

S42A Landscape Report

Private Plan Change 36 Conifer Grove

Prepared for

Selwyn District Council

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Introduction

1. In this report I review the plan change request with particular regard to landscape and visual amenity matters arising from it. In particular I focus on the ODP and the District Plan provisions that the applicant proposes to amend. I then consider what these will deliver and whether this will achieve the outcomes anticipated in the District Plan, Canterbury Regional Policy Statement and LURP for L3 zones. I also have regard to the outcomes anticipated in the Council's Rural Residential Strategy 2014 that was recently prepared under the Local Government Act and in fulfilment of the Canterbury Regional Policy Statement requirement to prepare such a strategy.
2. In combination these statutory documents provide, among other matters, detailed guidance on the kind of landscape character and amenity expected of L3 or rural residential zones. Essentially, the general direction of these documents aims to create high amenity rural residential environments. When compared to suburban living environments these are characterised by relatively large amounts of open space dominated by the presence of vegetation. Further, they are devoid of the usual paraphernalia of urban settings such as kerb and channel, street furniture, street lighting, fancy gateways and such like. Essentially L3 zones will have what I call a 'rural flavour', even though they are entirely devoted to residential activity. Some very small scale rural activity may occur, but is not expected to be prevalent.
3. To achieve these outcomes the various documents referred to above collectively set out the following parameters. These mostly focus on managing the proportion of open space to built form. In so doing they aim to maximise apparent open space by various means. Other provisions seek to avoid an overly urban appearance. It is against these outcomes that I assess this and other L3 plan change requests. It should be noted that not all of the following landscape matters are 'rules' contributing to the permitted baseline – some are assessment matters to be exercised at the time of subdivision.

a. L3 Zone location	Sufficiently close to existing townships so as to enable integration ¹ with them; and to maintain a contrast between urban and rural areas
b. Site density	1-2 dwellings per hectare
c. Site coverage	The lesser of 10% or 500m ²
d. Setbacks	20m from road boundaries ² and 15m from internal boundaries
e. Fencing	Transparent farm style – post and wire or rail, deer
f. Street design	Kerb & channel, street lights & formed sealed footpaths and prominent entry features are avoided

¹ Integration being via reticulated services and connectivity via pedestrian, cycle, blue and green networks.

² 20m in the LURP Action 18 (viii) – increased so as to compensate for the lack of landscaping controls

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| g | Natural features | Those of significance – water courses, notable trees, indigenous vegetation, geological features are protected, maintained or enhanced |
| h. | Heritage features | Those of significance are protected, maintained or enhanced |
| I | Integration | With the surrounding environment |
| j | Adverse visual effects | Avoiding areas alongside strategic infrastructure, education and research facilities |
| k | Tangata Whenua | Ngai Tahu / Te Taumutu Rununga values existing in the landscape are protected, maintained or enhanced |
| I | Views | Significant ones to the Port Hills are provided for |
4. While the above factors will contribute significantly to achieving desired L3 Zone outcomes, there are others that also potentially affect delivery of rural residential character. These include;
- a. The overall number of lots where the more there are the less likely rural outlook can be achieved.
 - b. The overall size and shape of the zone.
 - c. The layout of lots where subdivision layouts that result in the highest exposure to rural outlook are preferred.
 - d. Allied to the above – cumulative effects.
5. Also considered in this report are whether there are any landscape impediments to re-zoning. No expert landscape assessment accompanies the application, although it does include a section briefly addressing character, amenity and visual effects.³
6. Regarding the District Plan amendments promoted by the applicant I comment on these where they affect landscape outcomes. In so doing I recommend further amendments and discuss the reasons for them.
7. I also address any landscape and visual amenity concerns raised by submitters.
8. I have visited the plan change site and am familiar with its landscape character and that of its wider setting.

The Plan Change 36 application

9. The application is assessed as follows in accordance with the factors listed and described above.

³ Plan Change Application – section 7.2ff

L3 Zone location

10. The plan change site is well contained by roads on two of its three sides (being triangular in shape). And to the north along the internal boundary the site adjoins what is essentially existing rural residential activity (Living 2A zone), which in turn directly abuts Prebbleton Township – see **Figure 1** aerial photograph. The plan change site is reasonably close to the township and therefore is well located in terms of what is statutorily expected in terms of its integration with it.



Figure 1 *The plan change site – within yellow outline - showing its relationship to adjoining land uses and Prebbleton Township – at the top of the photograph.*

Site Density

11. With no lots less than 5000m² and a proposed average density of approximately 7,500m², the proposed site density will achieve the 1 to 2 dwellings per hectare expected of L3 zones.

Site coverage

12. Selwyn District Plan Township Rule 4.7.1 Table C4.1 concerning site coverage states for L3 that site coverage shall be the 'lesser of 10% or 500m²'. I understand

this rule will apply as any variation or amendment to it is not sought by the applicant.

Setbacks

13. The proposed LA18 setback rule requiring buildings to be setback 20m⁴ from road boundaries will apply.

Fencing

14. Required are fences to be essentially transparent subject to the typologies set out in the LA18 (Appendix 43) and Council's Rural Residential Strategy 2014. The applicant intends achieving this for boundary fences.

Street design

15. As for fencing the '*Appendix 43⁵ Indicative Road Cross Section and Living 3 zone and Fencing Typologies*' will apply. The plan change proposes that a PC 36-specific road cross section be added to the Plan, however this cross section is the same as that proposed as Appendix 43 in the LURP. The LURP therefore will deliver this cross section to all L3 zones, negating the need for a PC 36 specific rule that delivers the same cross section. It is noted that PC41 in Prebbleton has also separately sought that the Appendix 43 cross section apply to all L3 zones. Implementation of this will help maintain rural rather than urban character, through the avoidance of kerb & channel, street lights, formed sealed footpaths and prominent entry features.

Natural features

16. No natural features of any importance exist on site.

Heritage features

17. I understand from the application that there are no significant heritage features within the plan change site.

Integration

18. Integration via pedestrian and cycle linkages exists as a formed pathway within Birches Road. This will link the site with Prebbleton Township via a proposed cycleway / pedestrian reserve within the Plan Change site.

Adverse visual effects

19. Regarding these, the statutory documents flag the potential for rural residential activity to adversely affect the character and amenity of those residing in rural

⁴ 20m from road boundaries and 15m from internal boundaries in the LURP Action 18 (viii) – increased from the 15m in the SDP so as to compensate for the lack of landscaping controls

⁵ Identified as Appendix 41 in the application and Appendix 43 in LA18 Assessment Matter Rules 12.1.4.88 and 12.1.1.89

areas by diminishing the contrast between rural and urban environments. LA18 also wants to avoid visual effects where rural residential activity adjoins strategic infrastructure, education and research facilities, but it is unclear if this is for the benefit of rural residents or users of the above facilities.

20. For rural residents their outlook will be changed should rural residential development take place on neighbouring land. The intervening roads and existing shelter belts should counter any such effects for those residing in the neighbouring rural zone.
21. The rural outlook currently attained by the L2A zone residents on Trices Road will experience a change. The rules however do not appear to be concerned in this regard. Nonetheless there is a cumulative effect to consider in this regard, where there is an expectation where those residing in rural residential areas will have a rural outlook or at least be aware they live in a setting that is predominantly rural in character. This experience will be diminished for existing L2A zone residents, but in my opinion not lost. The reason is that overall site density for that area of land bounded by Trices, Hamptons and Birches Roads is still quite low. Further, the site sizes are reasonably large. Consequently abundant open space will continue to prevail despite the presence of additional dwellings within the proposed plan change site.
22. Concerning potential dilution of urban / rural contrast and diminished distinctiveness, the location of the plan change site in proximity to Prebbleton Township is such that this should be maintained. Birches and Hamptons Roads will reinforce this effect by providing reasonably strong physical boundaries containing and defining the site.

Tangata Whenua

23. There is a requirement for Ngai Tahu / Te Taumutu Rununga values existing in the landscape of plan change sites to be protected, maintained or enhanced. As mentioned in the application no such values appear to currently exist within the site. Nonetheless, the Te Taumutu Rununga does express concerns that landscaping within the site does not appear to recognise these values. I discuss this in more detail when I address the submission.

Views

24. There is a requirement for significant views to the Port Hills to be recognised and provided for. A central ROW aligned east / west along with the pedestrian / cycleway reserve will provide clear views to the Port Hills subject to the presence or otherwise of street trees.

Other matters

25. As mentioned, site size, the number of lots and their layout can all affect the delivery of rural residential character and amenity. At 12.4 hectares the plan change site is relatively small. A maximum of 17 lots are sought none of which is less than a minimum size of 5000m². Consequently the proposal is modest in scale. In combination with all of the other factors listed and discussed above, the proposal will achieve the character and amenity outcomes expected of a L3 zone.
- 26.

Overall, the proposed plan change appears able to achieve virtually all of the statutory provisions (in their general intent and as they collectively appear in the various documents) where they concern landscape and visual amenity outcomes. I am satisfied that the proposal will result in a high amenity - low density rural residential environment that exhibits ample open space and vegetation in proportion to built form.

The application

27. As mentioned, no expert landscape assessment accompanies the application, although it does briefly describe existing character and visual amenity. I generally agree with the observations and conclusions reached in that section of the application. There are however some points that I would like to add with respect to character and amenity, which I summarise as follows.
- a) The existing character of the plan change site is predominantly rural where vegetated open space dominates built form.
 - b) Due to the presence of three dwellings and Orion Prebbleton substation within the site and with others adjoining, rural character is at the lower end of the scale.
 - c) Apart from a water race that runs alongside the site within the Hamptons Road reserve, the site is devoid of any significant landscape features such as water bodies, indigenous vegetation, notable trees or heritage items.
 - d) The site is fully modified due to past and existing rural activity and the presence of residences.
 - e) Topographically the site is flat and is devoid of any relief.
 - f) The specific landscape character of the site is not unique or rare in any way.
 - g) Apart from the utilitarian appearance of the substation there are no features on site that detract from amenity such as transmission lines, although these do exist alongside Hamptons Road. Consequently the site exhibits moderately high visual amenity.
 - h) The wider setting is varied ranging from suburban density residential activity in nearby Prebbleton to typically inner rural plains with its mix of small scale farming and horticultural activities. Rural residential activity is also a feature of the surrounding area.
28. Overall, regarding landscape character and amenity the site is not especially significant in any way that would preclude rezoning for L3 activity. Nor are there any features within the site that would merit retention.
29. As the applicant notes, the site will however undergo a significant change in character and visual amenity resulting from implementation of rezoning. This will mean the loss of predominantly pastoral open space from which rural amenity is derived. In its place will be the kind of amenity that typically arises from rural residential activity. That is, the L3 environment will be characterised by the presence of large scale amenity planting associated with modern housing in a relatively open setting. In essence one sort of amenity will be exchanged for

another. Any adverse effects arising will be for existing residents neighbouring the site, whose rural outlook will be supplanted by L3 activity. This will mainly affect those living alongside the site on Trices Road.

30. Despite this, it is my opinion that there is no need to introduce avoidance or mitigation measures. As mentioned visual amenity will generally be high and so there will be no adverse effects in this regard – the plan change will simply exchange one sort of landscape amenity with a different (but still high) level of amenity.
31. Overall, I agree with the applicant that with regard to landscape and visual amenity effects the site is suitable for L3 rezoning.

The applicant's proposed District Plan amendments

32. The application states that it does not seek to amend or introduce new objectives and policies, instead relying on inclusion of the ODP and ensuring that it is implemented as intended. Based on my earlier discussion regarding the statutory parameters for L3 zones it is clear that the District Plan and proposed LA18 rules affecting landscape outcomes, such as those concerning building bulk and location, and fencing will be adhered to. On that basis I am satisfied that the landscape and amenity outcomes expected by these statutory documents (giving effect to the relevant ones in the RPS) will be achieved by this particular plan change via its ODP.
33. The ODP is satisfactory from a landscape point of view. The proposed lot sizes are appropriate, as is their layout. The relatively small number of lots will ensure that future residents will either have rural outlook or a strong sense that they reside in a setting that is generally rural or semi-rural in character.
34. As discussed earlier, the only outstanding matter concerns the shelter belts shown on the ODP, whose purpose seems unclear. For the reasons I have already outlined, I do not think it necessary that these need to be retained.
35. The only other outstanding landscape matter concerns treatment of the ROW. The applicant has indicated that the treatment of roads, and by inference the ROW, will adhere to the LA18 Appendix 43 guide – referred to as *Figure Y* in the application. Doubtless details regarding the ROW treatment will be forthcoming at the subdivision stage. In any case, it would be desirable to include tree and other plantings within the ROW so as to enhance amenity and landscape coherence.
36. The applicant also assesses the proposed plan change against the relevant statutory documents, although it is apparent that the application predates LA18. Nevertheless, regarding landscape and amenity I am satisfied that the proposed plan change and subsequent L3 zoning will appropriately achieve the relevant statutory provisions.

Submissions

37. Two submitters raise landscape and visual amenity concerns which are addressed by topic as follows.

Retention of shelter belts (s1 M Sinclair D1.3)

38. This submitter seeks the retention of shelter belts as alluded to in the application and points out that there is a lack of specifics as to how this is achieved. No mention is made as to why it is necessary to retain the shelter belts. I agree that little detail is given to the matter of the shelter belts as shown on the ODP and Conceptual Development Layout plan. But as discussed I do not think it necessary to retain the shelter belts.

Lot size (s1 M Sinclair D1.1)

39. In this submission an increase in lot size ($> 7247m^2$) is sought so as to be consistent with those properties alongside Trices Road. The applicant states that *'The Living 3 zone allows from an average dwelling density of $7,500m^2$ '*, although the average net area density is $7,135m^2$ (under the 'Visual' heading). The ODP shows that the smallest lot (11) is $5000m^2$. Despite the average and minimum site sizes proposed by the applicant, the density fulfils the 1 to 2 dwellings per hectare sought by the RPS (chapter 6). Because of that, the proposed density acceptably meets what is anticipated for L3 environments and as a consequence the amenity arising from this will be achieved.

Inappropriate landscaping

40. Mahaanui Kurataiao on behalf of Te Taumutu Rununga is concerned that the ODP lacks sufficient detail to ascertain whether biodiversity and mahinga kai are taken account of. The submission stresses the importance to the Rununga of restoring indigenous vegetation and the role it plays in providing biodiversity.
41. Given that the statutory provisions referred to earlier seek recognition of Te Taumutu Rununga values then it would seem desirable to encourage the provision of indigenous plant species. The applicant has not indicated what vegetation will be provided (within the reserve and ROW). Nor does the applicant recommend that certain plant species be provided within private land holdings.
42. The best opportunity for providing indigenous vegetation is in the public open space and / common areas – namely the ROW and cycle / pedestrian reserve. If blue networks existed then these too would be appropriate locations. So it is my recommendation that indigenous vegetation be planted in these areas, (indicated at the subdivision stage) and that no restriction is placed on future residents other than to encourage or promote the planting of site appropriate indigenous vegetation, but not exclusively so.

Additional lots (s3 Orion NZ Ltd)

43. A further submitter (Orion) – also seeks amendments to the proposal involving the ability to subdivide its site into more lots than the four shown on the ODP advanced by the applicant. This will have little effect as two of the Orion sites exceed 1 hectare. Consequently it is feasible subject to the L3 average site density of 1 to 2 dwellings per hectare to accommodate additional lots and still achieve the kind of outcomes expected of a L3 environment.

Conclusion

44. Generally the proposed plan change and indicative subdivision layout is entirely appropriate with what the relevant statutory documents expect of the L3 environment. In particular the site sizes, at no less than 0.5ha are entirely appropriate as are the relatively small number of lots.
45. Indications are that the applicant accepts the L3 rules as they stand and that the ODP is capable of enabling their achievement. I agree that the combination of both will deliver the kind of landscape character and amenity expected of L3 zones.
46. Regarding landscaping and the Rununga's concerns; it would seem that the appropriate time to address these are at the subdivision consent stage when more detailed design is developed – particularly in accordance with the relevant subdivision assessment matters. In this regard I encourage the use of indigenous vegetation, particularly within common land.

Andrew Craig Landscape Architect

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