



# Awakino Precinct Proposed Plan Change

Awakino Road, Dargaville

Urban Design Assessment

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**B&A**  
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## 1.0 Executive summary

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This report provides an urban design assessment of the Proposed Plan Change (“PPC”) to the Kaipara District Plan (“KDP”) known as Awakino Precinct, which seeks to rezone approximately 39.26ha of ‘rural’ zoned land to ‘residential’ zoned land.

This report is structured as follows:

- A review of the subject site (“the site”) and context including an analysis of the opportunities and constraints;
- Planning context as it pertains to urban design matters;
- Identification of the key urban design related outcomes required to support the rezoning of the site for residential purposes;
- Assessment of the proposed precinct provisions and how they will give effect to the key urban related outcomes identified; and
- Concluding comments.

**Key findings of this report include:**

- The proposed rezoning of the Plan Change Area (“PCA”) from rural to residential land use is an appropriate response given the sites proximity to existing services and amenities and existing residential neighbourhood at its western edge.
- The change in activity from rural to residential purposes will provide residential housing capacity in Dargaville to support the anticipated growth over the coming years.
- The proposed precinct plan and provisions, including the proposed objectives, policies, rules and assessment criteria, will establish a robust framework that will help to secure good urban design outcomes as part of any future residential development on the site.
- The proposed precinct plan and provisions will ensure that key existing natural features on-site will be retained, enhanced and maintained in a sensitive manner.
- The PPC will result in minimal adverse effects on existing neighbouring properties and the adjoining Awakino Road.

## 2.0 Introduction

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### 2.1 Background

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Moonlight Heights Limited (“MHL”) seeks to rezone approximately 39.26ha of ‘rural’ zoned land to ‘residential’ zoned land. MHL envisages that the PPC will provide additional residential land that will result in additional housing supply for the Dargaville area.

Barker & Associates (“B&A”) have been engaged by MHL to provide an urban design assessment to support the PPC. I am familiar with the area to which the application relates and visited the site on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2022.

This report assesses the proposed precinct provisions and how they give effect to good urban design principles. These principles are set out in this report and have been derived from good urban design practice, expected outcomes from the Kaipara District Plan, the Kaipara Spatial Plan and guidance documents including the New Zealand Urban Design Protocol and Auckland Design Manual (in the absence of specific Kaipara design guidance).

## 2.2 Scope and purpose of report

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This report provides an urban design assessment of the PPC. The report:

- Summarises the characteristics of the PCA and its context;
- Summarises the strategic planning context relevant to an urban design assessment;
- Reviews the proposed precinct provisions in relation to anticipated urban design outcomes; and
- Assesses the urban design effects of the proposed rezoning and proposed precinct plan associated with the PCA.

## 3.0 Plan change area and surrounding context

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### 3.1 Plan change area

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The PCA applies to a number of properties at Awakino Road (refer to Records of Title, Appendix 1) of which Moonlight Heights Limited is a significant owner. On its western side, the PCA is adjoined by Awakino Road and residential properties along its edge. On the eastern side the PCA adjoins further rural zoned land, currently used for agriculture and which contains an existing 50kV Electricity Transmission Line. Directly north of the PCA is the Dargaville Landfill (Designation 34 / D34). The PCA has a total area of approximately 392,610.4m<sup>2</sup> (39.26ha).

The PCA is largely defined by existing parcel boundaries, however, the eastern most boundary is defined by an existing 'flood hazard overlay' which also broadly aligns with the existing topography with a reduced level ("RL") of approximately 4m. With the exception of the eastern boundary and the existing parcels excluded from the PCA associated with the western boundary, the site is reasonably regular in shape and poses positive opportunities for efficient residential development.





**Figure 1: Proposed plan change area (source: LINZ data).**

### 3.2 Existing site conditions

Whilst the majority of the PCA is reasonably level, there is a steep change in elevation of approximately 26m to the east and 15m to the south within the PCA. The significant change in elevation in these two areas will heavily constrain future development potential, however, equally creates unique opportunities to achieve high-quality outlook and views from future homes out across the rural zoned land to the east.

With reference to Appendix 6: Ecologist Assessment, there are a number of existing natural and ecological features of the PCA, some of which will be retained, protected and enhanced through the proposed precinct provisions. These features include but are not limited to:

- Wetlands;
- Wet steep areas;
- Ephemeral streams;
- Intermittent streams;
- Artificial drains;
- Existing native vegetation; and
- Existing exotic vegetation.

### 3.3 Opportunities and constraints

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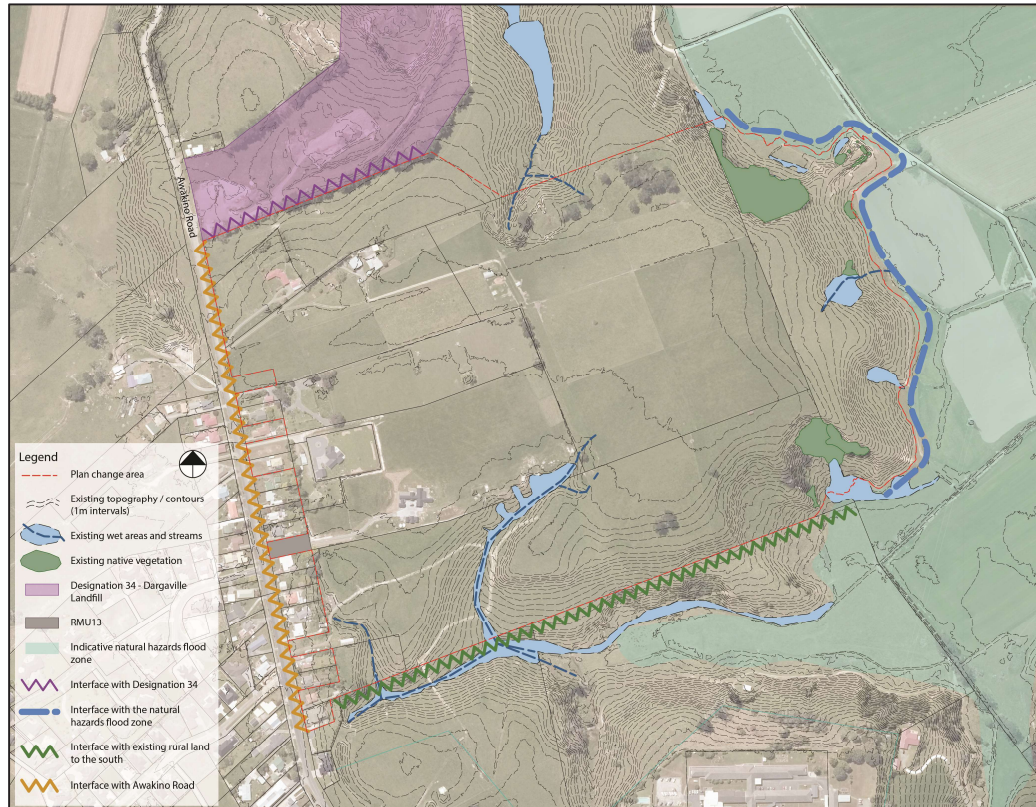
As part of my analysis of the PCA, a series of high-level urban design opportunities and constraints that the PCA presents to development have been identified below. Many of these features can either be interpreted as an opportunity or constraint depending on how each feature is approached. For ease of reference, all opportunities and constraints have been identified together which have helped to inform the PPC.

The natural features of the site are considered to be both opportunities and constraints. The most significant natural features, from a landscape character perspective, include:

- The wetlands and streams which are scattered across the site, predominantly toward the east and south;
- The topographical context:
  - The significant areas of flat land which will likely result in efficient residential development; and
  - The significant change in elevation toward the east and south which will likely limit development in these locations, however, could provide a high-quality outlook.
- The existing native vegetation which could be retained and enhanced. These elements would likely contribute to the quality, amenity and sense of place associated with any future residential development.

In addition to the above natural features, there are several interfaces and elements within and beyond the PCA which can also be identified as both opportunities and constraints:

- The interface to the north with Designation 34, typically considered a constraint.
  - There is currently a significant landscape buffer located at the interface between D34 and the PCA which includes native shrubs / bush and mature specimen trees.
  - D34 is also zoned residential under the Kaipara District Plan.
- The interface with the natural hazards flood zone to the east.
- The interface with the rural zoned land to the south.
- The interface with Awakino Road to the west.
- The parcel of land which the 'loop road' is proposed to connect to Awakino Road is classified as 'Road Reserve' (RMU13) within the Kaipara District Plan.



**Figure 2: Opportunities and constraints.**

### 3.4 Accessibility and proximity to amenities

The PCA is well served and accessible to surrounding amenities. The following amenities have been identified as being within reasonable proximity to the PCA:

- Dargaville Primary School is located approximately 1.7km to the south-west;
- Selwyn Park Primary School is located approximately 1.4km / 17minute walk to the south-east;
- Dargaville Intermediate is a 1.7km / 20minute walk to the south-west;
- Dargaville High School is a 1.2km walk / 15minute walk to the south-west;
- Dargaville Hospital is an 850m / 11minute walk to the south;
- Selwyn Park is a 1.4km / 18minute walk to the south;
- Dargaville town centre and Wairoa River are approximately 1.7km to the south; and
- Dargaville Railway Station is approximately 1.9km to the south-west;



## 4.0 Strategic planning context

The strategic planning context is covered in detail within the Assessment of Effects and Section 32 Evaluation Report dated 31 May 2022. Below, I provide a brief summary of those aspects relevant to an urban design assessment.

### 4.1 Kaipara District Plan

The chapters associated with the Kaipara District Plan relevant to this PPC from an urban design perspective include:

**Chapter 3 – Land use and development strategy:** This chapter provides objectives and policies for Council to respond to growth and economic development opportunities.

**Chapter 13 – Residential:** This chapter provides objectives and policies for Council to respond to future development outcomes within residential zoned land.

### 4.2 Kaipara Spatial Plan (Part 2 - Dargaville Spatial Plan)

Part 2 of the Kaipara Spatial Plan identifies Dargaville as a strategic centre within the Kaipara region due to its location on the Northern Wairoa River, its growing population and its historic and cultural context. In addition, the Dargaville Spatial Plan identifies the PCA as a suitable location for new medium density housing.

A series of key moves and criteria in relation to future medium density housing have also been identified within the Dargaville Spatial Plan. These elements have been considered and integrated into the proposed PCA where relevant.

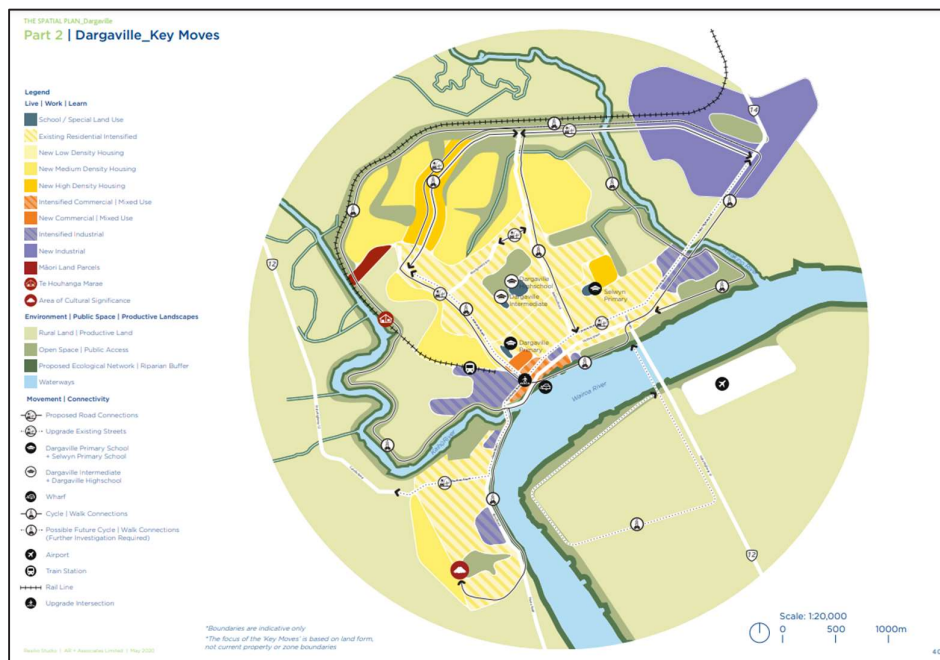


Figure 3: Dargaville Spatial Plan Key Moves (source: Kaipara Spatial Plan, Part 2, Page 40).

### 4.3 NPS-UD

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The National Policy Statement on Urban Development (NPSUD) (August 2020) sets a nationwide direction for accommodating growth both ‘up’ and ‘out’ in New Zealand cities. There is an emphasis on enabling development capacity in locations close to jobs, community services, public transport and other community amenities.

Dargaville is classified as a Tier 3 city. As such, the objectives and policies that relate to the PCA and urban design matters include:

**Objective 1 and Policy 1:** Planning decisions contribute to well-functioning urban environments which at a minimum:

- Meet the needs, in terms of type, price, and location, of different households, have good accessibility for all people between housing, jobs, community services, natural spaces, and open spaces, including by way of public or active transport;
- Support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions; and
- Are resilient to the likely current and future effects of climate change.

**Objective 3 and Policy 5:** Regional policy statements and district plans applying to Tier 2 and 3 urban environments enable heights and density of urban form commensurate with the greater of:

- The level of accessibility by existing or planned active or public transport to a range of commercial activities and community services.

### 4.4 Regional policy statement

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The Northland Regional Policy Statement (‘RPS’) sets out the strategic framework for managing Northland’s natural and physical resources. Provisions associated with the RPS relevant to the PCA and urban design matters primarily relate to ‘**3.11 Regional Form**’.

The objectives associated with this chapter seek to achieve a regional form that enhances the quality of life for Northland’s residents by creating sustainable communities that have:

- Good physical connections;
- An adequate range of transport choices; and
- Vibrant, safe and cohesive town centres with a range of residential and business opportunities.

## 5.0 Description of the proposal

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The PPC seeks to rezone approximately 39.26ha of ‘rural’ zoned land to ‘residential’ zoned land and introduce a precinct (“Awakino Precinct”) to the Kaipara District Plan that will apply across the PCA.

The proposed precinct will contain a suite of District Plan objectives, policies and rules which will guide future development of the PCA to secure good urban design outcomes, as described in chapter 6.3 of this assessment.

The full list of objectives, policies and rules of the proposed precinct can be found within Appendix 8 of this assessment.

## 6.0 Urban design assessment

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### 6.1 Urban design outcomes

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In developing the PPC and draft precinct plan, the following urban design outcomes have been utilised to guide the objectives, policies, rules and assessment criteria of the proposed residential precinct:

- (1) The block structure responds to the topography and climatic conditions of the site, such as solar orientation and prevailing winds.
- (2) The flexibility of the block structure enables delivery of a range of housing typologies, that respond to the needs of the community and market.
- (3) Public streets and open space networks are well connected, legible, safe and enhance environmental and ecological values of the site.
- (4) Where private development adjoins future public open space, it creates a safe, positive and open edge condition.
- (5) Future development is designed to ensure high quality on-site residential amenity, privacy, sunlight access and legibility for residents.

### 6.2 Precinct plan

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The Proposed Precinct Plan (**"PPP"**) that will accompany the PPC identifies certain elements that will be required as part of any future development. These include:

- (1) A primary 20m wide **'loop road'** that responds to the existing site's topography and creates a foundation for future development patterns i.e. north-south local road connections.
- (2) A central **'neighbourhood park'** which is sized and designed in response to the existing and anticipated number of residents within the local area.
- (3) A north-south **'green street'** which will create an ecological corridor between open space areas to the north and south of the PCA. Design elements, such as those below, could be incorporated in the street's design:
  - (a) Stormwater treatment devices i.e. swales or rain gardens;
  - (b) Native street trees of a size and species' that will create canopy cover along the 'green street' (for example, trees that are planted at 160L grades that can reach heights of 8m within a five-year period from planting); and
  - (c) A 3m shared pedestrian / cycle connection located on the eastern side of the road, to align with the indicative neighbourhood park.

The location and alignment of the green street will also help to reinforce a desirable north-south development pattern / block structure.

In my view, the key elements identified above will help to secure a number of the urban design related outcomes identified within chapter 6.1. More specifically, these elements will:

- Assist in establishing a block structure that:
  - Responds positively to the topography and climatic conditions of the site including solar orientation;
  - Will provide flexibility to accommodate a range of housing typologies as determined at the time of development;
  - Is clear and legible and will facilitate positive interfaces between dwellings, properties and the street(s) i.e. 'fronts' facing 'fronts' and 'backs' facing 'backs';
- Enhance environmental and ecological values of the site; and
- Encourage park edge roads, most notably around the 'neighbourhood park' and existing hydrological elements which will be retained through the proposed precinct provisions.

### 6.3 Precinct provisions

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In addition to the Precinct Plan, the comprehensive set of objectives, policies, rules and assessment criteria in the PPC help to establish site specific provisions pertaining to future block layout, subdivision, residential amenity, connectivity, ecological integrity and open space. These can be found within Appendix 8.

It's my opinion that the proposed precinct provisions in combination with the specific elements identified within the precinct plan will provide a robust framework to achieve the urban design outcomes identified within chapter 6.1 of this assessment within future development of the PCA.

In particular, the following provisions of the PPC directly relate to the urban design outcomes sought:

- **13.13A:** Specific dimensions are proposed for each development block to ensure that public road connections will be located at reasonable intervals, contributing to a well-connected and legible street network.
- **13.13A:** A specific quantum, dimension and location has been identified for future open space requirements. This will ensure that sufficient, usable and functional recreation areas / open spaces will be provided as part of any future residential development in order to service the existing and proposed residential catchment.
- **13.10.7:** Specific setbacks have been identified in relation to wetlands, rivers and adjacent rural zoned land. These have been provided to ensure future residential development will not result in any significant adverse effects on neighbouring properties and natural features of the site.
- **13.10.11:** Specific rules have been identified regarding the quantum, functionality, privacy, sunlight access and general amenity associated with private outdoor space.
- **AHP-P3:** Policies have been identified regarding the protection, enhancement and management of existing natural ecological features on site.

## 6.4 Urban design effects

The PCA will see a significant change in character due to the different development outcomes associated with a 'rural' to a 'residential' land use change. Notwithstanding, this change is anticipated by the district's statutory framework and will result in an opportunity to establish greatly needed residential dwellings to support the growth of Dargaville. Further, the proposed precinct provisions utilise good urban design principles that will help to ensure the change in land use will result in favourable effects for the PCA and wider neighbourhood.

As part of this assessment, the following interfaces have been considered in terms of their possible sensitivity pertaining to urban design matters:

- Potential streetscape effects associated with Awakino Road; and
- Potential effects onto neighbouring properties.

### Potential streetscape effects associated with Awakino Road:

In my view, any urban design related adverse effects pertaining to the streetscape amenity associated with Awakino Road will be minimal for the following reasons:

- A series of existing smaller 'residential' zoned lots already front Awakino Road resulting in an existing fine grain development pattern.
- The portions of the PCA which will be visible from Awakino Road will seamlessly tie in with the existing 'residential' zoned lots creating a contiguous 'residential' block in this location.
- The primary discernable change will be the two public road connections / intersections that will connect with Awakino Road in the future once development occurs.
  - These two street connections will be located approximately 220m apart. In addition, these will be reasonably minor intersections, therefore, I do not anticipate any significant adverse effects on walking and cycling.

### Potential effects onto neighbouring properties:

In my view, any potential urban design related adverse effects of the PPC onto neighbouring properties will be minimal and / or will be successfully mitigated through the proposed precinct provisions. Any future development will be subject to various boundary setbacks and development controls of the District Plan that will mitigate any potential adverse amenity effects onto existing neighbouring properties as typical to a residential environment.

With specific regard to the existing properties located adjacent to where the proposed 'loop road' would be located (i.e. next to the currently vacant sections where the proposed loop road will be constructed) I provide the following assessment:

- **155 Awakino Road:**
  - This site is located directly south of the northern proposed 'loop road' connection onto Awakino Road.
  - This site is currently vacant of any dwellings, therefore if the site remains vacant at the time of the loop road's construction, there will be no urban design related adverse effects.
  - The current interface comprises live stock boundary fencing which is low level and visually permeable. In my view, this existing treatment will maintain a positive and open edge



condition to the future public road without resulting in any adverse effects pertaining to privacy and residential amenity.

- **133 and 137 Awakino Road:**
  - These two sites are located directly adjacent to the southern proposed 'loop road' connection onto Awakino Road.
  - As it stands, both of the existing dwellings will effectively present side elevations to the proposed road connection.
  - Both of their outdoor living spaces are currently located toward the east / rear of their properties, therefore, change will primarily be experienced along the side boundary(s) as the adjacent site changes from a driveway (see below) to a public street.
  - The site in which the 'loop road' is proposed to be located, currently contains a driveway of approximately 5m in width. It would therefore be reasonable to assume that the adjacent dwellings already experiences vehicles accessing the PCA site in close proximity to their outdoor living spaces, albeit much lower volume and regularity than of a fully public road connection.
  - Further, the parcel of land which the 'loop road' is proposed to connect to Awakino Road is classified as 'Road Reserve' (RMU13) within the Kaipara District Plan, therefore, a road connection in this location is anticipated.
  - 137 Awakino Road currently has a low-level picket fence along its southern boundary, while 133 Awakino Road currently has a mid-height fence along its northern boundary. Both fences in their current condition may be insufficient to provide either visual privacy to the rear outdoor living space or a positive and open condition to the street when the proposed loop road is operational.
  - In my view, an appropriate boundary treatment that would assist in mitigating any potential adverse privacy and amenity effects while maintaining a positive and open street edge, would comprise a low-level fence typology for the first 10 – 15m from Awakino Road which then transitions up to a mid-height, visually permeable fence typology for the balance of both sites. This would retain some degree of privacy for existing residents while providing a balanced open edge condition to the future public realm.
  - With a change of fence type along the boundary with the proposed loop road, the properties at 133 and 137 Awakino Road transition to a typical residential condition of properties located on street corners in residential neighbourhoods.

## 7.0 Conclusion

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Overall, in my view, the proximity of the PCA in relation to a range of services and amenities including those in the Kaipara Town Centre, make it well suited for residential purposes that would be possible should this plan change be granted.

A significant portion of the PCA has limited topographical constraints which is well suited for more intensive residential development. Where significant topography is located, this provides an opportunity to provide high-quality outlook and opportunities for additional open space.

The change in land use will enable residential activity which is aligned with higher purpose strategic planning policy.

The proposed precinct plan and relevant objectives, policies, rules and assessment criteria of the proposed plan change will establish a robust framework to secure good urban design outcomes for any future residential development on the subject site.