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### **Gabites Block Rezoning**

This document is to provide landscaping advice over the proposed development form at the Gabites Block in Upper Hutt.

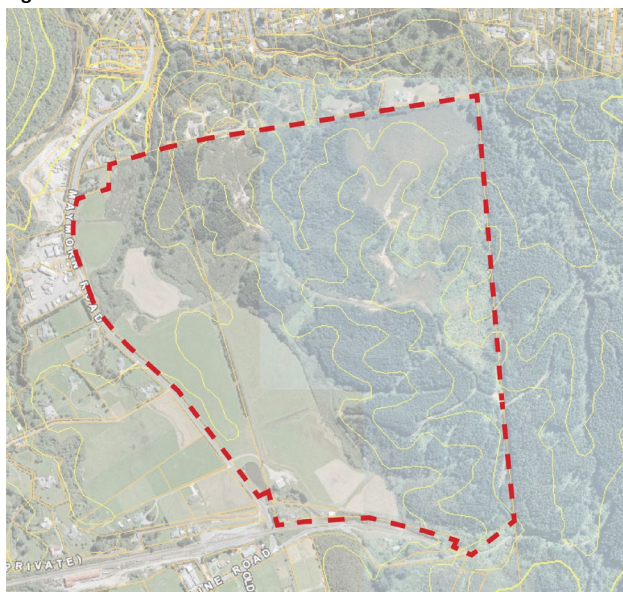
#### **Background**

Council received a request to consider the rezoning of Gabites Block (see Figure 1). The applicant is likely to advance the rezoning of this site as a private plan change to allow for a combination of residential and rural residential development.

This site has been subject to a structure plan to enable an urban development form with up to 1800 residential dwellings within the wider Maymorn community. This structure plan was subject to a significant amount of community opposition and was subsequently not acted upon.

The site however has been identified in the Upper Hutt City Council Land Use Strategy as being potentially being able to accommodate up to 220 residential dwellings.

**Figure 1: Location of Gabites Block**



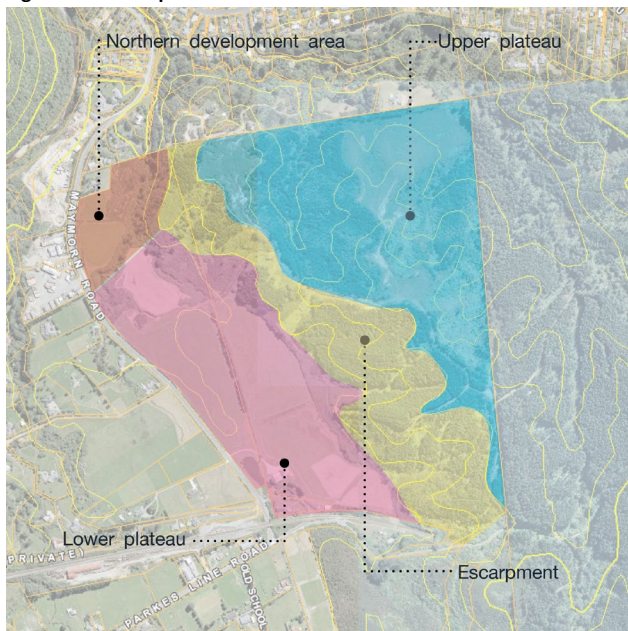
### Landscape Features of the Site

The site is located at the entrance to Mangaroa and forms part of the gateway to the rural environment. Leading into the site, the landscape value of the local area is defined by residential dwellings and light business premises, on modified landscapes. Areas of steeper topography (for example the north façade of Mt Marua) are however largely undeveloped and are vegetated. This gives the impression of overall a lower level of density than what may be expected in an urban area and provides a transition from the urban environment to the rural environment.

The site itself is 744 020m<sup>2</sup> in area and is comprised of the following four landscape features as marked in Figure 2 below:

- Lower Plain;
- Escarpment;
- Elevated Plateau; and
- Northern Development Area.

Figure 2: Landscape features on the site.



### Plan Change 50

The site has been identified to be rezoned under Plan Change 50 of Upper Hutt City Council. Under the current operative District Plan, the site is split zoned, with the Lower Plain largely within the Rural Valley Zone, with the remainder under the Rural Hill Zone. Within these zones, the operative District Plan allows for the following density of development:

- Rural Valley Zone – 1 dwelling per 4 hectares
- Rural Hill Zone – 1 dwelling per 20 hectares.

Under Plan Change 50, the Council is proposing to change the zoning of the site to the following:

- Rural Settlement along the Lower Plan and Elevated Plateau
- General Rural along the escarpment



- Lower Density Residential along the northern development area

Council has identified that this site is appropriate for a more intense form of residential development for a number of reasons including:

- Proximity to the CBD and urban area
- Proximity to the Mangaroa Railway Station;
- Proximity to reticulated infrastructure; and
- It has been identified within the Upper Hutt Urban Growth Strategy as an area to accommodate future growth.

It is also recognised that the background rural character assessments that have been undertaken as part of Plan Change 50 has identified the ability for this site to accommodate further intensification. As such, the review of the proposed development plan provided by the applicant and which has been assessed within this report, does not seek to question this previous reporting. Rather, it seeks to apply both a planning and a landscape lens to the site on an individual basis.

It is also recognised that a draft set of bulk and location provisions to inform the form of future dwellings has been developed by UHCC. These bulk and location provisions have informed the decisions around this site and it has been assumed that buildings constructed on the site, will be in accordance with these provisions. This assessment has not sought to reconsider these zone wide provisions at this stage, as this assessment is more of a high-level determination of appropriateness of the proposed development form, against the intended future zone direction by Upper Hutt City Council.

### **Development Plan**

The applicant for the private plan change has prepared a development plan. This is identified in Figure 3 below:



Figure 3: Development Plan for Gabites Block



This development plan consists of residential in the northern portion of the site, 2000m<sup>2</sup> lots along the lower plain and upper plateau and no development on the escarpment. The proposed development pattern is considered in more detail below.

### Lower Plain

Under Plan Change 50, this area is proposed to be Settlement Zone, which allows for 2000m<sup>2</sup> lots. The proposed lots in this area are all over 2000m<sup>2</sup> and therefore meets the intent of the proposed Settlement Zone. However, to ensure that a sense of rural character is maintained, the following outcomes need to be achieved (it is noted that the development plan as proposed largely already achieves these matters):

- No more than 2 road connections onto Maymorn Road
- No private driveways from the dwellings on the lots with frontage onto Maymorn Road
- Maintaining a setback of approximately 7m from the front boundary for future building that will be constructed on the proposed lots
- Ensuring the fence design is rural in nature and not closeboard fencing
- Consideration to be given to internal road lighting design to ensure there is not an urban form of streetlighting (though it is recognised that there may be Code of Practice implications around this suggestion)
- Consideration to be given to planting along the Maymorn Road frontage. This planting does not need to hide or fully screen the development on the site. Rather it is to contribute to the sense of open rural character. A planting strip of at least 5m should be considered.



## **Escarpment**

The proposed development design shows no development along the escarpment apart from a road. This is supported, as by not having buildings on this escarpment, the development continues to contribute to the open rural character of the local area. It is also supported having one road connection up to the plateau to support reduced disturbance of this feature.

When the detailed roading design is undertaken, consideration should be given to minimise the extent and height of retaining walls or cut and fill batters. Where retaining walls, fill batters and/or cut faces are required, these should be revegetated to ensure that the following outcomes are achieved:

- There are not any permanently exposed earthworked surfaces; and
- Any retaining structures are screened when viewed from Maymorn Road and the wider environment.

## **Upper Plateau**

Under Plan Change 50, this area is proposed to be Settlement Zone, which allows for 2000m<sup>2</sup> lots. The proposed lots in this area are all over 2000m<sup>2</sup> and therefore meet the intent of the proposed Settlement Zone. However, to ensure that a sense of rural character is maintained, the following outcomes need to be achieved

- Ensuring the fence design is rural in natural and not closeboard fencing, this is particularly important along the boundaries of properties that front Maymorn Road or the proposed internal roading;
- Consideration be given to internal road lighting design to ensure there is not an urban form of streetlighting (though it is recognised that there may be Code of Practice implications around this suggestion);
- The future dwellings on these properties would be visible from the Tunnel Gulley entrance to the Kaitoke Regional Park. As the Regional Park is elevated over the site, the full development form will potentially be visible from this area, which provides a unique perspective on the site. To ensure that the building forms blend in with the local area, it is considered that a recessive colour palette, similar to what is used in the other rural zones, may be appropriate for dwellings on this Upper Plateau.





## Northern Development Area

The applicant proposes to establish an urban residential development in the northern portion of the site as detailed in Figure 4 below:

Figure 4: Development Plan for the northern portion of the site



The northern portion of the site is somewhat separated from the remainder of the property by the stream that passes to the south of this area. The northern portion is located adjacent to business and residential properties and therefore residential development within this area would not appear out of context with the character of the immediate local environment. Critically, the majority of this portion of the development is located prior to where the road curves to the south. The south of this curve is where the rural environment becomes more pronounced. However, for residential density in this area to be supported, ideally the following would apply:

- The residential development would be largely constrained to the flat areas of the land to the west of where the site rises into the escarpment (which is described above)
- Development would avoid the identified Significant Natural Area, which provides a natural backdrop to the local environment
- The residential development would not extend beyond the stream, which divides the northern portion of the site and the lower plain
- The residential development density would be more consistent with that of the adjoining residential areas. Currently the plan provided by the applicant shows a number of lots around 400m<sup>2</sup> in area. We understand that this density is similar to the General Residential Zone. Given the location of this site relatively to the Urban CBD, the infrequency of public transport in the area, and the general pattern of residential development in the wider



environment, we believe that a development pattern that is more consistent with the Low Density Residential Zone (being lots of 600m<sup>2</sup>) is more appropriate.

- The applicant has proposed a planting strip along the front boundaries of the lots that front Myamorn Road. This would be beneficial in integrating the residential development on this portion of the site with the future rural settlement development to the south.

### **Conclusion**

It is considered that the Gabites Block can be rezoned to allow for further intensification. There are however a number of sensitivities that need to be accounted for when considering the rezoning of the site. The draft plan provided to the Council already addresses a number of these sensitivities and the remainder would need to be accounted as the detail of this development progresses.



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