

To:	Jo Michalakakis (Align) Dalia Evanson (Gisborne District Council)	Date:	Wednesday 19 th August 2026
From:	Lisa Rimmer (Isthmus Group Limited) Sophie Fisher (Isthmus Group Limited)	Job No:	5228
Subject:	Draft Landscape Peer Review of the Waipaoa Stopbank Improvements proposal, Te Karaka.		

Introduction and Overview

- 1) Isthmus has been engaged by Gisborne District Council to provide a review of the Landscape and Visual Assessment prepared by WSP (“**the assessment**”), for the proposed improvements to the Waipaoa Stopbanks and associated road upgrades located in Te Karaka.
- 2) The proposal seeks to:
 - raise sections of the existing stopbanks by approximately 2m with a standard 4m crest width;
 - construct new sections of 4.5m high stopbank, offset but broadly in alignment to the existing stopbank; and
 - adjust sections of roading to suit the required stopbank levels.
- 3) The purpose of this peer review memo (“**the review**”) is to review the application in relation to landscape matters and provide an appraisal of the assessment. The review has been carried out in accordance with guidance from Te Tangi a te Manu¹ (Landscape Assessment Guidelines) and as part of the process the following documents have been read:
 - Waipaoa Stopbank Improvements. Landscape and Visual Effects Assessment – WSP, 30 March 2026
 - Relevant sections of: Resource Consent Application for Te Karaka Flood Scheme Upgrade, Te Karaka Township – Stradegy, 21 April 2026
- 4) The proposal is defined as a Discretionary Activity under various rules of the Tairāwhiti Resource Management Plan, with a breakdown of resource consents required provided in Section 5.2 of the Resource Consent Application. For completeness, those with particular relevance to landscape and visual matters include:

¹ ‘Te Tangi a te Manu: Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines’, Tuia Pito Ora New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects, July 2022

- **C6.3.13(4)** Damming, diversion and drainage of streams, rivers and lakes: *Discretionary Activity*.
- **C6.4.5(16)** Vegetation clearance within the Riparian Management Area (Schedule G15): *Restricted Discretionary Activity*.
- **C6.4.5(20)** Land disturbance that exposes or disturbs more than 10m² of earth per contiguous 100m of Riparian Management Area or exposes or disturbs more than 10m² of earth over any 24-month period: *Restricted Discretionary Activity*.
- **C8.2.3(5)** Earthworks which alter the level of the land (F1 River and Floodway): *Restricted Discretionary Activity*.

5) This review addresses the following matters:

- How robust are the aspects of the Landscape Assessment? i.e. the assessment section itself, and if the methodology of the assessment is appropriate and in line with Te Tangi a te Manu.
- Whether the findings of the assessment are supported and, if not, what levels of effects are considered more accurate.
- If there are any key landscape recommendations which have not been considered within the application.

Review of the Assessment

- 6) Lisa Rimmer undertook a visit to the site and the surroundings on Thursday 18th June 2026 to gain an appreciation of the proposal and its context.
- 7) Although briefly explained, the assessment is supported by a **methodology** (Section 4) that is broadly consistent with Te Tangi a te Manu, using the seven-point scale as the method for assessing the landscape and visual effects.
- 8) The **existing environment**, landscape context and visual catchment have been described in Sections 5.1 and 5.2 of the assessment. The descriptions are high level, but appropriately identify present-day landscape values to set the contextual scene of the surrounding area within a relevant spatial scale; a rural productive valley landscape with alluvial landforms and low-density settlements. Identifying the visual catchment is helpful to gain an understanding of the affected area of the proposal.
- 9) It is noted that the assessment summarises landscape characteristics and features pertinent to the surrounding area and recognizes the shared values of the present-day environment. However, the assessment does not make reference to values of mana whenua and other historical associations that may or may not be present or significant within Te Karaka and the surrounding context. Similarly, it does not specifically attribute characteristics, abiotic, biotic or perceptual, as relevant to natural character. As such, assessment against these values is omitted from the LVA.

- 10) The assessment describes the **proposal** clearly and with an appropriate level of detail to understand the extents of potential landscape effects.
- 11) **Statutory planning** provisions are cited in Section 3 of the assessment, making reference to the Tairāwhiti Resource Management Plan. This provides a general understanding of the key provisions for the Rural General Zone in which the site is located.
- 12) An outline of relevant provisions within the RMA has not been provided in the assessment. Because of the nature of the proposal (a river landscape environment), assessment against the following provisions would be expected to be provided:
 - Section 6(a): *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;*
 - Section 7(c): *the maintenance and enhancement of amenity values;* and
 - Section 7(f): *maintenance and enhancement of the quality of the environment.*

To note, assessment of the natural character is of particular relevance given the flood banks location within the river corridor. Input to be provided by river geomorphologist and ecologist to ensure abiotic and biotic factors relevant to natural character are addressed within the assessment.
- 13) The assessment separates its effects analysis into four components: landscape character effects during construction and operation, and visual effects during construction and operation. The inclusion of a summary table, to provide an overview of the ratings, would improve clarity, helping to summarise the findings.
- 14) As noted, the assessment does not address landscape values held by mana whenua or any relevant historical associations. To support a comprehensive effects assessment, the presence or absence of these values should be acknowledged. The following comments therefore proceed on the assumption that no notable associations require consideration at this stage. Similarly, that the assessment of effects on natural character, while important, for completeness, does not result in the identification of the need for additional mitigation measures.
- 15) The proposal appears to require localised tree removal, for example through shelterbelts on the east, and where road earthworks encroach on vegetation. Can the applicant please confirm the extents of this and whether this will affect the outcome of the assessment.
- 16) Additionally, the proposal may require adjustments to existing power poles and overhead lines as a result of proposed earthworks around the road works and stopbanks. Can the applicant please clarify the effects of these changes, particularly on neighbouring properties.

Landscape Character effects

- 17) I broadly agree that effects during construction on the values associated with landscape character are **low adverse**, primarily due to the temporary nature of the construction activity. Construction activity will be seen within the context of the river and the existing productive rural valley and are not unexpected within this environment. The assessment does not, however, address the effects of the proposed borrow pit locations on the landscape character and visual effects. Can the applicant please provide an overview assessment of the locations for this.
- 18) Once established, the assessment rates the proposal as **low adverse** in areas of offset from the existing alignment and **very low to negligible** where the proposal follows the existing alignment. I generally agree with this conclusion, however, consider a **very low** rating (rather than negligible) to be more appropriate where the proposal follows the existing alignment. While the enlarged stopbank will be viewed within the context of the existing structure, the increase in its scale will nevertheless result in an increase in prominence. As such, the proposal would still give rise to a low level of development that is more appropriately captured in this adverse rating.

Visual effects

- 19) I broadly agree with the rating outcomes identified in the visual effects section of the assessment. Ratings have been provided for groups of properties within the assessment, however, it would be helpful to understand the extent to which the conclusions reached for views of works from private residences are representative of houses closest to the proposal. As part of this, clear references to distinguish which properties the assessment outcomes are referring to would be useful, in particular, clarity of effects for properties at 9 and 11 Rangatira Road, 29 Morris Road, 59 Kipling Road and 35 Paulson Road, which appear to have more marked changes to their outlook as a result of the proposal.
- 20) The increase in height of the existing stopbank and the new sections at 4.5m high may have shading effects (and is a matter raised in submission 80) , particularly during the winter months. Can the applicant please clarify any effects of shading from the stopbanks to properties.
- 21) I also agree, in general, with the effect rating outcomes (ranging from moderate-low to moderate adverse) for the roading modifications. An increase in road levels at Rangatira Road and Kanakanaia Road will make the roads more visually prominent. With the addition of mitigation planting, long term effects will be reduced to **low**.
- 22) Mitigation planting is recommended in the assessment to assist in integrating the stop banks into the existing environment and reducing any effects of road level changes. It is understood the extent of this planting will be provided later, and therefore the assessment

does not cover the extents of this. Considered planting arrangement may help to lessen effects from surrounding views.

Response to Submissions

23) Further assessment or clarification of the items raised within this peer review will provide clarity in response to submission received on the proposal. Emerging landscape character and amenity themes of the submissions include:

- Loss of rural views and visual dominance of the stop bank close to dwellings. Shading effects of the proposal (matters raised by submissions 22 and 80);
- Effects and extents of vegetation removal, including wind exposure (matters raised by submissions 7 and 81);
- Effects on appearance and productive character resulting from the location, scale and proposed rehabilitation of the borrow pits (matters raised by submission 80 and 81); and
- Consideration of cultural landscape values (matters raised by submission 67 and 75).

Conclusion

24) The assessment provides an assessment methodology which is generally consistent with Te Tangi a te Manu for the stopbanks proposal. It summarises the proposal appropriately and I agree with the general effects ratings provided.

25) I recommend that, for completeness, the following matters are addressed by the applicant:

- The consideration of any specific values to tangata whenua, as relevant to landscape matters;
- An assessment of any natural character effects;
- Confirm any effects of the borrow sites location, scale and proposed rehabilitation on landscape character, natural character and visual amenity;
- Confirmation of extents of vegetation removal and effects;
- Clarify effects as a result of adjustments to existing electrical infrastructure, particularly with regard to neighbouring properties;
- Clarify any effects of shading to properties as a result of the height increase of the existing stop bank or proposed stop bank;
- A review of any adverse visual amenity effects for the following properties:
 - 9 and 11 Rangatira Road;
 - 29 Morris Road;
 - 59 Kipling Road; and

- 35 Paulson Road.
 - And, following this, confirmation or otherwise of the adverse effects ratings (including a summary table) for the proposal and mitigation recommendations.
- 26) Further, should the consent be granted, I recommend an appropriate condition to ensure the preparation of a landscape mitigation plan to be certified with input from a landscape architect including planting plans, species numbers and grades, and a specification for implementation and maintenance to successful establishment.