



11. As noted, 'decision-makers' in a statutory planning context means the Environment Court, boards of inquiry, council commissioners, and certain council officers with delegated authority. However, the principle of assisting decision-makers applies by extension to assisting everyone else involved in the statutory planning processes.

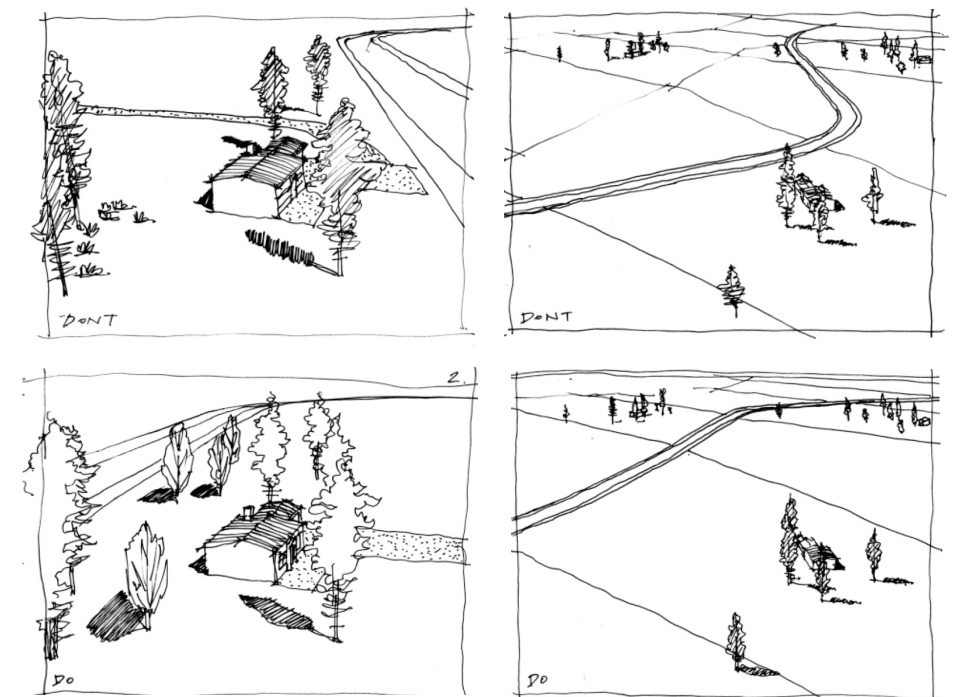
12. Environment Court of New Zealand, Expert Witnesses, Code of Conduct, Environment Court Practice Note, 2014, Section 7.2. <http://environmentcourt.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Publications/2014-ENVC-practice-notes.pdf>

13. Only a small proportion of landscape assessors (typically the most experienced) provide evidence to Council hearings or the Environment Court. However, these Guidelines take the position that the principles outlined here apply to everyone working on assessment projects.

14. Expert evidence is your own expert opinion justified with reasons. You cannot present an assessment you don't agree with. Don't let others put words in your mouth. Apply the same principle to all professional landscape assessments.

## Roles and responsibilities

- 2.01 A landscape assessor's role in a statutory planning context is, ultimately, to assist decision-makers<sup>11</sup> to manage landscape values: for instance, by identifying a landscape's values (and the attributes on which those values depend), assessing effects on such values, and designing measures to maintain and improve the values. To fulfil this role, an assessor needs to:
- be informed and skilled on landscape matters
  - be impartial and balanced
  - be clear and succinct
  - focus on relevant matters
  - use an appropriate methodology and method
  - provide reasons.
- 2.02 Such an approach is consistent with the Environment Court's 'Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses'<sup>12</sup> which states that witnesses have an "overriding duty to assist the Court impartially on relevant matters within the expert's field of expertise". While that Code is for the Environment Court, extending its principles to all landscape assessors and all phases of an assessment process will assist everyone involved in statutory planning processes.<sup>13</sup>
- 2.03 Landscape assessors have a role as experts within such processes. While opinion—which is essential to landscape assessment—is generally inadmissible as evidence, the Evidence Act provides an exception for expert opinion.<sup>14</sup> It is a privileged role that we should cherish and safeguard.



Above: Steamfield Design Protocols  
Tauhara II, Geothermal Power Station,  
Taupō. Isthmus Group  
Sketch: Nada Stanish

15. On the contrary, tāngata whenua, for example, have a deep understanding of their rohe, and residents are likely to have an intimate understanding of their surroundings and the amenity values they enjoy.

16. Landscape architects and pūkenga do sometimes become involved in projects where they have an interest in the outcome and are therefore not impartial. That is normal. But in those instances, make clear that you are a party to the proceedings (applicant or submitter) rather than in the role of an independent expert. See for example 'Upper Clutha Environmental Society (Application to Strike out Evidence)' [2019] NZEnvC 46. That decision discusses the role of an expert from paragraphs 8–44. It states the principle that a person can give lay evidence on behalf of a group, or expert evidence, but not both. Refer especially to paragraphs 17–18. See also 'Gibbston Vines' [2019] NZEnvC 115, paragraph 146.

17. Lay experts can provide opinion on what they personally experience and observe. Independent professional experts have wider scope to draw findings and expert opinion based on their specialised knowledge and experience. Expert opinion, though, is more than mere opinion. It needs to be properly informed, and be based on transparency, reason, and analysis.

18. While submitters and lawyers may advocate for or against a proposal, impartiality is one of the key planks of an independent expert.

19. It is important to also be transparent with clients so that they understand your professional opinions and the reasons behind them. For proposal-driven projects, for example, it often requires that you make an early decision on your professional support (or not). Explain your reasons, outline the likely findings of the assessment you are to carry out, and any mitigation or design changes necessary to ensure your support. Being up-front as soon as possible is in everyone's interests. Professional duty may also entail alerting clients to matters that are outside your area of expertise, and the need to engage other experts.

2.04 The term 'expert' in this context refers to a role and responsibilities rather than a claim to exclusive knowledge.<sup>15</sup> For instance, independent professional experts have a different and complementary role from that of submitters<sup>16</sup> and lay experts.<sup>17</sup> Each role is essential to the statutory planning process. These Guidelines focus on the role of the independent professional expert.

2.05 Pūkenga are experts on tāngata whenua mātauranga (knowledge, wisdom). Tāngata whenua perspectives of landscape are typically held and expressed collectively by iwi/hapū/whānau, rather than individually, and are based on relationships, values (both tangible and intangible), and wisdom accumulated over generations through being in and with a place. It is normal for such mātauranga to be vested in pūkenga (learned individuals). These people are tāngata whenua experts in matters relating to whenua.

2.06 The standing of experts (including landscape architects and pūkenga) rests on:

- impartiality
- specialised knowledge or skill derived from training, study, or experience.

### Be impartial

2.07 The following conduct helps maintain impartiality:

- Be measured—avoid exaggeration.
- Be open and balanced—acknowledge points that may not support your client's interests—explain the pros and cons considered in reaching your professional opinion.
- Be consistent.
- Be as objective as possible, given that landscape necessarily entails subjectivity. That is, be unbiased (not an advocate<sup>18</sup>) and rational. Acknowledge matters that might influence your subjective interpretation. Ensure that your interpretation is consistent with an objective analysis of the environment (such as current scientific knowledge and landscape attributes that can be measured).

2.08 The overriding duty to decision-makers does not replace duties we also have to our clients<sup>19</sup> and 'the landscape' through our professional ethics—for instance, as set out in the Tuia Pito Ora/NZILA Code of Conduct<sup>20</sup> and draft Landscape Charter.<sup>21</sup> It does not replace duties of pūkenga to iwi/hapū/whānau or to Te Ao Māori values such as whakapapa and tikanga. Those things remain a foundation of practice. But, in this professional role, we have an additional overriding duty to assist decision-makers in an impartial manner.<sup>22</sup>

20. Tuia Pito Ora /New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects, Articles of Constitution, July 2020, page 28.

21. Tuia Pito Ora/New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects, The Aotearoa-New Zealand Landscape Charter (draft), updated version for AGM, March 2010.

22. Fortunately, professional ethics with respect to the landscape are consistent with the purpose and principles of the resource management legislation. There should be no inherent conflict in adhering to both professional ethics and duties to decision-makers.

23. When preparing landscape evidence for complex cases, the lawyer coordinating the evidence may explain their 'theory of the case' which will identify the matters they see as relevant. Attention to this key document is one way of helping ensure that the evidence is coherent and tailored to the issues.

24. Refer to paragraph 2.29 on how "other matters" are considered within the statutory planning framework.

25. Landscape assessments are generally either proposal-driven or policy-driven. Proposal-driven assessments include assessments of landscape and visual effects for resource consent applications and notices of requirement. Policy-driven assessments are those carried out to inform policy relating to the landscape values, such as identifying and managing the landscape values of an area (area-based assessments) or to address certain issues (issue-based assessments).

### Be relevant

2.09 Focus landscape assessment on the relevant issues for the decision-maker.<sup>23</sup> Such issues typically arise from the intersection of: i) the landscape (its character, values, and context); ii) the purpose of the assessment (e.g. the potential landscape effects); and iii) the statutory planning framework (which can include "other matters"<sup>24</sup> such as iwi/hapū environmental management plans, heritage charters, design guidelines). The issues are particular to each project. They may be quite narrow (e.g. assessment against certain criteria for restricted discretionary activities) or broad. It pays to think about and list the issues to help focus your assessment. It may help to conceptualise issues diagrammatically, as shown below.

2.10 By way of further explanation, Section 25 of the Evidence Act (referred to above at paragraph 2.03) says that expert opinion evidence can be admissible "if the fact-finder is likely to obtain substantial help from the opinion in understanding other evidence..." Evidence that does not offer substantial help is not only undesirable but is in fact inadmissible. Likewise, the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses states that such witnesses "have an overriding duty to assist the Court impartially on relevant matters within the expert's field of expertise". Relevant matters may be more obvious with assessments of landscape and visual effects, where the proposal and scope are defined, than with assessments carried out for policy purposes where the scope may be more open-ended and future activities not yet defined.<sup>25</sup> But in each instance, a pro-active approach is needed to sift what is relevant from what is not.

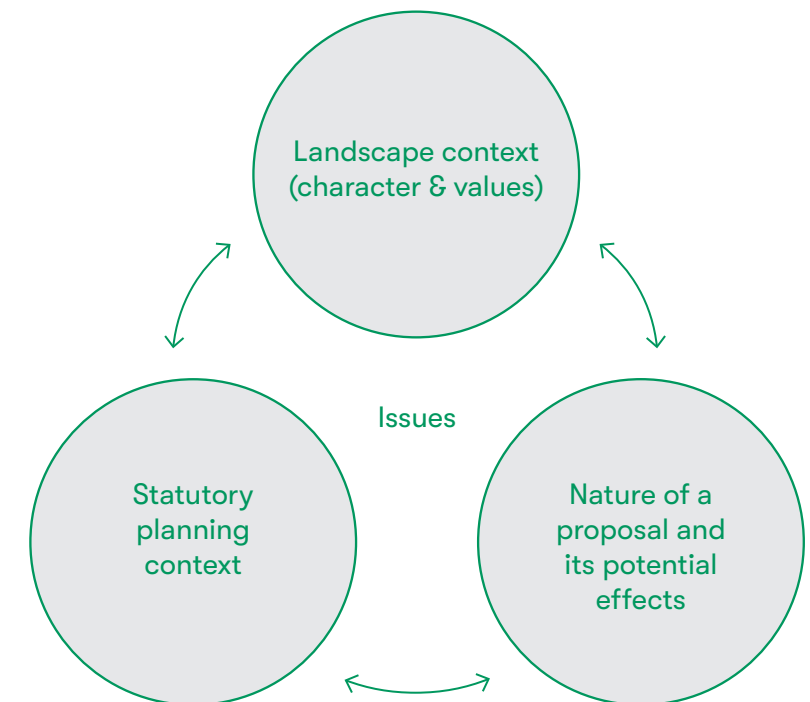


Figure 2. Identifying issues by triangulating the landscape context, the statutory planning provisions, and the potential effects of a proposal.



26. Instances where concern was expressed that landscape evidence was too long and unfocused includes, for example, 'Kennedy Point Marina' [2018] NZEnvC 81, paragraph 20, and 'Mill Creek Wind Farm' [2011] NZEnvC 232, paragraphs 138–139.

27. Environment Court of New Zealand, Practice Note 2014, Appendix 3, Protocol for Expert Witness Conferences.

28. Concern over "superficial conferencing" is expressed, for example, in 'Mill Creek Wind Farm' [2011] NZEnvC 232, paragraph 140. "The expert conferencing process provided an opportunity to cut through the extensive material and to present a clear outline of the matters we needed to decide with the differences in opinion between the landscape witnesses. However, the joint witness statement was superficial. It did not logically set out or work through the issues that were in front of us." In contrast, support for constructive conferencing and a focused approach is expressed in 'Transmission Gully' [2012] Final Report and Decision of the Board of Inquiry into the Transmission Gully Proposal, paragraphs 801–802. "...It is apparent from the witness conferencing statement that the witnesses agreed on many aspects of the landscape issues...Their briefs were comprehensive and focussed on relevant issues. The witnesses had clearly proceeded with their discussions in an objective fashion as required by the Board's instructions to expert witnesses...".

2.11 There may be a perceived tension between relevance and thoroughness. While an assessment process should be thorough, a report (or evidence) should present organised information selected for its relevance. Put background and detail (for example tabulated analysis) into appendices.

2.12 Specifically, a proposal-driven assessment of effects should be proportionate to the proposal's scale and potential effects consistent with the principle in RMA Schedule 4 (2)(3)(c). An assessment for a small project with incidental effects should be brief, whereas that for a large project with potentially significant effects should be detailed and comprehensive.

#### **Be clear and succinct**

2.13 Being clear is essential to fulfilling our professional role:

- Be succinct and to the point.
- Use straightforward language—avoid needless jargon.
- Be precise with key terms—define them where it helps clarity.

2.14 Every sentence in an assessment should be relevant, just as every line in a design drawing has a purpose.<sup>26</sup>

#### **Provide reasons**

2.15 Explain assessments in a reasoned way. The nature of landscape means that assessors need to explain how they have integrated and interpreted many tangible and intangible factors in a way that is specific to context. It is the reasons that give a professional assessment weight.

2.16 It is useful to remember that decisions in a statutory planning context are written and reasoned. Assessments that use clear language and provide reasons are more likely to contribute effectively to such decision-making.

#### **Explain in the context of others' assessments**

2.17 Where assessments are carried out by different landscape assessors (e.g. where different landscape architects are involved on complex resource consent applications) it is important to explain why you agree with, or differ from, others. The Courts have previously expressed frustration in attempting to compare different landscape assessments. Your explanations in this respect will help decision-makers evaluate different perspectives. For example:

- Align your assessment structure with that of others where it might assist in understanding the substance of different assessments. For instance, adopt common terminology, scales, viewpoints, headings etc. where it might help. Provide reasons if you consider it necessary to differ.

- Highlight points of agreement and difference. Explain the reasons for the differences. Such differences may arise, for instance, through different methods, different interpretation of the area's character and values, and use of a different spatial context. There may be a need to explain how an assessment from a Te Ao Māori perspective, for example, agrees with or differs from assessments carried out from a Western perspective.
- Be constructive in discussions with others (including participation in "Expert Witness Conferences")<sup>27</sup> to narrow the points of difference and to clarify the reasons for any remaining differences.<sup>28</sup> Do not dwell on trivial differences that are unlikely to assist decision-makers.
- Focus on the substance. Do not criticise others personally. Focus on the subject in a professional manner.





—Deborah Tall (1993).  
‘From Where We Stand:  
Recovering a Sense of Place’

‘I read the landscape to help me through, to  
know what’s come before me there, to find my  
footing in time’

29. Unless you also happen to be qualified and experienced in ecology.

30. There is no final and definitive list of principles of the Treaty of Waitangi. The principles have evolved, and will continue to evolve as the Treaty is applied to particular issues and new situations. They are derived from the articles and spirit of the Treaty, interpreted through law, court cases, government statement, and the Waitangi Tribunal. The following websites are useful resources: ‘<https://teara.govt.nz/en/principles-of-the-treaty-of-waitangia-matapon-o-te-tiriti/page-1>; <https://waitangitribunal.govt.nz/treaty-of-waitangi/principles-of-the-treaty/>”

### Field of expertise

- 2.18 Assisting others on relevant matters within our field of expertise means:
- being informed and skilled in landscape matters, and
  - focusing on our field of expertise (interpreting and integrating landscape matters)

### Focus on our field of expertise

- 2.19 Landscape expertise entails interpreting an area’s physical, associative, and perceptual dimensions as a landscape. It includes drawing knowledge from other disciplines (such as geomorphology, ecology, cultural information, history etc.) and weaving it into a landscape perspective. Landscape architecture is an integrative discipline. A landscape assessor’s expertise is not in those disciplines on which they draw but in the interpretation of knowledge from such disciplines. Specifically, landscape expertise requires integration of different types of knowledge. The requirement to assist others within our field of expertise does not mean restricting our sources of knowledge. On the contrary, our field of expertise is to integrate such knowledge and interpret it as landscape.

- 2.20 For example, it is outside the expertise of a landscape assessor to assess ecological effects.<sup>29</sup> Nor is it our role to simply report on ecological findings or those of any other discipline: landscape is more than a catalogue of other disciplines. Rather, our role is to draw on properly referenced information to help build an understanding of landscape as landscape. Integration is most evident where connections are made with each of a landscape’s physical, associative, and perceptual dimensions (see also paragraph 4.21).

### Be Informed and skilled

- 2.21 Being informed and skilled in landscape assessment requires general knowledge and the ability to access specialist knowledge across diverse fields. It can mean identifying gaps in specialist knowledge and alerting clients to such gaps where necessary.
- 2.22 Specifically, being informed and skilled in landscape assessment within Aotearoa includes awareness of Te Ao Māori and having regard to relevant tāngata whenua matters. Such matters are integral to Aotearoa’s landscapes. Having regard to such matters arises from being part of a nation with a bi-cultural foundation through the Treaty of Waitangi. Principles of the Treaty of Waitangi relevant in a landscape context include:
- iwi/hapū/whānau self-autonomy (mana motuhake)
  - partnership
  - meaningful engagement and participation
  - active protection of Māori interests.<sup>30</sup>



31. See, for example, 'Dominion Valley Road [2020] NZEnvC 024, paragraph 90–91; 'Port Gore' [2012] NZEnvC 072 paragraph 214; 'Schofield' (2012) NZEnvC 68, paragraphs 51–54; 'Blueskin Energy' [2017] NZEnvC 150/17, paragraph 158.

32. Refer to paragraph 2.29 on how "other matters", which include non-statutory documents, are considered in a statutory planning framework.

33. Landscape assessors tend to assimilate an understanding of the range of views on landscape matters in the community through such things as experience on previous projects, meetings with stakeholders, submissions on proposals, and being 'tuned in' to published material on landscape matters. Sometimes formal research (surveys, focus groups, drop-in centres) can also provide more targeted insight.

34. Briefly, the sections of the RMA to which landscape assessors will most commonly refer include: Part 2 (s5–8) which sets out the purpose and principles of the Act, matters of national importance, other matters to which particular regard is to be had, and Treaty of Waitangi; Schedule 4 (6) & (7) which sets out the information required in an assessment of environmental effects and matters to be considered; and s104 which sets out the matters decision-makers are to have regard to when considering resource consent applications. Other sections to which landscape assessors may refer include s127 which addresses variations to conditions of a consent and s166–176 which relate to notices of requirement for such things as network infrastructure. Section 2 defines terms including 'environment' and 'amenity values', and s3 lists generic types of effect. However, other sections of the RMA are also relevant to landscape assessment in a variety of circumstances. The Ministry for the Environment publishes a useful everyday guide to the RMA. <https://www.mfe.govt.nz/rma/processes-and-how-get-involved/everyday-guide-rma>.

35. National policy statements (NPS) currently comprise: New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement (NZCPS), NPS on Urban Development, NPS for Freshwater Management, NPS for Renewable Energy Generation,

### Role of landscape assessor with respect to community

- 2.23 Landscapes are not the sole preserve of landscape assessors. On the contrary, everyone experiences landscapes and has heart-felt views about them. People and communities have input to the management of landscapes through: i) submissions on policy (such as district plans and non-statutory documents), and ii) submissions on specific proposals (such as resource consent applications and notices of requirement). Decision-makers will have regard to such views alongside expert evidence and the relevant statutory provisions (and "other matters").<sup>31</sup>
- 32 The professional landscape assessor's role in this context is to assist decision-makers by:
- providing an objective account of relevant landscape facts against which to test others' opinions
  - providing an unbiased and independent expert opinion against which the range of community views might be compared
  - assessing landscape matters in the context of the relevant provisions
  - analysing, interpreting, and explaining landscape matters that other participants may lack the training to articulate.
- 2.24 The role of an independent landscape assessor is therefore different from, but complementary to, that of communities and individual submitters. A landscape assessor should remain aware of the range of opinions and perceptions of landscape matters in the community and draw on available sources of information.<sup>33</sup> The purpose of such knowledge, though, is to help maintain the balance and insight of an impartial and independent professional assessment. The role is not to simply repeat others' opinions. That would have no value to decision-makers. It would not be fulfilling our role.
- 2.25 To fulfil the role in a complementary way, a landscape assessment should enable comparison between the expert assessment and the community's views. Use straightforward language, a transparent method, and explain findings with clear reasons.

### Statutory provisions (and "other matters")

- 2.26 Landscape assessors should be familiar with the statutory provisions relevant to each landscape assessment.
- 2.27 Much (not all) landscape assessment work will be carried out under the RMA.<sup>34</sup> The purpose and principles set out in Part 2 of the RMA are the top of a hierarchy of statutory provisions which include national policy statements,<sup>35</sup> regional policy statements, regional plans, and district plans (or unitary plans when the latter are combined). The lower order documents give effect to the higher order documents. Lower order documents, such as the district plan, are therefore often the first point of reference in framing an assessment.

and NPS on Electricity Transmission. There are also national environmental standards (NES) for: air quality; sources of drinking water; telecommunication facilities; electricity transmission activities; plantation forestry; freshwater, marine aquaculture, and assessing and managing contaminants to soil to protect human health.

36. The National Parks Act does not refer explicitly to 'landscape' but does so indirectly by referring to "areas of New Zealand that contain scenery of such distinctive quality, ecological systems, or natural features so beautiful, unique, or scientifically important..."

37. Use 'case law' in a colloquial sense only. It is a common term but is not strictly accurate. Previous decisions of the Environment Court in most instances do not in fact establish law. While the Environment Court is bound by decisions of the higher courts on points of law, it is not bound to follow determinations of previous Environment Court decisions. However, previous decisions do provide guidance to the Courts' thinking on certain landscape concepts and principles—typically derived from the Courts' findings on landscape evidence. Frame your assessments with an awareness of such matters but, if you need to refer to 'case law' in evidence, refer to it along such lines as 'an approach supported in previous decisions'. Leave legal discussion on such matters to lawyers.

38. Tuia Pito Ora/NZILA, 'Case Law' Review, December 2020. The review is drawn largely from the Environment Court but includes some relevant decisions from Boards of Inquiry, the High Court, Court of Appeal, and Supreme Court. The review is tabulated with excerpts from the decisions and a synopsis of the relevant landscape principles. Each entry is tagged to topics that correspond to the structure of these Guidelines. All case references in these Guidelines can be found in that document.

39. Some organisations provide guidelines for certain project types. Waka Kotahi/NZ Transport Agency and Auckland Council, for example, publish useful guidelines. Maintain a critical awareness though, and do not just accept a guideline as a template.

- 2.28 The principles of landscape assessment set out in these Guidelines also apply to landscape assessments carried out under other statutes. Statutes that contain provisions relating to landscape include:
- Conservation Act
  - Reserves Act
  - Crown Pastoral Land Act
  - Queen Elizabeth the Second National Trust Act
  - Biosecurity Act.
  - National Parks Act.<sup>36</sup>
- 2.29 "Other matters"—as provided for by RMA s 104(1)(c) and s 171(1)(d)—are those that a decision-maker considers relevant and reasonably necessary to determine an application. They may include non-statutory documents that express the community's vision and direction for the environment such as long-term council community plans (LTCCP), iwi and hapū resource management plans, guidelines—such as the Auckland Design Manual—masterplans, conservation plans, catchment management plans, and 'sense of place' studies.

### 'Case law'

- 2.30 Landscape assessors should also remain informed on landscape assessment concepts, principles, and terms that have gained authority through decisions of the courts and boards of inquiry (colloquially referred to as 'case law').<sup>37</sup> A review of relevant decisions, with extracts and commentary, has been prepared as a separate background document.<sup>38</sup>
- 2.31 'Case law' on landscape matters often originates from professional evidence and will continue to evolve. It is our profession's responsibility to continue to refine and develop concepts and principles that fall within our expertise. Likewise, court hearings will continue to provide a valuable forum in which to test such matters and accrue guidance from decisions. Be open to adapting the way you work in response to such decisions.

### Appropriate methodology and method

#### Tailor method to issues—landscape context, assessment purpose, planning framework

- 2.32 The first task of a landscape assessment is to affirm a methodology and to design (or tailor) a method<sup>39</sup> in response to the relevant issues. The issues are particular to each project. As discussed in paragraph 2.09, they typically arise from the intersection of the context landscape, the purpose of the assessment (such as the potential effects of a proposal), and the planning framework.



- 2.33 Methodology is the high-level system that includes concepts, philosophies, principles, terminology, and general investigative approaches. These Guidelines represent a methodology.
- 2.34 Methods, on the other hand, are procedures for specific projects to suit the context, purpose, planning framework, and resource management issues. Designing an appropriate method can be visualised as follows:<sup>40</sup>
- State the purpose—the matters to be assessed.
  - Identify the concepts, principles, terminology, and general approaches associated with the matters to be assessed.
  - Consider the factors, metrics, descriptors and criteria that may be relevant to the matters being assessed (for instance, the factors and metrics that might influence rural character).
  - Select (or tailor) the appropriate method for the assessment. This is likely to entail both desk-top research and field work to investigate and interpret the things listed above.
  - Revise the method in an iterative way if other factors, metrics, criteria etc., emerge while carrying out the assessment and warrant assessment.
  - Structure the report to best explain the findings in terms of the purpose of the assessment.

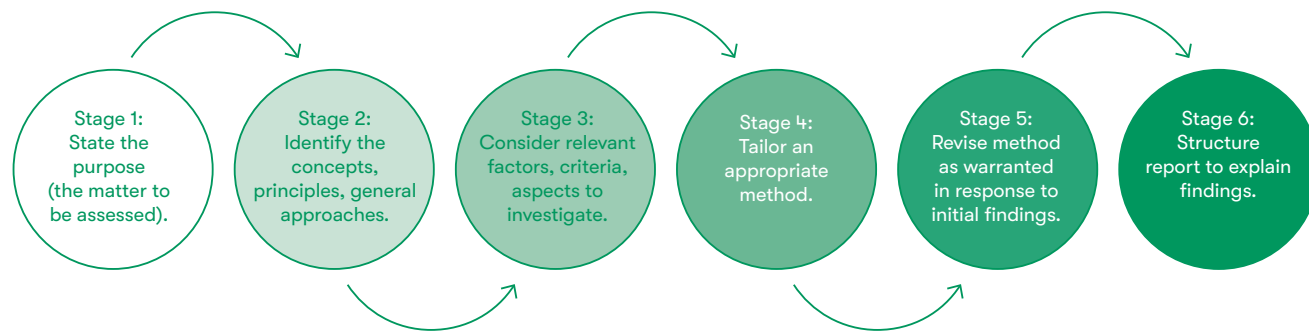


Figure 3: Generalised flow chart for design of a method for landscape assessments. Adapted from Dr Mike Steven, 2021.

- 2.35 Designing a method involves a logical sequence in which each stage should be consistent with the preceding stages. For example, the landscape aspects or criteria identified for consideration at stage 3 should be consistent with how landscape is defined at stage 2, and relevant to the purpose of the assessment set out at stage 1. The method at stage 4 will be tailored in response to the first three stages, with critical awareness maintained so that the method can be refined in response to initial findings at stage 5. The report structure at stage 6 will then reflect the preceding stages. The integrity of the whole method goes to the validity of the assessment.

Nothing can be achieved without a plan, a workforce and a way of doing things

**Tē tōia, tē haumatia**



4.1. 'Unison Networks'. NZEnvC C11 2009, paragraph 96

4.2. The approach outlined in these Guidelines is in keeping with trends in international practice. See Tuia Pito Ora, Review of Other Guidelines, op cit, from paragraph 4.1. The main historical approaches are: i) visual resource management approaches, focusing on generic visual parameters and formulaic methods, and ii) landscape character (place-based) approaches, focusing on specific character and values. Internationally, practice has moved towards the latter approach, illustrated by the European Landscape Convention. Aotearoa practice has similarly moved towards the latter approach, in keeping with leading international practice, and has evolved a specific flavour reflecting our own natural and cultural context.

- 2.36 Rigid and prescriptive assessment methods (such as rigid criteria and prescriptive techniques) are unsuited to landscapes for the following reasons:
- Assessing landscapes requires integrating: i) different types of objective and subjective information, and ii) information relating to both the land and people.
  - Landscape values arise from the interaction of a landscape's dimensions rather than the sum of them (see paragraph 4.27).
  - Landscape values depend on context—landscapes are valued for different types of reason in different situations.
  - Assessments are also carried out for different purposes in the context of different statutory planning provisions.
- 2.37 Professional judgement and interpretation are therefore necessary. The relevant factors, their weight, how they integrate, and how they are interpreted, will all vary with context.

*...it is important to avoid settling upon a mere formulaic framework that could simply be 'fed through' in a computerised fashion. Ultimately each case must be considered in the light of dependable and recognised pointers or guiding criteria to assist the making of an overall appraisal and judgement, without the risk of professional landscape architects failing to see the wood for the trees.<sup>41</sup>*

- 2.38 These Guidelines, therefore, emphasise a reasoned approach—based on transparency and explanation—rather than prescriptive or standardised methods.<sup>42</sup>

#### **Explain methodology and method**

- 2.39 Include a methodology statement as part of a landscape assessment to assist decision-makers interpret the assessment and weigh competing assessments. Such statements might reference these Guidelines with respect to the overall methodology and then outline the specific method tailored to the situation. A brief statement (one or two paragraphs) may be enough for a simple project—more detail is warranted for complex projects.
- 2.40 As discussed at paragraph 1.09, avoiding prescriptive methods places greater onus on landscape assessors to understand their methodology and explain it clearly.
- 2.41 Maintain critical oversight while carrying out an assessment and challenge your own findings. Do not be so wedded to a method as to overlook the obvious. Test findings for credibility and plausibility. Methods are tools to understanding the landscape—they are not the point of the assessment. Methods are not landscape.

—Rebecca Solnit (2001).  
'Wanderlust:  
A History of Walking'

'It had come to me not in a sudden epiphany but with a gradual sureness, a sense of meaning like a sense of place. When you give yourself to places, they give you yourself back; the more one comes to know them the more one seeds them with the invisible crop of memories and associations that will be waiting for you when you come back, while new places offer up new thoughts, new possibilities. Exploring the world is one of the best ways of exploring the mind, and walking travels both terrains.'

—Robert McFarlane  
(2012) 'Landscape and  
the Human Heart'

'One of the ecosystem services the environment gives us is metaphor—landscape gives us ways of figuring ourselves to ourselves ...everyone thinks to some degree in landscape and with landscape...all have been shaped by places, by phenomena experienced and recollected... paths connect real locations, but also lead inward to the self...our verb 'to learn' has a root meaning to follow a path...'



Pursue excellence—should  
you bow your head, let it  
be before a lofty mountain

## Whāia e koe te iti kahurangi— ki te tūohu koe, me he maunga teitei









If handed down by  
the ancestors,  
it would be correct

## Kia heke iho ra i ngā tūpuna, kātahi ka tika

## Whakarāpopototanga

### Summary

The ultimate reason for assessing landscapes is to manage landscape values. More precisely, in a statutory planning context the purpose is to assist decision-makers (and by extension others) to that end.

A landscape assessor should therefore:

- be informed and skilled on landscape matters
- be impartial and balanced
- be clear and succinct
- focus on relevant matters
- use an appropriate methodology and methods.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, being informed on landscape matters includes awareness of Te Ao Māori and having regard to tāngata whenua matters. Such matters are integral to Aotearoa's landscapes.

The methodology and method for each assessment should be carefully configured to:

- the purpose of the assessment
- the landscape context
- the issues (e.g. the nature of potential effects in the context of the relevant statutory planning provisions).

Landscapes do not readily fit rigid and prescribed methods. Rather, these Guidelines promote transparent, reasoned explanation.