

LA4

**Highbrook – Private Plan Change**  
**Assessment of Landscape and Visual Effects**

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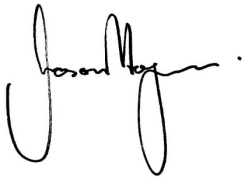
**Assessment of Landscape and Visual Effects  
Quality Assurance Statement**

Prepared by:



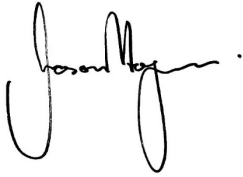
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# Highbrook Private Plan Change

## Assessment of Landscape and Visual Effects

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 LA4 Landscape Architects have been requested by Highbrook Living Limited to undertake an Assessment of Landscape and Visual Effects ('**ALVE**') of the Highbrook Private Plan Change Request ('**PPC**') for the proposed rezoning of approximately 5 hectares of land bounded by Highbrook Drive to the south and east, the southern motorway ('**SH1**') to the west and the Tāmaki River to the north, Highbrook, Auckland ('the **Site**').
- 1.2 This assessment investigates the existing character of the Site and surrounding environment, identifies the key landscape and visual features of the Site and describes the visual and landscape implications of the PPC on the Site and surrounding area. Investigations of the Site and surrounding environment were undertaken in November 2021.

### 2. Project Overview

- 2.1 The Site is located within the Auckland Unitary Plan ('**AUP**') Business – Light Industry Zone ('**LI**') and covers a total area of approximately 5 hectares. The Private Plan Change Request seeks to rezone the land as Residential – Terrace Housing and Apartment Buildings Zone ('**THAB**') in its entirety.
- 2.2 A Development Concept Plan has been prepared and designed in accordance with established urban design principles and is a potential option for development. Indicatively it would ensure a high level of visual amenity, comprehensively planted with trees and riparian plantings along the esplanade reserve to enhance its overall amenity and assist in its integration with the surrounding urban and industrial area over time. The Development Concept Plan is included in **Annexure 1**.
- 2.3 The Development Concept Plan envisages larger apartment buildings to the southern portion of the Site and smaller scale buildings to the northern portion, overlooking the Tāmaki River within a well landscaped setting. The concept plan also illustrates a 20m wide esplanade reserve along the Tāmaki River frontage to the Site with a number of facilities including walking tracks, playground and seating areas.

### 3. Assessment Methodology

- 3.1 The key to assessing the landscape character and visual amenity effects of the PPC on this landscape is first to establish the existing characteristics and values of the landscape and then to assess the effects of this proposal on them. In accordance with the Resource Management Act (1991) this includes an assessment of the cumulative effects of the proposal combined with existing developments.
- 3.2 The methodology used in this assessment is designed to assess whether or not development enabled by the PPC would have adverse landscape effects on the nature and quality of the surroundings, including views from the coastal area. The following methodology has been used in this assessment.

#### ***Background Review***

- 3.3 A review of the existing background information and plans has been undertaken in relation to the landscape and visual amenity aspects of the proposal. Key landscape and environmental factors which would potentially be affected by the proposal were identified and reviewed.



### ***Site and Landscape Evaluation – Landscape and Visual Environment***

- 3.4 Detailed site investigations and an analysis of the Site and surrounding environment were undertaken. The landscape character, visual and amenity values were identified and outlined and a photographic record of the Site and surrounding environment compiled. Key landscape features and elements were identified and an analysis of the landscape values and the landscape's ability to accommodate change as a result of development enabled by the PPC undertaken.
- 3.5 An analysis of the existing landscape and natural character of the Site and surrounding environment was undertaken. The analysis identified how vulnerable the Site and surrounding environment is to change. This included:
- i) aesthetic value (vividness, complexity, cohesion, legibility, and other less tangible values)
  - ii) natural character values
  - iii) natural processes, patterns and elements
  - iv) rarity
  - v) visual absorption capability including land uses, vegetation cover and type and topographic diversity and type
  - vi) exposure and visibility.

### ***Visual Catchment and Viewing Audience***

- 3.6 The physical area that would be visually affected by the proposal was defined. In turn, this indicated the range, type and size of viewing audiences that would be impacted upon.

### ***Viewpoint Selection***

- 3.7 The next step was to establish a platform from which detailed analysis could be carried out. The most practical platform for carrying out such analysis is a series of viewpoints, strategically located within the visual catchment in order to assess the impact of the proposal for most of the potential viewing audiences.
- 3.8 Detailed analysis of the implications of the proposal was then carried out using a Visual Effects Matrix, which ensures that each view and changes within each view are evaluated thoroughly and consistently.

### ***Landscape Character and Visual Effects Assessment***

- 3.9 A specific analysis and assessment was undertaken and key questions addressed derived from the very nature of anticipated effects on landscape character and visual amenity. This process assessed the effects of the proposal and identified the aspects which were likely to have high or adverse visual, landscape or visual amenity impacts.

### ***Statutory Context***

- 3.10 A review of the relevant statutory provisions was undertaken to identify the key landscape and visual related objectives and policies in order to assess the proposal against them.

### ***Conclusions***

- 3.11 An evaluation of the proposal as a whole taking into account all the preceding analysis was then undertaken in relation to potential effects on landscape character and visual amenity values. Conclusions were made in relation to the potential landscape and visual effects, landscape character and amenity effects of the development including recommendations for avoiding, remedying or mitigating these effects.

## 4. The Subject Site and Surrounding Environment

- 4.1 The Site comprises of approximately 5ha of land bounded by SH1 to the west, Highbrook Drive to the south and east and the Tāmaki River to the north. The topography of the Site is predominantly flat at approximately RL 5m dropping off more steeply towards the Tāmaki River edge.
- 4.2 The Site is undeveloped at present and characterised by wide open grassed areas in the southern part. A large stand of semi-mature indigenous vegetation extends along the western part of the Site comprising kānuka (*Kunzea ericoides*), mānuka (*Leptospermum scoparium*), flax (*Phormium tenax*), pūriri (*Vitex lucens*), karaka (*Corynocarpus laevigatus*), karo (*Pittosporum crassifolium*), coprosma (*Coprosma repens*), cabbage tree (*Cordyline australis*), interspersed with some exotic gums (*Eucalyptus species*) and noxious weed species including woolly nightshade, privet and toetoe.
- 4.3 A double row of poplar trees extends along the southern road frontage and a large stand of pine and macrocarpas intermixed with some exotic and indigenous species and noxious weeds is located in the northeastern part of the Site. Mangroves extend along the coastal edge.
- 4.4 A metalled access road traverses the Site with the southern part extending down to the river edge and the original river loading dock and piles. The road currently provides maintenance access for the large advertising billboard located in the southwestern part of the Site facing towards the motorway. The access road also extends north towards the Highbrook Drive underpass.



**Figure 1:** The Site

- 4.5 To the east of the Site is Light Industry zoned land. Part of this area is utilised by a car distribution and auto logistics company with hundreds of vehicles awaiting distribution throughout the country. Transpower's Ōtara substation is located immediately to the south of here.

- 4.6 The Site abuts the tidal Tāmaki River / Tāmaki Estuary to the north, which is an estuarial arm and harbour of the Hauraki Gulf. It extends south for 15km from its mouth between St Heliers and the Bucklands Beach peninsula at Musick Point. It has several smaller tributary arms which extend from it, with the Pakuranga Creek and Ōtara Creek in the east, and the Ōtāhuhu Creek and Panmure Basin in the west.
- 4.7 To the northeast of the Site is the Ōtara Creek and the Pukewairiki Crater. The Pukewairiki (Waiouru) tuff ring has an indistinct, craterlike depression about 300m in diameter. The crater is breached to the southwest by tidal creeks and has an 8m terrace along the Tāmaki River. It is one of the oldest volcanoes in the Auckland volcanic field. Pukewairiki is designated as an Outstanding Natural Feature 236 ('**ONF**') in the AUP.
- 4.8 To the east of Pukewairiki is Ngati Ōtara Park – a large sports park with coastal access and extensive walking tracks amongst mature trees. A playground, toilets and changing rooms, fitness equipment, netball and basketball courts, sports fields, artificial cricket pitches, picnic tables and seating, and parking are inside the park. On the northern side of the Tāmaki River is the residential area of northeastern Ōtāhuhu with Seaside Park located at the eastern end of the peninsula with a range of sports fields, community buildings, sports clubs and a boat ramp.

*Refer to **Annexure 2: Site photographs***

#### **The wider landscape context**

- 4.9 The Highbrook Business Park encompasses 107ha of industrial, commercial and retail businesses situated on the Waiouru Peninsula. The Waiouru Peninsula lies between the Pakuranga Creek to the north, the Tāmaki Creek to the west and the Ōtara Creek to the south. Highbrook Crossing serves as a focal point for Highbrook's growing community, with a mix of cafes, childcare, gym, and conference centres.
- 4.10 A public open space network has been integrated into Highbrook Business Park and comprises a network of walkways and cycleways enabling public access along the coastal frontages bordering the Business Park, and the vesting of approximately 40 hectares of the Pukewairiki Crater area as a public reserve.
- 4.11 The open space corridor of Highbrook Park runs along the coastline and is characterised by planted stormwater ponds, formal lines of poplar tree plantings, substantial groupings of native tree and shrub species, mown lawn, and native coastal edge plantings along the shoreline. The combined 14km pedestrian and cycle track is formed in metal and winds its way along the coastal edge and around the stormwater ponds and various small scale gullies draining to the Tāmaki River.
- 4.12 The wider East Tāmaki area is a manufacturing and distribution hub of some 2000 businesses strategically located close to the motorway, airport and port. The rest of the East Tāmaki business precinct is a mixture of manufacturing, related services and retail/wholesale outlets. Vehicle servicing and sales yards feature prominently while it is also home to some major franchises. The residential area of Ōtara and the Ōtara Town Centre are located further to the southeast of the Site along with the Manukau Institute of Technology, schools, commercial and business area.

## **5. Evaluation of the Proposal**

- 5.1 The key to assessing the landscape and visual effects of development enabled by the PPC is first to establish the existing characteristics and values of the landscape and then to assess the effects of development enabled by the PPC on them. In accordance with the Resource Management Act 1991 ('**RMA**') this includes an assessment of the

cumulative effects of the proposal combined with existing development within Highbrook.

- 5.2 The purpose of this section is to provide an assessment of the nature and degree of potential landscape effects and the appropriateness of the PPC and development opportunities. The assessment responds to matters related to landscape and visual amenity. It also considers the anticipated outcomes of the THAB zone proposed (in relation to the AUP provisions) and their suitability in this setting.
- 5.3 The zoning sought under the PPC would enable development opportunities pertaining to the provisions associated with the anticipated AUP zoning. This PPC application is for rezoning primarily and any further matters can and would be dealt with as part of future resource consent processes for the respective sites.
- 5.4 The assessment of landscape effects takes into consideration physical changes to the landscape as a resource which may give rise to changes to its character and quality and perceived landscape values. Visual effects are a consequence of landscape effects as this is how we mainly perceive effects on landscape values. Landscape and visual effects are therefore inextricably linked and are influenced by the sensitivity of the receiving environment combined with the type and magnitude of change associated with the proposal.
- 5.5 Matters to be addressed in this assessment relate to the urban landscape and visual amenity include the following:
  - i) Natural character effects
  - ii) Landscape effects
  - iii) Visual amenity effects
  - iv) Construction effects

#### **Natural Character Effects**

- 5.6 Natural character relates to the degree of 'naturalness' or modification 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. Assessments of natural character therefore broadly assess:
  - i) Natural processes – the underlying formative processes that have shaped and given expression to the landscape (geological, volcanic, ecological, fluvial etc.);
  - ii) Natural elements – features within the landscape that are products of natural processes (landform, vegetation, waterbodies etc.);
  - iii) Natural patterns – the natural expression or distribution of un-manufactured elements and features within the landscape; and
  - iv) Development / land use – the presence or absence of development such as structures and buildings and the level of modification as a result of land use and management.
- 5.7 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**

- 5.8 The Site is not high in natural character values (other than the coastal edge) and has been modified through previous activities. The Site is a component of the wider modified Highbrook industrial environment in an area zoned for light industrial activities adjacent to SH1 and Highbrook Drive. Overall, the adverse effects of development enabled by the PPC on the natural character values of the Site and surrounding area

would be low. The proposed esplanade reserve with riparian plantings would enhance the natural character values of the Tāmaki River edge.

### **Landscape Effects**

- 5.9 Landscape effects take into consideration the physical effects on 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. 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.
- 5.10 Landscape characterisation is the term used to encapsulate the process of identifying and describing landscape character areas. Each character area has a distinguishing combination of biophysical and cultural factors that make it distinctive. Characterisation provides a basis for the understanding of landscape diversity and change.
- 5.11 Landscape character is derived from a combination of landscape components that make up the landscape of the site that distinguishes one area from another including:
- i) The elements that make up the landscape including:
    - physical influences – geology, soils, landform, drainage and waterbodies;
    - land cover, including different types of vegetation and patterns and types of tree cover; and
    - the influence of human activity, including land use and management, the character of settlements and buildings, and pattern and type of enclosure.
  - ii) The aesthetic and perceptual aspects of the landscape including its scale, complexity, openness, tranquillity or wilderness; and
  - iii) The overall character of the landscape in the area including any distinctive landscape character types or areas that can be identified, and the particular combinations of elements and aesthetic and perceptual aspects that make each distinctive, usually by identification as key characteristics of the landscape.
- 5.12 Landscape character results from a combination of physical elements together with aesthetic and perceptual aspects that combine to make an area distinct. The surrounding landscape is heavily modified with the Highbrook industrial area, SH1 and Highbrook Drive.
- 5.13 Development enabled by the PPC would inevitably transform the local undeveloped character of the Site to that of a more intensive and urban development which would have an influence on the surrounding area. It is important to note however that light industrial development is anticipated and the AUP identifies the Site as an area to accommodate future development.

### **Landscape Effects Analysis**

- 5.14 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 Site is a relatively degraded, modified environment lacking any significant landscape values (other than the coastal edge and indigenous vegetation), adjacent to the existing industrial area and SH1. The PPC will result in changing the existing landscape character of the Site, however, this is already provided for and anticipated by the AUP planning framework for this Site.
- 5.15 The key methods of mitigating for the change in landscape character are to retain and enhance where possible existing landscape features and create a quality urban development (albeit the Site being zoned for light industrial activities). There are

number of positive landscape outcomes associated with the PPC. The Development Concept Plan has been designed in accordance with established urban design principles and would ensure a high level of visual amenity, comprehensively planted with trees and riparian plantings along the Tāmaki River corridor to enhance its overall amenity and assist in its integration with the surrounding industrial and coastal area over time.

- 5.16 Development enabled by the PPC would result in a change in landscape character, but would ensure a superior level of amenity, albeit an urban, rather than an industrial character is achieved. I consider that the landscape effects of the proposal would be positive in contrast to development enabled by the Light Industry zoning of the Site.

### **Visual Effects**

- 5.17 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.
- 5.18 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.
- 5.19 The methodology used in this assessment is designed to assess whether or not future development enabled by the PPC would have adverse visual effects on the nature and quality of the surrounding environment.

The process of analysing such effects involves:

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

### **Visual Catchment and Viewing Audience**

- 5.20 The visual catchment is the area from which noticeable visual effects of future development enabled by the PPC within the Site are likely to be evident to any significant degree. SH1 and Highbrook Drive surrounding the Site, result in a number of open views into the Site, however existing vegetation patterns within the Site, along the Highbrook Drive frontage and within the Highbrook coastal walkway currently provide a level of screening from parts of the wider surrounding areas.
- 5.21 The location of the Site surrounded on two sides by the motorway, on and off-ramps, Highbrook Drive and Tāmaki River to the north means that it has a high level of exposure from the surrounding area. Consequently, SH1, Highbrook Drive, SH1 on and off-ramps, and the Tāmaki River define the main visual catchment for the PPC.
- 5.22 The coastal edge of the northeastern part of the Ōtāhuhu residential area on the northern side of the Tāmaki River would be exposed to views towards the Site, this includes residents and recreational users of the foreshore, Curlew Bay, Shroffs Bay Beach Reserve and Seaside Park (albeit at distances between 375m and 1.5km away). Recreational users of the Tāmaki River, Highbrook coastal walkway and Highbrook Drive Reserve would gain views towards the Site.
- 5.23 The viewing audience would therefore encompass the following groups:

- i) Road users on the surrounding roads including SH1, Highbrook Drive and the on and off-ramps;
- ii) Pedestrians on Highbrook Drive and the Tāmaki River overbridge on the eastern side of SH1;
- iii) Workers within the industrial area to the east of the Site and within parts of Highbrook Business Park;
- iv) Residents and visitors within the residential properties along the coastal edge of the northeastern Ōtāhuhu residential area;
- v) Recreational users of the Tāmaki River, Highbrook coastal walkway, Highbrook Drive Reserve;
- vi) Recreational users of the northeastern Ōtāhuhu coastal foreshore, Curlew Bay, Shroffs Bay Beach Reserve and Seaside Park; and
- vii) Distant viewers within parts of the surrounding Ōtāhuhu residential area on the western side of SH1.

5.24 Overall, the anticipated level of audience exposure would be large due to the location of the Site adjacent to the motorway, surrounding roads and Tāmaki River.

### **Visual Amenity Effects Analysis**

5.25 The proposed future development of the Site enabled by the PPC raises a number of visual issues, including the potential effects on visual amenity to the following key areas:

- i) Surrounding area
- ii) Highbrook coastal walkway
- iii) Surrounding road network
- iv) Wider surrounding area

5.26 The visual effects of development enabled by the PPC have been assessed from representative viewpoints within the visual catchment area that have potential for visual effects. Six viewpoints have been identified in order to assess the potential visual effects. The viewpoints were selected as locations that capture and fairly represent the range of public and private views towards the Site.

5.27 The assessment has been undertaken by reference the following viewpoints:

- Viewpoint 1:** Highbrook coastal walkway
- Viewpoint 2:** Ōtara Creek bridge
- Viewpoint 3:** Highbrook Drive roundabout
- Viewpoint 4:** Tāmaki River overbridge
- Viewpoint 5:** Curlew Bay Road
- Viewpoint 6:** Shroffs Bay Beach Reserve

*Refer to: **Annexure 3: The Site and Viewpoint Location Map**  
**Annexure 4: Viewpoint Photographs 1-6***

5.28 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, which ensures that each view and changes within each view are evaluated thoroughly and consistently.

5.29 The key factors contained in that matrix are given in detail in **Annexure 5**. 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 proposed development, how well the proposal integrates with its surroundings and whether or not the proposal intrudes into any existing views.

5.30 The total score given in the descriptions denote the overall visual effects rating. The following seven-point scale has been used to rate effects, based on the guidelines contained within the Tuia Pito Ora NZILA 'Aotearoa Landscape Assessment Guidelines 2021':

**Very Low | Low | Low-Moderate | Moderate | Moderate-High | High | Very High**

Very Low Effect

*No appreciable change to the visual character of the landscape, its landscape values and/or amenity values.*

Low Effect

*Limited change to the visual character of the landscape, with a low level of effect in relation to landscape values and/or amenity values.*

Low-Moderate Effect

*Evident visual change to the visual character of the landscape with a low to moderate level of effect in relation to landscape values and/or amenity values.*

Moderate Effect

*Appreciable change to the visual character of the landscape with a moderate level of effect in relation to landscape values and/or amenity values.*

Moderate-High Effect

*Marked change to the visual character of the landscape with a moderate to high level of effect in relation to landscape values and/or amenity values.*

High Effect

*Significant change to the visual character of the landscape with a high level of effect in relation to landscape values and/or amenity values.*

Very High Effect

*Fundamental change to the visual character of the landscape with a very high level of effect in relation to landscape values and/or amenity values. The proposal causes significant adverse effects that cannot be avoided, remedied or mitigated.*

5.31 In assessing the significance of effects, the assessment also considers the nature of effects in terms of whether this would be positive (beneficial) or negative (adverse) in the context within which it occurs. Neutral effects can also result where the visual change is considered to be benign in the context of where it occurs.

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

- i) **Quality of the view** – the relative quality and sensitivity of views into the Site, including landscape character and visual amenity values.
- ii) **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.
- iii) **Urban amenity** – the impact of future development on the wider surrounding rural and urban amenity.
- iv) **Urban form** – the degree to which future development would fit into the existing rural and urban context of the surrounding environs.
- v) **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.



- vi) **Mitigation potential** – the extent to which any potential adverse effects of the proposal could be mitigated through integration into its surrounds by specific measures.

### **Surrounding Area**

- 5.33 **Viewpoint 4** is taken from the Tāmaki River overbridge looking southeast, **Viewpoint 5** is taken from Curlew Bay Road looking in a southerly direction towards the Site and **Viewpoint 6** is taken from Shroffs Bay Beach Reserve looking southwest. The Site extends from SH1 in the west to the Ōtara Creek bridge in the east. The views portray the coastal characteristics of the foreground estuarine Tāmaki River and beyond to the Highbrook Business Park. Prominent in the view is the infrastructure of Transpower’s electricity substation with the HV electricity pylons and overhead wires traversing the skyline.
- 5.34 These views are representative of the recreational users of the Tāmaki River coastal foreshore, residents within northeastern parts of the Ōtāhuhu residential area and pedestrians using the Tāmaki River overbridge from McManus Place to Highbrook. Closer views would be gained by recreational users of the river including kayakers, boaties and rowers. Motorists travelling in southerly directions along SH1 would gain similar views to Viewpoint 4, albeit transient and brief, travelling at speeds of 100kph.
- 5.35 From these representative viewing locations, development enabled by the PPC would be viewed in the context of the existing highly modified characteristics of Highbrook Business Park and the adjacent motorway. The degree of intrusion that the proposal offers is therefore limited by these built elements that are already an established part of the surrounding environment.
- 5.36 Development enabled by the PPC would be viewed from here across the mangrove foreground of the coastal edge. The proposal would not detract from the existing coastal character of the surrounding landscape and would integrate well into the landscape.
- 5.37 For these viewers, the existing outlook would change noticeably from a vegetated and undeveloped scene, into a comprehensive urban view with a hierarchy of building heights and forms. Although this would constitute a noticeable change to the existing character, it is not the type of change which is unexpected within the planning context of the area, and the quality nature of the future urban development would ensure that a suitable level of amenity is achieved (and a higher level than the underlying LI zoning would achieve).
- 5.38 Once the Site is developed, the existing views would be replaced with a combination of residential urban development with planted streetscapes, open spaces and the esplanade reserve extending along the along the coastal foreshore. Development enabled by the proposal would not be out of context due to the current zoning of the land. The future form would be read as part of the wider urban context.
- 5.39 The planted esplanade reserve along the coastal edge would assist in breaking up the extent of the urban development and filter views so that although the view would have changed from a vegetated undeveloped scene to an urban one, the full extent of the development would not be apparent. Development enabled by the PPC, however, would change the landscape character and visual amenity currently experienced for the visual catchment to the north, however this would not be inconsistent with the change in character if the Site was to be developed for industrial purposes.
- 5.40 The proposal would have a minimal impact on the existing coastal amenity values of the Site and surrounding light industrial environs and would be viewed as an integral component of the existing modified environment. Overall, the visual effects for the

viewing audience from the surrounding area to the north would be low-moderate, albeit anticipated through the current zoning of the Site for light industrial development.

### **Surrounding Road Network**

- 5.41 For road users on the surrounding road network, the development of the Site is likely to result in visual effects of little significance as development enabled by the PPC would be seen as part of the pattern of land use change occurring locally within the surrounding environs. **Viewpoint 2** is taken from the Ōtara Creek bridge, **Viewpoint 3** from the Highbrook Drive roundabout and **Viewpoint 4** from the Tāmaki River overbridge.
- 5.42 Although a large audience, the general road users are unlikely to be particularly sensitive to future development, as they would have fleeting views of the Site whilst moving through a landscape, which already exhibits diverse characteristics adjoining SH1 and the Highbrook Business Park. Travelling east along Highbrook Road, the proposal would be viewed against the backdrop of the Highbrook Business Park with its large scale buildings within a well landscaped setting. Travelling west, development within the PPC Site would be seen in conjunction with the industrial activities flanking the southern side of Highbrook Drive.
- 5.43 Overall, the visual effects from the surrounding road network would be low and seen within the context of the prevailing industrial context.

### **Highbrook coastal walkway**

- 5.44 **Viewpoint 1** is taken from the southern end of the Highbrook coastal walkway looking in a southwesterly direction across the Tāmaki River approximately 300m away from the Site. This is one of the few views available from the coastal walkway due to the southwest orientation of the walkway and existing tree plantings. Both the formal and more organic tree and shrub plantings have been positioned to provide framed views from the walkway to the coastline, along the park corridor and back towards the business park, resulting in a relatively well contained and enclosed coastal parkland character.
- 5.45 This view is representative of the recreational users of the coastal walkway in the vicinity. The view from here extends across from the Ōtara Creek bridge towards the Site across the foreground of the Tāmaki River and beyond to SH1 and the Ōtāhuhu residential area. The industrial characteristics of the area to the east are apparent from here along with the infrastructure of the Ōtara substation with transmission pylons and overhead wires.
- 5.46 Development enabled by the PPC would be viewed from here across the foreground of the Tāmaki River. The proposal would not detract from the existing coastal character of the surrounding landscape and would integrate well into the landscape. For these recreational viewers, the existing outlook would change into an urban view with built development. While development would change the existing character, it is anticipated within the planning context of the area, and a suitable level of amenity would be achieved, to a higher level than the underlying LI zoning would achieve.
- 5.47 Development enabled by the PPC would not be out of context due to the zoning of the land and the PPC would be read as part of the wider Highbrook business environment. Overall, the visual effects for recreational users of the coastal walkway would be moderate-low and anticipated through the current zoning of the Site for light industrial development.

## Wider Surrounding Area

- 5.48 More distant views may be gained from parts of the Ōtāhuhu residential area on the western side of SH1 to the west and northwest of the Site and from distant locations within the surrounding landscape. Views towards development enabled by the PPC would be highly variable due to distance, orientation of the view, diversity of elements within the view and screening elements including the motorway infrastructure, buildings, substation and vegetation.
- 5.49 While development enabled by the PPC would be visible from parts of the wider surrounding area, I consider that the visual effects would be low to very low and entirely acceptable within the context of the existing and planned future urban environment.

## 6. Statutory Context

- 6.1 A comprehensive outline of the proposed PPC relating to statutory and non-statutory provisions is provided within the Statutory Assessment Report prepared by Babbage Consultants. This section of the assessment outlines, by way of background, the provisions most relevant to landscape and visual amenity matters. These are set out further in **Annexure 6** to help frame the assessment.
- 6.2 In relation to the RMA, the following sections are relevant:
- i) Section 6(a) - the preservation of the natural character of the coastal environment (including the coastal marine area), wetlands, and lakes and rivers and their margins, and the protection of them from inappropriate subdivision, use, and development,
  - ii) Section 7(b) - the efficient use and development of natural and physical resources,
  - iii) Section 7(c) - the maintenance and enhancement of amenity values, and
  - iv) Section 7(f) - maintenance and enhancement of the quality of the environment.
- 6.3 Development enabled by the PPC will be an efficient use of natural and physical resources and enhance the amenity values and quality of the environment through the proposed residential zoning of the Site which seeks to use the existing qualities of the coastal location and utilise existing open space amenities and infrastructure within the Highbrook Business Park.
- 6.4 In relation to the relevant provisions of the AUP from a landscape and visual amenity perspective, the objectives, and policies of the existing LI zone and proposed THAB zone have been considered. This allows an assessment of the PPC zoning and its application across the PPC area in the context of the existing environment.
- 6.5 The PPC proposes to use the existing provisions associated with the THAB zone under the AUP. These have been tested and proved as appropriate as part of the establishment of the AUP. This PPC application is for rezoning only, and any further matters can and would be dealt with as part of future resource consent processes for the respective sites.
- 6.6 The Site is currently zoned Business – Light Industry ('LI') in the AUP. The LI zone anticipates industrial activities that do not generate objectionable odour, dust or noise. This includes manufacturing, production, logistics, storage, transport and distribution activities. The anticipated level of amenity is lower than the centres zones, Business – General Business Zone and Business – Mixed Use Zone. The zone allows for building heights up to 20m.
- 6.7 As outlined previously the PPC seeks to rezone the land as Terrace Housing and Apartment Buildings ('**THAB**'). The THAB zone is a high intensity zone enabling a greater intensity of residential development. This zone provides for urban residential

living in the form of terrace housing and apartments. The purpose of the zone is to make efficient use of land and infrastructure, increase the capacity of housing and ensure that residents have convenient access to services, employment, education facilities, retail and entertainment opportunities, public open space and public transport. The zone provides for the greatest density, height and scale of development of all the residential zones. Buildings are enabled up to five storeys and, in identified Height Variation Control areas, six or seven storeys.

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- 6.8 The main relevant sections of the AUP relating to the landscape and visual amenity effects that the PPC has been assessed against include:

***B2. Tāhuhu whakaruruhau ā-taone – Urban growth and form***

***B8. Toitū te taiwhenua – Coastal environment***

***E18. Natural character of the coastal environment***

***H6. Residential – Terrace Housing and Apartment Buildings Zone***

***H17. Business – Light Industry Zone***

- 6.9 With respect to the matters addressed in these objectives and policies, I comment as follows:

- i) The Site and the immediately surrounding landscape are part of the established Highbrook Business Park which is a modified environment through business, industrial and commercial activities.
- ii) The natural characteristics and qualities that contribute to the natural character of the coastal environment would not be adversely affected by the proposal. The provision of the esplanade reserve and riparian plantings would enhance the natural character of the Tāmaki River edge. The Pukewairiki ONF would be unaffected by development enabled by the PPC.
- iii) Development within the PPC area would achieve a comprehensive residential environment which would have high levels of amenity and allow for a range of housing densities and typologies. Potential adverse landscape and visual effects on the environment would be avoided, remedied or mitigated in accordance with the operative AUP provisions.
- iv) Development enabled by the PPC would ensure a high quality environment. The Development Concept Plan has responded to the intrinsic qualities and physical characteristics of the Site through the location of the housing typologies as well as the open space network.
- v) Adverse effects on amenity values and the natural environment, both within the zone and on adjacent areas, would be managed to a greater degree than the current LI zoning.
- vi) Development would be in keeping with the areas planned urban built character and form.
- vii) Consistent with the THAB zone provisions, a high level of on-site residential amenity would be provided for residents and the coastal edge would be significantly enhanced through the provision of the esplanade reserve via future development of the Site. Provision of non-residential activities (such as café, shop, workspace) compatible with the scale and intensity of development anticipated by the THAB zone would contribute to the amenity of the neighbourhood and well-being of the community.

- viii) Development enabled by the PPC would be superior to the Site's planned light industry built character and the Site has the capacity to visually absorb the proposed development within a well landscaped setting. The enhanced coastal edge would significantly increase the coastal character values of the Tāmaki River environments.
- ix) Public access to and along the coastal marine area would be maintained and enhanced in a manner that is sensitive to the use and values of the area through the provision of the planted and grassed esplanade reserve.
- x) The open space, recreation and amenity values of the coastal environment would be maintained and enhanced through the provision of public walking tracks within the future esplanade reserve.

### **New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2010 (NZCPS)**

- 6.10 Noting that the Tāmaki River is tidal, the Site is within the coastal environment and therefore the provisions of NZCPS are relevant for the PPC. In relation to the landscape and natural character considerations, Policies 13 (Preservation of natural character) and 14 (Restoration of natural character) are relevant to this assessment.
- 6.11 Policy 13 requires the preservation of natural character of the coastal environment and to protect it from inappropriate subdivision, use and development. Adverse effects on areas of outstanding natural character are to be avoided and significant adverse effects are to be avoided while other adverse effects are to be avoided, remedied or mitigated. In the context of this PPC, it is noted that there are no outstanding natural character values within the Site or surrounding landscape. The PPC area is located on areas of land that have been modified previously, and the Site does not contribute to the natural character values of the coastal environment. The natural characteristics and qualities that contribute to the natural character of the coastal environment would not be adversely affected by development enabled by the PPC. The provision of the esplanade reserve and riparian plantings would enhance the natural character values of the Tāmaki River edge.
- 6.12 Policy 14 promotes the restoration or rehabilitation of the natural character of the coastal environment. The existing vegetation along the coastal edge is not managed for its natural values and noxious weed species are present, adversely affecting the natural character of the area. The future development of the Site will provide opportunities for planting of the esplanade reserve areas with indigenous vegetation.
- 6.13 I therefore consider that future development enabled by the PPC would be generally 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 would be entirely acceptable in landscape character and visual amenity terms.

## **7. Conclusions**

- 7.1 The proposed development of the Site resulting from the PPC would change its current vegetated and undeveloped landscape character. Development enabled by the PPC would however be consistent with the Site being zoned LI with development envisaged in the AUP.
- 7.2 While the proposed development would result in a significant visual change from the Site's current state to one with urban characteristics, such visual change is anticipated and is in accordance with the key planning initiatives for the area within the AUP (albeit the current LI zoning anticipating a lower level of amenity than proposed by the PPC).

- 7.3 In conclusion, the PPC would fulfil the need for residential and urban intensification and provide an opportunity for an innovative and environmentally sustainable urban development. The PPC would be largely consistent with regional growth strategies for the area and would result in a high-quality urban development with a range of positive landscape and environmental outcomes.
- 7.4 I consider that the proposed Highbrook Private Plan Change is appropriate in this urban setting from a landscape and visual amenity perspective and would result in a superior outcome than development enabled through the current Light Industrial zoning of the Site.

Rob Pryor  
Director | Registered NZILA Landscape Architect  
**LA4 Landscape Architects**  
February 2022



# Annexure 1: Development Concept Plan





## Annexure 2: Site Photographs





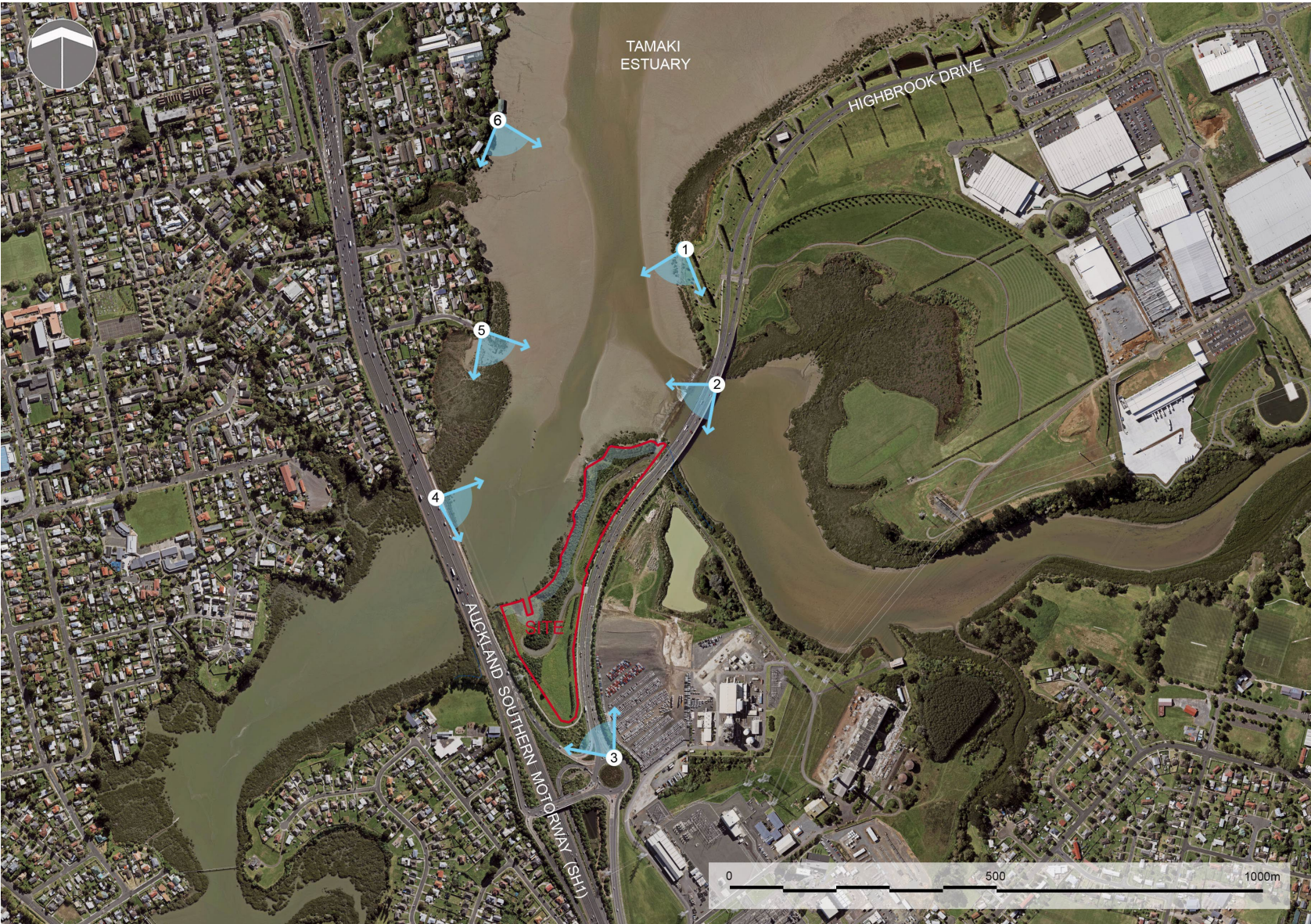








# Annexure 3: Viewpoint Location Map





## Annexure 4: Viewpoint Photographs



Viewpoint 1: Highbrook Coastal Walkway



Viewpoint 2: Ōtara Creek Bridge





Viewpoint 3: Highbrook Drive roundabout



Viewpoint 4: SH1 Tāmaki River overbridge





Viewpoint 5: Curlew Bay Road





Viewpoint 6: Shroffs Bay Beach Reserve

## Annexure 5: Visual Effects Matrix Methodology

Use of a matrix offers one way in which the various facets of visual change – qualitative change, visual contrast etc. – can be pulled together and evaluated in a way which gives due weight to each. This matrix was designed to measure the scale of no or low visual effects through to high visual effects.

The assessment matrix is broken into two stages. The first involves looking at the existing situation and assessing the visual quality and sensitivity of the present view to change. This is followed by an evaluation of the changes associated with the proposed development. Key issues or variables are addressed within each stage and ratings for these are eventually combined to provide a composite visual effects rating. Set out below is the basic structure, showing what these key variables are and how they are arranged:

### PART A - SENSITIVITY OF THE VIEW AND SITE TO CHANGE

- A1. Analysis of the view's **Visual Quality** is carried out on the basis that higher quality views are more sensitive to potential disruption and degradation than poorer quality views.
- A2. Analysis of the view's **Visual Absorption Capability** is an evaluation of the degree to which a view is predisposed, or otherwise, to change by virtue of its land uses and/or screening elements and will either accommodate change or make it stand out from its setting.
- A3. Analysis of **Perceptual Factors**. In this section the type and size of population represented by the viewpoint, the viewing distance to the development site and other factors which indicate its sensitivity in terms of both viewing audience and the inherent exposure of the viewpoint to the site because of its physical character is assessed.

### PART B - INTRUSION AND QUALITATIVE CHANGE

- B1. Analysis of **Intrusion | Contrast**: the degree to which a proposal's location and specific structural content and appearance make it either blend into its surroundings or be made to stand out from them in terms of form, linearity, mass, colour and physical factors. Whether or not the proposal would intrude into existing views.
- B2. Analysis of the proposal's **Aesthetic Characteristics**: exploring the degree to which it would relate aesthetically and in terms of general character to its surroundings.

Ratings are combined for each viewpoint via a system of averaging and multiplying of ratings to progressively indicate each viewpoint's **sensitivity**, followed by levels of **intrusion and qualitative change**, and culminate in an **overall visual effects rating**.

## **Annexure 6: Relevant Statutory Provisions**

### **B8. Toitū te taiwhenua – Coastal environment**

#### **B8.2. Natural character**

##### ***B8.2.1. Objectives***

...

- (2) Subdivision, use and development in the coastal environment are designed, located and managed to preserve the characteristics and qualities that contribute to the natural character of the coastal environment.*
- (3) Where practicable, in the coastal environment areas with degraded natural character are restored or rehabilitated and areas of high and outstanding natural character are enhanced.*

##### ***B8.2.2. Policies***

...

- (1) Avoid significant adverse effects and avoid, remedy or mitigate other adverse effects on natural character of the coastal environment not identified as outstanding natural character and high natural character from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.*

#### **B8.3. Subdivision, use and development**

##### ***B8.3.1. Objectives***

- (1) Subdivision, use and development in the coastal environment are located in appropriate places and are of an appropriate form and within appropriate limits, taking into account the range of uses and values of the coastal environment.*
- (2) The adverse effects of subdivision, use and development on the values of the coastal environment are avoided, remedied or mitigated.*
- (3) The natural and physical resources of the coastal environment are used efficiently and activities that depend on the use of the natural and physical resources of the coastal environment are provided for in appropriate locations.*

...

- (5) Uses and developments that have a need to locate on land above and below the mean high water springs are provided for in an integrated manner.*

...

##### ***B8.3.2. Policies Use and development***

- (1) Recognise the contribution that use and development of the coastal environment make to the social, economic and cultural well-being of people and communities.*
- (2) Avoid or mitigate sprawling or sporadic patterns of subdivision, use and development in the coastal environment by all of the following:*
  - (a) concentrating subdivision, use and development within areas already characterised by development and where natural character values are already compromised;*

- (b) *avoiding urban activities in areas with natural and physical resources that have been scheduled in the Unitary Plan in relation to natural heritage, Mana Whenua, natural resources, coastal, historic heritage and special character; and*

....

- (4) *Require subdivision, use and development in the coastal environment to avoid, remedy or mitigate the adverse effects of activities above and below the mean high water springs, including the effects on existing uses and on the coastal receiving environment.*

#### **B8.4. Public access and open space**

##### **B8.4.1. Objectives**

- (1) *Public access to and along the coastal marine area is maintained and enhanced, except where it is appropriate to restrict that access, in a manner that is sensitive to the use and values of an area.*

...

- (3) *The open space, recreation and amenity values of the coastal environment are maintained or enhanced, including through the provision of public facilities in appropriate locations.*

##### **B8.4.2. Policies**

- (1) *Subdivision, use and development in the coastal environment must, where practicable, do all of the following:*
  - (a) *maintain and where possible enhance public access to and along the coastal marine area, including through the provision of esplanade reserves and strips;*
  - (b) *be designed and located to minimise impacts on public use of and access to and along the coastal marine area;*
  - (c) *be set back from the coastal marine area to protect public open space values and access; and*
  - (d) *take into account the likely impact of coastal processes and climate change, and be set back sufficiently to not compromise the ability of future generations to have access to and along the coast.*
- (2) *Provide for a range of open space and recreational use of the coastal environment by doing all of the following:*
  - (a) *identifying areas for recreational use, including land-based facilities for those uses, where this ensures the efficient use of the coastal environment;*
  - (b) *enabling the provision of facilities in appropriate locations that enhance public access and amenity values;*
  - (c) *enabling Māori cultural activities and customary use; and*

...

## **E18. Natural character of the coastal environment**

### **E18.2. Objectives**

- (1) The natural characteristics and qualities that contribute to the natural character of the coastal environment are maintained while providing for subdivision, use and development.*
- (2) Where practical the natural character values of the coastal environment are restored or rehabilitated.*

### **E18.3. Policies**

- (1) Manage subdivision, use and development of land adjoining scheduled outstanding natural character or high natural character areas that have a biophysical or visual linkage with the scheduled area to:
  - (a) avoid adverse effects on the natural characteristics and qualities that contribute to the natural character values of outstanding natural character areas; and*
  - (b) avoid significant adverse effects, and avoid, remedy or mitigate other adverse effects, on the characteristics and qualities that contribute to the natural character values of high natural character areas.**
- (2) Maintain significant landforms and indigenous vegetation and habitats that are connected to outstanding natural character and high natural character areas.*
- (3) Manage the effects of subdivision, use and development in the coastal environment to avoid significant adverse effects, and avoid, remedy or mitigate other adverse effects, on the characteristics and qualities that contribute to natural character values.*
- ...*
- (4) Promote land use practices and restoration activities that will restore or rehabilitate natural character values*

## **H6. Residential – Terrace Housing and Apartment Buildings Zone**

### **H6.2. Objectives**

- (2) Land adjacent to centres and near the public transport network is efficiently used to provide high-density urban living that increases housing capacity and choice and access to centres and public transport.*
- (3) Development is in keeping with the areas planned urban built character of predominantly five, six or seven storey buildings in identified areas, in a variety of forms.*
- (4) Development provides quality on-site residential amenity for residents and the street.*
- (5) Non-residential activities provide for the community's social, economic and cultural well-being, while being compatible with the scale and intensity of development anticipated by the zone so as to contribute to the amenity of the neighbourhood.*

### **H6.3. Policies**

- (1) Enable a variety of housing types at high densities including terrace housing and apartments and integrated residential development such as retirement villages.*

- (2) *Require the height, bulk, form and appearance of development and the provision of setbacks and landscaped areas to achieve a high-density urban built character of predominantly five, six or seven storey buildings in identified areas, in a variety of forms.*
- (3) *Encourage development to achieve attractive and safe streets and public open spaces including by:*
  - (a) *providing for passive surveillance*
  - (b) *optimising front yard landscaping*
  - (c) *minimising visual dominance of garage doors.*
- (4) *In identified locations adjacent to centres, enable greater building height through the application of the Height Variation Control where the additional development potential enabled:*
  - (a) *provides an appropriate transition in building scale from the adjoining higher density business zone to neighbouring lower intensity residential zones, and;*
  - (b) *supports public transport, social infrastructure and the vitality of the adjoining centre,*
- (5) *Manage the height and bulk of development to maintain daylight access and a reasonable standard of privacy, and to minimise visual dominance effects to adjoining sites and developments.*
- (6) *Require accommodation to be designed to meet the day to day needs of residents by:*
  - (a) *providing privacy and outlook; and*
  - (b) *providing access to daylight and sunlight, and providing the amenities necessary for those residents.*
- (7) *Recognise the functional and operational requirements of activities and development.*
- (8) *Encourage accommodation to have useable and accessible outdoor living space.*
- (9) *Restrict the maximum impervious area on a site in order to manage the amount of stormwater runoff generated by a development and ensure that adverse effects on water quality, quantity and amenity values are avoided or mitigated.*
- (10) *Provide for non-residential activities that:*
  - (a) *support the social and economic well-being of the community;*
  - (b) *are in keeping with the with the scale and intensity of development anticipated within the zone; avoid, remedy or mitigate adverse effects on residential amenity; and will not detract from the vitality of the Business – City Centre Zone, Business – Metropolitan Centre Zone and Business – Town Centre Zone.*

## **H17. Business – Light Industry Zone**

### **H17.2. Objectives**

- (1) *Light industrial activities locate and function efficiently within the zone.*
- (2) *The establishment of activities that may compromise the efficiency and functionality of the zone for light industrial activities is avoided.*
- (3) *Adverse effects on amenity values and the natural environment, both within the zone and on adjacent areas, are managed.*

*(4) Development avoids, remedies or mitigates adverse effects on the amenity of adjacent public open spaces and residential zones.*

**H17.3. Policies**

*(1) Enable light industrial activities to locate in the zone.*

*(2) Avoid reverse sensitivity effects from activities that may constrain the establishment and operation of light industrial activities.*

*(3) Avoid activities that do not support the primary function of the zone.*

*(4) Require development adjacent to open space zones, residential zones and special purpose zones to manage adverse amenity effects on those zones.*

*(5) In identified locations enable greater building height than the standard zone height, having regard to whether the greater height:*

*(a) is an efficient use of land; and*

*(b) can be accommodated without significant adverse effects on adjacent residential zones; considering the size and depth of the area.*

*(6) Avoid reverse sensitivity effects from activities within the Business – Light Industry Zone that may constrain the establishment and operation of heavy industrial activities within the Business – Heavy Industry Zone.*

*(7) Require activities adjacent to residential zones to avoid, remedy or mitigate adverse effects on amenity values of those areas.*