



# 320 The Terrace

Urban Design Report to inform  
a Plan Change for the Site at  
320 The Terrace

for  
Victoria University of Wellington

prepared by  
McIndoe Urban Ltd  
April 2015





TODAY WE'VE GOT YOUR  
BACK, JUST LIKE THE  
ALWAYS HAVE.

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# 01 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Overview

### Purpose and intent

This document provides an urban design assessment of the site at 320 The Terrace (the Site) and its immediate and wider context. The analysis highlights issues ranging from built form patterns, topography and character to landscape and connectivity.

The report been prepared to inform a Plan Change for the Site and to inform site-specific design guidelines. Urban design constraints are identified to address sensitivities in relation to neighbouring properties, views, landscape and to reinforce the important and positive local characteristics of The Terrace and rising topography to the west.

### Significance of this site

The Site is important for both the city and the university. For the city, the existing Gordon Wilson building (photos adjacent) forms a visually dominant element in views and affects the visibility and experience of the vegetated escarpment beyond. The quality of this experience and the degree to which the Gordon Wilson building contributes positively to the city is an important consideration. It can be noted that a severe juxtaposition in scale with neighbours and overall street character occurs, along with blocking of views to the escarpment

as a backdrop. The Site has the potential to contribute towards a more positive relationship between the escarpment, the city and the character of The Terrace than currently exists. Importantly it can open up new connections to Kelburn and enhance choice for a range of users.

The Site is highly significant to the university in so far as it can establish:

- a new front door and 'gateway' to the city;
- a physical and visible presence that can overcome perceptual and real access barriers;
- accommodation for new facilities;

Any development on the Site at 320 The Terrace will need to respond to the issues of relating to the city, the university, the neighbours and The Terrace in-the-round.



Local views of the Site tend to be oblique



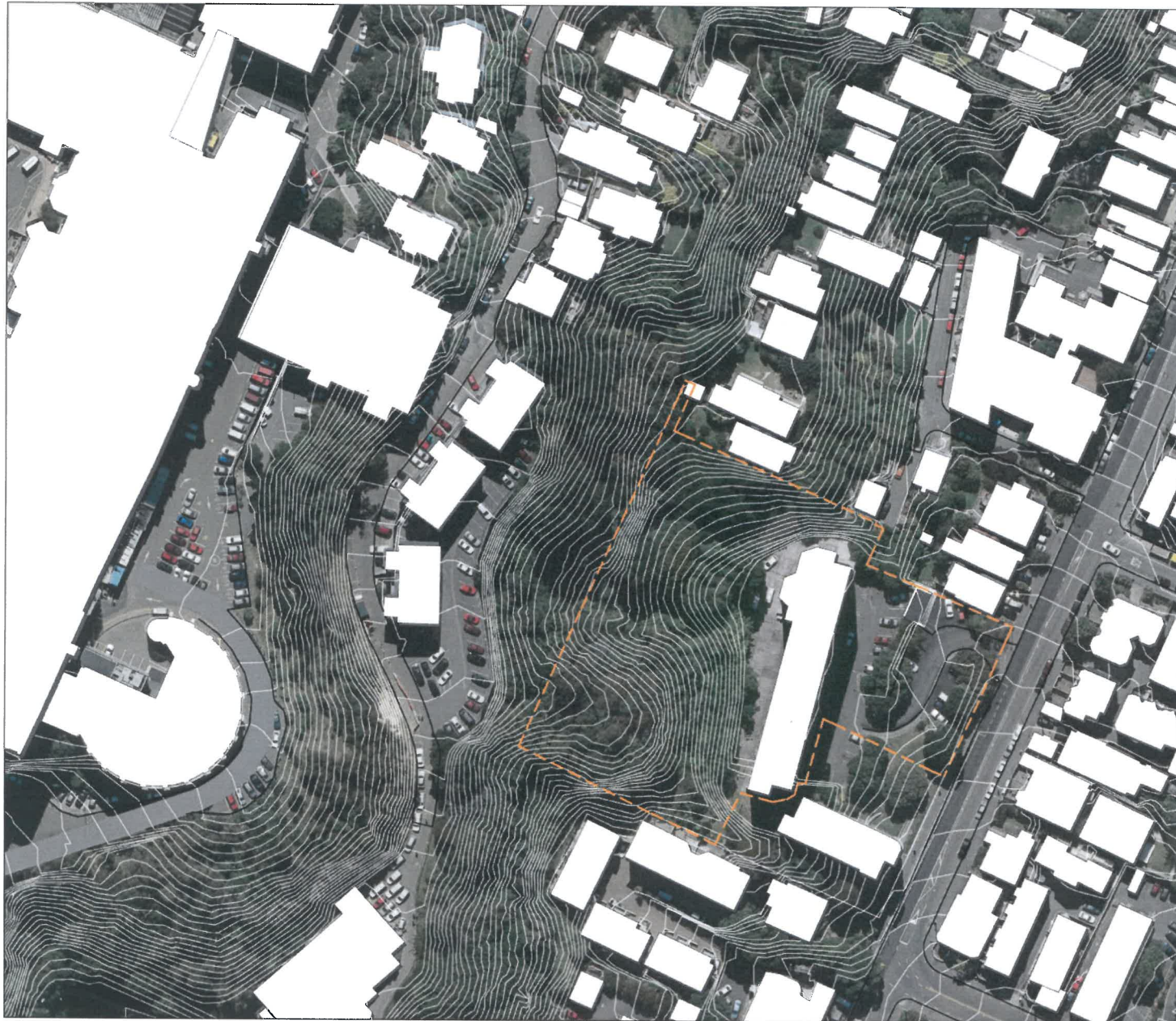
Typical views of buildings within a vegetated hill backdrop



Views into the Site are restricted by mature trees



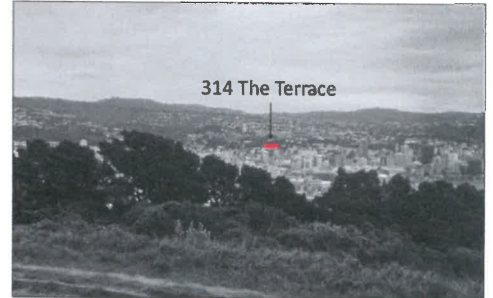
Neighbouring HNZC site planned for redevelopment



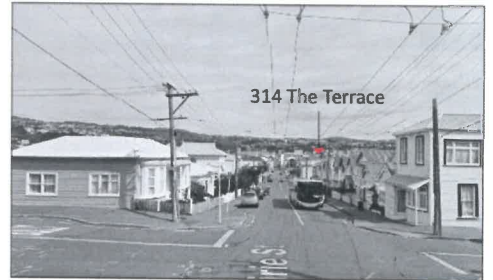
0m 50m 100m



Medium distance view from Ghuznee St towards the Site



314 The Terrace



314 The Terrace

Long distance views towards the Site from Mt Victoria (images by W+A)



Local view from the upper parts of the Site's northern boundary towards the harbour (3D model view by AAL)

Figure 1 - Site aerial  
Scale - NTS

## 02 URBAN DESIGN ANALYSIS

### 2.1 Overview

#### *Informing development of the Site at 320 The Terrace*

Urban design analysis of the Site and its context has been undertaken and is described across the following pages (Section 2).

The range of analytical drawings provide an overview of various site and contextual characteristics and the parameters within which development on the Site should respond. They also inform and are summarised within the Design Guidelines.

320 The Terrace comprises some 7,136sq.m and is defined to the northern and southern boundaries by adjacent residential development (Figure 3). The western boundary sits within the steeply rising hill and is visually indeterminate when viewed from the street. The eastern boundary is clearly defined along The Terrace street edge. The Site is therefore not a 'stand-alone site but forms part of a continuum along The Terrace and synonymous with the Kelburn hill as a perceptual if not actual town belt. Whilst connections between The Terrace and the city exist (MacDonald Crescent, Dixon Street, Ghuznee Street) the links between The Terrace and Kelburn are limited. The Site offers the potential to create new links to the Kelburn campus (principal routes shown in orange at Figure 3) and residential areas beyond.

Figure 3 indicates (in pink) those residential edges adjoining the Site that would need to be considered in relation to any adverse effects (particularly overlooking, sunlight/shading, outlook) and that should influence any future development on the Site.

Figure 3 also indicates (in grey) those existing buildings both on the Site and in the wider context (VUW buildings) that may be affected or influenced in some way by development on the Site. Those beyond the Site are matters of consideration at the wider context level but outside of this Plan Change consideration.

Medium distance views of the Site from Ghuznee Street are shown in the photos on the previous page as well as longer distance views from Mt Victoria across the city. Local views from the upper parts of the Site looking down towards The Terrace are also shown. These images generally highlight the dominance of the Gordon Wilson building and its impacts restricting views both to the hill from the city and to the harbour from the upper parts of the Site.

#### **Existing Planning Context**

The Site is zoned Inner Residential in the District Plan with a maximum building height of 10m above ground, 50% site coverage, 1m setback at the front boundary, 1m setback to the residential side boundaries and recession planes of 2.5m and 45 degrees at the south boundary and 2.5m and 71 degrees at north boundary. These conditions have been modelled

and are shown at Figure 2 below. It is worth noting that the vacant Gordon Wilson building projects beyond height controls as would the McLean flats to the south of the Site and Victoria House.

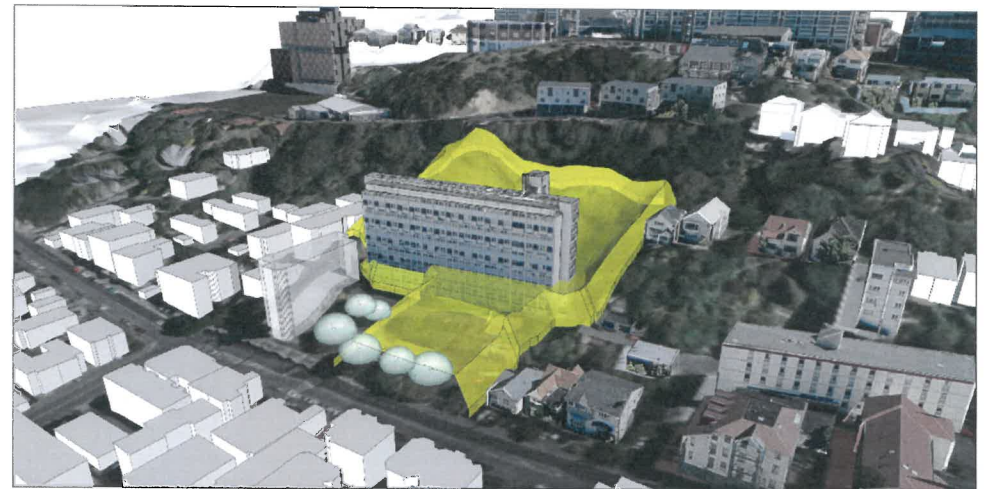


Figure 2 - Existing Inner Residential controls - 3D model of sunlight access planes (AAL drawing)

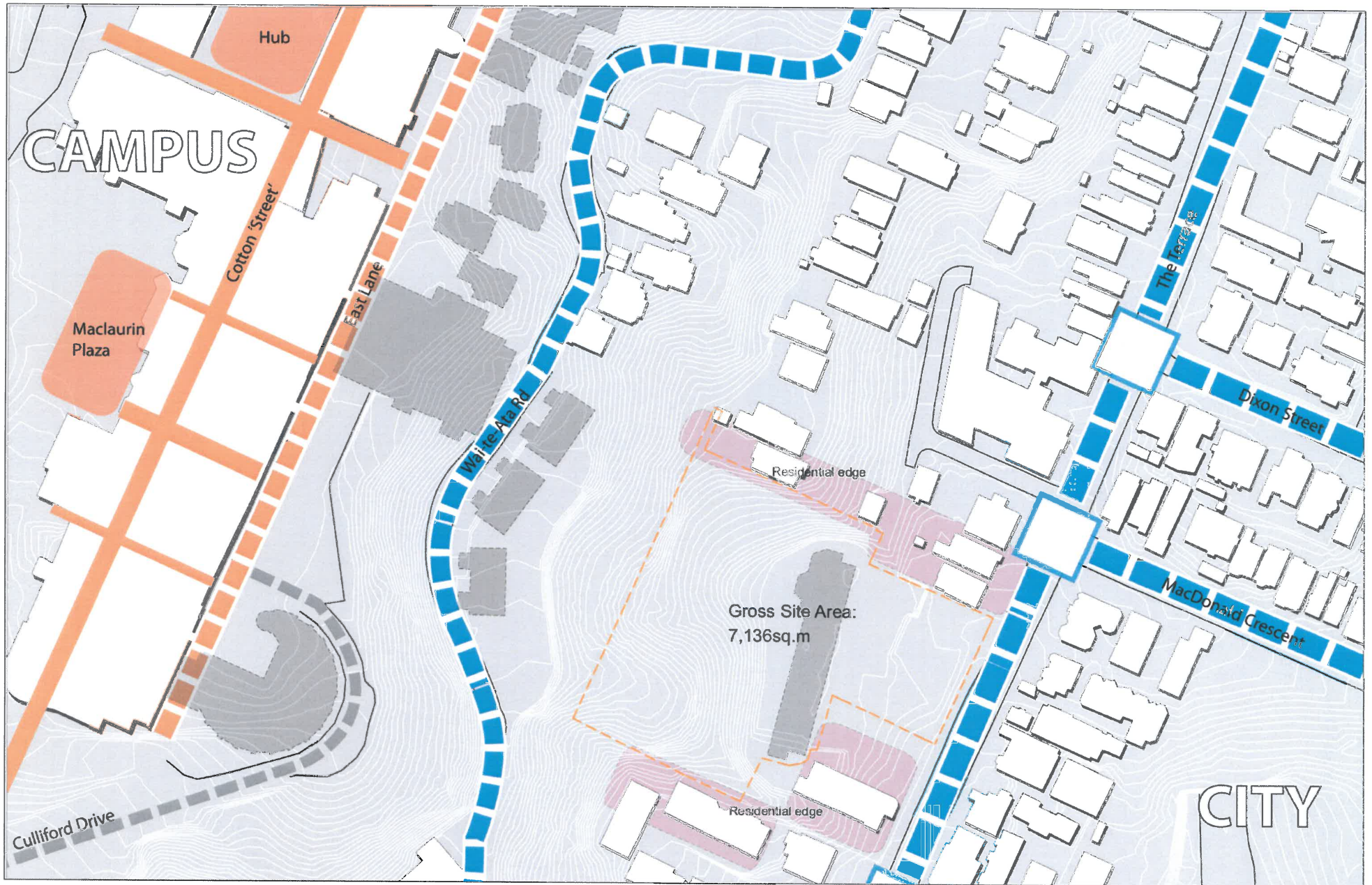


Figure 3 - Local site context

## 02 URBAN DESIGN ANALYSIS

### 2.2 Built Form Patterns - Wider Context

Figures 4 and 5 describe the patterns of built form across the wider context surrounding the Site. These have been drawn to extend to Kelburn and the city and reveal interesting characteristics.

Large scale and coarser grain development clearly exists along the Kelburn Campus area shown in Figure 4 (2) and the city (4). These forms are generally aligned with the city grid and can be clearly perceived in views across the city. Particularly the ridge top of the campus expresses this condition.

Finer grain development, mostly residential though with some institutional use, can be noted in areas (1) and (3) on Figure 4. These either follow the city grid alignment (particularly in area 3), or are influenced by the local topography / contour and street alignments (area 1).

The Site can be seen clearly located within area 3 and therefore, if consistency with that scale is to be pursued or deemed positive, development should respond to that finer grain context. However given the nature of the Site's relationship both to areas 2 and 3, an approach to development that is transitional forming a larger scale built form link to The Terrace could

be investigated. Such an approach would need to present development forms that relate to The Terrace scale and the permitted scale of neighbouring buildings as well as the campus above.

The existing Gordon Wilson building clearly presents a form that relates poorly to its neighbours and to the hill side context (vis blocking of views to the hill) suggesting an approach to massing that varies in height, is configured to facilitate views up (and down) the slope and that allows the ridge top to be perceived.



Figure 4 - Grain patterns and topography  
Scale - NTS



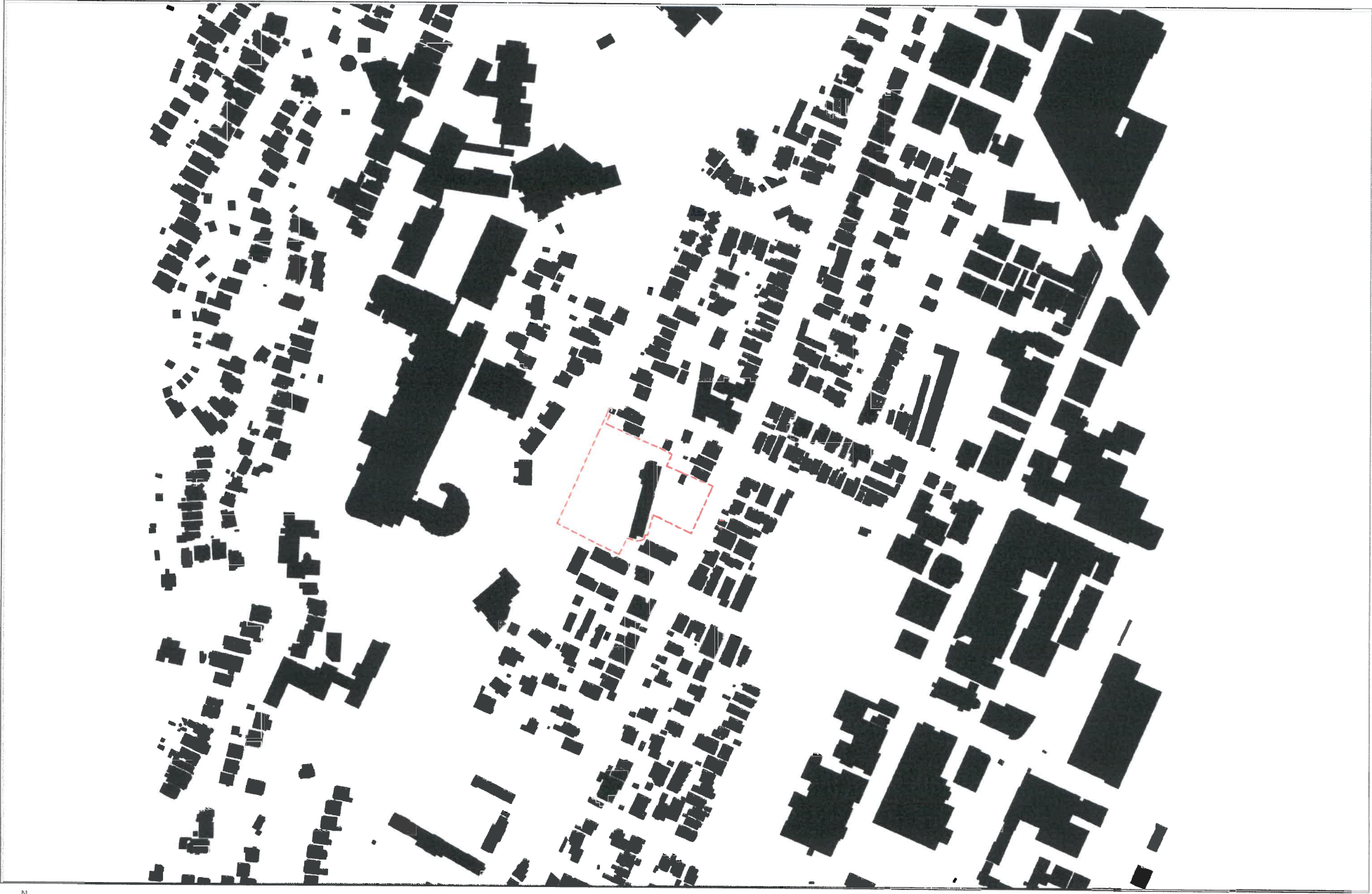


Figure 5 - Built Form Patterns  
Scale - NTS

## 02 URBAN DESIGN ANALYSIS

### 2.3 Spatial Alignments - Wider Context

Figure 6 opposite describes the principal spatial alignments that exist across the wider context surrounding the Site.

The diagram is revealing in so far as it highlights two relatively simple conditions as follows:

#### **Condition 1:**

An orthogonal grid (city) on a north north east - south south west alignment. This grid is principally reflected in the city centre where flatter land exists but is also occurs to the Kelburn Campus ridge. The grid can also be noted along steeper rising ground from the city to the west (eg Dixon Street / MacDonald Crescent) and most clearly along The Terrace.

#### **Condition 2:**

Curvilinear alignments that occur between areas of the city (orthogonal) grid and relate to the steeper topography of those areas. These curvilinear alignments heavily influence the form and pattern of development, resulting in a, generally, finer grain outcome of lower density. Never-the-less a regular pattern of built form can be seen to exist along these routes resulting in a degree of order and creating an interesting, dynamic character.

The Site is outlined in black and located within these spatial patterns. Importantly this highlights the influence of both the orthogonal grid and the curvilinear conditions on the Site and suggests that future spatial patterns address both through:

- a traditional orthogonal relationship to The Terrace street edge, potentially set back to acknowledge the different 'role' of the Site; and,
- a more varied pattern of routes and spaces, and potentially buildings, that adjust to contour alignments up the slope to the west.

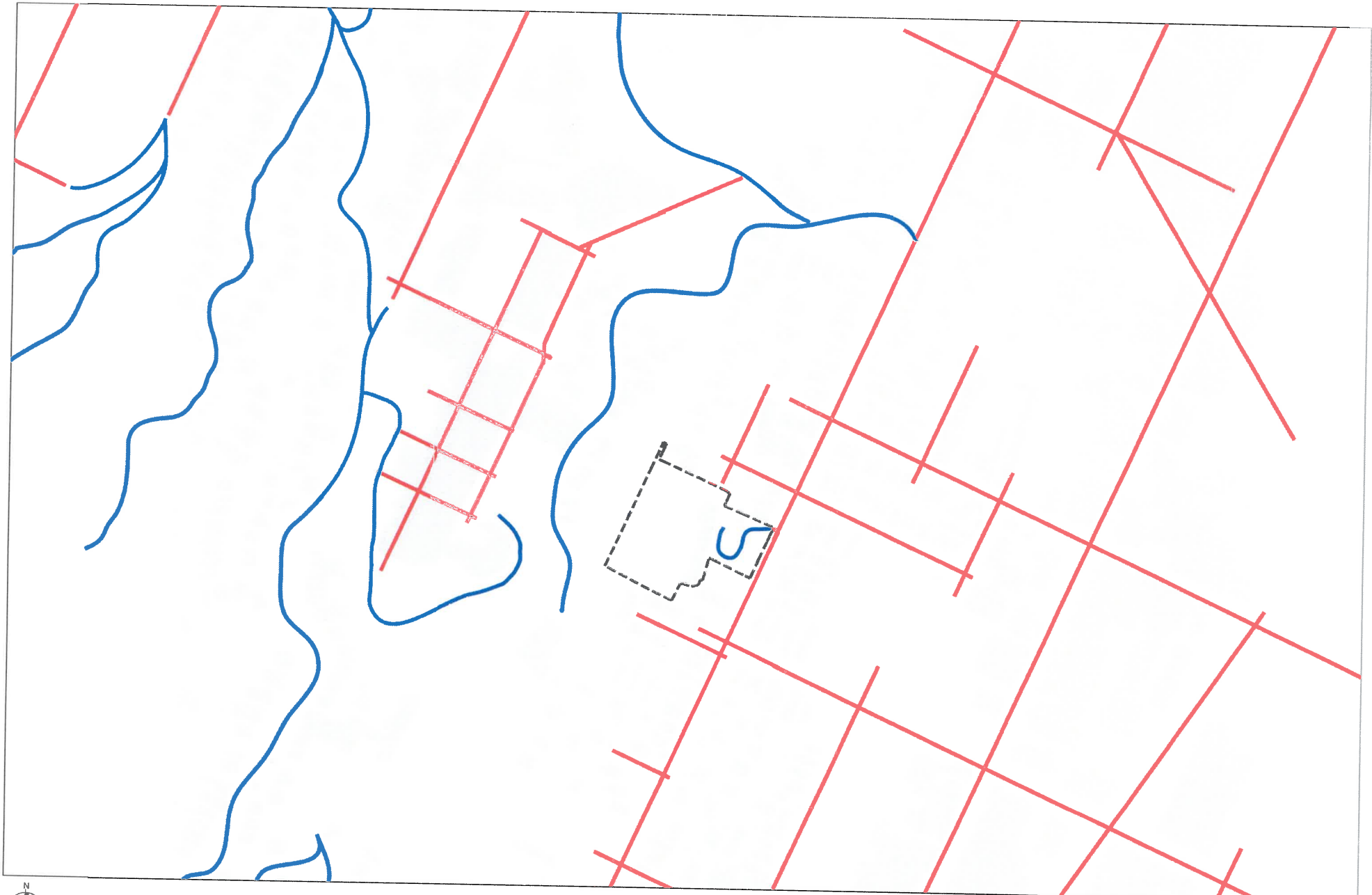


Figure 6 - Spatial Alignments  
Scale - NTS

## 02 URBAN DESIGN ANALYSIS

### 2.4 Spatial Alignments and Landscape - Wider Context

The wider landscape patterns are identified on the drawings at Figures 7 and 8.

Figure 8 indicates two general types of landscape: a) the more heavily planted / mature landscape (darker green) and dedicated open spaces, and b) the planting associated with residential suburban areas. The Site is shown located within this and includes approximately half of the site area as vegetation.

Figure 7 overlays landscape / planted areas with topography. The diagram indicates the close association of planted areas with steeper topography. Flatter areas, notably where the built form grain is coarser / larger scale and the city grid occurs, include much lower provision of planting. This is reflected on the Site in the difference between the lower flatter platforms and the steeper upper slopes.

Future development on the Site should recognise the importance of the generally planted upper level slopes as part of a 'perceived' town belt and seek to establish views to the vegetated areas from the city centre (eg along Ghuznee Street) and The Terrace. Creating an open space along the street edge at the entrance to the Site would need to consider the formality of the orthogonal grid nature of this street condition and may assist views to the slopes beyond.

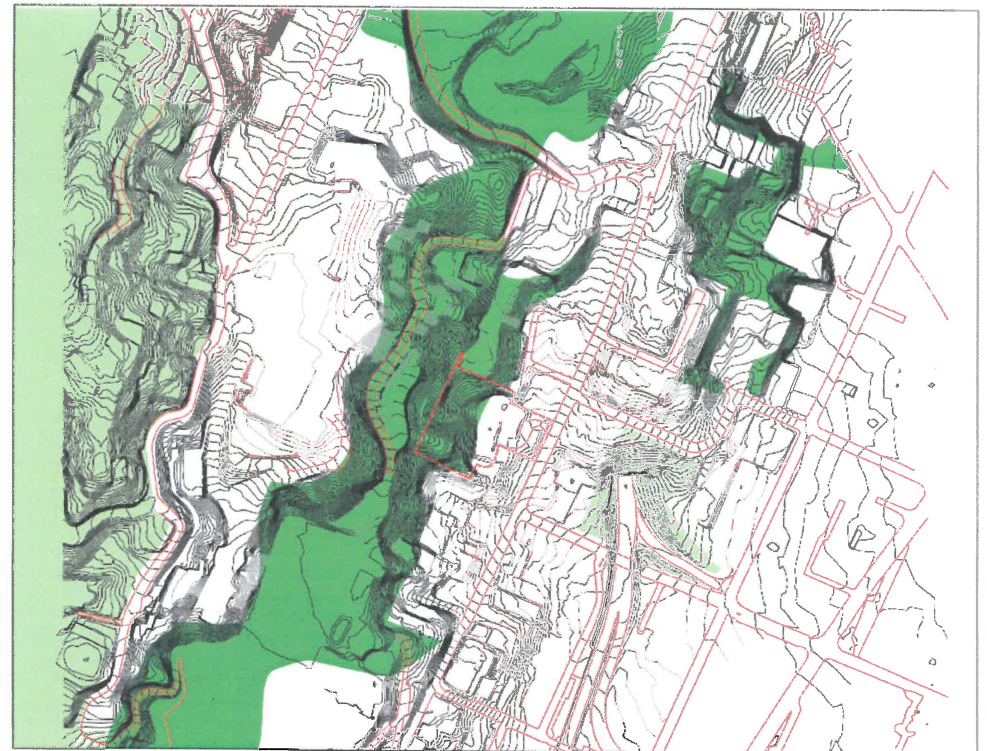


Figure 7 - Landscape patterns and topography  
Scale - NTS

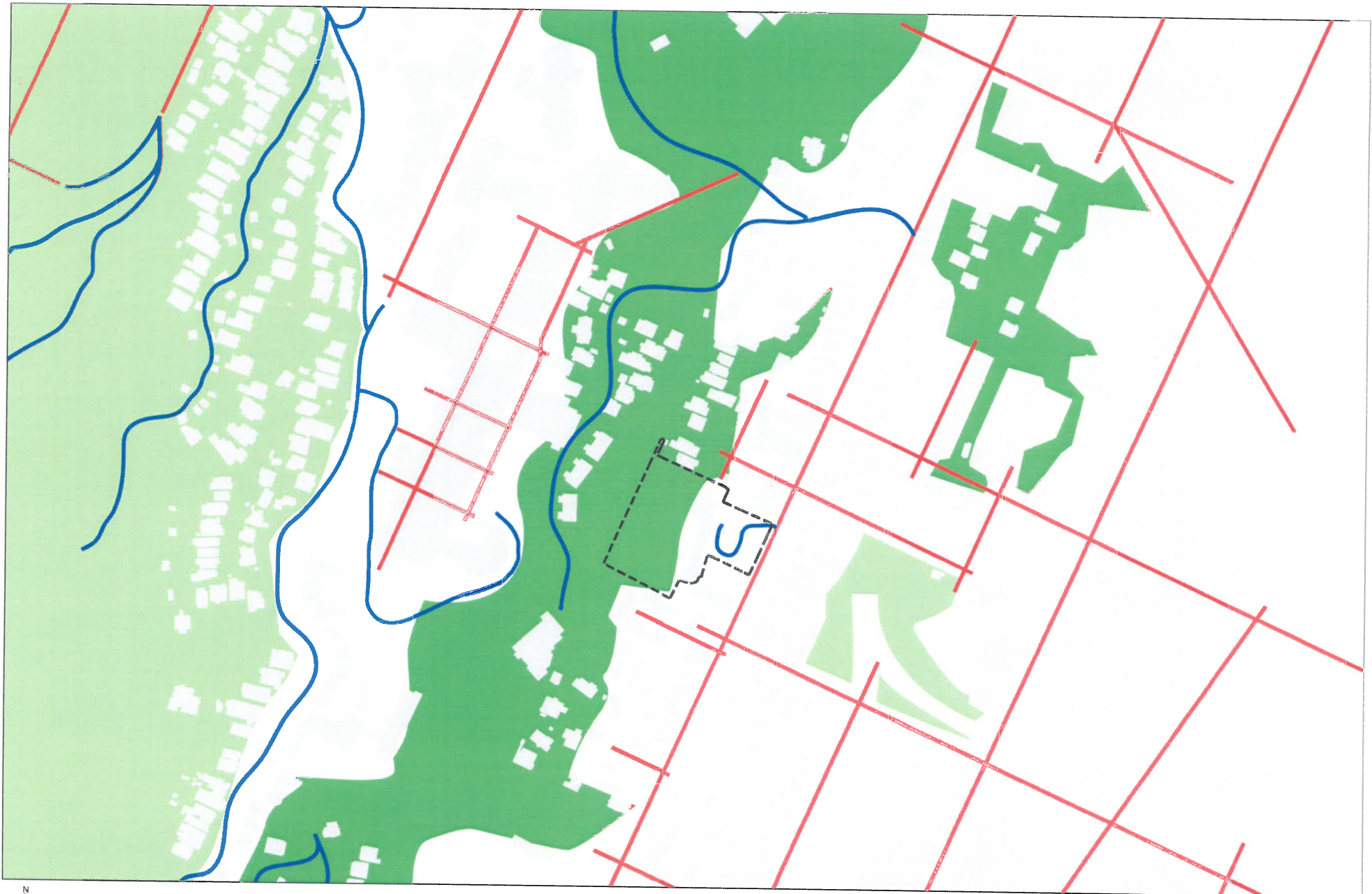


Figure 8 - Landscape and spatial alignments  
Scale - NTS

## 02 URBAN DESIGN ANALYSIS

### 2.5 Land Use Patterns - Site Context

Land uses across the local site context are assessed at Figure 9 opposite. These have been described in relation to four categories (residential single-unit, residential multi-unit, institutional (VUW), and commercial) influenced by the typical uses in the area. Residential single and multi-unit has been identified given the significant patterns of these activities.

Given the Inner Residential zoning in the District Plan the overall pattern is one of predominantly residential activity. Of interest is the high level of multi-unit development in the local area (noted in orange on Figure 9). Some limited and sporadic commercial activity can be seen east of The Terrace while the university presents a considerable institutional presence in the area. A number of multi-unit activities are owned and/or managed by VUW, notably Victoria House, accommodation along Wai-te-ata Road and (off plan) Te Puni Village to the south west. A sub station exists on the Site.

Both the Gordon Wilson building (on the Site) and adjacent McLean flats are vacant due to their poor seismic conditions. The Housing New Zealand owned McLean flats are currently under review for redevelopment.

The pattern of uses surrounding the Site provide an important context for any future development on the Site. Particularly the neighbouring residential properties to the north eastern and south western boundaries which condition how development could be configured along these edges. Overshadowing (re sunlight) will need to be avoided to the south west while overlooking and issues of outlook / visual amenity will need to be considered to the north east.

Compatibility of institutional activities alongside residential has been established elsewhere in the area and a future development comprising this mix could be considered appropriate on the Site.



Figure 9 - Land Use  
Scale - NTS

## 02 URBAN DESIGN ANALYSIS

### 2.6 Building Heights - Site Context

Building heights across the local site context are assessed at Figure 10 opposite. These have been described in relation to four height 'bands' (1-2 storeys, 3-4, 5-6, and 7+ storeys) influenced by the typical building heights in the area.

The overall pattern is one of predominantly low (1-2 storey and some 3-4 storey) development. Taller developments tend to comprise residential multi-unit activity and there is reasonable correlation between the two when Figures 9 and 10 are compared. The Terrace exhibits a reasonably consistent 1-2 storey height pattern with some taller accents though these do not occur in any particular order.

Notably taller buildings include Victoria House (up to 5 storeys), Gordon Wilson (10 storeys) and the university (Kelburn Campus, Cotton Building, 5 storeys).

The general effect of suppressed height along The Terrace (except at specific locations) is to create a human scale environment where views are enabled across the tops of buildings to the ridge line and green hill beyond. This is not the case where the Gordon Wilson building's 10 storeys blocks views beyond. In some instances

3 storey housing (eg No. 272 The Terrace) affords glimpsed views beyond suggesting taller buildings if located with appropriate set back could facilitate views to the escarpment beyond. A balance however needs to be struck as this is not the case for the Gordon Wilson building which though set back up to 45m at its northern end severely limits views beyond.

Implications for the Site include:

- height towards the street edge that could reflect the taller building limits in the area of 4-5 storeys;
- a setback to facilitate views to the escarpment beyond and which 'eases' the relationship with neighbouring 1-2 storey development to the north; and,
- any taller development to the western parts of the Site should be modulated to avoid presenting a visual barrier against the escarpment and ridge.



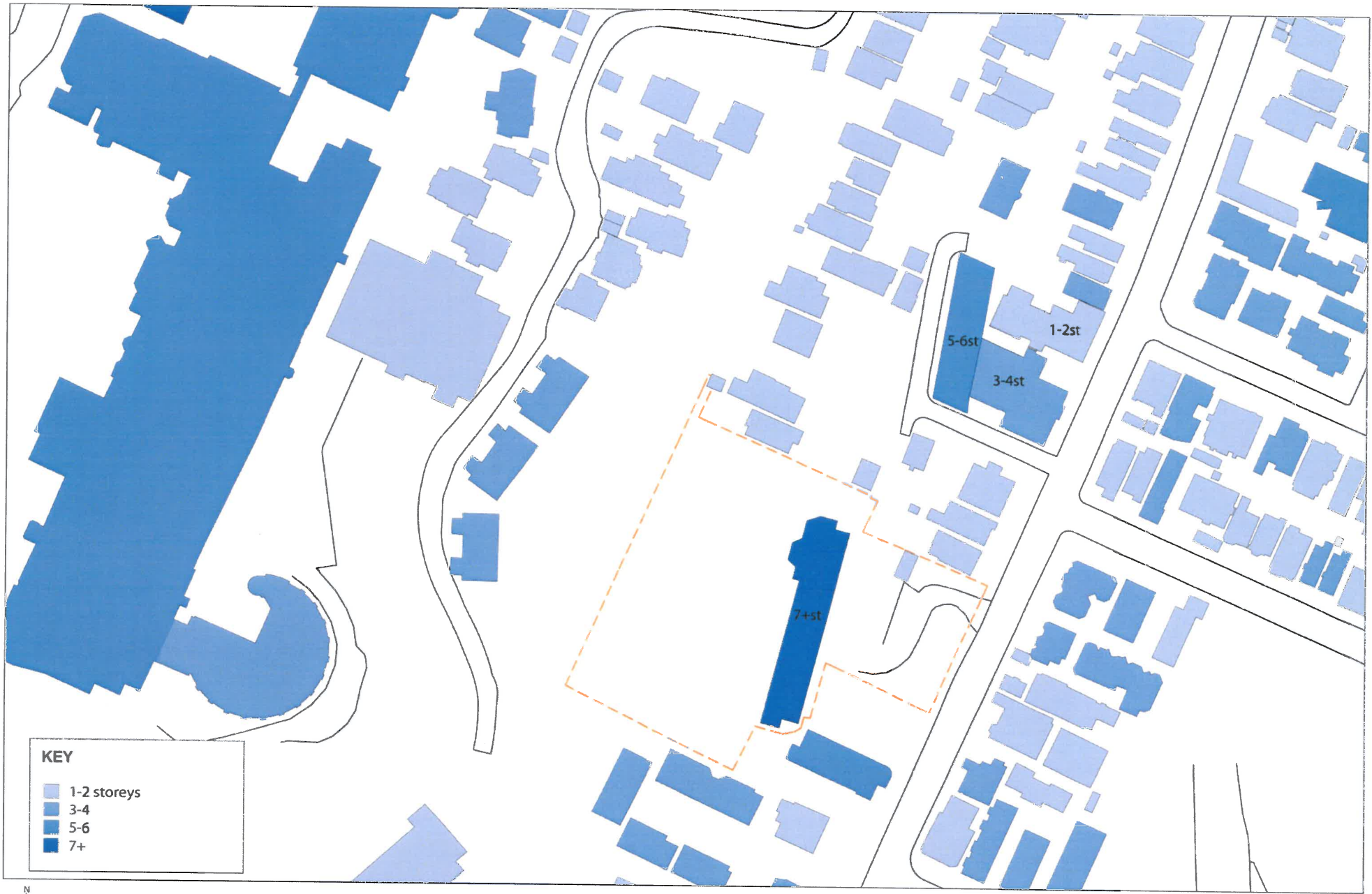


Figure 10 - Building heights  
Scale - NTS

## 02 URBAN DESIGN ANALYSIS

### 2.7 Site Topography and Levels - Site Context

The Site exhibits a range of topographical conditions and associated issues as demonstrated at Figures 11 and 12 opposite.

The overall level difference between The Terrace (at the boundary of the Site) and the western boundary of the Site is some 26m (at mid-point). The height difference from The Terrace to Waite-Ata Road across the Site is some 48-50m and the overall rise to East Lane at the Kelburn campus is circa 70-72m. As a comparison and within the Site boundaries alone this equates to some 6-7 storeys of development and some 12 storeys to Wai-te-Ata Road.

The change in level is not consistent and the contour drawing at Figure 12 describes the complexities of the rising ground condition. Five significant level changes occur (shown as black thick dashed line). These define a lower platform against the street (shown in blue), a mid-way platform below Wai-te-Ata Road and an upper platform that comprises East Lane. Ground conditions between these platforms are steep, generally vegetated and follow a curvilinear alignment. A notable promontory occurs to the southern end of the mid-way platform.

The implications for the Site and any subsequent development would be to utilise the lower platform as an efficient building area whilst recognising the need for a set back and open space to the street edge. A key urban design consideration would be to define building form and mass that best responds to the slope condition and that has the potential to connect beyond the Site into the wider context of the Kelburn campus. Vertical access within buildings should be considered as a means to provide access up the slope (in addition to new access routes).

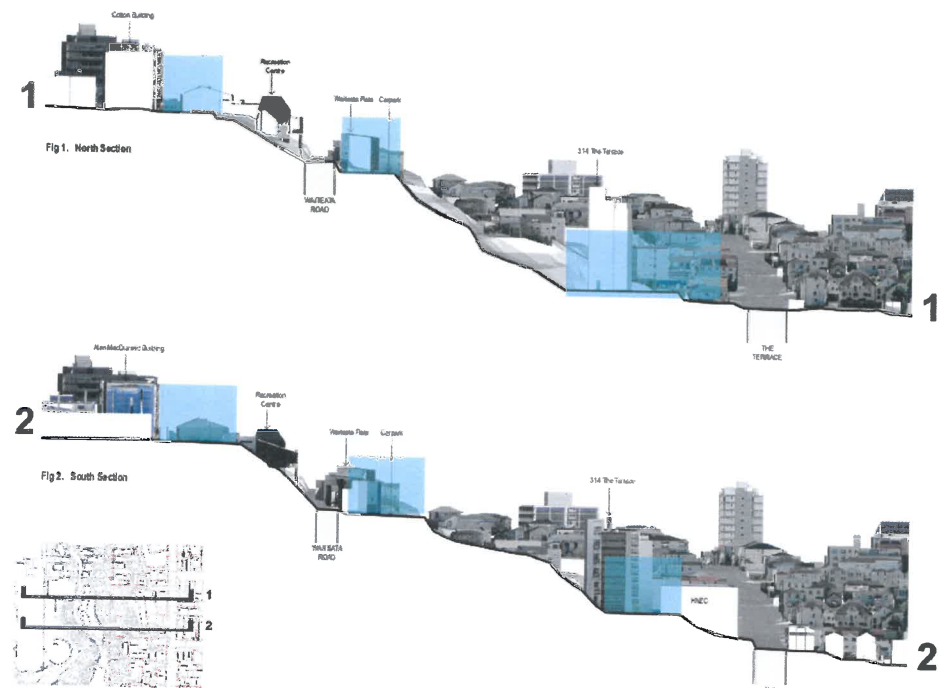
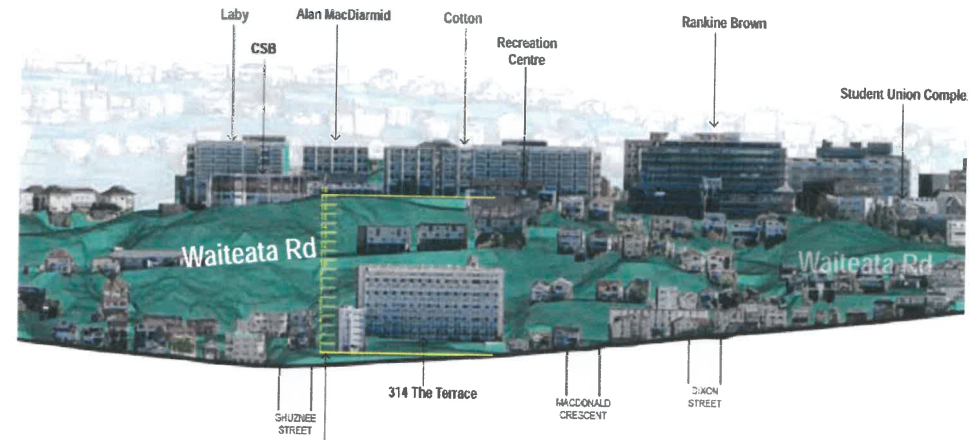


Figure 11 - Site Levels (drawings by AAL)  
Scale - NTS

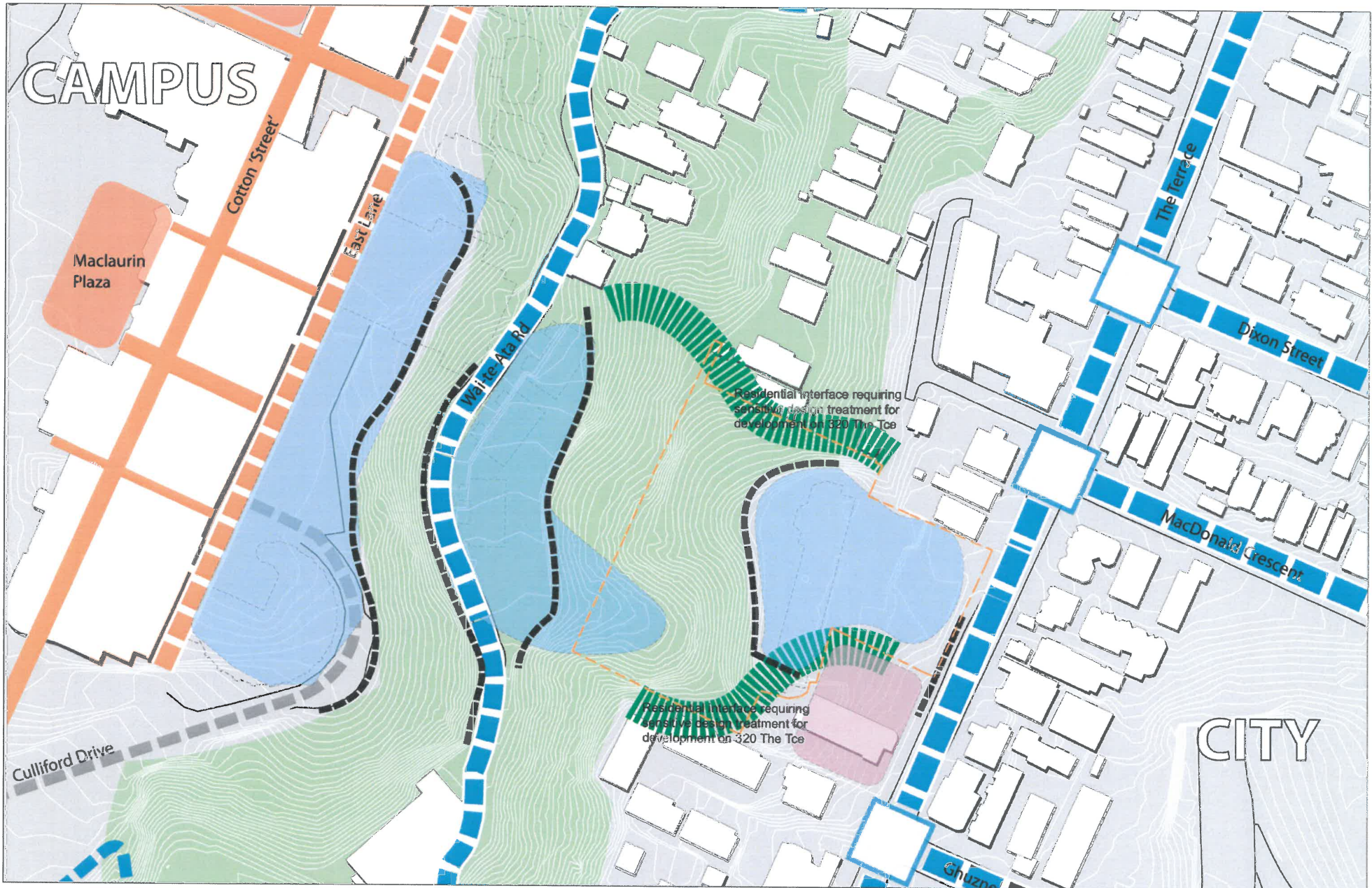


Figure 12 - Topography and Levels  
Scale - NTS

## 02 URBAN DESIGN ANALYSIS

### 2.8 Connections - Site Context

The Site is clearly located between two different movement contexts, with the intention to establish new connections and open up access between the city and the Kelburn campus and wider Kelburn context.

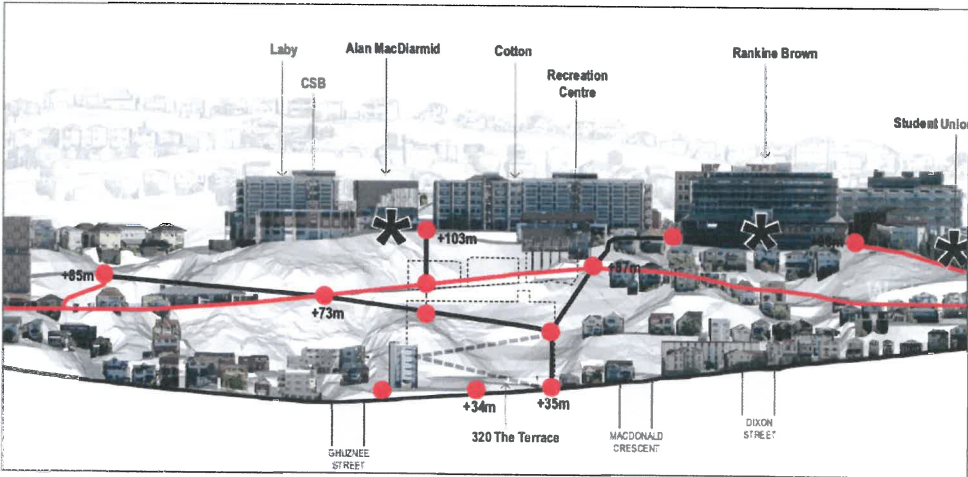
Figure 13 highlights the principal links through the university and identifies two key cross connections (dashed thick blue line) that would inform any future access alignments across the Site. The principal street connections from the city to The Terrace are also shown, indicating the close proximity of Ghuznee Street, MacDonald Crescent and Dixon Street to the Site.

Figure 14 identifies, diagrammatically, the potential location of a connection point to The Terrace (informed by existing access and levels) and link options (1, 2, 3) through to Wai-te-Ata Road. These links do not account for contour conditions and are purely desirable 'A-to-B' connections. The 3 links identify the potential for connection with Wai-te-Ata Road and Culliford Drive Road and the desirability for direct pedestrian links to parts of the Kelburn campus.

From an urban design perspective an interim use of the Site as recreational open space would support safer connections across and up the slope, in conjunction with lighting, planting management and attractive landscape design. Risks to interim use of the Site of this type would principally include issues of safety and security, including to that of neighbouring residential properties, and the need for ongoing management and maintenance of the space. However these risks could be appropriately mitigated through a design that ensures high levels of visibility into the space from the street and from any walkway above, avoidance of areas for concealment and entrapment and an active programme of uses for the space.



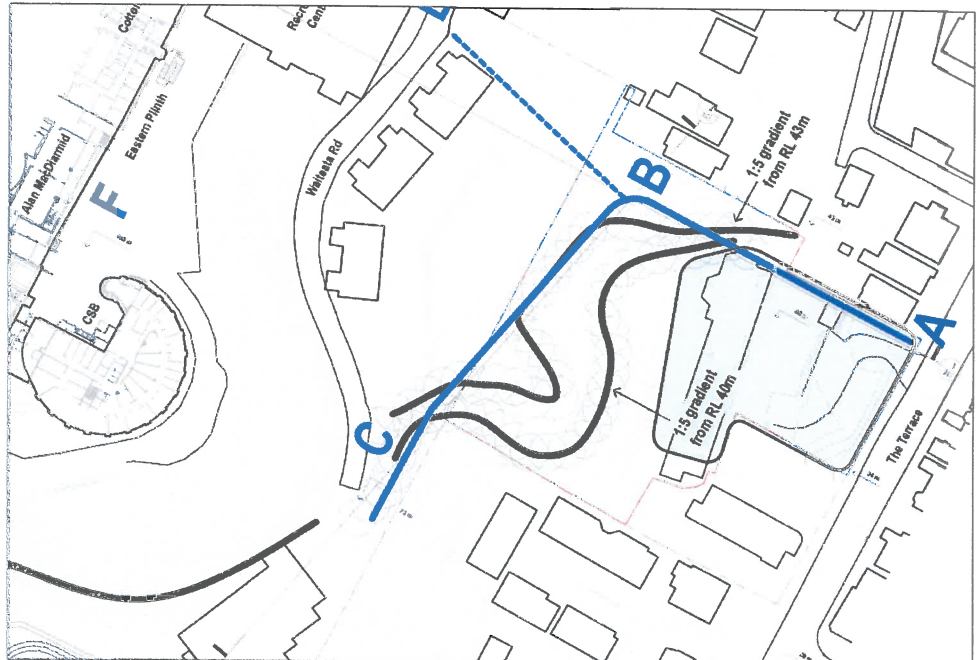
Figure 13 - Campus and City Connections  
Scale - NTS



15a



Figure 14 - Connecting the Site  
Scale - NTS



Figures 15a, b - Options for Connections  
(Drawings by AAL) Scale - NTS



## 03 KEY PRINCIPLES FOR SITE DEVELOPMENT

### 3.1 Key principles

This section identifies the overarching 10 principles to which any future development of the Site should respond. These are developed from an urban design perspective based on the analysis provided in the preceding Sections 1 and 2.

#### 1. New gateway

Development to establish a high quality 'front door' for VUW along The Terrace and a gateway to the city.

#### 2. Character

Site character to be 'transitional' relating to both the adjacent (permitted) residential context but recognising the larger scale institutional role and function of the Site.

#### 3. Topography and alignment

Celebrate the level change and slope condition. Maintain a sense of the natural ground and avoid creating large artificial datums. Align building forms with the contours where appropriate whilst allowing some built forms to traverse contours to facilitate access up the slope.

#### 4. Connections and access

Establish new physical links from The Terrace to Wai-te-Ata Road and to connect further up

to the main campus. Links to work with the contours to create a unique experience of the hill side and creating new views to the city. Links to interconnect with the ground and with future buildings. Potential for multi-modal connections exist but require further detailed investigation. Access to utilise the existing entry point onto the Site but could consider a basement vehicular access towards the southern end of the street front.

Access to facilitate and allow for vehicular access to the adjacent HNZN McLean flats site to the south.

#### 5. Built form: height and massing

Building height to establish a maximum 4 storey frontage towards The Terrace and set back in relation to a forecourt at the front of the Site (see Open space below). Building heights to step up the Site to the west.

Massing: Development to allow for variation along any continuous facade with notable visual change at maximum 30m intervals. This may comprise of a set back, step, or projection coupled with change in height reinforced by eave and roof line. No single, monotonous or overly large facades are to be created in either an east-west or north-south orientation.

#### 6. Open space

The value of existing mature street edge tree planting should be reviewed in relation to the degree to which it constraints visual connections with the street and the potential for an entrance space. Provide a forecourt space to the front of the Site against the The Terrace of at least 20m depth. Establish new planting to all outdoor areas particularly to slopes.

A human scale street edge with attractive, inviting, active spaces should be created.

#### 7. Views structure

Development to allow for some visual links to rising ground beyond, between and over buildings. Visual links to be maintained and enhanced to the ridge and Kelburn campus buildings above. Short range views occur at the intersection of MacDonald Crescent with The Terrace, medium range views occur principally along Ghuznee Street, and long range views exist across Te Aro from Mount Victoria, though the visibility of the Site in these long range views are negligible.

#### 8. Entrances and entrance spaces

Development to provide clearly visible building entrances onto a forecourt. Upper level

entrances to be oriented towards and opening onto access routes connecting up and across the Site.

#### 9. Elevated secondary spaces

Development to create a sequence of minor spaces located along new routes that provide connection into buildings and afford views out across the city.

#### 10. Active building edges

Where development adjoins, fronts and overlooks a forecourt space or other routes / connections, building edges to include high levels of facade transparency promoting visual connections between inside and out. Locate entrances along these edges.