



## FRANKLIN 2 PRECINCT PLAN CHANGE APPLICATION

---

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS  
JULY 2025

AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND  
GRAFTON DOWNS LTD



AMY ZHU-GRANT  
URBAN DESIGN

T: +1 (571) 318 0856  
E: amy.zhu.grant@gmail.com

**Project:**

Franklin 2 Precinct - Plan Change Application Landscape Analysis

**Client:**

Grafton Downs Limited

**Date:**

JULY 2025

**Version:**

V1

**Issue Status:**

FINAL

**Author:**

Amy Zhu-Grant - Urban Designer

**AMY ZHU-GANT**  
URBAN DESIGN

T: +1 (571) 318 0856  
E: amy.zhu.grant@gmail.com

## CONTENTS

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

<b>1.0</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>3</b>	
<b>2.0</b>	<b>LANDSCAPE CONTEXT</b>	<b>4</b>	
	<b>LOCATION AND SURROUNDING CONTEXT</b>	<b>4</b>	
	<b>THE SITE</b>	<b>4</b>	
<b>3.0</b>	<b>TOPOGRAPHY + LANDFORM</b>	<b>6</b>	
<b>4.0</b>	<b>LANDSCAPE CHARACTER</b>	<b>8</b>	
<b>5.0</b>	<b>TOPOGRAPHICAL AND LANDSCAPE CONSTRAINTS</b>	<b>10</b>	
<b>6.0</b>	<b>MASTERPLAN DESIGN RESPONSE</b>	<b>12</b>	
	<b>GREEN NETWORK AND EFFECTS ON LANDSCAPE CHARACTER</b>	<b>12</b>	
	<b>ROADING AND LOT LAYOUT</b>	<b>12</b>	
	<b>ZONING DISTRIBUTION</b>	<b>14</b>	
<b>7.0</b>	<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>16</b>	
			<b>1.1</b> The Council's Urban Design Specialist has requested GDL provide a description (including a map with contours overlaid on Precinct Plan 1) and analysis of the underlying topography, its associated landscape character and the resulting topographical constraints within the Franklin 2 Precinct ("the Precinct") and identify the implications in relation to the proposed zone distribution and features shown on Precinct Plan 1. This information has been sought to better understand how the distribution of zoning and the key structuring elements relate to the underlying topography and associated landscape character (in the context of change enabled by the operative zone and Precinct provisions).
			<b>1.2</b> This response provides a description and analysis of the underlying topography, its associated landscape character and the resulting topographical constraints within the Precinct. It identifies the implications in relation to the proposed zone distribution and features shown on Precinct Plan 1. It should be read in conjunction with Drawing Numbers: SK013 and SK014. It is not a landscape assessment but rather provides a summary of the Precinct's landscape character and an outline of principal areas that influenced the master planning, urban structure, and the proposed zone distribution in the Proposed Plan Change request.

## 2.0 LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

### LOCATION AND SURROUNDING CONTEXT

- 2.1 The Precinct is located north of Paerātā in rural south Auckland, approximately 6km north of Pukekohe and 9.5km southwest of Papakura. The Southern Motorway is located 5.7km to the west. The Precinct is situated within the Franklin Local Board area and the Manukau Ecological District (ED), a highly modified environment that primarily comprises pastoral farmland with large (and expanding) areas of urban settlement.
- 2.2 To the north of the Precinct, across Karaka Road, land is predominantly in pasture framed by fencing, hedges and shelter belts. A small number of farmhouses are also present. The Pukekohe golf course is located directly opposite the Precinct's northern boundary and is an obvious feature on the landscape due to the cluster of buildings close to Karaka Road and the mature trees that define the course's fairways.
- 2.3 To the west of Paerātā Road, the pattern of development is similar to that in the north. In addition, a number of smaller lifestyle rural lots are located along Paerātā Road, in close proximity to the College grounds. The settlement pattern changes slightly to the northeast with an increased density of rural lifestyle lots and horticultural activities.
- 2.4 The intersection of Paerātā Road, Karaka Road, Glenbrook Road and Te Rata Boulevard has been upgraded with the implementation of the two-lane Glenbrook roundabout, which provides the northern access to the Precinct.

### THE SITE

- 2.5 The Precinct is an irregularly shaped triangular area, bordered by State Highway 22 (Karaka and Paerātā Roads) to the north and west, with the North Island Main Trunk (NIMT) railway line along its eastern boundary.
- 2.6 The northern end of the precinct, development for residential purposes is well established with consents obtained for the subdivision of Phases 1 to 3 (refer to Drawing Numbers: SK012), with further construction ongoing. To date, resource consent has been obtained for 947 residential lots, with approximately 648 individual titles issued and 311 houses constructed. Other developments in this part of the Precinct include the construction of Paerātā School, a new primary school, and a consent has been granted for a supermarket on the land adjacent to the Glenbrook roundabout zoned for residential purposes.
- 2.7 Wesley College is located midway along Paerātā Road, to the south of Puhitahi Hill Road. It occupies approximately 27 hectares on an elevated ridge at the western edge of the site. The College remains a visually prominent feature in the landscape, mainly due to its mature tree canopy and elevated position. Though much of the campus is screened by vegetation and topography, occasional glimpses of heritage buildings, such as the Chapel, are visible.
- 2.8 To the south, the Paerātā Train Station is under construction on land adjoining the NIMT railway line along with the new east-west Link Road. This new road will connect State Highway 22 (Paerātā Road) to the park-and-ride facility under construction on the eastern side of the railway line, while providing a link to the neighbouring Future Urban zoned areas to the east and west of the Precinct. Once completed, the road will provide the southern access point into the Precinct from SH22.

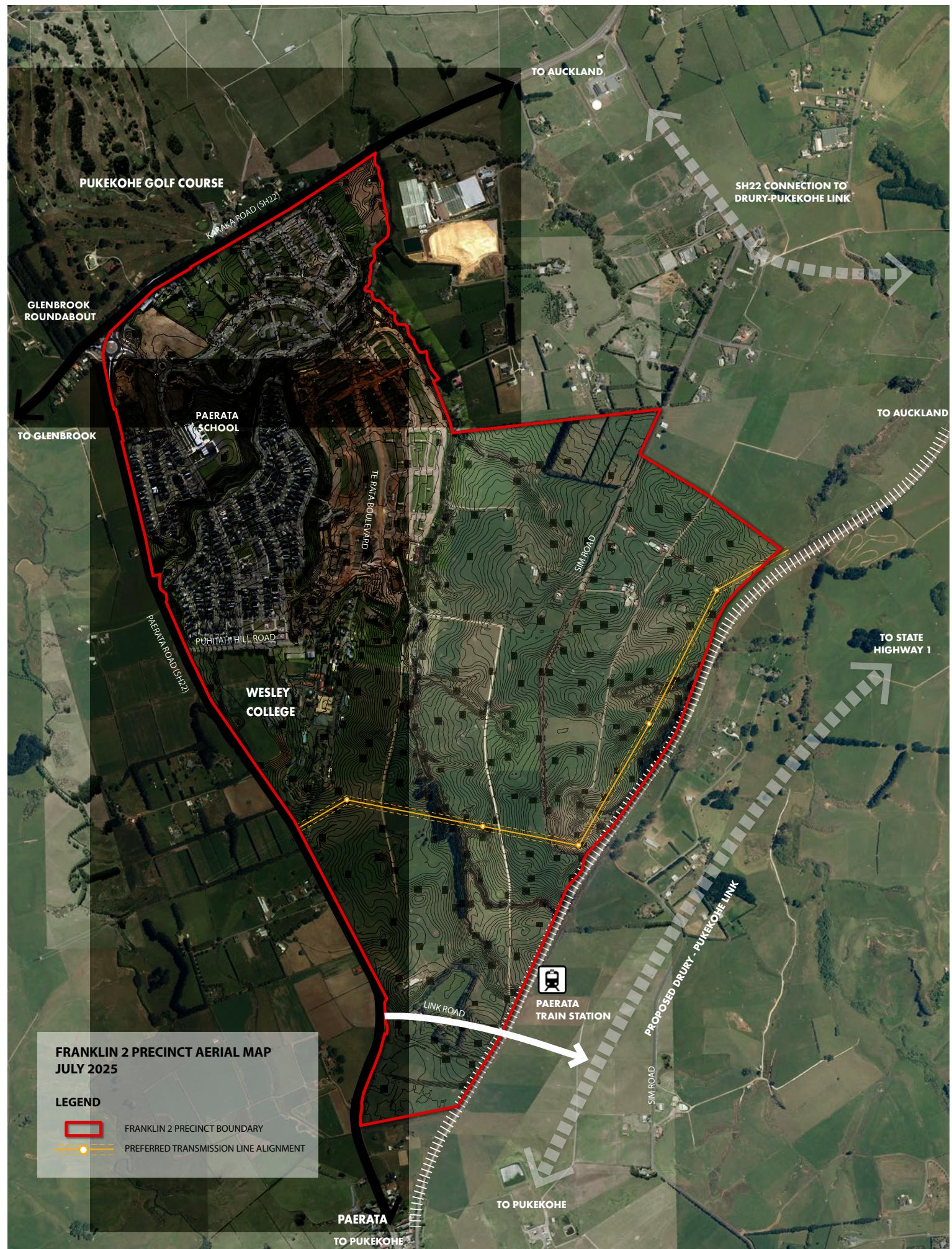


Figure 1: Site Context - Aerial photo and topography

## 3.0 TOPOGRAPHY AND LANDFORM

3.1 The Precinct is situated on the northern edge of the South Auckland volcanic field (also known as the Franklin volcanic field). The land features gently rolling hill-country terrain, shaped historically by erosion-resistant volcanic soils and used mainly for pastoral activities. The Precinct displays three distinct topographical zones.

### **NORTHERN SECTOR (KARAKA ROAD INTERFACE):**

3.2 This area is relatively flat, with ground levels between RL 25 and 30m, offering good potential for development with minimal earthwork requirements. It has been prioritised for early development stages due to its proximity to the Glenbrook roundabout, which provides convenient road connections. The lower-density housing proposed here also offers a more suitable transition to the adjoining rural zone. The consented lots are larger, better reflecting the peri-urban and semi-rural character of the surrounding environment.

### **CENTRAL SPINE:**

3.3 The topography becomes more elevated and dynamic through the centre of the site, where two primary ridgelines run in a north-south direction, reaching a high point of RL 60m. These ridges offer long-range views and strong natural orientation cues, and have been used to inform the road layout within the masterplan.

### **SOUTHERN SECTOR (PAERĀTĀ VILLAGE INTERFACE):**

3.4 The land flattens again towards the southern tip, dropping to around RL 40m, and includes a flood-prone area at the south end of the triangular site. The upper part of this floodplain has been engineered and is now suitable for development; however, the southern tip remains designated for open space and/or stormwater functions.

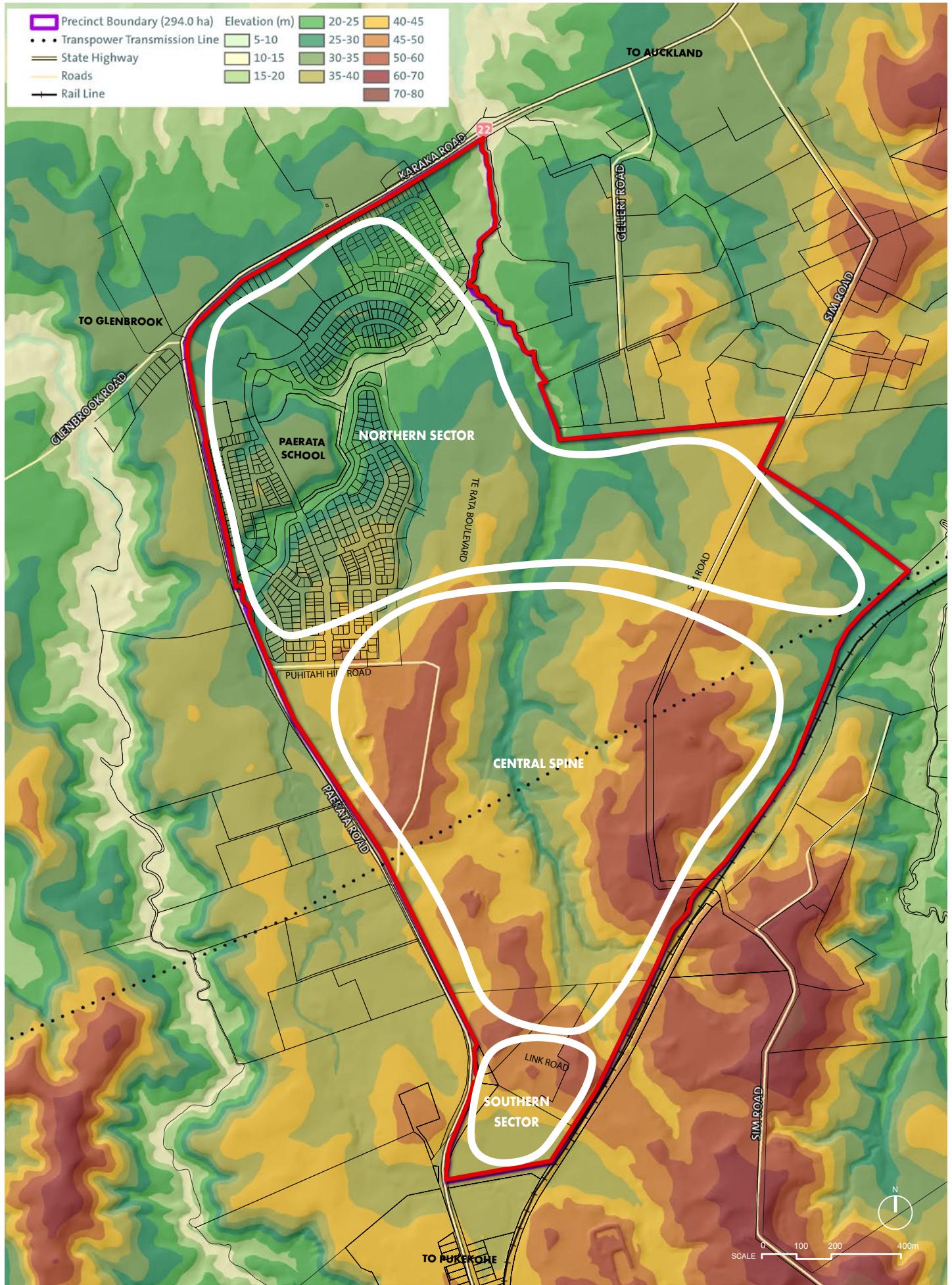


Figure 2: Site Context - Elevation

## 4.0 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

4.1 The landscape character of the Precinct is best described as urban edge. The Precinct is in transition, with the northwestern area fronting Karaka and Paerātā Roads exhibiting a suburban character, while the eastern area currently retains a more rural-modified character, shaped over time by longstanding agricultural practices. The eastern area of the Precinct currently remains as open pasture used for grazing, with exotic shelterbelts, scattered shade trees, and limited native vegetation. This pattern of urbanisation is consistent with the Pukekohe-Paerata Structure Plan, which anticipates a corridor of urban development extending northward from Pukekohe following transportation connections.

4.2 A key feature of the Precinct is the approximately 9 kilometres of stream tributaries that cut through the land via a network of incised gullies. These tributaries originate from the Whangapouri Stream to the west and Oira Creek to the east, both of which eventually flow into the Manukau Harbour through Drury Creek and the Pahurehure Inlet. The streams are often exposed due to a lack of riparian planting and are occasionally lined with patches of wet pasture or small wetlands. The Precinct integrates riparian enhancement provisions to support the ecological restoration of riparian margins while facilitating public access and recreational use. These provisions have been foundational in guiding early subdivision and development phases. Riparian yards have been strategically implemented to ensure appropriate setbacks between residential development and the open space and stream network. This approach enhances ecological connectivity, improves water quality, reduces exposure to natural hazards, and reinforces the Precinct's open space framework—aligning with best practice urban planning and environmental design principles.

4.3 Vegetation across the site is generally sparse, although clusters of both exotic and native trees add visual interest. Notable examples include Puriri, Totara, Liriodendron, and Monkey Puzzle trees, especially within the Wesley College grounds and along the central and eastern parts of the site. These trees give a sense of maturity and character to the Precinct. Some of these trees are scheduled as notable trees in the Auckland Unitary Plan, which protects those identified individuals and groups from modification or removal. Over the last decade, there has been confusion regarding which trees are scheduled for protection. Following meetings between GDL's arborist and the Council, an agreement has been reached on the notable trees to be scheduled. The agreed schedule is included in the private plan change request.

4.4 Built elements and infrastructure also play a vital role in shaping the site's character. Wesley College, located on an elevated ridgeline, stands as a cultural landmark within the landscape, especially its historic chapel. Conversely, the presence of large-scale infrastructure—such as the 220kV high-voltage transmission corridor and the NIMT railway line—creates a more utilitarian and fragmented visual character in certain parts of the site.

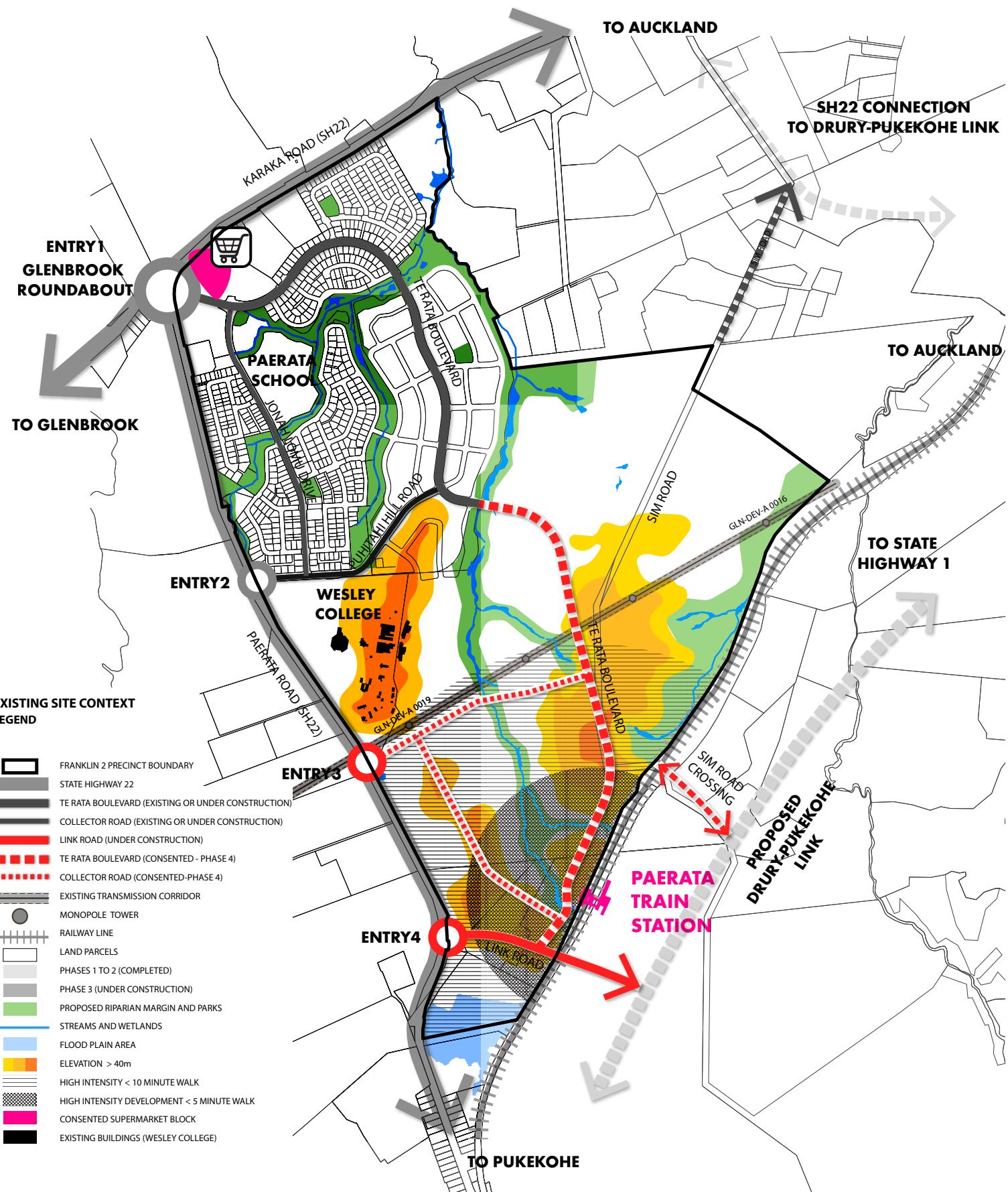


Figure 3: Site Context - Existing features and consented roading

## 5.0 TOPOGRAPHICAL AND LANDSCAPE CONSTRAINTS

5.1 The Precinct encounters several key landscape and infrastructure constraints that have notably shaped the structure plan. These limitations necessitated careful coordination and urban design strategies to deliver functional, resilient, and context-aware development. The primary limitations include:

- **High-voltage transmission corridor:**

The site is crossed by a 220kV transmission line supported by four lattice pylons (refer to Figure 3). These structures are prominent and serve as both spatial and visual barriers, disrupting internal connectivity, decreasing urban cohesion, and limiting land use options beneath and around the corridor. The original masterplan for the Precinct (2014) recognised that careful planning of roads, open spaces, and land use would be necessary to reduce impacts on amenity, walkability, and permeability.

- **Incised stream corridors:**

Multiple stream tributaries cross the site, restricting developable areas and requiring riparian setbacks and ecological buffers. Nonetheless, as demonstrated in the first phases of subdivision and development, these corridors offer opportunities for integrated stormwater management and environmental enhancement within an integrated open space network.

- **Undulating topography:**

The natural variation in landform across the site requires a contour-sensitive approach to street and lot layout. Minimising cut-and-fill earthworks supports more efficient infrastructure delivery and creates a built form that is better integrated with the landscape.

- **Floodplain areas:**

Parts of the southern site are located within a floodplain and are not suitable for standard residential development. These zones require integrated stormwater management solutions and are better suited for lower-risk land uses, such as open space for stormwater runoff, ecological restoration, or recreational purposes.

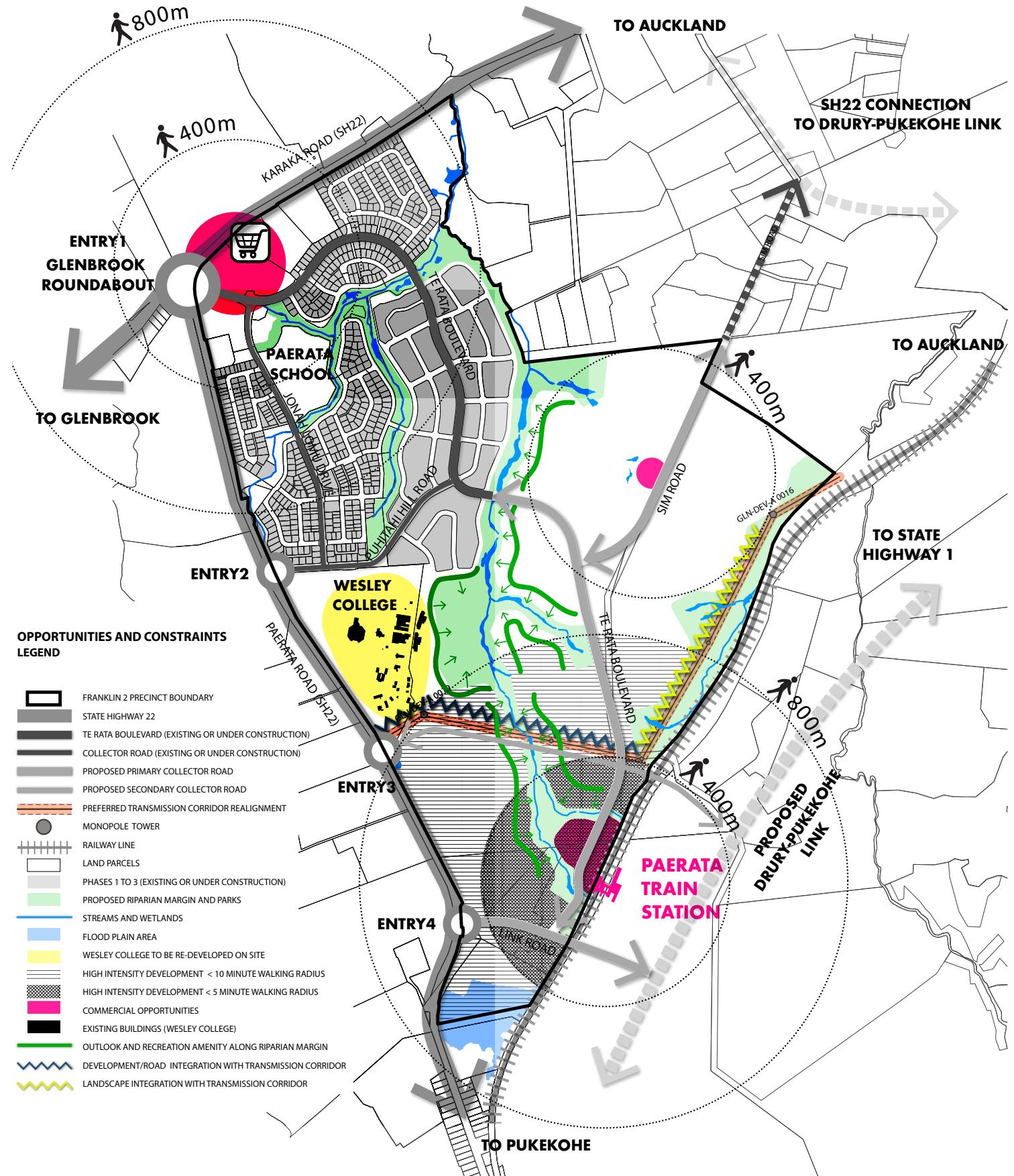


Figure 4: Opportunities and Constraints

# 6.0 MASTERPLAN DESIGN RESPONSE

6.1 The original structure plan, zoning layout and precinct plan were directly shaped by the topography and landscape context of the Precinct. This landscape-led approach has been carried through into the revised masterplan. The following subsections outline the key design responses that continue to reflect and respond to the site's natural and physical characteristics.

## GREEN NETWORK AND EFFECTS ON LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

6.2 The natural character of the Precinct is mainly defined by its network of streams, riparian vegetation, and small wetland areas. Although these features have been considerably altered by historic agricultural activities—with most streams lacking native vegetation and showing only low to moderate ecological value—the revised masterplan continues to aim to preserve and improve these natural elements through a coordinated approach to stormwater and open space planning. Key measures include riparian restoration, wetland enhancement, and the reintroduction of native vegetation to boost biodiversity and maintain the natural character of the site, even within an urban environment.

6.3 Approximately 35–40 hectares of riparian corridors have been identified for enhancement and are marked as “Riparian Margin” on Precinct Plan 1. In several locations, neighbourhood parks and central park extend from these corridors, forming a continuous ecological and recreational spine that links key areas of the precinct, including Paerātā Station.

6.4 In most cases, the riparian margins extend considerably beyond the minimum 10-metre buffer required by planning provisions. These broader green corridors provide a high-quality landscape setting that supports ecological functions, stormwater management, visual amenity, and passive recreation.

6.5 Pedestrian walkways and shared cycleways run along both sides of the riparian corridors, encouraging active travel and supporting a healthy, connected lifestyle. Adjacent parcels have been purposefully positioned to face these corridors, ensuring strong passive surveillance and improving safety and amenity. The road and block layout, as depicted in Precinct Plan 1, has been developed with enough detail to confirm the placement of key collector roads and to maintain a coherent urban structure with well-defined fronts and backs to development blocks.

6.6 Towards the eastern boundary of the site, a large area is identified as a Riparian Margin in Precinct Plan 1. The green space not only protects the ecological values of the existing stream corridor but also addresses the steep topography, which falls sharply towards the railway line, creating a visual buffer from it. Because of the slope, this land is unsuitable for urban development without significant earthworks and has therefore been included in the wider green network.

## ROADING AND LOT LAYOUT

6.7 The masterplan adopts a road and block layout that is responsive to the site's topography. Primary road patterns align with the natural contours of the land, especially along ridgelines and valleys, to reduce major earthworks and preserve natural landform features. This approach significantly cuts the amount of earthworks needed and minimises both visual and physical disruption to the existing landform. In steeper areas, particularly around the proposed Paerātā train station, the indicative masterplan shows deeper blocks which enables management of level changes through techniques such as battering, split-level dwellings, and the use of rear-access lanes or parking courts. For instance, in medium-density areas where terrace housing or apartments are proposed, and where gradients are too steep to support front-access garages, vehicle access can be provided from the rear via a shared lane or parking court. This enables split-level housing that works in harmony with the land's slope, reduces the need for excessive retaining walls, and maintains a consistent streetscape. Local streets are tiered in the master plan as a response to topography, further minimising the use of visually intrusive retaining structures while encouraging built form to step with the land. This results in more human-scaled streetscapes and a stronger connection between the built and natural environment.

6.8 The high-voltage transmission corridor has long been a design constraint within the Precinct. Previous design iterations explored several options, including maintaining the pylons in their existing location or relocating them underground. The consented Phase 4 Framework Plan, for example, showed the corridor being undergrounded. Recent discussions between GDL and Transpower have determined that undergrounding the corridor is unfeasible. Instead, an agreement has been reached to realign the corridor further south, crossing the Precinct over a shorter span. This adjustment creates the opportunity for the corridor to be co-located with the proposed east–west collector road at the third egress from SH22, at the southern boundary of the Wesley College site. The alignment of the transmission corridor along a key movement spine reduces fragmentation, allows dual use of the corridor for access and infrastructure, preserves the required maintenance clearances, and minimises the impact on developable land.

6.9 Finally, aligning roads with ridgelines and slopes not only cuts construction costs and reduces environmental impact but also improves the clarity and character of the neighbourhood. Block depths and lot types have been carefully considered and varies in steeper areas to manage changes in level using stepped building forms, battering, and rear-lot access solutions where suitable.

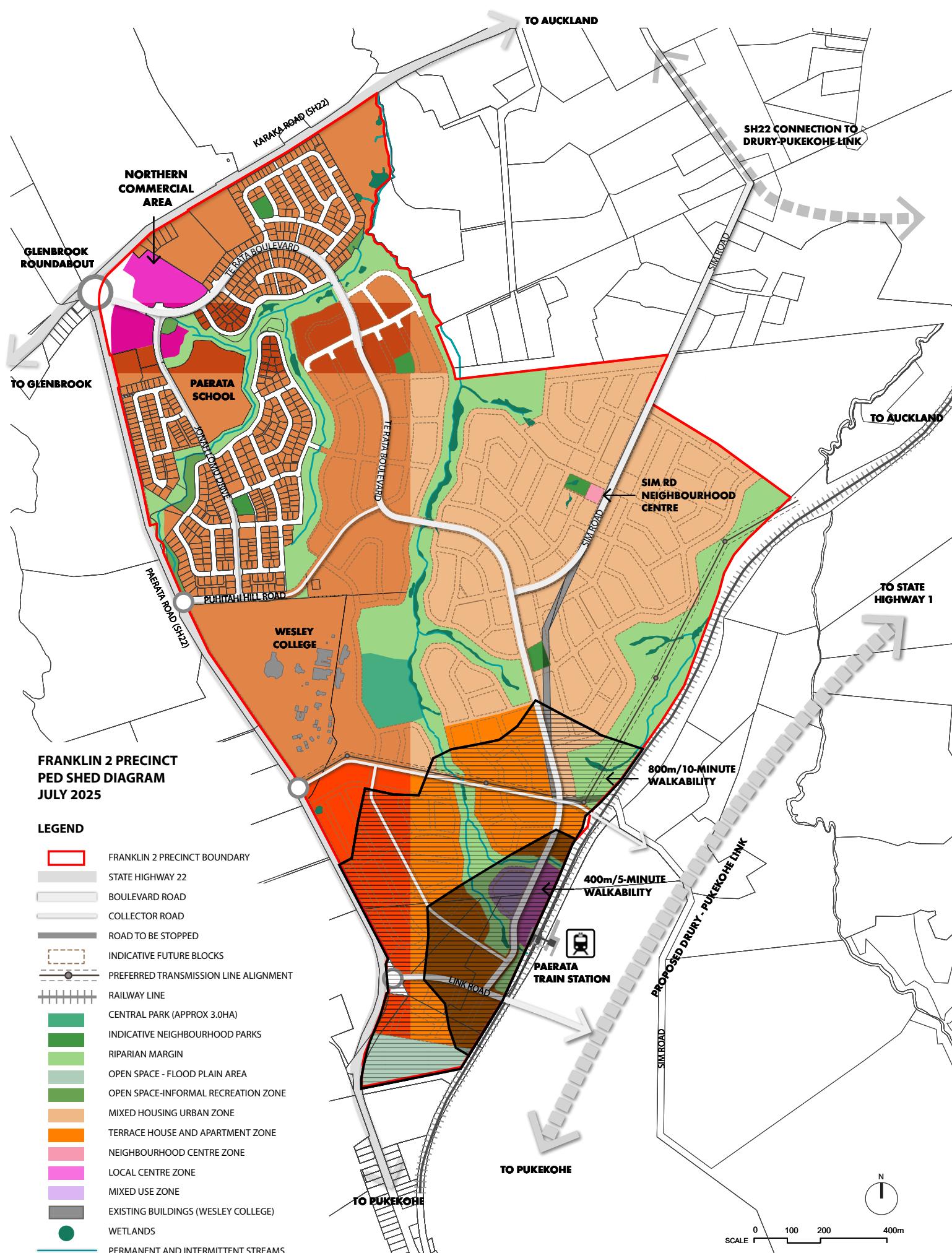


Figure 5: 2025 Masterplan with ped-shed overlay

## ZONING DISTRIBUTION

6.10 The distribution of zoning in the Precinct has been directed by walkability to the key public transport facilities at the Paerātā train station and proximity to future commercial amenities. The Terrace Housing and Apartment Buildings (THAB) zone and a small area of Mixed-Use zoning are concentrated within the immediate walkable catchment of the train station and proposed local centre, supporting higher-density, transit-oriented development.

6.11 While a portion of land to the east of the precinct also falls within the walkable catchment, it has not been zoned THAB due to a combination of physical and environmental constraints. The topography in this area is steep, falling sharply towards the railway line, and is dissected by an incised gully stream, making intensive development challenging and potentially unfeasible without significant earthworks and ecological disruption. These constraints reduce development efficiency and conflict with the principles of contour-responsive, landscape-integrated planning. Te Rata Boulevard has therefore been used as the logical boundary to transition from THAB zoning to Mixed Housing Urban. This road functions as a strong boundary within the masterplan, providing clear physical separation from the constrained eastern land while maintaining connectivity and legibility within the neighbourhood, helping avoid spot zoning, and allowing the MU-zoned land east of the road to respond more appropriately to the terrain and ecological context. For these reasons, although technically within walking distance of the train station, the eastern land has not been identified for THAB.

6.12 The remaining part of the site is zoned as Mixed Housing Urban, which permits a variety of residential types, including standalone homes, duplexes, and terrace houses. While this zone supports medium-density development, it does not exclude the construction of larger, standalone residences. The illustrative masterplan demonstrates this flexibility by placing lower-density housing along the outer edges of the precinct, creating a gentler transition to the nearby rural zone.

6.13 A small area at the southern end of the site is located within a floodplain, and the master plan has been revised to respond appropriately to this stormwater-sensitive zone. Development blocks and roads have been shifted northward, into areas that will be engineered and confirmed as suitable for urban development. The floodplain is relatively flat, covering approximately 2.7 hectares, and is not currently planned for future development. Instead, it offers an opportunity for use as public open space if Auckland Council Parks is interested in acquiring the land. Alternatively, the area could support low-risk land uses compatible with occasional inundation, such as stormwater wetlands, ecological reserves, passive recreation areas, or community gardens.

## PROPOSED ZONING PLAN (2025)

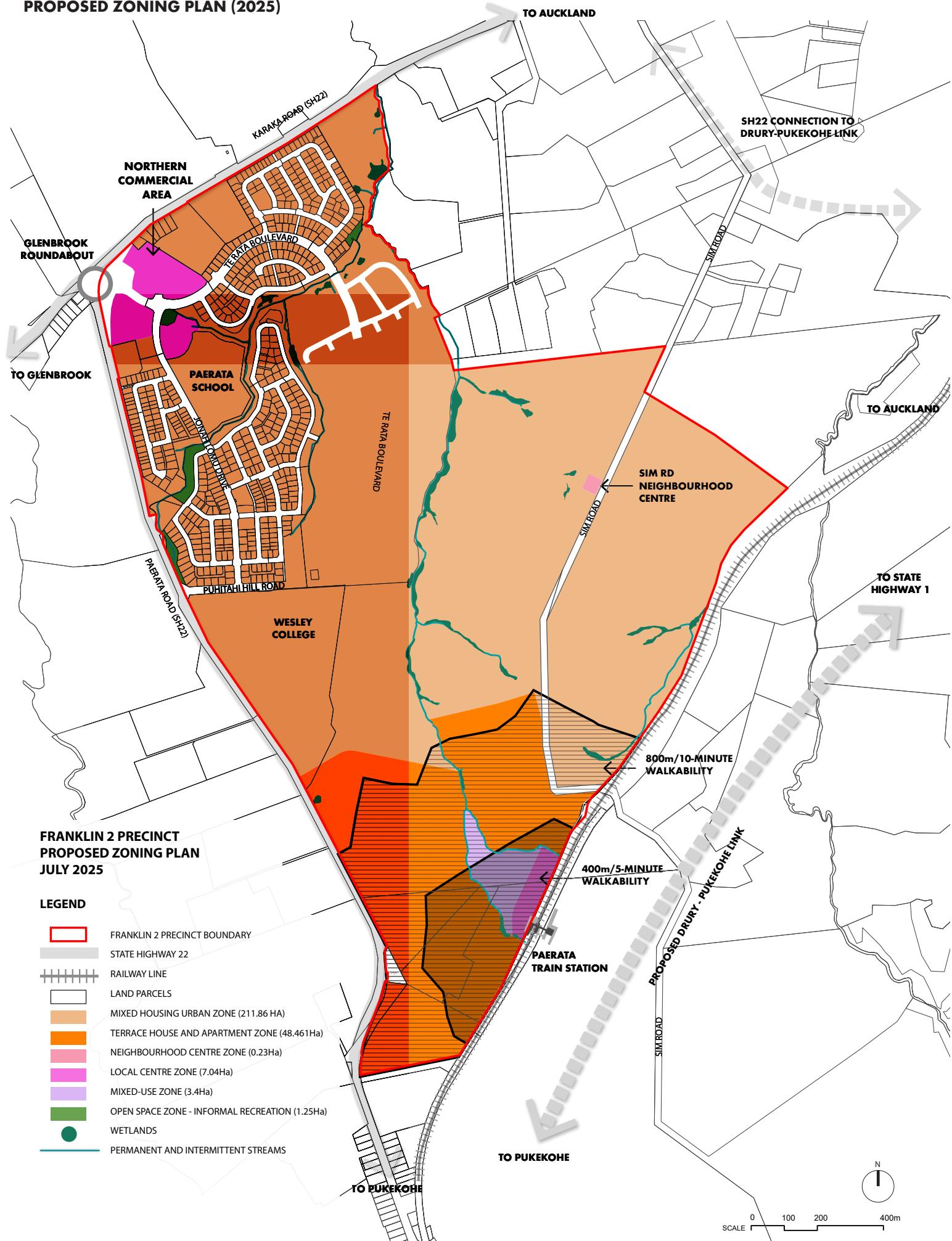


Figure 6: 2025 Zoning Plan with ped-shed overlay

## 7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The proposed development of the Precinct continues to align well with its landscape context. While the Precinct is transitioning from a rural, agricultural setting into an urban environment, with the exception of the notable trees, it lacks any distinctive or other protected landscape features. The Precinct continues to be masterplanned with a response that considers its natural topography. Key design principles focus on protecting and enhancing ecological corridors, integrating the high-voltage transmission line, and responding to natural landforms through roading and block design.
- 7.2 These landscape conditions continue to directly influence the zoning distribution and urban structure, maintaining a balance between development potential and environmental sensitivity. The resulting structure plan is landscape-aware, environmentally resilient, and aligned with both the Auckland Unitary Plan and the National Policy Statement on Urban Development (NPS-UD).
- 7.3 In the northern part of the site, where development is occurring, the quality of the urban environment shows the success of this approach. Wide, well-landscaped riparian reserves have been created, establishing a strong precedent for the rest of the Precinct. These reserves will remain part of a connected green network across the site, restoring ecological corridors, widening riparian margins, and providing both visual and recreational benefits.
- 7.4 The road and block network follows the natural topography wherever possible, reducing the need for significant earthworks and minimising the frequency and scale of retaining walls. In steeper areas, the masterplan provides for deeper blocks that can accommodate slope through battering between lots or stepped housing typologies, with rear-lot vehicle access to preserve active frontages and a coherent streetscape.
- 7.5 A key structural element in the masterplan is the relocation of the high-voltage transmission corridor, which has guided the alignment of the east-west collector road at the third entry off Paerātā Road (SH22). By co-locating the road reserve with the transmission corridor, the design maximises the use of constrained land, minimises the visual impact of overhead lines, and consolidates the physical barriers of the collector road and the transmission corridor.
- 7.6 Overall, the Precinct will provide much-needed housing while improving the ecological and visual appearance of the area. Through riparian restoration, planting, and a well-connected open space network, the development will make a positive contribution to the character and identity of this developing urban environment.