

B.1 ONEHUNGA RAILWAY STATION AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

D160-004

John Smith, General Manager Transport and Urban Development, Martin White, Group Manager Urban Development and Brenna Waghorn, Project Leader - Urban Development: 4 August 2009

The report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of section 76 and 77 of the Local Government Act 2002, having regard to section 79.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to advise committee of work related to the preparation of a development framework for 109-111 Onehunga Mall, and other work streams.

Onehunga is a strategically important centre with significant employment capacity, a sizable existing population, well developed social infrastructure, good connectivity and a sub-regional market catchment. Consistent with the Regional Growth Strategy and Regional Policy Statement, Onehunga has been identified as a principal centre for housing and employment intensification.

In 2008 the Auckland Regional Council (ARC) purchased 109-111 Onehunga Mall for urban development purposes. The site, known locally as the ITM site, extends to 8,066 square metres and is located east of Onehunga Mall, bounded by Princes Street to the north and Neilson Street to the south (attachment 1). The Onehunga branch line (OBL) forms the eastern boundary of the site.

The Auckland Regional Transport Authority (ARTA) and ONTRACK are progressing the reopening of the Onehunga branch line and it is proposed that the Onehunga station will be located on the southern half of the ITM site. The line should be opened by mid 2010.

A draft development framework has been prepared which will outline how the site will be developed. The northern end could be redeveloped as a high quality, intensive form of development, which would support the commercial viability of the southern end of Onehunga Mall. Increased footfall and activity generated by the station will increase the attractiveness and commercial viability of that part of Onehunga.

The preferred option for the conceptual design and layout for the ITM site presents the ARC with an opportunity to integrate land use planning with public transport investment. In this regard, the ARC has an opportunity to influence a project which is consistent with its regional and planning policies of improving the quality of the built environment.

Commercial property advice suggests that in the medium term, the most appropriate uses would comprise a mix of retail and residential. While current developer interest is weak, general economic conditions are expected to improve and other improvements in the vicinity such as the enhancement of the Onehunga foreshore mean that interest in the township may increase. At present, the scope to let the site for a viable development on commercial terms is relatively limited. The council is therefore advised to take a long term perspective.

Investigations into the feasibility of relocating the former Onehunga railway station from Alfred Street to the ITM site should be pursued. Heritage advisors recommend

that there is merit in relocating the building back to the vicinity of its original location. If it is relocated, the council will need to consider carefully how it relates to the new development and also the needs of the Railway Enthusiasts Society.

The committee is asked to note progress in a number of areas and to approve the preferred development option as the basis for consultation with key stakeholders.

This report will be supported by two presentations. One will outline progress on the reinstatement of the Onehunga branch line, and proposed station locations, and the second will outline the draft development framework and the preferred development option for the site.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- a) That the report be received.
- b) That the committee note that the Auckland Regional Transport Authority and ONTRACK are planning to open the Onehunga branch line by mid 2010, and provide a temporary park and ride facility on the northern portion of 109-111 Onehunga Mall.
- c) That the committee agrees to the Auckland Regional Transport Authority's request to locate the Onehunga station on the southern section of 109-111 Onehunga Mall, subject to appropriate terms, which will be reported back to the committee. The committee notes that the proposed platform location and configuration will reduce the amount of land which may be developed for commercial purposes.
- d) That the committee notes that the Auckland Regional Transport Authority is in discussions with Auckland City Council regarding the railway designation on 109-111 Onehunga Mall.
- e) That the draft development framework and the preferred option, subject to comments made by the committee, be approved for the purposes of obtaining the views of the local community.
- f) That officers report back to the committee with the views of the local community in November.
- g) That the committee note that the Auckland Regional Transport Authority and ONTRACK will develop a strategy to engage with the local community, and will form a local steering group to facilitate the process.
- h) That officers be requested to liaise with the Railway Enthusiasts Society Inc regarding the feasibility of relocating the former Onehunga railway station from 38 Alfred Street to 109-111 Onehunga Mall, and report on progress.
- i) That the committee notes that 109-111 Onehunga Mall could be developed in the medium term for a mix of uses including retail and residential.
- j) That committee notes that the site is leased to ONTRACK for a term of six months from August 2009, thereafter renewable on a monthly basis by agreement. The site will be used to store materials and equipment in relation to the reinstatement of the Onehunga branch line.

B.1.1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to advise committee of work related to the preparation of a draft development framework for 109-111 Onehunga Mall and other workstreams.

ARTA and ONTRACK are progressing the reopening of the Onehunga branch line and it is proposed that the Onehunga station will be located on the ITM site. The line should be opened by mid 2010.

B.1.2 BACKGROUND

In 2008 the ARC purchased 109-111 Onehunga Mall for urban development purposes. The site, known locally as the ITM site, extends to 8,066 square metres and is located east of Onehunga Mall, bounded by Princes Street to the north and Neilson Street to the south (attachment 1). The Onehunga branch line forms the eastern boundary of the site.

The site is generally level and has two commercial buildings with areas of open storage. Up until December 2008, the site had been occupied by a scaffold company on a short term lease. The site is now leased to ONTRACK, who will use it to store materials and equipment for the reinstatement of the Onehunga branch line.

This report provides an update on progress towards:

- the reinstatement of the Onehunga branch line and three stations as part of DART project,
- opportunities for the redevelopment of the ITM site in terms of facilitating a station for Onehunga and achieving a high quality, sustainable urban development, and
- developing guiding principles (for example, urban design criteria and sustainability principles) which should guide the policy context for the redevelopment of the site.

The draft development framework is underpinned by a number of supporting studies, including:

- station platform alignment options, ARTA and ONTRACK,
- draft Onehunga Development Framework, August 2009, Boffa Miskell,
- market assessment advising on proposed future uses for the ITM site, August 2009, DTZ, and
- Onehunga Railway Station: heritage assessment investigating the feasibility of relocating the former Onehunga Railway station from Alfred Street to the ITM site, August 2009, Salmond Reed Architects.

A working group has been established to manage the Onehunga project which comprises of representatives from ARTA, ONTRACK and the ARC. Having purchased the site to facilitate urban development, the ARC has a number of roles in this project. They include:

Landowner/developer

The ARC has bought the ITM site to facilitate urban development in conjunction with the development of a rail station for Onehunga. When considering how best to develop the site to meet a range of outcomes, the ARC, as landowner should consider commercial viability and return on investment. This commercial driver should be assessed and balanced against the council's desire to deliver a high quality development and achieve a range of environmental, economic and social outcomes.

It is proposed that the station be located on the southern portion of the site, which leaves approximately 4,000m² for redevelopment of the northern end. In the short term it is proposed that this half will be used on a temporary basis, as a park and ride facility. However, the long term use of this half of the site needs to be considered in terms of how the site can best be developed to enhance the southern end of Onehunga Mall, create a high quality urban development and an attractive gateway/point of arrival to Onehunga for rail passengers.

Regional planning authority

The ARC is a signatory to the NZ Urban Design Protocol and is committed through its varying roles, to champion and demonstrate high quality urban design. The site provides an opportunity for an intensive form of development which supports the role of Onehunga and the new station. It is an opportunity to demonstrate the highest possible standards in terms of good "place making" principles, urban design, transit orientated development, sustainability and commercial viability.

Focusing high quality, mixed use, intensive development in town centres and aligned with passenger transport facilities, is a key concept of the Regional Growth Strategy and an objective of the Regional Policy Statement.

Regulator

The ARC has statutory duties under the Resource Management Act. These duties must not be compromised when the ARC is a landowner, and or developer.

B.1.3 MAIN REPORT

This section of the report considers a range of issues and details progress on key aspects of the project including, strategic context, regional development objectives and opportunities, station planning and platform configuration, site development options, funding, the relocation of the heritage station, market feasibility and short term use. Conclusions are presented which draw on these issues and outline the next steps.

Funding confirmation for the rail station

The ARC has been advised by ARTA that local share of 40 per cent from ARC together with 60 per cent funding subsidy from NZTA has been confirmed for ARTA's cost apportionment of the new Onehunga rail station, for the 2009/10 financial year.

Cost apportionment for the development of the new station on the ITM site will be in accordance with the protocols set down for DART projects. The funding arrangements for the work on the ITM site has been agreed with ARTA and in summary, ONTRACK will provide the track and the platforms while ARTA will obtain the consents, formation and above track costs.

The design of the track into the ITM site and the provision for a new station will not preclude the ability of ONTRACK to continue the rail line through to Onehunga port at some future time. Whilst the rail corridor will be formed as far as the port, the rail tracks will only be laid when POAL confirm that it will use rail to convey freight to and from the port. No funds are committed to building the track to the port at present. It is understood that negotiations between POAL and ONTRACK are continuing.

Strategic planning and policy context

Regional policy context

The Auckland Regional Growth Strategy and Regional Policy Statement seek to encourage more intensive mixed use development in town centres and aligned with high quality passenger transport. Onehunga's strength and potential as a mixed-use town centre has led the ARC and Auckland City Council to identify it as a major centre within the region for housing and employment intensification. Onehunga's diverse and interesting character has already led to demographic change and rising residential values, and it is reasonable to foresee a steady rise in values in the long-term. It will increasingly become an important destination in its own right. This is enhanced by a significant hinterland of industrial development to the south and west of Onehunga.

More recent technical work on the role and function of the region's centres, business areas and corridors, has highlighted the strategic importance of Onehunga which, compared to many other centres, has significant employment capacity, a sizable existing population, well developed social infrastructure, good connectivity and a sub-regional market catchment.

The Auckland Sustainability Framework has reinforced the importance of the core principles of the Growth Strategy - a more compact settlement pattern and focusing growth in a network of vibrant, walkable centres offering a diverse range of services and facilities connected by high quality passenger transport.

Development of Onehunga station and site is consistent with the ARC's LTCCP (2009-2019) which indicates that between 2009-12, there will be a focus on regionally significant places which integrate land use and transport activities to achieve a compact, well-designed sustainable urban form.

Connectivity and regional transport context

A number of infrastructure projects will increase Onehunga's connectedness and quality as a centre, including the new rail line, the motorway extension and widening, and the restoration and re-connection of the foreshore. The rail station site is at the south end of the mainstreet retail, and will become a key hub as Princes St develops into a mixed-use quarter connecting to the restored foreshore.

The coastline and convergence of regional multimodal transport systems make Onehunga town centre and its adjacent suburbs a natural and important place where significant numbers of person trips converge from the west, east, north and south. Some of these trips have final destinations in Onehunga town centre and surrounding industrial areas, but most pass through before reaching their final destinations elsewhere in the region.

The future development of the regional transport system (attachment 2) will further increase Onehunga's accessibility and support its future growth and densification and its importance as a destination. In recognition of these trends, ARTA's planning for rapid transit shows that Onehunga will be a key future rail rapid transit interchange

with possible future rail extensions planned from Onehunga to the airport and to Avondale.

In March 2007, the Government confirmed investment of up to \$10 million for ONTRACK (NZRC) to rehabilitate the Onehunga branch line as part of the DART project.

Future Planning Framework – Auckland City Council

Onehunga has been identified as a principal centre in Auckland City Council's Future Planning Framework and Maungakiekie Area Plan, and it is the subject of a pilot precinct plan which is currently underway.

ARTA station planning and platform configuration

This work is being led by ARTA and ONTRACK. GHD engineering consultants have been appointed for the design and construction of railway stations on the Onehunga branch line. Different options have been considered for the termination of the line on the ITM site and the proposed plans show the railway station on the southern end of the ITM site. The reason for this is that the alignment of the railway corridor in relation to the curve to the east of the site is too acute, resulting in a gap between the platform edge and railway carriages, which present a health and safety danger. Straightening the line to eliminate any gap means that the platform will be on the ITM site resulting in more land being used for railway purposes at the site, than was originally envisaged.

The proposed platform location is identified in attachment 3. The development of this option would not preclude extension of the track to Onehunga wharf, Mangere Bridge or Auckland Airport at some stage in the future. Some further issues in terms of platform elevation are being considered to ensure that the best pedestrian connectivity to Onehunga Mall is achieved.

Since this option for track and station construction lies outside ONTRACK's existing designation consideration is being given to the resource consent requirements. ARTA are in discussion with Auckland City Council and they have engaged resource management consultants to advise them on this matter. It is understood that a minor change to the designation will be required, and ARTA officers will be able to update committee of progress at the meeting.

Regional development principles and opportunities

As the owner of the site the ARC has the opportunity to set the development framework. The following principles have been established at the outset to guide the development framework:

- Sustainable development - The development of the site should incorporate and be underpinned by sustainable development principles. This refers to the site as a whole, not just individual buildings within it. However the buildings should achieve five star rating (NZ Green Building Council) for achieving a high standard of sustainability.
- Quality development - The site presents an opportunity to deliver an exemplar development in terms of place making and urban design. Its built form should enhance and compliment the southern end of Onehunga town centre and make a bold statement about this gateway location. The sites connection with and its relationship to the centre is crucial in terms of its role as a public

transport interchange and a destination in itself. Connectivity, legibility and pedestrian flows to and from the site will be key considerations. The proposals should be developed within the guidelines of the NZ Urban Design Protocol and the Auckland City Council Urban Design Framework.

- Delivery - The redevelopment proposals should be founded on a robust analysis of demand and market conditions.
- Integrated and co-ordinated development - The development proposals should integrate with the strategic and policy context of the region and the local area. The approach should be holistic, and a range of outcomes should be achieved which provide lasting benefits.
- Integrated transport - The proposed development should sustain and support the attractiveness of Onehunga town centre, and integrate with other forms of transport.
- Innovation and best practice - The ARC is committed to exploring new and different ways to achieving a broad range of outcomes. Achieving the highest standards in terms of built form and creating vibrant and stimulating places are key outcomes.

Site development options

The ARC has commissioned Boffa Miskell to prepare a draft development framework for the site, taking into account the regional development principles listed above. The study developed and assessed a range of development options for the site. The key issues considered in developing the options were access and entries, platform location, frontages and activities, upper level typologies, and different uses for the site. A key concern was to ensure a visible high quality entrance to the station, via a public space/walkway/plaza from Onehunga Mall. This includes the need to create street activity, pedestrian traffic, vibrancy and security near the station.

The proposed configuration on the site arising from the station location creates two key building platforms (the largest platform bordering Princes St and Onehunga Mall and a second triangular platform bordering Onehunga Mall and the station platform, please refer to attachment 4). It also results in an area to the south east of the site that has very limited development potential due to the lack of access, its landlocked, the level is below Nielson Street and over bridge, and the presence of the power pylon.

Having analysed the site and local area, three different development options were investigated that explored different levels of intensity and uses suitable to the town centre location.

All the options anticipate retail frontages at the ground level on Onehunga Mall and flexibility for retail on Princes Street, or workshop/offices, and residential development on upper levels. The possibility of office or other commercial development (e.g. entertainment) is also considered.

The three options are:

- Option 1 - four story developments on the two corners but elsewhere restricted to a three-story walk-up residential typology. The least intensive of the development options, it is within the current District Plan limit.

- Option 2 - development up to the level that would be allowed by the volcanic sightline plane protecting the view of One Tree Hill (Maungakiekie) from the SH20 approach to the Mangere Bridge. This translates to five-storey development on most of the frontages, with a 6-storey building on the corner of Neilson St. These would be served by lifts and are likely to be configured by a greater number of smaller-sized apartments than Option 1.
- Option 3 - predominantly four and five-story development, this option also includes an 18-storey residential tower on the corner of Neilson St. Apartments are also wrapped round a third side of the central courtyard with a frontage along the vehicle lane.

The draft development framework identifies Option 2 (illustrated in attachment 4), the middle level of intensity investigated, as the preferred option, the essential features of which are:

- an open plaza descending diagonally to the centre of the rail platform from Onehunga Mall,
- retail tenancies fronting Onehunga Mall, including café/leisure frontages along the sunny side of the entry plaza,
- a metro food store-type activity at platform level, alongside a carpark beneath the northern frontages of the site (and accessed down a lane from Princes St at the north-east corner of the site),
- 4-6 storey development above the shops, probably built between party walls, and dimensioned to allow flexibility in use as either apartments or offices,
- a variety of day and night activities - shops, offices, apartments, cafes, and possibly cinemas or other night-time leisure facilities to ensure the interest, activity and safety of the station precinct at all times.

The current economic recession, some specific constraints of the site, and the plan rules and implementation mechanism for the mixed-use zone connecting this new transport hub to the restored foreshore, all present significant challenges. The rail station site nevertheless has considerable ability to promote rail patronage on the new line and to stimulate investment in Onehunga and its wider waterfront area.

The purpose of the draft development framework is to identify, at the conceptual level, the future development opportunities on the site, considering the bulk, scale and massing of buildings, as well as potential uses. It is not intended to be a detailed design and many other design issues will need to be addressed at later stages.

Re- location of Onehunga heritage station

The opportunity to find a more prominent and authentic location for the original Onehunga station as part of the new development is being investigated (following discussion between the ARC Chairman and Chair of the Rail Enthusiasts Society). The old station building, a class 3 Vogel station, which is scheduled category B by Auckland City Council, is currently located in Alfred Street and is the home of the Railway Enthusiasts Society. Attachment 5 shows the current and original location of the former Onehunga Station. Salmond Reed Architects (heritage specialists) were commissioned to consider the potential and benefits of relocating the station to the ITM site. Recommendations of a preliminary assessment suggest that:

- There is merit in relocating the station closer to its original location, and maintain its east west orientation. The original location is in the vicinity of the north eastern corner of the ITM site, on land now occupied by residential development on Princes Street.
- The station should be considered as a stand alone element rather than as an integral part of any redevelopment proposals.
- The station should be clearly visible, in and through the development.

Boffa Miskell have considered this report in light of the preferred option for the draft development framework, and propose that the land to the south east of the rail platform may be the most appropriate location for a relocated station building. This location would be visually prominent, as a backdrop to the platform in the “plaza” area. Subject to the views of the committee, it is proposed that officers continue discussions with the Railway Enthusiasts Society about the feasibility of relocating the station building from Alfred Street to the site.

Market feasibility and development economics

DTZ NZ Ltd has been commissioned to assess the potential redevelopment opportunities taking into account likely future market trends. The assessment considers the sites’ attributes and surrounding land uses, business development trends and drivers, residential and commercial property market trends in the area, demographic projections, current development activity, and the implications of the range of investments in Onehunga such as the foreshore restoration, transport improvements and new station. This is considered in relation to property market cycles. A summary of the key findings of the draft report are:

- The scope to let the site in today’s market for a commercially viable scheme is limited.
- In the medium term (seven years plus) the most appropriate uses in commercial terms would be a mix of retail and residential development. Other development and infrastructure improvements, such as the enhancement of the Onehunga foreshore will improve the attractiveness of the town to investors.
- In terms of commercial viability the council is advised to take a long term perspective, and bring the site to market at a time when returns can be optimised.

When the sites are marketed, specific attention will need to be given to attracting developers, business owners and architects who are committed to delivering a high quality, transit oriented development. The development of this site presents the ARC with an opportunity to “lead by example” and deliver a high quality, sustainable development which will contribute to the development of Onehunga.

Short term use of site/immediate issues

The site is leased to ONTRACK, who are using it to store materials and equipment in relation to the reinstatement of the branch line. The lease is for a term of six months, from August, 2009, and thereafter renewable monthly by agreement.

The site is also generating \$3,000, per annum, from billboard income.

Conclusions and next steps

The preferred option for the conceptual design and layout for the ITM site presents the ARC with an opportunity to integrate land use planning with public transport investment. In this regard the ARC has an opportunity to influence a project which is consistent with its regional and planning policies of improving the quality of the built environment. The ITM site links the station with Onehunga and it is important that that transition creates a distinct sense of place which is well designed. The draft development framework sets out a number of well established urban design guiding principles which will assist in securing a form of development which is commercially viable and provides a good sense of place.

The Onehunga station will be located at the southern end of the site. The northern end could be redeveloped as a high quality, intensive form of development, which would support the commercial viability of the southern end of Onehunga Mall. Increased footfall and activity generated by the station will increase the attractiveness and commercial viability of that part of Onehunga.

Commercial property advice has been sought from DTZ. They advise that in the medium term, the most appropriate uses would comprise a mix of retail and residential. At the moment the property market is "soft", and developer interest is weak. However, general economic conditions are expected to improve and other improvements in the vicinity such as the enhancement of the Onehunga foreshore mean that interest in the township may increase. DTZ do stress that at the present the scope to let the site for a viable development on commercial terms is relatively limited. The council is therefore advised to take a long term perspective.

Investigations into the feasibility of relocating the former Onehunga railway station from Alfred Street to the ITM site should be pursued. Heritage advisors recommend that there is merit in relocating the building back to the vicinity of its original location. If it is relocated, the council will need to consider carefully how it relates to the new development and also the needs of the Railway Enthusiasts Society.

ARTA and ONTRACK have held an open evening (25 August, 2009, attended by the Chairman) at Onehunga and officers were available to answer questions. ARTA and ONTRACK intend to establish a community liaison group so that the needs and concerns of the local community can be addressed, and it will provide a forum to update the community on progress. ARC officers will attend those meetings. ARTA and ONTRACK intend to deliver regular presentations to Auckland City Council and the community board.

Subject to the committee's views, it is proposed that the preferred option in the development framework be approved for the purposes of consulting with the local community. It is proposed that the views of the community board, the Onehunga Business Association and the owners of neighbouring property be sought at this stage. Officers are working closely with Auckland City Council via the precinct plan. Every effort will be made to work closely with ARTA and ONTRACK to coordinate in our engagement with the local community to avoid duplication and/or repetition.

B.1.4 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCING IMPLICATIONS

ARTA and ONTRACK have confirmed that they have funding for the reinstatement of the Onehunga branch line in their budgets for 2009/10. The funding includes the costs of providing stations at three locations, including Onehunga.

The costs associated with preparing the draft development framework can be met from within existing budgets.

Commercial property advice has been sought as part of the development framework work stream, and it recommends that the council takes a medium to long term perspective (5-7 years) in terms of bring the site to the market. If the council accepts the advice, it will have to consider how best to use the site in the interim. A possible use is a temporary park and ride facility.

The ITM site is now leased to ONTRACK and generates a rental income of \$8,000 plus GST, per month. A sum of \$3,000, per annum, is obtained from billboard income. When the railway works and Onehunga station have been completed ONTRACK will vacate the site, anticipated to be mid 2010.

Discussions are continuing with ARTA and ONTRACK regarding the terms and conditions of their occupation of the site for a station and the proposed temporary use of the site for a park and ride facility on the northern portion of the site. The results of the discussions, and their implications, will be reported back to committee in due course.

B.1.5 LEGAL AND LEGISLATIVE IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

The report does not need to be referred to the Auckland Transition Authority (ATA). The proposal to develop an integrated land use and transport scheme at Onehunga is outlined in the councils LTCCP which has been approved by the ATA.

B.1.6 CONSULTATION

The preparation of this report has involved close liaison with partners in the working group, including ARTA, ONTRACK and ACC.

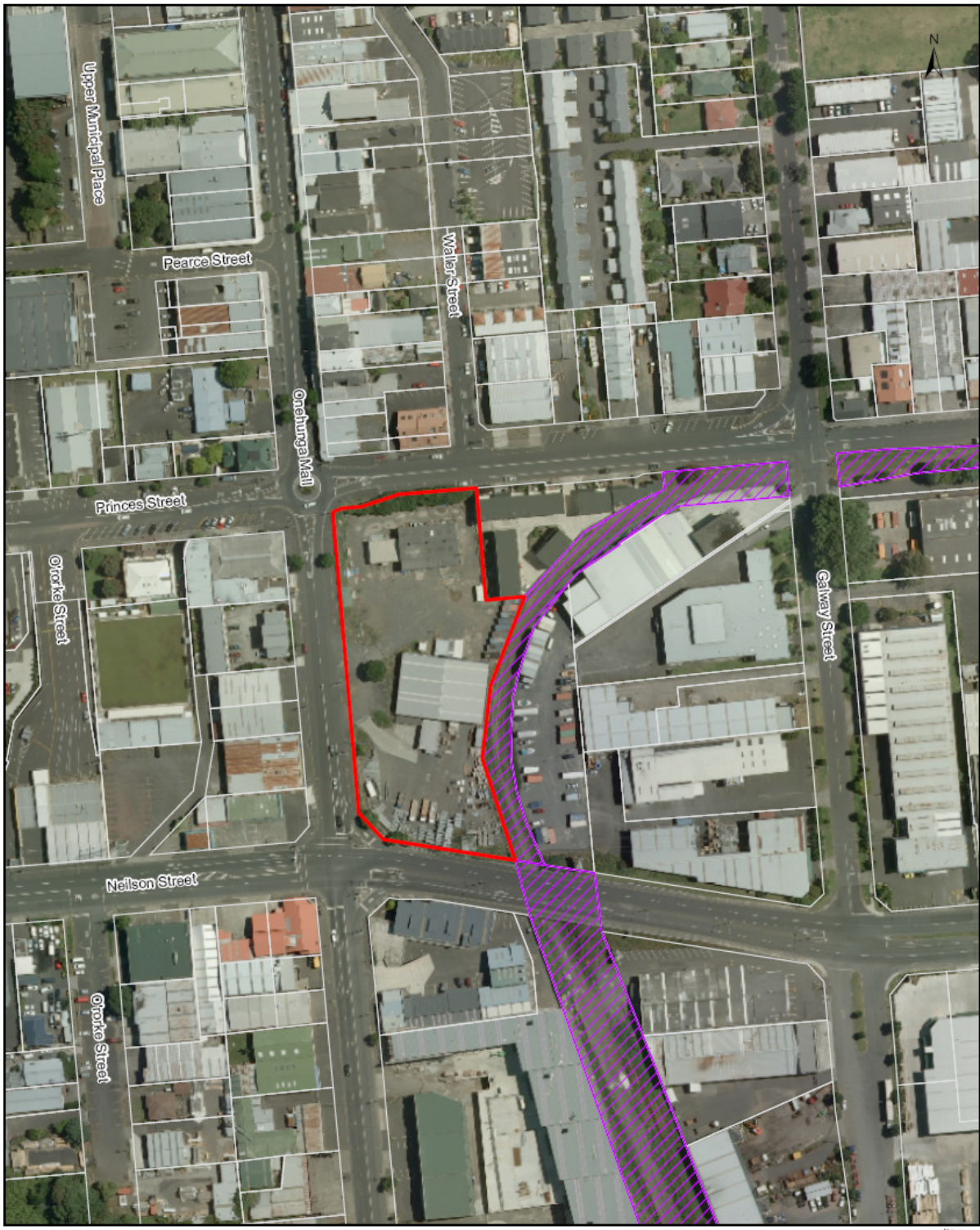
ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 - Site and rail corridor.
- Attachment 2 - Anticipated Future Regional Transport Connections to Onehunga.
- Attachment 3 - Onehunga Station Proposed Platform Location.
- Attachment 4 - Draft Development Framework: Preferred Option 2.
- Attachment 5 - Original Location of Onehunga Station.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- a) That the report be received.
- b) That the committee note that the Auckland Regional Transport Authority and ONTRACK are planning to open the Onehunga branch line by mid winter 2010, and provide a temporary park and ride facility on the northern portion of 109-111 Onehunga Mall.
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Site and rail corridor



Legend

- Site
- Rail Corridor

Onehunga

Map Produced by GIS Information Services
Auckland Regional Council

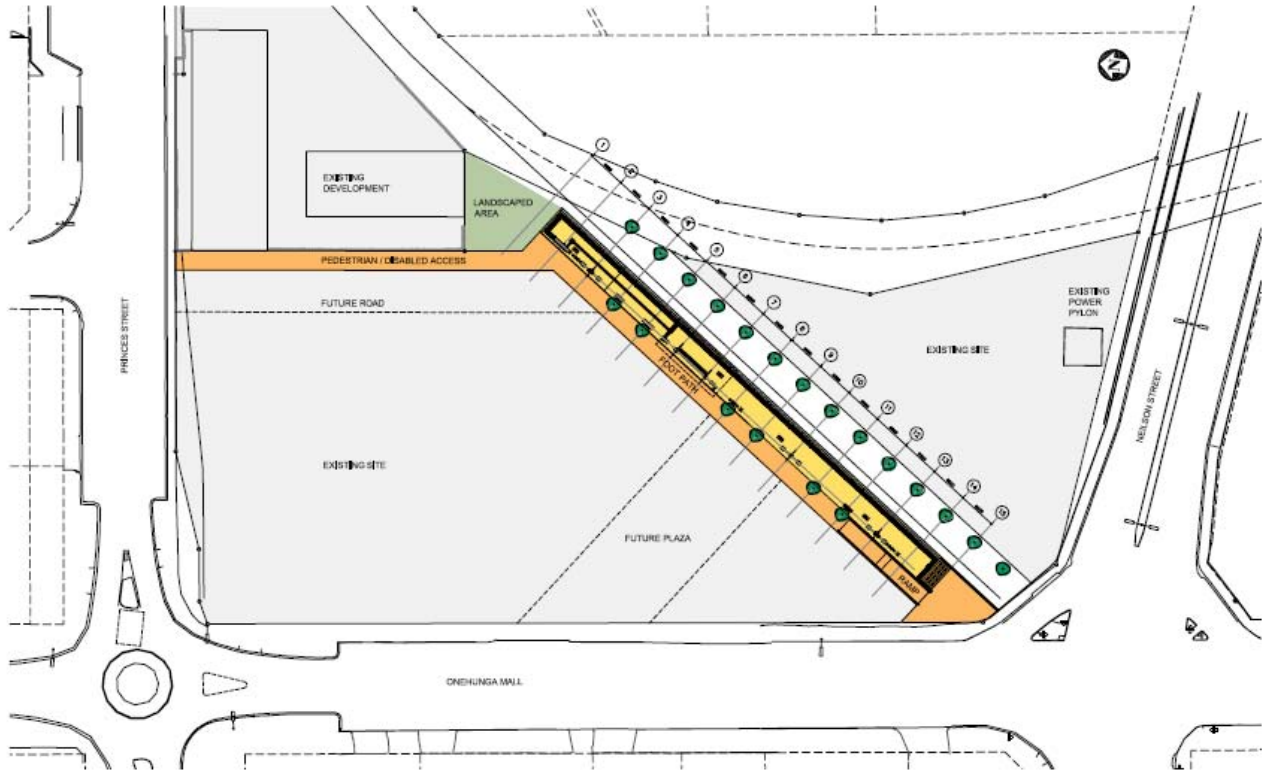
Auckland Regional Council
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Anticipated Future Regional Transport Connections to Onehunga



Onehunga Station Proposed Platform Location



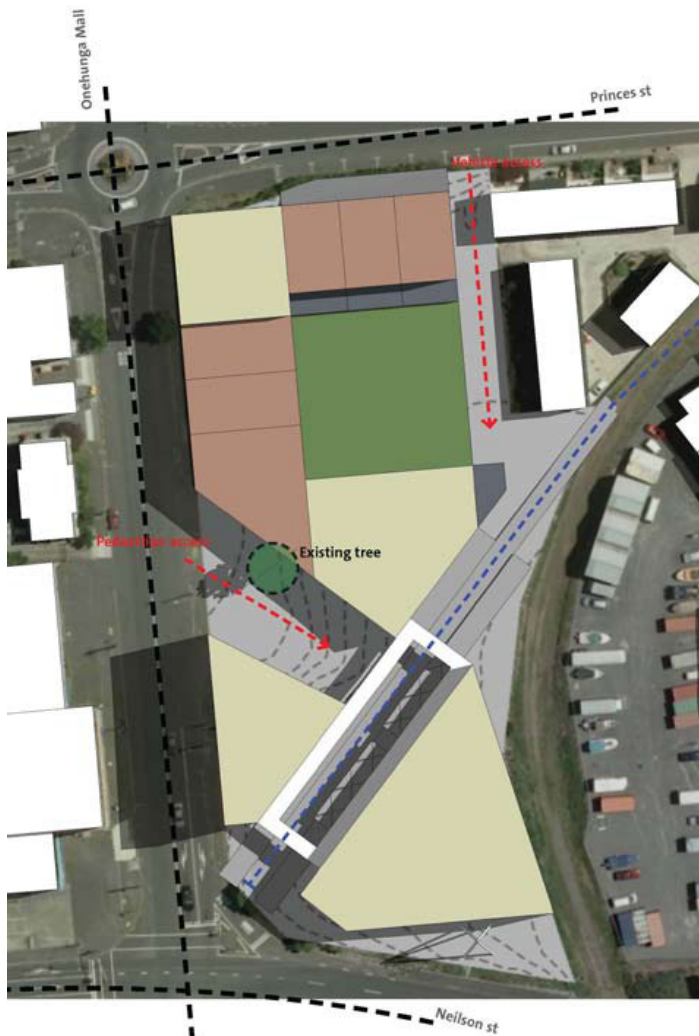
ONEHUNGA STATION
SITE PLAN - PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

SK-001 Revision A
2009/09/09



Preferred Option: Development Framework For Onehunga Station Site

Source: *Onehunga Development Framework: Development Concept Option (Draft, Boffa Miskell)*



Original Location Of Onehunga Station (Source: Report On Former Onehunga Rail Station, Salmond Reed)

