

Natural Character Assessment Report Maitahi Bayview Development (PPC28)

Maitahi Valley, Nelson

6 June 2022



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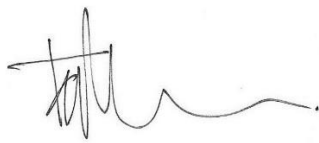
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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose and Scope

Rough Milne Mitchell Landscape Architects (**RMM**) have been involved in the Private Plan Change 28 request (PPC28 – Maitahi Bayview) project since mid-2019. As part of the PPC28 process, CCKV Maitai Dev Co LP and Bayview Nelson Limited (**the Applicant**) has engaged RMM to provide additional information in relation to natural character, as a response to questions raised during expert conferencing (Landscape) for the upcoming Hearing. This Natural Character Assessment Report is a standalone document which builds upon the detailed landscape assessment work undertaken by RMM¹ that was included in the Private Plan Change documents which accompanied the application. This report also includes consideration of the continued refinement of aspects of the PPC28 request which seek to further reduce potential adverse effects and appropriately integrate the proposed development into the existing environment.

PPC28 seeks to rezone a large portion of the application site (located within Kākā Valley, along Botanical Hill and Malvern Hill) to enable an increased density of dwellings. The site comprises a total of 13 allotments and covers an area of 286.78ha (**Figure 1**).



Figure 1. The application site is highlighted by the red line.

¹ Private Plan Change Documents as Notified: Attachemnts C Technical Assessments – C9

This natural character assessment report is formatted as per the following:

- A description of the methodology applied to this Report.
- A description of Private Plan Change 28 as notified.
- A description of the refinements to the structure plan that have resulted through additional investigation and expert conferencing.
- An outline of the relevant (natural character) policy provisions.
- A description of the relevant assessment area as defined by s6(a) of the RMA, including a description of the Physical natural elements and processes (Abiotic and Biotic) as well as how they are perceived (Experiential).
- The identification of the assessment areas existing natural character values. These are based on site observations, and a review of existing information.
- An assessment of the actual and potential natural character effects.
- An assessment against the relevant landscape policy provisions.
- Conclusion.

This report is accompanied by a Graphic Attachment (**GA**), that contains photos of the site and surrounds (including a photo location map) and has referenced the 'Maitahi Bayview Structure Plan – Plan Package' (including the revised structure plan, vegetation plan and zoning plan).

1.2 Methodology

The methodology and terminology used in this report has been informed by the Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines², specifically the chapter on Natural Character which adopt the interpretation that natural character is a type of character, being the distinct combination of an area's natural characteristics and qualities, and that naturalness is an attribute of that natural character³.

The tailored method applied to this report is essentially the procedure of completing the series of bullet points in the section above. A further site visit was undertaken on 18 May 2022 to specifically consider the natural character qualities and characteristics of the application site. It included a walk over of the site (with assistance from a 4WD vehicle), collection of drone footage and viewing the site from the surrounding public roads. This site visit has assisted in refining the understanding of natural character values within the receiving environment, identifying where the primary s6(a) areas are located on-site and how the proposed development will integrate with the site.

The following reports form part of the Private Plan Change 28 package and have informed this Report:

- Morphum Environmental LTD: Preliminary Structure Plan Environment Review - Maitahi & Bayview Development Private Plan Change Request (13/04/2021)
- Tonkin + Taylor: Private Plan Change Request, Infrastructure and Flooding Report - CCKL Maitai Dev Co & Bayview Nelson Ltd (31/03/2021)

² 'Te Tangi a te Manu: Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines'. [Final Draft subject to final editing, graphic design, illustrations, approved by Tuia Pito Ora/NZILA 5 May 2021].

³ Ibid – Paragraph 9.4

- Tonkin + Taylor: Private Plan Change Request, Ecological Opportunity and Constraints Report - CCKL Maitai Dev Co & Bayview Nelson Ltd (31/03/2021)
- Tonkin + Taylor: Private Plan Change 28, Stormwater Management Report DRFAT - CCKL Maitai Dev Co & Bayview Nelson Ltd (20/05/2022)
- Robertson Environmental: Private Plan Change 28 - Maitahi Bayview Supplementary Terrestrial Ecological Values Assessment (13/05/2022)
- Morphem Environmental LTD: Ecological Restoration Plan - Maitai River (12/08/2020)

The key statutory provisions relevant to natural character are derived from the RMA. Further discussion around the importance of the statutory hierarchy is included in the statutory provisions section below.

The table included in Figure 2 outlines the rating scales that are referred to in this report and their more detailed descriptions align with those described in Table 3 of the RMM Landscape and Visual Effects Assessment, except swap the term 'landscape character and/or landscape values' for 'natural character'. The effect can be either adverse, neutral or beneficial.

The table included in Figure 3 is a comparative scale for the RMA s95 notification determination test and the RMA s104D 'gateway' test for non-complying activities.

Very Low	Low	Low - Moderate	Moderate	Moderate - High	High	Very High
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Figure 2. The seven-point landscape and visual effects rating scale.⁴

Very Low	Low	Low - Moderate	Moderate	Moderate - High	High	Very High
Less than Minor	Minor		More than Minor		Significant	

Figure 3. The comparative scale of degree of effects.⁵

⁴ 'Te Tangi a te Manu: Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines'. [Final Draft subject to final editing, graphic design, illustrations, approved by Tuia Pito Ora/NZILA 5 May 2021].

⁵ 'Te Tangi a te Manu: Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines'. [Final Draft subject to final editing, graphic design, illustrations, approved by Tuia Pito Ora/NZILA 5 May 2021].

2 The Proposal

2.1 The Proposed PPC28 as Notified

As describe in the RMM Landscape Assessment⁶, the Proposal seeks to;

“rezone the majority of the site with a mix of Residential Zones, Open Space Recreation Zone, Suburban Commercial Zone and Rural - Higher Density Small Holdings Area. This development area will be subject to Schedule X and a Maitahi Bayview Structure Plan, as well as specific policy provisions, which shall be read in addition to the NRMP.”

The proposal intentionally made use of existing zones within the NRMP to provide for simple integration with the existing planning framework. This incorporates a variety of zones, at different housing densities, and acknowledges existing overlays across the site. The Proposed Structure Plan, as notified is illustrated below on **Figure 2**.

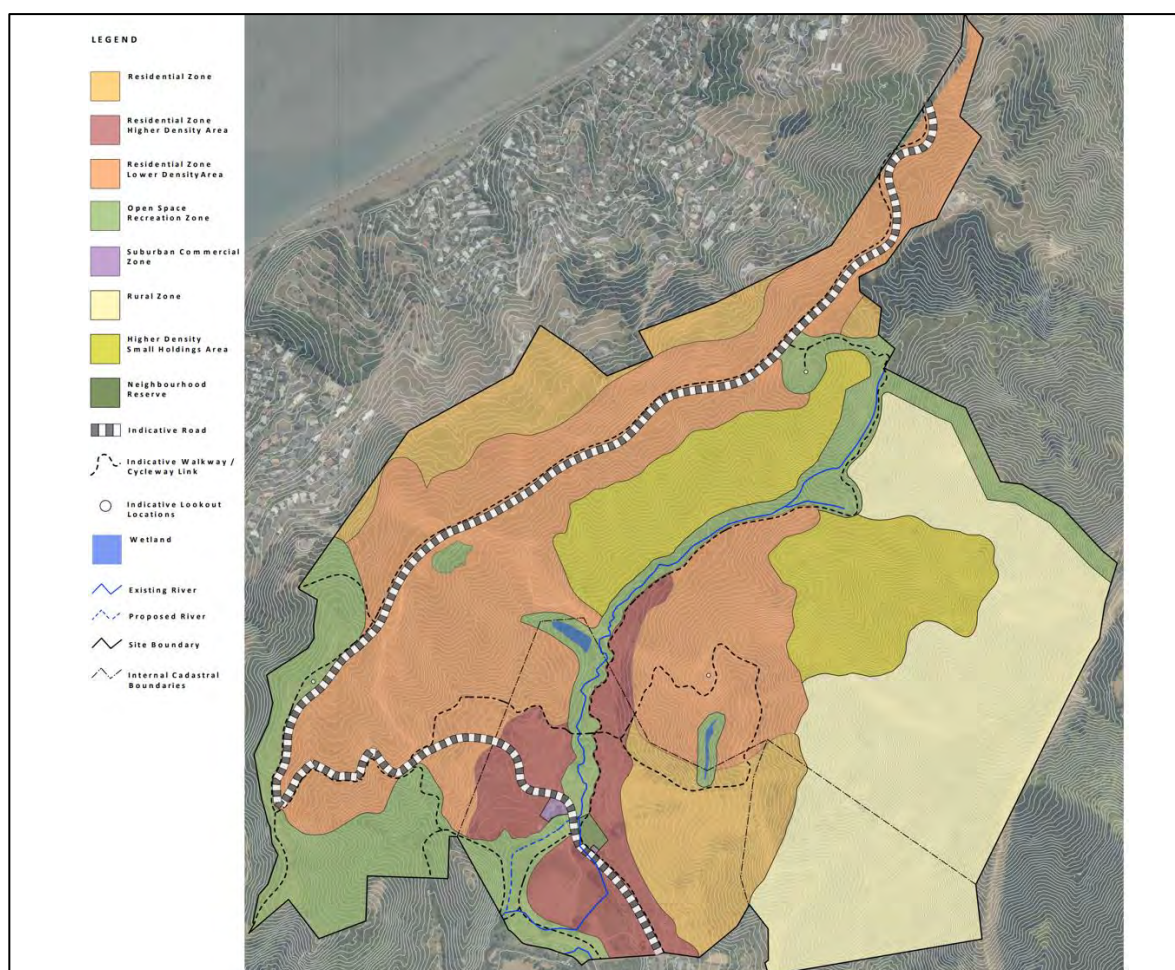


Figure 2. Proposed Structure Plan – As notified.

⁶ Private Plan Change Request – Maitahi and Bayview, Nelson: Landscape, Visual Amenity and Urban Design Assessment – Sheet 28.

2.2 The Proposed PPC28 Refinements

Following the notification of PPC28, further refinement of the proposal has been undertaken in response to feedback from; Nelson City Council, Council engaged peer review, expert conferencing, and community submissions. The refinements have resulted in the changes outlined below, all of what are considered to further reduce the potential for adverse effects and assist with integration of the proposal within the application site. The resultant changes are illustrated on **Figure 3** (as well as within the Maitahi Bayview Structure Plan – Plan Package) and include:

- Additional areas of ecological corridors, clearance of large portions of hillside (overlooking the upper reaches of the Kākā Stream) for revegetation planting, and the inclusion of a much wider Vegetation Plan for the application site;
- An agreement with Ngati Koata to take ownership of the rural zoned land on the Kākā Hill slopes (currently regenerating native bush);
- Provision for a detailed design response for the Maitahi/Mahitahi River erosion control and application site interface (extending along the true right bank down to Dennes hole);
- Reduction in the extent of proposed Residential Zone (37.9ha less, or a 26% reduction);
- An increase in Rural Zone land (with a revegetation overlay); and
- Inclusion of Residential Green Overlays with revegetation and ecological design intentions.

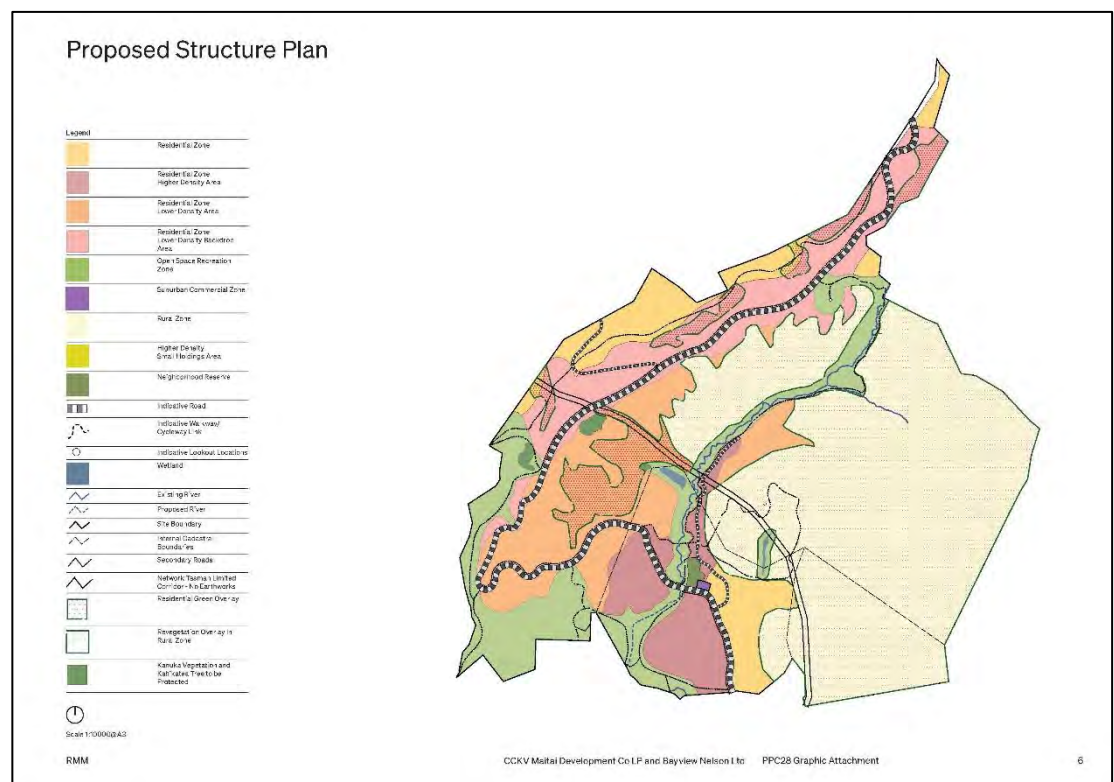


Figure 3. Proposed Structure Plan – as refined through the consultation process.

3 Relevant Policy Provisions

3.1 Identification of Key Documents

The Resource Management Act (**RMA**) is the key statutory document at the top of the hierarchy which provides for natural character. Sitting below the RMA are the Operative Nelson Regional Policy Statement (NRPS) and Nelson Resource Management Plan (NRMP), as well as non-statutory consideration being given to the Draft WWNP.

It is relevant to acknowledge the most recent (Regional) natural character assessment undertaken for Nelson City Council is the Nelson Coastal Study⁷, and this has been incorporated into the preparation of the Draft WWNP. Furthermore, the background documents (including both natural character and landscape assessments) which have informed the Draft WWNP represent more up-to-date assessment frameworks which better represents best practice (e.g. the NRPS is no longer up to date with assessment methodologies and terminology or the environment in its current condition).

One example of why there is a preference for the most recent studies (the Draft WWNP) is in relation to a now out of date NRPS (1997) Objective which provides for development in areas where the natural character has already been compromised, while also commenting on sprawling and sporadic subdivision.

CO1.3.8 - *To encourage appropriate subdivision, use or development in areas where the natural character has already been compromised, while:*

- i) *avoiding sprawling or sporadic subdivision, use or development in the coastal environment;*

This terminology 'where natural character has already been compromised' specifically relates to the very first policy of the 1994 NZ Coastal Policy Statement (**NZCPS**), now superseded by the 2010 NZCPS, which previously stated;

Policy 1.1.1 - *It is a national priority to preserve the natural character of the coastal environment by:*

- a) *encouraging appropriate subdivision, use or development in areas where the natural character has already been compromised and avoiding sprawling or sporadic subdivision, use or development in the coastal environment.*

This policy has now been removed from the NZCPS and the Operative NRPS has not been updated to align with the current policy framework.

It is considered reasonable at this point in the PPC28 process, to also consider the WWNP for natural character, alongside the Operative NRPS and NRMP. Although the WWNP is a Draft that is currently on hold, initially due to Covid related delays and now because of NCC concerns around anticipated new legislation which may require significant changes to resource management plans in local government, this framework has incorporated both updated landscape and natural character assessment reports prepared by Boffa Miskell and underwent public consultation in 2016.

Key provisions from the statutory framework are included below.

⁷ Boffa Miskell Limited 2016. Nelson Coastal Study: Natural Character of the Nelson Coastal Environment. Report prepared by Boffa Miskell Limited for Nelson City Council.

3.2 Resource Management Act (1991)

The RMA informs the planning process and underpins the Territorial Authority provisions. The protection of natural character stems from RMA and is found within Section 6 (matters of national importance) of the Act, which requires that development recognises and provides for;

Section 6(a) - *the preservation of the natural character of the coastal environment (including the coastal marine area), wetlands, and lakes and rivers and their margins, and the protection of them from inappropriate subdivision, use, and development:*

3.3 Nelson Regional Policy Statement (1997)

The key natural character provisions are contained within Chapter 7 (Natural & Amenity Values – NA) and Chapter 8 (The Coast - CO).

Policy NA2.3.9 - *To preserve the natural character of the coastal environment.*

Objective NA5.2.1 - *Management of riparian and coastal margins which protects and enhances significant habitats, natural features, natural functions, natural character, landscape, amenity, cultural features and water quality.*

Policy NA5.3.1 - *To identify and protect the natural character of riparian and coastal margins where any or all of the following features or values exist:*

ii) scenes or landscapes of regional or national significance within which water forms an essential component.

iv) heritage, recreational, scientific or other amenity or intrinsic values of regional or national significance;

Policy NA5.3.10 - *Unless legislative or operational requirements dictate otherwise, to manage riparian and coastal margins under Council's ownership or control in such a way as to protect habitats, natural processes, natural character, cultural values, natural features and landscapes, amenity values, the life-supporting capacity of ecosystems, water quality and public access.*

Policy NA5.3.12 - *To advocate or promote management practices for riparian land that enhance existing or desired natural characteristics and values.*

Objective CO1.2.1 - *Achievement of the social, economic and cultural needs of the community within the coastal environment, while ensuring a high level of protection is afforded to the natural character and to natural and physical resources associated with the coast.*

Policy CO1.3.14 - *To restore and rehabilitate the natural character of the coastal environment where appropriate.*

3.4 Nelson Resource Management Plan

The key natural character provisions are contained within Chapter 5 (Natural Values – DO5), Chapter 6 (Riparian and coastal margins – DO6), Chapter 7 (Coastal Environment – DO7), Appendix 14 (residential subdivision design & information requirements - AP) and Appendix 28.9 (Freshwater Rules for All Zones – FWr).

Objective DO5.1 - An environment within which natural values are preserved and enhanced and comprise an integral part of the natural setting.

Policy DO5.1.2 - Promotion of linkages and corridors between areas of natural vegetation.

Objective DO6.1 - Riparian and coastal margins where natural character, public access, natural functions, landscapes, heritage values, water quality and ecological values are protected and enhanced.

Objective DO7.1 - Preservation of the natural character of the coastal environment from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.

Policy DO7.1.5 - Within the coastal environment, sprawling or sporadic subdivision, use, or development of land shall be avoided, and any future residential development should be within a papakainga development, or the residentially zoned land at the Glen.

AP14.3.5.ii – Quality Subdivision will: 1) Maintain streams and watercourses and enhance their natural character by minimising any changes to the hydrological factors by affecting flows.

FWR.1.4 Disturbance of river and lake beds and wetlands - Assessment Criteria - a) Effects on existing natural character, b) degree to which natural character is retained or enhanced.

FWR.10.1 Realignment and piping of beds of rivers and lakes, and wetlands – Permitted - The realignment of the bed of a river which does not have a continuous base flow is permitted if - vii) natural character is maintained where practical.

FWR.10.4 Realignment and piping of beds of rivers and lakes, and wetlands – Assessment Criteria - c) effects on natural character.

3.5 Draft Whakamahere Whakatū Nelson Plan

Draft Regional Policy Statement

There is a strong directive within the Draft RPS around Outstanding Coastal Natural Character (Objective 7.3, Policy 7.2, Objective 10.2 and Policy 10.2). However, the application site does not contain any areas of outstanding coastal natural character, being beyond the extent of the coastal environment. The most relevant remaining provisions of the Draft RPS are included below (underline is our emphasis).

Policy 2.2

Manage the development, maintenance and use of infrastructure and its networks in a way that protects natural and physical resources and the health, safety, and wellbeing of the community through avoiding, remedying or mitigating:

d) A loss of natural character and public access in the coastal environment, wetlands, lakes and rivers and their margins

Objective 3.4

Natural character and landscape values that contribute to the sense of enjoyment and appreciation of rural and coastal areas are protected.

Objective 10.2

Protect the values that contribute to outstanding natural character, outstanding natural landscapes and other significant natural features, and ensure use and development maintains or restores natural values in other areas.

Objective 11.5 b

The beds of rivers, lakes and wetlands are managed in a manner which:

- b) provides for the in-stream morphological components of natural character.*

Policy 11.10

The management of the beds of rivers must:

- e) Manage effects on natural character which includes the natural style and dynamic processes of the river, width and the quality and quantity of the habitat of the bed.*

3.6 Nelson Coastal Study – Extent of the Coastal Environment

One of the original reasons for having not undertaken a detailed natural character assessment for PPC28, was an acceptance that the site was situated outside of the Coastal Environment, which is a focus area for natural character assessment of effects. Under the Operative Nelson RMP, the coastal environment is positioned seaward (west) of the residential area at the base of the Malvern Hills, whereas the Nelson Coastal Study (as subsequently the Draft WWNP) had repositioned the coastal environment boundary onto the foothills of the Malvern Hills.

The extent of the coastal environment along the Malvern Hills portion of coastline was identified⁸ ;

"Due to the modification provided by the roads, housing and other land use patterns, the extent of the coastal environment in this Coastal Terrestrial Area broadly extends to the 90 to 100 metre contour line. This includes the lower-elevated houses and roads. This area could be described as a coastal transition area, where detailed refinement of the extent of the coastal environment would need to be required for specific proposals to more accurately determine the extent in this area."

This is graphically represented in the Nelson Coast Study by 'Illustration 8' which is included as Figure 4 below.

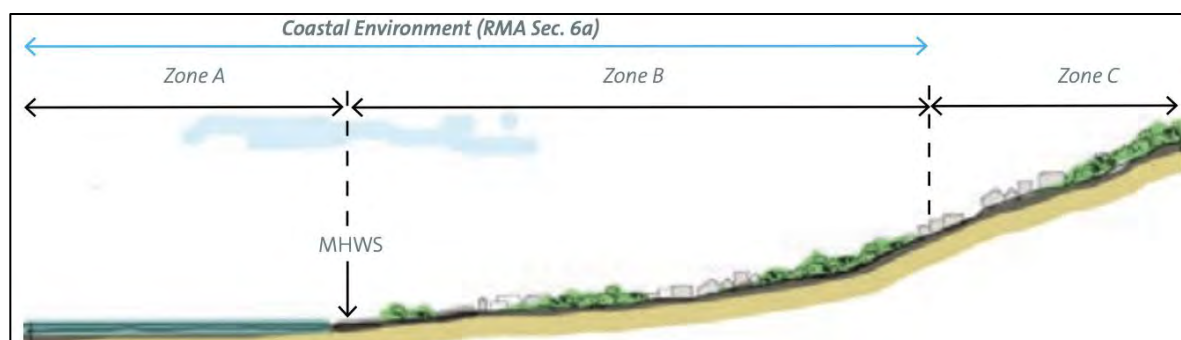


Figure 4. Representative Coastal environment Diagram of Malvern Hills

⁸ Boffa Miskell Limited 2015. Nelson Coastal Study: Natural Character of the Nelson Coastal Environment. Report prepared by Boffa Miskell Limited for Nelson City Council. Section D – Coastal Terrestrial Area 8, Page 107

There is one additional consideration around the identification of the coastal environment and that is the small triangle of land, approximately 2500m², which is legally part of the property at 4 Chamerion Way. However, this land is currently managed (grazed) by the applicant and as such has been included within the proposed PPC28 structure plan.

This is the only piece of land identified within the coastal environment (not legally located within the application site) and was identified based on a contour elevation, noting that it could be refined based on specific proposals.

Figure 5 below illustrates the position of the coastal environment extent in relation to the application site. Due to the presence of adjacent dwellings and development, along with the modified landcover (which has been cleared in the past 5 years), the natural character value of this location is only considered to be very low.

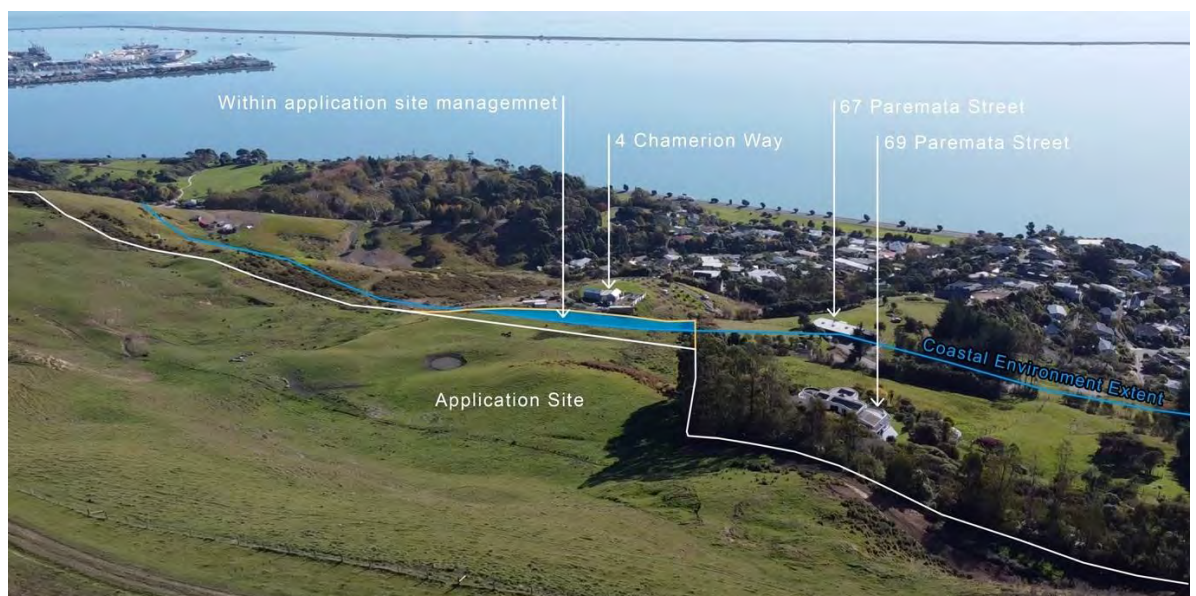


Figure 5. Drone Photo illustrating the mapped extent of the Coastal Environment.

4 Natural Character Description

4.1 Identification of the relevant area

The PPC28 site is within close proximity to Nelson's City Centre (approximately 2km east) and only around 500m east of the current Maitahi/Mahitahi River suburb (as labelled on Google Maps). The relevant area to consider, for this proposal driven assessment, primarily includes the PPC28 site and its margins. The site's location in relation to surrounding landforms and the Maitahi/Mahitahi River also provide relevant context.

The focus of RMA s6(a) considerations evolve around rivers (including streams), wetlands and their margins. As such the following natural character assessment has been separated into the following areas;

- Maitahi/Mahitahi River Interface
- Lower Kākā Stream
- Upper Kākā Stream
- On-Site Wetlands

Consideration of each of these natural character areas has also included their margins. It is acknowledged that a minimum 30m wide buffer is included adjacent to the Maitahi/Mahitahi River (resulting in approximately 100m river corridor) and a minimum 40m wide buffer is included along the Kākā Stream corridor. Additionally, the identified extent of the two wetlands includes the extent of their relatively narrow margins. In all instances, the Open Space Recreation Zone adjacent to each of these features incorporates what is considered to be their margins, in a statutory sense.

The inland extent of the coastal environment has been identified in the Nelson Coastal Study, with commentary in the section above. Despite a small portion of land identified within the PPC28 Structure Plan on the western slopes of the Malvern Hills being within the mapped coastal environment, it is not considered necessary to undertake a detailed natural character assessment against this area. This discrete triangle of land is currently in pasture and located adjacent to existing residential zoning/dwellings around the 100m contour of the Malvern Hills. The inclusion (or not) of this parcel within the PPC28 application is not considered to compromise the existing natural character value of this hill slope (being a degraded and modified environment in such close proximity to existing residential developments).

4.2 Overall Site Natural Character

Abiotic

The site is primarily comprised lowland flats and hill country within the Kākā Valley, located within the Bryant Ecological District. The western portion of the site has been identified as part of the 'Brook Street Land Type'. The main Kākā Valley is part of a wider Maitahi/Mahitahi Valley system.

Biotic

The Ecological Opportunities and Constraints Assessment Report has identified 24 native plant species and 24 exotic plant species across the PPC28 site⁹. Of those on the exotic list, over half of the species are also listed as invasive weed species with three also recorded within the National Pest Plan Accord¹⁰ (climbing asparagus, crack willow and old man's beard). Of the indigenous plants, most are relatively common with only kanuka being classified as 'threatened – nationally vulnerable'¹¹.

A supplementary terrestrial ecological values report was prepared for Expert Conferencing¹². This identified that the ecological value of invertebrates is low, as well as a low likelihood that a significant amount of indigenous bird species utilise the sites existing habitat¹³. Furthermore, the majority of the receiving environment and in particular the land adjacent to the river, stream (and wetland areas) is identified as Pasture Grasses¹⁴, having low terrestrial ecological value.

This aligns with anticipated ecological value assumptions related to the operational farmland. It is noted that the combination of a broken canopy, along with grazing pressure from stock and pest mammals (e.g., goats) has resulted in a near absence of understorey growth within the shrubland areas¹⁵.

Natural Character Value

The majority of land adjacent to the Maitahi/Mahitahi River and the Kākā Stream (and their margins) is pasture grass, identified as having Low value in relation to terrestrial ecology¹⁶ as it "*highly modified area with little to no representation of indigenous vegetation and very low levels of diversity*". It is the pastureland that has also been the focus of more intensive development locations within PPC28 site.

The combination of natural elements across the site present clearly as active farmland. The experience of this site's natural character features (described individually below) is almost non-existent for the wider population as this is a privately owned property.

The current level of naturalness of the wider site is linked to an absence of buildings across the site. However, there is a high degree of existing modification across the site including access track cuts, drainage channels, exotic plant species (intentional and unintentional), powerlines and farm sheds/structures.

4.3 Maitahi/Mahitahi River Interface (Graphic Attachment - Photos E, F, G & 1)

Abiotic

The Maitahi/Mahitahi River is the largest river in Nelson, stretching from Bryant Range to the Tasman Sea at Nelson Haven (passing through Nelson City). The riverbed is gravel, washed down from the

⁹ Tonkin + Taylor: Ecological Opportunities and Constraints Assessment Report – Appendix C

¹⁰ Administered by MPI and which identifies species which are unwanted organisms under the Biosecurity Act 1993.

¹¹ Robertson Environmental: PPC 28 – Maitahi Bayview, Supplementary Terrestrial Ecological Values Assessment – Section 4.3

¹² Robertson Environmental: PPC 28 – Maitahi Bayview, Supplementary Terrestrial Ecological Values Assessment.

¹³ Robertson Environmental: PPC 28 – Maitahi Bayview, Supplementary Terrestrial Ecological Values Assessment – Section 4.4.1 & 4.4.3.

¹⁴ Robertson Environmental: PPC 28 – Maitahi Bayview, Supplementary Terrestrial Ecological Values Assessment – Table 5.1 – pg14.

¹⁵ Ibid – Section 4.2.1

¹⁶ Robertson Environmental Review – Section 5, Table 5.1

Bryant Range, with the soils on the riverbank and adjacent land being primarily well-draining Holocene Alluvium¹⁷.

The Maitahi/Mahitahi River is positioned adjacent to the Kākā Valley¹⁸ floor.

The climate is relatively dry and warm, particularly when compared with areas further inland, although there is a degree of shelter provided to the site by the Maitahi/Mahitahi River and Kākā Valley landforms.

The river elevation adjacent to the site is approximately 15m asl.

Biotic

The Matai River Ecological Restoration Plan¹⁹ identifies the river corridor within the 1.5km long 'Recreation Zone' extent of the river corridor, which stretches from Gibbs Bridge to Clouston Bridge. This portion of river corridor is identified by the extent of reserves and is noted as being²⁰ *"primarily maintained lawns with interspersed exotic trees and overall low biodiversity values."* The tree species lining the active banks adjacent to the site are primarily exotic.

Furthermore, there is commentary around the erosion occurring on the application site due to willow trees which notes that²¹ *"Willows are abundant along the riverbanks between Black hole and Gibbs bridge, with the largest density immediately downstream of Gibbs bridge where they have been creating ongoing bank erosion issues. The bank erosion issues have been created by willows accumulating sediment and shifting the river channel which is now eroding the true right bank of the bend in the river."*

Natural Character Value

The ecological value of the Maitahi/Mahitahi River true right bank in this location is relatively degraded, with numerous invasive exotic plants and erosion issues specifically as a result of willow. The existing application site, on the true right bank of the river, consists of grazed farmland and the extent of erosion can be observed in the property fencing that is dangling over the water (Graphic Attachment - Photograph E).

The true left bank has a somewhat increased level of ecological value, due to the native riparian plantings which have taken place adjacent to the Maitai Cricket Ground walkway.

The natural character of the river itself is valuable, in relation to water quality, habitat, recreational value (e.g., Dennes Hole), amenity value and the sounds of flowing water accompanied by birdlife. The Maitahi/Mahitahi River is an important feature which contributes to the wider appreciation of natural character within the City and Region.

The overall level of natural Character of the Maitahi/Mahitahi River, at the interface with the PPC28 site, is considered to be moderate-high, primarily due to the recreational experience afforded by the Maitai Cricket Ground public access to the walkway and Dennes Hole. The degree of naturalness is considered to be high, due to the evident elements and processes of the Maitahi/Mahitahi River.

17 Tonkin + Taylor: Geology and Geotechnical Hazards Report – Figure: 1012397-F3

18 R+M Notified document - C9a.-LVA-and-UD-Furthr-Information-Response_Appendix-1

19 Maitai Ecological Restoration Plan, Prepared for Nelson City Council (2020)

20 Ibid – Section 1.3.2

21 Ibid – Section 1.3.2

4.4 Lower Kākā Stream (Graphic Attachment - Photos H, I, J, K & 2)

Abiotic

The lower section of the Kākā Stream runs from the culvert adjacent to the existing hay shed down to the confluence with the Maitahi/Mahitahi River. This section of stream is approximately 600m long and has been heavily modified and managed into farm drains across the Kākā Valley floor pasture. This lower reach of the streambed generally contains high sediment cover²² (composed of clay, sands, and muds) with the soils on the adjacent land being well-draining Holocene Alluvium²³.

The climate is relatively dry and warm, particularly when compared with areas further inland, although there is a degree of shelter provided to the site by the Maitahi/Mahitahi River and Kākā Valley landforms.

The ephemeral stream (which does not have a continuous flow) is positioned at an elevation of approximately 15-20m asl.

Biotic

The habitat diversity and abundance for freshwater fauna is low (with only isolated areas of habitat providing refugia) and the riparian cover is mature rank pasture grass²⁴. Stock grazes pasture which is adjacent to this portion of the stream (open drain) and there were a number of invasive weed species contained along the bank on the drain.

It is noted that no fish species were identified along this lower section of the Kākā Stream during the site investigation undertaken by Tonkin + Taylor²⁵.

Natural Character Value

The ecological value of the lower section of Kākā Stream is limited, as this is essentially a farm drain through pasture. The value in relation to flora and fauna is very low, as is the potential experiential value across this currently private farmland. In relation to processes, this does serve as an ephemeral watercourse and connects the upper reach of the Kākā stream to the Maitahi/Mahitahi River.

The overall level of natural Character of the Lower Kākā Stream is very low. The degree of naturalness is considered to be Low, simply due to the presence of evident hydrological process.

4.5 Upper Kākā Stream (Graphic Attachment - Photos L, P, R, S, U, W, W, X, 3 & 4)

Abiotic

The upper section of the Kākā Stream runs from the culvert adjacent to the existing hay shed up to the north-eastern site boundary, positioned centrally within the valley between Kākā Hill (to the south-east) and the Malvern Hills (to the north-west). This section of stream is approximately 1500m long and has undergone less modification than the lower Kākā Stream and the soils on the adjacent land being well-draining Quaternary Alluvium and Botanical Hill Formation²⁶.

22 Tonkin + Taylor: *Ecological Opportunities and Constraints Assessment Report* – Section 3.1.6.2

23 Tonkin + Taylor: *Geology and Geotechnical Hazards Report* – Figure: 1012397-F3

24 Tonkin + Taylor: *Ecological Opportunities and Constraints Assessment Report* – Section 3.1.6.2

25 Tonkin + Taylor: *Ecological Opportunities and Constraints Assessment Report* – Figure 1: *Site Plan of Ecological Features*

26 Tonkin + Taylor: *Geology and Geotechnical Hazards Report* – Figure: 1012397-F3

The stream substrate consisted of a mix of boulders, cobbles, and gravels, along with patchy sediment cover (and increased sediment in pools and slower flowing areas) has a more consistent hydrological function including pools, backwaters, riffles, and shallow runs and is a diverse aquatic habitat²⁷.

The climate is relatively dry and warm, particularly when compared with areas further inland, although there is a degree of shelter provided to the site by the Maitahi/Mahitahi River and Kākā Valley landforms.

The upper Kākā Stream varies in elevation from approximately 20m-150m asl.

Biotic

The upper reaches of the Kākā Stream provide relatively moderate habitat diversity and abundance for freshwater fauna (when compared to the lower Kākā stream)²⁸. There is generally more riparian vegetation located along the stream bank as the stream climbs higher up the valley. The vegetation is a mixture of exotic and native species which provides a beneficial shade function as well as other habitat and ecological benefits, however there is still a predominance of pasture adjacent to the stream. Algae growth on the water has also been observed and recorded²⁹.

Stock can still access/graze pasture adjacent to the stream, with both cattle, sheep and goats observed within the stream corridor during the site visit.

Fish species were identified at 7 locations along this section of the Kākā Stream during the site investigation undertaken by Tonkin + Taylor³⁰.

Natural Character Value

The ecological value of the upper section of Kākā Stream is of a better quality than the lower stream reaches. This is still a corridor which is actively farmed and has been degraded through the land use. However, the presence of terrestrial flora (both native and exotic) provides a useful habitat and ecological function (which also improves the aquatic environment as well), there is a functional aquatic environment and the incised gully nature of much of this portion of Kākā Stream also contribute to the evident natural processes.

This stream crosses relatively secluded private farmland and only limited distant viewpoints can observe this valley.

The overall level of natural Character of the Lower Kākā Stream is Low-Moderate. The degree of naturalness is considered to be Moderate, due to the combination of geomorphology, hydrology and ecology.

4.6 On-Site Wetlands (Graphic Attachment - Photos M, N, O, Q & 3)

The application site includes two notable areas that are considered to meet the definition of wetlands under the NPS-FW³¹. While they meet the definition for what a wetland can be considered to be, in their current condition these areas present as little more than boggy pasture land with a few wetland

²⁷ Ibid – Section 3.1.6.1

²⁸ Tonkin + Taylor: Ecological Opportunities and Constraints Assessment Report – Section 3.1.6.1

²⁹ Ibid - Section 3.1.6.1

³⁰ Tonkin + Taylor: Ecological Opportunities and Constraints Assessment Report – Figure 1: Site Plan of Ecological Features

³¹ Morphum Environmental Review – Section 3.3.3

species present. These areas do however represent locations which could provide a significant opportunity for ecological restoration and habitat creation.

Abiotic

These two wetlands are positioned within minor gully systems on well-draining soils of the PPC28 site. The eastern Wetland is situated on soils of Grampian Formation³² at an elevation of approximately 95m asl. The western wetland soils are a combination of Botanical Hill Formation and Quaternary Alluvium at an elevation of approximately 60m asl. Both of these wetland areas link into Kākā Stream upper reach.

The climate is similar to that of the wider property, being relatively dry and warm, however their positions result in a damper microclimate (a combination of water catchment shade provided). The eastern wetland area in particular was acoustically sheltered in comparison to much of the wider application site.

Biotic

The western wetland area is comprised of *Juncus effusus* and *Juncus articulata* (approximately 0.29ha), and the eastern wetland is dominated by pasture plant species and exotic rushes³³. Invasive pest species were prominent around the wetlands, notably Gorse and Old Man's Beard.

Stock currently grazes these areas.

The margins (steeper enclosing slopes) of the eastern wetland areas had some good examples of more mature indigenous flora, including tree ferns. This area had a noticeable presence of birdsong.

There is a positive ecological function associated with these areas, even though in a degraded state.

Natural Character Value

In the case of both on-site wetland areas, their ecological footprint and functioning has been limited due to the ongoing presence of stock. The locations are located relatively central to the application site and are not experienced as a benefit to natural character value beyond their immediate margin.

There is a notable difference in hydrological function for these areas, as was observed by the more sodden ground underfoot during the site visit, along with the presence of wetland species. The presence of adjacent farmland, pest species foragers (e.g., goats) and other modifications (e.g., powerlines above both wetland areas) limit the overall natural character and naturalness.

The overall level of natural character associated with these two areas is Moderate-Low. The level of naturalness associated with these areas is Moderate-Low.

³² Tonkin + Taylor: *Geology and Geotechnical Hazards Report* – Figure: 1012397-F3

³³ Tonkin + Taylor: *Ecological Opportunities and Constraints Assessment Report* – Section 3.1.1.5

5 Assessment of Natural Character Effects

5.1 Context and Discussion

Degraded Site

The Ecological Opportunities and Constraints Assessment Report provides a succinct statement of terrestrial condition within the executive summary.

“Most terrestrial habitats within the site are highly degraded with an abundance of exotic plants and animal pests present. The exception is an area of mature kānuka forest on the elevated eastern side of the site, being the western face of Kākā Hill.”³⁴

Of the 146 hectares of proposed residential zone area examined, around 107 hectares (74%) of the terrestrial receiving environment is highly modified and has very low ecological value³⁵, and that a relatively large area of future development is “not seen to have any discernible impact on the terrestrial ecology of the area”³⁶.

The current land use of the site, as a productive farm, results in the presence of stock directly adjacent to the waterways and tributaries across the site. The pastureland holds little value in relation to ecological or biodiversity, and it is important to recognise that the natural character value of the waterbodies on the site are in a degraded state (to varying degrees). The act of simply fencing off the waterbodies and undertaking pest species control, while will ensure maintenance of the current condition, will not promote enhancement or restoration.

“The structure plan has focused potential developments in areas of lower ecological value and has minimal development planned in areas of higher ecological value.”³⁷

Enhancements

Through the ongoing refinement of the Structure Plan, the total area proposed to be rezoned to Residential has now been reduced by over 38ha. The vast majority of that 38ha is regenerative scrub on the slopes of Kākā Hill, which will now be transferred to Ngati Koata with a clear intention of ecological restoration in the long term. Additionally, there is a significant proportion of the site proposed to be within the Open Space and Recreation Zone, which will further promote ecological restoration and enhancement through the development of the site. This includes a 40m minimum riparian corridor along the length of the Kākā Stream.

There will also be new enhancement opportunities, such as the Dennes Hole Interface Plan (prepared by RMM) which seeks to provide a riparian buffer that promotes community engagement with Kākā Stream, Dennes Hole, and the Matai River. The opportunities for enhancement of the waterbodies and their margins across the site is considered to be a significant positive outcome. It is noted, that regardless of the PPC28 application outcome, the applicant has already undertaken a mass clearance of weed vegetation (e.g., gorse), implemented a wilding pine removal programme, undertaken a cull of the wild goats, and cleared a large tract of the eastern Malvern Hills face to undertake native restoration planting.

³⁴ Tonkin + Taylor: Ecological Opportunities and Constraints Assessment Report

³⁵ Robertson Environmental Review – Section 7, Page 17.

³⁶ Ibid – Section 7, Page 17.

³⁷ Tonkin+Taylor: Ecological Opportunities and Constraints Assessment Report – Section 5.1, Page 19

With this work already underway, and the resulting stock removal from the majority of the site (staged transition), as well as the proposed reinstatement of the likely historic alignment of the lower Kākā Stream, and extensive indigenous planting, then there is an obvious trajectory for elevating the overall level of natural character associated with the site waterways through ecological and biodiversity gains.

The benefits associated with the appreciation of natural character include; restore and enhance natural ecosystems, enhanced the esplanade reserve, improve terrestrial wetland habitat, account for native fish passage, freshwater enhancement, improve riparian and stream habitat, provide ecological corridors and linkages, enhanced biodiversity, require indigenous vegetation, increase flora and fauna value, provide for recreation through public open space, introduce walkways and cycle paths, implement pest control, and exclude stock from developed areas.

It is considered that the agreements reached with the various Joint Witness Statements prepared for PPC28 in relation to Schedule X (particularly X.7 and X.9) are sufficient to direct the intended outcomes at the detailed design and resource consent application stage.

Matai River Erosion Mitigation

In relation to the current Maitahi/Mahitahi River erosion occurring within the application site, it is noted that a report commissioned by NCC provided a series of options for bank erosion mitigation. Work has already been undertaken (removal of willow on the southern side of the river) and further work to relocate the river to the previous alignment has not been included within any NCC programme of work. It is however noted that any changes to the Matai River in relation to this matter, happen irrespective of the PPC28 proposal.

Natural Character Comparison

During the site visit it was observed that the overall experience of natural character on the site was relatively low (**Figure 6**). The standard sounds, smells and sights on a farm (e.g., walking through a paddock of cow pats, noting the scent of manure, observing stagnant ponds and invasive weeds), do not necessarily reinforce natural qualities and characteristics, despite being in an environment free of built form.



Figure 6: Kākā Stream Natural Character Example (GA – Photograph H)

However, in contrast to that was the experience when positioned along the Maitahi/Mahitahi River walkway adjacent to the highly modified Dommet St urban environment. In this location (**Figure 7**), native plantings had recently been undertaken, tree leaves crunched underfoot, the sounds of water and birdsong was evident, and the air smelt fresh.



Figure 7: Maitahi/Mahitahi River – Adjacent to Dommet St in Nelson City (GA – Photograph B)

It is this experience alongside the river which is envisioned for the future upgrade to the interface with the Matai River at the PPC28 site, as well as along the Kākā Stream riparian corridor and the identified wetland locations. The natural character experience can be significantly enhanced through simple planting restoration and direct engagement with the waterbody feature.

It is considered that, overall, the level of natural character associated with the Maitai River walkway within the Nelson City boundary, is of a higher quality than that of the existing PPC28 site farmland.

Recreation

One final consideration around natural character value relates to how the natural characteristics and qualities are able to be perceived. The inclusion of recreation pathways throughout the site which connect to a wider recreation network will promote wider community integration and enable a much greater level of interaction with the natural qualities of the site's waterbodies. This transition away from the resource being in private ownership to becoming a community asset is a significant enhancement to the perceived value of natural character.

5.2 Maitahi/Mahitahi River Natural Character Effects

As discussed under the 'Matai River Erosion Mitigation' above, there is an anticipated level of modification work that is intended to be undertaken to the Maitahi/Mahitahi River adjacent to and within the PPC28 site. Potential adverse effects on natural character of the intended mitigation options have not been factored into the adverse effects of the PPC28 proposal. The erosion control mitigation will occur regardless of the PPC28 outcome.

The proposal provides for a higher level of engagement with the Matai River adjacent to the PPC28 site, through the implementation of the 'Development and Dennes Hole Interface Plan' (prepared by RMM). This proposal will include a mix of wetland, riparian, and shrub plantings, along with opportunities for public recreation.

There are currently opportunities to look toward the PPC28 site (e.g., from along the Maitai Cricket Ground walkway) however the existing backdrop has a limited 'natural' appeal other than the dominant landform. It is considered that the meaningful structure planning of the site, as enabled by PPC28, will better reveal the natural patterns and processes of the site. Any potential for adverse effect of introduced residential, when seen from the Maitahi/Mahitahi River of Maitai Cricket Ground, will be mitigated by the setback and riparian planting, with a significant component of natural character enhancement.

The proposal is considered to have a very low adverse effect on the Maitahi/Mahitahi River natural character and will provide beneficial effects along the true right bank through ecological enhancement opportunities. The overall level of naturalness within the Matai River margin will improve, however remain at a 'high' rating.

5.3 Lower Kākā Stream Natural Character Effects

With respect to freshwater values, the Ecological Opportunities and Constraints Assessment notes that the lower reach of Kākā Stream has been artificially modified and that there is an intent to realign the stream on the western side of the lower terrace which aligns with the inferred natural stream position prior to land drainage for farming. This realignment will enable a more natural character to be achieved than currently exists with opportunities to enhance the existing habitat values, connectivity, and ecological function³⁸.

The proposed realignment of Kākā Stream hard against the escarpment on the true right will support good shading outside of the flood channel and then through well considered plant selection both shading and ecological outcomes will be achieved. It is envisaged that the low flow channel could be against the true right with the wider flood capacity on the true left. This will then maximise the area within the Kākā Stream corridor available for integrating wetlands and associated landscape outcomes. A series of indicative cross sections have been prepared which illustrate anticipated outcomes within the Kākā Stream corridor, as well as the interface with proposed adjoining zoning.

It is considered that PPC28 will result in beneficial effects on the natural character of the Lower Kākā Stream, due to reestablishment of the watercourse's previous alignment, as well as riparian enhancement planting. The potential for adverse effects on natural character resulting from PPC28 is considered to be very low.

The level of naturalness within the Lower Kākā Stream margin will significantly improve, increasing to a 'moderate-high' rating.

5.4 Upper Kākā Stream Natural Character Effects

The changes to the application site that will result from PPC28 primarily seek to enhance the on-site natural character values. The upper Reach of the Kākā Stream will be afforded a minimum 40m wide corridor (Open Space Recreation Zone) and riparian plantings within a relatively incised gulley that will enhance the ecological value of this corridor, while improving existing patterns and processes.

³⁸ *Morphum Environmental: Preliminary Structure Plan Environmental Review – Section 3.3.3*

It is considered that PPC28 will result in beneficial effects on the natural character of the Upper Kākā Stream, as a result of intended Open Space Recreation Zone outcomes and despite proximity to future residential development. The potential for adverse effects on natural character resulting from PPC28 is considered to be very low.

The level of naturalness within the upper Kākā Stream margin will improve, increasing to a 'moderate-high' rating.

5.5 Wetland Natural Character Effects

There are technically two wetland areas (by definition) located on the PPC28 site, however these currently present as soggy areas of pasture with limited natural character value.

It is considered that PPC28 will provide a significant benefit to the natural character value of these two wetland areas, through the exclusion of stock from both the immediate area and adjacent areas, as well as through the extent of and enhancement planting that is provided for through Schedule X.7 and X.9. The potential for adverse effects on natural character resulting from PPC28 is considered to be very low.

The level of naturalness within the two wetland areas will significantly improve, increasing to a 'high' rating.

6 An Assessment Against the Relevant Policy Provisions

When considering the potential implication of PPC28 on the natural character values across the site, relevant provisions were identified earlier in this assessment (Section 3). The following commentary is provided against those provisions based on consideration of what is being proposed within PPC28 and the effects considerations undertaken within this assessment.

6.1 Resource Management Act (1991)

It is considered that natural character of all the identified **RMA s6(a)** areas have been, at a minimum, preserved. Overall, PPC28 provides for significant enhancement of the Maitahi/Mahitahi River, Kākā Stream (upper and lower) and the identified on-site wetlands. The proposed structure plan and PPC28 design led approach to the site development is considered to be an appropriate response.

The degree of naturalness of the s6(a) features will increase, despite the transition to an urban environment adjacent to and beyond the waterway margins. It is noted that the potential for adverse effects beyond the identified features (e.g., on areas of adjacent pastoral land) has not been rated as this is not a requirement of s6(a) which specifically addresses the coastal environment, wetlands, and lakes and rivers (and their margins).

It has been identified in the Peer Review of the application that the LVA-UD comments that the change in use from rural to urban will reduce the natural character of the lower slopes. Yes, however this is not the Kākā Stream, or its tightly defined margins. The LVA-UD refers to this area in question as landcover 'not of significant value'.

Nelson Regional Policy Statement (1997)

The proposal is not considered to compromise either the naturalness or natural character of the nearby coastal environment (**Policy NA2.3.9**) as the site is (for all intents and purposes) located beyond the coastal environment.

PPC28, through the introduction of the structure plan, zones and Schedule X.7/X.9 will protect and enhance natural character (**Objective NA5.2.1, Policy NA5.3.1, Policy NA5.3.10**) through enhancing ecological habitats, natural features, amenity value, water quality, cultural association (as advised by Ngati Koata), and public access.

PPC28 is considered to promote management of the riparian corridor in a manner which will enhance natural characteristics and values (**Policy NA5.2.12**), while also providing greater community access and rehabilitation opportunities.

6.2 Nelson Resource Management Plan

PPC28 represents a change to the site which will enhance the natural values of the on-site waterbodies (**Objective DO5.1**), provide a significant corridor linkage between onsite areas of natural vegetation and the Maitahi/Mahitahi River corridor through the establishment of the Kākā Stream central riparian spine (**Policy DO5.1.2**).

The existing level of on-site natural character of the waterbodies will be protected and enhanced (**Objective DO6.1 & Objective DO7.1**), while promoting appropriate development.

The structure plan and zoning will ensure that the natural character of streams and watercourses will be enhanced, with the primary change to hydrology being the reinstatement of the historic Kākā Stream lower reach alignment and factors in the potential for adverse effects (**AP14.3.5.ii, FWr.1.4, FWr.10.1 & FWr.10.4**).

6.3 Whakamahere Whakatū Nelson Plan – Draft Regional Policy Statement

There is a strong directive within the Draft RPS around protection of Outstanding Coastal Natural Character is not relevant to the PPC28 site.

PPC28 is considered to protect the natural and physical resources in a manner which avoids a loss of natural character and provides greater public access to wetlands, rivers and their margins (Policy 2.2.d). The existing (relatively degraded) natural character value of the site have formed the base for environmental enhancement that will restore natural values (**Objective 10.2**) and will allow for a greater sense of enjoyment of the Kākā Valley through increased public access (**Objective 3.4**).

The in-stream natural character will be provided for through the design intention of the Stormwater Management Plan (Objective 11.5b), with the bed of the river (Kākā Stream) changes resulting in reinstatement of the natural river process and enhancement of the associated habitat (Objective 11.10).

7 Conclusion

In conclusion, the proposal will result in a significant improvement to the natural character value of the site with only temporary adverse effects associated with the construction effects adjacent to and within the river corridors. It will result in ecological enhancement along the Kākā Stream corridor and adjacent to the Maitahi/Mahitahi River, as well as introducing wetland planting in locations which can support that habitat.

At the wider Matai Valley scale, it is considered that this ties in nicely with the NCC Mahi Tahi vision for the Maitahi/Mahitahi Valley, while providing an enhanced ecological corridor between the Maitahi/Mahitahi River and Kākā Stream.

Overall, the majority of potential effects on natural character are considered to be beneficial, and at most, a very low adverse effect.

Maitahi Bayview Structure Plan
Natural Character Report
Graphic Attachment
6 June 2022

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Document Information

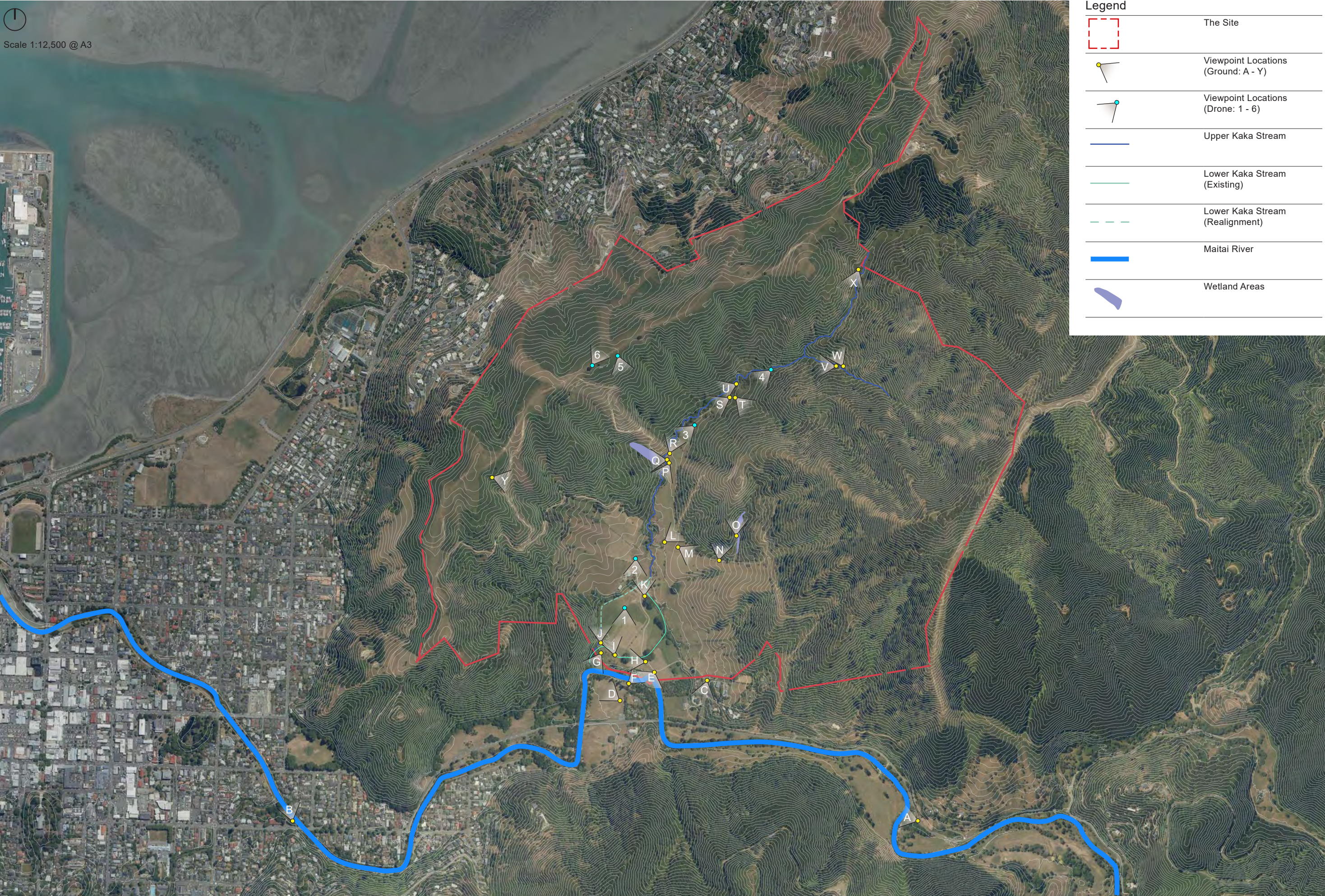
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Site Context Plan



Location Photographs



Photograph A



Photograph B



Photograph C



Photograph D

Location Photographs



Photograph E



Photograph F



Photograph G

Location Photographs



Photograph H



Photograph I



Photograph J



Photograph K

Location Photographs



Photograph L



Photograph M



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Photograph S



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Location Photographs



Photograph V



Photograph W



Photograph X



Photograph Y

Location Photographs



Photograph 1



Photograph 2



Photograph 3

Location Photographs



Photograph 4



Photograph 5



Photograph 6

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