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FLAT POINT STAGE 2
LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ASSESSMENT
AUGUST 2008

URBAN DESIGN • LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

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Isthmus Group Limited
43 Sale Street
PO Box 90 366
Auckland

Tel: 09 309 9442
Fax: 09 309 9060

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The proposal comprises the second stage development of a beach settlement at Flat Point. The initial stage comprising 39 lots was granted consent in 1998 has been implemented. The second stage comprises a further 42 lots designed in the same manner as the first stage, including the following characteristics:
- i) It is located in an area of low inland dunes some 200m from Mean High Water Springs (MHWS).
 - ii) The landforms will be retained and rehabilitated as the main landscape element of the subdivision. The roads and lots have been laid out around them.
 - iii) Controls will be put in place on building height, colours, extent of earthworks and fencing to ensure the settlement is nestled within the landforms and that it retains an open character.

2 EXISTING LANDSCAPE

- 2.1. Flat Point's landscape character includes the following main features:
- i) An open coastal setting
 - ii) A steep hill-country extensive pastoral backdrop
 - iii) A sense of remoteness
 - iv) Local topographic features of Flat Point reef and Te Unu Unu Stream mouth
 - v) Historical associations with earlier Maori settlement and the large sheep stations including Flat Point
 - vi) The existing Flat Point beach settlement

Context

Location and Remoteness

- 2.2. The Wairarapa coast is generally remote. Flat Point is some distance the nearest settlement of any size (56km from Carterton) and is isolated by the coastal ranges of hills.

Geomorphology

- 2.3. The eastern Wairarapa landforms comprise an extensive band of steep hill country aligned on a NE-SW axis parallel to the tectonic plate boundary between the Pacific and Australian plates. The underlying geology of the hill country is calcareous siltstones and mudstones. There is a narrow coastal plain typically 0.5km wide (on which the application site is located) comprising uplifted former marine benches (and alluvial fans), and back-dropped by an escarpment approximately 100m high.

Tangata whenua

- 2.4. Traditionally this part of the Wairarapa was occupied by Rangitane and Ngati Kahungunu, and is part of the broad Kahungunu rohe. It is understood the area forms ancestral land of Ngai Tumapuhiaarang, Ngati Maahu and Ngati Te Kawekairangi hapu, who have been recognised as kaitiaki of the local area. There is an occupation site and urupa on a distinctive small hill adjacent to a loop in Te Unu Unu Stream approximately 300m west of the site.

History

- 2.5. Since the 1840s the coast historically comprised large sheep stations. Before adequate roads were constructed during the 1920s wool was loaded by lighters on to ships standing off-shore from the stations.

Landuse

- 2.6. The landscape is still characterized by extensive pastoral farming although there are also some forest plantations and some cropping on the coastal plain. The vegetation in the area is mostly modified. Historically both the coastal plain and backdrop hill country have been managed as extensive dry stock pasture. Dry conditions have aided clearance and inhibited regeneration.

Site and Surroundings

Landuse and Vegetation

- 2.7. The coastal plain generally comprises rough pasture grasses and reeds (e.g. *Juncus*) in the inter-dune areas, with coastal grasses on the stable inland dunes. Some stands of pine have been planted for shelter. Paddocks further back from the coast have been improved and there is some cropping on areas of alluvial soil.

Flat Point Homestead

- 2.8. The Flat Point station homestead is located 0.5km inland from the coast on the north bank of Te Unu Unu Stream, and comprises the homestead building and several other

outbuildings within extensive landscaped grounds. There is a large pine shelter belt on the south-west side of the homestead. An airstrip and golf course area associated with the homestead is located on open land behind Flat Point in the vicinity of the existing beach settlement.

Flat Point Reef and Te Unu Unu Stream

- 2.9. Flat Point itself¹ is a small protrusion of the coastal plain formed behind an offshore reef. The reef provides sheltered water that was historically used to load lighters, and is now used to launch recreational fishing boats and also provides sheltered swimming. Te Unu Unu stream meanders in a loop across the coastal plain behind Flat Point. Its mouth is just south of the point, although during floods the stream occasionally follows a shorter route and discharges across the beach to the north of the point.

Frontal Dunes

- 2.10. There are active frontal dunes behind the beach. Near Flat Point these rise up to approximately 4-5 above the beach with a steep seaward face. These dunes have been identified as having significant conservation value. They include areas of spinifex and pingao, sand coprosma and sand pimelea. Spotted skinks, common skinks and katipo spiders have also been identified.²

Inland Dunes

- 2.11. There is an open and relatively flat area about 200m wide separating the frontal dunes from an area of stable inland dunes amongst which the existing Flat Point beach settlement is located. These inland dune landforms are not part of the active coastal processes, but are former coastal dunes that have either migrated inland or been marooned by rising land. By comparison with the active coastal dunes they are somewhat more subdued and have a more rolling profile. Within the site the dunes are generally 1m –3m high (8m-11m above sea level datum) with occasional high points around 5m high (13m above sea level datum).

Existing Beach Settlement

- 2.12. The existing beach settlement comprises 39 lots. Beach houses have been built on 18 of the lots. The dwellings are laid out around the toe of the dunes so that the settlement has an organic appearance with the dunes providing the main organizing structure. The dunes have been retained in an open character. Dwellings are limited to

¹ The name Flat Point was given by Captain Cook from the Endeavour in 1770

² Department of Conservation Ecological Site Database; Native Plant Database

a maximum height of 5m, so that they appear to nestle within the dune landforms. The properties are unfenced and build are modest in scale³ so that settlement has more of the character of a traditional bach settlement than some recent coastal developments in other parts of the country.

Dispersed Baches

- 2.13. There are a several dispersed baches on the coastal side of the road south of the site, and two traditional baches near Flat Point itself.

Landscape Evaluation: (Is it an Outstanding Natural Features and Landscape?)

Existing Classification

- 2.14. The landscape at Flat Point is not identified as an Outstanding Natural Feature or Landscape in terms of s6(b) of the RMA, nor as a 'Special Amenity Landscape' in terms of section 7, in the Regional Policy Statement, Operative Carterton District Plan or Proposed Wairarapa Combined District Plan.⁴

Professional Assessment

- 2.15. The following conclusions were reached as a result of evaluating the area in terms of the factors set out in the recognised 'Pigeon Bay Criteria':
- i) The area at the beach in the vicinity of Flat Point itself, and including the reef and lagoon, might be considered an outstanding natural feature; or at least as a Special Amenity Landscape. That feature has reasonably high value in terms of the Pigeon Bay Criteria, and has a high degree of natural character notwithstanding the presence of two baches.
 - ii) The area in the vicinity of the proposal, on the other hand, is neither outstanding enough nor natural enough to warrant classification as part of an Outstanding Natural Landscape nor a Section 7 classification. The main landforms in this area comprise an area of inland dunes, but these are relic dunes that do not form part of the active frontal dune system near the beach. The vegetation is modified, comprising rough pasture, weed species, occasional sand coprosma, and stands of pines. It does not appear to have any particular ecological or botanical significance.

Coastal Environment Evaluation: Extent and Degree of Natural Character

³ In accordance with building covenants

⁴ Notified 26 August 2006

Extent

- 2.16. The site is within the coastal environment. The coastal environment has been mapped in the non-statutory Wairarapa Coastal Strategy, in essence extending to the dominant front ridge on the escarpment behind the coast. I agree with this delineation.
- 2.17. However the degree of coastal influence varies within the coastal environment. Along the beach and frontal dunes the coast is obviously dominant in terms of elements, patterns and processes. The escarpment is also important to the visual character of the coast. However the coastal influences diminish as one moves inland across the coastal plain to the vicinity of the site.⁵

Degree of Natural Character

- 2.18. The degree of natural character of the broader coastal environment is moderately-high. There are modifications of processes through farming, and a number of buildings associated with the homestead, baches, and existing settlement. However the natural landform and presence of the coast remain the dominant features. Within the footprint of the development area the natural character is moderate or moderate-low as a result of the presence of the immediately adjacent existing settlement, and artificial patterns of the pine plantations.

3 DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL

- 3.1. The proposal is a 42 lot coastal subdivision extending the existing 39 lot Flat Point settlement.
- 3.2. The development is illustrated on **Figure 1: Landscape Concept Plan** and has been designed around the following principles:
- The dune landforms will be retained as the organising features. The roads are aligned along the hollows between these dunes and building platforms arranged around the toe of them.
 - The dunes will be protected and a natural vegetation cover restored.
 - Development will be restricted to the identified building platforms.
 - The design and materials of houses will be controlled in the same manner as the previous 39 Lots

⁵ The area where most of the houses are proposed amongst the inland dune landforms would fall within a 'coastal influence' area in the model developed by the Ministry for the Environment and Boffa Miskell.

Layout

- 3.3. Building platforms were laid out individually on site in a manner so that dunes will remain the main organising feature. Platforms have also been laid out as far as possible to maintain views to the coast.
- 3.4. The central road is a continuation of Beach Road, although unlike Beach Road it will be a private access rather than a public road. It runs across the lower ground in front of the inland dune field, and then follows low points between the landforms. The formed road will be 5.5m wide. The two cul-de-sacs are similarly aligned along depressions between the dunes.

Site Development and Building Covenants

- 3.5. Covenants attached to titles will restrict building and earthworks to the identified 15m x 15m building platforms with 2m flexibility in any direction, except for access formation. Solid fencing will also be restricted to building platforms. The purpose of these controls is to maintain an open character and avoid lot boundaries being delineated by fencing or hedging
- 3.6. Covenants attached to titles will restrict aspects of building design as follows:
- Buildings will be restricted to 5m height above natural ground level except Lots 40, 79, 80 & 81 which are restricted to 3.5m
 - Building colour will be restricted to colours naturally found in the area.

Dune Protection

- 3.7. There are three rows of dune landforms within the subdivision. One comprises the highest dunes located on the boundary between Stages 1 & 2, and which is already covenanted as part of the earlier development. The higher parts of the remaining two dunes will be protected by covenant attached to relevant titles. Within these areas the following controls will apply:
- i) The perimeter of the dune covenant areas shall be identified with marker posts at the intersection of the covenant areas and lot boundaries. Fencing will not be permitted within dune covenant areas (In other words the dunes will retain an open character).
 - ii) Natural vegetation cover shall be maintained within the dune covenant area in accordance with a Dune Management Plan (DMP). The DMP will provide an overall strategy for long term management of this area. Initial phases of dune restoration will be carried out as a condition of consent. On-going management will

be linked to covenants recorded to titles. The remainder of the provisions will act as voluntary guidelines.

4 RELEVANT STATUTORY CONTEXT

- 4.1. The proposal is a non-complying activity⁶ under the Proposed Wairarapa Combined District Plan because the average minimum lot size would be less than 4ha -the standard for subdivision in the Rural (Primary Production) Zone under Rule 20.1.7.
- 4.2. The landscape assessment needs to take into account the following matters subject to the over-riding provisions of Part 2 of the RMA:
- i) Actual and potential effects (discussed below under heading 5).
 - ii) Relevant Plans, which include the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement, Wellington Regional Policy Statement, Carterton District Plan, and the Proposed Wairarapa Combined District Plan⁷ (discussed below under heading 6).
 - iii) Any other matters, including the Wairarapa Coastal Strategy (2004) and the associated guidelines 'Caring For Our Coast (2004)' (discussed below under heading 7).
- 4.3. In addition, because the application is non-complying the assessment needs to consider whether the proposal satisfies either of the two 'gate-way tests' set out in s104(1) of the RMA: Namely that any adverse effects are no more than minor, or that it is not contrary to the objectives and policies of the District Plan.

5 ACTUAL AND POTENTIAL EFFECTS

- 5.1. The main potential landscape and visual effects to be considered include the following:
- i) Effects on biophysical factors of landscape and natural character (natural landform, vegetation and ecology)
 - ii) Effects on perceptual factors (including effects on 'aesthetic coherence', rural character)
 - iii) Effects on associational factors (including cultural & heritage associations, recreational attributes)

⁶ It is a discretionary activity under the Operative Carterton District Plan

⁷ Notified 26 August 2006

- iv) Visual effects
- v) Cumulative effects in conjunction with the existing settlement

Effects on Biophysical Factors (Landforms, Vegetation, Ecology)

Landform

- 5.2. There will be modifications to landform in order to create roads, building platforms, site access and house curtilage areas. Such modification will have relatively minor significance given the existing values of the site and the following reasons:
- i) The inland dune landforms within the site have relatively modest intrinsic value.
 - ii) The subdivision design has been laid out around the landforms.
 - iii) Effects on these landforms will be controlled by covenants restricting development and earthworks in those areas.
 - iv) Earthworks within the rest of the site will be limited to the nominated building sites and to access. Given the relatively flat contour of the site the likely effect is self limiting.

Vegetation

- 5.3. There is no significant vegetation within the site itself. The proposed Dune Management Plan will go some way to restoring restore natural vegetation value on the inland dune landforms through restoration of a cover of native grasses and associated shrub species.

Ecology (Frontal Dunes and Foreshore)

- 5.4. As discussed above, there is a band of dunes behind the beach south of Te Unu Unu Stream in front of the subdivision area. In contrast to the inland dunes, these dunes are higher and steeper; are an active part of the natural beach processes; and have recognised ecological and botanical significance. The Department of Conservation native plant database lists several species that are either regionally or locally threatened that have been identified in these dunes, although to the south of the site. The proposed subdivision will not directly affect these frontal coastal dunes at all. Three-quarters of the frontage in the area of the subdivision has already been vested as a reserve 80m deep from MHWS as part of Flat Point Stage 1. The natural vegetation will be protected by way of covenant on the remaining 25% of the frontage to a depth of 80m from MWHS. The nearest building platforms are approximately 110m from MHWS.

- 5.5. Access to the beach will continue to be confined to pedestrian access at the end of Beach Road. It is noted that launching access for trailer boats is on the opposite (north) side of Flat Point by way of a track on the opposite side of Te Unu Unu Stream that remains in control of Flat Point Station. In other words the only vehicle access to the beach is not public but is controlled by the owners of Flat Point Station. It is envisaged that this access situation will continue as there is evidence over the past decade that this control of access has been beneficial in avoiding effects of access on the coastal dunes.

Effects on Perceptual Factors

- 5.6. The proposal will reduce the natural appearance of the area to a degree by increasing the number of domestic buildings and associated human activity. However it is considered the effects will be modest and the subdivision will be appropriate for the following reasons:
- i) The site is in a less sensitive part of the coastal environment: The coastal elements, patterns and processes diminish as one moves back from the coast to the vicinity of the subdivision site.
 - ii) The subdivision layout is organic in form in response the natural landforms, and includes measures to improve the natural vegetation cover of those landforms.
 - iii) The subdivision controls are designed to ensure buildings are visually unobtrusive as discussed above. In particular this includes controls that limit building height, limit building footprint to a relatively small platform, and in particular avoids the tendency for buildings to be elevated in order to obtain views. Rather houses will be nestled amongst the small scale landforms.
 - iv) There will be sense of unity or 'aesthetic cohesiveness' within the development as a result of integration with landform, and controls on landscaping and building materials and colour.
 - v) It will be seen as a logical extension of the existing Flat Point beach settlement. The layout of the new lots is compact. The subdivision shares its long dimension with the existing settlement, with its narrow dimension parallel to the coast. It therefore avoids sprawling or sporadic subdivision.
 - vi) Most views from the beach area will be screened by the active coastal dunes immediately behind the beach. (discussed under the heading 'visual effects' below).

Effects on Associational Factors

Cultural

- 5.7. It is understood that the area is ancestral lands of Ngai Tumapuhiaarang, Ngati Maahu and Ngati Te Kawekairangi hapu, who have been recognised as tangata whenua and kaitiaki, and that the Flat Point area has particular cultural significance. Appeals to the Environment Court and the High Court addressed these matters in relation to the resource consents for the existing Flat Point settlement. The Courts found that the consent recognised the relevant cultural matters within the purpose of sustainable management. The proposed Stage 2 subdivision is immediately adjacent to the existing settlement but is located further from Flat Point.

Archeological

- 5.8. There are no known archaeological or historical sites within the subdivision footprint. Refer to the archaeological report in the AEE.

Recreational Attributes

- 5.9. Flat Point will appeal to people interested in fishing and diving, and to those who wish to enjoy the remote, natural, and often wild coastal setting. The proposed subdivision will facilitate such recreation without detracting from the landscape attributes that make the area special. The settlement will have a low-key presence so that the beach itself and coastal waters retain a natural character. The control over access will contribute to maintenance of natural character along the beach. Walking access to the beach is restricted to the single existing walkway at the end of 'Beach Road'. Boat access is by way of controlled access across Flat Point Station to the sheltered water on the north side of Flat Point.

Visual Effects

Visibility and Viewing Audiences

- 5.10. The site will have relatively low visibility. It is enclosed to the south-west by shelter trees and low dunes; to the north-east by the existing subdivision. It has only a short frontage to Flat Point Road to the north-west; and frontal dunes reduce views from the beach. The main viewing audiences will be residents on adjoining properties to the south; residents of the existing Flat Point settlement to the north; and visitors to the beach at Flat Point.

Views from the Beach (South-East)

- 5.11. As discussed above, most views will be screened by the coastal dunes immediately behind the beach. Views will be obtained only from occasional gaps in the dunes, from the tops of the dunes, and places such as from the beach access track. From those

places where views do occur, the subdivision will appear set back from the coast as a middle-ground feature; it will appear low in scale, visually anchored, and seen against a backdrop of hills. The degree of visual effect can be readily anticipated by the low prominence of the existing settlement.

Views from Flat Point Road (North-West)

- 5.12. Flat Point Road runs along the coastal plain behind the inland dunes and behind the proposed site. The subdivision is orientated with its short axis to Flat Point Road so that it will occupy only approximately 215m of road frontage. In other words it will avoid 'ribbon' development common along coastal roads in other places. The development will be screened from approaching motorists by existing vegetation and low dune landforms. As one passes the site there will be brief views of the subdivision, specifically the northern part containing 9 houses,⁸ although even these views will be partly screened by the planting proposed adjacent to the road boundary. The subdivision will be seen in the context of the existing settlement immediately to the north (although separated by a covenanted dune).

Views from Existing Settlement (North-East)

- 5.13. The proposed subdivision will be located 'behind' the existing settlement in views from Beach Road, with the exception of the parking area at the end of the road.
- 5.14. The main visual amenity effects will be to those existing properties adjoining the south-western edge of the existing settlement. In other words properties sharing a common boundary with the proposed development. These comprise lots 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17. The building platforms on these properties are located so that they provide orientation and outlook in the opposite direction from the site, mostly to the east and north-east. However they do also have outlook across the site to the south-west. A rehabilitated dune will provide a buffer between the site and lots 11, 12 and 13, and also partially for Lot 14. The effects on the remaining three properties (Lots 14, 15, 16 & 17) could be effectively mitigated through boundary planting including restoration of the dune on Lot 51.
- 5.15. More houses will be visible from the parking area than is currently the case. However they will be seen as integral to the existing settlement. The design provides for an open covenanted area on the inland side of the parking area which will help retain its existing visual amenity.

⁸ Lots 57-65

Views from Properties to South-West

- 5.16. There is a dwelling on the neighbouring property approximately 20m west of the site boundary. This house is oriented towards the south in order to take advantages of views of the ocean. The owners of this property will be aware of the presence of new dwellings and activity on the adjacent land, but most views, including those from the dwelling itself, will be screened by the existing pines and proposed replacement native vegetation. The open views toward the coast will not be affected.
- 5.17. There are a small number of baches further west along the coast, at approximate distances of 200m-300m. These are oriented to views of the coast to the south. Views to the east toward the proposed subdivision will be mostly screened by the existing pines on the site, proposed additional planting, and dune landforms in the intervening landscape.

Cumulative Effects (in Conjunction with Existing Settlement)

- 5.18. The proposal will double the number of properties forming the existing Flat Point settlement. It is the second of what the owners' envisage as a two-stage development and makes no provision for future extension: The roads stop short of each of the property boundaries.
- 5.19. It is considered that adverse cumulative effects will be largely avoided for the following reasons:
- i) The subdivision is compact with relatively small lots clustered in response to landform. It has its long dimension with the boundary of the existing settlement, and its short dimension parallel to the coast.
 - ii) It will be integrated with the existing settlement: It follows the same design principles, will have similar character and qualities, and will share the same entrance and road. There will be 'aesthetic coherence' with the existing settlement.
 - iii) While it will increase activity near the natural focus of Flat Point, the subdivision will be 'behind' the existing settlement (in relation to Flat Point itself) and located far enough back from the coast that the natural character of the beach will be retained.
 - iv) For the above reasons it is neither sporadic nor sprawling⁹. It is in keeping with the policies of the proposed Wairarapa District Plan to consolidate development at existing coastal settlements, and to manage the expansion of existing coastal settlement to ensure the special qualities of each settlement are protected.

⁹ Policy 1.1.1 NZCPS

6 ASSESSMENT AGAINST POLICY STATEMENTS AND PLANS

- 6.1. This section of the assessment considers the proposed subdivision against those provisions of the Policy Statements and Plans considered most relevant to landscape matters, in terms of the over-riding provisions of Part 2 of the RMA.

Part 2 Resource Management Act.

- 6.2. Part 2 sets out the purpose and principles of the Resource Management Act. Section 5 states that the purpose of the act is to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources. Sustainable management is defined as the “ *managing the use, development and protection of natural and physical resources in a way, or a rate, which enables people and communities to provide for their social, economic, and cultural wellbeing and for their health and safety while-*

a) sustaining the potential of natural and physical resources (excluding natural minerals) to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations; and

b) safeguarding the life supporting capacity of air, water, soil, and ecosystems; and

c) avoiding, remedying, or mitigating any adverse effects of activities on the environment.”

- 6.3. Section 6 sets out matters of national importance which must be recognised and provided for. Those relevant to landscape matters in this application include the following:

- Section 6(a) requires the preservation of the natural character of the coastal environment (including the coastal marine area), wetlands, and lakes and rivers and their margins, and the protection of them from inappropriate subdivision, use, and development:
- Section 6(b) requires the protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes from inappropriate subdivision, use and development:
- Section 6(d) requires the maintenance and enhancement of public access to and along the coastal marine area, lakes and rivers.

- 6.4. Section 7 sets out other matters to which particular regard shall be had. Those relevant to landscape matters in this application include the following:

- Section 7(c) requires regard be had to the maintenance and enhancement of amenity values, which are defined in Section 2 of the RMA as *“those natural and physical qualities and characteristics of an area that contribute to people’s appreciation of its pleasantness, aesthetic coherence, and cultural and recreational attributes.”*
- Section 7 (f) requires regard be had to *“maintenance and enhancement of the quality of the environment”*.

Commentary

6.5. The proposal satisfies the purpose of sustainable management. It will enable people to provide for their wellbeing by enjoying the landscape and recreational attributes of Flat Point, while avoiding, remedying and mitigating potential adverse effects on the environment. It is in accordance with the other provisions of Part 2 relevant to landscape matters as follows:

- i) It will be appropriate development in the coastal environment because it is located where coastal influences diminish, and is designed to nestle amongst landforms in a way that natural character is maintained along the beach and coastal waters.
- ii) It will not affect any outstanding natural features or landscapes.
- iii) It will provide for a greater number of people to enjoy access to the coast at Flat Point, and access will be controlled in a way that protects natural values and recreational attributes of the coast.
- iv) It will achieve a high level of amenity, including ‘aesthetic coherence’.
- v) It will maintain the quality of the environment through the Dune Management Plan.

New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement

6.6. The New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement (NZCPS) states policies in order to achieve the purpose of the RMA in relation to the coastal environment. In addition to the over-riding provisions of Part 2 of the RMA, the NZCPS lists a set of 14 principles to which regard should be given. These include recognition that development may be appropriate in the coastal environment if it provides for the well-being of the community, is appropriately located, and avoids, remedies or mitigates adverse effects on natural character.

6.7. Of particular relevance is Policy 1.1.1:

Policy 1.1.1

It is a national priority to preserve the natural character of the coastal environment by:

(a) encouraging appropriate subdivision, use or development in areas where the natural character has already been compromised and avoiding sprawling or sporadic subdivision, use or development in the coastal environment;

(b) taking into account the potential effects of subdivision, use, or development on the values relating to the natural character of the coastal environment, both within and outside the immediate location; and

(c) avoiding cumulative adverse effects of subdivision, use and development in the coastal environment

Commentary

- 6.8. The proposal satisfies those provisions of the NZCPS relevant to landscape matters for the following reasons:

- vi) The subdivision will avoid sprawling or sporadic development because it is adjacent to and integrated with an existing settlement; it will have a compact clustered layout with its long dimension abutting the settlement and its narrow dimension parallel to the coast;

Wellington Regional Policy Statement

- 6.9. Provisions of the Wellington Regional Policy Statement relevant to landscape and visual matters are included in the following Chapters:

Chapter 7 The Coastal Environment

Chapter 9 Ecosystems

Chapter 10 Landscape and Heritage

Chapter 7.3: The Coastal Environment. Objective 1

“The natural character of the coastal environment is preserved through:

- 1) The protection of nationally and regionally significant area and values;”*
- 2) The protection of the integrity, functioning and resilience of the physical and ecological processes in the coastal environment;”*

Chapter 7.4: The Coastal Environment. Policy 1

“To give effect to the following matters when planning for and making decisions on subdivisions, use and development in the coastal environment:”

1) Protection, from all actual or potential adverse effects of areas of nationally or regionally significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats for indigenous fauna, including those listed in table 8;”

Chapter 7.4: The Coastal Environment. Policy 2

“To consider...the following matters when planning and making decisions about subdivision, use or development in coastal environment:

1) The degree to which the proposed activity will impose effects additional to those resulting from existing subdivision, use and development and the extent to which such cumulative adverse effects on natural character may be avoided, remedied or mitigated;”

5) The actual or potential adverse effects of subdivision, use or development on areas of cultural spiritual significance, heritage resources;”

Chapter 7.4: The Coastal Environment. Policy 3

“To restore and rehabilitate the natural character of the coastal environment where appropriate.”

Chapter 9.3: Ecosystems. Objective 1

“The overall quality of ecosystems in the Region is increased.”

Chapter 9.3: Ecosystems. Objective 2

“The area and quality of indigenous ecosystems in the region is increased.”

Chapter 9.3: Ecosystems. Objective 3

“Special ecosystems in the Region are actively protected and appropriately managed.”

Chapter 10.3: Landscape and Heritage. Objective 3

“The cultural heritage of the Region which is of regional significance is:

3) Conserved and sustained for present and future generations.”

Chapter 10.4: Landscape and Heritage. Policy 5

“To recognize...the heritage values of regionally significant cultural heritage resources...”

Commentary

6.10. In summary, issues relevant to landscape and coastal environment matters include the following

- Protecting outstanding natural features and landscapes
- Protecting heritage sites
- Maintaining access for recreational enjoyment.
- Avoiding sprawling and/or sporadic coastal development;
- Avoiding the cumulative adverse effects of coastal subdivision;
- Protecting nationally and regionally significant natural areas and values;
- Protecting the integrity of physical and ecological processes;
- Restoring and rehabilitating the natural character of the coastal environment;
- Managing subdivision so that adverse effects are avoided, remedied or mitigated;
- Promoting public access to the coast.

6.11. The proposal satisfies those provisions of the Wellington Regional Policy Statement relevant to landscape matters for the following reasons:

- vii) The subdivision is located on a site with no recognised landscape, ecological or heritage values.
- viii) Access will be maintained and enhanced, but in a controlled way that protects natural values of the coast
- ix) The compact and clustered layout anchored by the existing settlement avoids sprawling or sporadic subdivision
- x) Cumulative effects will not be significant for reasons set out above in paragraphs 5.19..
- xi) Biodiversity will be enhanced to a degree through restoration/rehabilitation of inland dune landforms.
- xii) Effects on sensitive environments along the coast and coastal dunes will be avoided through the existing controlled access.

Carterton District Plan

- 6.12. The site is within the Rural Zone of the Operative Carterton District Plan. Relevant provisions are included within the following sections:

Chapter 2 Rural Environment

Chapter 9 Subdivision and Development

Chapter 12 Heritage

Chapter 13 Natural Resources

- 6.13. The District Plan also identifies a Coastal Management Area extending 60m from Mean High Water Springs (MHWS), with policies to consider coastal hazards, and the effects on coastal amenity of development. Although the titles to be subdivided extend into this area it is proposed that an 80m wide reserve be created across the remainder of the frontage not already reserved. The footprint of the development itself is well inland with the nearest house some 200m from MHWS.¹⁰

Chapter 2: Rural Environment. Objective 2.3.1

“Maintain and enhance the character and amenity of the rural area.”

Chapter 2: Rural Environment. Policy 2.4.1

“Manage the density of development to deal with adverse effects on the open rural amenity”

Chapter 9: Subdivision and Development. Objective 9.2.1

“Ensure the act of subdivision and any development meet minimum environmental standards.”

Chapter 9: Subdivision and Development. Policy 9.3.4

“Ensure subdivision and development protects any identified heritage feature or natural environment feature as identified in Appendix 12A or 13A.”

Chapter 12: Heritage. Objective 12.2.1

“Recognition and protection of the values of heritage resources.”

Chapter 13: Natural Resource. Objective 13.2.1

“Recognition and protection of important natural areas and features”

¹⁰ The site is nevertheless considered to part of the coastal environment as discussed above in paragraphs 2.16 ff

Chapter 13: Natural Resource. Policy 13.3.2

“Ensure no subdivision, use or development of land compromises the values of natural areas and features identified in Appendix 13A.”

Chapter 13: Natural Resources. Policy 13.3.10

“Avoid the adverse effects of indigenous vegetation clearance.”

Commentary

6.14. In summary the issues relevant to the assessment include the following:

- Recognising and protecting important natural areas and features.
- Avoiding, remedying or mitigating adverse effects on natural environmental features and areas, the coastal environment, heritage features and areas of indigenous vegetation can be avoided, remedied or mitigated.
- Maintaining rural character and amenity.

6.15. The proposal is in accordance with those Objectives and Policies of the Operative Carterton District Plan relevant to landscape matters for the following reasons:

xiii) The subdivision site does not have any important natural areas or features.

xiv) In this instance the higher density cluster-type subdivision is preferable to a dispersed pattern of settlement. By avoiding sprawling development it better meets the purpose of sustainable management, and better remedies potential effects on natural character of the coastal environment and effects on rural amenity.

Proposed Wairarapa Combined District Plan

6.16. The site is within the Rural Zone (primary production) and the Coastal Environment Management Area overlay of the Proposed Combined Wairarapa District Plan. Objectives and policies relevant to landscape matters include the following:

Chapter 13.3.1: Coastal Environment. Objective CE1 – Natural Character

“To protect the natural character of the coastal environment by ensuring use, subdivision and development maintains the comparatively undeveloped nature of the Wairarapa Coast.”

Chapter 13.3.2: Coastal Environment. Policy CE1 – Natural Character

(b) Manage the design, location and scale of subdivision and development in the identified coastal environment to ensure the special qualities and natural character of the coast are retained

(d) Discourage subdivision, land use and development where it would contribute to cumulative adverse effects on the special qualities and natural character of the Wairarapa coast.

(e) Promote the consolidation of urban development at existing coastal settlements.

(f) Manage the expansion of existing coastal settlements to ensure the special qualities of each settlement are protected.

(k) Encourage and support innovative land uses and development that retains or enhances the special qualities of the coast

Chapter 10.3.1: Coastal Environment. Objective HH1 - Historic Heritage Values

“To recognize and protect the important heritage values of historic areas, sites, features and trees.”

Chapter 13.3.4: Coastal Environment. Objective CE1 - Coastal Settlement

“To provide for further development at coastal settlements in a manner that maintains the distinctive character and amenity values of each settlement.”

Chapter 18.3.1: Subdivision, Land development and Urban Growth.

Objective SLD - Effects of Subdivision and Land Development

“To ensure subdivision and land development maintains and enhances the character, amenity, natural and visual qualities of the Wairarapa.”

Chapter 19.3.1: General Amenity Values. Objective GAV1 - General Amenity Values

“To maintain and enhance those general amenity values which make Wairarapa a pleasant place in which to live and work, or visit.”

Chapter 9.3.1: Landscape. Objective Lan1 - Outstanding landscape and Natural Features

“To identify and protect the Wairarapa’s outstanding landscapes and natural features from the adverse effects of subdivision, use and development.”

Commentary

- 6.17. In summary, issues relevant to landscape and visual assessments include:
- Protecting rural character and amenity;
 - Enabling primary production;
 - Recognising and protecting important heritage values;
 - Protecting outstanding landscapes and natural features from adverse subdivision use and development;
 - Protecting, maintaining and enhancing indigenous biodiversity;
 - Protecting natural character of coastal environments;
 - Providing for further development at coastal settlements, whilst maintaining the distinct character and amenity of each settlement;
 - Promoting consolidation of urban development at existing coastal developments
 - Discouraging built development between roads and the foreshore where such roads are in close proximity to the foreshore, to protect the open coastal vistas
 - Encouraging innovative development that enhances the special qualities of the coast
- 6.18. The proposal is in accordance with these Objectives and Policies of the Proposed Plan relevant to landscape matters for the following reasons:
- xv) In this instance the higher density cluster-type subdivision is preferable to a dispersed pattern of settlement. By avoiding sprawling development it better meets the purpose of sustainable management, and better avoids potential effects on natural character of the coastal environment, effects on rural amenity, and primary production.
- xvi) The subdivision footprint does not have any landscape or ecological value of significance, or recognised heritage sites. The proposed Dune Management Plan will enhance biodiversity.

- xvii) The proposal would provide for further development at the existing coastal settlement in a way that would continue the same distinct character and amenity. It would be consolidating development at an existing settlement.
- xviii) Most of the lots are located on the inland side of the road. There are three lots on the seaward side of the road. However it is a private access rather than the road, and the three lots are located at the point where the road turns inland.
- xix) The proposal, as with the existing settlement, follows an innovative approach that ensures the settlement has an open, low key character; that houses nestle amongst the landform; and that the natural qualities of the coast are retained.

7 OTHER MATTERS

Wairarapa Coastal Strategy

- 7.1. The Wairarapa Coastal Strategy (2004) is a joint initiative of the Masterton, Carterton and South Wairarapa District Councils, Rangitane o Wairarapa, Ngati Kahungunu ki Wairarapa, and Greater Wellington Regional Council. While it is a non-statutory document, it has been written with existing legislation and policies in mind, and is referred to by the Proposed Combined Wairarapa District Plan.
- 7.2. The vision is *“To provide for sensitive, sustainable development and management of the Wairarapa Coast which recognizes and retains its special qualities”*. Relevant provisions are contained within the following sections:
- Land Use and Development
 - Heritage
 - Native ecosystems
 - Landscape and Natural Character
 - Hazards

Landscape and Natural Character (Page 29). Goal 3

“Natural character of the Wairarapa Coast is retained and enhanced.”

Landscape and Natural Character (Page 29). Goal 1

“Outstanding landscapes and areas of high natural character are retained.”

Landscape and Natural Character (Page 30). Policy 8

“Retain outstanding landscapes and areas of high natural character by avoiding development and activities that would degrade or destroy them.”

Native Ecosystems (Page 23). Goal 4

“The biodiversity of the Wairarapa Coast is retained.”

Native Ecosystems (Page 24). Policy 3

“Reduce the loss of native ecosystems and biodiversity by managing activities and threats that degrade or destroy them...”

Heritage Goal (Page 19). Goal 3

“Significant heritage of the Wairarapa Coast is retained for generations to come.”

Heritage (Page 20). Policy 6

“Ensure the protection of significant physical and cultural heritage of the Wairarapa Coast, and avoid subdivision, land use and development that would destroy or degrade significant heritage sites.”

Commentary

7.3. In summary, strategies relevant to landscape include:

- Retaining coastal qualities by adopting innovative and strategic approaches to subdivision, land use and development;
- Avoiding cumulative impact of development
- Protecting heritage sites;
- Retaining areas of outstanding natural landscape and high natural character.
- Protecting biodiversity

7.4. The proposal is in accordance with these provisions for the following reasons:

- i) The design is in keeping with the same innovative approach of the existing settlement designed to maintain natural character.
- ii) Cumulative impacts will be minimized for reasons set out above in paragraph 5.19

- iii) The site does not have any known heritage sites (refer to heritage section of AEE), it is not an outstanding natural landscape and it does not have a high natural character

Caring For Our Coast Guidelines

- 7.5. The Coastal Strategy refers to a guideline document '**Caring for Our Coast; A guide for coastal visitors, residents, and developers' (2004)**. This includes 'best practice' guidelines for design and layout of coastal development. The proposal closely follows the principles set out in the guidelines on pages 30 – 46. Specifically:
- i) An "holistic approach" has been taken to site selection, layout and design in a "design with nature" approach
 - ii) Environmental constraints have been identified so that the subdivision avoids sensitive areas landscape, natural character, ecological areas, natural hazards. Access to the coast will be by way of low impact walkway, and controlled vehicle access for boat launching.
 - iii) The layout follows a cluster-type approach, with clusters following landform in an organic manner. Specific house sites were laid out and fine-tuned on site, with intention of houses nestled within naturalistic landform.
 - iv) Controls will be implemented to control building size, height, colour, and fencing of properties so that houses will have a low impact on landscape.
 - v) Ecology will be enhanced by restoration of dune landforms. Effects on coastal dunes will be avoided by using existing beach access.

Summary of Assessment against Relevant Policy Statements and Plans and Other Matters

- 7.6. As discussed above, the proposal is non-complying because it does not meet the average minimum lot size of 4ha for the Rural (Primary Production) Zone set out in Rule 20.1.7 of the Proposed Wairarapa Combined District Plan.
- 7.7. However the small lot size and clustering approach (in conjunction with the other design measures) better satisfies the Objectives and Policies of the Proposed Wairarapa Combined Plan, along with those also of the Operative Carterton District Plan, Wellington Regional Policy Statement and New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement. It also follows closely the approach described in the 'Caring for our Coast' guidelines prepared to guide development on the Wairarapa Coast in a manner that meets the goals of the Wairarapa Coastal Strategy. And overall, the approach taken

better achieves the purpose of sustainable management, and the other provisions of Part 2 of the RMA.

8 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

- 8.1. The proposal will lead to a compact development that will be integrated with the existing Flat Point settlement, and designed to continue the same distinctive character.
- 8.2. Specifically the proposal is located near the natural focus of Flat Point but far enough inland to protect the natural character of the coast itself; it is designed around the natural landforms which will be protected and rehabilitated; the controls will ensure houses are nestled in the landforms and the subdivision as a whole will have an open, organic and low-key character.
- 8.3. The proposed subdivision is in accordance with those objectives and policies of the Operative Carterton District Plan and Proposed Wairarapa Combined District Plan relevant to landscape and natural character matters. While the proposal is non-complying because it does not meet the average minimum lot size of 4ha for the Rural (Primary Production) Zone in the Proposed Plan, the compact clustering approach (together with the other design measures) better meets the Objectives and Policies of the Proposed Plan.
- 8.4. It similarly satisfies the provisions of the other statutory documents, and achieves the purpose of sustainable management and the other relevant provisions of Part 2 of the RMA. The design also matches the principles described in 'Caring For Our Coast', a set of guidelines for subdivision in the coastal environment that are intended to assist implementation of the Coastal Strategy and the Proposed Wairarapa Combined District Plan.
- 8.5. In my view therefore it is an appropriate development.

Gavin Lister
Isthmus Group
7 August 2008



-  LOT NUMBERS
-  EXISTING PINE TREES TO REMAIN
-  EXISTING PINE TREES TO REMAIN IN INTERIM
-  DUNELAND PLANTING
-  SHRUBS ALONG FLAT POINT ROAD BOUNDARY
-  COASTAL GRASSES
-  FOREDUNES
-  PUBLIC BEACH ACCESS
-  NEIGHBOURING PROPERTY DWELLING & DRIVE