

It is the potential effects of the earthworks on the existing landscape character and visual amenity within the surrounding area which will be the primary focus of this Landscape and Visual Effects Assessment, considering the relevant provisions of the District Plan.

This report refers to 'Napier Hill'. This being the extent of the former Scinde Island, known to local iwi as 'Mataruahou' and now commonly known as the combination of 'Hospital Hill' (western end) and 'Bluff Hill' (eastern end).

BACKGROUND/DESIGN INFLUENCE

Josh Hunt from Hudson Associates first met on site to discuss this project, with Cam Drury of with Stradegy, on 12 November 2018. It was at this meeting that the need to carefully consider the appropriateness and/or nature of any such cuts was expressed. However, the approach taken has been to include Hudson Associates in the design process to enable a site response which will mitigate the potential adverse landscape and visual effects.

The key consideration, in relation to landscape and visual amenity, has been to soften the appearance of the vertical cut and reduce the overall scale of a blank wall/cut. Following a wider site visit and consideration of the relevant District Plan provisions, a team meeting was held on 3 December which included Bayswater (Applicant), Stradegy (Planning), Cheal (Geotechnical), ADA Designers (Architectural) and Hudson Associates (Landscape). At this meeting the need to carefully consider the appropriateness and/or nature of any such cuts was expressed to the team, with the outcome being a direction for Ian Jennings (Cheal) and myself to carefully consider the options and potential mitigation options.

The following day Ian Jennings provided four options for altering the cut profile along the boundary with 32 May Avenue (Attachment 1 – Attached as a working document to show our conceptual process). These cut profiles (Option A, B Ca & Cb) were then modelled in CAD software and considered in the context of a working 3d simulation to help explore the visual implications. The preferred approach was then refined by modifying the benched profile option (Option B) so that each bench (0.75m wide) was separated by a vertical height of approximately 4m. This potentially allows for a 12m reduction to the overall height of a central portion of the largest cut face. It will also allow for planting to be established on each of these benches.

Furthermore, we had discussed the inclusion of direct planting into the hillside cut for the upper portion which is not able to be benched. While a 0.75m bench is considered to be narrow, it will provide enough space to establish planting using this methodology.

The trade-off for a wider bench is the reduction in the number of benches (from 3 down to 2). It is considered that there will be greater benefit in having three benches, which extend further down the exposed face, than providing for a lesser number of wider individual benches.

Connecting the bench levels will also be a series of ladder-like structures which will enable the bench planting to more readily attach to the newly exposed vertical face. There is an example of this which has been used in Plimmerton along State Highway 1 Wellington at the Steyne intersection. Over time, it is possible to see how this has helped establish the vegetation (Figures 2, 3 & 4).

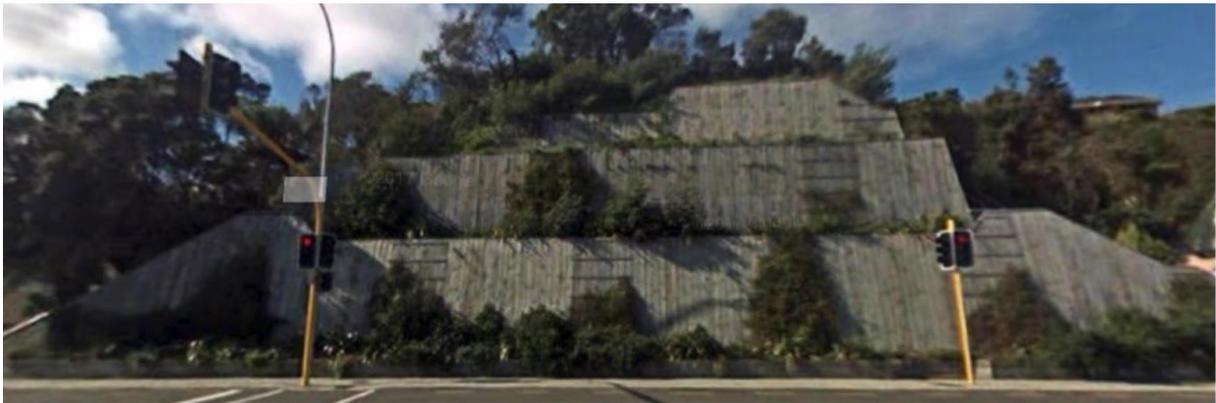


Figure 2: Plimmerton Example - 2008



Figure 3: Plimmerton Example - 2013



Figure 4: Plimmerton Example - 2017

METHODOLOGY

The outcome of the collaborative approach outlined above (Attachment 2 – Landscape Treatment) has been the basis for the following assessment of effects. This assessment of landscape and visual effects is primarily concerned with the effects on the landform of Napier Hill and the resulting impact upon the amenity of the immediate area. The method used to assess effects involves looking at the physical changes being proposed in the context of the existing environment, and how this change will be perceived; the scale, type and intensity of change, and the nature of the audience who would experience the change.

When considering the level of effect, the following scale has been adopted from the Quality Planning website to assist categorising the potential impact of landscape and visual change:

- ***Nil Effects***
No effects at all.
- ***Less than Minor Adverse Effects***
Adverse effects that are discernible day-to-day effects, but too small to adversely affect other persons.
- ***Minor Adverse Effects***
Adverse effects that are noticeable but will not cause any significant adverse impacts.
- ***More than Minor Adverse Effects***
Adverse effects that are noticeable that may cause an adverse impact but could be potentially mitigated or remedied.
- ***Significant Adverse Effects that could be remedied or mitigated.***
An effect that is noticeable and will have a serious adverse impact on the environment but could potentially be mitigated or remedied.
- ***Unacceptable Adverse Effects***
Extensive adverse effects that cannot be avoided, remedied or mitigated.

THE PROPOSAL AND STATUTORY CONTEXT

The applicant is planning an upgrade to the existing Bayswater Vehicles facility on the corner of Carlyle Street and Faraday Street in Napier, with the general layout (Figure 5) indicated in the Bayswater Site Plans supplied by ADA Designers. In order to achieve the desired site layout and internal circulation, earthworks (primarily cut) will be required into the hillside at the back of the Bayswater Vehicles site.

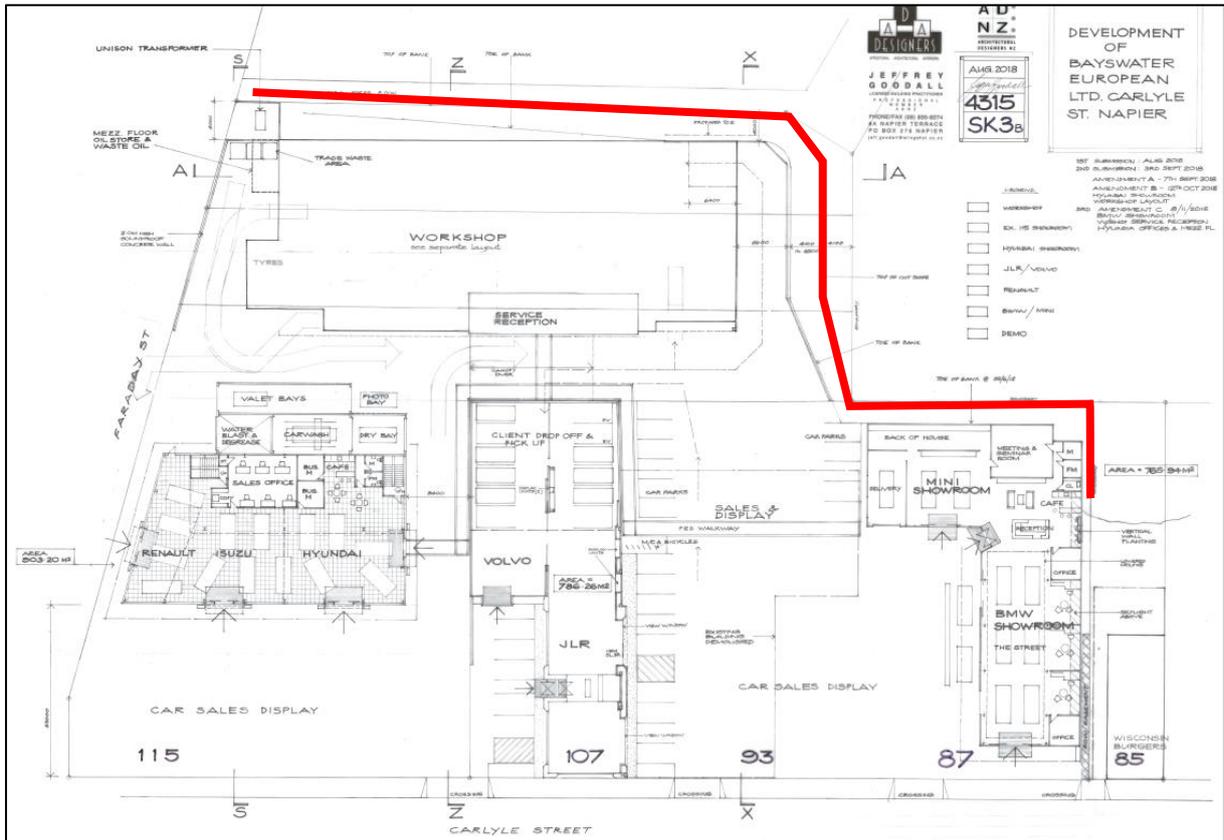


Figure 5: Site Plan – ADA Designers (Indicative location of cut face in RED)

The Napier District Plan also provides some direction for activities such as this proposed forecourt expansion and associated earthworks. In relation to earthworks, the following is identified as a resource management issue:

52A.2.2 - Inappropriate earthworks can negatively impact on visual amenity.

A large scale earthwork has the potential to irrevocably scar the landscape if undertaken without the necessary controls to mitigate against adverse effects. Without the ability to reestablish vegetation on, or over, modified land, the visual effects can be a dominant feature on the landscape for many years resulting in a degradation of amenity.

The following provisions are considered particularly relevant in managing this issue:

52A.3.1 - Require the repasture or revegetation of land where vegetation is cleared in association with earthworks.

52A.3.4 - *Control earthworks to ensure that they will not adversely affect the natural and physical environment, and the amenity of the community, adjoining land uses, historic heritage values and culturally sensitive sites.*

The assessment criteria in Chapter 52A.21 against which resource consent applications are to be assessed is also relevant:

52a.21 *Assessment Criteria (2) Earthworks - Visual Impact*

a) The visual effects of the activity will be assessed in terms of its potential effect on:

ii) The existing character of the locality and amenity values.

b) In making that assessment regard shall be had to:

i) Planting, screening and other amenity treatment to minimise visual impact.

ii) Site location including locality, topography, geographical features, adjoining land uses.

iii) Height of soil stockpiles and cuttings.

iv) Rehabilitation of the site, including contouring, landscaping and re-vegetation.

Finally, 52A.22(4) assists the assessment by outlining the reasons for the rules around excavation earthworks:

52a.22 - *Principle Reasons for Rules (4) Excavation*

Excavation Limitations on the height and scale of cuts are in place to avoid unsightly scarring of the landscape particularly in areas where they will be highly visible. Large scale cuts beyond the permitted rules will therefore be subject of resource consent which will provide the Council with controls to control earthworks when they are of a scale not envisaged by District Plan rules and have potential safety issues.

It is with this background and these particular provisions in mind that the following assessment has been undertaken. These items of the Plan also helped to inform the consideration of the earthworks cut profile which includes a series of benched terraces and planting (Attachment 2).

EXISTING ENVIRONMENT

The application site is located on the corner of Carlyle Street (an Arterial road) and Faraday Street (a Local road). While the majority of the site is generally flat, being within one of the Napier City commercial precincts, the northern portion of this site backs onto Napier Hill.

The application site is located at the western extent of the Napier Fringe Commercial zone which extends along Carlyle Street from the CBD. The streetscape of this area is dominated by pavement (with very little existing vegetation), large scale signage, cars (sales yards and parking) and results in a distinctly commercial character at the site and to the east (Figure 6). The block to the west of the site (on the northern side of the road) still retains a commercial character as 2/3rds of the road frontage (between Faraday Street and Chaucer Road) is occupied by commercial activities (Figure 7 – Commercial frontage indicated by Purple Line, Residential Frontage indicated by Yellow Line).



Figure 6: Carlyle Street Commercial Context

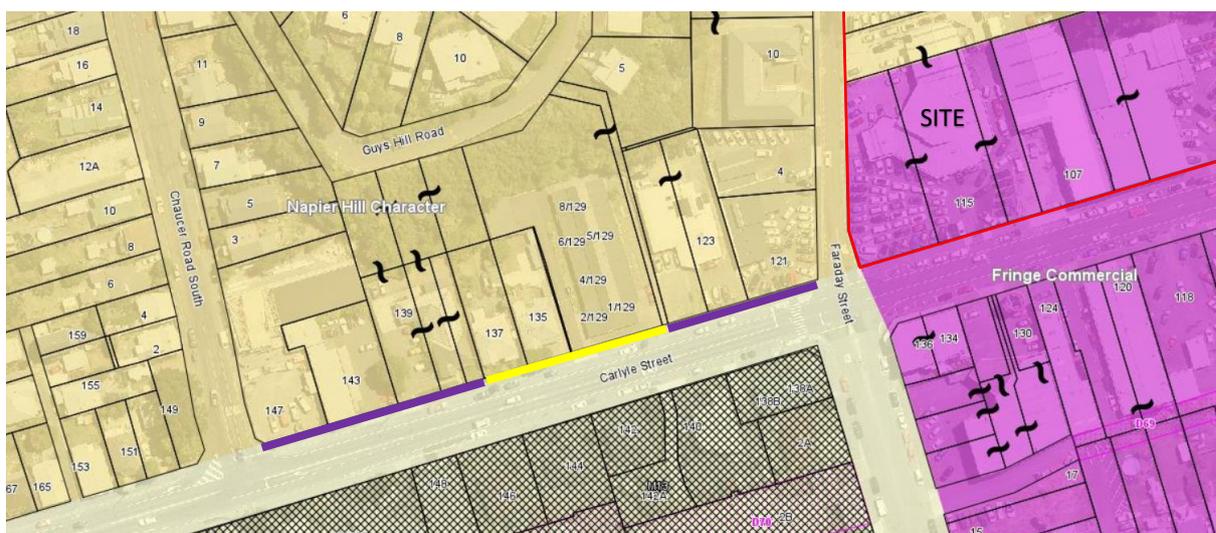


Figure 7: Carlyle Street Commercial Context

Beyond Chaucer Road the scale of development reverts to a portion of residential dwellings. There is also a row of residential sections heading up Chaucer road which quickly transitions into a smaller scale residential environment as you head away from Carlyle Street and a public walkway adjoins the northern boundary of the site (connecting Chaucer Road and May Avenue).

The southern half of the Napier Hill perimeter is predominantly backed onto by either Fringe Commercial or Suburban Industrial Zoning, which results in a distinct development composition. This consists of larger scale industrial/commercial activates located around the base of the hill, with a vegetated band sitting below the residential dwellings perched on the terrace edge (Figure 8).



Figure 8: Pattern of dwellings perched along the edge of Napier Hill with a vegetated band below

Earthwork modifications to the perimeter of Napier hill are also common. For example, the 30m backdrop to Smith & Smith (Figure 9), approximately 500m west of the application site, appears to have been excavated with the result being a few open faces of exposed earth and extensive reestablishment of vegetation.



Figure 9: Vegetation and cut faces behind Smith & Smith

The next property west from here, the Caltex on Hyderabad Road, is backed by a 15m high bench which has been cut into the hillside (Figure 10).



Figure 10: Bench cut behind Caltex

The backdrop to Craven Terrace, approximately 500m east of the application site also appears to have been excavated and now has an almost vertical 30m high hill face which has successfully re-established a vegetative cover (Figure 11). There are other examples of cuts into Napier Hill around its entire perimeter.



Figure 11: Vegetated vertical face back-dropping Craven Tce

It is somewhat surprising that vegetation establishes so well on the face of Napier Hill. In areas that have been modified by earthworks, exotic species re-establish in a relatively short time-frame and cover much of the exposed earth with spreading vegetation (Figure 12). It is even possible to find wilding pines establishing on a near vertical face (Figure 13). These factors highlight the inherent fertility of the cross-bedded sandstone and limestone geology of the Scinde Island Formation which encircles the Napier Hill escarpment.



Figure 12: Vegetation cover on exposed face



Figure 13: Wilding pines establishing on near vertical face

The mention of other earthworks example undertaken around Napier Hill is simply to illustrate that the existing character of the wider Napier Hill environment contains modifications. The numerous cuts that have been required over the years for walkways, roads, residential dwellings and business activities all contribute to the modified character of this location.

VIEWING AUDIENCES AND VISUAL SIMULATION

The visual effects of any development will vary for different viewing audiences. Based on the three site visits that have been undertaken, it is considered that the viewing audience most likely to observe the change will be motorists, cyclists and pedestrians travelling along Carlyle Street. Views toward the site also exist from the properties located at 10 (block of flats) and 12 Faraday Street. There are also lines of sight to the proposal from the wider area.

In order to illustrate the scale of the earthworks and likely effects which may result from this proposal, one visual simulation has been prepared (Attachment 2 – DWH 64-02). The location of this viewpoint is from the southern side of the Carlyle Street and Faraday Street intersection, looking directly toward the site as this is considered to be the most prominent location to view the earthworks change. The simulation modelled the scenario outlined in Figure 14 (Attachment 2: DWG 64-01), and included the proposed new building mass as well as the resulting cut with associated benches and recommended planting.



Figure 14: Vegetation cover on exposed face

ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS

The potential adverse effects on the landscape and visual amenity are important considerations that need to be addressed in relation to the existing character of the site. At this time the entire Bayswater Vehicles site is being used by this commercial activity (Showrooms, workshop, car display/storage etc.) and it is part of a much wider commercial presence along Carlyle Street which has typically larger scale buildings and signage, with this streetscape character having been described in the Existing Environment section earlier in this assessment.

One additional consideration is that, from my understanding, it would be permitted for the applicant to undertake clearance of all of the vegetation across the hillside of their property. A limited amount of clearance is already being planned, as a number of pine trees have established and need to be removed so that they do not cause any damage to the buildings below. Clearance of all the vegetation would be a noticeable change from the current appearance of the vegetated backdrop and is an unambiguous baseline against which the proposed change should be considered.

While it is accepted that the final layout of the proposed buildings will be reliant on the earthworks component of this application, it is also my understanding that the scale, bulk and general location of the buildings within the Fringe Commercial Zone 'in front' of the cut can be constructed a height of

10m or greater depending on the scenarios in Condition 17.13 adopted. This would mean that, at least, from the road frontage of Carlyle Street and Faraday Street, buildings of the scale proposed, at least to some degree over the footprint proposed can be constructed as permitted. . This plays into consideration of the earthworks effects, as the buildings provide a significant level of screening in front of where the earthworks are to be undertaken.

While the sensitivity of any individual viewer will vary based upon their own values, overall the prominence of the proposed earthworks will be influenced largely by the direction of travel (heading east along Carlyle Street would be more sensitive than heading west) and the proximity to the site (the area within approximately 120m of the earthworks will be more sensitive than locations beyond that distance).

Visual Effects

Viewpoint 1 - Carlyle Street and Faraday Street Intersection

This is the most prominent location for viewing the proposed change (Figure 15). An uninterrupted and almost vertical cut rising up above the new buildings to the boundary with 32 May Avenue would have been considered noticeable and to have an adverse impact, which would equate to a more than minor effect on the ranking scale outlined in the Methodology above.

However, with the mitigation measures proposed (creation of benches and implementation of planting) through the design response outlined in Attachment 2, the overall level of effect on visual amenity is considered to be less than minor.



Figure 15: Photo from Carlyle Street and Faraday Street Intersection

Viewpoint 2 - 137 Carlyle Street

This location (Figure 16) is approximately 100m west of the application site. The streetscape frontage is a mix of commercial and residential activities which provide a visual screen through the buildings along this stretch of road. The existing vegetation also further screen the application site, however these are not relied upon for screening or mitigation. Due to the distance away from the proposed earthworks, this location along Carlyle Street is considered to have nil effect on visual amenity.



Figure 16: Photo from 137 Carlyle Street

Viewpoint 3 - Carlyle Street and Owen Street Intersection

This location (Figure 17) is approximately 70m west of the application site. The streetscape is dominated by commercial activities while the major earthworks will be contained around the corner and are out of view from this location. There will however be some lower earthworks visible from this viewpoint, however given the perceivable scale and urban context the proposal is considered to have nil effect on visual amenity from this location along Carlyle Street.



Figure 17: Photo from Carlyle Street and Owen Street Intersection

Viewpoint 4 - Properties 10 & 12 Faraday Street

This location (Figure 18) is considered to be the most prominent location for static views (unlike all of the other viewpoints discussed which primarily have a transient viewing audience). Factoring in that the hillside vegetation within the Bayswater property could be cleared away, the proposed new building on the development site across the road from these properties will provide a degree of screening to the earthworks backdrop, the building itself will be a tidy upgrade to the existing yard and the mitigation planting associated with the earthworks/benching will reduce the overall impact of the cut face at its highest point. With the mitigation measures proposed, the overall level of effect on visual amenity is considered to be less than minor.



Figure 18: Photo from outside 10 & 12 Faraday Street

Viewpoint 5 – Kennedy Road and Owen Street Intersection (Example of wider views)

This location (Figure 19) is a representative example of wider views that can be obtained towards the application site, which is approximately 380m away from the application site. Although there will be a change to the landform, the distance away from the site and existing built environment are considered to reduce the effect on visual amenity to a nil effect.



Figure 19: Photo from Kennedy Road and Owen Street Intersection

Landscape Effects

When considering the scale of change being proposed by this application, the existing and wider environment are fair indicators of what the landscape is able to accommodate. There are a number of other vertical faces of a similar height located around Napier Hill which have successfully reestablished vegetative cover, and which are now screened and consequently not out of place in this environment. While the volume of earthworks required is considered to be sizeable, in my opinion, it will not have a significant impact on the existing landscape character of Napier Hill or the immediate locale after mitigation.

The act of clearing the existing vegetation (predominantly exotic), would result in an exposed hillside scar that would be commensurate with the level of effects associated with this proposal, and this needs to be factored into the context under which the proposal is to be assessed.

The proposed mitigation will ensure that the typical pattern of larger scale industrial/commercial activities located around the base of the hill, with a vegetated band sitting below the residential dwellings perched on the terrace edge will be maintained.

Additionally, through a collaborative approach to the design of the cut profile, mitigation measures have been put in place which will soften the overall prominence of the proposed cut by using benches and planting to break up the scale of this vertical backdrop. Planting on the benches and into the higher portion of the hillside will also assist with reestablishing vegetation and the three pronged planting method (bench planting, hill face planting and ladder-like structures to assist with vegetation spread) will result in an efficient reestablishment period. Overall, the adverse effect on the landscape values are considered to be less than minor.

STATUTORY PLANNING ASSESSMENT (DISTRICT PLAN)

This section provides a brief consideration against the relevant matters set out in the District Plan with regards to landscape and visual matters related to this proposal.

52A.2.2 - The earthworks being proposed are considered appropriate as the mitigation proposed will reduce the overall appearance of scale and provide for reestablishment of vegetation.

52A.3.1 – Revegetation is being required as part of the mitigation measures.

52A.3.4 – The proposed mitigation results in a control over the implementation of the earthworks to limit adverse effects. In my opinion the effects of the proposal on the amenity of the community and adjoining landusers will be less than minor. Also, I am unaware of any identified historic heritage or cultural sites associated with this property.

52a.21 – the visual effects have been assessed against the existing character and amenity values, finding that the level of effect is appropriate and less than minor. Revegetation planting and contouring (benching) methods have both been used to reduce the potential scale of visual impact.

52a.22.4 –With the mitigation measures in place, reestablishing the vegetation will occur at a much faster rate than by natural processes, with the post mitigation outcome being considered as having less adverse visual impact than would result from the permitted removal of all hillside vegetation.

CONCLUSION

This proposal is considered to be appropriate due to; the existing large scale commercial character of the receiving environment, the potential site modifications that can be achieved as a permitted activity (vegetation clearance) and the mitigation measures implemented through a benched cut profile with associated planting.

The foregoing assessment concludes that any effects (actual and potential) on the landscape and visual amenity values resulting from the proposal are considered discernible day-to-day effects, too small to adversely affect other persons. Overall the proposal is considered to have a **less than minor effect**.

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Hudson Associates