
1092 Coatesville-Riverhead Highway, Riverhead, Auckland: High Level Desktop Archaeological Assessment

Introduction:

Matvin Group is proposing the development of a new retirement village at 1092 Coatesville-Riverhead Highway, Riverhead (Figure 1, Figure 2). The legal description of the property is Lot 2 DP 164590.

A high-level desktop archaeological assessment of the project area was commissioned in the first instance by Matvin Group and The Planning Collective to determine if the proposed development of the property is likely to affect archaeological values. Recommendations have been made in accordance with relevant statutory criteria.

Methodology

As part of the preparation of this report, the Auckland Council Cultural Heritage Inventory (CHI) and NZ Archaeological Association (NZAA) ArchSite databases were searched for information on archaeological sites recorded within close proximity to the project area. The Auckland Unitary Plan – Operative in Part and the Heritage New Zealand List were consulted to determine if any sites had been scheduled or registered within or close to the proposed works area. Relevant archaeological assessments previously undertaken within the area were also consulted (see Bibliography). Historic survey plans and aerial photographs were also inspected to provide information on past activities and land use.

No field assessment of the property has yet been undertaken.



Figure 1. Aerial showing the location of the subject property at 1092 Coatesville-Riverhead Highway, Riverhead (outlined in blue). Aerial source: Auckland Council Geomaps 2021



Figure 2. Proposed Retirement Village – 1092 Coatesville-Riverhead Highway (Gel Architects)

Brief Historical Background¹

Pitoitoi or Riverhead is strategically located near the head of the Waitemata Harbour on the Pitoitoi Inlet, halfway between the Auckland Isthmus and the Kaipara Harbour and was the eastern entrance to the Riverhead-Helensville waka portage between the Waitemata and Kaipara Harbours. Archaeological sites relating to pre-European Maori occupation are focussed around the coastline of the upper Waitemata Harbour. Shell midden sites located along the coast are by far the most common site type as temporary encampments were established while exploiting the rich marine resources of the harbour (Clough & Prince 1999:10; Judge et. al. 2017:9). At Riverhead, these sites are also likely to relate to groups camping as they transited between the Waitemata and Kaipara Harbours via the Riverhead portage. The low lying and poorly drained soils inland would not have been attractive for Maori settlement and use (Tatton 2001:58).

Organised pioneer groups never systematically settled at Riverhead, however timber felling for the much sought after Kauri began as early as 1841 with gum digging comprising the other key early industry due to the areas proximity to Auckland rather than the quality of the gum (Mabbett 1996:111). Flour, paper and timber mills were also established along the river and permanent streams. Madden (1966) identifies twelve gum diggers' camps within the general area, although the closest to the current project area lay some distance to the north within what is now the Riverhead Forest (Figure 3). Madden also identifies a mill and dam to the west of the subject property close to the banks of the Wautaiti Stream (Figure 3).

The Riverhead area to the north and east of the Kaipara portage was included in the vast Mahurangi Block which was acquired by the Crown from Maori in 1841. From 1851 to 1867, the land to the west and south of the portage was also acquired. The land was surveyed into sections and granted to various individuals (Madden 1966:34). Allotments within the new Riverhead Township were put up for auction in February 1863, with the early settlement focussed around the river due to the lack of inland roads.

A review of historic survey plans and aerial photographs shows that the current project area was located just west of the main settlement at Riverhead (Figure 4). The property appears to have remained as a pastoral and later orchard block for perhaps all of the last century (Figure 5-Figure 8).

¹ Adapted from Judge, C., A. Brown & R. Clough 2017

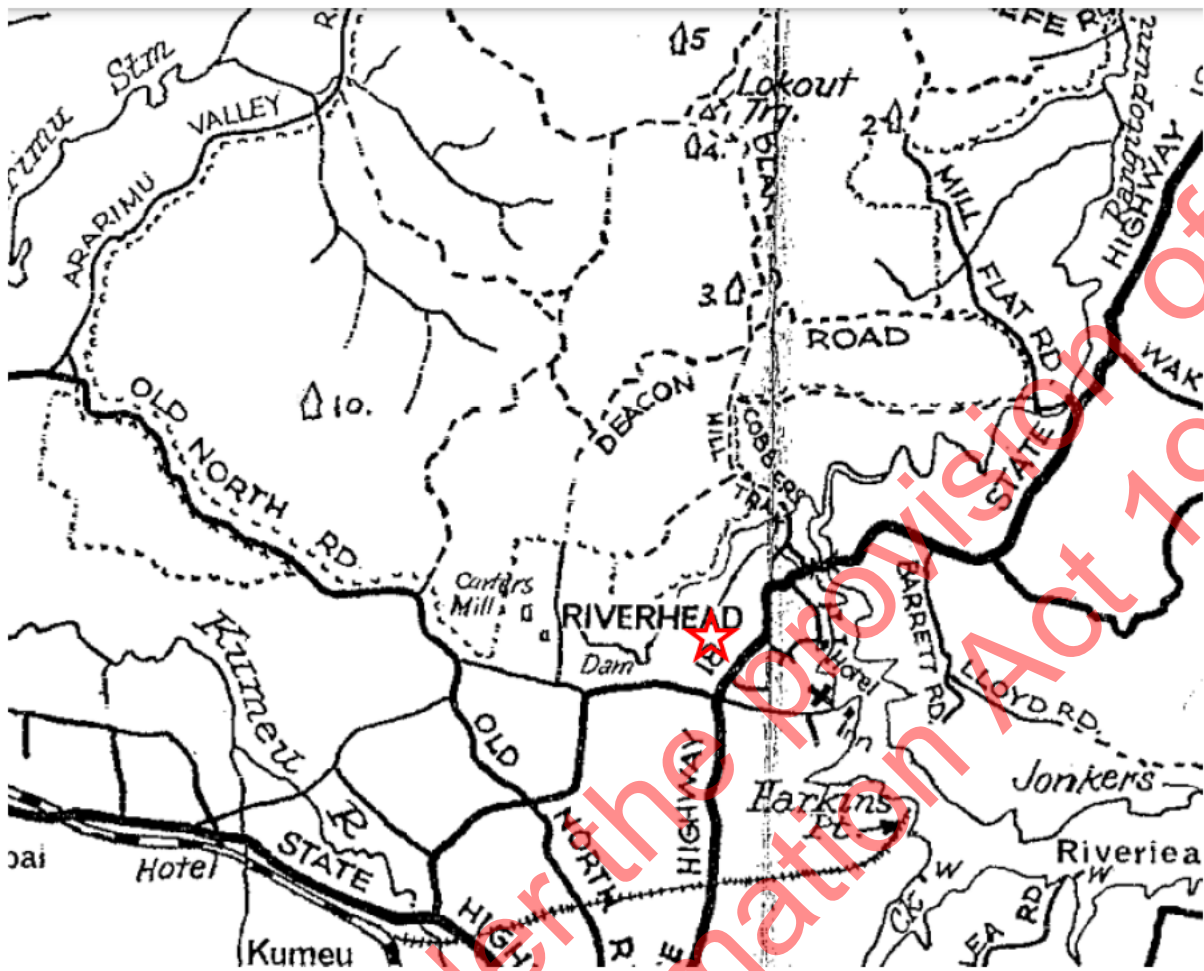


Figure 3. Detail of map from Madden 1966 showing identified historic features at Riverhead, including the locations of identified gum digger's camps (marked with house symbols and numbered). The approximate location of the current project area is marked with a star. Source: Madden 1966

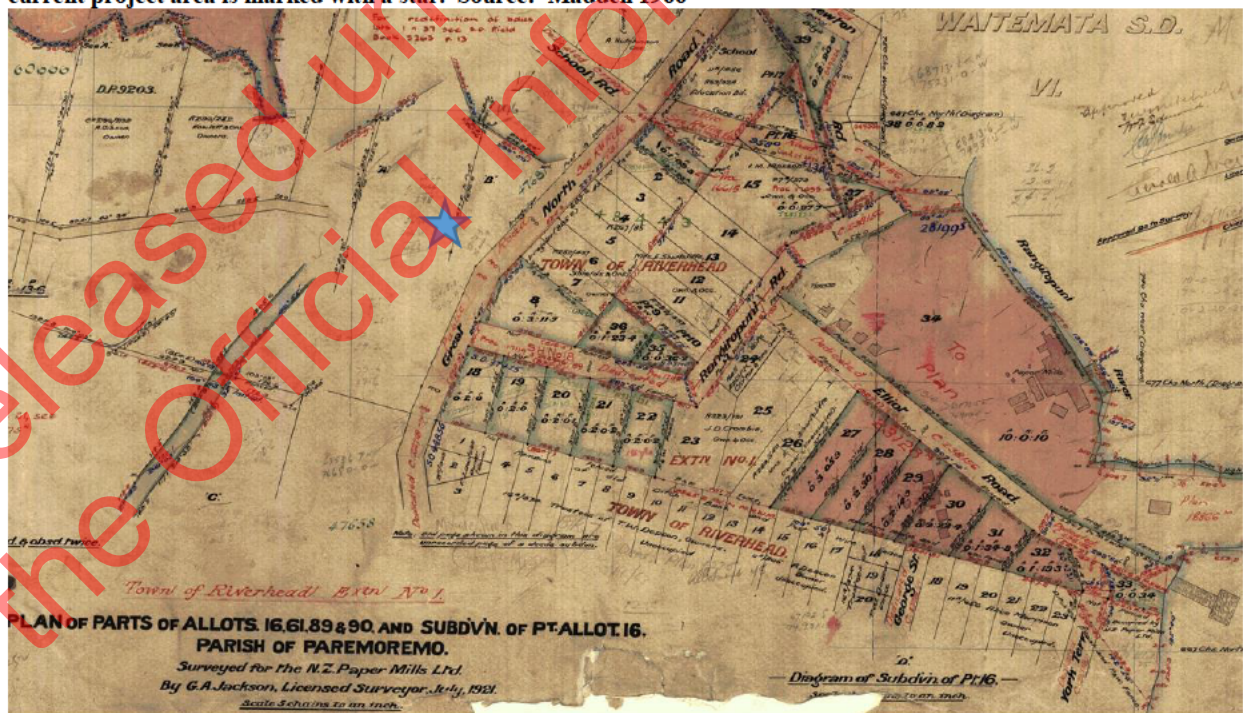


Figure 4. Detail of 1921 survey plan DP 15592 showing the location of the current project area (marked with a star) in relation to the Riverhead Township. Source: Quickmap 2021



Figure 5. Detail of 1940 aerial photograph showing the approximate bounds of the subject property (outlined).
Aerial source: Retrolens ref. Crown-143-91-19

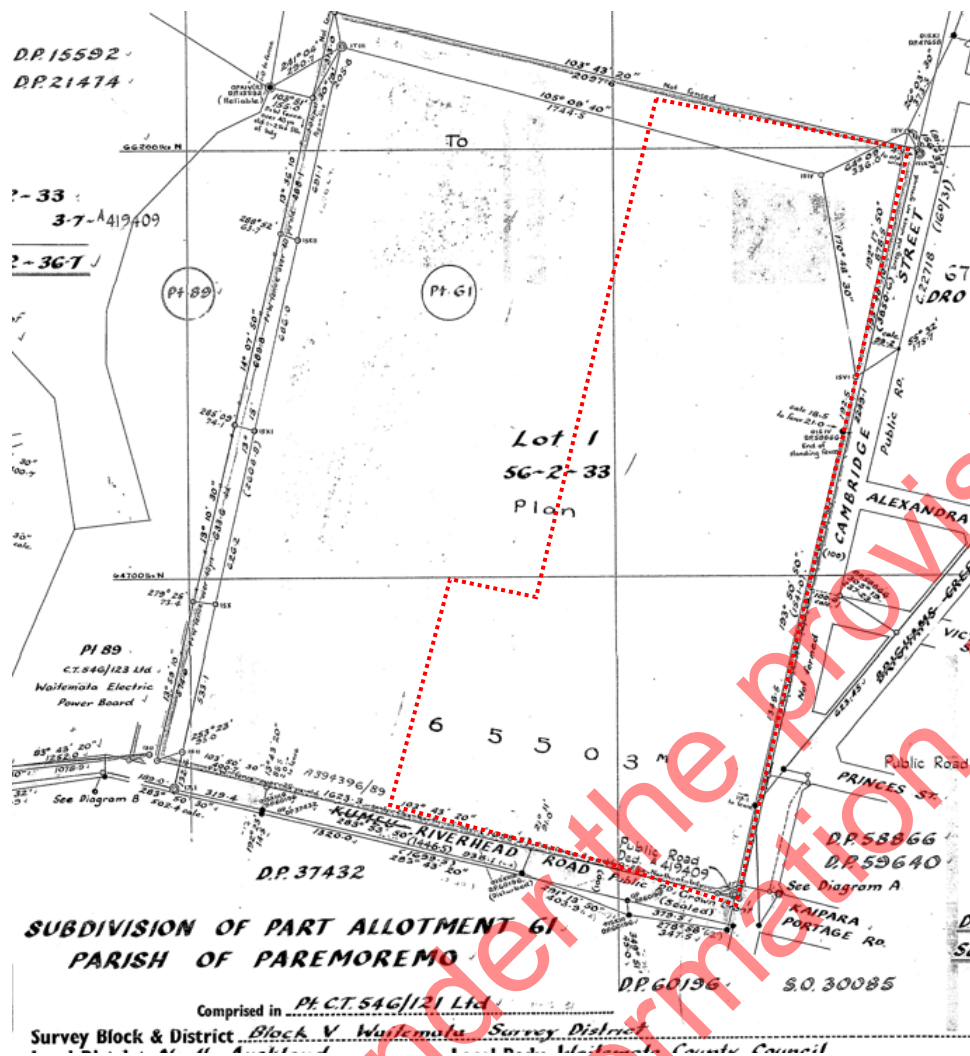




Figure 7. Detail of 1981 aerial photograph showing the current project area (approximate boundaries outlined).
Source: Retrolens ref. Crown-5916-A-7



Figure 8. 1996 aerial photograph of the subject property (outlined in blue). **Source: Auckland Council Geomaps 2021**

Archaeological Background

Previous archaeological survey within the Riverhead area has focussed upon the Riverhead Forest and the Riverhead Flour/Paper Mill (R10/721) located along the western bank of the river. Further sporadic archaeological surveys have been undertaken as part of private land development across the wider area (Foster 1997; Shakles & Clough 2011; Phear & Clough 2012; Shakles et. al. 2013; Ford & Nasoordeen 2013; Judge et. al. 2017; Brown 2018). Assessments for utilities works including the installation of a gas line along the Coatesville-Riverhead Highway (Mosen 1996) and a local reticulation networks, also along the Coatesville-Riverhead Highway (Shakles et al. 2011) have also been undertaken within close proximity to the subject property.

Archaeological sites within the Riverhead area tend to be focussed along the river in areas easily accessible by waka and in later years, by boat (Figure 9). Nineteenth century milling sites were also located along permanent stream alignments, while identified gum diggers camps tend to be focussed within the area that is now the Riverhead Forest.



Figure 9. Aerial showing the distribution of recorded archaeological sites (marked with red circles; other heritage sites are marked with blue squares and purple hexagons) within the Riverhead area and in relation to the current project area (outlined in blue). Aerial source: Auckland Council Geomaps 2021

Results of Desktop Assessment

The project area covers a an almost 10ha block of land bordered to the south by Riverhead Road, to the east by residential properties along Coatesville-Riverhead Highway and to the north and west by rural or horticultural blocks. The topography of the property slopes gently to the north and is currently used predominantly for horticulture (strawberries and kiwifruit) with exotic tree shelter belts (Coates 2021). The soils of the area comprise Impeded Allophanic Soils. These soils have a hard layer that impedes roots and water and are considered to have low fertility (Manaaki Whenua – Landcare Research 2020) which would have been unsuitable for the cultivation of tropical Polynesian crops.

No archaeological sites have previously been recorded within c.400m of the subject property. The closest recorded sites comprise a 19th century timber mill (R10/1376) located on the northern banks of the Wautaiti Stream, c.440m north of the current project area and multiple sites relating to pre-European Maori settlement and 19th century commerce and industry recorded along the banks of the river and Rangitopuni Stream, between 0.8-1km east of the current project area (Figure 10).



Figure 10. Aerial showing the locations of recorded archaeological (red circles) and other heritage sites (blue squares and purple hexagons) in relation to the subject property (outlined in blue). Aerial source: Auckland Council Geomaps 2021

Discussion and Conclusions

No archaeological sites have previously been recorded within or on the bounds of the project area and no areas of archaeological interest were identified within or on the bounds of the property as a result of research undertaken for this assessment. In addition, there are no AUP OP scheduled heritage sites or Heritage NZ Listed sites within or on the bounds of the project area.

Previously recorded archaeological sites within the Riverhead area tend to be located around the banks of the river or permanent natural waterways – none of which are located within the current project area. A more comprehensive archaeological assessment including field survey will be provided to support the development application at the expert consenting stage. While it is unlikely that significant archaeological remains will be identified within the property, field survey will assist in confirming the potential for any previously unrecorded archaeological remains within the development area.

It should be noted that all archaeological sites dating prior to 1900AD, whether recorded or not, are protected under the provisions of the Heritage NZ Pouhere Taonga Act 2014 and cannot be modified/damaged or destroyed without an Authority under that Act.

References

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