
Under the Resource Management Act 1991 (the Act)

In the matter of an application by Ryman Healthcare Ltd
For resource consent to establish and operate a comprehensive retirement village and associated activities at 7-37 Ngataringa Road and 1-88 Wakakura Crescent, Devonport

Between Ryman Healthcare Limited
Applicant

And Auckland Council
Consent authority

**Statement of Evidence of Richard Leonard Cheyne Reid for
Ngataringa Bay Action Group**

28 November 2016

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1 Introduction

1.1 My full name is Richard Leonard Cheyne Reid.

1.2 My evidence is given on behalf of the Ngataranga Bay Action Group (NBAG).

Brief

My brief was to review and assess:

- i) the resource consent application design proposal by Ryman Healthcare for Narrowneck Retirement Village, located at 7-37 Ngataranga Road and 1-88 Wakakura Crescent, Devonport
- ii) the Urban Design Review prepared by Mr Clinton Bird for the applicant (dated 18 November 2015);
- iii) the Urban Design Review prepared by Mr Clinton Bird for the applicant (dated 18 November 2016);
- iv) the landscape review of the application prepared by Mr Brad Coombes for Auckland Council (14 July 2016);
- v) the Urban Design Specialist Report on the application prepared by Mr Chris Butler, Principal Urban Designer at Auckland Council (dated 29 July 2016); and
- vi) the Auckland Urban Design Panel Recommendations on the application (dated 8 December 2015). I note the resource consent application was lodged prior to the Panel's review of the design proposal.

In order to undertake my assessment of the application, I have spent two days walking the site and visiting each of the sixteen viewpoints from which photomontages were prepared by the applicant for simulating the design proposal within the local environment.

Qualifications and experience

1.3 I am the Director of Richard Reid & Associates Citymakers, a multi-disciplinary design practice based in Auckland which specialises in integrating large projects with local environments, many of which are heritage listed.

- 1.4 I am a registered architect and registered landscape architect with 25 years of professional experience, working in Sydney and London for five years with two architects of national and international reputation (Neville Gruzman and Sir Colin St. John Wilson respectively) and in my own practice in Auckland for the past sixteen years.
- 1.5 I am an individual member and my practice is a practice member of the New Zealand Institute of Architects (NZIA) and Landscape Architects (NZILA).
- 1.6 I have undertaken many assessments of development proposals affecting Auckland landscapes, in particular concentrating on volcanic features and landscapes, most of which are recognised as outstanding natural features.
- 1.7 I have worked as an urban designer for the past twelve years. My experience includes:
- i) leading the urban design group at Manukau City Council in their re-planning of the Manukau City Centre. I co-authored the production of a Public Domain Manual for the City Centre (2010-2011)
 - ii) preparing a planning report on Auckland's CBD for Auckland City Council which won the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects National Supreme Award for Planning in 2006
 - iii) providing expert urban design and landscape evidence for the Environment Court on Fletcher Residential Ltd's 'Three Kings Quarry Redevelopment Proposal' (2016) and to a Board of Inquiry on NZTA's Basin Bridge Proposal in Wellington (2014). Both these assessments formed an integral part of decisions to decline or significantly modify the applicant's proposal respectively.
- 1.8 I am recognised by the Environment Court as an expert in transport planning and have redesigned the configurations and alignments of two nationally significant transport infrastructure projects, (SH20 Gloucester Park Interchange, Onehunga and SH1 Basin Reserve Roundabout, Wellington) both of which were preferred by hearing commissioners to the New Zealand Transport Agency's proposals.

- 1.9 I have taught at the School of Architecture & Planning, University of Auckland, for the past thirteen years, teaching design at Bachelor and Masters' levels and lecturing to Bachelor and Masters students' of Planning Practice and Urban Design respectively.
- 1.10 Over the past fifteen years, my practice has focused on large-scale urban and landscape projects. A hallmark of my work has been the preparation of urban and landscape assessments and design recommendations which demonstrate how a project can satisfy development objectives at the same time as protecting the conservation values of a recognised feature or area, whether it be a historic building (Birdcage Hotel), nationally significant urban precinct (Basin Reserve Historic Area), internationally important volcanic landscape (Puketapapa Mt Roskill) or Significant Ecological Area (Waikumete Cemetery).
- 1.11 My assessments and integrated design solutions typically reveal and build upon the historic structure and unique character of the receiving environment instead of seeking to change this fundamentally. As a result, I have been responsible for recommending methodologies and outcomes which avoid the need to mitigate harmful impacts from achieving a project's objectives.

Code of Compliance

- 1.22 Although these proceedings are not before the Environment Court, I have read and am familiar with the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses and I agree to comply with it as if these proceeding were before the Court. I confirm that the matters addressed in this Statement of Evidence are within my area of expertise. I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions expressed.
- 1.23 I further acknowledge that in the provision of expert evidence and, in appearing as an expert witness, I am not advocating for the Ngataranga Bay Action Group (NBAG), the submitter for whom I am appearing.

2 Executive Summary

- 2.1 I consider the bulk, scale and overall dominant character of the development will create significant adverse effects which cannot be mitigated by existing vegetation or additional planting. These effects will exist regardless of whether the application complies with new building height controls in the Operative Auckland Unitary Plan.
- 2.3 The development's adverse effects will be seen and experienced mostly from the southern side of Ngataringa Bay. The same design problems will likely also generate adverse effects for residents within the development, limiting solar access into buildings and reducing the on-site amenity and quality of outdoor spaces.
- 2.4 I agree with Mr Chris Butler (Principal Urban Designer, Auckland Council) and the Auckland Urban Design Panel (AUDP) that changes will need to be made to the building layout, building proportions (e.g. lengths and heights) and material selection in order for the applicant to achieve its stated goal of an integrated comprehensive development which contextually fits the neighbourhood and coastal environment it will form part of.
- 2.5 I agree with the serious concerns Mr Butler and AUDP have expressed regarding the application. In my opinion, these are accurate and sound. Mr Butler's assessment, in particular, is nuanced in its understanding of the site and proposed development and very thorough in its critique of the development.
- 2.6 I largely disagree with the assessments made by Mr Clinton Bird and Mr Brad Coombs regarding the type, extent and degree of potential effects created by the development.
- 2.7 I strongly disagree with Mr Bird's statement that the proposed retirement village will integrate well within its Ngataringa Road streetscape and its Waitemata Harbour coastal context. I disagree with Mr Bird that the design satisfactorily addresses all 19 of the key urban design objectives he outlines in Section 6.5 of his 2015 report. In my assessment, a majority of these objectives are not met. The development will be clearly visible from View Points 1-8, all of which are located on the southern side of Ngataringa Bay. From these locations, the proposal will create adverse visual and dominance

effects, and from View Points 7-8 especially, very strong overlooking effects. Contrary to Mr Bird's assertions, the bulk, scale and uninterrupted lengths of the proposal will create a visual wall of buildings.

- 2.8 I strongly disagree with Mr Coombs that the proposed development will be nestled into the neighbourhood by the framework of vegetation within the esplanade area. The most intrusive buildings (B02 and B03) are sited on contours, either existing or artificially raised, well above the line of the esplanade vegetation, too high to be screened by it.
- 2.9 I note an underlying contradiction between Mr Bird and Mr Coombs' support of the application. Mr Bird states that the development is designed in such a way that it does not rely on screening by planting; while Mr Coombs states that more planting is needed to manage the effect on amenity created by the "bulk and scale of buildings and more specifically the length of uninterrupted building and roofline that is visible".
- 2.10 The plan of the building B01 is cumbersome and heavy. The massive extension of the eastern wing from the central core contributes to the northern elevation's uninterrupted length of c.110 metres, equivalent to a whole street block in length. The length of this building goes completely against the permeability and grain of the neighbourhood and closes down rather than integrates important connections beyond the site.
- 2.11 Whilst building B02 and B03's extra height acknowledge the high point of Ngataranga Road behind them, they create a vertical emphasis significantly out of step with the horizontal profile and grounded composure of B01 and B05. The rising ground level under B03 and B02 accentuates their height difference in relation to B01 and B05 which are noticeably lower on the site. My assessment of B02 and B03 is that their visual effects are adverse and the contrast in scale and bulk with the surrounding residential areas and coastal environment, including B01, is severe.
- 2.11 Even more problematic for the success of the 'Village design structure' is that B02 does not fit into the overall composition of the village either in plan, elevation or perspective. The building is too close to B01 and B03, resulting in significant dominance and visual effects on B01, and for the overall village when these buildings are read collectively from the southern side of Ngataranga Bay.

- 2.12 A building or a development's height in metres above ground level is only one factor to consider when the activity may have or is likely to have adverse effects on the environment that are more than minor. By implication, compliance with building height controls by itself does not ensure or constitute a contextual fit.
- 2.10 The applicant's reports (including the AEE) do not discuss the wider urban and landscape context in detail and therefore avoid providing the sensitivity required for the context. Some of the planning and design problems could be remedied if the related street pattern between Ngataringa peninsula and Devonport is carried through into the site. This would provide a measure of restraint and proportion missing from the proposal, as well as improve the village's connectivity and integration with the wider environment and neighbourhood.
- 2.11 My study of the Ngataringa peninsula reveals how important the 19th century gridded street pattern has been for providing a visual and sensual awareness of being surrounded by and connected to the harbour. Nearly every street on this peninsula terminates with an open view of water.
- 2.12 One of the unique aspects of the Ngataringa peninsula street pattern is its alignment with Devonport streets across Ngataringa Bay. Regent Street aligns with Victoria Road with their potential connection still marked as a paper road. The inter-connected street pattern between Ngataringa and Devonport shapes the water space of the bay as a collective urban space. The bay is a public square that the streets frame and front on to. This larger scale offers a new way of understanding the contextual significance and potential integration of the site. At a much higher level, it offers a way of understanding the future city of Auckland enabled by the Unitary Plan.
- 2.13 Sub-Precinct F (the site) and other new sub-precincts within the Devonport Peninsula Precinct should not be seen as isolated and insular pockets of redevelopment. They are part of a collective framework for the development of an urban vision which shapes and structures the city beyond the confines of an individual site.

2.14 I have illustrated how some of the necessary changes could achieve a better integration and contextual fit. This alternative approach to the site is indicative only and has been prepared to convey to commissioners key ideas and opportunities missing from the application.

2.15 One of the recommendations is for Regent Street to be continued through the site as a viewshaft. This will break up the wall of buildings lining Ngataringa Road, protect Regent Street and Ngataringa Road's visual connection with the harbour and integrate the village with the underlying urban structure of the peninsula. I have investigated how the site layout could accommodate the viewshaft which have led to other improvements being recommended for the proposal.

3 Description of the site and assessment of the Proposal

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 I have read Mr Bird's landscape descriptions of the site which are threaded throughout his November 2015 report and have been briefly summarised in Section 4: The Site (p12, 2015). I have also read the AEE's description of the site (p16-17) and Mr Butler's review of the AEE and AUDP's description (Butler, p4).

3.1.2 Whilst agreeing with these general descriptions, it is important to note the site's specific characteristics and how these have, or could, help shape the applicant's proposal.

3.1.3 For instance, the site has various slopes falling in different directions rather than one dominant slope falling steeply north to south from Ngataringa Road. Furthermore, the site is not all sloped; it has significant areas of relatively level ground created from past uses of the site.

3.1.4 My site visits and analysis reveal the site has seven distinct areas:

- i) Northern boundary: a narrow strip which runs parallel with the Ngataringa Road street boundary and slopes down to the main area of the site. The grassed slope is planted with clusters of semi-mature trees

- ii) Middle area: a very large, reasonably level area in the middle of the site, sitting below Ngataringa Road which falls gently to the coastal edge
- iii) Eastern end: a relatively small area below the access road at the eastern end of the site
- iv) Western slope: a long, continuous slope running parallel with Wesley Street, the top half of which has a gentle gradient and can be accessed off Ngataringa Road
- v) Coastal road: a long, narrow strip of land at the base of the western slope which runs above and alongside the coastal forest until it joins with an ex-Navy car park. The retirement village proposes a new road through this area
- vi) Polly's Park: the coastal forest planted on steep slopes down to Ngataringa Bay
- vii) Lake Road House, consisting of one property with a small residential unit

I now make some observations on these areas in relation to the proposal.

3.2 Northern boundary

- 3.2.1 A narrow landscaped space runs parallel with Ngataringa Road from the Navy road entrance westwards up to Regent Street. Below the road reserve, the site slopes down to a large and relatively level area. The slope apparently has been created from the past quarrying of clay by Duders Brickworks.
- 3.2.2 The top of the slope has been intermittently planted with clusters of what are now semi-mature trees along its length. The trees filter views of the site whilst the open spaces in-between them offer more distant and beautiful views of Ngataringa Bay, Devonport suburb, Mt Victoria, the CBD and the impressive profile of half a dozen volcanoes beyond.
- 3.2.3 The informality of planting and the open space between the trees is one of the site's virtues. It provides an undoubted amenity and aesthetic pleasure for people walking or driving along Ngataringa Road. I agree with the retention of this narrow landscape space in the proposal.

- 3.2.4 The height differential between the street and lower area of the site would make building up to the site boundary challenging. It would require a very different building and planning typology, design skillset and construction methodology which the applicant has obviously shied away from.
- 3.2.5 One consequence of a building setback is that the retention of the slope makes pedestrian access into the site very difficult. There is only one other entry point proposed along Ngataranga Road in addition to the existing entrance at no. 7. This is a staircase opposite 28 Ngataranga Road. There is no footpath provided for residents or visitors to B04 and B03 directly off Wesley Street. Alternative pedestrian entry points are located at the extreme far ends of the site at the bottom of Wesley Street and the public pathway from Lake Road. Although a bus stop is provided on Ngataranga Road, the height and length of the proposed staircase to access it will likely mean the bus is not often used by village residents. In practice, the village will be a car-centric place. The setback will undoubtedly serve to isolate the village from the neighbourhood as the AUDP recognised in its review.
- 3.2.6 Whilst I support retaining the narrow landscape space in the proposal, I do not support the proposed planting plan for this space or the recommendations of Mr Butler and Mr Coombs to provide even more planting than the planting plan does in order to screen the effects of B01's uninterrupted length and B02's sixth storey from view.
- 3.2.7 The proposed infill planting, almost all of which is formal and regular, has the potential to create a green wall closing off the site from the neighbourhood purely for the sake of mitigation. In my opinion, excessive infill planting will simply draw attention to the intrinsic problems created by the design of B01 and B02 and is unlikely to further enhance the amenity and landscape setting of the site frontage.
- 3.3 Middle area (which houses B01 and part of B02)
- 3.3.1 A very large, predominantly level area occupies the middle of the site. This area falls gently eastwards and southwards to the coastal edge, creating a sense of easy movement from east to west across the site. The east-west axis was reflected in the Navy's former layout of housing, access road and footpath to Lake Road. The same axis is currently recognised as a potential linkage in the Takapuna-Devonport Local Board Greenways Network.

- 3.3.2 The levelled area makes for an ideal building platform for larger buildings because of its size, distance below Ngataringa Road and the screening provided by semi-mature trees. The expansive area has understandably led to the applicant centralising the siting of new buildings across the site on the east-west axis.
- 3.3.4 I support the location and height of B01 in this middle area. However, I do not support B01's uninterrupted length and dominant massing and orientation to the south.
- 3.3.5 The plan of the building is cumbersome and heavy. The massive extension of the eastern wing from the central core contributes to the elevation's uninterrupted length of c. 110 metres seen from Ngataringa Road, equivalent to a whole street block in length. As a practical guide, the building is the same length as Regent Street between Ngataringa Road and Aramoana Ave. The length of this building goes completely against the permeability and grain of the neighbourhood and closes down rather than integrates important connections beyond the site (e.g. Regent Street's potential open space viewshaft to Ngataringa Bay and Victoria Road in the distance). In my opinion, this is both a poor outcome and poor urban design.
- 3.3.6 I agree with the AUDP that the outdoor spaces to the north and south of the main communal areas of B01 have poor amenity. The shading diagrams provided by the applicant show the main communal courtyard will be shaded for most of the day during the four seasons of the year. This is largely because of the height, width and orientation of B01 in proportion to the courtyard. I believe this has necessitated the excavation of the northern slope to create a smaller north-facing courtyard. This will provide the only solar access into the internal communal areas on the ground floor.
- 3.3.7 The crude cut made into the slope for the north-facing courtyard extends along nearly the entire northern elevation, effectively forming a 'moat' between the building and street. Whilst the setback of the building has been made for understandable reasons, the 'moat' conveys the village is separated from the street and neighbourhood. The depth of the 'moat' will accentuate the height and uninterrupted length of B01 and both B01 and 'moat' will reinforce the lack of integration and a visual wall and fortress effect of the retirement village.

3.3.8 Mr Butler and the AUDP both recommend the length and reduction in building contiguity of B01 and B05. No comment is offered regarding where and how this recommendation could be achieved. I have analysed this issue on site and recommend the most-eastern section of B01 be removed. That is, the diagonal wing aligned with the access road. I consider this will:

- i) shorten the building's length and uninterrupted length of the building
- ii) increase the open space and planting between B01 and B05
- iii) enable the amenity of the trees along Ngataringa Road to lead into the middle of the site
- iv) decrease the building's visual effects
- v) enhance the views to Mt Victoria from Ngataringa Road

3.3.9 Overall, this shortening of B01 would significantly reduce the impact of B01 and B05 which Mr Butler, the AUDP and Mr Coombes have all called for. It would also increase the village's on-site amenity and better integrate the village with Ngataringa Road.

3.4 Eastern end (which houses B05)

3.4.1 The eastern area of the site below the access road has a character of its own. This appears to be another levelled area although it is much smaller in size. It is a 'pocket' space off the main area which is discrete and relatively private due to its position at the lowest point of the site and its proximity to trees which enclose it on three sides.

3.4.2 The area is shaped at its northern end by the access road which I consider to be one of the most positive elements of the site. It has been beautifully shaped and graded in relation to the topography and the planting delicately softens its graceful serpentine form. I am pleased the applicant has retained the alignment and landscaped space of the access road, including the trees.

3.4.3 I support the siting and alignment of B05 in this location. I would prefer the building was not as wide as it has been planned. B05 sits comfortably on the site and its height does not create adverse effects when seen from the southern side of Ngataringa Bay.

3.4.4 My main concern with B05 is the building's solidity which does not complement or reflect the coastal vegetation adjacent to it. The massing of B05 is too dominant. I consider a lighter, more transparent building would soften its presence and enhance its setting.

3.4.5 I also have a concern that the public path along the building's southern boundary will be hemmed in by a fence or wall protecting residents' privacy. No fence has been shown on the detailed planting plan although undoubtedly one will be built. This will create an unwelcome tightly enclosed corridor for path users. Ideally a planting space is provided on the south side of where a private fence/wall is likely to be built. This will widen the corridor and soften the enclosed space.

3.5 Western slope (which houses B03 and B04)

3.5.1 A large, contiguous, relatively unmodified slope at the western end of the site runs from Ngataringa Road down to the coastal forest 100 metres away. The upper area is wide, has a gentle fall and is easily accessed from Ngataringa Road. This area once accommodated residential quarters for the Navy. Beyond its lower car park, the slope carries over a steep bank before levelling out close to the coastal forest.

3.5.2 The comfortableness of the upper slope, its easy access off Ngataringa Road and its proximity to small-scale suburban residential buildings on two sides, suggests the area would suit smaller-scaled apartment dwellings like those supplied in other Ryman villages (e.g. terraced apartments), although the density of these could be higher if designed well (see Fig. 01 for a best practice example). The potential here is for the village to integrate with the neighbourhood by bringing a familiar scale and form but higher density within the site.

3.5.3 This approach has not been adopted by the applicant who has chosen to excavate a substantial part of the slope and steep bank in order to accommodate two large-scale apartment buildings. The crude excavations may help reduce these buildings' full impact seen from adjacent roads but do not prevent brutal and ugly lower outdoor spaces, and dominating, solid south-facing walls, being created between B03 and B04, as has been built at the Sir Edmund Hillary Retirement Village (Fig. 02).

- 3.5.4 Mr Butler has expressed concern about the height of B03 along the western boundary of this slope (p10). He states “the building isn’t ‘nestled’ into the site and despite the upper floor setbacks will in my opinion clearly read as a 5 level building and located directly opposite the dwelling at 1 Wesley Street.” I agree with his assessment.
- 3.5.5 The fifth storey of B03 creates visual effects on both this and the building’s southern side where the full dimensions of the building’s height is evident. I also note that the ground level rises the equivalent of one storey towards the east, meaning the fifth storey setback is effectively six storeys above Wesley Street and the public pathway adjacent to the coastal forest. This compounds the visual effects Mr Butler was concerned about and creates wider dominance effects, especially when viewed from the southern side of Ngataranga Bay.
- 3.5.6 The wider dominance and visual effects from increasing the setback height of B03 belies one of the objectives of Mr Bird’s ‘Village design structure’ which is to progressively increase the height of buildings as they step down the sloping contours of the site towards the southern boundary (6.5, ix, p63). Mr Bird asserts that this increase in height will not create adverse visual dominance for surrounding residential properties but in the one instance where the objective has been realised, both Mr Butler and I agree that it creates visual dominance. Also noteworthy is that Mr Bird fails to consider the impact of this objective on public land, public space users and private residents on the south side of Ngataranga Bay. This is a fundamental weakness in his assessment. I consider the visual effects of the fifth storey are adverse and will contrast in scale and bulk with the surrounding residential areas and coastal environment.
- 3.5.7 I do not consider Mr Butler’s recommendation to intensively plant along the western boundary will screen B03’s adverse effects. I recommend instead the removal of the fifth storey which prior to the Unitary Plan becoming operative, grossly exceeded the District Plan height control. I have visualised B03 built to four storeys versus the application’s five storeys and believe four storeys is the most appropriate level to minimise the building’s visual and dominance effects (see Fig. 03).

3.5.8 This recommendation is more consistent with Mr Butler's assessment earlier in his report which identifies "a solution lies in managing building form and scale" (p6). I consider B03's adverse effects are intrinsically tied to the problems inherent in the building design and should not be externalised on the receiving environment. Planting is ephemeral by nature and in the wrong place can create its own adverse effects. I do not consider the intensity of planting Mr Butler recommends along the western boundary to screen this building is an appropriate 'solution'. Two wrongs do not make a right.

3.6 Coastal road (which houses B02 and B03)

3.6.1 The lowest part of the western slope presently provides a beautiful walking gradient, sheltered space and beautiful aspect which follows an east-west direction along the edge of the coastal forest.

3.6.2 The applicant has sited B03 well forward into this space and designed a new access road through the space to connect with the existing road further inside the site. It is not clear to me how this space can work successfully with such dominant elements intruding into it. It is also unclear how much of this space will be eaten up by B03 and the road, and by implication, how much of the coastal vegetation may be required to be removed. The applicant's drawing cross-sections are vague in their illustration of this area and especially where the existing line of the coastal forest starts.

3.6.3 The full height and length of B03 and the full height of B02 are experienced along the coastal road. B03 is five storeys at its south-eastern corner while B02 is six storeys facing the road. I have noted that the ground level of the south-eastern corner of B03 sits one storey above Wesley Street to the west. The ground level of B02 is approximately two storeys higher than the ground plane B01 sits on to the east. I have calculated that the eastern elevation of B02, taking into account the basement car park and external retaining walls, is the equivalent of eight storeys above the ground level of B01.

3.6.4 Whilst B02 and B03's extra storeys are apparently to acknowledge the high point of Ngataranga Road behind them, they create a vertical emphasis significantly out of step with the horizontal profile and grounded composure of B01 and B05. The rising ground level under B03 and B02 accentuates their height difference in relation to B01 and B05 which are noticeably lower on the site.

- 3.6.5 B02 and B03's extra storeys and their position on higher ground above surrounding residential buildings mean they will be seen well above the line of the coastal vegetation and therefore are too high to be screened by it. It is not possible to mitigate these buildings' visual effects with existing or new planting. Mr Coomb's assertion that "the proposed development will be nestled into the neighbourhood by the framework of vegetation within the esplanade area" (Coombs, p2) is not supported by the evidence, whether this be from site information or the photomontages and drawing elevations prepared for the application. My assessment of B02 and B03 is that their visual effects are adverse and the contrast in scale and bulk with the surrounding residential areas and coastal environment, including B01, is severe.
- 3.6.6 Even more problematic for the success of the 'Village design structure' is that B02 does not fit into the overall composition of the village either in plan, elevation or perspective. The building is too close to B01 and B03, resulting in significant dominance and visual effects on B01, and for the overall village when these buildings are read collectively from the southern side of Ngataranga Bay.
- 3.6.7 B02's plan, elevations, building proportions and base excavations are poorly shaped, as though the building has been made to fit the gap between B03 and B01 without sufficient consideration of the quality or appropriateness of this fit. B02 does not belong on the site in the comfortable and unforced way that B01 and B05 have achieved when seen from the south.
- 3.6.8 I have prepared photomontages of the village seen from the south-west using the V04 photomontage from Jim Titchener Parade by the applicant as the base model. My analysis finds:
- i) the adverse effects of B03 are significantly reduced when the fifth storey is removed (Fig. 04)
 - ii) the adverse effects of B02 are reduced when the sixth storey is removed but adverse effects still remain (Fig. 05). The difference in ground level, building height and vertical emphasis of B03/B02 versus B01/B05 is still too contrasting. There is only a distant relationship between B02 and B01. The overall composition is skewed or weighted too heavily on B02 and B03's prominence at the expense of the rest of the village. The village appears divided into two halves instead of forming and presenting a cohesive whole.

3.6.9 I have also examined whether removing the fifth storey from B02 provides the additional reduction in effects needed. I consider it does. Although removing the fifth storey may appear to create a consistent building height across the development's southern elevation, the changing ground levels will mean there is sufficient variation in building profile to achieve the mixture of building heights sought in the relevant precinct policy.

3.6.10 Otherwise, the solution may be to remove the whole of B02 from the plan or relocate it to another area of the site in conjunction with other improvements to the layout of the village I recommend. I have investigated this option as well (see Section xxx).

3.7 Coastal forest (which houses Polly's Park)

3.7.1 The esplanade vegetation, colloquially known as Polly's Park, is to my knowledge one of the most significant individually-created urban forests in Auckland, perhaps matched only in ambition and extent by Winifred Huggins (1896-1988) at Dingle Dell in St Heliers.

3.7.2 The forest contains significant pohutukawa and a rich diversity of other native trees including kauri, totara, rimu, miro, kahikatea, puriri, nikau, kowhai, tawa, titoki, and tanekaha (observed on my site visit with Dave Coker).

3.7.3 I agree with the AUDP that a public pathway through Polly's Park should be provided – or at the least the existing one upgraded – as part of the application. I am very pleased to learn the applicant has agreed to undertake this.

3.8 Lake Road House

3.8.1 I have not seen inside the residential unit at 29 Lake Road so I am not in a position to assess the building's architectural merit or value. I am also unable to compare its value relative to the benefits of residential intensification provided by B06. Taken by itself, I consider B06's effects to be less than minor. I do not oppose B06. However, I consider that the driveway area needs design development to reduce its crude shaping and appearance.

4 Compliance with building height controls

4.1 Height controls vs other factors

4.1.1 Mr Bird's two urban design reviews concentrate on the proposal's degree of compliance with the now superceded District Plan building height controls and the recently operative Unitary Plan Devonport Peninsula Precinct maximum building heights. Most of his attention is focused on the assessment of effects involving the Ngaratinga Road and Wesley Street sides of the proposal. Much less consideration and weighting is given to the potential effects created by the southern side of the proposal when seen from viewpoints south of Ngaratinga Bay. This apparent bias characterises the content of his assessments generally.

4.1.2 A building or a development's height in metres above ground level is only one factor to consider when the activity may have or is likely to have adverse effects on the environment that are more than minor (RMA, section 95A). By implication, compliance with building height controls by itself does not ensure or constitute a contextual fit.

4.1.3 The maximum building height for this precinct is not a mandatory height for development but rather enables a greater building height while "avoiding wider dominance or visual effects" (Devonport Peninsula Precinct, I508.53 Policies (1) (a)).

4.1.4 Other factors which may contribute to wider dominance and visual effects include:

- i) the bulk and scale of individual buildings in relation to the surrounding built and natural environment
- ii) the bulk and scale of the overall development in relation to the surrounding built and natural environment
- iii) the dominance of buildings over open space
- iv) the dominance of buildings over other buildings adjacent to or surrounding them
- v) the dominance of a building elevation
- vi) the proximity of buildings to others
- vii) the size and effectiveness of gaps between buildings

- viii) the uninterrupted length of a building
- ix) the uninterrupted length of the overall development
- x) the position and height of buildings on the landform
- xi) the height of a building in relation to a foreground space (e.g. Ngataringa Bay) and background context (e.g. where does the building sit in relation to the horizon line)
- xii) the relationship of the building or development to the street
- xiii) the relationship of the building or development to the neighbourhood street pattern
- xiv) the degree of integration with the housing grain of the neighbourhood
- xv) the integration of buildings with existing planting
- xvi) the integration of a proposed planting plan with proposed buildings
- xvii) the solidity and massing of the building
- xviii) the material selections for the building
- xix) the orientation of the building in relation to the sun
- xx) the amount of shadow on building/s and/or cast by building/s

4.1.5 As set out in the preceding sections, I consider the overall development and B02 in particular, fail when assessed against most of these factors, especially when the proposal is seen and assessed from the southern side of Ngataringa Bay. In my opinion, the proposal will have adverse effects on the environment that are more than minor. Cumulatively, the proposal creates wider dominance and visual effects which are adverse.

4.1.6 I have examined two of the factors in further detail to illustrate my assessment. These are drawn from Mr Bird's own 'Village design structure' objectives (Section 6.5, p 62-65, 2015):

- vi) to create substantial gaps between the buildings facing Ngataringa Road, so as to avoid a potential 'visual' wall of buildings lining the street*
- vi) to create viewshafts from Ngataringa Road, through the site, to the harbour and the city centre beyond*

4.1.7 I note these objectives do not assess whether the proposal has avoided a potential 'visual' wall of buildings lining Ngataringa Bay.

5 Assessment of substantial gaps and viewshafts through the proposal

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 Mr Bird states in Section 6.5 of his 2015 Urban Design review that the underlying design structure of the proposed retirement village is driven by nineteen key urban design objectives, two of which have been quoted above.

5.1.2 It appears that Mr Bird has used the word ‘viewshaft’ loosely rather than strictly in the legal/planning meaning of the term. Use of the word ‘viewshaft’ in Auckland usually involves the public identification and management of very specific views of features with demonstrable immense value to the city. The areas within viewshafts are subject to development controls so that visual protection is afforded to that view of the feature, whether this is towards a volcano (‘Auckland volcanic viewshaft’), other natural features or a built feature such as the Auckland War Memorial Museum.

5.1.3 I do not believe Mr Bird’s use of the term ‘viewshaft’ is relevant or applicable to this proposal; nor does this proposal provide any unique views to features of immense value. Instead, lines of sight have been drawn through minimal gaps in the 330metre long development towards subject matter of only generic interest (‘harbour’, ‘city centre’ etc). None of these lines of sight warrant protection.

5.1.4 Except in one instance, the gaps between buildings do not appear to have been designed to align with anything in particular other than the orthogonal grid of the peninsula street pattern. Instead, they appear as opportunities to highlight lines of sight through the proposal – the implication being that the proposal is not a “visual wall of buildings lining the street”.

5.1.5 Three of the five ‘lines of sight’ Mr Bird has identified appear extremely ambitious in their definition as ‘substantial gaps’ and ‘viewshafts’ (to the west of B03/B04; between B02/B01; to the east of B05). All three are very narrow in width and would be practically impossible to manage as protected or substantial open spaces because they have existing or proposed trees within or in front of them. The photomontages show these spaces filled with trees instead of as clear open spaces.

- 5.1.6 The 'substantial' gap and viewshaft between B01 and B05 is similarly compromised by existing trees along Ngataringa Road and the access road. In my opinion, these trees and the open space around them provide much greater amenity value for the retirement village than their location within a view corridor to the harbour. In any case, the serpentine beauty of the existing driveway means that views unfold around every bend rather than being contained within straight lines.
- 5.1.7 The space between B01 and B02 also seems far-fetched to describe as a substantial gap and viewshaft. I believe the practical line of sight amounts to only c. 7 metres wide between the 5 and 6 storey buildings due to the B01 lift / stairwell protruding into the space. A line of sight it indeed is.
- 5.1.8 I therefore do not give any credit to these key urban design objectives or to Mr Bird's assessment of them. I do not agree that the proposal achieves something significant by providing them. In my opinion, they draw attention to the fact that there are very few and limited opportunities for views through the proposal. These views are not generous or special. If anything, they highlight that the proposal has not been designed with substantial gaps and viewshafts in mind. It raises doubts about whether Mr Bird really believes the proposal avoids creating a visual wall of buildings lining the street.

5.2 Alternative urban design framework

- 5.2.1 If the retirement village had been designed with a real viewshaft in mind, then it would make sense that there was a public focus and benefit to its provision.
- 5.2.2 My study of the Ngataringa peninsula reveals how important the 19th century gridded street pattern has been for providing a visual and sensual awareness of being surrounded by and connected to the harbour. Nearly every street on this peninsula terminates with an open view of water (Fig. 06). This is replicated on other peninsulas south and north of Ngataringa Bay – Devonport, Bayswater, Eversleigh Road, Hauraki Corner, Takapuna and Milford - as well as other 19th century peninsula settlements in Auckland (Point Chevalier, Herne Bay).

- 5.2.3 One of the unique aspects of the Ngataringa peninsula street pattern is its alignment with Devonport streets across Ngataringa Bay (Fig. 07). Regent Street aligns with Victoria Road ~~with their potential connection still marked as a paper road~~. Only the large gum trees in Dacre Park conceal this obvious alignment. These trees have a finite lifespan so it will be only a matter of time before the alignment is exposed again. Similarly, Wesley Street was planned to align (but not physically connect) with ~~Bulwer~~ Cowper Street.
- 5.2.4 The inter-connected street pattern between Ngataringa and Devonport shapes the water space of the bay as a collective urban space (Fig. 08). The bay is a public square that the streets frame and front on to. This larger scale offers a new way of understanding the contextual significance and potential integration of the site. At a much higher level, it offers a way of understanding the future city of Auckland enabled by the Unitary Plan.
- 5.2.5 Sub-Precinct F (the site) and other new sub-precincts within the Devonport Peninsula Precinct should not be seen as isolated and insular pockets of redevelopment (Fig. 09). They are part of a collective framework for the development of an urban vision which shapes and structures the city beyond the confines of an individual site.
- 5.2.6 Great cities can sometimes show us something of our future. San Francisco has a similar street pattern and open space structure to 19th century Auckland peninsula settlements. San Francisco has protected these underlying structural elements through successive waves of development and intensification. The streets are controlled and work like viewshafts. Their ridgeline to harbour trajectory have become a defining feature of the city (Fig. 10).
- 5.2.7 Through the course of any city's history and development, it is the street pattern overlaid on a landform which is most likely to persist. Buildings and building uses come and go. In San Francisco's case, it is the street and open space structure which both represents and sustains the urban vision for the city. Development is integrated within this.
- 5.2.8 The site adjacent to Ngataringa Bay offers a fresh opportunity to strengthen the street and open space structure of the city.

5.3 Regent Street Viewshaft

- 5.3.1 One of the proposal's key weaknesses is that it treats the expansive site as a contiguous whole facing Ngataranga Bay. Such an approach closes out the urban context behind it.
- 5.3.2 With limited openings penetrating its 330 metre length, the proposal creates a visual wall of buildings lining the street.
- 5.3.3 I recommend Regent Street be continued through the site as a viewshaft. This will break up the wall of buildings lining Ngataranga Road, protect Regent Street and Ngataranga Road's visual connection with the harbour and integrate the village with the underlying urban structure of the peninsula (Fig. 11).
- 5.3.4 The viewshaft will provide a measure of restraint and proportion missing from the proposal. It will also improve the village's connection with the neighbourhood. From the intersection of Regent Street and Ngataranga Road seven volcanoes can be seen.
- 5.3.5 Whether it is possible to accommodate a public staircase or road on this alignment should also be investigated. However, provision of the viewshaft is of primary importance.

5.4 Alternative site plan layout

- 5.4.1 I have prepared a plan which accommodates the Regent Street viewshaft (Fig.13).
- 5.4.2 Coincidentally or not, the southern wings of B01 are closely aligned with Regent Street's road reserve boundaries (Fig. 12). B01's courtyard space is therefore already dimensioned to accommodate the viewshaft through it. The building's wings can form the viewshaft's edges, with the main body of B01 running westwards. There is sufficient space on the site for a reconfigured B01 to accommodate its internal functions and congregate around a new courtyard space. This courtyard space could open up more to the west to improve solar access, reduce shading and reintroduce an east-west pedestrian route through the site.

- 5.4.3 A new building – or a relocated B02 - could form the eastern edge of the viewshaft. This building retains a courtyard/arrival space in front of it. The building's shorter eastern wing adopts my earlier recommendation to reduce the length of B01 to the east, thus inviting a more generous opening to Ngataringa Road, improving the narrow landscape space along Ngataringa Road and increasing the village's on-site amenity.
- 5.4.4 The road in front of B03 and B01 could be lifted slightly higher on the slope to enable a more generous recreational space below it and less confrontational interface with the coastal forest. I would prefer the car parking areas which appear to protrude into the coastal forest to be located on the northern side of the road.
- 5.4.5 This alternative approach to the site is indicative only and has been prepared to convey to commissioners key ideas and opportunities missing from the application. They are not intended to form or represent a viable alternative to the proposal. One change will have implications for other areas of the design which have not been investigated.

6 Visual Assessment of the Proposal from Viewpoints 1-8

- 6.1 I have visited each of the viewpoints from which photomontages have been prepared and agree with Mr Bird's selection of them. They provide an appropriate selection of views from which to assess the potential effects of the proposal.
- 6.2 However, I agree with Mr Butler's criticism of Mr Bird's visual assessments. He states "Overall I felt that the conclusions of the assessment did not accurately reflect the significant physical change that the proposal would have on the landscape" (p5-6).
- 6.3 The three assessments Mr Butler referred were made from viewpoints sited on the southern side of Ngataringa Bay. I disagree with all Mr Bird's assessments he made from viewpoints south of Ngataringa Bay (View Points 1-8). In my opinion, these assessments are not accurate descriptions of the proposal's visibility and significantly underplay the proposal's adverse effects. The proposal will be clearly visible from all these vantage points including North Head. Even at this distance, the problems I have identified earlier in my evidence are evident.

6.4 From these locations, the proposal will create adverse visual and dominance effects, and from View Points 7-8 especially, very strong overlooking effects. Contrary to Mr Bird's assertions, the bulk, scale and uninterrupted lengths of the proposal will create a visual wall of buildings.

7 Conclusion and Recommendations

7.1 The applicant has not achieved an integrated high-quality housing development that mitigates general visual and dominance effects.

7.2 The applicant has also not demonstrated the proposal is the most appropriate way to achieve the purpose of the RMA.

7.3 I do not believe the proposed retirement village will integrate well within its Ngataringa Road street frontage and its Waitemata Harbour coastal context.

7.5 I consider that the overall development and B02 in particular, fail when assessed against critical contextual factors, especially when the proposal is seen and assessed from the southern side of Ngataringa Bay.

7.6 The development will create adverse visual and dominance effects, and from View Points 7-8 especially, very strong overlooking effects. The bulk, scale and uninterrupted lengths of the proposal will create a visual wall of buildings.

7.6 I agree with Mr Chris Butler (Principal Urban Designer, Auckland Council) that changes will need to be made to the building layout, building proportions (e.g. lengths and heights) and material selection in order for the applicant to achieve its stated goal of an integrated comprehensive development which contextually fits the neighbourhood and coastal environment it will form part of.

7.7 I have illustrated how some of the necessary changes could achieve a better contextual fit. This alternative approach to the site is indicative only and has been prepared to convey to commissioners key ideas and opportunities missing from the application.

7.8 My recommendations include:

- i) B01 should be reduced in length - the diagonal extension of the eastern wing which is currently aligned with the entry road should be removed from the proposal
- ii) B03 should be reduced in height by one storey (the fifth storey)
- iii) B02 should be reduced in height by at least one storey. My investigation into the relative effects from different storey heights indicates that B02 should be reduced by two storeys to compensate for its higher ground level. Preferably, the building is removed altogether
- iv) A viewshaft should be created through the site which is aligned with Regent Street. Buildings B01 should be re-planned to accommodate the viewshaft
- v) The western access road could be lifted higher on the slope and car parking removed from south of this road to enable a car-free recreation space along the edge of the coastal vegetation connecting with the lawn bowls area and public pathway to Lake Road
- vi) Material selection needs development to reduce the proposal's bulk and scale
- vii) The proposal should integrate a wider mix of uses and open itself up more with the community and neighbourhood. This would mitigate the setback of the proposal from Ngataranga Road.
- viii) The satisfactory resolution of the street pattern and open space structure should precede the design of any built development on top.

7.9 Unless the applicant agrees to make significant changes to the proposal, along the lines of the recommendations above, my recommendation is for the application to be **declined**.



Richard Reid

28 November 2016

Fig. 1



NEWINGTON APARTMENTS
Olympic Park, Sydney (Architect: Bruce Eeles)

Fig. 2



SIR EDMUND HILLARY RETIREMENT VILLAGE
(Ryman Healthcare Ltd)

Fig. 3



VP04 Jim Titchener Parade

Fig. 4



VP04 Jim Titchener Parade

VP04 JIM TITCHENER PARADE PHOTOMONTAGE

Study #1 of Applicant's Proposal -
B02 and B03 reduced by one storey

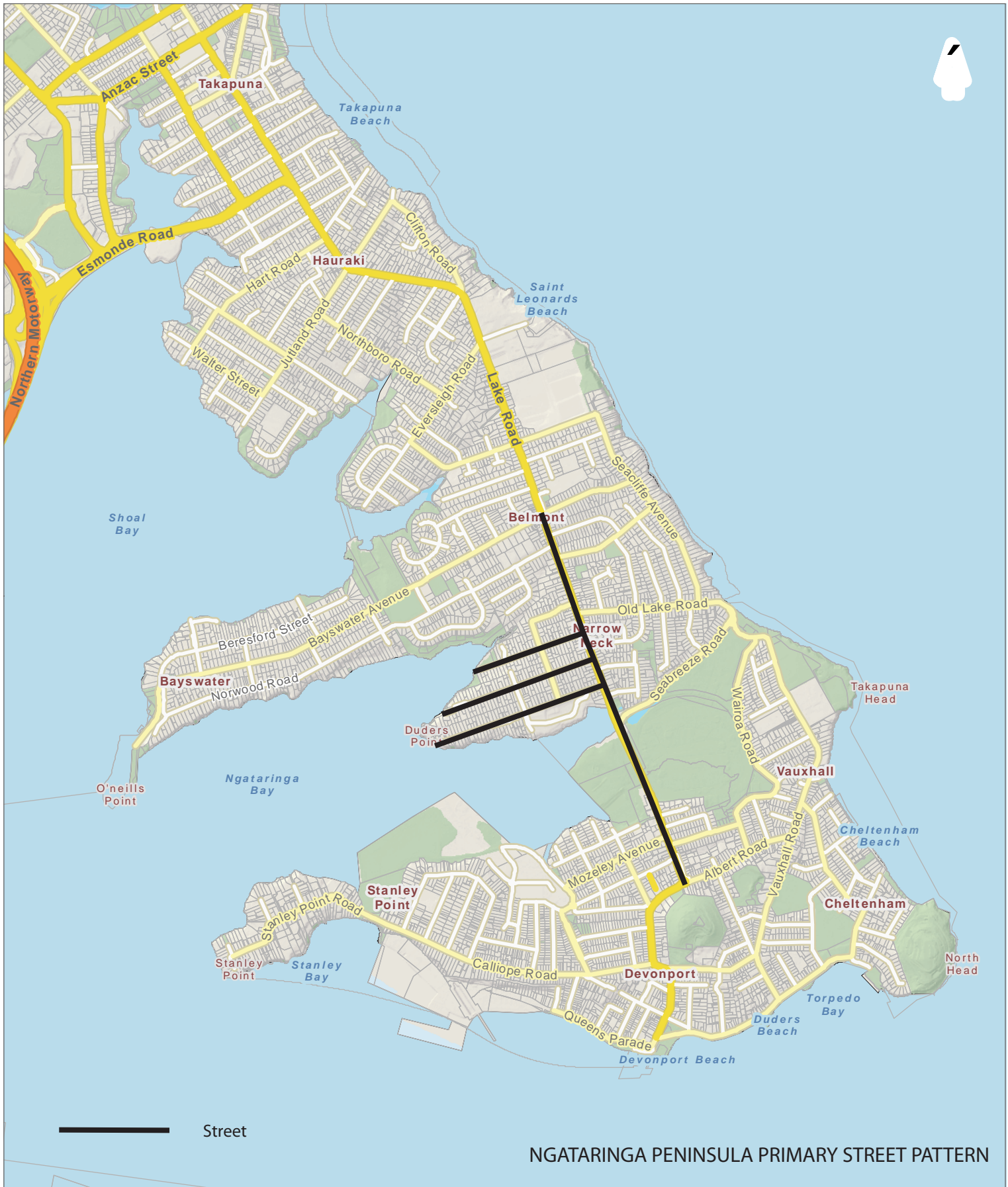
Fig. 5



VP04 Jim Titchener Parade

VP04 JIM TITCHENER PARADE PHOTOMONTAGE

Study #2 of Applicant's Proposal -
B02 reduced by two storeys and
B03 reduced by one storey



NGATARINGA PENINSULA PRIMARY STREET PATTERN

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Takapuna-Devonport Peninsula

0 130 260 390
 Meters

Scale @ A4
 = 1:25,000

Date Printed:
 24/11/2016





STREET ALIGNMENTS ACROSS THE BAY

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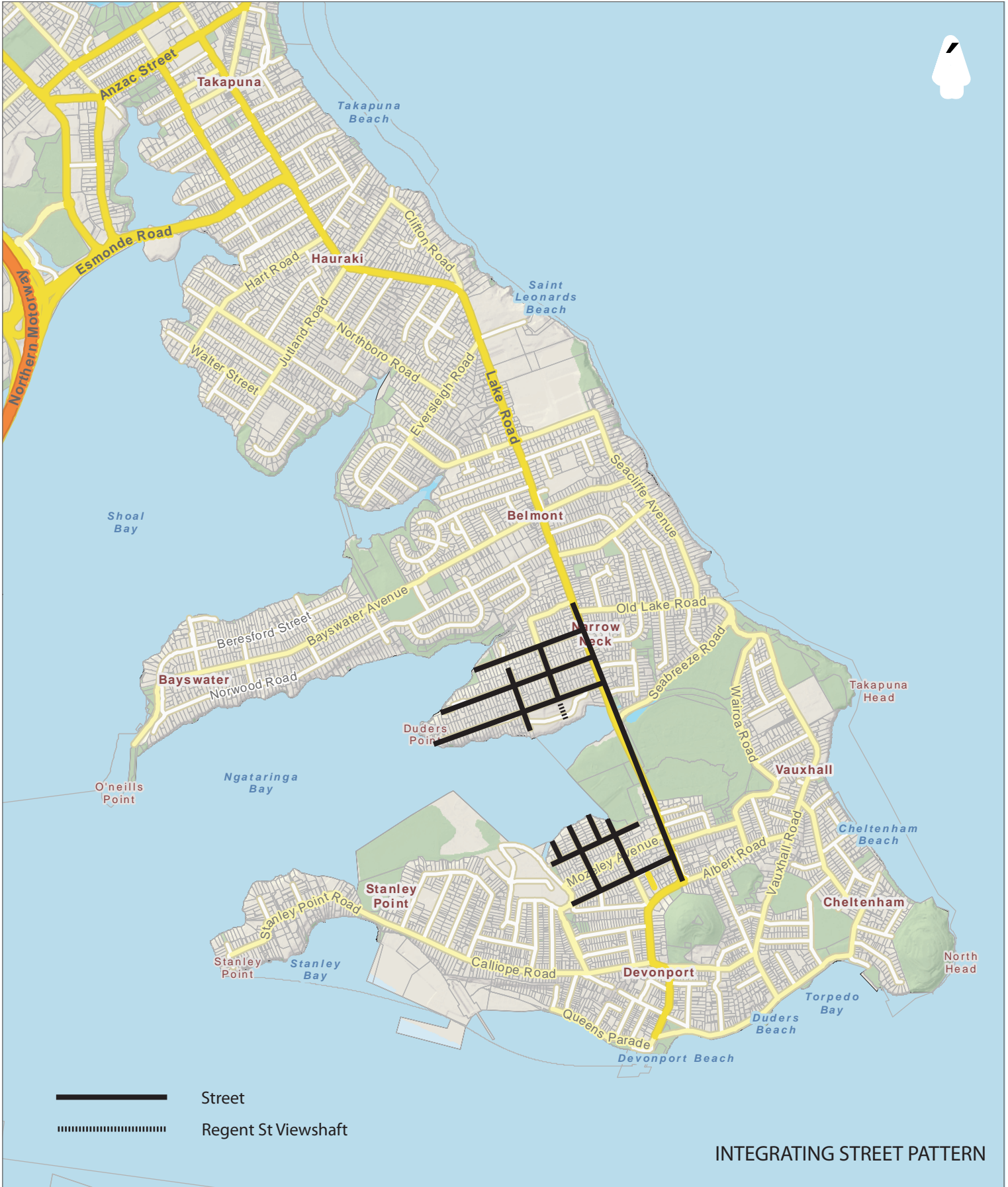
Takapuna-Devonport Peninsula

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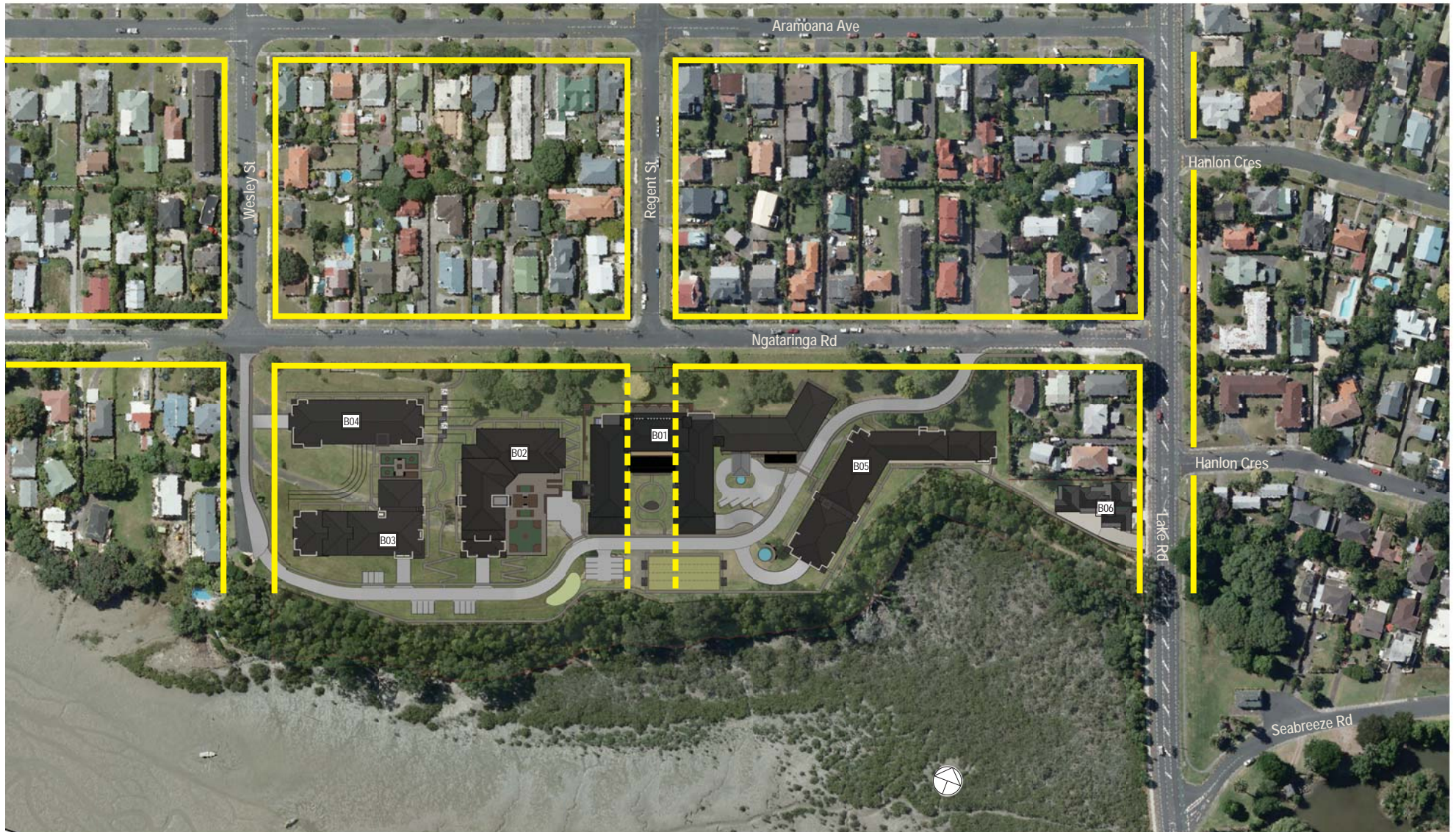


Fig. 10



SAN FRANCISCO LANDFORM AND STREET PATTERN

Fig. 11



Site Plan - with Aerial

A1 sheet scale = 1 : 1000
A3 sheet scale is twice scale shown above



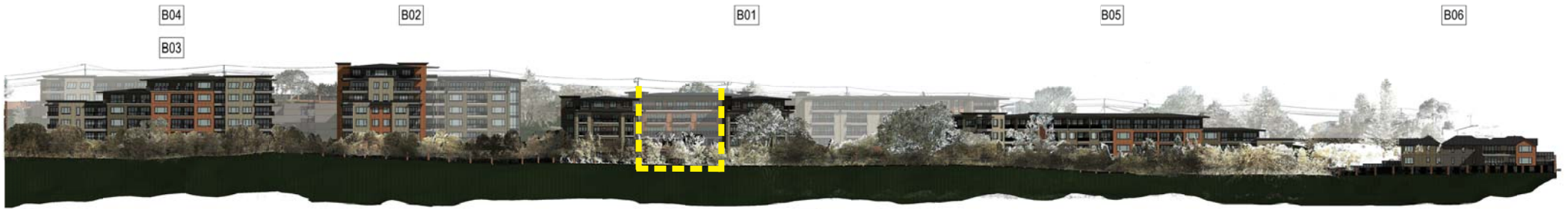
Street Block

Regent Street Viewshaft

Fig. 12



1 Site Elevation - North - Ngataringa Road
A1 sheet scale = 1:500
A3 sheet scale is twice scale shown above

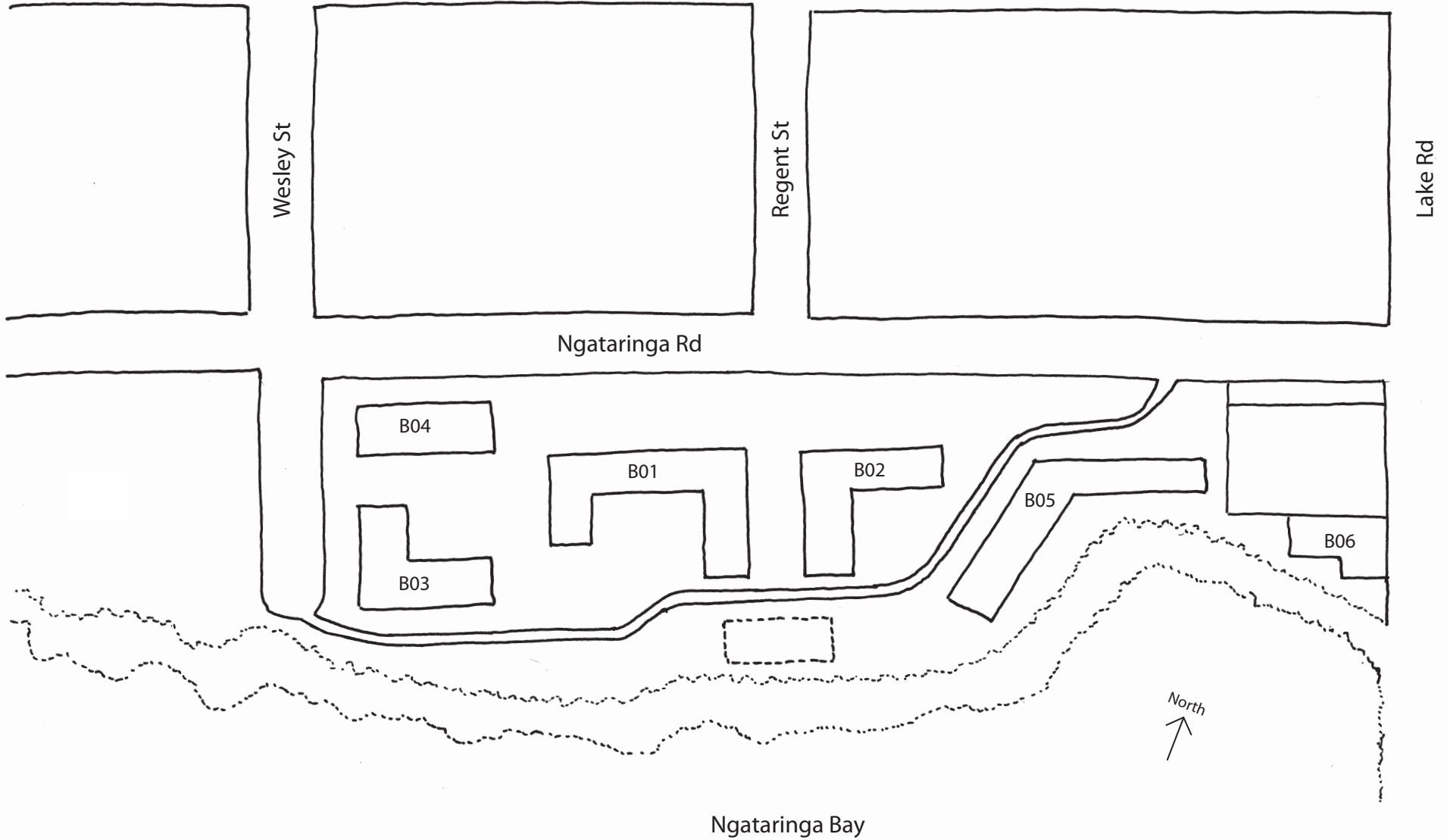


3 Site Elevation - South - Harbour side
A1 sheet scale = 1:500
A3 sheet scale is twice scale shown above



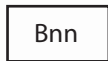
Regent Street Viewshaft

Fig.13



Note 1: Plan does not show building heights

Note 2: Plan does not show specimen trees within site



Building



Polly's Park / Forest

ALTERNATIVE SITE LAYOUT
Incorporating Regent St Viewshaft and
reducing wall effect of building elevations
to Ngataringa Rd and Ngataringa Bay