

Proposed Boatshed 21 Marine Parade, Taieri Mouth

Natural Character and Landscape Effects Assessment Report

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Prepared by

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Introduction

Onumai Enterprises are applying for a replacement to Coastal Permit 2006.321 to provide for occupation of the coastal marine area with a wharf for mooring and loading / unloading commercial and recreational vessels and a building for short term, temporary accommodation, recreation and sporting purposes. Overall, this is assessed as being a discretionary activity in terms of the provisions of the Otago Regional Plan: Coast (ORPC)¹.

Otago Regional Council have assessed the application and have requested further information under section 92(1) of the RMA including the following:

8) Please engage a suitably qualified and experienced landscape architect to assess the potential effects on landscape/natural character and visual amenity.

- *The assessment should provide an analysis of the viewshed/viewing audience (to Tuia Pito Ora/New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects best practice) with representative viewpoints to back up any conclusions reached regarding visual effects.*
- *The assessment should address the appropriateness/landscape capacity for the residential nature and appearance of the proposal in this location via a comparison of the proposed structure's level of residential use and character with a recreational/hobbyist boatshed.*

This report has been commissioned to respond to this and addresses the effects of the proposed development on natural character, landscape values and visual amenity. It is structured as follows:

- Methodology
- Site and area description
- The proposed development
- Visual effects analysis
- Natural character assessment
- Landscape assessment

¹ Cubitt Consulting Ltd, Application for Resource Consent, 21 Marine Parade, Taieri Mouth, June 2022.

- Visual amenity assessment
- Statutory provisions assessment
- Conclusion

Methodology

This assessment follows the concepts and principles outlined in the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects (NZILA) Landscape Assessment Guidelines², and has been informed by a review of the relevant statutory provisions and a site visit on 22 December 2022.

When rating the degree of effects of the proposed activity on natural character attributes and landscape values, I adopt the recommended 7-point rating scale in the Landscape Assessment Guidelines, which is related to RMA terminology in the table below:

Degree of effect assessment scale

<i>Very low</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Low-mod</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Mod-high</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Very high</i>
<i>Less than minor</i>		<i>Minor</i>	<i>More than minor</i>		<i>Significant</i>	

Site and area description

As illustrated in **Figure 1**, the site is on the true right bank of the Taieri River at Taieri Mouth, within a small cluster of old fishing wharfs at the northern end of the Taieri Mouth settlement. The river in this area is tidal and estuarine and is within the coastal environment. The river emerges from its lower gorge at this point and the landform adjacent to the site rises steeply. The Taieri Mouth settlement lies largely to the south of the river but there are dwellings on both sides of the river which overlook the site. The river mouth character is modified by the old port area and the Taieri Mouth township but upstream, within the gorge, natural character is strongly expressed. The Taieri Mouth

² Te Tangi a te Manu, Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines. Tuia Pito Ora, New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects, July 2022.

township has an informal beach / crib settlement character with generally modestly scaled dwellings of various ages and style, up to 3 stories in height, and no footpaths.

The immediate context of the site is the area of wharves and fishing industry sheds which occupy an approximately 200m stretch of riverbank directly adjacent to Marine Parade downstream of the bridge. The wharf and shed structures are the legacy of a once flourishing fishing industry which operated out of Taieri Mouth, but which is now almost entirely ceased. The wharves are typically relatively short timber structures, and the associated buildings are of modest scale, generally no more than approximately 45m² on floor area and 4m in height. As well as the wharves and buildings there are mooring piles, slipways, containers, and scattered fishing gear. At the time of my site visit there were several vessels tied up at the wharves, some of which were clearly designed for recreational rather than commercial fishing usage. The area has a utilitarian, rather scruffy and dilapidated small-scale fishing port character.

The site itself is within the coastal marine area (CMA) and is currently occupied by an existing wharf structure, on which are located two cool sheds and a lean-to storage area. There is also a floating pontoon attached to the wharf. The structures on the wharf read as two small sheds, approximately 8 x 2.5m and 4 x 2.5m in area respectively, and both approximately 3m in height. There is a tank situated on the roof of the smaller shed, and access to the wharf is blocked by a wire mesh gate.

Figures 2 - 10 illustrate the character of the site and its wider landscape contexts.

The proposed development

The proposed development involves recognition of a change in use of the wharf from a commercial fishing focus to a recreational and accommodation usage. There will be no change to the wharf structure itself, except that an additional access ramp will run along the northern side of the proposed boat shed involving an addition approximately 7.2m² coverage of the seabed. No new disturbance to the seabed is envisaged.

The existing structures will be incorporated into a new boatshed which will be 9.64 x 8.66m (approx. 83.5m²) in floor area and up to 5.9m in height. The roof is to be clad with Ebony (black) coloured aluminum corrugate and the walls are to be clad with 'linea' weatherboard, coloured 'Baltic Sea' (dark grey). The western / road facing façade will be largely devoid of windows and will provide access to the building via a double sliding door. The side (north and south) elevations will have some windows as well as two skylights to either side, whilst the eastern (river facing) façade will be entirely glazed, It is proposed that the majority of the glazing is grey tinted to reduce light reflectance and light bleed.

Figure 11 illustrates the proposed development.

Visual effects analysis

The following is my assessment of the visual effects of the proposed boatshed from representative viewpoints in the area surrounding.

Viewpoints to the west of the site (see Figures 2 - 4)

<i>Viewpoints description</i>	<i>Significant viewpoints to the west of the site are largely limited to those on Marine Parade, including directly adjacent to the site.</i>
<i>Existing view description</i>	<i>The wharves, sheds and boats form a lineal feature for an approximately 200m stretch along Marine Parade between the road and the river. A rocky cliff face rises from the other side of the road. The small scale, utilitarian, fishing industry structures (and associated clutter of fishing gear) are of some interest but do not contribute to natural character or aesthetic coherence.</i>
<i>Description of visual effects of the boatshed</i>	<i>The proposed shed will be significantly larger in scale than the existing structures in this area and will introduce a gabled form in a context where buildings are currently lean-to of flat roofed. It will also differ from the existing character in that the skylights and windows will reflect residential usage and the aesthetic will be newer and smarter. From this viewing angle, its different usage and character</i>

	<p><i>will not be starkly obvious as the largely blank road facing faced will retain a boatshed character to a large extent. The proposed black / dark grey colour scheme of the proposed structure will differ from the largely lighter colours of the existing structures but will help minimise its visual prominence.</i></p>
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Viewpoints to the north of the site (see Figure 5)

<p><i>Viewpoints description</i></p>	<p><i>The site can be seen from the north from the river and bridge, and the boat launching area on the western side of the bridge.</i></p>
<p><i>Existing view description</i></p>	<p><i>From this angle, the existing fishing port area is seen in the context of the township dwellings on the south-west bank of the river. The waters edge structures and moored boats are an element of visual interest and something of a focal point.</i></p>
<p><i>Description of visual effects of the subdivision</i></p>	<p><i>The proposed shed will be seen within the existing built context. It will contrast to an extent with the other riverside sheds in terms of its greater (but still modest) scale, colour and (given its glazed river facing façade) its residential character. Factors which will assist to integrate it include the residential character of the township beyond and (when present) the moored recreational / private boats.</i></p>

Viewpoints to the east of the site (see Figures 6 - 8)

<p><i>Viewpoints description</i></p>	<p><i>Significant viewpoints to the east of the site include the surface of the river, the true-left river margin, Taieri Mouth Road and dwellings accessed from this road.</i></p>
<p><i>Existing view description</i></p>	<p><i>From this angle, the existing fishing port area is seen in the context of the township dwellings on the south-west bank of the river. The waters edge structures and moored boats are an element of visual interest and something of a focal point.</i></p>

<p><i>Description of visual effects of the subdivision</i></p>	<p><i>The proposed shed will be seen within the existing built context. It will contrast to an extent with the other riverside sheds in terms of its greater (but still modest) scale, colour and (given its glazed river facing façade) its residential character. Factors which will assist to integrate it include the residential character of the township beyond and (when present) the moored recreational / private boats.</i></p>
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Viewpoints to the south of the site (see Figures 9 and 10)

<p><i>Viewpoints description</i></p>	<p><i>Significant viewpoints to the south of the site include sections of Marine Parade (including the lookout point near the Finlayson Road intersection) and dwellings located on slopes adjacent to the road, as well as Knarston Park.</i></p>
<p><i>Existing view description</i></p>	<p><i>The existing fishing port is seen upriver from these viewpoints with the bridge and natural gorge landscape beyond. Whilst of visual interest, the port elements also represent 'clutter' that modifies the natural character based aesthetic values of the river landscape to an extent.</i></p>
<p><i>Description of visual effects of the subdivision</i></p>	<p><i>The proposed shed will be seen within the existing port context. From closer viewpoints its different (residential) character and larger scale will contrast to an extent with the other riverside sheds. From more distant viewpoints and where seen with a bush covered hill backdrop (e.g. Knarston Park) its dark colour scheme will be very effective in minimizing its visual prominence.</i></p>

Natural character assessment

Policy 13 (2) of the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2010 reads:

Recognise that natural character is not the same as natural features and landscapes or amenity values and may include such matters as:

- (a) natural elements, processes and patterns;*
- (b) biophysical, ecological, geological and geomorphological aspects*
- (c) natural landforms such as headlands, peninsulas, cliffs, dunes, wetlands, reefs, freshwater springs and surf breaks;*
- (d) the natural movement of water and sediment.*
- (e) the natural darkness of the night sky;*
- (f) places or areas that are wild or scenic;*
- (g) a range of natural character from pristine to modified; and*
- (h) experiential attributes, including the sounds and smell of the sea; and their context and setting.*

The NZILA Landscape Assessment Guidelines defines natural character as:

*'An area's distinct combination of natural characteristics and qualities, including degree of naturalness.'*³

Natural character assessment includes consideration of both biophysical and human experiential attributes. Natural character effects describe the impact of the proposed activity on the biophysical integrity and natural processes of the areas affected, as well as sensory / experiential effects on perceptions of natural character. Their significance is determined with reference to the degree of existing modification and the sensitivity of the existing environment to change, and the scale and nature of the proposed development. Given that there will be no disturbance to the wharf piles or seabed, biophysical effects of this project will be minimal, and this assessment is focused on experiential natural character.

³ Te Tangi a te Manu, Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines. Tuia Pito Ora, New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects, July 2022.

Effects of activities on natural character can be positive or adverse in nature and can vary in degree. The degree of effect will be rated in terms of the 7-point scale introduced above.

Natural character attributes

In the ORPC, the site is located within a Coastal Development Area. These are described in Section 2.2 as *'characterised by having a mixture of structures, facilities and associated infrastructure required by the recreational and commercial activities occurring in those areas'*. The values listed for CDA 5 Taieri Mouth are fishing facilities and recreational facilities.

In the Clutha District Coastal Natural Character and Landscape Assessment⁴, the site was included within the Taieri Mouth natural character assessment unit and this area was rated 'medium' for natural character. The overall comment relevant to this assessment unit was:

'Modification of the geomorphological, hydrological and ecological systems is evident as a result of human activity. Moderately low perceptual naturalness but some wild and scenic quality.'

Natural character in the Taieri Mouth area is expressed through the presence and powerful natural processes of the river and the ocean, and the largely natural coastal landforms. It is clearly modified though, by the buildings and exotic plantings of the township, the port elements, the roads, and the bridge. More subtly, marram has modified the coastal dunes. In the immediate context of the site (the port and boat launching area), natural character is significantly modified by areas of reclamation and rock protection, the wharf and shed structures, and the presence of moored vessels. The site is not within an area of high or outstanding natural character.

⁴ Moore et al, 2015, Coastal Environment of Otago, Natural character and outstanding natural features and landscapes assessment, Clutha District Section Report, Otago Regional Council.

Natural character effects

The proposed boatshed will have no impact on natural river / coastal processes as no change is planned to the wharf piles and there will be no seabed disturbance. The built form on the wharf will change however, from essentially two small structures, to one larger one, involving an approximately four-fold increase in bulk. The change in character from a fishing industry related facility to a recreational / accommodation facility will have no impact on natural character per se.

In that there will be greater scale and impact of built form, I consider that the nature of the effect of the proposed shed on natural character will be adverse. I assess the degree of this effect as very low however, because the area is already highly modified and not highly sensitive to change of this nature, and because in the context of the existing built elements, the proposed increase in built impact will be small. Overall then, it is my assessment that natural character effects will be adverse / very low.

Landscape assessment

Landscape effects are defined as follows:

*'An adverse or positive outcome for a landscape value as a consequence of changes to a landscape's physical attributes.'*⁵

I assess the landscape effects of the development against the landscape values discussed below. Landscape effects may be positive or adverse in nature and I rate the degree of effect in terms of the 7-point rating scale introduced already.

Landscape values

The site is not identified as being within an outstanding natural feature or landscape in Schedule 3.2 of the ORPC. As noted already, the port area is identified in the ORPC as

⁵ Te Tangi a te Manu, Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines. Tuia Pito Ora, New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects, July 2022.

a Coastal Development Area characterised by structures and facilities, in this case for fishing and recreation.

In the Clutha District Coastal Natural Character and Landscape Assessment⁶, the site is within the Taieri Mouth Landscape Character unit and this unit was assessed as having medium-high landscape values. The summary comment reads:

The Taieri Mouth unit has some features of significant natural science value and also has some very significant cultural values. Aesthetically, its values are more modest due to a rather sporadic and sprawling settlement pattern.'

As noted here, the wider Taieri Mouth area has features of biophysical and cultural / historic significance, for example Moturata Island, wetlands, and tangata whenua settlement and mahinga kai sites. The river mouth is also an area valued generally for its recreational opportunities. The fishing port area is a notable feature of Taieri Mouth reflecting an historically important aspect of the history of the township and the moored boats, wharves and sheds are a memorable, if somewhat aesthetically 'scruffy' element. The interplay of the natural river with the boats and structures is visually interesting. The port facilities have no heritage or landscape statutory recognition however, and are now largely unused for commercial fishing purposes.

Effects on landscape values

The proposed boatshed will introduce a larger structure to the port area, which will have a noticeably different character and purpose to the existing sheds (i.e. recreational / accommodation vs commercial fishing). To an extent, this changing character is already occurring with the changing character of the boats moored. In my assessment, the scale of the proposed boatshed will integrate acceptably in this context. Its scale, form and character are within the range of typical of boatsheds generally, and are appropriate to its riverside / coastal setting. Aesthetically, the dark coloured, single, gabled building will contribute positively to the visual amenity of the area when compared with the existing

⁶ Moore et al, 2015, Coastal Environment of Otago, Natural character and outstanding natural features and landscapes assessment, Clutha District Section Report, Otago Regional Council.

fishing related structures. Whilst there will be an obvious change in character, including substantial glazing to the river façade expressing usage of the structure for accommodation, it is common to see boat sheds with various levels of accommodation / residential use provided for all around New Zealand. I consider that the structure will be seen as an element of visual interest from surrounding areas.

Overall, given that there is no baseline requiring protection of the existing fishing port character, I consider that effects on landscape values will be neutral or positive.

Visual amenity assessment

Amenity values are defined in Section 2 of the RMA as follows:

'those natural or physical qualities and characteristics of an area that contribute to people's appreciation of its pleasantness, aesthetic coherence, and cultural and recreational attributes.'

In my assessment, the existing port area is interesting and memorable based on its expression of an historically important industry in the area and because of the inherent visual interest in the interplay of water and waterside built elements. It does not however, contribute positively to natural character-based amenity values and aesthetically, has a rather dilapidated and scruffy appearance.

The proposed development will integrate readily into this setting and in my assessment, will improve visual amenity as it will have a form and scale that is typical of boatsheds around New Zealand, result in less 'clutter' (one building rather than two), and will be recessively coloured. It is not my assessment that the amount of glazing and obvious usage of the building for accommodation will have adverse amenity effects. I consider that the structure will be an element of visual interest in the landscape that reflects the changing use of the Taieri Mouth Coastal Development Area.

Statutory provisions assessment

The site for the proposed structure is within the Taieri Mouth Coastal Development Area in the ORPC and is a Discretionary Activity. Below, I outline the provisions of the ORPC, and those of the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2010 (NZCPS) that are relevant to the natural character and landscape effects of the proposed development and make brief comment.

Otago Regional Plan Coast – Objectives and Policies

Provision	Comment
<p>Objective 5.3.1 <i>To provide for the use and development of Otago’s coastal marine area while maintaining or enhancing its natural character, outstanding natural features and landscapes, and its ecosystem, amenity, cultural and historical values.</i></p>	<p>I consider that the proposed development is consistent with this objective. Any adverse effects on natural character will be less than minor in this existing port / CDA setting. No outstanding natural features / landscapes or recognized ecological, cultural, or historical values are impacted. I have assessed effects on visual amenity as neutral or positive.</p>
<p>Policy 5.4.10 <i>To recognise and provide for the following elements which contribute to the natural character of Otago’s coastal marine area:</i> (a) <i>Natural coastal processes;</i> (b) <i>Water quality;</i> (c) <i>Landforms, seascapes; and</i> (d) <i>Coastal ecosystems.</i></p>	<p>The proposed development will have no impact on the elements listed.</p>
<p>Policy 5.4.11 <i>To have particular regard to the:</i> (a) <i>Amenity values;</i> (b) <i>Cultural values;</i></p>	<p>In my assessment the proposed development will have neutral or positive effects on amenity and scenic values.</p>

<p>(c) <i>Scenic values;</i> (d) <i>Ecological values; and</i> (e) <i>Historical values, including those identified in Schedule 8;</i> <i>associated with Otago's coastal marine area when considering its subdivision, use or development.</i></p>	
<p>Objective 8.3.1 <i>To recognise and provide for values associated with:</i> (a) <i>Areas of cultural significance; and</i> (b) <i>Areas of conservation value; and</i> (c) <i>Areas of public amenity;</i> <i>when considering structures within the coastal marine area.</i></p>	<p>I consider that the proposed modifications to the structure will have neutral or positive effects on amenity values in this area.</p>
<p>Objective 8.3.2 <i>To preserve the natural character of Otago's coastal marine area as far as practicable from the adverse effects associated with structures.</i></p>	<p>The proposed development will not result in modification to the wharf piles or any further disturbance to the seabed. The site is within an existing port area and CDA in the ORPC, and I have assessed adverse effects associated with the proposed greater bulk of built form as less than minor in this setting.</p>
<p>Policy 8.4.5 <i>New and existing structures will be required to be maintained in a structurally sound and tidy state, and should blend as far as is practicable with the adjoining landscape to minimise the visual impact of that structure on the character of the area.</i></p>	<p>In my assessment, the proposed boatshed will integrate acceptably with the character of the existing port area, the use of which, is changing from commercial fishing to recreation. The proposed structure will clearly read as a live-in boatshed, and will not appear out of place in terms of scale or character.</p>

New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2010 – Objectives and Policies

Provision	Comment
<p>Policy 13. Preservation of natural character</p> <p><i>1. To preserve the natural character of the coastal environment and to protect it from inappropriate subdivision, use and development:</i></p> <p><i>a. avoid adverse effects of activities on natural character in areas of the coastal environment with outstanding natural character; and</i></p> <p><i>b. avoid significant adverse effects and avoid, remedy or mitigate other adverse effects of activities on natural character in all other areas of the coastal environment ...</i></p>	<p>Policy 13. 1. (b) rather than 13. 1. (a) is relevant to this application. It is my assessment that the development proposed is consistent with this policy in that significant adverse effects are avoided, and other adverse effects will be appropriately mitigated by the proposed design.</p>
<p>Policy 15. Natural features and natural landscapes</p> <p><i>To protect the natural features and natural landscapes (including seascapes) of the coastal environment from inappropriate subdivision, use, and development:</i></p> <p><i>(a) avoid adverse effects of activities on outstanding natural features and outstanding natural landscapes in the coastal environment; and</i></p> <p><i>(b) avoid significant adverse effects and avoid, remedy, or mitigate other adverse effects of activities on other natural features and natural landscapes in the coastal environment ...</i></p>	<p>Policy 15. (b) rather than 15. (a) is relevant to this application. It is my assessment that the development proposed is consistent with this policy in that significant adverse effects are avoided, and other adverse effects will be appropriately mitigated by the proposed design.</p>

Conclusion

The proposed replacement permit seeks provision for expansion of the existing sheds on the existing wharf structure to provide for recreational use and short-term accommodation rather than the current fishing usage. This will result in a change in the form and character of the structure including greater bulk of built form.

The site is within a Coastal Development Area in the ORPC and already has a very modified, fishing port character. There are no particularly recognized natural character, landscape or other natural / cultural heritage values applying.

I have assessed the effects of the proposed development on natural character as very low (less than minor), and the effects on landscape and visual amenity values as neutral or positive. I consider that the proposed development is consistent with the relevant statutory provisions applicable to natural character, landscape and visual amenity effects.



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