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Opuia Marina PDP Hearing Urban Design Assessment

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CONFIDENTIAL





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1. Introduction

WSP has been engaged by Far North Holdings Limited (FNHL) to prepare an Urban Design Report (UDR) to assess the relevant urban design related aspects of submission #320 by FNHL to the Proposed Far North District Plan (PDP). This report should be read in conjunction with the Landscape Assessment Report (LAR) also prepared by WSP. The UDR has been written to assist the LAR with all urban design related matters that could affect the Natural Character and Visual Effects of what has been proposed in submission #320.

Submission #320 spans across four sites; Opuia Marina Development Area (OMDA), Marine Business Park (MBP), Opuia Commercial Estate (OCE) and Colenso Triangle (CT). (combined **The Proposed Sites**)

The Sites have been illustrated in Figure 1. The Assessment will be included in the FNHL submission to the Proposed Far North District Plan Change (PDP) and will be addressed in Hearing 4: Natural Environment Values & Coastal Environment. In the context of the PDP, the location of The Proposed Sites and Hearing 4, the Assessment will be primarily focused on Natural Character and the Coastal Environment.



Figure 1: Proposed Development Sites (FNHL submission #320 appendix 1, page 73)

In the context of the PDP, FNHL is proposing that all of The Proposed Sites are rezoned from their proposed zoning to Mixed Use Zone. This will allow for The Bay of Islands Marina / Marine Park / Commercial Estate Masterplan (**The Masterplan**) developed in October 2022 to be implemented.

To inform this assessment, the Opuia Masterplan drawings dated 31/10/2022, have been referred to (**Appendix 1**).

2. Context

The Sites as referred to in Figure 1: are all located near or within the township Opua, which is situated at the mouth of the Kawakawa River, along the East Coast of Northland, within the Bay of Islands. State Highway 11 is the main connecting road that connect Opua with Kawakawa to the South and Paihia to the North. The Opua Marina, which is located on the eastern fringe of the township, is a main entry point for visitors to the Bay of Islands over sea. The Opua Wharf is also located within the Marina area harbouring the Opua-Okiato Vehicle Ferry, connecting Opua directly with Okiato.

As can be seen from the urban design analyses map in figure 2 below and Appendix 2 attached to this report the urban fabric shows a relative fine grain predominately defined by single to two storey detached dwellings. Opua has one primary school and 3 mixed use/ commercial areas in close proximity to the town of which two of those are within the site extends. One being Opua Commercial estate and the other the Opua Marina

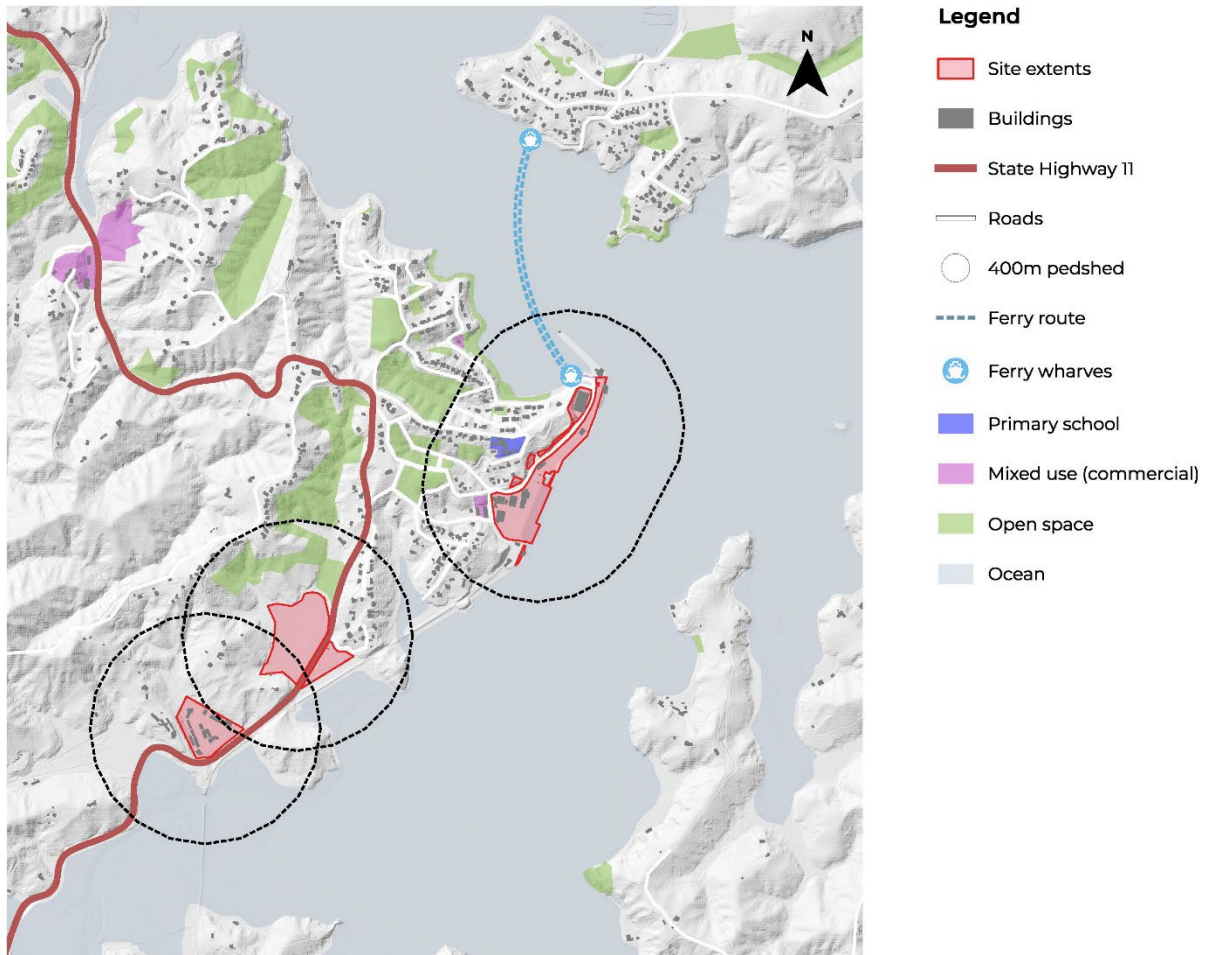


Figure 2: Wider contextual analyses Opua and surrounds

Building size and footprints in the residential zones are generally under 300m² , but become significantly larger within the Marina and Commercial Estate areas as can be seen in Figure 3 below.

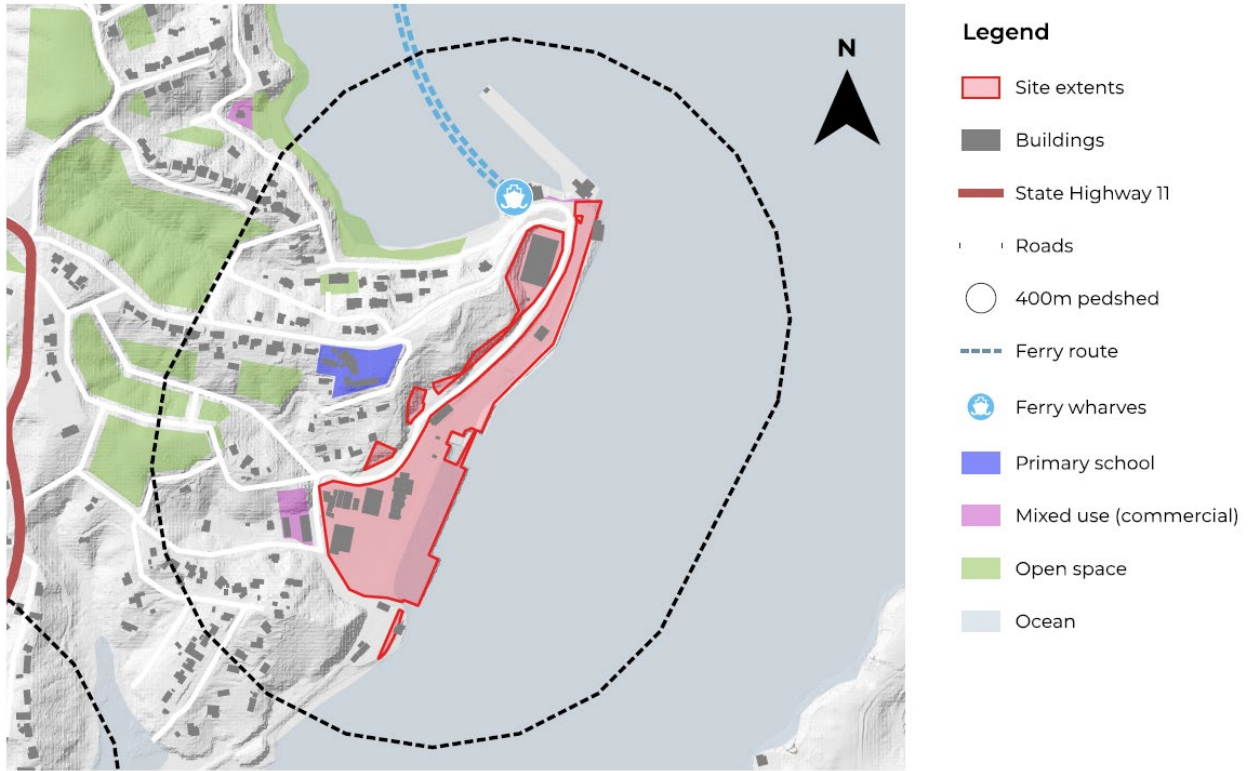


Figure 3: Contextual analyses map Opua Marina and surrounds.

Although Opua and Okiato are the main areas of settlement within the wider coastal environment surrounding Opua further settlement of the coastal area is also occurring. This can be seen from the various buildings, mostly large detached dwellings, scattered around the wider coastal area, as can be seen on figure 2 above.

3. Background to the Masterplan:

Opua Marina and the other 3 sites are all located within the popular visitor triangle of Paihia, Waitangi and Russell and it holds untapped potential to evolve into a vibrant, mixed-use hub that complements the region's existing attractions.

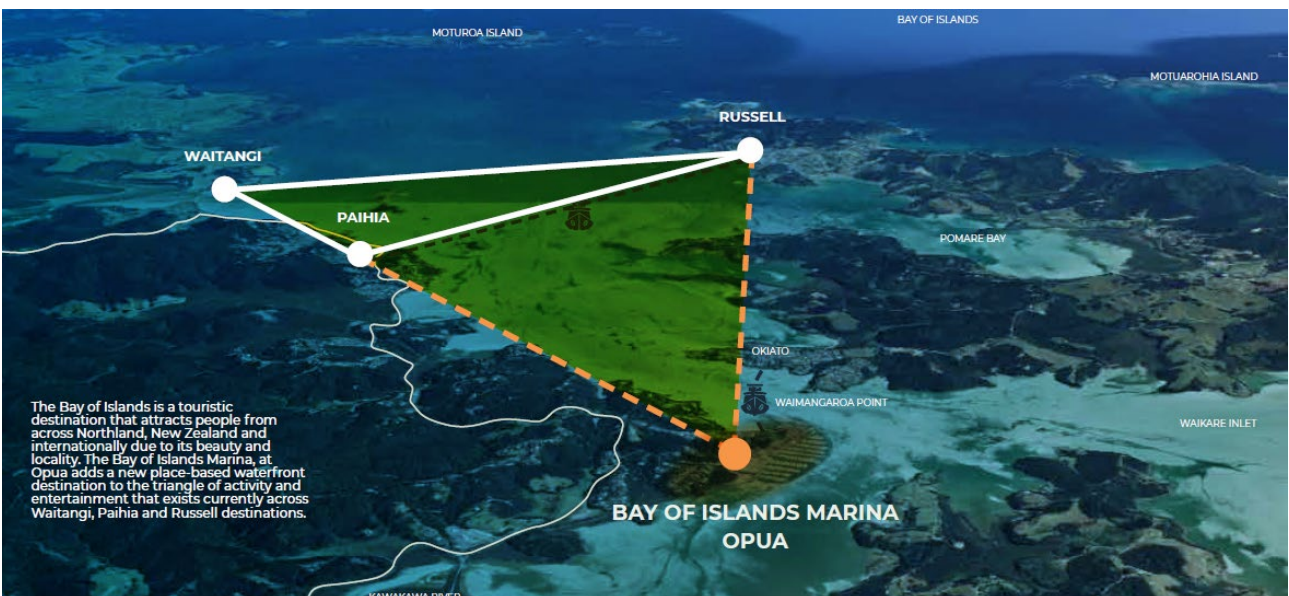


Figure 4: Destination Bay of Island (FNHL submission #320 appendix 1, page 73)

There is a desire and a great opportunity to transform Opua Marina Development Area into a dynamic, mixed-use environment that blends place-based waterfront design with residential, retail and community spaces.

To achieve this vision, the Marine Business Park, Opua Commercial Estate and Colenso Triangle sites are also required to be developed. This to accommodate the existing and potential future marine services that would not fully align with the Marina vision but would still be desired and needed from a commercial and community benefit perspective.

ODMA could foster a diverse community while enhancing the existing maritime character through residential and commercial offerings. This proposed shift in land use aligns with the Proposed Regional Plan for Northland (**PRP**) which has land at ODMA designated as a mixture of Marina Zone and Coastal Commercial Zone.

The PDP however shows a significantly more restrictive land use and built-form direction. It proposes to zone the Marina area as light industrial only, with further restriction from the Coastal environment overlay.

For the Opua Marina Masterplan to be successful, FNHL are seeking the following amendments/relief to the PDP:

- To change all of the Landholdings from their respective operative and proposed zoning in Table 1 to a Mixed Use Zone, including retaining Opua Commercial Estate as a Mixed Use Zone.
- A Bay of Islands Marina Development Area overlay that applies to the Bay of Islands Marina Landholdings;
- To retain the Maritime Exemption Area of the Operative District Plan as currently mapped in relation to the Bay of Islands Marina;
- To promote changes / deletions / additions to those provisions found in **Attachment 1 and 2** of **Appendix B**.

4. Method (4 scenarios)

In order to assess the Urban Design related affect of the amendments and reliefs sought through submission #320 by FNHL, the building envelopes of 3 scenarios have been modelled. These building envelopes show the volume of maximum building heights restricted by recession planes and setbacks. Site coverage has been taken into account as well.

The following scenarios have been modelled:

1. Building envelope of the Operative District Plan.
2. Building envelope of the Proposed District Plan including the Coastal Environment overlay.
3. Building envelope resulting from the proposed changes in submission #320 by FNHL

A fourth scenario (Scenario 4) has been incorporated and described based on appendix 1 of submission #320 by FNHL. This Scenario however has not been modelled as the intention of the submission is to allow for the masterplan to eventuate in a comprehensive way. This scenario has been included to further explain the intentions of FNHL and to address the urban design related effects and highlight further built form controls that might be needed to achieve the outcomes sought by the Masterplan.

This Urban Design report does not address the landscape visual impact aspects of these scenarios but rather compares the Urban Design aspects of the 4 scenarios. The Landscape report by Ms Hamilton addresses the visual impact aspects of submission #320.

4.1 Scenario 1 Operative District Plan

The 4 sites shown in Figure 1 have various district plan zoning and overlay aspects, the most important ones being:

- For the OMDA: Recreation Activities Zone, Industrial Zone, Commercial Zone and the Coastal Residential Zone.
- For the CT: General Coastal Zone
- For the MBP: Coastal Living Zone
- For the OCE: Commercial Zone

The predominate building height allowed in the Opua Marina area is 12m for the Industrial Zone and 10 meters for the commercial zone. Both the recreation and Coastal residential have a height limit of 8 meters.

4.2 Scenario 2 Proposed District Plan

The PDP proposes to change the zoning and thus the built form standards of the 4 sites. There is however a complexity regarding two matters, the Coastal Environment overlay and the setback requirements from the MHWS. Both matters affect the possible built form permitted on the 4 sites. Where the Coastal environment overlay would have a significant impact on building heights and size, reducing it to a maximum of 5 meters. The Setback requirement from the MHWS significantly affects development potential within the OMDA.

On Monday 8 July the Far North District Council provided a response to all submitters in their Section 42a report, shifting their views on what would be appropriate within the Coastal Environment overlay. The key change in approach is the recognition of the existing areas of urban development that have already compromised the natural character values of this part of the coastline. The Opua coastal settlement is one of those areas. Taking an Urban Design view on this approach I would consider the extend of the settlement or 'urban' area of Opua to include the OCE and consequently the two other sites as well.

The PDP results in the following build form outcomes for the 4 sites:

- For the OMDA: Industrial is changed to Light Industrial, increasing setbacks from boundaries to 3m and introducing a 10% site permeability requirement. Coastal Residential becomes General Residential which affects the height in relation to boundaries rules. Commercial is rezoned to Mixed use which increases the height limit from 10m to 12m. However it introduces a 3 meter setback to other zones and changes the height in relation to boundary rules. There is no longer a Recreation Activities Zone and the sites with that zone are now changed to either General Residential or Light Industrial.

The biggest change for the OMDA are the Coastal Environment overlay and the setback requirement from the MHWS. The Coastal Environment overlay basically sits across all the land of the OMDA and would reduce the height limit to 5 meters. However as mentioned above Council has reconsidered and the built form standards of the underlying zones will be used for sites within the Opua Settlement. The setback from the MHWS however still remains and significantly constrains any development at the coastal edge of the OMDA.

- For the CT the zoning is being changed from General Coastal to Rural Production. Key changes are: increase in height limit from 8 meters to 12 meters; the allowance for a residential unit changes from 1 house per 20ha of land to 1 house per 40ha of land; A setback of 30 meters from the MHWS; the land is affected by the coastal environment overlay for a large portion of the site reducing the height limit to 5 meters.

- For the MBP the zoning is changed from Coastal Living to Rural Lifestyle. Key changes are: 1 house per 4ha of land. However, when considering the CT as part of the Opuia Settlement this would revert back to the standards of the underlying zone to 1 house per 2ha of land; small changes to the height relation to boundary rules; site coverage from 10% with a maximum of 600m² to 12.5% with a maximum of 2500m². Setbacks have changed from 30 meters from waterways to 30 meters from the MHWS. A very small portion of the site is affected by the Coastal Environment overlay reducing the size of buildings and height limit within that area. However, when considering the MBP as part of the Opuia Settlement this would revert back to the standards of the underlying zone.
- For the OCE the zoning is being changed from the Commercial Zone to the Mixed use zone, which effectively increases the height limit from 10m to 12m. However it introduces a 3 meter setback to zones other than Mixed use and Industrial and it changes the height in relation to boundary rules. The Coastal Environment overlay also affects a good portion of the site reducing the size of buildings and height limit within that area. However, when considering the OCE as part of the Opuia Settlement this would revert back to the standards of the underlying zone.

4.3 Scenario 3 FNHL submission

The submission of FNHL seeks changes to the rules as suggested within the PDP that affect the feasibility to realise the vision identified in the Opuia Marina Masterplan. The key changes sought from a built form perspective are to change the height limit suggested in the Coastal Environment overlay to match the underlying zoning, to have all the land in the 4 sites zoned as Mixed Use, to have a 16 m height limit in the OMDA and a 12 m height limit for the rest of the site, overall to increase the maximum GFA to 800m² and to remove the large setback requirements from the MHWS.

This would result in the following:

- For the OMDA the overall height limit would now be 16m across the whole area. However the height in relation to boundary and setback from zones other than Mixed Use / Industrial remain the same as suggested in the PDP. No setback requirements from the MHWS by using the Maritime Exemption Overlay.
- For the CT, the MBP and the OCE the submission seeks to rezone to Mixed Use with a height limit of 12 meters. Height in relation to boundary and setback from zones other than Mixed Use / Industrial remain the same as suggested in the PDP.

4.4 Scenario 4 the Opuia Marina Masterplan

As highlighted above the intention of the Masterplan is to turn the Opuia Marina Development Area into a dynamic, place-based mixed-use environment.

This scenario shows the intention of the Opuia Marina Masterplan and describes the actual proposed built form needed to achieve this. The masterplan proposes the following for the 4 sites:

- For the OMDA the masterplan suggest a fine grain mix of buildings ranging between 1 - 5/6 levels. As can be seen in figure 5, the proposed building heights map, below the intention is to have predominately 1-2 storey buildings at the shore front with the taller 3 storey building sitting behind. To accommodate feasible apartment living above ground floor there are 3 appartement blocks with a height ranging from 13-18m proposed sitting nested within the hill topography.

PROPOSED BUILDING HEIGHT AREA PLAN - MIXED-USE ZONING



Figure 5: Proposed building heights (FNHL submission #320 appendix 1, page 87)

- The intention of the CT is to compliment the sites involved as it promotes a consented development opportunity for a new railway terminus and associated activities for the BOI Vintage Railway Trust and to accommodate a landing facility for marine farming and barging activities, covered under existing resource consents.¹
- The MBP and the OCE are intended to offer commercial premises ranging between 200-1000m² in size filling a market gap and encouraging further economic growth to further diversify employment offering away from solely tourism positions. Typical commercial building heights will be between 5-12m.

¹ FNHL submission #320 appendix 1 page 77 Role of Colenso Triangle

5. Urban Design assessment

Above each scenario has been described and the assessment below provides an Urban Design appraisal of these scenarios. Allowing for a clear comparison in Urban Design related effects.

5.1 Scenario 1

For the existing commercial and Industrial zones the ODP allows for a substantial amount of development with buildings of respectively height of 10 meters for commercial and 12 meters for Industrial being a permitted activity. For the landholding within the Marina this would mean that buildings with a height of 12 meters could be build up to the shorefront. From an urban design perspective there is a risk that the built form this would allow could be quite dominant and overbearing, if not designed well. This is particularly the case when viewed from the shorefront.

Most of the existing buildings within the Marina are 2-3 storeys in height, showing mostly gable roofs (with the exception of one or two warehouses). Most of the buildings have large footprints between 300-1000m² with the majority being larger than 500m² at ground floor. These large buildings are generally broken up to a degree with some modulation and the roof shape, but given the industrial nature of the area this is not to a degree that provides a good sense of human scale. This with the exception of the weather board clad buildings of the Opuia General Store building, the Old Store building and the boat house. Which do provide a good sense of human scale.

The Opuia Commercial Estate currently shows a predominance of 2 storey commercial buildings with footprints varying between 300-1000m². Most of the building stock is dated and could use some renewal. As a permitted activity there could be an increase of taller buildings up to a height of 10 meters (roughly 3 storeys).

The key factor to keep in mind with these Industrial and commercial areas is that they generally do not show any other activities than commercial. Which means that even though they will be active during daytime. At night-time these would mostly be empty and inactive, without residential or hospitality adding activity.

The CT is currently predominately used as a storage yard for old marine equipment and materials. However the General Coastal zoning would allow for a single dwelling to be built to a height of 8 meters.

The MBP is currently an area of land used for agricultural purposes, mostly grassland. The Coastal Living zone would allow for a single dwelling/ building to be built of a size of 600m² with a height of 8 meters.

From an urban design perspective the CT and the MBP are not urban and would not generate a lot of activity.

5.2 Scenario 2

As described above the PDP shows quite a significant change to what is currently permitted within the OMDA in the ODP. Even though Councils response to all submissions give direction to allow for the built form standards of the zones underlying the coastal environment overlay to be leading. The setback requirement of 26 meters from the MHWS still has a significant effect on development potential of the OMDA. It basically adds a significant restriction to development on the shore-front when compared to the ODP.

The key benefit this provides is that it takes away the risk of having buildings right at the coastal edge that could be dominating or feel overbearing. However it also reduces the opportunities for an active well-functioning Marina.

Regarding the OCE the most restriction to development is derived from the Coastal Overlay. From an urban design perspective, I consider that OCE is part of the Opua Settlement, as are the CT and the MBP. As such the underlying zone of Mixed use would become leading. This would result in an increase in development capacity regarding building height. Basically going from 10 meters to 12 meters.

It is unlikely that all development will be built to the 12 meter height limit, so as a result I would consider the built form outcomes of the PDP compared to the ODP to be very similar.

The CT within the new planning regulation of Rural Production can have a single house with a maximum building height of 12 meters, to a size of 12.5% of the site. This equates to a maximum building size of roughly 1100m².

The MBP area of land is proposed to be rezoned to Rural Lifestyle which would ultimately allow for two houses of 2500m² building size on the site with a height limit of 8 meters.

Both these areas of land are not used in an actual urban capacity even though as mentioned before would sit within the wider Opua settlement area. Although the more rural type of zoning proposed in my way is not incongruous with the current patterns of Development the Mixed use zoning of the OCE more or less bookends the edge of the Opua settlement and as such there would be opportunity for more intensive use of this land.

5.3 Scenario 3

This scenario proposes to rezone all the land in ownership of FNHL to mixed use, increase the height limit within the OMDA to 16 meters but still work within the proposed height in relation to boundary rules of the PDP. It also proposes to exempt the OMDA of the setback requirements to the MHWS as a result the OMDA would have similar built form outcomes to the ODP, but with an increased height limit, going from 12 meters to 16 meters. An additional 4 meters to the overall allowed building height is substantial and does have the potential to become overbearing.

Looking at the general road reserve width of Baffin Street it is mostly well under 20 meters and closer to 17 meters. This means that the potential height to width ratio almost becomes 1:1, which is quite urban and given the nature of large format buildings being placed in this area this could become overbearing.

When considering the change in height limit from the shore edge and the Marina Piers the difference will be even more prevalent.

However as discussed in the Landscape Report by Ms Hamilton when looking at the Marina from further away from the water, the difference between 12 meters and 16 meters is not as substantial any more as it still sits well below the more dominant shape and form of the hill topography that sits behind the Marina.

I'm of the view that from an urban design perspective that the OCE is part of the wider Opua settlement area. As such when considering the shift in view from Council expert Melean Absolum regarding the coastal environment overlay within the Opua Settlement area the FNHL submission would result in the same built form outcome as is currently proposed by Council. Which is appropriate in my view.

For the CT and the MBP the change in zoning would result in a significant increase in development potential, even though the height limit is not proposed to go to 16 meters, but 12 meters. From an urban design perspective I have already stated that I consider the CT and MBP site to be part of the Opua settlement area and as such an urban character would be appropriate. The proposed change in environment to these sites is significant although not inappropriate in my view. However these sites are embedded within a landscape setting that is still very valuable. As such I would consider it important that, if these sites are rezoned to Mixed use, that there is sufficient control to ensure these new buildings are sensitive to their environment and integrate well into the wider setting.

5.4 Scenario 4

FNHL have created a vision for a place-based waterfront. A destination with a world-class marina harbouring a mixed-use micro community.

When looking at the urban design rational diagrams below it is clear that the masterplan is taking a comprehensive approach to the wider masterplan development of the Marina. Combining a ribbon of fine-grain built form with the occasional landmark building, but in particular at the marina front. Ensuring there is a good connective network of movement for both vehicle movement and pedestrians and a promenade at the waterfront. A good level of amenity is achieved with a series of connected high-quality open spaces throughout the development.

For the masterplan to be successful it is important to have the right balance of the needed density compared to a built form that is sensitive to its location at the waterfront. When looking at the height map of figure 5 above it shows there is a clear intention to take a transect approach with the taller buildings being nested within the topographical backdrop and to have smaller fine-grain buildings framing the waterfront.

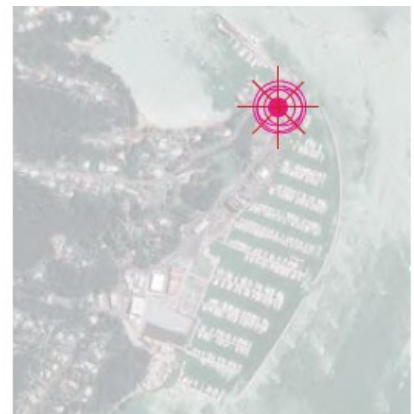
The masterplan is clearly showing a mixed use approach to the marina. Which will create an environment that has more activity throughout the day, including in the evenings. By introducing a significant amount of residential and travellers accommodation in key locations it this increase in activity will create a much safer environment, with more 'eyes on the street'.



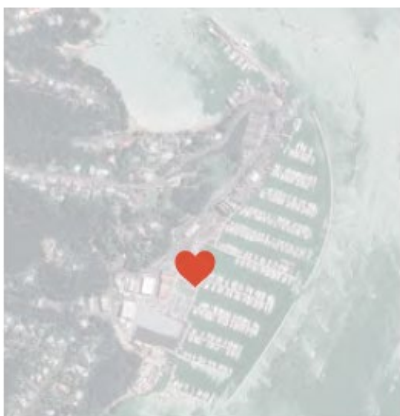
Water + Landscape Interface + Connection



Ribbon of fine-grain built form framing the waterfront



Celebration of Gateway Entry to the Bay of Islands Marina



Community Heart of the Marina



A series of quality green spaces + public realm



Connected movement networks

Figure 6: Urban Design Rational (FNHL submission #320 appendix 1, page 82)

6. Conclusion

Conclusion

The Operative District Plan allows for a significant amount of development to occur within the Opuia Marina Development Area, albeit with an Industrial land use. This significant amount of development is currently not strongly controlled with further standards to ensure a good urban design outcome. In short very large buildings with blank facades can be built relatively easily.

The Proposed District Plan puts a significant amount of constraint on the development potential of the OMDA with the setback requirement from de MHWS. In addition the rezoning that is proposed is predominately Light Industrial and will not provide the opportunity of a vibrant mixed use environment.

Although I agree developments should be sensitive towards the waterfront I do not believe this validates retaining a 26 meter setback from the MHWS.

If considered safe from a natural hazards perspective, a mixed use environment at the marina will create a much safer, more pleasant environment that will be of significantly more benefit to the wider community diversifying the local economy.

Submission #320 by FNHL seeks to have an increase in height to 16 meters within the OMDA and to rezone the CT and the MBP to mixed in a similar way to the OCE, with a height limit of 12m.

Although having buildings with a height of 12 meters or even higher within the Marina area is not necessarily problematic from an urban design perspective and could even provide a better sense of enclosure and legibility if located on key locations for wayfinding purposes, a blanket approach of 12 meters as currently active in the ODP or 16 meters as is proposed in the FNHL submission, would in my view risk a poor urban design outcome, without any other built form controls.

Regarding the CT and MBP sites I consider a rezoning to a more urban / commercial land-use is appropriate as it sits within the urban context of the Opuia settlement. However I do believe more refined controls to the built form are needed and street interface. This to ensure the developments will sensitive to the wider landscape setting and achieve a good level of amenity.

Scenario 4, the Opuia Marina Masterplan in my view clearly shows the intentions of FNHL behind submission #320. It shows a comprehensively designed masterplan that is sensitive to its surrounding natural and urban environment while introducing a significant amount of development and a variety of different land-use activities.

In order to achieve the outcomes sought in the masterplan I would consider the proposed building height of 16 meters would be appropriate for the sites sitting behind Baffin Street.

Realistically the height of buildings in this location could even become slightly higher if needed from a feasibility perspective, as long as they sit well within the landscape backdrop.

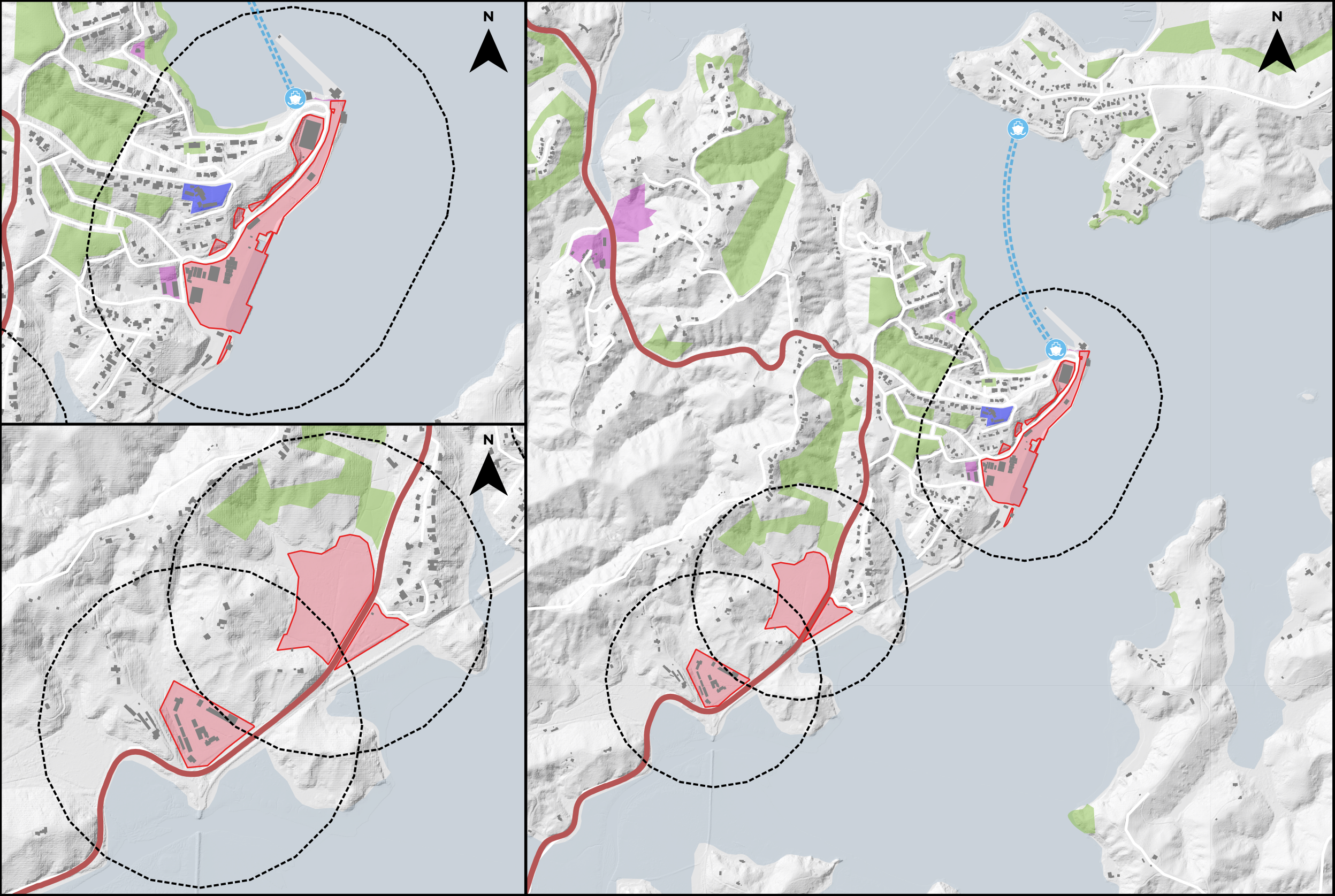
However the frontage towards the waterfront and along the intended boulevards/ promenade needs to be of a much smaller scale and finer grain even though the occasional higher building could provide some visual interest and assist with wayfinding and legibility. (as shown in the masterplan). To ensure these outcomes are met I consider further built form controls are needed. This could be achieved through a design guide that sits within the statutory framework and through more specific built form controls. Examples could be: a maximum building width at the waterfront, refining where additional height is appropriate and requiring a certain amount of glazing and building articulation throughout the development.

Appendix 1: Bay of Islands Marina Masterplan as shown in submission #320

Appendix 2: Urban Design Analyses

Opua Marina Masterplan

Urban Design Analysis Map



Legend

- Site extents
- Buildings
- State Highway 11
- Roads
- 400m pedshed
- Ferry route
- Ferry wharves
- Primary school
- Mixed use (commercial)
- Open space
- Ocean

0 0.1 0.2 0.3 0.4 0.5 km

LH maps scale 1: 10000 metres at A3

0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 km

RH map scale 1: 15000 metres at A3

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