

Ashbourne Referral Application – Cultural Assessment for Ngāti Hinerangi, Ngāti Hauā & Raukawa

1. Introduction

Unity Developments engaged Barker & Associates ('B&A') to provide planning services for the master planning, consenting and design of Ashbourne. Ashbourne is located approximately 1.8 kilometres south-west of the centre of Matamata in the Waikato and comprises a total area of 125 hectares. Ashbourne is a multi-use development that includes four key precincts:

- (1) A new residential community, comprising circa 520 new residential units with a variety of densities, a green space and a commercial node;
- (2) A multi-functional greenway that weaves from the neighbourhood centre and commercial node to the Waitoa River on the site's western boundary with an active-mode pathway along the length;
- (3) A retirement living core, comprising circa 218 units, an aged care service and supporting facilities that will be provided across a staged development; and
- (4) Two solar farms which will provide a sustainable energy resource onsite, with the potential to integrate into the wider electricity network to generate energy outside of the immediate development.

This three-stage development, with each of the four key precincts having their own sub-stages, will ensure demand is met over the short, medium and long term.

The 42-hectare residential community is underpinned by a series of design principles, which focus on creating a well-connected, legible and diverse community on the edge of Matamata. The eight-stage development is framed around a central spine road which runs from Station Road, to the north of the site, down to the eastern boundary. Intersecting this is a secondary spine road connection to link the wider residential precinct to the commercial node, green space and greenway. This transport network, supported by local roads, pedestrian and cycle connections, enables a legible grid structure in the residential area. A range of housing typologies and densities are proposed to meet the growing and changing needs of the housing market to ensure there are options for future residents.

The commercial node located in the heart of the development, includes a number of amenities and services to support the Ashbourne development, wider community and local economy, such as local shops, a childcare facility and a café. The commercial node comprises an area of 0.75 hectares in the centre of the Ashbourne development, that includes a number of commercial properties, café, childcare facility and superette. This element of the proposal has been scaled to support the density proposed in the residential and retirement village components to ensure it does not threaten the primary purpose of the town centre of Matamata.

The multi-functional greenway links the commercial node and open spaces of the Ashbourne development area. This corridor interconnects infrastructure, cultural narrative, ecological wellbeing, connectivity and amenity to support a place-based identity. A number of uses are

proposed along this corridor to encourage future residents to interact with the greenway, such as sheltered rest areas for relaxation and socialisation, active mode pathways, and play areas.

To support the growing demand for retirement living in Matamata, Ashbourne is anticipated to deliver circa 218 retirement living units, as well as the supporting healthcare and community facilities across an area of 19 hectares. A staged approach is proposed, from north to south, to establish a high-quality development overlooking the greenway.

Two solar farms are proposed to produce energy for over 7,000 homes per year, with the ability of powering not only Ashbourne but the wider community. The northern solar farm has an area of 12.7 hectares, while the southern solar farm is twice the size with an area of 24 hectares. An underpinning design principle of the solar farms is the dual-use, with agrivoltaic farming proposed to be undertaken underneath the solar panels to promote sustainability and preserve the identified highly productive land. Typical landscaping, planting and security will complement the solar farms to ensure their integration with the wider Ashbourne development.

Unity Developments engaged Te Hira Consultants to provide cultural assessment services for the master planning, consenting and design of Ashbourne.

1.1. Historical & Cultural Context

Ngāti Hinerangi, Ngāti Hauā, and Raukawa Charitable Trust share historical connections to the wai, whenua and taonga within Matamata, each iwi holding enduring kaitiakitanga responsibilities over their ancestral territories.

Iwi occupy the regions of Matamata and Kaimai Ranges, with their histories intricately woven into the landscape through traditional settlement, resource management, and tribal activities. They hold significant cultural values related to local waterways, wāhi tapu (sacred sites), and the preservation of their mātauranga (traditional knowledge).

Iwi are united in their commitment to preserving cultural identities and ancestral connections through the protection of key heritage sites and the sustainable management of natural resources. They emphasize the conservation of important sites while maintaining local biodiversity and natural landscapes.

The iwi collectively aim to ensure that their mātauranga (traditional knowledge) informs development processes, particularly regarding land use, water protection, and cultural heritage conservation. Additionally, they prioritize kaitiakitanga (guardianship) to guarantee that future generations can sustainably access and utilize natural resources. Their shared environmental management plan highlights critical areas such as water quality, biodiversity, and the preservation of cultural landscapes.

Together, Ngāti Hinerangi, Ngāti Hauā, and Raukawa work collaboratively to protect their heritage and ensure the sustainability of their natural resources for generations to come.

2. Statutory Obligations

All iwi have statutory recognition under various Acts, including the Resource Management Act, the Raukawa Claims Settlement Act 2014, Ngāti Hauā Claims Settlement Act 2014, and Ngāti Hinerangi Claims Settlement Act 2021. These Acts enshrine their rights to consultation and participation in decisions impacting their whenua (land), awa (waterways), and taonga.

The principles of the Treaty of Waitangi (Te Tiriti o Waitangi) emphasize partnership, participation, and protection, ensuring that iwi are engaged meaningfully in all decision-making processes. The development must adhere to these obligations, ensuring that iwi voices are central to all planning.

3. Assessment

Te Hira Consultants will prepare the Cultural Impact Assessment to accompany the resource consent application. This assessment will reaffirm the key cultural and environmental values for Mana Whenua, assess the cultural effects of Ashbourne, and outline environmental mitigation and cultural design recommendations. Through the preparation of the Cultural Impact Assessment, consultation with Ngāti Hinerangi, Ngāti Hauā, and Raukawa will occur, which is already underway.

3.1. Potential Effects & Potential Mitigation

The following potential effects will be considered through the assessment:

- Kaitiakitanga/Heritage where Mana Whenua retain decision-making authority over resources within their tribal boundaries.
- The Waitoa River's mauri is culturally and spiritually valuable; it has sustained Ngā Iwi with resources for food, weaving, and medicine, while also containing sacred sites.
- Mana Whenua highlight outdated infrastructure unable to support regional growth, leading to environmental concerns, particularly wastewater and stormwater management.
- Emphasize preserving natural water flows, protecting hydrologically sensitive areas, and implementing stormwater management.
- Healthy ecosystems are vital for clean water, fertile soil, and climate stability, essential for Mana Whenua well-being.
- Sustainable development must respect cultural narratives, ensuring that infrastructure aligns with Mana Whenua values for future generations.
- Large-scale earthworks pose risks of soil erosion and sediment runoff, potentially impacting water quality and mauri of the Waitoa River.
- Proposed solar farms may impact the rural landscape's visual character, necessitating strategic screening.

The following potential mitigation, based on the determined effects, will be considered through the assessment:

- Implement appropriate karakia and cultural protocols as needed.
- Ensure contractors involved in earthworks receive guidance on Ngā Iwi tikanga and protocols, including an understanding of the Accidental Discovery Protocol (ADP), which may be provided by a Mana Whenua representative or designate.
- Engage cultural monitors during the project's inception and construction phases.
- Conduct further discussions with Ngā Iwi representatives on protection, re-vegetation, and landscaping design to safeguard cultural heritage.
- Collaborate with Mana Whenua on a naming strategy and branding for the Eldenwood, including naming specific spaces, buildings, and features, along with bilingual signage and informed cultural interpretation.

- Integrate design elements reflecting key cultural values, including Raukawa, Ngāti Hauā and Ngāti Hinerangi pūrakau, art, and taonga, using Ngā Iwi-endorsed artists.
- Preserve landscape views of the Kaimai Ranges, Mamaku Ranges, Te Miro, and Sanctuary Mountain.
- Promote indigenous planting schemes for individual home landscaping through subdivision design guidelines.
- Develop a landscape plan in collaboration with Mana Whenua, including valued food-gathering species and habitats for mahinga kai species in reserves and along streets.
- Strengthen ecological corridors and enhance native biodiversity by incorporating a diverse range of native species that support local wildlife, including larger rākau rangatira (chiefly trees).
- Foster a partnership with Mana Whenua to maintain regular communication on technical aspects of infrastructure design.
- Design and implement best-practice infrastructure systems throughout the development.
- Ensure sustainable infrastructure outcomes, especially regarding water use and stormwater treatment, to protect iwi values.
- Incorporate dual-use pathways for pedestrians and cyclists within the development area.
- Apply Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) principles to incorporate Te Ao Māori in water management.
- Follow best practices for sustainable recycling of solar panels and batteries at the end of their life.
- Include cultural design and best practise for swale.
- Mana Whenua advocate for partnership in procurement, employment, and economic benefits to alleviate energy hardship for Mana whenua.

4. Next Steps

1.1. Aspirations & Values

Collectively iwi aspirations for the sustainable use of their lands, focusing on both cultural heritage and environmental stewardship: These values include:

- **Kaitiakitanga:** Upholding the principle of guardianship over the environment and natural resources, ensuring their protection for future generations.
- **Mātauranga:** Valuing traditional knowledge and wisdom, integrating it into decision-making processes to inform sustainable practices and cultural preservation.
- **Tiakitanga:** Committing to the protection and preservation of wāhi tapu (sacred sites) and other areas of cultural significance, ensuring their integrity and accessibility.
- **Sustainability:** Prioritizing practices that support the health of ecosystems, including biodiversity, water quality, and the resilience of natural landscapes.

1.2. Long-term Partnerships

The Ashbourne development offers valuable opportunities for collaboration with the iwi, such as integrating cultural design elements into the project, ensuring iwi participation in decision-making, and creating economic opportunities through employment or co-management of resources.

Working in partnership with iwi is best practice for sustainable development and resource management. This partnership and collaboration foster mutual respect and understanding, enabling projects to align with the aspirations of the iwi and the proposed development of Ashbourne.

2. Conclusion

Based on my experience and the information received to date, it is concluded that there are no cultural related reasons, specifically to Mana Whenua, impeding the progression of this project under the fast-track application process.

It is acknowledged that further assessment will be undertaken as part of the Cultural Impact Assessment, with extensive consultation occurring between the project team and Ngāti Hinerangi, Ngāti Hauā, and Raukawa.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bernard", with a stylized flourish at the end.