

# **40 Mahi Road, Helensville, Private Plan Change: archaeological assessment**

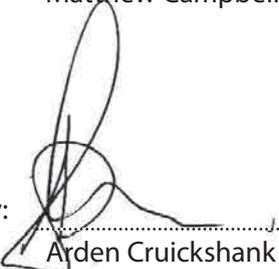
**report to  
Civix  
and  
Hounslow Holdings Ltd**

**Matthew Campbell**

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## 1 Introduction

Hounslow Holdings Ltd are preparing a Private Plan Change for land owned by them at 40 Mahi Road, Helensville (Lot 2 DP 586879). The property is currently zoned Future Urban Zone and Countryside Living Zone in the Auckland Unitary Plan. The proposal is to rezone the Future Urban land and some of the Countryside Living land to Single House Zone. The balance of the Countryside Living Zone will remain as currently zoned due to the presence of significant bush and watercourses, or geotechnical constraints. An archaeological assessment of effects is required in support of the proposed plan change application to Auckland Council. Lance Hessel on Civix, on behalf of Hounslow Holdings, commissioned this report from CFG Heritage.

### 1.1 Statutory requirements

All archaeological sites, whether recorded or not, are protected by the provisions of the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014 and may not be destroyed, damaged or modified without an authority issued by Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga (HNZPT).

An archaeological site is defined in the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act as:

- (a) any place in New Zealand, including any building or structure (or part of a building or structure), that—
  - (i) was associated with human activity that occurred before 1900 or is the site of the wreck of any vessel where the wreck occurred before 1900; and
  - (ii) provides or may provide, through investigation by archaeological methods, evidence relating to the history of New Zealand; and
- (b) includes a site for which a declaration is made under section 43(1).

The Resource Management Act 1991 requires City, District and Regional Councils to manage the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources in a way that provides for the wellbeing of today's communities while safeguarding the options of future generations. The protection of historic heritage from inappropriate subdivision, use, and development is identified as a matter of national importance (Section 6f).

Historic heritage is defined as those natural and physical resources that contribute to an understanding and appreciation of New Zealand's history and cultures, derived from archaeological, architectural, cultural, historic, scientific, or technological qualities.

Historic heritage includes:

- historic sites, structures, places, and areas
- archaeological sites;
- sites of significance to Maori, including wahi tapu;
- surroundings associated with the natural and physical resources (RMA Section 2).

These categories are not mutually exclusive and some archaeological sites may include above ground structures or may also be places that are of significance to Maori.

Where resource consent is required for any activity the assessment of effects is required to address cultural and historic heritage matters.

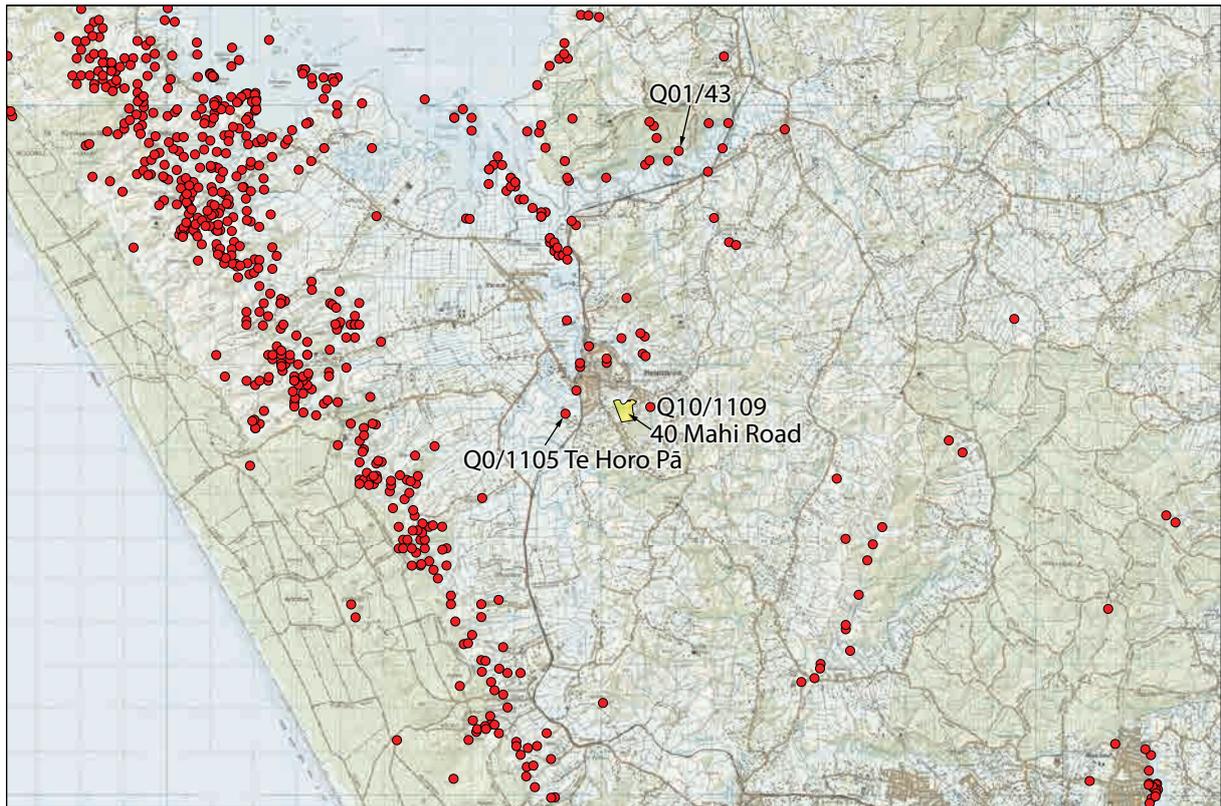


Figure 1. Location of 40 Mahi Road, showing archaeological sites recorded in the vicinity.

## 2 Method

The following digital resources were accessed:

- Site records from the New Zealand Archaeological Association (NZAA) Site Recording Scheme (SRS) were obtained from ArchSite (<https://nzarchaeology.org/archsite>).
- Records of previous archaeological investigations in the vicinity were obtained from the HNZPT digital library (<https://dl.heritage.org.nz/greenstone3/library/collection/pdf-reports/>).
- Further reports are held by CFG Heritage Ltd, or were supplied by Rod Clough of Clough and Associates and Russell Foster of Russell Foster and Associates.
- Historic maps and plans held by Land Information New Zealand (LINZ) were accessed using QuickMap.
- The Auckland Council Cultural Heritage Inventory (CHI) and the Auckland Council GeoMaps GIS viewer were searched for any areas of cultural significance in the vicinity (<https://geomapspublic.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/viewer/index.html>).

The property was assessed on 27 June 2024 by Matthew Campbell of CFG Heritage Ltd. This was a visual inspection only and no intrusive methods were employed.

## 3 Background

The soils on the property are primarily Mahurangi fine sandy loams, weathered from marine sedimentary Waitemata sandstones and underlain by a clay layer also derived from the same parent rock. They are often leached (podzolized) under kauri forest and have low fertility, are not well drained and are prone to erosion (DSIR 1954; Martindale et al. 2018). These soils are not generally suitable for pre-European Māori kūmara cultivation.

### 3.1 *Pre-European Māori*

Māori have occupied the Helensville and wider Kaipara area since early settlement and this occupation has left widespread archaeological evidence. In most areas the focus of settlement was on locations with good transport access, food resources and quality soils. These are often found together in coastal or riverine environments. Food resources were readily available in the waters of the Kaipara Harbour and the surrounding forests. The best soils in the area are to be found on the Pouto Peninsula, on small floodplains surrounding the rivers or on rendzina soils inland.

To the south around Helensville, the southern Kaipara Harbour and Muriwai Valley were occupied by Te Kawerau, Te Waiohua, Ngāti Awa and Ngāti Whātua prior to European contact (Spring-Rice 1978: 2). Ngāti Awa, Te Kawerau and Te Waiohua were ousted during the southern expansion of Ngāti Whātua into Kaipara and Tāmaki from the Hokianga. In 1822 Ngāpuhi, led by Hongi Hika and armed with muskets obtained from European traders, attacked the Tāmaki isthmus and killed large numbers of Ngāti Whātua. In 1826 Hika again inflicted a heavy defeat on Ngāti Whātua at the battle of Te Ika-a-Ranginui near Kaiwaka. The Kaipara was, for a time, depopulated.

The harbour and its tributary rivers provided the main means of access, and there were several important portages for canoes. Most of the region was originally covered by forest, but long Māori occupation resulted in the clearance of significant areas around the harbour shoreline, along the important routes between Ōtamatea and Mangawhai, and between the Kaipara River and upper Waitematā Harbour. Where they were not lived on and cultivated, the cleared lands were covered in fern, manuka scrub and regenerating forest. In short, the Kaipara district was a very attractive environment for Māori settlement. The Waitangi Tribunal Kaipara Report (2006), based on well researched evidence and reports commissioned by both Tribunal, Crown and applicants, sets out the areas the various tribal groups occupied in the Kaipara in the 19th century. Māori tribal groupings and rohe can be particularly complex with multiple parties involved, shifting alliances and spheres of influence.

### 3.2 *European background*

Although some Māori had drifted back by the 1830s and 1840s, the Kaipara was seen by European as an ideal location for new settlement, rich in timber resources and potential farmland. A mission station was established by Rev. Wallis at Tangiteroia in the Upper Kaipara (Ryburn 2006: 9). Wallis was succeeded by James Buller in 1839 and William Gittos in 1856. Gittos in particular encouraged the Māori communities around the Kaipara Harbour to sell or lease their lands to Europeans.

The traditional nature of land tenure and resource use patterns in the area was dramatically altered as a result of the Native Land Acts (1862, 1865) and the establishment of the Native Land Court to determine the 'ownership' of customary land. Between 1870 and 1871 most of the customary Māori land in Helensville area was surveyed, and investigations of title were undertaken for each block. Census information indicates that the area was occupied at this time by small groups of both Ngāti Kahupara and Te Kawerau (Murdoch 1994: 63). The 1870s and 1880s brought major change to the area as European settlement began. John Foster established a flax mill at Okiritoto on the Muriwai Stream. In 1875 the railway reached Helensville, and this meant that previously inaccessible land west of Waimauku became more attractive to European settlers. This period marked the beginning of the transfer of Māori land to European ownership, and by the 1890s the area had few permanent Māori residents. In 1905 Oneonenui was purchased by James Fletcher whose family went on to develop this area and remained associated with the district for over a century (Murdoch 1994: 64).

Te Awaroa was first settled by John and Isaac McLeod in 1862, when they built the first sawmill on the Kaipara on land sold to them by Chiefs Te Otene Kikokiko and Paora Kawharu (Ryburn 2006: 25). The McLeod family had emigrated from Canada at the behest of John McLeod, who had spent time at Thomas Henderson's timber mill in Auckland during the 1850s. The McLeod sawmill employed about 100 men, including many local Māori. A village was established on the stream bank opposite the sawmill, which attracted both Māori and European settlers.

The small settlement, Te Awaroa, developed into a major trading and transport point along the Kaipara River (Ryburn 2006: 25). By 1864 it became the centre for the Resident Magistrate of the Kaipara District and the Native Land Court. The settlement was renamed Helensville, after the home

that John McLeod built for his wife, Helen. It continued to develop into a trading and transport town over the next 70 years (Ryburn 2006: 26).

James Rogan was appointed as the first Resident Magistrate and in turn appointed eight Ngāti Whātua assessors to assist him in making by-laws for their district. Te Otene Kikokiko responded by gifting 10 acres at Helensville as a site for the resident magistrate and courthouse. The government erected the courthouse, gaol and a very basic native hostel with the promise that a school would be provided as well. By 1865 a small depot was also erected on the site for D. Nicholson to dispense medicines. Later Paora Kawharu gave part of the adjacent Ahukaroro South Block to the town for a public cemetery and transferred portions for the site of what is today a Methodist Church.

McLeod's sawmill closed down in 1867 and John McLeod and family left for Auckland (Ryburn 2006: 26). Isaac McLeod stayed in Helensville where he continued to farm cattle and grow wheat and crops. By 1871 plans were put forward for a railway line between Helensville and Riverhead, connecting the Kaipara and Waitematā Harbours (Ryburn 2006:34). The line was intended to replace an old portage track that had previously linked the Kaipara with Auckland. The track had been cut in 1856 by Māori labourers at the request of Rev. Gittos (Ryburn 2006: 35) but was rough and impassable in winter. Coach services and timber bullock wagons used the track up until the rail line was opened in October 1875. The railway was eventually continued north to Kaukapakapa in 1885 (Ryburn 2006: 83). Between 1881 and 1891, the population of Helensville had more than doubled from 326 to 742, buoyed by the fortunes of timber milling in the area (Ryburn 2006: 69). The Māori land surrounding Helensville was opened up for settlement and by 1883 Helensville had become a town district with an elected town board (Ryburn 2006: 88). In 1881 the Helensville Timber Company set up a new mill at Helensville under Isaac McLeod Jnr (Ryburn 2006: 111). The mill employed between 40 and 50 men, working in the forests southeast of Helensville. It was supplied by logs hauled along the old portage road by bullock wagons and rafted down the Kaipara River. A second mill combined with a woodturning factory was opened by Arthur and Edward West in 1884 and a third mill was opened by the Douglass brothers in 1890. Declining kauri returns meant that all three mills had closed by 1892. By the turn of century, the local economy shifted to dairy farming and Helensville developed into a farming service centre (Ryburn 2006: 162).

### 3.3 Archaeological background

There are numerous archaeological sites recorded in the wider Helensville vicinity, particularly along the shores of the Kaipara Harbour and the low consolidated dunes to the west, but very few in and around Helensville itself.

There are no archaeological sites recorded on the property. The nearest site is Q10/1109, a rua kūmara recorded in 2019 by Moira Jackson. Other recorded sites are over 1 km away, and are pit and terrace sites, while Q10/1105, Te Horo pā, is recorded on the banks of the Kaipara River 1.25 km to the west. A section 56 archaeological investigation in 2018, consisting of six test trenches excavated to subsoil level to identify surviving features, including the infilled defensive ditch, probable kūmara storage pits and possible drains. The balance of the site remains in a public reserve (Judge and Jones 2018). Donald Prince investigated site Q10/43 about 5.5 m north of the property in 2019, just north of the Kaukapakapa River. Previously identified kūmara storage pits were shown to be relatively shallow depressions infilled with modern material. A disturbed pre-European Māori midden dominated by tuangi (*Austrovenus stutchburyi*) was dated to the late 16th to early 18th centuries AD (Prince 2019).

Otherwise, assessments have been undertaken for private developments (e.g., Foster 2011; Apfel 2021) or government departments (e.g., Glover and Campbell 2022; Ussher 2022) with no archaeological sites recorded and consequently no investigations.

In summary, little archaeology has been recorded in Helensville although there are numerous recorded sites in the wide Kaipara region. Helensville would have been a useful strategic position, and it would be expected that the area would have been occupied by Māori.

In 2013 Donald Prince undertook an assessment of 155 and 177 Rautawhiri Road, immediately east of 40 Mahi Road. No archaeology was identified (Prince 2013). An accidental discovery of shell at 177 Rautawhiri Road in 2021 was inspected by Bernie Larsen, who concluded that it was not a cultural deposit (Larsen 2021).

## 4 Field assessment

The property sites on a north–south running ridge line that rises to the south from around 25 m to 105 m above sea level. During field assessment the bulk of the developable area was under knee to waist high kikuyu with patches of woolly nightshade and gorse and the ground surface was not visible. Despite this, the soils are of poor quality and the property is not a suitable location for pre-European Māori kūmara cultivation or storage. There is no reasonable cause to suspect that any archaeology will be found at 40 Mahi Road.

## 5 Recommendations

These recommendations are only made on the basis of the archaeological values that have been outlined above. Any other values associated with special interest groups can only be determined by them. It is recommended that:

- an authority to modify or destroy archaeological sites at 40 Mahi Road (Lot 2 DP 586879) does not need to be applied for from Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga (HNZPT) under Section 44 of the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014;
- all works should be undertaken under the Accidental Discovery Rule outlined in E12.6.1 of the Auckland Unitary Plan;
- since archaeological survey cannot always detect sites of traditional significance to Māori, or wāhi tapu, mana whenua should be consulted regarding the possible existence of such sites, and the recommendations in this report.



*Figure 2. 40 Mahi Road, looking south.*



*Figure 3. 40 Mahi Road, looking north.*

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