

To: Listed Projects Team – Ministry for the Environment

From: Easson Shen & Joseph McCready – Barker & Associates Limited

Date: 24 February 2026

Re: Landscape and Visual Effects Memorandum for Awanui Links Master plan.

## 1.0 Introduction

The LVA has been informed by the NZILA *Te Tangi a te Manu: Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines*, which provides an integrated framework for understanding landscape as the interrelationship of biophysical (physical) processes, associative meanings, and sensory/perceptual experience. Consistent with that approach, this report describes the Site and its context, identifies relevant landscape values and viewing audiences, and then considers the potential landscape and visual effects associated with the proposed masterplan. Figures referenced in the text are included to support understanding of the Site context, masterplan structure, and key viewpoints.

The Site is located on the eastern side of Telephone Road / SH1B, and northern side of Holland Road, with direct access from Telephone Road and strong connections to the wider state highway network (including SH1) serving Hamilton, Gordonton, Cambridge and surrounding rural communities. This strategic siting is relevant to the landscape and visual assessment because it places the project within a highly legible movement corridor where the “everyday” landscape experience for road users is a key part of the receiving environment, and where future change will be readily perceived.

## 2.0 Master Plan

- Legend**
- Site Boundary
  - Proposed Rural Residential Lots (70 lots)
  - Proposed Light Industrial Lots (9 lots)
  - Proposed Retirement Village (137 units)
  - Proposed Retirement Village Care Facility
  - Proposed Golf Course Visitor Accommodation
  - Proposed Golf Course Facility Buildings
  - Proposed Golf Course Driving Range Building
  - Proposed Commercial Amenities / Services
  - Proposed Community Hub / Meeting Space
  - Proposed Indicative Planting / Landscaping
  - Proposed Stormwater Device
  - Proposed Carpark (approx. 6300sqm)
  - Rail Corridor Noise and Vibration Influence / Alert Area (Kiwi Rail) (100m)
  - Existing Railway
  - State Highway
  - Wellness Centre / Fine Dining (approx. 3500sqm)
  - Event Centre / Hotel (approx. 3500sqm)
  - Clubhouse / Club / Cafe (approx. 2550sqm)
  - Proshop (approx. 800sqm)
  - Virtual Golf / Sims (approx. 800sqm)
  - Cart Storage (approx. 1000sqm)
  - Putting Green
  - Storage Shed (approx. 1000 sqm)
  - Open Space / Wedding Venue
  - Visitor Accommodation - Large Luxury Villas (10 villas)
  - Visitor Accommodation - Small Luxury Villas (52 villas)
  - Retirement Village Care Facility (approx. 3000sqm)
  - Cafe (approx. 800sqm)
  - Convenience Store / Pharmacy / Medical Centre / Dentist / Wellness Gym / Physio (approx. 1100sqm)
  - General Recreation / Lawn Bowls / Tennis / Pickle Ball Courts (approx. 2500sqm)
  - Solar Farm (approx. 3000sqm)



**Figure 1: Awanui Links Masterplan (B&A).**

In planning terms, the Site is zoned Rural Zone under the Operative Waikato District Plan and General Rural under the Waikato District Plan (Operative in Part). It is anticipated that development will deliver a cohesive

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transition from an existing rural environment into a mixed-use context, within a surrounding setting that already includes productive farmland, rural-residential properties, and emerging lifestyle development.

In landscape terms, this establishes a baseline in which rural character and rural amenity are not ‘pristine,’ but are nonetheless valued for openness, continuity of productive patterns, and the clarity of the urban–rural edge; these attributes are therefore the ones most likely to be sensitive to change and most important to manage through design.

Physically (biophysical dimension), the land is described as broadly regular in shape and generally flat with subtle falls and is presently expressed as a modified rural landscape structured by farming patterns, shelterbelts, hedgerows, and a network of artificial drains. Ecological information confirms that watercourses are artificial in origin, with two small wetland areas under investigation, and notes the potential habitat value of mature exotic trees and woody debris (including potential bat roosting and lizard habitat), alongside an explicit intention to adopt water-sensitive design principles that protect and enhance the Waikato River as the ultimate receiving environment. These characteristics matter because the flat topography increases potential visibility across and into the Site, while the drainage network and wetland opportunities provide a clear organising framework for ‘blue – green’ structure that can both mitigate effects (through filtering, buffering, and screening) and deliver positive effects (through restoration and amenity gains).

From an associative perspective, the masterplan identifies the opportunity to embed a cultural narrative that acknowledges the significance of the whenua and Waikato Te Awa, to be developed with tangata whenua. In practical terms, this means that the assessment should not treat cultural values as an “add-on”, but should instead inform where and how landscape structure, water systems, planting, and public-facing spaces are shaped to express identity, stewardship (kaitiakitanga), and the long-term health of the receiving environment.

Perceptually, the existing environment is experienced as a rural road-edge landscape with intermittent rural-residential development and open landform. Key viewers include residents on neighbouring lifestyle blocks and travellers along Telephone Road / SH1B, with additional sensitivity created by the proximity of the rail corridor and the road/rail noise influence areas noted in the consultation material. These conditions indicate that landscape and visual effects will be driven less by “long-distance” views and more by close-to-mid range viewing at speed (from SH1B) and slower, more attentive viewing from local roads and nearby dwellings. Accordingly, the assessment should focus on how built form, lighting, movement, and edge treatments alter the perceived openness and rural coherence of the landscape, and how proposed buffers and planting can re-establish legibility and a coherent sense of place as the Site transitions.

The masterplan itself proposes a mixed programme that includes rural residential lots (70), light industrial lots (9), a retirement village (137 units) with a care facility, and a golf course with associated visitor accommodation and facilities, as well as additional hospitality/wellness and event components and areas of proposed planting and wetlands. The landscape strategy explicitly emphasises restoration planting and water-sensitive stormwater management, enhanced planting along the Telephone Road boundary and the rail corridor, and layered boundary/character planting along neighbouring rural farms to retain rural character and provide visual screening and separation between activity types.

## 1.1 Project Summary

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The proposal establishes a broad range of land uses across a large rural-edge landholding, comprising rural-residential living, light industrial activity, a retirement village and care facility, and a recreation/visitor

economy anchored by a golf course. The breadth of uses is a defining feature of the conceptual masterplan and increases the importance of a clear spatial structure, so that different activities can operate efficiently while maintaining a coherent rural-edge pattern and avoiding land use conflict at sensitive interfaces.

- **Rural residential living (low density):** The rural-residential component provides for 70 lots at the north eastern boundary in a generally spacious pattern consistent with a rural lifestyle character. The intent of this component is to retain a degree of openness and rural amenity; while requiring a considered approach to setbacks, boundary shelter planting and internal street landscape structure so the area continues to read as part of the rural fringe rather than a suburban subdivision.
- **Light industrial precinct:** The masterplan provides for 9 light industrial lots, introducing a more intensive built form typology within the rural setting. Given the contrast between industrial building forms and the existing rural baseline, careful interface planning is required so that building mass, servicing areas, parking and lighting are absorbed by a strong landscape framework, maintaining legibility and avoiding visual dominance when viewed from public corridors and adjoining rural properties.
- **Retirement village and care facility:** A retirement village comprising 137 units and an associated care facility introduces a consolidated residential/healthcare environment within the broader rural context. This land use typically has a stronger built presence than rural dwellings, so its integration relies on internal layout, perimeter setbacks and layered planting to reduce perceived bulk and to maintain a softened edge condition consistent with rural amenity expectations.
- **Golf course and recreation/visitor economy:** An 18-hole golf course forms a substantial open-space anchor and is a key mechanism for retaining an open ground plane across the site. This component helps maintain rural openness and long horizontal sightlines, while also providing a clear organising structure for pedestrian movement, amenity landscapes and water-based features. Visitor accommodation and associated facilities, together with complementary destination uses (including wellness/fine dining and an event centre/hotel), add activity and night-time presence, making careful management of lighting, servicing and edge treatment important to maintain a coherent rural-edge experience.
- **Landscape and ecological framework (blue-green network):** A central element is the site-wide blue-green system, which repurposes the existing farm drain as a primary spine and integrates wetlands, swales and stormwater ponds as part of the landscape structure. This approach treats water infrastructure as visible, planted landscape, supporting stormwater treatment and attenuation while also providing amenity and an ecological corridor within an otherwise modified pastoral setting.
- **Interface and structure planting:** Targeted boundary planting is proposed along Telephone Road / SH1B, with enhanced planting along the rail corridor and layered character/screening planting at interfaces with neighbouring rural land. This planting structure is critical in a flat landscape where visibility is high and edges are readily perceived. A consistent, robust planting framework supports coherence and legibility, moderates the apparent scale of built elements, and provides a graduated transition between more intensive activity areas and quieter rural-residential environments.
- **Access, movement and servicing:** Access is anchored by a direct connection from SH1B / Telephone Road, with the existing culvert entrance intended to be upgraded and consolidated as a clear gateway. The internal movement network is conceived to be safe and legible across the full range of uses, with road layout responding to the underlying flat landform to reduce earthworks and simplify servicing. Buffers and setbacks are an important tool in managing the relationship between the transport corridors

(including the rail designation and state highway influences) and more sensitive activities, ensuring functional performance while supporting a high-quality public-facing corridor experience.

## 1.2 Broader Landscape Description

The Awanui Links Site is located within the rural landscape north-east of Hamilton, on the eastern side of Telephone Road / SH1B and northern side of Holland Road. The broader setting is part of the wider Waikato basin, where the landform is generally flat with subtle falls and a strong legibility of open, productive land at the rural edge of the Hamilton urban area. This geographic position is important because it places the development within a transitional environment - still experienced as rural in character and amenity yet increasingly influenced by growth pressure and the expanding functional reach of Hamilton and nearby settlements.

The broader area around Telephone Road comprises a mix of productive farmland, rural-residential properties, and emerging lifestyle development, with the proposal area forming part of this rural–peri-urban transition. Indigenous vegetation is limited and ecological values are largely associated with the Site’s modified vegetative structure and hydrological network, including shelterbelts, hedgerows, mature exotic trees, and an artificial farm drain. In landscape terms, these existing elements provide the immediate, legible “framework” of the rural landscape, meaning they are also the most effective building blocks for integrating future change while retaining continuity of character.

Telephone Road / SH1B functions as a key connector between Gordonton Road (SH1B) and Cambridge Road (SH1), and the Site benefits from proximity to major state highway routes that support regional movement of people and goods. The rail corridor and state highway noise influence bands introduce a strong infrastructural presence at the rural edge and create measurable sensitivity for adjacent land uses.

Overall, the Site is a modified rural basin landscape in transition: open and productive in character, structured by shelter planting and a working drainage network, and influenced by the presence of state highway connections and the rail corridor.

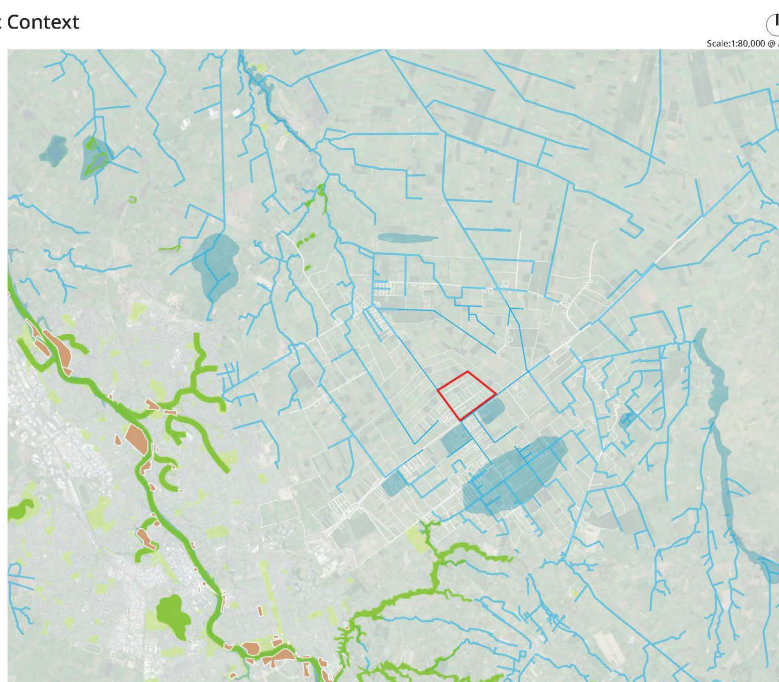
### 1.4 Cultural and Historic Context

The site is of identified cultural and resource management significance to Ngāti Hauā, Ngāti Wairere, and Waikato-Tainui.

The Masterplan and the development of Awanui Links present an opportunity to embed a cultural narrative that acknowledges and respects the significance of this whenua and the Waikato Te Awa. These opportunities will be identified together with tangata whenua.

**Legend**

- Subject Site
- Waterbodies
- Regional Flood Hazards Extent
- Green Spaces and Parks
- Significant Natural Area and Outstanding Landscape Area (HCC & WDC)
- Significant Archaeological Sites (HCC)



**Figure 2: Cultural and Historical Context (B&A).**

## 1.3 Site Description

The Site is located within the Waikato District on the eastern side of Telephone Road / SH1B, northern side of Holland Road, with access provided directly from Telephone Road. This positioning is relevant to the landscape and visual assessment because it places the Site within a highly legible rural road corridor, where the public experience of the landscape is dominated by close-to-mid range views from the road environment and by the interface with adjoining rural-residential properties.

The land is predominantly flat to gently rolling, consistent with the wider Hamilton basin floor. The paddocks are laid out in a rectilinear pattern, defined by fence lines, shelterbelts, and hedgerows, giving the Site a strongly modified and geometric structure.

The predominant land use is pastoral farming, with open pasture used for grazing. Scattered farm dwellings and accessory buildings are present but limited in scale and dispersed across the property. Vegetation is primarily exotic, consisting of shelter plantings, hedgerows, and isolated specimen trees, with indigenous vegetation largely absent. The Site also contains a network of drains managed by the Waikato Regional Council, contributing to stormwater conveyance and drainage of the productive land.

### 1.6 Ecological and Blue-green Network

The Awanui Links site has been assessed to understand its existing ecological values and to identify opportunities for integrating blue-green infrastructure into the development. The masterplan has been designed to integrate with existing natural features where it is practical and feasible.

The site is characterised by a network of artificial watercourses and modified rural landscapes, with the following key features:

- **Artificial Watercourses:** All watercourses within the site are artificial in origin.
- **Aquatic Ecology:** No fish species, including black mudfish, were captured during recent trapping surveys.
- **Wetland Areas:** Two small indicative wetland areas have been identified within the site. These are subject to further investigation that will occur during the substantive application.
- **Terrestrial Ecology:** Exotic shelterbelts and mature exotic trees across the site may offer potential roosting habitat for native bats. Further assessment will be required to confirm their ecological value. Additionally, several wood debris piles across the site provide potential habitat for lizards.

The development may result in the loss of the two indicative wetlands which are subject to further investigation. Should this occur, there are offsetting opportunities within the site.

Awanui Links is also being developed in accordance with water sensitive design principles. These principles aim to protect and enhance the health of the Waikato River which will be the ultimate receiving environment.

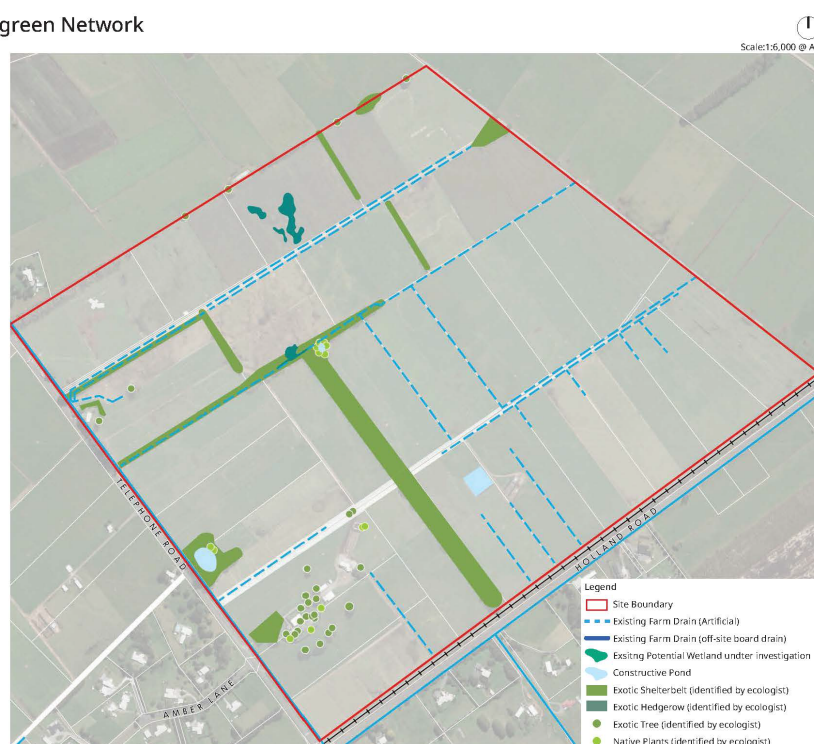


Figure 3: Ecological and Blue-green Network (B&A).

## 2.0 Landscape Values

For the Awanui Links Site and its broader Telephone Road / SH1B setting, the baseline landscape character is that of a modified rural environment in transition, shaped by productive land use, fragmented rural title patterns, and the strong influence of road and rail infrastructure. The key landscape values therefore relate less to “naturalness” and more to rural amenity, the legibility and coherence of the rural pattern, and the quality of the rural-edge experience as perceived from public corridors and adjacent rural-residential properties.

## 2.1 Associative Values

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The associative dimension relates to the meanings that people attribute to place through identity, memory, familiarity and everyday use, recognising that a landscape's character is shaped as much by how it is experienced as by its physical form. In this locality, the site is part of an established rural-edge environment on the outskirts of Hamilton, where the dominant associations arise from working farmland, dispersed rural-residential occupation and the routine patterns of travel through the area. Telephone Road / SH1B contributes a strong "journey" association, as a regularly used corridor where openness, shelter planting and occasional rural buildings collectively signal a rural setting and an approach sequence through the Waikato hinterland.

These existing associations are reinforced by the site's simplicity and legibility as open rural land, and by the familiarity of the surrounding pattern of productive lots and lifestyle properties. In this context, associative value is primarily tied to everyday rural amenity and the continuing recognition of the area as part of the rural fringe rather than a remote or outstanding landscape.

Sensitivity (associative): Lower - the site's associations are typical of a modified rural edge, and the area is already influenced by infrastructure and incremental change.

Magnitude of change (associative): Lower - change is unlikely to substantially alter how the area is broadly understood at a community scale, given the established rural-edge setting and existing transport corridor influence.

## 2.2 Biophysical (Physical) Values

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The physical dimension comprises the tangible components and processes that form the landscape, including landform, land cover, vegetation patterns, water systems and built elements. The site occupies the generally flat Waikato basin floor, with subtle falls and a strong horizontal reading. Land cover is predominantly modified rural pasture, structured by a legible pattern of fence lines, shelterbelts, hedgerows and scattered mature trees. A network of artificial drains and low-lying wet areas is present, reflecting ongoing land drainage and productive land use and forming the primary "blue" structure within the site.

Vegetation is largely exotic and utilitarian in function, providing shelter and boundary definition rather than extensive indigenous cover. Overall, the site reads as a working rural landscape where naturalness is low but physical structure is clear and consistent with the surrounding rural environment.

Sensitivity (biophysical): Lower - the landscape is strongly modified and typical of the basin rural environment, with no unusual or fragile physical attributes evident at the broad site scale.

Magnitude of change (biophysical): Lower - the underlying flat landform and existing rural structure would remain the dominant physical context, and there is no indication of dramatic landform modification as a defining feature of change.

## 2.3 Sensory (Perceptual) Values

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The perceptual dimension relates to how the landscape is experienced through sight, sound and movement, including the way views are framed and the overall sense of openness or enclosure. The site is experienced as open rural space with long horizontal sightlines across pasture, locally filtered by intermittent shelter planting and boundary vegetation. Dispersed rural buildings and farm infrastructure are present but not visually dominant, reinforcing a low-intensity rural character.

The presence of Telephone Road / SH1B and the rail corridor introduces an infrastructural overlay—movement, noise, and linear corridor edges—so that the area is frequently experienced in motion and with attention shared between travel and the surrounding landscape. This reinforces a functional, working rural-edge perceptual character rather than a quiet or remote rural environment.

Sensitivity (perceptual): Lower - viewing is largely movement-based and within an already modified corridor setting, with rural openness remaining the prevailing attribute.

Magnitude of change (perceptual): Lower - given the existing infrastructure influence, intermittent screening, and the broad-scale openness of the basin landscape, perceptual change is expected to be read as incremental within the established rural-edge context.

## 3.0 Visual Catchment Description

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### 3.1 Extent of the Visual Catchment

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The Awanui Links Site is located within the broadly flat Waikato basin landscape and is experienced as generally open in character, with localised filtering provided by shelter planting, boundary vegetation, and intermittent built elements associated with rural and rural-residential land use. The visual catchment reflects the interplay between landform, vegetation structure, and the pattern of movement corridors that shape how the landscape is encountered and understood. Given the predominantly flat landform and the presence of established roadside and boundary vegetation, visibility tends to be strongest at close-to-mid range from adjoining roads and neighbouring properties, with wider views occurring where vegetation gaps coincide with straight road alignments or elevated local vantage points.

The visual catchment is primarily defined by the Telephone Road / SH1B frontage and the adjoining rural-residential and productive farmland context. The road corridor forms a consistent public viewing edge, and the adjacent rail corridor introduces a strong linear element that also influences perceptions of landscape coherence and scale. Beyond the Site, visibility reduces across the basin floor as shelter planting, rural lots, and subtle landform variation progressively interrupt long sightlines.

Overall, the catchment is best understood as a localised rural-edge visual envelope, shaped by movement-based viewing from transport corridors and by sustained, close-range viewing from adjacent rural-residential properties.

The extent of the catchment can be described as follows:

- **Northern extent** – Views extend across adjoining rural land and rural-residential lots, with visibility frequently interrupted by shelterbelts, boundary planting, and the dispersed pattern of buildings typical of the rural setting.
- **Western extent** – The catchment encompasses rural properties and local roads connecting into the wider Gordonton/Hamilton fringe, with sightlines generally filtered by shelter vegetation and the layered edges of rural lots.
- **Eastern extent** – The broader movement network and linear infrastructure corridors contribute to intermittent visibility, with views tending to be transitory and framed by roadside vegetation and corridor planting. Beyond these corridors, visibility diminishes across the flat basin landscape and intervening rural land patterns.

- **Southern extent** – Views are available from the direction of Hamilton’s northern growth areas and the broader peri-urban edge, where the rural–urban transition is perceptible through changes in land use intensity, built form frequency, and the contrast between suburban structure and open rural land.

### 3.2 Primary Viewing Audiences

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The following viewing audiences have been identified:

- **Immediate road users (public corridor viewers)** – Motorists and passengers travelling along Telephone Road / SH1B, Holland Road and Railway form a key audience with frequent, transitory views. The Site is read in motion, and the perceived openness and rural-edge character are most evident where roadside vegetation is sparse or where long straight sections provide extended sightlines.
- **Adjoining rural-residential properties (local amenity viewers)** – Residents on nearby rural-residential lots experience regular, close-range views toward the Site. For these viewers, landscape values are closely tied to visual amenity, privacy, and the perceived compatibility of adjacent land uses, with shelter planting and setbacks playing a central role in moderating effects.
- **Local rural community and users of adjacent routes** – People using connecting local roads, driveways, and rural access routes experience intermittent but repeated views that contribute to a cumulative perception of change within the rural setting.
- **Wider public realm (broader area viewers)** – More distant views may occur from select locations where local elevation, open foregrounds, or gaps in shelter vegetation allow outward views. While typically limited by distance and intervening screening, these contribute to the broader perception of the area as a rural landscape in transition.

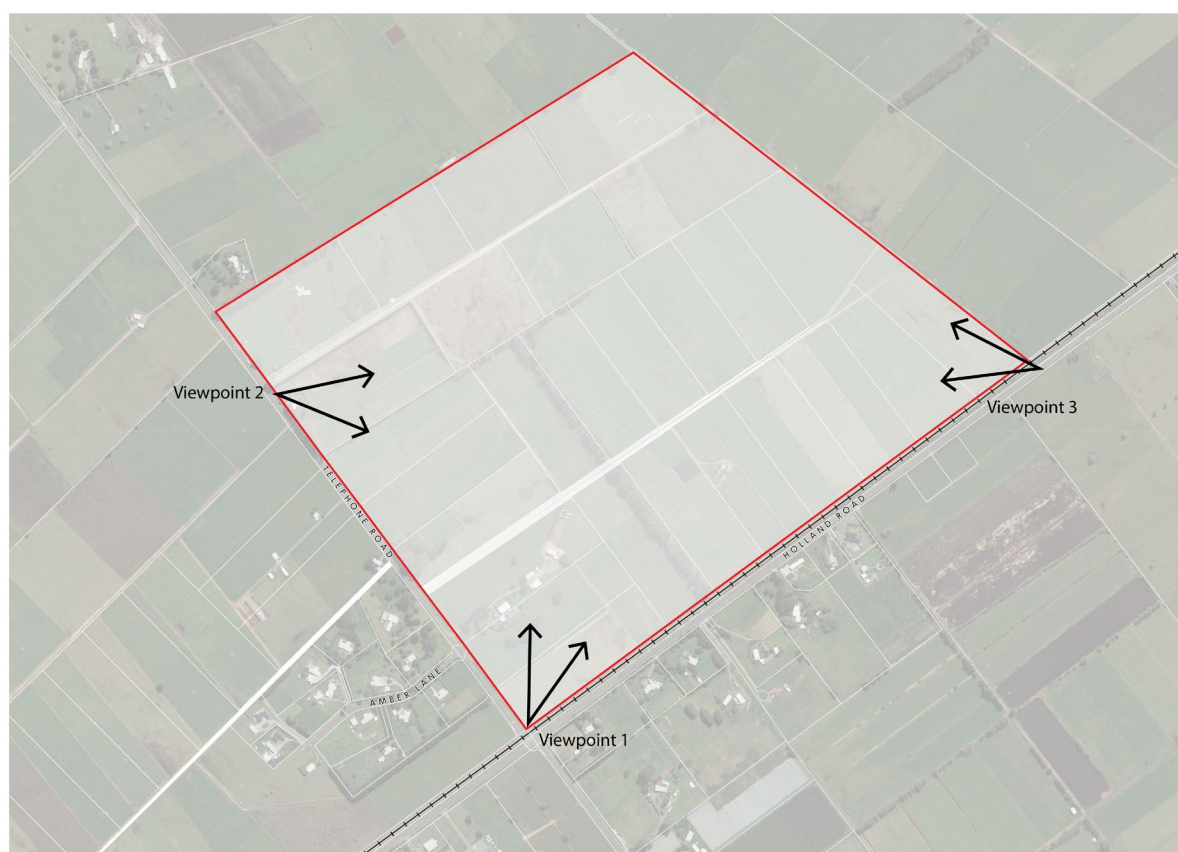
### 3.3 Factors Influencing Visibility

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Visibility within the catchment is primarily governed by the Site’s landform, the structure and continuity of vegetation, and the presence of linear infrastructure corridors. In landscape terms, these factors determine both the extent of potential visibility and the way the landscape is perceived (for example, whether it is read as coherent and legible, or fragmented by competing elements).

- **Topography** – The predominantly flat basin landform reduces skyline exposure and overall prominence; however, it also enables clear horizontal views at close range where there are uninterrupted paddock-scale foregrounds. As a result, effects are often experienced through horizontal expansion and edge contrast rather than through elevated dominance.
- **Vegetation structure** – Shelterbelts, boundary hedgerows, and clusters of trees fragment visibility, producing a mosaic of open and enclosed views. Where this vegetation is continuous, it supports perceived coherence and containment; where it is discontinuous, it allows broader glimpses that can increase the perceived scale of change.
- **Built form and infrastructure corridors** – Road and rail corridors introduce strong linear forms and movement-based viewing, which can draw attention and influence perceived landscape character. These elements can reduce perceived tranquillity and alter coherence, while also providing opportunities for structured planting, setbacks, and corridor landscape treatment to manage visual effects and reinforce a consistent rural-edge experience.

### 3.4 Key Viewpoints



**Figure 4: Key Viewpoints (B&A).**

#### 3.4.1 Viewpoint 1 – Facing northeast at the rail crossing at the intersection of Telephone Rd and Holland Rd

At the Telephone Road / rail crossing, views are close-range and generally oblique across open grazed paddocks beyond the road and rail corridor, with brief perpendicular glimpses at the crossing itself. Viewer sensitivity is lower, reflecting a predominantly movement-based viewing context where attention is directed to the transport corridor and crossing environment; the audience includes passing motorists and rail-corridor users, as well as occupants of nearby rural-residential lots along Telephone Road with intermittent, local outlooks. Corridor infrastructure and an open drain create a strongly modified foreground, while intermittent shelterbelts provide partial screening. The anticipated change would be a shift from open rural pasture to a more urbanised mixed-use edge, increasing built form, movement and lighting and reducing perceived openness. Overall magnitude of change is assessed as lower, as views are brief and filtered within an already infrastructure-dominated setting; effects can be further managed through setbacks and a strong blue-green and structure planting framework to maintain coherence and a clear rural-to-developed transition.



**Figure 5: VP1 (Google Streetview).**

### 3.4.2 Viewpoint 2 – Facing southwest at 90 Telephone Road

At 90 Telephone Road, views are generally oblique across open pasture and farm entrances along the Site edge, with occasional more direct glimpses where roadside vegetation opens. Viewer sensitivity is lower, reflecting a predominantly movement-based road corridor where views are brief and attention is shared with driving conditions; the viewing audience includes passing motorists and occupants of nearby rural-residential lots along Telephone Road with intermittent, local outlooks. Existing boundary trees and shelter planting provide intermittent screening but do not fully block views into the paddocks. The anticipated change would be a shift from open rural pasture and dispersed rural elements to a more urbanised mixed-use frontage, increasing built form, activity and night-time effects.

Overall magnitude of change is assessed as lower, given the short duration and filtered nature of views and the already modified road-edge setting; effects can be further managed through setbacks and a strong blue-green and structure planting framework to maintain coherence and a clear rural-to-developed transition.



**Figure 6: VP2 (Google Streetview).**

### 3.4.3 Viewpoint 3 – Facing west at 534 Holland Road

At 534 Holland Road, views are predominantly oblique across broad, open paddocks with long horizontal sightlines typical of the basin floor. Viewer sensitivity is lower, reflecting a mainly movement-based viewing context for passing motorists, with additional viewers from rural-residential lots along Holland Road experiencing intermittent local outlooks. Visual interruption is provided by roadside scrub, the slightly elevated railway corridor, and well-established shelterbelts associated with the rural-residential lots, which further filter and fragment views into the pastoral middle ground while retaining overall rural openness and legibility. The anticipated change would be a shift from open pasture and a simple rural pattern to a more urbanised mixed-use landscape with increased built form, activity and night-time effects.

Overall magnitude of change is assessed as lower, given viewing distance, intermittent screening, and the ability for setbacks and a strong blue-green and structure planting framework to maintain coherence and soften the rural-edge transition.



Figure 7: VP3 (Google Streetview).

## 4.0 Key Effects & Approaches to Address Key Effects

### 4.1 Changes to Local Character

The Awanui Links masterplan will transition the Site from an open, modified rural landscape to a mixed-use environment that includes a golf course, rural-residential living, light industrial activity and visitor/retirement components. This will change overall landscape character through shifts in key landscape attributes, including the distribution and intensity of built form, patterns of movement and activity, night-time lighting, vegetation structure, and the way three-waters and transport infrastructure organise the land.

Not all parts of the proposal contribute equally to character change. The proposed golf course retains a large-scale open ground plane and long horizontal sightlines, which helps maintain the Site's prevailing sense of openness and rural spaciousness. The rural-residential lots are also generally generous and low density, which supports a continued rural-edge pattern and reduces the risk of a hard suburban edge. The more

pronounced change will occur where built development clusters—particularly where servicing, parking, signage and lighting increase visual complexity and introduce more urban rhythms into a landscape currently read as simple and pastoral.

The transition will be perceived differently by different audiences. For some, it will read as a logical evolution of a rural-edge setting already influenced by transport corridors and incremental rural-residential development. For others, it will still represent a loss of familiar pastoral simplicity and a shift in identity away from productive farmland. The key determinant of acceptability will be whether the emerging development pattern remains coherent and legible, particularly at sensitive interfaces, and whether the landscape framework provides a clear, graduated transition between open landscapes (golf and rural-residential areas) and more intensive nodes (industrial and visitor/retirement components).

Overall, effects can be moderated where building scale is disciplined, edges are set back, and built areas are integrated with a strong blue-green network and layered structure planting. In combination, these measures can help the development read as an ordered and place-responsive evolution that retains meaningful aspects of openness and rural amenity, rather than a wholesale replacement of rural character.

## 4.2 Effects on Landscape values

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In assessing effects on the landscape values, professional judgement has been applied by considering (i) the sensitivity of the existing values to change and (ii) the magnitude of change likely to occur to the attributes that embody those values.

This combination of rural openness, infrastructure-driven visibility and the proximity of rural-residential living establishes the key landscape sensitivities for the project—namely maintaining rural amenity at sensitive interfaces, retaining and reinforcing the legible rural framework of paddocks and shelterbelts, and using the site’s hydrological spine and planting structure to guide change. With a coherent approach to setbacks, boundary structure planting and a robust blue-green network, the masterplan can integrate new uses in a manner that remains orderly and place-responsive, so that the landscape continues to read as a coherent rural-edge environment rather than a visually abrupt or fragmented transition.

### 4.2.1 Effects on Associative Values

The proposal will introduce new activity and land use signals into a landscape currently associated with working farmland, rural-residential living and routine travel through the rural fringe. However, the existing associative values are not rare or fragile; they are typical of a modified rural edge already influenced by transport infrastructure and incremental change. Where the open ground plane and rural-scale pattern remain evident, the area is expected to continue to be recognised as part of Hamilton’s rural fringe rather than being redefined as a distinctly urban place. Accordingly, effects on associative landscape values are assessed as **low**, because the change is unlikely to materially alter community-level understanding of the area’s identity or its established “everyday rural” associations.

### 4.2.2 Effects on Biophysical Values

The proposal will alter land cover and introduce built and infrastructural elements within a baseline that is already strongly modified and characterised by flat basin landform, pasture, exotic shelter planting and an artificial drainage network. The biophysical values present are primarily functional and structural (productive land, established shelter pattern, and drainage framework) rather than values of high naturalness or ecological integrity. Given the low sensitivity of these physical values and the expectation that the fundamental landform setting and broad rural structure remain the dominant context (with no indication of dramatic landform modification), the effect on biophysical landscape values is assessed as **low**. Any change

is anticipated to be read as a modification within an existing working rural matrix, rather than a substantive loss of distinctive physical landscape attributes.

#### 4.2.3 Effects on Perceptual Values

Perceptual values in this locality are anchored in openness, long horizontal sightlines and a low-intensity rural pattern, experienced alongside an existing infrastructure overlay from road and rail. While new built form, activity and night-time effects may increase local visual complexity, the receiving environment is already experienced largely in motion and within a corridor setting where attention is shared and views are frequently filtered by shelter planting. Given the low sensitivity of the perceptual environment and the low magnitude of change anticipated to the key perceptual attributes (particularly openness and the broad horizontal reading of the basin floor), effects on perceptual landscape values are assessed as **low**. In practical terms, the landscape is expected to continue to read as a coherent rural-edge environment, with change perceived as incremental rather than visually dominant.

Overall, the effects on landscape values are assessed as **low**. This outcome reflects the site's baseline as a modified rural landscape with low sensitivity, combined with a low magnitude of change to the attributes that underpin its values—especially the broad openness, rural legibility and the existing transport-corridor context that already shapes how the place is experienced.

### 4.3 Effects on Visual Amenity

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Visual amenity in the receiving environment is derived primarily from the openness of the pastoral ground plane, the low density of rural buildings, and the intermittent filtering provided by shelterbelts and boundary vegetation. The flat basin landform enables broad, horizontal sightlines where vegetation gaps occur, meaning visual amenity is most sensitive at close range for adjoining rural-residential properties, and less sensitive for movement-based viewers within the road corridor.

For motorists and passengers travelling along Telephone Road / SH1B as shown in the viewpoint 1 and 2, the site is experienced in short, transitory glimpses as part of a wider rural journey sequence. In this context, the road corridor and associated infrastructure already frame and condition the viewing experience, with attention typically shared between travel tasks and the surrounding landscape. Any change to outlook is therefore experienced briefly and cumulatively and is further moderated by the intermittent screening provided by existing roadside and boundary vegetation. On this basis, effects on visual amenity for road users are assessed as **low**, reflecting the limited duration of views and the established corridor character.

For occupants of nearby rural-residential lots, as discussed in viewpoint 2 and 3, views are more regular and can form part of daily residential amenity. However, these outlooks are commonly filtered by existing shelter planting and well-established boundary vegetation, and the dominant spatial structure remains one of openness and rural scale. While additional built form and activity will be introduced in parts of the site, the continuation of a large open ground plane (including the golf course) and the retention of a low-density rural-residential pattern supports continuity of rural character and reduces the likelihood of a visually abrupt change. With boundary structure planting in place, the development is anticipated to sit within, and read as part of, the surrounding rural-edge environment rather than presenting as a stark urban frontage. Effects on visual amenity for adjacent residents are therefore assessed as **low** overall, noting that localised increases in effect may occur where views are direct, close-range, and less screened.

Overall, visual amenity effects are assessed as **low**, as views are largely defined by an open pastoral ground plane and are either brief and corridor-framed for road users or filtered for rural-residential viewers by established shelter planting. The retention of a large open ground plane and a low-density rural pattern,

supported by boundary structure planting, means the development is expected to sit within the surrounding rural-edge context and avoid a visually abrupt change.

## 4.4 Approaches to Address Key Effects

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### 4.4.1 Strengthen Green Infrastructure Framework

A primary approach is to establish the blue-green system as the Site’s organising structure, so that the development is read as embedded within, rather than imposed upon, the living landscape. Retaining and enhancing the existing drain network and potential wetland areas as ecological and water-quality spines can reinforce coherence and deliver positive effects for biophysical values, while also providing a legible spatial framework that helps maintain rural-edge continuity. A connected open space network (greenways, wetland margins, and shared path corridors) should be designed to preserve “breathing space” within the masterplan, sustaining aspects of openness and providing a perceptual counterpoint to built intensity.

### 4.4.2 Sensitive Perimeter Design

The perimeter is where effects are most often perceived and where rural amenity is most sensitive. Setbacks, interface open spaces, and layered structure planting should be used to reduce visual dominance and to manage the relationship with adjoining rural and rural-residential properties. Building height and massing controls at the edges, coupled with planting that echoes the rhythm and scale of existing shelterbelts, can create a graduated transition that maintains legibility of the rural edge. Where industrial or higher-activity components occur, interface design should prioritise separation, screening, and microclimate buffering to avoid abrupt contrasts.

### 4.4.3 Integration with the Broader Landscape

Integration should be achieved by responding to the existing rural framework—its shelterbelt pattern, drainage structure, and the broad horizontal reading of the basin landscape—while introducing a more refined and intentional landscape structure appropriate to the new programme. Planting palettes and spatial patterns should be locally grounded and consistent with the surrounding rural landscape character, so that the developed landscape reads as an evolution of existing attributes rather than an unrelated visual language. This includes reinforcing strong linear planting along corridors and edges, while using internal structure planting and open space to maintain coherence across diverse land uses.

### 4.4.4 Enhance Public Realm Quality

Public realm quality will be a major determinant of how the new character is perceived and valued. Generous street trees, coherent avenue planting, and well-designed berms and swales should be used to establish an attractive and legible movement network. Reserves, wetland margins, and shared walking/cycling routes should be integrated into a cohesive system that is continuous, accessible, and clearly structured. This approach supports positive perceptual outcomes by providing a consistent landscape language across the masterplan and ensuring that urbanising change is experienced as orderly, green, and place responsive.

## 5.0 Conclusion and Overall Effects

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The Awanui Links proposal will result in a clear and enduring change in landscape character, transitioning a modified rural, pastoral setting into an intensively programmed mixed-use environment.

Overall effects are anticipated to be **low** at the local scale, particularly at sensitive rural-residential interfaces and along key public corridors where change will be most visible and most frequently experienced. At the broader district scale, effects are expected to be **very low**, reflecting the Site's strategic location, existing infrastructure influences, and the wider pattern of rural-edge transition. With robust implementation of sensitive perimeter design, a strong blue-green framework, cultural landscape integration, and a high-quality public realm, the proposal has the potential to establish a coherent and well-integrated development that is responsive to its receiving environment and maintains continuity of landscape identity through an explicit relationship between people, place, and the living landscape.

## 6.0 Qualifications and Experience

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**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 across 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 two 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.



**Easson Shen**

Landscape Architect & Urban Designer, Barker & Associates Limited

**Joseph McCready** (BLA (hons); BCom; NZILA Registered): I am a Registered Landscape Architect with more than 15 years' professional experience, including in team leader roles. Over this time, I have worked across a range of consultancies and public-sector organisations, including Beca, Jasmax, Auckland Council, Thomas Consultants Ltd, and Barker & Associates. My experience spans landscape design and landscape and visual assessment for projects at a wide range of scales, from large infrastructure environments through to subdivisions and parks.

I hold a Bachelor of Commerce from the University of Auckland and a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture (Honours) from Unitec, and I am registered with Tuia Pito Ora / the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects (NZILA).

Relevant project experience includes the Drury East Residential Masterplan (Auckland, approximately 102 ha, up to 1,500 dwellings including a new school, neighbourhood centre and parks for Fulton Hogan Land Development Ltd); the Wellsford North Masterplan (Auckland, approximately 48 ha, up to 1,000 dwellings with a neighbourhood centre and parks for Wellsford Welding Club Ltd); the Rotokauri Masterplan (Hamilton, approximately 130 ha, up to 3,100 dwellings with neighbourhood parks and esplanade reserves for multiple clients); and the Frankton Ladies Mile Masterplan (Queenstown, 17 ha, up to 750 dwellings across terraced housing and apartment typologies for Maryhill Ltd).

## Awanui Links Master Plan Fast Track Referral – LVA Memorandum

**Joseph McCready**

NZILA Registered Landscape Architect / Associate, Barker &amp; Associates Limited



## Landscape Assessment Methodology

Landscape and visual impacts result from natural or induced change in the components, character or quality of landscape. Usually these are the result of landform or vegetation modification or the introduction of new structures, activities or facilities into the landscape. The process of change itself, that is the construction process and/or activities associated with the development, also carry with them their own visual impacts as distinct from those generated by a completed development.

### Effects Rating

Change in a landscape does not necessarily constitute an adverse landscape or visual effect. Landscape is dynamic and constantly changing, however the key is the management of the change so that adverse effects are avoided or sufficiently mitigated. The assessment of the level of effects identified within this assessment is based upon a seven-point scale which includes: **very low; low; moderate-low; moderate; moderate-high; high; and very high** ratings.

Effects are assessed in respect of determining the way in which a proposal will impact on the character and values of the place, as outlined in the tables below:

Table 1. Effects Ratings

| <i>Very low</i>        | <i>Low</i> | <i>Low-Mod</i> | <i>Moderate</i> | <i>Mod-High</i>        | <i>High</i> | <i>Very high</i> |
|------------------------|------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------------|-------------|------------------|
| <i>Less than minor</i> |            | <i>Minor</i>   |                 | <i>More than minor</i> |             |                  |

| Contributing Factors |                            | Higher                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Lower                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|----------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sensitivity          | Susceptibility to change   | The landscape is strongly distinctive with important biophysical, sensory and associative aspects. There is an absence of landscape detractors which make it highly vulnerable to the type of change which would result from the proposed development. | The landscape lacks any distinctive biophysical, sensory or associative aspects. It has many detractors and has the ability to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences to landscape character. |
|                      | The value of the landscape | The landscape requires protection as a matter of national importance (ONF/L).                                                                                                                                                                          | The landscape is of low or local importance.                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Magnitude of Change  | Size or scale              | Total loss or addition of key features or elements.<br>Major changes in the key characteristics of the landscape, including significant aesthetic or perceptual elements.                                                                              | The majority of key features or elements are retained.<br>Key characteristics of the landscape remain intact with limited aesthetics or perceptual change apparent.                                                    |
|                      | Geographical extent        | Landscape character area scale.                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Site scale, immediate setting.                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|                      | Duration and reversibility | Permanent.<br>Long term (over 10 years).                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Reversible.<br>Short Term (0-5 years).                                                                                                                                                                                 |

Table 1: Determining the significance of landscape effects.

| Contributing Factors | Higher | Lower |
|----------------------|--------|-------|
|----------------------|--------|-------|

|                            |                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Sensitivity</b>         | Susceptibility to change   | Views from dwellings and recreation areas where attention is typically focussed on the landscape.                                                                                                                                  | Views from places of employment and other places where the focus is typically incidental to its landscape context.                                                                                                              |
|                            | Value attached to views    | Viewpoint is recognised by the community such as identification on tourist maps or in art and literature. High visitor numbers.                                                                                                    | Viewpoint is not typically recognised or valued by the community.<br><br>Infrequent visitor numbers.                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Magnitude of Change</b> | Size or scale              | Loss or addition of key features in the view.<br><br>High degree of contrast with existing landscape elements (i.e. in terms of form scale, mass, line, height, colour and texture).<br><br>Full view of the proposed development. | Most key features of view retained.<br><br>Low degree of contrast with existing landscape elements (i.e. in terms of form scale, mass, line, height, colour and texture).<br><br>Glimpse / no view of the proposed development. |
|                            | Geographical extent        | Front on views.<br>Near distance views;<br>Change visible across a wide area.                                                                                                                                                      | Oblique views.<br>Long distance views.<br>Small portion of change visible.                                                                                                                                                      |
|                            | Duration and reversibility | Permanent.<br>Long term (over 15 years).                                                                                                                                                                                           | Transient.<br>Short Term (0-5 years).                                                                                                                                                                                           |

Table 2: Determining the significance of visual effects.

| Effect Rating         | Use and Definition                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Very High:</b>     | Total loss to the characteristics or key attributes of the receiving environment and /or visual context amounting to a complete change of landscape character.                                                                               |
| <b>High:</b>          | Major change to the characteristics or key attributes of the receiving environment and /or the visual context within which it is seen; and/or a major effect on the perceived amenity derived from it.                                       |
| <b>Moderate-High:</b> | A moderate - high level of effect on the character or key attributes of the receiving environment and/or the visual context within which it is seen; and/or have a moderate - high level of effect on the perceived amenity derived from it. |
| <b>Moderate:</b>      | A moderate level of effect on the character or key attributes of the receiving environment and/or the visual context within which it is seen; and/or have a moderate level of effect on the perceived amenity derived from it.               |
| <b>Moderate -Low:</b> | A moderate - low level of effect on the character or key attributes of the receiving environment and/or the visual context within which it is seen; and/or have moderate - low level of effect on the perceived amenity derived from it.     |
| <b>Low:</b>           | A low level of effect on the character or key attributes of the receiving environment and/or the visual context within which it is seen; and/or have a low effect on the perceived amenity derived from it.                                  |
| <b>Very Low:</b>      | Very low or no modification to key elements/ features/ characteristics of the baseline or available views, i.e. approximating a 'no change' situation.                                                                                       |

Table 4: Determining the overall significance of landscape and visual effects.

## Plans from Awanui Links Master Plan Urban Design Consultation Pack

Awanui Links Masterplan, Waikato District | Consultation Document

B&amp;A

### 2.0 Master Plan

#### Legend

- Site Boundary
- Proposed Rural Residential Lots (70 lots)
- Proposed Light Industrial Lots (9 lots)
- Proposed Retirement Village (137 units)
- Proposed Retirement Village Care Facility
- Proposed Golf Course Visitor Accommodation
- Proposed Golf Course Facility Buildings
- Proposed Golf Course Driving Range Building
- Proposed Commercial Amenities / Services
- Proposed Community Hub / Meeting Space
- Proposed Indicative Planting / Landscaping
- Proposed Stormwater Device
- Proposed Carpark (approx. 6300sqm)
- Rail Corridor Noise and Vibration Influence / Alert Area (Kiwi Rail) (100m)
- Existing Railway
- State Highway
- 1 Wellness Centre / Fine Dining (approx. 3500sqm)
- 2 Event Centre / Hotel (approx. 3500sqm)
- 3 Clubhouse / Club / Cafe (approx. 2550sqm)
- 4 Proshop (approx. 800sqm)
- 5 Virtual Golf / Sims (approx. 800sqm)
- 6 Cart Storage (approx. 1000sqm)
- 7 Putting Green
- 8 Storage Shed (approx. 1000 sqm)
- 9 Open Space / Wedding Venue
- 10 Visitor Accommodation - Large Luxury Villas (10 villas)
- 11 Visitor Accommodation - Small Luxury Villas (52 villas)
- 12 Retirement Village Care Facility (approx. 3000sqm)
- 13 Cafe (approx. 800sqm)
- 14 Convenience Store / Pharmacy / Medical Centre / Dentist / Wellness Gym / Physio (approx. 1100sqm)
- 15 General Recreation / Lawn Bowls / Tennis / Pickle Ball Courts (approx. 2500sqm)
- 16 Solar Farm (approx. 3000sqm)



Figure 10 High-Level Masterplan

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## 1.4 Cultural and Historic Context

The site is of identified cultural and resource management significance to Ngāti Haua, Ngāti Wairere, and Waikato-Tainui.

The Masterplan and the development of Awanui Links present an opportunity to embed a cultural narrative that acknowledges and respects the significance of this whenua and the Waikato Te Awa. These opportunities will be identified together with tangata whenua.

**Legend**

- Subject Site
- Waterbodies
- Regional Flood Hazards Extent
- Green Spaces and Parks
- Significant Natural Area and Outstanding Landscape Area (HCC & WDC)
- Significant Archaeological Sites (HCC)

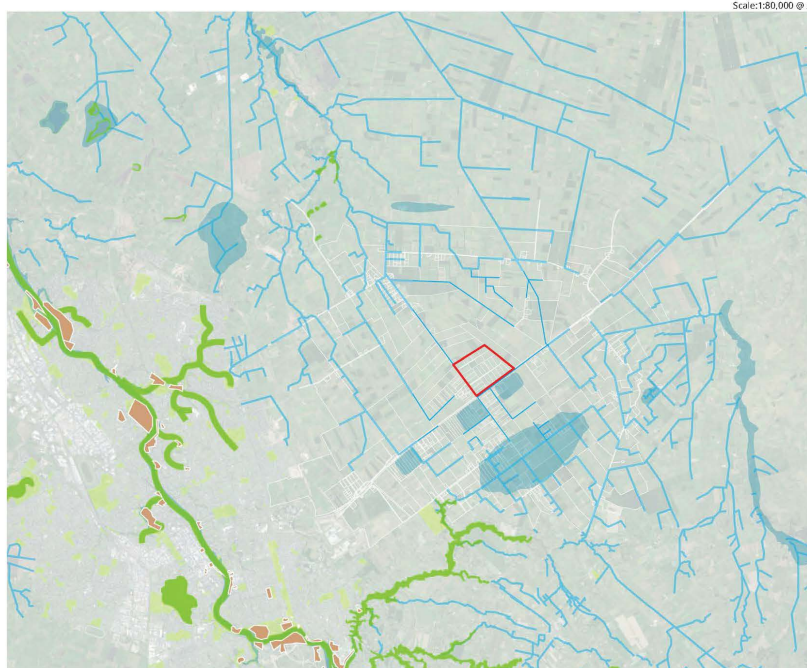


Figure 4 Identified Sites and Areas of Significance to Maori and Archaeological Sites

## 1.6 Ecological and Blue-green Network

The Awanui Links site has been assessed to understand its existing ecological values and to identify opportunities for integrating blue-green infrastructure into the development. The masterplan has been designed to integrate with existing natural features where it is practical and feasible.

The site is characterised by a network of artificial watercourses and modified rural landscapes, with the following key features:

- **Artificial Watercourses:** All watercourses within the site are artificial in origin.
- **Aquatic Ecology:** No fish species, including black mudfish, were captured during recent trapping surveys.
- **Wetland Areas:** Two small indicative wetland areas have been identified within the site. These are subject to further investigation that will occur during the substantive application.
- **Terrestrial Ecology:** Exotic shelterbelts and mature exotic trees across the site may offer potential roosting habitat for native bats. Further assessment will be required to confirm their ecological value. Additionally, several wood debris piles across the site provide potential habitat for lizards.

The development may result in the loss of the two indicative wetlands which are subject to further investigation. Should this occur, there are offsetting opportunities within the site.

Awanui Links is also being developed in accordance with water sensitive design principles. These principles aim to protect and enhance the health of the Waikato River which will be the ultimate receiving environment.

