

## **RESOURCE CONSENT APPLICATION**

**APPLICANT:** QUATTRO PROPERTY HOLDINGS LIMITED

**CONSENT AUTHORITY:** Waikato District Council

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### **STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF JOANNA LOUISE SOANES**

Dated: 6<sup>th</sup> November 2020

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## **1 Introduction**

1.1 My full name is Joanna Louise Soanes.

1.2 I am a Principal Landscape Architect at Boffa Miskell Limited, a position I have held since April 2018. Previously to that, I worked at WSP Opus for nine years.

## **2 Qualifications and Experience**

2.1 I have the qualifications and experience described in the following paragraphs.

2.2 I have a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture with Honours from Lincoln University. I am a Registered Landscape Architect and full member of the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects. I have 16 years' experience working with landscape and visual issues.

2.3 I have a broad skills base with experience spanning landscape planning, assessment and design for a diverse range of projects in both urban and rural contexts. I have practised as a Landscape Architect in Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington and Christchurch, undertaking work for a wide range of clients, from local and regional councils, central government, educational institutions to private companies and developers.

2.4 I have previous experience in providing expert evidence on landscape and visual effects at council hearings for resource consent applications and notices of requirement.

## **3 Code of Conduct**

3.1 I have read the Environment Court's Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses in the Environment Court of New Zealand and I agree to comply with it. My qualifications and experience as an expert are set out above. I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions expressed.

3.2 The evidence that I give in these proceedings is within my area of expertise, except when I rely on the evidence of another witness or other evidence, in which case I have explained that reliance.

## **4 Involvement with the Project**

4.1 I was commissioned by Quattro Property Holdings Ltd in October 2019 to undertake a Landscape and Visual Effects Assessment (LVA) for a proposed commercial complex at 561 Horotiu Road, Te Kowhai (the Site). The Site is zoned Country Living Zone within the Operative Waikato District Plan (ODP) and has a proposed Business zoning under the Proposed District Plan.

- 4.2 The LVA responds to a section 92 request from Waikato District Council (WDC) that an LVA be prepared as part of the proposed commercial complex consent application to assess landscape and visual impact of the development on the immediate and surrounding environment character.

## **5 Methodology**

- 5.1 In undertaking the LVA assessment, I visited the Site and its surrounding area on 14 October 2019 to understand the nature of the existing environment and its physical and visual relationship to the surrounding streets and residential properties, as well as the context, character, visual catchment and viewing audiences in the wider area. Due to weather conditions while finalising this evidence a Site visit was not possible. I plan to undertake a further Site visit prior to the hearing.
- 5.2 I have reviewed the Section 42A Officer's Report prepared by Ms Carmine (Consultant Planner, Element Planning).
- 5.3 A total of 25 submissions have been made in response to the publicly notified application. I have reviewed these submissions and note that 22 were in opposition and 2 in support and 1 is neutral. All 17 of these submitters in opposition have raised issues in relation to landscape and visual effects. I provide initial comments on these submissions in section 14 of my report, acknowledging that further details regarding each submission may emerge during the submitters' preparation of evidence for the hearing process.
- 5.4 Preparation of my evidence has also included the collection of baseline information through desktop studies and coordination with other disciplines.
- 5.5 A landscape graphic supplement, Landscape Mitigation Planting Plan, has been prepared as part of the landscape and visual assessment and is attached as **Appendix 1**.
- 5.6 The assessment of landscape effects addresses the landscape character and rural character values attributed to the Site and its relationship to Te Kowhai village and future development. The assessment of visual effects addresses more specifically visual amenity and visual effects resulting from the proposed design.

## **6 Scope of evidence**

- 6.1 This evidence addresses the following matters:
- a The existing environment;
  - b Landscape effects on rural amenity;
  - c Visual effects;

- d Mitigation measures;
- e Comments on the Officer's Report;
- f Proposed conditions; and
- g Response to submissions.

## **7 The existing environment**

- 7.1 The Site is located within the Waikato District and is located approximately 280 m north of the intersection of Te Kowhai Road and Horotiu Road. The existing environment is predominantly flat with Café gift shop adjacent, and rural living and residential properties surrounding the Site, with larger lots on the periphery of Te Kowhai used for farming agricultural purposes. The vegetation surrounding the Site is predominately hedgerow planting and specimen trees along street frontages and defining lot boundaries.
- 7.2 Te Kowhai is located 15 km north west of Hamilton and in recent years has seen an increase in planned conversion of rural land to residential subdivision. It includes a primary/intermediate school, small dairy/takeaway, fresh vegetable and fruit store, a large park with a playground and skate park, and mechanics shop. The wider context consists of rural land uses predominately dairy and cattle farms.
- 7.3 To the north, east and west of the Site is rural-residential living, with a residential node to the south. The land to the east has recently been subdivided into rural-residential lots, which are currently under development. To the south, directly adjoining the site, is a large consented café located within a relocated church.
- 7.4 The existing character and development within Te Kowhai is made up of 1970's residential mixed in with newer rural lifestyle dwellings. The northern half of Te Kowhai Village is where recent development has and is occurring with relatively large dwellings, with generous building offsets, use of post and rail fencing, extensive landscape plantings. The newer development provides a distinct spread-out, low density character and feeling to the Village. The older development areas appear more suburban in nature but generally within large lots. Commercial development is dispersed through the Village, the buildings that do have some prominence are the Te Kowhai Hall, and at Te Kowhai School, Te Kowhai Garage and relocated church. These design elements provide context to the character of Te Kowhai.
- 7.5 Horotiu Road is classed as an arterial road under the District Plan which is subject to a speed limit of 100 km/h. The speed limit adjacent to the Site is 50 km/h.
- 7.6 Significant growth has occurred within Te Kowhai including new residential growth as identified within the 2017 Ngaruawahia et al Structure Plan which includes reference to a

town centre in Te Kowhai. It is my understanding that the aspiration for a 'town centre' has not been included in the PDP and that the proposed Business Zone is intended to provide retail for Te Kowhai.

7.7 Summary of the key landscape characteristics and features of Te Kowhai and the area immediately surrounding the site:

- i Te Kowhai is located approximately 10km north-west of Hamilton City.
- ii The topography of the area is largely flat to gently undulating. The most notable elevation changes occur within the western fringes of Te Kowhai associated with the rising land/foothills of the hill country.
- iii Te Otamanui Lagoon and Stream, associated plantings and recreation walkway located to the west of Te Kowhai village and within walking distance.
- iv Vegetation in the surrounding area consists mostly of the forms and species typical of a Waikato landscape, with a mixture of exotic and indigenous species used for boundary planting, hedgerows, shade trees, shelter belts and small wood lots.
- v Built form in the surrounding area comprises a primary school, fruit and vegetable store, dairy takeaways, vehicle repair shop, café, retirement village and a large recreation park with skate park and playground and Te Kowhai airfield.
- vi There are a number of residential properties in the surrounding area. Residential typically comprises large lots.
- vii There are no outstanding natural landscapes ('ONL'), features ('ONF') or areas of outstanding / high natural character ('ONC' / 'HNC') within the site or the wider area.

## 8 Project description

- 8.1 The proposal is for a single storey commercial development with a floor area of 1,290m<sup>2</sup> comprising seven retail tenancies, with associated parking and landscaping throughout the curtilage of the centre. Wastewater and water supply will be on site as there are no such reticulated networks present as yet in Te Kowhai. A 7m high freestanding sign that was proposed in the original application has been deleted and is proposed to be replaced with signage attached directly to the fascia of the building.
- 8.2 The site is located within the Country Living Zone of the Operative Waikato District Plan (OWDP). The key focus of the provisions includes; amenity values, visual integration of buildings and subdivision. Design parameters also include; earthworks and vegetation

management, where location and design should not compromise visual amenity or road safety.

- 8.3 It is worth noting that the site is subject to proposed rezoning by WDC under the Proposed Waikato District Plan (PWDP) from Country Living Zone to Business Zone. I have been advised that the re-zoning is not challenged, but the nature of activities in the Business Zone is the subject of submissions.
- 8.4 A Landscape Mitigation Plan is attached to this evidence at **Appendix 1, Figure 8**. This provides further description in relation to proposed landscape and mitigation planting.

## **9 Landscape Effects**

- 9.1 Landscape effects are dependent on the degree of physical change to the existing landscape character, including landform, landcover and land use, as a result of the construction and operation of the Project. Change in a landscape does not, of itself, necessarily constitute an adverse landscape or visual effect. The landscape is dynamic and is constantly changing over time in both subtle and more dramatic transformation ways, these changes are both natural and human induced. What is important in managing landscape change is that adverse effects are avoided or significantly mitigated to ameliorate the effects of the change in land use.

### *Landscape Character*

- 9.2 The Site is situated on the country living fringe of Te Kowhai and adjacent to a variety of activities including; a café, gift shop, residential development, main arterial road and with a number of community facilities scattered throughout the Village including; Te Kowhai Hall, and at Te Kowhai School and Te Kowhai Garage.
- 9.3 The Site itself is vacant and the wider landscape pattern is a modified environment with a main arterial route bordering the Site to the west and development either consented, or under construction along the southern and eastern boundaries. The proposed changes to the Site will see a land holding change from a gap in the linear residential node to an intensified retail development node accompanying consented residential development and Church café.
- 9.4 The built form of Te Kowhai is mixed and consists of a number of older and newly established buildings. The character can be defined a low-density development with the scattering of community facilities. Generous building setbacks, large lots, landscaping with a focus on native plantings and post and rail fencing do provide some character defining elements to the village rather than the architectural form.
- 9.5 Whilst a change in immediate land use, the proposed retail development will not significantly alter the broader landform patterns of the wider area. It will sit within the changing rural and

country living landscape signalled by the proposed rezoning by WDC of the area under the PDP from Country Living Zone to future Business Zone.

- 9.6 The recently developed Church Café is located directly to the south of the Site. The historic Church was relocated to the Site and provides a building of interest to Te Kowhai village. While the architecture of the Church does not directly relate to the proposed retail development, the building setbacks, carparking configuration, appropriate landscape planting and fencing treatment do complement both developments. The combination of those activities will provide a co-ordinated extension along Horotiu Road and will make a proportionally small change to the established landscape character of this section of Te Kowhai.
- 9.7 The proposal will form a permanent change to the Site with changes to the landuse and landcover for the carparking, building development and associated landscape planting. The magnitude of change to the landscape character of the Site and wider Te Kowhai areas, has the potential to have a moderate-low landscape character effect if considered under the current Country Living zoning. If the proposal is considered taking account of the proposed rezoning to Business Zone, with increased urban development provided for, in combination with the generous building setback from road frontages and the integration of quality landscape planting and boundary treatment, the effects on landscape character are assessed as low.

#### *Physical Landscape Effects*

- 9.8 The inclusion of the proposed retail centre at the northern end of the Te Kowhai village will see a moderate-low change to the existing country living environment. Whilst the proposal seeks to undertake approximately 1,600 m<sup>3</sup> of earthworks over a 5,000 m<sup>2</sup> area, the overall landform of the Site will remain flat and tie in with adjacent land. The proposed changes to the landform will be low.
- 9.9 There is no significant vegetation within the site and therefore positive landscape effects with the vegetation proposed.

### **10 Visual effects**

- 10.1 Visual effects will result from the degree of visibility of the changes to the landscape that arise from the Project primarily from:
- a The temporary effects of construction activities; and
  - b The permanent structures associated with the building and carpark.
- 10.2 The viewing audience comprises people residing within or moving through the landscape in the form of:
- a Viewers travelling in vehicles along Horotiu Road and Westvale Lane;

- b Church café (consented);
- c Immediate residents surrounding the Site (8 Westvale Lane, 557, 560A, 564A Horotiu Road); and
- d Wider rural and country living views from surrounding private properties.

- 10.3 Residential audiences have a great sensitivity to changes within their outlooks, particularly to the north where they generally locate their outdoor living areas. This is partly due to the duration at which views can be appreciated, but also because the enjoyment of their outlooks depends largely upon the character of the landscape (view).
- 10.4 Due to the predominantly flat nature of the wider landscape context, the viewing audience is relatively contained to the immediate neighbours and travellers along Horotiu Road.
- 10.5 Of the above viewing audiences, the current outlook for the immediate neighbouring property at 557 Horotiu Road will have the potential for greatest level of visual change. This results from the short distance to the Site and the permanent visual change from undeveloped land to buildings and associated infrastructure including car parking and stormwater tanks. This evaluation takes into account the context of adjoining land use changing to smallish country living development with 3000m<sup>2</sup> blocks, with the usual roading, substantial houses and other residential buildings, landscaping and the Church café development.
- 10.6 For the property at 557 Horotiu Road the main outside living area for property appears to be located to the north with minimal outlook to the proposed development located to the south as there is some existing vegetation screening along the boundary. Combined with the proposed timber boundary fence, hedge planting and grassed swale, this will provide adequate screening between the property and the proposed development. The sensitivity of the property's residential viewing audience is considered to be moderate to low when assessed against the ODP.
- 10.7 Properties West of the site, on the other side of Horotiu Road, including 8 Westvale Lane, 564A, 560A and 560C Horotiu Road. These properties are set back from the road boundary and predominately well contained by vegetation along boundaries that will largely screen views of towards Horotiu Road and the Site. Visual effects are considered to be low (adverse) due to distance, orientation, existing vegetation and the changing surrounding land use to country living blocks being developed.
- 10.8 Transient views from Horotiu Road - The north and southbound views to the Site are restricted to views immediately before the Site and passing the Site. The proposed development within the Site is to be set back from the road and the proposed landscape planting provides amenity to the site and is in character with the surrounding Te Kowhai village. The development will also be viewed in context with the recently developed Church



Café. The magnitude of change for this viewing audiences is considered low due to the changing rural environment and the subdivision development within northern area of Te Kowhai. Based on this in the current ODP it is expected that the level of adverse effect for this audience would be low adverse. I note this is a change from my original assessment that identified effects on this viewing audience as Very Low as the re-zoning to Business zone was taken into account as part of the PDP. I will address the assessment taking account of the PDP provisions later in this evidence.

- 10.9 The owners to the east (Country Living subdivision) and south (Church café) have both provided written approval for the proposed development. Effects are therefore disregarded for these properties.
- 10.10 The visual effects associated with visual amenity are attributed to the aesthetic coherence and pleasantness of the proposed development. Like many retail and commercial developments their location is attributed to residential settlements they connect to, more so in smaller villages such as Te Kowhai. Integration of these features to ensure they recognise the key identified characteristics of Te Kowhai such as generous building setbacks, fencing and quality landscape planting.
- 10.11 If the unchallenged Business zoning under the PDP can be taken into account, the type of development and activity permitted on the Site would be commercial, If the permitted development, activity and required mitigations under that zoning are similar to the current proposal, my assessment would be that there is no or negligible difference between the landscape and visual effects of permitted use of the site and the effects of this proposal.

## **11 Mitigation measures**

- 11.1 In my opinion, the recommended landscape and visual mitigation measures are appropriate for the potential landscape and visual effects by avoiding, remedying or mitigating these effects. The proposed mitigation is also outlined in the Landscape Mitigation Plan, which is included as part of **Appendix 1, Figure 8** and includes the following:
- a Design process – Mitigation measures will be implemented in a co-ordinated approach alongside other disciplines including civil and architecture to ensure requirements to mitigate landscape and visual effects;
  - b Site clearance – Clearing work will be minimised to preserve soil and to ensure the appropriate disposal of noxious weeds. It has been assessed there is no vegetation on the site requiring protection;
  - c Native planting and low hedging to provide partial screening of the car parking;

- d Kowhai specimen tree planting along road frontage to reflect the wider environment;
- e Planting to assist with screening water tanks and effluent field;
- f Timber boundary fencing (stained dark colour) and planting along the north and east boundary to screen rear of development for 557 Horotiu Road and future residential development; and
- g Timber rail fence along road boundary to tie into adjacent Café Church development and wider Te Kowhai rural character.

## 12 Comments on the Officer's Report

- 12.1 I have reviewed the Officer's section 42 Report in relation to landscape and visual effects, in particular in Section 8.2 Character Effects.
- 12.2 **Built Form** – I agree with the Officer's Report that Te Kowhai village is a mix of building styles that make up the predominant building character of the Village. I also agree that the recently relocated church and school buildings add a more interesting architectural character to the village. I do not agree that because of these buildings' architecture, that the proposed commercial development needs to respond to these, particularly as Te Kowhai does not have clear building character or pattern as it is made of a mix of building areas and styles. The proposed development responds to the character of the Te Kowhai village with similar building setbacks, building configuration, landscape planting and fencing treatment that complements the adjacent Church café.
- 12.3 **Landscape** – The Officer's report raises concerns around my reliance in the Landscape and Visual Assessment and weight I have placed on the Proposed District Plan provisions and the presumption of change of zoning.
- 12.4 **Landscape Character Effects** – I agree with the Officer's report that when considering these effects under the ODP, the proposal has potential to have moderate – low landscape character effects. If account is taken of the proposed Business zoning, the provision for urban development, the building setback from road frontages and the integration of quality landscape planting and boundary treatment lead to the effects on landscape character being assessed as low.
- 12.5 **Visual Effects** – As outlined above I have reconsidered visual effects from transient views from Horotiu Road and provide further assessment to respond to the Officers' report around concerns relating to visual effects from Horotiu Road. I agree that due to the change in landuse and landcover that will create a greater scale and intensity of development from commercial development, when compared with the rural residential environment. The proposal does provide some mitigating attributes relative to the ODP Country Living Zone,

including generous building setbacks, landscaping and post and rail fencing that relate to the adjacent Church café providing some visual integration and configuration. As outlined in section 10.8 and 10.11 of my evidence, effects on this viewing audience are assessed as Very Low if the re-zoning to Business zone under the PDP can be taken into account.

- 12.6 **Mitigation Measures** – The Officer’s report provides comment that the proposed landscape features including post and railing fencing and kowhai trees are appropriate but do not mitigate the scale and design of the built form itself. It is my opinion that due the existing built environment within Te Kowhai, building setback and landscape mitigation measures outlined the proposal is acceptable.

### 13 **Proposed Consent Conditions**

- 13.1 The Landscape conditions reflect the intent outlined in the Application, with the additional clauses to ensure successful planting and landscape mitigation requirements.

### 14 **Response to submissions.**

- 14.1 In this section, I address the key landscape and visual effects issues raised in submissions. 25 submissions were received and of those 16 raised landscape and visual points and opposed the development.

- 14.2 I provide the following initial comments (grouped under issue headings), acknowledging that further details regarding each submission may emerge during the submitters’ preparation of evidence for the Council hearing process.

#### a) **Landscape Character Effects**

Several submitters raised concerns that the proposed development would have adverse impacts on the rural character of Te Kowhai.

I accept that the scale of the proposed development will create change to the land use and that the land will not be utilised for residential development as currently identified with the ODP. But as outlined in my evidence the Site is located in a country living environment that no longer looks or functions like a rural environment. Situated on the suburban-rural fringe of Te Kowhai and adjacent to a variety of land uses including; substantial residential development, the arterial road and adjacent church café, the landscape character effects will be low or moderate-low, depending on what account can be taken of the proposed Business zoning under the PDP. In my view the landscape character effects are acceptable in either context.

#### b) **Visibility of Water and Septic Tanks**

I understand from Mr Hayden Vink evidence that the two 25KI water tanks could be located underground if planting is not practical to mitigate visual effects from the tanks. Detail for

wastewater is to be confirmed but landscape planting is proposed to provide any visual screening that is required.

c) Building Design

I accept that the recently relocated Church café provides a new heritage feature and character to Te Kowhai and I note the concern that the built form of the proposed development does not relate well to the Church. The proposed development does respond in part to the adjacent Church café in relation to building setback, configuration, landscape and fencing treatment along Horotiu Road. These factors create a consistent treatment and interface with Horotiu road.

The proposal provides some references to the character of Te Kowhai including building setbacks, landscaping with a focus on native plantings and post and rail fencing, but due to the built form of Te Kowhai being so mixed, it is hard to define building character of Te Kowhai.

## 15 Conclusion

- 15.1 The proposed development is located within a landscape that is transitioning from larger lot country living to smaller lot country living and retail development with the recently established Church cafe. The site is currently zoned Country Living under the ODP and Business under the PDP. The site also borders a main arterial route with associated heavy traffic use.
- 15.2 The design of the proposal and planting is in keeping with the surrounding character and a variety of activities and the location of the site in context to changing land use. The development is set back from Horotiu Road and adjacent residential properties.
- 15.3 The visual effects are largely related to the changing land use and are viewed within the context of the adjacent café development and country living developments.
- 15.4 In summary the proposal has the potential to generate moderate -low landscape and visual effects when assessed against the ODP and low to very low effects when assessed against the PDP. Through the integration of quality landscape design to reflect the character of Te Kowhai and soften the building development, the effects will be acceptable.

Dated: 6 November 2020



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Joanna Louise Soanes

# 561 Horotiu Road, Te Kowhai Commercial Complex

Graphic Supplement to Support Resource Consent  
November 2020



# 561 Horotiu Road, Commerical Complex

Graphic Supplement to Support Resource Consent  
November 2020

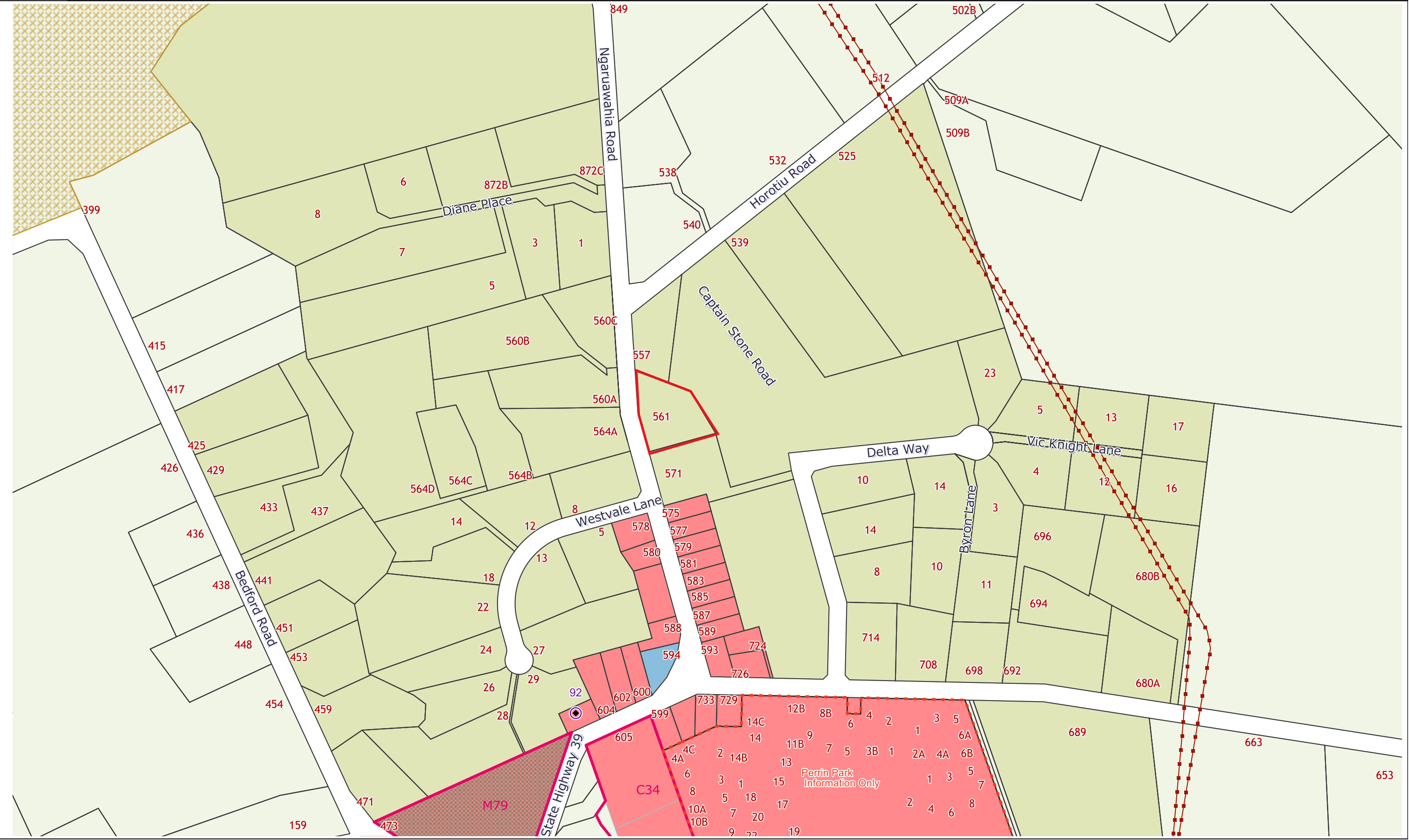
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FIGURE 9:	Landscape Palettes

















Site Appraisal Photo Viewpoint 1 : From Horotiu Road looking north towards Te Kowhai Road intersection.



Site Appraisal Photo Viewpoint 2 : From Westvale Road looking east towards the Church and site - 561 Horotiu Road.





Site Appraisal Photo Viewpoint 3 : From 564A Horotiu Road looking east towards the site - 561 Horotiu Road



Site Appraisal Photo Viewpoint 4 : From 560A Horotiu Road looking east towards the site.





Church Site (cafe)

Site - 561 Horotiu Road

557 Horotiu Road

Site Appraisal Photo Viewpoint 5 : From Horotiu Road looking south towards the site - 561 Horotiu Road.



557 Horotiu Road

Site - 561 Horotiu Road

Church Site (cafe)

Horotiu Road

Photo Appraisal Viewpoint 6 : From Horotiu Road looking east towards 557 Horotiu Road and the site - 561 Horotiu Road.





Photo Viewpoint 7 : From 540 Ngaruwahia Road looking south towards 557 Horotiu Road.

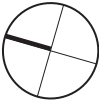


Photo Viewpoint 8 : Looking west towards the site from inside Te Kowhai Estate.



Key

- Site Boundary
- Kowhai Trees
- Titoki Trees
- Nikau Trees
- Amenity Planting
- Corokia Hedge - clipped to 800mm high.
- Grassed Swale
- Concrete Paving
- Walkway Threshold Paving
- Native Hedge Planting (3m min)





Soft Landscape Palette

Specimen Trees



Alectryon excelsus



Rhopalostylis sapida



Sophora microphylla

Hedging - Clipped to 800mm



Corokia 'Geentys Green'

Amenity Planting



Astelia nervosa 'Westland'



Dianella nigra



Carex buechananii



Coprosma prostrata



Acaena purpurea



Muhlenbeckia astonii

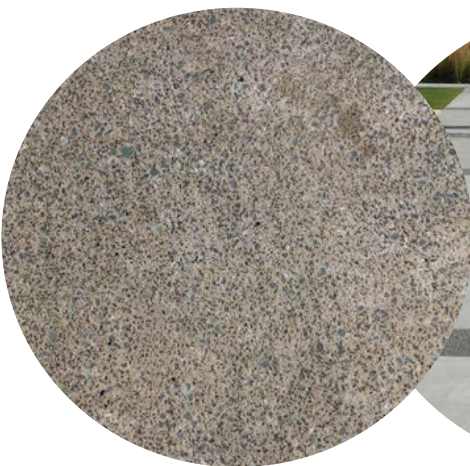


Poa cita

Plant Schedule

Trees			
Botanical	Common	Centres (m)	Size
Alectryon excelsus	Titoki	As shown	45L
Rhopalostylis sapida	Nikau	As shown	45L
Sophora microphylla	Kowhai	As shown	45L
Hedging			
Botanical	Common	Centres (m)	Size
Corokia 'Geentys Green'	Green corokia	1	1L
Amenity Planting			
Botanical	Common	Centres (m)	Size
Acaena purpurea	Purple bidibidi	0.75	1L
Astelia nervosa 'Westland'	Astelia	0.75	1L
Dianella nigra	Turutu	0.75	1L
Carex buechananii	Leatherleaf Sedge	0.5	1L
Coprosma prostrata	Coprosma	1	1L
Muhlenbeckia astonii	Shrubby tororaro	1	1L
Poa cita	Silver Tussock	0.75	1L

Hard Landscape Palette



Exposed aggregate walkway



Walkway with paving detail



Threshold paving



Threshold paving