



NATURAL CHARACTER EVALUATION TABLE

Biophysical Characteristics

Landforms | extensive steep harbour escarpment interspersed with exposed Karst landforms adjoining the eastern extent of the harbour comprising mud flats, exposed sand bars, shallow and deep water channels.

Vegetation type, Cover & Patterns | continuous sequence of remnant and regenerating indigenous coastal forest / shrubland cover the harbour escarpment down the coastal edge merging with a mosaic of estuarine vegetation types.

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 escarpment and adjoin harbour margins with a small numbers 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 | clearly defined ecological sequence of remnant indigenous forest through to mangrove colonies and mud flats. The estuarine flats and tidal influence of the Harbour are expressive of the interplay of natural processes within the coastal environment.

Rating of Biophysical Characteristics



Perceptual Characteristics

Wildness / Wilderness / Remoteness | enclosing landforms, particularly the continuous vegetation cover on the eastern escarpment and the Harbour headland, also contribute to the feeling of wilderness

Experiential Attributes | exposed karst landforms amongst indigenous coastal forest, expansive open water areas and tidal flats, absence of built form imbue the coastal environment with a memorable and 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 | absence of lighting across and above the escarpment contribute to the perceived intactness of the coastal environment.

Rating of Perceptual Characteristics



Overall Natural Character Evaluation

(Biophysical and Perceptual Values)

HIGH