



Heritage Management

Auckland  
Tel: +64 21 404 408  
27 Richmond Ave  
Northcote Point  
Auckland 0746  
New Zealand  
[russell@geometria.co.nz](mailto:russell@geometria.co.nz)

Postal:  
PO Box 34487  
Birkenhead  
Auckland 0746  
New Zealand

Whangarei  
Tel: +64 21 893 063  
PO Box 1972  
Whangarei  
New Zealand  
[jono@geometria.co.nz](mailto:jono@geometria.co.nz)

New Plymouth  
Tel: +64 6 753 6013  
114A Govett Avenue  
Frankleigh Park  
New Plymouth 4310  
New Zealand  
[dan@geometria.co.nz](mailto:dan@geometria.co.nz)

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New Plymouth District Council

c/- Sean Zieltjes

[sean@tearanga.org.nz](mailto:sean@tearanga.org.nz)

### Archaeological Memo – Tapuirau to Bell Block Growth Area

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Tēna koe Sean

I have reviewed the archaeological landscape of the wider Tapuirau to Bell Block Growth Area. In lieu of a comprehensive archaeological assessment of effects report, I have provided a GIS file containing locations and areas that factor into an overall understanding of the archaeological landscape of the growth area. This information is summarised in Figure 1. Note that macrons have not been used in the GIS dataset and figures due to some ArcGIS incompatibility with these characters.

This memo does not specifically seek to locate or identify wahi tapu or other places of cultural or spiritual significance to Māori or assess their significance, although I have considered them in making my overall conclusions. Such assessments may only be made by Tangata Whenua who may be approached independently of this memo for advice.

It is critical that the growth area be considered as an archaeological and cultural landscape, rather than as a series of discrete sites, as this most accurately presents the challenges of developing this area. It is also critical that the provided dataset be considered a dynamic dataset. Our understanding of the archaeological and historical record is constantly advancing and evolving as new evidence is discovered and new datasets become available.

The archaeological potential of the growth area can be summarised as generally very high, including areas in which no archaeological sites have previously been recorded. Previous excavations in the general area have demonstrated the high potential for unrecorded subsurface archaeology even in areas with no visible surface archaeology, or no previous history of archaeological material having been found.

Three key discussion areas have been identified (Figure 2):

- A large, intensively settled area on the southern and western fringe of the growth area.
- An intensively settled and protected area on the northern, southern and eastern fringe of the growth area, aligned with a large wetland system.
- A central area of the growth area (north of the Waipu Lagoon and south of the coastal Māori settlement) in which in-ground archaeological evidence has not been encountered, most likely due to lack of development.

The southern extent of the growth area is dominated by the pā cluster of Te Oropuriri, Ngahinapouri and Tapuirau, associated with the kainga Hoewaka, which was partially excavated (alongside Te Oropuriri) during the Bell Block bypass realignment of SH3. Tapuirau is associated with two clusters of storage pits previously excavated – one within the Links development and the other within the Sommerset development. Together these all form a large settlement landscape protected by the large pā, but likely settled throughout.

A track is noted in 1848, from this cluster (at Hoewaka) leading along the northern edge of a wetland to Te Rewarewa Pā and its satellite pā at the mouth of the awa Waiwhakaiho. This directly links the Te Rewarewa Pā cluster to the Tapuirau/Oropuriri/Ngahinapouri cluster both spatially and temporally, confirming that all these sites were occupied contemporaneously. Another cluster of pā and kainga form the Katere and Mangaone Pā complex to the southwest. Combined, the three large pā clusters of Te Rewarewa, Te Oropuriri/Tapuirau/Ngahinapouri and Katere/Mangaone form a much larger protected landscape with Paraparaiti and Parapanui Pā as well as Te Rerenga and Raukawakawa pā. This protected landscape allowed for the settlement of an enormous lot of land from Ngahinapouri to the awa Waiwhakaiho down to Raukawakawa Pā.

The northern and western extent of the growth area is dominated by the Mangati Stream wetland system, alongside which multiple pā were established, forming an intensively protected settlement landscape. Four of these pā have previously been recorded in the NPDC Proposed District Plan (PDP), as sites 156, 157, 158 and 682, however seven more probable pā have been identified on the edges of this wetland system, faintly visible in 1950 aerial photographs and now built over by residential developments. Terracing has also been noted in two locations along the wetland, demonstrating large scale modification of the landscape by Māori, probably for horticultural purposes.

At the mouth of the Mangati Stream the coastal dunes have presented archaeological evidence of settlement previously, in the form of shell midden and storage pits, however the dynamic nature of these dunes makes identification of archaeological features difficult until they are disturbed through earthworks.

The early settlement of Bell Block by British settlers was clustered around the Bell Block stockade (Figure 1), which was built to encourage settlers to this area and to provide them some protection. This had the effect of forming an historic settlement landscape around the stockade, as evidence in early drawings of the area that show houses clustered around the base of the hill. Oral history of Puketapu suggests that this hill was also the location where traditionally Māori buried their possessions, likely in the historic period. It is therefore likely that taonga tūturu (artefacts associated with Māori) would be encountered in this vicinity.

The centre of the growth area is dominated by the Waipu Lagoon, a large repo (wetland). The oral history of Puketapu tells that this was a place where the dead were washed before burial, which makes this an extremely significant and tapu place for Māori. Beyond simply washing of the dead, it was not uncommon for Māori to bury their dead within significant, tapu wetlands, and this could have occurred at Waipu, although to my knowledge there are no records of this occurring. The Mangati Urupa is recorded in the PDP as site 2037, north of Waipu.

Several other wetlands are noted within and on the fringes of the growth area, on historic plans as well as the 1950s aerial photographs (Figure 1). Wetlands held great significance to early Māori. They were rich resource sources, providing materials for weaving, such as raupo and harakeke, medicinal plants and paru, a mud rich in iron salts, especially iron tannate, which was used for dyeing and preserving textiles.

Wetlands were also mahinga kai, being habitat and spawning grounds for plants, birds, fish and eels, all of which were critical to providing resources and sustenance to early Māori. It is common throughout New Zealand for the remnants of eel traps (hīnaki) and similar artefacts to be encountered in wetlands, sometimes having sunk deep into the peat at the base of the wetland system.

The anaerobic nature of wetlands was also frequently exploited by Māori, who stored timber taonga tūturu (Māori artefacts) such as garden tools in them between seasons, primarily to condition and harden the timber. In times of war, taonga tūturu were frequently hidden away in wetlands to keep them safe from capture. Throughout Taranaki, and particularly along the North Taranaki coast, it is common for taonga tūturu to be found in old wetlands, including the famous Motunui epa carved panels, recovered from wetlands near Waitara. Although many of the identified wetlands have been drained or reduced in size, previous excavations I have undertaken in drained wetlands near Rapanui Stream, Tongaporutu have demonstrated that taonga tūturu can survive in “drained” wetlands as long as water remains at the deepest levels of the system. Any wetlands in the vicinity of old Māori settlements that have not been archaeologically excavated present the risk of encountering taonga tūturu in either a disturbed or undisturbed state.

The landscape around the Tapuirau to Bell Block growth area is rich in archaeological sites and evidence of both historic and precontact settlement. In contrast, the bulk of the growth area itself however is largely devoid of recorded archaeological sites. However, the key differentiator is that the growth area has not yet been developed. The bulk of the known archaeology has been recorded as a result of being encountered during earthworks for subdivision, or through being highly visible sites, such as pā. The large, apparently empty area in the centre-north of the growth area presents very similar archaeological risk as the surrounding landscape, to which it is contextually linked. There is little reason to believe that the landscape of densely packed archaeological evidence would not continue within the growth area as it does without. For the purposes of planning considerations, the entire area around and within the growth area should be considered a linked archaeological landscape, rich with precontact and historic evidence of settlement.

Any decisions around the future of the Tapuirau to Bell Block growth area must consider the implications on the overall heritage landscape, which includes both archaeological and cultural aspects. It is very difficult to avoid unknown archaeological sites within a high-risk archaeological landscape, however any developments within it should be aware of the high risks of encountering intact, previously unknown archaeological sites during earthworks.

I therefore make these recommendations:

- All planning decisions should consider the growth area as a contextually linked heritage landscape, rather than as a series of discrete, recorded archaeological and cultural sites.
- All planning decisions should consider that archaeological heritage is a valuable non-renewable resource that is actively being depleted along the North Taranaki coast. Destruction of archaeological sites, whether recorded or not, reduces the integrity of the heritage landscape.
- It is possible, through careful planning, to protect the key aspects of the heritage landscape of the growth area, while still allowing development within it. If development impacts archaeological sites mitigation efforts should be considered.
- All earthworks within the growth area should require an HNZPT archaeological authority as a resource consent condition, unless a comprehensive archaeological assessment demonstrates that it is not required for a specific development.
- The Te Oropuriri / Tapuirau / Ngahinapouri settlement landscape should be protected from development as much as is practically possible. This settlement landscape has already seen extensive, irreversible destruction of archaeological sites, to the point where it has lost a significant amount of contextual cohesion.
- All development should be prohibited within the immediate vicinity of any former or current wetlands. Archaeological sites in and around the growth area cluster around the wetlands, and it is reasonable to expect that this trend would continue around those wetlands not yet developed.

This archaeological memo serves to provide context to the GIS database provided to NPDC for planning purposes. As more archaeological, traditional, and historical information is recovered our understanding of the landscape increases, and this may be reflected in future updates to the database and this memo.

Nāku iti noa, nā,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. McCurdy', with a stylized, flowing script.

Daniel McCurdy

Geometria Ltd.



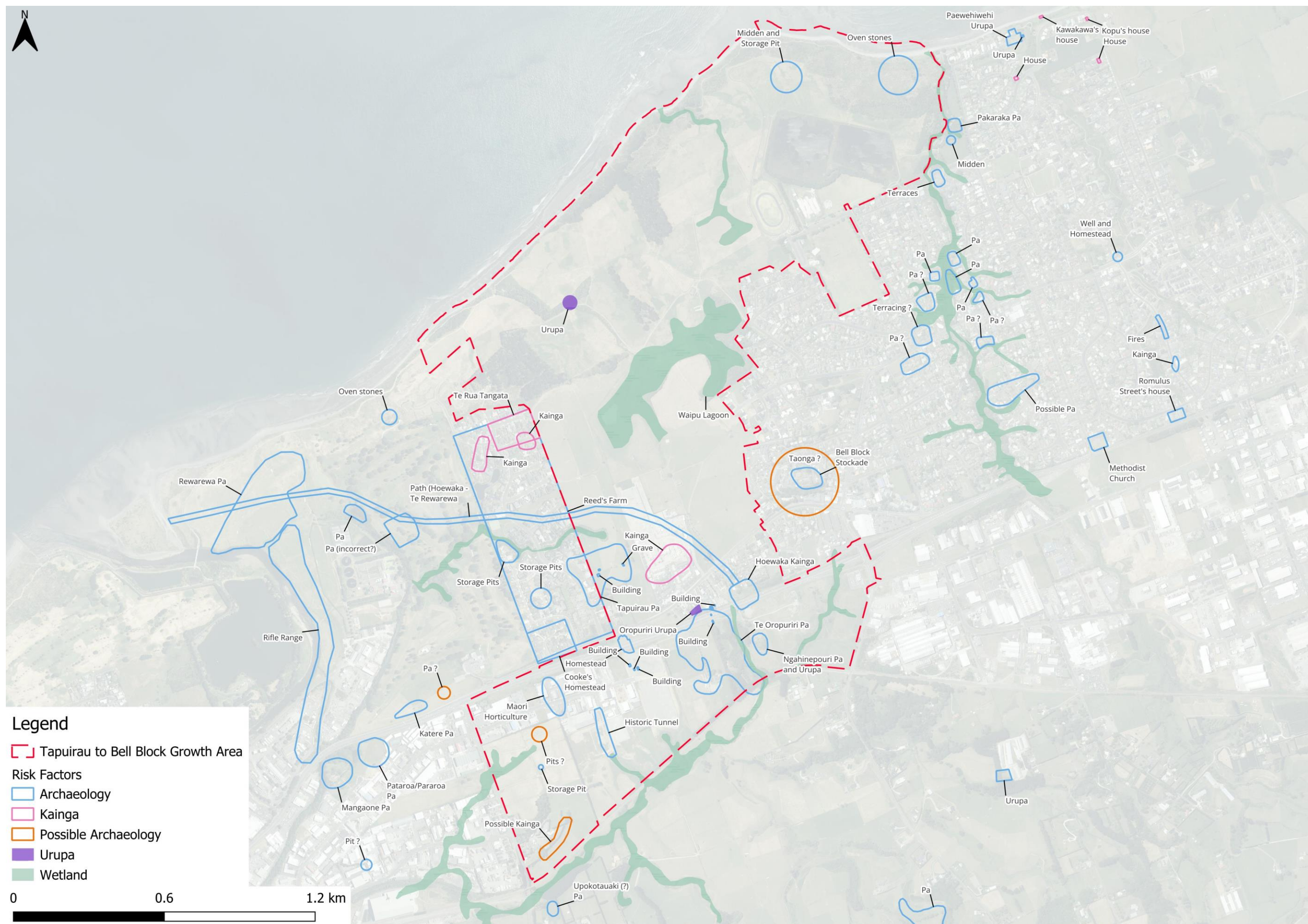


Figure 1: Summary of archaeological risk factors in and around the Tapuirau to Bell Block Growth Area.



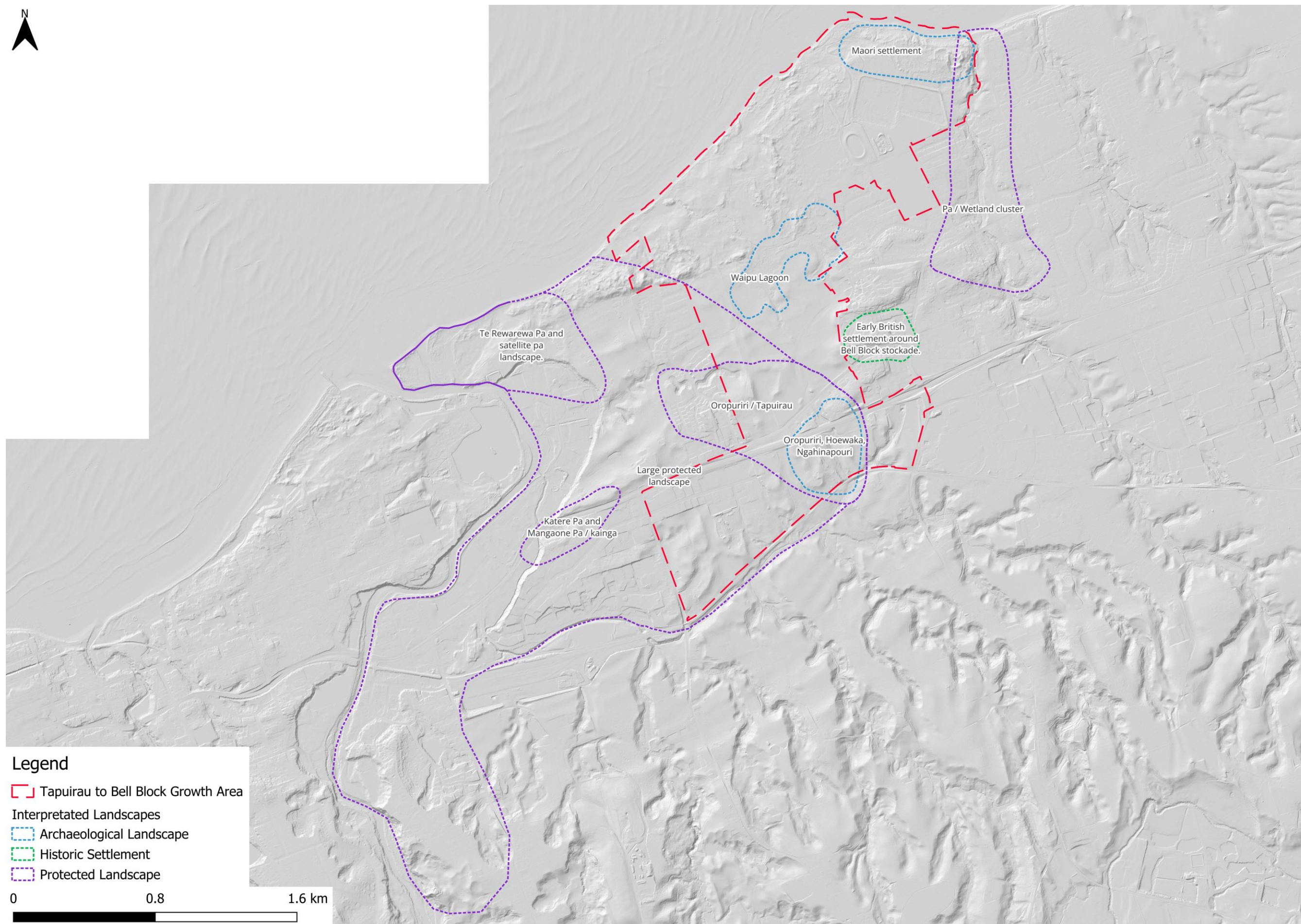


Figure 2: Plan detailing key identified landscapes in and around the Tapuirau to Bell Block Growth Area.