



Greater Wellington Regional Council

Eastern Bays Shared Use Path

Review of Applicant's
Landscape and Visual Assessment

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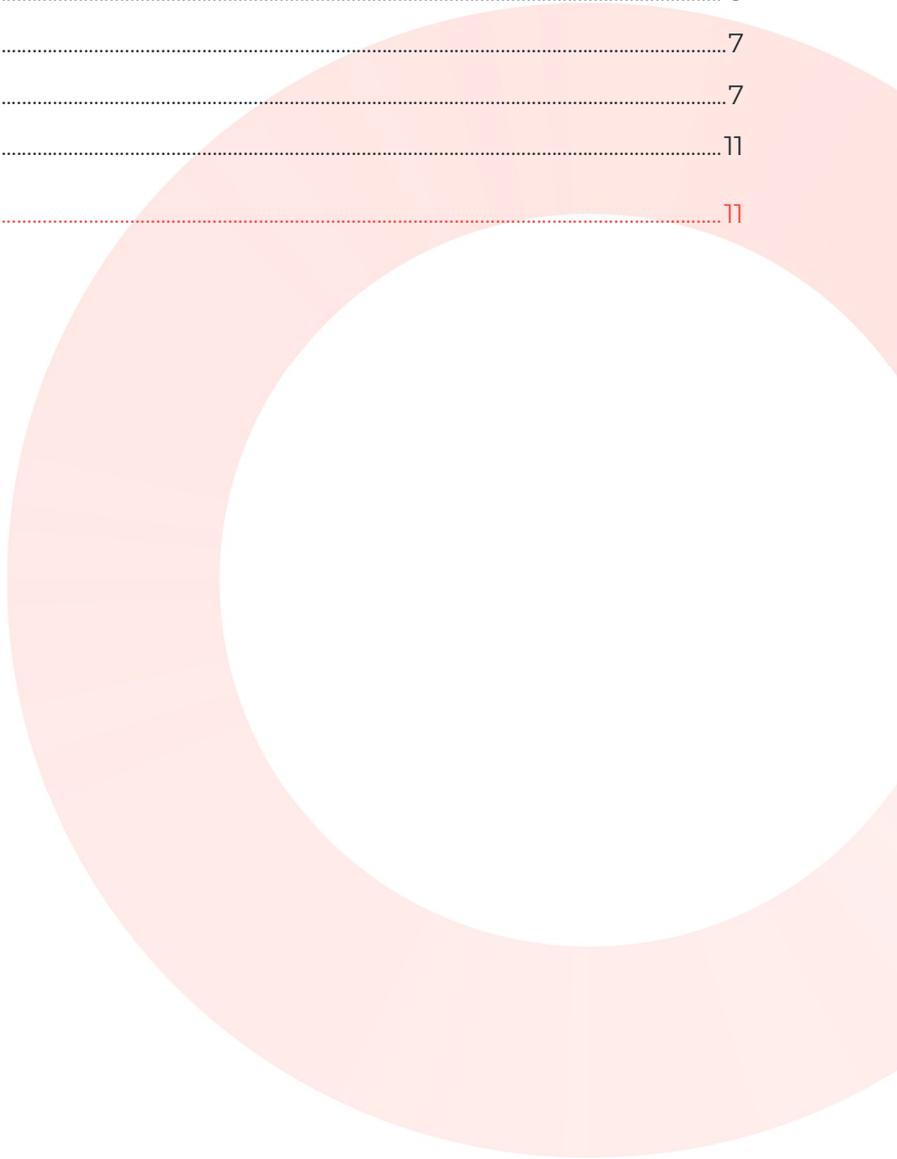
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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

This report provides a peer review of the landscape and visual effects assessment (prepared by Julia Williams, (Landscape Architect, Drakeford Williams Ltd, 7 February 2019). In this review the Williams assessment is referred to as the Applicant's 'LVA', which accompanies a Resource Consent Application by Hutt City Council (HCC) to the Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC). This peer review also provides comment on the Eastern Bay Shared Path Alternatives Assessment (March 2018) and the Eastern Bays Shared Path Design Features Report (January 2019). Both of these reports were prepared by Stantec for the Applicant and have a direct bearing on the landscape character and visual amenity outcomes of the proposal.

It is understood through discussions during the site visit with Caroline Van Halderen (Applicant's planner, Stantec) and Shannon Watson (Environmental Regulation, GWRC), that the final detail design and outward appearance of the proposal will evolve further from what is currently demonstrated in the application. The various parts of the proposed changes are detailed in the Stantec 'Design Features Report' (January 2019). It is explicit in the wording throughout the application that the design of the proposal will be refined and improved following consultation with the various bay communities¹, GWRC, HCC and the Stantec design technical team through the planned Landscape and Urban Design Plan (LUDP) phase.

The proposal is located in the Eastern Bays part of Wellington Harbour in two sections totalling 4.2kms along the coastal edge of Marine Drive. The first stretch is from Point Howard in the north to the southern end of Sunshine Bay in the south. The second stretch is from the southern end of Days Bay to the junction of Marine Drive and Muritai Road. This is shown in Appendix 'J' of the Application.

It is understood that the proposal will essentially improve and formalise an existing pedestrian/cycle path partly located between the sea wall and the Marine Drive northbound live lane. Other parts of the proposal will be located in areas where no shared use path currently exists - such as through reserve areas and on future reclaimed land where the proposal will be built within the current marine environment. The extent of the shared use path and sea wall treatment is shown in Appendix 'N'². It is also understood from the Applicant's LVA that the Eastbourne Community have identified climate change as a key issue that may affect their lives here in the future and that the proposal has the opportunity to address this.

The landscape character of the narrow linear site where the shared use path will be located, and the wider site context is described in thorough detail by Ms Williams and is not commented on further in this peer review.

This peer review considers the potential effects of the proposed development and how well these effects have been covered in the applicant's LVA. Relevant landscape matters from the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement (NZCPS) and the Greater Wellington Proposed Natural Resources Plan (GWNRP) will also be considered. These include the potential visual and landscape effects arising from the proposal falling on users of Marine Drive, the harbour and occupants of the various bays and headlands located adjacent to the shared use path route.

¹ Point Howard/Sorrento Bay, Lowry Bay, York Bay, Mahina Bay, Sunshine Bay, Days Bay, Rona Bay, Eastbourne village and Robinson Bay.

² Preliminary Design Plans - Revision J, Stantec.

Matters of landscape and natural character and the effects of the proposal on these are also considered.

On May 2, 2019 a site visit was carried out. This included an appraisal of where the proposed changes will be located largely via foot, and to a lesser extent by vehicle.

1.2 Scope

As mentioned, this peer review provides comment on landscape matters pertaining to the application, specifically the LVA prepared by Ms Williams. This peer review also provides further information and advice related to the effects of the proposal on landscape and visual values.

This peer review also considers:

- The alternatives assessment and design features reports.
- the statutory considerations arising from the NZCPS and the GWNRP relating to landscape matters.
- the analysis and conclusions drawn on the landscape, visual and natural character effects of the proposal,
- recommendations as to appropriate design outcomes that may be considered and contribute to the LUDP, and;
- any gaps and shortcomings in the assessment undertaken as part of the assessment of environmental effects prepared by the applicant's landscape architect.

1.3 Summary Conclusions

This report concludes overall in agreement with Ms Williams's findings with regards to the landscape, visual and natural character effects of the proposal subject to clarification of a few points discussed below.

It is agreed that broadly speaking, the nature of the proposal (location, scale (width/footprint), alignment and general physical improvement) over what currently exists will have an acceptable degree of compatibility with its site which is located between an urban and coastal environment setting - subject to further development of the design. Initial observations include ensuring that provision is made for multiple user groups and all physical abilities, and robust consideration of detailing and surface finishes. This peer review provides some recommendations as to how the final proposal may be best conceived to maximise its compatibility with its coastal setting and range of likely user groups.

The Applicant's LVA regularly refers to the proposed LUDP. The intent of this design process is to further develop the proposal in terms of finer-grained design decisions, which will be made at the bay-scale. The Williams LVA relies heavily on the outcomes of this document providing for a more appropriate and improved design solution to the proposal - compared to what is currently proposed. This peer review strongly agrees with the process and potential benefit to the design following the LUDP. Ms Williams considers the LUDP to be a 'suggested' condition of consent. This peer review concludes that the LUDP forms a *recommended* condition of consent. Some recommendations are included later in this peer review that are intended to be tabled during the LUDP process.

The Applicant's LVA refers to the assumed improvements following the LUDP throughout and concludes that the landscape and visual effects will be reduced further when these refinements are made. However, the nature of any design refinements at this stage of the application process is aspirational rather than actual as the LUDP has yet to occur. There is no guarantee that the proposal will necessarily change following the LUDP. This peer review

considers the proposal as it is currently presented forming a 'worst case scenario'. As the purpose of this peer review is to assist the GWRC in their decision making, it is necessary that it assesses the proposal as it is currently presented, critiques it and provides additional firm recommendations to enable a better and guaranteed landscape outcome for the Eastern Bays area. There is a degree of discomfort that a proposal such as this is being submitted for Resource Consent which will include further development.

There is also agreement that on the seven-point³ scale of effects, the biophysical effects will be 'moderate'⁴ due to the amount of natural beach and rock outcropping that will be covered by the revetment works. It is agreed that any adverse effects on visual amenity and natural character arising from the current proposal will be 'low'⁵. It is assumed in this peer review that these effects will drop to 'very low' or become 'positive' with further design improvements given the natural character of part of the setting and the number of user groups located permanently in the area or as visitors to it.

The site and the changes to it will be primarily seen from the harbour and beach areas where the face of the concrete sea walling and associated concrete structures (steps and ramps) will be apparent - particularly at low tide. However, the current (in places poor) condition of the sea walling, steps and so forth is already visible from these areas and so there is a degree of acceptance now of such engineered solutions to storm surges and the attenuation of coastal erosional processes. As such any visual, landscape and natural character effects of the proposal are considered to be acceptable as long as the construction methodology is sound, and the final appearance is appropriately mitigated.

It is concluded in this peer review that on the seven-point scale of effects, any potentially adverse landscape, visual and natural character effects arising from the proposal (as it currently stands) will fall between 'low' and 'moderate'. However, this determination is subject to improvement based on some recommended provisions to the proposal which will be addressed later in this review.

This review has considered the information that has been made available to date. It is possible that any reasons and conclusions may be altered in response to new information arising that becomes available prior to or at a hearing for the application.

2 Review of Landscape and Visual Effects Assessment

With regards to the Applicant' LVA, there is agreement:

- (a) On the necessity of the LUDP to determine the best final design outcome and that this process and document becomes a condition of consent.
- (b) On the relevant extent of the site context, the bay by bay description and defining characteristics.

³ Very Low - Low - Moderate to Low - Moderate - Moderate to High - High - Very High.

⁴ **Moderate:** A moderate level of effect on the character or key attributes of the receiving environment and/or the visual context within which it is seen; and/or have a moderate level of effect on the perceived amenity derived from it. (Oxford English Dictionary Definition: Moderate: adjective-average in amount, intensity or degree).

⁵ **Low:** A low level of effect on the character or key attributes of the receiving environment and/or the visual context within which it is seen; and/or have a low level of effect on the perceived amenity derived from it. (Oxford English Dictionary Definition: Low: adjective-below average in amount, extent, or intensity).

- (c) On the defined extent of the coastal environment, and the discussion on natural character and experiential values.
- (d) On the general landscape description of the Eastern Bays Area.
- (e) On the methodology undertaken.
- (f) That any landscape effects are confined to landform change, namely where the seawall / fill / revetment overlays the natural coastal area where these effects are concluded to be 'moderate' (at worst).
- (g) That beach nourishment practices will have 'moderate - low'⁶ adverse landscape effects.
- (h) That within the broader Eastern Bays context, effects on landscape, levels of legibility, picturesqueness and overall experiential natural character currently enjoyed will be 'low'.
- (i) That effects on legibility and visibility will be potentially 'very low' or 'positive' when the influence of the LUDP is considered in the final design.
- (j) That on balance, there will be very little to no change in the effects of coherence or the experiences attributed to the proposed foreshore treatment versus the existing situation.
- (k) On the identification of the key viewing audiences / their sensitivities to change and the extent and nature of these views and the likely visual impact of the proposal.
- (l) On the comparison and conclusions reached regarding the current condition of the foreshore and the proposal.
- (m) With the intent of the mitigation measures, although this will be discussed in greater detail in this peer review.
- (n) On the statutory discussion and conclusions reached although the LVA would benefit from additional discussion around Policy⁷ 6.1 (h) & (i), Policy 10.2⁸ (b) and Policy 18⁹ (a - e) of the NZCPS.
- (o) That the specifics of the proposal following further refinement through the LUDP will generate, at worst, 'low' adverse landscape, visual and natural character effects and, at best, the proposal will have overall 'positive' effects particularly given the existing condition of the built changes along the coastal edge where the proposal is located.

Some matters identified in this peer review raise additional points that require clarification, rather than criticise or disagree with what is included. These few points are discussed below.

2.1 Construction Effects

On page 4, the LVA notes that any adverse effects arising from the construction processes will be localized and temporary and will therefore be 'very low'¹⁰. On the seven-point scale, 'very low' is synonymous with a 'no-change' situation. It is concluded in this peer review that construction effects, while localized will be potentially 'moderate-high'. This is due to the

⁶ **Moderate-Low:** A moderate to low level of effect on the character or key attributes of the receiving environment and/or the visual context within which it is seen; and/or have a moderate to low level of effect on the perceived amenity derived from it.

⁷ Policy 6: Activities in the coastal environment.

⁸ Policy 10: Reclamation and declamation.

⁹ Policy 18: Public open space.

¹⁰ **Very Low:** Very low or no modification to key elements/features/characteristics of the baseline or available views, i.e. approximating a 'no-change' situation. The LVA describes 'Very Low' as "Very slight or barely distinguishable/discernible change to key elements/ features/ characteristics of the landscape baseline or views, i.e. effectively a 'no change' situation". Both descriptions are essentially the same.

possibility of lane and road closures,¹¹ disruption of views arising from machinery and personnel located near the coastal edge. The visual - albeit temporary effects of construction activities and the disruption of sea views in particular is evident to a degree in figures 4.2-4.4 of the January 2019 Design Features Report.

It is acknowledged that construction will occur bay by bay in 20m sections. This will go some way towards lessening the construction effects as the majority of the coastal seascape will be able to be enjoyed unchanged as opposed to the entirety of the proposal being implemented simultaneously.

2.2 Alternatives

The consideration of alternatives is required under Schedule 4 of the RMA. The alternatives document¹² includes a thorough precis of five options including 'do minimum', plus four other options discussing where the shared use path may best be located (landward side of Marine Drive, partial landward/seaward location, on the carriageway, and seaward of the carriageway (which was ultimately developed as 'Option 2A'). Option 2A (shared use path located on the landward side) was shown via a series of photo-simulations included at Appendix 'O' of the application. These 'before' and 'after' images are helpful and demonstrate the adverse effects of scaling back headlands.

Some other aspects of the proposal that were interrogated in the alternatives report included: cost, property acquisition and access, extent of earthworks, road user experience, continuity of shared path user experience, conflict points, traffic management issues during construction, resilience, longevity and opportunity for upgrades and sea level rise/climate change. A sixth inland route option was discounted as it would not meet the objectives of the project adequately.

Following the broad alternatives investigation described above, the preferred option was developed further. This centered around path width to best accommodate all user groups and the optimum engineered solution for the sea wall/reclamation to best support the path and address coastal processes including into the future.

The alternatives assessment allowed for some finer-grained design decisions to be made such as at more sensitive areas - notably headlands and beaches. At this time a workshop took place with participants including the Stantec technical design team, GWRC, HCC and community representatives. This holistic approach to further developing the design is commendable. Following this process and the general conclusions reached, the project team tested out several measures to avoid, remedy or mitigate any adverse effects on the environment. These design variations were then discussed with the community and following this, included in the proposal as it currently stands, outlined in the Design Features Report (DFR) (Stantec, January 2019) which is discussed next.

2.3 Design Features

The DFR articulates the broad design methodology and how the structures will appear in their basic form for Resource Consent purposes. It is acknowledged in the report that the outcome of the proposal may alter following the detailed design phase, including from input contributed by the LUDP process.

Further improvement in the design detailing of the proposal will yield significant benefit. At present the design of the proposal appears to largely be a functional one with less

¹¹ 4.1.2 Construction Methodology; Duration and Timing (Design Features Report January 2019).

¹² Eastern Bays Shared Path Alternatives Assessment (Stantec, March 2018).

acknowledgement of sense of place and visual aesthetics. This is clearly evident in the simulations in Appendix 'O' of the Application where an asphalt path is shown extending from the roadway separated with a series of concrete 'beam' forms. This is the current situation in part of York Bay and so the proposal currently extends this methodology (see image on cover).

At Part 3, the DFR lists and discusses several design features. This peer review comments on some of these design features where some opportunity for improvement in each has been identified, and discussed below:

Shared Path

While the shared use path is proposed to be asphalt, there is scope for some variation of this in discrete areas. Other ground surface materials could be explored such as exposed aggregate concrete – possibly in variable grades, recycled or new timber decking, artificial turf, variation in asphalt colour and so forth. Such changes in how the surface appears could be located at beach access points, bus stops, near heritage buildings and areas where there is opportunity for taking a pause. Any variation in surfacing will potentially define areas where passive activity or crossing points are located and will contribute positively to the character of the area and to the levels of amenity enjoyed. A continuous linear asphalt path as proposed has the potential to be a one-dimensional landscape feature – largely weighted towards the cycling fraternity.

Revetment structure

It is important that the rock used in the new revetment walls has a compatibility with the form, texture and colour of the existing bedrock seen in the area. The various bedrock reefs and outcrops are a distinctive feature of this part of the coast, helping to define each bay and the proposal will be seen very close to these outcrops in places. If imported rock material appears too 'different', it will stand out as foreign and draw the eye away from the natural features (**Figure 1**). In the DFR under 3.1.1 it states that "*The final selection of rock material for the revetment will be addressed by the contractor*". While this may be adequate, it is preferable that a landscape architect, possibly aided by a geologist, be engaged to select any non-local rock material. It is important that the revetment works appear as 'low key' as possible as these structures extend some way out into the coastal environment and higher than the top of the shared use path. Any adverse effects on landscape and natural character which are currently agreed as being 'moderate' will be exacerbated with poor rock choice where these effects will become unacceptable.



Figure 1 Reefs at Point Howard/Sorrento Bay. The foreground area is proposed to be a formed carpark with revetment extending out and overlaying part of the reef outcrops (red-brown rock). The shared use path passes to the seaward side of the pohutukawa. It is important that the revetment rock is

compatible with the local rock colour as opposed to the contrasting grey rock used here in the rip rap. Photograph by J. Head May 2, 2019.

Curved sea walls, ramps and steps

How these structures are finished will determine their levels of visibility and acceptability in this coastal setting. It is acknowledged that the curved form of the wall is optimal in attenuating wave action and storm surges. As the proposed walls, ramps and steps are concrete which is highly 'plastic' when it is placed into the formwork, there are limitless opportunities for reducing the potentially 'utilitarian' effects of these structures. Such effects arise from the structures' potentially highly regular and horizontal forms and surface reflectivity. This mostly affects harbour and beach views, but these effects will also be observed from the road and shared use path when looking across the curve of the bay (**Figure 2**).



Figure 2 Looking across the curve of Lowry Bay from Marine Drive/shared use path. Note visibility of existing (and proposed) sea wall, rocky reefs and historic Skerrett Boat Shed (at right, built over the water). It is important that the final design of the proposal adequately protects and enhances these features. Also note the opportunities for the shared use path to better separate itself from the road – rather than simply extend the asphalt surfacing. Photograph by J. Head May 2, 2019.

It is recommended that the curved and vertical surfaces be textured in a way where the face of the concrete appears irregular. Such textures could be achieved by taking latex moulds of natural rockwork or rock walling and laying these inside the formwork prior to being filled. It is not considered adequate to simply apply a random 'dimpling' in the surface as this will have scant benefit to more distant views. The flat step and curved wall 'treads,' ramp surface and wall top will obviously be required to be smoother for safety which will also benefit comfort levels (when the wall treads and cap are used for sitting on).

It will be necessary to manage the concrete colour. While adding colourful oxides is not considered appropriate or necessarily effective, it will be advantageous if the concrete can be as dark, visually recessive and uniform in colour as possible. This may require the addition of charcoal oxides. When concrete is new, it appears very bright – almost white which is evident in the colour of the concrete kerb separators. As such the new concrete structures will appear as a reflective and obtrusive band between the beach/harbour waters and the vegetated backdrop.

It is suggested that the top of the sea wall that sits flush with the asphalt path is wide enough to form an obvious 'seat' or 'perch'. At York Bay, the top of the wall is approximately 300mm wide. Figures 3-3 to 3-5 of the DFR show a much smaller concrete top than this. A concrete 'cap' width of 450-500mm is preferred. This will enable an obvious strip on which people may sit without feeling encroached upon by cyclists passing by. The wider 'seat' edge will also provide for increased visual differentiation between passive and active shared path users. Further to this, a wider cap will provide for a stronger, more deliberate visual transition between the shared use path and the occasionally rugged coastal environment here.

It is understood that a raised edge was explored for this situation and that if this was included it would need contrasting colour to increase its visibility (with adverse visual implications), and that it may possibly form a trip hazard. It is recommended that the concrete wall cap be left flush with the surface of the shared use path adjacent to it.

It is acknowledged that over time, new concrete will weather to a dull grey as is currently evident in the banding in the concrete colouring at York Bay. In this example, it would have been beneficial if the concrete had been tinted grey to lessen the contrast and 'striped' effect evident in the variable weathering processes.

Where the curved sea wall 'treads' transition to single curved wall, it is recommended that the end of the tread is set into a large rock or series of rocks – possibly, in turn, set in a concrete haunching. This way the squared off end of the tread would not be visible with its contrived non-natural pattern dominating the surrounding natural rock patterns (**Figure 3**).

It is recommended that a 1:1 site sample be made that can be agreed on by the design team and community as part of the LUDP, for replication on site.



Figure 3 *Unnatural transition from sea wall to rocky beach (to be avoided). The squared off end of the tread dominates the rock. It would have improved this transition if a large rock or a few large rocks were partially cast in to the end of the tread with minimal visible grouting (as opposed to here where the rocks set in the concrete matrix appears highly unnatural). Photograph by J. Head May 2, 2019.*

Kerb separators

The kerb separators are potentially the most visible part of the proposal from the landward side of the shared use path, including Marine Drive and the shared use path itself. As such

these structures need to be adequately designed. It is noted here following a site visit that the existing concrete kerb separators (which the proposal is modelled on) in York Bay still have scope for improvement (**Figure 3**).

The primary issue with the simple rectangular forms used is their utilitarian and regular appearance. While these concrete blocks may adequately protect the shared use path from encroachment by motorised vehicles, these structures would benefit from further design thought. It is acknowledged that the DFR states that “[the] *concrete separators have the adaptability to incorporate textures and colour and can be easily mass produced once the concrete forms have been manufactured*”. This peer review supports this comment. It is recommended that any visual changes to the size/height/length and surface finish be carefully explored in the LUDP. It is agreed that timber is not an appropriate material for this situation used in large quantities, but the concrete forms could take on the appearance of timber through the formwork. Timber textures would not be out of place and would have a compatibility with the variety of driftwood found washed up along the shoreline.

Another observation of the existing and proposed kerb separators is their visibility through contrast with the asphalt paved surfaces. It is recommended that this colour contrast is lessened which would be facilitated by forming a continuous concrete band flush with the road and shared use path surfaces aligned with the kerb separators. This concrete band should be exposed aggregate concrete, or even better - have a stone ‘cobbled’ look to the surface. This concrete/stone band with the kerb separators ranked along it will provide a stronger visual and physical delineation between the roadway and the shared use path which will improve traffic safety. This contrast or accentuation of the shared use path would be improved even further if a different asphalt colour was used for the shared use path.

2.4 Recommendations

The Applicant’s LVA provides recommendations at ‘Additional Mitigation Measures’ (part 8 of her LVA 8.21 - 8.24). While these recommendations are brief they are agreed with in this peer review. Otherwise, mitigation of the proposal relies on appropriate outcomes through the LUDP process.

As the outcome of the proposal is heavily reliant on refinements/improvements following the LUDP, it is recommended that the LUDP process occurs in a robust timely manner with appropriate attendees present. It is also recommended that the design refinements to the proposal as it currently stands are presented to the GWRC for careful consideration and formal approval before works begin on site.

This peer review includes some additional recommendations that are intended to be tabled for discussion at the LUDP. These have been discussed in the body of this peer review at 2.3 and are not repeated here.

3 Conclusion

There is general agreement with the content and conclusions reached in the Applicant’s LVA. The existing treatment of the coastal edge where the proposal is located is currently poor and in need of improvement. The proposal addresses this adequately and represents a nett improvement on the coastal edge’s appearance and functionality. The extent of the changes closely aligns with the current extent of the modified coastal edge - but not everywhere and so ‘moderate’ landscape effects will occur in these areas. This is a reasonable conclusion. Visual effects arising from the proposal are considered to be ‘low’ overall. This is also a reasonable conclusion.

Therefore, the proposal and any potentially adverse landscape, visual and natural character effects arising from it on the site and its coastal context have been covered off in satisfactory detail. It is agreed that the high natural landscape values and amenity values enjoyed in the area will continue to be maintained following the proposal as it is currently presented which essentially 'tidies up' the existing situation in a generic manner.

However, there is considerable scope for further improvements in the proposal. This will ensure the shared use path becomes a destination in itself, and the design better responds to 'sense of place'. This is alluded to throughout the LVA, without the detail of any such improvements being made explicit. With a careful, considered approach to the final form and appearance of the proposal and how it may better suit more user groups, a significantly improved result over what is shown in the proposal is possible. This is intended to be facilitated through the LUDP process, followed by further review by GWRC.