Appendix J

Landscape and Visual Assessment
ATTACHMENTS

NOTICE OF REQUIREMENT
PROPOSED WATER TREATMENT PLANT WHAU VALLEY
Prepared for Whangarei District Council

1177_Attachments_20160219
ATTACHMENT ONE
Photo point location plan
ATTACHMENT TWO
Numbering of surrounding properties
Photograph 1
The view from Whau Valley Road approximately 80m to the east of the one lane bridge.
The site is just beyond the roadside orange safety cone seen in the middle distance.

Photograph 2
Taken from just to the west of the one lane bridge.
Photograph 3
A panorama across the site from the adjacent roadside.
Photograph 4
Looking east back up Whau Valley Road from near the end of the straight that runs past the site.

Photograph 5
The view from Whau Valley Road approximately 465m to the west of the one lane bridge. The site is obscured by houses in the midground and lies beyond the poplar avenue seen immediately behind those homes.
ATTACHMENT THREE

Site photographs

Photograph 6
See caption below.

Photograph 7
A pair of images comprising a 360 degree panorama from with midst of the site, in the area where the treatment plant buildings are
ATTACHMENT THREE
Site photographs

Photograph 8
Looking down to the site from part way along the private access to the north of the site.

Photograph 9
View south from further west along the private access to the north of the site adjacent to the drive in 262A.
ATTACHMENT FOUR

KEY NOTES

1. Existing semi-mature totara to be conserved.
2. Shoulders of new access paved in permeable, grassed surfacing to “narrow” the entrance.
3. New plantings of totara as a primary theme to echo those at entrance and in surrounding areas.
5. Dense, evergreen belt alongside drive.
6. Mixed shrub planting with mature height of 1m.
7. Mixed indigenous shrub planting with mature height of 5-8m.
8. Possible adjustment of tall trees in this area to ensure telemetry signal.
9. Grove predominantly composed of totara form visual barrier to adjacent structures.
10. Belt of dense native planting with mature height of 6m+.

INDICATIVE LANDSCAPE CONCEPT
NOTICE OF REQUIREMENT
WATER TREATMENT PLANT WHAU VALLEY

Prepared for WDC
Ref: 1177_INDLC_20151206
WHAU VALLEY WATER TREATMENT PLANT

WHAU VALLEY ROAD WHANGAREI

ASSESSMENT OF LANDSCAPE, RURAL CHARACTER AND VISUAL EFFECTS
INTRODUCTION

A Notice of Requirement (NoR) is to be given by Whangarei District Council to designate land at 274 Whau Valley Road - legally described as Section 1, SO493018 - for the construction, operation and maintenance of a water treatment plant (WTP). The proposed works include the structures associated with the WTP, a stormwater / water retention pond, a site access road and car parking within the site, a security fence, the relocation of a small open drain, earth bunding, planting, and other ancillary works.

An Assessment of Environmental Effects (AEE) by CH2M Beca Ltd has been prepared to support the NoR, and contains a detailed account of the proposed site development, along with consideration of relevant provisions and drawings that outline the proposed WTP and related works.

A small pedestrian and cyclist bridge set alongside the one lane bridge on nearby Whau Valley Road forms part of the overall proposal.

The following Visual, Rural Character and Landscape Assessment has been prepared by Littoralis Landscape Architecture to inform that wider assessment of effects. Rather than duplicate the detailed descriptions found in that fuller document, this assessment will rely - in part - upon the AEE. A volume of attachments to this report contains a location plan, photographs of the site taken from a range of vantage points and a landscape integration concept for the complex.

SITE CONTEXT

The site is located approximately midway between the start of Whau Valley Road at its junction with Kamo Road and its end at the Whau Valley water reservoir. The junction of Whau Valley and Kamo Roads serves as a good starting point from which to describe the sequence of landscape types that are traversed heading to the west. Figure One, further below, graphically illustrates those characteristics in the form of a low oblique image.

After passing the small shopping centre at that intersection, Whau Valley Road takes follows a gently curving alignment to the east. As it does so, it first passes through an area of generously-scaled, established homes dating back to the late 1950’s and mid 1960’s. After passing the Fairway Drive intersection, where the existing WDC water treatment station resides to the west - paired with an old reservoir on the eastern side of Fairway Drive, a slightly newer and more modest residential area is bisected by the road corridor. As a general theme, this urban zone is well-endowed with mature trees and amenity planting, with homes set within those developed garden frameworks.

About 1km from the Kamo/Whau Valley intersection, the road takes an abrupt turn to the southwest as it nears both the site and the margin of suburban development. A further change occurring at this point is that the road drops down a slight descent as the adjacent hills close in to contain the valley floor that the road runs up the midst of. Simultaneously, the Waiarohia Stream meanders across to come into close proximity with the road corridor, typically accompanied by a well-developed
WHAU VALLEY WATER TREATMENT PLANT, WHANGAREI
ASSESSMENT OF LANDSCAPE, RURAL CHARACTER AND VISUAL EFFECTS

belt of trees (largely totara \textit{[Podocarpus totara]}). A minor tributary, which is described in the ecological assessment report for the NoR which has been prepared by 4site Consulting, crosses under the road at a one-lane bridge immediately to the east of the application site.

The site itself lies at the foot of a small side valley that projects west off of the primary Whau Valley course, terminating in a basin-like form framed by steep, elevated land that contains it to three sides. Those flanks run up to ridges that are around 160-180m ASL.

This surrounding higher ground features an increasing level of indigenous vegetation cover in its most elevated portions, reflecting a pattern that extends from the much more substantial and consistently vegetated expanse of Pukenui Forest / Western Hills that extends south towards Maunu and west in the direction of Kara. This fuller landscape entity serves as a defining, natural frame to the western margin of Whangarei’s central urban area and has been recognised as being an Outstanding Landscape\textsuperscript{1}. That recognition was later translated to acknowledgement as a Notable Landscape by the Whangarei District Plan, as noted by the AEE. It should be emphasised that this elevated value is not assigned to the considerably more developed and compromised terrain of the valley floor that is associated with the application site.

A much more recent landscape assessment\textsuperscript{2} undertaken to inform the Proposed Northland Regional Policy Statement does not identify any of the land immediately to the north of the site as being outstanding, possibly because that area has seen considerable modification since the 1995 assessment just cited.

Development over the past decade or so has seen a number of dwellings constructed along the ridgeline contained within (and beyond) that notable landscape that lies to the north of the application site and which are accessed by a

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure1.png}
\caption{The site highlighted by an orange margin in relation to the Whau Valley Dam, Pukenui Forest and north western margin of Whangarei urban area. (Google Earth 12/2015).}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{1} Whangarei District Landscape Assessment (1995). LA4 Landscape Architects
\textsuperscript{2} Northland Region Landscape Assessment (2014). Littoralis Landscape Architecture and Simon Cocker Landscape Architect
private, un-named shared driveway that leaves Whau Valley Road a little to the east of the site. Some of those houses are seen in the photograph on the cover to this report, with more being evident in the Photographs 5 and 6 of Attachment Three. A number of other homes lie on lower slopes surrounding and overlooking the application site, including an older home that is currently in the same ownership as the proposed WTP site and which sits upon a small natural bench immediately to the west. There are also a number of undeveloped, vacant sites amongst these surrounding buildings.

Back alongside Whau Valley Road, a moderately dense level of settlement is found to either side of the opening to the more open rural space represented by the site. Whilst not quite down to suburban lot sizes, many of these titles are of limited area and bring a relatively high density of housing within close proximity to the road. Several empty sections lie between the existing houses, indicating a likelihood of further dwellings being inserted over time. The Photo Point Location Plan forming Attachment One and a following attachment illustrates this cadastral and spatial arrangement, with the latter bringing the benefit of an overlay of title boundaries. Housing to the east of the site is generally older and more established than most of those encountered heading further up Whau Valley to the west, with much of that western development appearing to have occurred within the past decade.

The retention of groves and belts of established trees coupled with the development of domestic gardens serves to soften the presence of these relatively numerous houses focussed alongside the road corridor. Beyond that roadside belt of residential development there are much bigger titles that remain in open grazed or native forested land use. Periodically those larger allotments extend out to the roadside to form a break in the otherwise consistent placement of smaller lots along the road corridor. These breaks and background areas of much more “undeveloped” land counterbalance the concentration of housing near the road to maintain a moderate sense of rural character throughout the balance of Whau Valley to the west of the site.

Nearing the western end of Whau Valley Road, the experience of built development near the road diminishes. Whau Valley Dam and its backing reservoir of water supply emphatically terminate the formed road corridor. Lying beyond rise the wooded hillsides of the Pukenui Forest catchment that feeds the reservoir. At this point the landscape character transitions from being a moderately populated and developed rural one to a considerably more natural and intact landscape with correspondingly elevated values.

THE SITE

The physical conditions of the 2.33ha site for which the designation is to be sought are well described by the AEE. The portion that is proposed to contain the WTP is a simple, grazed area of land that slopes almost imperceptibly to the north east and largely defined by existing agricultural fences. A narrow road frontage of approximately 50m gently flares and widens moving away from the road, before the site widens further in a dog-leg around the residential title that adjoins to the east. A couple of mature totara (Podocarpus totara) sit upon or near the boundary.
in association with the road frontage to the site. Photograph 3 of Attachment Three provides a view into the site from Whau Valley Road.

The northern part of the site, which is not intended for development, contains a minor watercourse and then slopes quite steeply to the north as the foot of defining elevated land that continues to rise. A few scattered specimens of totara are found on that slope, along with some areas of very damp ground where minor seeps or springs emerge to be emphasised by rank, rush-like vegetation.

A belt of moderately aged poplars (*Populus* sp.) which spread a broad deciduous canopy along the southern margin of the site to define that edge of the land and act as a partial buffer to adjacent houses in the process. Dense planting of shrub and small trees spatially delineates the dog leg boundary of the residential property to the east. That established planting also serves as a very effective screen to almost entirely block. The western edge of the site is currently undefined and sits amidst a continuation of the very gradually sloping, flattened valley floor that continues on for several hundred metres before being constrained by the surrounding hillsides. A combination of Photographs 6 and 7 of Attachment Three convey an impression of the site and surrounding conditions when taken as a 360° panorama from the central portion of the site (as defined by an existing stock water trough).

THE PROPOSAL

A detailed description of the proposal has been provided within the Assessment of Environmental Effects (AEE) prepared by CH2M Beca. A landscape integration concept found as Attachment Four to this report indicates the anticipated placement of structures and access within the site and arrangement of vegetation that is broadly envisaged.

The tallest of the potential built structures is a relatively slender, 9m high water pressure balancing tank shown as being situated tight against the north eastern corner of the primary Amenities Building. That two storied block would be in the order of 7-8m in height and oriented across the site. The balance of the structures, consisting of a range of tanks and smaller buildings, are indicated as being nominally 5m high. The landscape integration concept conveys the intention for all of the structures to be concentrated as a tight cluster in the western portion of the site. When describing the proposal, the AEE notes that the conceptual design of the plant is at a preliminary stage for the purposes of the NoR, so there is likely to be refinement and minor adjustment as more detailed design is progressed. For the purposes of anticipating the general characteristics and effects of the proposed structures, it can be expected that the general parameters described here and the overall footprint shown on the relevant drawings will not be exceeded.

In terms of the characteristics of the built elements of the proposal, it is intended that the wall finishes of the amenity building, tanks and all ancillary structures would have a light reflectance value not exceeding 40%. The roofs of these
elements would be clad in materials or applied finishes whose light reflectance value is not more than 20%. In order to break the perceived mass of the proposed Amenities Building, it is expected that the design detailing of that structure would incorporate strategies such as subdividing cladding surfaces into a series of modest elements, incorporating subtle contrasts in texture and/or colour, employing window openings, canopies and other elements to relieve the extent of unbroken cladding, and employing generous eaves to create shade to the face of the building and to assist in “grounding” the building.

Collectively, these sorts of design measures would serve to bring a human scale to the Amenities Building and enable it to relate to the scale of the domestic architecture found on adjacent land. A number of model snapshots numbered as Figures 2-5 indicate how those types of measures may be expressed.

Whilst the WTP would clearly express itself as a piece of infrastructure and should not attempt to masquerade as a house, the scale and volume of the primary amenities building – which would stand as the core of the complex – is not dramatically different from that found in some of the larger dwellings that exist in the hinterland of the site.

Vehicular access would depart Whau Valley Road for the southern edge of the site frontage in order to skirt - and if at all practicable, conserve – the established totara that lies in the midst of that frontage. The shoulders of that intersection (denoted as “2” on Attachment Four) are proposed to be formed in permeably paving to both minimise impact upon that tree and to maximise the area of the road berm that remains in a grass surface.

After leaving the roadside, the access follows a very deliberate, flattened “s” alignment that provides for adjacent planting to create a blockage to views into the site from the road. A necessary security fence and associated entrance gate/s are indicated as being set well within the site so that they ultimately exist inside a broad belt of planting and are therefore imperceptible from outside the site. It is intended that the fencing would be specified with its mesh and galvanised
standards being finished in black powder coat or paint to minimise any initial visual impact.

A pond to contain stormwater and controlled, off-spec discharges from the WTP is shown as a vaguely triangular element in the eastern sector of the site. It is intended that this would incorporate indigenous wetland planting around its typical water level margins.

The indicative planting strategy is to effectively encapsulate the proposed WTP and its security fence within a broad belt of indigenous vegetation that ultimately precludes any views into the site from Whau Valley Road or immediately adjacent private properties. Some of that planting would be positioned on a low earth bund that is proposed to encircle much of the site. To achieve that screening objective, a range of locally common native species that feature a dense habit, such as mapou and Coprosma sp., would be incorporated. Complementing that screening vegetation would be a scattering of native trees that would achieve a greater scale and provide a further reference to established themes found in Whau Valley. To that end, totara is anticipated to be one of the prevailing selections for future planting on the site.
Elevated vantage points offered by ridgeline properties to the north means that intercepting those downward views would be more reliant upon the greater scale provided by specimen trees, which would develop a scale comparable to the greatest building heights within the proposal in between 10 and 15 years.

A narrow pedestrian and cyclist bridge also forms part of the proposed to be constructed immediately alongside the southern edge of the existing vehicular bridge that sits just to the south east of the proposed WTP site.

**VISUAL CATCHMENT AND VIEWING AUDIENCES**

Preceding sections describe the characteristics of the site, its immediate setting and wider context. The purpose of this section is to define the effects of the proposed development upon the site and setting, to consider how the proposal would impact upon the experience of people viewing the development from outside of the site, and to comment upon the level of potential effect upon landscape character, natural character and amenity. To assist with that prediction, publicly accessible vantage points in the area were visited and the potential impact of the proposal considered from each.

Visual impacts are considered to constitute an intrusion into, or change to, an existing view, with the significance of the impacts – the effects – measured as the bearing of that impact upon identified viewing audiences. Ultimately, it is the perceived relative sensitivity of visual receptors, which varies with their nature and the degree of exposure, which determines the significance of the impact source. These can be positive, negative or benign.

The degree of adverse visual / landscape effect generated by a proposed development depends upon the character of the surrounding landscape (the context), existing levels of development on the application site, the contour of the land, the presence or absence of screening and/or backdrop vegetation, and the characteristics of the proposed development.

As outlined earlier, the site for the proposed designation sits with the Whau Valley floor and is, in effect, virtually flat.

Inspections for public roads and the un-named private drive that provides access to elevated properties to the north of the site provided a basis for the following observations about the proposal’s potential visual catchment and impacts upon affected parties.

**Nearby residents on Whau Valley Road**

Views to the site from neighbouring residential properties to the east of site are extremely limited. Dwellings tend to be both situated and oriented towards the street and most have extensive planting to their northern and western boundaries that contain views out. Potentially most vulnerable are the pair of properties that effectively take a “bite” out of the NoR site (no’s 264 and 268), but even these properties are considerably shielded by established, dense perimeter plantings that
are evident in Photographs 3 and 6 of Attachment Three. Proposed planting within the site would supplement that existing vegetation to provide a substantial screen that would isolate any potential visual effect.

A house on the opposite side of Whau Valley Road (no 161) is positioned almost opposite the proposed site entrance, but is almost entirely shielded from views into the site by the combination of a close-boarded fence on its front boundary and associated planting within that title. Once again, proposed planting would serve to complete that present high level of existing screening.

**Residents of homes immediately to the south of the site**

Three houses (at no’s 276, 278 and 278A) in this triangular block of titles currently enjoy immediate views across the pastoral sweep of the site and the balance of the related grazed valley floor in its current form, with a couple of further dwellings (primarily no’s 276A, 280 and 286A a little further to the south) that are set in the background also gaining glimpsed views in that direction. Those properties are seen in Photograph 7 of Attachment Two. As seen in that image, the view to the site from this southern quarter is through the trunks of the lofty poplars that line the adjacent drive that lies between these homes and the site.

The homes within the triangular block are all quite new and most owners appear to be progressively developing gardens around their property margins. The most established of the homes display moderately developing shrub plantings, but it would seem that some have deliberately kept an unimpeded northern outlook toward the site.

The occupants of the three nearest houses – those that line the drive to the south of the proposed WTP site – are considered to be the most potentially affected by the proposal. That level of effect is somewhat suppressed by the arrangement of each of the individual houses and the proposed site. Attachment One provides an insight to how buildings and living space are arranged within each title (although the aerial photograph predates the very recent construction of a home on the lot numbered 278 Whau Valley Road).

Number 276 lies closest to the proposed site in the eastern corner of the triangular block. This house, with its dark cream brick walls and brown tile roof, can be clearly seen in the middle of Photograph 7. That image illustrates that this house is oriented to be almost perpendicular to the site, so that the narrow northern end of the house addresses the site most directly, rather than a wider expanse of open living space. An outdoor deck sits alongside the eastern corner of the building, where it primarily addresses the road, but also provides views to the north across the site. Ranch slider windows open to this deck from the south from what appears to be living space, with two of those large windows providing a view towards the site. These dark expanses of tinted glass and related outdoor surfacing can be seen through close inspection of Photograph 7.
The next house immediately alongside the neighbouring drive is number 278. This new building has a dark cladding, silver or white joinery, a complex and steeply pitched roof and contrasting white pillars supporting a northern veranda as seen in Photograph 7. It is aligned to run parallel to the southern boundary of the site and appears to be arranged so that living space is orientated to open due north, towards the site. This building is positioned slightly to the west within its title, where it would provide a panorama across the site as it currently stands. Developing the WTP and related planting would result in the openness of the eastern sector of that view being truncated, leaving a pastoral vision within a more contained sweep to the north and north west.

Number 278A is the last of the neighbouring houses that directly addresses the site. This home appears to have adopted a similar arrangement as has just been described for number 278, with views and living oriented to the north. Being located still further to the west, the outlook from this building is largely across pastoral land that is outside the proposed NoR.

The effects upon this viewing audience that would arise from developing the proposed WTP would initially be moderate, with the structures occupying some of the outlook from number 276 (which is only partially reliant on a view to the north) and the eastern margins of views from numbers 278 and 278A (which are much more firmly oriented to the north with living space and views). As planting proposed to contain the WTP progressively screens the complex over a period of 5 years, the effect of the facility upon these most affected properties will diminish to minor. The lasting legacy will be one of diverse and dense vegetation seen around the perimeter of the site, with specimen trees emerging above that structure. The planting will create a more contained and intimate outlook, particularly for number 276, in place of a current open, pastoral view.

**Travellers and pedestrians using Whau Valley Road**

Vehicular traffic along the road is understood to primarily consist of people accessing houses that lie beyond the site, combined with a lesser number who are driving to Whau Valley Dam and a minor pedestrian route into Pukenui Forest beyond. People walking are anticipated to largely comprise those who live nearby. Relatively low traffic volumes and the pleasant, relaxed amenity of the valley indicate that walking is likely to be quite popular.

As outlined in an earlier description, the site has a narrowing in its frontage to Whau Valley Road, opening to the west where the WTP is proposed to be located. This narrow road boundary, combined with the containing frame of vegetation and housing found to either side, results in views into the site from the road corridor being tightly defined and tangential to the flow of the road corridor. Passing motorists will tend to be focussed within the alignment of the road corridor, whereas those moving much more slowly on foot have the opportunity to look around and are therefore likely to be more aware of what exists in the wider setting of the road.
WHAU VALLEY WATER TREATMENT PLANT, WHANGAREI
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As a result of the intention to set the WTP well back in the site, proposed planting will not need to reach a great stature before it blocks views from the road to the proposed plant structures and security fence. Situating the fence and entrance gate/s structures well into the site, creating a slight chicane in the alignment of the driveway, and creating the entrance splay to that drive in grassed paving, would help to contain initial effects and play a more significant role as complementary planting develops.

During the construction and early operational phases of the proposal, the WTP will represent a significant shift from the simple, open pastoral state of the site as it currently exists and create moderate adverse visual effects upon this combined viewing audience, particularly walkers. The introduction of an access drive and security fence will initially serve to emphasise the presence of the WTP, notwithstanding proposed measures to minimise the impact of those elements.

From a starting point of a moderate level of adverse visual effects that would initially be experienced by this group, the screening effect of planting as it develops would see adverse effects diminish to minor after a period of approximately 3 years. Once again, the site would then be perceived as being very contained and would add a sense of enclosure to the adjacent road space, departing from the open, pastoral character presently found.

The proposed pedestrian bridge would solely impact upon this viewing audience and would be experienced in tandem with the road bridge as a related structure. Whilst the materials and detailed design of the bridge will have some bearing upon its level of visual effect, it is considered that the level generated is unlikely to exceed “minor”, and would be less than minor with the benefit of a design that responds to its informal, semi-rural setting.

The residents of elevated properties to the north
A number of dwellings overlook the site from a ridgeline immediately to the north. None of these homes were visited during the preparation this assessment, so the following observations are based upon looking down to the site from the adjacent private access and from looking up to these homes from the site itself.

Two of the ridge-top homes are seen through close inspection of the left portion of Photograph 6 and a pair further to the east on that ridge is evident on the skyline in Photograph 5. These latter buildings are seen to the upper right of the centre of Attachment One (with the more eastern largely concealed under the sheet title label), whilst those to the west are a small distance off to the northern edge of that plan. The eastern buildings just mentioned are accessed via a steep drive that leaves Whau Valley Road approximately 400m to the north east of the site. Set some distance away and amongst a dense cover of native shrub and tree fern species, it would appear that these two homes (defined as numbers 190 and 192 Whau Valley Road) would provide little if any opportunity to view the site. The adverse visual effect experienced from those sites is therefore considered to be less than minor.
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The same observation applies to 2/262 Whau Valley Road, which is rather less elevated than the properties just described and situated within a screening frame of vegetation. That dwelling is seen in Attachment One, where it sits at the top of the sheet, a little to right of centre. This property is served by a shared access that runs on provide for the other mid-slope and ridgeline titles to the west. Photograph 8 of Attachment Three was taken from the junction between the private drive to number 2/262 and the shared access, demonstrating that it would be when descending to this minor intersection that the occupants of 2/262 would witness the proposed WTP, rather than from the home itself.

The two homes at the western end of the access (as described on Photograph 6 earlier in this segment) and overlook the site, are numbered as 7/262 and 2/262 Whau Valley Road. An empty allotment, 262B, lies between those titles. 7/262 is a timber-clad home that lies a little nearer the head of the valley and takes in framed views down the valley from amongst scattered totara that are scattered nearby and slightly downslope. It is anticipated that this dwelling would provide for views to the proposed WTP. The more angular, salmon coloured house that occupies 2/262 also provides views down the site, although it would appear that these would only be gained from the more elevated parts of the eastern end of the house.

The elevation of these buildings and the distance that they are set from the site determines that the site forms a relatively small part of a much more extensive view that is expected to take in the broad frame of surrounding hills to the south and the settlement patterns found in the valley floor. As such the WTP would be experienced as a component of those patterns rather than in the more focussed manner sensed from closer proximity.

Offsetting the reduction of relative adverse visual effect that comes with greater distance and a more expansive outlook is the fact that the greater height of these vantage points means that people will tend to look over proposed screen planting and down into the site. Over time, the screening framework would gradually conceal the WTP structures, but will be reliant upon the specimen trees amongst that planting mix to achieve that outcome. As such, the exposure of the WTP will be of greater duration – in the order of 10-15 years – than the much more limited time for the planting to provide an effective screen from viewing locations that are at a similar elevation as the site itself.

As a result, the adverse visual effects upon these two properties is assessed as being between minor and moderate initially, and gradually diminishing to being less than minor as screen planting and specimen trees gain stature.

A recently constructed dwelling at 262A lies midway up the flank ascending to the ridge just outlined, where it sits below a sharp zig-zag in the accessway alignment. That small home is seen in the upper left corner of Attachment One, with Photograph 9 providing a view from the adjacent drive. A couple of totara and a large puriri feature in the foreground of that image and are clearly distinguished on Attachment One. It would appear that these trees serve to block views to the site.
from 262A, so visual effects experienced from that building are expected to be negligible.

The place where all of the residents of this northern flank and ridge would most graphically experience the proposed WTP is when descending the lower segment of the shared access way, as represented by Photographs 8 and 9. For the length of drive between those points there is limited intervening screening and the drive is slightly elevated above the level of the site (as shown in the centre/left portion of Photograph 6). Whilst the drive is effectively a road corridor and therefore tending to demand visual attention along its alignment rather than to its side, there is also a measure of focus down to the lower terrain of the valley floor and the WTP location. A further aspect of this viewing area being along the access drive is that it would lead to most people observing from a descending car, so views would be brief rather than the more lingering outlook taken from within a house or on foot.

Being of lower elevation than the buildings on the ridge, views to the proposed WTP from the drive will be more rapidly constrained by proposed screen planting. It is expected that the proposed planting would obscure the structures within the complex over a period of 5-10 years, by which time the visual effects being experienced would reduce from an initial level of low – moderate’ down to minor.

Residents of other elevated properties, primarily to the south
There are a number of houses situated in foothill locations around the less developed sides of the minor side valley containing the site that may have potential views.

Most affected of this grouping would be the occupants of 34 Bullock Ridge, whose home lies near the toe of the slope at the head of the valley roughly 500m to the west. This house is seen on the extreme left of Photograph 6. Although orientated to the north east rather than directly down the valley towards the site, this house is moderately exposed to the site and would initially sense the WTP imposed upon the far edge of the grassed open space that would form the fore and mid-ground of views towards Whau Valley Road. That imposition would bring moderate adverse visual impact initially, reducing to less than minor as proposed planting develops to merge with the backdrop of other vegetation as witnessed over this half kilometre distance.

The few other houses found amongst the low hills to the south and west of the site are almost entirely screened from the site by intervening vegetation. There is scope for glimpsed views when descending Bullock Ridge, but those would be both fleeting and diminished by other elements immediately adjacent or between that access and the site. Effects upon this latter portion of the audience grouping are assessed as being less than minor.
ASSESSMENT OF LANDSCAPE EFFECTS

Earlier segments of this report described the character of the landscape that the site sits within, observing a mix of settlement and grazed open space, roading and private access routes, the stream corridor, and indigenous vegetation. Whilst the mid Whau Valley area is a moderately diverse and interesting portion of landscape, it is also quite fragmented and with an increasingly prevalent shift towards built elements, particularly in association with the road corridor. This trend has progressively diminished the landscape and amenity values of the main valley. Heightened landscape values associated with some of the elevated terrain that frames the site have also reduced since they were identified two decades ago, with a more recent strategic landscape assessment having avoided including those areas.

Introducing the WTP complex into the open, grassed state of the site as it stands will inevitably result in low to moderate landscape effects, primarily due to disrupting that open spatial pattern and the expression of the side valley relative to Whau Valley itself.

Over time, the planting that has been outlined as part of the proposal will progressively develop the level of containment that is a common theme of several other parts of the main valley, thereby reinforcing a well-established pattern (as distinct to bringing a new pattern in an effort to mitigate).

In the context of the moderately developed existing character of Whau Valley, it is considered that landscape effects would initially be at a limited level and that these would reduce to minor as vegetative screening and structuring matures.

In terms of the proposed pedestrian/cyclist bridge, this would be experienced in relation to the existing road bridge and as part of that movement corridor. Subject to the final design of that structure acknowledging the modest scale and informal character of the Whau Valley road corridor, the landscape effects of the bridge are assessed as being less than minor.

RURAL CHARACTER IMPLICATIONS

Observations about landscape character and value apply similarly to the rural character of the area that the site is located within.

Rural character is certainly present in the immediate setting of application site, but tends to be most strongly expressed by the more open grazed and forested foothills that lie beyond the level of built development and related domestic trappings that have tended to concentrate in close proximity to the road.

The introduction of the WTP would negate the presence of the open, grazed side valley floor that is experienced through the modest frontage of the site onto Whau Valley Road. That contribution is offset, however, by the nature of the undeveloped title underlying the site. The attractiveness of Whau Valley as a
WHAU VALLEY WATER TREATMENT PLANT, WHANGAREI
ASSESSMENT OF LANDSCAPE, RURAL CHARACTER AND VISUAL EFFECTS

Lifestyle living location and its proximity to the urban area suggests that such an existing title would be highly sought-after and readily developed. Typical rural residential development would see the construction of a generously scaled house, frequently include one or more out-buildings and a desire to plant much of the extent of boundaries to achieve privacy and shelter. As such, the current open, grazed nature of the site would seem to be unlikely to endure as a perpetual part of the local area’s character.

Rural character effects arising from the proposal are therefore considered to be limited, primarily as a result of the supressed rural identity of the area as it stands and the observation that planting mitigation will ultimately lend an informal, moderately natural frame to the overall site, rather than leaving the buildings to determine the longer term nature of the land.

The rural character effects generated by the proposed footbridge alongside the Whau Valley road bridge are assessed as being between minor and less than minor, subject to the finishing and detailed design that eventuate.

CONCLUSIONS
The middle and upper portions of Whau Valley exhibit modest levels of landscape and rural character value. Housing is an increasingly prevalent determinant of the identity of the valley floor associated with the primary road corridor, although the foothills, flanks and ridges lying outside that most settled strip display moderate levels of landscape and rural character value as a result of maintaining more natural, cohesive patterns of land cover and clear expression of the underlying terrain.

The site of the proposed WTP lies within the portion of the valley that is most closely associated with the road corridor where residential forms of development are most concentrated, so modification from its existing, pastoral form is consistent with the development pattern found in the adjacent area. Putting aside the prospect of a WTP being created on the site, the current status of that undeveloped title provides for rural residential development of the site that is likely to not be significantly different to the scale and volume of the most prominent portions of the proposed structures.

At this preliminary stage of the NoR process, the proposal has been broadly configured to limit adverse effects, including the placement of built elements; a general design strategy that addresses access, security fencing and planting; and anticipated controls over building characteristics. It is anticipated that the general parameters outlined earlier in this report when describing the proposal, along with the spatial arrangement and related matters conceptually documented by Attachment Three to this assessment, will form a basis for further refinement in an Outline Plan of Works or through conditions of consent.
Subject to the measures outlined in the preceding paragraph being effectively achieved, the magnitude of adverse landscape, rural character and visual effects are assessed as being generally very limited, with most impacts being either less than minor to minor once planting achieves 3-5 years of maturity.

There are some specific areas from which initial adverse visual effects will initially be to a higher level of moderate or low to moderate, particularly from homes immediately to the south of the site, passing pedestrians and those occupying much more elevated houses to the north of the site. That initially elevated level is predicted to significantly diminish as proposed integrative planting measures take effect.

A proposed narrow pedestrian and cycling bridge alongside the existing one way bridge that Whau Valley Road passes over near the site is considered to relate closely to that current bridge structure and to be experienced as part of the road environment. Predicted levels of effect are in the range of less than minor to minor, subject to the materials and design employed. Ideally, that detailed design should respond to the semi-rural setting of the bridge and the informal character of this part of Whau Valley.

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