

DFH Joint Venture
Proposed Plan Change – Graham Block, Pokeno

Landscape and Visual Effects Assessment

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Table of Contents

1.0	Introduction 3
2.0	Project Overview...	... 3
3.0	The Subject Site and Surrounding Environment 4
4.0	Relevant Planning Documents 6
5.0	Evaluation of the Proposal 7
6.0	Conclusions19

Figures

- 1. Site Location and Viewpoints Map**
- 2. Viewpoint Photographs**
- 3. Site Landscape Character Photographs**

Appendices

- A. Existing Zones Plan**
- B. Proposed Zones Plan**

Proposed Plan Change – Graham Block, Pokeno

Landscape and Visual Effects Assessment

1. Introduction

- 1.1 LA4 Landscape Architects have been requested by DFH Joint Venture Limited ('DFH') to undertake a landscape and visual effects assessment to inform and support the proposed Plan Change Request ('PC') to rezone 40 hectares of land in Hitchen Road, Pokeno.
- 1.2 This assessment investigates the existing character of the plan change site and surrounding environment, identifies the key landscape and visual features of the area and describes the visual and landscape implications of the plan change on the site and surrounding area.
- 1.3 Investigations of the plan change area and surrounding environment were carried out in March 2017.

2. Project Overview

- 2.1 The current zoning of the land included in the proposed plan change request is shown in the plan attached as **Appendix 1**. The proposed zoning of the land is shown in the plan attached as **Appendix 2**.
- 2.2 The plan change request seeks the following changes to the Waikato District Plan:
 - (a) Deletion of the Large Lot Overlay from the Structure Plan Area and reinstatement of Residential 2;
 - (b) Rezoning 12.8 hectares of the Graham Block from Rural to Residential 2 (contiguous with the existing residential zone); and
 - (c) Rezoning 13.0 hectares of the Graham Block from Rural to Countryside Living.

Site Context and Background

- 2.3 In 2010 the Pokeno Landowners Consortium (Dines Group, Fulton Hogan, Hynds Pipe Systems and Winstone Aggregates) obtained a change to the Franklin District Plan ("PC 24") in relation to approximately 400 hectares of land at Pokeno ("**Pokeno Structure Plan**"). Of that land, DFH controlled approximately 200 hectares.
- 2.4 The plan change request was lodged as a private plan change but subsequently adopted by Franklin District Council. The plan change introduced the Pokeno Structure Plan and new zoning provisions which provided for:
 - (a) 2000 residential sections;
 - (b) Extensive recreational parks and sports grounds;
 - (c) Neighbourhood walkways with native planting and open spaces; and
 - (d) 80 hectares of industrial land.
- 2.5 Development of DFH's land commenced in 2011 and is being undertaken in stages. DFH anticipates that all residential land included within the PC 24 area will be developed by 2021. As demand for residential sections in Pokeno is high, DFH has identified additional land for development contiguous with the Structure Plan area.

- 2.6 The logical extension to the Pokeno Structure Plan area is land that forms part of the Graham Block, a 40-hectare block of land in the south west of the Structure Plan area. The entirety of the Graham Block was included in the original concept for the Pokeno Structure Plan and formed part of the study area in early versions of the technical reports that were ultimately included in the application for PC 24.
- 2.7 25.8 hectares of the Graham Block was removed from the proposed Structure Plan area as a result of opposition from the landowners. As a result, the southwestern portion of the Graham Block was included in PC 24 and is now zoned Residential 2 but the remainder of the land remains zoned Rural.
- 2.8 Land included in the Structure Plan Area along Hitchen Road, zoned Residential 2, has a Large Lot Overlay applied to it which establishes a minimum lot size of 1200m². The plan change request will also seek the removal of this overlay from the Structure Plan area to enable the development of an additional 51 lots on the land.

3. The Subject Site and Surrounding Environment

The Site

- 3.1 The site comprises approximately 40 hectares of land in the south west of the Structure Plan area. Hitchen Road bounds the site to the north and west, Large Lot Overlay and Industrial land to the east, Residential 2 and Rural land to the west and Rural and Aggregate Extraction and Processing land to the south.
- 3.2 Refer to:

Figure 1 – Site Location and Viewpoint Map

Figure 2 – Viewpoint Photographs

Figure 3 – Site Landscape Character Photographs

Landform and Catchment

- 3.3 The landform is characterised by the rolling and undulating terrain dissected with steeply incised gullies. A central northwest running ridge extends to a height of approximately RL95m along the southern boundary. This ridge continues along Hitchen Road with the land falling in both directions from it.
- 3.4 The ridge continues in a southeast direction from the southern boundary to a high point of RL140m in the adjoining property to the south. Several main spurs extend off from this ridge in easterly and southeasterly directions. These range in height from approximately RL70m to RL90m down to between RL35m and RL50m. Steeply incised gullies dissect these spurs, falling steeply to the gully floor at RL30m along the eastern boundary.
- 3.5 Land to the west of the Hitchen Road ridge falls more gently in a northwesterly direction to RL50 along the northwestern corner.
- 3.6 The Bluff Road ridgeline is the dominant ridge within the area, further to the south of the site, extending to a height of RL140m and forming a backdrop to, and enclosing the wider southern Pokeno environs.

Land Use

- 3.7 The site has been heavily modified from its naturalised state through the introduction of human land uses including lifestyle activities, farming practices and viticulture. The site is currently utilised for viticulture activities with a small

boutique vineyard occupying approximately 2 hectares centrally within the site. The remainder of the land is utilised for grazing.

- 3.8 A residential dwelling with garaging, extensively landscaped gardens and swimming pool is located on the eastern side of Hitchen Road.

Streams and Watercourses

- 3.9 A number of ephemeral watercourses are located in the incised gullies flowing in an easterly direction and opening out into wetland and swampy areas in the lower parts of the site. A small ephemeral watercourse is also located in the southwestern part of the site. These are described further in the Ecological Report.

Vegetation

- 3.10 Pasture covers the majority of the site and is grazed with cattle. Approximately 2 hectares of the north facing slopes are planted in rows of grapevines. Adjacent to the southern group is a small stand of olives and four cork oaks (*Quercus suber*). Dense plantings of predominantly exotic tree, shrub and amenity plantings surround the existing house, swimming pool and vineyard buildings.
- 3.11 Stands of mixed indigenous and exotic vegetation are located within the incised gullies. The southernmost stand is covenanted with the dominant species comprising mature taraire (*Beilschmiedia taraire*), totara (*Podocarpus totara*) and kahikatea (*Dacrycarpus dacrydioides*). A number of puriri (*Vitex lucens*), karaka (*Corynocarpus laevigatus*), kowhai (*Sophora microphylla*), manuka (*Leptospermum scoparium*), nikau (*Rhopalostylis sapida*) are present along with smaller growing natives species. The stand also includes a number of mature chestnut trees (*Castanea spp.*) around the edges.
- 3.12 The gully to the northwest of the dwelling also contains a number of exotic and indigenous tree species including chestnut trees (*Castanea spp.*), oaks (*Quercus spp.*), poplar (*Populus spp.*), cabbage tree (*Cordyline australis*) and tree fern (*Cyathea spp.*) along with a number of noxious weed species.
- 3.13 A large stand of indigenous plantings extends along the northern part of the eastern boundary fenceline. A small grove of young indigenous vegetation has been planted and fenced off in the small gully in the southwest part of the site.
- 3.14 Isolated indigenous and exotic specimen trees are also scattered throughout the grazed paddocks.

The Wider Landscape Context

- 3.15 From a landscape perspective, the existing urban area of Pokeno is located in the low-lying lands and surrounded by the dominant pastoral ridgelines that provide a rural backdrop to the village. These ridgelines have high visual sensitivity being visible from many locations locally and from a distance. The ridgelines associated with Ridge Road and Bluff Road and the descending slopes from these ridgelines have significance to Pokeno as they provide enclosure and a rural backdrop to the existing settlement.
- 3.16 Pokeno is undergoing rapid transformation and development as part of the Structure Plan process with urbanisation of the previously rural land. The wider surrounding area is dominated by these prevailing characteristics with established recent residential development to the north and earthworks activities in the surrounding area forming roads and building platforms for urban expansion.

- 3.17 The Gateway Business Park to the east of the PC area has a dominant influence on the area with the extensive Yashili International infant formula manufacturing plant, NZ Pure Water bottling factory and the extensive Hinds Pipes storage facility and yards (and soon to be constructed pipe manufacturing facility).
- 3.18 Land to the west of the site is zoned Residential 2, beyond which is Rural zoned land. The NIMT railway line extends to the west of the site, beyond which is Pokeno Road which links through to Tuakau. A small area of Rural zoned land adjoins the site to the south beyond which is the large Aggregate Extraction zone, providing the ridge backdrop. Consent had been obtained for the Aggregate Extraction zone to the south of the site, although this has subsequently expired.
- 3.19 The wider surrounding rural landform is generally characterised by expansive areas of undulating to gently rolling lowland pasture, with areas of more localised fragmentation by shelterbelts, bush remnants, forestry stands and stream corridors. The land to the west is more of a working landscape, intensively farmed with small landholdings along with relatively well-established rural living and lifestyle block development.

4. Evaluation of the Proposal

- 4.1 The key to assessing the visual and landscape effects of the proposed Plan Change is first to establish the existing characteristics and values of the landscape and then to assess the effects of the proposal on them. In accordance with the Resource Management Act (1991) this includes an assessment of the cumulative effects of urban development enabled by the Plan Change combined with existing developments.

Landscape Effects Methodology

- 4.2 Landscape effects take into consideration physical effects to the land resource. Assessments of landscape effects therefore investigate the likely nature and scale of change to landscape elements and characteristics. Landscape effects are primarily dependent on the landscape sensitivity of a site and its surrounds to accommodate change and development.
- 4.3 Landscape sensitivity is influenced by landscape quality and vulnerability, or the extent to which landscape character, elements/features and values are at risk to change. Landscape character results from a combination of physical elements together with aesthetic and perceptual aspects that combine to make an area distinct.

Landscape Effects Analysis

- 4.4 This landscape is undergoing rapid change and development with the surrounding development works transforming the previously rural landscape to one of highly modified characteristics through the urbanisation of the Pokeno environs to the north, the industrial area to the east and current earthworks and ground shaping for future urban development in the vicinity.
- 4.5 The attributes that contribute to the rural character of the area will become progressively less pervasive as the surrounding area develops with the Pokeno Structure Plan activities. Development enabled by the PC will inevitably transform the current remaining localised rural character to that of mixed urban. It is important to note however that this type of development has been advanced by a number of planning strategies with the surrounding environs zoned as one of the key areas to accommodate future urban growth requirements in Pokeno.

- 4.6 It is also important to note that although the site and local area currently exhibit rural characteristics, neither display a high degree of 'ruralness' due to a combination of the size of landholdings, the pattern of settlement, the adjoining industrial area, the rapid urbanisation of the surrounding area and the zoning of the surrounding sites.
- 4.7 Distinctly urban and industrial influences are already evident in the area, in particular the proximity of the site to the extensive Yashili manufacturing facility, which further reduce the sensitivity of the site and surrounding environment to change as anticipated by the PC.
- 4.8 Based on the preceding description and analysis of the site and surrounds it is clear that there are relatively low landscape values and sensitivity associated with the site. The PC site is a relatively degraded, modified rural environment lacking any significant landscape features (other than the covenanted indigenous bush and bush remnants), has moderate natural character values (primarily focussed around the bush), and generally relatively low visual amenity. Therefore the only negative outcomes in landscape terms will be the loss of the remnant rural character, which is anticipated by the Pokeno Structure Plan for the surrounding area.
- 4.9 The key methods of mitigating for this loss are to retain and enhance where possible existing landscape features and create a quality urban development. Although the proposal will result in the loss of rural character there are number of positive landscape outcomes associated with the development.
- 4.10 The proposal will allow for the retention of the main key landscape elements associated with the site including the covenanted bush remnant and the retention and enhancement of the main gully systems and wetland areas. The enhancement of these areas, including the provision for associated open space with extensive planting, will have beneficial landscape effects including the enhancement of amenity and habitat values, and the establishment of ecological linkages.
- 4.11 The PC development will result in a change in landscape character, but will ensure a suitable level of amenity, albeit an urban, rather than a rural character is achieved.

Natural Character Effects

- 4.12 Natural character relates to the degree of 'naturalness' of a landscape. It is primarily determined by the nature and extent of modification to a landscape and can be expressed in relation to natural processes, patterns and elements in the landscape.
- 4.13 The highest levels of natural character are where there is the least modification. Natural character effects relate to the degree to which a proposal alters the biophysical and / or perceived naturalness of a landscape.

Natural Character Effects Analysis

- 4.14 While the remnant bush area retains a good level of natural character, the site itself is not high in natural character values and has been highly modified through past pastoral and viticultural activities. The site is a component of the wider modified Pokeno environment and initially was included in the Pokeno Structure Plan area.

- 4.15 Overall, the natural character effects of development enabled by the PC would be low. The retention and enhancement of the main gully systems and wetland areas will enhance the natural character values.

Visual Effects Methodology

- 4.16 The assessment of visual effects analyses the perceptual (visual) response that any of the identified changes to the landscape may evoke, including effects relating to views and visual amenity. Visual sensitivity is influenced by a number of factors including the visibility of a proposal, the nature and extent of the viewing audience, the visual qualities of the proposal, and the ability to integrate any changes within the landscape setting, where applicable.
- 4.17 The nature and extent of visual effects are determined by a systematic analysis of the visual intrusion and qualitative change that a proposal may bring, specifically in relation to aesthetic considerations and visual character and amenity.
- 4.18 The methodology used in this assessment is designed to assess whether or not future development enabled by the Plan Change would have more than minor adverse visual effects on the nature and quality of the surrounding environment.

The process of analysing such effects involves:

- *Identification of the physical area or catchment from which development enabled by the Plan Change would be visible;*
- *Identification of the different viewing audiences that would be affected by future development; and*
- *Evaluation of the visual amenity effects taking into account the preceding analysis.*

Visual Catchment and Viewing Audience

- 4.19 The visual catchment is the area from which noticeable visual effects of future development of the PC site are likely to be evident to any significant degree.
- 4.20 Hitchen Road extending along the periphery of the PC area results in a number of open views into the site, however the landform and existing vegetation patterns and landform variations currently provide a level of screening from many of the surrounding areas.
- 4.21 The relative openness of the site, albeit compartmentalised by the central ridge and spurs, means that it has a relatively high level of exposure from more distant and elevated locations.
- 4.22 Consequently, the greatest level of visual exposure will be from more distant locations as closer views will be screened by future urbanisation and residential development within.
- 4.23 Distant views towards the site will be gained from the elevated properties in Razorback Road and Helenslee Road in the vicinity of the motorway overbridge. Elevated views will also be gained from parts of Ridge Road, and Dean Road on the eastern side of SH1.
- 4.24 Views will be gained from within the Pokeno urban area however these will progressively be screened out as residential development is built on the currently open areas. Views towards the western part of the site will be gained from Pokeno Road and parts of the rural lifestyle area off it to the west.

- 4.25 The viewing audience will therefore encompass the following groups:
- Road users on the surrounding road network and within the Pokeno residential area (to varying degrees as the Structure Plan area is progressively built out);
 - Road users and pedestrians travelling in an easterly direction along Pokeno Road to the west of the site;
 - Residents in some of the properties accessed off Pokeno Road to the west of the site; and
 - Road users, pedestrians and residents off some of the distant and elevated roads including Razorback Road, Ridge Road, Dean Road and Helenslee Road.

Visual Amenity Effects Analysis

- 4.26 The visual effects of the proposal have been assessed from viewpoints within the visual catchment area which have potential for landscape and visual effects. Seven viewpoints have been identified and the landscape and visual effects from each of these have been assessed (refer to Viewpoint Location Map). This is achieved by using both descriptive and analytical means.
- 4.27 The viewpoints were selected as locations that capture and fairly represent the range of public and private views towards the proposed development. The analysis from the viewpoints is representative of the potential views from the most affected surrounding properties and roads.
- 4.28 The assessment is from each of the following viewpoints:

Viewpoint 1: Razorback Road

Viewpoint 2: Helenslee Road

Viewpoint 3: Hillpark Drive | Muirhill Road

Viewpoint 4: Dean Road

Viewpoint 5: Munro Road

Viewpoint 6: Pokeno Road | Helenslee Road

Viewpoint 7: Pokeno Road

Refer to: Figure 1: Site Location and Viewpoint Map

Figure 2: Viewpoint Photographs

- 4.29 Photographs have been taken with a 35mm SLR camera with a fixed 50mm lens from the viewpoints and a detailed assessment and analysis of potential effects have been carried out using a Visual Effects Matrix (score sheet), which ensures that each view and changes within each view are evaluated thoroughly and consistently.
- 4.30 The key factors contained in that matrix are given in detail in Appendix A. It covers aspects such as the sensitivity of the view to change, the size of the viewing audience that would be affected, the legibility of the proposal, how well the proposal integrates with its surroundings and whether or not the proposal intrudes into any existing views.
- 4.31 The total scores given in the descriptions denote the overall visual effects rating, which has the following range of potential ratings and effects from each viewpoint. In general terms, visual effects in the no effect to moderate effect range are acceptable in landscape and visual terms, provided mitigation is carried out for close-up viewers, or for particularly intrusive elements.

4.32 For those units where high effects result, significant mitigation is required, and/or a redesign of parts of the proposal. Where a very high effect is created, the effects would be unacceptable in visual and landscape terms.

4.33 The following seven-point scale has been used to rate effects, based on the guidelines contained within the NZILA Best Practice Guide – Landscape Assessment and Sustainable Management 2010:

Negligible | Very Low | Low | Moderate | High | Very High | Extreme

Negligible Effect

The proposal would have no effect on the receiving environment.

Very Low Effect

The proposal has discernible effects but too small to adversely affect other persons.

Low Effect

The proposal constitutes only a minor component of the wider view. Awareness of the proposal would not have a marked effect on the overall quality of the scene or create any significant adverse effects.

Moderate Effect

The proposal may form a visible and recognisable new element within the overall scene and may be readily noticed by the viewer. The proposal may cause an adverse impact but could potentially be mitigated or remedied.

High Effect

The proposal forms a significant and immediately apparent part of the scene that affects and changes its overall character. The proposal may cause a serious adverse impact on the environment but could potentially be mitigated or remedied.

Very High Effect

The proposal becomes the dominant feature of the scene to which other elements become subordinate and it significantly affects and changes its character. The proposal causes extensive adverse effects that cannot be avoided, remedied or mitigated.

Extreme Effect

The proposal is completely at odds with the surrounding area and dominates the scene to an extreme degree. The proposal very significantly affects and entirely changes the character of the surrounding area. The proposal causes extreme adverse effects that cannot be avoided, remedied or mitigated.

4.34 The proposed future development of the site enabled by the Plan Change raises a number of visual issues, including the potential effects on visual amenity to the following key areas:

- Adjoining properties
- Surrounding road network
- Wider area

4.35 The assessment has been undertaken in terms of the following criteria:

- a). **Sensitivity of the view** – the relative quality of views into the site, including landscape character and visual amenity values.

- b). **Viewpoint | perceptual factors** – the type and size of population exposed to views into the site, the viewing distance to the site, and other factors which indicate its sensitivity in terms of both viewing audience and the inherent exposure of the view towards the site due to its physical character.
- c). **Urban | rural amenity** – the impact of future development on the wider surrounding urban and rural amenity.
- d). **Urban | rural form** – the degree to which future development would fit into the existing urban and rural context of the surrounding environs.
- e). **Visual intrusion | contrast** – the intrusion into or obstruction of views to landscape features in the locality and beyond and the impact upon key landscape elements and patterns.
- f). **Mitigation potential** – the extent to which any potential adverse effects of the development could be mitigated through integration into its surrounds by specific measures.

Viewpoint 1: Razorback Road

- 4.36 Viewpoint 1 illustrates the viewing perspective from Razorback Road looking in a southerly direction towards the site. The site is located behind the row of pine trees with the existing dwelling to the right surrounded by vegetation.

Sensitivity of the view

- 4.37 This landscape has distinctly modified characteristics through the urbanisation of the Pokeno area and beyond to the rural pastoral land. The recently constructed residential area in the north and earthworked slopes for future built development are the dominant characteristics of the landscape. The view is contained to a degree by the background rural hills enclosing the village and providing visual containment for the built environment. The view is not of high quality and the landscape has a good ability to visually absorb development enabled by the plan change.

Viewpoint / perceptual factors

- 4.38 From this viewpoint the anticipated level of audience exposure would be low and restricted to those travelling south along Razorback Road and several residential properties in the vicinity. The viewing distance towards the site is in excess of 3km away and from here the views are panoramic and diverse.

Implications of the development

- 4.39 From this viewing location, development enabled by the plan change will be viewed as an integral extension to Pokeno's urbanisation. The majority of development will be contained within the ridge landform and development will sit well below the backdrop rural ridge.

Urban / rural amenity

- 4.40 The proposal will not adversely affect the existing urban / rural amenity due to the current modified nature of the site and surrounding Pokeno environs. From here the development will appear as a small extension to the existing and proposed urbanisation of the foreground and surrounding area.

Visual intrusion / contrast

- 4.41 The proposed development will have no impact on views to key landscape features in the locality. The skyline ridges will remain the dominant natural feature and development will sit well below it. The development will not adversely impact upon key landscape elements and patterns.

Mitigation potential

- 4.42 The existing landform and vegetation patterns within the site and adjoining properties and the foreground built development will mitigate any potential adverse visual effects of the proposed development from here.
- 4.43 Overall, the proposed development would have negligible adverse visual effects from this viewpoint. Development would be seen as an integral part of the Pokeno urban area.

Viewpoint 2: Helenslee Road

- 4.44 Viewpoint 2 is taken from Helenslee Road just beyond the motorway overbridge and Razorback Road off-ramp looking in a southerly direction towards the site. The site is demarcated by the row of pine trees and vegetation in the middle of the view.

Sensitivity of the view

- 4.45 Again from here the highly modified characteristics of Pokeno are evident with the density of built development in the foreground, earthworked construction sites in the background and influence of the industrial area with the extensive and visually dominant Yashili production facility. From this lower elevation the background hills provide a good level of visual containment for the village, with the built development sitting on the lower flats. The view is not of high quality, highly urbanised and the landscape has a very good ability to visually absorb development enabled by the plan change.

Viewpoint / perceptual factors

- 4.46 From this viewpoint the anticipated level of audience exposure would be high, being the southern gateway into Pokeno from the southern motorway off-ramp. As one descends Helenslee Road dwellings within the line of sight increasingly obstruct the views. The viewing distance towards the site is in excess of 3km away.

Implications of the development

- 4.47 Again from this viewing location, development enabled by the plan change will be viewed as an integral extension to the Pokeno residential area. The development will be contained within the ridge landform and development will sit well below the backdrop rural ridge. Residential dwellings in the foreground along the northern side of Hitchen Road will screen parts of the development.

Urban / rural amenity

- 4.48 The proposal will not adversely affect the existing urban / rural amenity due to the heavily modified nature of the surrounding Pokeno environs. From here, development enabled by the plan change will appear continuous with the existing urban fabric.

Visual intrusion / contrast

- 4.49 The proposed development will have no impact on views to the key landscape features in the locality. The skyline ridge will remain the dominant natural feature and development will sit well below it. The development will not adversely impact upon key landscape elements and patterns in the surrounding area.

Mitigation potential

- 4.50 Similarly from here, the existing landform and vegetation patterns within the site and adjoining properties and the foreground built development will mitigate any potential adverse visual effects of the proposed development from here.
- 4.51 Overall, development enabled by the plan change would have very low adverse visual effects from this viewpoint.

Viewpoint 3: Hillpark Drive | Muirhill Road

- 4.52 Viewpoint 3 is taken from within the residential area at the intersection of Hillpark Road and Muirhill Road. The site extends from behind the shelterbelt pines to the left of the three Norfolk Island pines. The covenanted area of indigenous bush is visible behind the Norfolk Island pines. This view extends across the small grassed reserve area in the foreground.

Sensitivity of the view

- 4.53 The view from here is distinctly urban, being in the heart of the Pokeno residential environs. The pleasantness of the view is gained from the background hills providing visual relief from the urban environs in the foreground. The expanse of roof forms is unmitigated due to the 'newness' of the subdivision and lack of any mature vegetation to break up the mass.
- 4.54 The view is again not of high quality, highly urbanised and the landscape has a very good ability to visually absorb development enabled by the plan change due to the diversity of elements in the view and highly modified environment.

Viewpoint / perceptual factors

- 4.55 From this viewpoint the anticipated level of audience exposure would be moderate with Hillpark Road providing the main eastern road link through to the village centre. The majority of viewers will be transient and the view therefore brief. Similar views will be gained from several of the residential properties in the vicinity. The viewing distance from here towards the site is approximately 2km away.

Implications of the development

- 4.56 From this closer viewing location, large parts of the development will be screened by development on the northern side of Hitchen Road. The removal of the pines will open up views however the containing ridge and spurs will integrate the dwellings into the landscape. Development will be visible within the Countryside Living zone, however the building platforms will be restricted to lower parts of the site to ensure the built development does not encroach into the skyline ridge.

Urban / rural amenity

- 4.57 The proposal will not adversely affect the existing urban / rural amenity due to the existing urbanised characteristics of the environs. From here, development enabled by the plan change, where visible, will appear as a logical extension to the Pokeno residential area.

Visual intrusion / contrast

- 4.58 The proposed development will have no impact on views to the key landscape features in the locality. Development is to be kept well below the skyline ridge that will protect the visual integrity of the natural feature. Development will not adversely impact upon key landscape elements and patterns in the surrounding area.

Mitigation potential

- 4.59 The existing landform within the site, covenanted bush area and intervening vegetation outside the site will mitigate any potential adverse visual effects of the proposed development from here.
- 4.60 Overall, development enabled by the plan change would have very low adverse visual effects from this viewpoint.

Viewpoint 4: Dean Road

- 4.61 Viewpoint 4 is taken from Dean Road looking in a south-westerly direction towards the site across the southern motorway. From this direction, more open views into the site are gained due to the viewing angle. The view extends across the foreground of the older area of Pokeno with the more established and mature vegetation patterns evident. The covenanted bush within the southern gully is visible along with the distinctive linear patterning of the grape vines below the existing residence.

Sensitivity of the view

- 4.62 The view from here is again characterised by an area in transition. The extensive earthworked areas for future development including industrial and residential activities encompass a wide area of the view. Yashili forms a dominant and highly visible built element and the southern motorway and Pokeno off-ramp impart utilitarian characteristics into the view.
- 4.63 The view is not of high quality, highly urbanised and traffic dominated and the landscape has a good ability to visually absorb development enabled by the plan change, particularly in light of existing and future planned development.

Viewpoint / perceptual factors

- 4.64 From this viewpoint the anticipated level of audience exposure would be low to moderate. The majority of viewers will be transient and the view therefore brief. Similar views will be gained from some of the residential properties in the vicinity. The viewing distance from here towards the site is approximately 1.6km away.

Implications of the development

- 4.65 From this more exposed viewing location a larger part of the site is visible. The residential dwellings will be viewed sitting into the slopes behind the foreground of both industrial and residential development (currently undeveloped).

Urban / rural amenity

- 4.66 The proposal will not adversely affect the existing urban / rural amenity which is not high from here. The entire area is undergoing rapid and extensive transformation and is a landscape in transition. From here, development enabled by the plan change, will be contiguous with the foreground developments and not appear out of character.

Visual intrusion / contrast

- 4.67 The proposed development will have a low impact on views to the key landscape features in the locality. Development on the higher slopes towards Hitchen Road may be visible on the skyline, however this would likely occur within the consented Residential 2 zone on the western side of Hitchen Road. Development within the more sensitive Countryside Living zone is to be kept below the ridgeline. Development will not adversely impact upon key landscape elements and patterns in the surrounding area.

- 4.68 In addition, the foreground view will significantly change in the near future with the development within the industrial zone immediately below the site.

Mitigation potential

- 4.69 Retention and protection of the covenanted bush area and retention and enhancement of the wetlands and proposed reserve areas will assist to mitigate potential adverse effects of the development.
- 4.70 Overall, development enabled by the plan change would have low to moderate adverse visual effects from this viewpoint.

Viewpoint 5: Munro Road

- 4.71 This view is taken from Munro Road looking directly south towards the site demarcated by the pines within the Hitchen Road northern boundary. The white barn and truck are in the adjoining property to the east. Part of the vineyard is visible below the large pines on the skyline.

- 4.72 The view extends across the recently subdivided land in the foreground and across to the Hitchen Block.

Sensitivity of the view

- 4.73 The view from here is temporary in nature, currently looking across undeveloped land. This view will entirely change in the short to medium term with the urbanisation of the land and construction of numerous houses. The entire extent of land between here and the site is zoned for residential development.

- 4.74 Large parts of the site will not be visible from here, being located below the Hitchen Road ridge. The landscape therefore has a very good ability to visually absorb development enabled by the plan change.

Viewpoint / perceptual factors

- 4.75 From this viewpoint the anticipated level of audience exposure would be moderate with Munro Road providing access between Helenslee Road and Pokeno Road. The majority of viewers will be transient and the view therefore brief until construction of the dwellings in the foreground commences. Views may be gained from the future residential properties in the vicinity although likely to be screened by other intervening dwellings. The viewing distance from here towards the site is approximately 1km away.

Implications of the development

- 4.76 From this closer viewing location, large parts of the development will be screened by the Hitchen Road ridge and future residential development in the foreground and extending up to Hitchen Road.

Urban / rural amenity

- 4.77 The proposal, where visible, will not adversely affect the existing urban / rural amenity due to the existing urbanised characteristics of the environs. From here, development enabled by the plan change, where visible, will appear as an integral part of the surrounding residential area.

Visual intrusion / contrast

- 4.78 Development enabled by the plan change will sit below the skyline ridge and have no impact on views to the key landscape features in the locality. Development will not adversely impact upon key landscape elements and patterns in the surrounding area that have been largely modified by transformation and development of the previously rural landscape.

Mitigation potential

- 4.79 The existing landform within the site, covenanted bush area and intervening built development within the line of sight will mitigate any potential adverse visual effects of the proposed development from here.
- 4.80 Overall, development enabled by the plan change would have very low adverse visual effects from this viewpoint.

Viewpoint 6: Pokeno Road | Helenslee Road

- 4.81 Viewpoint 6 is taken from the intersection of Pokeno Road and Helenslee Road looking in a south-westerly direction towards the site. The view extends across the residentially zoned land, NIMT railway line and beyond to the residential land in the foreground to the site. Large parts of the site are screened from here by the intervening landform. The Countryside Living zone, rising up from the covenanted bush, is visible. Rural zoned land extends to the left of this up towards the ridgeline.

Sensitivity of the view

- 4.82 Similar to Viewpoint 5, this view from here is temporary in nature, currently looking across undeveloped land. This view will change in the short to medium term with the urbanisation of the land and construction of numerous houses. The land between here and the site is zoned for residential development.

- 4.83 Large parts of the site will not be visible from here, being located below the Hitchen Road ridge and behind the elevated knoll. The landscape therefore has a very good ability to visually absorb development enabled by the plan change.

Viewpoint / perceptual factors

- 4.84 From this viewpoint the anticipated level of audience exposure would be relatively high due to the volume of traffic travelling along Pokeno Road. The viewer's exposure to the site will be transient and brief. Following construction of the dwellings in the foreground, views will be entirely lost. Views may be gained from the future residential properties in the vicinity, although likely to be screened by other intervening dwellings.

Implications of the development

- 4.85 From this viewing location, large parts of the development will be screened by the Hitchen Road ridge, intervening landform and future residential development in the foreground.

Urban / rural amenity

- 4.86 The proposal, where visible, will not adversely affect the existing urban / rural amenity due to the existing urbanised characteristics of the environs. From here, development enabled by the plan change, where visible, will appear as an integral part of the surrounding Pokeno village environs.

Visual intrusion / contrast

- 4.87 Development enabled by the plan change within the Countryside Living zone will sit below the skyline ridge and have a spacious appearance due to the expanse of open space between dwellings. Development within the Residential zone is likely to be screened entirely by dwellings within the foreground. There will be no impact on views to the key landscape features in the locality.

Mitigation potential

- 4.88 The existing landform within the site, covenanted bush area and intervening built development within the line of sight will mitigate any potential adverse visual effects of the proposed development from here.
- 4.89 Overall, development enabled by the plan change would have very low adverse visual effects from this viewpoint.

Viewpoint 7: Pokeno Road

- 4.90 This view is taken from Pokeno Road looking east towards the western slopes extending down from Hitchen Road. The digger on the skyline is in the adjoining site to the south, preparing site works for the construction of Watercare's reservoirs. Approximately half of the site is screened behind the vegetation to the right of the view. The intervening rolling slope also screens part of the site.
- 4.91 Land to the left of the photo adjoining the northern boundary of the site is zoned Residential 2. Land in the foreground is zoned Rural.

Sensitivity of the view

- 4.92 The view from here is currently rural in character due to the lack of development on the site and surrounding area. This reduces the site's ability to visually absorb development. The adjoining land however has been zoned for residential development and the application site proposes lower density Countryside Living.

Viewpoint / perceptual factors

- 4.93 From this viewpoint the anticipated level of audience exposure would be high due to the volume of traffic travelling between Tuakau and Pokeno. The majority of viewers will be transient, travelling in a north-easterly direction and the view brief and at speed. The orientation of the view is northwards along the road and not peripheral as in this viewpoint.
- 4.94 Views towards the western part of the site may be gained from some of the properties on the extending up from Pokeno Road and from Huia Road in the immediate vicinity.

Implications of the development

- 4.95 From this close viewing location, large parts of the site are screened by vegetation within the adjoining Pokeno Road property. This view will entirely change with residential development to be constructed on the adjoining land to the north (left hand side of the view).

Urban / rural amenity

- 4.96 Development enabled within the adjoining residential land will have an effect on the current rural amenity. The land is however zoned for this and therefore urban development is anticipated. Development within the PC site will be of lower density and viewed as a good transition between the more intensive residential to the north and adjoining rural land to the south.

Visual intrusion / contrast

- 4.97 Development enabled by the plan change may potentially be visible on the skyline. This skyline however is of local significance and the entire skyline is likely to change with development within the residential land to the north.

Mitigation potential

- 4.98 The existing landform and vegetation within the adjoining site will mitigate any potential adverse visual effects of the proposed development from here.
- 4.99 Overall, development enabled by the plan change would have low adverse visual effects from this viewpoint, particularly in consideration of the future residential development on the adjoining site within the Structure Plan area.

Construction Effects

- 4.100 Due to the nature and scale of the development, and the level of disturbance it will bring to the existing landscape, the visual effects will generally be high during and immediately following construction. The most significant changes and resultant effects on visual amenity will arise from the extensive earthworks associated with roading, infrastructure and building platform development.

- 4.101 These visual effects will reduce on completion, with the establishment of the open space areas assisting in integrating the residential development into the surrounding landscape. In addition, earthworks are a common sight in the Pokeno environs through past and present construction activities.

5. Relevant Planning Documents

- 5.1 The following statutory documents are of particular relevance to this assessment:

- *Waikato District Plan – Franklin Section*
- *Pokeno Structure Plan*

Waikato District Plan – Franklin Section

- 5.2 The Waikato District Plan notes that the continued modification of the rural environment through subdivision, use and development can adversely affect their natural and physical qualities and character. These qualities and character are important in maintaining investment in rural activities and providing a context for the development of towns and villages.

- 5.3 The following objectives and policies are of relevance to landscape and visual issues:

Part 54 Pokeno Structure Plan Area

54.15.2.1 Accommodating growth in a compact and contained urban form

Objective

To achieve subdivision and development within the Pokeno Structure Plan Area which:

- Accommodates its share of the district's projected population growth;*
- Maintains a compact and contained urban form;*
- Maintains the quality, function and integrity of the adjoining rural environment;*

54.15.2.2 Environmental Constraints

Objective

To achieve development which maintains locally significant landforms and vegetation and maintains or enhances water quality and identified watercourses.

Policy

Subdivision and development should avoid, remedy or mitigate the effects of urban development by:

- having regard to the adopted Pokeno Stormwater Catchment Management Plan (and/or approved discharge consent);*
- establishing the open space and stormwater reserves and the stormwater infrastructure (quality and detention) in an appropriate and timely manner;*
- protecting, maintaining and enhancing significant vegetation and landforms;*
- protecting, maintaining and enhancing watercourses identified on the Pokeno Structure Plan;*
- maintaining water quality and managing earthworks to avoid siltation and sedimentation of watercourses and adjoining properties; and*
- appropriately managing earthworks during subdivision to avoid, as far as practicable, the need for further significant earthworks and retaining during the development of buildings.*

54.15.2.3 Existing Amenity Values and Character

Objective

To achieve subdivision and development which maintains or enhances identified elements of the existing amenity values

Policy

Subdivision and development should be designed to maintain identified elements of the existing amenity values and character of Pokeno and its surroundings. Key elements that should be maintained and where appropriate enhanced are:

- (a) *The varied topography comprising areas of flat, rolling and steeper land;*
- (b) *Significant trees and vegetation;*
- (c) *Significant visual elements: views of the rural backdrops (in particular Mt William and the surrounding ridgelines) from the town centre and residential areas; two identified knolls, stream corridors;*

Comment

- 5.4 The quality, function and integrity of the adjoining rural environment will be maintained by the PC through the Countryside Living zone buffer between the Residential 2 and Rural zone. This will provide an appropriate hierarchy and buffer between the two zones. A compact and urban form will be maintained, with the land being surrounded to the north and west by residential development and to the east by the industrial zone.
- 5.5 The proposal will protect, maintain and enhance the significant vegetation and landforms. The main key landscape elements associated with the site including the covenanted bush remnant will be retained and the main gully systems and wetland areas enhanced. The enhancement of these areas, including the provision for associated open space with extensive planting, will have beneficial landscape effects including the enhancement of amenity and habitat values, and the establishment of ecological linkages.
- 5.6 The retention and enhancement of the main gully systems and wetland areas will enhance the natural character values of the site and surrounding area.

Pokeno Structure Plan

- 5.7 The Pokeno Structure Plan outlines under Section 4 the planning framework that guided the Pokeno structure planning process. The vision was for Pokeno developing as a sustainable community providing urban type opportunities within a rural setting.
- 5.8 A number of guiding principles were developed. Those of relevance to this assessment are:

Principle 3: Protect and enhance the natural landscape

The natural environment within the Structure Plan Area has, in many circumstances been significantly affected by human activity. In order to protect and enhance the natural landscape the Structure Plan is designed to:

- *Integrate with the Pokeno Catchment Management Plan, which has been prepared in parallel with the Pokeno Structure Plan Document. The receiving environment of the Mangatawhiri wetlands and ultimately the Waikato River is sensitive and any potentially adverse environmental impacts have to be mitigated within the development;*
- *Protect and enhance the key aspects of the natural topography and land capability;*

- *Minimise adverse environmental effects through the appropriate location of land use activities, the use of appropriate design solutions for stormwater and wastewater, and the incorporation of the former into the recreation/open space network.*

Principle 4: Reinforce Site values

In response to acknowledging context and character, the Structure Plan will:

- *Retain the rural backdrop by defining the boundaries to the town and ensuring views out of the town towards the surrounding hills are provided for.*

Comment

- 5.9 The proposal retains the main key landscape elements associated with the site including the covenanted bush remnant and the retention and enhancement of the main gully systems and wetland areas.
- 5.10 From most of the visual catchment, development enabled by the plan change will be viewed as an integral extension to the Pokeno residential area. The development will be contained within the ridge landform and development will sit well below the rural backdrop ridge.

Conclusion

- 5.11 I consider that future development enabled by this Plan Change is consistent with the intent of the landscape, visual, natural character and amenity objectives and policies of the relevant statutory documents and when considered in totality is entirely acceptable in landscape and visual terms.

6. Conclusions

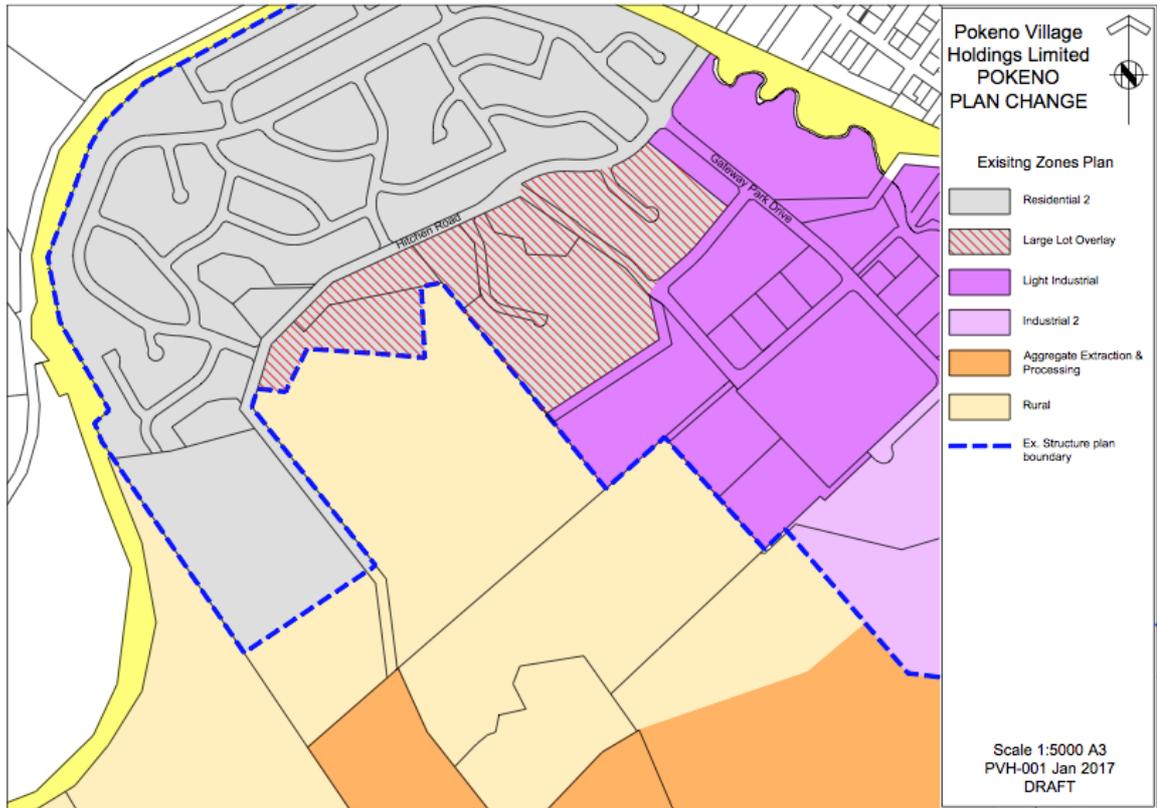
- 6.1 The proposed urbanisation of the Plan Change site will change its current open rural landscape character. The development will however be consistent with the adjoining land being zoned Residential and Light Industrial.
- 6.2 Although the subject site is largely in sloping pasture with incised gullies and remnant bush areas, its rural character is lessened to a degree by the existing modified land uses and relatively steep and degraded pasture. The close proximity to the Pokeno urban and industrial areas also reduces the rural character as evidenced by the extensive earthworks currently being undertaken within the surrounding area.
- 6.3 Although the subject site includes productive land, it is a modified degraded site with relatively low landscape values. In light of these considerations and its adjacency to the Pokeno Structure Plan area, the site is well suited to the type of urban development proposed.
- 6.4 The proposed urbanisation of the land will inevitably result in the transformation of the site from a fringe rural area to an urban residential area. This will have implications on the surrounding rural land to the south and west, with the urban development impacting on the rural qualities of these areas. Nevertheless, the surrounding area is a landscape in transition and is an area designated for urban expansion in the foreseeable future.
- 6.5 The change from the existing semi-rural character of this landscape to one dominated by the built form of a residential area will also introduce a range of beneficial effects, including the retention and protection of the existing covenanted indigenous bush area and ecological enhancement to the watercourses and wetland.

- 6.6 While the proposed development will result in a significant visual change from the site's current pastoral state to one with urban characteristics, such visual change is anticipated for the surrounding area and is in accordance with the key planning initiatives for the Pokeno Structure Plan area.
- 6.7 Despite the relatively low landscape values, development enabled by the plan change will initially generate landscape and visual effects of some significance. These however are inevitable with the first stage of urban development in a previously rural area in the process of urbanisation.
- 6.8 In conclusion, the plan change will fulfil the need for an expansion to the Greenfield housing area and provide an opportunity for urban development in keeping with the vision and principles established within the Pokeno Structure Plan area. The proposal is consistent with regional growth strategies for the surrounding area and will result in an urban development well integrated into its surroundings and with a range of positive landscape and environmental outcomes.

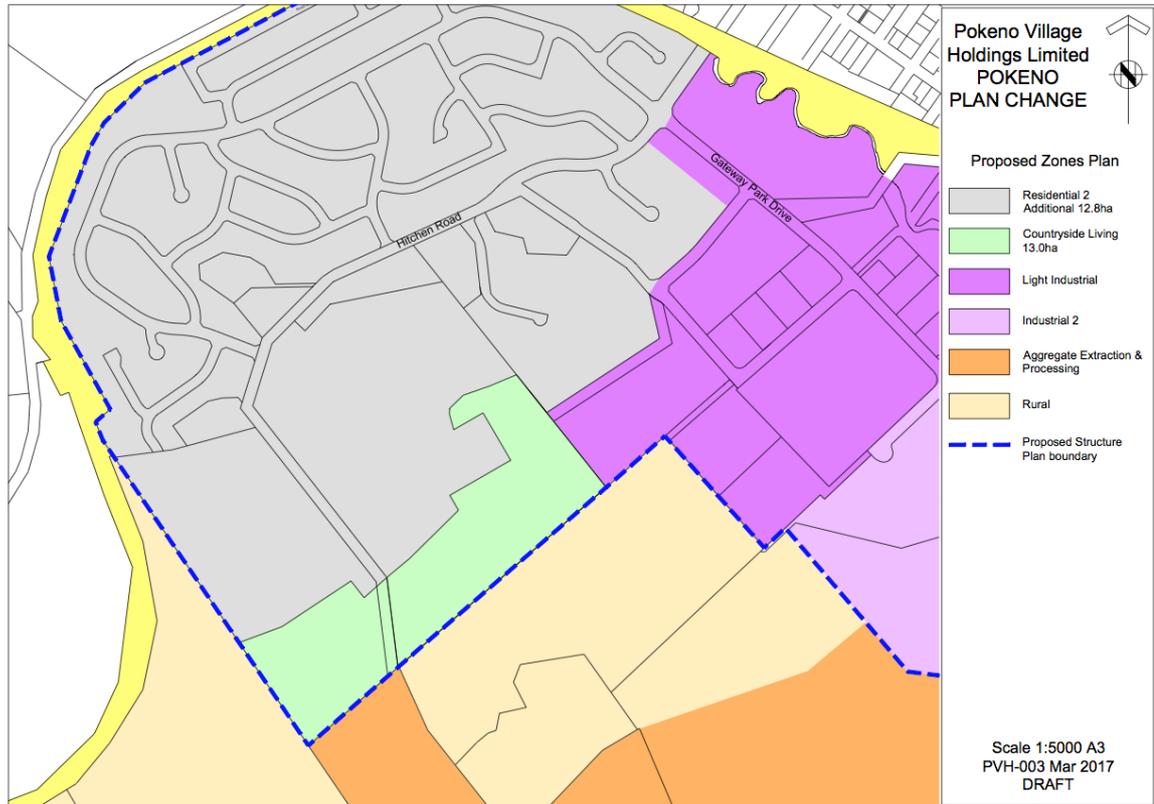
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April 2017

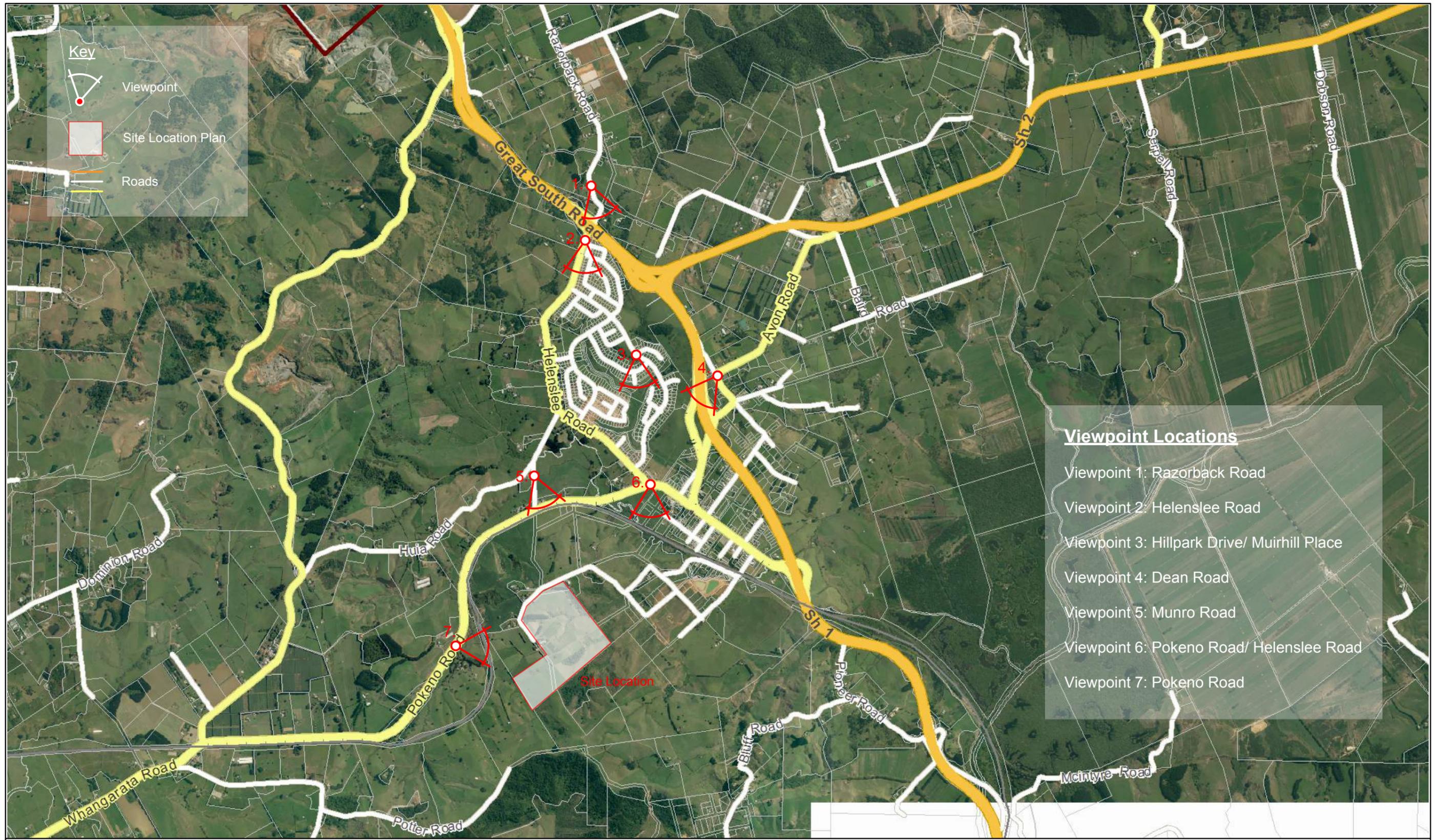


Appendix 1: Existing Zones Plan



Appendix 2: Proposed Zones Plan





- Viewpoint Locations**
- Viewpoint 1: Razorback Road
 - Viewpoint 2: Helenslee Road
 - Viewpoint 3: Hillpark Drive/ Muirhill Place
 - Viewpoint 4: Dean Road
 - Viewpoint 5: Munro Road
 - Viewpoint 6: Pokeno Road/ Helenslee Road
 - Viewpoint 7: Pokeno Road

No.	Preliminary	JC	RP	RP	16.03.17
	Revision	By	Chk	Appd	Date


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Original Scale	Design	RP
1:25000 (A3)	Drafting	JC
	Drafting Checked	RP
	Approval	RP

Client: **DFH JOINT VENTURE**

Project: **PROPOSED PLAN CHANGE:
GRAHAM BLOCK, POKENO**

Title: **SITE LOCATION AND VIEWPOINT MAP**

Project No.	17543
Drawing No.	LP01
Rev.	-



Viewpoint 1 Razorback Road



Viewpoint 2 Helenslee Road



Viewpoint 3 Hillpark Drive & Muirhill Place



Viewpoint 4 Dean Road



Viewpoint 5 Munro Road



Viewpoint 6 Pokeno Road & Helenslee Road



Viewpoint 7 Pokeno Road



Site Landscape Character Photographs



Site Landscape Character Photographs

Technical Memo

To: Mr Chris Scrafton
Principal Planner
Stantec

From: Rob Pryor
Director | NZILA Registered Landscape Architect
LA4 Landscape Architects Ltd

Date: 6 July 2017



Graham Block Rezoning – Request for Additional Information Assessment of Landscape and Visual Effects

In response to Mr Dave Mansergh's request for additional information I would make the following comments.

1. Further analysis of the effects on landscape and visual amenity

- a) *Identification and further detailed analysis of lots or areas where building development may be seen above the enclosing skyline ridge.*

The Pokeno Structure Plan (2008) outlines that to ensure the rural setting characteristics of Pokeno are retained, the prominent ridgelines and outlook which create the natural bowl characteristics of the surrounding valley should be protected from development.

The map within section 7.3.2 of the document indicates the topography and highlights all land above a 60m ASL contour. It considers that, to ensure the rural setting of Pokeno is protected, all land at a level above 100m should be excluded from potential development due to its visual sensitivity to a wider audience.

The Graham Block extends from 40m ASL in the northeast to a high point of 95m ASL along the southern boundary. The most elevated parts of the site are zoned for Countryside Living. The prominent ridge that encloses Pokeno to the south extends to a height of between 120m ASL and 130m ASL. Development within the Countryside Living zone of the site sits well below the prominent ridgeline.

- b) *Photomontages (prepared in general accordance with the NZILA Best Practice Guide BPG 10.2) depicting the visibility or visual changes (minimum standard required: building envelope) likely to occur from view locations 3, 6 & 7.*

I do not consider that photomontages are required at this Plan Change application stage. Photomontages are typically prepared for resource consent applications when a defined development has been identified. In relation to Viewpoint 3 – Hillpark Road and Muirhill Place, the land immediately in the foreground is zoned Residential 2 and is within Stage 9 of the Pokeno development. This view will be entirely built out by future dwellings within the land.

Similarly in relation to Viewpoint 6 – Pokeno Road and Helenslee Road, the land in the foreground is Residential 2 and the site will be entirely screened from view by built development in the near future.

From Viewpoint 7 – Pokeno Road, the entire skyline will change from the currently zoned Residential 2 land immediately to the northwest of the site. The visible portion of the application site is proposed as Countryside Living and will create an appropriate transition to the Rural zone land to the southeast. I note also that an above ground Watercare reservoir is currently being constructed on the skyline to the south of the site.

- c) *Confirmation of any requirement to construct retaining walls Identification and analysis of the effects associated with tall retaining walls on steep slope lots.*

As this is a Plan Change application and not a subdivision application, no detailed design has been undertaken for any retaining walls that may be required. Any built structures would be subject to assessment criteria in any case.

2. Sensitivity of View Ratings and Analysis

- a) *A brief explanation of the factors or criteria considered in determining the quality of the view.*

The quality of the view is determined by a number of factors. The sensitivity of the view to change is dependant on the visual amenity values of the site and surroundings. For example in Viewpoint 1 – Razorback Road the view is not of high quality due the highly modified characteristics of the landscape including the built development and earthworked slopes within the Pokeno environs.

Similarly for Viewpoint 2 the highly modified characteristics of Pokeno are evident with the density of built development in the foreground, earthworked construction sites in the background and influence of the industrial area with the extensive and visually dominant Yashili production facility.

High quality views for example would have a high proportion of natural features – landforms, water bodies, natural features, vegetation and minimal built development. High quality views also exhibit high levels of naturalness, vividness, coherence, memorability and rarity.

- b) *Further explanation around the relationship within the report between the sensitivity of the site and the quality of the view*

The relative sensitivity of the view to changes proposed by a development is determined by the quality of the view (as described above), the values attached to the particular view and the views vulnerability to change. In this regard consideration is taken as to the extent (level/degree) of change that would need to occur before the existing characteristics of the view are adversely affected. This includes consideration of the magnitude of change relating to prominence and legibility, size and scale, the impact on key landscape elements and patterns, and geographical extent.

The sensitivity of a view is also a factor of the context within which the view is experienced (e.g. whether it is transient (from a vehicle) or static where the context plays a larger part (e.g. the view may be framed by natural elements [high value] or viewed across the foreground of, for example, a transfer station [low value]).

3. Urban Design and Amenity

- a) *Assessment of the permeability (vehicular and pedestrian) of the proposed development with particular emphasis given to any requirements for additional connections or linkages.*

This is a traffic issue and not relative to the landscape and visual effects assessment.

- b) *Identification and analysis of the effects of the steep cul de sac /right of ways on the usability (amenity) of the street and ability to access properties.*

This is a traffic issue and not relative to the landscape and visual effects assessment.

- c) *Analysis of the effects of the removal of the Large Lot Overlay on wider visual and urban amenity.*

The removal of the Large Lot Overlay will not adversely affect the visual and urban amenity values of the surrounding landscape. Land to the north and west is similarly zoned Residential 2, land to the east is large lot and to the southeast is the industrial zone. From most viewing locations views will be obstructed or entirely blocked by built residential development in the surrounding Pokeno urban area. The site is not sensitive to change and in the context of the rapidly changing urbanisation of the area the effects will be entirely acceptable.



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DIRECTOR

