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## **LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT**

### **SOUL FRIENDS PET CREMATORIUM 94 MULGRAVE STREET**

September 2021

Prepared by

**Hudson Associates  
Landscape Architects**

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## INTRODUCTION

1. The following assessment of landscape character and visual effects was commissioned by Palmerston North City Council to review the Landscape and Visual Assessment which accompanied an application for resource consent for a proposed crematorium. The Landscape and Visual Assessment, dated 18 December 2020, was prepared by WSP hereinafter referred to as the “**Landscape Assessment**” (Figure 1).
2. The proposal is located at 94 Mulgrave Street, Ashhurst. The 4-hectare site is legally named Lot 2 DP 35100 and held in Record of Title WN12A/55.

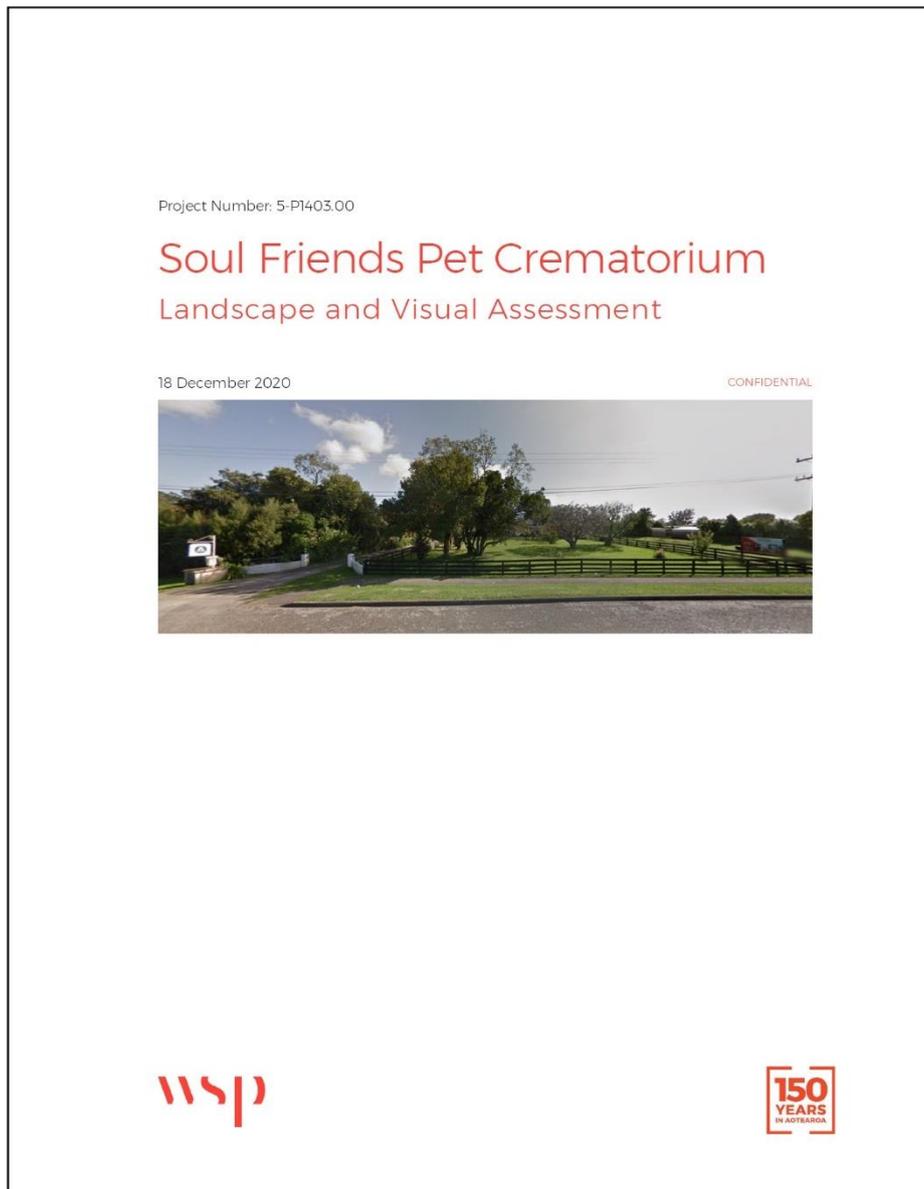


Figure 1: Title page of the Landscape and Visual Assessment, dated 18 December 2020, prepared by WSP.

## METHODOLOGY

3. The landscape methodology used for this assessment follows the concepts and principles outlined in the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects (“**NZILA**”) Guidelines.<sup>1</sup>
4. Due to COVID-19 restrictions a site visit was unable to be undertaken at the time of assessment, although the authors are familiar with the area. A digital site visit was completed using Google Earth, including appraisal of Google Street View to gain an appreciation of the broader context and localised area of the site.
5. Statutory documents which have been reviewed as part of this assessment include: Resource Management Act 1991 (“**RMA**”), Manawatu-Wanganui Regional Council's (Horizon’s) One Plan Operative Regional Policy Statement (“**RPS**”), and the Operative Palmerston North District Plan (“**PNDP**”).
6. Key matters assessed in this report include effects of the proposed crematorium on landscape character (including visual effects). As part of this assessment, consideration is given to potential effects of the proposal on the protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes (“**ONLF**”), maintenance and enhancement of amenity values, and maintenance and enhancement of the quality of the environment.
7. Consideration has been given to measures to avoid, remedy, and mitigate potential adverse effects, and these are discussed throughout the assessment and are considered when assessing effects. The assessment uses a seven-point scale<sup>2</sup> to rate effects (*Table 1*). See *Table 2* for conversion to RMA terminology.<sup>3</sup>

*Table 1: Effects rating table.*

Very Low	Low	Low-Moderate	Moderate	Moderate-High	High	Very High
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*Table 2: Rating of effects and RMA terminology.*

	<b>Effects rating scale</b>	<b>RMA terminology</b>
	Very low	Less than minor effects
	Low	Minor effects
	Low-moderate	Minor effects
	Moderate	More than minor effects
	Moderate-high	More than minor effects
	High	Significant effects
	Very high	Significant effects

<sup>1</sup> Te Tangi a Te Manu: Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines (April 2021).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

## PROPOSAL

8. Soul Friends Pet Cremation (“**Applicant**”) is seeking resource consent to operate a pet cremation business with workshop facilities and memorial gardens on Rural zoned land. Refer to the project description in the AEE and the S42A report for further details.
9. Key aspects of the proposal pertinent to landscape include:
  - 500m<sup>2</sup> Totalspan shed (*Figure 2*).
  - Four 10.5m high cremator stacks (*Figure 2*).
  - 2.6m high by 6.1m long shipping container.
  - Impermeable 1.8m high acoustic fencing along the boundaries with 98 Mulgrave Street, approximately 73m in length (*Figure 3*).
  - Hardstand areas for access and parking (*Figure 3*).
10. Measures intended to avoid potential adverse landscape and visual effects include:
  - The form of structures (roof shape and pitch designed to avoid forms which would be out of character with the landscape), see *Figure 2*.
  - The scale of structures (compact footprint of the proposal to allow some open space to be retained), see *Figure 3*.
  - Planting (intended to blend the structures into the surrounding landscape), see *Figure 3*.
  - Materiality (use of low reflective, dark green or black colour finishes intended to minimise the prominence of built forms).

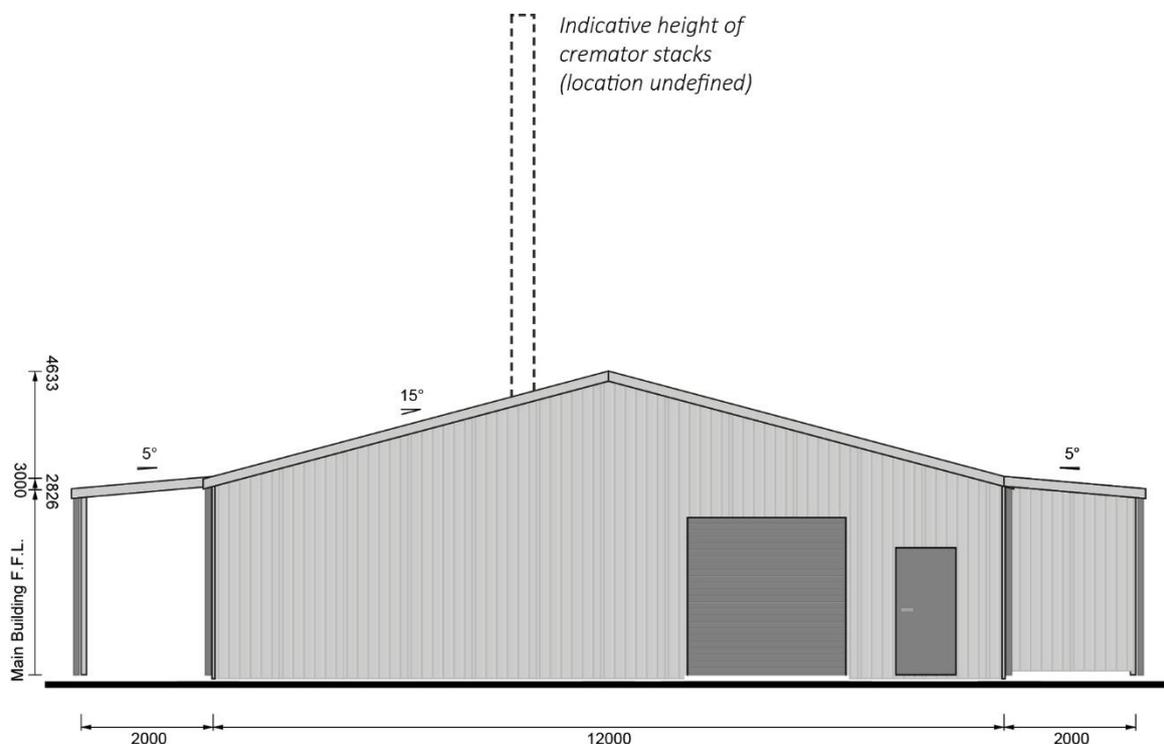
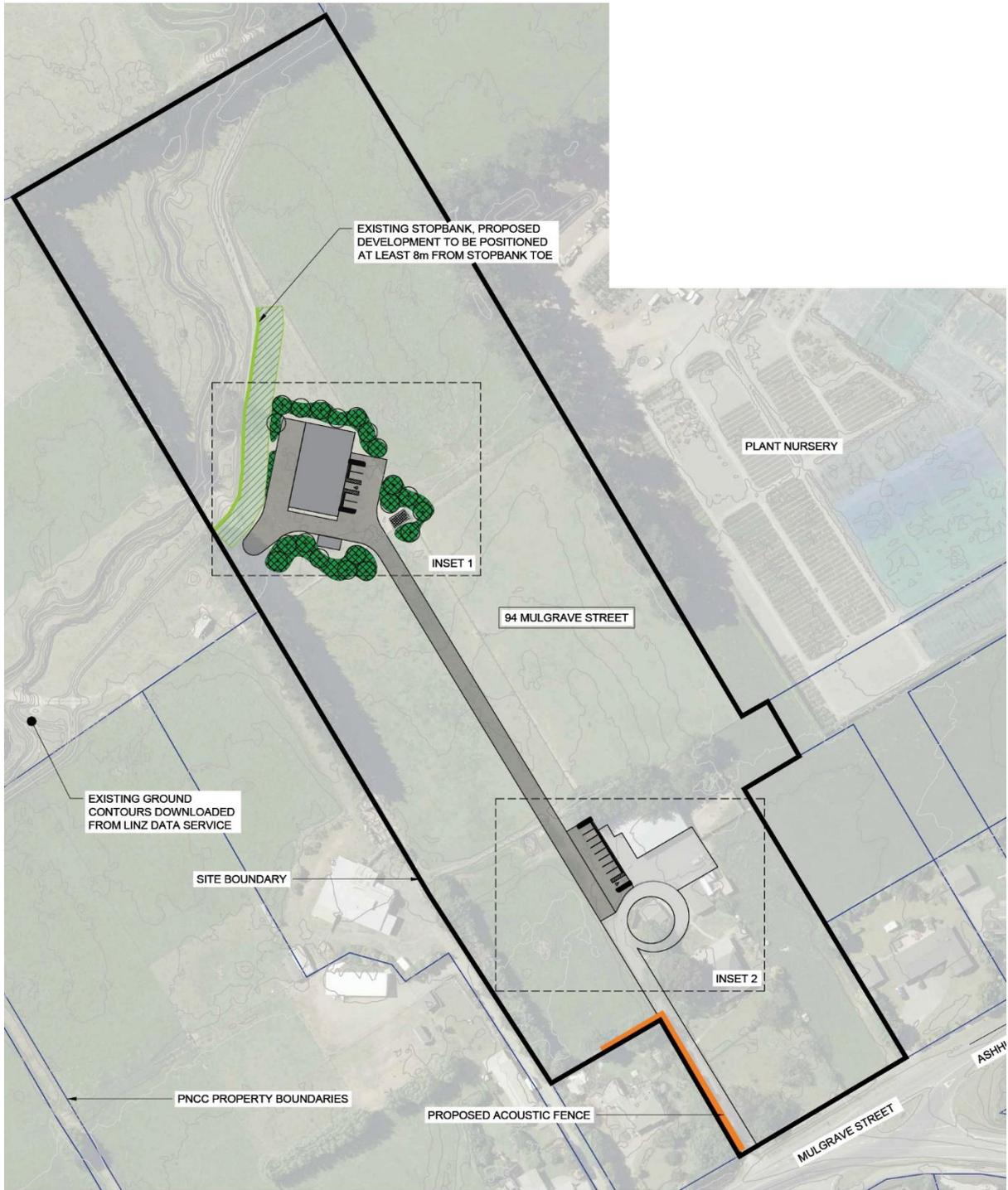


Figure 2: Elevation view of TotalSpan shed. Sourced from the Landscape Assessment. Note: the 10.5m high cremator stacks were excluded from this drawing so the height of these have been indicatively annotated.



**KEY**

- Application Site
- Proposed Pet Crematorium
- Proposed Access/Parking
- Proposed Screen Planting
- + Proposed Speciman Trees

- Proposed Acoustic Fence
- Existing Stop Bank

20m    40m  
  
**1:2,000 @ A4**  
 Do not scale from dwg



Figure 3: Site Plan.

## RELEVANT STATUTORY PROVISIONS

11. The statutory planning context for the proposal is provided by the RMA, RPS, and the PNDP.
12. The purpose of reviewing the provisions is to help frame the landscape assessment. It is not to undertake a comprehensive appraisal of the provisions or a planning assessment of the proposal against the provisions.

### ***Resource Management Act***

13. Part 2, Section 6 of the RMA sets out “matters of national importance”, while Section 7 sets out “other matters”. Considered in relation to this application Section 6(b) which requires the protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes, Section 7(c) which requires that regard is given to the maintenance and enhancement of amenity values, and Section 7(f) which requires that regard is given to the maintenance and enhancement of quality of the environment.

### ***Horizon’s Operative ‘One Plan’ Regional Policy Statement***

14. Policy 6-6 addresses regionally outstanding natural features and landscapes listed in Schedule G Table G.1. This includes the Manawatū Gorge (Te Āpiti), from Ballance Bridge to the confluence of the Pohangina and Manawatū Rivers, including the adjacent scenic reserve

### ***Operative Palmerston North District Plan***

15. The application site is in the rural zone ([Figure 4](#)); however, crematoria are not a listed activity. Crematoria are referred to in Section 13 (Airport zone) in which Crematoria are a Restricted Discretionary Activity with regard to “*design and appearance of any buildings or structures in relation to the amenity for the surrounding Community*”. It explains that:

*Crematoria have the potential to adversely affect the amenity values of both adjoining and adjacent properties. Council recognises that there are appropriate locations for the siting of crematoria but these need to be in such a location that does not adversely affect the amenity values of the surrounding community.*

16. Objectives and policies relevant to the landscape matters and the proposal are provided in Section 9 (rural zone). Objective 3 directs the maintenance and enhancement of the quality and natural character of the rural environment.

#### ***Policy 3.3***

*To control the adverse visual effects on the rural environment (including effects on rural dwellers) of activities that disturb the land surface, introduce buildings, remove and/or process natural material.*

17. Objective 7 is designed to “recognise parts of the Tararua Ranges and the Manawatū Gorge as regionally Outstanding Natural Features and Landscapes and protect them from inappropriate use and development”.

The Tararua Landscape Protection Area is identified in Map 9.1, and characteristics and values are defined in Schedule 9.1. The Manawatū Gorge (Te Āpiti) is nearest the application area, more than 2km south of the site.

18. The application site is not within a Significant Amenity Landscape (“SAL’s”) and has no Significant Natural Areas (“SNA’s”).

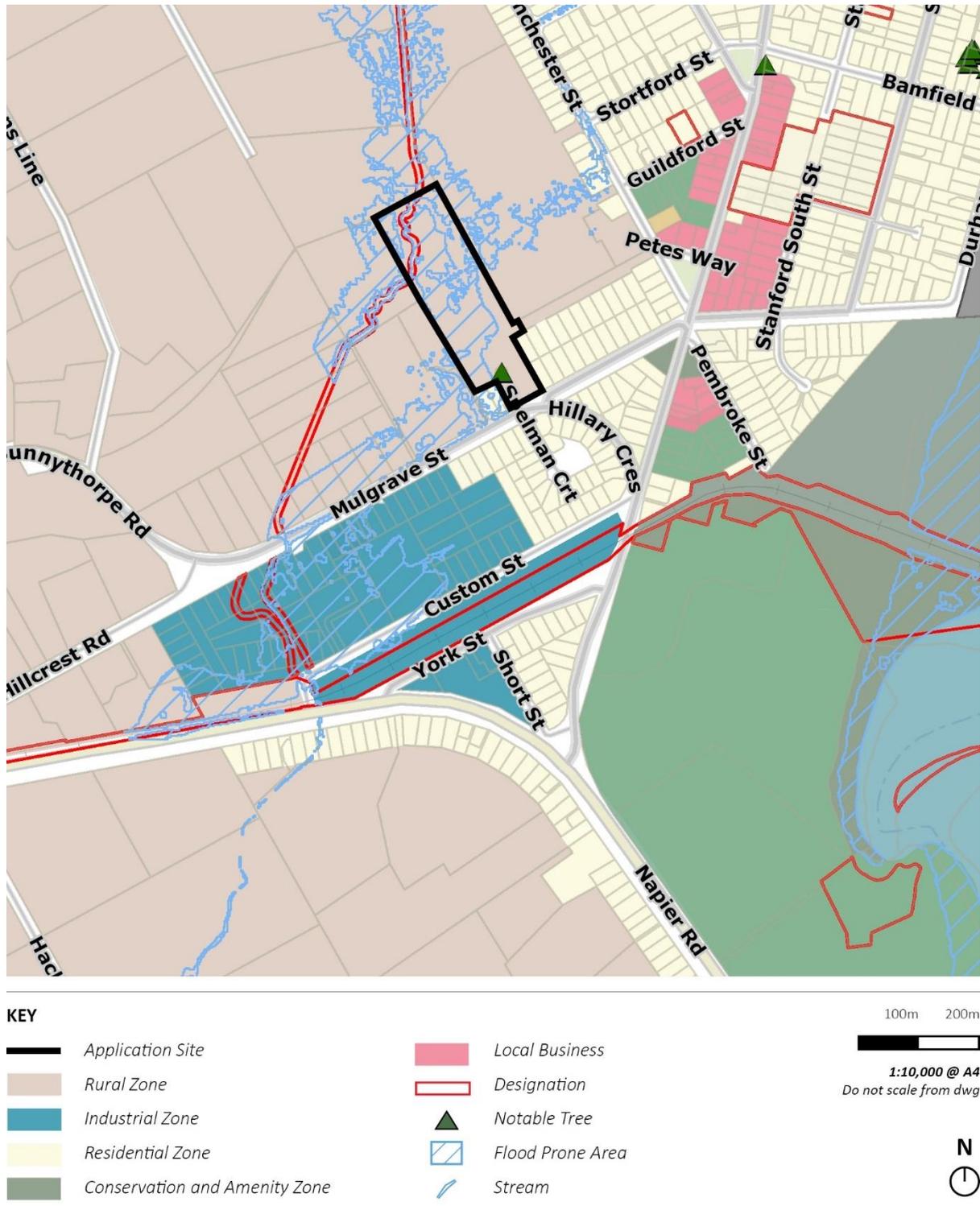


Figure 4: District Plan Map annotated with application site.

## EXISTING ENVIRONMENT

19. For the purposes of the landscape character assessment, the existing environment has been characterised at two scales: the 'broader context' (Figure 5), and the 'localised area' (Figure 6), as described in the text and shown in the figures below.

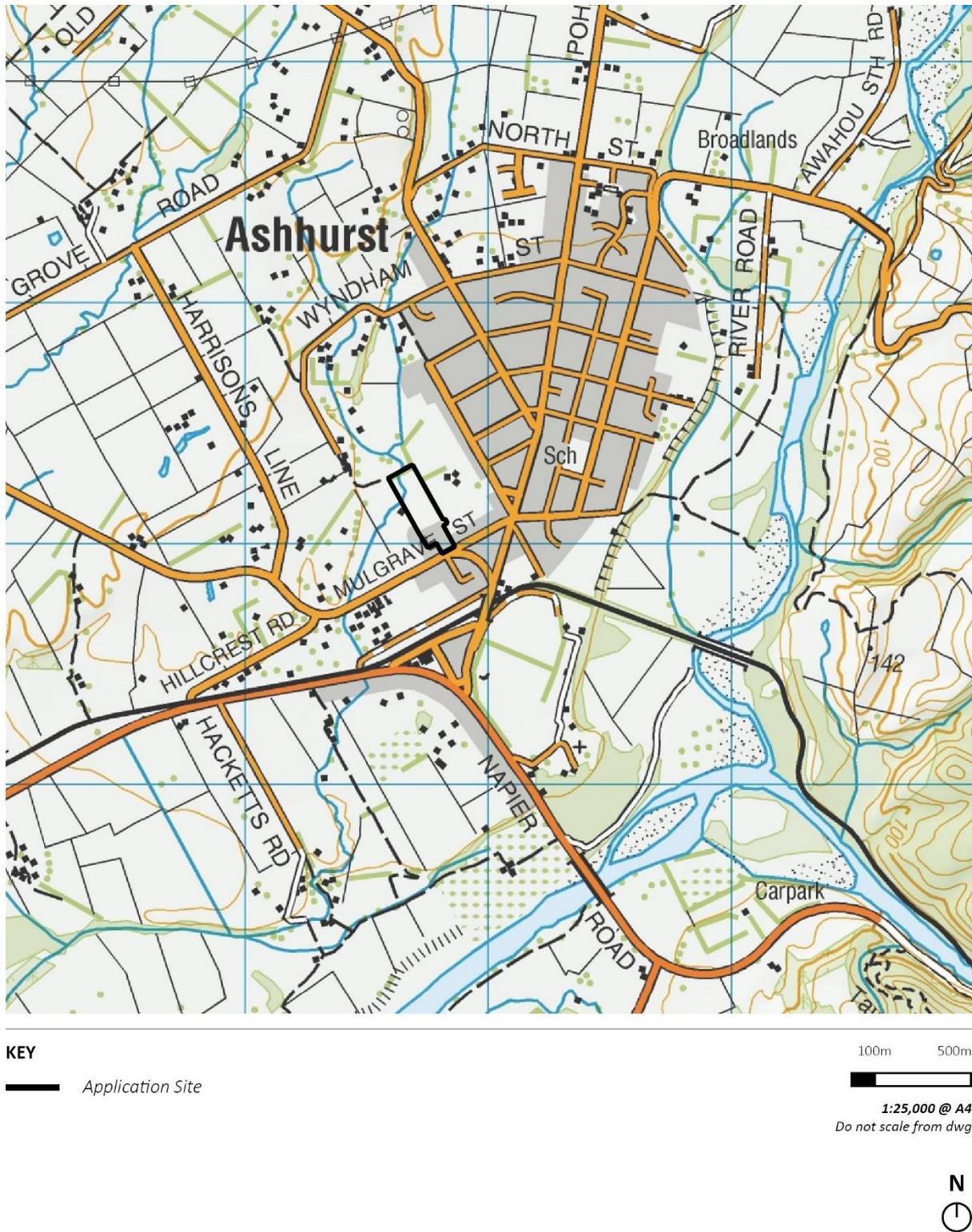


Figure 5: Existing Environment Plan: Broader context.



**KEY**

-  Application Site
-  Localised Area

100m 200m  
  
 1:10,000 @ A4  
 Do not scale from dwg



Figure 6: Existing Environment Plan: Localised area.

## **Broader context**

20. The broader context ([Figure 5](#)) is loosely defined the Manawatū River (south), Pohangina River (east), Ashhurst's town centre, and the surrounding rural areas.

### *River Terraces and Mountain Ranges*

21. As described in the application's Landscape Assessment, the broader context is characteristically open flat river terraces, elevated above the true right bank of the Manawatū River and Pohangina River. The site's broader context is part of, and nicely characterised by, the Te Matai Flats landscape unit defined in the Palmerston North Landscape Inventory<sup>4</sup>:

*"The rich fertile land has a long history of settlement and intensive horticultural use, despite being relatively low lying and subject to flooding. The flats provide a rural gateway to the city for travellers from Napier and the Wairarapa and a distinctive rural buffer between Ashhurst and Palmerston North. The river terrace to the immediate north of State Highway 3 and the Railway (Palmerston North-Gisborne Line) provides a sense of containment so that views for travellers are directed across the river flats and out to the Tararua Ranges through 'windows' in shelterbelts..."*

22. In the broader area, vistas feature the Tararua and Ruahine Ranges, Manawatū Gorge (Te Āpiti), and the wind farms on both sides of the gorge, which acts as a gateway to the Pohangina Valley.

### *Small Rural Township*

23. Ashhurst is considered both a township (with a population of ~3,500 people) and an outlying suburb of Palmerston North, in the Manawatū-Whanganui region. The area is principally rural in character with abundant shelterbelts, hedges and established tree plantings around dwellings and farm related structures. The farmland has been closely subdivided into residential allotments, concentrated around Manawatū Scenic Route/ Cambridge Avenue west of Pohangina River, forming a small rural town centre.

### *Summary*

24. In summary, the landscape expresses characteristics of rural production and rural lifestyle landuse (i.e., open, flat, pasture covered terraces setback from the river), which transitions to rural residential characteristics, north-east of the small industrial area ([Figure 7](#)). The sense of containment created from the landforms and land uses accentuates the visual appreciation of the elevated terrain (i.e., Tararua and Ruahine Ranges) which are regionally recognised as outstanding natural features and landscapes.

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<sup>4</sup> Palmerston North District Council (2011). *Palmerston North Landscape Inventory*.



Figure 7: Rural production Existing Environment Plan: Localised area.

### **Localised Area**

25. The localised area is predominantly considered the neighbouring properties between Wyndham Street, Winchester Street, Harrison Road, Custom Street and Ashhurst Road (*Figure 6*).

#### *Rural-Residential-Industrial Interface*

26. The characteristics of the broader context carry through into the localised area. It is apparent that the application site is at an interface between rural, residential, and industrial landuse. Tall shelterbelts line the property boundaries of the application site, and larger lots to the north and west. Plant nurseries are located to the north and east of the site, with rural lifestyle properties along Wyndham Street and to the north-west. Lifestyle dwellings are typically accompanied by stands of amenity plantings, surrounded by pastoral fields. To the east, closer to Manawatū Scenic Route/ Cambridge Avenue, smaller residential lots are linearly located along Winchester Street and Mulgrave Street. Just north of the railway line and SH3 is a small industrial zone, opposite the application site (*Figure 4*). This creates a diversity of landuse within a relatively small area, which is typical of small rural townships in New Zealand.

#### *Sense of Containment*

27. The characteristics of the broader context, such as the sense of containment, carry through into the localised area. Subtle terrain undulation which extends from the broader terrace escarpments, provide a relatively intimate local context. Rural production and rural residential properties emphasise the feeling of enclosure with masses of surrounding planting. These, among other vertical landscape elements are dominant in the localised area. To the east and south-east are viewshafts of the Tararua and Ruahine Ranges respectively, each scattered with tall wind turbine structures. The local rural roads are lined with tall powerlines and lighting poles which emulate these skyline protrusions. Further to the east, ribbon development of residential dwellings further reduces the scale of the local landscape.
28. Based on appraisal of Google Street view imagery (captured in January 2021), the representative views provided in the Landscape Assessment accurately depict the visibility of the site from public viewpoints. Visibility of the application site is generally quite limited due to the screening undulating landform, and intervening vegetation and buildings (*Figure 8 - Figure 11*). These existing landscape elements contribute to the sense of containment.



Figure 8: Representative view looking south-east from **Wyndham Street** towards the site in the midground. Sourced from the Landscape Assessment.



Figure 9: Representative view looking west from **Stortford Street (Winchester Street)** towards the site in the midground. Sourced from the Landscape Assessment.



Figure 10: Representative view looking north-east from **Mulgrave Street** towards the site in the midground. Sourced from the Landscape Assessment.



Figure 11: Representative looking south-east from **Harrisons Road** towards the site in the midground. Sourced from the Landscape Assessment.

## POTENTIAL ISSUES

29. As identified in the District Plan (Airport Zone), crematoria have the potential to adversely affect the amenity values of both adjoining and adjacent properties.



Figure 12: Example of Pet Crematorium in Lincoln, New Zealand (Fond Farewells), with two cremator stacks. Sourced from Stacy Squires/Stuff.<sup>5</sup>

30. Consideration must be given to the effects of the proposal on the area's landscape characteristics (i.e., ruralness and visual appreciation). This includes:
- The landscape effects of landform modification.
  - Compatibility of the activity with surrounding landuse.
  - The extent to which the built form integrates with the landscape character, and the suitability of the proposed planting.
  - Ability to appreciate vistas of the Tararua and Ruahine Ranges, and The Manawatū Gorge (Te Āpiti).
31. Noise effects are not considered in this assessment as, from a landscape perspective, the existing environment is not considered to be characterised as peaceful. As stated by a submitter, Sanjana Ellwood, *“already, dogs are barking at all hours of the day”*. We defer acoustic amenity effects to the relevant expert.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/96359152/canterbury-pet-crematorium-too-much-for-neighbours>

## ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS

32. The following section focuses on the potential adverse effects of the proposal, on the landscape values identified in the broader context and the localised area.

### *Landform Modification*

33. According to the AEE, the application proposes earthworks exceeding 25m<sup>3</sup> per 500m<sup>2</sup> over an area of 1,666mm<sup>2</sup> to a depth of approximately 275mm. This is required to form appropriate footprints for the building and hardstand areas.
34. The landform is already characteristically flat, separated from the nearby waterway by a stopbank. Additional flattening of the river terrace will be indiscernible, such that the terrain be inconsequently changed. This is considered a **very-low** effect.

### *Compatibility of Activity*

35. The proposal is a commercial land use activity being introduced in a rural zone, at the interface with both the industrial and residential zone. Given the proximity to commercial/industrial activities of a similar nature (e.g., Abattoir, Kennels and Cattery, Plant Nurseries, and the Ashhurst Transfer Station), the activity is not uncharacteristic of the surrounding landscape. The surrounding open space, because of rural zoning to the east, north, and west, ensures the landscape generally has the capacity to accommodate the proposal activity. Given these considerations, the activity will result in an indiscernible change in landuse. This is considered a **very-low** effect.
36. Due to the potential for negative connotations with crematorium, friction arises between the proposed activity and residential landuse near the site. To avoid adverse effects of the crematorium on residential sensibilities, the crematorium building is located at the rear of the site, setback at least 190m from residential properties to the south. Open space is proposed on-site, and the existing shelter belt and trees are to be retained, which will provide a buffer between these potentially conflicting activities. This will reduce the visual effects of the proposal during construction, and while the mitigation planting is being established. Given these considerations, while the activity will be unobtrusive due to mitigation measured (see [Integration of Built Form](#)), **low** effects arise due to the heightened sensitivity of residents. In extreme instances, effects may be **low-moderate** at most.

### *Integration of Built Form*

37. The scale and form of the proposed building is in-keeping with the rural context. Surrounding the site, the landscape predominantly displays a rural aesthetic. Structures are typically utilitarian, such as farms sheds, fencing, and powerlines amongst pervasive vegetation. The proposal building is a TotalSpan shed which is a built form anticipated in the rural zone. The proposed screening planting around the building will further integrate the built form into the broader and local rural

environment. Overtime the mitigation planting will visually blend with the bulk of the built form and enhance the sense of enclosure which is characteristic of this area. Additional mitigation measures reduce the dominance of the structure by using recessive colours with low reflectivity.

38. The visual dominance of four cremator stacks will be less effectively mitigated, compared with the rest of the structures. While dark colours (i.e., Resene Karaka or Resene Flaxpod) generally minimise the bulk of the structure, this will have the opposite effect for the 10.1m vertical elements which will, in some instances, extend above the vegetation into the skyline. This visual change will be most noticeable to neighbouring residents with low fences and limited planting. In saying that, tall and thin vertical elements are not uncharacteristic within the broad and localised context. As a result, this modification is immaterial in terms of the landscape character. This is considered a **low** effect. The adverse effect associated with the visibility of these stacks are primarily attributed to the negative connotation's locals may ascribe to crematoriums.

#### *Landscape Appreciation*

39. The application site is located so that from certain eastward facing viewpoints (i.e., [Figure 11](#)), the Tararua and Ruahine Ranges and Te Āpiti are seen as a backdrop to the site. Mitigation measures have been included in the proposal, i.e., planting and colour palettes, to blend structures into the surrounding landscape and minimise the prominence of the built forms. We are in agreement with the Landscape Assessment, that the stacks will remain below the ridge and skyline and views of the ranges and Te Āpiti will remain intact. Effects of any visible stacks will be mitigated by the recessive colour of the stacks which will blend with the escarpment vegetation surrounding the Manawatū Gorge (Te Āpiti). We therefore consider these effects to the **very low**.

#### *Effects Summary*

40. To conclude, the proposal would cause **very low** adverse effects to the landforms, vegetation, landuse, built forms, and general visual appreciations which are characteristic of the broader context and localised area. These adverse effects translate to less than minor in RMA terminology.
41. The greatest adverse landscape effects arise from sensitive viewers, who may have negative associates with crematoriums, even when viewed at a distance or with partial screening. These effects are limited due to the contained nature of the landscape causing limited visibility of the proposal, the mitigation measures which enhance the sense of containment and further limit visibility, the distance setback from roads and residential properties, and the open space buffers. These **low to low-moderate** effects translate to minor in RMA terminology.

## **MITIGATION**

42. The design measures provided in the proposal adequately avoid or mitigate the adverse landscape and visual effects. These included:
- The form of structures (roof shape and pitch designed to avoid forms which would be out of character with the landscape).
  - The scale of structures (compact footprint of the proposal to allow some open space to be retained).
  - Screen planting (intended to blend the structures into the surrounding landscape).
  - Materiality (use of low reflective, dark green or black colour finishes intended to minimise the prominence of built forms).
43. To further reduce effects on surrounding residents we considered the option of using lighter colours with low reflectivity for the cremator stacks. This would help to blend the vertical elements into the sky (similarly to wind turbines on the ridges) from certain angles. However, an unintended consequence for this would be that these vertical elements would become more prominent from viewpoints where the Tararua and Ruahine Ranges act as a backdrop. Given that appreciation of ONFL's is fundamental to the landscape character, we do not recommend the use of lighter colours for the cremator stacks.
44. As a result, no additional mitigation measures are proposed. Although, it is our recommendation that the mitigation measures provided in the AEE are required as a condition of granting resource consent for the new building, which I support.

## **CONCLUSION**

45. Overall levels of landscape effects are assessed as no more than minor, by virtue of the location, scale, design, colour and form of the new structures, and the proposed planting. In my opinion that the proposal meets the objective of maintaining the quality and character of the rural environment and the policy of controlling the adverse visual effects on the rural environment.
46. This opinion is expressed solely in terms of landscape matters and does not consider the planning history or other matters related to this application.

John Hudson and Chelsea Kershaw

September 2021

## ATTACHMENT 1

### **Key terms**

Several key terms have been used in this report. The following descriptions provide the definitions for these terms as used in this report.

**Amenity** – is those natural or physical qualities and characteristics of an area that contribute to people’s appreciation of its pleasantness, aesthetic coherence, and cultural and recreational attributes.<sup>6</sup> From a landscape perspective, amenity encapsulates some perceptual and associative attributes but is confined to interpreting these attributes in terms of pleasantness, aesthetic coherence, and cultural and recreational qualities.

**Associative attributes**<sup>7</sup> – are the relationship between people and place. These include spiritual, cultural and social associations, such as tangata whenua, historic, and shared and recognised associations (e.g. the area may be highly valued for its contribution to local identity and recognised as a special place).

**Broader context** – loosely defined the Manawatū River (south), Pohangina River (east), Ashhurst’s town centre, and the surrounding rural lifestyle areas ([Figure 5](#)).

**Environment** – includes ecosystems and their constituent parts, including people and communities, all natural and physical resources, amenity values, and the social, economic, aesthetic and cultural conditions which affect those matters aforementioned.<sup>8</sup>

**Landscape** – embodies the relationships between people and place. It is an area’s collective physical attributes, how they are perceived, and what they mean for people.<sup>9</sup>

**Landscape attributes** – tangible and intangible characteristics and qualities that contribute collectively to landscape character.<sup>10</sup>

**Landscape character** – each landscape’s distinctive combination of physical, associative and perceptual attributes.<sup>11</sup>

**Landscape values** – the reasons a landscape is values. Values are embodied in certain attributes.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> RMA definition for “amenity values”.

<sup>7</sup> The term attributes, qualities and characteristics are used interchangeably throughout this report.

<sup>8</sup> RMA definition for “environment”.

<sup>9</sup> Definition in the Final Draft NZILA Assessment Guidelines 2021

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

**Localised area** – defined by the neighbouring properties between Wyndham Street, Winchester Street, Harrison Road, Custom Street and Ashhurst Road (*Figure 6*).

**Natural** – those elements that are of natural origin (landform, vegetation, waterbodies), rather than human origin (buildings, infrastructure).<sup>13</sup>

**Naturalness** – the extent to which natural elements, patterns and processes occur. The extent to which an area is unmodified.<sup>14</sup>

**Natural character** – is the distinct combination of an area’s natural characteristics and qualities, including degree of naturalness. Natural character is the outcome of physical environment and perception.<sup>15</sup> Defined in the RMA (Section 6(a)) natural character only relates to the coastal environment and to waterbodies and their margins, rather than the landscape in its entirety.

**Natural elements** – includes water, landform and vegetation cover.

**Natural patterns** – the distribution of natural elements over an area.

**Natural processes** – includes the action of rivers, waves, tides, wind and rain, the movement of animals, and the natural succession of plant species.

**Perceptual attributes** – are derived from the sensory experience of the five senses (what you see, hear, smell, touch and taste). These include, but are not limited to, the perceptual qualities of a landscape, such as legibility (e.g. clearly shows the formative natural processes), wayfinding and mental maps (e.g. legibility or visual clarity of landmarks), memorability (e.g. visually striking or iconic), coherence (e.g. patterns of landcover), aesthetic qualities, naturalness, and views.

**Physical attributes** – these include abiotic and biotic qualities of landscape (such as landform, marine and terrestrial ecology, hydrology and natural processes), as well as humanmade developments (such as roads, powerlines and buildings).

**Quality of the environment** – considers natural and physical qualities of an area, as well as the area’s amenity values, and social, aesthetic and cultural conditions.

**Visual effects** – are relevant to physical, associative and perceptual attributes, as such they are one means for assessing the effects on landscape character and natural character. Schedule 4 7(1)(b) of the RMA requires visual effects to be addressed by an assessment of environmental effects.

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<sup>13</sup> Definition in the Final Draft NZILA Assessment Guidelines 2021

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

<sup>15</sup> Ibid