

# WAIRAKA PRECINCT

## Plan Change Request to Auckland Unitary Plan

(Including a request to change the precinct name to Te Auaunga)

### Heritage Impact Assessment

December 2022



83 Victoria Road, P.O. Box 32-318  
Devonport, Auckland, New Zealand  
admin@dpaarchitects.co.nz  
Ph. (09) 445 8544

## **1 Introduction**

This report concerns an area of land in the north west corner of a larger site which was originally part of the Oakley Hospital complex. After the hospital closed, the site was purchased by the Unitec Institute of Technology and the Hospital was incorporated into the campus. The Institute subsequently vacated the Former Oakley Hospital Building and consolidated its campus on the southern part of the site. The land previously occupied by the hospital and then Unitec became known as the Wairaka Precinct after the promulgation of Auckland's Unitary Plan (notified in 2014) (the precinct).

The precinct is now administered by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and HUD is supporting three Rōpū with development rights to the site who are in the process of developing a masterplan for its redevelopment. HUD has now instigated a Private Plan Change lodged in December 2022 to enable the redevelopment of the precinct.

The intention is for the precinct to provide for a diverse urban community which will include extensive redevelopment for residential activities, ongoing development of the education facility, as well as enabling the provision of community, recreational and social activities. Some commercial uses will also be catered for.

Across the precinct a range of building heights will be provided for that correspond to the topography of the land and recognise the sensitivity of neighbouring sites. Greater heights will be enabled in areas where potential adverse effects can be managed. In the northwest corner of the site, buildings of additional height are envisaged to act as landmarks for the northern part of the development and to support the urban legibility of the precinct in the wider landscape.

Parts of the precinct are currently zoned Special Purpose – Tertiary Education and Special Purpose – Healthcare Facility and Hospital and the plan change seeks to have this land rezoned Business: Mixed Use and Residential: Mixed Housing Urban.

The Plan Change also seeks to rename the Wairaka Precinct as the Te Auaunga Precinct. The Te Auaunga Precinct extends from the north western motorway in the north through to Woodward Road in the south and from Te Auaunga Waterway in the west through to Carrington Road in the east.

## **2 Background**

The Former Oakley Hospital Building located at 1 Carrington Road, Mount Albert was constructed as a psychiatric hospital and continued in the role until 1992 when the site was purchased by Unitec Institute of Technology. It was then used to accommodate the School of Architecture and Design and other faculties. Unitec eventually vacated the building and consolidated its campus on the southern part of the site.

The Former Oakley Hospital Building is scheduled in the Auckland Unitary Plan (Operative in Part) as a Category A Historic Heritage Place. Part of the building is identified as a primary feature, while all buildings and structures constructed after 1905 are excluded. The scheduled item includes an Extent of Place which encompasses the whole of the main building and extends out to the boundary of the precinct with Great North Road in the north and Carrington Road in the east.



Former Oakley Hospital Main Building and Extent of Place in the Auckland Unitary Plan

The Former Oakley Hospital Building is also listed as a Category 1 historic place by Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga. As there was human activity on the site prior to the year 1900, it will also be designated as an archaeological site under the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014.

### **3 Purpose of Report**

The area of land in the northwest corner of the site is immediately adjacent to the Extent of Place associated with the Former Oakley Hospital building. Under the proposed Plan Change specific provision for taller buildings in this location is sought. The buildings will be in relatively close proximity to the western end of the scheduled building but will not intrude into the Extent of Place.

The purpose of the report is to assess the impact of the proposed Plan Change on the heritage values of the Former Oakley Hospital Main Building and the Extent of Place and to outline aspects of the proposal that are considered to mitigate potential negative impacts on the heritage values of those places.

The report was commissioned by John Duthie, Director of Tattico Limited on behalf of HUD and was written by Dave Pearson, principal of DPA Architects.

### **4 Outline of Plan Change**

As noted, the area that is the subject of this report is located in the north west corner of the precinct and immediately to the west of the Former Oakley Hospital Building. Within this area, it is proposed to enable buildings of a greater height than would

otherwise be permitted in the underlying zone as a way of contributing to Auckland Council's proposals for population intensification to add diversity to the housing typologies offered on the site. A cluster of buildings may also provide a recognisable landmark which would help to define the northern part of the site.

As the area is generally away from other proposed residential areas, well separated from neighbouring residential suburbs, affords views over the upper Waitemata Harbour / Waitakere Ranges and back to Central Auckland and has good sun orientation, is the applicant's planning, landscape and urban design experts consider that this part of the precinct is eminently suitable for high rise development. This area is labelled as Height Area 1 on 1334.10.3 Te Auaunga: Precinct Plan 3 – Te Auaunga Additional Height.

In areas where taller buildings are proposed, additional controls will be introduced around wind, separation of buildings and maximum dimensions of floor plates. Detailed design criteria will be provided to ensure all buildings and taller buildings, in particular, achieve a high quality of design and functionality. In particular, in Height Area 1, the Plan Change provides for buildings of up to 35 metres in height with one building enabled up to 72 metres, one building to 54 metres and one building to 43.5 metres. The diagonal floor plate dimensions of the taller buildings are limited to ensure they have a slender form. Maximum tower plan dimensions are indicated in Figure 1334.6.11.2. A 14 metre building to building setback is also proposed.

Detailed assessment criteria are proposed to ensure the buildings attain a design standard of high quality. These are found in section 1334.8 Assessment – Restricted Discretionary Activities.

Also Included in the policies of the Te Auaunga Precinct is Policy 1334.3 (4)(i) which requires the identification and protection of significant landscape features, the adaptation of the scheduled historic buildings, identified trees and integrated open space network. Policy 1334.3 (11) also encourages the retention and adaptation of the heritage and character buildings.

The existing Wairaka Precinct provisions protect 47 trees. No change is proposed to the protected trees as part of this proposed plan change. The protected trees are shown on diagram 1334.10.2 Te Auaunga Precinct Plan 2 – Protected Trees. Trees that are protected on the site include a number of mature pōhutukawa and other native and exotic trees along the north western boundary of Height Area 1.

## **5 Impact of Plan Change on Heritage**

The proposed Plan Change will enable buildings of additional height to be constructed in relatively close proximity to the scheduled Former Oakley Hospital Building.

Although the proposed buildings will be outside the Extent of Place, the enabled development will potentially impact the heritage values of the former hospital. In particular, the proposed buildings will change the setting associated with the Former Oakley Hospital Building in that they will be located relatively close to its north west corner and will be visible above the Former Oakley Hospital Building when viewed from the north east. Any new buildings within Height Area 1 should be positioned and orientated having regard to their impact on the heritage values of the Former Oakley Hospital Building.

## 6 Mitigating Factors

The proposal endeavours to use the land of the Former Oakley Hospital site in the most efficient way by locating buildings of additional height in an area in the north west that will result in the least impact on the heritage values to the scheduled building.

The principal facade of the Former Oakley Hospital Building faces northeast and was built in two stages between 1864 and 1881. Historically, this view was also the most prominent and there was a vehicle entry located at what is now the junction of Carrington Road and the Great North Road. A driveway from the gate led to a turning circle in front of the main entrance. This traditional entry was severed with the construction of the North-western Motorway and the vehicular entrance to the site was relocated to the rear of the building on Carrington Road.



Oakley Hospital 1890s.

A distant view of the Former Oakley Hospital Building can still be had from the Point Chevalier shops and the building is also visible from Carrington Road. These views of the building and the landscaped area in front of the building will not be affected by the Plan Change.

The rear of the Former Oakley Hospital Building will also be visible from the new backbone road that will be formed leading from Carrington Road. The road carriageway will become the future south west edge of the building before turning through a right angle to extend further into the precinct. Consent has been granted to remove part of the central and eastern wing to facilitate this new road alignment.

As noted, the proposed Plan Change will potentially result in the construction of three new high rise buildings in proximity to the Former Oakley Hospital Building. The taller buildings when viewed from the northwest will act as a landmark and a symbol of a new urban environment. Viewed from the northwest, a group of protected trees along the boundary currently screens the Former Oakley Hospital Building from view. Under the proposed Plan Change, due to the tree protection rule, there will be effectively a 10 metre boundary setback within which the new buildings will not be able to encroach to ensure the trees remain.

The new buildings will therefore not change the current situation where the trees prevent a view of the Former Oakley Hospital Building from this aspect. The trees will, however, have the effect of reducing the bulk of the new buildings from this viewpoint.

As noted, the Plan Change will enable the construction of a group of new high-rise buildings in close proximity to a corner of the Former Oakley Hospital Building. By way of comparison, the Pacifica Hotel in Customs Street East, Auckland Central rises to a height of 178 metres above street level. Across the road at a distance of some 20 metres is a group of significantly lower four and five storey heritage buildings within the Britomart Precinct. The two building typologies co-exist harmoniously as part of the cityscape and reflect the typical evolution of a city.

As described above, the policies of the Te Auaunga Precinct encourage the retention and adaptation of the scheduled heritage building, however very relevantly the Former Oakley Hospital Building will require costly seismic upgrades to meet the relevant building code requirements, as well as other significant works to adapt the building to a viable future use. It is hoped that construction of intensive residential development on the precinct will provide financial support to help achieve these policies.

## **7 Conclusion**

The site of the Former Oakley Hospital in Point Chevalier was purchased by the Unitec Institute of Technology after the hospital closed. The building was then subsequently occupied and then vacated by Unitec and became known as the Wairaka Precinct with the adoption of the Auckland Unitary Plan.

Three Rōpū are in the process of preparing a master plan for the site supported by HUD which has instigated a Private Plan Change to enable the precinct to be developed. The Plan Change also seeks to rename the precinct as the Te Auaunga Precinct. The Precinct includes policies that encourage the retention and adaptation of heritage buildings on the site including the Former Oakley Hospital.

Under the Plan Change, an area of land in the north-western corner of the precinct adjacent to the Extent of Place associated with the Former Oakley Hospital Building and close to the building itself will be set aside as Height Area 1 within which buildings will be able to be constructed to a greater height than would otherwise be permitted in the underlying zone. The site is generally considered to be suitable for the location of taller buildings which will act as a landmark to the north of the site and symbolise the changing character of the site to an urban environment.

Due to the close proximity of Height Area 1 to the Former Oakley Hospital, any new buildings, and particularly those of additional height, will have an impact on the heritage values of the Former Oakley Hospital. However, a juxtaposition of heritage buildings and taller new buildings in close proximity is a characteristic of modern cities and one that can be seen in Auckland CBD. Any new buildings should still be sited having regard to their impact on the Former Oakley Hospital.

As noted, the policies of the Te Auaunga Precinct encourage the retention and adaptation of heritage buildings in the precinct. Any adaptation of the Former Oakley

Hospital building will require substantial funding and the hope is that construction of the new buildings and development of the Precinct will facilitate financial contributions to support the retention of the heritage building.

Dave Pearson B Arch ANZIA  
Principal DPA Architects

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