



MEMO: LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS ASSESSMENT

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Subject: Landscape and Visual Effects Assessment Memo

1.0: Introduction

The following memo outlines the anticipated landscape and visual effects associated with the installation of two prefabricated pod structures and a small toilet pod which will be connected by a deck partially covered with a pergola within Outstanding Natural Features and Landscapes (ONFL) plan areas located in Mount Maunganui. In this *MEMO: LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS ASSESSMENT* these structures are referred to as 'buildings'.

The Landscape and Visual Effects (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 'buildings', the anticipated effects have been evaluated based on 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. A site visit was undertaken in October 2025 to assess the visibility of the proposed element and

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)

the site relationship with its surrounding environment, as well as viewing the broader landscape context including views from the wider Mount Maunganui suburb, Pilot Bay walkway and Te Ara Tūtanga (base) track’s Southern entrance. An assessment of landscape and visual effects, including an assessment of the appropriateness of the proposal with regards to natural character and landscape character, with particular regard to the values of the Outstanding Natural Features and Landscape (ONFL) overlay.

The effects ratings below are based on a seven-point assessment scale which is outlined in Te Tangi a te Manu³(see Figure 1). The scale ranges from very low to very high for assessing the degree of natural character, landscape character and visual effects that have been identified. The scale is used to determine negative effects of the proposal, whereas positive effects of the proposal are not scaled, they are simply described as positive effects.

For the purpose of assisting project planners and decision makers in understanding the degree of landscape and visual effects of the proposal and undertaking the broader ‘balance’ required under the RMA those effects that are assessed as ‘low moderate’ are ‘minor’ in planning evaluation terms. Effects that are at the ‘very low’ end of the scale are negligible and those effects that are ‘high to very high’ are significant.

Very Low	Low	Low Moderate	Moderate	High Moderate	High	Very High
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Figure 1: The seven point assessment scale

1. Site Context

The proposal is located partially on Mauao, a prominent volcanic landmark at the entrance to Tauranga Harbour, and on the adjacent road reserve leading to the entrance of the Te Ara Tūtanga track. Mauao 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 2).

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.

³ ‘Te Tangi a te Manu: Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines’. (Tuia Pito Ora New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects, July 2022)

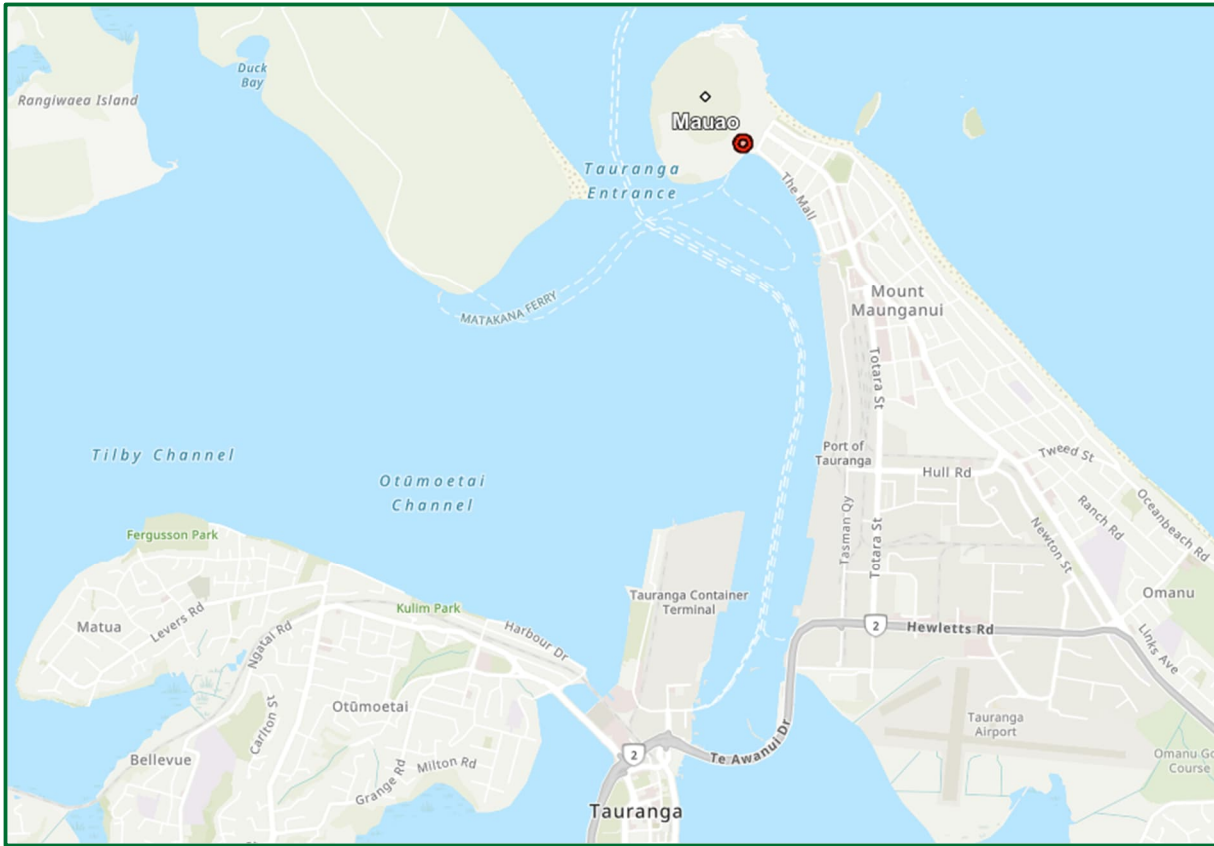


Figure 2: Site Context Map. The red circle indicates the location of the proposed buildings.

2. The Proposal

The Mauao 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, entrance pou, cultural fencing 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 improvement comprises the addition of the ‘buildings’ at a specific location, which are classified as a non-complying activity under the Tauranga City Plan. Hence, the focus of this memo is centred around the new ‘buildings’ at the proposed location on Mauao (see Figure 3).

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 3: Location of the site (red outline) for the proposed 'buildings' on Mauao and Tauranga City Council Road Reserve

3. Waikorire (Pilot Bay) Entrance

Biophysical Values

The proposed 'buildings' are located at the North-Western side of the paved Pilot Bay Quay boat trailer parking area, and adjacent to the entrance to the Te Ara Tūtanga (base) track (see Figure 4). The 'buildings' in this area extend across both the Road Reserve and Mauao Historic Reserve boundaries. On the northern side of the road, a fence is positioned at the base of a slope and above a low stone retaining wall that frames the area. The wider area includes evidence of archaeological features, such as middens. A large Pohutukawa grows from the embankment directly above the proposed 'buildings'. 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 road, 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. The adjacent Te Ara Tūtanga (base) track entrance is highlighted by two large pou and an ornamental fence.

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 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 'buildings' will be visible from a range of viewpoints. 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 vegetated slopes directly above the site. Strategically placed, the 'buildings' play 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 located near the site of the proposed 'buildings'.



Figure 4: Location of the proposed 'buildings' with the road entrance off Pilot Quay. The maximum height of the buildings is 3.1m.

4. Relevant Statutory Provisions

The proposed 'buildings' are situated within the Passive Open Space - Conservation Zone as defined in the Tauranga City Plan. The proposed 'buildings' 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.

Tauranga City Plan

The following are in addition to the Statutory Provisions laid out in the '*Mauao Placemaking Improvements: Landscape Assessment*'. (Beca, December 2022)

Tauranga City Plan: 6A.4.2: Restricted Discretionary Activity - Matters of Discretion and Conditions

The Council shall restrict the exercise of its discretion to:

- a. *The height, scale, and location of any building, structure, or sign;*

The height and scale of the proposed 'buildings' is consistent with other buildings in the area. The campground has kitchen and ablution blocks of a similar height (single storey) and scale. The surrounding residential blocks range from single storey dwellings to the twin towers which are multi-storey buildings.

- b. *The use of materials on the exterior of any building or structure, including the use of colour;*

The exterior of the proposed 'buildings' is a coloursteel cladding, painted with FlaxPod Matte and vertical Cedar natural timber. These materials are commonly used in the Mount Maunganui residential area. The Coloursteel cladding colour has been chosen as it has Total Solar Reflectance (TSR) of 20% and Light Reflectance Value (LVR) allowing the buildings to blend into the background planting (see Figure 5).

By contrast the upright poles of the pergola will be painted with Abodo Waterborne Protector Oil (Manuka) (see Figure 6) which is the colour recommended for all vertical elements on Mauao. The final colour perceived by the eye can vary according to the wood type being used.

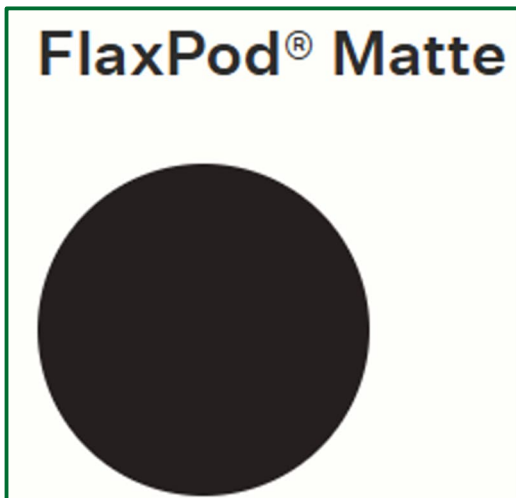


Figure 5: The Coloursteel cladding paint colour. This has a TSR: 20% and LVR: 6%.



Figure 6: The Abodo Waterborne Protector Oil (Manuka) paint colour (suppliers sample on left) used on Mauao can vary considerably depending on the wood being used.

c. *The nature, location and extent of any proposed earthworks;*

It is anticipated that although the ground was levelled in two tiers many years ago, there will be some earthworks (less than 50m³) cut required to:

- i. ensure the pods are above the overland flow path level,
- ii. dig holes for piles to attach the 'buildings' to and,
- iii. dig holes to plant the bank between the 'buildings' and the car park.

However, these earthworks will not significantly change landform.

d. *The location and design of access, parking areas; infrastructure and services or fences;*

The current access from the road to the car park and the buildings site is paved with asphalt. The grass on the car park will be retained as it is anticipated that the low frequency of car parking is unlikely to damage it. A similar situation has been observed on the grass at the adjacent Mount Maunganui Beachside Holiday Park where car movements are minimal. A set of steps will be placed to allow ease of access for visitors to the information centre. These will be surrounded by the planting on the bank to reduce their impact on the landscape.

e. *Whether the proposed activity, building or structure will adversely affect the indigenous flora and fauna values and whether retention of indigenous and exotic vegetation, reinstatement of indigenous vegetation or provision of new indigenous planting is required;*

It is anticipated that no existing indigenous flora will be impacted by this project. Additional indigenous planting will be established on the exposed soil of the bank between the car park and the buildings, and around the buildings, where appropriate, resulting in an increase in habitat for fauna and a more natural environment.

f. *Whether the proposed activity, building or structure will adversely affect the factors, values and associations of a specific landscape feature and whether retention of specific landscape features or reinstatement of those features is required;*

The proposed 'buildings' play a key role in enhancing the gateway experience to Mauao. Tangata whenua have long valued Mauao as sacred to all local iwi. Those who settled there typically modified the slopes of Mauao to create useable platforms. The formed terraces that the buildings will occupy replicate those created over many centuries. Terraces on Mauao have previously been constructed for a range of uses e.g. gardens, dwelling spaces and defence.

However, this terraced area was then used for camping as part of the Mount Maunganui Beachside Holiday Park (see Figure 7), where the random placing of tents and caravans dominated the site, removing any remnant of former occupation. This new proposal will bring a sense of how such terraces were previously used before Europeans arrived in Tauranga.

The ancestral connections, specific landmarks, narratives, and the practice of kaitiakitanga (guardianship) will all be strongly acknowledged by those using these buildings. They will also offer welcoming space, visitor information, meeting space and a range of other options that will enhance the user-experience for Mauao visitors.

The amenity value of the site will be enhanced with locals and visitors able to rest at outdoor tables, view Pilot Bay, learn about Mauao and its history. This will occur in buildings that nestle quietly into the landscape

and will be bathed in the early morning sun. Mauao translates to 'caught by the dawn' or 'caught in the light of the day' and these buildings will reflect that transient value.

The large pohutukawa that dominates the site will be retained with buildings designed to allow it to continue to flourish. The additional plantings will attract native birds to the site. Plants such as flax and kowhai attract tui and other birds in large numbers to Mauao during the flowering times and the plantings here will add to that spectacle. The landscape around the buildings will provide additional native vegetation cover which will also be available for traditional uses e.g. weaving, medicinal properties etc.



Figure 7: The proposed site was for many years used as a tent and caravan site.

5. Effects Assessment

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

The potential effects can be classified into two primary categories.

- a. Landscape effects pertain to changes in the physical landscape, which may alter its characteristics, attributes, or inherent values.
- b. 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 'buildings' is expected to have minimal impact. The design ensures that they will not disrupt the natural terrain or other significant features but rather fit into it. The scale of the 'buildings' ensures they remain a small-scale intervention within the broader landscape.

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 than the

proposed 'buildings'. In contrast, the proposed 'buildings' 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 without compromising its natural character. Built elements such as the proposed 'buildings' are compatible with the existing cultural features on Mauao and the adjacent TCC Road Reserve, where similar structures are already present. Furthermore the 'buildings' are to be located in a position previously occupied by the Mount Maunganui Beachside Holiday Park campsites and currently surrounded by campervans and permanent holiday units. Currently, a temporary container office building sits on the proposed lower car park area, and the upper terrace is often occupied by parked cars (see Figure 8).



Figure 8: The proposed site is currently occupied by a temporary container office and associated car parking.

As a result, introducing these 'buildings' will not be interpreted as a significant departure from what currently exists.

The 'buildings' serve a functional role, offering visitors to Mauao information about the areas of historical and cultural significance, and guidance as to how they can assist in their protection. This 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 'buildings' will integrate into the environment in a manner that respects the landforms and significant viewshafts (see Figure 9), while recognising the necessity for minor modification.

The site for the 'buildings' has already been heavily modified with substantial terracing undertaken for camping sites previously. These 'buildings' will be placed on the terraced ground with only a small volume of groundworks that will not significantly alter the landform. Soil from the earthworks will be spread on-site or moved to another designated site on Mauao. Mauao soil does not leave the maunga.

In summary, the proposed installation of the 'buildings' will result in minimal modification to the physical landscape. The design, scale and location of the 'buildings' is intended to have minimal impact on the landscape's key characteristics, thereby preserving its integrity and natural character. The introduction of the 'buildings' 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 9: Illustrative perspective showing the proposed Whare Manaaki, (with new planting and controlled parking).

Visual Effects Comments

A visual framework has been established to identify the areas where the 'buildings' 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 area is primarily defined by the walking tracks, beaches, harbour, and surrounding landscape. The most significant public sightlines in relation to the proposal are those from the Pilot Bay (Waikorire) boardwalk, Te Ara Tūtanga (base track) and Adams Avenue, as these areas are most likely to be impacted visually due to their proximity to the proposed 'buildings'.

The design of the proposed 'buildings' has been conceived with visual integration in mind. The height has been kept to a minimum by using a long, low, flat roofed structure, not dissimilar to a shipping container. The colour chosen, FlaxPod Matte, does not attract the eye strongly, thereby allowing the vegetated green slopes of Mauao to remain the dominant visual feature of the area. The darker 'Flaxpod Matte' colour of the 'buildings' may draw some attention, but the overall design facilitates a visual connection between the viewer and the surrounding natural landscape which mitigates the extent to which the 'buildings' intersect with the view. The colour palette or the pergola has been selected to complement the existing seating and wayfinding signage suite in the area, ensuring that the vertical elements of the pergola and timber panelling match those within the broader cultural elements of Mauao and contribute to a cohesive visual character within the landscape.

Despite these design considerations, the proposed 'buildings' are expected to cause some noticeable visual effects. Users of the Te Ara Tūtanga (base) walking track will, as is the intention of a visitor centre, directly interact with the 'buildings' near the Southern entrance to the track. Previously this building site was terraced to carry tents and caravans as part of the Mount Maunganui Beachside Holiday Park. In this location, the visual effect of the 'buildings' will be more prominent as they introduce a new cultural element to the landscape but the impact of the new 'buildings' will be reduced due to the screening effect of the existing pohutukawa from this direction (see Figure 10).



Figure 10: Illustrative perspective from Te Ara Tūtanga (base) walking track before (left image) and after (right image). The existing pohutukawa will reduce the visual impact of the proposed 'buildings'.

Users of the Pilot Bay (Waikorire) boardwalk will interact with the 'buildings' mainly at the Northern end. Due to the need to attract visitors to the information centre in the 'buildings', the design and layout ensure some visibility to those who are close to the location, but not to those who will not interact with it by walking from the boardwalk to Adams Avenue (see Figure 11).



Figure 11: Illustrative perspective from Northern end of the Pilot Bay walkway before (left image) and after (right image). The existing Norfolk Island pine and other temporary and permanent structures will reduce the visual impact of the proposed 'buildings' from this distance.

The visual effect from Adams Avenue is anticipated to be less significant as the Mount Maunganui Beachside Holiday Park contains several mobile homes, caravans and visitor units adjacent to the site which reduce the overall visual prominence from this road. (see Figure 12).



Figure 12: Illustrative perspective from Adams Avenue footpath before (left image) and after (right image). The existing vegetation and temporary and permanent structures will reduce the visual impact of the proposed 'buildings' from this distance.

The proposed 'buildings' are expected to have a more noticeable visual impact during the establishment phase of the plantings. However, once the plantings have matured, its height and spread will assist in reducing the visual impact and making the 'buildings' less prominent. Given the presence of existing large built and modified elements in the area, such as the toilet block, camper vans, caravans and visitor units, the 'buildings' are further anticipated to have a comparatively lesser visual impact.

The natural character of the 'buildings' is assessed as low, primarily due to substantial modifications such as the existing paved entryway for vehicles (see Figure 4), 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 'buildings' in this location is expected to have minimal impact on the site's natural character.

Considering the design, placement and proximity of the proposed 'buildings' to key sightlines to the location, the overall visual effect is anticipated to be of low-moderate degree. While they introduce a new cultural element to the landscape, the 'buildings' will not significantly alter the visual experience. Instead, their strategic placement will allow them 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 'buildings' presence and its tactical design, which aims to minimise its visual impact and remain unobtrusive within the landscape.

6. Recommendations

Height Restriction

- Ensure the height of the 'buildings' (i.e. the Podlife units and the pergolas do not exceed the proposed 3.1m maximum),
- This height limit will help minimise the potential obstruction of views and reduce the visual bulk of the 'buildings', maintaining the landscape's openness and visual connectivity.

Colour Selection

- Select a 'buildings' colour that is subtle and blends well with the natural environment, which will not create a stark contrast with the surrounding landscape or the Mauao cultural elements.

- Opt for the recommended 'Flaxpod Matte' for the exterior of the Podlife units and the horizontal timber on the pergola, consider using the existing palette that is predominant in the character of the structures on Mauao, thereby enabling the pergola to integrate with the natural environment without drawing undue attention.

Placement on the Site

- The 'buildings' should be placed on a single level of the terraced area. They should be as close as possible taking into consideration CPTED, access to toilet block and rear of the site.
- The deck and pergolas should be integrated with the 'buildings' to ensure a uniform look and feel to the whole development.

Consideration of Alternative Planting

- Investigate the feasibility of using additional planting (e.g. climbers on the pergola, trees behind at the back and sides of the site, trees in the car park) to integrate the 'buildings' into the landscape.
- The most appropriate plants to introduce to the site would be native, bird-attracting species. Mauao has had a rapid increase in tui and other native birds recently because of such additional plantings. Kowhai, harakeke (flax), rewarewa, kawakawa, koromiko and karo are all used elsewhere on Mauao. Kowhai, rewarewa and karo are taller species that could be used in the car park and to the side of and behind the 'buildings' to soften the impact of the proposal. Harakeke, koromiko and kawakawa are smaller and could be used to plant the bank between the car park and the 'buildings'. The bird-attracting climber, akapukaea, from the three Kings Islands could be grown up on the pergola.
- A full landscape plan should be developed as part of the proposal before planting begins.

Implementing these recommendations will help mitigate potential adverse landscape and visual effects of the proposed 'buildings', supporting their integration with the surrounding landscape.

7. Conclusion

The installation of the proposed 'buildings' in the designated area 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 'buildings' will be visible due to their form, placement, and extent, their modest height, strategic placement on a terrace partially under a mature pohutukawa, additional plantings and choice of materials ensure 'buildings' will not be visually dominant. Due to the combination of these factors, the proposed 'buildings' facilitates predominantly unobstructed views of the surrounding natural features and the wider landscape.

As a cultural element, the 'buildings' are 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 'buildings', in relation to the expansive Mauao landscape, is modest and the anticipated visual impacts are limited. Their 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 with minimal compromise to its significance.