

KARORI CHARACTER ASSESSMENT
30TH OCTOBER 2015

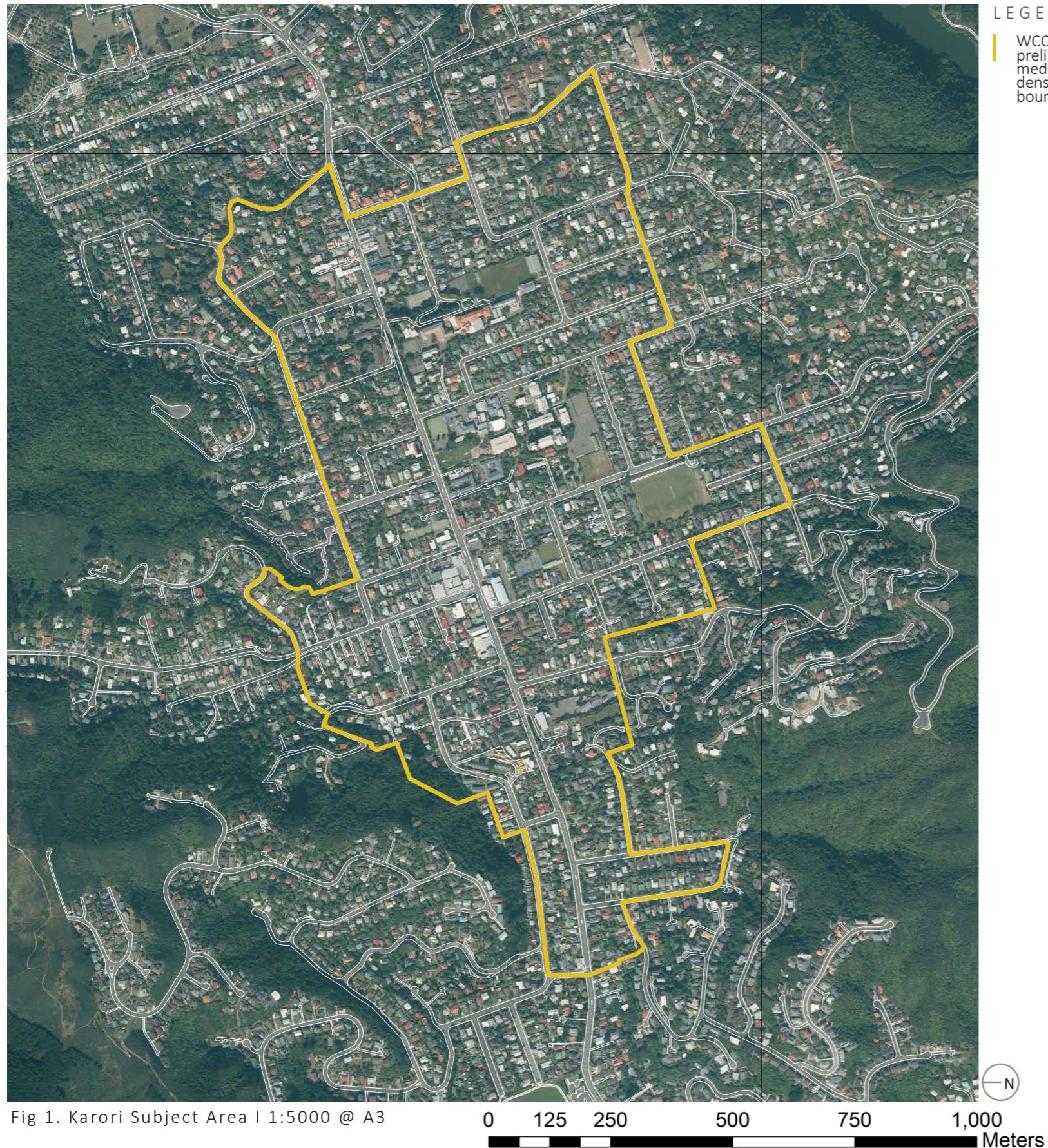


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WCC
preliminary
medium
density
boundary

INTRODUCTION

This character assessment of the urban design qualities of the suburb of Karori has been prepared for the Wellington City Council (WCC) by Wright and Associates Ltd.

Wellington City Council are considering an area for residential intensification shown opposite based on walkability to retail, community facilities and bus routes, land values and development economics.

This report suggests considerations that affect the boundary for residential intensification based on urban and landscape character.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Wellington City Council's objective is to encourage appropriate medium density housing around Karori town centre.

The purpose of this report is

- To identify character areas within Karori.
- To identify areas that are suitable for medium density housing based on character assessment.
- To identify provisions that should be included within the medium density housing zoning to respond to the specific character of Karori.

CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

Both natural and built character elements are used as the basis for this character assessment. Each element identified contributes towards character, but the character (or identity) of a place arises from a cohesiveness in the expression of these elements and from the unique combination of these elements. These elements are listed below.

NATURAL CHARACTER ELEMENTS

- Topography and Aspect
- Green Structure
- Open Space
- Landmark Elements

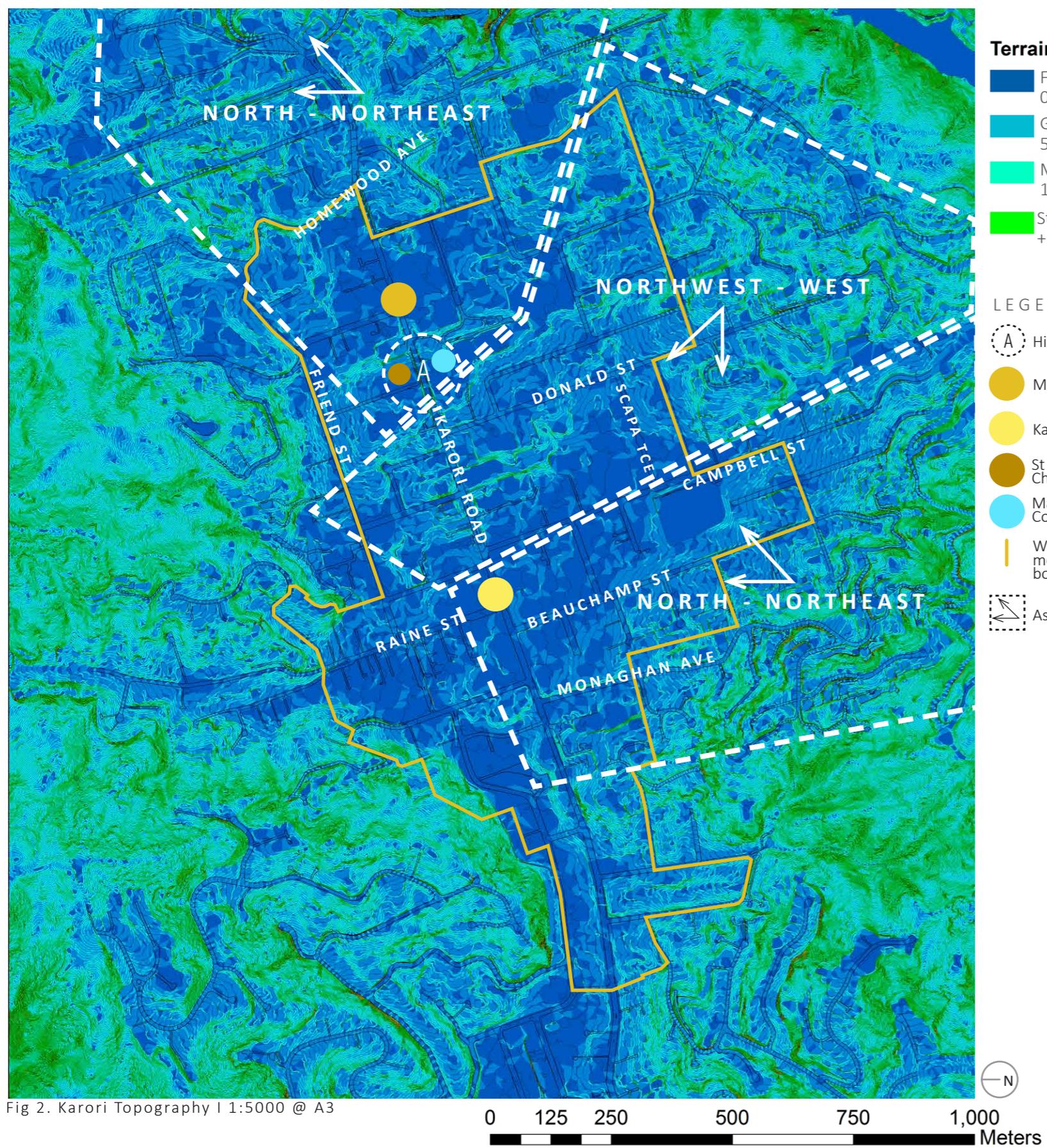
BUILT CHARACTER ELEMENTS

- Street pattern
- Built form typology
- Neighbourhood centres
- Building setbacks and density
- Residential Type and Height
- Architectural Style, Materials and Age
- Built heritage and Landmark structures

SCOPE

This study has been undertaken through desk top study with some field verification.

NATURAL CHARACTER



TOPOGRAPHY AND ASPECT

Karori is located within a basin that widens from west to east and is bordered by significant hills from the south-west to south-east and the north to north-west. The basin is divided into two flattish areas by a hillock that peaks at St Mary's Anglican Church and Marsden College. The hillock separates Marsden Village from Karori town centre (point A). The hills to the north and south are all steep.

The flattish land at the centre of the area is the most suitable land for medium density building. Green areas of the map opposite are too steep to be considered for inclusion in the medium density zoning. Predominantly blue land in the map is most suitable and therefore should be considered for residential intensification.

The aspect of the majority of the built environment in Karori is north, northeast and northwest-west. These aspects provide good solar orientation and views of the northern hills (images 1, 2 and 3 below).



Image 1: Flat areas of the basin with steep hills beyond, looking north from Campbell Street.

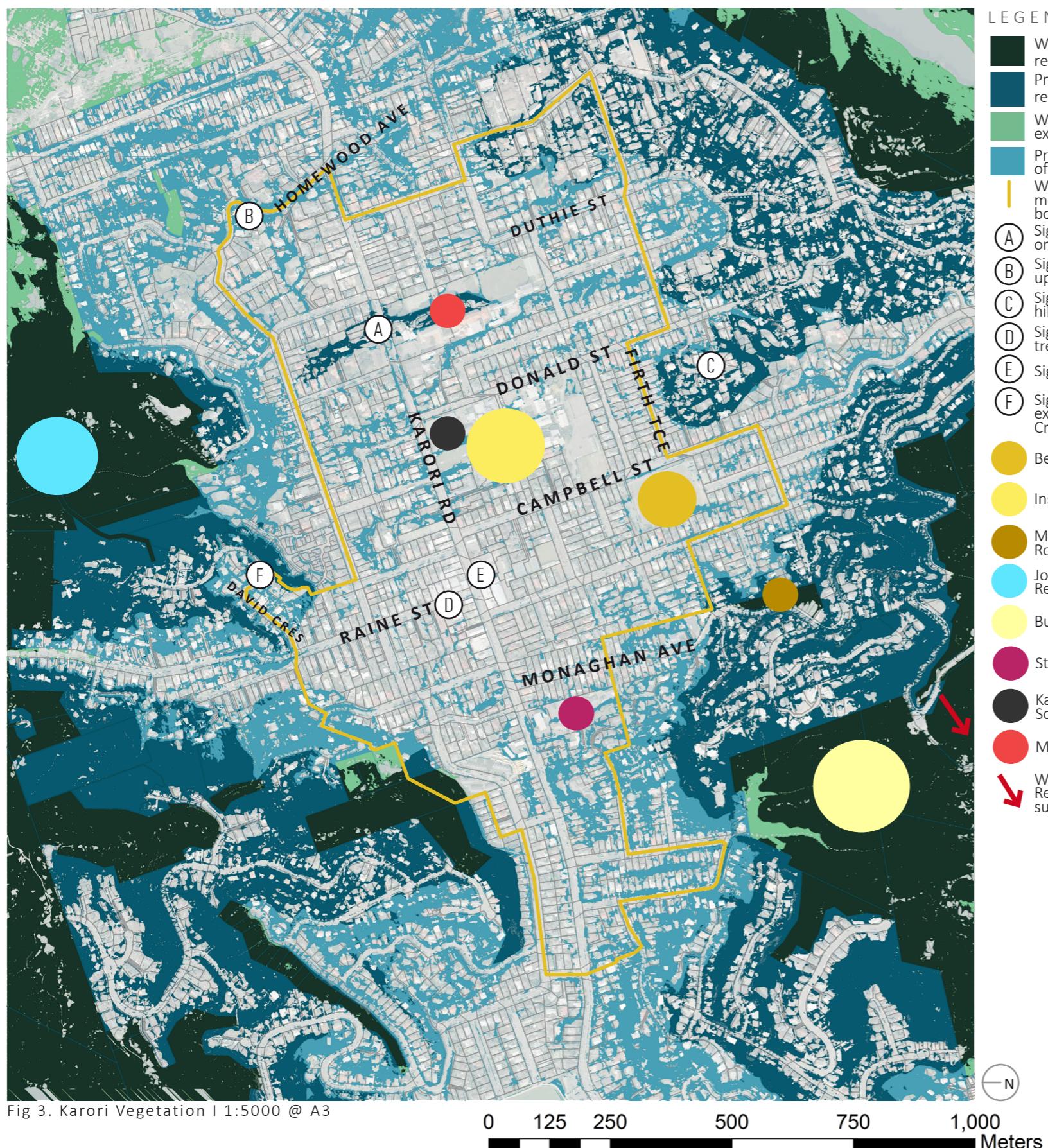


Image 2: In the north of the basin looking to the vegetated slopes of the north western escarpment seen from Friend Street.



Image 3: Flat areas of the basin with steep hills beyond from Scapa Terrace looking West.

NATURAL CHARACTER



- LEGEND**
- WCC owned Bush/ regenerating bush
 - Privately owned bush/ regenerating bush
 - WCC owned mix of exotics and natives
 - Privately owned mix of exotics and natives
 - WCC preliminary medium density boundary
 - A Significant vegetation on hillock.
 - B Significant vegetation upon Homewood Ave
 - C Significant vegetated hill.
 - D Significant street trees on Raine Street
 - E Significant Gum tree
 - F Significant species examples on David Crescent.
 - Ben Burn Park
 - Institutional area.
 - Monaghan Ave Roadside open space
 - Johnson Hill Reserve
 - Burrows Ave Park.
 - St Teresa's School.
 - Karori Normal School
 - Marsden College.
 - Wrights Hill Reserve (outside subject area)

GREEN STRUCTURE

VEGETATION STRUCTURE

Vegetation upon the steeper hills to north, northwest, southwest and southeast provide a visual backdrop for the suburb (images 1,2 and 3 previous page). This vegetation correlates to the steep topography and defines the green structure of Karori.

Within the basin of the suburb there are few significant trees. Medium to low level planting in the back of private properties is largely unnoticeable from the street. Exceptions to this include tall vegetation in the hillock occupied by Samuel Marsden College and Karori Anglican Church (point A), on flattish land in the Northeast of the suburb surrounded by Homewood Ave (point B) and on the hill bounded by Donald Street, Firth Terrace and Campbell Street (point C). In these areas, property and lot sizes are more varied and taller vegetation is much more apparent.

Much of the significant vegetation upon the hill spurs is under council control though private property also has significant green area on these hills. A considerable amount of the significant vegetation within the flat parts of the basin is in private land ownership. This private vegetation adds significantly to the green character at a street level and also adds to the visual backdrop for the centre of the suburb.

VEGETATION TYPOLOGY

Upon the vegetated slopes and spurs of the bordering hills the vegetation is predominantly regenerating native bush. Black tree fern and soft tree fern are the two predominant species that significantly add to the character of these slopes (image 4 over page). In areas such as Johnston Hill regeneration is more advanced and taller forest species have emerged.

Within the basin amongst the privately held land there is a mixed vegetation palette of exotics and natives with few character defining specimens or typologies and little consistency.

STREET TREES

There are few street trees within the subject area. Most vegetation is on private property. There are five established street trees along the Karori Mall carpark entrance on Raine Street (point D on fig.3; image 5 over page) and a significant gum tree alongside the Mobil station (point E on fig.3). Some trees have been planted alongside traffic control measures on streets within the area but they add little to the green character as they are individual elements that are not repeated. There are a variety of individual examples of street trees on most streets within the flat basin though lack of consistency reduces the impact on the predominant street character.

NATURAL CHARACTER

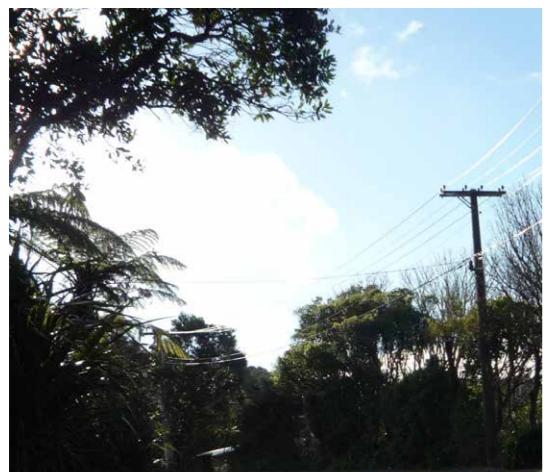


Image 4: Significant character species on David Crescent (point F on fig 3.)



Image 5: Street trees on Raine Street



Image 6: Typical vegetation on Karori's Hill streets from Duthie Street.



Image 7: The open space road reserve alongside Monaghan Ave.



Image 8: Ben Burn Park from Campbell Street



Image 9: Open space character of the blocks bounded by Karori Road, Campbell and Donald Streets, viewed from Campbell street.

OPEN SPACE

OPEN SPACE ON THE HILLS

Around and on the enframing hills Karori has significant natural open spaces in Johnston Hill Scenic Reserve, Burrows Avenue Park and Wrights Hill Reserve (outside subject area). These areas provide a green belt that surrounds the suburb and add significantly to the visual backdrop.

Within the residential areas on the hills there is just the one green open space area. This is located alongside Monaghan Ave and consists of a grassy slope surrounded by lowlying regenerating bush (image 7).

OPEN SPACE IN THE BASIN

Ben Burn Park alongside Campbell Street is the largest of the public open space areas within the subject area and contains sport and playground facilities. It is slightly elevated above Campbell Street which reduces its visibility from the street (image 8).

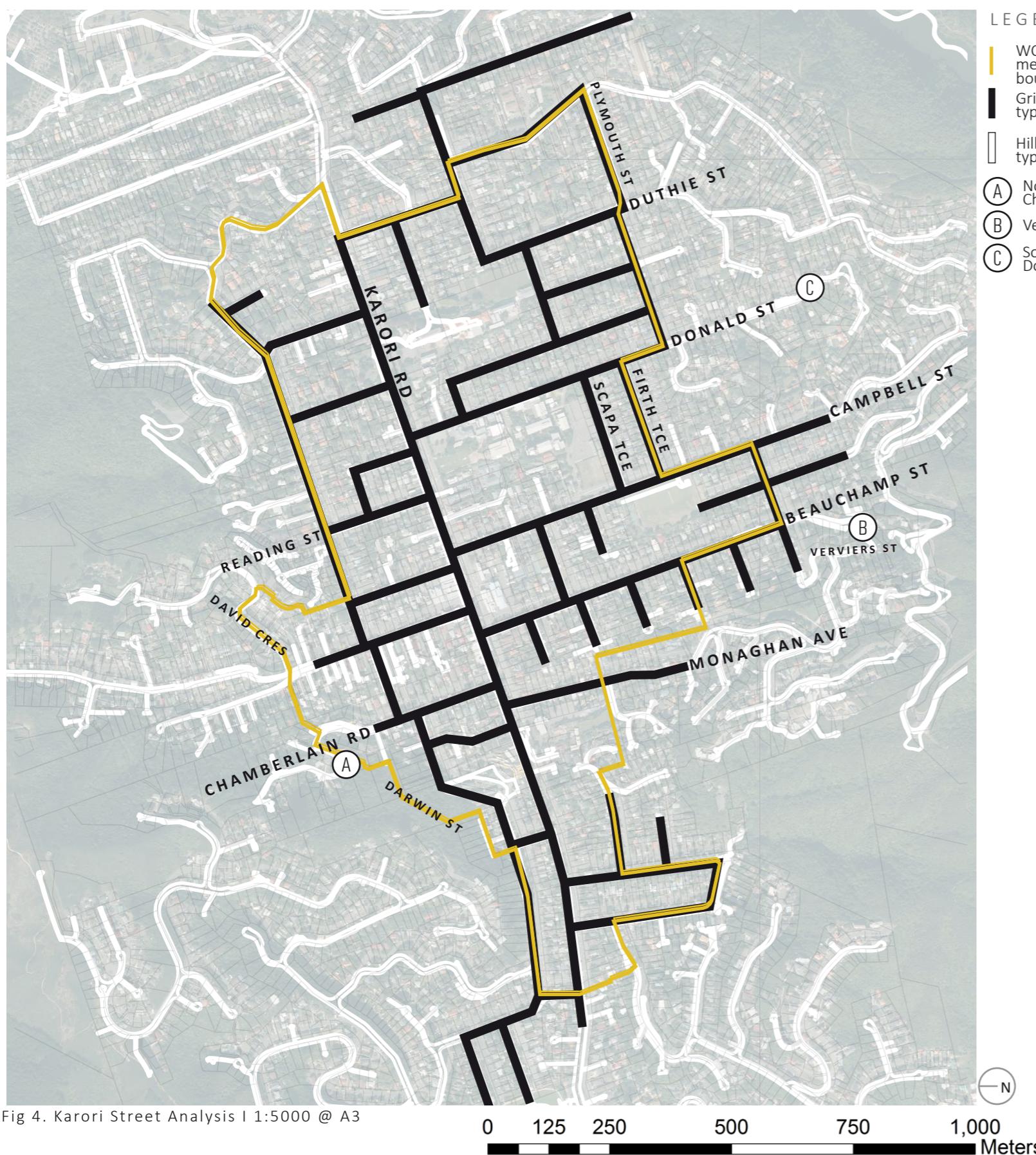
The large blocks bounded by Karori Road, Beauchamp Street and Donald Street have a strong open space character (image 9). They contain the grounds of Karori Normal School and Victoria University's Campus, recreational facilities including bowling greens and tennis courts and the public open space beside Karori community centre behind the Mobil service station.

Elsewhere in the basin open space can be found on the hillock within the grounds of Marsden College and St Mary's Anglican Church and at the western end of the basin at St Teresa's school.

LANDMARK ELEMENTS

Due to aspect, topography and vegetation Karori's enframing hills are a significant landmark within the subject area. Johnston Hill Scenic Reserve, Burrows Avenue Park and Wrights Hill Reserve as well as the vegetated escarpment to the North west of the subject area (see image 2 on page 4) are natural landmark elements that are integral to the green basin character of Karori.

BUILT CHARACTER



LEGEND

- WCC preliminary medium density boundary
- Gridded street typology
- Hill street typology
- (A) Northern end of Chamberlain Rd
- (B) Verviers St
- (C) Southern end of Donald St.

STREET PATTERN

Karori's main character shifts occur where the flat basin meets the surrounding hills. At these points the street character shifts from an orthogonal grid into serpentine hill streets.

The orthogonal grid is aligned with Karori Road. The grid is randomly squared. The serpentine hill streets link into the basin grid and wind through the surrounding hills. The logic of the street pattern appears to reflect the influence of topography within the basin.

THE GRIDDED STREETS

There are two defining street typologies within the grid. The first typology can be found on many streets running perpendicular to the main arterial road (Karori Road) through Karori such as Reading and Beauchamp Streets, Chamberlain Road and Monaghan Ave. Many of these streets are 20m wide with on-street parking provisions in both directions.

It is commonplace in this typology to see the width accentuated with painted medians, unplanted verges and footpaths; fence lines are often setback some metres from the footpath (image 10). Garages and other ancillary buildings occasionally sit at the fence line and the grass verges beyond the kerbside footpaths have sporadic street tree plantings (as noted previously).

The other notable street typology includes narrower streets with fence lines bordering the footpath. Garages and other ancillary buildings sit at the fence line. These streets are located within the preliminary medium density boundary. Examples include interconnecting streets running parallel to Karori Road such as Firth and Scapa Terraces (image 11).

The grid makes it easy to navigate and access shops, public transport and the main road which makes the grid suitable for medium density residential intensification.

HILL STREETS

Beyond the grid there are two primary street typologies.

Upon the more gradual slopes streets are broad and winding with footpaths and gradual embankments. Properties in this typology sit above the level of the road on one side and below the level of the road on the other. For properties on the downhill side of the road medium height planting is common and provides some privacy from the road. Examples of this typology can be found upon the southeastern hills on Duthie (image 12) and Plymouth Streets and on the northern hills on David Crescent.

Steeper streets are typically narrower and have no footpaths. Properties are setback further from the street and significant private vegetation creates more privacy between neighbouring properties and the street. Example streets include the northern end of Chamberlain Road (point A), Verviers Street (point B) and the southern end of Donald Street (point C).

Hill streets' larger setbacks and more significant street character vegetation in private ownership make them inappropriate for inclusion in the medium density residential zone.

STREET CHARACTER IMAGES



Image 10: Wide street typology of the grid from Campbell Street.



Image 11: Narrower grid typology from Firth Terrace.



Image 12: Typical hill street character from Duthie Street.

BUILT CHARACTER

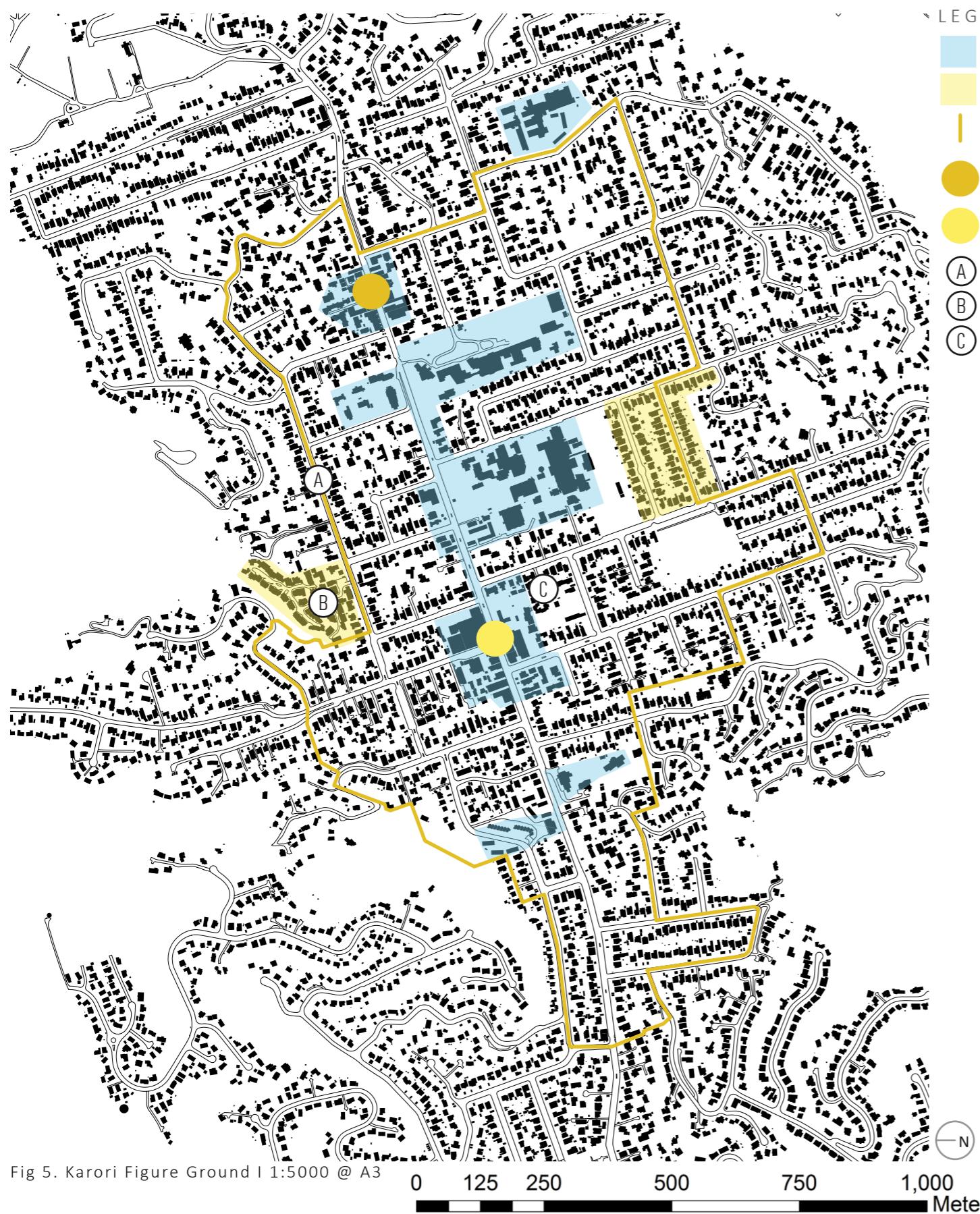


Fig 5. Karori Figure Ground I 1:5000 @ A3

BUILT FORM TYPOLOGY

Built form typology is closely tied to land use. Residential property has relatively fine grain within the subject area (as described in housing typology, p9) compared to the larger format buildings that exist along the main arterial road where commercial retail, professional services, community services, educational services, recreational facility and residential uses are all found.

NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES

The majority of the larger format buildings can be found within one block of Karori Road where two centres lie; Marsden Village and Karori's town centre (images 13 and 14). Community buildings, including St Mary's Anglican Church, the public library, Karori community and recreation centres, Karori Mall and Life Pharmacy are located towards the centres joining cafes, restaurants, takeaway outlets, two petrol stations and foot-traffic driven retail businesses.

Also within close proximity of the centres there are a variety of educational services including several schools across all age categories, pre-schools and a Victoria University campus (image 15). Recreational facilities including Karori Pool, tennis clubs, lawn bowls and netball courts along with Ben Burn Park fragment the consistency in residential character within one block south of Karori Road (images 16 and 17).

BUILDING SETBACKS AND DENSITY

Building street front setbacks vary throughout the subject area, often influenced by underlying topography and building typology. At the flattest points within the grid single story weatherboard bungalows and villas sit towards the front of the property. On the wide streets with setback fence lines, buildings are setback further and contribute to the open character of the streets. Examples of this include the western edge of Cooper Street, the northern end of Campbell Street, Friend Street (image 18, point A) and along the eastern side of Donald street. Small street front setbacks on both sides of the street are rare but does occur on Scarpa and Firth Terraces.

Density is fairly consistent throughout the grid and streets though there are slightly denser areas surrounding the aforementioned Terraces, lower Campbell Street and within anomalies such as Futuna and Scorian Close.

Amongst the enframing hills where property boundaries become less consistent there are larger setbacks, less fences and more vegetation. Many garages sit attached below housing creating a more distinct fragmentation of built form at the front of properties. The resulting density within these areas is sparser and built form rarely occupies more than 35% of the site.



Image 13: Marsden Village from Karori Road



Image 14: Karori town centre from Karori Road



Image 15: Victoria University Campus



Image 16: Recreational facilities south of Karori Road from Campbell Street.



Image 17: Recreational Facilities south of Karori Road from Campbell Street.



Image 18: Common setbacks within the grid from Friend Street.



Image 19: Medium density flats on Karori Road.



Image 20: Huntley retirement home on Karori Road.



Image 22: Scorian Close off of Campbell Street.



Image 22: Council flats on Darwin Street.



Image 23: Early 1900's Victorian villas from Campbell Street.



Image 24: Futuna Chapel from Friend Street

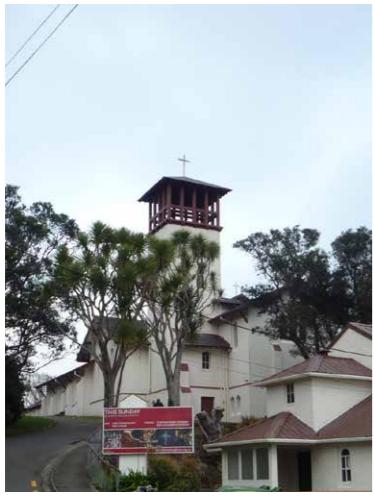


Image 25: St Mary's Anglican Church from Karori Road.



Image 26: Karori Public Library on Karori Road



Image 27: Victoria University's Campus from Campbell Street.

RESIDENTIAL TYPE AND HEIGHT

Within the gridded streets housing is predominantly single storey with occasional double-storey properties from later dates. Single storey properties range from traditional early 1900's villas to bungalows, but most are modest. Within one block of the main road this has diversified somewhat and there are examples of medium density apartment dwellings such as Huntleigh retirement home (image 20), compact in-fill development Scorian Close (image 21) and medium density state housing varieties upon Darwin Street at the foot of the northwestern hills (image 22).

Outside of the orthogonal grid there is more variety of housing which vary between one and two storeys. The topography determines how these properties address the street and there is less consistency in style and site layout. Larger setbacks and visible street and private vegetation play a more prominent role in the defining character in these areas.

Outside of the significant heritage buildings mentioned (see built heritage) there are no significant built housing typologies that should be restricted potential residential intensification.

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

Within the flat gridded streets of the suburb there are a few examples of Victorian villas and cottages from the late 19th and early 20th century (image 23). Typical 1920's bungalows, characterized by their low roof pitch and projected gables are the most common style throughout the gridded area though remodelling efforts throughout the suburb reduces the consistency and affects the overall street character.

Within the grid there are also sporadic examples of art deco housing. Modest private housing from the 1940-60's is a variety consistently found along Monaghan Avenue, the Southern end of Campbell and Donald Streets and in a mixed zone with 1920's bungalows where the basin narrows into the West of Karori.

Outside of the gridded street consistency in style of the built character is rare. Upon the hill streets character is defined by natural characteristics such as topography and vegetation; less from the built character which has been sited around the topographical constraints.

MATERIALS

The variety of building age has produced a variety of materials throughout the subject area. Though brick, plaster and cedar clad housing is common, Karori's most prominent cladding material is painted weatherboard. Roofing is predominantly corrugated steel though there are areas of alternative typologies such as shingle tiles, these are not consistent enough to have a considerable effect on the character.

BUILDING AGE

The majority of the housing stock within the subject area was built from 1900-1930, but much of the housing stock within the grid is inconsistent due to redevelopment and remodelling works.

Scarpa Terrace, the hill bounded by Donald and Campbell Streets and the northern end of Monaghan Ave were developed in the 1930's and 40's and still retain that consistency with few renovated or remodelled properties.

Further consistent building age can be found upon the southwestern slopes up Monaghan Ave (from the 1970's) and within the Futuna townhouse complex along Friend Street (2000's).

The inconsistencies in building age has little influence on character of the place.

BUILT HERITAGE

There are few heritage buildings of note within the subject area. Chesney Wold (at 372 Karori Road), Futuna Chapel (within Futuna Close), 21 Campbell Street and St Mary's Anglican Church (upon the hillock beside Karori Road) all have protected status. The built heritage of Karori has no significant impact on medium density zoning.

LANDMARK STRUCTURES

There are several landmark buildings from different eras around the subject area. Futuna Chapel is widely appreciated and a striking modernist building designed by John Scott, New Zealand's first Maori architect (image 24).

St Mary's Anglican church sitting atop the hillock in the Karori basin is both historically significant as well as being easily identified as a landmark due to its tower (image 25). More recently, the new public library sits in the heart of the urban centre and is easily locatable within the grid (image 26). Victoria University's Karori campus is the tallest building in Karori though it is most apparent from west of Campbell Street due to topography (image 27).

B R O A D C H A R A C T E R A R E A S A N D R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S



C H A R A C T E R A R E A S

The character of an area is usually defined by its appearance from public spaces, especially streets. The boundary between character areas should therefore usually run along the rear boundary of properties. We recommend that the boundary of the medium density residential zone runs along the rear boundaries of properties to ensure the character along streets is consistent.

T H E N A R R O W G R I D

The dense grid is a small area within the subject area including Scarpa and Firth Terraces. This area's character is defined by its small setbacks, fences and garages lining the footpath, flat topography, consistent building style and age. Similar characteristics on both sides of the street give this character area a well defined edge. Its character would not be affected by intensification and therefore we recommend it be included in the medium density residential zone.

T H E I N S T I T U T I O N A L A R E A

This character area is defined by the blocks containing most of the community, educational and recreational aspects of the subject area. Large areas of open space, inconsistent building size, typology and a wide variety of land use give this area an inconsistent character and make this area's character resilient to intensification. We recommend this area be included in the medium density zone.

T H E W I D E G R I D

The wide grid is defined by its wide streets, fairly consistent housing stock of low character value, relatively inconsistent set backs, inconsistently-defined street front vegetative character and consistent building density. The wide roads and set back fencing reinforce an open character. This area is recommended for inclusion in the medium density residential zone.

T H E H O M E W O O D A V E N U E C O R N E R

The Northeast corner of the grid, dissected by Homewood Avenue is an anomaly at the edge of the wide grid. Whilst flat land exists in this area, there is also a definitive green character defined by a number of mature specimens of both exotics and natives at the front of properties. This area is recommended for inclusion in the medium density zone with provisions made for the protection of mature trees.

T H E V E G E T A T E D S L O P E S

Where the grid begins to respond to the topography is the most defining character change within the subject area. Streets become more serpentine and narrower. Housing is less frequently single storey with less consistent set backs and less consistent style. In this area one side of the street sits higher than the road and is more visually connected to the street. Vegetation is more abundant within these areas and creates a green character. It is recommended that this area be excluded from the medium density residential zone.

The 1970's residential development at the southern end of Monaghan Ave is an anomaly within this area. Sloped land but wide streets and relatively weak street front vegetation give this area a consistent character but not one that is uncommon to Wellington or particularly valuable to the character of Karori. It is recommended that this area be included in the medium density residential zone.

U R B A N C E N T R E

The centre is defined by existing land use and inconsistent building heights, ages and materiality. Inconsistencies in all these elements make the character relatively weak and resilient to change. It includes both Marsden Village and Karori Town Centre. It is recommended that this area be included in the medium density residential zone.

T H E O U T L I E R S

Futuna Close is a distinctive area with a vegetated backdrop, consistent and strong built form character. As an inward-facing, enclosed development it has a relatively small impact on surrounding street character. It is recommended that this area be excluded from the medium density residential zone.

C O N C L U S I O N A N D R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S

Based on the above character assessment Figure 6 shows the character areas of Karori and recommends which areas should be included in the medium density residential zone.

T O P O G R A P H Y

Karori's character, like much of Wellington, is significantly affected by its topography. Flat land is the most conducive to residential intensification. The hills surrounding Karori provide a distinctive frame for the suburb. On the steeper slopes this has resulted in inconsistent sizes, layouts and setbacks of properties enabling a strong green character to become apparent in both the front and rear of properties. As the hill slopes becomes more gradual and begin to merge into the wide grid, a greater consistency amongst property sizes, setbacks and built form at the street front has reduced the green character of the slopes. The feathered boundaries of Figure 6 denote where these shifts in character occur. The recommended boundary from a character perspective in these merging character areas is determined by existing properties rear boundaries and the relationship between opposite sides of streets.

V E G E T A T I O N

Topography has allowed vegetation to grow to a significant height on surrounding hills. It provides the green backdrop which significantly affects the character of the suburb. At a street level within the hills vegetation provides privacy to properties on the lower side of the street whilst adding significantly to the character of the street itself. Loss of vegetation due to residential intensification would have a negative impact on the green character of the area therefore making them unsuitable for inclusion in the medium density residential zone.

Within the grid there is little significant vegetation that would be affected by residential intensification. There is a small amount of vegetation at the front of properties, relatively small setbacks and no significant vegetation that affect the overall character of the area. This character is resilient to intensification and therefore is included within the medium density zone.

U R B A N S T R U C T U R E

Within the wide grid Karori's urban structure is predominantly flat with wide streets, consistent property sizes and a relatively low density. Small setbacks and built form at the street edge are common. Housing typologies are relatively inconsistent and are insignificant to the character of the streets. The wide grid and narrow grid character areas are included in the recommended medium density zone because the defining street character would not be influenced by residential intensification.

P R O V I S I O N S

On wide streets, low building density and consistent property sizes make a 10 metre height limit appropriate for the recommended medium density zone.

There are two areas within the grid that have a strong green character due to mature and tall vegetation held in private ownership. In these areas significant trees should be retained during intensification:

- The Homewood Avenue corner (as shown in fig 6 previous page).
- The hillock containing Marsden College and St Mary's Anglican Church adds significant character to the area due to its elevated vegetation and the heritage listed church. Development of these areas should have provisions in place to retain mature trees and ensure that building heights do not impede on significant views of the church tower from Karori Road.