

Memorandum

9 June 2025

Memo to : Knight Investments Limited - Daniel Nakhle

Memo From : Nick Rae

Re: Fast Track Referral Application – Pohutukawa Business Park – Urban Design Considerations

The following provides urban design commentary on the proposal to submit a referral application for the Pohutukawa Business Park development to the relevant agency and ultimately the Minister for consideration and determination, under the Fast-Track Approvals Act 2024 (The FTAA).

The Proposal

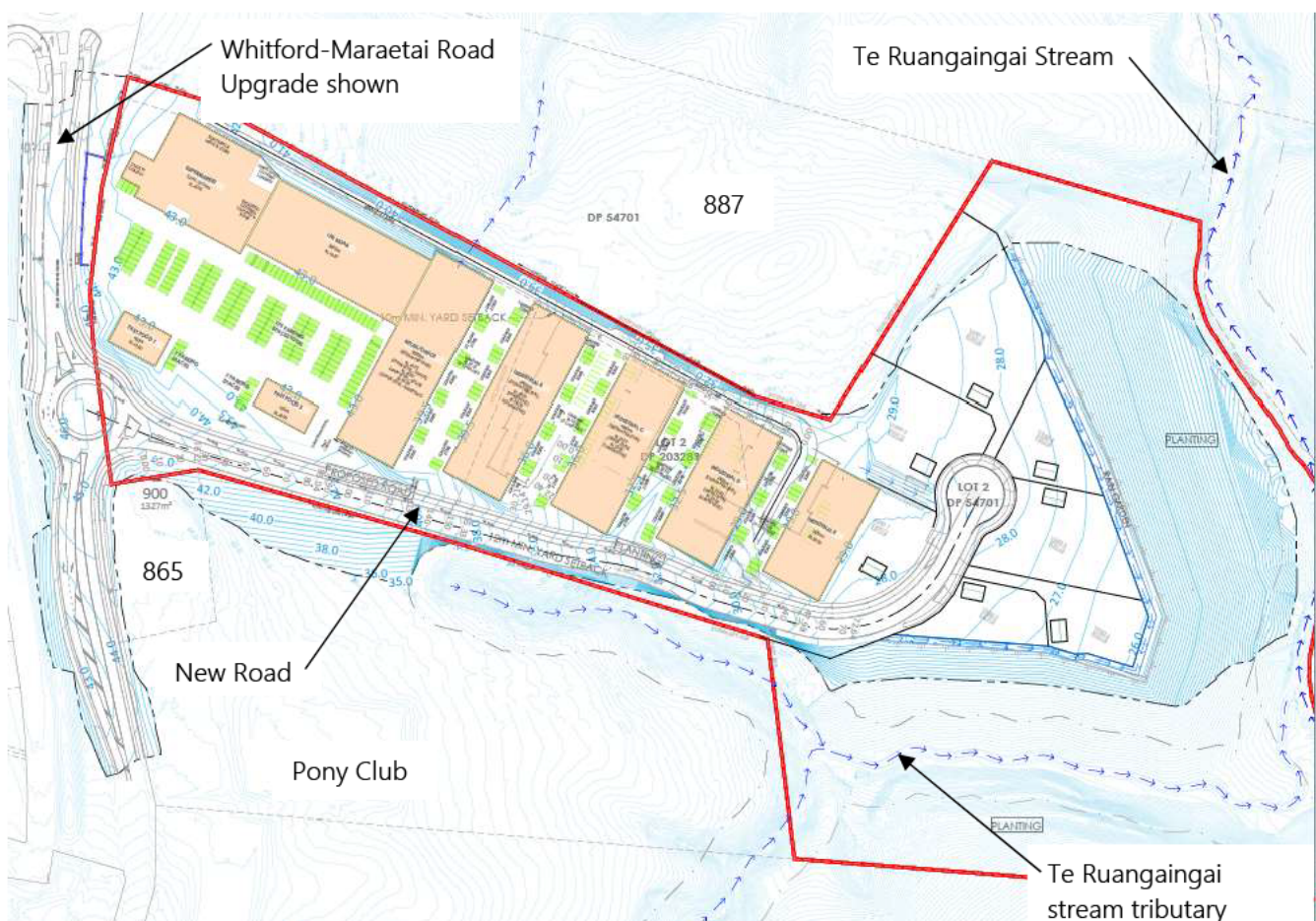


Figure 1 – Concept plan for proposed application prepared by Civilplan dated 24-02-2025. For the purpose of this report, north is up the page.

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The proposal is to develop the site (867 and 885 Whitford-Maraetai Road, Beachlands, Auckland) with a mixed use development consisting of industrial warehousing, yard based industrial, large format retail, fast food restaurants and offices, along with a new road, adjustments to Whitford-Maraetai Road, service access and car parking facilities as shown in the project concept in Figure 1. The proposal includes earthworks (including on two neighbouring properties to the south), retaining walls and planting.

Scope

Transurban has been engaged as part of the specialist team providing input into the proposal from an urban design perspective in support of a "Referral Application" under the FTAA.

The scope of this memo is to address the proposal with regard to urban design matters and consider known and anticipated effects as well as identify mitigation options if required to manage effects.

As the design is a concept, it is expected that changes will be made to this as part of documentation for a substantive application.

The Context

Drawings 01 to 03 in Attachment A illustrate the physical and planning Beachlands-Maraetai context and relationship the site has with existing and future development opportunities.

The site is mostly a former quarry which is currently being rehabilitated through a managed fill process. The eastern part is zoned Quarry zone, while the western part is Countryside Living zone.

It has an easterly aspect falling from the Whitford-Maraetai Road to the Te Ruangaingai Stream (formerly the Te Puru Stream).

It abuts land zoned Open Space – Sport and Active Recreation to the south (currently leased by a Pony Club), Countryside Living zoned land north and south, with Mixed Rural to the east. The western boundary of the site abuts Whitford-Maraetai Road and is opposite Business - Local Centre zone and a small area of Residential Single House zone. A landscape buffer along the western side of Whitford-Maraetai Road means that there is no direct relationship between the existing development to the west, and Whitford-Maraetai Road or the site, although urban development can be seen "above" the bund, or through the gaps in the bund.

There is one dwelling close to the south of the site at 865 Whitford-Maraetai Road, and one north of the site at 887 Whitford-Maraetai Road. There is a dwelling on the ridge of the hill to the south of the site, at a minimum of 283m from the closest part of the southern boundary. All three dwellings have views to parts of the site.

The current zone does not anticipate the proposal. From an urban design perspective, the statutory context is important, but in this case this should only be considered at a higher level

given that the existing quarry operation is nearing the end of its life and the zoning is no longer appropriate. Urban expansion in Beachlands is enabled by recent plan changes, but those did not look at or include this land. The closure of the quarry leads to this opportunity and consideration for the next phase of the use of this land.

Previous quarry-related consents enable the reconstruction of a part of an arm of the stream that originates at the southern boundary, and replaces a part of the 'Pony Club stream' connecting into the Te Ruangaingai Stream at the eastern edge of the site. This consent includes the final design of the fill levels within the southern part of the quarry and a native revegetation planting strategy to restore a natural system with native revegetation repairing the land. This outcome is currently being implemented and is considered part of the existing environment.

An existing resource consent applies to the site which provides for a new road and industrial activities within 5 buildings and yards to the rear of the site as illustrated in Sheet 05 of Attachment A. This activity would be considered as part of the existing environment if this application was not proposed to replace it. A new application is required to adjust the layout of the site and include activities on the front part of the site.

Fast Track Approvals Act

The assessment below also addresses two key urban design related matters related to the Referral application, being:

- (a) Does the proposal assist in increasing the supply of housing or contribute to providing a well-functioning urban environment (as listed in Clause 22(2) of the FTAA to assist with determining whether the project would have significant regional benefit); and
- (b) Identification of any anticipated and known adverse effects of the proposal on the environment (Section 13(4)(h)), including how will the proposal impact the amenity values of neighbours and the public).

To assist the assessment under point (a), the proposal will not assist the supply of any housing. But it will assist in providing for a well functioning urban environment. Policy 1 of the NPSUD assists with guidance on a well-functioning urban environment together with other urban design principles developed by Transurban structured around the qualities identified in the NZ urban design protocol, Te Aranga Māori design principles, and People, Places, Spaces: A design guide for urban New Zealand (2001).

These focus on the urban form and function of places which are well connected, fit the planned context, add to the character and amenity of the area, provide choice for people and are environmentally responsive.

Initial Assessment

Overall, the Pohutukawa Business Park proposal is designed to integrate urban activities into a location which currently is a “peri-urban location” and of a mixed character where parts are more akin to rural rather than urban (but others such as that of the quarry and former quarry areas are not of a rural nature).

Best practice urban design generally seeks to maximise urban activities around centres. In that regard, the south eastern end of the proposed land use is 650m from the edge of the Local Centre zone. This is a good opportunity to provide additional business activities that are more vehicle based near a centre but also respond to the vehicle movement function of the corridor.

While the proposal does not increase the supply of housing, the site is well located to provide employment activities to assist with the functioning of Beachlands, and to a lesser extent, Maraetai. The proposal includes a variety of opportunities that are suitable for different business sectors (particularly light industry and yard-based activities) in a location that avoids adverse effects on the existing and planned amenity values of the urban area, and would have reasonable accessibility for people residing in the area, or from those residing further afield.

The urban land use as proposed on this land is considered to be more appropriate from an urban design perspective than limiting the site to only a few people living on lifestyle blocks due to the close proximity to the existing centre and the good accessibility provided by Whitford-Maraetai Road. A commercial-type development will integrate with the existing qualities of the road, and avoid issues that could arise if the proposed landuse was residential (which could also be a contender for the land being that close to the existing centre).

Provision for employment generating activities will assist with achieving a well-functioning urban environment for Beachlands as a whole, as the area is documented by both PC78 and PC88 as needing additional employment for the existing residential but also the future residential growth anticipated by both of these plan changes.

Connections

The site is strategically situated near a main road which provides the only vehicle access between Maraetai, Beachlands and Whitford, then on to Auckland and Manukau. Refer to Attachment A-01 illustrating the site in its regional context, and Attachment A-02 illustrating the main road “Whitford-Maraetai Road”.

A bus service between Maraetai via Beachlands, Whitford, Ormiston Town Centre to Botany Town Centre is accessible from bus stops on Beachlands Road at a distance of 270m from the site road frontage (refer to attachment A-04 illustrating the route). The site location is within an easy walking distance of this public transport option, providing alternatives for people residing in Maraetai and Beachlands or further afield to access the site. The residential catchment includes land outside what is considered a walkable context for this size of centre. The previous consent included road upgrades to include bus stops outside the site. These could also be included allowing for a change to the bus route reducing this walk if agreed.

The concept includes proposed upgrades to Whitford-Maraetai Road to improve pedestrian and cycling access in addition to the new intersection and traffic lane reconfiguration. There are other improvements that should also be explored to strengthen connections particularly to the residential area to the south of the existing centre as illustrated in sheet 4 of Attachment A.

The design of the site can and should achieve pedestrian connections linking to the wider road network. The exact design resolution will be part of the detailed design stage.

The close proximity to the existing centre is positive providing for alternative business and light industry type uses which are not best suited to a centre location, employees of this development would have access to the services provided for the centre, potentially adding to its vitality.

Built form

The design responds to the Whitford-Maraetai Road frontage with a landscape solution to create an attractive street edge transitioning to buildings behind which is an appropriate outcome. This is not a highly active or interactive design due to the function of the road. There is no built form to which the proposal should respond to. The stepping of buildings down the slope is a good response to the landform, particularly for the light industrial buildings.

The industrial buildings are the same as the previous consent which replicate rural style sheds and provide a more interesting outcome through the roof design than typical industrial buildings.

The design of buildings should where possible contribute to the arrival experience to Beachlands and to the amenity values of the street. This will be addressed through detail design of the proposal.

The western part of the site includes a layout with the major stores located to the rear of a big car park, typical of a vehicle-based development. The building design is yet to be progressed and the detail will ensure that it contributes to an interesting arrival experience.

Conclusion

The site provides a good opportunity to provide for a greater range of business in a location with easy walking distance of the existing centre and residential area, but also on the main road providing good access from wider locations including Maraetai.

Changes to the road environment are required and further pedestrian and cycle connections are recommended to address locations where connections previously have not been necessary.

The detailed design phase will enable the resolution of connections, levels, layout, building design and landscape treatment.

An Urban Design Assessment will be provided with the substantive application.

Author:



Nick Rae

Nick Rae holds a Master of Urban Design from Sydney University and a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture from Lincoln University.

Nick's urban design career has spanned the last 16 years in New Zealand, and since 2009 has been the managing director of Transurban Limited. Prior to that, Nick worked in Sydney, Riyadh, and London.

Nick is a founding member of the Urban Designers Institute Aotearoa, a professional institute that accredits urban design professionals.

Nick has experience in many master planning projects, plan changes, detailed design of greenfield subdivisions supported by urban design assessments.

Nick has had significant involvement in the masterplanning and detailed design of residential and retirement, industrial and centre developments including subdivision, and land form changes and enhancement of natural systems.