

## **Landscape Unit G**

### *Creation & Character*

This Landscape Unit is similar to Landscape Unit C, with both parking and residential development on the fore-dune. Houses have been strung along the back of the beach, both north and south of Moana Stream which runs along Beach Valley Road. This area experienced some of the earliest redevelopment of holiday baches into larger, potentially permanent homes, with a number of visually prominent homes having been built, see Photograph 6.

### *Vulnerability*

The proximity of the residential development along the coastal edge to the beach mean that redevelopment of these properties will be readily visible from the road and beach. As with Landscape Unit C, the mix of built and natural elements is finely balanced and redevelopment has the potential to tip this balance the wrong way. This is more so at the northern end of the Landscape Unit where the rising land backdrop is lower and contributes much less to the character of the area.

As was noted in Landscape Unit B, the management of public land can have impacts on the character of the area. For example the channelling of Moana Stream as it approaches the beach has introduced a sense of contrived formality which reduces the natural character to some extent. It is acknowledged that erosion of the sand dunes, particularly during periods of heavy rain, prompted this construction work as part of the solution.

It will continue to be important for Council to recognise that within sensitive environments, such as those found in Piha and the other coastal villages, skilled design capable of solving both the problem being addressed and maintaining the natural features and elements of an area, will be required. Standard solutions will often be inappropriate and a commitment of innovative design is necessary.

### *Development potential*

There are only two properties in this Landscape Unit recorded as undeveloped. They are 1A Marine Parade South at the southern end of the road and 21 Marine Parade South, to the north of the stream. This latter property extends up onto the top of the hill between Piha Stream and Marine Parade South and new development here could be visually significant unless sympathetically designed. A track already exists through the property and vegetation appears to be confined to low growing species, offering little in the way amelioration potential.

The other vacant site is much smaller and appears on the aerials to be covered in taller dense vegetation. Careful design should enable a new dwelling to be constructed here without creating adverse landscape impacts.

### *Restoration potential*

Restoration of the fore-dune is not possible in this area, although recent community initiatives have seen extensive revegetation of the seaward face of this dune. There are few opportunities for replacement of indigenous vegetation to the north of the

stream where residential buildings are close to each other and the road. Eastwards, further up the hill, the establishment of larger trees behind existing dwellings would be appropriate but would require cooperation from individual landowners.

### **Landscape Unit H**

#### *Creation & Character*

Along Beach Valley Road the retention of a significant number of large pohutukawa trees, amongst which smaller houses have been developed, creates a distinctive and highly attractive valley landscape. The rising land either side give a strong sense of enclosure here which ends dramatically where the road rises over the hill at about 13 beach Valley Road, and the pohutukawa trees peter out.

This landscape character extends up the slopes to the south around Sylvan Glade where many houses and drives are tucked in amongst tall vegetation, extending up as far as Rayner Road. The level of shelter afforded this valley means that much of the vegetation is unaffected by sea winds and sculpted forms are uncommon.

#### *Vulnerability*

Loss of existing vegetation is probably the biggest threat to this Landscape Unit. This could arise through the redevelopment of existing houses or, particularly on the steeper slopes to the south, through the reconstruction of narrow and steep access drives.

#### *Development potential*

Both 36 and 48 Beach Valley Road are vacant. It is probable that Photograph 7 shows number 48 where some earlier development appears to have been removed from the site.

#### *Restoration potential*

The existing quality of this landscape unit means that there is little necessity for restoration. However, continued diligence with regard to vegetation removal will be an ongoing requirement.

### **Landscape Unit J**

#### *Creation & Character*

This Landscape Unit extends from the valley floor up Piha Road as far as and including both Rayner and Pendrell Roads. These two roads have been constructed along two more or less level terraces either side of Piha Road. Steep, vegetated land both above and below these roads create separation between the residential areas and, particularly from the campsite or Domain, in the heart of Piha, form the skyline behind the visible extent of residential development, as shown on Figure 2 and Photograph 8.

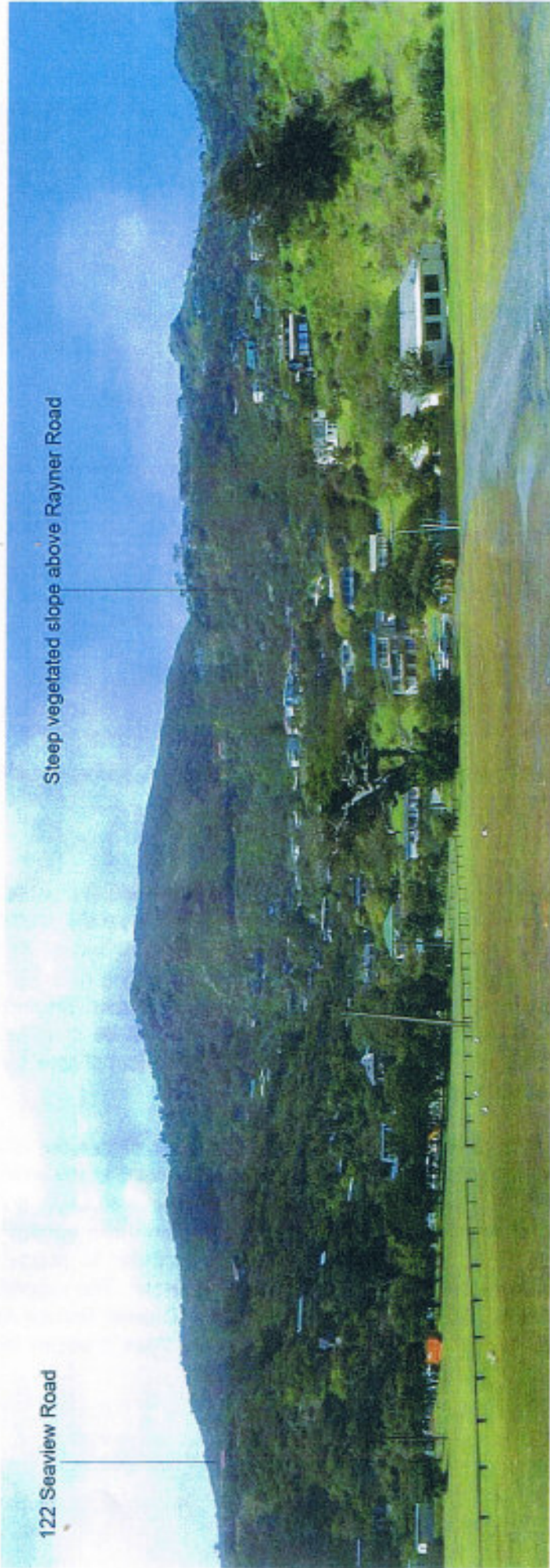


**Photograph 7** Undeveloped section beneath mature pohutukawa in landscape unit H

#### *Vulnerability*

This Landscape Unit is perhaps most vulnerable from development which pushes out into the surrounding steep and vegetated land, either above or below the terraces. To the east behind Pendrell Road this potential is limited by the extent of the Centennial Memorial Parkland which wraps closely around the existing housing, but between Pendrell and Glenesk Roads are a few large well vegetated properties, some of which appear to be vacant and where development might be anticipated. These are to the east of number 122 Seaview Road which is identifiable by its distinctive red-roofed house, identified in Photograph 8.

Numbers 124, 124A and 126 lie to the east of this property and are all notated on the aerial supplied as being vacant. Each of these properties lies close to the existing housing clustered along Pendrell Road, although the former two extend beyond this, into the heart of the important vegetated slopes. Development on these vacant lots should keep new dwellings close to the existing housing, in order to retain the buffering effect of the vegetated slopes beyond as much as possible. The properties also lie within both the Waitakere Ranges Environment and the Coastal Natural Area and given the vegetation clearance limitations within the District Plan, it seems likely that this is achievable.



**Photograph 8** Steep vegetated land separating different areas of development, as seen from the Domain

A similar situation occurs in respect of Rayner Road with vegetated slopes both above and below the 'terrace' of housing. Here, however, there is no Regional Parkland protection over any of the vegetated slopes. Instead a series of large properties wrap around the existing residential development. The properties to the west are within the Waitakere Ranges Environment and Coastal Natural Area in the District Plan and are thus unable to be further subdivided. But those slopes above the housing, between Piha Road and Rayner Road are within the Coastal Villages Environment. Here subdivision down to 4,000m<sup>2</sup> is possible, providing cleared areas exist for building platforms and, indeed, during the preparation of this report a recently approved subdivision plan of two of these properties, 47 and 51 Piha Road, was supplied. It is not clear what conditions of consent were imposed on this subdivision but it seems inevitable that seven new dwellings will be developed on the lots<sup>2</sup>.

#### *Development potential*

There are numerous vacant sites identified within the Landscape Unit on the aerial supplied. The majority of these are small sites where further development would 'infill' between existing buildings and potential impacts on the landscape are limited to those arising from building design and colour. There are, however, a few exceptions to this where development could extend into the steep green buffer areas.

Number 12 Rayner Road<sup>3</sup> is immediately east of the recently approved subdivision discussed above, and fronts both Rayner Road, via a pan handle, and Piha Road where it has a much longer frontage. It is conceivable that this property may too be subdivided, possibly into 5 lots, and further development could encroach into the green slopes between Rayner and Piha Roads.

It is noted that a large triangular property to the west of the approved subdivision is highlighted as vacant and numbered 29. This number is applied to a collection of properties to the west and south-west of Rayner Road and appear to be part of a very large property including 29 Te Ahuahu Road, hence the number. However, it is within the Waitakere Ranges Environment and thus subdivision is not possible although some form of residential development does appear conceivable.

#### *Restoration potential*

The interface of the public and private realm is probably the area where Council can have the greatest influence over the character of different landscape units. As was discussed in the Landscape Unit E, the design of driveways and front property boundaries can create impacts beyond the site itself.

Similarly, the road frontage of properties is an area where Council initiated restoration could be undertaken. Within this Landscape Unit are a number of examples of highly 'urban' style landscape treatment which contrast dramatically with the surroundings, as shown in Photograph 9. Restoration of a more natural

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<sup>2</sup> The two lots have been subdivided into 8 lots, but one dwelling already exists.

<sup>3</sup> This may in fact be number 10 Rayner Road, the aerial is somewhat confusing

vegetative regime would improve overall landscape quality in the local area. However, there are a number of difficulties associated with this, including:

- Protection of sea views;
- Perception that the road frontage is to be managed by owners and therefore they may choose how it is treated;
- Who is responsible for the ongoing management of any restoration planting.

Clearly careful negotiation with small groups of, or individual landowners will be necessary if such interventions are to be successful. Conditions associated with consents for development should also be considered.

### **Landscape Unit K**

#### *Creation & Character*

This small Landscape Unit is probably the most sensitive at Piha. It sits on the horizon as seen from the Domain, the beach around Lion Rock and the lower parts of Piha Village, as seen in Photograph 10. The landform around and within the Landscape Unit means that it sits in a saddle between undeveloped bush clad slopes which form the horizon to both the east and west, as can be seen in Figure 2.

A series of large and eclectically styled houses has been built on this ridge over the last decade or so and they are frequently visible on the skyline across a wide area when moving around Piha village.

#### *Vulnerability*

This is a highly sensitive Landscape Unit and redevelopment of the existing properties could create further visual impacts on the horizon.

#### *Development potential*

Six properties on the eastern side of Piha Road are identified as being vacant at present on the aerial supplied, although this appears somewhat inaccurate in the photograph. Nevertheless, it seems likely that further development could easily be undertaken here. To the west of Piha Road, at a slightly lower elevation there appears to be further development potential with five properties all numbered 91 identified as vacant.

Great care will be required in ensuring that new buildings do not visually join with existing development to create apparently larger built elements in the landscape. Care with location in relation to the skyline will also be necessary, as will the choice of colours.

#### *Restoration potential*

Vegetation needs to be reasonably large here to have any hope of competing on the same scale as the buildings. However, the rocky nature of the landform across much of this Landscape Unit and the elevation above sea level make the establishment of tall vegetation difficult here.



**Photograph 9** Urban style landscape treatment

Landscape unit K on the horizon, as seen from the Domain



**Photograph 10** View south-eastwards from the Domain

## **Landscape Unit L**

### *Creation & Character*

This Landscape Unit sits behind the ridgeline which forms the horizon for much of the village of Piha. It does however have a strong sense of connection with the village by virtue of being experienced from Piha Road. Development tends to have been strung along the road but usually set back with substantial vegetation along the roadside. As a result built elements do not dominate in this Landscape Unit.

### *Vulnerability*

Being hidden from those long distance views identified for Landscape Unit K and the surrounding bush clad slopes, this landscape unit is less vulnerable to highly visible development. Of more sensitivity in this Landscape Unit is the extensive roadside vegetation the continuity of which could potentially be broken by the addition of additional driveways.

### *Development potential*

The aerial provided indicates that there are several properties on both sides of the road which are currently vacant, although some of these do appear to have buildings on them. The majority of these are within the Coastal Villages Environment and Coastal Natural Area in the District Plan, although number 138 Piha Road is within the Waitakere Ranges Environment.

### *Restoration potential*

Again the biggest challenge to any vegetation restoration is the elevation and strong sea winds. The vegetation across this landscape unit is dramatically wind sculpted, except for a stretch within the shelter of the road corridor.

## **Landscape Unit M**

### *Creation & Character*

It is clearly the relatively flat land on the ridge top and the sea views which have attracted residential development here, despite the fact that this landscape unit is largely separated from the rest of Piha, with a narrow strip of housing extending towards the sea.

Vegetation is again highly wind sculpted and large or unusual house forms stand out above the low canopy, as seen in Photograph 11. The location of the ridge, however, to the south of the land forming the horizon from much of the flat land in Piha, means that there are in fact few public locations from which the string of houses can be seen.

### *Vulnerability*

The landform of the area reduces the vulnerability of this Landscape Unit with public views towards being quite restricted. Nevertheless, residential amenity values are particularly sensitive where tall vegetation is so sparse and hard to achieve and houses are located very close to each other.





**Photograph 11** Unusual house shapes visible above wind sculpted vegetation



**Photograph 12** Small scale baches are becoming increasingly rare

*Development potential*

Four properties on the northern side of Log Race and Te Ahuahu Roads are vacant. If development on these occurs close to the road, as has been the case with their neighbours, then any development of these will be a case of 'infilling' the gaps. This will continue the existing built to natural elements relationship in an appropriate way.

On the southern side of Te Ahuahu Road the situation exists with development potential consisting of gaps in the built elements strung along the roadside. On the southern side of Log Race Road houses are set further back from the road where the ridge broadens and here development is less likely to be on the skyline.

*Restoration potential*

Roadside vegetation restoration, which doesn't impinge on residents' views, could be considered here. As has been noted earlier, individual landowner cooperation will be a pre-requisite to this being successful.

**Landscape Unit N***Creation & Character*

This Landscape Unit forms the 'gateway to Piha'. It also functions as a transition from the rolling bush clad plateau of the Waitakere Ranges to the more intensive residential development of Piha. Although one is aware of houses being present, when travelling along Piha Road, they are not dominant features, principally because of the size and extent of tall vegetation.

*Vulnerability*

The relatively flat land and proximity to Piha mean that redevelopment of existing properties could see the removal of some of the important vegetation within this landscape unit.

Treatment of the area between the public and private realm is again a critical consideration here with the potential for urban style treatments to completely undermine the existing rural qualities of this landscape unit.

*Development potential*

A number of lots on both sides of the road are identified as vacant, although buildings appear to be on at least one of these. Contours suggest that any development of the vacant lots is likely to be fairly close to the road and amongst existing development, although number 140A Piha Road is much larger with plenty of cleared land where development could occur. Any such development is likely to be reasonably well screened, from the road at least, by vegetation on other properties.

*Restoration potential*

There is little apparent sign of the need for restoration in this Landscape Unit.

## CONCLUSIONS

It is clear from the foregoing discussion of the 13 landscape units that the degree of vulnerability varies from one unit to another. Similarly, some units appear to have the capacity for more new development compared with others, while all units have redevelopment potential.

The most sensitive landscape units to change are those where the landform and vegetation patterns expose the unit to a wide audience. These include the units where development has occurred along the fore-dunes, units C and G; where the landform creates an horizon, along which development appears, units J and K; and where existing development is substantially screened by privately owned mature vegetation, without which development would be much more exposed, unit H.

Much less sensitive are those units where the landform and or vegetation assists in screening development from wider audiences, or where land ownership reduces the potential for further development. This includes the Council owned parkland within units B and F; the enclosed valley of unit E; and the undulating well vegetated areas of units L and N.

The potential exists for numerous small changes, either by way of more built development or reduced natural elements, to cumulatively create significant adverse effects. A precautionary approach to small infringements of District Plan provisions is advisable, particularly in the more sensitive landscape units.

The change from the majority of residential development being small-scale baches on relatively generous lots, as shown in Photograph 12, to much larger permanently occupied dwellings on smaller lots has changed the relationship of built elements to natural, dramatically so in some places. Also the variety of different materials, colours and styles utilised in more recent building developments has removed any sense of homogeneity between individual buildings, creating often discordant relationships between them. There has, as a result, been an increase in the number, size and diversity of built elements together with an overall reduction in area and cohesion of the spaces between buildings.

This impacts on the landscape character of the village as a whole, reducing the sense of natural wilderness and replacing it with a more suburban character. It is only because the village occupies such a dramatic landform on the very edge of two extensive natural areas, the Waitakere Ranges and the Tasman Sea, that any sense of 'natural' remains within parts of the village.

It is also for this reason that the remaining fingers of steep vegetated slopes which extend from the Ranges through the village and out to the coast are so important. Without them, the sense of 'normal suburbia' would potentially percolate throughout the village.

Also assisting in keeping the suburbanisation trend at bay is the manner in which roads and footpaths are treated. The absence of kerb and channelling, footpaths and streetlights through much of the village underlines that this place is not average

suburbia and retains vestiges of rural character. Clearly the manner in which Council manages the public / private interface is very important and can have a big influence.

Although some parts of Piha have been compromised by inappropriate development, it is not too late to put in place programmes designed to reverse this trend. This includes a range of education and cooperation initiatives between Council and private landowners, as well as the requirement for restorative planting when the opportunity arises.

Unfortunately it will be necessary for enforcement programmes to go hand in hand with the education and cooperation initiatives. Pruning vegetation for sea views is already evident in some places, although fortunately not widespread. Similarly, weed management is important along all forest margins and some riparian areas. This may require a combination of enforcement (from the Regional Council) and education / cooperation with landowners.

Piha is a dramatic and extremely attractive coastal village within Waitakere City. The pressure for increased development is unlikely to be stemmed in the short term and therefore must be appropriately managed.

**Melean Absolum**

Dip LA FNZILA

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Registered  
NZILA  
Landscape  
Architect



Other views of Piha