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taumarunui gateway
visioning document

Taumarunui Gateway Visioning Document

This document presents a vision for the future gateway for Taumarunui. Located at the town's northern entrance, the gateway presents an opportunity to showcase Taumarunui's heritage, culture, and future direction. The design concepts presented in this document draw on the rich natural and cultural heritage of the district. They present a series of elements that work together as a coherent whole, but are also able to be implemented in a staged approach with community support.

The objectives of the design are:

1. To create a gateway and a sense of arrival to the Taumarunui Township for visitors from the North.
2. To tell the story of the region and Taumarunui's cultural history.
3. To communicate an identity based on the township's past, its landscape, and its future as the entrance to the adventure tourism region beyond.

The document is divided into a series of sections. These sections are listed below:

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Taumarunui's Wider Context

Taumarunui is located in a landscape comprised of productive farmland, bush-clad hills and sweeping river valleys, which changes dramatically beyond as visitors approach the mountain. The township itself is located near the convergence of the Ongerue and Whanganui rivers where they meander through the hills and valleys formed between Tongariro forest park and Whanganui National Park. The rivers and hillsides form a strong part of the identity of the town, with the surrounding rural areas also being a strong influence.

The area is rich in history, with the township located where three Iwi meet - Whanganui to the South West, Maniapoto to North West & Tuwharetoa to the East. European history includes the construction of the rail line, with the timber and rail industry forming the backbone of the emerging town.

Ruapehu is a major tourist destination in both summer and winter, with many adventure tourism activities such as skiing, jet boating, tramping, cycling available in the area. Taumarunui is the first township visitors arrive at when entering the Ruapehu area from the north after travelling from Hamilton along the State Highway 4 connection. The future prosperity of the town is very much connected to the growth of tourism in the region.



The Gateway's Local Context

The site is located on State Highway 4, immediately north of Kururau Road where visitors turn to cross the Ongerue river and enter the township.

The road follows the river in a south east direction, and the site is nestled between the two. To the south is Te Peka hill, which has a walkway to the summit with an entrance opposite the site, and a further entrance north of the site.

In the past the township to the east on Hakiaka Street was visible across the river from the road as visitors approached, however this connection has been lost over time as the trees on the riverbank have grown.



Site Analysis

The site is bounded by mature trees to the north west, the Ongarue River and line of vegetation and trees to the north east, Kururau Road to the south east, and State Highway 4 to the south west.

There is currently an informal carpark on the road edge where visitors can pull off the State Highway. This is adjacent to a level area which currently has a concrete pad on it. The pad is the foundation of what was a local jet boat operators building. There is a tall sign to the east of the pad with an image of Tawhaio on it, which is to remain and to be refurbished. A footpath connects the carpark to the bridge alongside the road edge.

From the concrete pad the land falls steeply towards the river to another level area which appears to be part of a floodway, however the existing vegetation suggests this would not flood often, or severely when it does. The area is open and grassed, with a few specimen trees dotted through the centre. The bank of the river drops steeply from the edge of this area, with large trees and shrubs along its edge. These trees block views to the town, however they also potentially provide some stabilisation of the bank, and so other means of stabilisation may be required if they are removed.

There is an existing 'Taumarunui' sign further north along the road and an information sign beside the concrete pad. The jetty formerly used by the jet boat operation is located along the river.



Kururau Road /Hakiaha St Bridge
Orientation: North West



State Highway 4
Orientation: West



Lower Bank Corner
Orientation: West



Concrete Pad
Orientation: West



Lower Bank Corner
Orientation: North East

The Natural, Cultural & Social Context - Meeting of Cultures

Both Maori and European have a strong kinship to the land, reflected through use of the landscape as a resource and as a place of origin.

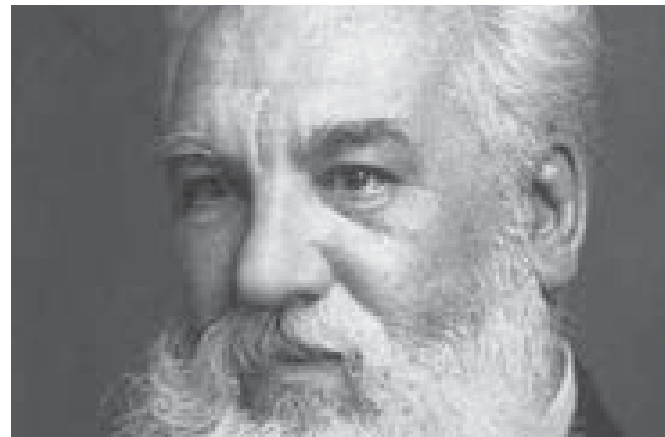
An important part of the design is representing the cultural significance of the region, and how Taumarunui has acted as a centre for local Iwi, providing a middle ground and place of meeting.

The cultural background of the area can be represented in the waka sculpture and supports. There is also potential to represent the connections between cultures within the site by creating physical links through ground treatment or use of materials, or by using traditional building materials and construction methods.

Whanganui, Ngati Maniapoto & Ngati Tuwharetoa Iwi have coexisted in King Country since settlement.



Alexander Bell (1874) was believed to be the first European settler in Taumarunui living locally as a trader.



The monument representing King Country known as 'Rohe Potae' or 'brim of a hat', referring to King Tawhaio's claim to land demonstrated by throwing his hat onto a map of the North Island

The Maori Warrior Chief, and second Maori King. King Tawhaio (1915)



Totara Carving



Meeting and integration of elements



Integration of local forms



Traditional techniques



The Natural, Cultural & Social Context - Rail and Forestry Heritage

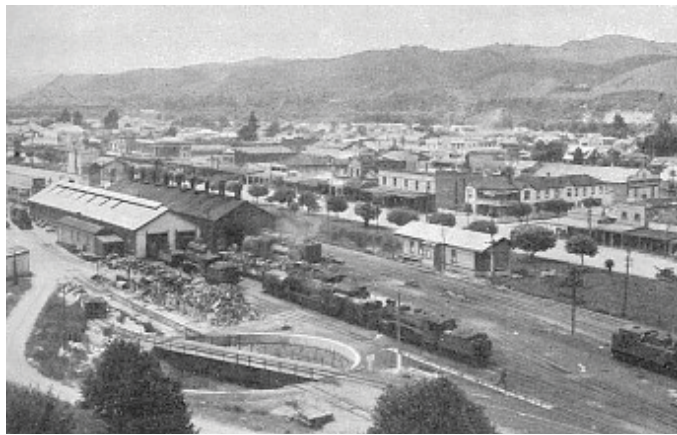
Taumarunui has a rich rail heritage directly relating to its proximity to the North Island Main trunk Line which helped to accelerate the towns growth and population during the timber industry boom in the early 1900's. The rail and timber industry forms an important part of the towns history and identity.

The railway's character is derived from its horizontal structure and its industrial materials. This has the potential to influence the design through use of the forms and materials from the rail and timber industry - steel and gravel, substantially sized timber elements, linear forms and industrial type construction methods.

The use of native timbers as rail sleepers countersunk into the earth or gravel beds can be an interpretation of this character.

The sleepers and gravel form the strong foundations of the railway, where the steel tracks reveal direction. This can be applied on site to the ground plane, to begin to inform way finding.

The North Island's Main Trunk Line was completed in 1908 servicing the timber industry boom that lasted into the mid 1900's.



The region experienced prosperity due to the opening of the passage between Te Kuiti and Taumarunui in 1903.



Ongarue Bridge - completed in 1911 and rebuilt in concrete in 1927.

New Zealand's forestry boom in the 19th century



Plane Cut Totara



Totara Sectional Cut



Railway Sleepers



Railway Materiality



Steel and Concrete



Concrete with rough-sawn timber texture

The Natural, Cultural & Social Context - Natural Land Formation

The King Country character is largely influenced by its landscape. The undulating rocky and rugged terrain, dense bush clad hills and valleys and winding rivers form both the character of the area and support the fast growing adventure tourism industry which is expected to have a significant impact on the town's future.

Taumarunui itself is built on an alluvial plain, on the northern bank of the Whanganui River, the third largest river in New Zealand, where it meets the Ongarue River. The Whanganui River flows north-west from the slopes of Mount Tongariro. At Taumarunui it flows south-west to the Whanganui National Park. The Ongarue River travels south from the Hauhungaroa Ranges, acting as a large tributary to the Whanganui River.

The river can inform the design through use of patterning and flowing forms, enhancing visual connections to the river itself from the site, and the use of vegetation common to the river.

The Hauhungaroa Ranges to the east & north east.



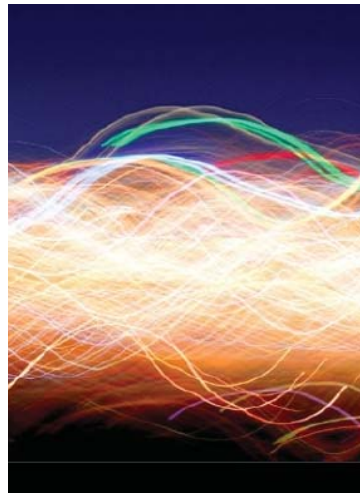
The merging of the Ongarue and Whanganui river, continuing south as the Whanganui River.



Mt Ruapehu, New Zealand's largest active volcano.



Formed from years of alluvial sediment succession from the surrounding hills and valleys of King Country.



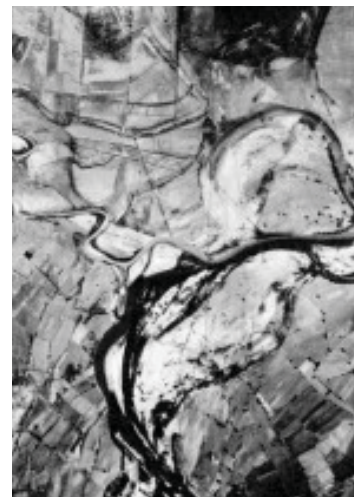
Confluence patterning



Braided river confluence



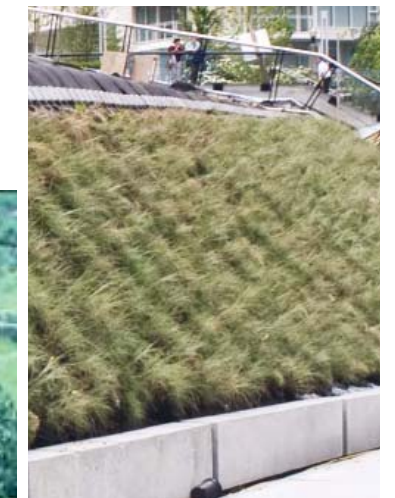
Meandering forms



River confluence



Braiding slope planting



Bank planting

The Natural, Cultural & Social Context - Future Tourism

Taumarunui is the gateway to the Ruapehu District and the adventure tourism attraction programmes the District contains. These make use of the unique natural elements of King Country, including river tours, tramping, horse back riding, Maori food tours and caving. Taumarunui's economic future is dependant largely on the growth of the area as a tourist destination.

Adventure tourism can be interpreted as the experience of the untamed rugged wilderness and include activities that have an element of danger, risk or lack of control. This idea can be expressed in the materiality and form of elements within the design through the use of rugged, natural materials such as weathered timber and coarse river stone and the design of structures which defy gravity or have an element of instability.

River boat tours run on the Whanganui River and previously on the Ongerue.



The Ruapehu District acts as the central ski and snowboarding destination in the North Island.

Tours allow visitors to explore the native bush in the hills, valleys and rivers surrounding Taumarunui.



River canoeing and jet boat tours are run on the Whanganui River.



Lookout



Industrial steel structures



Views of vast landforms



River activities



River stone



Rapids



Defying gravity

The Natural, Cultural & Social Context - **Vegetation**

The landscape of the District is an important aspect of the character and identity of Taumarunui. The untouched landscape formations of undulating rocky topography, rugged bush clad hills of dense green vegetation, and meandering rivers with lush banks form a palette of colour and texture.

Taumarunui similarly has its own unique character informed largely by its location on an alluvial plane at the convergence of the Whanganui and Ongarue rivers.

The pastoral landscape also informs the character of the area reflected through the numerous exotic tree species, shelter belts and naturalised exotic tree species along the river bank.

Local species identified include natives such as totara, flax, tree ferns, toi toi, astelia and grasses, plus exotics seen in the pastoral surroundings such as willow, poplar and the existing magnolia trees on site.

Planting on the site can reflect the lush and rugged natural character of the wider regional landscape, while also referencing the significant pastoral character.

This mix or convergence of character can be achieved through a structuring of planting with exotic species for street trees and larger specimen trees and a lower, understorey of predominantly native species.



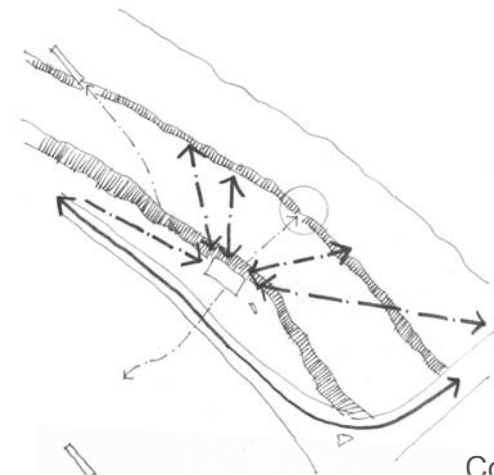


Concept Development

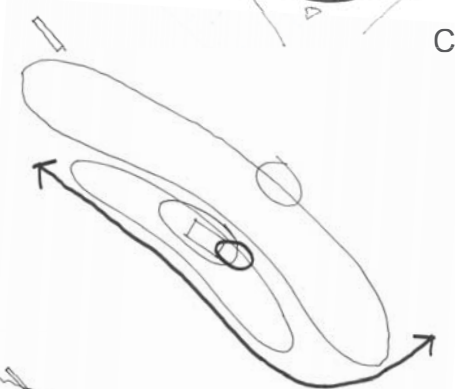
The concept draws upon an analysis of the regional, local, natural and social context. Firstly, physical and visual connections have been considered - the view of the site for visitors travelling along SH4 and across the site and the river to the town, the view from the site to the river and across to the town, the connection across the road to the walkway entrance, the pedestrian connection across the bridge to the town, and the connection through the site to the rivers edge and the existing jetty.

The spatial arrangement of the site was then considered, the 'landing' area adjacent to the road (upper terrace), the slope (between terraces), the more passive space in the floodway (lower terrace), and the river bank itself. The views from the site are constrained by the tree planting on the river bank, and proposed thinning or lifting of the canopies of these trees aims to improve visual connections. Finally a braided pattern, taken from the eddies and swirls of the river confluence, is introduced to inform the arrangement of planting of the steeper areas of the site.

Other landscape and built elements are then located based on relationships to views, physical connections and spatial arrangement with an emphasis on revealing the unique qualities of the site.



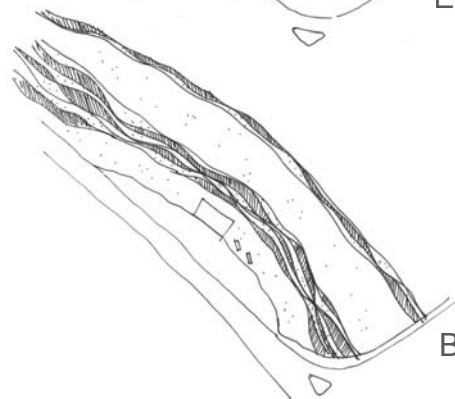
Connections



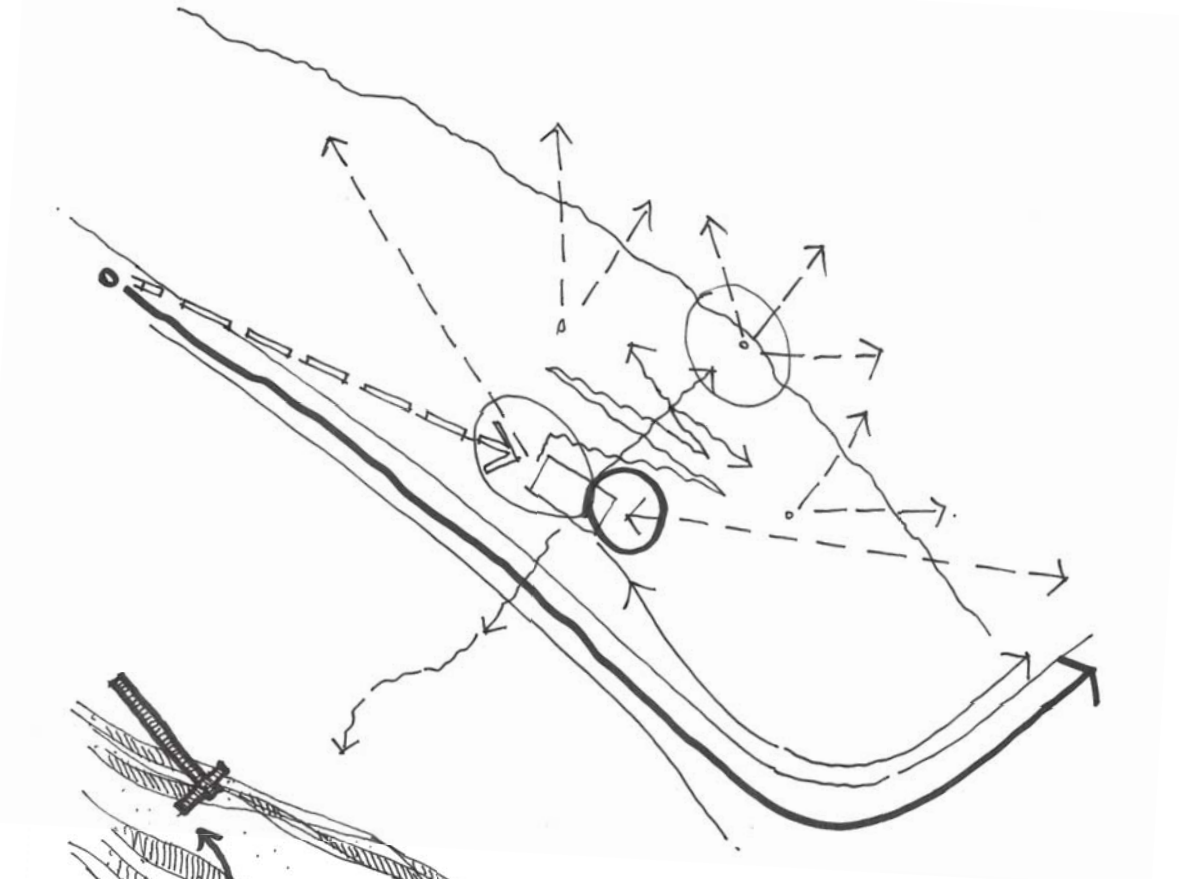
Spatial Organisation



Existing Trees Thinned

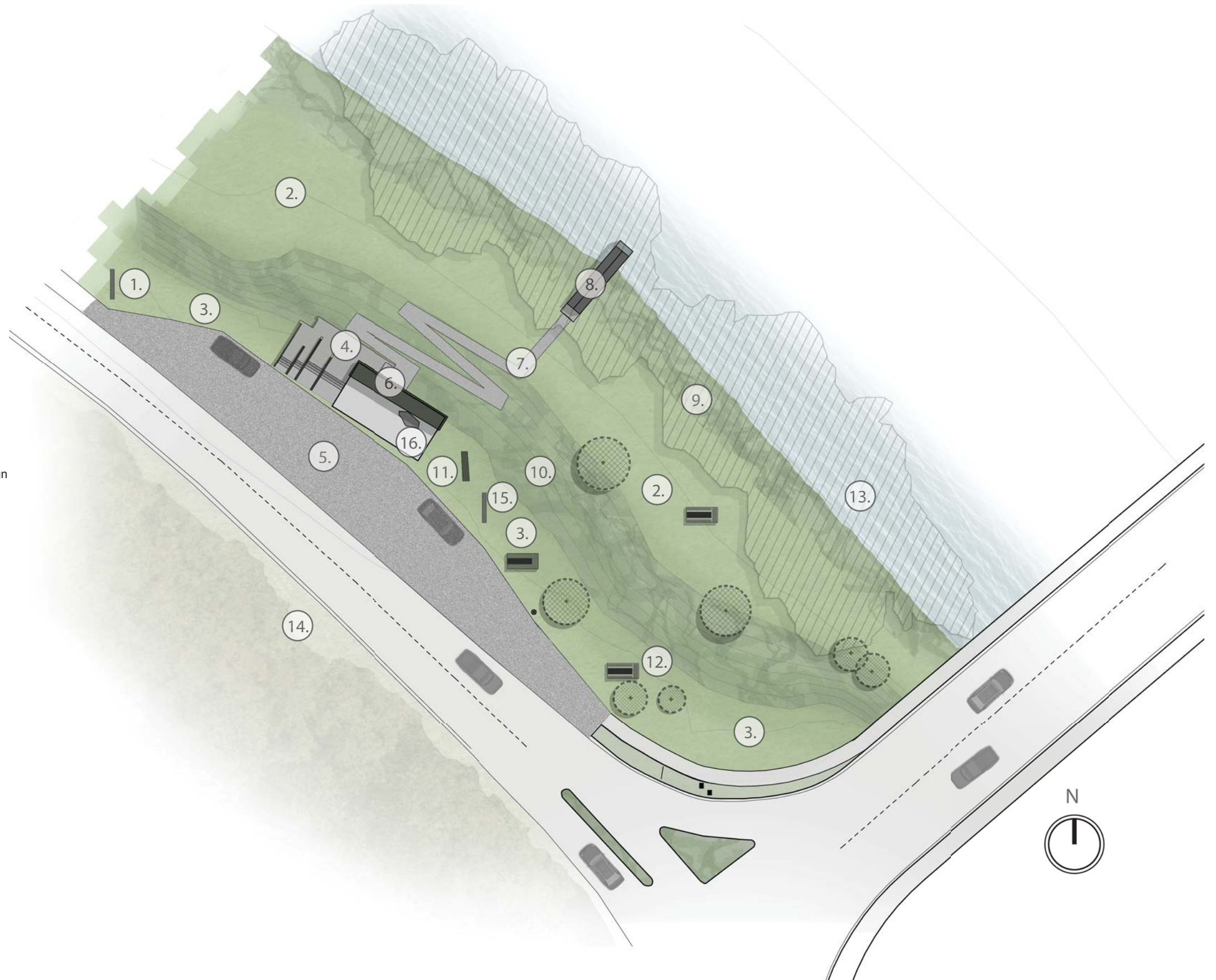


Braided Planting



Concept Development

- 1. 'Welcome to Taumarunui' sign
See page 18-19
- 2. Lower terrace passive recreation Area
- 3. Upper terrace grassed area
- 4. Upper terrace central area - See page 16+21
- 5. Gravel carpark
- 6. Waka structure
See page 16
- 7. Gravel pathway transition to lower terrace
- 8. River opening lookout structure
See page 22-23
- 9. River bank braided planting
- 10. Slope braided planting
- 11. Refurbished Tawhaio sign + information boards
See page 24
- 12. Picnic seating
See page 20-21
- 13. Re-establishing vistas through thinning trees
- 14. Te Peka Hill walkway entrance to be tied into the design with use of similar materials and planting
- 15. Heritage Trail Sign
- 16. Feature Rock



Implementation and Staging

Due to the nature of the design being made up of a series of individual elements, staging the implementation is quite straight forward. A possible implementation plan is given here for how the gateway could be staged.





Design Progression - Shelter Structure and Waka

Through the development of the design, the key feature of the site has gone through several iterations. Originally the structure was envisaged as a shelter structure, located on the edge of the existing concrete pad. With four connecting roof structures, it was designed to represent the coming together/meeting of cultures and the branches face to the four points of the compass. A carved Po was proposed for the central pole, with the story of each of the lwi told on sign blades on the outer posts of the structure, with the European history of the areas timber and rail industries are told on the reverse side of each of the blades.

The second iteration used the same I beam materials reflective of the rail industry and which relate to the history of the area, as well as continuing the language of the rest of the site. The roof supporting structure was reflective of the steel truss bridges common in the area and used in the rail industry. Its a simple clean form, was easy to construct, and storm water to be channelled off the shelter into the planting behind.

The final iteration and the preferred concept is the Waka, as seen on the opposite page.

'Waka' Concept

The preferred concept for the gateway is based around the story of the waka and its representations. The Whanganui and Ongarue Rivers form part of the backbone to the Taumuarunui settlement and so are intrinsically linked to its 'sense of place'. Large waka were built in the surrounding area, and were the primary form of transport for the river based tribes.

In this concept the importance of the waka is reinforced. The waka is highly visible, and is directly related to the adjacent river.

The design allows for people to move under and around the waka, to touch, feel and engage with the concrete panels telling stories of the area. The openness of the pillars maintains the visual connection between the sculpture and the river.

The waka concept ties into the already proposed material palette, and the forms, textures and colours area also repeated through the use of steel I beams and textured concrete.



Key Components

1. Waka sculpture

A Waka sculpture forms the central piece of the concept. The idea for the Waka is based around the notions of the journey through life, and is symbolic of the 'peoples/community' journey.

The design and materiality of the waka sculpture is something that will require careful consideration.

2. Four Pillars

The four pillars relate to the story of both the Iwi and European culture in the area. The pillars are supporting the 'peoples/community' journey. They are strong, bold, heavy, and anchored to the land.

The pillars can be constructed from steel I beams and precast concrete panels. The frames for the pillars will consist of the steel I beams and these will be fixed to the existing concrete platform. This will give them the structural integrity required to stand and support the waka sculpture.

The precast concrete panels are then filled into the steel frame. The concrete panels could be patterned around the idea of Tukutuku panels. The pattern on the concrete could relate to the stories of the local iwi, or have images of Taumarunui.

*Note that the panels do not have to be concrete. Other materials such as steel or fibreglass could be used to show stories, imagery or patterns. These materials could also be backlit to add another dimension to the design at night.

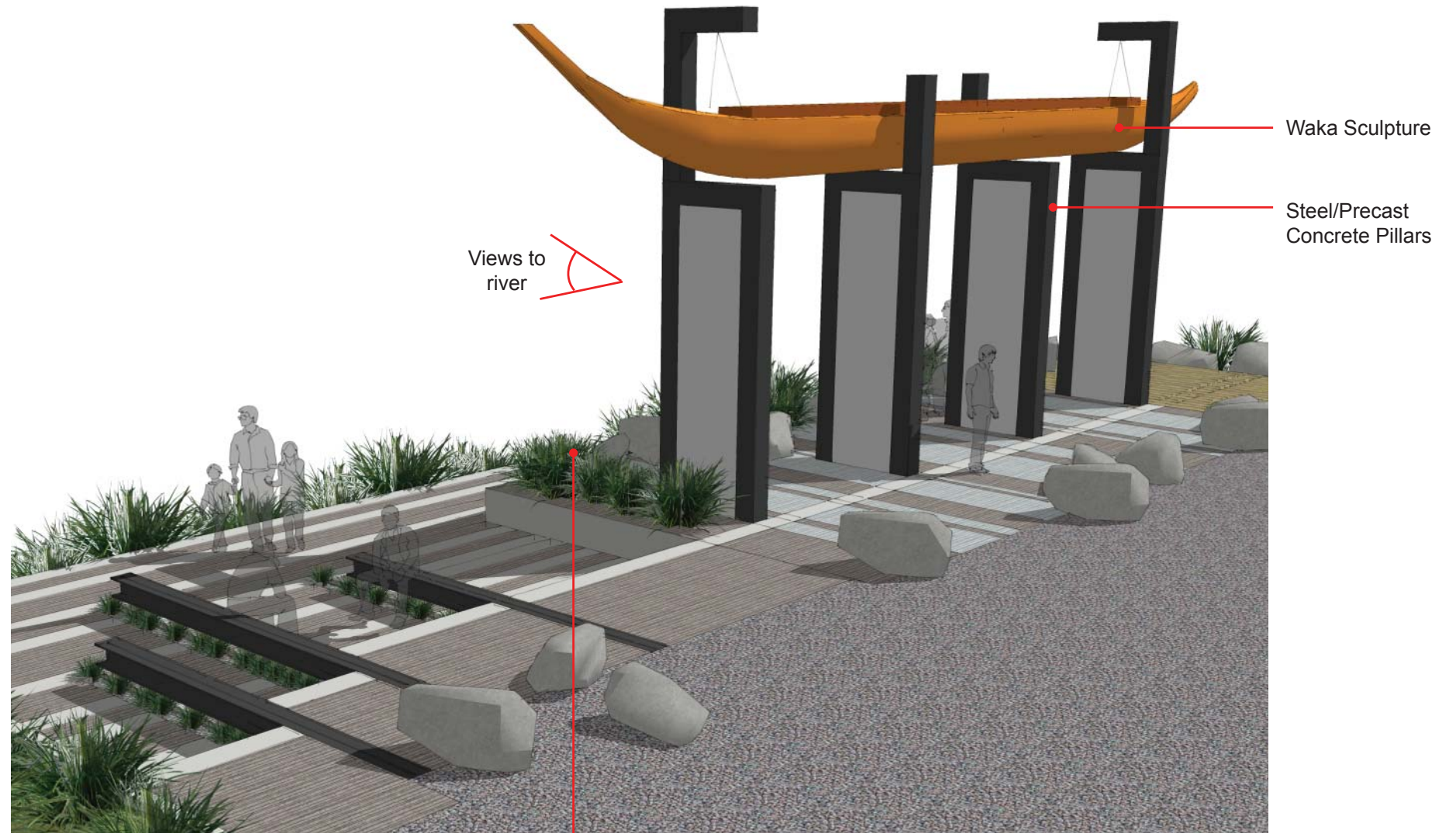
3. River Boulders

River boulders are to be incorporated around the base of the concrete pad. The boulders will be set into the ground to prevent any movement and risk of rolling. They will also hide the edges of the existing concrete pad. In the gaps between the boulders there will be soil added to allow native plants to grow, and the boulders will also be surrounded with native planting.

The precast concrete panels are patterned around the idea of Tukutuku panels. Tukutuku panels are a traditional Māori art form. They are decorative wall panels that were once part of the traditional wall construction used inside meeting houses. The forms and patterns on the panels tell stories about the iwi or local area.



Examples of Tukutuku panels are precast concrete panels



River boulders and native planting to be placed around the edge of the concrete platform

The design, form, and materiality of the waka sculpture is highly important and will require input and feedback from local iwi.



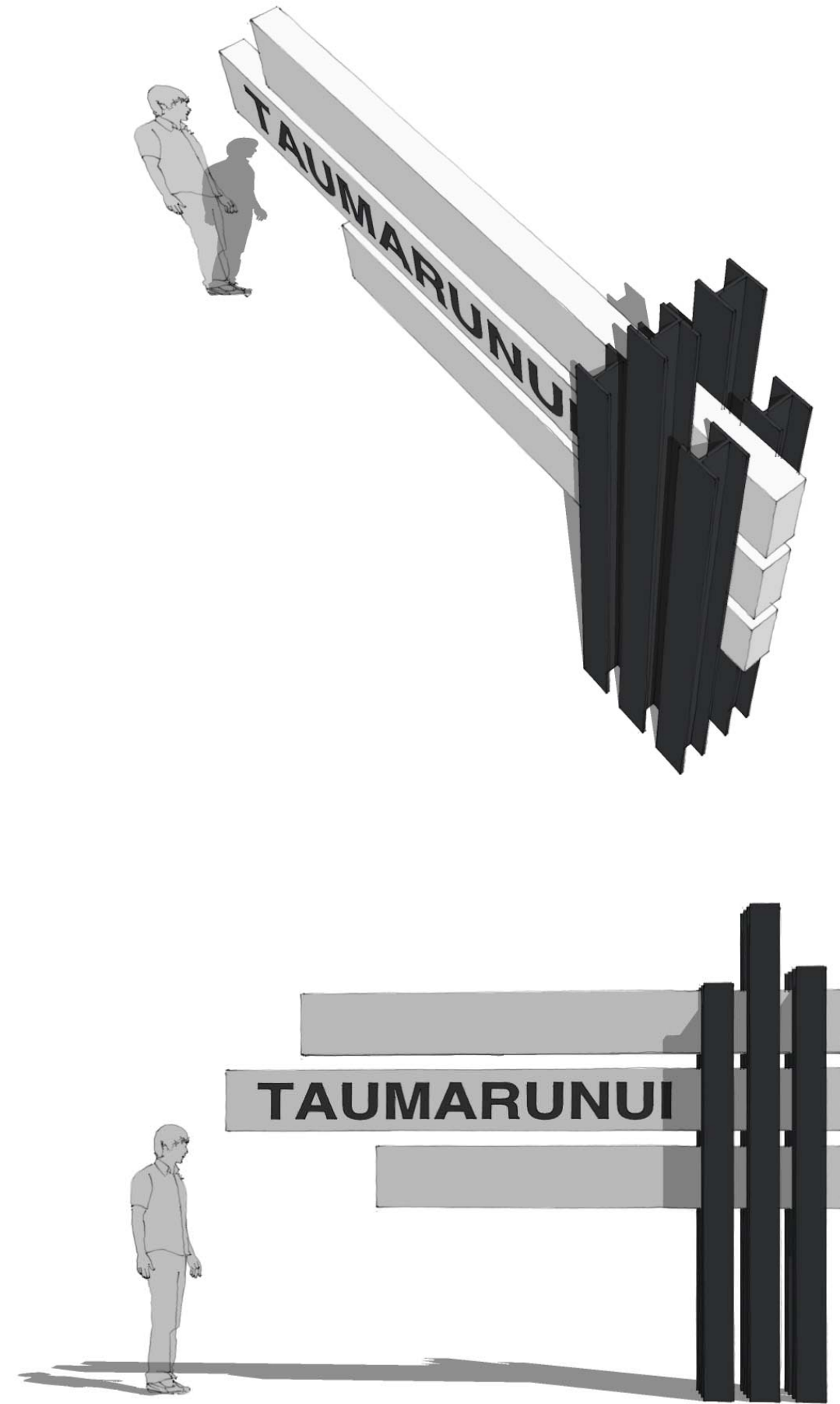
Examples of waka inspired sculptures by William Jameson and Virginia King

Taumarunui Sign

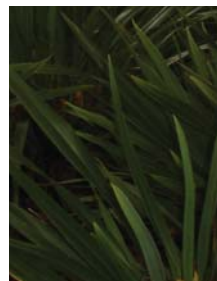
The proposed Taumarunui sign is a significant element of the gateway, a large structure seen from vehicles approaching the site. Drawing on the timber and rail heritage of the area, it is comprised of large solid pieces of weathered timber and industrial powder-coated steel I beams evocative of the industrial nature of rail related structures. An element of instability is incorporated into the character of the sign - through an over sizing of horizontal timber elements relative to the vertical steel elements.

Text is routed into the timber and stained to create the required contrast.

The vertical steel I beams could also incorporate laser cutting in the pattern of local carving forms.



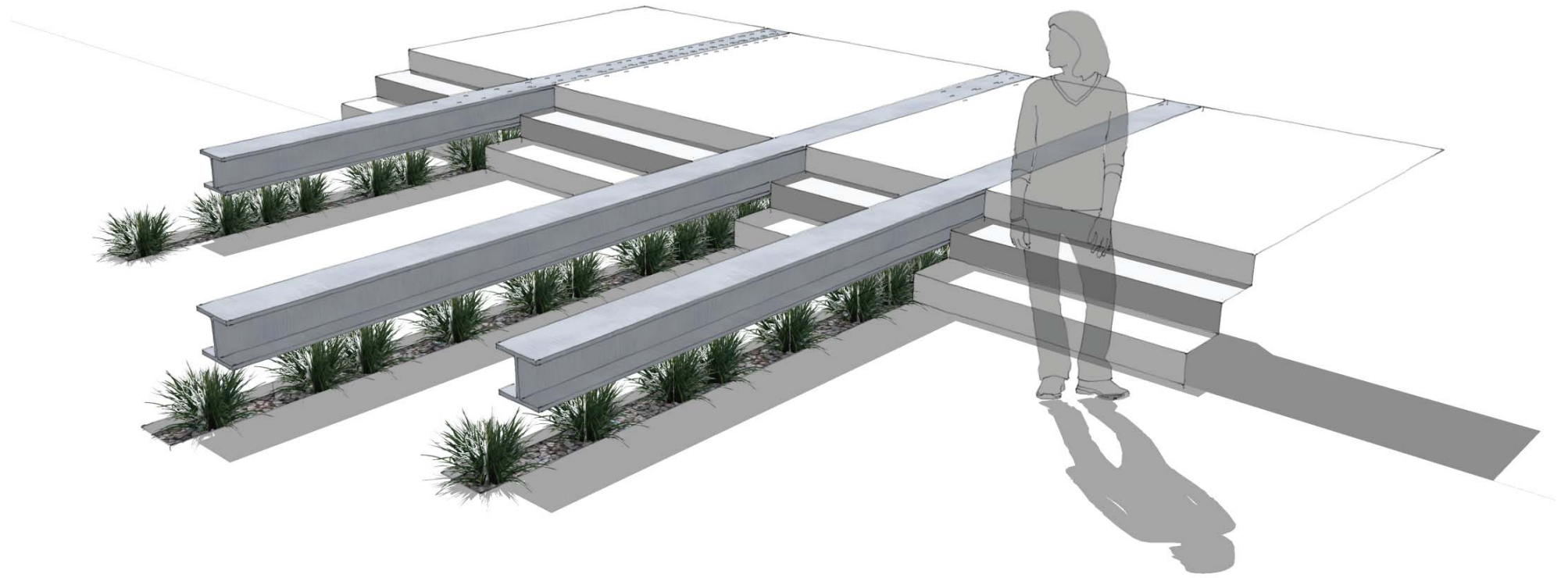
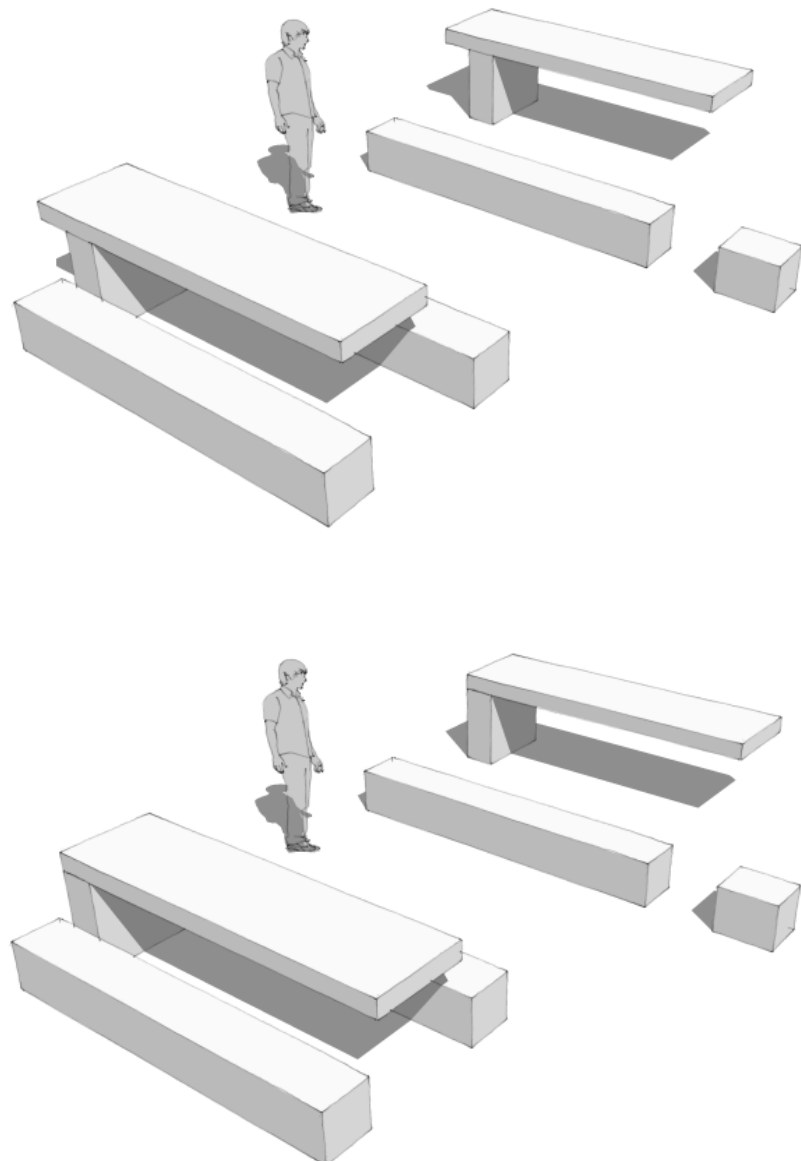
	Option One	Option Two	Option Three
Technic	TAUMARUNUI	TAUMARUNUI	TAUMARUNUI
Roman D	Taumarunui	taumarunui	TAUMARUNUI
Microsoft PhagsPa	Taumarunui	taumarunui	TAUMARUNUI
Levenim	Taumarunui	taumarunui	TAUMARUNUI
Cambria	Taumarunui	taumarunui	TAUMARUNUI
Calibri	Taumarunui	taumarunui	TAUMARUNUI



Picnic Table and Seating

Picnic tables and seating again draw on the timber heritage through the use of large slabs of weathered timber, and again make use of a sense of instability or feeling of being 'on edge' through cantilevering.

In the main rest area, steel I beams cantilever from a higher ground plane projecting out from the stairs to create informal seating, underplanted with native grasses and groundcovers.





Main Rest Area

The main rest area makes use of surface materials to evoke the character of Taumarunui. Options include the use of cast concrete with a rough-sawn timber surface texture, gravel, in-ground timber slabs, and coloured concrete.

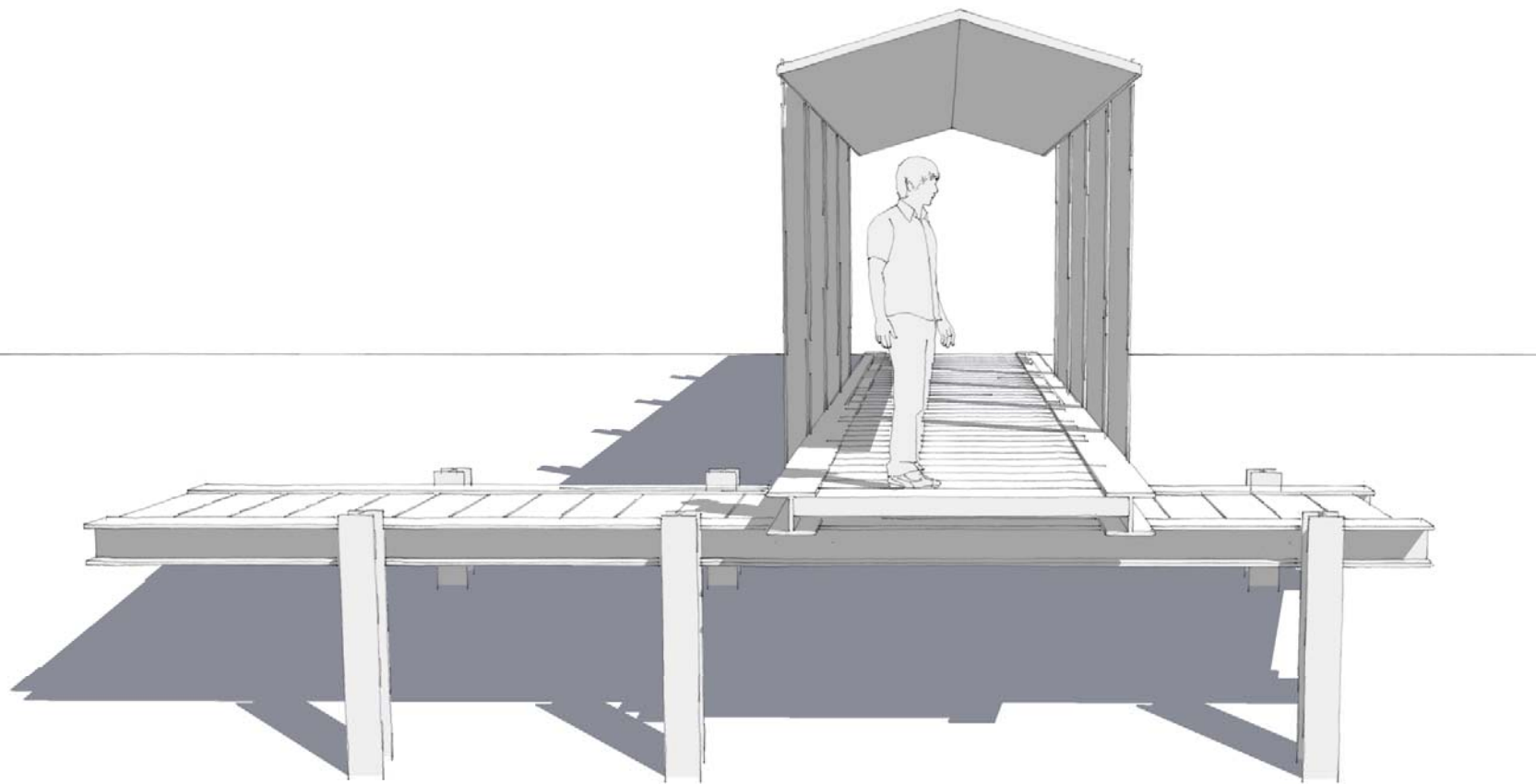
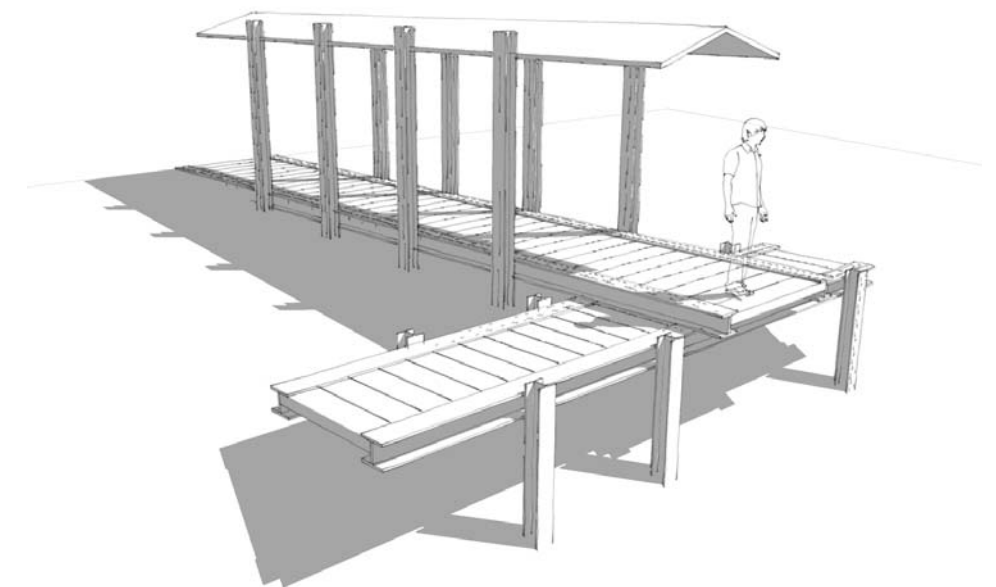
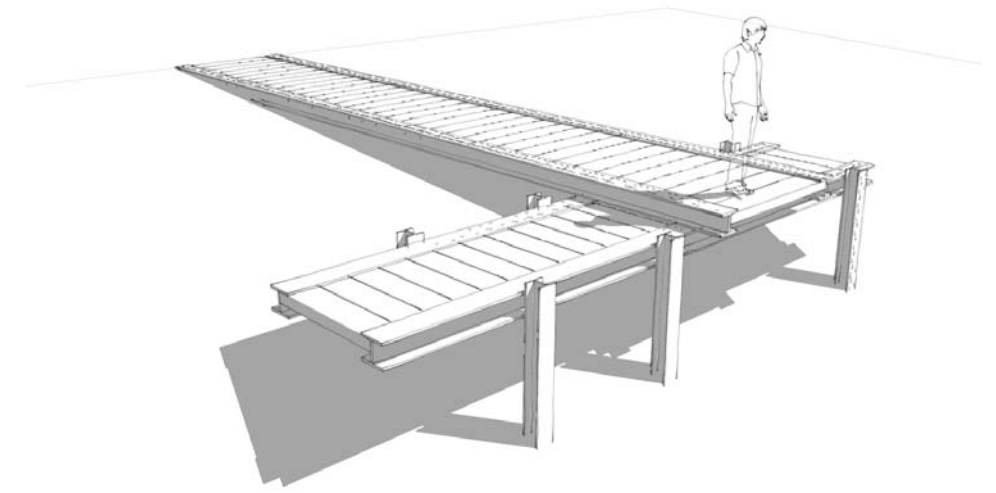
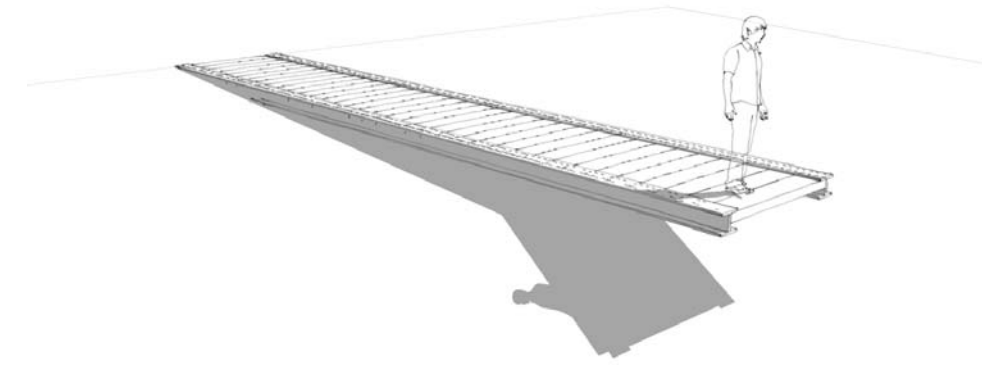
The area incorporates the existing concrete pad which could be resurfaced or sandblasted to tie into the proposed informal seating, steps, and proposed shelter structure.

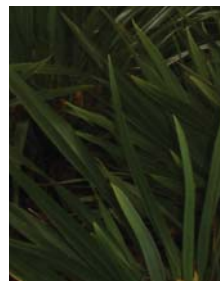


The River Lookout

The lookout allows visitors to get close and engage with the river, experiencing views to the town and creating a strong link between the gateway site, river and town.

Constructed of timber with a steel I beam framework and with a pitched roof profile echoing that of the main shelter structure, the lookout can be implemented in stages as depicted, with the first deck initially constructed and following stages adding the second level deck and finally the shelter.





King Tawhiao Sign

The existing King Tawhiao sign is to be refurbished. The frame will be repainted a charcoal colour and infilled with panels. The picture of King Tawhiao is to be removed and assessed, and replaced with the Lindauer painted design shown here.



