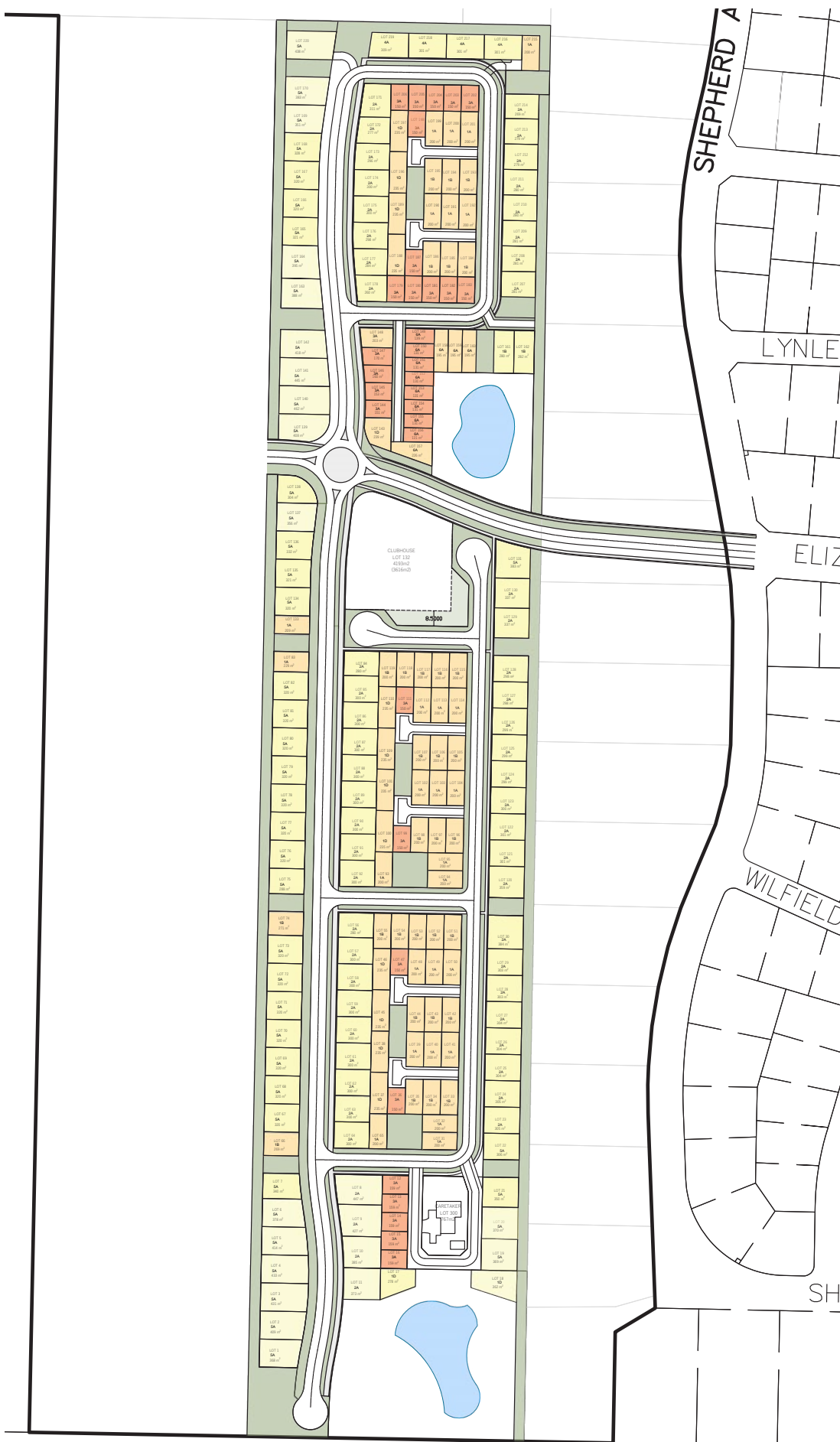


APPENDIX D VISUAL ASSESSMENT

APPENDIX E

INDICATIVE CONCEPT





West Melton - Northwest **APPENDIX D - Visual Assessment**

13 / 06 / 2022 | REVISION 3 RETIREMENT VILLAGE PROPOSAL





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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This Visual assessment has been prepared in response in relation to a private plan change application to the Proposed Selwyn District Plan. The purpose of the Application for rezoning is to enable the residential development of land on the western edge of West Melton north of SH73. The plan change is an amendment to the original PC 77 which consisted of a larger land area extending all the way north to Hallkett Road. The reduced land area for this amended PC is approximately 12.5 ha.

The revised application is for a LZ residential zone with a medium density overlay to accommodate a retirement village. The proposal shares a boundary with the Preston Downs community to the east and with SH 73 to the south. Both boundaries are significantly shorter when compared to the original PC 77 application, however part the original visual assessment are still applicable and form the basis for this revised visual assessment.

A new Outline Development Plan has been developed to guide the development of a retirement village, including provision of appropriate road linkages to the existing urban area to the east and possible future urban areas to the north south and west of the Site. This ODP was based on an urban analysis of development and growth patterns in West Melton, followed by an overall urban design concept that focused on movement, connectivity, and residential amenity for existing and future residents.

The revised urban design report attached to the PC application includes an indicative layout plan ('the design concept') showing a possible layout for the retirement village that forms the basis for the visual assessment. Although the underlying zoning requires the development to achieve a minimum development density of 12hh/ha, the proposal will most likely achieve a higher density throughout as a result of the proposed residential typology.

The following visual assessment has taken all the above information into account including the medium density assessment matters as per SDC.

2. METHODOLOGY

A standard assessment approach has been used to identify the existing natural features and character including any heritage features of the site and its surroundings and to assess the potential effects of the proposed development on existing visual character and rural/urban amenity.

A combination of desk top analysis and field assessment has been undertaken to identify the potential visibility of the proposed development from surrounding areas.

In broad terms, the assessment consists of the:

- a) Identification of the key elements or attributes of the proposed development;
- b) Identification of the landscape values and character of the site and the surrounding area;
- c) Identification of relevant assessment criteria within the context of the relevant statutory instruments, 'Best Practice' and Urban Design Guide; and
- d) Assessment of the effects of the proposed residential development on the existing visual character and rural/urban amenity.

By considering the above, the likely effects of the proposed development are able to be identified and rated.

The methodology used in this assessment is in line with the requirements set out in the Landscape Assessment and Sustainable Management 10.1, (NZILA Education Foundation), dated 2.11.2010 and Visual Assessment Best Practice.

3. STATUTORY DOCUMENTS / REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

3.1 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ACT

Section 6 - Matters of National importance:

“In achieving the purpose of this Act, all persons exercising functions and powers under it, in relation to managing the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources, shall recognise and provide for the following matters of national importance:

s.6 (a) The preservation of the natural character of the coastal environment (including the coastal marine area), wetlands, and lakes and rivers and their margins, and the protection of them from inappropriate subdivision, use and development;

s.6 (b) The protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes from inappropriate subdivision, use, and development;

s.6 (c) The protection of areas of significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna.”

Section 7 - Other Matters

“In achieving the purpose of this Act, all persons exercising functions and powers under it, in relation to managing the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources, shall have particular regard to -

(c) The maintenance and enhancement of amenity values.”

The site is not located in either an Outstanding Natural Landscapes (ONL) or a Visual Amenity Landscapes (VAL).

With regard to section 7(c), the Selwyn District Plan provides more detailed guidance in the form of objectives and policies which are covered in the original PC application.

3.2 OPERATIVE SELWYN DISTRICT PLAN

Under the Operative Selwyn District Plan, the Site is zoned Inner Plains Rural. There are several policies in the Rural Objectives and Policies of the Selwyn District Plan which relate to Landscape Values and Amenity and have been taken into consideration.

4. ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS LANDSCAPE AND URBAN

4.1 EXISTING SITE CHARACTER

The site is located at the periphery of the current extent of development in the North-Western Quadrant of West Melton, adjacent to a fairly recent completed subdivision between Halkett Road and State Highway 73 (SH73). It is within walking distance (approximately 800m) of the local centre, primary school and domain. The Site measures approx. 12.5 ha and is under single ownership.

The proposed site is a rural area used for grazing and training horses. The land is predominantly flat with some undulations and subtle elevation changes across the entire site. Like the surrounding rural environment, the site itself also includes shelterbelt planting associated with rural activities and domestic curtilage planting to support rural style living.

There is one existing dwelling, well set back from the road, at the southern end of the Site. The dwelling borders SH73 and is nestled within a domestic curtilage with extensive planting.

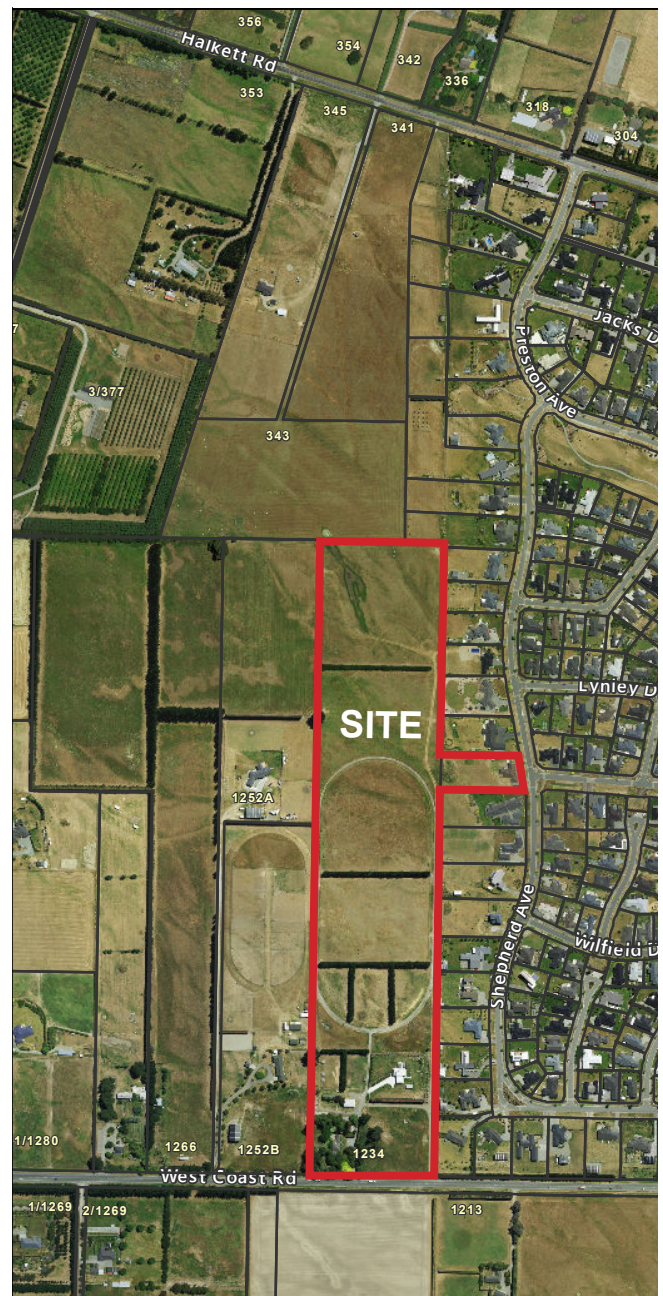
Other buildings on site are auxiliary in nature, such as stand-alone garages, sheds, and other structures associated with rural living. In the middle of the PC Site there is a race training track and associated stables. The remainder of the Site is otherwise dominated by flat pastoral land used for grazing.



Private property on site partially screened - (zoom)



Existing dwelling on Site





View from SH73 into the site with western boundary visible on right

The western boundary consists of a rural fence allowing open views into the adjacent paddocks. Only in the south of the Site are views to the west partially screened by existing vegetation. This vegetation is associated with the domestic curtilage of nearby rural dwellings. There are multiple *Macrocarpa* shelterbelts running perpendicular across the site situated along paddock boundaries and fence lines compartmentmenting the site into smaller areas.

Additionally, established trees are clustered around the southern end of the Site, creating a visual buffer towards SH73. Other clusters of smaller trees and taller shrubs are located around the Site to act as a visual screen for residential activities and provide shade.

A waterway forms part of the northern boundary and provide a drainage channel for surface water run off from the paddocks to the north of the site.



Sheperds Road
properties

shelterbelt

waterway on boundary



View onto northern boundary of Site - layered vegetation with low shrubs /gorse along boundary drainage channel and taller east west shelterbelt set further back into the Site



Along the rural interface, north and west, and in parts along the eastern boundary open style rural fencing allows views between the Site and the neighbouring rural and residential environments.

The Site shares a boundary with SH73, within the south west corner the existing dwelling is well set back from the road hidden behind dense clusters of vegetation. In the south eastern corner of the Site smaller open paddocks allow views deeper into the Site onto sheds and other auxiliary buildings giving the site a rural character. Access to the site is gained either via a informal, rural driveway leading to well screened dwelling or via a separate gated farm track. A waterway runs along the this southern edge and functions as a drainage channel for surface water runoff from the Site.



View from SH73 towards the southern boundary of the site - showing established vegetation in SW corner with dwelling nestled within



View from SH73 into the site looking towards western boundary hedge and Sheperds Road properties

The Site interfaces with the residential sites along Shepherd Ave to the east.

The boundary treatment along this residential / rural interface is partially open style fencing at the northern end, providing a rural outlook for some of these properties.

For most of the eastern boundary however a large Macrocarpa hedge provides a solid visual screen, dropping to a lower hedge further north and is removed completely along the northern part.

In response to this either screened or partially open environment, individual properties are providing their own screening via landscaped gardens, hedge and tree planting, creating their own landscaped outlook with intermittent framed views into the rural land.



View between Shepherds Road properties towards Site



All above - examples of boundary treatment at rural to residential interface - Shepherds Road properties



4.2 LANDSCAPE AND URBAN CHARACTERISTIC OF THE RECEIVING ENVIRONMENT

Residential environment

The neighbouring Preston Downs is a residential area with a mix of residential lots ranging from standard urban through to large lots along Shepherd Ave.

To the East, the site connects to West Melton and the receiving environment is residential in character. Although it is of a fairly low density, it displays a typical suburban subdivision pattern with mainly single storey detached residential dwellings on a variety of sites. The residential character is evident with increases in hard surfaces and general infrastructure present in the landscape. These residential characteristics are also evident in the vegetation around individual properties and within the street scape. Plantings on private property are often exotic species and trees are of a smaller stature to prevent excessive shading.

Streets have a distinct residential character with hard surfaces dominating, intermittent street trees in a linear arrangement, and ornamental vegetation to front yards. Properties often have solid 1.8m fencing along internal boundaries with roof lines showing prominently. Most properties have open front yards allowing views in and up to the property. Building setbacks from the road range from approx. 5m to 10m depending on geometry and size of the property. Front yards are often well landscaped, creating a high visual amenity and allowing houses to gradually blend into the streetscape.

Public environments and stormwater reserves create larger open spaces breaking up the urban environment. These areas are predominantly planted with native species and facilitate walking and cycling on formed pathways interconnecting the neighbourhood.



Typical examples of landscaping and built form of the adjacent Preston Downs residential environment

The proposed Site borders only properties along Shepherd Avenue with the following characteristics:

- o Large lot residential
- o Largely single-story dwellings oriented towards the road
- o Low, open style or no fencing is prevalent to front of the property, with taller closed fencing or screens along internal boundaries between dwellings for privacy and open style fencing towards the rural land
- o The rear of most properties has well established gardens partially screening views into the rural land. Along some of the northern-most properties, boundary plantings are still young and will over time provide further screening
- o Several Shepherd Avenue properties look towards a hedge along the internal residential/rural boundary. This blocks views and creates a sense of enclosure for these residential sites – this hedge is cut shorter approx. 150m north of the southern corner and continues to gradually expose the rural outlook.



Existing rural property with dwelling west of Site



Existing rural property with dwelling west of Site

Rural environment

To the North and West the adjacent land will remain rural in nature and has been assessed as a rural urban interface.

Along the southern boundary the road reserve of SH73 forms a buffer between the proposed site and the remaining rural environment.

North and West

There are several rural/residential dwellings west of the site. Two of these are located in closer proximity across the western boundary and currently experience fairly unobstructed views into the plan change area. The individual dwellings orient themselves mostly to the north and west with private outdoor spaces, however, do have areas like entry and service spaces facing east. The shelterbelts within the Site provide some visual screening towards the residential areas of Preston Downs.

Other rural dwellings to the west and north are reasonably well set back from the site and have either their own domestic curtilage or established boundary hedges blocking views into the Site. The single dwelling to the northwest is visually more exposed but is well set back from the northern boundary and has no private outdoor areas facing south.



Private rural property west of Site partially screened by vegetation (zoom)



Private rural property west of Site partially screened by vegetation

South

SH 73 forms the Southern boundary with rural properties on the south side. Similar to the northern and western neighbours, these are larger rural lots used for rural residential lifestyle mixed with extensive grazing and small-scale agricultural activities. Due to the nature of the state highway, these properties are completely screened by dense vegetation.

Views into the site can only be experienced from the highway itself, allowing glimpses towards the residential dwelling on the site along driveways and small gaps in the well-established vegetation.



SH 73 looking west - with PC77 Site to the right



SH 73 looking east - towards West Melton with large rural hedge forming the boundary to residential lots in Preston Downs



SH 73 looking south

Topography

The wider receiving rural environment is relatively flat land, typical for rural areas within the Canterbury Plains. There are no discernible topographical attributes within the wider area, and only minor natural elevations or features such as rural drainage channels.



Typical surrounding rural vegetation

Vegetation

Typical for the Canterbury Plains, the vegetation in the surrounding rural environment is used predominantly for shelterbelts to block the prevailing easterly winds and runs along property boundaries or edges of paddocks. They include similar species as those found on the site (Macrocarpa, Pinus, Poplars) and are predominantly planted along property or road boundaries.

Vegetation types in the surrounding rural residential blocks to the north, south, and west are a mix of exotic species within the private gardens with a scattering of native planting.

Vegetation in the adjoining residential environment to the east in Preston Downs is also predominantly exotic but of a smaller scale and larger variety, including typical garden planting such as ground covers and shrubs, as well as trees ranging from 4m - 8m in height. Although new residential developments to the west have introduced more native species, exotic plants, particularly exotic trees, still dominate within private gardens. Stormwater management areas and all recreational reserves have extensive native planting giving the areas a high amenity and visual appeal.

Due to the large-scale land use changes seen throughout the plains, including the site, there are only remnants of indigenous vegetation left in the wider surrounding environments. None of any significance have been identified on the Site or in close proximity to the Site. As a result, the site and wider area has a low sensitivity to change, given the high level of fast growing introduced exotic species.

Sensory qualities

Within the Canterbury Plains, flat open fields sit against a backdrop of the Southern Alps to the west and the Port Hills to the east. This creates opportunities for expansive views that are intermittently interrupted by large shelter belts or rural structures. These have become integral to the rural aesthetic and identity. The natural characteristic of the environment is therefore considered to be modified, with a rural character as opposed to a natural character (refer to Canterbury Regional Landscape Study Review (2010) by Boffa Miskell). The land surrounding the proposed site mirrors the overall character of the region.



Typical suburban residential character



Typical suburban built form



Typical rural character and built form

Built form in the rural environment

Whilst the scale, character, form, and materiality of structures varies throughout the wider receiving environment, dwellings, and farm structures are common throughout the rural area. To the north, west, and south the rural environment is interspersed with rural dwellings and associated auxiliary structures displaying the typical rural characteristics of stand-alone dwellings. These dwellings are protected by a domestic curtilage, whilst sheds and other agricultural infrastructure remains more visible.

Built form in the urban environment

To the east in Preston Downs, the receiving environment is residential in character. It displays a typical suburban subdivision pattern with a suburban density of dwellings, increased quantity of hard surfaces, and general infrastructure present in the landscape. Dwellings are mainly single storey detached houses on sections, demarcated by a variety of open or closed internal boundary fences. Driveways and front yard structures, such as low fencing and letter boxes, create a regular rhythm of built form with reasonable large gaps of 4m - 8m between dwellings due to the nature of the underlying 'low density' zone. Combined with a residential roading standard with footpaths and regular street tree planting, the streetscape within the development has a strong residential character.

Overall, the receiving environment can be divided into two categories with their own specific characteristics:

1. A rural, open character with various structures including dwellings, auxiliary structures, power lines and exotic vegetation clustered throughout the landscape to the south and east with the Port Hills as a visual backdrop;
2. A suburban, built-up character with established detached residential dwellings, associated domestic scale landscaping, dominant property fencing, and residential streets with kerbs and channel, footpaths and regularly spaced driveways.

4.3 EFFECTS ON LANDSCAPE CHARACTER



Typical vegetation treatment on private properties (Shepherd Avenue)



Front yard landscaping and fencing. (Preston Ave)

Landscape character is the combination and composition of biophysical elements such as topography, vegetation, built form and sensory qualities perceived by humans. Landscape character is also spiritual, cultural, and social associations. (Landscape Assessment and Sustainable Management 10.1, (NZILA Education Foundation))

The site is located directly on the rural / urban interface of West Melton and therefore displays a generally rural character with suburban characteristics in very close proximity along the eastern boundary it shares with Preston Down where it meets the current edge of the township. It is used principally for rural activities, such as horse breeding / training and stock grazing, as well as rural residential lifestyle.

Natural landscape character

The wider natural landscape is the Canterbury Plains, with the Southern Alps and Port Hills as visual landmarks in the distance. These identifying features can only really be experienced where views from public spaces are unobstructed, and along streets that are aligned with specific viewshafts, such as SH 73 and Halkett Road.

The natural landscape character of the receiving environment is already highly modified, due to the changes introduced by agricultural land use and the proximity to the township. This is reflected in the surrounding rural environment with very limited vegetation cover and several dwellings and structures to support a rural lifestyle and limited, small scale farming activities taking place on site. Apart from selected clusters of trees and shelterbelts, the key contributor to the amenity of the natural landscape is the sense of open space and the views to the surrounding landscape this openness allows. Beyond this there are no discernible natural landscape features.

The development proposed in the Plan Change will modify this character of the landscape from a rural environment to a denser suburban character. Here buildings, infrastructure, and amenities are more concentrated and visible. This is generally in-keeping with residential development occurring around the current edges of West Melton as part of the ongoing urban growth as the township expands.

Open space character and amenity

The proposed development incorporates several open spaces that will break up the denser built form of the retirement village and retain a sense of openness for the Site, allowing for longer distance views. Open green spaces are a combination of stormwater management areas and recreational reserves, offering opportunities for bulk plantings of native vegetation and large specimen trees which will enhance the natural amenity of the site.

The character of existing built environment in Preston Downs is typically detached dwellings, to which the proposal intends to continue to provide a natural extension of the existing urban character with a high street amenity.

To retain open character and limit the impact on the existing environment, higher densities/ smaller lots will be concentrated towards the centre of the site and co-located adjacent to larger open space. In addition, the option exists to retain some of the trees of the established gardens and the eastern boundary hedge where this is practicable. This will provide a sense of scale for the new development as well as visual screening.

The sparse rural vegetation within the site, primarily shelterbelts, will be removed as their scale makes them incompatible with residential development. The result will initially be a sparsely vegetated site. Once the green spaces and reserves are developed, and the residential private gardens establish, the new residential vegetation character will emerge. Although the rural vegetation character will be removed it will be replaced with a residential character and associated vegetation of a similar, if not higher amenity.

4.4 EFFECTS ON LANDSCAPE VALUES

The continuation of residential development at the edge of a township is part of a natural extension of the urban form of a settlement and can be visually and physically integrated without altering the core landscape values.

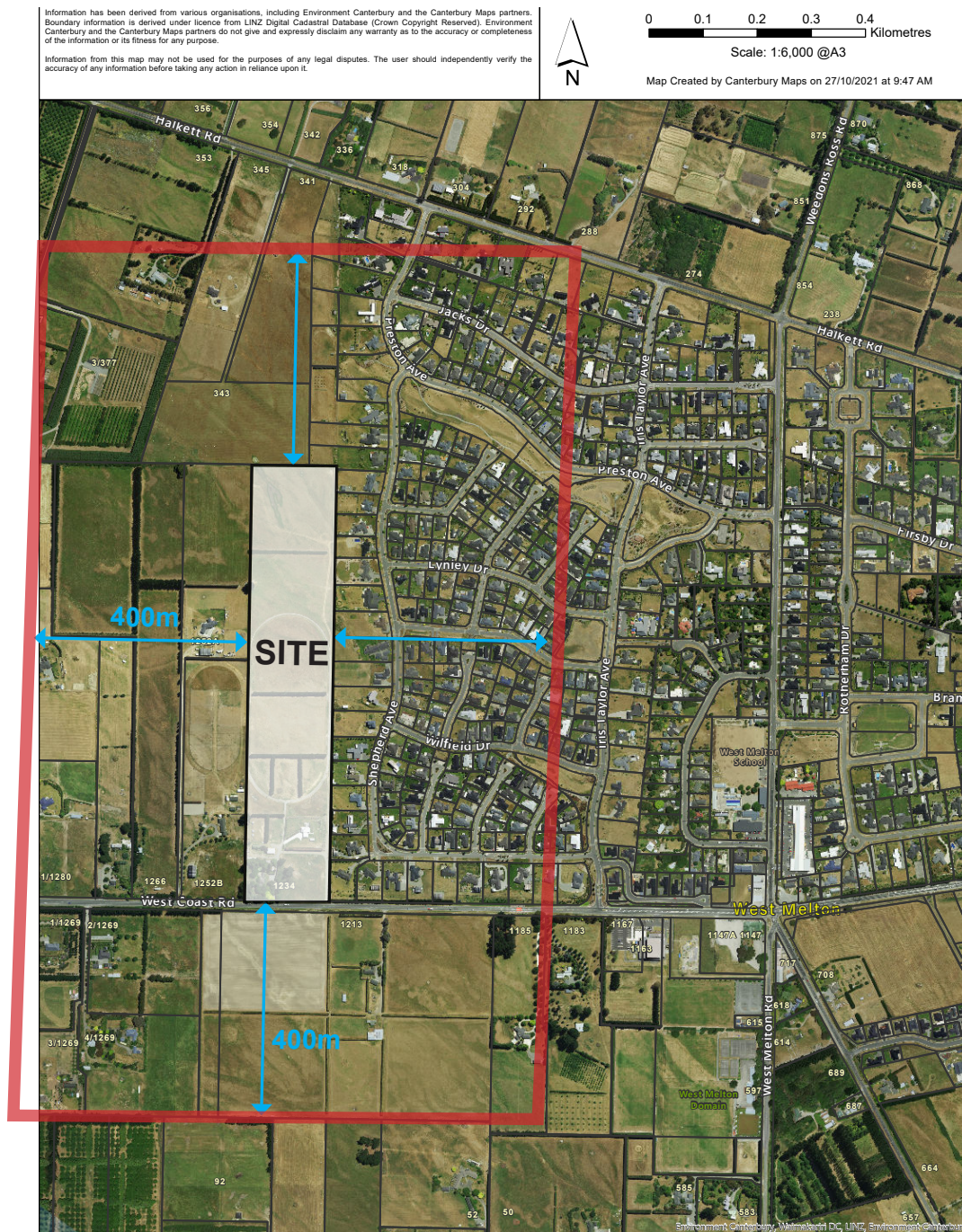
To ensure coherence but also provide flexibility the plan change has adopted the residential zone Living Z in response to the already existing zones adjacent to the Site. The retirement village will result in a higher overall density for the plan change Site than the existing zones and will initiate change to the site itself and the immediate neighbours. However, due to the internalising of the highest densities, the landscape edge treatment to all boundaries and the strategic placement of large open space and utility reserves, the proposed plan change will retain a character that will integrate into the wider context on the ground.

When compared to surrounding residential development it will be perceived as an extension of residential development along the edge of a township. This type of urban growth is considered appropriate for this setting on the edge of the township and therefore does not change the overall landscape values experienced within the wider receiving environment.

5. VISUAL ASSESSMENT

5.1 EXISTING VISUAL CONTEXT

The visual context of the receiving environment is considered to be an approximately 400m buffer around the ODP boundary. The series of key viewpoints were selected to show a representative sample of the likely visual effects which could result from the proposal. Viewpoints are generally located on public land and, where possible, located as close as possible to existing or proposed residential dwellings. In assessing the potential effect of a proposal, the quality and openness of the view is considered as well as the availability of alternative views.



Views from the North

Along the western edge of Preston Avenue, to the northwest of the Site, properties are larger and dwellings have larger setbacks to their western boundary. These dwellings experience fairly open views south-westwards into the rural surroundings through the northern edge of the Site, until this view is blocked by large east west shelterbelt. There is one rural dwelling north of the Site set back around 300m that has open views into the northernmost part of the site. The large shelterbelt block the view from this dwelling reaching further south through the site.

Most of the affected Preston Avenue and northern Shepherd Avenue properties are well set back from site boundary and are experiencing views across several other landscaped garden onto the northern part of the Site.

Views from the South

There are no direct views from rural dwellings to the south across SH73 into the site due to extensive tree planting, hedge planting, and large dwelling setbacks.

Views from the West

There are two rural residential dwellings sharing an internal boundary to the west of the site. These are currently experiencing open views into the Site through open rural style fencing. The sparsely landscaped domestic curtilage of these dwellings provide some visual screening when combined with the auxiliary buildings on site, however due to a lack of established boundary vegetation there are still larger stretches where views deeper into the Site can be experienced.

While western views into the site are fairly open, slightly angled views north-east or south-east through the Site are interrupted by large shelterbelts.

The east-west shelterbelts internal to the site will most likely be removed as part of the development process. This will open views north or south through the site for the two dwellings directly west, where the domestic curtilage has vegetation gaps. At the time of the visual assessment, the exact location of the shelterbelts couldn't be determined, nor was it possible to access the rural properties to ascertain individual vegetation cover around the dwellings. The visual assessment is therefore based on the information available through the study of aerial photos (sourced from Canterbury Maps)

Further west are 5 dwellings with no views into the Site due to several large shelterbelts running north-south.

Views from the East

The existing residential properties along Shepherd Avenue experience views into the rural parts of the site ranging from open unobstructed to partially screened to fully screened depending on the individual location and existing edge treatment of the shared boundary with Site.

At the southern end, an established shelterbelt blocks views into the rural part of the site. The midsection displays some boundary vegetation with intermittent gaps, providing partial screening depending on height and type of vegetation. The northernmost part of the shared boundary has the least established vegetation and therefore allows for deeper views into the rural site.

The key views outlined above have been used as a reference point where it is considered that the effects are likely to be similar with regard to the potential effects on visually sensitive receptors.

The table in Appendix A lists the potential visual effects for each view, or group of views, and how the effects may potentially be mitigated. The effects take into account the likely sensitivity of the receptor or affected party (based on type), combined with the likely magnitude of effects (a combination of distance from the proposal and degree of change) to determine what the likely residual effects from the proposal will be.

Detailed mitigation measures will be covered in Section 6 of this document.

5.2 SUMMARY OF EFFECTS ON VISUAL AMENITY

The proposal, either as a retirement village, or as a standard LZ development with medium density overlay, would result in an overall change in character from open and rural to one that is denser and urban in nature. For the purpose of this visual assessment, a retirement village is assumed due to the intensity of the development. This would have the following effects:

Interface with Rural neighbours (west)

The two nearby existing dwellings to the west do have limited domestic curtilage, partially screening the Site, and currently observe a rural outlook. The proposal would position an urban density development on their eastern boundary therefore changing the nature of the view from these properties to an urban outlook. To mitigate this, the development proposes a landscaped edge treatment, including dense shrub and tress, screening views into the Site. To accommodate this treatment there will be a building setback of at least 6m. The inclusion of trees ensures partial screening of the dense urban roofscape of the development.

The owners of these two rural properties may also be affected on their approaches along SH 73 when travelling from West Melton town centre home. The urban character of the PC site in closer proximity to their properties, reduces the sense of separation to the township.

The dwellings located further west of the Site are still within the visual catchment however existing vegetation screening, combined with the distance of the existing rural dwelling to the PC Site, means that the proposed change from rural to urban density will have a negligible impact on the visual amenity experienced.

Interface with Rural neighbours (north)

There is one rural dwelling north of the Site with open views into the proposed development. This dwelling has no domestic curtilage. An equivalent edge treatment to that in the west of the site is proposed to mitigate adverse effects to the outlook of this dwelling.

Properties north of Halkett Road are not within the visual catchment area of the site and sit behind large hedges, screening any views to the Site.

In addition, all the rural properties to west and north have alternative rural views further mitigating the effects.

Nevertheless landscape mitigation is proposed along the western and northern boundaries to ensure a high visual amenity is maintained.

Reverse sensitivity

While mitigating potential effects on the visual amenity for rural properties is possible, reverse sensitivity between the rural and residential activities also needs to be considered.

There are no real concerns about adverse effects with regard to reverse sensitivity for the smaller rural lifestyle blocks to the west and north as the rural activities are mostly low intensity grazing.

In addition to the proposed landscape treatment along the rural interface appropriate fencing to prevent stock from reaching into residential gardens is proposed.

Interface with SH 73

The southern boundary treatment consists of

- a stormwater treatment area including related planting at the southeast end of the Site,
- a 40m building setback from SH 73
- a landscaped buffer within that setback at the southwest corner of the Site

The above mitigation measures will retain as much of the rural character as possible and provide a high visual amenity.

A consistent low and open style rural fence is recommended along the road boundary. This will be coupled with tree planting within the road reserve to partially screen dwellings and to break the 'skyline' created by multiple roof lines.

All these measures, coupled with the road reserve of SH 73 give a significant level of buffering and screening between the Site and any future developments to the south.

Residential properties to the east.

There are adverse visual effects on outlook and openness for several residents of Sheperds Avenue. Depending on the existing extent of boundary vegetation, views into the rural part the site are currently available for several of the properties.

Southern properties (Shepherds Ave)

The most southern properties on Shepherds Avenue will be unaffected if the Macrocarpa hedge is retained as their outlook would not change. Should the hedge be removed they will experience views into the stormwater area in the south of the site.

Progressing further north the properties gain more and more open views into the site. These properties will experience a change in outlook as a result of the proposal introducing an urban character into the site. To mitigate the effects, a boundary treatment is proposed that includes hedge planting up to 5m in height to retain privacy between existing and new properties, and intermittent tree planting to partially screen the denser roofscape. This treatment will be similar to the existing boundary treatment for these properties.

Remaining properties (mid and northern section)

Most properties along this boundary currently have some boundary planting along their shared boundary with the rural land and experience framed views and in some instances open views into the Site. The proposed development will change this rural outlook to an outlook into a residential development with typical residential characteristics. They will have views onto dwellings, rooflines and residential type landscaping and fencing associated with this type of residential density. Without mitigation this change will impact on their visual amenity.

The proposed landscape strategy (E52A) goes a long way to mitigate the potential effects of the proposal for these western neighbours through several landscape measures. This includes a min. 6m wide landscaped area along the entire western boundary with evergreen hedges and intermittent tree planting to provide a strong visual screen and ensure privacy between the existing and proposed residential activities.

Further mitigation is provided where recreational reserves and stormwater treatment areas are located along the western boundary creating open space and a high visual amenity through landscaping. Within these open spaces tree planting can be positioned in strategic locations to block views onto building but still allow views into the open spaces within the development.

A third mitigation measure is the strategic positioning of street trees either in clusters in suitable locations within the road reserve or as avenue style tree planting along the internal main-north south road. This landscape approach will break the linear development up into smaller components making it easier to integrate into the existing development character

A further mitigating factor is the generous dwelling setbacks of the existing Sheperds Avenue houses from the shared internal boundary with the proposed Site. Although not officially accepted as a mitigation measure, most of these properties their own landscaped edge treatment. Some of this vegetation is fairly recent and most likely planted to provide shelter and privacy. Over time this vegetation will be able to assist in creating a layering effects further screening views into the development with intermittent taller roof lines visible above.

The combination of all the above mitigation reduces the effects on these existing residential properties but still will constitute a change in the visual amenity from a rural to a residential character.

Wider Context

Within the wider visual amenity context the proposed development will be different in character to the existing residential development due to its density and the nature of a retirement village. While the density of development will be greater, the style of building will be of a similar nature, primarily standalone single story dwellings

Public environments

Travellers primarily motorists, along SH 73 currently have fleeting views into the Plan Change site. A change from rural to urban is already occurring along this road stretch at the western edge of the township and is anticipated. A change in landuse and visual amenity from rural to urban is expected when travelling to/from West Melton township. Effects on road users are therefore considered acceptable.

6. MITIGATION MEASURES

The following mitigation measures are suggested to either avoid, remedy, or mitigate any potential effects on Landscape Character, Landscape Values, and/or Visual Amenity.

Some measures are key components of well-functioning urban environments and typically incorporated into residential developments to ensure an open character with a high level of amenity is achieved:

MM1 - provision of large reserves to break up the built environment

This is provided for on the ODP. Detailed design matters will be confirmed at the time of subdivision consent applications.

MM2 - Retention of some of the established trees and garden vegetation around existing dwellings. Where suitable this will be integrated into open spaces and setback areas to provide immediate scale, visual points of reference and ensure a visual break in the roof lines of the development. Decisions on any retention of trees should be undertaken at detailed design stage. This can be addressed at subdivision stage (see District Plan assessment matters 12.1.4.41).

MM3 - Density distribution that is responsive to the amenity of the Site and adjoining sites.

This is provided for through the proposed Living Z zone which is a fairly flexible residential zone allowing for a range of lot sizes, including medium density. Higher densities and smaller lots can be located towards the centre of the development and adjacent to high amenity open space and high amenity street environments, whilst low density lots would create a buffer along the southern, northern and western edge of the plan change site. This will assist with reducing 'urban-like' effects onto the open character of the adjoining properties. A similar approach applies to the retirement village, where the smaller sites are located internally within the centre of the site with the larger properties along the edges.

MM4 - Consistent low / permeable fencing adjacent to reserves (as required by operative District Plan rule 4.17).

Closed board timber fences can have an adverse effect on the amenity of residential developments and the sense of space, particularly as lot sizes decrease and the distance between fences is less. Solid fences can also have a negative effect on the character and safety of public reserves by limiting the potential for passive surveillance from adjoining properties.

MM5 - Rural fencing and screening planting along rural edge.

To mitigate potential visual amenity effects and reverse sensitivity effects on the adjoining rural properties to the west and north, it is suggested that an open style rural fence is used. While grazing occurs on the rural land to the west, a secondary open wire fence can be positioned to protect the planting. These matters can be incorporated into developer covenants at subdivision stage.

MM6 - SH73 boundary treatment

Use a cohesive low / permeable rural fencing to provide a cohesive streetscene (to be implemented through developers covenants as appropriate). Use street tree planting in road reserve to break the roof line of denser development.

Provide landscaped buffer and larger dwelling setbacks to SH 73.

MM7 - Eastern boundary treatment

To mitigate potential visual amenity effects on the adjoining residential properties to the east, it is suggested that an open style rural fence is used and a planted buffer. This can take the form of manageable hedge type planting suitable for a residential environments and should include tree planting to partially screen views onto rooflines. Planting needs to be positioned in strategic locations to block views onto buildings but still allow views into the open spaces within the development. These matters can be incorporated into developer covenants at subdivision stage.

MM8 - Retirement Village specific Landscape Strategy - refer to E52A

7. CONCLUSION

Landscape character

The change in character is considered to be one of landuse intensity with the area already exhibiting a mixed semi-rural and semi residential character. The degree of openness will be lessened with residential dwellings establishing, however this difference is considered overall less than minor in terms of Landscape Character as the plan change area will be viewed as a natural extension of the residential development of West Melton and not as a standalone settlement.

Natural Character

The proposal is not considered to have any effects on Natural Character as the natural character is already heavily modified within the rural environment. The site does not currently have any significant natural features that contribute to the wider natural character. The existing shelterbelts are a common feature of a working rural landscape, so are the small waterways/drainage channels along at the northern and southern boundaries. Whilst the shelterbelts will most likely be removed as they are not compatible with a residential development, the waterways can be integrated into the proposed landscaped buffer and edge treatment of each respective boundary.

Landscape Values

The proposal Site is bounded on the east by urban residential development and bounded on the other 3 sides by rural land and roads. Residential development extending into the Site can be anticipated within these perimeter areas around a township over time. The Landscape Values will be affected by this change but, with successful implementation of the relevant mitigation measures, these effects on Landscape Values are considered minor.

Visual amenity

Rural dwellings in the vicinity do not experience change of any significance from their dwellings, including domestic curtilage, due to large setbacks and existing vegetation screening or auxiliary structure screening view . The visual effects on them are considered less than minor after implementation of the mitigation measures along the western, northern, and southern boundaries of the site.

The most affected parties after successful implementation of mitigation measures are the dwellings to the east along Shepherds Avenue where they share a boundary with the Site. The visual effects resulting from the development are considered moderate at the start, moving to moderate-low, once the planting measures at the boundary progressively establish. The visual effects can reduce to low once the trees and boundary vegetation grow to their full height and width.

This planting mitigation should be started at a very early stage and protected during construction to ensure it is successfully implemented. It is evident that the visual amenity for all the western neighbours will change in character from rural to urban. However, this change can be considered appropriate at the edge of a township where growth over time is anticipated. The proposed mitigation measures will ensure that the new outlook onto a landscaped edge still constitutes a high amenity visual environment.

Adverse effects experienced by the public are considered less than minor as they are intermittent and fleeting. They only occur on public streets and no reserves or public open spaces are affected.

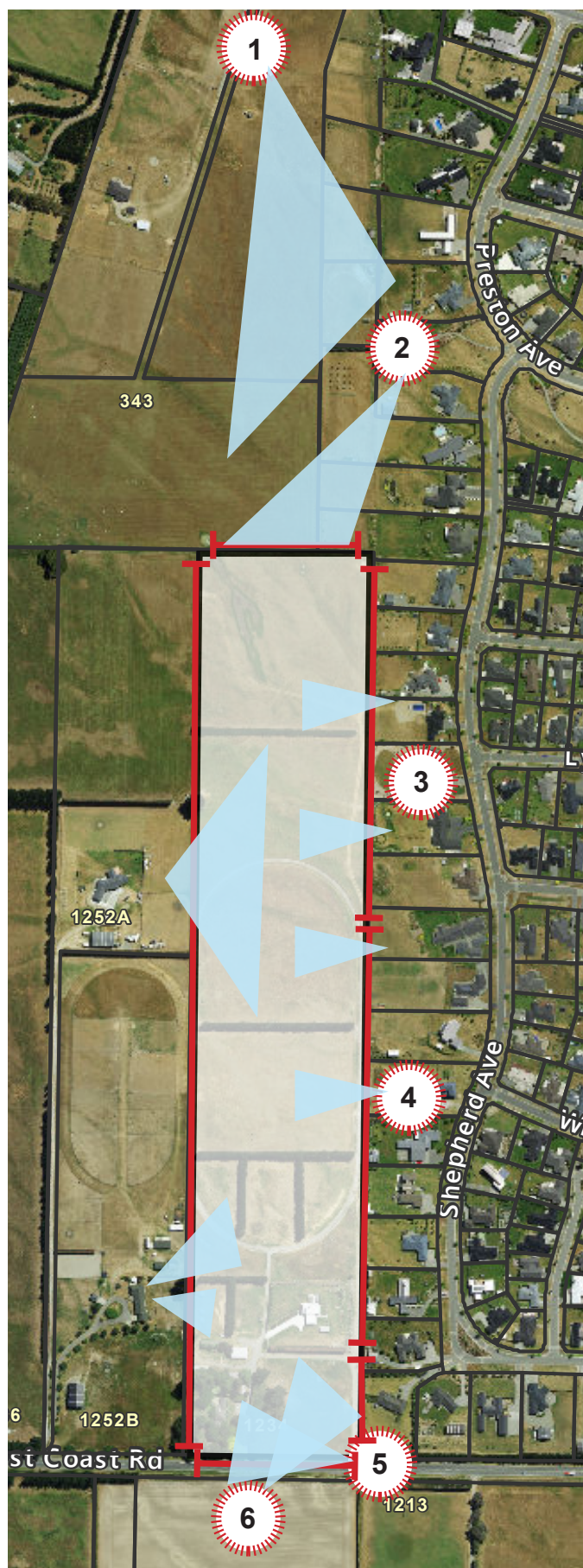
Overall, it is considered that with successful implementation of the mitigation measures the overall adverse effects on Visual Amenity resulting from the proposal will be moderate to minor at the start and minor to less than minor with all mitigation measures fully established.

APPENDIX A

Visual assessment table and views



Viewpoint and area where visual assessment of viewpoint applies



VIEWPOINT 1



View southeast from Halkett Road onto northern boundary

VIEWPOINT 2



View from utility reserve on shepherd Avenue towards north west corner of the Site

VIEWPOINT 3



View to Site between existing properties on Sheperds Avenue

VIEWPOINT 4



Views through residential properties around mid-section of Shepherd Ave, looking westwards onto site



Zoomed view showing boundary treatment at rural / residential interface

VIEWPOINT 5



View from SH 73 looking north-east into Site

VIEWPOINT 6



View from SH 73 south-west corner of site looking north-west