, particularly to the west on the opposite side of Telephone Road and to the north-west. The Site is approximately 10 kilometres from the Hamilton City Centre.

The Site comprises approximately 118 hectares of land located to the east of the Hamilton City boundary, positioned between the rural communities of Puketaha (to the north) and Matangi (to the south). It is currently held in 27 individual lots and is predominantly utilised for rural using.

Barker & Associates

+64 375 0900 | admin@barker.co.nz

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The Site is framed by Telephone Road to the south-west, the East Coast Main Trunk rail corridor to the south-east, and Holland Road running parallel to the railway line. These transport corridors provide key north-south and east-west links between Gordonton, Cambridge, Hamilton and Morrinsville. The Site sits at a strategic interface between Hamilton City's eastern urban edge and the surrounding rural landscape within the Waikato District.

The Site's topography is predominantly flat with a total level change of approximately 3m across the site (from 42m to 45m above sea level).

Existing water courses are generally artificial in origin and include farm drains and two artificial farm ponds. An off-site farm drain along the west boundary has resulted in five existing entrances from Telephone Road which utilise culverts over the drain to gain access to the Site.

In terms of vegetation, the Site is dominated by exotic vegetation, shelterbelts, and grazed pasture, with some individual native saplings and small trees located within the shelterbelts. There are two small wetlands located in the north-western portion of the Site, which potentially provide natural habitats that are ecologically sensitive. These wetlands are currently under investigation to further confirm their ecological status and conditions.

The surrounding context is predominantly rural in character, comprising pastoral farmland that is representative of the wider Waikato District landscape. Rural-residential properties and lifestyle allotments are located adjacent to the Site and along the opposite side of Telephone Road, reinforcing the low-density, open-space setting. Puketaha Primary School is the closest educational facility serving the local community, located approximately 6 km from the Site. A broader range of day-to-day amenities and services, including supermarkets, hospitality, and retail area primarily available within Hamilton City approximately 10km from the Site.

4.0 Urban Design Response

The Masterplan has been informed by high-level technical inputs from a range of specialists and has been designed to provide for quality urban design outcomes. Key design aspects of the masterplan are discussed further below.

4.1 Movement and Connectivity

The Masterplan will create a connected, easy-to-navigate street network linking the proposed land uses to Telephone Road / State Highway 1B. The network is structured around two proposed local roads (~20 m) and supported by private roads (~10 m) serving the rural-residential, retirement village, golf course, and industrial areas. The Masterplan has adopted the following design measures:

- A clear street hierarchy that links Awanui Links to Telephone Road / SH1B, with local roads forming the primary east-west spines and a series of Right of Ways providing fine-grain access between land uses, to support legibility and connectivity.
- The proposed lots and built forms across the various land uses generally address the street, providing convenient access and a clear indoor-outdoor connection and outlook that support passive surveillance. In turn, locating primary entrances and glazing on the street enhances the pedestrian experience and supports active frontages.

- The proposed light industrial lots are accessed via a dedicated 10 m right-of-way from Telephone Road, separate from the internal street network serving the rural residential, retirement village and golf course areas. This arrangement accommodates heavy vehicle movements while minimising interactions and potential conflicts with resident and visitor traffic, supporting site safety.
- Continuous, segregated walking and cycling links will connect different parts of the Site integrating land uses, enabling safe and convenient movement to key destinations without relying on vehicle trips.

4.2 Land use pattern and context integration

The Masterplan's land-use pattern and landscape structure are intended to support a mix of uses while managing its integration with the surrounding rural context:

- The co-location of rural-residential lots, a retirement village, golf course, guest accommodation and light industrial area create a balanced land-use mix that supports activity, with residents, visitors and workers present at different times of day. This supports access to amenities while providing opportunities for passive surveillance across the site.
- The provision of golf fairways, wetlands and layered boundary planting creates separation between the proposed built form from SH1B and adjoining farmland. This allows Awanui Links to read as a landscape-led change of the rural environment and manages potential reverse-sensitivity effects between urban and rural activities.
- The proposed 3000m² rural-residential lots provide flexibility for a wide range of building forms, setbacks, and on-site landscaping, helping to avoid uniformity and introduce visual variation whilst maintaining an open character consistent with the surrounding rural setting. This flexibility also enables buildings to respond to site features (trees, contours, drainage), provides privacy, outlook, and amenity to future residents and supports a more varied, interesting streetscape - even at the low density proposed.
- Different uses generate activity across the day and night, increasing "eyes on the street" and passive surveillance around streets, paths, and shared spaces. This improves perceived safety and helps create a more lively, legible site structure.
- The provision of active recreation opportunities and open outlook strengthens overall site amenity by supporting healthy, everyday activity and access to attractive open spaces. Outlook to landscape and recreation areas provide visual relief and wellbeing, contributing to a stronger visual character.
- Appropriate separation between on-site uses is achieved through dedicated industrial vehicle access, which limits heavy vehicle movements within the internal network and reduces potential conflict with residential and visitor circulation. Proposed setbacks and a perimeter shelter belt around the industrial uses will provide effective visual screening and amenity buffering for operational effects, including potential noise and vibration. The interface is further assisted by the light industrial area adjoining the golf course, which is a less sensitive receiving environment, supporting an appropriate land use transition and reducing potential reverse-sensitivity effects.
- Transitions at rural interfaces are managed by graduating development intensity down toward the Site edges through lower-density rural-residential lots, generous setbacks, and landscape/shelter planting. This approach maintains a more open rural outlook, reduces the perceived scale of built form and helps new development sit comfortably within the existing rural context. It also provides a clear, legible edge condition and an appropriate buffer to support rural amenity.

- Rural residential lots are orientated to enable future buildings to front streets and open spaces while screening yards and servicing, so rural character is retained, and reverse sensitivity effects are managed.

4.3 Retirement village

The Masterplan includes a 135-unit retirement village with two dwelling typologies (comprising either 60 m² and 80 m² internal floor area), supported by care facilities and a café. It is accessed via the northern most local road from Telephone Road and served by private accessways to individual units. It is positioned between the proposed rural-residential lots, and the golf course.

- The retirement village introduces age-friendly housing and everyday activity into the masterplan, and by clustering the café and care facilities along the local street it can support passive surveillance to the public realm.
- The larger built form associated with the retirement village is setback from the external boundaries to limit potential visual effects.
- The arrangement of units adjacent to the proposed accessways will enable active frontages and passive surveillance as well as on-site amenity.

4.4 Open space provision, response to natural features and infrastructure

Eight stormwater ponds will function as key structuring elements of the open space network, combining water-sensitive urban design with ecology, recreation, and identity:

- Stormwater ponds are formed with gentle batters and safety shelves, with integrated paths and specimen trees so that stormwater infrastructure reads as parkland rather than inactive spaces, and double as dispersed landscape features within the golf course providing amenity and outlook for future residents and users.
- Boundary planting is proposed at key edges to manage visual effects and soften hard edges created by transport and rail corridors.
- The proposed golf course planting increases overall vegetation coverage, enhances habitat and biodiversity, provides shade for players, and establishes green buffers that separate the golf course from guest accommodation and retirement village units to mitigate potential conflicts between on-site uses.

5.0 Preliminary Recommendations and Conclusion

It is considered that Awanui Links delivers a coherent street and open space framework, and a mix of land-uses to create diverse activity while managing reverse sensitivity along key transport routes and providing an appropriate visual transition at rural edges.

The Masterplan integrates a blue-green network of wetlands, drains and landscape corridors that both manage stormwater while providing future amenity. Subject to further technical inputs, the development of more detailed building plans, comprehensive design controls and/or guidelines, the proposal will support a well-functioning urban environment consistent with contemporary New Zealand urban design practice and the FTAA purpose.

6.0 Qualifications and Experience

Barker & Associates is a specialist planning consultancy founded in 1997, with a team of more than 45 planning and urban design staff operating out of Kerikeri, Whangārei, Warkworth, Auckland, Tauranga, Hamilton, Cambridge, Hastings, Wellington, Christchurch, Queenstown and Wānaka offices.

Easson Shen (BLA (hons); MUDes)

I am an Urban Designer and Landscape Architect at Barker & Associates (B&A), a planning, urban design, and landscape consultancy with offices located around New Zealand. I joined B&A in June 2024 and am based in the Auckland office.

I hold a Master of Urban Design from the University of Auckland and a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture (Honours) from Lincoln University, and I am a graduate member of the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects (NZILA). I have approximately 2 years' professional experience in urban design and landscape architecture.

My experience includes working for a range of clients, including land developers and commercial entities throughout New Zealand. This has involved preparing urban design assessments in support of resource consent applications, undertaking master planning, completing landscape and visual effects assessments, and delivering landscape design work.

Alicia Lawrie (BAS; MArch (prof))

I am an Associate Urban Designer at Barker & Associates (B&A). B&A is a planning, urban design and landscape consultancy with offices located around New Zealand. I have been employed by B&A since January 2022 and am based in the Wellington office.

I hold a Master of Architecture (Professional) and a Bachelor of Architectural Studies from Victoria University of Wellington. I am an associate member of the New Zealand Planning Institute. I have approximately 9 years' experience working in the field of urban design in the public and private sectors.

I have a broad range of experience working on behalf of clients including land developers, commercial entities and Councils in Northland and around New Zealand. This has involved urban design assessments to support resource consent applications, urban design peer reviews, the development of urban design guidelines, strategic planning and master planning.