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FROM: Stephen Brown (Brown NZ Ltd)

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48 ESMONDE RD PLAN CHANGE: RESPONSE TO CLAUSE 23 REQUEST

This report addresses a request from Auckland Council for further information in relation to the landscape and amenity effects of the proposed Plan Change for 48 Esmonde Road, Takapuna.

Matters Requested By Council – Landscape & Visual

The Clause 23 information request raises the following issues in relation to the AEE report addressing landscape and amenity effects:

L11 In order to ensure the dominance of the existing coastal vegetation, it is recommended that restrictions on building colours be included in the precinct provisions, such as the use of dark, neutral colours with an LRV level of less than 30%.

L12 NZILA have recently updated their landscape assessment guidelines (Te Tangi a te Manu: Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines). Please confirm whether the 'severe' rating within the landscape and visual assessment is in line with the 'very high' recommended within the guidelines.

P5. Additional Viewpoint(s)

Please provide an additional viewpoint(s) and associated analysis and comments of the proposal from the Northern motorway travelling in a southerly direction, between the Northcote Road and Esmonde Road on/off-ramps - in the vicinity of the Marae / land zoned Special Purpose – Māori Purpose Zone, where the proposal site is identifiable; and in particular an assessment of the impacts on views to Rangitoto from such a viewpoint and a result of current zoning and the proposed precinct.

Response To Clause 23 Matters Raised:

Colour Restrictions

Colour restrictions are normally applied where integration is sought between the natural environment (including coastal sites) and development within it. In this instance, the subject site has a THAB zoning and adjoining areas are zoned for MHU, MHS and Business-Mixed Use development, none of which are subject to colour or materiality controls. Furthermore, It could well be desirable for the profile, materials and colouring of development to get lighter – as opposed to darker and heavier – as development climbs towards the tower ‘cap’ at 16 storeys. This could help to make the overall development appear more permeable and lightweight than would be the case with development subject to a more limited range of darker colours.

Consequently, it is my opinion that development under the Plan Change provisions should be assessed as a whole, without being subject to the colour restrictions recommended by Auckland Council. In this regard, I consider that the proposed **Assessment Criteria I553.8.2 (1)(b)(i), (ii) and (iii)** [building design and external appearance] provide adequate safeguards in relation to the overall design and visual effects of future development at 48 Esmonde Road.

The Te Tangi a te Manu Effects Ratings Scale

The draft *Te Tangi A Te Manu* (Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines) recommends use of a rating scale that

- is symmetrical around ‘moderate’.
- has even gradations; and
- uses neutral terms so does not confuse rating and qualitative aspects.

An indicative 7-point scale is then shown on p.64:

very low	low	low-mod	moderate	mod-high	high	very high
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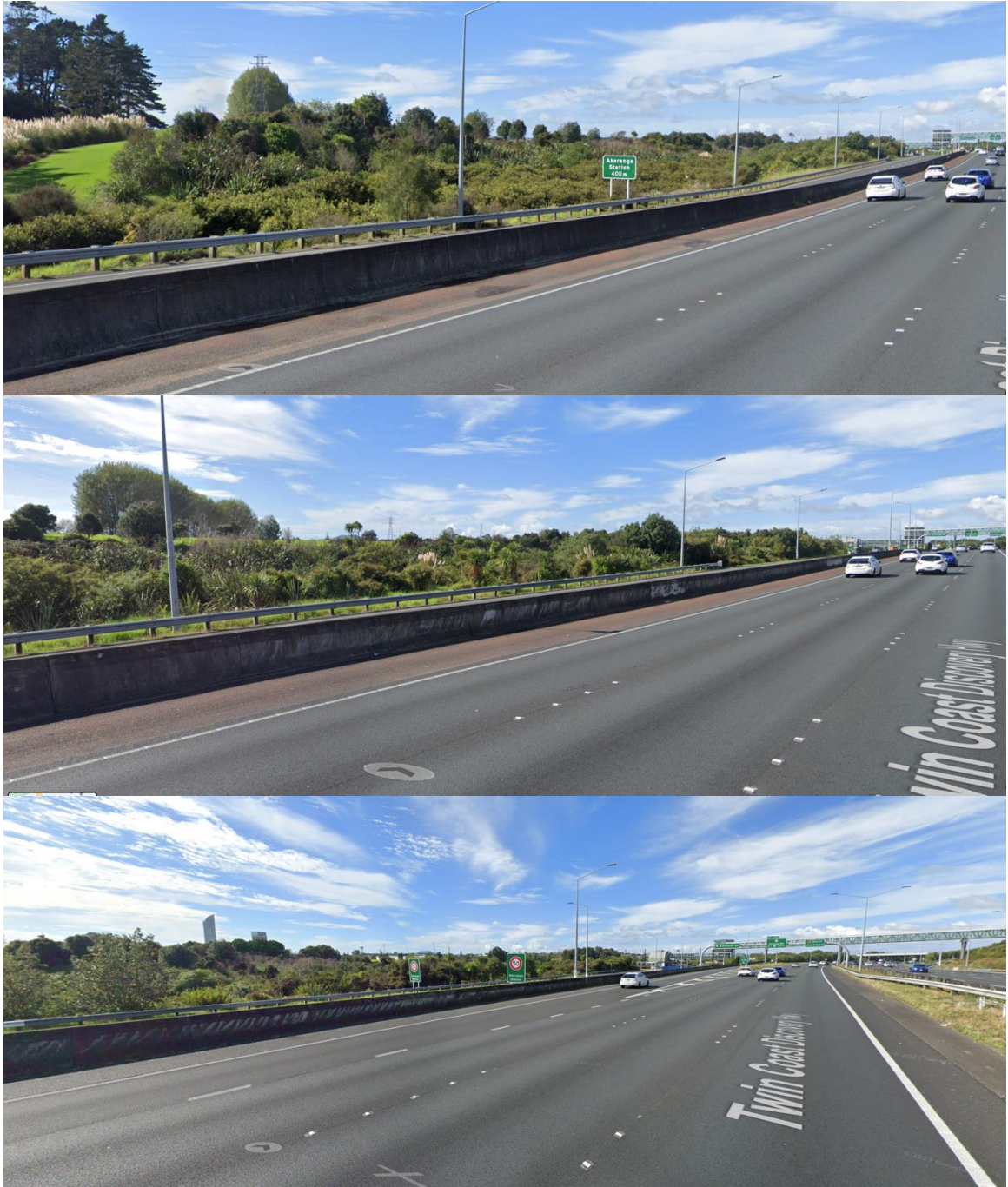
In my opinion, the rating scale employed in the Brown NZ Limited assessment of the Plan Change is aligned with this scale. The following comparison highlights this:

<u>Te Tangi a te Manu Scale:</u>	<u>Plan Change AEE Scale:</u>
Very Low	Very Low
Low	Low
Low-Moderate	Low-Moderate
Moderate	Moderate
Moderate-High	Moderate-High
High	High
Very High	Severe

As indicated in Council’s request for further information, the term ‘severe’ in the AEE rating scale is taken to equate with the ‘very high’ rating in the *Te Tangi A Te Manu* scale.

Additional Viewpoint

In order to better understand what has been asked for, the following images extracted from Google Maps show the progression down the Northern Motorway from just past Smiths Bush to the Esmonde Road off-ramp, then the intersection with Esmonde Road.





A number of matters are highlighted by these images:

- In early views from near Smith Bush and the Northern Busway descending from Northcote Road, views towards Esmonde Road are restricted by the slopes descending from Puriri Park Retirement Village, together with the revegetation around Hillcrest Stream. Together with the slopes descending towards Hillcrest Stream on the opposite side of the motorway, this results in views being largely channelled along the motorway concourse – towards the Esmonde Road interchange. The proposed development at 48 Esmonde Road might well be visible above the slopes and bush to the left of SH1, but it would remain relatively small scale and very much secondary to the motorway corridor and its margins – much like The Sentinel Tower, which emerges further down the motorway.
- Dropping down towards Hillcrest Stream as it passes under the motorway, the screening afforded by native vegetation near both the stream and Northern Busway is significant. It rises up to screen out most of the reserve beyond the busway and the commercial / Mixed Use development running down the elevated spine of Barrys Point Road. Again, the proposed complex at 48 Esmonde Road would be visible, but it would be viewed in relative isolation – like the Spencer on Byron and The Sentinel further to the left. The motorway’s channelised structure and traffic would remain strongly contained by the emerging revegetation, while glimpses of the proposed apartment complex – especially its tower – would be devoid of any real context or meaning: it wouldn’t impact on Shoal Bay or any other meaningful features. In this regard, the very top of Rangitoto used to be visible above the Lake Road ridge, but it too is now increasingly lost because of the intervening vegetation. Consequently, the proposed complex would have very little, if any, effect in relation to what remains visible of Rangitoto and wouldn’t interfere with any other landmarks or landscapes. At most, it would ‘compete’ with the motorway corridor. Over time, the vegetation next to the motorway and Northern Busway can be expected to increase the level of screening and containment just described, further limiting motorists’ access to ‘wayfinding’ elements like The Sentinel and even the proposed development.
- Approaching then entering the Esmonde Road off-ramp, the Northern Busway Terminal and its overpasses become quite dominant structures. They are close at hand, loom large, and have a decidedly structural, functional character. This would remain the case, irrespective of the presence of the proposed development at 48 Esmonde Road, which would be glimpsed past the terminal and casuarinas lining the Golf Warehouse Driving Range. Again, however, that development would seem rather distant and separate from the more immediate motorway environment – much like The Sentinel and Spencer on Byron. It wouldn’t impact on any notable features or landscapes (e.g. Shoal Bay).
- In the final approach to the Esmonde Road interchange views are again strongly channelised – towards the lights and interchange ahead, not more peripheral elements / features beyond both the vegetation directly flanking the off-ramp and the casuarinas closer to Barrys Point Road.

Evaluating this sequence as a whole, it is clear that the proposed complex would be visible at times as motorists progress from the Milford interchange towards that at Esmonde Road. Yet, as the new NZILA document – *Te Tangi A Te Manu / NZ Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines* – makes clear, the visual presence of a structure or element alone does not equate to landscape and / or amenity effects. Such effects only arise when specific landscape and amenity characteristics or values are impacted.

In this case, I don't believe that seeing the proposed complex would impact on any 'landscape' characteristics or values that I have been able to identify. At worst, it would help other, existing towers – like The Sentinel – to signal the approach to Takapuna as a Metropolitan Centre. In my view, this would not be an adverse effect.

Clearly, the complex at 48 Esmonde Road would become more readily visible as motorists turn from the off-ramp onto Esmonde Road. At that point, the complex would also be more strongly associated with the likes of Shoal Bay and even the coastal margins on the near side of Lake Road. However, the anticipated effects in relation to such views are already addressed via **Viewpoints 8**, then **7** – progressing from the motorway interchange to the Barrys Point Road interchange – in my August 2021 (AEE) Report. Consequently, I don't believe that the landscape effects associated with both viewpoints, and travel, past them needs to be addressed again.

Overall, it is my opinion that it is not necessary to undertake another detailed assessment from any viewpoints within the viewpoint corridor described above. In a more pragmatic vein, it would also be virtually impossible to take the GPS registered photos needed to produce accurate photo simulations. In the past, the AMA and Waka Kotahi has accompanied landscape architects onto the motorway system to take GPS located photos from the motorway system, but it is my understanding that such support and access are no longer available.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S. Brown', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Stephen Brown

Director, Brown NZ Ltd

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Registered NZILA Landscape Architect