



0 1KM

— Outstanding Natural Character Area
— High Natural Character Area



NATURAL CHARACTER EVALUATION TABLE

Biophysical Characteristics

Landforms | expansive tidal harbour with a matrix of exposed sand bars and mud flats along with shallow and deep water channels. Intact sequence of coastal slopes that frame the western margins of the harbour

Vegetation type, Cover & Patterns | mosaic of estuarine vegetation types although mangrove colonies dominate the upper and middle harbour areas. Wetland vegetation extends into shallow waters between the mouths of the rivers and streams feeding the Harbour. A contiguous coverage of remnant and regenerating indigenous coastal forest covers the coastal slopes.

Sea / Estuarine Water Bodies | the coastal environment enjoys a dynamic interaction with the waters of the Harbour - the Pacific Oceans tidal rhythm provides a counterpoint for the harbour catchments natural flow variations, clarity and flood cycles.

Land Uses / Activities / Structure | largely unmodified harbour environment with a scattering of dwellings located on coastal slopes amongst bush, however given the predominance of natural attributes, they do not disrupt the integrity of the underlying landforms, vegetation cover or the overall cohesion of the unit.

Habitat Value | rich and diverse coastal habitat due to the sequence of vegetation from mangrove, salt marsh and coastal scrub through to remnant indigenous vegetation on elevated coastal slopes.

Natural Processes | the interplay of intertidal estuarine flats and the tidal influence of the Harbour are expressive of natural processes within the coastal environment. Clearly defined ecological sequence of remnant indigenous forest descending into coastal margins, including mangrove colonies and mud flats.

Rating of Biophysical Characteristics

Very Low.....Very High

Perceptual Characteristics

Wildness / Wilderness / Remoteness | natural qualities are clearly evident in the amalgam of landforms, native forest remnants and their relationship with the Whitianga Harbour contributing to a sense of wildness although the proximity of Whitianga settlement limits this.

Experiential Attributes | very clearly defined harbour environment and interaction of indigenous forest, estuarine vegetation and mudflats which express natural coastal processes – the coastal environment has a strong endemic signature.

Context / Setting | the adjoining coastal environment has been severely modified due to farming, exotic forestry, and recent development while the Whitianga settlement is located on the northwestern banks of the Harbour entrance which affect the cohesion of the unit's margins.

Transient / Dynamic Attributes | Interplay of land and harbour including variation resulting from atmospheric conditions, time of day / year, tide and wildlife. Wading and sea birds prevalent.

Night-time Values | lighting from nearby settlement starts to affect the perceived intactness of the adjoining coastal environment.

Rating of Perceptual Characteristics

Very Low.....Very High

Overall Natural Character Evaluation
(Biophysical and Perceptual Values)

HIGH