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**urban design assessment and neighbourhood  
design statement  
40 MAHI ROAD, HELENSVILLE**

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for

**HOUNSLOW HOLDINGS LTD**

by

**IAN MUNRO**

October 2024  
Updated July 2025

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## executive summary

This report documents an independent analysis of a request for a Private Plan Change to re-zone part of an approximately 17.37ha site, for Hounslow Holdings Ltd, at 40 Mahi Road, Helensville. The request has been made to Auckland Council under the Resource Management Act 1991 (“**RMA**”) in terms of the Auckland Unitary Plan (Operative in Part) “**AUP: OP**”. The key conclusions of this report are that:

- a. The site has been identified as suitable for urban purposes through the Future Urban zone that applies to the land although the Council has not yet undertaken a structure plan for Helensville and the most recent Future Development Strategy indicates the Site (Helensville 1) is in the Council’s 2035+ re-zoning program. The proposed residential use of the land is in keeping with the land’s characteristics as well as development on adjacent land, and is the most appropriate in urban design terms given the site’s opportunities and constraints, and adjacent land’s characteristics. Due to the slope and presence of a stream and associated gullies, future drainage reserves would likely be required to be vested through a future subdivision.
- b. The proposal includes a combination of Countryside Living, Single House (SH), and Mixed Housing Suburban (MHS) zones. These respond to the characteristics of the land, with the MHS zone ‘internalised’ within the SH zone so as to provide housing choice locally but limit any adverse effects created by higher density living within the Site and away from neighbours.
- c. A concept master plan for the proposed SH + MHS zoned-part of the Site, and which is intended to act as an analytical aid to substantiate conclusions expressed as to developability of the Site, demonstrates that the land is capable of delivering an integrated, well-connected and spatially coherent urban form outcome in line with the outcomes sought by the AUP: OP. It also demonstrates how a variety of densities and living choices could be accommodated taking into account the Site’s slope and geotechnical characteristics.
- d. For the land to be developed a number of design decisions would need to occur and be integrated. The existing AUP: OP provisions require these matters to be addressed through normal consent requirements, usually via conditions of consent. I consider it very unlikely that the proposal would give rise to any subdivision or built form-related urban design effects ‘out of the ordinary’ from what typically occurs as urban expansion occurs or that could not be properly managed through the applicable consent requirements.
- e. At its closest point the Site is approximately 1.7km from the Helensville town centre, and 400m from Rautawhiri Reserve. The former is not within a walkable distance of the Site but the latter is. I consider that this is sufficiently located as to support (generally lower-density) urban-density residential development in a way that logically extends Mahi Road southwards.
- f. Notwithstanding recent amendments to the RMA (the MDRS) and the Council’s proposed PC78 (which does not apply to Helensville), the urban-compatible part of the Site is proposed to be zoned SH and MHS zones rather than Mixed Housing Urban zone. This reflects the zone and development patterns on adjacent land; the Site’s own characteristics and sensitivities; and market research indicating what types of housing and densities will likely be viable in Helensville. In urban design terms the mix and densities of housing proposed to be enabled will be suitable. For a fundamentally higher density to be supportable, I would expect a closer centre zone to be available.
- g. The proposal will result in a number of adverse urban design effects, although none are considered to be unusual or severe in the context of urban land re-zoning. Positive urban design effects will also occur or be enabled through future subdivision. Overall, the proposal is consistent with the quality compact urban form sought by the AUP: OP and the specific matters set out in Chapter B2: Urban Form.

The private plan change application could be accepted and approved on urban design grounds.

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## notes and limitations

- a. This report is limited by the information provided at the time of writing and any responsibility for ensuring the correctness of that information rests with the party or parties that produced it. Specific reliance has been placed on architectural, landscape, planning and engineering advice.
- b. This report has been prepared solely for use in the context of the Resource Management Act 1991 and the application made for a private plan change by Hounslow Holdings Ltd at 40 Mahi Road, Helensville. To that end:
  - i. The report focuses on whether or not the proposal is acceptable through an urban design lens, but only in terms of the RMA matters that apply and only to the extent that those matters reasonably provide for or seek urban design outcomes.
  - ii. The report does not offer a 'pure' urban design assessment based only on best-practice or 'text-book' urban design preferences that might otherwise generally apply.
  - iii. In consequence it could be possible at one extreme for support to be given to a proposal that was poor in general urban design terms but which satisfied all applicable RMA matters; and at the other extreme a proposal could be opposed even if it was quite successful in general urban design terms but failed the applicable RMA matters.
- c. Unless otherwise specified in this report due to the presence a superseding project-specific definition, "urban design" at the high-level relates to configuring physical space and land use activities to maximise exchange opportunities between people and communities as efficiently and comfortably as possible (i.e., live, work, play, travel), whilst simultaneously providing for the highest possible levels of character and distinctiveness. At a detailed level, it relates to configuring physical space to maximise the quality, safety, and prominence of public (or publicly usable) spaces, including the integration of development on adjoining private spaces. Some contributing authorities are:
  - i. Carmona, M., et. al., 2021, *Public Places Urban Spaces: The Dimensions of Urban Design* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.).
  - ii. Couch. C., 2016, *Urban Planning: An Introduction* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed).
  - iii. Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage, State of Western Australia, *Liveable Neighbourhoods*, [www.wa.gov.au/government/publications/liveable-neighbourhoods](http://www.wa.gov.au/government/publications/liveable-neighbourhoods), January 2024.
  - iv. Department of Transport and Planning, State of Victoria, *Urban Design Guidelines for Victoria*, [www.planning.vic.gov.au/guides-and-resources](http://www.planning.vic.gov.au/guides-and-resources), January 2024.
  - v. Larice, M., and Macdonald, E., (editors), 2012, *The Urban Design Reader* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed).
  - vi. Miller. C., and Beatie. L., (editors) 2022, *Planning Practice in New Zealand* (chapter 14) (2<sup>nd</sup> ed).
  - vii. Ministry for the Environment, 2003, *People Places Spaces: A Design Guide for Urban New Zealand*.
  - viii. Ministry for the Environment, 2005, *Urban Design Protocol*.
  - ix. Ministry of Justice, 2005, National Guidelines for Crime Prevention through Environmental Design in New Zealand, *Part 1: Seven Qualities of Safer Places*.

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## 1. introduction

- 1.1 This report documents an independent analysis of a request for a Private Plan Change to re-zone part of an approximately 17.37ha site, for Hounslow Holdings Ltd, at 40 Mahi Road, Helensville. The request has been made to Auckland Council under the Resource Management Act 1991 (“RMA”) in terms of the Auckland Unitary Plan (Operative in Part) “AUP: OP”.
- 1.2 For full details of the proposal, the application and planning analysis (s.32 report) prepared by Civix Ltd is referred to.

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## 2. background, scope and involvement

- 2.1 Ian Munro was appointed by Hounslow Holdings Ltd in 2023 as an independent urban design consultant.
- 2.2 The process followed to undertake this urban design assessment is as follows:
  - a. Preliminary site investigations were undertaken by Civix Ltd and this was provided.
  - b. Briefing meetings were held.
  - c. A site visit was undertaken.
  - d. The Council’s Future Development Strategy was considered along with details of adjacent subdivision consents.
  - e. A concept master plan was developed and provided to Civix Ltd to test in terms of high level engineering and earthworks-compatibility.
  - f. The Concept master plan was iterated and then used as a basis to develop proposed zone and precinct plans.
  - g. An urban design report was prepared and the application lodged with the Council.
  - h. The Council made a number of requests under Cl23 of the RMA 1<sup>st</sup> Schedule for further information and through that process a number of changes were agreed to the proposal.
  - i. An amended application was prepared and this report was updated in July 2025 to reflect that. The key change was to remove a proposed precinct / precinct plan and instead rely on the existing Single House and Mixed Housing Suburban zone frameworks (and Countryside Living).

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## 3. urban design framework

- 3.1 Although historically focused on the way in which private space and development impacted on public space, 'urban design' now encompasses a wide range of potential considerations. This is best evidenced by the breadth of matters included in MfE's 2005 New Zealand Urban Design Protocol. As a result of this breadth urban design analyses, when based only on preferred or 'ideal' urban design prerogatives, do not always match well with the specific matters relevant to Resource Management Act proceedings. Practical challenges faced by urban designers working under the RMA, and which have been factored into this assessment, include that:
- a. urban design outcomes only apply to the extent that they are relevant to the specific resource management issues relevant to each specific application (primarily the relevant objectives and policies applicable to a specific plan change);
  - b. RMA plans need to be generally interpreted in light of what the specific objectives and policies mean and with reference to the methods used by each Plan to implement those provisions – not against what outcomes an urban designer might consider to be preferred or ideal in pure urban design terms; and
  - c. the RMA provides for positive environmental effects and outcomes but does not require them (unless a NPS or Plan requires them).
  - d. The RMA plan change s.32 test of "most appropriate" means "best suited and reasonable to the circumstance", and does not mean "perfect" or "ideal" in terms of specialist inputs including urban design.
- 3.2 In this instance, the proposal is for a scale and type of land use and development that is in line with the plan-making and land use frameworks set out within the AUP: OP. As such, for this assessment it is not considered necessary to identify urban design outcomes or precedents beyond the provisions of the AUP: OP. However, based on direction at AUP: OP Appendix 1.3, the Auckland Plan, Auckland Design Manual, and the Rodney Local Board Plan (2023) have been reviewed and considered. In the absence of a Council-led structure plan, I have considered the relevant structure plan matters that relate to the proposal. I am also aware of the Rodney District Plan 2000 and its structure plan for Helensville, which does seem to have influenced subsequent Council policy.
- 3.3 The key provisions of the AUP: OP relevant to the proposal in urban design terms are **Appendix 1** (structure plan guidelines); **B2** RPS (urban growth and form); **E38** (urban subdivision); **H3** (single house zone), and **H4** (mixed housing suburban zone). Although the concept plan includes potential future open spaces (drainage network) these would be determined and, it is assumed,

vested through a later subdivision process and so cannot be soundly 'zoned' as public open space ahead of that. The Countryside Living zone exists on the Site and is proposed to remain generally as it is currently configured. For that reason no additional analysis is considered necessary.

3.4 The Council has recently completed a Future Development Strategy under the NPS: UD. The FDS confirmed the FUZ in Helensville but signalled urban re-zoning some time after 2035. There was no specific urban design rationale for or against this. The Council's PC78 responds to the NPS: UD and RMA requirements to enable the Medium Density Residential Standards in relevant urban zones. PC78 does not apply to Helensville as the Council has determined Helensville is not large enough to qualify as an urban environment.

3.5 In preparing this report I have also relied on the following:

- a. Concept plan and zone plan set prepared by CIVIX Ltd, dated September 2024 and June 2025 respectively.
- b. Planning report and appendices prepared by CIVIX Ltd, dated October 2024.
- c. Landscape assessment prepared by LA4 Ltd, dated September 2024.

3.6 Having considered the relevant provisions of the AUP: OP and related documents identified above, the planning outcomes and environmental effects to be addressed can be synthesised (for simplicity) into the following topic headings:

- a. The development should contribute to a quality compact urban form that supports and enhances the local area.
- b. The development should achieve a well-connected, integrated built form outcome, with residential areas having high amenity, and being healthy, attractive and safe.
- c. Non-residential activities support the needs of people and the local community.
- d. The development should maintain or enhance the character of the local area, and provide adequately for infrastructure.
- e. Open spaces should be well integrated and physically connected where possible.
- f. Reverse sensitivity effects with adjacent land uses are managed.
- g. The proposal should demonstrate how the site's opportunities and constraints have been positively responded to.
- h. Overall urban design merit.

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## 4. site and context analysis

### site analysis

4.1 In urban design terms the Site's key characteristics are:

#### **The site**

- a. The Site is 17.37ha and has an irregular shape. It is vacant, accommodating an upper table that is grassed, and a steeper stream and gully area that is bush-clad.
- b. The Site is split-zoned Rural Countryside Living zone and Future Urban zone. The FUZ area has an irregular shape loosely following the Site's contours but which is unusual in the context of how the FUZ has been placed on sites generally across Auckland (corresponding to cadastral boundaries). This is illustrated on **Figure 1**.
- c. The Site sits on the eastern slope of the Wishart Road ridge. Its elevation rises from approximately 23m ASL to 95m at one point at its southern boundary. The landform continues to rise beyond the Site, up to 125m (south, and adjacent to Wishart Road). In this respect the Site is contained from wider view other than from the north and east.

#### **Adjacent sites**

- d. North of the Site is Single House zoned land, which follows the Rautawhiri Road corridor, extending south-east with an area of Future Urban zone as far as Manuka Grove (2.4km from Garfield Road and 2.8km from the Helensville commercial main street). The SHZ has been developing by way of detached family houses on lots of approximately 600m<sup>2</sup>. The most-recent development (east) at Rongomai Street has lots ranging between 200m<sup>2</sup> – 325m<sup>2</sup>. North of this SHZ zoned area is the fairly extensive recreational facility of Rautawhiri Park. This is within a convenient walk of the Site and includes a variety of green and hard-court playing facilities.
- e. South of the Site is 197 Wishart Road. This is unusual in that most of it is Future Urban zone, but the FUZ relates to bush-clad parts of it. Its western ¼ is zoned Rural Countryside Living zone but this is largely cleared and subject to various landform modifications.
- f. West of the Site are 25 (2ha), 69 (2ha), 75 (2.2ha), and 141 (4.1ha) Wishart Road. These are each zoned Rural Countryside Living zone and are occupied by a single detached dwelling. Adjacent to the Site, on all of these lots, the bush area on the Site continues naturally across the boundary. The dwellings are all on the far side (west), adjacent to Wishart Road.

- g. East of the Site are 34, 36, 38, 40 and 42 Urumaraki Avenue. These are Rural Countryside Living-zoned lots between 1ha – 2ha, and each is occupied by a dwelling. The dwellings are located on the lower, eastern parts of these lots adjacent to the accessway. A variety of trees and bush areas are spread across these lots.

#### **The neighbourhood**

- h. The neighbourhood is in my opinion best categorised as 'Helensville East'. It has been an area of planned Helensville expansion for the past few decades and follows an obvious topographical 'path of least resistance' along a valley between steeper hill and ridge systems.
  - i. It is surprising to me that in what has been a well-established urban growth exercise no provision was made for even a Neighbourhood Centre given the separation between this area and the Helensville town centre (both walking distance and the 'up and over' characteristic of moving over Garfield Road. This has the benefit of ensuring that all development will support the town centre zone, but it does mean that many residents in Helensville East will not realistically be able to walk to a centre zone.
  - j. Although there is no centre zone the impressive Rautawhiri Park facility and Kaipara College serve the neighbourhood and are each conveniently located relative to the Site. Given these facilities I record my observation that a small neighbourhood centre on Rautawhiri Road, between these and in the vicinity (preferably at) the intersection with Awaroa Road would have made most sense.
  - k. The urban form of the neighbourhood is 'transitional' – the existing SHZ is in the process of being developed and the FUZ will in time (it is assumed) also be up-zoned. Although most dwellings are on sites around 600m<sup>2</sup>, smaller-sites have more recently been provided. Almost all housing that I can identify is in the form of detached housing. The form of the SHZ that has developed to date has taken the form of an organic grid, which is typical of modern-day urban design principles matched to undulating or sloped terrain. It is otherwise unremarkable.
  - l. Of note is that Mahi Road has been provided directly to the Site's northern boundary, with recent SHZ subdivision and development (38 and 27 Mahi Road, and 9, 11, 13, 15 and 17 Panui Avenue) adjoining the Site.
  - m. The Countryside Living zone has resulted in a wide range of site sizes and shapes, with no obvious overall rationale.
- #### **Planning / urban form context**
- n. Helensville is a constrained rural town subject to flooding hazards and an original vision for a rail-based regional pattern that never fulfilled its

initial ambition. The historic centre has a rectilinear grid-form and the north-south Commercial Road.

- o. Growth over time quickly exhausted the limited capacity of the town's original site, pushing development into the hills and eventually spilling over Garfield Road to the east, leading to the development area that adjoins the Site.
- p. The Kaipara River is a meandering, snaking river that winds and bends – creating numerous loops – north-south. This sits immediately west of the town and forms something of a natural edge (in conjunction with flood plain issues). Overall, Helensville is a good example of a small town that has outgrown its original thinking and has resulted in a pragmatic 'best practicable option' urban form and extent. There is a marked change in morphology between the 'old town' west of Garfield Road (rectilinear grid), and the 'new town' east of that – which being characteristic of 1950-2000 development reflects many more cul-de-sacs, curvilinear roads and less overall permeability.

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## 5. the proposal

- 5.1 The proposal is to divide the Site into approximately two halves, with Countryside Living zone retained on the north-western half, and Single House zone / Mixed Housing Suburban zone introduced on the south-eastern half (**Figure 2**).
- 5.2. An on-site stream and bush / ecological area is to be retained and has been coordinated with the proposed zone boundary, and an extension of Mahi Road (local road status) is proposed north-south through the Site to its southern boundary so as to enable its continuation in the future.
- 5.3 A concept plan (**Figure 3**) was prepared by myself and CIVIX Ltd's engineers to test the Site's capabilities. The concept plan tested a variety of densities and typologies, and overall shows 109 allotments (excluding the Countryside Living zoned part of the Site). Based on this, I estimate a likely range of 100 – 125 dwellings is likely. The concept plan is an analytical tool to help give greater certainty as to what is or is not likely to prove possible or appropriate on the land. It is not a subdivision proposal, but it has been subject to a high-level of engineering appraisal in terms of known geotechnical and civil practicalities. It (or something similar to it) is in my opinion possible on the Site.

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## 6. assessment

### the development should contribute to a quality compact urban form that supports and enhances the local area

- 6.1 This topic is primarily derived from B2.2.1(1), B2.2.2(4), B2.6.1(1), B2.6.2(1), and Appendix 1 in the AUP: OP.
- 6.2 In my opinion the proposal will successfully contribute to the quality compact urban form sought for Auckland, and also both support and enhance Helensville's east. My key reasons for this are:
- a. The existing FUZ within the Site makes little spatial sense, with the proposal providing a more practical and site-responsive solution that could result in a continuation of Mahi Road southwards.
  - b. The Single House + Mixed Housing Suburban zone and Countryside Living zone combination is highly compatible with the existing zones adjacent to the Site, and the Site's contours.
  - c. In light of the Site's distance from Helensville centre and Rautawhiri Reserve, I agree that Single House zone with the centralised pod of Mixed Housing Suburban zone presents a good balance between density and housing choice / affordability (noting that compact housing is specifically in short supply in Helensville), with the limited range of activities that are accessible nearby.
  - d. The MHS zoned area could allow for housing down to approximately 1:200m<sup>2</sup> density, which would be likely to deliver duplex or compact detached dwellings – a form of density that is in my opinion compatible with the intensity of development common on Single House zone sites (i.e., fairly large, 2-storey detached houses). It has been positioned so as to be internalised within the Site and screened from neighbouring sites. This is in my opinion good-practice. It has been integrated with an area of Single House zone north of that, so as to allow the dwellings to enjoy a visual connection to the stream and bush / open space feature on the Site.
  - e. It is regrettable that there is no Neighbourhood Centre zone in the east-Helensville area although this has clearly been a historical decision of the Council when Rautawhiri Reserve and the Helensville East area was developed for housing. It would be in my opinion desirable but the optimum location for that would have been near the Rautawhiri + Awaroa Road intersection. The addition of 100-125 dwellings on the Site will not fundamentally change the existing residential pattern that has been already established and although I would not oppose a small area of Neighbourhood centre zone on the Site, I am pessimistic that its location

would be commercially workable so far removed from the movement patterns of the wider neighbourhood (and with no clear sense of where an extended Mahi Road might eventually connect to, if anywhere). On this basis I am neutral on this point but do not see a centre zone on the Site as essential to support its urban re-zoning. Having said that, and although Helensville centre is beyond a conveniently walkable distance from the Site, the proposal would plainly support the businesses and amenity of that centre.

- f. The concept plan, commented on below, is in summary in-line with orthodox urban design and planning principles. This helps substantiate the assumption that an acceptable outcome is actually possible at later resource consent stage and is an important urban design tool.
- g. The concept plan shows a variety of housing that would be compatible with what has already been developed and achievable in Helensville, the policy framework of the SHZ / MHSZ, and existing neighbours. It would be a logical extension of the existing urban area, would be contained well below the high-points of existing ridges east and south, and relate well to the bush-area / retained Countryside Living zone.
- h. The concept plan shows future lots backing onto the retained bush / ecological area. This is on the basis of both steepening topography at the western end of the Site's natural 'table', and my expectation that the area will be retained in private ownership not subject to general public use or access. In such scenarios this is a correct urban design response. This would be further resolved at the time of a formal subdivision consent.
- i. The concept plan does not show future lots in the Countryside Living zone, for the reason that this is an existing zone and is not proposed to be subdivided as part of this Plan Change or be otherwise subject to new or amended plan provisions. To the extent that part of the existing FUZ is to be down-zoned to Countryside Living zone, this is in my opinion self-evidently on the basis of the real-world extent of bush / ecological area to be retained and that is best-done via the Countryside Living zone.
- j. I have also considered the difference in likely urban design effects between the proposed SHZ + MHSZ zone extent and a hypothetical alternative of SHZ + MHSZ applying only to the existing FUZ portion of the Site. In my opinion the difference in effects would be minimal, and overall I regard the proposal as the more site-responsive.
- k. I have considered all of the matters set out in Appendix 1 of the AUP: OP. I consider that the information prepared by the Applicant and that I have in part contributed to is sufficient to address all relevant questions relating to urbanising the Site that the Structure Plan process would address, such that there is no need for any further structure-plan type analysis. Specifically and in summary:

- i. Retaining the existing Countryside Living zone in the Site's north-eastern half reflects the existing situation and the environmental characteristics of that land including the streams and bush area. There is in my opinion no need or urban design benefit to changing this.
- ii. Having agreed with the extent of urban zone proposed on the eastern and southern half of the Site, I do not consider that any alternative residential zone would be as or more appropriate than the proposed SHZ + MHSZ. In particular:
  - 1. The Large Lot residential zone would not make sense in light of the proven appropriateness of SHZ directly adjoining the Site. Although the Site is on higher ground than that, it remains contained within the natural elevation of adjacent ridges, and is on lower elevation than other existing SHZ in Helensville.
  - 2. MHU or THAB zones are not justified based on a lack of adjacent centre zone or higher-frequency bus services, and SHZ with an internalised pod of MHSZ is the most character-compatible choice noting the prevalence of SHZ across Helensville. The proposed MHSZ area for higher density is commensurate with real-world densities that have been achieved elsewhere in Helensville and will positively promote greater housing choice.
  - 3. SHZ without any additional density opportunity (i.e., MHSZ) would have materially similar built form effects as the proposal (because of how 'internalised' that MHSZ has been positioned), but would not provide as readily for affordable housing or housing variety generally.
  - 4. The proposed SHZ area is generally gently sloped and free of significant development constraints that might otherwise justify a bespoke precinct-based limitation.
  - 5. There is no overriding built form character constraint that would otherwise impact what or how development might occur on the Site (compared to Clevedon or an urban Special Character Area).
- iii. The Site's location in Helensville and elevation make it unsuitable for employment zones as an alternative to the SHZ / MHSZ. As noted previously, I do not consider a neighbourhood centre zone would be successful or necessary, as much as one would be in my opinion desirable in Helensville East generally.
- iv. Site sensitivities and environmental constraints have been provided for via the retained extent of Countryside Living zone.

- v. It is common in Helensville for SHZ and Countryside Living zone to adjoin one another without special controls or mitigation techniques, and in my opinion they are a compatible fit.
- vi. The concept plan shows that a workable urban subdivision outcome can be achieved on the Site, and I note that all subdivision activities require resource consent based on an extensive set of considerations. This also shows a hypothetical lot layout achieving the matters sought by Chapters E38 and H3 / H4 of the AUP: OP, including lots fronting streets and enjoying solar access, streets that form a liveable, connected neighbourhood and that will be well-overlooked as well as safe-feeling, and protection of environmental features.

6.3 On the basis of the above, I consider that:

- a. In terms of any adverse urban design effects, I consider the proposal would not result in any problematic or unusual effects that do not typically come with land development or subdivision. The design process followed, and plan provisions proposed to apply will be successful at avoiding, remedying or mitigating potential urban design effects related to a quality compact urban form and Helensville.
- b. In terms of the relevant AUP: OP provisions, I consider the proposal is consistent with the built-form outcomes sought including the circumstances where establishing new urban zones is appropriate.
- c. In overall consideration of the above, I consider that the proposal represents the most appropriate urban design outcome for the PPC land and it is supported.

**the development should achieve a well-connected, integrated built form outcome, with residential areas having high amenity, and being healthy, attractive and safe**

6.4 This topic is primarily derived from B2.3.1(1), B2.3.1(3), B2.3.2(1), B2.3.2(2), B2.4.1(2), B2.4.2(8), B2.4.2(9), B2.6.1(1), B2.6.2(1) and Appendix 1 in the AUP: OP.

6.5 In my opinion the proposal will achieve this outcome. My key reasons for this conclusion are:

- a. The concept master plan, although non-statutory, demonstrates that the Site is capable of achieving an appropriate subdivision outcome in line with the provisions of AUP: OP Chapter E38. Connectivity to Rautawhiri Road via Mahi Road is the key link. A connection to the south, land largely also subject to the FUZ, could be achieved. In my opinion thae

proposal can be described as well-integrated. This relates to policy E38.3(10).

- b. New roads would themselves be subject to the AUP: OP and Auckland Transport requirements. I am satisfied based on the concept plan that a network of AT-compliant public roads could be achieved, although in places limited use of JOALs may be desirable to service rear allotments and manage steeper land at the edges of the bush / ecological area. These are not in my opinion likely to be so out of the ordinary in frequency or extent as to compromise the basic quality of the future subdivision (relating to policies E38.3(10), (11), and (12)).
- c. The concept plan demonstrates how a block structure could be potentially achieved on the Site. Although I consider it does fairly indicate that some rear lots may be required, these can be limited to where they cannot be practicably avoided. It can also provide for a quite well-connected series of short blocks, and almost all lots being front-lots. As discussed previously, assuming that the bush / ecological area is to be retained in private ownership and is otherwise on steeper land, no park-edge roads are envisaged (or in my opinion necessary) but could be explored further at the time of subdivision if a public open space outcome is agreed to by the Council.
- d. I envisage that the new local roads and any JOALs would be designed to accommodate low-vehicle speeds (30km/h or less) so as to allow cyclists to share the carriageway (there are no dedicated cycle facilities on any adjacent street that could be connected to or continued). This relates to policies E38.3(16) and (17).
- e. In my opinion a block structure similar to that indicated on the concept plan would provide good sightlines and a number of pleasant walking routes for pedestrians although Mahi Road as the key spine route to Rautawhiri Road will be the principal route. The AUP: OP urban subdivision and SHZ / MHSZ provisions would require development to positively contribute to the quality of streets and provide for passive surveillance, and as shown on the concept plan it will be possible for most lots to be front lots adjoining street edges (relevant to policies E38.3(11) and H5.3(3)).
- f. Because of topography and what I expect to be private ownership, there is in this instance little prospect of the stream network interfacing with the road network, as promoted by policy E38.3(10)(a)(iii). Although such configurations are desirable and allow people to engage with natural features in a way that would be visually interesting and add amenity to the neighbourhood, it is not widely common in Helensville. As part of developing the concept plan, I confirm however that I did test a Mahi Road extension that entered the Site, then bent westwards to follow the bush area, and then bent around back to the approximately point that is shown at the Site's southern boundary. This was spatially inefficient and raised concerns with CIVIX's engineers regarding road gradient and

needing retaining works to hold up the road at the bush edge. It was not taken any further.

- g. The ability to walk through the subdivision along well-overlooked streets will in my opinion enable public health and safety. This relates to policies E38.3(10), (11), and (18).
- h. My analysis is that from the southern-most point of the Site following the Mahi Road axis, it would be a 2.2km trip to the Commercial Road main street. This compares to a 2.4km walk from the edge of the existing SHZ east of the Site (excluding the FUZ land beyond that). On this basis I do not agree that the Site could be said to be less connected or less a part of Helensville than the existing urban zoned extent is.
- i. Lastly, and in terms of an integrated built form outcome, the concept plan shows a predominant positioning of the back of future allotments around the Site's boundaries. This is a foundational urban design principle for managing urban space on the basis that positioning the private backs of properties to face other private backs is a compatible interface that will minimise nuisance effects between neighbours. It also avoids the issue of a neighbour's existing rear boundary becoming a front boundary (with additional yard and land use impositions resulting). Noting also that on the Countryside Living zoned lots east of the Site, in all cases existing neighbouring dwellings are on the far sides of those lots away from the Site, I consider the proposal will maintain amenity values appropriately.
- j. By way of conclusion, I have also considered the concept plan, albeit an indicative suggestion, against the scale, pattern and type of urban streets and blocks that have eventuated within the neighbourhood. I am satisfied that the land can be developed in a way that is compatible with that 'grain' of development and streets (which in Helensville East does include numerous 'pockets' of housing along road corridors).

6.6 On the basis of the above, I consider that:

- a. In terms of any adverse urban design effects, I consider the proposal would not result in any adverse urban design effects that are remarkable or out of the ordinary for new green field development. Overall, I consider the PPC is likely to result in a number of successful urban design outcomes at the time of future subdivision and development. The design process followed and plan provisions proposed to apply will be successful at avoiding, remedying or mitigating potential urban design effects.
- b. In terms of the relevant AUP: OP provisions, I consider the proposal is consistent with the built-form outcomes sought including the circumstances where establishing urban zones is appropriate.
- c. In overall consideration of the above, I consider that the proposal represents the most appropriate urban design outcome for the PPC land and it is supported.

## non-residential activities support the needs of people and the local community

- 6.7 This topic is primarily derived from B2.3.1(1), B2.4.1(5), B2.4.2(10), B2.5.1(3), B2.5.2(7) and Appendix 1 in the AUP: OP.
- 6.8 The proposal in my opinion appropriately provides for the needs of the local community by way of housing choice. It will also do so in a way that will not result in problematic amenity effects between employment and residential activities. My key reasons for this conclusion are:
- a. Based on my analysis and as summarised previously, there is in my opinion no urban design basis to support employment zones on the Site. A SHZ + MHSZ approach is by far the most compatible and appropriate use of the Site. This is on the basis of the Site's adjacent zones and uses, elevation, and location along Mahi Road through an existing SHZ area. Employment would be more appropriate along the Rautawhiri Road valley floor.
  - b. I would not oppose a small Neighbourhood Centre zone on the Site but just cannot see how one could be viable based on orthodox urban planning principles for centre zone planning – based on maximising visual exposure and accessibility rather than being relatively 'off line' and on (what would be for the foreseeable future) a cul-de-sac Mahi Road extension. Again, such a potential zone would be much more appropriate along the Rautawhiri Road valley floor.
  - c. I note that home occupations would be permitted within future dwellings and this is likely to be something taken up in at least some homes.
- 6.9 On the basis of the above, I consider that:
- a. In terms of any adverse urban design effects, I consider the proposal's purely residential zones is appropriate noting that future open space is likely in the form of a stream network and storm water facilities. If some of all of these come to be vested as public open space, the Council routinely undertakes public plan changes to 'sweep these up' and zone them as public open space in due course. That would be the appropriate solution for that scenario. I consider that no adverse effects of concern are likely to arise.
  - b. In terms of the relevant AUP: OP provisions, I consider the proposal is consistent with the built-form outcomes sought including the circumstances where establishing urban zones is appropriate.
  - c. In overall consideration of the above, I consider that the proposal represents the most appropriate urban design outcome for the PPC land and it is supported.

## **the development should maintain or enhance the character of the local area, and provide adequately for infrastructure**

- 6.10 This topic is primarily derived from B2.3.1(1), B2.3.2(1), B2.4.1(2), B2.4.2(8), B2.4.2(9), B2.6.1(1), B2.6.2(1), and Appendix 1 in the AUP: OP. It relates to all five of the principles identified in the Council Structure Plan NDS but in particular principles 1, 4 and to a lesser extent 5 (notably storm water and flooding).
- 6.11 In my opinion the proposal will be compatible with the local area's existing character, and provides mechanisms to ensure the provision of infrastructure. My key reasons for this conclusion are:
- a. The provision of water and wastewater infrastructure are the subject of separate investigations but I accept no development could proceed without sufficient service connections.
  - b. Storm water facilities may be required on-site and to that end the concept plan identifies one potential storm water area / drainage reserve, which would be confirmed at the time of subdivision. But in summary, it is expected that development on the Site would need to properly account for its stormwater quality and quantity, and this is likely to be something achieved via on-site space and engineering solutions.
  - c. Transport infrastructure can be provided in accordance with ATCOP, based on the concept plan and associated preliminary investigations looking at gradient and dimensions / radii.
  - d. All other infrastructure (electricity, internet) would use transport corridors and present no urban design concerns.
  - e. In terms of Helensville's character, it is in my opinion important to contextualise the Site as part of Helensville East. This has a different character and morphology to Helensville West (old Helensville), including in terms of street and block layouts, housing type and age, and the way in which there is a fundamental difference between the west – residential development on a flat that grew up into the hills, and east – development effectively limited to hills along an east-west valley.
  - f. The proposal will be compatible with the existing Countryside Living zone / FUZ split on the Site, with the proposed zone boundary being consistent with what I can ascertain is the purpose and principles of that split-zoning (protecting the streams and bush; reflecting Site topography and contours).
  - g. The proposal will have very limited visibility south and west, due to being north/east facing and on lower land. From the east and south, the proposal will largely continue the SHZ-based development rising up the hill that has been currently set-in-train and what I consider to have been

foreshadowed by the FUZ being placed on the Site. Development visible in the future will be a compatible continuation of detached 1-to-2 storey dwellings, with a limited area of (internalised) MHSZ contained within the Site's perimeter.

- h. The proposal will not result in development appearing to adversely dominate or occupy the ridge or skyline.
- i. As noted earlier, the more general character of a cluster of housing opening out on the Site's table feature from Mahi Road is itself compatible with the clusters or pods of housing that can be seen (often via cul-de-sacs) along Awaroa Road, Cabeleigh Drive and Rautawhiri Road.
- j. Overall, people north and east of the Site will be able to see urban development on land that is currently vacant. In its existing context, I disagree that this will seem significantly adverse, materially change the existing urban / rural character interface of the hill south of Rautawhiri Road, or otherwise be objectionable in urban design terms.

6.12 On the basis of the above, I consider that:

- a. In terms of any adverse urban design effects, I consider the proposal would result in a substantial change in the character of the Site although overall it is a change that is compatible with that signalled by the Future Urban zone and the SHZ-based development adjacent and north of the Site. Development of the Site will be managed by the AUP: OP's underlying subdivision and zone frameworks. I am in particular satisfied that an urban form outcome will be achieved that positively contributes to the planned character of Helensville's east. The design process followed, and plan provisions proposed to apply will be successful at avoiding, remedying or mitigating potential urban design effects.
- b. In terms of the relevant AUP: OP provisions, I consider the proposal is consistent with the built-form outcomes sought including the circumstances where establishing a new urban zone is appropriate.
- c. In overall consideration of the above, I consider that the proposal represents the most appropriate urban design outcome for the PPC land and it is supported.

### **open spaces should be well integrated and physically connected where possible**

6.13 This topic is primarily derived from B2.2.1(1), B2.3.1(1), B2.3.1(3), B2.7.1(1), B2.7.2(1), B2.7.2(2), and Appendix 1 in the AUP: OP.

- 6.14 In my opinion the proposal will be appropriate. My key reasons for this conclusion are:
- a. No public recreational spaces are envisaged as being necessary on account of the Site's proximity to Rautawhiri Reserve and the proposal's own modest likely yield (not being sufficient to create demand for a new or additional open space on its own).
  - b. An extensive area of stream, riparian area and ecological bush area are to be protected including by retention of the Countryside Living zone. My assumption is that this will be retained in private ownership but it is possible that some or all of this could be desired by the Council to be vested as reserve at the time of subdivision. I would not have an inherent objection to this although as noted earlier the exact extent (edges) of such a future public open space relative to Site topography may preclude achievement of a park-edge-road configuration.
  - c. A potential drainage reserve has been identified on the concept plan. This would adjoin Mahi Road and the bush / ecological area, and hence if needed it would be in public view and obvious.
  - d. I see no need or justification for any other pedestrian or public trails or pathways through the Site. There are no obvious destinations or connections available, and in light of the intended ecological function of the bush / streams on the Site, disturbance to construct such facilities seems counter-productive. A pedestrian and cycle route through the Site via Mahi Road will be provided and, in time, this will continue south into 197 Wishart Road (with no clarity on where – if anywhere – it may ultimately lead to).
  - e. However, if the Council did determine to acquire a new public recreational open space (i.e., a park) on the Site, there are several locations that could be workable based on the concept plan's dimensions and the topography of the proposed SHZ / MHSZ area. This could be addressed at the time of subdivision.

6.15 On the basis of the above, I consider that:

- a. In terms of any adverse urban design effects, I consider the proposal does not require creation of any new public recreational open spaces. But should the Council require this at the time of subdivision consent it could acquire one, and there are several configurations that could be workable. Retained and enhanced streams on the Site, and retained bush will provide visual amenity.
- b. In terms of the relevant AUP: OP provisions, I consider the proposal is consistent with the built-form outcomes sought including the circumstances where establishing and integrating new open spaces is appropriate.

- c. In overall consideration of the above, I consider that the proposal represents the most appropriate urban design outcome for the PPC land and it is supported.

### **reverse sensitivity effects with adjacent land uses are managed**

- 6.16 This topic is primarily derived from B2.5.1(3), B2.5.2(10), B2.7.1(3), and Appendix 1 in the AUP: OP.
- 6.17 In my opinion, the proposal will successfully manage reverse sensitivity effects on adjacent activities. My key reasons for this conclusion are:
  - a. The retention of Countryside Living zone will avoid any adverse effects on land west or north of the Site.
  - b. The proposed SHZ and internalised MHSZ pod is compatible with the Countryside Living zone generally to the south and east, and as evidenced by how commonly this interface occurs around Helensville.
  - c. Internalisation of a MHSZ pod will also ensure that any adverse effects and reverse sensitivity effects are avoided.
  - d. The original proposal included a precinct plan and a 1-storey height restriction on some parts of the SHZ area, so as to also ensure no development could be seen on any ridgeline (although there was a low probability of that occurring). The Council officers via the CI23 RMA further information process favour reliance on the AUP: OP's standard zone and subdivision frameworks to manage the effects of development and hence the precinct has been removed from the proposal. I agree that at the time of subdivision any allotment presenting future ridgeline or related visibility concerns could be managed such as limited building height via a Consent Notice mechanism.
  - e. Overall the proposal is in my opinion very compatible with its environs and immediate neighbours.
- 6.18 On the basis of the above, I consider that:
  - a. In terms of any adverse urban design effects, the proposal would result in a range of residential or residential-compatible (by way of consent) uses that will not give rise to any reverse sensitivity effects of concern. The design process followed, and associated plan provisions proposed to apply will be successful at avoiding, remedying or mitigating potential urban design effects.
  - b. In terms of the relevant AUP: OP provisions, I consider the proposal is consistent with the built-form outcomes sought including the

circumstances where reverse sensitivity effects are likely or should be avoided.

- c. In overall consideration of the above, I consider that the proposal represents the most appropriate urban design outcome for the PPC land and it is supported.

### **the proposal should demonstrate how the site's opportunities and constraints have been positively responded to**

- 6.19 At the fundamental design and layout level, the way in which a proposal responds to its site characteristics, opportunities and constraints is regarded by urban designers as one of the key ways that potential adverse effects can be avoided, remedied or mitigated (and that potential positive effects can be maximised). In this respect, this topic relates to all of the AUP: OP RPS provisions relevant to the PPC.
- 6.20 In my opinion, the proposal represents a logical and successful response to its context. My key reasons for this conclusion are:
  - a. The zone pattern and extents proposed relate positively to the Site's contours and natural features. I consider it an appropriate iteration of the Operative zone pattern on the Site rather than a fundamental re-think or competitor to that. It is broadly in-line with what the AUP: OP drafters would have had in mind, noting that the AUP: OP had no up-zone timeframes tied to it, and the former Future Urban Land Supply Supply Strategy has been superseded by the more-recent Future Development Strategy. In this respect, it is difficult to attribute an urban design effect to whether something similar to the proposed concept plan eventuated within the next 5-10 years, or 15-20 years.
  - b. Countryside Living zone and SHZ / MHSZ are compatible with one another and the existing zones used in the Helensville East neighbourhood. The MHSZ area will be internalised within the Site, provide for greater housing choice, and also be consistent with the level of density that has previously occurred in Helensville. I consider it superior to only allowing one narrower type of housing, although in so doing I agree that a SHZ + MHSZ is a more appropriate fit with the existing character of the neighbourhood than a MHU or THAB zone would.
  - c. The concept plan shows how the subdivision and land use outcomes sought by the Council's AUP: OP chapters E38, H3 and H4 seek, including a majority of front lots with good solar access, a well-connected street network, and well-overlooked, safe-feeling streets.
  - d. Retaining the streams and bush in the Countryside Living zone means that this will be retained in one or at most a few larger allotments,

minimising fragmentation, which I am supportive of. It also means that there is no chance of density 'gaming' at the time of subdivision by way of fragmenting the bush into many small lots to allow them to each exceed a 600m<sup>2</sup> area.

- e. Following on from that, the concept plan shows an orthodox urban design outcome in relation to how neighbouring sites could be interfaced with and I have confidence that an acceptable solution will be readily achievable at the time of subdivision.
- f. Because of the modest densities sought to be enabled, I have no concerns regarding future land use or servicing type needs. The dwellings will enjoy a spacious north-facing outlook to Rautawhiri Road, and will provide good amenity to future occupants.
- g. The concept plan shows, for the MHSZ pod, a ladder of east-west blocks. All things being equal, including when on flat land, north-south blocks are preferred. On a sloped, north-facing site, the east-west blocks shown are workable because the southern row of lots is on higher ground than the north, allowing more sunlight to access those lots over the top of houses on the northern row of lots. Although a detailed subdivision or land use consent proposal would allow this to be confirmed at a later consent stage, at the level of a plan change I am comfortable that the concept plan is an appropriate response to the site's characteristics.

6.21 On the basis of the above, I consider that:

- a. In terms of any adverse urban design effects, I consider the proposal responds logically and appropriately to the site's opportunities and constraints (to the extent that can be determined at the level of a plan change). The design process followed, and associated plan provisions proposed to apply will be successful at avoiding, remedying or mitigating potential urban design effects.
- b. In terms of the relevant AUP: OP provisions, I consider the proposal is consistent with the built-form outcomes sought including the circumstances where establishing new urban zones is appropriate.
- c. In overall consideration of the above, I consider that the proposal represents the most appropriate urban design outcome for the PPC land and it is supported

## overall urban design merit

6.22 In light of the above analyses, I have turned my mind to a cumulative and overall assessment of urban design merit.

- 6.23 The proposal has followed a design-led process and identified the most-appropriate framework for the site. In my opinion the design process was comprehensive and of a depth that is commensurate to the scale and potential environmental effects that the PPC could give rise to.
- 6.24 The proposed zone framework, and plan provisions will ensure subdivision and development maintains and enhances the planned character and other qualities of Helensville East. The concept plan gives me confidence that the zone proposed will be of a sufficient size and characteristics that the ‘downstream’ resource consent provisions triggered under the AUP: OP can be properly administered.
- 6.25 On balance, I consider the proposal to adequately reflect the outcomes sought by the AUP: OP for new urban zones in the Future Urban zone, and that any adverse effects arising from subdivision and development of the land will be appropriate in urban design terms.
- 6.26 On the basis of the above and overall, I consider that the proposal could be supported on urban design grounds.

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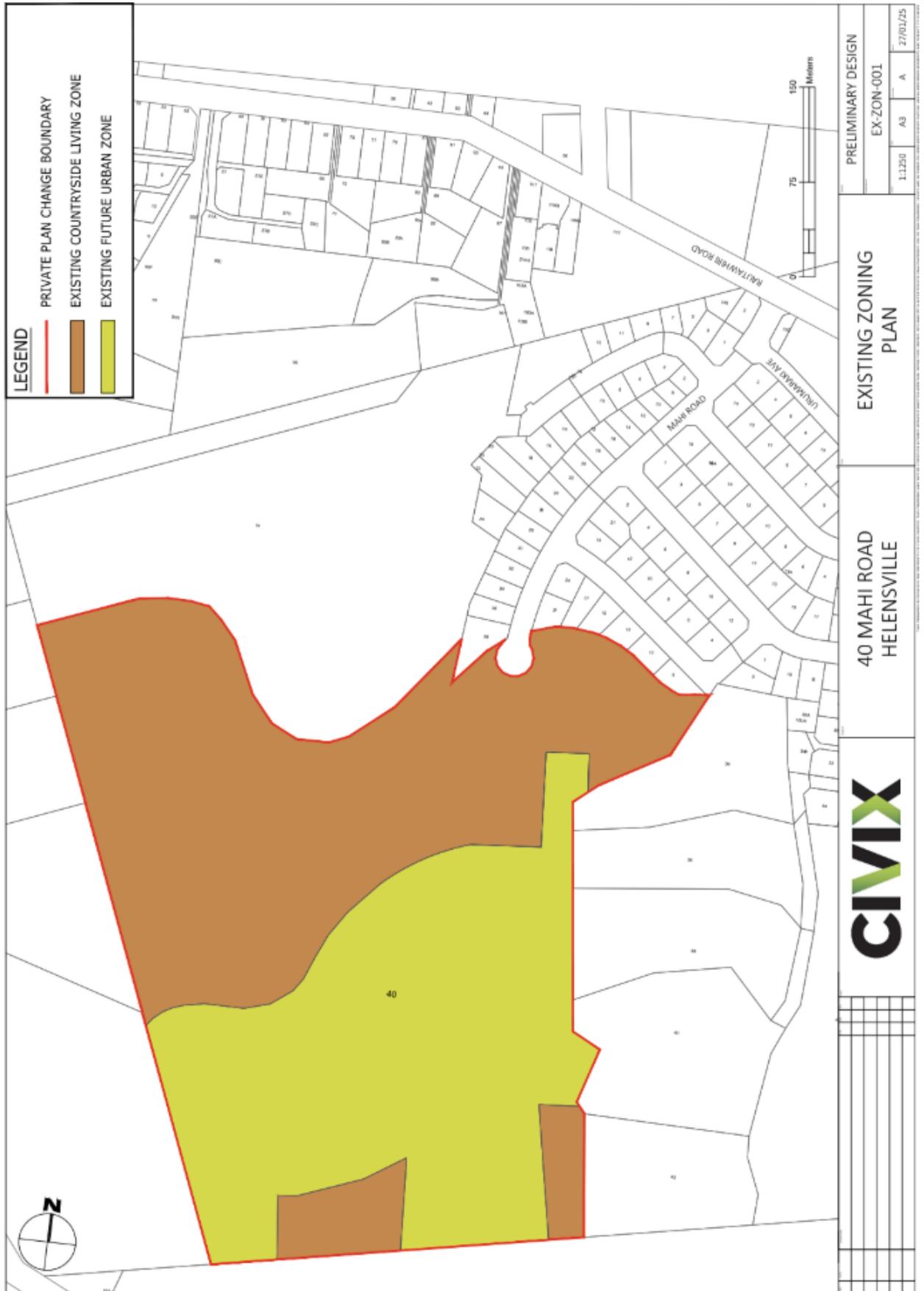
## 7. conclusions

- 7.1 This report documents an independent analysis of a request for a Private Plan Change to re-zone part of an approximately 17.37ha site, for Hounslow Holdings Ltd, at 40 Mahi Road, Helensville. The request has been made to Auckland Council under the Resource Management Act 1991 (“RMA”) in terms of the Auckland Unitary Plan (Operative in Part) “AUP: OP”. The key conclusions of this report are that:
- a. The site has been identified as suitable for urban purposes through the Future Urban zone that applies to the land although the Council has not yet undertaken a structure plan for Helensville and the most recent Future Development Strategy indicates the Site (Helensville 1) is in the Council’s 2035+ re-zoning program. The proposed residential use of the land is in keeping with the land’s characteristics as well as development on adjacent land, and is the most appropriate in urban design terms given the site’s opportunities and constraints, and adjacent land’s characteristics. Due to the slope and presence of a stream and associated gullies, future drainage reserves would likely be required to be vested through a future subdivision.
  - b. The proposal includes a combination of Countryside Living, Single House (SH), and Mixed Housing Suburban (MHS) zones. These respond to the characteristics of the land, with the MHS zone ‘internalised’ within the SH zone so as to provide housing choice locally but limit any adverse effects created by higher density living within the Site and away from neighbours.

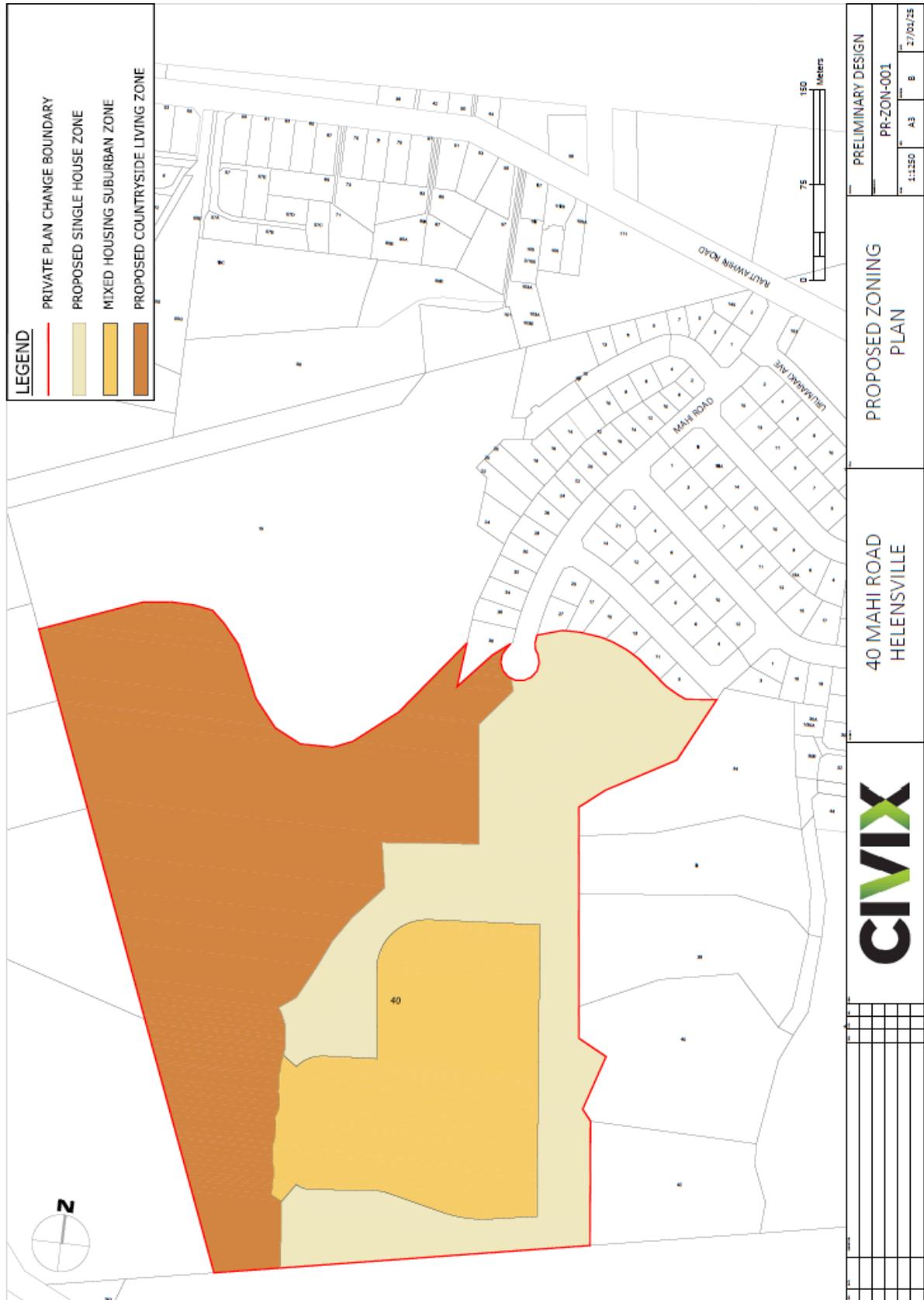
- c. A concept master plan for the proposed SH + MHS zoned-part of the Site, and which is intended to act as an analytical aid to substantiate conclusions expressed as to developability of the Site, demonstrates that the land is capable of delivering an integrated, well-connected and spatially coherent urban form outcome in line with the outcomes sought by the AUP: OP. It also demonstrates how a variety of densities and living choices could be accommodated taking into account the Site's slope and geotechnical characteristics.
- d. For the land to be developed a number of design decisions would need to occur and be integrated. The existing AUP: OP provisions require these matters to be addressed through normal consent requirements, usually via conditions of consent. I consider it very unlikely that the proposal would give rise to any subdivision or built form-related urban design effects 'out of the ordinary' from what typically occurs as urban expansion occurs or that could not be properly managed through the applicable consent requirements.
- e. At its closest point the Site is approximately 1.7km from the Helensville town centre, and 400m from Rautawhiri Reserve. The former is not within a walkable distance of the Site but the latter is. I consider that this is sufficiently located as to support (generally lower-density) urban-density residential development in a way that logically extends Mahi Road southwards.
- f. Notwithstanding recent amendments to the RMA (the MDRS) and the Council's proposed PC78 (which does not apply to Helensville), the urban-compatible part of the Site is proposed to be zoned SH and MHS zones rather than Mixed Housing Urban zone. This reflects the zone and development patterns on adjacent land; the Site's own characteristics and sensitivities; and market research indicating what types of housing and densities will likely be viable in Helensville. In urban design terms the mix and densities of housing proposed to be enabled will be suitable. For a fundamentally higher density to be supportable, I would expect a closer centre zone to be available.
- g. The proposal will result in a number of adverse urban design effects, although none are considered to be unusual or severe in the context of urban land re-zoning. Positive urban design effects will also occur or be enabled through future subdivision. Overall, the proposal is consistent with the quality compact urban form sought by the AUP: OP and the specific matters set out in Chapter B2: Urban Form.

7.2 The private plan change application could be accepted on urban design grounds.

ATTACHMENT 1 – EXISTING AUP:OP ZONES ON THE SITE, NO SCALE



# ATTACHMENT 2 – PROPOSED AUP: OP ZONES



# ATTACHMENT 3 – CONCEPT PLAN

