



Ohiro Properties Limited

**Visual Impact Assessment
Private Plan Change
Ohiro Road, Wellington**

June 2004

Quality Assurance Statement	
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1. Introduction

This report has been prepared in relation to a proposed private plan change within Wellington City. It provides an assessment of the anticipated visual impact of the proposed plan change from Rural to Outer Residential for twelve properties along Ohiro Road, Brooklyn.

2. Location and Legal Description

Brooklyn, a residential suburb of Wellington, is located approximately 5 kilometres south-west of Wellington's central business district. The suburb is located over the slopes and along the ridges of several steep valleys. The main vehicular thoroughfare through Brooklyn is Ohiro Road, which runs along the floor of a steeply incised valley and links Wellington's central business district to the city's southern suburbs. The proposal site is located along Ohiro Road, on the western slopes of the narrow valley. A location map is shown Figure 1.



Figure 1: Location of site in relation to Wellington urban area.

The plan change is proposed for the following eight properties located along Ohiro Road: Lot 1 DP59971, Pt SBDN 17 Sec 14, Lot 1 DP 50192, Lot 2 DP 50192, Lot 3 DP 50192, Lot 2 DP 83641, Lot 1 DP 83641, Lot 61 DP 61507, Lot 2 DP69375, Lot 1 DP86738, Pt Lot 3 DP69375 and Lot 1 DP 69375.

3. Site Description

The properties are located on a steep, densely vegetated, western slope of a narrow valley. Most of the properties have a single access road off Ohiro Road, and a few have a single residential house on the property. Most of the houses are located within close proximity of Ohiro Road. An aerial view of the proposal site is shown at Figure 2. Figure 2 also shows the top of the western and eastern ridgelines, indicating the narrowness of the valley.



Figure 2: Aerial view of the proposal site

The lots are zoned Rural within the Wellington City Council District Plan. Surrounding the lots to the north, east and west are Outer Residential zoned properties. Along the western boundary is an Open Space B zoned recreation/lookout reserve. To the south, Rural zoned properties continue. A map showing the proposal site in relation to the District Plan zoning is shown Figure 3.

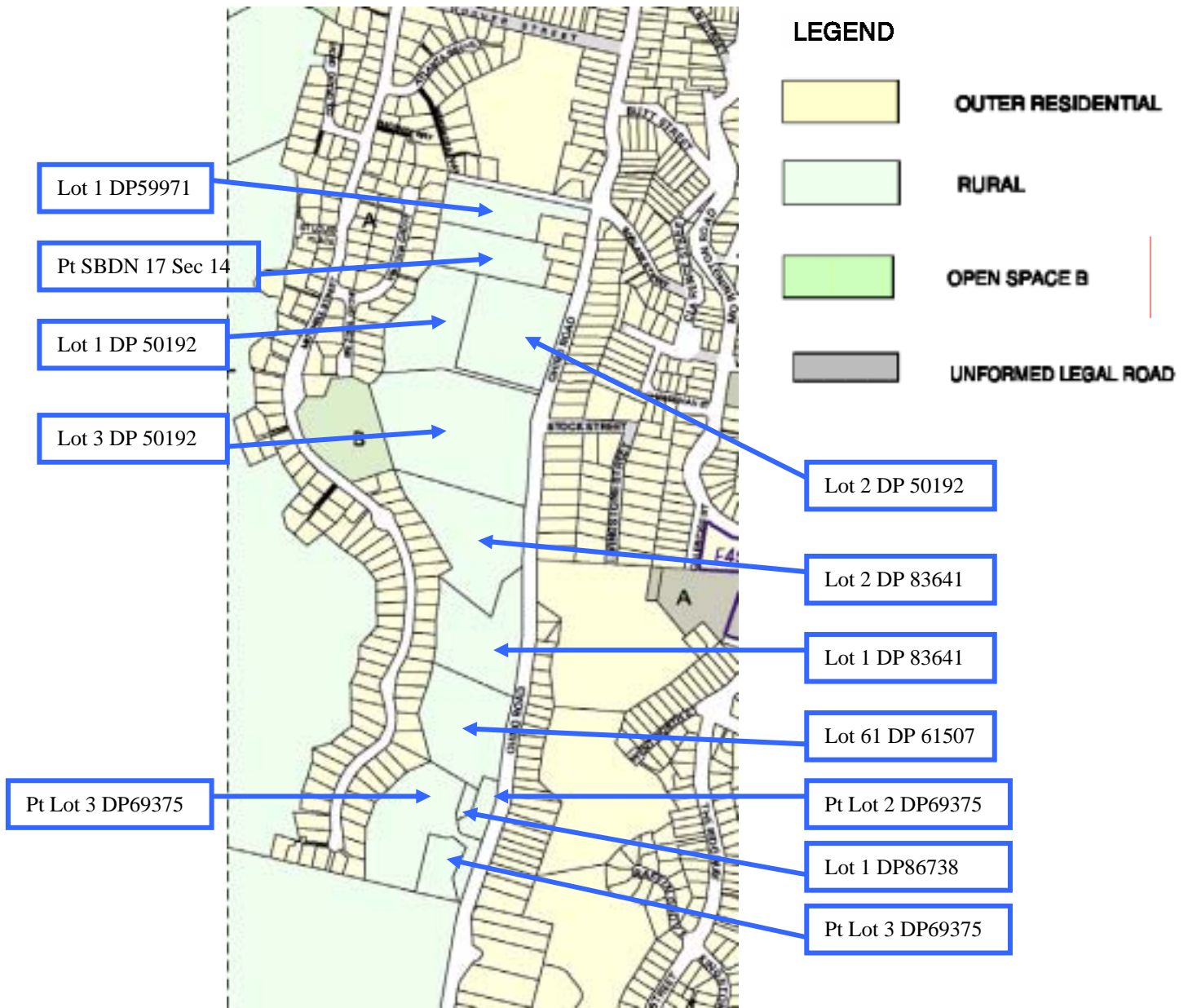


Figure 3: Excerpt from Wellington City Council District Planning Map 6

The Rural zoned properties of the proposal site are surrounded (north, west and east) by suburban, residential bungalows and villas built on the steep slopes and ridgelines of the valley. On the opposite (eastern) side of the valley, steep, narrow roads climb up the slopes and along the ridgeline throughout the Outer Residential area. Timber houses are perched over the slopes amongst established trees.

Along Ohiro Road at the foot of the eastern slope of the valley, and intermittently at the foot of the western slope, are houses with direct access onto Ohiro Road. The valley floor is narrow and the houses are nestled close to the road edge with narrow, or no, front yards.

Above the proposal site, on top of the western slope, Outer Residential suburban development occurs over the ridgeline. Rear yard boundaries of existing residences back onto the Rural zoned properties which are the subject of the proposed plan change. Garden escapes and rubbish are evident in the dense undergrowth at the interface of Outer Residential/Open Space and Rural properties.

Dense, predominantly native vegetation covers the proposal site properties. There are numerous steep gullies leading from the ridgeline above, down to Ohiro Road through the site, and taller vegetation has established within these drainage lines. The dense vegetation extends to the Ohiro Road edge and existing residential property boundaries above and below the proposal site.

Immediately to the south and in the adjacent valley to the west, vegetated properties (predominantly gorse) cover the slopes and ridgelines providing a 'green' buffer to the city landfill (located to the south-west), and backdrop to the Outer Residential suburban area. The extensive area of vegetated slopes marks a visual transition from the urban to the rural environment.

4. Proposal

It is proposed to change the zoning of the proposal site properties from Rural to Outer Residential. The expectation is that following a plan change to Outer Residential, the proposal site could then be developed consistent with permitted or consented activities for the Outer Residential zone. It is possible then, that the site could be utilised for housing and residential infrastructure, extending the Outer Residential zone by infilling between the existing residential development above and below the proposal site.

5. District Plan

Wellington City Council District Plan is considered in terms of Objectives, Policies and Rules relating to visual amenity for residential areas. Chapter 4 of the Plan outlines the character and intent for residential areas of the city. Chapter 4.1 states...

The Outer Residential Area contains the remaining suburbs, from the Inner Town Belt to the boundary of the Rural Areas. Tawa is in the Outer area. In the Outer Residential Area, houses are usually located on larger sections and developments are more spacious. Residential character varies depending on the type of landform and the extent of vegetation. Most non-residential activities in the area are of a type that directly service local residents.

In both the Inner and Outer areas new development will be provided for in a manner that will respect existing forms. Council's approach in Residential Areas is to permit appropriate activities and to assess others on a controlled or discretionary basis. This is considered necessary to protect the character and amenities of Residential Areas. The intention is to make specific development standards as flexible as possible to encourage development opportunities without harming the amenities of the area.

Permitted Activities are those which are normally undertaken in Residential Areas and allow these areas to remain the primary living environments of the city. In accordance with the aims of sustainable management no minimum site area requirement is included in this Plan, in order to encourage more intensive development. This will be closely monitored to ensure that character or amenity standards are not reduced to any significant extent.

...

The Plan identifies objectives and policies to assist in maintaining visual amenity within other Residential Areas. The surrounding residential area of the proposal site, however, is not identified as an area of special streetscape. Objective 4.2.2 states:

4.2.2 To maintain and enhance the amenity values of Residential Areas

POLICIES

To achieve this objective, Council will:

4.2.2.1 Control the potential adverse effects of residential activities.

METHODS

- Rules
- National standard access design criteria
- Advocacy

People expect that the amenity standards of the Residential Areas of the city where most people live will be maintained to a level that sustains the residents' enjoyment of their suburb. For this reason District Plan rules have been imposed.

...

4.2.2.5 Manage any adverse effects of earthworks.

METHODS

- Rules
- Other mechanisms (WCC Bylaws)

Earthworks associated with land development and building is an essential activity throughout the Residential Area. The Plan therefore allows most forms of earthworks but retains controls to prevent unnecessary visual scarring of the landscape. Issues concerning the safety of earthworks are dealt with by the City Bylaws.

Objective 4.2.3 states:

4.2.3 To maintain and enhance the physical character of Residential Areas and identified areas of special streetscape or townscape character.

POLICIES

To achieve this objective, Council will:

- 4.2.3.1 Control the siting, scale and intensity of new residential buildings to reflect the differences between older and more recent suburban Residential Areas.**

METHODS

- Rules
- Other mechanism (Building Act)

The rules for all new residential buildings have been set to recognise the differences between the older, more densely developed Inner Residential Areas and the Outer Areas, including Tawa. The Inner Residential rules are more lenient and acknowledge that development in these areas is more compact and intensive. In both the Inner and Outer Areas the way the rules are applied will permit development in a manner that reflects their general character. The rules include variations aimed at accommodating different development forms in localised areas such as Oriental Bay.

...

Objective 4.2.4:

- 4.2.4 To ensure that the adverse effects of new subdivisions are avoided, remedied or mitigated.**

POLICIES

To achieve this objective, Council will:

- 4.2.4.1 Allow infill subdivision within suburban areas subject to conditions or criteria which ensure adverse effects, including cumulative effects, are avoided, remedied or mitigated and that sites are suitable for intended uses.**

METHOD

- Rules

To help promote a sustainable city Council seeks to minimise the peripheral expansion of urban development and to allow more intensive development within the existing urban area. Encouragement will be given to the further subdivision of existing sites. Other plan controls will work to ensure that the general character and amenity of particular neighbourhoods or character areas is maintained.

The environmental result will be more intense building development in Residential Areas.

- 4.2.4.2 Control greenfield subdivision to ensure that adverse effects are avoided, remedied or mitigated and that if land is developed, it is developed in a way that will lead to neighbourhoods which have a high amenity standard and which are adequately integrated with existing infrastructure.**

METHODS

- Rules
- Design Guides

The District Plan Maps identify the extent of urban (primarily residential) areas on the basis of existing residential and suburban centre development and land subject to current subdivision consents. In accordance with the purpose of sustainable management, the aim is to provide for the intensification of land use within the urban area and to accommodate, where adverse effects can be avoided, remedied or mitigated, the orderly development of new subdivisions on the fringes of the existing urban area.

In most circumstances greenfield subdivision will be considered as part of a District Plan change to extend the urban area. This enables the full effects of the potential development to be assessed. Assessments will include the design of the subdivision, its impact on the natural and physical environment, and constraints (such as natural hazards) imposed by the environment.

The environmental result will be a more compact city and, where approved, the development of new subdivisions that are well designed and integrated with existing infrastructure.

...

Objective 4.2.5:

4.2.5 To maintain and enhance natural features (including landscapes and ecosystems) that contribute to Wellington's natural environment.

POLICIES

To achieve this objective, Council will:

4.2.5.1 Protect significant escarpments, coastal cliffs and areas of open space from development and visual obstruction.

METHOD

- Rules

The Wellington faultscarp, coastal cliffs, and areas of open space are important components of the city's visual character, which Council seeks to preserve. Where these are not protected by public ownership, Council aims to restrict and avoid, remedy or mitigate the visual impact of any development. The Open Space and Rural rules deal primarily with this issue. However, where possible, Council will seek added protection where subdivision or other non-permitted residential development is proposed.

The environmental result will be the protection of significant features of the Wellington landscape.

4.2.5.2 Encourage the protection of undeveloped skylines and ridges that make an important contribution to the landscape of Wellington.

METHOD

- Design Guide (Subdivision)

Undeveloped skylines are another important component of the landscape which should be preserved. The visual intrusion caused by structures can be dramatic, and for this reason Council seeks to limit development. To prevent adverse effects, ridges and skylines will be evaluated for their landscape significance and development on significant skylines will be restricted.

The environmental result will be the protection of significant skylines from intrusive new developments.

4.2.5.3 Ensure that any approved earthworks are designed and engineered to reflect natural landforms.

METHODS

- Rules
- Design Guide (Subdivision)
- Other mechanisms (WCC Bylaw Part 8) (Earthworks)

Because excavations or earth fills can leave unnatural forms or unsightly scars which detract from the amenities of an area, Council considers that controls on such activities are necessary. The city bylaws control earthworks to ensure that they are properly engineered, whereas the District Plan provisions enable amenity considerations to be assessed.

The environmental result will be to ensure that earthworks, when completed, will not cause a visual detraction.

4.2.5.4 Encourage retention of existing vegetation, especially established trees and existing native vegetation.

METHODS

- Rules
- Design Guide (Subdivision)
- Conservation Strategy
- Open Space Strategy

Existing native vegetation and established trees are an important element in Wellington's landscape and can also have importance as wildlife habitat, as linking corridors and buffer zones, and for soil and water conservation values. Remaining areas of native vegetation and established trees will be retained as far as possible where subdivision or other development is proposed.

The environmental result will be the greater protection of existing native vegetation on sites.

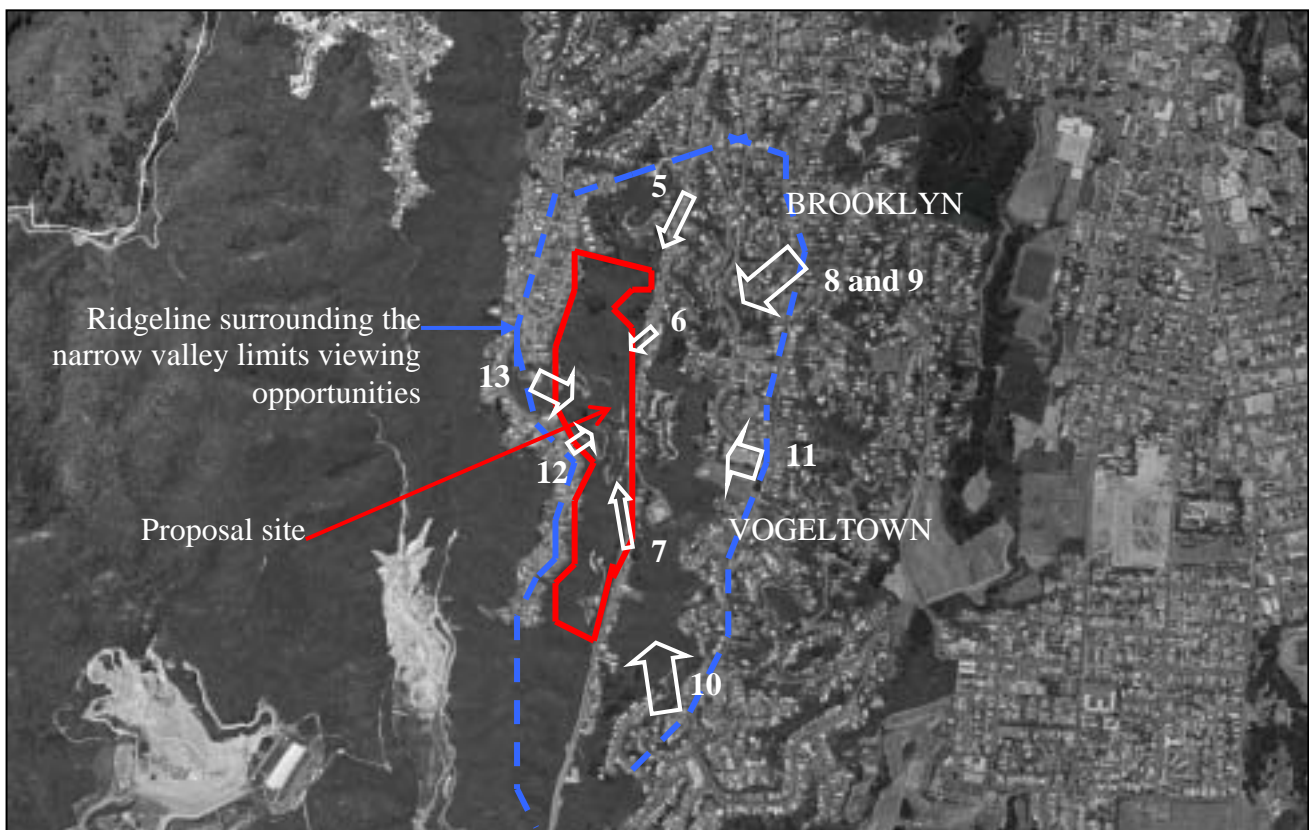
To comply with the District Plan, new subdivision or other development is required to:

- € respect existing forms
- € maintain the general character and amenity of the Outer Residential zone
- € prevent unnecessary visual scarring of the landscape
- € be well designed and integrated with existing infrastructure
- € not affect protection of existing features of the Wellington landscape such as ridges and significant areas of open space.
- € retain remaining areas of native vegetation and established trees as far as possible.

Assessment of specific development proposals would be undertaken within this framework.

6. Site Assessment

The proposal site is seen from limited viewing points. The narrow, long valley the site is located within, limits visual access to the site. Vantage points are only possible from Ohiro Road, the residential area located on the eastern slope of the valley (Vogeltown/Brooklyn), and the residential area on the ridgeline above the proposal site (Mitchell Street, Brooklyn). The map at Figure 4 illustrates the extent of viewing areas as limited by the local landform (the viewshed). Topography, existing vegetation and structures further limit the range of residential properties and publicly accessible locations within the viewshed from which views to the site are possible.



Key – numbers refer to figure numbers within this report

6.1 Ohiro Road

Ohiro Road is an arterial road and the main route between Wellington city and the southern suburb of Owhiro Bay. Viewing locations from Ohiro Road are limited by topography, existing structures, and vegetation. Travelling along Ohiro Road from the city, the vegetated slopes of the proposal site are seen as a backdrop to residential development in the foreground (refer Figure 5). The view of the site is quite restricted from Ohiro Road until the viewer is at the base of the proposal site area. The view of the site from closer proximity (refer Figure 6) is of the dense vegetation covering the slopes of the proposal site extending down to Ohiro Road.



Figure 5: View from the south toward the proposal site



Figure 6: View from opposite the proposal site

Views of the proposal site from the south show the vegetated steep slopes opposite residential development in the background and along Ohiro Road (refer Figure 7). Close proximity views of the site from residences along Ohiro Road are constrained by the elevation of the proposal site. The primary view upwards toward the proposal site are of the vegetated slopes, however, views are tempered by the traffic and infrastructure of Ohiro Road in the foreground.



Figure 7: View looking north toward the proposal site

If the proposed plan change from Rural to Outer Residential zone were to proceed, it would be anticipated that the vegetated slopes of the proposal site would be infilled with residential development.

Views from Ohiro Road residences would alter to an outlook upon residential development. Residents along the east of Ohiro Road would view the new residential area at closer proximity although views into the residential area would be restricted due to the steep elevation of the western slope.

Vegetated slopes of properties south of the proposal site would act as a backdrop to the infill development when viewing toward the south from the northern end of Ohiro Road.

6.2 Vogelstown/Brooklyn

The outlook from many existing residences within the residential area on the eastern slopes of the valley is toward the proposal site and the vegetated steep slopes on the western side of the valley. From these residences, direct views into the proposal site are possible. The view is tempered by a ribbon of residential development along the ridgeline above the proposal site, and along Ohiro Road below the proposal site. Figures 8 and 9 show views from the residential area of Vogelstown and Brooklyn looking south-west toward the proposal site. Figure 10 shows the view looking north toward the proposal site.



Figure 8: View from Clarence St, Brooklyn (a view looking south-west)



Figure 9: View from Mornington St, Brooklyn (a view looking south-west)

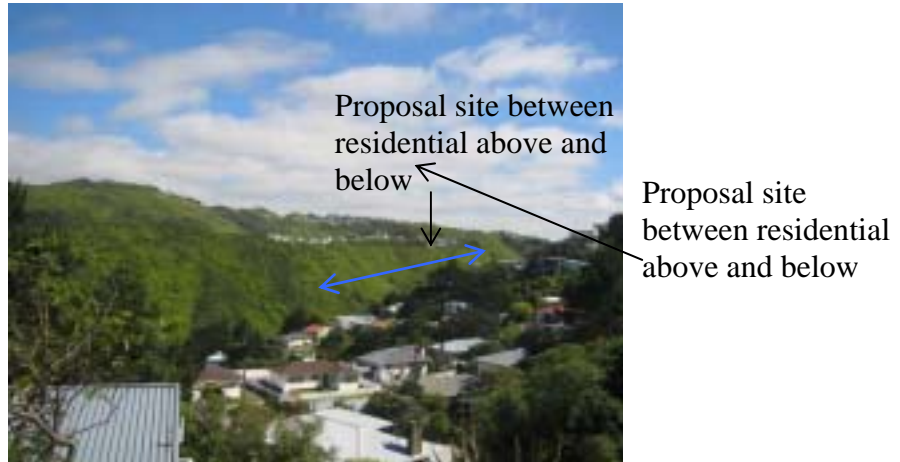


Figure 10: View from Camrose Street, Vogelstown (view looking north-west)

As the ridgeline of the western slope has been developed as a residential area, the proposal site is fringed with an ‘urban’ strip. The proposal site is rendered as an isolated finger of ‘green’ surrounded by the urban ‘built’ landscape. Beyond the ridgeline, vegetated slopes of properties to the west provide a green, hilly backdrop.

A view from Mornington Road looking directly west toward the proposal site is shown Figure 11. However, as seen in the Figure, the proposal site is lower in elevation than existing residential development and is not visible from many areas of Vogelstown and Brooklyn.



Figure 11: View from Mornington Road looking west toward proposal site

If the proposed plan change were to proceed, the view from residences with a direct outlook onto the proposal site would alter. Views would comprise a more extensive outlook over residential development and views over vegetated slopes would be found only in the background rather than the middle ground.

However, given the location of the proposal site between existing residential areas, it may be an expected and realistic outlook that the western slope would be developed for residential purposes, complementing the residential development of the opposite, eastern slope.

6.3 Mitchell Street, Brooklyn

6.3.1 Residences

Several properties along the eastern side of Mitchell Street share a rear property boundary with the proposal site. They have direct views into the proposal site, however, the close proximity of these vantage points does not allow wide views of the vegetated slopes of the site. The view of the proposal site has very short range into dense vegetation that occurs along the boundary. The predominant outlook from these properties is of the opposite (eastern) slope of the valley, and the Outer Residential area of Vogelstown and Brooklyn. An example of the outlook from Mitchell Street residential area is shown Figure 12.



Figure 12: View between houses of Mitchell Street that back onto the proposal site

If the proposed plan change proceeds, the view from these houses would be similar to the existing view. The predominant outlook over the residential area of Vogelstown and Brooklyn would not be affected by the proposal.

6.3.2 Kowhai Lookout

Along Mitchell Street is a public reserve, Kowhai Lookout. The landform and position of the lookout in relation to the proposal site, prevents direct views of the proposal site from the public road edge of the reserve. From within the reserve, and from the vantage of the lookout, a panorama of the surrounding area and of Wellington Harbour is possible. The view includes the residential area of Vogelstown and Brooklyn on the opposite (eastern) slope, however, does not provide direct views into the proposal site.

Figure 13 shows a view from Kowhai Lookout in the direction of the proposal site. The view from Kowhai Lookout would be unaffected by the proposal.



Proposal site out of view down slope

Figure 13: View toward proposal site from Kowhai Lookout

6.4 Summary

Views of the proposal site are very limited due to the topography of the area. The proposal site is seen by road users and residents along Ohiro Road, and from residences located on the eastern slope of the valley. The proposal site is not easily viewed from Mitchell Street.

Residents along Ohiro Road have a close proximity view, across Ohiro Road, directly onto the existing dense vegetation of the proposal site. Many residents of Vogeltown and Brooklyn also have a direct outlook toward the proposal site and its vegetated slopes. Views toward the proposal site are fringed with residential development along the ridgeline of the western slope and in the foreground along Ohiro Road.

The proposed plan change would alter views from these residential areas. The outlook toward the proposal site currently over vegetated slopes, would change to an outlook of a residential area. The proposed residential area would infill the area between existing residential development above the site along the ridgeline and below the site along Ohiro Road. Background views of vegetated ridges and slopes west of existing residential development of Mitchell Road, and south of the proposal site would not be affected by the proposed plan change.

7. Discussion

As outlined previously, in accordance with the objectives and policies of the District Plan, new subdivision or other development would be required to meet a range of criteria set out in objectives and policies for the Residential Outer Area.

The general character of the Outer Residential zone within the vicinity is typified by houses built over steep slopes with narrow roads winding over the slopes providing access to the houses. The residential area is also typified by substantial vegetation. Views of Outer Residential areas in the neighbourhood show that residences are nestled and interspersed between trees, creating an almost even visual balance between the extent of built form and vegetation.

Vegetation has largely been maintained within private lots, as generally there has not been adequate space within road reserves for tree planting or for retaining existing trees. Larger sized lots (typical of the Outer Residential zone) are required to retain and provide for mature trees.

Introducing infill residential development that provides for tall vegetation throughout the 'built' form, could promote an easy visual integration with the surrounding Outer Residential form.

Further, introducing residential development that did not create significant benching/earthworks over the slope that would remain obvious in the long term, and consequently limiting visual scarring to temporary construction effects only, would also assist integration of the site into the general character of the Outer Residential zone.

While the above measures would assist visual integration, generally it is considered that the proposed plan change would not have widespread adverse visual effects. The proposal to infill the site with residential development would not affect existing features of the Wellington landscape that require protection. The proposal would not affect ridgelines, the coastal environment, or significant areas of open space.

The anticipated development of the site that would result from the proposed plan change, would introduce a familiar and expected visual form of the urban environment into the finger of 'Rural' land that remains between two areas of existing residential development, above and below the proposal site.

8. Conclusion

Views toward the proposal site are limited by topography. Viewing positions are possible from Ohiro Road and from within the Outer Residential zone of the eastern slope of the valley – from areas of Vogeltown and Brooklyn.

Presently, views toward the proposal site from these areas are of a densely vegetated slope fringed with residential development along the ridgeline above the proposal site along Mitchell Street, and below the proposal site along Ohiro Road. The proposal site provides a pleasant green outlook for residents of Vogeltown and Brooklyn whose primary outlook is toward the west, overlooking the western slope of the valley. The site is also the start of the visual transition from urban to rural form for road users travelling south along Ohiro Road from Wellington central business district.

Views from these areas would change if the proposal for a plan change from Rural zone to Outer Residential zone were to proceed. It would be expected that the proposal site would be developed for residential purposes. The zone change would permit residential development of the site that is consistent with the neighbouring Outer Residential zone.

Following the plan change, views toward the proposal site would be of a residential area with a general character of the Outer Residential Area. The resulting form would be typical of Wellington's residential suburban development that has been established on the steep slopes and numerous valleys

located throughout Wellington City. Departure from this expectation would involve resource consents. Views toward vegetated slopes and ridges further west and south of the proposal site, would not be affected by the proposed plan change and these areas would continue to provide a vegetated background to the extended Outer Residential Area.