PEAKE DESIGN

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE ❑ URBAN DESIGN ❑ PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Landscape and Visual Assessment for Proposed Tree Removal Otāhuhu

Prepared for:
The Tūpuna Maunga o Tāmaki Makaurau Authority

Prepared by:
Sally Peake
Principal, Peake Design Ltd
FNZILA Registered Landscape Architect

PO Box 104086, Lincoln North, Auckland 6543 Phone: 09 838 4143 Email: sally.peake@xtra.co.nz

CONTENTS

Page No.

1. INTRODUCTION 2

2. TUPUNA MAUNGA CONTEXT 2

3. SITE CHARACTER AND CONTEXT 3

4. THE PROPOSAL 6

5. STATUTORY CONTEXT 7

5.1 Auckland Unitary Plan (Part Operative) 8

5.2 Tūpuna Maunga Integrated Management Plan 9

6. ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS 10

6.1 Introduction 10

6.2 Biophysical effects (and landscape quality) 11

6.3 Landscape and natural character effects 12

6.4 Visual amenity 13

7. ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE AUP PROVISIONS 20

8. CONCLUSIONS 21

1. INTRODUCTION

Peake Design Ltd was requested by Anna McElrea on behalf of the Tupuna Maunga o Tāmaki Makaurau Authority to undertake an evaluation of the potential landscape and visual effects of proposed exotic vegetation removal at Ōtāhuhu (Mt Richmond).

Following the Ngā Mana Whenua o Tāmaki Makaurau Collective Redress Act (2014) being legislated in 2014, 14 of the region's volcanic cones were returned to Mana Whenua via the collective legal entity, the Tūpuna Taonga Trust. The Maunga (mountains) are taonga (treasures). A key objective of the Tūpuna Taonga Trust is to ensure no further degradation or permanent loss of these important sites with the aim of handing these taonga to the next generation in a better condition than they were received.

In order to undertake the evaluation several site visits were made to the site and surrounding neighbourhood on between September 2018 and March 2019.

The assessment was based on the survey and tree removal methodology and report prepared by Treescape Arboriculture Consultants dated December 2018, and the ecological assessment and proposed restoration planting prepared by Te Ngahere, August 2018.

The purpose of the assessment is to evaluate how the proposed works will potentially affect the landscape and its character as well as the visual amenity of the local community.

The report describes the outcomes of the evaluation of landscape and visual effects, with reference to the objectives and policies of the Auckland Council Unitary Plan (Part Operative version).

2. TUPUNA MAUNGA CONTEXT

The Auckland Volcanic Field encompasses has an approximate 20km radius in central Auckland and contains about 50 volcanoes[1] (see Attachment 3). The volcanic cones and associated features make a particular contribution to Auckland's distinctive character and sense of place. The volcanic field has erupted sporadically over the last 250,000 years. While it is currently dormant, Rangitoto was the last volcano to erupt, about 600 years ago. The field is considered to still be active.[1]

The Tūpuna Maunga are among the most significant spiritual, cultural, historical, archaeological and geological landscapes in the Auckland region. The Tūpuna Maunga are sacred to mana whenua as taonga tuku iho (treasures handed down the generations).[2]

Together with Auckland's three harbours – the Waitemata, Manukau and Kaipara – its cone field is unquestionably the Region's most distinctive and iconic feature. Once comprising close to 60 cones and craters, this field has been eroded over the last 160 years by quarrying and urban development to the point where just nine maunga – Mt Eden / Maungawhau, Mt Hobson / Ohinerangi, Mt Saint John / Te Kopuke, One Tree Hill / Maungakiekie, Mt Wellington / Maungarei, Mt Albert / Owairaka, Mt Roskill / Puketapapa,

[1] B Hayward et al "Volcanoes of Auckland", 2011

[2] Tūpuna Maunga o Tāmaki Makaurau Integrated Management Plan, 2016

and (more peripherally) Mangere Mountain – now provide exemplars of a volcanic resource that was once both much more prominent and pervasive than is now the case.[3]

The multiple values of the cone field have long been recognised and are clearly referenced in the current ARPS description of the maunga (Part 6.2.6):

"The volcanic cones are iconic features of Auckland. They give the Region its unique character and identity and set this urban area apart from other cities in the world.

Their contribution to the character of the Region arises not only from their individual identities as outstanding natural features, but also from their number and juxtaposition within the urban landscape. They provide islands of naturalness, of open space and of green that interact with an urban landscape which continues to change as a result of urban growth and development.

Many views of the cones are inextricably linked with images of Auckland. For example, Maungauika (North Head), Takarunga (Mt Victoria), Rangitoto, Motukorea (Browns Island) and Te Pane O Mataaho (Mangere Mountain) and Maungarei (Mt Wellington) are key markers of Auckland's maritime setting. Other volcanic cones such as Pukekaroro (Auckland Domain), Maungawhau (Mt Eden), Maungakiekie (One Tree Hill), Koheraunui (Big King of Three Kings), Owairaka (Mt Albert), Puketapapa (Mt Roskill), Te Kopuke (Mt St John), Remuwera (Mt Hobson) and Otahuhu (Mt Richmond) are physical markers and identifiers at both the regional and local level. They are outstanding natural features and have a landscape value that arises from their combination of naturalness within an urban environment and their cultural associations.[4]

3. SITE CHARACTER AND CONTEXT

Ōtāhuhu (Mount Richmond) is a group of cratered scoria cones elongated SW-NE within a large swampy tuff ring about 800m in diameter. Approximately 50m above sea level the tuff ring is partially intact while the nest of small scoria cones have been partly quarried away.

The cones have been modified since about 1928 when the Mount Wellington Road Board worked a quarry on the northwest side. There were four old small workings within the domain until the main pit closed in 1959. A quarry outside the domain was removed from the southern flank during 1959-6, and the tuff ring to the southeast and northwest has also been modified or removed.

The existing form reflects the former quarrying and history of the domain (Figure 1). It comprises a number of discrete areas connected by formal and informal paths and roads. In addition it is covered by different recreation titles: the Mt Richmond Domain, Bert Henham Park, and McManus Park. There are also a number of buildings and structures on the feature and a variety of leases over the area. These relate to existing or former use of the park by Otahuhu United Ruby Football Club, The Northern Sports Car Club, The Mt Richmond Rifle Club, The Otahuhu United Association Football Club, and The Otahuhu Rugby League Club.

[3] Stephen Brown evidence to The Unitary Plan Independent Hearings Panel, 25 May 2015
[4] Ibid

In addition to formal sports (rugby league), the project area is used for informal walking. Vehicular access is off Great South Road with carparking adjacent to the club/sports areas (Figure 2). A trig station occupies the highest point.

Figure 1 1940 Aerial photograph showing quarries – note absence of vegetation

Dating back to 1890 when the domain was gazetted, there is collection of exotic trees across the site, which have been augmented with native trees and smaller vegetation around the buildings and roads. A total of 444 exotic trees have been surveyed and are proposed for removal. There are some 46 different species, with the largest proportion being Olea, which have established across the domain. Other notable trees in higher numbers are Monterey Cypress, Moreton Bay Fig, Monterey Pine, London Plane and Black Poplar.

The author of Auckland's Remarkable Urban Forest[5] states that there is a fine collection of exotic trees on this scoria cone. Of outstanding interest is a very large pagoda tree (Styphnolobium japonicum), a big Chinese fir, a white escallonia (Escallonia bifida), several large European beech, two sweet chestnuts, several magnificent figs and London plane..... there are numerous elms and several enormous eastern cottonwoods....

[5] Auckland's Remarkable Urban Forest, Mike D Wilcox, 2012

Not all these trees are identified in the Treescape survey, however.

There are 150 native trees and 11 different species, with Pohutukawa, Puriri, Karaka and Totara being the most prevalent and noticeable.

Figure 2 Aerial image of subject site and surrounding area

Surrounding the feature is a mix of commercial and residential development. This is generally at a lower elevation than the maunga, but there are higher areas to the west - up to 40m (similar to the tallest part of the maunga). Generally, development in the locality is of low quality, with historic and special character business/residential areas some distance to the south.

With a relatively low profile, the mountain is not a particularly distinctive or widely visible feature within the landscape context, as evidenced by the images in section 6.4 of this report. It is also identified as having aesthetic value as part of its historic heritage value and an Outstanding Natural Feature in the AUP.

Further information on the existing vegetation is provided in the report prepared by Treescape under 'Tree Population':

In total 444 exotic trees (woody vegetation >3m in height) representing 45 species were identified within the survey area. A breakdown by species is given in Table 2 on the following page.

The greatest concentrations of exotics are contained within the peripheral track/roadway with a linear belt of trees along the eastern boundary of the sports field.

The species composition is dominated by Olive (Olea europaea) with 101 trees representing 22% of the exotic stock. Morton Bay fig (Ficus macrophylla), London plane (Platanus x acerifolia) and elm (Ulmus sp.) each represent 6% of the exotic population.

A number of large figs are present, particularly upon the terracing on the western side and the presence of so many elm dictate full compliance with Dutch Elm Disease protocols (although no infected elms were detected at the time of inspection).

Three (3) species identified on site are listed as pests in the regional pest management strategy (RPMS): Acmena/monkey apple (Syzygium smithii); Hawthorn (Crataegus laevigata); Phoenix palm (Phoenix canariensis); are classified as 'Surveillance – Whole region'. It is notable that two of the most numerous species, Olive (Olea sp.) and Morton Bay fig (Ficus macrophylla) are classified under the RPMS as 'Species to be researched (not a Pest Plant) - Whole Region'.

4. THE PROPOSAL

The Tūpuna Maunga Authority are seeking consent for vegetation removal on Ōtāhuhu (Mt Richmond) to facilitate the restoration of the natural, spiritual and indigenous landscape of the maunga and to help restore and enhance of the mauri and wairua of their Tūpuna Maunga.

The proposal represents one of the first steps for the Tūpuna Maunga Authority in giving effect to their Integrated Management Plan (IMP) since the return of Ngā Tūpuna Maunga o Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland's ancestral mountains) to 13 iwi and hapū of Auckland.

Native vegetation is one of the natural features of Ngā Tūpuna Maunga o Tāmaki Makaurau that has diminished over many decades, removed through quarrying and replaced by exotic (non-native) specimens. Replanting and restoring traditional indigenous mana whenua flora and fauna on the maunga is a long term goal.

A key driver for the vegetation removal project is to preserve and enhance the authenticity and visual integrity of the maunga so that they are markers in the landscape, and their cultural and natural features are visually apparent *(extract from Tūpuna Maunga Integrated Management Plan)*.

The vegetation programme at Otahuhu / Mt Richmond includes the removal of exotic trees from the maunga and restoration planting with indigenous species. Proposed tree removal will take a staged approach, with the final programme depending on factors such as methodologies and optimal seasons, costings, capacity of contractors, ground conditions and staging of other projects on the maunga.

In principle, the removals will be undertaken in two stages, divided into West and East tihi, which will be separated by no less than 6 months and no greater than 18 months. This is with the exception of the trees along the Mount Wellington frontage, which are subject to other constraints as described in this report.

In summary, the proposal will include:

- The removal of 437 exotic trees from the maunga;
- Proposed restoration of former quarry areas and areas around the maunga (outside archaeological sites) with indigenous plantings (Puriri broadleaf forest ecosystem);
- Proposed retained amenity planting around sportsfield buildings

In addition, the Tūpuna Maunga Authority are working with lease holders on the management of the sportsfield areas, including removing facilities that are no longer required.

The methodology for tree removal and planting is described in the AEE and reports by Treescape and Te Ngahere. In addition to above, site management will include restoration of local species and habitats together with methods that prevent regeneration of exotic weed species.

Key matters for this assessment are:

- Identifying cultural landscape features for protection and enhancement
- Effects of visual change for user groups/community
- Managing visual amenity effects of tree removal

5. STATUTORY CONTEXT

With regard to the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) provisions, assessment of landscape and visual effects considers effects in terms of three interrelated landscape assessment categories: biophysical and landscape quality, visual amenity, and landscape character. The table below shows the relationship between the relevant RMA provisions and the assessment categories used in this report.

RMA Provision	**Landscape and visual assessment category**
s 6(a);Effects on the natural character of the coastal environment, wetlands and rivers and their margins	Biophysical/Landscape Quality Landscape Character
6(b) Effects on outstanding natural features and landscapes	Biophysical/Landscape Quality Landscape Character Visual Amenity
s 7(c) Effects on amenity values; and	Visual amenity
s 7(f) Effects on the quality of the environment	Biophysical/Landscape Quality

For this proposal, the assessment is concerned with s6(b), s&(c) and s7(f) matters as well as effects on natural character . Natural character is a sub-set or component of landscape character and concerned with 'a measure of naturalness' in relation to the biophysical sensory components of landscape, and is consistent with the aims and values of the Tupuna Maunga Integrated Management Plan (see below).

5.1 Auckland Unitary Plan (Part Operative)

The majority of the site is zoned Open Space – Conservation in the Auckland Unitary Plan (Operative in Part) (AUP), with the exception of the quarried flat areas of the maunga, which are zoned Open Space - Sports and Active Recreation (Figure 3).

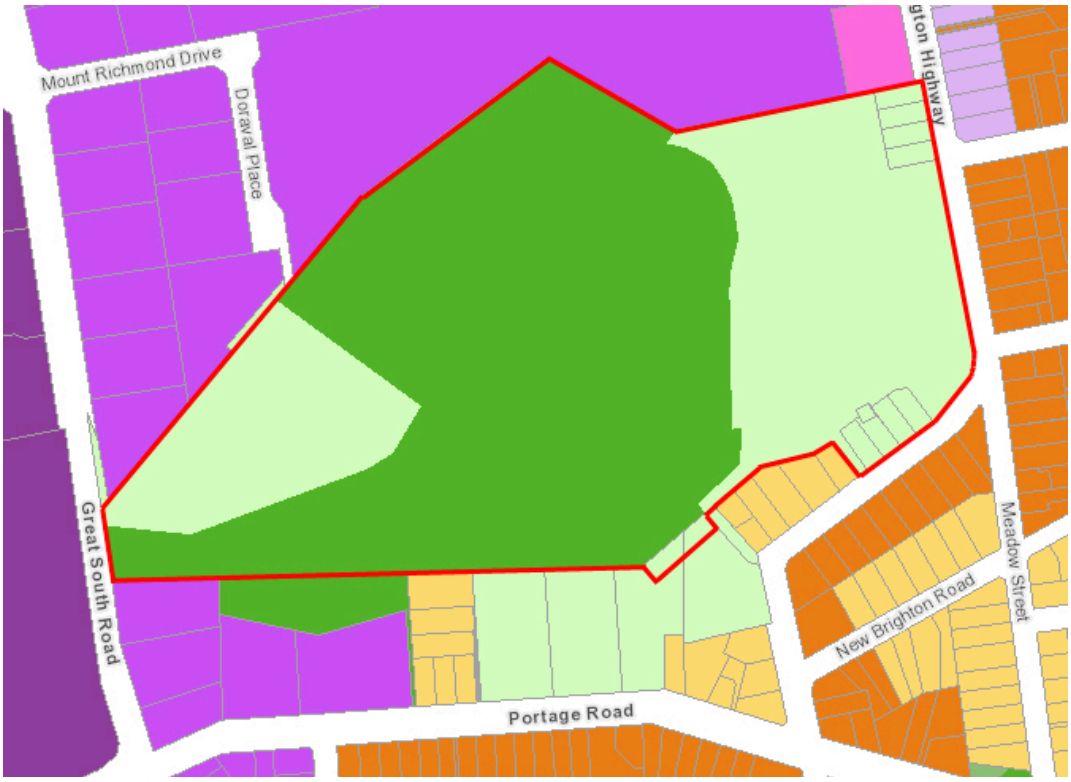

Figure 3 Site showing AUP Zones

The site is also subject to a number of overlays, including: Outstanding Natural Feature overlay (ID111) over the whole site, and Historic Heritage overlay (extent of place – 1579) over part of the site roughly equating to the Open Space – Conservation zone.

The AUP planning maps also indicate that there is a Regionally Significant Volcanic Viewshafts and Height Sensitive Areas overlay (excluding Bert Henham Park), but it is not included in the Schedule or Appendix 20.

An overarching objective in the Regional Policy Statement (B4.2.1(3) is:

The visual and physical integrity and the historic, archaeological and cultural values of Auckland's volcanic features that are of local, regional, national or international significance are protected and, where practicable, enhanced.

Of relevance is supporting Policy B4.2.2(8) which states:

Manage outstanding natural landscapes and outstanding natural features in an integrated manner to protect, and where practicable and appropriate, enhance their values.

The regional policy statement objectives and policies are given effect by the identification of the Outstanding Natural Feature (ONF) overlay that applies to the Site. Objectives D10.2(1) and (2) seek to protect Auckland's ONFs and to recognise and provide for the ancestral relationship of Mana Whenua with ONFs. Objective (3) promotes, where practicable, restoration and enhancement of ONFs. The supporting suite of policies includes Policy D10.3(3) which sets out how to protect the physical and visual integrity of ONFs, and Policy (4) which sets out the other matters that need to be taken into account while achieving this.

In terms of historic heritage, at the regional policy statement level, Objective B5.2.1(2) seeks to ensure that the protection, management and conservation of historic heritage places is encouraged. This includes retention, maintenance and adaptation.

The Open Space – Conservation zone is applied to open spaces with natural, ecological, landscape, and cultural and historic heritage values. The objectives for the zone (H7.4.2(1) and (2) seek to ensure that the natural, ecological, landscape and Mana Whenua values of the zone are enhanced and protected from the adverse effects of use and development, and that use and development complements and protects the conservation and natural qualities of the zone.

These objectives are supported by a number of policies. Of particular relevance to this proposal is Policy H7.4.3(3) which states:

Manage the use of open space to protect and enhance Mana Whenua values, and enable appropriate activities which support and re-establish the relationship of Mana Whenua and their culture and traditions to their ancestral lands, water, sites, wahi tapu and other taonga.

Objectives and policies for the Open Space – Sports and Active Recreation zone are generally enabling of sports and active recreation, including buildings and structures, excepting that activities and development in locations adjoining the coast or a water body are required to: *(c) avoid areas scheduled for their outstanding natural landscape, outstanding or high natural character or historic heritage values; and (d) recognise Mana Whenua values.* (my underline)

Section E16 relates to trees in open space zones. The objectives seek to protect trees in the open space zones that contribute to the cultural, amenity, landscape and ecological values (E16.2(1)) and to increase the quality and extent of tree cover in open space zones, particularly within areas identified for intensified living (E16.2(2)).

Section E15 relates to vegetation management and diversity, with objectives and policies focused on protecting and managing indigenous biological diversity and ecosystem services.

5.2 Tūpuna Maunga Integrated Management Plan

The Tūpuna Maunga (ancestral mountains) of Tamaki Makaurau (Auckland) were held in crown ownership with various reserve classifications and managed by Auckland Council and, in some cases, the Department of Conservation. In 2014 the Ngā Mana Whenua o

Tāmaki Makaurau Collective Redress Act (2014) legislated a Collective deed of settlement. Under that Act, 14 Tūpuna Maunga were transferred to the 13 iwi/hapu of Ngā Mana Whenua o Tāmaki Makaurau via the collective legal entity, the Tūpuna Taonga Trust. The Tūpuna Taonga Trust has developed the Tūpuna Maunga Integrated Management Plan (the IMP) to set the foundations for how the Tūpuna Maunga are valued, protected, restored, enhanced and managed in the future.[6]

The Tūpuna Maunga Authority has produced a single integrated management plan (IMP) to set the direction for their restoration, protection and management. The plan outlines the long-term vision for the Tūpuna Maunga and sets out values and pathways to achieve an integrated outcome for all the maunga.

Values provide the framework for the tika approach to caring and protecting the maunga, while the pathways elaborate on and give tangible expression to the values. These form guiding principles and objectives that set the direction the Tūpuna Maunga Authority proposes for protecting and caring for the maunga and they provide a framework for future decision-making.

Relevant values are identified as:

- Mana Aotūra/Cultural and heritage
- Takotoranga Whenua/Landscape
- Mauri Pūnaha Hauropi/Ecology and biodiversity
- Mana Whai a Rēhia/Recreational.

6. ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS

6.1 Introduction

Section 3.1 of this report sets out the landscape assessment categories and their relationship with the relevant RMA provisions. The categories combine to create the relationship between a development (or proposed change) and its landscape context or setting, which is directly responsible for the impacts of any proposed development/change.

In this regard, there are three main sets of values that can generally be attributed to the setting. These are:

1. the degree of builtness or naturalness of the surrounding landscape

2. the landscape vulnerability or fragility of the environment to absorb development or change, and

3. the nature of the development itself

[6] Tupuna Maunga o Tamaki Makaurau Integrated Management Plan, Tupuna Maunga o Tamaki Makaurau Authority, 2016

The first two define the "fitness" of the landscape to accept the new development/change, and allow decisions to be made regarding the impact of a proposal on the receiving environment, while the third defines how well equipped the design or nature of the development/change is to "fit" the landscape, taking account of physical and cultural values as well as from an aesthetic point of view. The landscape character and nature of the landform and vegetation also determines the available views of the development/change, depending on the exact location and disposition of elements.

With regard to the degree of naturalness, it is common practice to measure natural character on a continuum from modified to pristine, using a 7-point scale, although this is less useful in an urban environment where the environment has been significantly modified. As part of the Unitary Plan review, however, a review of the regional and district plan policy statements and rules in relation to natural landscapes, natural character, volcanic viewshafts and natural features was carried out, where areas having very important landscape and natural character values were identified as Outstanding Natural Landscapes (ONLs), High Natural Character (HNC) and Outstanding Natural Character (ONC) areas.

The site was not identified as one of these areas. Nevertheless, the site was identified as an ONF where natural characteristics and qualities contribute to its values and may include:

- natural elements, processes and patterns;
- biophysical, ecological, geological and geomorphological aspects;
- experiential and sensory attributes.

Potential adverse effects therefore relate to the magnitude of change to abiotic and biotic elements, processes and patterns, as well as the consequential experiential and aesthetic changes arising from the proposed vegetation removal and replanting.

6.2 Biophysical effects (and landscape quality)

The assessment of biophysical effects considers the extent and significance of modifications to landform, waterbodies and vegetation, and in particular any landscape features identified with regional or local significance.

The scale for assessing biophysical change used is set out below:

Extreme - Loss of key feature/attributes

Very high - Fundamental alteration to key feature/attributes of the site/neighbourhood

High – Major alteration to key feature/attributes of the site/neighbourhood

Moderate – Noticeable alteration to key feature/attributes (partially changed)

Low - Minor change to landscape, with no noticeable change to key feature/attribute (i.e. similar to before)

Very low - Slight change, with no change to any key feature/attribute and change barely distinguishable

Negligible - No discernible change

The mountain is identified as an ONF and is therefore considered to have high landscape quality with a landform that is sensitive to change. Equally, however, much of the mountain has been modified through quarrying, while a substantial part of the project area has also

been converted to sports fields. As a consequence, there are two distinct areas – the central cone areas, and the outlying areas that have been modified for sportsfields.

The overall aim of the project to enhance the integrity of the maunga is considered to support the ONF values and repair some of the damage caused by quarrying. In addition, while the project will involve modifications through the removal of vegetation, it is clear that the vegetation to be removed is not indigenous and was planted for more recent cultural purposes (refer to Section 3 and images). These include recreational use under the Reserves and Domains Act (within the cones area) and amenity planting in relation to the sports activity, including carparking areas.

Restoring the maunga to a more natural state is considered to be consistent with good long term sustainable management as well as contributing to restoration and education. This is reflected in the integrated management that seeks the protection, restoration, and enhancement on each Tūpuna Maunga, which includes restoring the physical and cultural landscape.

Accordingly, while the project will have noticeable impacts in relation to biophysical change due to the number and size of exotic trees proposed to be removed, the methods used to effect change will limit physical effects on the heritage/indigenous culture, and ultimately protect and enhance it, resulting in positive effects on the integrity of the feature and its landscape.

In this regard, I note that the assessment of ecological effects also rates the overall level of ecological effects as low, and it is considered that the proposed works will protect and enhance the natural landform, while replanting will restore natural and landscape values so that there will be positive effects resulting from the biophysical change.

6.3 Landscape and natural character effects

Landscape character is the distinctive combination of landscape attributes that gives an area its identity, and is derived from a combination of landform, land cover and land use. The effects on landscape character relate to changes in land use, (new or different activities); changes to existing patterns and elements in the landscape such as vegetation, waterbodies, landform, and building patterns; and the introduction of new elements and patterns including structures and paving and the various associated processes such as earthworks.

Natural character is discussed in section 6.1 above and relates to the natural qualities and features of an area (as opposed to artificial features such as roads and buildings). It may also be linked to landscape quality, as there is a strong relationship between s6a and s6b of the RMA in relation to natural character.

The scale used to determine landscape character change is set out below.

Extreme - Significant change affecting the overall landscape character

Very high - Fundamental alteration to key features/ attributes, character largely changed (with little ability to mitigate effects)

High - Alteration to several key elements or features/ attributes, major change to character and composition.

Moderate - Readily noticeable alteration to key element/s, feature/s or attribute/s, with character and composition partially changed

Low – Small amount of change to underlying character and composition, similar to before

Very low - Very slight change to landscape character, change barely distinguishable

Negligible - No discernible change of character

As noted for biophysical change above, existing vegetation varies across the project area, with older, larger trees mainly located on the higher area of cones, and more recent smaller vegetation located on the edges.

Due to the number and size of trees to be removed, there will be a noticeable alteration to key features/attributes of the project area, as well as a change to landscape patterns and character, particularly on elevated areas/ tihi.

Overall, however, the character of the landscape will be enhanced through restoration of the visual integrity of the maunga and new vegetation patterns. In addition, the removal of the exotic vegetation will restore the integrity of the maunga and enable its mana to be better acknowledged and recognised.

This is consistent with the values and pathways set out in the IMP, while the proposed replacement of exotic planting with native restoration planting in the former quarry areas will also enhance the ecological and biodiversity value of the mountain, thus making a positive contribution to its landscape value.

Notwithstanding this, due to the nature and magnitude of change (and the potential visual effects of this change), a staged approach is proposed which, together with a communications programme, will assist in managing the effects of change.

The communications programme will explain the purpose and aims of the restoration, while proposed staging will retain some exotic trees in order to manage/mitigate effects of character change. These changes primarily relate to the scale and location of tree removal and consequential increased prominence of buildings. Specifically, it is proposed to initially retain all the trees along Mt Wellington Highway together with selected trees that help integrate/screen views of buildings from surrounding streets.

Once the main removal programme is complete and as part of the restoration phase (minimum 2 years), the exotic trees aloing Mt Wellington Highway will be removed and, in the event that the south eastern building is still in place, new amenity planting will be implemented around the building/carpark.

Through the implementation of these measures, landscape character change is rated low adverse in the short term and positive in the longer term following restoration.

6.4 Visual amenity

Visual amenity is a component of the overall amenity of a place and contributes to peoples' appreciation of the pleasantness and aesthetic coherence of the environment. This aspect considers the effects of the visual change to the environment and for the viewing audience.

Contributing factors that affect the relative magnitude of effect include:

- Physical catchment and character that would be exposed to visual change
- Nature of the audience who would experience that change
- Type/size of view (orientation; elevation; peripheral/central)
- Scale, type and intensity of change

The following scale has been adopted to categorise the potential impact of visual change and the degree to which that change is adverse.

Extreme – Proposed tree removal will fundamentally change/ obscure views for a large viewing audience.

Very high – Area of proposed tree removal will form a prominent part of views and/or be a focus of views for a large viewing audience or within close proximity of residences (e.g. 100m)

High – Area of proposed tree removal is likely to be a major element of view for a large number of people and/or be a focus of view for residents

Moderate – Area of proposed tree removal is likely to form a visible and recognizable new element within the overall scene

Low – Area of proposed tree removal is likely to be either a limited component of a wider scene, and/or make little difference to the overall scene (i.e. may be missed by casual observer)

Very low – Area of proposed tree removal will form a very limited component of the wider scene and/or be viewed from a considerable distance

Negligible - Proposal will not be identifiable within available views

As noted in Section 3, the mountain is a distinctive landscape feature but is not widely visible within the surrounding business and residential context. No regionally significant views or height sensitive areas have been identified in the AUP. From close distances, notably surrounding roads, there are clear views of the maunga and surrounding sports fields, but from further afield the feature is generally screened from view.

In addition to views from adjacent roads, there are some residential areas that are immediately adjacent to the reserve areas with clear views of the project area, while residents and visitors regularly use the sports facilities and tracks.

As a result, while there is a small visual catchment overall, there is a variety of viewing audiences with some large numbers.

The attachment to this report shows views that have been selected to represent views for residents and users of the surrounding street network, noting that in more distant views the maunga and proposed vegetation removal will be less discernible (with less than minor visual effects).

In the assessment below, visual effects for visitors and users within the project area are evaluated, together with residential neighbours.

In relation to the rating scale above (and the rating scales for biophysical and landscape character change), it should be noted that the rating is specific to this assessment and is not related to the decision as to whether the application should be publicly notified. With reference to Section 95 of the RMA it is considered that ‘moderate’ used in this assessment

equates to minor adverse effects (adverse effects that are noticeable but will not cause any significant adverse impacts.

Street network users

Users of the street network comprise drivers and pedestrians who may be travelling to/from work or home, or visiting the area. Representative views are included in the attachment to this report and an analysis of representative views for these users is shown in the table below.

Viewpoint	**Comments**	**Visual effects**
1: Doraval Place	Dead end road in commercial/industrial area. Small viewing audience. Fencing, cars and building in foreground partially screen mountain. Exotic trees mainly on left of image (partially screened by foreground trees) and previously cleared area of maunga visible between. Removal of trees will result in some visible change with reduced tree height, but existing native planting will remain – notably along the ridgeline (righthand side of image). New planting will partially replace existing vegetation (and the cleared area).	Low adverse effects
2. Gt South Road/ Bell Avenue	Major arterial route and approach to Ōtāhuhu town centre – through commercial/industrial area. Large viewing audience. Mountain partially visible above foreground clutter of traffic and commercial environment. Removal of trees will result in some visible change although the m majority of trees in this view are native.	Low adverse effects
3. 21 Saleyards Rd	Busy commercial road. Moderate-high viewing audience. Trees contain view which terminates on the maunga and water tower. Vegetation will be mainly unaltered and change unlikely to be noticeable.	Nil or negligible effects
4. 115 Great South Road	Town centre fringe and major arterial route. Large viewing audience.	Nil or negligible effects

	Top of trees and water tower visible in view. Vegetation will be mainly unaltered and change unlikely to be noticeable.	
5. 11 Pukeiti Road	Short through road in commercial/industrial area. Small viewing audience. Maunga and water tower focus of view with buildings in foreground. Majority of trees not affected by proposal – small area on right flank of maunga where trees above slope will be removed.	Very low effects
6. 43 Portage Road	Connecting road between major arterials – mix of residential and commercial development. Small viewing audience. Expansive view of project site with 3 distinct parts: water tower and Pohutukawa on ridgeline with weedy bank below, above residential and commercial; scattered trees on maunga in centre of image, and low lying sports facilities on right of image. Noticeable visual change will occur in the middle part of image where nearly all the trees will be removed resulting in substantial change to part of the view.	Moderate adverse effects initially Low effects at the end of the project
7. Atkinson Avenue/ Princes Street	Major arterial route and approach to Ōtāhuhu town centre – through residential area. Large viewing audience. Mountain is visible above roof tops but is integrated into the wider landscape/treescape. The majority of trees within the area will be removed resulting in some visible change. Distance will moderate effects, however, and the profile of the maunga will become more defined.	Low-moderate adverse effects initially Low effects at the end of the project
8. Bert Henham Park (south)	As above – major arterial route and approach to Ōtāhuhu town centre – through residential area. Large viewing audience. Perpendicular view from street to Bert Henham Park and sports buildings. Buildings on left to be removed and staged removal of trees/future amenity planting around building/parking will protect visual amenity	Low adverse effects

9. Atkinson Avenue/Mt Wellington Highway (Camp Street)	As for View 7 & 8 - major arterial route and approach to Ōtāhuhu town centre – through residential area. Large viewing audience. Wide expansive view of Bert Henham Park with mountain behind and commercial/ sports buildings below. Majority of trees on the maunga would be removed resulting in major change. Staged removal of trees/future amenity planting around building/parking will protect visual amenity	Moderate adverse effects initially Low effects at the end of the project Includes potential future building removal and/ or amenity planting
10. 38 Hillside Road	Local residential street with small viewing audience. The mountain terminates the tree lined view with trees on the maunga visible above foreground trees. In this view the majority of visible trees on the mountain will be removed. Staged removal of trees along Mt Ellington Highway will moderate views in the short term. Effects will also be moderated by distance and foreground trees.	Low adverse effects
11. Bert Henham Park (north)	Major arterial route and southern approach to Ōtāhuhu town centre – through residential area. Large viewing audience. Wide expansive view of Bert Henham Park with mountain in right of image above sports fields and buildings, and merging with development in left of image. A large number of trees on the mountain and in the middle distance (within the parks areas) would be removed although some native tree cover would remain. Negative effects will be increased views of parking and buildings while positive effects will be enhancement of the maunga with enhanced profile and legibility.	Moderate adverse effects initially Low effects at the end of the project Includes potential future building removal and/ or amenity planting

All views are from relatively close proximity, as the relative elevation of the maunga combined with the surrounding terrain and buildings means that only the tops of trees are seen in longer views (with negligible-low visual effects).

The assessment of visual effects shows that the impacts of the tree removal for drivers and pedestrians will vary according to distance and location. From most of the surrounding streets, only the top of the mountain will be visible above foreground development. In these views, although there will be physical and visual change, effects are moderated by distance

and the visual context so that the magnitude of change will be small. As for the landscape character change, the essential profile of the land and maunga will remain, or be enhanced with a new character created through restoration of the visual integrity of the maunga and new vegetation.

Where views include the lower part of the mountain, and in particular those views that incorporate the sports parks in the foreground, the retention of existing trees around the buildings will reduce potential adverse visual effects while the potential removal of existing vacant buildings or new amenity planting will moderate future visual effects and effects of landscape character change.

It should also be noted that where the assessment determines that there will be low effects long term, this is a conservative rating as it does not take account of the positive effects of the enhanced cultural and visual integrity of the landscape as a result of the restoration programme.

Visitors

Visitors to Ōtāhuhu generally access the maunga by car or on foot, with main entry points at Great South Road and Atkinson Avenue. A number of carparks are also accessed from these points.

The entry from Great South Road is likely to have been the historical main entry but is now relatively obscure. It is defined by a number of very large Morton Bay Figs on the south side, however, so that the proposed tree removal will result in visual change. Notwithstanding this, the change is unlikely to be particularly noticeable, and there are other native trees that will be retained (at a higher elevation). Additionally, the existing area to the west of the driveway is proposed to be replanted and restored as wetland, which will visually enhance the entry.

The entry from Atkinson Avenue serves a number of carparks and the adjacent residential lots. There will be no change to this entry, although vegetation in and around the carparks will be removed. Where trees are proposed to be removed within the carpark, they will be replaced with low native groundcover planting.

Visitors can be divided into two main groups – those engaged in active use (using the sports facilities) and those engaged in passive or informal use. Images of these areas are included in the attachment to this report.

For those visitors engaged in active sport, although there will be visual change around the sports facilities arising from tree removal, effects for this user group are rated low as the natural landscape is unlikely to be a focus of attention and the tree removal may not be noticeable or of importance.

For those visitors engaged in passive or informal use, the landscape may form an important part of the activity, and as the tracks are located in the area most affected by tree removals, the visual change is likely to be more noticeable. In addition, there will be some initial visual impacts from retained tree trunks, particularly buttressed roots, although they are expected to be quickly contained and screened by grass and vegetation.

Visual effects are expected to vary for different individuals, depending on the purpose of the visit and the nature of the activity and, as for landscape effects, while the project will have noticeable visual impacts due to the number and size of trees proposed to be removed, the

final outcome will result in positive effects on the integrity of the feature and its landscape through protection and enhancement. This is likely to be appreciated by users sensitive to environmental improvement and is expected to assist in moderating adverse visual effects.

Generally, in relation to informal recreation use of the maunga, the magnitude of visual change resulting from the vegetation removal will be high due to the location and number of trees proposed to be removed, but effects will vary according to the sensitivity of the receiver (as well as their knowledge/perception about the sensitivity of the environment to change – either positive or negative).

Overall, however, the removal of the exotic vegetation will reinstate the natural character of the volcanic feature and mountain, and provides the opportunity to enhance the visitor experience with overall positive effects.

Residential neighbours

As noted in earlier sections, large areas of the surrounding neighbourhood have a commercial/industrial land use with a transient population. Effects for this user group are therefore rated the same as street network users.

Residential neighbours are concentrated on the south and western sides of the mountain. However, views from this area are limited so that available views for neighbours would mainly be those fronting Portage Road and Atkinson Road/Mt Wellington Highway. In addition, there are two residential enclaves next to Bert Henham Park and McManus Park where close views of the proposed tree removal would be obtained. As noted for street network users, views are also obtained from the elevated area around Hillside Road.

Visual effects for neighbours on Portage Road, Atkinson Avenue/Mt Wellington Highway and Hillside Road may be considered similar to effects for road users, although views into the reserves would only be available from elevated viewpoints.

Views for residents at 657-667 Atkinson Avenue and 57–67 Portage Road are represented by views a and b in the attachment to this report.

In View a, only the vegetation on the right side of the image will be affected by the proposal, with the trees in the centre of the image most visible to neighbours. Due to orientation and relative elevation of dwellings, visual effects may vary, but there are likely to be short term impacts during tree removal. Where there is a major change to the scene, however, it is not considered that this necessarily results in adverse visual or amenity effects, and positive effects could arise with reduced shading.

View b illustrates the available views for neighbouring residents, where the vegetation on the left side of the image would be relatively untouched, and the vegetation on the right side of the image would be mostly removed. As a result, there will be major visual change for some neighbours although intervening vegetation and fencing could screen some views. The tree removal activity is also expected to result in short term visual impacts.

Overall, effects for neighbours will depend on their sensitivity to the proposed change and how much they value the existing views of trees. A large apportion of the scene will replace existing trees with grass, except in previously quarried areas where planting restoration is proposed. Grass slopes will allow the maunga profile to be better defined and revealed so that the legibility of the volcanic feature will be enhanced.

Temporary effects

In addition to the impacts of visual change, the location and method of tree removal will also create temporary short term effects, particularly for immediate neighbours. The methodology statement by Treescape sets out the different methods proposed to remove the vegetation, including manual removal, MEWP assisted removal, crane assisted removal, and helicopter assisted removal. Structures such as platforms, cranes, and helicopters will introduce visual features that contrast with the natural character of the maunga. However, their temporary use means their introduction will result in only low adverse visual effects for a limited time frame, while for most viewers their small size relative to the overall scale of the mountain will also minimise effects. For some people, the operation will be of interest and will not have any negative effects.

In addition to temporary operational effects, there could be temporary landscape and visual effects from the retention of tree stumps. Such effects will be minimised as far as possible, and the height of retained stumps will be minimise (max. 1m). It is anticipated that stumps will be quickly contained and screened by grass and vegetation.

7. ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE AUP PROVISIONS

As set out in Section 5, the AUP sets out a detailed and clear policy framework that recognises the landscape values of the volcanic features of the Auckland volcanic field and seeks to protect and, where practicable, enhance these values. The Integrated Management Plan is also focused on restoring and enhancing these values, while the project represents their practical execution.

The proposal is consistent with the overarching objectives contained in the Regional Policy Statement in relation to protecting and enhancing the visual, physical and cultural values of the volcanic feature, and will enhance the landscape values of the maunga, identified as an ONF. Together with the removal of vegetation that is at odds with the values of the mountain, restoration planting will further enhance the landscape values of the ONF.

The proposal is also consistent with the policy framework relating to volcanic viewshafts. The project does not propose any subdivision use or development that could encroach into protected views and erode their significance, and the removal of incongruous vegetation will improve the visual integrity of the volcanic feature This in turn will enhance the contribution the volcanic feature makes to the landscape of Auckland.

In relation to the Open Space – Conservation zone, it is considered that the proposal is consistent with the policy framework that also seeks to ensure that the natural, ecological, landscape, and Mana Whenua values of the zone are enhanced. In particular, the removal of exotic vegetation and proposed restoration planting will restore the landscape values of the maunga, and contribute to re-establishing cultural landscape values by supporting the relationship of Mana Whenua to their ancestral lands. In this respect, the proposal is consistent with the direction provided in the IMP.

The proposal is also generally consistent with the objectives and policies relating to the Open Space – Sports and Active Recreation zone, and tree protection in Sections E15 and E16, as it protects those trees in the open space zones that contribute to the (indigenous) cultural, amenity, landscape and ecological values, and protects and manages indigenous biological diversity and ecosystem services.

Overall, it is concluded that the proposal will realise the outcomes sought by the policy framework in relation to landscape considerations as set out in various sections of the AUP.

8. CONCLUSIONS

The description of the existing landscape character and context shows that Ōtāhuhu is an important volcanic and heritage feature that has been eroded by quarrying and development, together with modification by new plantings and structures.

As part of the Tūpuna Maunga Integrated Management Plan it is proposed to remove exotic vegetation on the maunga in order to preserve and enhance their authenticity and visual integrity - so that they are markers in the landscape, and their cultural and natural features are visually apparent.

The assessment of landscape and visual effects has determined that the proposal to remove exotic vegetation from the volcanic cone, together with native restoration planting, will result in positive effects with regard to biophysical change and landscape quality as well as landscape and natural character.

The assessment of visual effects determined that the extent of visual change resulting from the vegetation removal will vary. There will be noticeable visual change from some viewpoints and for some viewing audiences due to the location and number of trees proposed to be removed. To manage visual effects (and effects of landscape character change) from public places with a large viewing audience, the project has adopted a range of measures. These include a staged removal of trees, a communications programme, and the retention of selected trees that help integrate/screen views of buildings from surrounding streets.

Ultimately, it is concluded that the proposed removal of the exotic vegetation will result in positive effects derived from reinstating the natural character of the volcanic feature and mountain, including the opportunity to enhance the visitor experience.

The assessment determined that visual effects for visitors and residents will vary according to the sensitivity of the receiver, as well as their knowledge/perception about the sensitivity of the environment to change (either positive or negative), and it is concluded that the proposed communications programme will provide an important part in managing expectations and explaining the benefits of the restoration programme.

Finally, it is concluded that the proposal will realise the outcomes sought by the policy framework in relation to landscape considerations as set out in various sections of the AUP. In addition, the proposal will result in positive landscape effects and low adverse visual effects.

Sally Peake
Registered FNZILA Landscape Architect