

Proposed Waikato District Plan

Technical Response to Submissions on Landscape Classifications of the Waikato River
Prepared for Waikato District Council

31 July 2020



1.0 Introduction

Several submissions have been prepared addressing the landscape classification of the Waikato River as an Outstanding Natural Feature, Outstanding Natural Landscape and Significant Amenity Landscape. The submissions received address two main matters being the method of assessment as a whole feature and the second being the inclusion or removal of areas of ONF, ONL or SAL on the River.

The purpose of this technical report is to respond, within the area of expertise, to the matters raised by the submitters and provide recommendations to inform the Section 42A Report.

2.0 Submissions on the Waikato River

The submissions sought the following:

- Identification of the entire Waikato River and its margins (within the Waikato District) as an Outstanding Natural Feature and as an Outstanding Natural Landscape. This submission included supporting and opposing submissions.
- Removal and/or reduction of Significant Amenity Landscape areas, in part and in full, for various properties, including rural residential properties and Huntly River Power Station.

The details of the submitters are included in specific technical responses prepared by the author of this report for the Section 42A Council Officers Report. The purpose of this technical response is to provide further background to these technical responses.

In addressing the submission, the following firstly considers the method of assessment of reviewing and identifying the Operative Waikato District Plan. Secondly the application of the RPS criteria in the identification of the Outstanding Natural Features and Landscapes within the Waikato District.

3.0 Methodology

The difference in method and scale of assessment is the fundamental matter which has resulted in the differences between the submitters identified ONFs and the Waikato District Landscape Study's identified landscapes and features.

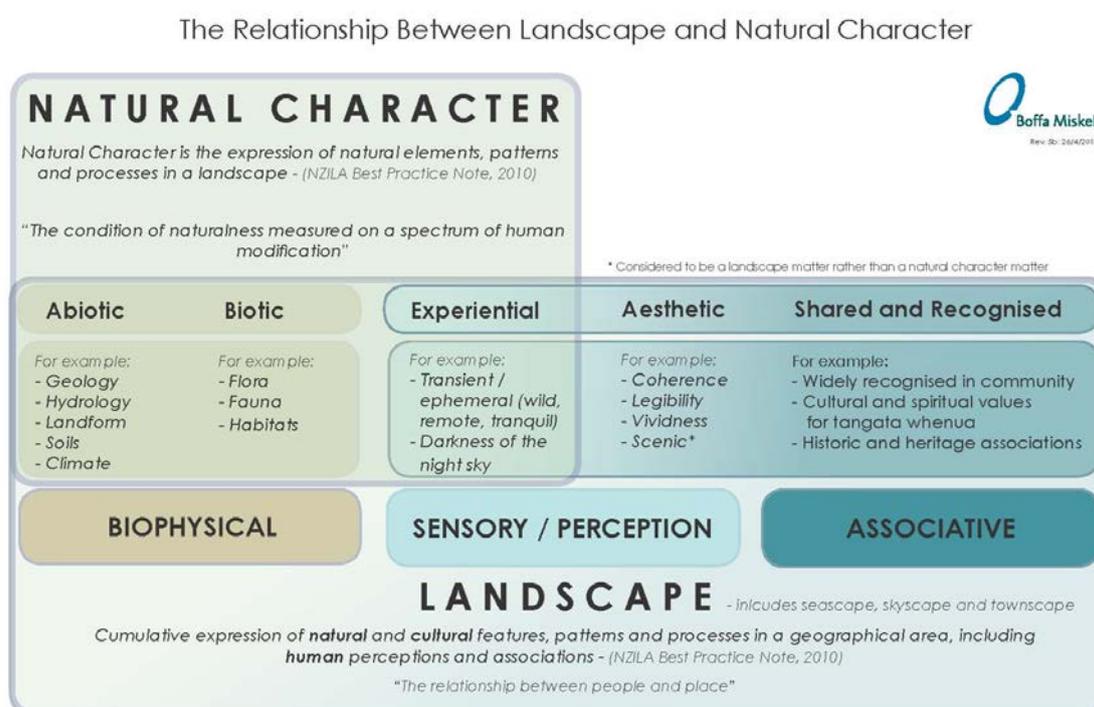
In order to understand why the differences in features identified occur and before addressing those recommended features from the submission, the

The background paper accompanying the submission speaks to the legislation and is derived from the amended Pigeon Bay Criteria and NZILA approach to considering:

1. Biophysical features, patterns and processes may be natural and/or cultural in origin and range from the geology and landform that shape a landscape to the physical artefacts such as roads that mark human settlement and livelihood.

2. Sensory qualities are landscape phenomena as directly perceived by humans, such as the view of a scenic landscape, or the distinctive smell and sound of the foreshore.
3. Associative meanings are spiritual, cultural or social associations with particular landscape elements, features or areas such as pa, kainga, tupuna awa, mahinga kai and waahi tapu, or other sites of historic events or heritage. Associative activities are patterns of socially activity that occur in particular parts of a landscape or example popular walking routes or fishing spots.

In order to respond to the Waikato Regional Policy Statement, Table 12.2 the Waikato District Landscape Study addresses the attributed identified and further considers a further level of consideration of Maori relationship with landscape and features. Figure 1 below demonstrates the three dimensions of landscape under which attributes are grouped:



Also informing the method of assessment and reconfirming this approach are a number of Environment Court matters which speak to the dimensions for consideration and the weighting between these. More recently the *Matakana Island* decision speaks to the weighting given to the Associative dimension and this is on equal weighting to that of the Biophysical and Sensory dimensions. As part of this process the Waikato District Council's Iwi Reference Group were engaged with to provide input using agreed cultural values. This cultural dimension sits across the three dimensions and does not specifically identify cultural landscapes, however, provides a deeper understanding of a Te Ao Maaori world view.

More specifically the study speaks to the following approach toward the cultural and heritage values and the tangata whenua values as extracted below:

CULTURAL AND HERITAGE VALUES

Cultural legibility is a vital component of many overseas landscapes where many centuries of human endeavour can be unravelled through study of the present landscape. In New Zealand this aspect of landscape has received only limited and

belated attention. Waikato District with its rich history and a multitude heritage layers includes both Maaori and European history, as well as more recent multi-cultural influences such as those from Polynesia, Asia and Africa. Maaori heritage values are often associated with significant natural features, that are in many cases now highly modified, such as former wetlands and swamps, as these places were important for mahinga kai (traditional food species and gathering) and supported associated kaainga (villages) and paa (fortified villages). The methodology for gathering information relating to these values are described further below. European heritage values includes numerous historic buildings, protected/ notable trees and a multitude of associations and histories relating to the european settlement and early land wars. A number of sources has been used to inform the European heritage aspect of the landscape, such as the Historic Places Trust and Archaeological Association records, heritage sites listed in the operative District Plan and numerous literature references. The developing awareness of complexity of the 'indigenous cultural landscape' of tangata whenua is covered under the tangata whenua evaluation criterion below. This increased understanding of the value of landscape as a living record of social change, adds to the increasing significance attached to the legibility of our landscapes.

TANGATA WHENUA VALUES

There are a variety of natural features and landscapes that are clearly special or widely known and influenced by their connection to tangata whenua and the associated Maaori values inherent in these places. These landscapes (or the parts of them that remain) have been identified as having particular regional importance to tangata whenua. This input has been provided the various representatives of the Waikato District Plan Iwi Reference Group.

These values can only be appropriately addressed by tangata whenua. To identify values and/or sites of cultural landscape significance to tangata whenua within Waikato a desktop review of relevant planning and historical documents.

Outstanding Test: *For a feature or landscape to score highly for Associative Values, the feature or landscape will need to contain exceptional and/or very high shared and recognised and cultural (including tangata whenua) and heritage values. There is a difference between an acknowledged area of value such as a reserve, and an association with an area due to it having been written about or painted. Therefore, the measure of integrity is useful to differentiate those landscapes that currently demonstrate shared and recognised values through various forms of functioning protection and management such as legislative or voluntary systems. For heritage values, the measurement and extent to which the landscape has been modified with consideration to whether the key characteristics of the historic period have been retained will be crucial. In terms of tangata whenua values, integrity refers to the manner in which the area fully embodies their culture and beliefs and in particular the spiritual connection between the Maaori community and their environment*

3.1 Landscapes versus Features:

Natural Landscapes are larger areas that are perceived as a whole, which can include a number of natural features within them. Landscapes can be either experienced from within or seen as the whole of the outlook. Landscape boundaries can coincide with visual catchments. Natural Landscape Features are discrete elements within a landscape, which are generally experienced from outside the features boundaries. Features display integrity as a whole element and can often be clearly distinguished from the surrounding landscape, which forms the context around them. Generally features are defined by their geomorphological landform boundaries.

However in some instances (such as areas of native bush), features are defined more readily by land cover characteristics. Small landscapes can nest within larger landscapes and are scale dependant. For example, the Te Kaha Point duneland is a landscape feature within the Whaingaroa Harbour landscape. At a wider scale the harbour and its margins are a feature of the volcanic landscape of the area, which also includes the Raglan settlement and Karioi.

The Waikato River is recognised as a defining element of the Waikato Region and Waikato District's landscape. The river has been formative in the landscape which it moves through and retains this function at the lower reaches of the river, where modifications to the river margins are less restrictive to its natural function. Waikato District contains the lower reaches of the Waikato River, and represents a feature within the lower Waikato Plains landscape.

3.2 Landscape Areas

In assessing the River as an element or feature within a broader landscape the scale of assessment has considered the four landscape character areas in which the River passes through, being *River*, *Inland Range*, *Wetlands* and *Northern Hills*. The character areas have been informed by the biophysical and cultural relationships with the landscape, including specifically considering the Waikato River relationship to Maaori.

As a result of this approach the River has been assessed in 'parts' whilst also considering the 'whole' river in the wider landscape of the District and Region. This approach has been expressed in the mapping of the river and its margins as features along the extent of the river, resulting in areas of the river being evaluated and identified as components rather than the river and its margins as a singularly mapped feature. This follows a consistent approach with the remainder of the landscape study whereby features and landscapes are considered as a whole and in more detailed parts.

To prepare a study where the river as a whole feature is identified, the scale of the Landscape Study would require reviewing to broaden the identification of similar broad features in the landscape, including the ranges, harbours, volcanic landscapes and coastal features. This would, as a result, require reconsideration of management methods, to recognise the broader degree of identification and recognise attributes which do not demonstrate a high or very high degree of condition or value.

3.3 Evaluation Scaling

The method applied to the evaluation of outstanding natural features and landscapes considers the same three dimensions. Policy direction from the RMA 1991, NZCPS 2010, and the Waikato Regional Policy Statement do not provide separate criteria or attributes that distinguish a difference between a feature or landscape. As such the method of evaluation considers geopreservation sites as part of the overall evaluation however does not weight these more heavily than the remaining dimensions (Sensory and Associative) for either a feature or landscape. The overall evaluation approach applies a seven point scale which is not cumulative in a numerical calculation but considers the overall landscape or feature in the round.

3.3.1 Scale

Turning to scale, the Waikato Landscape Study, comprised a review of the Waikato District's Landscape's and undertook an approach to characterise the District at a broader scale and then consider the existing and potential additional landscapes of importance.

3.3.2 Evaluation

Consideration of findings from the desktop review and on-site investigations assisted the study team to determine a landscape's or feature's biophysical, sensory or associative values. This essentially used a seven-point scale from Very High through to Very Low. Under the methodology, outstanding landscapes or features contained at least a Very High or High attribute scoring. It was acknowledged that not all landscapes needed to score Very High in every category to be considered as an Outstanding Natural Feature or Landscape (ONF/L), although this depended on the landscape under consideration.

While some landscapes/ features have high amenity values ONF/Ls were only identified in areas that also contained other high landscape values, such as Mt Karioi, which in addition to scenic or sensory values includes, high biophysical and associational values. Landscapes and features containing particular scenic values, but a noticeably lower rating of other landscape values, have been identified as Significant Features and Landscapes (SF/Ls). The values of these SF/Ls are often more alike to Significant Amenity Landscapes (SAL), which have been identified in other districts under S7(c) of the RMA. Through case law SALs are often associated with rural landscapes that have an 'arcadian' character.

The threshold between SF/L and ONF/L was defined based on a rating for each of the three attributes outlined above. ONF/Ls were defined as those landscapes and features that would reach an overall rating of greater than 'High' with no one of the attributes rated lower than 'Moderate'. A few SF/Ls had a low rating for one of the attributes but were overall still rated as moderate- high. This allows for landscapes and features to be considered as SF/Ls that may for example be relatively modified biophysically but very important in terms of their cultural associations.

3.4 Outstanding Natural Landscapes

Natural Landscapes are larger areas that are perceived as a whole, which can include a number of natural features within them. Landscapes can be either experienced from within or seen as the whole of the outlook. Landscape boundaries can coincide with visual catchments.

Within this District the Outstanding Natural Landscapes have been identified as Hunua Ranges, Mt Karioi and Mt Pirongia. Within these features are numerous water courses which are formative of this landscape and in turn would be representative as features within the landscape.

3.5 Outstanding Natural Features

Natural Landscape Features are discrete elements within a landscape, which are generally experienced from outside the features boundaries. Features display integrity as a whole element and can often be clearly distinguished from the surrounding landscape, which forms the context around them. Generally features are defined by their geomorphological landform boundaries. However in some instances (such as areas of native bush) are defined more readily by land cover characteristics.

Within this District the Outstanding Natural Features have been identified as Pourauroa Stream Bush, **Waikato River and Wetlands**, Whangamarino Wetland, Lake Waikare, Lake Whangape, Taupiri Range, Te Hoe, Hakarimata Range, Kokako Hills, Wairenga (Bridal Veil Falls), Manuaitu and Potahi Point.

3.6 Significant Amenity Landscapes or Features

The term 'Significant' has been used in this study to identify natural features and landscapes that do not meet the quality threshold for 'Outstanding' in terms of their values. These areas were identified due to their relatively high landscape value, which in the view of the study team lies just below or around the threshold for ONF/L identification.

Within this District the Significant Amenity Landscapes or Features have been identified as **Waikato River Margins**, Onewhero Tuff Ring, Alexandra Redoubt Bush, Pukekawa, Rataroa Hills, Te Hoe Hills, Opuatia Wetland, Te Hehe Bush, Te Umukaraka Bush, Kaawa Dunes including Matira Sand Dune, Waimahi Dunes, Te Kotuku Dunes, Taupiri Range Lower Slopes, Karioi Lower Slopes, and Toreparu Wetland.

4.0 Response to Submissions

4.1 Features vs. Landscape

In assessing the River as an element or feature within a broader landscape the scale of assessment has considered the four landscape character areas in which the River passes through, being *River, Inland Range, Wetlands and Northern Hills*. The character areas have been informed by the biophysical and cultural relationships with the landscape, including specifically considering the Waikato River relationship to Maori.

As a result of this approach the River has been assessed in 'parts' whilst considering the 'whole' river in the wider landscape of the District and Region. This approach has been expressed in the mapping of the river and its margins as features along the extent of the river, resulting in areas of the river being evaluated and identified as components rather than the river and its margins as a singularly mapped feature. This approach follows a consistent approach with the remainder of the landscape study and its review.

To provide consistency the request to identify the river as both an outstanding natural feature and an outstanding natural landscape, is inconsistent with the Waikato Landscape Study's approach to distinguishing the difference between the two. **It is considered that the Waikato River be assessed as a Feature.**

4.2 Assessment scale – parts vs. whole river.

The Landscape Study approach considers the 'areas' the River passes through and in doing so considers the river as a feature with different sections that are informed by the surrounding landscape character. In doing so there are distinctive 'character areas' where the river and its margins vary in condition and extent.

Recognising the Waikato River is a connected feature that forms a connected cultural landscape, the indicators to the 'areas' along the river are informed primarily by the biophysical and sensory dimensions. There are varying degrees of condition and value of the attributes that inform the biophysical and sensory values along the river corridor. These include:

- Modified river margins to include stop banks, restricting the natural hydrological patterns of the Rivers water body.
- Varying biophysical characteristics of the river hydrology and geomorphology including narrow and incised, low and wide and meandering and shallow with islands to a sand spit river mouth.
- Modified biotic condition of the River and its margins including the presence, and in some instances dominance of weed and pest species.
- Varying degrees of land use activities along the River margin including:
 - Agriculture
 - Rural Residential Housing
 - Residential
 - Commercial, including towns
 - Industrial, including electricity generation.

As a result there are varying degrees of attributes amongst the biophysical, sensory and associate dimensions, which require unique identification to inform management outcomes for the River and its environs.

Turning to the waterbody identification, the lower reaches of the river where the water body forms part of a connected delta river system and adjacent river plains the identification has extended into the water body. Whereas where the river extends into a singular water body with a clearly defined river margin the margins have only been identified.

4.3 Degree of Classification

As a result of the Landscape Study there are two classifications identified along the Waikato River; 1. Outstanding Natural Features (ONF), and 2. Significant Amenity Landscape Areas (SAL).

Submissions received for the Waikato River request two main and diverging outcomes:

1. The request that the 'whole' of the Waikato River and its margins are identified as Outstanding. In this regard this relates to Waikato Tainui and Turangawaewae Trust Board request to identify the River as an ONF and as an ONL. There is also a submission to include a SAL alongside the River mouth as an ONF by the Geoscience Society of New Zealand.
2. The request to remove in whole or in part Significant Amenity Landscape areas from properties. These relate to three main areas along the river:
 - a. Industrial activities at the Rivers edge – Huntly Power Station
 - b. Rural residential activities alongside the River
 - c. Waikato River flood plains at the lower reaches of the River.

4.3.1 Outstanding Natural Feature – Waikato River and Wetlands

The lower delta extent of the Waikato River has been identified as demonstrating high degrees of condition and value pertaining to the biophysical, sensory and associative dimensions. This extent of the river is distinctive from the remainder of the river environs and is highly expressive of the abiotic and biotic processes which have and continue to form it. The extent of wetland margins and islands demonstrate seasonal and environmental changes that contribute to the transient values experienced.

The outer margins remain modified with a narrowed flood plain as a result of adjoining landform and land use modifications.

4.3.1.1 Mapping Omission and Correction Recommendation

Through the review of submission, it was recognised a mapping omission occurred on the lower reaches of the Waikato River at the boundary of the Coastal Marine Area line (CMA). This is considered an omission in that the area downstream of the CMA should be identified as part of the lower reaches of the ONF.

This area of the water body meets the river mouth which is defined by a meandering river mouth framed by the Okariha Sand Spit, on its southern edge, and the Waiuku productive forestry block to the north. The dynamic interrelationship with the Waikato River's hydrology and the existing high natural character area of the Okariha Sand Spit are legible as one area.

It is recommended that the extension of the ONF from the CMA to the coast should occur and recognise the inclusion of the sand spit as part of the ONF extent of the Waikato River and Wetlands area.

It is noted that the inclusion of Okariha Sand Spit as an ONF as part of the Waikato River and Wetlands area also provides relief to part of the submission received from the Geoscience Society of NZ, Bruce Hayward.

4.3.2 Significant Amenity Landscape

The SAL areas identified on the river occur at the lower reaches and transition from the delta and its series of smaller islands and wetlands, to a singular channel with adjacent wetland areas and modified land uses. Drainage patterns, access tracks and modified biotic values become more apparent with the larger island include a mixture of agricultural land uses and an exotic / native vegetation cover mix.

Here the river plains widen demonstrating the formative river plains and hydrology of the River. The further upstream the more modified these areas are. Including cropping and extractive land uses.

The margins of the river, become more modified as less expressive of the natural abiotic and biotic attributes of the biophysical environment. These include stop banks and pastoral land uses immediately within the river margins.

Moving upstream the River transitions from wider flood plains to a more channelised singular channel with the margins contributing to main 'terrestrial' biophysical and sensory dimensions of the River environment.

Through submissions there are significant alterations to the River margins at the Huntly Power Station site which require, as a result of degraded site specific values, of removal of the SAL around the area. This is pertinent to the existing condition and requires ground truthing to determine the extent of reduction required.

4.3.2.1 Mapping Correction Recommendations

In review of submissions received some mapping corrections are required to more accurately:

- **reflect the water's edge extent of the Significant Amenity Landscape Areas along the river,**
- **Remove areas where the 'interrelationship with the River is less apparent (Fulton Hogan Quarry Tuakau, 275 Parker Lane and 278 Bluff Road)**
- **Extend the 'waters edge of the River margin SALs to reflect the true river banks**
- **Reduce the extent of SAL adjoining the Huntly River Power Station Site and Scott Farms Coal Ash.**
- **Reduce and amend mapping anomalies for 185B Hakarimata Road – where the SAL extends across Hakarimata Road into a dwelling.**

All of the above recommendations require ground truthing to determine an accurate extent of modification

5.0 Summary of Recommendations

Overall the Waikato River is undoubtedly a culturally significant feature within the Waikato Region's landscape and in turn the Waikato District's landscape. Much like many of the Waikato landscape character areas, the river and its environs have varying degrees of biophysical, sensory and associative values along its length.

The approach undertaken focuses on providing a degree of analysis that provides a reflection of the attributes condition on the ground that are balanced across the dimensions of biophysical, sensory and associative. The river's margins and the surrounding landscape alongside the river environs informs the 'areas' considered in parts with the mapping expressing these values in the extent of the mapped areas.

By retaining this approach of considering the Waikato River as a feature moving through a series of landscapes, set within a broader landscape, the identification of 'parts' of the River is considered appropriate.

Recognising the submissions provided the following recommendations are with regard to the approach and mapping of ONF, ONL and SAL identification:

1. Retain the existing approach to identification of the Waikato River as a Feature.
2. Retain consideration of the River in parts to reflect the character areas and varying segments of the River within the Waikato District.
3. Amend the ONF of the Waikato River and Wetlands to include the lower reach and Okariha Sand Spit (currently SAL)
4. Undertake mapping amendments to the SALs to:
 - a. reflect the water's edge extent of the Significant Amenity Landscape Areas along the river,
 - b. Remove areas where the 'interrelationship with the River is less apparent (Fulton Hogan Quarry Tuakau, 275 Parker Lane and 278 Bluff Road)
 - c. Extend the 'waters edge of the River margin SALs to reflect the true river banks
 - d. Reduce the extent of SAL adjoining the Huntly River Power Station Site and Scott Farms Coal Ash.
 - e. Reduce and amend mapping anomalies for 185B Hakarimata Road – where the SAL extends across Hakarimata Road into a dwelling.

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