

Urban Design Memo

# 1206 Great South Road, Drury

FOR: Drury LP

21<sup>st</sup> August 2025

**Attention:** Joe Gray Principal Planner joe@saddleback.nz  
**Copy To:** Will Clarke Planner will@saddleback.nz

Hi Joe,

Thank you for reaching out to me for Urban Design advice on this Resource Consent application for a civil contractors yard including a circa 4,000m<sup>2</sup> hardstand on a 2.4281ha site on the western side of Great South Road in Drury.



Image 1. Site Concept Plan

My understanding is that you have received advice from Council advising that the application may be publicly notified due to rural character effects.

The challenges posed from this application from an urban design perspective focus on two key matters:

- a) Character – what is it is? and what are the key considerations, and;
- b) Edges – principally, is Great south Road and an edge? and if so, is it defensible?

I will unpick these factors as simply as possible below.

## Character

Understanding character is particularly important with respect to edges. The key factors pertaining to this application with respect to character is that of the existing environment and the impact of any zoning applied to, or sought for it – in this case the site has a Future Urban Zone (FUZ)<sup>1</sup>.

The FUZ is important because it is a 'transitional' zone that signals the area will be urban in the near future (typically short–medium term). This means that, for all intents and purposes, it is rural activity that has become a transitional activity and more urban–related activity should be anticipated. The intent of the zone is to restrict development which might undermine future intensive urban development outcomes, primarily by seeking to avoid the fracturing of land holdings. Notwithstanding, retaining rural character until such time as it is rezoned is clearly articulated in the Objectives and Policies for the zone. These attributes are not mutually exclusive and can be achieved relatively easily on larger sites like that of the applicants.

Another important element shaping the areas character is the planned Drury to Pukekohe Link (Designation #6780 as highlighted in Image 2 below) – less than 300m south of the site. This arterial road will be a new 'edge' once constructed, which in–turn increases the

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<sup>1</sup> The statutory context is covered fully in the assessment of environmental effects ('AEE') prepared by Saddleback Planning in support of the application

likelihood of the areas to the north and east of the designation being a similar or complimentary land use in future.

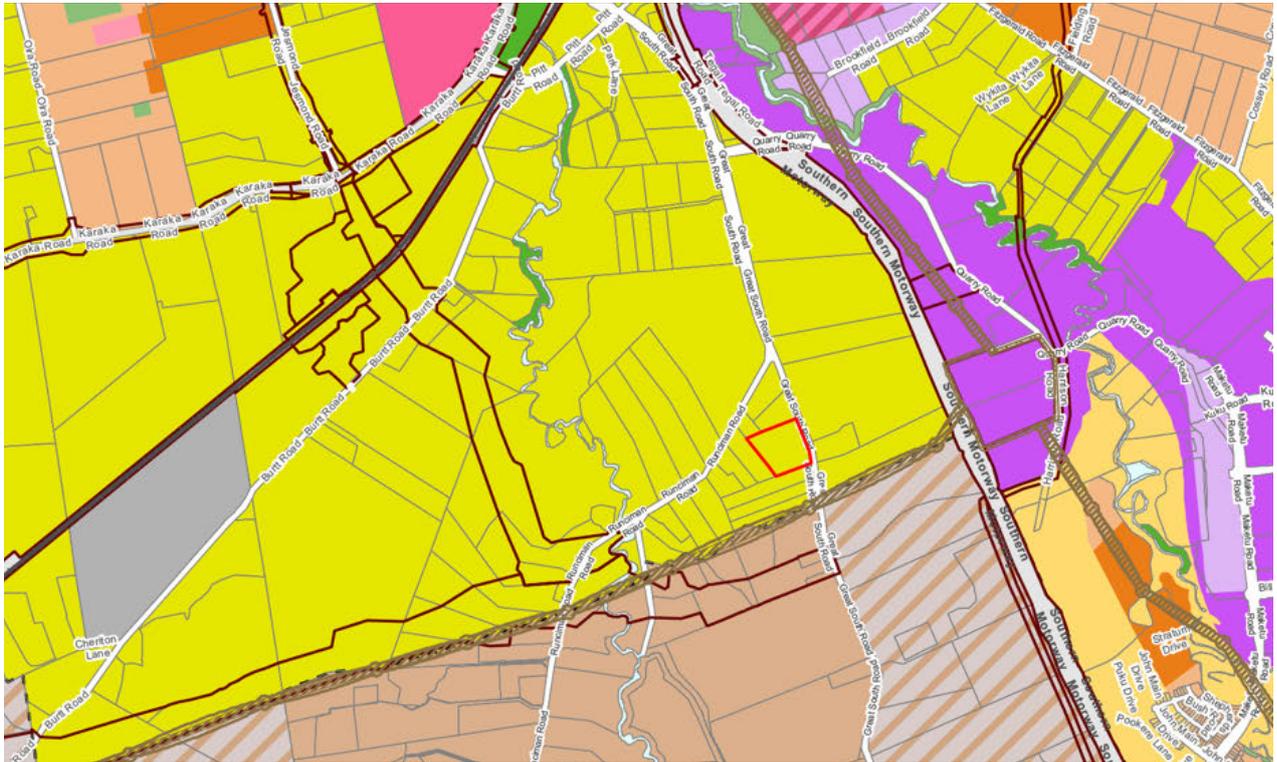


Image 2. Designation #6780 for the Drury to Pukekohe Link overlaid in the AUP Zoning Map

## Site in Context

Great South Road is no longer an 'open road environment' and now features an 80km/hr speed limit.

As detailed by Rob Pryor (LA4, date 10 June 2025) Great South Road to the north, between the site and Quarry Road is characterised by a number of commercial/light industrial activities. These include a Hiab transport, cartage, earthworks and aggregate recycling plant, truck repairs and service, construction equipment supplier, a commercial helicopter company and a transport company.

To the south of the site, Great South Road is predominantly rural lifestyle properties but also includes a number of commercial activities including a firewood supplier, mechanical engineer, canine therapy, fencing contractor, and dog daycare.

The area in which the site is located, including Great South Road itself is falling from a low ridgeline some 100m to the south (identified from the transmission lines on images 2 and 4). The site falls in a north–westerly direction by approximately 10m over 150m+ a very gentle fall.



Image 3. Google Earth image (2025) looking north.

Looking at the aerial images above and below, it is clear there is already a level of built form intensity and non–rural activity already surrounding the site. In fact, in most respects the site looks anomalous to the character around it south of Runciman Road.



Image 4. Site Aerial Image (Geomaps 2024)

Other salient points include:

- As per the LA4 assessment there are no Outstanding Natural Landscapes or Features associated with the site or immediate surrounds.
- No additional structures are proposed and therefore, matters of visual appropriateness are somewhat germane.
- The proposed hardstand area covers a little over 15% of the site (4,000m<sup>2</sup> of 24,281m<sup>2</sup>) and the current entry is being used.

Certainly at the part of Great South Road at least, the proposed activity appears entirely within the character of other surrounding activities — on both sides of Great South Road.

Consequently, the outstanding questions are whether Great South Road is an edge? and if so, is it defensible?

## Where are the Edges?

It is understood that Council officers consider that Great South Road is in fact an 'edge' between two quite distinct character areas that must be 'defended'.

In urban design theory, **edges** refer to the boundaries or transitions between different character environments. They are one of the key elements identified by urban theorist **Kevin Lynch** in his seminal work *The Image of the City* (1960), where he categorized five elements<sup>2</sup> that shape how people perceive and navigate cities.

In my practical experience, 'edges' are most commonly linear elements that act as boundaries, or are perceived as barriers between two land use (districts) or character (precinct) areas. The most effective edges are natural features (waterbodies, cliffs or parks) or significant man-made features such as motorways and railways. The general rule of thumb is that if an engineered solution such as a bridge or underpass is required to link opposing areas, then the linear element is considered an edge. Roads can sometimes fulfil this function but unless they are of significant (existing or planned) scale they tend to be temporary in nature. Typically roads become integrators over time as traffic speeds reduce (friction from built form, intersections and accessways) and the urban character around it tends to reach a level of symmetry.

Looking specifically at Great South Road, its role changed dramatically following the completion<sup>3</sup> of the Southern Motorway. While the road itself has retained a somewhat rural<sup>4</sup>, the last 40+ years has seen increasing numbers and frequency of entry and exit points, further impacting vehicle speeds and road design attributes. As a result, its

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<sup>2</sup> These are: paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks

<sup>3</sup> In the late 1970's.

<sup>4</sup> Specifically relatively-narrow carriageway and unformed verges.

effectiveness as an edge is now severely degraded, and certainly in the immediate location of the site, now preforms much more like an integrator.

Consequently, if Great South Road is not shaping spatial organization or urban form, then the character of the area from one side of the road to the other becomes less defined and agglomerated. I believe this is now the situation.

Site landscaping is useful for short-term visual mitigation but even if amalgamated with that on surrounding properties, plays no meaningful part with respect to establishing a defensible edge. The 'defensible edge' to the west is, and always was, formed by the Ngakoura Stream some 650m away.

To the south there is currently no defensible edge for quite some distance – realistically the Bombay–Pukekohe hills ridgeline. Notwithstanding, the planned Drury to Pukekohe Link designation/road now provides that opportunity for Council.

## Summary and Recommendations

Whilst I understand Council's desire to find some limit to what they see as a creep of unplanned land uses, their rationale in this instance is tenuous because:

- The land uses around the site largely reflect what is now being sought (FUZ Policy H18.3(3) *Require subdivision, use and development to maintain and complement rural character and amenity.*)
- The land is being maintained in a single large parcel capable of urban intensification when sought (FUZ Policy H18.3(4) *Avoid subdivision that will result in the fragmentation of land and compromise future urban development.*)
- Reverse sensitivity matters (FUZ Policy H18.3(6)) either do not arise or are anticipated in a rural environment

As such, from an urban design perspective, there is little to argue that that character is being irrevocably or unduly changed.

Seeking to argue that Great South Road is a defensible edge is likewise flawed as the road has been transitioning from a rural road to increasingly urban in character – certainly along its northern part.

Consequently, it is simply not possible, nor appropriate to seek to protect rural character on the opposite side of Great South Road in the area of the site.

Council should be making every endeavour to protect and enhance the urban edges which are being created, or naturally exist elsewhere.

I hope this aids you with your thinking and advice to Drury LP.

Kind regards,



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