Cultural Impact Assessment

Proposed mixed-use development at 32–42 Victoria Street, Cambridge, Waipā District

1. Purpose and Scope

This draft Cultural Impact Assessment has been prepared by Harry Wilson to identify cultural values, potential effects, and recommended responses associated with the proposed demolition of existing buildings and construction of a four-storey mixed-use development with basement parking at 32–42 Victoria Street, Cambridge. The proposal is understood to include retail, office, apartment, and parking uses within land zoned commercial.

This assessment is a working desktop draft. It should be reviewed with mana whenua before being relied on for statutory processes, resource consent documentation, or project design decisions.

2. Site and Proposal

The site is located at 32–42 Victoria Street in central Cambridge, within the Waipa District. Available public property and planning information indicates that this part of Cambridge functions as a town-centre/commercial environment, with commercial, office, retail, and mixed-use activity in the surrounding area.

The proposal involves demolition of the existing buildings and construction of a new mixed-use building comprising ground-level retail, upper-level office and apartment uses, and basement parking. The building is described as four storeys plus basement parking. Key activities likely to require cultural consideration include demolition, earthworks, excavation for basement parking, stormwater management, construction traffic, streetscape change, and long-term occupation of the site.

3. Cultural and Historical Context

Cambridge sits within the boundary of Ngati Koroki Kahukura. Ngati Koroki Kahukura descend from **Hoturoa** captain of the Tainui waka buried at Kawhia. Some 16 generations later the infamous **Koroki** was born at the foothills of Maungatautari. There he grew and later built his Paa at Carters Flat called **Horotiu Paa**. Historians say known as Cambridge. Later **Koroki** moved to the Waikato Hospital Site Kirikiriroa but his decedents stayed in Cambridge, Maungatautari area and to this day.

Ngati Koroki Kahukura have 2 marae **Maungatautari** and **Pohara**, but one people.

E rua ngaa marae Kotahi te iwi.

Ngāti Koroki Kahukura is recognised for the Resource Management Act purposes, and the settlement record identifies Te Koo Utu a nearby place within the Town of Cambridge. The cultural landscape of Cambridge is also closely connected to

Kiingi Taawhiao tongikura Arekahaanara tooku haona kaha,

Kemureti tooku oko horoi,

Ngaaruawaahia tooku tuurangawaewae." In this context,

"Ko Kemureti tooku oko horoi" acknowledges Cambridge as a washbowl of sorrow, associated with the use of the lake/waters of Te Koo Utu to relieve grief and restore mana. This statement provides an important cultural lens for considering new development in the town centre.

4. Cultural Values Potentially Relevant to the Site

- **Mana whenua relationships:** The site lies within a broader landscape where Ngāti Koroki Kahukura, Ngati Haua and Waikato-Tainui through engagement.
- **Kiingitanga associations:** Cambridge is linked with King Taawhiao's tongikura and the memory of Waikato raupatu, land loss, grief, and resilience.
- **Whakapapa and place names:** The use of Horotiu Kemureti, Te Oko Horoi, Waikato Awa, Maungatautari to rooms or areas.
- **Archaeology and subsurface risk:** Demolition and basement excavation may expose archaeological material.
- **Freshwater stress and demand on the Waikato River**
  The development should recognise pressure on the Waikato River and connected freshwater systems. Reducing reliance on treated potable water is consistent with protecting the mauri of wai and supporting a more sustainable urban form
- .**Stormwater reuse options**
  Stormwater from roof areas could potentially be captured, filtered, and reused on site to reduce pressure on the Waikato River.

5. Potential Cultural Effects

Project activity	Potential cultural effect	Indicative response
Basement excavation	Risk of disturbance to archaeology, taonga or koiwi	Prepare accidental discovery protocol, archaeological assessment, and cultural monitoring approach.
Stormwater and servicing	Potential effects on water quality, mauri, and downstream receiving environments.	Use water-sensitive design, treatment devices, spill controls, and maintenance commitments.
Four-storey built form	Change to streetscape scale, views, and cultural legibility of the town centre.	Integrate mana whenua design input, appropriate materials, and interpretation.

6. Recommended Engagement

Early engagement is recommended with mana whenua likely to hold interests in Cambridge and the wider Waipa cultural landscape. At minimum, the project team should seek guidance from the Ngati Koroki Kahukura representatives and confirm whether Waikato-Tainui Engagement should occur before final design, demolition, and earthworks methodology are confirmed. Also working with Designs, planning etc. The Cambridge Police station is an example a Ngati Koroki Kahukura rep was involved.

7. Incorporating King Taawhiao's Tongikura into the Development

The proposed building should incorporate King Taawhiao's tongikura as a guiding cultural design narrative rather than as a superficial motif. The phrase "Ko Kemureti toku oko horoi" should inform how the development responds to memory, restoration, water, mana, and the historic role of Cambridge within the Waikato and Kiingitanga landscape. Any use of the tongikura, including wording, translation, placement, or visual interpretation, should be confirmed through mana whenua engagement before final design approval.

The design response could include a mana whenua-led cultural design statement that connects the ground floor, public interface, and pedestrian experience with the idea of

Te Oko Horoi as a place of cleansing, reflection, and the restoration of dignity. This may be expressed through careful integration of water-sensitive design, planted thresholds, textured paving, recesses for pause and gathering, and a calm entry sequence that acknowledges the cultural significance of Kemureti without over-commercialising it.

Architectural expression should consider layered references to the tongikura through materials, patterning, lighting, and façade rhythm. These references should be subtle, place-based, and developed with mana whenua artists or designers. Possible approaches include using locally resonant materials, interpretive panels, carved or patterned screens, water-evoking paving or landscape elements, and design features that frame movement from Victoria Street toward places of cultural memory such as Te Koo Utu.

The basement parking and earthworks component should also be addressed through this narrative. Because the proposal requires excavation below the existing town-centre surface, the design and construction methodology should recognise that the whenua may hold archaeological, cultural, and historical layers. This reinforces the need for archaeological assessment, accidental discovery procedures, cultural monitoring where requested, and contractor induction on the significance of the tongikura and the wider Cambridge cultural landscape.

The following design principles are recommended for incorporation into the project brief and architectural design response:

- **Mana whenua authorship:** Cultural interpretation should be developed with Ngāti Koroki Kahukura and any other confirmed mana whenua parties, not applied after the design is complete.
- **Respectful use of kupu:** The tongikura should not be used as branding, marketing, or decorative signage unless mana whenua expressly support that use.
- **Water as restoration:** Stormwater treatment, raingardens, and public-realm planting should express care for wai and mauri, linking the building's environmental performance with the "oko horoi" concept.
- **Thresholds and pause points:** The ground-floor frontage should include human-scale spaces for arrival, reflection, shelter, and wayfinding rather than a purely commercial edge.
- **Material memory:** Reused materials, local stone, timber, textured concrete, or patterned screens could help express continuity between the old site fabric and the new building.
- **Interpretation with restraint:** Any interpretive element should explain the significance of King Taawhiao's words in a culturally approved way and avoid reducing the tongikura to a slogan.

- **Connection to Te Koo Utu and the town centre:** The building should strengthen pedestrian legibility and public-realm connections within central Cambridge, acknowledging nearby cultural landscapes.

7. Mitigation and Design Recommendations

1. Cultural induction to contractors
2. Blessing before any works onsite, then coffee light snack.
3. Adopt an accidental discovery protocol for archaeology, taonga or koiwi
4. Provide opportunities for tribal members
5. Use water-sensitive urban design to treat and manage stormwater before discharge.
6. Consider cultural names that responds to Cambridge as Kemureti and Te Oko Horoi.
7. Design the street interface to contribute positively to Victoria Street through active frontages, human-scale materials, accessibility, and safe public spaces. Maintain ongoing communication with mana whenua during construction and provide a clear process for responding to discoveries or concerns.

8. Preliminary Conclusion

The proposed redevelopment of 32–42 Victoria Street has the potential to support town-centre intensification and mixed-use activity within a commercial setting. However, the cultural history of Cambridge, the associations of Kemureti with King Taawhiao and the Kiingitanga, and the statutory settlement context for Ngāti Koroki Kahukura mean that the project should proceed with careful mana whenua engagement and culturally informed design. The most significant risks are likely to relate to ground disturbance, respectful treatment of cultural narratives, stormwater effects, and the scale and expression of the new building within the town-centre environment.

Subject to mana whenua engagement and the mitigation measures outlined above, cultural effects may be able to be appropriately avoided, remedied, or mitigated. This conclusion should be revisited after direct feedback has been received from mana whenua and after archaeological, planning, and stormwater assessments have been completed.