

MANA WHENUA POSITION STATEMENT
SL1 TWWG response to: SL1 Houchens Development
Archaeological Assessment of Effects

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Representing: Ngaati Wairere Taiao Trust
On behalf of: Southern Links 1 Tangata Whenua Working Group
Date: 17 February 2026

1. Purpose of this Paper

- 1.1** This Cultural Position Statement is provided by the Southern Links 1 Tangata Whenua Working Group (SL1 TWWG)¹ in response to the *Archaeological Assessment of Effects, SL1 Houchens (Report prepared for Chinamans Hill and Ohaupo Land Partnership, December 2025, Matt Gainsford)* (AAE), prepared for the SL1 Houchens Development. It sets out the collective mana whenua position in relation to cultural values held by mana whenua associated with the site and responds directly to the consultation recommendation contained within the AAE.
- 1.2** SL1 TWWG acknowledges the technical archaeological assessment and does not seek to alter or diminish its findings. Rather, this paper clarifies the collective mana whenua position in relation to cultural values, provides Raupatu and Treaty settlement context, responds directly to the AAE recommendation for consultation with mana whenua, and confirms the pathway for cultural integration through the Cultural Values Assessment (CVA), Archaeological Site Management Plan (ASMP), and the SL1 Houchens Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).
- 1.3** This SL1 TWWG submission is not exhaustive. It represents the first formal step in the cultural engagement process for this stage of the project, with further work to occur through the engagement framework established under the SL1 Houchens MOU, and through the CVA and ASMP processes.

2. Archaeological Findings

- 2.1** SL1 TWWG acknowledges the identification of recorded archaeological site S14/510, the recommendation that an Archaeological Authority be sought from Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga, and the conclusions reached in relation to archaeological effects.
- 2.2** SL1 TWWG accepts the technical archaeological findings as presented. However, acknowledgement of limited recorded archaeological features does not mean that the site is not of significance to mana whenua. Archaeological assessment identifies physical remnants, whereas cultural significance includes associative, historical, environmental, and intergenerational dimensions that may not be visible within the archaeological record.

3. Raupatu, Cultural Landscape and Whole-of-Site Significance

- 3.1** The SL1 Houchens site lies within the rohe of the collective SL1 TWWG represented hapuu, and within land confiscated during the Raupatu of 1863 pursuant to the New Zealand Settlements Act 1863, resulting in the confiscation of approximately 1.2 million acres of land and natural resources from Waikato iwi and hapuu, and the enduring disruption of customary occupation and resource use. For the collective

¹ SL1 TWWG comprises mandated representatives of Ngaati Maahanga, Ngaati Tamainupoo, Ngaati Wairere, Ngaati Koroki-Kahukura, Ngaati Hauaa, and Ngaati Apakura supported by Waikato-Tainui.

hapuu represented within SL1 TWWG, the significance of this whenua must be understood within that Raupatu context.

- 3.2 Prior to confiscation and subsequent drainage and agricultural transformation, much of this landscape comprised swamp, wetland, and low-lying terrain. Such environments were culturally and economically significant and supported travel routes, burial practices, puna associated with birthing and ritual practices, gathering of kai and taonga species, medicinal plant harvesting, and trade networks connected to the Waikato River.
- 3.3 Swamp and wetland landscapes were dynamic environments in which daily life was conducted. Tools, waka, pou, and other taonga were sometimes intentionally placed or buried within such environments for protection, ritual purposes, concealment during conflict, or long-term storage.
- 3.4 The collective position of SL1 TWWG is that the entirety of the SL1 Houchens site is culturally significant due to its association with Raupatu, its historic wetland character, and the enduring intergenerational relationship of mana whenua with the whenua and connected waterways as tributaries to our ancestral awa, Waikato.

4. Treaty Settlement Context and Te Ture Whaimana

- 4.1 The SL1 Houchens site is located within the wider Waikato River catchment and the Treaty settlement framework established by the Waikato Raupatu Claims Settlement Act 1995 and the Waikato Raupatu Claims (Waikato River) Settlement Act 2010.
- 4.2 Te Ture Whaimana o Te Awa o Waikato provides an overarching direction for the protection and restoration of the health and wellbeing of the river for present and future generations. Land-use change within this catchment therefore engages broader considerations of mauri, water systems, ecological integrity, and landscape transformation.

5. Response to AAE Recommendation 2 – Mana Whenua Consultation

- 5.1 The AAE recommends at page 22, that consultation be undertaken with Mana Whenua at an early stage and that the results of the AAE be discussed in detail. This paper is provided in direct response to that recommendation.
- 5.2 SL1 TWWG confirms that the AAE has been reviewed in detail and that this document records collective commentary on the findings, the project, and the pathway for engagement regarding any Archaeological Authority application.
- 5.3 Consultation is understood as an ongoing relational process rather than a single procedural step. Further engagement will occur through the ASMP, CVA, and life-of-project mechanisms established under the SL1 Houchens MOU.

6. Cultural Integration and Next Steps

- 6.1 SL1 TWWG confirms that the following measures are necessary moving forward:
 - 1. The ASMP will be developed in consultation with SL1 TWWG and include mana whenua kaitiaki monitoring, accidental discovery procedures aligned with SL1

TWWG protocols, and development of discovery protocols specific to this whenua.

2. Cultural effects beyond archaeology will be addressed through the Cultural Values Assessment process and integration of mana whenua input into mitigation, design, and restoration measures.
3. Mana whenua cultural koorero and historical narratives will be progressively developed and incorporated into the CVA, ASMP, and design responses where appropriate.

7. Ongoing Engagement

- 7.1 SL1 TWWG supports continued and structured dialogue with the applicant and consultants to ensure:
- a. Archaeological and cultural processes are aligned;
 - b. Engagement occurs early and meaningfully; and
 - c. Cultural considerations are appropriately integrated into the development.

8. Conclusion and SL1 TWWG Mana Whenua Cultural Position

- 8.1 SL1 TWWG acknowledges the archaeological findings of the Archaeological Assessment of Effects for SL1 Houchens and supports compliance with the statutory requirements of the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014.
- 8.2 However, SL1 TWWG confirms that cultural significance extends beyond recorded archaeological features. The SL1 Houchens site is part of a wider Waikato cultural landscape shaped by Raupatu, wetland occupation, resource use, intergenerational connection, and ongoing mana whakahaere and kaitiaki responsibilities recognised through Treaty settlement legislation and associated co-governance arrangements.
- 8.3 The collective position of SL1 TWWG is that the entirety of the site is culturally significant. This position reflects both historical association and contemporary mana whakahaere responsibilities. While the AAE identifies limited recorded archaeological material, this does not diminish the historical, associative, and intergenerational values held by mana whenua.
- 8.4 This Cultural Position Statement satisfies the intent of the AAE recommendation for early consultation with mana whenua and establishes the foundation for continued engagement.
- 8.5 SL1 TWWG confirms that:
- a. Archaeological processes, including any Authority application, will be discussed and progressed through the framework established in the SL1 Houchens MOU;
 - b. The ASMP will be developed in consultation with mana whenua and include kaitiaki monitoring and discovery protocols;
 - c. Broader cultural effects will be addressed through the Cultural Values Assessment process;
 - d. Mana whenua cultural koorero and historical narratives will be progressively developed and integrated over time.

8.6 This paper represents the first formal articulation of the collective cultural position of SL1 TWWG for the SL1 Houchens stage. It is not exhaustive. Cultural understanding will continue to evolve through structured engagement, assessment processes, and implementation mechanisms.

8.7 SL1 TWWG supports ongoing dialogue to ensure that archaeological, cultural, environmental, and historical considerations are appropriately integrated into the development and its long-term outcomes.

For and on behalf of the SL1 Tangata Whenua Working Group (TWWG) (Representing Ngaati Wairere, Ngaati Maahanga, Ngaati Tamainupoo, Ngaati Hauaa, Ngaati Koroki-Kahukura, and Ngaati Apakura, with the support of Waikato-Tainui)

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Pouwhenua Consultancy Ltd, representing the Ngaati Wairere Taiao Trust, for and on behalf of the Southern Links 1 Tangata Whenua Working Group (SL1 TWWG)