

173. A baking analogy is sometimes used to differentiate those aspects that are 'baked in' (integral) to the project from those that are 'sprinkled on' afterwards as mitigation.

174. These common attributes are useful foundations on which to integrate planning and design.

175. The separation of landscape architecture into two sub-disciplines is not helpful in this regard.

176. Not of all of these will be relevant in every situation.

Purpose of assessment is managing landscape values

- 7.01 The ultimate purpose of landscape assessment is to manage landscape values.
- 7.02 While landscape assessment may traditionally have tended toward maintaining existing values, or mitigating adverse effects, current practice and these Guidelines aspire towards improvement of landscape values. It is not enough to sustain the status quo if the landscape values are already diminished. Hence, these Guidelines highlight assessment of landscape effects in terms of outcomes on landscape values rather than in terms of mere change. They look beyond avoiding, remedying, and mitigating adverse effects to the greater imperative of positive outcomes for landscape values.

Integrate landscape assessment and design

- 7.03 Improvements are best realised when assessment and design operate in tandem. Such an approach helps ensure that positive effects, and avoidance of adverse effects, are 'designed-in'¹⁷³ to projects.
- 7.04 Assessment and design share such common foundations as:¹⁷⁴
- close attention to context
 - integration of many different factors and types of information
 - creative interpretation and insight
 - an impulse for better places, and the quest for opportunities to create such places.
- 7.05 Best outcomes are achieved when assessment and design operate in tandem from start to finish: assessment with a design lens and design with an assessment lens. In a statutory planning context, assessment can help articulate and direct outcomes and design can help resolve and realise outcomes. This is sometimes referred to as 'design-thinking'. While there can be differences in competencies between landscape planning and design, jointly applying those competencies is key to enhancing landscape values.¹⁷⁵

Describe the design process

- 7.06 Describe, as part of the landscape assessment, how potential adverse effects were identified, avoided, remedied, and mitigated through the integrated assessment and design process. An integrated approach might include, for example:¹⁷⁶
- strategic input to the initial planning and conceptualisation of a project
 - input to site selection or route alignment
 - input to considering alternatives (alternative concepts, locations, routes)

177. Such benchmarks include the time period in which the condition should be implemented. This should be specified where relevant.

- input to the design such as design decisions taken to avoid and remedy potential adverse effects, or design opportunities taken to incorporate positive landscape effects
- collaborative design (co-design) undertaken to give effect to tāngata whenua and/or community perspectives
- alternative design options considered and the reasons for the preferred option
- measures taken to mitigate the residual adverse landscape effects
- design description including how the concept responds to its landscape context, and how the concept is resolved at different scales and for each element of the project
- integration of landscape with other disciplines and any cross-over benefits
- implementation methods that provide confidence that the design and proposed mitigation measures will be successful (see the section on conditions, paragraphs 7.11–7.13).

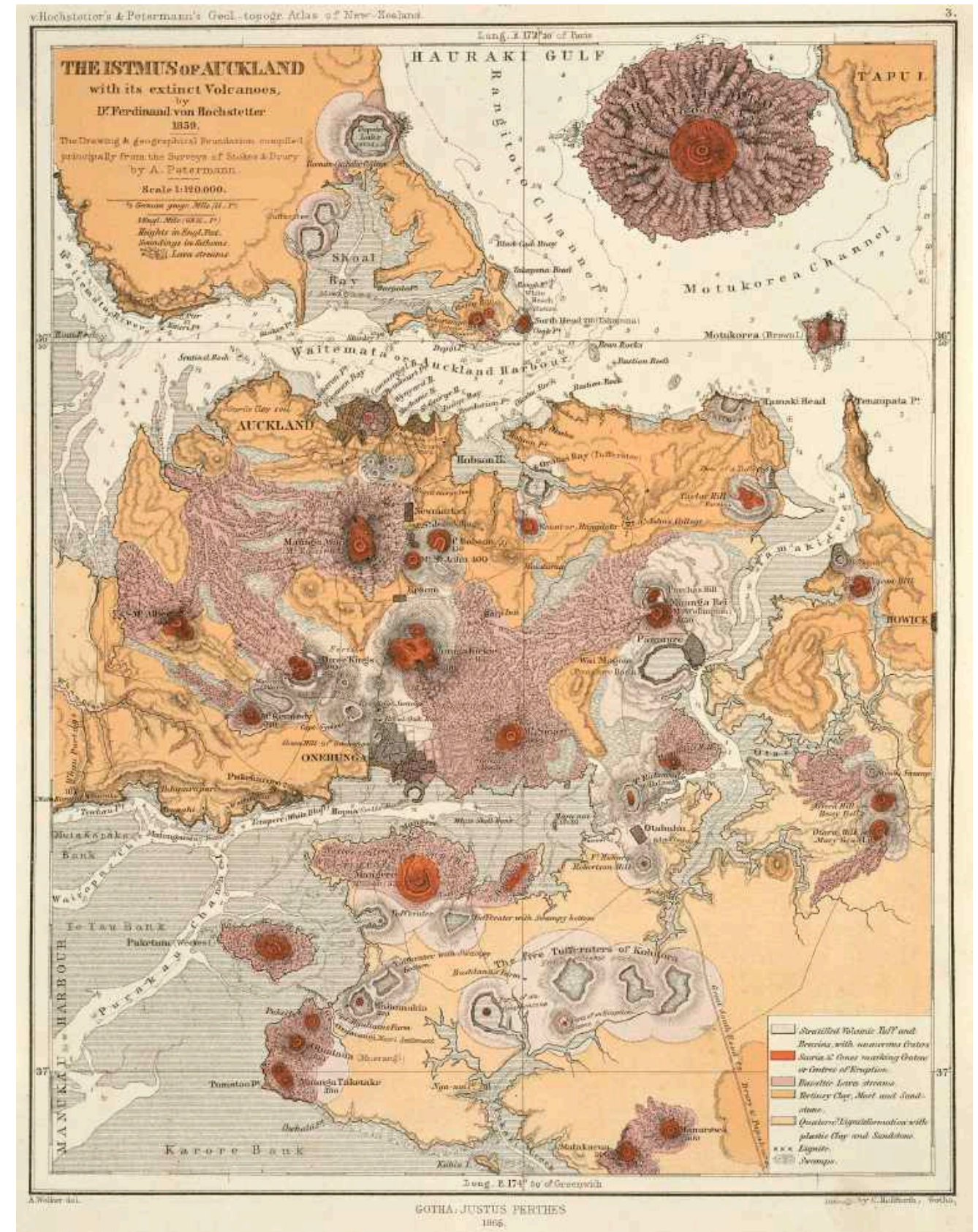
7.07 It is more credible to explain an active design process to achieve positive outcomes and avoid adverse outcomes, than to passively assess effects after the design has already been carried out. Such an integrated approach can help with the statutory planning processes. It both indicates the intent to achieve the best outcomes and helps explain how the outcomes are achieved.

Explain design in terms of landscape values

- 7.08 Explain the process and the design’s attributes in terms of landscape values. Examples might be how a road alignment follows natural patterns, how a design restores natural processes, how a new building responds to the typical grain and materials of an area, or how a path’s design celebrates aspects of its context.
- 7.09 The implications of a design are likely to entail positive effects, but can also include avoidance, remediation, or mitigation of potential adverse effects.
- 7.10 Explaining the implications of a design for landscape values is a skill that requires precision and perceptiveness. The assessor needs to interpret the design in terms of the landscape attributes that underpin landscape values. It also requires impartiality and objectivity (see paragraph 7.14).

Devise conditions

7.11 Devise conditions to ensure that the design’s intended outcomes are achieved in fact, and to ensure that the claimed benefits are given weight in the statutory planning process.¹⁷⁷





—Francis Upritchard (2022).
‘The Press’

‘Collaboration leads to error,
misunderstandings and accidents,
which show you new paths’

178. ‘Recommendations too often result in disappointing outcomes. It is dispiriting for best intentions to be let down by poor implementation. One means to ensure the assessor’s intentions are realised is through attention to the conditions, and to other tools such as design frameworks.

179. For example, the ‘business case’ model commonly used in government departments and other agencies uses successive phases of Preliminary Business Case, Indicative Business Case, and Detailed Business Case. As discussed, design frameworks are useful in ensuring continuity through these successive phases.

7.12 Unfortunately, conditions are often overlooked. They are the link between assessment, design, and outcome. It is important that they are carefully crafted. They are a key part of an assessment’s recommendations.¹⁷⁸

7.13 The purpose of landscape conditions is to achieve outcomes for landscape values.

Maintain impartiality

7.14 A potential pitfall of integrating assessment and design is that assessors may become personally invested in a project to the point of losing impartiality. Landscape assessors working in such situations should be sufficiently self-aware to maintain an impartial approach consistent with the code of conduct discussed in Chapter 2. It is worth managing the additional risks because of the positive environmental outcomes also likely to be achieved by integrating design and assessment. The risks can be reduced by:

- acknowledging the risk
- explaining and interpreting the design in a professional, fair, and balanced manner
- avoiding overstating positives and ignoring or understating negatives - transparency and professional ethics should remain at the forefront
- working closely together but still maintaining separate assessor and designer roles where appropriate
- getting a second opinion on one’s assessment.

Design frameworks

7.15 One means of integrating assessment and design is through ‘design frameworks’ often employed for complex projects (e.g. highways or large urban developments). These frameworks set out the principles that guide the project through different phases of a project (e.g. project inception, planning, design, consenting, procurement, construction, maintenance)¹⁷⁹—each phase at an increasing level of certainty and detail. Design frameworks maintain continuity through successive phases which may run over many years. Design frameworks will typically include:

- project objectives and statutory planning provisions
- a landscape analysis of the area - its relevant characteristics and values
- the guiding design concept and ideas
- the design principles—often expressed as outcomes
- the design, at increasing levels of detail, that gives effect to the concept, principles, and outcomes.

180. As noted above, the language in the consultation draft of the Natural and Built Environment Bill refers to outcomes for the benefit of the environment, and on protecting, restoring, and improving certain aspects of the environment.

7.16 Design frameworks link the assessment of the landscape character and values, tāngata whenua and community aspirations, design, outcomes, effects, and statutory requirements.

Co-design

7.17 Co-design is a way to integrate tāngata whenua and/or community involvement in landscape planning and design processes. It is a further expression of the principle of integrating assessment, design, and outcomes. Co-design is typically a joint process to develop a project. It is both 'co' and 'design'. It is based on the following principles:

- power sharing
- prioritising and building relationships
- ensuring active participation (in assessment and design)
- building capacity for further participation.

7.18 The co-design process can be as important as the outcomes. It is an approach that is likely to build trust, strengthen relationships, engender ownership, and improve outcomes.

Avoid vs remedy vs mitigate

7.19 It is commonplace for landscape assessments to include a section on mitigation of adverse effects. However, in s5 of the RMA, the first preference of “avoiding, remedying and mitigating any adverse effects” is to avoid (i.e. through such things as site selection and design). This requires the landscape architect to be an active participant in project design from its inception, not brought in after the design has been determined to mitigate effects. Mitigation should be a last resort. Section 7(c) and 7(f) of the Act also require particular regard be had to the maintenance and enhancement of amenity values and the quality of the environment respectively.¹⁸⁰ Policy statements and plans interpret these provisions with greater specificity as to different places or matters.

7.20 In addition, consideration of alternatives is required in certain circumstances:

- Section 6(1)(a) of Schedule 4, which lists the information required in assessments of environmental effects, requires a description of any possible alternative locations or methods if it is likely the activity will result in any significant adverse effect on the environment.
- Section 171(1)(b) similarly requires a territorial authority to consider whether adequate consideration has been given to alternative sites, routes, or methods if the work will have a significant adverse effect on the environment, or the requiring authority does not have an interest in the required land.

7.21 These RMA provisions support the greater imperative to actively avoid adverse effects and to enhance landscapes. As discussed, the best opportunity to avoid adverse effects and to achieve positive effects is for assessment and design to work in tandem.



Above: Wharekauhau
'a walk is a retreat'
Diagram: Emma McRae

It's fine to have recollections of the past, but wisdom comes from being able to prepare opportunities for the future.

He pai te tirohanga ki ngā mahara mō ngā rā pahemo, engari ka puta te māramatanga i runga i te titiro whakamua





Ah, don't pluck the blossoms of the rātā. (Some things are beautiful as they are—there is nothing we can do to improve them).

E, kei whawhati noa mai i te rau o te rātā

Whakarāpopototanga

Summary

Managing landscapes is not limited to avoiding, remedying, and mitigating adverse effects. Rather, enhancing and restoring landscape values is the greater imperative.

Managing landscape values is best realised when design and assessment operate in tandem. Design and assessment share common foundations:

- close attention to context
- integration of diverse factors and types of information
- creative insight and interpretation
- an impulse to achieve improved outcomes: healthier, more efficient, aesthetically rewarding, meaningful places.

Landscape assessments, including assessments of effects, should explain design thinking that is incorporated (“designed-in”) within a project. It is important, though, that assessors retain impartiality.

Conditions are important to ensuring that intended outcomes are achieved. A condition should make its purpose clear and it should be enforceable so that it achieves the intended outcome.

Co-design is a way to integrate tāngata whenua and community involvement in projects.

Design frameworks are a tool to integrate design and assessment through the successive planning, design, consenting, and construction phases of complex projects.