

Memorandum

9 June 2025

Memo to : Knight Investments Limited - Daniel Nakhle

Memo From : Nick Rae

Re: Fast Track Referral Application – Pohutukawa Business Park – Landscape Considerations

The following provides commentary with regard to landscape considerations 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 Proposal

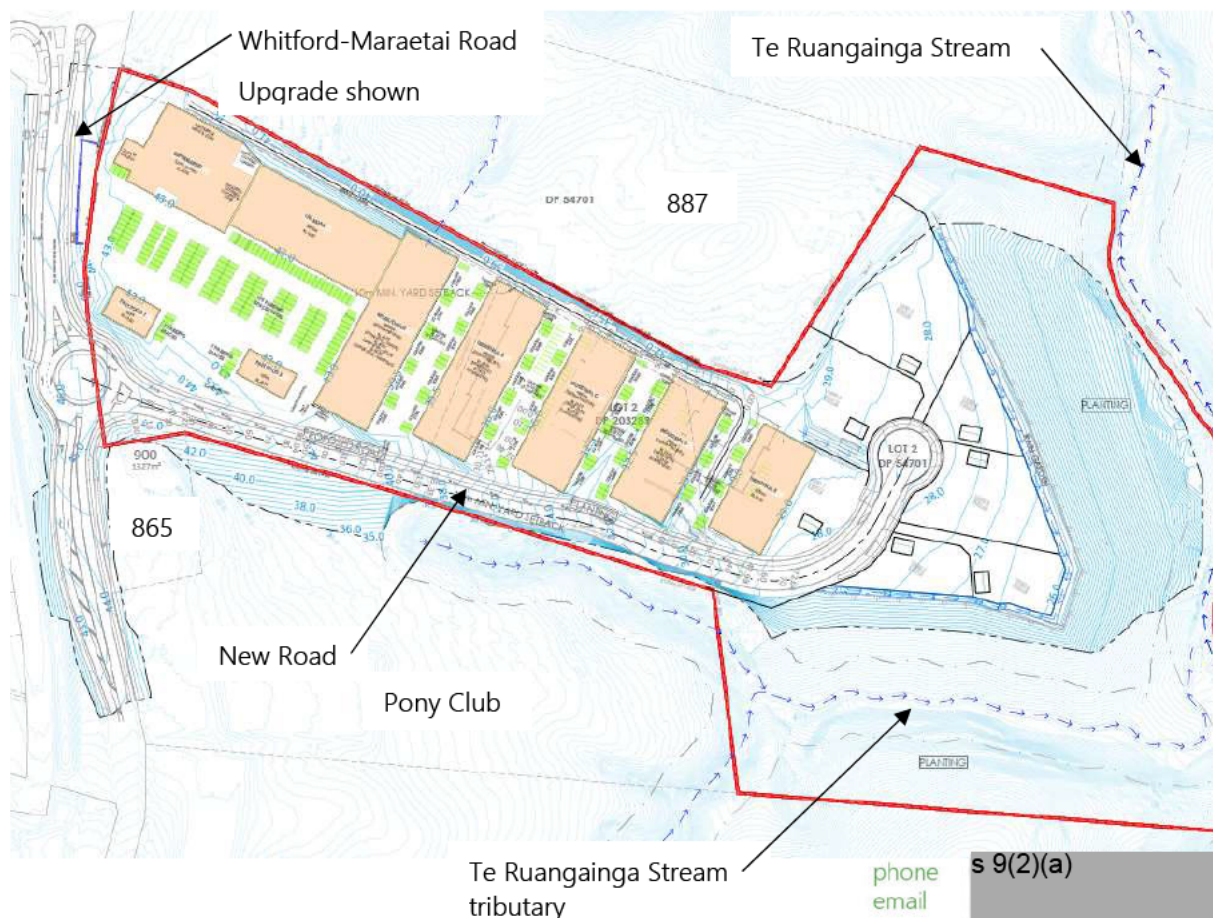


Figure 1 – Concept plan for proposed application prepared by Civilplan dated 24-02-2025. For the purpose of this report, north is up the page.

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Scope

Transurban has been engaged as part of the specialist team providing input into the proposal from a landscape perspective in support of a "Referral Application".

The scope of this memo is to provide a high-level assessment of landscape and visual impacts and consider known and anticipated effects as well as identify mitigation options if required to manage effects.

Methodology

This report sets out the potential landscape and visual effects of the Proposal and discusses the measures proposed to mitigate and manage those effects.

The assessment follows the concepts and principles outlined in 'Te Tangi a te Manu: Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines' 2022, particularly the need to identify existing landscape values, identify and describe any effect and determine the magnitude of effects.

Landscape effects in this assessment are the consequences on landscape values as appreciated by people. Experiencing the landscape is multisensory, however the primary experience considered in this assessment is visual. Consideration of who will see the proposal, and from where, are important aspects of assessing the magnitude of any effect.

The existing environment is the baseline for any effects assessment under s104 the Resource Management Act 1991. In this case, this existing environment includes the quarry activities (including filling) and stream realignment with associated revegetation.

A full methodology would be set out in a full assessment for the substantive application.

Context

Please refer to the urban design memo for the discussion on context in addition to the following specific to landscape.

The following image illustrates the wider landscape patterns where the main ridgelines in orange rise up from the coast resulting in the site being within a different hydrological catchment than Beachlands.



Figure 2 – Google 3D view from the north illustrating the landscape patterns of ridgelines in orange, streams in blue and the edge of the existing suburban development in green, with the expansion area of PC88 in yellow.

The landscape surrounding the site, except to the west, has rural characteristics (rolling topography, existing streams, some patches of native bush, exotic trees, pastoral farmland and associated buildings, dwellings and roads). To the west (and in the distance to the north east) the landscape has sub-urban characteristics. The Whitford-Maraetai Road currently provides an edge between the sub-urban and rural characteristics at Beachlands with the site having a peri-urban character.

The quarry impacts on rural character as it is more of an industrial activity. Quarries generally exist within rural environments, but generally do not contribute to a pleasant rural character. The degree to which the quarry operation is visible from the surrounding landscape varies, however it is reasonably contained visually. Figures 3, 4, 5 and 6 illustrate examples of these differing views and that the quarry is a visually different landuse to the surrounding landscape that is of rural character. The character of this environment is also influenced by the sub-urban activity that is experienced in many of the views, such that the context is not rural or urban, rather a mix of the qualities found in these environments.



Figure 3 - View from Whitford-Maraetai Road looking north with the site to the right and Beachlands straight ahead and to the left



Figure 4 - View from Whitford-Maraetai Road into the front of the site, with quarry operations in the background and existing trees along the southern boundary (Immediate right of image).



Figure 5 – View from Whitford-Maraetai Road at the north eastern corner of the site, looking along the driveway to the quarry (right) and access to the 887 Whitford-Maraetai Road (left)



Figure 6 – View from Keanes Road looking south west illustrating the fill operation of the quarry within a generally rural character, however the urban form can be seen in the distance.

Views consist of multiple layers, and spaces within the landscape are somewhat compartmentalised by existing trees, as illustrated in these examples.



Figure 7 - View over the quarry from within the site with the Te Ruangainga stream along eastern boundary behind the quarry looking south east, Keanes Road properties in the background to the left illustrating the stark contrast that can be experienced.

The views of the quarry are subject to continual change due to the continuing work to fill the quarry pit.

The relationship where the road has been used to define urban from rural dissolves at Maraetai where development exists either side of the main road and development responds generally to the topography of the landscape, but also to property boundaries leading to artificial lines in the landscape. This sub-urban form is viewed from parts of the landscape with rural characteristics as illustrated in Figure 8.



Figure 8 - Maraetai urban form seen from Whitford-Maraetai Road over pasture and partially screened by trees.

The key landscape values for the wider site context are considered to include:

- A coastal / rural character
- Clear sub-urban and rural character – site at the interface
- Limited but valuable native vegetation with strong landscape patterns of a mix of tree canopy and pasture
- Medium to high stream values and are key elements underlying the landscape patterns
- Undulating rolling landform within the overall broader large valleys and ridges
- Range of contained views, with wider views to harbour / coastal environment
- Reasonably contained views of the quarry

It is confirmed that there are no significant landscape values (either mapped by the AUP through an outstanding natural landscape or feature, nor are there any unmapped features which would qualify as such features) associated with the site or its immediate surrounds. The site itself also does not contain any views to the coast where the Outstanding Natural landscape overlay applies. There are no Outstanding or High Natural Character landscapes identified close to the site, however, the latter applies to the island to the north west of

Beachlands, and in the bays east of Maraetai. There are no significant volcanic viewshafts or height sensitive area overlays applying to the whole Beachlands area.

The parts of the wider area, generally along streams, are protected by a significant ecological area overlay, including around and a small portion within the site. The overlay also applies to large areas of the coastal edge which are less relevant to the site except for the need to manage sediment and discharge via streams as standard.

There are 3 identified notable trees within the Beachlands residential area and none are within the site.

Visual audience of the site

Due to the topography and location of the existing bund along Whitford-Maraetai Road, the visual catchment of the proposal is limited to views from the road and immediate neighbours. Views from more distant properties could be possible.

The visual audience of the proposed development will include:

- People using the site and dwelling at 865 Whitford-Maraetai Road;
- The people using the Open Space zoned land which is occupied by a Pony Club , expected to be few in number (club has only a few members);
- People using the land to the north at 887 Whitford-Maraetai Road, expected to be very few in number;
- Glimpse views from people using Keane Road;
- Stationary views for people residing in dwellings accessed from Keane Road facing west;
- A few dwellings to the west of Whitford-Maraetai Road may experience the development over the bund;
- People using Whitford-Maraetai Road in both directions south of the existing roundabout, being reasonably high in volume
- Glimpse views may be possible for people travelling south on Whitford-Maraetai Road north of the site towards the Beachlands Roundabout;
- There are potentially some views from dwellings to the west of Whitford-Maraetai Road north of the existing roundabout at Beachlands Road.

The visual catchment is relatively small, so is the audience number, except for the high audience number using Whitford-Maraetai Road. Most of the viewing audience will have current views of the existing urban area at Beachlands including the current Local Centre activities (as it is not entirely visually screened by the existing landscaping or bund). The audience would be aware that they are within or close to the Beachlands and Maraetai settlements.

Auckland Unitary Plan

The Auckland Unitary Plan ("AUP") objectives relevant to the current Countryside Living zone and Whitford Precinct seek that the rural character and amenity values are maintained and enhanced when subdividing or developing a site; the natural character and ecological values of native bush and vegetation areas, the streams and coastal waters are maintained and enhanced; and the operation of rural production activities can continue without being constrained by the adverse effects of reverse sensitivity. The Quarry zone objectives relate to enabling mineral extraction and the rehabilitation of quarries.

The Open Space - Sport and Active Recreation zone applying to the land to the south of the site, currently used by the Pony Club, is provided for indoor and outdoor organised sports, active recreation and community activities. Development within this zone are to be compatible with the surrounding environment.

Initial landscape assessment

With regard to the design and relationship between the site and neighbours and the wider context in terms of maintaining or providing appropriate amenity values the following comments are made:

1. The AUP anticipates that any development on the front portion of the site contribute to rural character. This is based on the current Rural-Countryside Living zone ("CLZ") of part of the site and the immediate neighbouring sites north and south. Although it is acknowledged that the Special Purpose Quarry Zoning which applies to part of the site does not necessarily require or anticipate rural amenity outcomes.
2. A consent has previously been obtained for some industrial buildings on part of the site (that part used by the quarry activities which extends beyond the quarry zoning into the CLZ). The overall landscape outcome for the previous consent achieved a compatibility with the rural character when viewed from the outside to a degree by proposing significant planting and retention of important trees, and the design and colour and location of buildings.
3. The anticipated AUP zoned outcome is perhaps the most challenging issue which anticipates a rural character which the proposal will not achieve, as the proposal creates an urban outcome.
4. From a landscape context perspective, the Countryside Living zoning is not reflective of activities occurring in this location nor is it reflective of the experience of all viewing audiences. The key issue is whether this change in experience will actually create an adverse landscape or visual effect.
5. Unlike motorway service centres which "pop up" in a rural environment, this would be read as an extension of urban activities already occurring in Beachlands. The proposed extension uses a more natural visual boundary to the urban area, being the Te Ruangainga Stream.

6. Furthermore, given the significant changes to landform resulting from the quarry operations, the proposal is likely to improve the visual and landscape outcomes.
7. The experience from Whitford-Maraetai Road will be different from the current experience due to the introduction of the proposed roundabout, road upgrade and views to retail buildings. The addition of the built form and parking areas, particularly at the western end of the site (as seen from the road) will result in an outcome which will appear "urban" rather than the planned "rural lifestyle". Significant roading features such as roundabouts are neither rural or urban. Moreover, views in the location already experience urban activities in the existing Beachlands Local Centre and residential urban areas. The experience of views of urban activities on both sides of the road is acknowledged to be "different" to the current experience.
8. Views from a wider context, where some dwellings may be elevated and have views of the site will experience a change to their outlook and may impact the composition of those views.
9. This impact can be mitigated to some extent with tree planting, however a more urban built form will be experienced and this is likely to change the visual experience and the existing rural amenity values of this property. However, the wider viewing audience would also experience the existing Beachlands Local Centre and urban residential neighbourhoods which already exist and thus the change in view is not totally out of the character when taking into account the wider visual catchment (i.e., this will not be read as an isolated spot of urban in an otherwise entirely rural landscape).
10. The previous consent included a landscape design solution that would visually integrate the development into the landscape. This application includes this same approach and the eastern end of the site will be very similar to the previously approved design with yard based activities having edge shelter belts to soften views from elevated rural properties enabling a transition in landscape from the more rural activities to the more urban activities and the existing Beachlands Local Centre.
11. The northern edge of the site abuts an existing neighbour also zoned Rural Countryside Living, which includes a dwelling and a number of sheds with a collection of vehicles, and vegetation along most of the site's northern boundary. A water supply business operates from this site. The combination of features means that this site is also not reflective of the planned zoned outcomes. Specific edge treatment for this site is required (and forms part of the matters listed in paragraph 12 below). It is acknowledged that the proposal will be visible from the neighbouring site and will on face value change the amenity values of that neighbour (particularly as the outcome will be "urban" rather than "rural lifestyle") from its immediate southern views. However, this site already experiences south eastern views onto the quarry and its operations. Its western boundary abuts the Whitford-Maraetai Road roundabout and Local Centre activities. Trees screen views for most of this front boundary however the driveway provide visual access.
12. Specific site design and details identified in the concept plan will form part of the substantive application and will assist in integrating with the landscape. These include:

- Adjustment to the landform within the Pony Club land and within 865 Whitford-Maraetai Road;
- Set backs and edge planting along directly adjoining neighbours;
- Retaining wall design and treatment to use steps and/or vegetative “green” walls and screen planting to soften potential visual effects;
- Use of larger specimen trees at time of planting and/or fast-growing species and/or pre-planting where possible to avoid delays in planting achieving full height and thus full mitigation for screening; and
- Treatments to the façade of buildings to reduce visual impacts (particularly on neighbour properties).

Conclusion

Subject to the detailed design of the development and landscape, the proposal is expected to result in a change to the visual experience of the site for its viewing audience. Looking only at the AUP planned character, the proposal is a departure from the anticipated Countryside Living zone rural lifestyle character. However, the site and the surrounds already present a departure from this, particularly given the significant land modification which has occurred through quarrying activities.

A comprehensive landscape concept will help to integrate the proposal into its context, however, it is acknowledged that this will not maintain or enhance rural character and for the most part will be more compatible with an urban character. Vegetation can be used to screen areas where required (e.g from third party neighbours where a more rural character can be achieved). A mix of plant sizes, including larger trees and shrubs, will help to mitigate effects.

A detailed Landscape and Visual Assessment (following the concepts and principles outlined in ‘Te Tangi a te Manu: Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines’ 2022) and detailed planting/landscaping treatment plans in addition to the detailed design of the site layout, levels and architectural response will be provided as part of 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. He holds membership with New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects, but is not ‘registered’.

Nick is a founding member of the Urban Designers Institute Aotearoa, a professional institute that accredits urban design professionals. His urban design skills draw on his landscape skillset along with knowledge gained through working with other design disciplines.

Nick's landscape architectural career has spanned the last 28 years in New Zealand, Sydney, Riyadh, and London. Since 2009 Nick has been the managing director of Transurban Limited.

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.

This includes designing and providing strategic advice in response to landscape features, through to detailed landscape design, plant selection and implementation, design of circulation networks and park strategies. He has particular interest in stormwater management and the relationship this has with the landscape. Stream and wetland restoration has led to the rehabilitation of natural systems, while creating great places for people to recreate in, and experience and appreciate the natural environment.

Nick has undertaken landscape and visual assessments for a wide range of projects, including the assessment of the previous proposal on this site.