



Ohoka Landscape Assessment

Prepared for Waimakariri District Council and
the Ohoka Community Trust
November 2004

CONTENTS

Introduction

The Brief

Objectives

Methodology

The site & Context

Landscape Character Areas

Area A	Ohoka Village
Area B	Heritage Landscapes
Area C	Mill Stream Landscape
Area D	Lifestyle Landscape
Area E	Rural Agricultural Landscape
Area F	Lifestyle Subdivision Landscape

Ohoka Community Survey Report

General Comments

Summary & Conclusions

Recommendations

INTRODUCTION

The Participants

The Ohoka Community Trust in partnership with the Waimakariri District Council commissioned Edge Landscape Projects Limited to undertake a visual landscape assessment of the Ohoka Area.

This landscape character assessment was seen as being necessary to provide the community with a reference point to which it could begin to gauge the effects of continuing subdivision development within the Ohoka area.

The Trust has obtained sponsorship for the project from Water Dynamics Limited and Mark Pringle - Bayley’s Real Estate.

In conjunction with this landscape assessment, Council also prepared a Community Survey to assess how residents viewed their area.

These parallel projects would provide the community with some background information suitable for discussion and consultation.

One suggested outcome resulting from the information provided would be for Council to prepare a Community Plan.

The Study Area

The Landscape Assessment was undertaken in early 2004 with the initial survey extending south from Tram Road, north to the Main Drain, west to Two Chains Road and east to Giles Road.

The visual landscape assessment focused on the area east of Bradley’s Road.

THE STUDY BRIEF

We advised the Community Trust and Council that we considered that there would be at least two stages to the evaluation process.

Stage 1 Visual Assessment

This involved the visual assessment of the existing landscape character.

Although the study did not include a full Bio-Physical and cultural assessment we did consider the physical forms and landscape patterns that are derived from these.

The aim of the assessment was to provide residents with an analysis of the visual characteristics of their local environment.

The information would then be presented to the community for its members to confirm if they agreed with the analysis and our interpretation of the landscape character types proposed. This would provide an opportunity for the community to further contribute to the process by providing historical and local information about the landscape, the buildings and the people.

Stage 2 Evaluation and Outcomes

Evaluation of the landscape assessment and the community survey would provide a consensus as to how best to manage change in the future. It would help to define which of the landscape elements that were valued by the community as needing to be retained, modified or enhanced.

The outcomes could be

- District Plan Policy Change related to land- use, development and landscape
- Preparation of a Community Plan
- Preparation of Community Design Guidelines

OBJECTIVES

Objective 1

To describe and assess the landscape elements that contribute to the visual character of the Ohoka Landscape.

Objective 2

To identify and describe any distinctive landscape character types that may exist within the area.

Objective 3

To identify the 'effects' that continued subdivision may have on the identified character types.

Objective 4 (Next Stage)

Provide guidance to council and the community as to how they can best manage change to retain those most valued elements that contribute to the quality of the Ohoka landscape character.

METHODOLOGY

The assessment Process

In order to satisfy the brief and budget we decided on a simple and effective visual assessment process. This involved a process of describing, interpreting and evaluating the landscape.

Data Collection

The surveying of the study area involved driving around all the roads within the study boundary. We documented the landscape by taking photographs from various locations and made comments about the composition of elements within the landscape.

These photographs helped to record the landscape elements present at each location. Some of this information has been included in the appendix.

Description

Landscape Elements

Identify key landscape elements
Landscape elements are individual objects that are seen in the landscape, the combination and arrangement of these form landscape patterns.

Natural Systems

- Topography
 - Landform: Plains vs Foothills
 - Aspect
- Catchments and Hydrology
 - Natural Waterways
 - Drainage Patterns
- Remnant vegetation
 - Native
 - Exotic
 - Seasonal Change
 - Deciduous Trees
 - Evergreen Trees

Cultural Influences

- Vegetation Pattern
 - Ornamental Planting
 - Open Space
 - Street Trees

- Roading Pattern
 - Grid or Curvilinear
 - Hierarchy
 - Sealed/Unsealed
 - Berm character
- Land Use
 - Residential
 - Agricultural – sheep/dairy/deer/cropping
 - Horticulture
- Built Environment
 - Historical settlement
 - Density
 - Location
 - Style/Materials
 - Age
- Services
 - Over-head wires
 - Pylons

Interpretation

We then analysed the landscape elements and patterns in terms of the visual and spatial qualities, this involved assessing the following attributes:

Principles

- **The Scale** of the environment in the Ohoka area is variable depending on where one is and in what direction one is looking.

In the 'rural' environment one can appreciate a greater sense of scale when looking across open fields of cropping land toward a backdrop of the foothills near Oxford.

In the semi-rural environment land use patterns have generally resulted in a greater compartmentalization of the landscape. The appreciation of distant views are diminished. Objects like hedges or trees get in the way. Then one begins to look through view shafts. The middle ground becomes more complex and interesting in its own right.

The semi urban environment around Ohoka becomes even more complex. Distant views are almost lost completely. The scale is more 'human'. Objects appear that are of a scale that we feel comfortable with. The house, the fence, the vegetation.

- **Views** – A view is a scene observed from a given vantage point.
It could be a setting for a structure, a limit of visual space, a backdrop.

Near Views (Foreground)
Middle Views (Middle ground)
Distant Views (Background)

- **Enclosure** is the term used to describe the containment of a space. It relates to scale and views. Spaces can be ill-defined. The distant landscape elements become a feature - they are more open. A high degree of enclosure often will limit ones view or appreciation of the wider landscape. Elements defining a higher degree of enclosure are often the vertical elements such high hedges close to the road or tall trees. Enclosure is about the comparison between the horizontal and vertical elements in the landscape.
- **Unity of Composition** is an essential ingredient of visual satisfaction. Lack of visual order signals chaos, and visual disturbance. A sense of order must be introduced to a landscape dominated by incongruous elements. Too many individual units in any one view create visual dissatisfaction. However, it is wise to maintain variety within unity, to avoid monotony. The aim is unity, rather than uniformity.

A driver for example, because of the speed at which he travels, is only able to comprehend and appreciate simple visual patterns. While residents moving at a slower pace are able to experience more complex visual patterns.

For example where Mill Road passes through the township ('urban' landscape) traveling at a slower speed one can acknowledge both simple and complex visual elements. However further west of the township (rural landscape) the speed of the driver increases and therefore more simple visual landscape elements can be appreciated. In the other direction east of the township (semi rural, semi urban) the landscape is neither simple or complex. No matter which situation one is in, the landscape elements within each landscape type must relate to one another to give some sense of order and unity.

Factors giving variety between different landscapes thus enabling them to have separate identities include such things as variations of enclosing planes, composition of enclosing planes, species of vegetation, construction materials, built forms, sequential experiences along the road or a combination of all of these.

Sequential Experience, is gained by dividing a long space (a road) into varying segments, or sequences of space greatly enhance and add human interest to an environment.

The road acts as the essential thread of continuity, but needs to be supported by a succession of spaces that appear to give it some legibility.

Examples include transitions between spaces of different character, changes in scale, points of decision, structures of significance.

Evaluation

Our visual assessment at each site enabled us to build up a picture of the patterns created over the landscape by the various elements.

The arrangement/composition of various landscape elements contribute to forming the landscape character.

Our task was to see whether these elements produced identifiable landscape character types

See Landscape Character map

THE SITE AND CONTEXT

The following plans indicate the:

- Study area

Plans of Significant Landscape Elements

- District Plan Landuse and Zoning
- Heritage Features
- Natural Watercourses
- Public Drains
- Roads

Drainage

Ohoka is situated on relatively flat low-lying ground that has been developed since early settlement as an agricultural landscape.

Typically the roads throughout the flat Canterbury landscape including those in the Waimakariri District were built long and straight with land either side subdivided into rectangular blocks suitable for farming.

In the Ohoka area the grid style subdivision and roading pattern largely ignores the underlying natural landscape pattern that consist of a diversity of soils and a complexity of overland drainage requirements.

As a result the low-lying Ohoka landscape has been intercepted by a man-modifying drainage pattern of deep drainage channels. The Main Drain is the most significant man-made feature in the area.

The convergence of the natural water courses at the eastern end of Ohoka posed problems for the grid system and so the roading and subdivision layouts had to be more complex and more in tune with nature.

The composition of these natural landscape elements form a strong and easily identifiable landscape character at the eastern part of Ohoka .

Road side drains

Many of these are deep drains with untidy unmown berms while others are kept well maintained. They are seen as an effective means to dispose of water rather than as an element in the landscape that could add value to the 'roadscape'.

The combination of steep sides, fences and hedges at the back edge, leaves little scope for improving or maintaining them as an asset to the roadside or the private property.

In a few cases, property owners have set back their fences, dished the ditch to create a broader swale and planted trees on their side of the ditch clear of power lines.

Vegetation

The Ohoka landscape is almost devoid of any significant areas of natural vegetation. The land was probably cleared of flax and swamp vegetation to allow for the drainage system and development of agriculture.

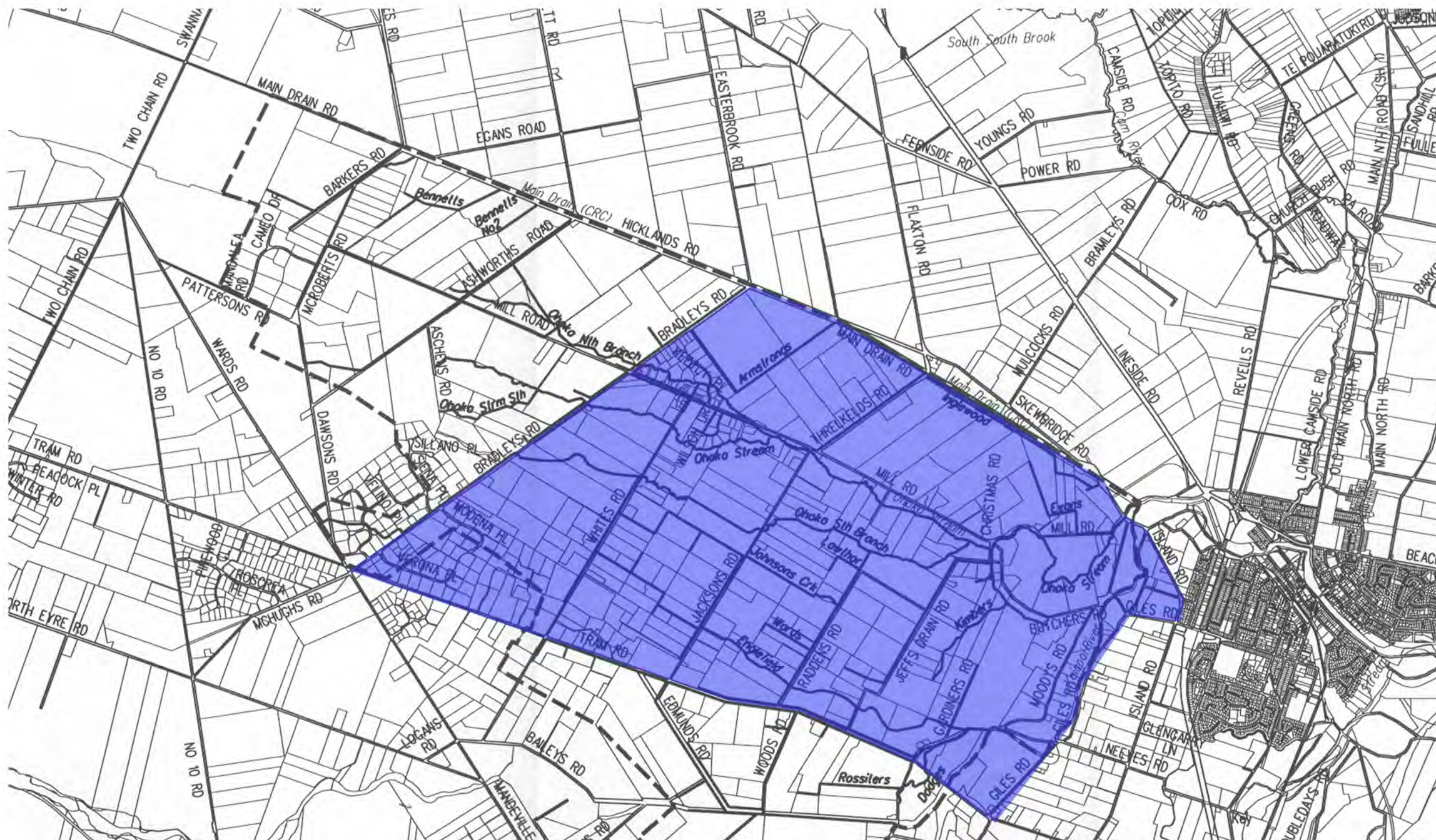
The landscape east of Bradleys Road is particularly well treed.

The exotic vegetation with mature Oaks and Willows predominate in the richer soils of the eastern part of Ohoka. Their presence helps identify the location of the water courses and the location of the early homesteads.

There is evidence to suggest that Oak trees (*Quercus robur* - English Oak) were planted along the drainage ditches as single specimens or close to farm gates in groups. The ditches became fence lines and defined paddocks.

Often they were planted with Hawthorn hedges.

The visibility of the streams and creeks however is reduced when traveling west away from the Kaiapoi River, they gradually reduce in size into small flowing depressions in the rural farmland. These small depressions often have sparse or no associated vegetation. We did note during the site survey that the natural water courses to the west of Bradleys Road in particular were devoid of vegetation and in many cases stock was not isolated from these features.



Project Title **OHOKA LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT**

Drawing Title LANDSCAPE STUDY BOUNDARY



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Key

- Local Roads
- Local Unsealed Roads
- Arterial Roads
- Collector Roads

Local Road

Primary function is property access

Local Unsealed Road

Arterial Road

A road that is of major importance in the District serving significant populations and functioning as a prime access to other major centres inside and outside the District

Collector Road

A road that is the preferred route for travel from within, and between, areas of population and principal activities



Local Road
(Jeffs Drain Rd)



Local Unsealed Road
(Main Drain Rd)



Arterial Road
(Tram Rd)



Collector Road
(Mill Rd)

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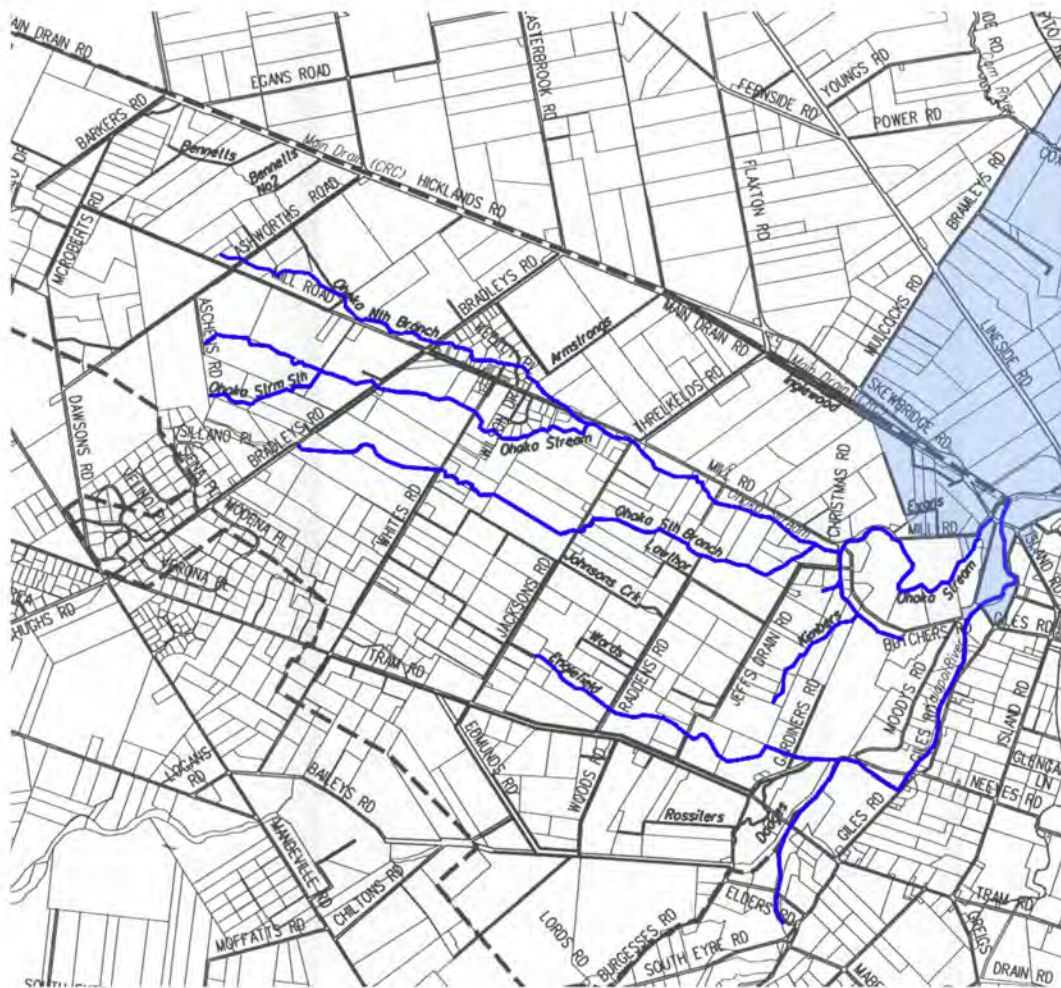
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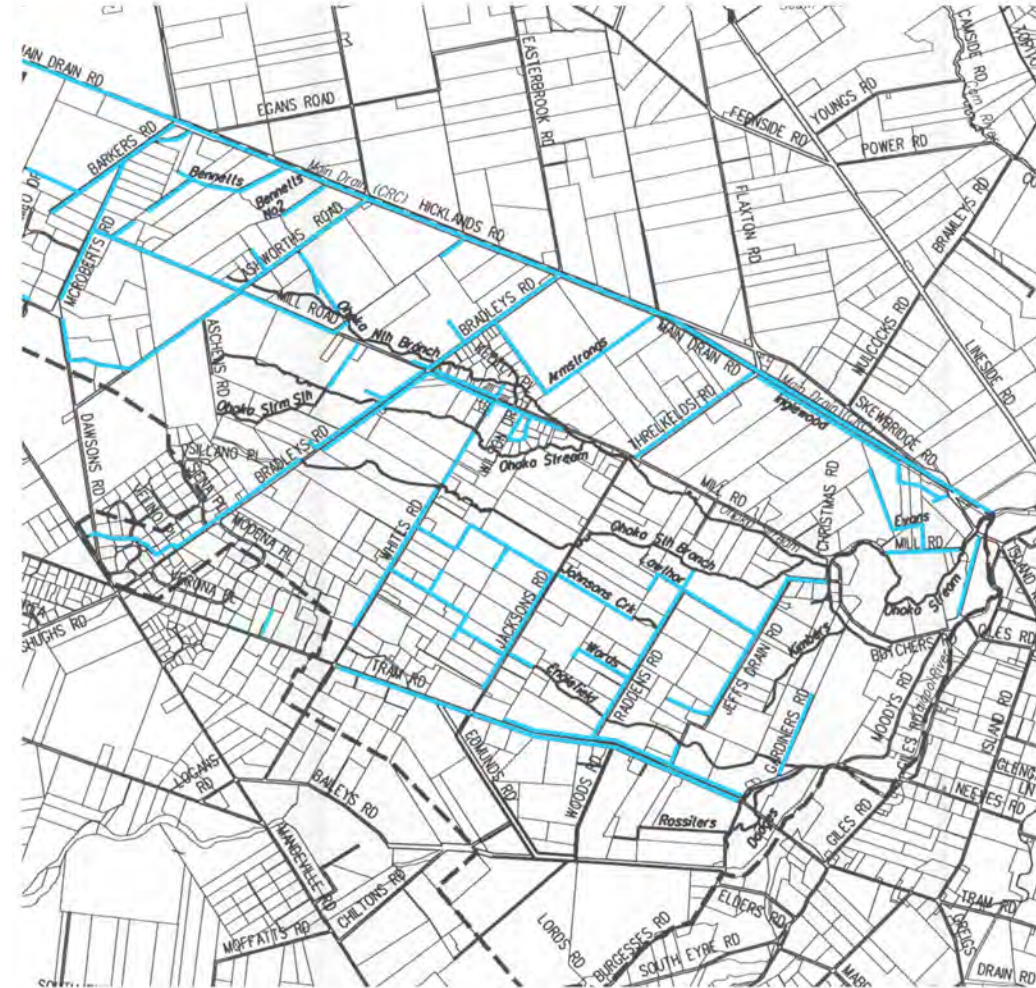


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Localised Flooding Area Natural Watercourses

The natural watercourses within the Ohoka landscape, create an irregular pattern over the landscape. The flowing forms of the streams and creeks create a softer, natural character compared to the linear paddocks and road layout. The natural watercourse character is enhanced when vegetation is growing along the waters edge.



Public Drains

The network of public drains creates a strong pattern over the landscape. They follow the grid layout of the paddocks and road layout.



Ohoka Stream (off Butchers Rd)



Ohoka Stream (off Mill Rd)



Public Drain (Jacksons Rd)



Public Drain (Mill Rd)

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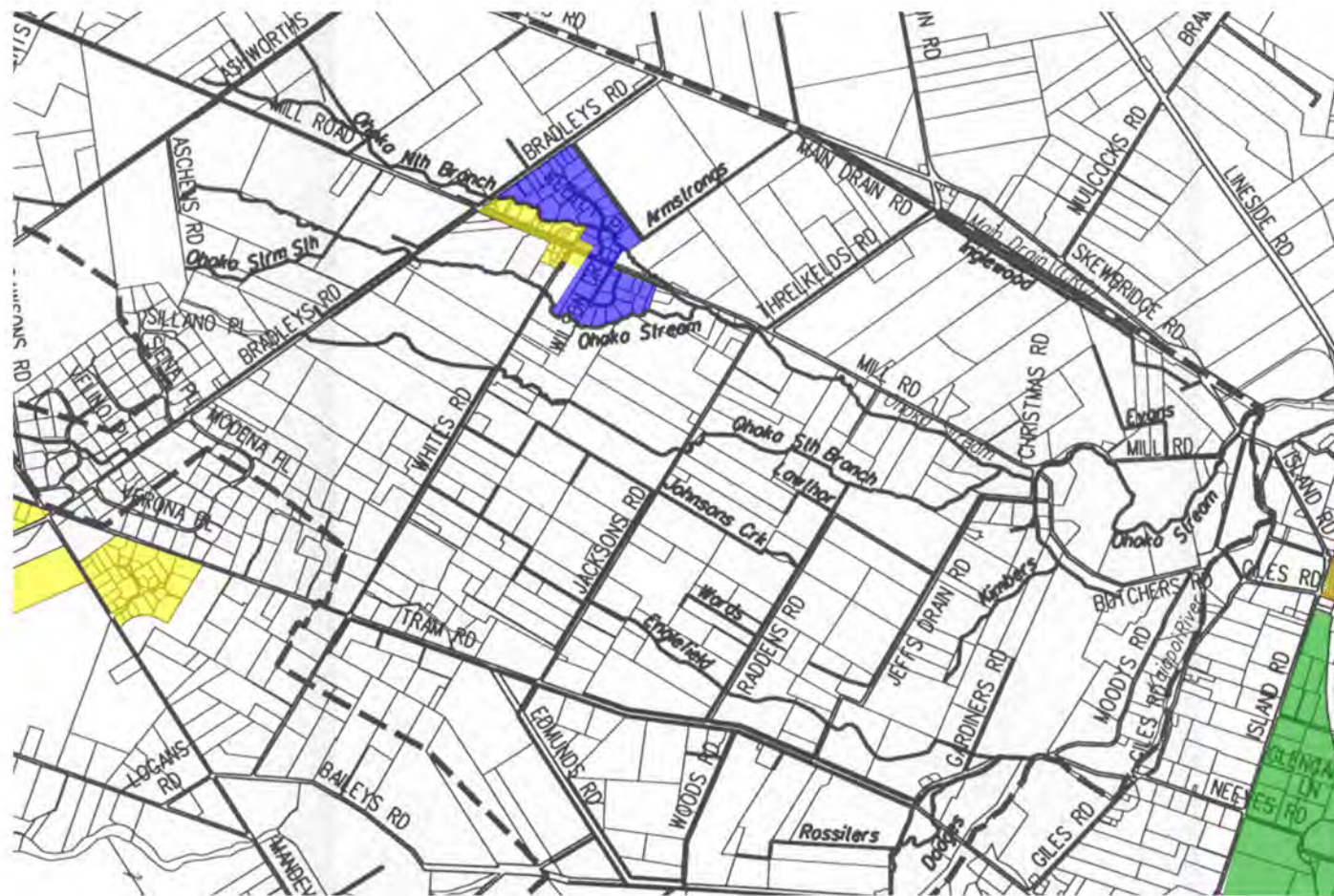
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KEY

- Residential 4B
- Rural & Subdivision Constraint
- Residential 3
- Rural
- Residential 2

Residential 4B

Provides a living environment within the rural area. The nature of these zones has increasingly taken on urban characteristics.

Rural and Subdivision Constraint

Residential 3

Small settlements that have different character than the four major towns in the district

Rural

The rural zone is characterised by the dominant effect of paddocks, trees, agriculture, pastoral or horticultural. The separation between dwelling houses.

Residential 2

Relevant Policies

Waimakariri District Council - District Plan

9.0 Heritage

Issue 9.1

Loss of, and adverse effects on, heritage sites, structures, places and areas from a lack of awareness of what exists, the values of those heritage resources, and from inappropriate subdivision, and development.



Residential 4B
(Wilson's Drive off Mill Road)
This zone has urban characteristics including street lighting, footpaths.



Residential 3
(Ohoka - Mill Road)
This zone has a different character than the surrounding townships. This zone also has urban characteristics.



Rural
(Jeffs Drain Road)
This zone has distinctive rural characteristics such as paddocks, trees, farm buildings and a sense of openness.

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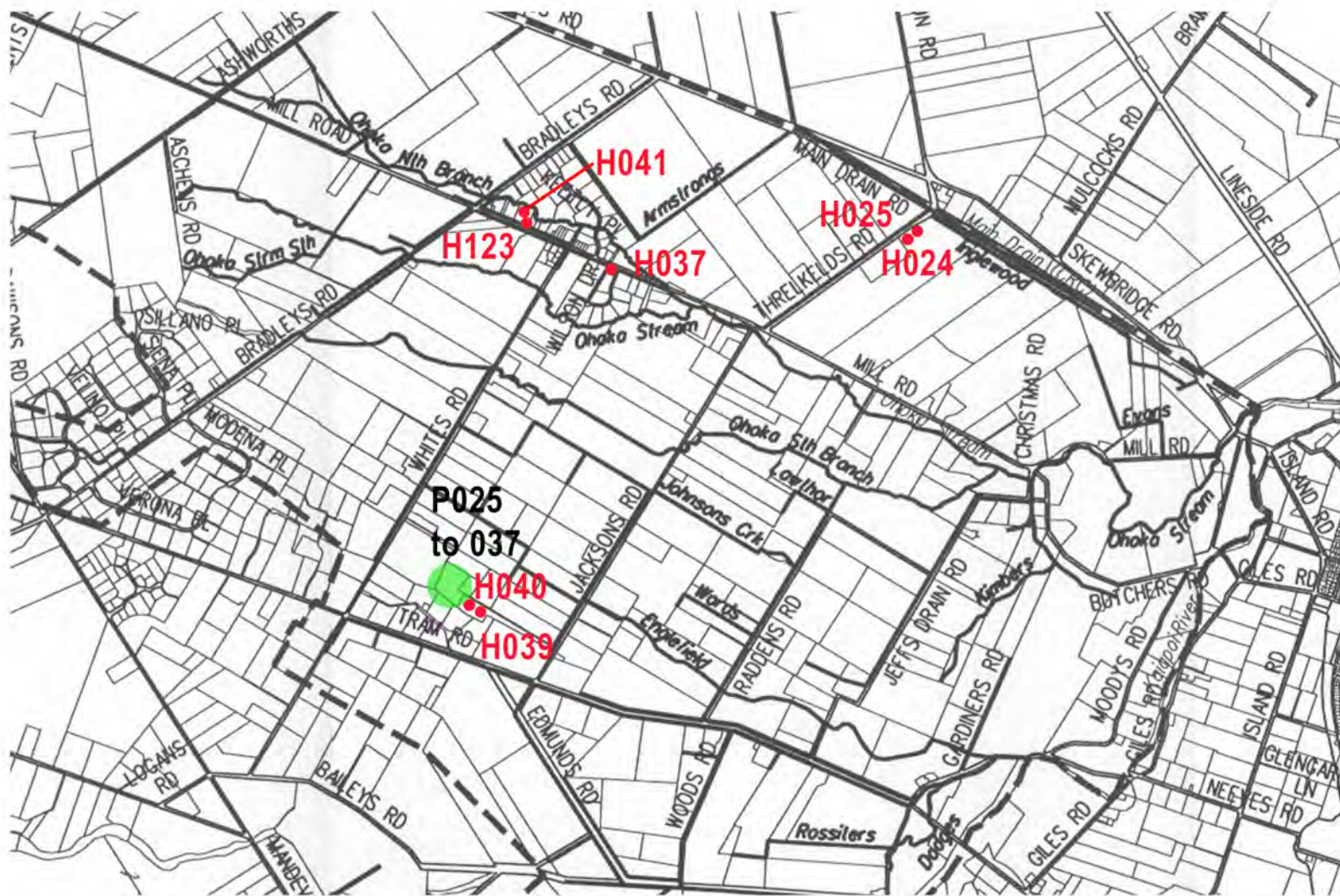
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Threlkelds Road



St Albans Church - Mill Road



Mill Road

HERITAGE FEATURES

H024 Inglewood Homestead - Threlkelds Road

Historical and social significance
Architectural significance
Group and setting significance
Landmark significance

H025 Inglewood Stables - Threlkelds Road

Historical significance
Group and setting significance

H037 Former Eyre County Council Building - Mill Road

Historical and social significance

H039 Ohoka Homestead Stables and Dovecot - Jacksons Road

Historical and social significance
Architectural significance
Group and setting significance

H040 Ohoka Homestead - Jacksons Road

Historical and social significance
Architectural significance
Group and setting significance
Technological and social significance

H0401 Former Te Wai Pounamu School House - Mill Road

Historical and social significance
Cultural and spiritual significance
Architectural significance

H123 St Albans Church - Mill Road

Historical and social significance
Cultural and spiritual significance
Architectural significance

NOTABLE PLANTS

P025 to 037 - Jacksons Road

Mixed exotic species including
Ulmus procera, *Sequoia sempervirens*, *Fraxinus excelsior*

Project Title **OHOKA LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT**

Drawing Title **LANDSCAPE CULTURAL INFLUENCES - HISTORICAL FEATURES**



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ROADS in the landscape

Roads serve the primary function of allowing people to access property and travel from one place to another.

For the public they are of major significance. The road is the only place that they can view and appreciate the landscape. Driving in the countryside is a major recreational activity for local people and tourists.

A road in a rural area traditionally has given the public views across farmland to the broader landscape and distant hills and mountains.

In many instances the views to the wider landscape was interrupted by isolated farm houses often surrounded by trees and shelter hedges set back from the road.

The Canterbury climate with its nor-west winds has required farmers to plant shelterbelts to protect stock and soils. The most popular plants used include pine, macrocarpa and poplars. Because of their scale and intermittent placement in the landscape their presence is accepted as being ‘necessary’ and forms part of the accepted character of the rural environment.

The motorists distant views are hidden for a few moments and then open again at the next paddock.

The densification of the rural environment impacts on this appreciation of the landscape as seen from the road.

Other than the views from the road our perceptions of the road function will be determined not so much by the ‘speed sign’ but more by the road’s ‘design’, its geometry, the carriageway width the nature of the berm and how drainage is handled, presence of trees, the volume of traffic. These elements contribute to landscape character.

Background

The Waimakariri District Council has identified a road hierarchy within their district that identifies roads on the basis of current or predicted traffic volumes. The speed limit for each then dictates the road geometry and roadside characteristics.

Arterial Roads (Tram Road)

This is the busiest road designed to take traffic between main residential areas of Kaiapoi and Oxford. It functions as the prime access route to other major centers inside and outside the district. The speed limit is 100km and the carriageway width is about 8.0m. Road markings down the centre and at the sides help identify its importance.

Collector Roads (Mill Road, Jackson Road, Threlkelds Road, Ashworths Road)

These are the preferred route for locals to access the arterial. They also provide cross linkage between the arterials.

Local Roads (Bradleys Road, Whites Road, Jeffs Drain Road, Giles Road, Neeves Road)

Other roads include those within subdivisions.

The main function of these roads is to provide property access.

Local Unsealed Roads (Moody's Road, Raddens Road)

These are roads with few properties and boarder farms.

A roads status in the system implies certain physical characteristics.

Each new entry to a subdivision requires the developer to widen the carriageway for up to 100m either side of the entry point.

One of the problems of Council’s policy for local residents has been the extent of physical changes associated with subdivisions with respect to their impact on the character of collector and local roads.

More people means demand for better quality services, footpaths, street lighting, kerb and channels.

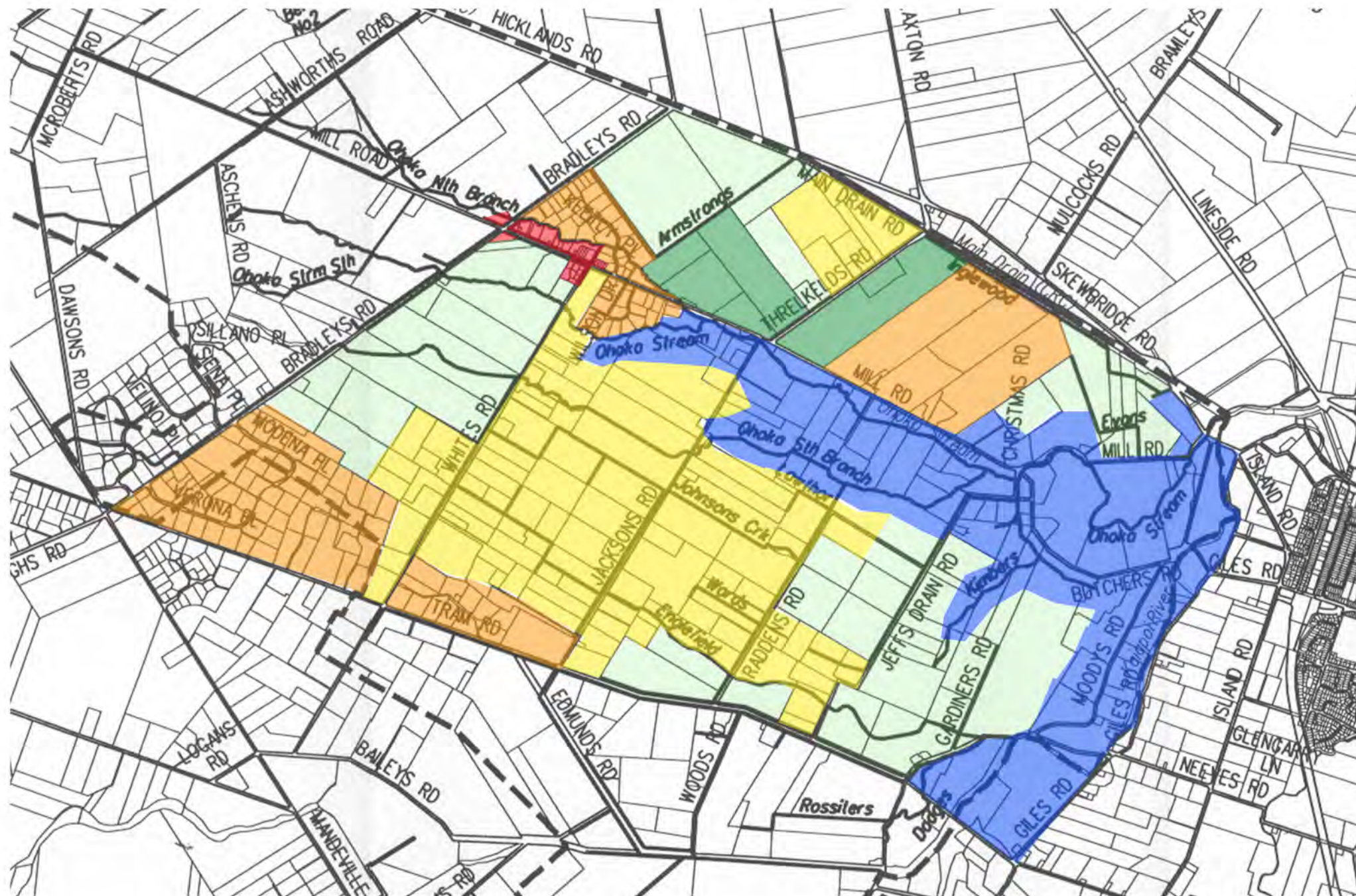
‘Street’ trees are often introduced to improve a visually chaotic landscape character. Planting of trees in the public landscape provides one of the few avenues left for communities to help unify their visually disparate landscapes.

The Mill Road trees were planted more as a beatification exercise than a need to improve the landscape composition. The planting is designed to provide a sense of ownership and pride for the Ohoka community. The formality of the planting however runs contrary to the more informally planted vegetation in the adjacent rural landscape. Their placement now conflicts with overhead wires and traffic safety issues.

Questions

The study raised a few questions for the community to consider:

- The appropriateness of the physical change required as part of subdivision development (widening of roads).
- Should the hierarchy system be revisited.
- Should the speed limits be changed.
- Should trees be planted along roads
- Has the Council adequately explained the implications of this hierarchy to residents.
- What’s the effect on the landscape character of Ohoka



Area A - Ohoka Village



Area B - Hertiage Landscape



Area C - Mill Stream Landscape



Area D - 'Lifestyle' Landscape



Area E - Rural, Agricultural Landscape



Area F - 'Lifestyle' Subdivision Landscape

Project Title **OHOKA LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT**

Drawing Title **LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS**



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LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

AREA A OHOKA VILLAGE

The Ohoka Village core is the most urbanised center in the study area. The village has limited services and facilities. However it provides a significant node for locals to develop a strong sense of community.

The following elements contribute significantly to the quality and character of the Ohoka Village.

- Smaller sections, older dwellings, church, service station, halls, public open space, industrial activity.
- urban style fencing for properties – paling and steel fences
- domestic scale planting in smaller gardens.
- street lights and some signage.

The scale of the township is small and the composition of its landscape elements are generally more complex.



AREA B HERITAGE LANDSCAPE

There are a few culturally significant dwellings within the Ohoka area that have valued Heritage status as identified in the District Plan.

It is clearly evident that a handful of early landowners have made a significant contribution to defining the landscape character of the Ohoka environment as we know it today.

Both the Ohoka Homestead and Inglewood Homestead planted their properties using (Quercus robur - English Oak). The remaining trees are cherished by many local people and are a unique element in the local landscape.

These two properties in particular appear to have been sheep farms and consequently the paddock sizes are large.

In each case a long tree lined driveway and hedges closer to the houses give shelter and privacy where it is most needed.

The District Plan recognizes the historical importance of the landscape setting without actually mentioning the word landscape.

The landscape elements that contribute to this landscape character include:

- large house setback from the road
- large mature trees placed casually in groups between the road and the house.
- The scale of the Homestead space. The settlers gave themselves sufficient space to accommodate their large houses and out-buildings. To separate themselves from the farm physically yet still appreciating the expansiveness of the property beyond.
- A simple range of shrubs were used because there were only a few species available at the time.
- The combination of mature trees and low hedges along the fencelines.
- Simple fences and gates. Working with timber and material easily available at the time.
- Stately without being vulgar.

Essentially it is the placement and relationship between the various landscape elements that give these properties their special landscape quality.



AREA C MILL STREAM LANDSCAPE

The natural drainage pattern is particularly noticeable at the eastern end of Mill Road. Here the Ohoka Stream, Kimbers Stream, Ohoka Stream South, Ohoka North branch, Englefield and Johnsons Creek are all visible as they flow in to the upper reaches of the Kaiapoi River.

At the eastern end the streams and rivers appearance are more visible as they increase in size and are all generally lined with associated vegetation as they approach the Kaiapoi River.

The natural waterways dictate the location and form of the road. Here the roads follow the pattern of the streams. Mill Road (eastern end), Giles Road and Butchers Road are narrow winding roads that flow along side the streams. These roads provide a contrast to the straight roads elsewhere in the area and provide a sense of mystery.

Correspondingly, mature Willow trees follow the streams and contribute significantly to the landscape character of that part of the district. These larger groupings of trees can be seen for some distance.

The key elements in this landscape include:

- The natural waterway
- The meandering narrower roads
- Mature vegetation following the streams
- Mature hedges
- Properties set back from the road with mature deciduous trees between the house and the road.
- Creation of an 'English' style woodland landscape
- A greater level of care for roadside berms

A landscape character that is the product of early settlement and richer soils.

The composition is unified through the presence of larger trees and waterways.



AREA D LIFESTYLE LANDSCAPE

We have coined the term 'Lifestyle Landscape' character to describe the landscape that is derived from the subdivision of the rural land into the 4 ha (10 acre) lots.

These 'Lifestyle Blocks' have been sold and developed in several different ways.

Subdivision Types

Type A .

Development where land is divided into lots that are accessed directly off the 'public' road network.

Type B

Lots that are accessed from 'internally designed' subdivision roads.

Type C

'Gated' communities where subdivision roads are not accessed by the public.

Common Landscape Elements

- Large single dwelling (single or double storey)
- Ancillary Buildings (garages, Farm sheds, glass houses)
- Amenity planting around the house (large scale trees, extensive lawns)
- Entry gateways with long Driveways
- Paddock spaces for grazing sheep, horses defined by various types of fencing
- Landscape features such as ponds
- Hedges and fences to define their space and provide privacy.



AREA E RURAL /AGRICULTURAL LANDSCAPE

The landscape patterns and character in Ohoka are determined by landscape elements such as waterways, paddocks and vegetation e.g. the size of the paddock, the boundaries such as hedgerows or clusters of trees, deciduous or evergreen.

The rural landscape has been influenced by the early settlers and their imported plant species. There is evidence of historical plantings such as deciduous trees, and hedges. This distinctive planting creates a different character to the typical rural landscape which consists of evergreen plantings.

In more recent times, the vegetation in rural areas has resulted in the introduction of evergreen plants such as Eucalypts, Pines, Macrocarpa. These trees with their dark evergreen foliage have become prominent landscape elements in the rural landscape.

The rural – agricultural landscape in the Ohoka study area is distinctive

Agricultural Landscape

Sheep Farms

- These generally lack irrigation and have larger paddocks.
- The appearance of these landscapes changes seasonally depending upon summer dryness or winter greenness.
- Farm buildings and stockyards
- Hedgerows cut lower
- Tidy farms

These properties are generally found to the west of Bradleys Road.

Dairy Farming

- Smaller paddock sizes
- Irrigation
- Greener grass
- Less tree planting down the fence lines
- Planting is often limited to the houses site.
- The Milking sheds sit apart from the main dwelling and have no significant vegetation around them.

These landscapes flank the Ohoka township but are gradually being developed to become ‘lifestyle landscapes’.

The rural landscapes are dynamic places. Livestock move around constantly, paddocks are ploughed, mown and grazed.

They are compositionally simple. They are expansive landscapes allowing people to appreciate distant views.



AREA F LIFESTYLE SUBDIVISION LANDSCAPE

More recent Lifestyle subdivisions have been ‘designed’ to attract homeowners to a specific style of landscape.

Elements present in these areas include:

Common Landscape Elements

- Large single dwelling (single or double storey)
- Ancillary Buildings (garages, Farm sheds, glass houses)
- Amenity planting around the house (large scale trees, extensive lawns)
- Entry gateways with long Driveways
- Paddock spaces for grazing sheep, horses defined by various types of fencing
- Landscape features such as ponds
- Horticultural tree crops (Olives, Oaks for Truffles, Chestnuts, Walnuts)
- Hedges and fences to define their space and provide privacy.
- Large gardens

The distinguishing factor of these types of subdivisions from the others is that the public landscape (the roadscape) is developed to a much higher standard.

It is the quality of the treatment used in these areas that introduces elements that are either ‘rural’ in character or ‘urban’ in character.

There is a greater level of uniformity between the individual parcels of land in these types as opposed to those where bare land parcels are sold as individual lots.

Unfortunately even these ‘designed’ landscapes are highly variable in character.



OHOKA COMMUNITY SURVEY REPORT

OHOKA COMMUNITY SURVEY REPORT

The results of the Ohoka Community survey conducted by the Waimakariri District Council in March and April 2004 identified how Ohoka residents perceive and value their area.

The key findings of the report, help to determine what the Ohoka residents feel is most important to them in their local environment. These key words and statements contribute to understanding the cultural meaning of the landscape and help to determine its character.

For instance, a number of responses suggest that *rural character is one of the main reasons why they chose to live in Ohoka*. The Residents identified 'rural' character as lifestyle, trees, views, spaciousness and quietness. This suggests that these attributes are important to the residents, and contribute largely to the landscape character and value.

The report identified resident concerns over the management of their roads and roadsides. This relates strongly to our findings of the landscape assessment report.

The respondents also have concerns of the increasing subdivision and development in the Ohoka area. A high percentage of respondents do not want further subdivision and subdivision below 4 hectares.

In summary, the main issues that Ohoka residents want addressed is the speed and flow of traffic in the area, and the introduction of controls on growth to ensure that the area retains its present character.

GENERAL COMMENTS

The Existing Rural Landscape

The landscape character that residents perceive to be of the greatest value is their appreciation of the rural lifestyle, as derived from a sense of spaciousness. This is an appreciation of the agricultural activity, the middle and distant views that they experience while driving home along the 'rural' roads.

The Pace of Change

Our assessment shows that the rate of change in the visual composition for the Ohoka landscape has been dramatic over a relatively short timeframe.

The rural landscapes were traditionally held in family ownership for decades with little change to the visual quality of the landscape.

Changes to the Waimakariri District Plan in the 1990's however opened the door for large scale subdivision of the Ohoka area. Subdivision into parcels of 4 ha freehold lots has created a new landscape phenomenon that we have termed 'Lifestyle Landscape'.

The landscape character created by the combination of lots, land use activity, built structures and vegetation has given rise to a much more chaotic and visually disorganized landscape.

All the land within the study area is capable of being subdivided and it will only be a matter of time before the entire area is given over to the 'Lifestyle Landscape'.

'Lifestyle Landscape'

It is apparent that the 'Lifestyle Landscape' as a landscape character type is, in effect, diminishing the rural qualities historically present in the Ohoka area.

It is conceivable that within a relatively short timeframe the more 'distant' landscape views that residents appreciate from their properties or see from the Ohoka roads will be lost to views that are 'near'.

This continued development may eventually lead to a visual character that is less 'rural' toward one that has landscape elements that are more 'urban' in character.

Successful subdivision requires some cohesion of the landscape elements.

One of the more visually obvious physical elements in the landscape that highlights the lifestyle changes taking place, is the arrangement of trees. Historically, tree planting within Ohoka has been based on the use of a small range of species, whereas the establishment of the 'Lifestyle Landscape' has resulted in the use a wider range of species. This increased range of species adds to the complexity of the views experienced by individuals in the landscape.

The Future

It seems clear from the community survey that residents value the quality of their visual environment.

Unfortunately some of the existing landscape elements that they enjoy will gradually disappear from their daily experience. These include the large open paddocks, the livestock grazing over the fence, the distant views.

If some measures are not put in place soon then the landscape character will become disjointed and blotchy. The composition will be neither 'rural' nor 'urban'. The 'Lifestyle Landscape' will dominate.

The 'rural' landscape in the past relied on the farmer to create the landscape as part of their farming practices. Because adjacent farms had similar practices the uniformity of the landscape has endured.

However the landscape character of the 'Lifestyle Landscapes' is derived from smaller lots with a diverse range of people each impacting in isolation from the next. What one person does could be entirely different to their neighbour. The level of enclosure –'hiding behind the fence syndrome' increases with tall hedges etc.

The 'rural' landscape character is lost.

It is not too late however for the community to confirm its aspirations for the area, in order to protect and enhance its cherished landscape values.

One simple solution for example would be to look at the use of tree planting in subdivisions. Tree planting using similar species (particularly poplars and other deciduous trees) in a subdivision and on other adjacent subdivisions can provide a sense of visual cohesion by linking the subdivision to the wider rural landscape.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The Ohoka landscape is a landscape in transition.

The 'rural' qualities of the existing landscape that residents currently experience from their properties and from the roads may diminish over time.

The loss of 'rural' qualities is in part derived from the spatial arrangement and the variety of landscape treatments (planting and hard surfaces) occurring in both subdivisions and within individual properties.

In the future public landscapes (roads, open spaces and waterways) will play an increasingly important role in unifying the landscape. Greater consideration towards the design and management of these public landscapes will help to thread together the increasingly disparate visual landscapes.

It is interesting that the *Historical Section* of the District Plan refers to the significance of: *D Group and Setting*: "The heritage resource has a unity in terms of scale, space, structure, form, materials, texture and colour in relationship to its setting or surrounding buildings."

The Council's landscape provisions may need to be reviewed to accommodate the communities desire to retain or enhance its sense of 'ruralness'.

Resident Aspirations

We suspect that there is a naive contradiction between the reasons why people chose to live in Ohoka and why they left the City as reflected in how they actually 'landscape' their rural properties.

People in the city seek privacy by fencing around their boundaries.

In a rural environment people need to be encouraged to engage with the larger scale environment and not shut it out by planting of shelterbelts and hedges around their boundaries.

The physical form of the Ohoka 'Lifestyle Landscape' areas has resulted in part from private spaces being 'fenced-in' on a grand scale.

Houses do need to be screened to retain a sense of privacy, but this 'screening' can take place closer to the house and in a way that is more conducive to a rural landscape setting.

We are aware from talking with locals, that the turn-over of properties within the 'Lifestyle Landscape' areas is reasonably high – perhaps a two or three year turnaround. It would be useful to find out more about why this happens with respect to issues like, do people have an unrealistic expectation of the amount of work and costs associated with running a small holding and having to create a larger garden. This then poses questions about the appropriateness of the size of the lots created by planning legislation. For example; if the 4 hectare lots are too small to be economic, in an agricultural sense, conversely are they too big to be a garden for most people

It is not within the scope of this visual assessment to address these issues, but our observations clearly showed considerable variation in the management styles being practiced between individual property owners. This in turn impacts on the cohesive character of the landscape as a whole.

Subdivisions of the Future - Questions

The community will need to consider:

- Did the 4 ha lot idea achieve the lifestyle that residents had originally envisaged?
- Does Council need to look at other subdivision models that retain more productive land?

Subdivision design controls

It was clear during our assessment that variations in the design elements and layouts of various subdivisions added to the fragmentation of the landscape character.

In order to help preserve the quality and 'ruralness' of the Ohoka landscape, Council may need to consider exercising greater design control over:

- Roadway and drainage design
- Tree planting – limited range of species
- Road frontage treatment
- Property setbacks
- Fencing/entry design
- Retain existing trees
- Look to remaining natural drainage patterns for design clues(i.e. Do not cut across the natural drainage patterns)
- Try to link to the larger scale landscape

Ideas for Consideration

- Establish some design principles and rules for consent applications.
- Establish consent requirements for road frontage treatment.
- Ensure that planting along the district road frontage is set back say 50m into the property or that it at least needs to be designed to meet some strict principles.

- Require fencing/hedging designs along the road frontage to be part of the subdivision consent.
- Consider measures to prevent steep sided drainage channels 1:6 max slope and avoid sprayed drainage ditches
- Do not plant Macrocarpa & Pine Hedges closer than 50m to the road or trim hedges no higher than 1m where they are closer than 50m to the road boundary.
- Encourage private landscapes to engage with the 'Roadscape' in order to contribute to the sense of 'ruralness'.

Public Planting

The Land Transport Safety Association (LTSA) guidelines for tree planting along rural roads are unfortunately not conducive to the creation of tree lined avenues in narrow berm areas. Although the community certainly wants to keep the Mill Road trees, in other roads in the study area the community may wish to look at alternative arrangements for planting trees. Creative, publicly driven incentives schemes for tree planting perhaps in private properties are a cheap way of achieving aesthetic improvement and visual cohesion in the rural landscape.

Although tree lined avenue planting is more of an urban solution than a rural one (as a consequence of spatial limitations), in the rural environment this kind of planting can be dynamic and inspiring. However we would recommend very limited use of this planting style in the Ohoka landscape.

Public/Private interface.

There will need to be a greater level of cooperation between Council and property owners to acknowledge that it would be beneficial to create a 'designed' landscape. Opportunities exist to:

- Use the 'Roadscape' to integrate the disparate parts. The interface between the road and the property boundary is going to be an important zone of influence to achieve physical and visual cohesiveness in the landscape.
- Build on the notion of creating something special that relates to its historic and natural landscape patterns.
- Discourage 'introverted' /closed-in urban type landscape treatments.
- Encourage the planting of a limited range the large growing tree species to help improve the uniformity (visual cohesiveness) across the landscape to reinforce the linkages to the existing more established landscape.
- Develop a planting strategy for the district.
- Obtain agreements with Nurseries to offer locals discounts for certain types of trees.

Introduce Design Controls for Residents

Design controls are usually unwelcome by a community who value their independence.

The community may however find it more palatable to accept some design guidelines (best practice ideas) that would assist in allowing the future Ohoka landscape character to develop with a higher degree of uniformity (visual cohesiveness).

The objective would be to retain some assemblance of 'ruralness' – a special quality that distinguishes Ohoka from some other part of the district.

Architecture

It is virtually impossible and undesirable to impose design controls on buildings.

It is also very difficult to impose controls on the use of building materials such as those for claddings and roofing.

Although the increasingly visually chaotic Ohoka environment would benefit from such controls, the problem is more prevalent in the newer subdivisions. This is because visually unrelated buildings can be seen side by side. Over time tree and shrub plantings screen each building and help to unify the disparate elements.

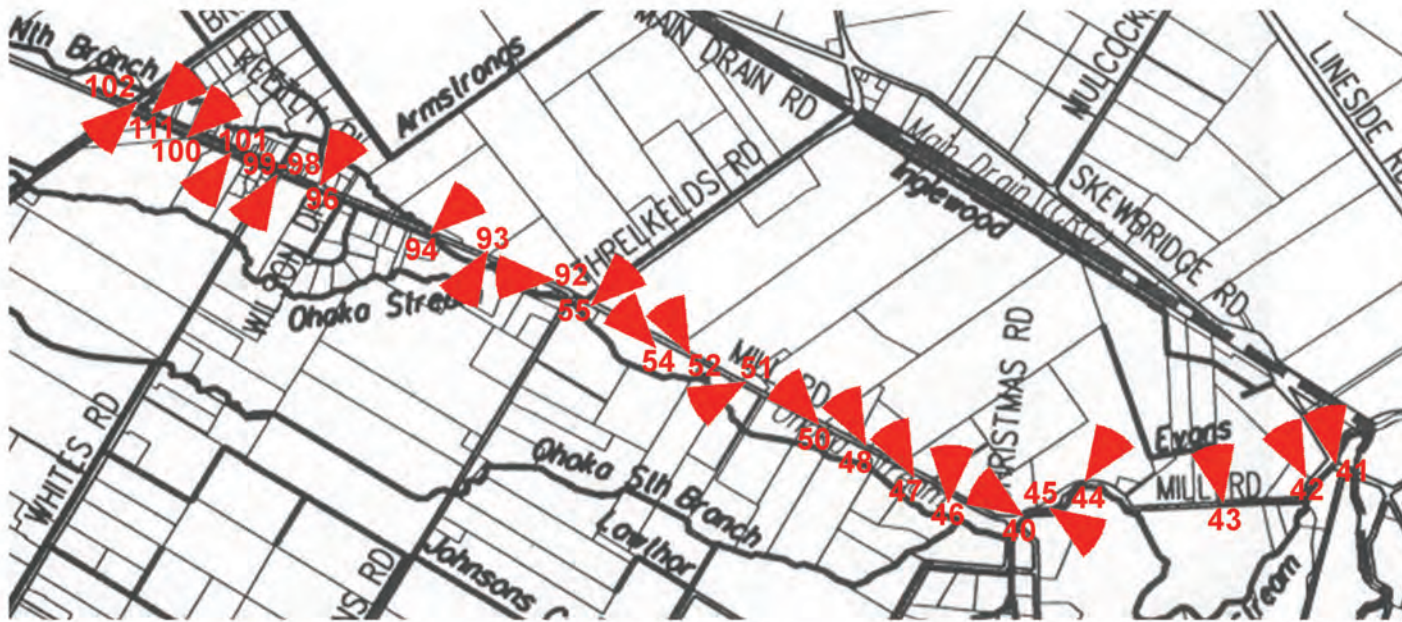
RECOMMENDATIONS

- That Council now draws together the outcomes of the two independent studies; the Ohoka Community Survey and the Ohoka Landscape Assessment in order to use the material gathered to provide the basis of the 'Ohoka Community Plan'.
- That Council considers the implications of future subdivision as outlined in the Landscape Assessment Report and its impact on the quality of the existing landscape and prepare landscape guidelines for developers and residents.
- That Council prepare an Open Space Strategy that aims to integrate the existing physical landscape features (rivers, drains) with open space requirements for subdivisions to create a network of linked off-road walkways and cycle ways that benefit the community.

APPENDIX 1

Roads

	Page
Main Drain Road Sheet One	01
Jefferies Drain Road and Christmas Road	04
Mill Road	06
Thelkelds Road	13
Jacksons Road	14
Raddens Road	16
Whites Road	17
Giles Road	18
Tram Road	20
Bradleys Road	22
Gardiners Road	24
Moodys Road and Butchers Road	25



View 101



View 101



View 102



View 102



View 111



View 101



View 100



View 102



View 102



View 111



View 101



View 100

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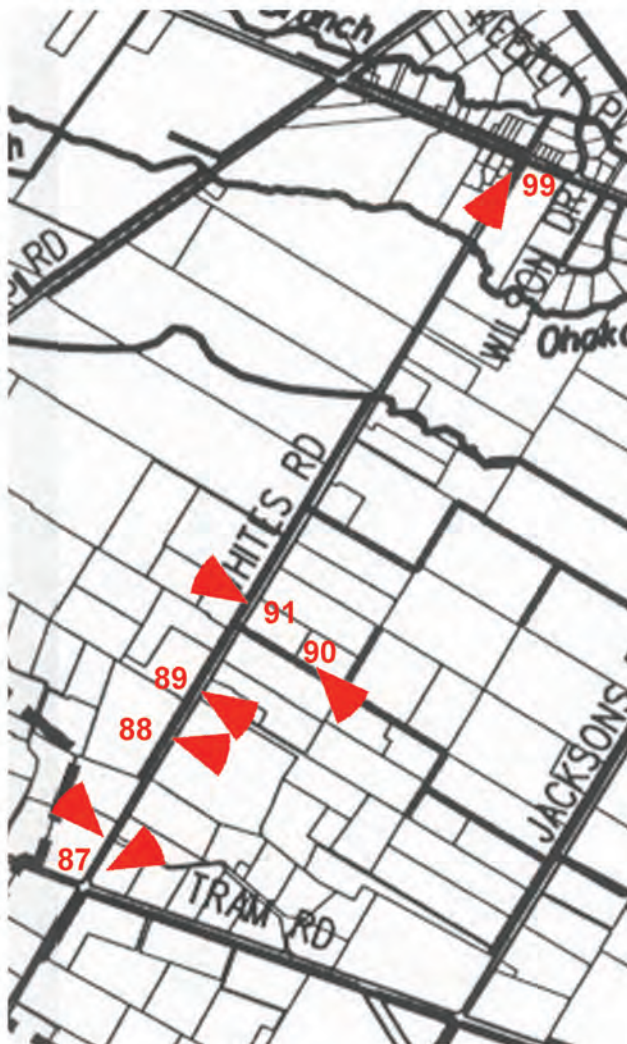
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Project N° E0402
Page N° 06
Revision N° 00
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Date Nov 2004
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View 87



View 87



View 87



View 88



View 88



View 89



View 89



View 90



View 90



View 91



View 91

Project Title OHOKA LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

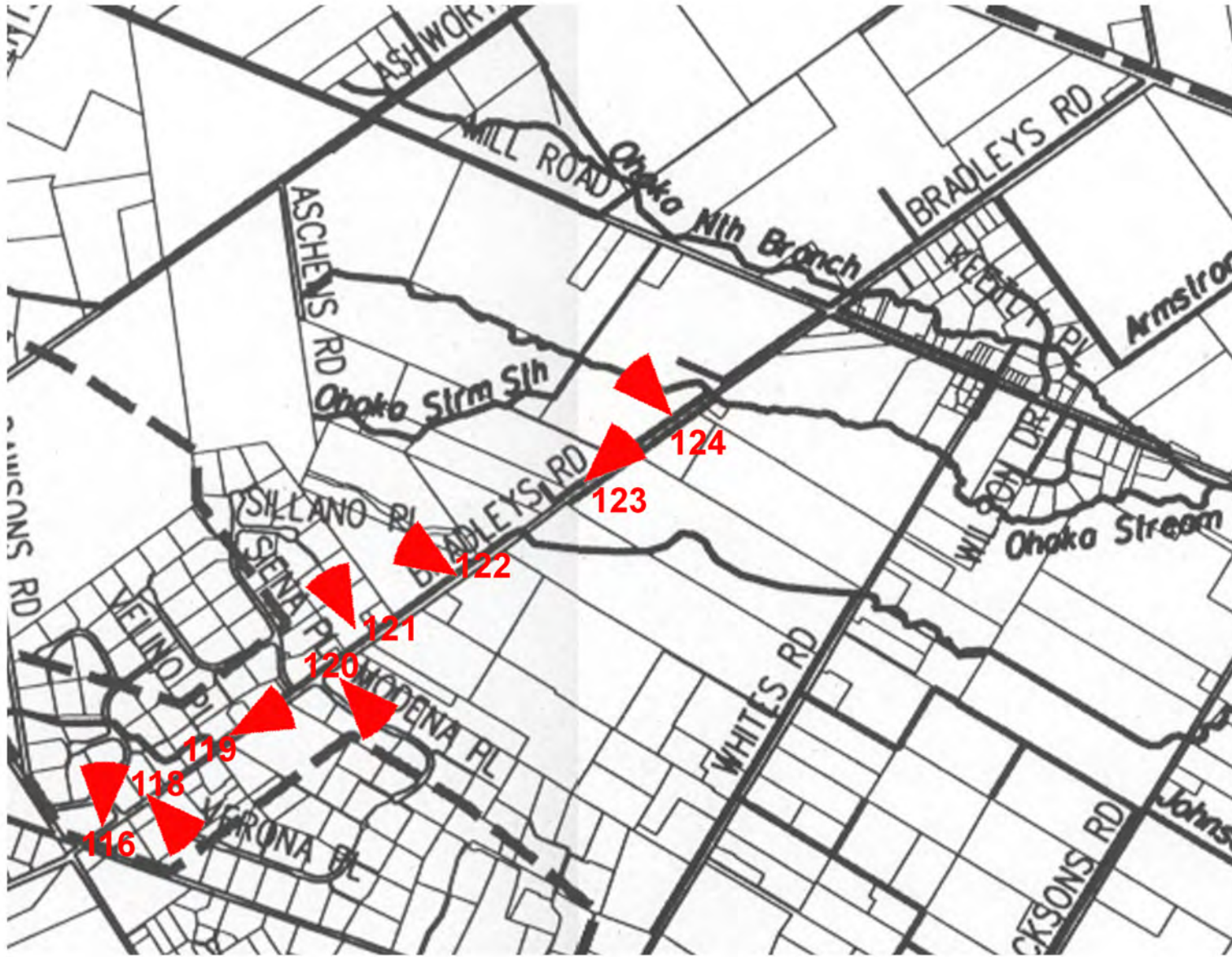
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Revision N° 00
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View 118



View 122



View 119



View 123



View 119



View 124



View 116



View 121



View 122

Project Title **OHOKA LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT**

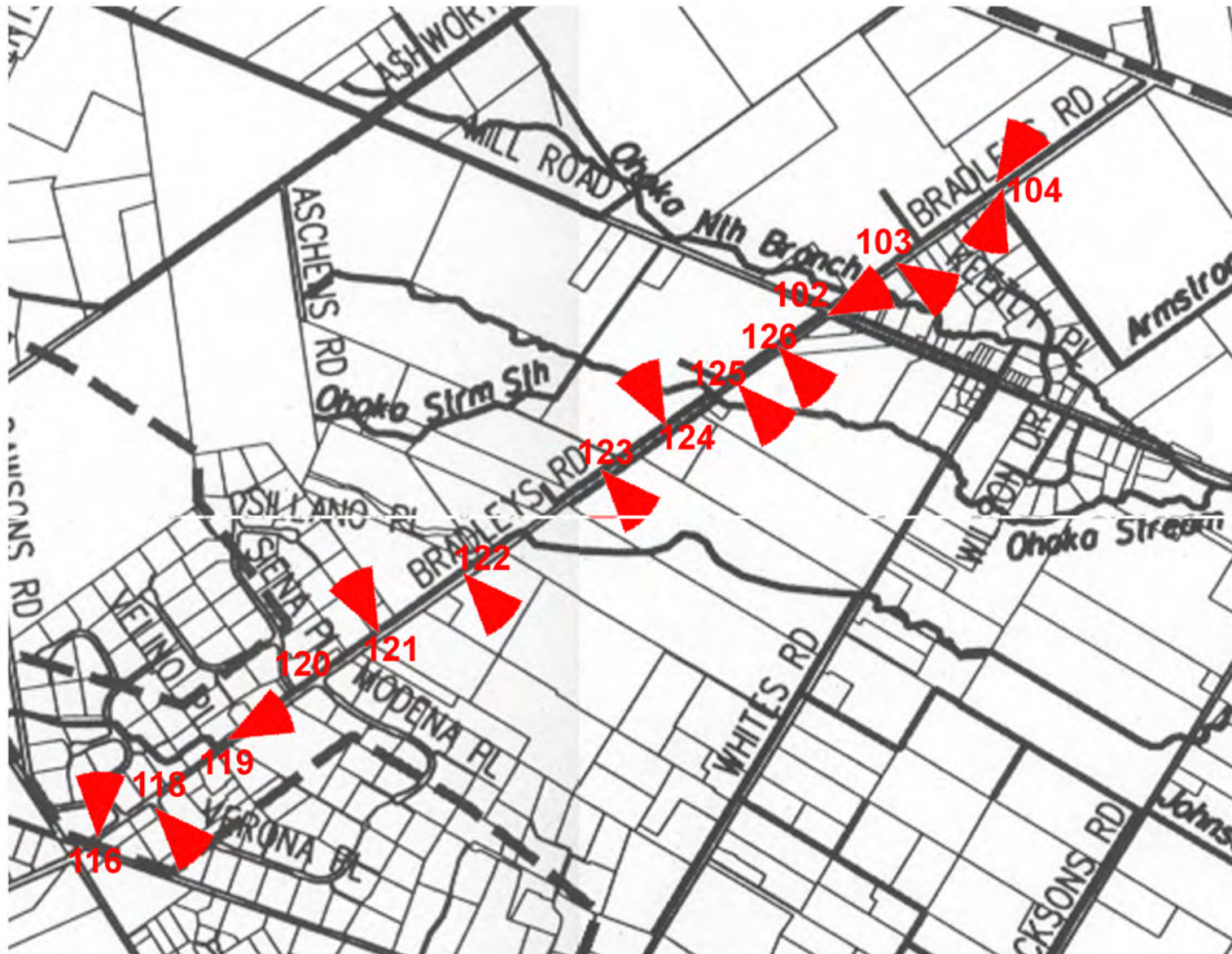
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Page N° 22
Revision N° 00
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Date Nov 2004
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View 102



View 102



View 102



View 103



View 102



View 104



View 126



View 125



View 102



View 104

Project Title **OHOKA LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT**

Drawing Title **BRADLEYS ROAD - APPENDIX - SHEET TWO**



Project N°
Page N°
Revision N°
Sheet Size
Date
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APPENDIX 2

Subdivisions

Mill Brook Lane

Millcroft Lane

Verona Place and Modena Place

Wilson Drive and Keetly Place

Ohoka Downs Subdivision

Page

26

27

28

29

30



View 118



View 118



View 118



View 120



View 118



View 120



View 118



View 118



View 118



View 120

Project Title **OHOKA LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT**
 Drawing Title **VERONA PLACE & MODENA PLACE SUBDIVISION (OFF BRADLEYS ROAD) - APPENDIX**



Project N° **E0402**
 Page N° **28**
 Revision N° **00**
 Sheet Size **A3**
 Date **Nov 2004**
 Scale **N/A**



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View 97



View 97



View 97



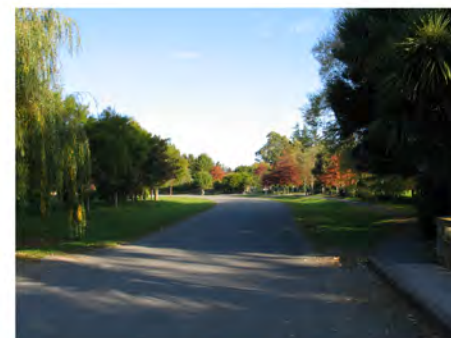
View 95



View 97



View 97



View 97



View 95

Project Title **OHOKA LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT**

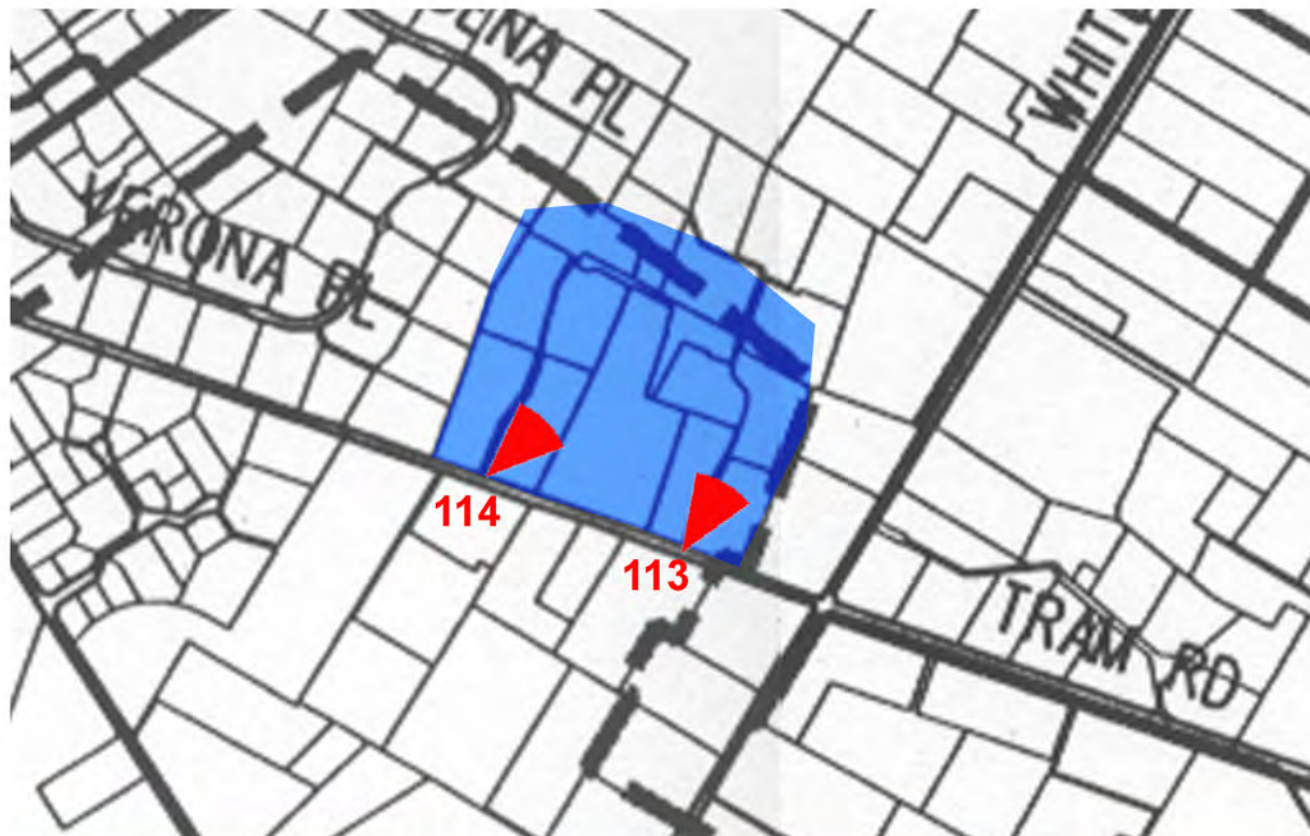
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Project N° E0402
Page N° 29
Revision N° 00
Sheet Size A3
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View 113



View 113



View 113



View 113



View 113



View 113



View 113



View 113



View 114



View 113



View 113



View 113



View 113



View 114

Project Title **OHOKA LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT**
 Drawing Title **OHOKA DOWNS SUBDIVISIONS - APPENDIX**



Project N° **E0402**
 Page N° **30**
 Revision N° **00**
 Sheet Size **A3**
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