

TO: Dave Robinson (Inovo)

Date: 22 April 2026

FROM: Annabelle Coates

Document No: 10455-002-1

## OAKLANDS, NELSON – ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT FOR FAST-TRACK REFERRAL

### Introduction

This memorandum has been prepared to provide a high-level ecological assessment to accompany a Fast-Track referral application for a proposed residential development on part of the property at 467 Suffolk Road, Stoke, Nelson (“the site”). The site comprises the north-western corner of the wider property and measures approximately 60 ha in area.

The site is zoned Rural under the Nelson Resource Management Plan (NRMP).

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide:

- A high-level overview of ecological values on the site;
- A description of anticipated ecological effects; and
- Recommendations for further assessment and management measures to inform the substantive application.

The site was visited in April 2026 by an experienced ecologist, who undertook a site walkover, and recorded any terrestrial and freshwater features. Ecological features identified are discussed below, including an initial overview of ecological values and anticipated effects. Detailed surveys and assessments will follow at the substantive application stage.

This preliminary assessment is intended to support referral of the project, and to demonstrate that ecological matters are sufficiently understood at a high level and can be appropriately addressed through further assessment and design at the substantive application stage.

### Methodology

A site walkover was completed in April 2026. While this site visit did not represent formal ecological surveys, it provides an understanding of the site’s ecological characteristics and condition.

No detailed ecological field surveys have been undertaken for the proposed development area at this stage. As such, a precautionary approach has been adopted where appropriate.

### Existing Environment

#### Site Context and Land Use

The site currently contains a dwelling with associated soft and hard landscaping, various outbuildings and sheds, and the Oaklands milk factory with associated solar power arrays. The remainder of the area can be characterised as rural and is split into several paddocks. The site borders existing residential development, including the Somerset (Richmond Ranges) retirement village on the western boundary, and the Saxton Fields sports complex on the northern boundary.

## Historical Ecological Context

The site is located in the Motueka Ecological District of the Nelson Region. The district is characterised by lowland plains, shallow coastlines and river estuaries. The climate is generally warm and sunny with moderate levels of rainfall that can be of high intensity. Pre-human, the district was mostly forested by tall podocarp-hardwood-beech forests. Areas of wetland, fernland and grassland were present in some areas. The district has been widely modified through historical Polynesian burning and more recent development of agriculture, horticulture and forestry.

Historical aerial imagery from the 1940s shows the site and surrounding landscape had already been extensively cleared for agricultural use over 85 years ago and that the original forest ecosystems were removed prior to 1940. The site has been highly modified for an extended period.

## Terrestrial values

The site reflected a long history of agriculture with pasture forming the dominant vegetation type. There were various stands of mature exotic trees, generally associated with a hill/terrace edge, laneway, or waterway. Three areas of mixed exotic-native vegetation were present (Attachment A). In the north-west, a stand of willows was present with a native wetland understory. At two locations along the central constructed/highly modified stream (waterway 2), there were areas of mixed native trees, with exotic trees. Native species present included mānuka (*Leptospermum scoparium*), lemonwood (*Pittosporum eugenioides*) and mahoe (*Melicetyus ramiflorus*).

One main area of native vegetation was present. Reasonably mature native species were present in the riparian zone of waterway 7. This vegetation was moderately complex with a reasonably diversity of species. However, exotic species, including weeds such as old man's beard (*Clematis vitalba*), ivy (*Hedera* sp.), woolly nightshade (*Solanum mauritianum*) and fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*), were also abundant.

The paddocks were closely grazed and grass was short at the time of the site visit. Northern grass skink (*Oligosoma polychroma*; Not Threatened) have been recorded within five kilometres of the site. No records of geckos are present within five kilometres of the site. It is considered possible that lizards may be present on site where suitable habitat is present. However, the short grass and long history of agriculture within the site mean the site is not considered to be high value lizard habitat.

Birds observed on the site, and those expected to be present, are limited to common native and exotic species. Habitat present for birds was common and abundant in the wider area.

## Freshwater values

### Waterways

Various waterways were present within the site (Attachment A). Waterway 7 was classified as a permanent, natural stream. It also functions, or historically functioned, as the spillway for a constructed dam, upstream of the site that used to feed the irrigation pond, although the dam no longer provides water to this pond. The channel followed a natural alignment, with meanders, and was contained mostly within an apparently natural gully. The lower reaches have likely been straightened at some point, however the straightened or modified reach is small. Waterway 7 discharges to waterway 1, which has been classified as a highly modified natural stream. Review of historical aerial images shows a channel has been present here since before the aerial image record (<1946; Attachment B). The

channel is artificially straight, however as it contains water from a natural source, i.e. waterway 7, it is considered to be a highly modified natural stream. The lower reaches had been planted as part of the development of the retirement village, however weed growth was abundant and plants did not appear to be overly healthy. Waterway 3 contained two distinct types of channel. The upper reaches were contained within a natural gully, with the alignment showing natural meanders and variations in width and depth. It did appear that some deepening had occurred as the channel was very incised in some areas. The mid and lower reaches were contained within a highly incised channel, that was artificially straight and flowed across the natural contour of the land in places, rather than with the contours. Communications with Julian Raine (current land owner) revealed this channel had been constructed by his family several decades ago. The earliest historic aerial image (1946) shows it is present in more or less its current alignment at that time. This reach has been conservatively classified as a highly modified natural channel despite its clearly constructed status. Review of historical aerial images suggests the channel likely flowed in a north west direction before being modified to its current alignment. Areas of darker grass visible suggest a defined low point at this alignment, indicated in Attachment A.

Waterway 7 and waterway 1, downstream of where waterway 7 flows into it, are included in the NRMP riparian overlay.

Review of the New Zealand Freshwater Fish Database identified various records for Saxton Creek and its tributaries, including waterways within the site. The fish community present is expected to be diverse and include At Risk species such as longfin eel (*Anguilla dieffenbachii*), inanga (*Galaxias maculatus*), banded kokopu (*Galaxias fasciatus*), and redfin bully (*Gobiomorphus huttoni*). It is likely only eels are present in waterway 3, due to the limited flow.

Ecological values associated with waterways 1 and 7 were considered to be high, while those of waterway 3 were considered moderate.

There are excellent opportunities to enhance the streams through riparian planting. Maintenance of the planting will be required until it is capable of outcompeting weeds. This maintenance has not occurred for the planting that has been established on waterway 1, outside of the site.

Waterways 2, 4, 5 and 6 were all classified as constructed/artificial drains. All were artificially straight and did not have a clear source of water. Channels 4, 5 and 6 were dry and vegetated with pasture species. It is expected they only contain water following sufficient rainfall. Waterway 2 did contain a small amount of water, though there was no clear source. It flowed into the irrigation pond.

All waterways within the site discharge to Saxton Creek, beyond the site's boundaries.

### **Wetlands**

One natural inland wetland, as defined by the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020 (NPS-FM), was present, located in the north-west corner of the site. This area included the confluence point of waterway 3 and Saxton Creek. Aerial images suggest this wetland has formed over time with older aerial images showing pasture present, not wetland vegetation. The value of this wetland was considered moderate due to the dense vegetation, albeit with a high proportion of exotic species.

A second area of likely wetland was present in approximately the centre of the site. This area was contained within a shallow gully. Standing water was present and wetland vegetation was present. Because bulls were present in the paddock, the area was observed from the adjacent paddocks.

However, it is considered highly likely this area would meet the definition of a natural inland wetland. The value of this wetland was considered low due to the lack of structural tiers, low plant diversity and impact from stock. The boundaries illustrated on the map are conservative, and should be refined prior to lodgement of any resource consent application.

A third area of wetland was classified as non-natural. This area, on the site's northern boundary, contained wetland vegetation and was functioning as a wetland. However, the source of the water for the wetland was a series of constructed amenity ponds associated with gardens for the property's main house. The amenity ponds discharge to a channel which feeds the wetlands. Water is pumped to the amenity ponds from the irrigation pond within the site to maintain desired water levels.. The NPS-FM expressly excludes constructed waterbodies and wetlands associated with constructed waterbodies from the definition of a natural inland wetland. As the wetland is only present due to the constructed amenity ponds, it is considered to be artificial or a non-natural wetland.

A constructed irrigation pond was present near the site's north-west corner. The pond was constructed in the 1980s. The pond is not considered to be a natural inland wetland due to its constructed status.

## **Assessment of Effects**

### **Effects on Terrestrial Values**

Terrestrial ecological values within the site are generally low and are mostly associated with exotic vegetation. These areas provide low quality habitat for fauna. One area of mixed native vegetation provided higher values. However, a high abundance of weeds limits the potential of this area.

Vegetation clearance associated with the proposed development is not expected to result in significant adverse ecological effects, nor a meaningful loss of ecological function. The native vegetation is within the riparian zone of streams and will be subject to consent if removed. It is intended that the majority of the native vegetation along waterway 7 be retained.

The proposal provides a significant opportunity for ecological enhancement, particularly through extensive riparian and wetland margin planting. This planting will:

- Improve habitat quality;
- Increase native vegetation diversity;
- Enhance ecological connectivity; and
- Strengthen buffering functions across the site.

Any areas of native revegetation will provide connectivity for fauna, particularly birds, across the wider landscape, such as the Bryant Range, Richmond Ranges, Motueka Valley area and the Nelson and Tasman coastal areas.

Any potential effects on indigenous fauna can be appropriately managed through the implementation of fauna management measures, to be developed as part of the substantive application.

### **Effects on Freshwater Values**

Proposed realignment and naturalisation of waterway 3 will result in an improvement in ecological values. Minor realignment of waterway 7 to accommodate roading access may be necessary, however realignment would be confined to the area downstream of the native vegetation in a reach that has

likely been subject to modification historically. While some loss of lineal length of waterway 3 is possible as a result of the proposed realignment, it is considered the realignment more closely resembles the original alignment and flow path of the stream. Works on any of the waterways will require application of the effects management hierarchy and any detrimental residual effects are expected to be able to be mitigated through habitat improvements and riparian management. The specifics will be determined during detailed design stages. Values will be significantly enhanced through naturalisation of the stream banks and riparian planting.

It is recommended that native riparian vegetation along waterway 7 is retained, and subject to weed control.

Improvements to values will include:

- Riparian planting to improve water quality through increased filtration;
- Increased shading to moderate water temperatures;
- Improved bank stability; and
- Enhancement of in-stream habitat and ecological connectivity.

Given the current degraded condition of many stream habitats within the site, these measures are expected to result in an overall improvement in freshwater ecological values.

One natural inland wetland, and one likely natural inland wetland are present on the site. These will be subject to NES-F rules managing works within, and within 10 m of, the wetlands, and discharges, water takes and earthworks within 100 m of them. The central wetland may require reclamation, subject to detailed design and further ecological assessment at the substantive application stage. Based on the site walkover, this wetland appears to have comparatively low ecological value; however, formal wetland delineation will be required to confirm its extent and characteristics. Any potential reclamation would be subject to the relevant statutory framework, including application of the effects management hierarchy. Where adverse effects cannot be avoided or minimised, they would be addressed through appropriate offsetting or compensation measures. This may include enhancement of the existing wetland in the north-west of the site, or creation of wetlands elsewhere within the wider property, where hydrological conditions are suitable.

Any culverts required for road or pathway crossings will be designed to meet permitted activity NES-F standards for culverts, where practicable. Where permitted activity standards cannot be achieved, adverse effects will be managed in accordance with the effects management hierarchy.

## Relevant Legislation

The above assessment has been undertaken with regard to relevant statutory planning and ecological policy frameworks, including:

- The Resource Management Act 1991;
- The National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020 (NPS-FM); and
- The National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity 2023 (NPS-IB).

The objective of the NPS-FM is to prioritise the health and well-being of freshwater bodies and ecosystems. Consistent with this objective, freshwater features within the site will be further identified

and assessed at the substantive application stage to ensure that reclamation or disturbance is avoided where practicable, and that any residual effects are appropriately managed through application of the effects management hierarchy.

The objective of the NPS-IB is to maintain indigenous biodiversity and, at a minimum, achieve no overall loss. Given the low terrestrial ecological values in most of the site, and the opportunity for enhancement through restoration planting, the proposal is considered capable of achieving consistency with this objective. Indigenous biodiversity values have been identified and avoided where practicable, and residual effects will be managed through mitigation, and restoration.

Overall, the proposal is considered capable of being developed in a manner that is consistent with relevant statutory requirements. The preliminary assessment has not identified any ecological constraints that would preclude development. Matters requiring further assessments, including detailed ecological survey, wetland delineation, and refinement of avoidance and mitigation measures, can be appropriately addressed at the substantive application stage.

## Conclusion

The site comprises a highly modified pastoral landscape with little indigenous vegetation, and ecological values primarily associated with the freshwater network. The only areas of indigenous vegetation were along the streams.

The proposed development includes retention and enhancement of freshwater features, where practicable, and includes the realignment of waterway 3 to a more natural alignment. Enhancement of the waterways and the north-west wetland are expected to result in significant ecological gains.

Based on this preliminary assessment, ecological effects are expected to be appropriately avoidable, manageable, or mitigable, and do not present a constraint to referral under the Fast-Track process. The site comprises a highly modified environment, with higher-value ecological features that are identifiable and spatially discrete. The anticipated ecological effects are understood, and effects can be appropriately managed through detailed design, targeted survey, and the implementation of management measures at the substantive application stage.

No ecological matters have been identified at this stage that would preclude referral of the project. Further detailed ecological assessment will be undertaken to support the substantive application.

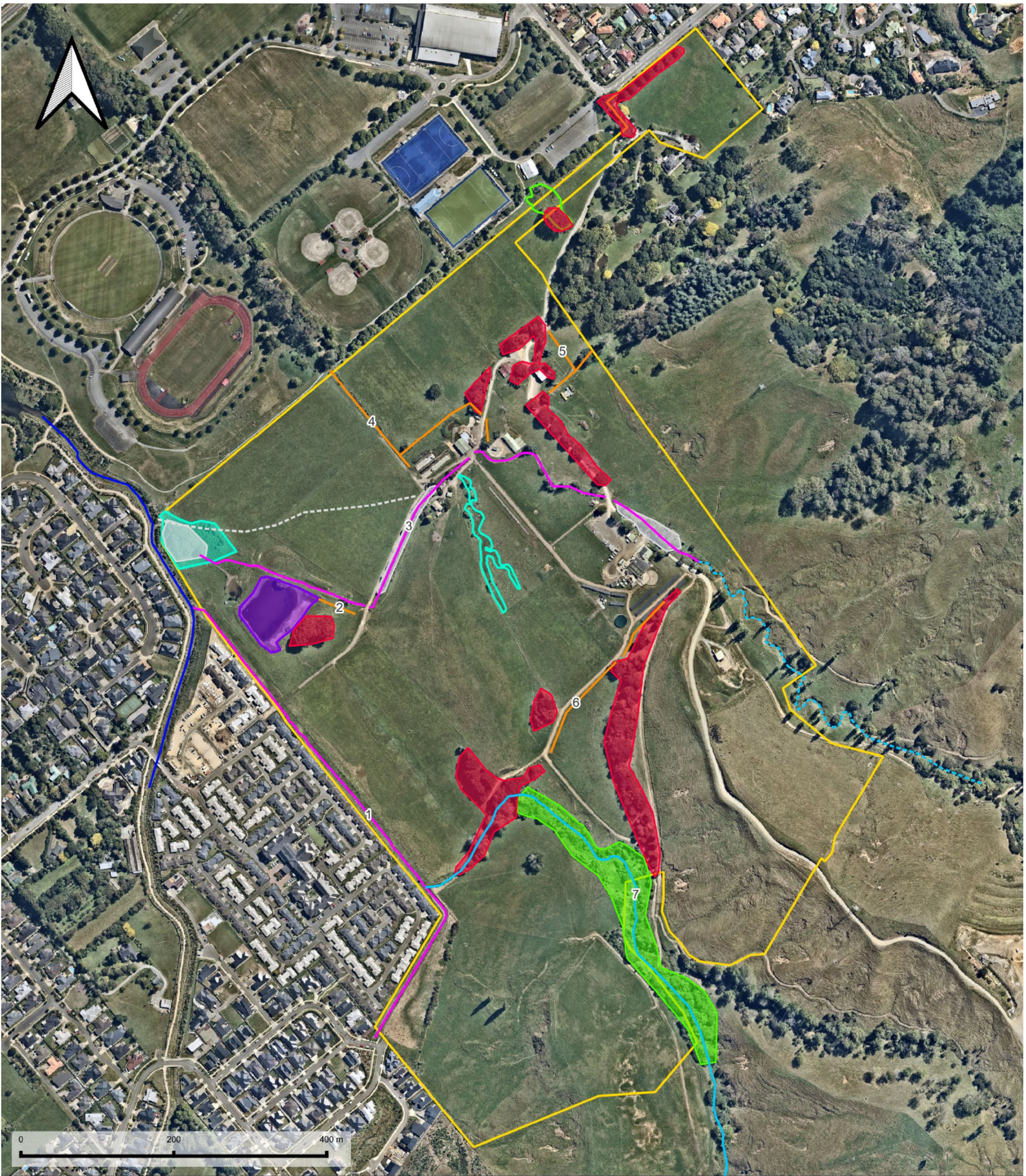
## Attachments

Attachment A – Ecological Features

Attached B – 1946 Historical Aerial Image

© Viridis Limited 2026

This document has been prepared by Viridis Limited for Recipient company . The document may only be used for the purpose for which it was commissioned and in accordance with the Terms of Engagement for the commission. Unauthorised use of this document in any form whatsoever is prohibited.



## Oaklands, Nelson - Ecological features

Inovo

PROJECT NO. 10455

DRAWN BY: AJC

DATE: 21/04/2026

SCALE 1:4,500 @ A3

Site boundary

### Vegetation

Exotic

Mixed

Native dominant

### Waterways

Permanent

Intermittent

Indicative historical alignment

Highly modified

Saxton Creek

Drain

### Freshwater features

Constructed pond

Likely natural wetland

Natural wetland

Non-natural wetland



### SOURCES

Nearmap.com 2025

### DISCLAIMER:

This map/plan is not an engineering draft. This map/plan is illustrative only and all information should be independently verified on site before taking any action.



0 100 200 300 400 m

