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Memorandum

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Attention:	Shan Warusavithana – Principal Project Delivery, Blue Green Networks, Healthy Waters
Company:	Auckland Council
Date:	18 November 2025
From:	Oliver May / Tom Lines
Message Ref:	Ngā Wairau – Stage 1 A F Thomas Park works – Preliminary Natural Character, Landscape and Visual Assessment
Project No:	BM230171.02

Introduction

Auckland Council's Healthy Waters and Flood Resilience Department (Healthy Waters) is lodging a referral application to increase flood storage at A F Thomas Park, Wairau Valley under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024.

The project broadly involves:

a) Flood resilience infrastructure works; and

b) Reserve reinstatement, including site stabilisation, landscaping, new footpaths/boardwalks, and formal and informal recreation.

This memorandum provides high-level natural character, landscape and visual considerations for the proposal.

Project Description

The Ngā Wairau project is part of Auckland Council's Making Space for Water – Blue-green Network programme and is focused on the key areas within the Wairau catchment that were impacted by the 2023 storm events. Given the large scale of the Wairau catchment, the Ngā Wairau project is being delivered in three stages. This proposal covers Stage 1, which involves increasing the existing flood storage at A F Thomas Park, together with reserve reinstatement. The stormwater detention capacity created through Stage 1 works is critical to enabling future Stages 2 and 3. Further design development and funding confirmation is required for Stages 2 and 3, and they therefore do not form part of this proposal.

The works proposed under Stage 1 enable the delivery of flood resilience in the catchment by increasing flood storage within A F Thomas Park, initially for the downstream residential area, and undertaking additional stormwater improvement works.

The proposed works to increase flood storage within A F Thomas Park include the following:

- Excavate the park to increase the existing flood storage to reduce flood flows and flood levels. Formalisation of a wetland on the northern end of the park where water naturally ponds as a result of the works and dry detention in other areas of the park. At this stage the earthworks on the site are indicatively estimated to be in the order of 700,000m3 – 800,000m3 (cut and fill) to achieve a flood storage volume of approximately 550,000m3. All excavated material is to remain onsite unless unsuitable.

- The proposed flood storage changes will amend the consented dam. At this stage, the proposed changes may include reducing the dam height, increasing the flood storage capacity and providing an additional spillway.
- Construct a new spillway channel linking the existing channel north of A F Thomas Park that flows east under State Highway 1 to A F Thomas Park to optimise storage and release of flood flows in the park to maximise benefits.
- Reshaping ground using cut material to convey flood flows between proposed raise areas.
- Vegetation removal is required to facilitate the works.
- A temporary construction laydown area will be established on-site (location TBC).
- Reinstatement of A F Thomas Park and constructing new multi-use maintenance accessways.

The technical parameters provided above are indicative, as design is ongoing. The referral is sought on the basis of the broader project description provided above (i.e. (a) flood resilience infrastructure works and (b) reserve reinstatement, including site stabilisation, landscaping, new footpaths/boardwalks, and formal and informal recreation), with final design specifications and precise quantities to follow in the substantive application.

Project Boundary

The project boundary is outlined in the figure below; the red line is the project boundary and the parcels that make up the project area are shown with yellow lines and associated numbering.

Figure 1: A F Thomas Park Project Boundary

Site Address

The site addresses and the legal descriptions for the project area are as follows:

Property address	Legal description
R 21 and 21 Northcote Road	Lot 1 DP 150598, Lot 3 DP 150598, Lot 4 DP 150598, Lot 8 DP 150598 and Lot 8 DP 101760
17 Silverfield Lane	Lot 2 DP 150598
17A Silverfield Lane	Lot 5 DP 150598
17B Silverfield Lane	Lot 6 DP 150598
17C Silverfield Lane	Lot 7 DP 150598
Nil	Part Allot 103 PSH OF Takapuna

Summary of the receiving environment

The project will take place at A F Thomas Park which is currently utilised as a golf course. The site is bordered by residential land uses to the west, industrial land use to the north and road corridors to the south (Northcote Road) and East (State Highway 1). Overall, the site is located within a highly urbanised environment which supports varied land uses.

The site is currently occupied by the Takapuna golf course, which creates a park-like landscape featuring mature tree stands (exotic and native) along maintained fairways. The landform has been modified for the purpose of playing golf and includes a modified watercourse which feeds into the Wairau Creek.

Principal Landscape Assessment Requirements

The assessment of the proposed Ngā Wairau Stage 1 works within A F Thomas Park is proposed to be undertaken and peer reviewed by a registered Tuia Pito Ora / New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects (NZILA) Landscape Architect with specific reference to Te Tangi a te Manu, Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines (2022) and Quality Planning Landscape Guidance Note[1] and its signposts to examples of best practice. The assessment would be prepared in the context of the relevant statutory provisions of the Auckland Unitary Plan (AUP) and the Resource Management Act (RMA), or the relevant equivalent national planning policy at the time. It would include ratings of effects based on the professional judgements of the author based, where it cannot otherwise be quantified.

The principal aspects to be assessed from a natural character, and landscape and visual effects perspectives include but are not limited to:

- The proposed works, including how the proposal has been informed by the characteristics of the site.
- The boundaries of the site and the interface between the open space and the adjacent residential, industrial, and road environments. This will include the consideration of existing trees and their contribution to the qualities and characteristics of the site.
- Proposals to enhance the natural character and landscape values within the site and its function as open space for the community. This would include an understanding of the anticipated changes to the open space during flood conditions.
- The amenity within adjoining areas that may be impacted by the proposal.
- The extent of proposed earthworks and how final levels can be integrated to maintain or enhance landscape and natural character values for the site.
- The Natural Character of the site and its setting together with any potential associated effects or

[1] https://www.qualityplanning.org.nz/node/802

enhancements related to the proposal.

- Potential adverse visual amenity effects associated with the removal of existing vegetation required to enable the proposed earthworks and the introduction of new buildings (if any), including:
    - The extent to which existing boundary planting and high value screening vegetation can be retained
    - Managing the height, materiality, and location of any proposed buildings to appear recessive or integrated into the site
    - Potential adverse effects on residential dwellings associated with construction timeframes and the immediate reinstatement and planting establishment period – particularly those in proximity to the west (e.g. Marywil Crescent, Terrylyn Drive, Benders Avenue).

Preliminary Effects Assessment

The potential and anticipated Landscape, visual and natural character effects resulting from the project have been informed by a desktop study, visit to the site[2] (including the surrounding area) and the information in the A F Thomas Park Concept Design Option [Rev0.1].

Landscape Effects

It is anticipated that the landscape effects resulting from the proposal will primarily be associated with the earthworks and vegetation removal during the construction period. Following construction, it is recognised that the site will remain as an area of open space, albeit performing a different function. As a result, it is anticipated that landscape effects will be highest during construction and notably reduce following the completion of construction. Post construction landscape effects are expected to be Low adverse before improving to neutral or positive effects following the establishment of a proposed planting plan.

Visual Effects

The visual catchment for the proposal is anticipated to be well contained by the arterial road to the south, industrial land and stadium to the north and State Highway 1 to the east. Residential audiences to the west are anticipated to be most likely to experience elevated visual effects. However, these will be predominantly experienced by the dwellings which immediately border the site (e.g. Marywil Crescent, Terrylyn Drive, Benders Avenue). Visual effects are anticipated to reduce considerably as the distance from the site increases and intervening built form and vegetation screen and filter views into the site. Visual effects will be most pronounced during construction and will substantially reduce immediately following the completion of construction works. It is anticipated that over time the proposed planting will provide screening and filtering of views of the SH1 from residential properties to the west and an outlook similar to the existing views for all viewing audiences. In the interim period it is anticipated that visual effects will range from Low adverse to neutral.

Natural Character Effects

Due to the nature of the project it is anticipated that existing watercourses and wetlands in the site will be substantially impacted by the proposed earthworks in the site. However, it is anticipated that the proposal will overall result in an improvement to the functionality, character, and quality of the site's natural character. The proposed flood storage will be designed to optimise the environmental benefits, which will result in overall beneficial effects on natural character following the completion of the project.

Concluding Comments

At this provisional stage it is evident that there are clear methods to deliver a comprehensive natural character, landscape and visual effects assessment for the proposal. Alteration to AF Thomas Park will require an assessment approach that aligns with national, regional and local policy directives. The assessment would need to consider the scale of the site and the receiving environment, and evaluate the proposal from a natural character, landscape, and visual amenity perspective. In particular, effects will need to be considered in relation to the established audiences, the future works, and the management of water within the catchment. It is anticipated that the predominant adverse effects would be during the construction phase of works and associated with the earthworks. By their nature construction effects would be temporary in nature and limited to the construction period of work. Following the completion of the project it is

[2] Undertaken on the 29 October 2025

anticipated that long term effects would potentially be neutral / positive overall due to the retained open space amenity and the opportunities to improve the landscape and natural character of the site overall.

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