



MEMO: LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS ASSESSMENT

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Subject: Landscape and Visual Effects Assessment Memo

Introduction

The following memo outlines the anticipated landscape and visual effects associated with the installation of new palisade fencing within Outstanding Natural Features and Landscapes (ONFL) plan areas located in Mount Maunganui.

The LVA process provides a framework for evaluating and identifying the nature and significance of potential impacts that may result from a proposed development, particularly those that are within ONFL plan areas. These impacts can include changes to physical landscape elements, modification to the existing landscape character and associated effects on visual amenity as experienced by viewers.

The methodology employed for this memo follows best practice, including those outlined in the *'Te Tangi a Te Manu: Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines'*¹. While a full LVA has not been undertaken for the proposed additional palisade fencing, the anticipated effects have been evaluated based on our professional expertise, familiarity with the site and surrounding landscape and experience with similar assessments in the area.

A detailed LVA submitted as part of RC29606 titled *'Mauao Placemaking Improvements'*² has been previously conducted and is based on elements of similar nature, observing that resource consent has since been approved for these proposals. This previous assessment undertaken by Beca during 2022 covers various placemaking elements on Mauao, such as entrance pou, raised timber platforms, balustrades, seating, terracing, steps and vegetation clearances and serves as an important reference in understanding the broader landscape context for the current proposal. Consequently, it is considered that an in-depth assessment of the proposal is unwarranted. This memo presents an assessment of the proposal's significance, while also acknowledging the objectives and analysis established in previous assessments.

These comments are based on a review of the application drawings of which have been prepared by Law Creative, dated October 2024.

¹ *'Te Tangi a te Manu: Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines'*. (Tuia Pito Ora New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects, July 2022)

² *'Mauao Placemaking Improvements: Landscape Assessment'*. (Beca, December 2022)

1. Site Context

The proposal is located on Mauao, a prominent volcanic landmark at the entrance to Tauranga Harbour. It is visible across the Bay of Plenty and is a significant feature in both the natural landscape and urban environment, with neighbouring high-density residential development (see Figure 1).

Biophysical Values

Mauao's landscape combines natural features, such as regenerating native bush and steep volcanic slopes, with human-modified areas, including grazed pasture and built infrastructure. Key cultural elements include walking tracks, seating, signage, and other facilities supporting public access and maintenance. Vegetation is being restored through replanting efforts.

Perceptual and Experiential Values

Mauao is a highly visible and valued landmark in the region, contributing to Tauranga's identity. Its distinctive form, vegetation, and coastal relationship define its perceptual value, with strong connections to both the local community and surrounding landscapes.

Associative Values

Mauao is a sacred site for Tauranga Moana iwi, with significant archaeological features such as terraces and middens. These cultural values, along with its historical role as a navigational landmark, make Mauao a place of deep ancestral and community importance. Current and proposed improvements are located in proximity to these key cultural sites.

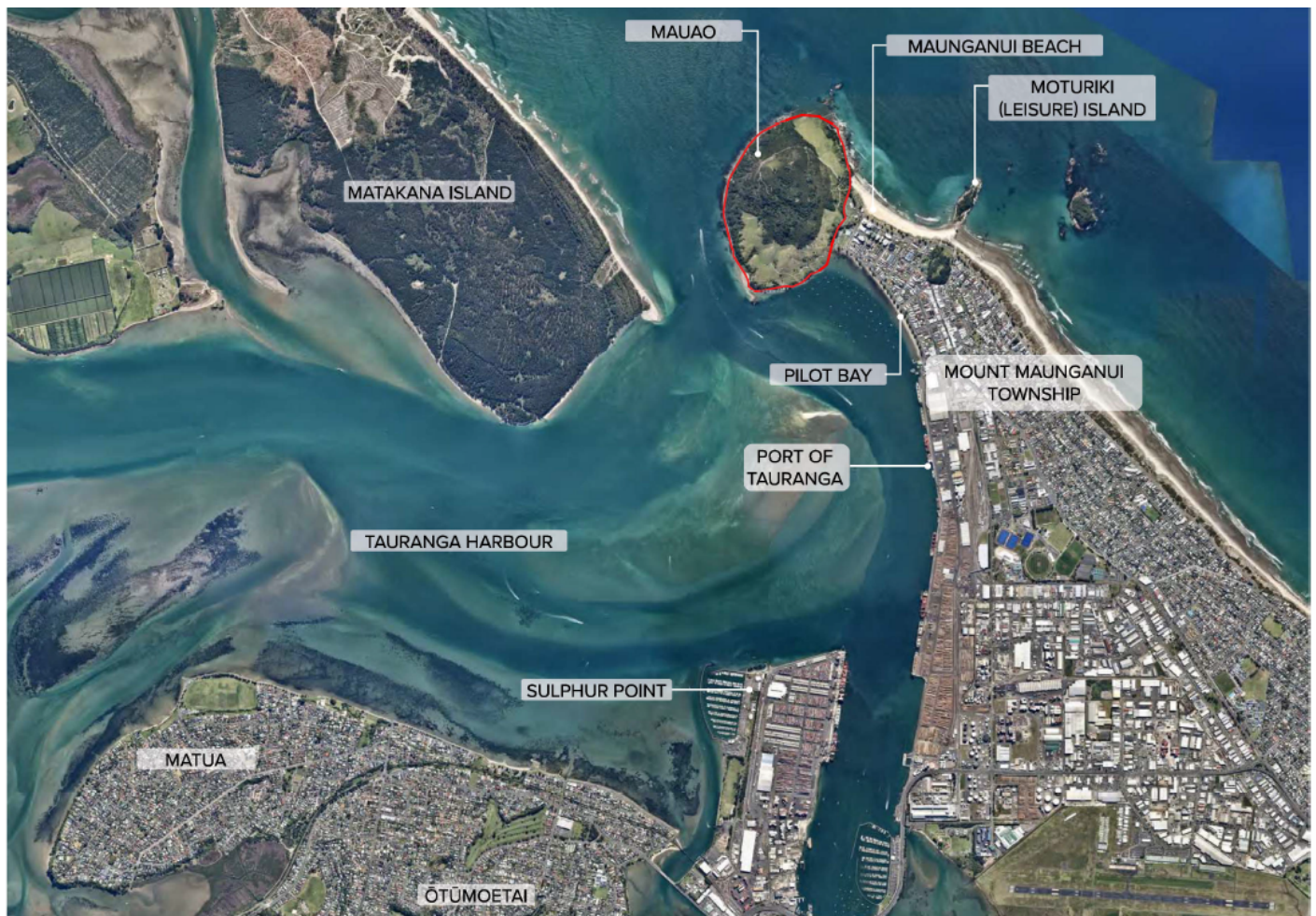


Figure 1: Site Context Map (Beca, 2022)

2. The Proposal

The project commenced in 2021 and involves a series of components, including the removal of exotic tree species, the dismantling of the trig at the summit of Mauao and the installation of a 'cultural compass' and mauri stone at the summit. More recently, elements such as interpretive signage and seating have been provided.

This memo does not reiterate the descriptions of the wider placemaking project, as these are comprehensively set out in the LVA prepared by Beca as part of RC29606. These descriptions have been adopted and along with the prior assessment details, serve as the foundation for the assessment comments.

The purpose of this LVA memo has been developed to evaluate the potential impacts of additional proposed placemaking improvements at Mauao, Mount Maunganui. The additional improvements comprise of seating and palisade fencing across specific locations, all of which are classified as a non-complying activity under the Tauranga City Plan. While the seating is permitted within the Mauao ONFL plan area, the palisade fencing is not. Hence, the focus of this memo is centred around the additional palisade fences at the three proposed locations on Mauao (see Figure 2).

It is important to note that the landscape character and ONFL values of Mauao are rated as moderate to high, while its natural character values are considered high. Mauao holds significant cultural value for the iwi of Tauranga Moana.



Figure 2: Location of the three sites for the proposed additional palisade fencing (Law Creative, 2024)

3. Water Tank Area

Biophysical Values

The proposed additional palisade fencing is located on a grassed bund that adjoins the grazed pasture on the lower southern slopes of Mauao (see Figure 3). The bund rises distinctly from the Motukauri walking track, with rows of mature poplar and juvenile karaka trees providing partial screening of the bund and water tank from the south. Below the bund, the land slopes steeply towards the coast, where it is covered by dense vegetation. A large concrete water tank, painted with a local mural is positioned at the northern end of the bund with steel barriers to limit public access. Bordered by mature Pōhutukawa tree immediately to the north, the steep pastured slopes continue leading up to the regenerating vegetation towards summit. To the west, the entrance to Tauranga Harbour lies between Mauao and Matakana Island.

Perceptual and Experiential Values

The site is visible and can be experienced from a range of vantage points. Direct viewshafts are possible for people using the Motukauri and Te Ara Tūtanga (base) tracks. Additionally, the site is partially visible to individuals aboard recreational boats, shipping vessels and cruise ships navigating Tauranga Harbour, as well as to those located at the Port of Tauranga or on the beach at Matakana Island. Due to the prominent location of the proposed palisade fences and the wide expanse of grazed pasture on the southern slopes, the proposal will be highly visible from the bordering Motukauri track.

Associative Values

The area surrounding the water tank is of historical significance, situated near key freshwater sources, including Waipatukakahu (water for washing clothes) and Waitapu (sacred water). The presence of shell middens and terracing also indicates a history of extensive occupation. The site overlooks Ruarapapari Pā, with Hukitawatawa and Motukauri historically serving as gateways to Mauao, offering sheltered landing areas below the site.



Figure 3: Location of the proposed additional palisade fencing near the water tank

4. Waipatukakahu

Biophysical Values

The proposed additional palisade fencing in Waipatukakahu is positioned between two distinct areas. Steep pastured slopes are found to the north, while to the south the terrain transitions to a gentler gradient with recent plantings of harakeke and scattered juvenile and mature trees throughout (see Figure 4). An exposed freshwater stream runs through the area, where it is then channelled beneath the diverging Te Ara Tūtanga (base) track. Mature trees, including Pōhutukawa, frame the site at both the eastern and western ends of the proposed palisade fencing. Additional improvements, such as new bench seating and wayfinding signage is also found within the area. Directly south of the main track, a grass embankment gradually slopes down into a coastal vegetation buffer, which separates the main track from the beach below.

Perceptual and Experiential Values

The site and proposal are highly visible and can be observed from a variety of locations. Users of the Te Ara Tūtanga (base) track, which runs directly adjacent to the site, have unobstructed views. Clear sightlines of the proposed additional fencing are also provided from the Motukauri track, located further up the Maunga. The site is naturally framed by mature trees on the eastern and western boundaries with a coastal vegetation strip immediately above the beach, offering partial sightlines for those on the beach below. The site is also partially visible from the Port of Tauranga and Tauranga City. Due to the prominent location of the proposed palisade fences and the natural framing provided by the surrounding vegetation and grazed pasture, the proposal is particularly visible to those aboard recreational boats, shipping vessels, and cruise ships in Tauranga Harbour.

Associative Values

The area surrounding the location of the proposal contains significant archaeological features, including exposed middens on the hillside and terracing across the grazed pasture slopes to the north, indicative of past occupation. The freshwater stream that flows through the site is also historically linked to Waipatukakahu (water for washing clothes) and Waitapu (sacred water). The site also possesses two large symbolic weaving needles, emphasising the significance of harakeke in traditional weaving practices in the area.



Figure 4: Location of the proposed additional palisade fencing in Waipatukakahu

5. Waikorire Entrance

Biophysical Values

The proposed palisade fencing is located at the end of the paved Pilot Bay Quay boat trailer parking area, flanking both sides of the entrance to the Te Ara Tūtanga (base) track (see Figure 5). The fencing in this area extends across both the Road Reserve and Mauao Historic Reserve boundaries. On the northern side, the fence is positioned at the base of a slope and above a low stone retaining wall that frames the area. The area includes evidence of archaeological features, such as middens. A large Pohutukawa grows from the embankment directly above the proposed fence. The embankment beneath the Pohutukawa consists of a mix of low-lying flax plants, unmanaged grass and exposed Pohutukawa roots that assist with stabilising the slope. On the southern edge of the entrance, the fence is situated on level ground, gradually descending into a vegetated slope that serves as a buffer between the track and the beach below. Of the three proposed locations for additional palisade fencing on Mauao, this area contains the highest concentration of built elements.

Perceptual and Experiential Values

The site offers a variety of views and experiences. These include people entering or exiting the Te Ara Tūtanga track from Pilot Bay, launching boats from the Pilot Bay boat ramp or visiting Pilot Bay Beach and the boardwalk. It also includes those participating in water sports, such as kayaking or stand-up paddleboarding, as well as residents from the adjacent urban area who have views from both the street and residential properties. Visitors from the nearby Mount Maunganui Beachside Holiday Park also contribute to the range of experiences. Given the proposal's location at the entrance to Mauao and its proximity to the urban environment, the palisade fencing will be highly visible. However, a key consideration when assessing the visual effects is that it will be observed and experienced within the context of the surrounding urban landscape and the grazed pasture slopes directly above the site. Strategically placed, the fencing plays a key role in enhancing the gateway experience to Mauao.

Associative Values

Archaeological features are clearly visible in the surrounding area, including exposed middens on the hillside, the remnants of a historic stone jetty along the shoreline and terracing on the grazed slopes of Mauao. The Cultural Values Assessment identifies Waikorire as the traditional land gateway to Mauao. The pā sites of Taumatautakitaki and Te Pae o Para, along with their associated terraces and shell middens serve as significant indications of past human settlement in the area. Waitapu (sacred water), also known as Waiparera's well, is found near the location of the proposed palisade fencing.

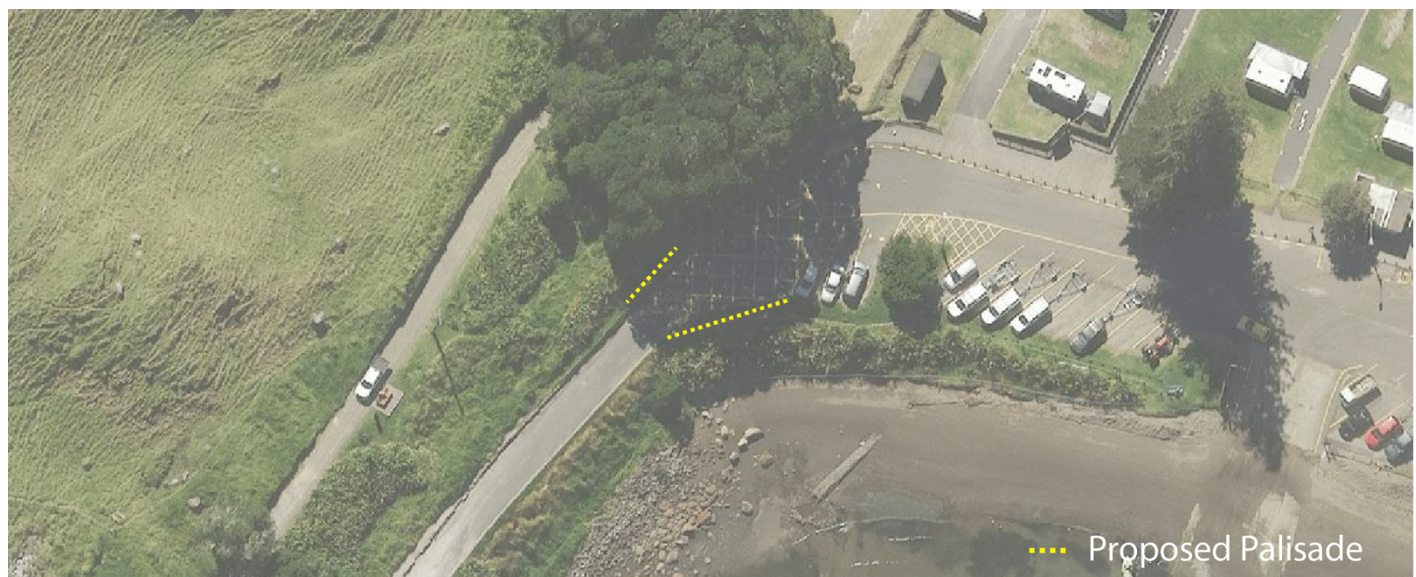


Figure 5: Location of the proposed additional palisade fencing at the Waikorire Entrance

6. Relevant Statutory Provisions

The proposed additional palisade fencing is situated within the Passive Open Space - Conservation Zone as defined in the Tauranga City Plan. The additional palisade fencing is classified as a non-complying (NC) activity due to their placement within an Outstanding Natural Features and Landscapes (ONFL) plan area. This designation underscores the need to address key considerations related to landscape effects as part of the assessment process.

A comprehensive review of the relevant statutory provisions can be found in *Mauao Placemaking Improvements - Landscape Assessment - Appendix 05*, authored by Beca, dated 11 December 2022.

7. Effects Assessment

This assessment evaluates the existing landscape character and visual amenity as a baseline for determining the potential effects of the proposed additional palisade fencing on Mauao.

The potential effects can be classified into two primary categories. Landscape effects pertain to changes in the physical landscape, which may alter its characteristics, attributes, or inherent values. Visual effects relate to modifications in specific views, which could impact the visual amenity experienced by individuals in the area.

Landscape Effects Comments

Assessing landscape effects requires a comprehensive understanding of the landscape's character, significance and value. By establishing this baseline, it is possible to evaluate the sensitivity of the landscape and the extent of change that may result from the proposal. The sensitivity of a landscape is influenced by how much change a particular area or feature can absorb without compromising its key characteristics or values. Mauao's landscape, with its ONFL status, is highly sensitive. However, the proposed palisade fencing is expected to have minimal impact. Its design ensures that it will not disrupt the natural terrain or other significant features and its scale ensures it remains a small-scale intervention within the broader landscape.

While Mauao already contains several significant manmade modifications, such as vegetation clearances for farming and graded walking tracks, these changes have had a greater impact on the landscape's physical characteristics. In contrast, the proposed palisade fencing will be confined to specific areas, with a minimal physical footprint, preserving the overall character of the landscape. The extensive openness of the surrounding environment allows it to absorb minor cultural elements, such as fencing, without compromising its natural character. Built elements such as fencing are compatible with the existing cultural features on Mauao, where similar structures are already present. As a result, introducing additional palisade fencing will not be interpreted as a significant departure from what currently exists.

The palisade fencing serves a functional role, offering protective benefits to areas of significance such as the terracing near Waipatukakahu, slope stability near Waikorire entrance and planting near the water tank. By safeguarding these features, the fencing supports the integrity of the landscape while mitigating any potential environmental impacts. Overall, the proposal will not significantly alter the site's spatial qualities, such as expansive views or the sense of openness that characterises Mauao. Instead, it is believed that the palisade fencing will integrate into the environment in a manner that respects the landforms and significant viewshafts (see Figure 6), while recognising the necessity for minor modification.

In summary, the proposed installation of palisade fencing will result in minimal modification to the physical landscape. The design and scale of the fencing is intended to have minimal impact on the landscape's key characteristics, thereby preserving its integrity and natural character. The introduction of the palisade fencing will contribute to the protection of both cultural and natural features, ensuring that the overall landscape effects remain low and the broader landscape's inherent qualities are maintained.



Figure 6: Illustrative perspective showing the proposed additional palisade fencing near the water tank

Visual Effects Comments

A visual framework has been established to identify the areas where the proposed palisade fencing may be visible, the potential viewers and the key public and private viewpoints from which visual effects will be evaluated. The visual catchment of the three areas is primarily defined by the walking tracks, beaches, harbour, and surrounding landscape. The most significant sightlines in relation to the proposal are those from the Te Ara Tūtanga (base track) and Motukauri walking tracks, as these areas are most likely to be impacted visually due to their proximity to the proposed palisade fencing.

The design of the proposed palisade fencing has been conceived with visual permeability in mind. The spacing between the posts and pickets, along with the modest profile and dimensions of the pickets ensures that the fence allows for unobstructed sightlines through its structure (see Figure 8). Furthermore, the fence is constructed with posts that extend to a height of 1.8m, while the pickets between the posts reach a maximum height of 1.5m. This design consideration results in a fence of modest overall height, with the 1.5m pickets playing a key role in minimising its visual impact. While the darker colour of the fence may draw some attention, the overall design facilitates a visual connection between the viewer and the surrounding natural landscape of which mitigates the extent to which the fencing dominates the view. The colour palette has been selected to complement the existing seating and wayfinding signage suite in the area, ensuring that the palisade fencing integrates with the broader cultural elements and contributes to a cohesive visual character within the landscape.



Figure 7: Illustrative perspective showing the proposed additional palisade fencing at Waipatukakahu

Despite these design considerations, the proposed fencing is expected to cause some noticeable visual effects. Users of the Te Ara Tūtanga (base) walking track and particularly those on the Motukauri track, will directly interact with the additional palisade fencing near the water tank, where no fencing previously existed. In this location, the visual effect of the fencing will be more prominent as it introduces a new cultural element to the landscape.

The proposed palisade fencing near the water tank is expected to have a more noticeable visual impact during the establishment phase of the flax. However, once the flax has matured, its height and spread will closely match that of the fence, resulting in a significant reduction in visual impact and making the fence less prominent. Given the presence of existing large built and modified elements in the area, such as the water tank and grass bund, the fencing is anticipated to have a comparatively lesser visual impact.

The visual effect at Waipatukakahu is anticipated to be less significant, as an existing fence is already present. The proposed palisade fencing will be situated further from the viewer, reducing its overall visual prominence (see Figure 7). In this location, the fencing is positioned at the base of the steeper slopes and is not placed in a way that obstructs views of significant features, further minimising its visual impact on the distinctive elements that characterise Mauao.

The natural character of the Waikorire Entrance is assessed as low, primarily due to substantial modifications such as the paved entryway for vehicles (see Figure 8), car parking area, nearby roads, the spread of exotic grasses on the embankment and the nearby presence of Mount Maunganui's urban environment. Given these existing modifications, the installation of palisade fencing in this location is expected to have minimal impact on the site's natural character.

Considering the design, placement and proximity of the proposed fencing to key sightlines in each of the three locations, the overall visual effect is anticipated to be of low-moderate degree. While it introduces a new cultural element to the landscape, the fencing will not significantly alter the visual experience. Instead, its strategic placement will allow it to integrate with the existing significant natural and cultural features of the area, contributing to the wider landscape's visual character without dominating it. The low-moderate degree of visual effect reflects the balance between the proposed palisade fencing's presence and its tactical design, which aims to minimise its visual impact and remain unobtrusive within the landscape.



Figure 8: Illustrative perspective showing the proposed additional palisade fencing at the Waikorire Entrance

8. Recommendations

Height Restriction

- Ensure the height of the palisade fence posts do not exceed 1.8m, with the pickets between them restricted to a maximum height of 1.5m to preserve the visual integrity of the surrounding landscape and prevent the fence from becoming an overly prominent feature in the area.
- This height limit will help minimise the potential obstruction of views and reduce the visual bulk of the fence, maintaining the landscape's openness and visual connectivity.

Colour Selection

- Select a fence colour that is subtle and blends well with the natural environment, which is not excessively dark to avoid creating a stark contrast with the surrounding landscape.
- Opt for neutral tones such as a charcoal or light brown, enabling the fence to integrate with the natural environment without drawing undue attention.

Consistent Spacing

- The spacing between the pickets should be uniform and consistent across the full extent of the fencing to ensure a visually continuous appearance.
- Consistent spacing will enhance the visual permeability of the fence, allowing for less obstructed views and minimising its visual impact on the surrounding landscape.

Consideration of Alternative Materials

- Investigate the feasibility of using alternative fencing materials, such as wire fencing or other lightweight options particularly near the water tank area where users will be in proximity.
- Other visually permeable options have the potential to further minimise any adverse visual effects in this area, allowing the surrounding landscape to remain more visible while still serving as a functional barrier.

Implementing these recommendations will help mitigate potential adverse landscape and visual effects of the proposed palisade fencing, supporting its integration with the surrounding landscape.

9. Conclusion

The installation of additional palisade fencing in the three designated areas of Mauao will introduce a visible change to the natural landscape. However, the design has been carefully considered to respect and integrate with the Outstanding Natural Feature and Landscape (ONFL) values of the site. While the fencing will be visible due to its form, placement, and extent, its modest height, strategic spacing between the posts and choice of materials ensure visual permeability. Due to the combination of these factors, the proposed fencing facilitates predominantly unobstructed views of the surrounding natural features and the wider landscape.

As a cultural element, the fencing is intended to enhance the site's amenity and protect sensitive natural and historic areas while maintaining the area's visual prominence. The scale of the fencing, in relation to the expansive Mauao landscape, is modest and the anticipated visual impacts are limited. Its integration with recently installed cultural placemaking elements, such as seating and signage further supports this.

Overall, the proposal is considered an appropriate addition to Mauao's landscape. The anticipated landscape and visual effects are expected to be of low-moderate degree, aligning with statutory provisions and the existing natural character of the site. Therefore, the proposal is consistent with the landscape values of Mauao and will contribute to the area's amenity without significantly compromising its significance.



§ 7(2)(f)(ii)