

memo

Date: 2 July 2025

To: **Catherine Somerville-Frost** – Three Pines Trust
By email to: csomervillefrost@outlook.com

From: **Peter Kensington** – KPLC Limited
By email from: peter@kplc.co.nz

Re: **Proposed removal of two Notable Trees scheduled under the AUP(OP)**
at 7 Symonds Street, Onehunga, Auckland 1061

ASSESSMENT OF LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS COMMENTARY

Tēnā koe Catherine

Introduction and scope of advice

1. This memo sets out my expert landscape architectural consideration¹ of the potential landscape and visual effects that will result from the proposal to remove two trees which are currently scheduled as Notable Trees under the Auckland Unitary Plan (Operative in part) 2016 (AUP(OP)) from the property at 7 Symonds Street, Onehunga.² Removal is required for health and safety reasons of persons living at this property, as addressed in the expert arboricultural assessment of the proposal from Allan Holmes of GreensceneNZ.
2. I have visited the site and surrounding area, with the photographs included in the supporting figures to this memo captured during that site visit from six representative public viewpoints. I have also reviewed Allan Holmes' expert arboricultural assessment.
3. Specifically, you have sought my consideration of the two matters outlined below:
 - i. Whether removal of the trees for health and safety reasons requires the application to be publicly notified because of the trees' contribution to public visual amenity values; and
 - ii. The landscape and visual amenity related effects of the Council arborist's suggestion to 'lollipop' prune, rather than remove, the trees; within the context of the trees being part of a group of mature scheduled trees in a setting with heritage values, with the residential site including an 1860's kauri villa and registered archaeological sites.

¹ One Moreton Bay Fig and one Pohutukawa – being part of a group of seven scheduled trees on the property.

² My qualifications and experience are set out in Schedule One.

4. The GreensceneNZ assessment sets out the relevant AUP(OP) provisions. I have also reviewed chapter D13 of the AUP(OP), including objective D13.2.(1) and the related policies under D13.3, which have a tree retention focus. I note that discretionary activity resource consent is required under the AUP(OP) to remove a Notable Tree. Allan Holmes' assessment also highlights that Moreton Bay Fig trees are listed as a pest plant under the Auckland Regional Pest Management Plan 2020-30.
5. While the relevant AUP(OP) objective and policies have a focus on tree protection, Policy D13.3.(2) sets out a range of factors to consider when assessing whether such trees should continue to be protected. This includes the likelihood of significant adverse effects to people and property from the tree(s), which is a relevant consideration in this instance given the matters raised in Allan Holmes' assessment.
6. I understand that you have agreed to plant and establish two new trees as mitigation for the proposed removal of the two scheduled trees. You have also indicated that an option for this replacement planting is through engagement with Ngati Te Ata to determine appropriate tree species and planting location(s).
7. While not scheduled as historic heritage under the AUP(OP), the existing dwelling on the site, which was originally constructed around 1860, has heritage value. Removal of the two trees, particularly the Fig which is located very close to the dwelling, would create a greater on-site appreciation of this building.

What contribution do the trees make to public visual amenity values?

8. From my visit to the site and surrounding area, I have assessed that the two trees which are proposed for removal do not contribute significantly to existing public visual amenity values.
9. The Pohutukawa tree in particular is very difficult to see from locations external to the site, primarily because of its form and sparse canopy which, while understood once to have been an impressive umbrella canopy when viewed upwards from the site, is currently 'lions tailed', as described in Allan Holmes' assessment. Further, the tree is located within the site behind other existing mature evergreen trees which are located around the perimeter of the site³. If this tree were to be removed, there would be very little or no adverse effect on public visual amenity values, in my opinion.
10. The Moreton Bay Fig tree is more visible than the Pohutukawa tree, however only parts of this tree's canopy are visible from some external viewpoints to the site. In most instances, this existing Fig tree is not highly visible given the predominance of other existing tree canopy on the site.
11. It is the two scheduled Norfolk Island Pine trees, along with a third unscheduled Norfolk Island Pine tree on the site, which are by far the most visible vegetated elements on the site when viewed from locations surrounding the site, in the public street network – including from the State Highway 20 motorway.
12. I note the tree evaluation forms (undated), which provided justification for the original scheduling of the seven Notable Trees on the site, state that the view from "the road to the airport" is an important viewpoint from where these trees are visible. My Viewpoint 5 is representative of this location, being adjacent the State Highway 20 motorway. It is my assessment that the Norfolk Island Pine trees are very prominent from this location; however, the Pohutukawa is not visible save for two 'tufts' remaining of the 'lions tailed' canopy, and only a very small portion of the Moreton Bay Fig tree canopy is visible.
13. I summarise my assessment from each of the six representative viewpoints below:

Viewpoint 1 – Symonds Street 120m north of site:

- Small part of Moreton Bay Fig canopy visible; Pohutukawa not visible, save for one 'tuft'.

³ Abelia hedge and adjacent Holm Oaks.

Viewpoint 2 – Jackson Street 75m west of site:

- Upper part of Moreton Bay Fig canopy visible; small part of Pohutukawa visible.

Viewpoint 3 – Arthur Street 75m south of site:

- Both trees difficult to distinguish.

Viewpoint 4 – Forbes Street 140m north-east of site:

- Small part of Moreton Bay Fig canopy visible; Pohutukawa not visible.

Viewpoint 5 – Orpheus Drive 330m south of site:

- Small part of Moreton Bay Fig canopy visible; Pohutukawa not visible save for two small ‘tufts’.

Viewpoint 6 – Herd Road 920m north-west of site:

- Both trees difficult to distinguish.

14. My overall assessment is that both trees proposed for removal have very limited visibility from locations external to the site, with the three Norfolk Island Pine trees being the most prominent trees on the site, amongst an evergreen canopy of other trees (including another two existing scheduled Pohutukawa) on the site and on other properties in the immediate area of the site. As such, it is my opinion that these two trees do not contribute in any meaningful way to an appreciation of public amenity values and removal of these two trees will not result in any perceived reduction in public visual amenity values.
15. In the context of determining public notification of the application to remove these trees, it is my finding that the adverse effects on public amenity values as a result of removing these two trees would be very low (less than minor) in degree⁴ when viewed ‘in the round’ from my assessed representative viewpoints.

What would be the effects from the option to ‘lollipop’ prune the trees rather than to remove?

16. It is my assessment that the landscape and visual effects experienced by people viewing the site from locations external to the site would be no different if the trees were to be removed or if they were to be pruned in the ‘lollipop’ manner⁵ which I understand has been suggested by the Council’s arborists. In other words, the proposed tree pruning will not improve visibility of either tree for external viewers.
17. I agree with Allan Holmes’ assessment that the only people that will have clear visibility of these two trees (if they were ‘lollipop’ pruned) would be people viewing the trees from on the site itself. The site is relatively large and contains many other mature trees which contribute to public visual amenity values and these trees effectively screen the two trees which are proposed to be removed from external viewers.
18. It is also my assessment that the proposal to prune the trees in the manner which has been proposed by the Council’s arborists (i.e. ‘lollipop’ pruning), rather than remove them, would effectively compromise the natural value these trees provide to the landscape and visual amenity values experienced by occupants of the site. The form of the pruned trees would appear very unnatural, compromised and would very much be out of character with the remaining mature trees on the property, in my opinion.
19. In terms of appropriate landscape management of existing vegetation on a property which holds heritage values and significance, not only from the trees but also in terms of the 1860’s dwelling and archaeological sites present on the property, it is my opinion that it would be more beneficial to remove these trees (rather than prune them) so that the grounds of the site can be better maintained in a manner that is in keeping with the remainder of the property. It is also my opinion that removal of the two trees would

⁴ Based on utilising the scale of adverse effects within Te Tangi a te Manu (*Te Tangi a te Manu: Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines*’, Tuia Pito Ora New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects, July 2022) as reproduced at the end of this memo.

⁵ Hard pruning both trees to height of approximately 6.0m above ground level.

create improved on-site visibility of the existing 1860's dwelling and of other scheduled and non-scheduled mature trees on the site. Pruning of the type proposed by the Council arborists would not achieve these outcomes and would result in a compromised tree form that is inconsistent with those other existing trees remaining on the site.

- 20. Once removed, there would be an increased opportunity for light to reach ground level on the site, such that it would make it easier to establish and maintain gardens that were in keeping with the heritage character of the property. At present, I understand that such improvements are difficult to achieve given the dominant nature of the Moreton Bay Fig tree canopy and root structure. In addition, I anticipate that removal of these two tree canopies would, in time, provide opportunities for other existing trees on the site to potentially grow into the newly created canopy space, continuing to contribute positively to both on site and off site landscape and visual amenity values.

Conclusion

- 21. The existing scheduled Pohutukawa and Moreton Bay Fig trees on the site which are proposed for removal do not contribute significantly to public visual amenity values. Indeed, these trees are generally difficult to view from locations external to the site, with other existing trees on the site (which are to remain) being much more visible and which provide a more positive contribution to public visual amenity values. As such, there will be no loss of any public visual amenity values from removal of the trees.
- 22. I do not support the Council arborist's proposal to 'lollipop' prune these two trees as this management method would not improve visibility of the trees from public viewpoints and would result in negative effects on the landscape and visual amenity values experienced by people living on the property.
- 23. Following my consideration and assessment of this proposal, I support the removal of both existing trees from a landscape and visual amenity effects perspective.

Please let me know if you have any questions or require any further clarification or advice.

Ngā mihi



Peter Kensington

Email: peter@kplc.co.nz

Phone: 027 227 8700



Te Tangi a te Manu seven-point scale of adverse effects						SIGNIFICANT
LESS THAN MINOR		MINOR		MORE THAN MINOR		
VERY LOW	LOW	LOW-MOD	MODERATE	MOD-HIGH	HIGH	VERY HIGH

ATTACHMENTS

SCHEDULE ONE – Relevant qualifications and experience.

FIGURES 1-13 – Viewpoint Location Plan and Photos (pages to be viewed / printed at A3-size in colour).

SCHEDULE ONE

Peter Kensington – relevant qualifications and experience

1. I have worked as a landscape architect and a planner for twenty-seven years. I am currently a director of KPLC Limited (**KPLC**); formed in September 2017. As a KPLC consultant, I provide professional landscape architectural and planning services for applicants, regulatory authorities and submitters.
2. My relevant qualifications include a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture (Honours), 1995, from Lincoln University (Canterbury) and a Bachelor of Regional Planning (Honours), 1993, from Massey University (Palmerston North). I am a Registered member of the Tuia Pito Ora New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects (**NZILA**) and a Full member of the New Zealand Planning Institute. I have been an elected member of the national executive committee of the NZILA (during the 2011-2013 term), as Treasurer, then again appointed as a proxy member between 2016-2017. I have been a member of NZILA awards judging panels and most recently I was a panel member for the 2022 awards.
3. I have worked for the Christchurch City Council (1995-1997), the Wellington City Council (1999), the Auckland office of Boffa Miskell Limited (1999-2012) and, prior to establishing KPLC, the Auckland Council (**Council**) (2012-2017). At the Council I was a Principal Planner in the Hearings and Resolutions team of the Resource Consents Department. In that role, I was responsible for the case management of appeals, direct referrals, judicial reviews, objections, hearings and independent duty and hearings commissioner processes – in relation to applications for resource consent associated with the geographic area generally defined by the legacy Auckland Council District Plan (Isthmus Section) and the Operative Auckland Council District Plan (Hauraki Gulf Islands Section). In addition to my core role, I also assisted the Resource Consents Department’s Practice and Training team with interpretation and integration of the Auckland Unitary Plan (Operative in part) into the department’s practices and procedures.
4. My landscape architectural work is focussed within the landscape planning speciality of landscape architecture, where an assessment of effects on natural character, landscape and/or visual amenity values is required, primarily in relation to applications for resource consent or plan changes. Throughout my professional career, I have provided expert landscape architectural advice in relation to many matters where an assessment of the effects of proposed developments on the landscape character and visual amenity values of urban, rural or coastal environments is required. The majority of my KPLC consulting over the past seven-years has been undertaken on behalf of the Council’s Planning Resource Consents Department through the Tāmaki Makaurau Design Ope design review team. I am a current independent hearing commissioner for the Council and I also provide duty commissioner services for the Council.
5. I have listed below examples from my recent projects that have relevance to this matter:
 - i. Assessment of landscape effects for removal of exotic trees and restoration planting at Maungarei, Te Pane-o-Mataaho - Te Ara Pueru, Ōwairaka - Te Ahi-kā-a-Rakataura, Te Ōhuiārangi, Puketāpapa - Pukewīwī, Ōtāhuhu and Te Tātua-a-Riukiuta.
 - ii. Assessment of landscape effects for proposed streetscape enhancements, including tree removal, Quay Street (Lower Hobson to Commerce Streets) and Ferry Basin downtown public open space (Quay Street - Princes Wharf - Ferry Building).
 - iii. Assessment of landscape effects for removal of stands of mature pine trees within Te Wai Ōrea - Western Springs Lakeside Reserve, Grey Lynn and Churchill Park, Glendowie.
 - iv. Decision maker on application for subdivision, land use and notable tree removal, Moreton Drive, Manly.


PETER KENSINGTON
Planner • Landscape Architect
MNZPI • Registered NZILA
027 227 8700
peter@kplc.co.nz

KPLC
PLANNING • LANDSCAPE • CONSULTANTS



Cover page image source: Auckland Infrared Imagery 2024-2025 - Auckland Council and Aerial Surveys Limited

KPLC TPT 1 Figures 1-13

Proposed removal of two scheduled AUP(OP) Notable Trees at 7 Symonds Street, Onehunga
Assessment of Landscape Effects - supporting figures

2 July 2025



Aerial and contour information as per base map source

Parts of existing Moreton Bay Fig canopy visible

Tuft of existing Pohutukawa visible





Extent of single-frame (50mm) photo - refer Figure 2





Extent of single-frame (50mm) photo - refer Figure 4





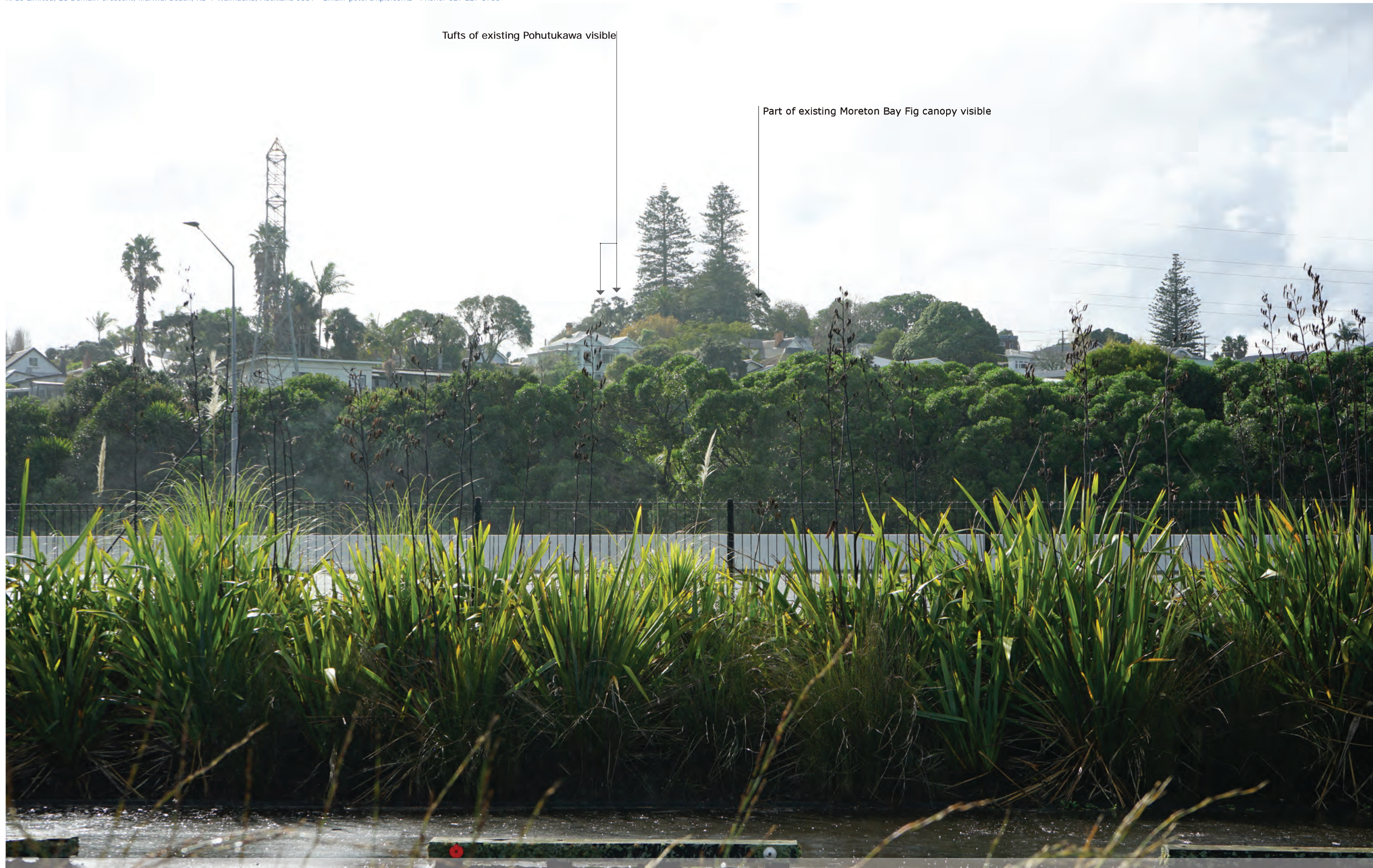
Extent of single-frame (50mm) photo - refer Figure 6



Part of existing Moreton Bay Fig canopy visible (Pohutukawa not visible)



Extent of single-frame (50mm) photo - refer Figure 8



Tufts of existing Pohutukawa visible

Part of existing Moreton Bay Fig canopy visible



Extent of single-frame (50mm) photo - refer Figure 10





Extent of single-frame (50mm) photo - refer Figure 12