

# **HAURAKI GULF ISLANDS : DISTRICT PLAN REVIEW**

## ***EARTHWORKS PROVISIONS***

### ***SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT***

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## INTRODUCTION

Following preparation of the earlier report by Melean Absolum Limited, 'Hauraki Gulf Islands : District Plan Review *Earthworks provisions*' further consultation has been carried out with the Community Board on the earthworks provisions of the proposed Plan Change. As a consequence it has been decided to further relax the provisions by changes to the angle of slope of land on which 400m<sup>2</sup> of earthworks could be carried out as a permitted activity.

In the earlier report the provisions under consideration included allowing 50m<sup>2</sup> of earthworks as a permitted activity in Land Units 2, 3, 5-15, 17-25 on land with a slope of greater than 5%. 400m<sup>2</sup> of earthworks would be permitted as of right in Land Units 2, 3, 5-15, 17-25 on land with a slope of 5% or less. Earthworks in excess of these standards would be provided for as a restricted discretionary activity which would be dealt with on a non-notified basis.

It is now proposed that the second of these two controls be relaxed so that the slope of land on which 400m<sup>2</sup> of earthworks may be carried out as a permitted activity increases from 5% (1:20) to 16.6% (1:6), except in Land Units 1, 2 and 4 where all earthworks require a consent.

As noted in the earlier report, two of the roles of the earthworks provisions are assisting in the:

- protection of natural character in the coastal area;
- protection of broader landscape values by controlling changes to landform.

This brief supplementary report addresses the landscape and visual implications of the proposed change to the earthworks provisions, in terms of these two roles.

## IMPLICATIONS

The most obvious consequence of allowing earthworks as of right on steeper slopes is that larger areas of the Gulf Islands will fall within the slope category where this can happen. Having said this, it is worth considering where these areas might be.

On Waiheke Island the landform generally consists of fairly steep coastal cliffs with indented bays and headlands, backed by broad rolling ridges. The flatter areas where the relaxed controls are likely to see an extension to permitted earthworks are thus likely to be relatively close to bays on the more gently sloping land to the rear of the bay and not around the steeper headlands.

It is also likely to occur on the tops and upper slopes of the broad ridges. Many of these ridges are designated as significant ridgelines within the District Plan but the ridgeline protection provisions control buildings in these locations, rather than earthworks. It is thus possible that earthworks on the flatter upper slopes of ridges could occur as a permitted activity, and in such a way that the landform is significantly modified. This could undermine the ridgeline protection provisions which aim to keep these sensitive highly visible landforms intact.

The sorts of instances where this might occur are with such developments as access driveways to ridge-top buildings where cuts and batters may be seen silhouetted against the skyline. There may well be adverse landscape and visual effects arising from such a proposition.

On Great Barrier Island the landform is rather different with much steeper ridges predominating. The coast also has small indented bays with steep headlands and cliffs but there are also long, flat beach areas, particularly on the east coast, with associated flat land and wetlands. Although the flatter areas where the relaxed controls are likely to see an extension to permitted earthworks are unlikely to be found in rugged inland areas, they may well extend across coastal flats, particularly on the eastern side of the island. In some of these areas Land Units 2 and 4, sand dunes and wetlands, may prevent earthworks without a consent.

There may however be areas where neither Land Unit 2 or 4 provides any protection against earthworks. These areas are, however, unlikely to be either highly visible or very close to the coast. As a consequence, it seems less likely that there would be adverse landscape or visual effects on either landforms or the natural character of the coastal environment associated with earthworks.

## CONCLUSIONS

Without detailed information on the extent and location of areas of the Hauraki Gulf Islands which are between 1: 20 (the earlier maximum slope) and 1:6 (the proposed maximum slope) it is impossible to make more than a generalised assessment of the implications of the proposed change to the earthworks controls.

The most likely adverse effects of the relaxation of the earthworks controls seems most likely to occur on the upper slopes of ridges on Waiheke Island and on the edges of the coastal flats on Great Barrier Island. These effects are obviously generalised and earthworks on individual sites may well result in landscape and visual effects not anticipated here.

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