Heritage Impact Assessment - Proposed Re-development Whakarire Ave Groyne

Prepared for Napier City Council

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Executive Summary

Opus International Consultants (Opus) were contracted by Napier City Council to carry out an assessment of heritage values associated with proposed work to modify the design of an existing groyne off Whakarire Point. The purpose of the assessment was to identify heritage features within the area of works, provide an assessment of their heritage values, and provide recommendations for mitigation or management.

As a result of research it was identified that the timber structures running parallel with the shoreline at Westshore, in the vicinity of Whakarire Ave are associated with the operation of the North British and Hawke's Bay Freezing Works between 1887 and 1924. As such the features meet the definition of an archaeological site under the provisions of the Historic Palces Act 1993.

The following recommendations are made:

- As this site pre-dates 1900 there is a legal requirement to obtain an authority to modify an archaeological site from the Historic Places Trust.
- It is recommended that, in line with international best practice, a record of the historic timber structures associated with the sea wall at Whakarire Ave is made prior to any modification associated with this project. This record should by both photographic and a survey plan indicating the location and nature of the timbers.
- It is recommended that further interpretation, outlining the changes to land form and land use at the end of the western spit is incorporated into the construction project for the groyne at the end of Whakarire Ave.
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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

Opus International Consultants (Opus) were contracted by Napier City Council to carry out an assessment of heritage values associated with proposed work to modify the design of an existing groyne off Whakarire Point. The purpose of the assessment was to identify heritage features within the area of works, provide an assessment of their heritage values, and provide recommendations for mitigation or management.

1.2 Proposal

There is an existing small groyne or seawall at Whakarire Point, Westshore, Napier. A number of increased erosion problems have been identified along Westshore Beach, linked to the design of the groyne. It is proposed that a new rock wall groyne will be constructed in front of the existing structure. This new structure will follow the existing stone wall in part, but will then run at a right angle in a north westerly direction, before turning again in a westerly direction, almost parallel with the shore. A design plan for the groyne is provided in Figure One.

Figure One Design of groyne (Beca plan provided by Napier City Council). Shown in red is the existing sea wall
1.3 Location

As is stated, the new groyne will be located at the eastern end of Westshore Beach, with access from Whakarire Ave. This is a largely residential area at the eastern most end of Westshore. There is an area of recreation reserve along the front of the beach, managed by Napier City Council, and at the eastern extent of the land is the entrance to the Ahuriri Lagoon. On either side of the entrance is a groyne, providing extended protection to the entrance.

![Figure Two](image.png)

**Figure Two** Part NZMS 260 V21 showing location of project area

1.4 Limitations

This report does not provide comment on the values of this place to tangata whenua as these are comments that only they can make. It is also not the purpose of the report to provide a detailed history of the area. Sufficient information is provided in which to present information on structures and sites and to provide context in which to discuss heritage values.
2 Background

2.1 Historic

The area of Ahuriri has changed considerably over the last 150 years, affected both by reclamation programs as well as the 1931 earthquake. Descriptions of the area now known as Westshore indicate that it was a long shingle spit, separating the Inner Harbour from the sea. In the 1850s the Western Spit was included within the area surveyed by Arthur Domett for the township of Napier, although he names the area Meeanee Spit. At the eastern end of the spit, closest to the harbour entrance, there is a clearly marked reserve area for ferry and public landing place.

![Figure Three](image)

**Figure Three** Part of 1850s survey plan SO 5011 showing subdivision of sections on Western Spit and the location of the ferry and landing place.

Photographs of the area from the 1880s indicate that very little of the housing or subdivision development planned in the 1850s actually took place, although there was a small hotel, the Ferry Hotel, built on the spit, to accommodate travellers linking the short ferry crossing with the coach north, which left at 6am (Campbell 1974:29 – 30).

Although no large structures or buildings are visible in photographs of the point during this period, several features of relevance to this project are visible. By 1880 a mole or groyne has been constructed at the entrance to the harbour on the Western Spit. Visible behind this is a small lagoon, protected by a small shingle reef. This feature is also shown in a survey plan of the area drawn in 1889 (SO 1066). No reference could be found to the
formal filling in of this lagoon, and it is possible that over this period infilling was assisted by the construction of the entrance groyne and resulting changes to wave patterns, along with informal infilling with debris.

In 1888 the North British and Hawke’s Bay Freezing Works began operations on land at the end of the Western Spit leased from the Napier Harbour Board. The location of the works on the spit meant that the works could load meat into lighters (small boats) for transport to larger cargo steamers offshore. The operation and development of this business is discussed further below.

In 1907 the name of the Western Spit was formally changed at a public meeting to Westshore (Mooney 1973:94).
**Figure Four** – 1868 photo of Ahuriri and Western Spit from Napier Hill, looking north west. Visible is the small lagoon at the eastern end of the Western Spit (Photo from collection Hawke’s Bay Museum and Art Gallery, Napier)
**Figure Five** Ahuriri and Western Spit 1880 – showing mole at entrance to harbour and footbridge across to the spit (Photo from collection Hawke’s Bay Museum and Art Gallery, Napier)
At the beginning of the twentieth century plans were drawn up for the development of the Port of Napier, with improvements including dredging of areas of the Inner Harbour, reclamation of shallower areas around Ahuriri and the development of wharves in the area. A plan from this period, drawn in 1912, clearly shows the location of the freezing works at the end of the spit (Figure Seven). Also indicated is a small area of tramline associated with the wharf for the works in the Inner Harbour adjacent to the works. There is no indication of protection works along the seaward edge of the land at the end of the spit, nor of any other associated structure in this area.

Many of the plans for reclamation work and the development of the Inner Harbour were significantly altered in February 1931 as a result of the Napier Earthquake. One of the key changes at Westshore was the change of the shingle bank to a more placid beach (Campbell 1974:161).
Figure Seven Part of 1912 reclamation plan showing the location of the freezing works on the Western Spit (Plan held Opus International Consultants, Napier)

2.2 North British and Hawke’s Bay Freezing Works

As is noted above, the North British and Hawke’s Bay Freezing Works was established on the Western Spit in the late 1880s, with the first shipment of meat transported to Europe in March 1888. Until the railway reached Westshore in 1919 stock for the works were driven over the bridge from Ahuriri, creating a hazard for members of the public. Facilities at the works included a wharf and rail system, which was structurally linked with the existing groyne at the harbour entrance (Leamy in Pishief 1998:1). It was by this means that meat was transported around the site, and loaded onto boats for transportation.

Other structures at the site would have included the killing room, stock yards and the sheds for freezing the meat for transportation. The freezing works operated at this site until about 1924 (Campbell 1975), with many of the buildings demolished following the earthquake. Mooney suggests that one of the key failures of the works was its situation on the shingle spit (1973. 40). Following the construction of the main breakwater at the port in the late 1880s there was a reported marked increase in erosion at the Western Spit, with the eating away of the Rangatira Reef. As a result the works were effectively left sitting isolated at the end of the spit, “balanced between the sea and the Inner Harbour” (ibid.).
Figure Eight View looking south west along Freezing Works site showing works, wharf and rail. Date unknown (Photo from collection Hawke’s Bay Museum and Art Gallery, Napier)

Figure Nine View looking south east towards Napier Hill (in background) showing works. Date Unknown. Photo appears to be taken from near the end of Charles Street looking towards Ahuriri and Napier Hill (Photo from collection Hawke’s Bay Museum and Art Gallery, Napier)
2.3 Recorded Archaeological Sites

Within the immediate area of the proposed works there are two recorded archaeological sites. Information on these is held on the files of the New Zealand Archaeological Association. Examination of the site records indicates that they are recorded as the location of a World War Two Pillbox (NZAA Site Number V21/259) and the North British and Hawke’s Bay Freezing Works (NZAA Site Number V21/260). Both sites were recorded in 1997 by Elizabeth Pishief as part of work being carried out on behalf of Napier City Council which resulted in modification to the remnants of the freezing works wharf.

Copies of the records for both sites are attached with this report as Appendix One.

**V21/260 – Freezing Works:** By the late 1990s little visibly remained of the freezing works at the end of Whakarire Ave, Westshore. As is noted above, most of the buildings associated with the operation of the works were demolished following the 1931 earthquake. During a visit to the site Pishief recorded the remains of the rail wharf along the edge of the site at that entrance to the Inner Harbour. Many of the timber remains were in poor condition and these were considered to present a safety hazard to residents and those using the area.

As part of an effort to make the area safe, Napier City Council applied to the Historic Places Trust for an authority to modify the remains by demolishing much of the wharf. This authority was granted, with the condition that a record was made of the structure before it was demolished, and that a section of the remains were made safe and retained to provide some visible evidence of past activities at the site (NZHPT Authority 1997/127). This work was carried out in 1998.

In the NZAA site record form for this site there is reference in correspondence to the wooden piles running parallel with the shore, and their association with the freezing works.

**V21/259:** This site is recorded as the remains of a concrete pillbox that formed part of the coastal defence system in Napier during World War Two. The concrete remains are located in Council reserve land, on the edge of the small lagoon created by a small, low groyne.

3 Legislation

In conjunction with district plans, there are several pieces of legislation that assist with the protection and management of heritage sites. These must be considered in regard to any development or land use proposal that may affect heritage or archaeological sites within an area.

3.1 The Historic Places Act 1993

Under the Historic Places Act 1993 (HPA), all archaeological sites, whether recorded or not, are protected and it is illegal to destroy, damage or modify an archaeological site without an Authority to do so from the Historic Places Trust (HPT).

An archaeological site is defined in the HPA 1993 as any place in New Zealand that:
Either

(a) i) was associated with human activity before 1900; or
   ii) is the site of the wreck of any vessel where the wreck occurred before 1900; and

(b) is or may be able through investigation by archaeological methods to provide evidence relating to the history of New Zealand.

In considering any application for an Authority, the Trust may grant fully, or in part, or decline any application. The Act allows for up to 3 months for the Trust to process an Authority after the application has been formally lodged.


The Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) provides guidelines and regulations for the sustainable management and protection of the natural and cultural resources. In 2003 amendments to the RMA elevated historic heritage to a Matter of National Importance under Section 6 (f), which identifies the need for “the protection of historic heritage from inappropriate subdivision, use, and development.”

A definition of Historic Heritage has also been added with the amendments to the RMA. This defines Historic Heritage as:

a) Those natural and physical resources that contribute to an understanding and appreciation of New Zealand’s history and cultures deriving from any of the following qualities:

   (i) Archaeological
   (ii) Architectural
   (iii) Cultural
   (iv) Historic
   (v) Scientific
   (vi) Technological; and

b) Includes –

   (i) Historic sites, structures, places, and areas; and
   (ii) Archaeological sites; and
   (iii) Sites of significance to Maori, including waahi tapu; and
   (iv) Surroundings associated with the natural and physical resources.
4 Archaeological Assessment

4.1 Methodology

Prior to conducting any field assessment, background research on the areas was carried out. This included a review of the New Zealand Archaeological Association (NZAA) site recording database, a review of previous reports on the area and a review of documents associated with the proposal. Historic photos of the area were examined at the Hawke’s Bay Museum and Art Gallery and copies of historic survey plans of the area were reviewed for information on the development of the Western Spit.

Reports on the previous work at the site carried out by Napier City Council were also reviewed for information on the nature of work carried out that may have affected the site and results of records made during that work.

4.2 Site Visit

Two visits were carried out to the site, the first on 29 May at high tide and the second on 3 June 2008 during a low tide. The purpose of carrying out two visits was to determine how the proposed project area and existing structures within it are affected by tidal activity.

The length of the existing seawall was walked and photographs taken. A record of features identified was made in order to assist with the assessment.

4.3 Results

The existing seawall is constructed of large boulders and mixed concrete debris. Along the outer, seaward face of the sea wall are the remnants of a wooden structure, characterised as a line of broken wooden piles. These wooden piles are between half a metre and one metre out from the sea wall and they all angle in toward the stone wall. Some of these wooden structures are visible at high tide, but the majority have broken off over time and are at high water level, best visible at low tide. None of the features appeared to be in good structural condition. They are however an interesting aesthetic feature in this landscape.

The presence of the sea wall has resulted in the creation of a small lagoon at high tide, similar to that indicated on historic survey plans. On the inward (land) beach are the concrete remains of the World War Two pillbox. This historic feature will not be affected by the proposed works.
**Figure Ten** View looking west along existing seawall

**Figure Eleven** View looking east towards Ahuriri entrance
5 Discussion

Historic accounts of the North British and Hawke’s Bay Freezing Works at the time that it closed in the late 1920s indicate that by that time the site had been severely affected by erosion, resulting in the site effectively being located on an island between the Inner Harbour and the sea. The cause of this increased erosion was identified as the construction of the breakwater at Napier Port in the 1890s (Mooney 1973:40). This statement suggests that at that time there were no seawall protections along the eastern end of Westshore, with the exception of the groyne at the entrance to the Inner Harbour. Examination of details in Figure Eight of this report however suggest that there was some form of timber walling along the seaward front of the freezing works at some time.

None of the historic plans examined as part of this project dating from this period indicate a structure along the sea front at this location but it is possible that this structure, built during the operation of the freezing works, was considered part of regular maintenance and land protection and was not significant enough to be identified separately on plans. It was thought that of all plans consulted, those most likely to show any structures along the water and sea edge would be the proposed harbour development and reclamation plan from 1919. This plan was compiled while the freezing works were still operating, and does show the harbour entrance groyne, the location of the freezing works and the tramline along the wharf associated with the works. There is no indication on the plan of coastal structures or the Whakarire Ave sea wall (Figure Seven).

Examination of the timbers remaining of the structure indicates that they are fairly old and generally in poor condition. Identifying a clear age for these wooden features however is not possible, although there is reference in the NZAA site record form that these features were associated with the freezing works (email from E Pishief to T Walton 9 August 2002). It is necessary to take into account however the affects of salt water and sea activity. The fact that they follow the line of the existing boulder sea wall suggests that these two features, and their construction, may be linked. It is possible that the line of timbers was a preliminary breakwater to halt erosion noted in the 1920s, and the stone wall was built at a later period, with demolition debris to support the deteriorating timber wall.

Examination of the proposed groyne plans indicates that only half of the timber structural remains will be affected by the proposal – those timbers located at the eastern half of the sea wall (Figure Twelve). The timbers along the front of the western half of the existing sea wall will not be physically affected by the proposed works and will remain intact. They will however eventually disappear over time as a result of natural processes of decay.
Historic research suggests that the sea wall feature may not predate 1900, but there is reference in NZAA records that the feature may be associated with the freezing works. As such it is recommended that the timber remains are considered as meeting the definition of an archaeological site as defined in the Historic Places Act 1993. As such, there is a legal requirement to obtain an authority to modify an archaeological site under the provisions of the Act. Such an application should be made under Section 11 of the Act.

The potential for the timber structures to provide considerable archaeological information as part of this project is limited, however they do represent an interesting visual feature along Westshore and do form part of the historic development of this area. It is therefore recommended that a record of these features is made prior to their modification and/or disappearance through natural processes. This record should be both photographic and a survey plan recording the location and size of each timber. The compilation of such a record would be in keeping with international standards of best practice for the recording and management of heritage features.

A further recommendation for this site is for the installation of interpretation of changes in land form and land use at the end of the Western Spit. There is currently an interpretation
panel with text at the location of the wharf associated with the freezing works. There is potential to provide photographic interpretation associated with the proposed works that illustrate the changes to the shoreline.

6 Recommendations

• As this site pre dates 1900 there is a legal requirement to obtain an authority to modify an archaeological site from the Historic Places Trust

• It is recommended that, in line with international best practice, a record of the historic timber structures associated with the sea wall at Whakarire Ave is made prior to any modification associated with this project. This record should by both photographic and a survey plan indicating the location and nature of the timbers.

• It is recommended that further interpretation, outlining the changes to land form and land use at the end of the western spit is incorporated into the construction project for the groyne at the end of Whakarire Ave.

References:

Campbell, M D N

1975 The Story of Napier 1874 – 1974: Footprints Along the Shore Napier City Council, Martin Printing Company

Mooney, K

1973 History of the County of Hawke’s Bay Volumes I and II, Hawke’s Bay County Council

Pishief, E

1998 Documentation for the recording of the North British and Hawke’s Bay Company Wharf Ruins, associated reporting for NZHPT Authority 1997/127 (includes historic summary by Patrick Parsons and structural report by Patrick Leamy)

Also consulted

NZAA Site File – Hawke’s Bay

Historic Survey Plans held in Landonline - specifically DP 1066 and SO 5011

Photographic records in Hawke’s Bay Museum and Art Gallery
APPENDIX ONE

Copies of NZAA Site Records V21/259 and V21/260
**NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION**  
**SITE RECORD FORM (NZMS260)**  
NZMS 260 map number V20  
NZMS 260 map name Esk  
NZMS 260 map 1st  

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<td>NZAA METRIC SITE NUMBER V21/259</td>
<td>SITE TYPE pill box</td>
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<tr>
<td>DATE VISITED: September 1996</td>
<td>SITE NAME: MAORI</td>
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**Grid References**  
Easting 448, Northing 8444

1. **Aids to relocation of site (attach a sketch map)**  
Napier. On southern end of Westshore Beach - on northern side of arm forming channel to estuary.

2. **Description of site (Supply full details, history, local environment, references, sketches, etc. If extra sheets are attached, include a summary here)**

One of a series of pillboxes built along beach during WWII  
Standard design with 2 trailing wings.

cf. V21/251, 253, 258,

3. **State of site and possible future damage**  
Concrete remains - eroding.

4. **Owner** Napier City Council  
**Tenant/Manager**  
**Address**

5. **Nature of information (hearsay, brief or extended visit, etc.)**  
**Photographs** (reference numbers and where they are held)

6. **Aerial photographs** (reference numbers and clarity of site)

7. **Reported by E Pichief**  
**Filekeeper**  
**Address**

8. **New Zealand Register of Archaeological Sites (for office use)**  
**NZHPI Site Field Code**

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New Zealand Archaeological Association

SITE DESCRIPTION FORM

Site Number: V21/259
Site Type: Pillbox
Grid reference: 447 843

Site is at Westshore, southwest of the harbour entrance. Easiest access is off Charles Street. Structure is clearly visible on beach at rear of 13 Whakarire St. Grid reference above is derived from Terraview GIS. Site was visited on Thursday 21 November 2002.

It is a standard double-ended pillbox in reasonably good condition. It has been undermined on the beach side and so has a very distinct lean.


References:

A. Walton
23 November 2002
Revised 16 December 2002
Heritage Assessment Whakariri Ave Groyne

The North British and Hawkes Bay Freezing Co. Ltd. was established in March 1888. It succeeded so well that after 3 years it was necessary to extend the buildings and double the plant. The average output increased from 500 - 1200 sheep per day and fifty bullocks.

Mr W Kinross White was the General Manager in 1908.


The photograph on p. 180 in “Industries of New Zealand”, shows the wharf with the railway line going along it. This is the part that is threatened.