



**MOTUKIEKIE, BAY OF ISLANDS**  
**PROPOSED ZONING AND PROVISION FOR BUILDINGS**

BROAD ASSESSMENT OF LANDSCAPE, NATURAL CHARACTER

## **1 INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY**

This report has been commissioned to inform a submission to the Proposed Far North District Plan (the PFNDP) in relation to Motukiekie in the Bay of Islands. It is scoped and structured for that purpose, so it takes a higher level, more strategic approach to considering potential effects than a project-specific assessment would adopt.

Russell McVeigh lodged a submission to the PFNDP on behalf of, the Lockwood family (the Lockwoods) who own Motukiekie, seeking that the future zoning of island be changed from the currently proposed Natural Open Space Zone to a revised "Moturoa and Motukiekie Island Zone" or a new zone dedicated solely to Motukiekie. The essence of that submission is that Motukiekie shares considerably more in common with privately owned Moturoa than it does with the public, reserve status islands that are also proposed to be zoned Natural Open Space.

A Further Submission lodged by Mai Chen, Barrister, contained a considerably more detailed description of the history of the island, its development, current operation and it the Lockwoods' aspirations for its future. Attachment 1 to that submission contained a tracked-changes version of the proposed Moturoa Island Zone that demonstrated how those provisions could be amended to incorporate Motukiekie, as sought at that time. A second Attachment contained a Motukiekie Island Development Plan that illustrated the location of four additional building areas that were envisaged at that time. The third Attachment provided a tracked-changes version of the District-wide Matters that would require consequential amendment as a result of the sought Zone changes.

This report will provide commentary upon the characteristics of Motukiekie as an Outstanding Natural Landscape and relative to other adjacent islands as one strand of its scope.

A second strand will be to outline a potential scenario that the Motukiekie Lockwoods are contemplating as an expression of the revised zoning that is sought, generally as indicated by the Motukiekie Development Plan and will introduce a refined version of that concept, which combines building areas 4 and 5, is found in Attachment Five to this report. The assessment will consider the potential effects of such development upon the landscape and natural character values of Motukiekie, along with visual amenity that it provides.

The final strand considers the current Natural Open Space zoning that has been applied to Motukiekie under the Proposed Plan and its appropriateness to the specific character and ownership status of the island.

This assessment report has been prepared within the period between lodgement of submissions to the Proposed Plan and hearings on the Proposed Plan. It is informed by further refinements in thinking about provisions and process that have been developed by those advising the Lockwoods during that intervening period. This broad, landscape-related assessment has been undertaken using the following methodology:

- Review background documents that inform an understanding of the Site and wider setting in terms of both physical characteristics and the proposed regulatory framework.

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- Conduct a detailed site visit that includes close inspection of each of the indicated building areas. Photograph these locations where the density of vegetation doesn't preclude a useful image.
- Traverse the waters surrounding the island by boat, photographing Motukiekie from key areas that represent areas of heightened use or passage.
- Describe and analyse the biophysical characteristics of the island, along with the various developments that have occurred.
- Assess the relationship between the potential buildings that would be provided for under the sought zoning and the various viewing audience groupings that are potentially affected by the proposal in consideration of visual amenity effects.
- Assess landscape effects in relation to the form of the modifications that would occur under the proposed zoning and their compatibility or otherwise with established characteristics, patterns and general structure of both the island and its wider context.
- Identify and quantify natural character effects that may be imposed upon adjacent areas of coast.
- Comment upon the relationship the overall suitability or otherwise of proposed revisions to the provisions of the Proposed Far North District Plan.
- Provide some summarising conclusions that draw together the main body of findings.

## SECTION A: DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

Attachment One illustrates the narrow, elongated form of Motukiekie, with its numerous rocky outcrops, small bays and reef projections. That dynamic footprint extends to its terrain, which is dissected and steep, dropping from a well-defined ridgeline that creates a backbone that runs the length of the island. The contours and cross sections contained in Attachment Three provide a detailed sense of that morphology.

The second sheet of Attachment One conveys the wider location of Motukiekie on the outer edge of the cluster of islands in the eastern portion of the wider Bay of Islands.

Motukiekie joins surrounding islands in its status as an outstanding natural landscape under both the Operative and Proposed Far North District Plans and is also recognised as part of that grouping for its heightened natural character values.

### Landscape values

#### Far North District Landscape Assessment (1995) LA4 Landscape Architects

This broad-scale study, carried out in 1995, assessed the landscape of the entire Far North District, with the exception of areas of urban settlement, as a resource for what remains as the operative Far North District Plan.

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Motukiekie lies within a coastal landscape unit described as Islands of the Bay of Islands (C2). This unit fits within a landscape category of *rocky coast interspersed with beaches* and covers the entirety of the island.

The landscape category is common along this portion of the District's shoreline, where the coast tends to be quite convoluted and indented with rocky headlands, punctuated by small bays within low lying portions of the landform.

This landscape unit was assessed as having an overall sensitivity rating of 6 on a range of 1 (low) to 7 (extreme) and therefore defined as being of high sensitivity. Accordingly, it has been deemed to be an outstanding landscape within the Far North District Plan. Aspects identified as characterising this unit include:

- Scattered islands welling from the sea.
- Steep rocky coastal banks.
- Reefed platforms on points.
- Small coves and bays defined by prominent points.
- Fringe of pohutukawa.
- Predominant cover of indigenous scrub.
- Predominant sense of naturalness.
- Sense of inter-relatedness of islands – part of a system.
- Buildings largely well sited and integrated (*note: the Motukiekie residence was not yet present in 1994 when this assessment's fieldwork was undertaken, but is considered to align to this observation*)

Elements and patterns recorded as detracting from landscape character and value applied only to other parts of the landscape unit.

Aspects which contribute to the ability of the landscape to visually absorb change without significant modification of its character (VAC) include the effect of existing built development (limited at that point to Otehei and Robertson), mature areas of vegetation, and subtle topographic variations, coves and embayments. Elements that reduce VAC are the sensitivity of headlands, ridges, flanks and most open portions of coastal terrain; the limited distribution of existing built developments; and the consistency of vegetation cover and lack of scale of most.

**Northland Regional Policy Statement Landscape Assessment (2016)**

**Littoralis Landscape Architecture and Simon Cocker Landscape Architecture**

This region-wide study was prepared to inform the Proposed Regional Policy Statement for Northland (RPS) and, in the process, to provide an updated basis for the outstanding natural landscape (ONL) mapping underpinning the three district plans which cover the region. The outstanding landscape mapping contained in the Proposed Far North District Plan is founded upon this assessment. A significant driver for the update of the RPS was the updated NZCPS 2010, with its informing policies guiding the landscape assessment.

A copy of the relevant Landscape Assessment Worksheet is found in Attachment Four to this report and so the description and analysis of the landscape unit can be consumed there.

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Whilst differently structured and offering a greater depth of information than was provided by its predecessor just described, the relevant worksheet records findings that are closely aligned to those of 1995. Rankings across natural science factors, aesthetic values and experiential are largely rated at the highest level of 5, with a ranking of 4 applying only in relation to its intactness (where the presence of exotic grasslands and tree cover detract) and remoteness/wilderness (with respect to high seasonal visitor use and the buildings and man-made facilities present).

In recognition of the relative currency of the RPS study and the hierarchical primacy of a regional policy statement over a district plan, RPS assessment findings can be regarded as being more current and correct, although the consistency of the two assessments in relation to the Bay of Island means that any differences are somewhat academic.

**Natural Character Values**

**Northland Regional Policy Statement Natural Character Assessment (2016)  
Pacific Eco-Logic Ltd**

As part of the Regional Mapping Project that included the regional landscape assessment outlined above, the identification and description of areas of High and Outstanding natural character was also undertaken. This project was particularly influenced by policies 13 and 14 of the NZCPS.

Motukiekie is defined as having high natural character (as distinct from being outstanding) and has the identifier 11/45 under this assessment.

The key natural character elements and values found within that area are set out by the assessment as follows:

**Summary Description** Rocky island with a mosaic of kanuka dominant shrubland and low forest, fringing pohutukawa in south, variety of planted introduced trees (especially eucalyptus and pines) that have been progressively logged. On the northern faces there are patches of introduced grasses with kanuka shrubs. House and caretakers house (*Note: mistakenly identifies a caretaker house*) with jetty and walkway on west. Part of Project Island Song (free from animal pests)

**Contributing Values** Relatively large area of indigenous vegetation with some inclusions of grass/shrubland and introduced trees. Some restoration on planting areas. Minimal human-mediated hydrological or landform changes. A few obvious localised human structures. Animal pest free.

**2 EXISTING PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS**

**2.1 Geology and soils**

The island shares its origins with adjacent island and mainland promontory landforms in being founded upon Paleozoic-Mesozoic Waipapa Terrane greywacke geology. This foundation is clearly expressed in the rocky islets, cliffs and shelf reefs that have been exposed on the northern and eastern faces of the island,

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where it is most battered by the ocean swells fetching into the outer part of the wider Bay.

A steep topography and relatively recent history of pastoral grazing through to the late 1950's (and possibly beyond) means that the Marua light brown clay loam soils are likely to be highly weathered and may have been predominantly lost following clearance of the island's original mantle of indigenous forest and subsequent pressure of stock. Developing indigenous shrubland and forest associations are likely to be establishing an evolving organic horizon over what remains of these parent soils. The soils are categorised as Land Use Class 7 (LUC 7)<sup>1</sup>.

## 2.2 Landform

The contour plans found in Attachment Three convey the steep topography that prevails across almost all of Motukiekie, with a typical gradient of between 1:1 and 1:2. That gradient is also conveyed by the cross-section drawings also found in Attachment Three.

The balance of the Island exhibits similarly inclined slopes, ascending rapidly from a predominantly indented coastline to the pronounced spine of the island that is evident in the various panoramic photographs contained in Attachment Two. Some portions of the island's apex are less severe, as is the slight bench where the

property's homestead is situated, but generally the topography is steep to precipitous.

## 2.3 Hydrology

A small footprint, combined with steep but quite evenly graded terrain, means that the Island has very limited freshwater channels, with those that do exist tending to be undefined and thought to run only briefly after the most intense rainfall deluges.

It is the Island's inherent relationship with the surrounding Coastal Marine Area (CMA) that is self-evidently the most important hydrological influence. This will be relationship will be examined more fully when discussing the site context later in this report.

## 2.4 Vegetation and Land use

Whilst now nearing an almost complete cover of trees and shrubland – in considerable part due to the restorative efforts of the Lockwoods - the Island's vegetation has a diverse composition. During the 1950's the island was reputed to still be completely grazed by sheep, which are thought to have been withdrawn by the 1960's.

Plantings by the Lockwoods during that period brought a range of exotic species, some of which still feature and are of a scale that makes their removal impracticable. Those remaining exotics include Norfolk Island pine (*Araucaria hetrophylla*), Japanese cedar (*Cryptomeria japonica*), gum (*Eucalyptus sp.*), and

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<sup>1</sup> Manaaki Whenua Landscare Research, *Our Environment GIS Viewer (Land Use Capability)*



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Morton Bay fig (*Ficus macrophylla*). The conservation programme on the island has seen the smaller, self-seeded specimens of these species largely removed and an ongoing focus upon continuing control.

The indigenous vegetation of the island has developed considerably over the past 3 decades. According to Beever et al <sup>2</sup> citing A Goodwin, a range of native species were introduced to the island during the period 1958-1964, so some of the current indigenous species are likely to be either those introductions or their offspring.

Figure 1, opposite, is an aerial image of the island captured approximately 45 years ago, where a scattering of mature specimens of pohutukawa clearly contrast with the diminutive shrubland and grassed cover that prevails.

Figure 2 further below demonstrates how the native shrubland/forest associations have evolved over the following +/- 45 years, with the particular benefit of very active management in the latter couple of decades. The more mature trees that fringe the western margin of the island are still distinct, but most of the balance of the landmass displays a texture that conveys the developing nature of most other vegetation. Former grassland areas are much diminished in extent. Some of that advance reflects a substantial investment by the Lockwoods to install approximately 20,000 eco-sourced plants since the 2004 image was taken.



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Source: Google Earth

**Figure 2:** An aerial image captured in 2023. Comparison with Figure 1 shows the considerable consolidation of the canopy and expansion of indigenous cover through the very active management applied over the intervening 45-50 years.

Alongside a comparable dedication to pest eradication that supports the Island's status within the local "Project Island Song", this philanthropic enterprise is tangible evidence of the Lockwoods' commitment to conserving and enhancing the island's natural values whilst also providing for the wider Lockwood family's recreational needs.

Proposed Building Areas 2 and 3 are surrounded by dense vegetation but a reasonable portion of the identified Building Areas are predominantly clear of indigenous shrub or tree vegetation, with the exception of a few pohutukawa within Area 2. Part of building area 4 is also free of vegetation of scale, but the balance is occupied by leggy manuka (*Leptospermum scoparium*) or kanuka (*Kunzea ericoides*) of 6-8m in height. To the immediate south-west is a fringe of mature pohutukawa (*Metrosideros excelsa*) that are evident in Figure 1, and which provide a dense visual filter to the adjacent channel.

Collectively, these pohutukawa and enduring manuka/kanuka to the north-east would form an immediate and tight vegetative frame to a future structure to proposed Building Area 4.

### **2.5 Buildings and other site development**

The previously described existing residence on the Site lies in a modest embayment in the coastal landform, where a portion of the topography inland of the small beach that is present is slightly gentler than is found over most of the rest of the island.

Despite its muted presence when seen from beyond of the island (see Photograph 1 below) the existing house is a substantial three-storied building with a steeply pitched, gabled roof. It lies above one of the most pronounced of the small beaches on Motukiekie. A boardwalk connects a jetty and pontoon assembly on the north-west margin of the beach up to the house, skirting the rocky shore for the first part of its route. This arrangement can be seen in Photograph 1, below.



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From the house, the same generous boardwalk ascends approximately 200m to the crest of the island. The boardwalk was constructed to allow all-weather access for ecological management activities whilst conserving the natural landform and leaving overland flow patterns unhindered.



**Photograph 1:** A small part of the roof of the established house on the island, glimpsed through a setting of established trees (many of them exotic), with its related shoreline developments and adjacent boardwalk, jetty and pontoon assemblage seen to left.

Small implement and storage sheds are situated on the ridge immediately inland of the existing house, within proposed building area 2. Nearby is a solar array, visible and marked on Attachment One. A little further to the north-west is a helipad

(marked in Attachment Three), but this takes the form of an area maintained clear of vegetation rather than being a structure.

A tiny and aged cabin structure lies halfway down the eastern spur extending from proposed house area 3, where it is entirely encapsulated in vegetation. Rounding out the existing built elements are a cluster of water tanks set near the highest point of the island and entirely concealed from external view by surrounding vegetation.

## **SECTION B: CHARACTERISATION OF SETTING**

### **3 DEFINING ELEMENTS / LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS**

The wider structure of the outer Bay of Islands (which Motukiekie forms part of) displays a relatively cohesive identity, but an inherent diversity at a finer grade. In the light of Motukiekie's diminutive size and its orientation, its coastal surrounding is very diverse in terms of spatial scale and levels of exposure to wave energy. To the northwest, its tip addresses the mid to outer Bay of Islands and the swells that fetch down from the north. To the northeast, a modest channel separates Motukiekie from the chain of Okahu, Waewaetorea and Urupukapuka Islands.

To the south-east, the island connects with the semi protected waters of Te Rawhiti Inlet as it approaches Albert Channel off of Rawhiti. Poroporo Island hangs off the

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tail of Urupukapuka as an intermediary between Motukiekie and the southwest entry to Albert Channel.

The immediate setting of the south-western face of Motukiekie is defined by the topographic enclosure created by the landform of the Island and its immediate relationship with the channel separating it from Moturua Island to the south-west. Analysis of the extent of potential exposure confirms that zone of influence is contained by the primary ridge of Motukiekie and the hooked headland at its north-east tip that defines the bay containing the existing residence.

By contrast, the water bodies surrounding the other three sides of Motukiekie, as outlined further above, are much broader and more open, without the tighter definition found to the south-west. This difference means that potential viewing audiences are much more dispersed and likely to be tracking considerably further from Motukiekie.

## **SECTION C: DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL**

Although this reporting essentially relates to a zoning matter, the request for three future buildings areas to be identified and subject to future discretionary resource consent applications provides a framework for the assessment of landscape and visual effects. As such, this reporting will discuss and analyse the development inherent in the rezoning and “Development Plan” as “the proposal”.

The Lockwoods have used Motukiekie as a recreational escape for almost two decades. During that time, they have invested heavily in the low-key infrastructure present and the extensive restoration effort that has led to such a positive transformation of Motukiekie. As another generation of the wider family grows, there is a desire to provide an opportunity for those nuclear families to construct a dwelling at some point, if desired. The Lockwoods have indicated that there are no fixed, imminent plans to create additional dwellings, but they wish to ensure that zoning makes adequate provision for that to occur under the PFNDP.

The proposal originally conceived to inform a change of zoning under the PFNDP provided for four dwelling locations. It was this development scenario that accompanied the submissions to the FNDP that were lodged on behalf of the Lockwoods. Those initially favoured building areas were selected to benefit from the very limited locations on the island that feature a combination of accessible and relatively gentle terrain, coupled with a high degree of containment created by established vegetation.

In response to the fieldwork findings of *this* assessment report, former building areas 4 and 5 were rationalised to the currently indicated area 4, which lies midway between former 4 and 5 on slightly flared part of the ridge and away from an area of apparent instability near former area 5. A further refinement has been to shift Building Area 2 so that it is just off the ridge and slightly to the east of its originally proposed position, now twisted slightly so that it coincides with a natural bench in the terrain.

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A further part of the proposal is to provide for a downhill extension of the existing solar array, since the degree of the vegetative containment of the three building areas is likely to compromise the effectiveness of roof-mounted solar panels on future structures.

The plans and cross sections found in **Attachment Three** illustrate the location of each building area and the profile of the terrain that runs off to either side to the shoreline. Those drawings show that each of proposed 30m x 50m building areas is positioned atop or closely adjacent to the ridge, where an access track exists and where the terrain profile allows for a building to occur without the requirement to either suspend it on tall piles, undertake significant earthworks or create the need for substantial retaining.

Ordinarily, buildings on ridgelines have the potential for elevated adverse visual amenity, landscape and natural character impacts. Future owners tend to seek out such locations in pursuit of expansive views and to avoid potential instability on side slopes. District Plan provisions frequently seek to encourage building to occur away from ridgelines in sensitive areas to minimise the potential for adverse effects, and the Coastal rules of the Proposed Plan reflect that norm.

In this context, it is ironic that the ridgeline zone of Motukiekie provides the opportunity to most actively limit the sorts of effects that this report is focussed upon, almost entirely because of the density and scale of vegetation that exists nearby, much of it the result of the Lockwoods' early planting efforts. Cross Sections A-A' to D-D' in **Attachment Three** illustrate how the scale and density of vegetation provides to almost entirely internalise any visual presence of a future

building to within a very small surrounding area of the island (as distinct from visibility from beyond Motukiekie).

To ensure that any future buildings are most effectively integrated, a suite of Principles and Building Guidelines are intended to apply to all three of the building areas, with those intended to inform the discretionary activity resource consent that would be necessary to construct any of those buildings. In summary, those controls intend to ensure that:

- Any building is within the defined building area.
- Materials are of a very low reflectance value and complementary to surrounding vegetation.
- Window coverings are also suitably controlled.
- External lighting is extremely limited and not visible from outside the island.
- Access is low-impact and avoids concentrating runoff.
- Vegetation clearance is limited to a practicable minimum, with any large indigenous trees conserved.
- Buildings are designed and assessed to ensure that their visible presence is almost entirely restricted to being within the island.
- Any additional solar panels not mounted on buildings are installed in association with the existing solar array and downslope of that assembly.

The full suite of proposed Principles and Guidelines can be found in Appendix One.

## SECTION D: ZONING UNDER PROPOSED FAR NORTH DISTRICT PLAN

The introduction to this report noted the submissions to the PFNDP that the proposed Natural Open Space zoning indicated for Motukiekie is inappropriate. Those submissions recorded the private ownership of the Island, the developments that have occurred upon it and the parallels between Motukiekie and Moturoa, which has a Special Purpose Zone applying to it.

When considering the zoning of the island through a landscape/natural character lens, it can be observed that Motukiekie benefits from a long-standing conservation initiative that might be construed as aligning it to being a Natural Open Space that solely shares values with publicly owned islands within the Bay.

Drawing in the other dimensions of Motukiekie, with its substantial house, adjacent foreshore developments, well developed service tracks, helipad, maintenance buildings and water tanks, sets it apart from the almost entirely “natural” DoC-administered islands. In terms of detailed landscape and natural characteristics, Motukiekie is more closely allied to the ends of Motuarohia / Roberton Island and Moturoa, where the character influenced by private ownership and development and is quite distinct from the public Natural Open Space zoned land.

It is noteworthy that the currently developed part of Moturoa, the private parts of Motuarohia and Otehei Bay all have a Rural Production zoning applied under the

PFNDP and that a Natural Open Space zoning only applies to the balance of Moturoa, which is crown-owned conservation estate. On the basis of the landscape character and natural character of Motukiekie, a parallel Special Purpose zoning that carries a consistent structure with those that apply to Moturoa is considered to be most appropriate, since that would provide provisions that are tailored to the unique combination of that island’s particular characteristics, the ownership status of the island and ensuring that continuing management and limited future development of Motukiekie ensure that its qualities continue to improve.

## SECTION E: EFFECTS ASSESSMENT

Preceding sections describe the characteristics of the Motukiekie and its setting. These are followed by a description of the anticipated development of the Site and its component parts. The purpose of *this* section of the report is to define the effects of the intended additional buildings upon the island and its setting, to consider how the proposal would impact upon the experience of people viewing development that would result from the plan change from outside of the site, and to comment upon the resulting level of effect upon landscape character, visual amenity and natural character.

**Adverse effects** impact negatively on the landscape and result in landscape, natural character and/or visual amenity values being diminished. **Benign or neutral effects** are those in which a proposed change neither degrades nor

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enhances these values when considered in the whole. In circumstances where **positive effects** arise from a development, the changes that have been brought are deemed to be beneficial relative to the landscape state of the site prior to that change.

Effect ratings that will be used:

**Very high:** resulting in a dramatic or total loss of the defining landscape characteristics of the site/context, or visual amenity associated with that setting.

**High:** leading to a major change in the characteristics site or setting, or significantly diminishing key attributes, and/or comparable impacts upon visual amenity.

**Moderate – high:** an interim measure of effect in which impact of the development results in a change of some significance to the qualities or perception subject landscape.

**Moderate:** a self-explanatory magnitude in which effects sit midway between the extremes this spectrum of magnitude. Can also be considered as an “average” level.

**Moderate – low:** impacts on landscape characteristics and attributes are relatively contained. The threshold defining “minor” in relation to the S104D gateway test sits within this level of magnitude, typically towards the lower end of its spectrum.

**Low:** effects are generally very limited and do not result in compromising the characteristics of a landscape or perceptions of it in a more than subtle way.

**Very low:** negligible or imperceptible effects result upon the landscape and/ or perceptions of it.

## 7 VISUAL AMENITY EFFECTS

### Viewing audiences / affected parties

To assist with predicting the level of visual and landscape effect that the proposal would generate, publicly accessible vantage points in the area were selected to be broadly representative of each of the following identified audience groups, selecting worst-case views wherever possible. Photographs for each vantage point are found in Attachment Two. These will be referred to in the following commentary. Unfortunately, the late winter light conditions present during the early afternoon of the site visit have left the images compromised, but they are considered adequate to provide a clear impression of the site and its setting.

Images have been captured using a mirrorless Nikon Z5 SLR digital camera with a lens focal length setting of 32mm. This setting replicates the combination of a 50mm lens on 35mm format film camera. Panoramas have sought to capture setting and context, so are often knowingly wider than the human field of view.



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The vantage point locations are marked in the aerial photograph comprising Attachment One. Their distribution has been selected to be representative of the range of views to Motukiekie from typical navigation routes and from the closest of the nearby islands, Moturua. As such, they seek to largely capture the potential “visual catchment” of the proposal (in the theoretical scenario of buildings being visible), being the extent of surrounding area from which the proposal could be seen.

Black arrows inserted into the sky above the Site in the panoramas highlight the location of the proposed house locations, although buildings themselves would not be visible because of the vegetative screening described earlier. White arrows have been used to indicate the location of the existing house.

The degree of adverse visual / landscape effect generated by a proposed change or development depends upon the character of the surrounding landscape (the context), existing levels of development on the application site, the contour of the land, the presence or absence of screening and/or backdrop vegetation, and the characteristics of the proposed development. When contemplating visual effects in relation to this proposal, it is important to acknowledge that the existing house and nearby coastal structures establish a measure of impact which, when combined with the “signal” of the large exotic trees clustered within the bay, define that location as a point of habitation.

***Those in boats to the north east of Motukiekie***

Two vantagepoints represent middle distant to distant views from this sector. Panorama VP04 indicates the view to be had of the northern end of the island from vessels returning from the outer Bay to the sheltered inner passage. The main area of grassland remaining on the island is most evident from this area, with the solar array that is situated near its brink barely evident, since it is presented end-on. The small buildings that currently occupied proposed Building Area 2 (denoted by an inserted black arrow) are not visible and the large trees that currently preclude any view to those structures would be perform the same role for a future permanent building.

Panorama VP05 is indicative of the south-western view from boats that have rounded Motungarangara and people returning from the very popular sandy beach on the north-west shore of Waewaetorea. Once again, the solar array is almost imperceptible (as a gauge of visibility and in relation to its possible expansion) and Building Area 2 is entirely shrouded by mature vegetation. Building Areas 2 and 3 would both be visible from this more distant position were it not for the forest and shrubland cover of Motukiekie but in reality would be completely concealed by the large vegetation that surrounds each of them.

This viewing audience would be entirely unaffected by the proposal, other than the small potential for a limited amount of light that may be visible emanating from a structure on Building Area 2 to those entering from nearer Motukiekie. Provision to extend the solar array downslope would place it within a topographic and

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vegetative setting (of emergent harakeke and other native seedlings) that ensures that its presence will be not considerably greater than the very limited visibility that exists in its current form.

***Boats passing between Waewaetorea and Urupukapuka***

This narrow channel offers passage from the outer bay and includes three small coves/beaches that are commonly used as anchorages and for day trips. Panorama VP06 records the view of those exiting this narrow channel to the south-west. Once again, the proposed Building Areas would be imperceptible due to dense screening by existing shrubland and forest.

***The approach from the south east of Motukiekie and Moturua***

Panorama VP07 takes the view of those leaving the inner passage and traversing the landward end of Motukiekie when heading for Waewaetorea and the outer Bay beyond. This aspect condenses the sense of the length of the island and the separation between the three proposed Building Areas, but they remain entirely screened by a considerable depth of substantial vegetation and would not be visible.

***Boat passengers in the channel between Motukiekie and Moturua***

Panoramas VP08, 09 and 10 represent views to the various parts of the island as experienced from vessels following a typical track through the centre of the channel in a north-west direction away from Te Rawhiti Inlet towards the more open Bay of Islands beyond Motukiekie. Exposure to the locations of the building areas (as

distinct from future buildings themselves) is equally balanced for those travelling on the opposite course back into more protected waters.

As these images illustrate, the closer and perpendicular VP09 sees the proposed building area locations in concert with the primary house and related maritime structures described earlier. In making that observation, no building on any one or more of the 3 Building Areas would be visible from this or any of the area to the south-east of Motukiekie, except for a small amount of light potentially emanating from a building within Area 4 during darkness. This image usefully illustrates that even the large, three storied existing house is barely visible from outside the island, despite its scale, by virtue of containing vegetation.

For this viewing audience, the impact of three future buildings within the proposed Building Areas upon visual amenity would be no greater than *very low* (and therefore considerably less than minor), since they would be undetectable from beyond the island, other than a possible small amount of internal light in relation to Area 4.

***Users of Waiwhapuku Bay***

The majority of Moturua is a scenic reserve administered by the Department of Conservation. Waiwhapuku (Army) Bay is the site of the WWII Control of Mines Base, where foundations and other relics remain as a point of interest for visitors. The shelter offered by the Bay and its pleasant beach make it a popular day destination and summer anchorage. A track that circles much of Moturua passes

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through the Bay, whilst a diversion heads to Hikurangi Pa, much compromised by a WWII defensive lookout, at the northern tip of the island.

Panorama VP11 was taken from the midst of the beach, where the existing development on Motukiekie is most evident. This vantage point is set approximately three quarters of a kilometre from the Site. From this position, proposed Areas 2, 3 and 4 would all be exposed to view, were it not for the solid belt of vegetation that immediately intervenes along the south-western face that runs up to the ridge to provide a solid screen to each of the Areas. As a result, none of the future buildings would be visible.

### **8 LANDSCAPE EFFECTS**

Landscape effects are those impacts upon the structure, pattern and character of landscape that result from a development or change in land use.

In the case of this proposal, the consistent steep contour and maturing vegetation cover of most of Motukiekie are influential in determining the magnitude of landscape effects arising from any potential development that lies within that pattern. This predominantly cohesive landscape character creates a dichotomy in the way that potential development could interact. Any considerable disruption to that pattern – in the form of extensive vegetation clearance, major exposed earthworks or a highly visible, prominent building or other structure – would generate heightened landscape effects through its contrast. On the other hand, the continuity and scale of vegetation that now prevails creates a framework within

which sensitive and modest development can be integrated with negligible adverse landscape impacts.

The location of the proposed future buildings has been selected very carefully by the Lockwoods through their intimate knowledge of Motukiekie and desire to ensure that its landscape identity remains essentially unaltered (and continuing on a path of enhancement under their stewardship). Their knowledge of the island includes an awareness of the pa sites at either end of the island and two identified terraces near the solar array, none of which would be influenced by the proposal. The Lockwoods' initial selection has then been further refined (in the form of subtly adjusting the position and orientation of Area 2 and rationalising former Areas 4 and 5 into a single Area 4) through the scrutiny of all of the initially indicated Building Areas by a landscape architect.

As a result of the proposal emerging from a rigorous approach that responds to the detailed contour of the natural ground, utilising small clearings where these exist, and – particularly, the level and nature of the tree canopy present - the potential for intrusive landscape impacts is actively avoided. That siting approach is backed by proposed detailed conditions/assessment criteria that address site factors and the form, scale and finish of buildings to ensure that future applications for discretionary resource consent fully realise the measures necessary to optimally integrate buildings within the selected Areas.

In this context, the magnitude of landscape effects of the proposal, once fully implemented and established, is *very low*.

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## 9 NATURAL CHARACTER EFFECTS

Section 6(a) of the Resource Management Act (1991) states that the following matter of national importance shall be recognised and provided for:

*“The preservation of the natural character of the coastal environment (including the coastal marine area), wetlands, and lakes and rivers and their margins and the protection of them from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.”*

A working definition of natural character is derived from research undertaken for the Ministry of the Environment in relation to Environmental Performance Indicators (Boffa Miskell Ltd 2002). This states that:

*“The degree or level of natural character within an area depends on the extent to which natural elements, patterns and processes occur; and the nature and extent of modifications to the ecosystems and landscape / seascape. The highest degree of natural character (greatest naturalness) occurs where there is least modification. The effect of different types of modification upon the natural character of an area varies with the context and may be perceived differently by different parts of the community.”*

As the preceding extract indicates, natural character exists on a continuum that spans from totally modified at one extreme, to entirely natural at the other. The Site has been defined as having heightened natural character by the assessment that

informs the RPS and therefore carries an elevated sensitivity when considering the addition of a building.

Contributing to that sensitivity are the “unbuilt” nature of much of the Site and the contiguity of native growth that clads most of the island. Countering those positive dimensions are the existence of the nearby residence, the adjacent coastal boardwalk, jetty and pontoon, coastline modifications associated with the existing house, and the concentration of large exotic trees that lie around the house as a reminder of early amenity plantings by former owners.

Whilst not recorded by the natural character assessment that informs the Regional Policy Statement and mentioned on p3 of this report, the extensive restoration investment by the Lockwoods contributes considerably to the present-day natural character values of Motukiekie.

The pair of aerial images that form Attachment One offer an overview that is informative when considering the intimate relationship that Motukiekie enjoys with the adjacent maritime area. Most of the panoramic photographs of Attachment Two further inform that understanding. The predominant ridge that would receive the proposed future buildings currently carries a helicopter landing pad, a solar array (on the upper flank), a cluster of small utility buildings/shelters, an orchard and water tanks, and a generous picnic and camping clearing. With the exception of the solar array, none of those existing “developments” are experienced from outside the island or impact upon the experience of its natural character. Whilst subtly visible, the solar array is almost mute in terms of its impact upon natural

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character (and landscape values). That situation would continue if the array were to be extended downslope as proposed, with the larger potential extent leading to a small incremental increase to its effect upon natural character values, in part due to topographic variability and also as a result of progressive natural colonisation in that area.

Two of the three proposed Building Areas occupy the cleared pockets mentioned above and the third would occur in an area that is also encapsulated by surrounding large vegetation and require clearance only of unremarkable vegetation, leaving nearby large specimens intact.

In light of the proposal's highly achievable approach to "internalise" any small potential adverse effect upon the landscape and natural character of Motukiekie, it is considered that the resulting level of natural character effects arising from the proposal would be benign and of a *very low* level (therefore being considerably less than minor).

## **SECTION F: CONCLUSIONS**

Motukiekie is an integral component of the Bay of Islands and has a powerful connection to the surrounding seascape, with heightened levels of landscape and natural character value and sensitivity as a result. Those values are recognised by

Motukiekie's status as an outstanding natural landscape and being also defined as having high natural character values.

In its current form, the island reflects the later stages of a transition from pastoral grazing to one dominated by a more complete, diverse, indigenous ecology. The significant effort and resources that have been contributed to that process by the Submitters are noteworthy in the island's evolution to its current state.

The proposed zoning of Motukiekie under the PFNDP is inconsistent with the nature and use of the island as a privately owned title, with the type of zoning applying to Moturoa being considered more appropriate. Whilst Motukiekie continues to benefit from privately resourced conservation initiatives (as does Moturoa) the island's ownership and use, along with elements of existing development, place it alongside Moturoa and the privately owned portions of Motuarohia / Roberton Island, where the character derived from such ownership and development is differentiated by proposed zoning from the Natural Open Space applying to islands administered by the Department of Conservation.

A Special Purpose Zone that is comparable to that applying to Moturoa but specifically tailored to the character of Motukiekie and the aspects that relate to its private ownership, is considered a markedly better response than the Natural Open Space Zone that currently applies under the Proposed Plan and superior to a Rural Production Zone alternative.



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The configuration of a proposal to allow for three future buildings through a Development Plan under a more appropriate zoning reflects a concerted effort to avoid any wider adverse effects when providing to insert relatively modest buildings into this sensitive site to cater for the Lockwoods' future family needs. The specific definition of Building Areas provides certainty upon where structures could be created and the way that surrounding, containing vegetation would have to be conserved.

The requirement for any of the future buildings to pass through a discretionary consent application process that is informed by proposed Special Information Requirements provides assurance that due scrutiny will be applied to ensuring that any effects are as contained as this assessment predicts. Recommended Principles and Building Guidelines would inform the nature of any building and the details of any necessary minor clearance and access provision (beyond existing formed tracks).

In recognition of the extremely contained nature of the identified Building Areas and proposed parameters that would apply to any development within those Areas, any landscape, natural character and visual amenity effects are assessed to be almost entirely benign and less than minor. Expansion of the solar array facility as provided for would also have less than minor effects.

**Mike Farrow                      Principal landscape architect                      May 2025**

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## APPENDIX ONE

The following principles and guidelines apply to the future management of Motukiekie and any development that occurs on the island under the auspices of the Development Plan. It is intended that they will shape the form of such development and provide a framework for the consideration of a discretionary resource consent application for that development.

### Principles

- Motukiekie has special cultural, ecological, landscape and natural character values that need to be conserved through its continuing care and potential development.
- Motukiekie is an integral part of a wider chain of nearby islands and mainland shoreline that is appreciated by large numbers of recreational users.
- The ever-improving state of Motukiekie reflects a considerable, long-term commitment from its owners as custodians and that stewardship role is intended to continue into the future.
- Existing as a private title, the use of the Motukiekie needs to balance the recreational and well-being needs of its owners with wider benefits and values but should do so without diminishing those wider benefits and values.
- Any future development on the island must be very carefully configured to avoid effects upon the key natural characteristics of Motukiekie or the experience of those using surrounding waters and adjacent islands. Buildings should aspire to “touch the land lightly”.

### Motukiekie Building Guidelines

- Future houses need to be located within spaces defined as Building Areas on the Development Plan.
- Consideration should be given to location relative to terrain within the defined Building Area, building form, massing and a height that does not generally exceed 5m above natural ground level.
- Building materials, including window coverings such as curtains and blinds, should have a light reflectance value not exceeding 25% and favour hues that are complementary to (as distinct from seeking to camouflage) the colours of the vegetation and weathered rocks of the island.
- Potential earthworks and/or retaining structures should be minimised to avoid potential landscape, visual amenity and natural drainage pattern effects.
- Any external lighting should be configured to minimise its presence when the island is experienced from surrounding waters and adjacent islands, with any flood and spot-lighting actively avoided. Other exterior lighting may most effectively address this consideration within inward-facing low bollards and the use of containing shrouds to luminaires on the building.
- Whilst the identified building areas are largely free of large trees, the location of existing trees and large shrubs within and in the immediate proximity of any proposed building should be identified when undertaking a site survey to allow the design of the building to retain (as far as possible) established vegetation within the building area.

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- Planting should comprise species that are found amongst the natural flora of Motukiekie.
- Access to future buildings shall utilise existing service tracks to the greatest extent that is practicable, to minimise vegetation clearance, stormwater concentration or other potentially adverse effects.
- Any extension of the solar array should be within the area identified on the Development Plan and should allow for the continued natural colonisation of harakeke and other indigenous plants on the surrounding flank.