Clevedon Quarry Expansion: archaeological assessment

report to
Stevenson Aggregates Limited

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1 Introduction

Stevenson Aggregates Limited (SAL) propose expanding the footprint of a quarry located atStevenson Aggregates Limited (SAL) propose expanding the footprint of the existing Clevedon Quarry located at 546 McNicol Road, 646 McNicol Road and 439 Otau Mountain Road, Clevedon, 2585 (Lot 1 DP 169491, Lot 1 DP 56208, Lots 1 and 2 DP 177738). Archaeological sites are recorded in the New Zealand Archaeological Association (NZAA) Site Recording Scheme (SRS) in the wider Clevedon area, but none are recorded on the property. The total proposed expansion area is approximately 74 ha (excluding the approximately 4.6 ha overburden disposal area). The expansion will be developed across five indicative stages, over an approximate 50-year period. SAL has been referred to apply for approval for the proposed extension to the Clevedon quarry under the Fast Track Approval Act 2024 (FTAA) process. An archaeological assessment of effects is required in support of the FTAA process. Stevenson Aggregates Limited commissioned this assessment from CFG Heritage.

1.1 Statutory requirements

All archaeological sites, whether recorded or not, are protected by the provisions of the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014 and may not be destroyed, damaged or modified without an authority issued by Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga (HNZPT).
An archaeological site is defined in the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act as:

(a) any place in New Zealand, including any building or structure (or part of a building or structure), that—
  (i) was associated with human activity that occurred before 1900 or is the site of the wreck of any vessel where the wreck occurred before 1900; and
  (ii) provides or may provide, through investigation by archaeological methods, evidence relating to the history of New Zealand; and
(b) includes a site for which a declaration is made under section 43(1).

The Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) requires City, District and Regional Councils to manage the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources in a way that provides for the wellbeing of today's communities while safeguarding the options of future generations. The protection of historic heritage from inappropriate subdivision, use, and development is identified as a matter of national importance (Section 6f).

Historic heritage is defined as those natural and physical resources that contribute to an understanding and appreciation of New Zealand's history and cultures, derived from archaeological, architectural, cultural, historic, scientific, or technological qualities.

Historic heritage includes:

- historic sites, structures, places, and areas
- archaeological sites;
- sites of significance to Māori, including wāhi tapu;
- surroundings associated with the natural and physical resources (RMA Section 2).

These categories are not mutually exclusive and some archaeological sites may include above ground structures or may also be places that are of significance to Māori.

Where resource consent is required for any activity the assessment of effects is required to address cultural and historic heritage matters.

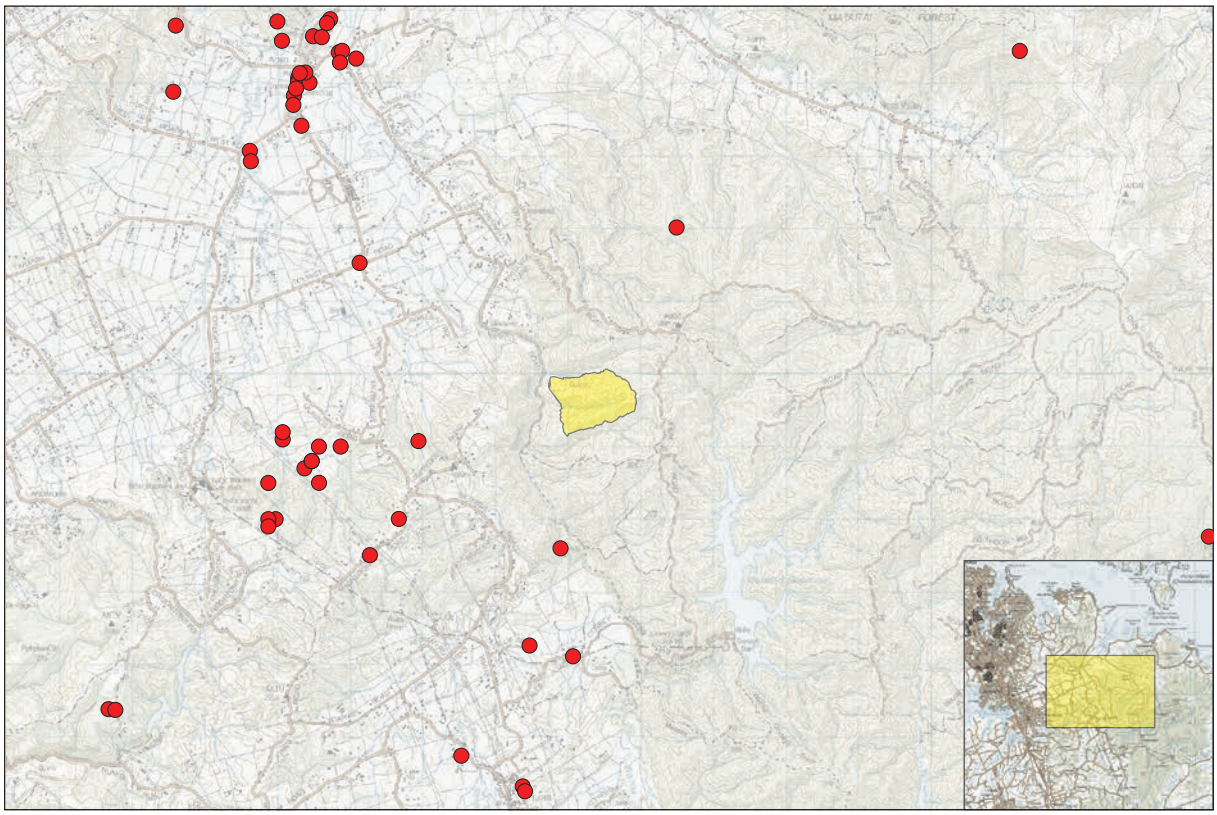


Figure 1. Location of the proposed works, with surrounding archaeological sites.

2 Methodology

The following digital data sources were consulted:

- Site records from the New Zealand Archaeological Association (NZAA) Site Recording Scheme (SRS) were obtained from ArchSite (https://nzarchaeology.org/archsite).
- Records of previous archaeological investigations in the wider vicinity were obtained from the HNZPT digital library (https://dl.heritage.org.nz/greenstone3/library/collection/pdf-reports/).
- The HNZPT New Zealand Heritage List / Rarangi Korero were accessed for records of other heritage items in the vicinity.
- The CFG Heritage reports library was visited for records of works undertaken in the past in the wider Clevedon area
- Historic maps and plans held by Land Information New Zealand (LINZ) were accessed using QuickMap.
- Retrolens was used to access early aerial photographs of the area to check for signs of archaeology (retrolens.nz).
- DigitalNZ search engine was checked of early maps and photographs of the project area.
- Aerial Photographs held by Land Information New Zealand (LINZ), Auckland Council and in other online archives were searched (https://data.linz.govt.nz; https://www.aucklandlibraries.govt.nz/Pages/heritage-photographs.aspx; https://kura.aucklandlibraries.govt.nz).
- The Auckland Council Cultural Heritage Inventory (CHI) and the Auckland Council GeoMaps GIS viewer were searched for any areas of cultural significance in the vicinity (https://geomapspublic.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/viewer/index.html).
- The Auckland Council Heritage Team were contacted for copies of relevant documents held by them for CHI sites near the project extent as part of background research of the area.

The proposed quarry extension site was surveyed by Lucy Arrell of CFG Heritage Ltd on 3 November 2025. This was primarily a visual and foot survey. All data was then integrated into a project GIS.

3 Background

This background is based on content in Cruickshank (2016) with updates made.

The proposed works area is located on the west foothills of the Hūnua Ranges in the upper Wairoa River Valley. McNicol Road and the Wairoa River extend to the west of the project area, with smaller tributaries emptying into the Wairoa River running east–west at the bottom of gullies (Figure 2).

The project area is set inside a steep sided east-west sloped gully with an associated creek line and prominent ridgelines along the north and south. It is currently used as a quarry, which has heavily modified the southern portion of the valley floor, but the original landscape is easy enough to interpret. The remainder of the property which is not currently being used for the quarry is under a probable first rotation pine plantation that has been previously felled and replanted in 2024 and 2025. Approximately 11 hectares of pine were felled prior to Fulton Hogan purchasing the property. This area is under dense regrowth of bracken, ponga and invasive species and was not surveyed.

The dominant subsoil type is clay, with little topsoil. The clay originates from the weathered greywacke of the Waipapa Group which created the ranges (Edbrooke 2001: 12). The Waipapa Group consists of greywacke basement rock along with volcaniclastic sandstones and argillites, with tectonically included basalt and cherts. It has a low structural vulnerability, but the weathered and rotten rock below allows for reasonable drainage of the soil.

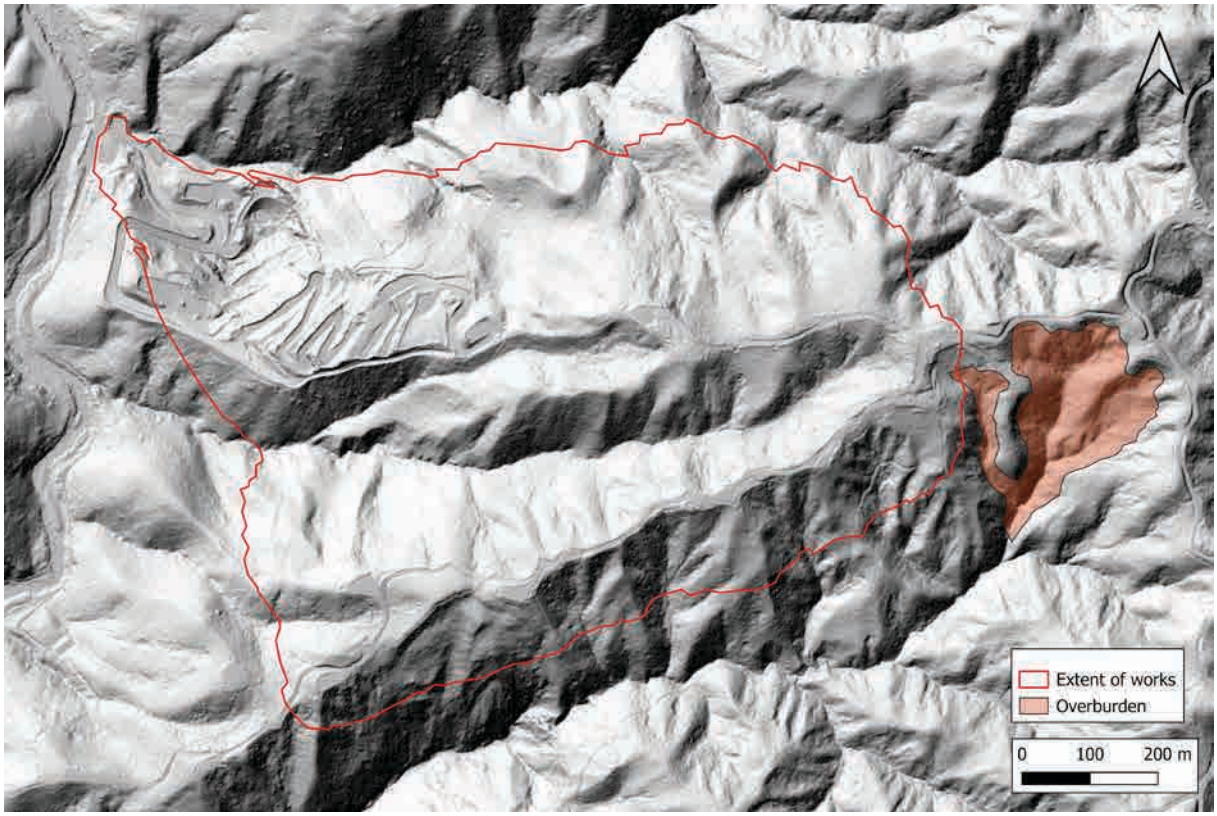


Figure 2. Hillshade model from data collected 2024, with the proposed works overlaid.

3.1 Pre-European Māori

The Wairoa River Valley and the low hills around the Hūnua ranges were settled by Māori with strong connections to Hauraki and Waikato Māori due to kinship ties, and its strategic location with the Wairoa River Valley acting as a main thoroughfare between the Manukau Harbour and the Firth of Thames. The foothills of the Hunua Ranges were used for cultivation and settlement, including the settlement at Ōpāheke on the Manukau Harbour and various kāinga along the Firth of Thames coastline. The poorly drained areas of the lowlands would not have been attractive for settlement but would have been exploited for their birds and other wetland resources (Te Roopu Kaitiaki o Papakura 2010: 7; Tatton 2001: 45).

As well as the importance of these resources, the area was significant to Māori as a link between the Auckland Isthmus, the Waikato and the Hauraki Gulf. A significant pā at Māketu overlooked the Ararimu Track, the inland route to the Waikato (Clarke 1983) and the Hauraki Gulf was accessed using the overland route through the Wairoa River Valley (Tatton 2001).

The Hūnua Ranges were also used as a place of refuge in time of fighting through to the 1800s (Murdoch 1993: 9). Māori were pushed south as a result of Ngāpuhi expansion in the early 19th century, which lead to the abandonment of much of the Auckland area, including Hūnua (Murdoch 1993).

Following the Ngāpuhi incursions a number of Hauraki tribes appealed to the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in 1832 to establish mission stations in the district in a bid to secure peace. The CMS responded in 1833 by sending missionaries Reverend Henry Williams and William Thomas Fairburn to the Tāmaki region to investigate potential mission station locations. Fairburn noted that the Tāmaki Isthmus and the land between Tāmaki and the Wairoa were virtually uninhabited at this time. (Murdoch 1996). Despite their return, Hauraki Māori remained ill at ease in their occupation of their ancestral lands due to ongoing hostilities and animosity in the region that existed between various tribal groups as the result of years of warfare (Plowman 2011).

From 1835, missionaries Fairburn and Preece who had established a CMS mission at Thames were in regular contact with Māori in the Wairoa area. The Fairburn purchase was the result of an attempt to facilitate peace between groups by Fairburn and Preece. The missionaries mistakenly believed that the underlying reason for the instability of the Tāmaki region was the of relatively unpopulated borderland around Hūnua and the Wairoa River Valley later incorporated in the purchase. Henry Williams argued that the territory should be ceded to missionaries and held in trust as a buffer between the contending parties, thereby removing any immediate obstacles to peace. As a result, the deed of sale for this huge block of land was originally calculated as being 40,000 acres but was most likely double that (Te Roopu Kaitiaki o Papakura 2010).

Following the Fairburn purchase European settlers moved into the area, starting with business partners D. McNicol and G. Hoye in 1852. They purchased 1100 acres at 10 shillings per acre on the east side of the Wairoa River. The early settlers were involved in gum digging and kauri felling and flax harvesting, freeing up land for farming (Plowman 2011). During this period, local Māori and the European settlers worked well together and trade was prosperous.

This initial period of cooperation was short lived, as European demands for land intensified in the 1850s. As conflict began between Taranaki and Waikato Māori and the Government, Hauraki Māori were inevitably involved through their ties to Waikato. A number of European redoubts were built in the Wairoa River Valley around modern day Clevedon, and volunteer rifle brigades were established. A number of small skirmishes occurred in the area, and although the conflicts were short-lived, the long term implications were felt by Māori and European alike. Many Europeans abandoned their land in the Wairoa River Valley, and land confiscation led to the loss of 50,000 acres of Māori land (Murdoch 1993; Plowman 2011). Eventually Europeans settled the area again, and farming became the prevalent industry in the Wairoa River Valley, as it remains through to today.

3.2 19th century

A survey plan of the area (SO 265) shows the project area south of the Clevedon township, which had begun to be subdivided. The drawing is not clearly dated, but the following plan (SO 266) is drawn August 1867, so the drawing presumably predates that. The drawing shows the project area



Figure 3. SO 265 drawn before August 1867, with the project area overlaid.



Figure 4. Survey plan SO 4226 drawn in 1890 with the project area overlaid and recorded archaeological sites overlaid.

was almost entirely under bush, and a transport route ran up the centre northeast – southwest line of the project area (Figure 3). It is unclear from the drawing if that route was a bridle track or similar, but the route does neatly follow the south ridgeline when overlaid with LiDAR data. What appears to be the same track is visible in a 1975 map of the Wairoa River Gorge with roads and boundaries as surveyed in the late 1860s (ACC Map 9286). It is located south of SO 265, down the steep south edge a ridgeline, and is recorded as an original surveyed road. Neither track location is visible in the LiDAR. Survey plan SO 4226, drawn in 1890, shows the project area was "broken bush land" including "rata, rimu, tawa" (Figure 4).

3.3 Archaeological background

There has been little archaeological survey or investigation done in the Clevedon area, much less in the immediate vicinity of the Clevedon Quarry and proposed quarry expansion. There are 20 recorded archaeological sites within 4.5 km of the property, 12 of which are pre-European. Six of these are pit terrace sites, two are pā (one of which has been reported as a gunfighter pā, but this is contended) one is a midden/oven site and the remainder are artefact find spots. One of the artefact find spots (S11/747) was the remnants of a waka, and another (S11/742) was a stone anchor.

Pre-European Māori archaeological sites make up the greater part of all recorded cultural her¬itage sites in the area. Recorded sites in this area overall are widely scattered, but with occa¬-sional clusters adjacent to streams and on the high ridges of the hills and ranges. Although Ian Lawlor undertook a survey of the Ruatawhiti Stream as part of an Auckland Council proposal for developing it as a water supply for the city, the area has not been intensively surveyed (Plowman 2011; Tatton 2001). With this in mind, it should be assumed that the sites recorded in the SRS do not accurately represent the archaeological landscape of the Wairoa River Valley and Hunua Ranges. The Clevedon Township and wider Wairoa River Valley have not been subject to systematic archaeological ground survey and assessment for cultural heritage sites, therefore the likelihood that additional unrecorded sites are present inside the study area cannot be discounted and consequently the general area must be treated as archaeologically sensitive until proven otherwise.

4 Field survey

Due to the large scale of the survey area and the extremely steep topography, a targeted survey methodology was implemented (Figure 5). This methodology involved focussing on the ridge lines of the property and any flat areas. No invasive methods such as test pitting were employed. The bases of trees and around roots, along with other areas of erosion as well as accessible sections of ridgelines and slopes were inspected for archaeological material and to understand the local stratigraphy.

The site consists of a large area including several ridgelines and associated gullies, covered in a mix of thick native, planted pine, and harvested slash, as well as the large active greywacke quarry to the northwest of the proposed quarry expansion. Due to the previous forestry harvest, most of the accessed ground surface was entirely covered by slash and scrub regrowth (Figure 6).

Two roads cut the tops of the three large east-west ridgelines, these include several skids and landings for forestry and quarry equipment. Excluding these roads, and the quarry itself, the apparent modification of the area is significant surface damage done by successive forestry harvests. Only the northeast section of the property is in native bush and was inaccessible by foot or vehicle. Some areas of interest were noted toward the northeast end of the property, here the ridgelines were gentler with more frequent flat areas than anywhere else within the works extent (Figure 7). There is no visible evidence of archaeological deposits during the survey.

The area where the transportation route referenced in pre-1867 map SO 265 may be located was surveyed. The location of where the route would have ran did not have visible evidence (Figure 8), and may have just been a paper road that was never formalised.



Figure 5. East–west running ridgelines, showing steep topography and slash with regrowth.



Figure 6. Steep ridgeline sides with slash and small amounts of remaining planted pine.



Figure 7. Relatively flat spur at the northeast end of the site, with area of native bush to the north. Active quarry visible to the left of the photo.



Figure 8. Steep sides of the northern ridgeline taken from the lower slopes of the southern ridgeline. Flat area in the foreground was investigated as a possible location for the 1860s route - no signs were found.

5 Assessment

The following assessments relate only to archaeological values. Other interested parties, in particular mana whenua, may hold different values regarding the greater area.

No archaeological features or deposits were observed at the property and historic aerial imagery and research, site survey results, and LiDAR results indicate that none are expected to be present. Due to the steep and rocky landscape, it is highly unlikely that any heritage sites are located in the property. There is no reasonable case to suspect that the proposed extension of the Clevedon quarry will affect potential previously unrecorded archaeology.

6 Recommendations

These recommendations are only made on the basis of the archaeological values that have been outlined above. Any other values associated with special interest groups, including tangata whenua, can only be determined by them. It is recommended that:

- an authority to modify or destroy any unrecorded archaeology for the quarry expansion does not need to be applied for from Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga under Section 44 of the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014;
- works are undertaken under an Archaeological Accidental Discovery Rule in Section E11.6.1 of the Auckland Unitary Plan;
- since archaeological survey cannot always detect sites of traditional significance to Māori, or wāhi tapu, mana whenua should be consulted regarding the possible existence of such sites, and the recommendations in this report; and
- this report and recommendations are shared with the regional HNZPT office for their feedback and correct archaeological management.

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