

HBRC CONSENT REPORT - ARCHAEOLOGY TAIHAPE RD

BACKGROUND

An archaeological risk screening of proposed flood control options for Taihape Rd and Ohiti Rd, Ōmahu, Hawke's Bay, was originally requested from Archaeology Hawke's Bay Ltd (AHB) by Harry Donnelly (Hawke's Bay Regional Council – HBRC: 2024). The screening identified potential archaeological risk and recommended an Archaeological Assessment of Effects be prepared to better assess the risks posed. That document has been prepared and is in the final stages of completion in anticipation of an Archaeological Authority application being submitted to HNZPT.

This Consent Report summarizes the findings of the original screening and the in-prep Assessment of Effects for the purposes of the upcoming Consenting process, as requested by Cam Drury (Strategy).

PROPOSED WORK:

The proposed work for this section of Taihape Rd / Ohiti Rd includes a stop bank along the southern side of Taihape Rd and behind the residential properties to protect from inundation from the Waitio stream as it backlogs from the Ngaruroro River, and from both the Ngaruroro River and Ohiwa Stream (Figure 1). Ancillary work will include revised accessways off Taihape Rd, quarrying in the adjacent paddock, culverts and swales. It is understood that the stop banks will require a foundation footprint of approximately 30 m wide and 500 mm deep subject to soil conditions and engineering advice. For the purposes of the AAE it was assumed that there will be a 50 m stop bank works and general construction zone corridor following the stop bank alignment.



Figure 1: Proposed flood control measures for Taihape/ Ohiti Road area, orange dash indicates proposed quarry area (Source: HBRC, quarry site annotated in by AHB).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

The archaeological potential was assessed via several approaches:

- Recorded sites and wider recorded archaeological landscape (ArchSite)
- Current knowledge of oral narratives
- Historic records (maps & plans)
- Historic aerial photographs
- District Plan & HNZPT listings
- Visual assessment – site visit

There are no currently recorded archaeological sites within the identified area of proposed work. The nearest recorded archaeological sites are > 1 km away and are primarily pā and urupā sites. Further northeast are several kainga sites located at the foot of the hills.

The proposed work area is in a broad valley base that has experienced multiple flood events in the past. The wider Ōmahu area is historically recognized as having been a valuable horticultural area for Māori with traditional crops being replaced by European species including potatoes and wheat during the mid to late 1800s. At least one flour mill (V21/99) is known to have been operating in the area such was the productivity.

Historic maps are important in showing changes to the river corridors since the mid – late 1800s and sometimes indicating areas of past occupation or activity. The river corridors have markedly changed in the screened area with the redirection of the Waitio and Ngaruroro. The Rochfort map (undated but pre-1900) identifies cultivation as occurring in the general area of the proposed work, and specifically in the proposed quarry area. This map also indicates that prior to 19th and 20th C modifications the location lay adjacent to a substantial water course, the Waitio Stream.

Several Retrolens historic aerial images dating from the 1950s - 1980s were scanned for this area and do not show any additional archaeological indicators. However, given the long flood history of the area it is probable that any features such as pits are buried too deeply to see in aerial imagery.

The area of proposed work lies within the Hastings District Council District Plan region. No further items of historic or cultural significance were noted in the immediate vicinity of the proposed work areas.

A site visit was undertaken on 12 April 2024 accompanied by Harry Donnelly (HBRC). Although the affected land could not be directly accessed for a walkover it was possible to view most of it and discuss the entire project area from the road corridor. Most of the work corridor was under rough pasture. There are multiple houses in the area, several of which appear to be relatively recently constructed. No obvious archaeological indicators were noted from the limited visual inspection undertaken. No inspection of the area to the rear of the Taihape Rd houses was undertaken.

DISCUSSION

Although there are currently no recorded archaeological sites within the area of proposed work it does lie in a landscape of known long term occupation and in particular cultivation activity. Further research undertaken through the Assessment of Effects process has reiterated the importance of this area for cultivation pre-1900. The Rochfort map clearly identifies cultivation activity within the proposed work area. Further AAE research suggests that 'Old Ōmahu' may be very close to the proposed work zones.

The flood history of this area has been intense and is likely masking the surface expression of typical archaeological markers. Therefore, it is considered likely that archaeological horizons could be encountered at depths > 700 mm below the current ground surface based on experiences elsewhere e.g. V21/465 (Whakatū) and V21/531 (Puketapu).

CONCLUDING STATEMENTS

Recent findings from similar river corridor / stop bank work in Hawke's Bay has identified that archaeological horizons representing activity and / or occupation can be buried beneath > 1 m of overlying past flood deposits. Therefore, it would be prudent to assume that there is potentially greater archaeological risk in these areas than is reflected in ArchSite.

Stopbanks, swales and culverts: These aspects of the project carry moderate to low archaeological risk due to the limited depth (300 – 500 mm) and localized footprint corridor. However, any archaeology that is encountered in the footprint is unlikely to be able to be preserved in situ unless the Project and Geotechnical Engineers can permit a locally modified footing depth.

Borrow Areas: Stop bank material is confirmed to be sourced locally to the project, quarried from an adjacent paddock. This activity potentially poses the greatest risk (moderate – high) due to the extent of surface area and expected excavation depths (> 3 m). This area has been identified as pre-1900 cultivation and therefore has a high risk that cultivation soils, and evidence of associated activity will be encountered. While there may currently be no tangible evidence that there is archaeology buried under past flood silt layers in this location, if it is present and encountered the implications to the projects could be significant.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It has been recommended that a pre-emptive archaeological authority is applied for as the risk of encountering currently unrecorded archaeology is considered moderate to high for aspects of the project. Furthermore, a pre-emptive archaeological authority would effectively manage potential delays and cost implications to the project should unrecorded archaeology be encountered.

This Archaeological Authority process is currently being worked through with HBRC Project Management.



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