

## Consideration of Potential Landscape Effects Arising from the Huia WTP Site Vegetation Clearance and Temporary Cleared Site:

I have been requested to add to my earlier Landscape and Visual Effects Assessment (LVEA) and associated evidence to more specifically address the potential landscape effects of the vegetation clearance in respect of the three Huia WTP sites - the replacement WTP site and two reservoir sites – (the Site) with specific reference to the relevant objectives and policies of the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Act 2008 (WRHAA) and Auckland Unitary Plan (AUP) Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Overlay. This assessment is to accompany Watercare’s Outline Plan of Works.

### Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Act 2008 Provisions:

The Purpose of the WRHAA is:

- (1) *The purpose of this Act is to:*
  - (a) *recognise the national, regional, and local significance of the Waitakere Ranges heritage area; and*
  - (b) *promote the protection and enhancement of its heritage features for present and future generations.*

Part 2, Sections 7 and 8 are the most relevant to the consideration of potential landscape effects. These are copied in full at Appendix 1.

7(2)(a) identifies the heritage features of the area which include the Ranges terrestrial ecosystems ‘of prominent indigenous character’....

The public water catchment and supply system is recognised by the WRHAA as a heritage feature that contributes to the national significance of the heritage area 7(2)(n).

The Site lies within the eastern foothills area which is identified 7(2)(h) as acting as a buffer and providing a transition between metropolitan Auckland and the forested ranges and coasts;

The WRHA landscape provisions are predominately focused on managing residential development within the area to retain the character and natural features of the Waitakere Ranges.

The purpose and objectives of the WRHAA is given effect to in the AUP through the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Overlay, Section B4.4 of the Regional Policy Statement (RPS) and Chapter D12. The WRHA Overlay is a district plan provision.

Below is a summary of the key AUP RPS and District Plan provisions relevant to landscape:

RPS - B4.4.1 Objectives

(3) Development in settlements recognises and is sympathetic to the qualities, character and natural features of the Waitākere Ranges and the complex mixed landscapes of the foothills.

- (4) Cumulative effects of activities on the environment, including amenity values and heritage features, are recognised and avoided
- (5) The character, scale and intensity of subdivision, use or development do not adversely affect the heritage features.
- (6) The quality and diversity of landscapes are maintained by all of the following:
  - (a) protecting landscapes of local, regional, or national significance;
  - (b) restoring and enhancing degraded landscapes; and
  - (c) managing change within a landscape in an integrated way, including retaining rural character.

#### RPS - B4.4.2 Policies

- (6) Avoid non-residential activities:
  - (a) that are unrelated to the productive use of rural land;
  - (b) that require substantial earthworks or vegetation removal; or
  - (c) that are industrial and unrelated to rural activities.

#### DP - D12.2 Objectives

- (1) The heritage area and its features described in section 7 of the Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area Act 2008 are protected, restored and enhanced.

*Includes:*

- (a) its terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems of prominent indigenous character that (vii) have landscape qualities of regional and national significance: (viii) have natural scenic beauty:
- (b) the different classes of natural landforms and landscapes within the area that contrast and connect with each other, and which collectively give the area its distinctive character:
- (f) the dramatic landform of the Ranges and foothills, which is the visual backdrop to metropolitan Auckland, forming its western skyline:
- (h) the eastern foothills, which (i) act as a buffer between metropolitan Auckland and the forested ranges and coasts; and (ii) provide a transition from metropolitan Auckland to the forested ranges and coast:
- (i) the subservience of the built environment to the area's natural and rural landscape, which is reflected in—
  - (i) the individual identity and character of the coastal villages and their distinctive scale, containment, intensity, and amenity; and
  - (ii) the distinctive harmony, pleasantness, and coherence of the low-density residential and urban areas that are located in regenerating (and increasingly dominant) forest settings; and
  - (iii) the rural character of the foothills to the east and north and their intricate pattern of farmland, orchards, vineyards, uncultivated areas, indigenous vegetation, and dispersed low-density settlement with few urban-scale activities:

- (5) The quality and diversity of landscapes in the heritage area identified as having local, regional or national significance are maintained.

(6) Subdivision, use and development in the heritage area is subservient to the natural and rural landscape and character.

#### DP - D12.3 Policies

(3) Protect the different natural landforms and landscapes within the heritage area.

(4) Protect the distinctive natural and rural character of the heritage area.

(8) Manage subdivision, use and development within the area to ensure all of the following:

- a Areas identified in the Outstanding Natural Character and High Natural Character Overlay, the Outstanding Natural Features Overlay and Outstanding Natural Features Landscape Overlay, and the Significant Ecological Areas Overlay and are protected, restored or enhanced;
- b Heritage features are not adversely affected;
- c Rural landscape and character is retained; and
- d Degraded landscapes are restored and enhanced.

(9) Manage built development so that it is integrated and is subservient to the natural and rural landscape and the heritage features of the area.

(17) Provide for limited subdivision and development that: (d) Ensures buildings and structures will not be visually prominent, particularly on ridgelines, or through the removal of native vegetation;

#### Commentary:

It is not possible to undertake the project to replace the Huia WTP without some degree of indigenous vegetation clearance on the Site. Watercare has gone to considerable lengths to consider alternatives, however the current WTP requires replacement and after consideration of a wide range of alternatives the Proposal, being the Manuka Road WTP site with two associated reservoirs, is considered the best practicable option.

Given that vegetation clearance is necessary to enable the establishment of the new plant and reservoirs, extensive measures have been undertaken in the preliminary design phase to:

- Limit the scale of the development footprint and the footprint required for construction;
- Avoid vegetation that is of higher value;
- Avoid significant individual indigenous species trees that contribute to the landscape and its prevailing character;
- Avoid the landmark Kauri tree on the corner of Manuka and Woodlands Park Road;
- Locate the development in previously disturbed areas where vegetation has a less intact cover / is of mixed indigenous and exotic / weed species and is of lesser age; and
- Wherever practicable retain a buffer (set at an optimal 10m minimum width) of indigenous vegetation to physically and visually contain areas of vegetation clearance and / or future infrastructure associated with the replacement WTP.

In addition local landforms that contribute to the landscape have been recognised and the works areas defined to retain / protect these. In particular these include the vegetated toe of the

significant Exhibition Drive escarpment and the localised knoll in the Reservoir 1 Site. In this way the key landforms of the locality will not be adversely affected. Furthermore these will remain as the prominent landform features diminishing the impact of the vegetation clearance and landform modification within the Site.

In considering the potential landscape effects generated by the vegetation clearance required for the WTP project contributing factors in terms of the determination as to the scale of adverse effects generated are:

- The nature, including the relative prominence, of the landform on which the vegetation to be cleared is located;
- The extent to which more prominent vegetated landforms remain as part of the Site and / or within its immediate context;
- The relative quality of the indigenous vegetation to be cleared; and
- The context of association of the areas to be cleared with other features of the water treatment infrastructure – also recognised as part of the heritage of the ranges – including the existing WTP and past Watercare related activities on the site(s).

In addition the cleared Site state is not intended as a semi-permanent or longer term phase, it will be a transitional point in the construction process with the works progressing immediately to construction.

The final design of the water treatment facility will further focus on minimising the development footprint and achieving a design of the built elements that will sit well into the landscape including through the colour and materiality of built elements of the plant. In addition the proposed reservoirs will incorporate green roofs using native species vegetation to reduce the potential impact of these structures set into their vegetated context. Once construction works are complete remediation will be implemented leading to a final managed operational phase during which vegetation buffers will be fully re-established (where required) and maintained as indigenous species ecosystems appropriate to the Site.

In terms of landscape impacts the removal of indigenous vegetation within the Waitakere Ranges at the scale required for the WTP and the interim creation of cleared land will initially generate a high level of localised adverse landscape effects in terms of the integrity of the landscape. This rating takes into account that the principle character of the Waitakere Ranges landscape is one comprising vegetated indigenous ecosystems, all be it that the landscape character of the local area in which the WTP is proposed already comprises substantial water treatment infrastructure and a less intact pattern of indigenous vegetation.

The scale of this landscape effect will however reduce over time as the cleared site is occupied by water treatment plant structures - acknowledging that this infrastructure and the heritage aspects of water collection / storage / treatment also form part of the recognised heritage and amenity of the Waitakere Ranges – and associated landscape / vegetation restoration and enhancement is established. The landscape controls established, including retention of key landforms, vegetation and specific trees, as well as the vegetation buffers proposed, mean that the proposed facility will remain subservient to the predominantly bush clad character and amenity of the locality all be it in a part of the Ranges where there is an established heritage presence of water treatment facilities.

Once complete and operational the adverse landscape effects are assessed to be very low and consistent with the local landscape character and amenity of the Woodlands Park / Manuka Road landscape in this part of the Waitakere Ranges.

In respect of Policy B4.4.2(6)(c): "*avoid non-residential activities that are industrial and unrelated to rural activities*", I do not consider the proposal to be inconsistent with the RPS. Water collection, storage and treatment is a long established activity in the Waitākere Ranges forming part of the heritage and identity of the place and this is specifically recognised in the WRHAA and RPS. It is not an unexpected occurrence and the proposed facility, co-located with long established water treatment infrastructure of similar form and consistent purpose, will not appear as out of context infrastructure in this part of Woodlands Park Road / the Waitākere Ranges.

In respect of RPS Objective B4.4.1(3): "*Development in settlements recognises and is sympathetic to the qualities, character and natural features of the Waitākere Ranges and the complex mixed landscapes of the foothills*", I consider the character of the foothills landscape in the Woodlands Park Road locality in the vicinity of the subject site is strongly influenced by structures associated with water treatment such that the proposal will not seem out of context. The proposal will be consistent with this existing character of the landscape and once established will maintain the presence of water treatment infrastructure largely screened by native vegetation.

Similarly in terms of objectives B4.4.1(5) and (6) as set out below:

*(5) The character, scale and intensity of subdivision, use or development do not adversely affect the heritage features or contribute to urban growth outside the Rural Urban Boundary.*

*(6) The quality and diversity of landscapes are maintained by all of the following:*

*(a) protecting landscapes of local, regional, or national significance;*

*(b) restoring and enhancing degraded landscapes; and*

*(c) managing change within a landscape in an integrated way, including retaining rural character.*

I consider that the proposal is consistent with the water treatment heritage of the Waitakere Ranges and its heritage features, some of which are clustered in the locality of the proposed WTP. Whilst adding to the presence of water treatment facilities in the locality the heritage structures associated with the existing WTP, in particular the scheduled heritage building, will be enhanced with that building restored to its original character and its road frontage landscape restored to reflect the original character and amenity of the landscape.

Whilst a change will occur the rural character of this part of the Waitakere Ranges will not be altered.

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Boffa Miskell 24 August 2020

## Appendix 1:

### 7 National significance and heritage features of heritage area

- (1) The heritage area is of national significance and the heritage features described in subsection (2), individually or collectively, contribute to its significance.
- (2) The heritage features of the heritage area are:
  - (a) its terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems of prominent indigenous character that:
    - § (i) include large continuous areas of primary and regenerating lowland and coastal rainforest, wetland, and dune systems with intact ecological sequences:
    - § (ii) have intrinsic value:
    - § (iii) provide a diversity of habitats for indigenous flora and fauna:
    - § (iv) collect, store, and produce high quality water:
    - § (v) provide opportunities for ecological restoration:
    - § (vi) are of cultural, scientific, or educational interest:
    - § (vii) have landscape qualities of regional and national significance:
    - § (viii) have natural scenic beauty:
  - (b) the different classes of natural landforms and landscapes within the area that contrast and connect with each other, and which collectively give the area its distinctive character:
  - (c) the coastal areas, which:
    - § (i) have a natural and dynamic character; and
    - § (ii) contribute to the area's vistas; and
    - § (iii) differ significantly from each other:
  - (d) the naturally functioning streams that rise in the eastern foothills and contribute positively to downstream urban character, stormwater management, and flood protection:
  - (e) the quietness and darkness of the Waitakere Ranges and the coastal parts of the area:
  - (f) the dramatic landform of the Ranges and foothills, which is the visual backdrop to metropolitan Auckland, forming its western skyline:
  - (g) the opportunities that the area provides for wilderness experiences, recreation, and relaxation in close proximity to metropolitan Auckland:
  - (h) the eastern foothills, which:
    - § (i) act as a buffer between metropolitan Auckland and the forested ranges and coasts; and

- § (ii) provide a transition from metropolitan Auckland to the forested ranges and coast:
- (i) the subservience of the built environment to the area's natural and rural landscape, which is reflected in:
  - § (i) the individual identity and character of the coastal villages and their distinctive scale, containment, intensity, and amenity; and
  - § (ii) the distinctive harmony, pleasantness, and coherence of the low-density residential and urban areas that are located in regenerating (and increasingly dominant) forest settings; and
  - § (iii) the rural character of the foothills to the east and north and their intricate pattern of farmland, orchards, vineyards, uncultivated areas, indigenous vegetation, and dispersed low-density settlement with few urban-scale activities:
- (j) the historical, traditional, and cultural relationships of people, communities, and tangata whenua with the area and their exercise of kaitiakitanga and stewardship:
- (k) the evidence of past human activities in the area, including those in relation to timber extraction, gum-digging, flax milling, mineral extraction, quarrying, extensive farming, and water impoundment and supply:
- (l) its distinctive local communities:
- (m) the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park and its importance as an accessible public place with significant natural, historical, cultural, and recreational resources:
- (n) the public water catchment and supply system, the operation, maintenance, and development of which serves the people of Auckland.

## 8 Heritage area objectives

- The objectives of establishing and maintaining the heritage area are:
  - (a) to protect, restore, and enhance the area and its heritage features:
  - (b) to ensure that impacts on the area as a whole are considered when decisions are made affecting any part of it:
  - (c) to adopt the following approach when considering decisions that threaten serious or irreversible damage to a heritage feature:
    - § (i) carefully consider the risks and uncertainties associated with any particular course of action; and
    - § (ii) take into account the best information available; and
    - § (iii) endeavour to protect the heritage feature:
  - (d) to recognise and avoid adverse potential, or adverse cumulative, effects of activities on the area's environment (including its amenity) or its heritage features:

- (e) to recognise that, in protecting the heritage features, the area has little capacity to absorb further subdivision:
- (f) to ensure that any subdivision or development in the area, of itself or in respect of its cumulative effect,
  - § (i) is of an appropriate character, scale, and intensity; and
  - § (ii) does not adversely affect the heritage features; and
  - § (iii) does not contribute to urban sprawl:
- (g) to maintain the quality and diversity of landscapes in the area by:
  - § (i) protecting landscapes of local, regional, or national significance; and
  - § (ii) restoring and enhancing degraded landscapes; and
  - § (iii) managing change within a landscape in an integrated way, including managing change in a rural landscape to retain a rural character:
- (h) to manage aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems in the area to protect and enhance indigenous habitat values, landscape values, and amenity values:
- (i) to recognise that people live and work in the area in distinct communities, and to enable those people to provide for their social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being:
- (j) to provide for future uses of rural land in order to retain a rural character in the area:
- (k) to protect those features of the area that relate to its water catchment and supply functions:
- (l) to protect in perpetuity the natural and historic resources of the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park for their intrinsic worth and for the benefit, use, and enjoyment of the people and communities of the Auckland region and New Zealand.