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LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS ASSESSMENT REPORT

Prepared for

Mrs G.M. Logan

160 Bangor Road, Darfield

June 2015

Expert Witness

Landscape Assessment

Planning

Design

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION	4
Application site	4
The receiving environment and contextual setting	7
Landscape values	8
PROPOSED PLAN CHANGE	8
Outline Development Plan (description)	8
RELEVANT STATUTORY DOCUMENTS	10
The Resource Management Act 1991	11
The Land Use Recovery Plan 2013	12
The Canterbury Regional Policy Statement 1998 & 2010	12
The Selwyn District Plan	14
The Selwyn District Council Rural-Residential Strategy (June 2014)	15
ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS ON LANDSCAPE AND AMENITY	16
Users of public roads	16
Users of the rail corridor	17
Neighbouring residents	18
Summary	19
AVOIDANCE, REMEDIATION, MITIGATION OF ADVERSE EFFECTS	19
Avoidance	19
Remediation	20
Mitigation	20
RECOMMENDED RULES	20
CONCLUSION	24

APPENDIX 1: OUTLINE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

INTRODUCTION

Mrs G.M. Logan is requesting a Private Plan Change in relation to an area of land adjacent to the northwest part of the township of Darfield (the 'site'). The site is located at 160 Bangor Road and is shown mapped on **figure 1**. I have been engaged to assess and report on the effects of the proposed Plan Change with regards to landscape and amenity.

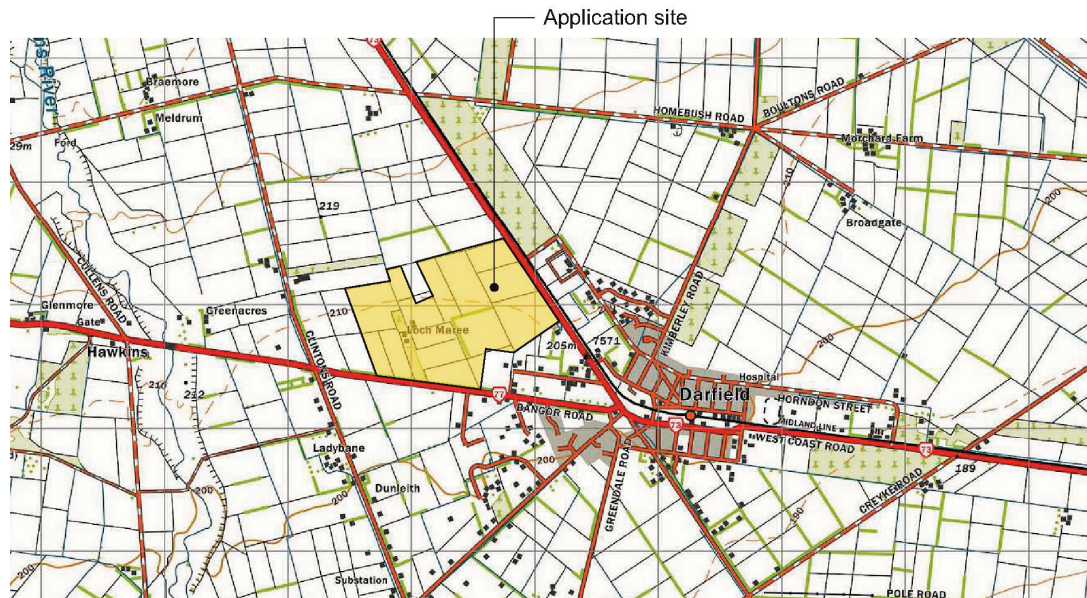


Figure 1: Application site location

The details of the proposed Plan Change are set out in the Private Plan Change Request document that has been prepared by Avanzar Consulting Ltd. In summary, the proposed Plan Change seeks to lift the deferred status of the site from Living 2A Deferred to Living 2A (a low density residential zoning). I understand that the land's deferred zone status relates to a water supply upgrade (which I understand has now been met) and provision of an ODP including measures to address reverse sensitivity effects. The proposal incorporates a requirement for all development of the site to be in accordance with an Outline Development Plan (ODP) that is included as part of the Plan Change application.

The intention of the proposed zoning is to provide for low density residential development. The result of the ODP and the various planning mechanisms that are incorporated into the proposed Plan Change is that a specific type and configuration of low density residential development will be provided for.

I understand that a pre-application meeting was held between Ms Clay (Planner for the applicant) and the Selwyn District Council, where the 'Darfield Integration Plan – ODP Area 4'¹ was discussed. This ODP included an indicative Living 2A zoning which included the subject site. Following on from this, another meeting was held with Council's urban designer where a draft ODP was discussed. Several points were raised by the Council's urban designer, most of which have been included in the final proposed ODP. This ODP was presented at a public 'drop-in' meeting, held on December 10, 2014. A significant number of neighbours attended this meeting which was held on site. The tenor of the public response was positive, with few concerns raised, all of which were resolved through discussions with the various experts present. Many attendees took copies of the proposed ODP away with them. As I understand it, there has been no further feedback from the public since this meeting took place.

¹ As I understand it, this plan has no status.

The ODP includes the location and extent of different lot densities, basic circulation patterns, a stormwater management area (if it is required) and the location of existing vegetation patterns and buildings (**attachment 1**). The ODP is discussed in this report and forms the basis of my landscape and visual effects assessment.

LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

Application Site

At the macro scale, the site is located in the Upper Plains Land Type which in itself is part of a much wider landtype grouping, known as a “Low Altitude Plains Landscape”². This land type “...comprises the broad low angle coalescing outwash fans and associated high terraces of the major rivers (Rakaia and Waimakariri Rivers)”. The site is towards the eastern edge of this land type. The substrates here are deep gravels topped with shallow droughty loessial-based soils of varying depth.

The eastern boundary of the site is defined by the West Coast Road / SH73 and the Midland Line rail corridor. The western and northern site boundaries are adjacent to the Rural (Outer Plains) Zone. The southern part of the site towards Darfield township is bounded by Bangor Road / SH77. These two state highways that run along parts of the site boundaries have road speeds limited to between 80 and 100kmph.

The site covers 130 hectares and adjoins the existing urban boundary at Darfield and a mix of Living Zones comprising L2, L2A1 and L2A Deferred Zones. There is a narrow Council owned land parcel ‘inserted’ into the site on the north boundary and accessed via an easement linking it with West Coast Road. This largely grazed 4 hectare land parcel contains 2 wells, a water reservoir structure and a weather station. See **figures 2 and 3**.

² Canterbury Regional Landscape Study 1993 and Review *Final Report* July 2010



Figure 2: (top) Application site and context.

Figure 3: (bottom) Pump shed and reservoir building on Council owned land to north.

The site is largely visually open from the West Coast Road and from the north generally (**figure 4**). Views into the site from the south and west are largely precluded by evergreen, predominantly coniferous shelterbelts. The site is currently used for sheep grazing, cropping and the production of feed crops. The landowner's private residence is nestled within a mature high amenity sheltered and large gardened setting, which visually screens it from much of the site. The location of this property can be seen on **figures 2 and 6**. Other tree and woodlot planting and an area of farm sheds are located associated with the homestead - also centrally on the site. The site appears flat, but falls subtly towards Bangor Road. There are two water races located on the site. One bisects the site from north to south, and a second smaller race is located along part of the site's southeastern boundary. A collection of rural sheds and outbuildings are located in a separately fenced off yard area near the homestead. A number of tall individual trees, woodlots and shelterbelts are well established within and along the boundaries of the site, several of which could potentially be integrated with any future development of the site. In

addition to the yards area, a second coniferous shelterbelt further to the northwest subdivides the majority of the site into essentially two large paddocks.



Figure 4: Looking across the site from West Coast Road / SH73.



Figure 5: Looking into the site from Bangor Road / SH77. Russell Range in distance.



Figure 6: View from Bangor Rd. entry up driveway to homestead (obscured behind woodlot).

Because of the flat and largely open topography, views to the foothills and taller Russell and Torlesse Ranges in particular are largely unobstructed. Three of the five internal shelterbelts running west to east and the central woodlot obscure parts of these views. However, the overall experience on site is of an open 'big-sky expansive landscape with broad views to distant landscape features (mountains) which are dramatic.

In general, vegetation patterns in the contextual setting are typically well-clipped evergreen coniferous shelterbelts including low gorse hedgerows, and also include broadleaf species such as *Eucalyptus* and various deciduous species. There are also sporadic woodlots and clumps of trees nearby - usually near dwellings to provide wind shelter and more intimate living environments in an otherwise expansive landscape.

The site and internal paddock boundaries are fenced with post and wire stock fences. Some of these fences accommodate old gorse hedging. Post and rail fencing is also found at the entrance to the homestead on Bangor Road.

The Receiving Environment and Contextual Setting

The receiving environment can be defined as the area surrounding the application site that could be potentially affected by the proposed changes to the site in a more than minor way. The receiving environment is shown mapped in **figure 2**. The site and the proposed changes to it may be visible and/or perceived beyond this area, however, the difference is - any effects beyond the receiving environment would not be significantly adverse.

A predominantly open, traditional Canterbury Plains rural landscape (which includes the site) characterises the general setting. The site sits more or less cradled between moderately large farmed blocks to the north, 10-acre lifestyle block development to the west and low-density residential development to the south and east. Further afield is Darfield Township with a traditional rural 'service town' mix of urban, commercial and business zones. Darfield High School and Trinity Church are located near the site at the junction of state highways 73 and 77. Approximately two kilometres to the north of the site is the new Fonterra dairy factory. Land parcels in the contextual area are geometric in form with their boundaries and fencelines often demarcated with shelterbelts and less formal planting to provide protection from winds, particularly the strong northwesterlies. The form of the braided Hawkins River to the west, contrasts with the dominant cultural patterning, as it cuts across this typical 'Canterbury patchwork quilt' rural landscape.

The surrounding rural landscape, zoned Rural Outer Plains ('OP') is presently utilized in a number of ways including but not limited to: dairying, cropping, sheep and cattle grazing, feed crop production and for lifestyle and hobby farming purposes. The township of Darfield, is reasonably compact, with its northern and southern edges transitioning abruptly to traditional rural farming activities and subsequent broad-scale land patterns. At the western end of the township the land patterns 'fan out' in a southwest and northwest direction forming a much more gradual transition to the broad scale rural landscape via significant lifestyle block and low density residential development patterns. The site is located between these southwestern and northwestern arms of low density residential development.

Cridges Road extends towards the site from West Coast Road extending an access 'spoke' from the junction of the two state highways into an area transitioning towards a low density residential type of development. This area is zoned as Living 2 or Living 2 Deferred. Public reserves are located near the site – two large reserves are on the eastern side of West Coast Road / Midland Railway Line, and a third is located between the site and Darfield Township on Bangor Road (Pearson Memorial Reserve).

The site is located between and partly bordering pair of state highways (Bangor Road / SH77 and West Coast Road / SH73). Bangor Road provides a connection to the Inland Scenic Route accessing attractions such as Mount Hutt, Methven and Ashburton. The West Coast Road provides one the two direct links Canterbury has with the West Coast – via Porters and Arthurs Passes. The public road environment is typically rural - even where zoning is residential, characterised by sealed and unsealed roads, broad mown or grazed grass verges, grassed drainage swales, minimal kerb and channeling, hedge and shelterbelt planting (deciduous and evergreen), post and wire and low timber fences. Power is typically reticulated above ground except for in the newer low density residential subdivisions where it is undergrounded.

Overall, the character of the majority of the contextual area, including the site, is that of a traditional working rural landscape. However, the proximity of Darfield Township, characterised by its settled and 'bustling' rural service-town character, and partly surrounded by lower density residential development provides a contrasting and domesticated urban character. The site thus finds itself located more or less on the transition between a settlement (Darfield) and a traditional rural plains landscape.

Landscape Values

I have not undertaken a specific study of community-held values pertaining to the site and area in general. However, several statutory documents do provide some indication of the perceived value, which I will discuss below:

Canterbury Regional Landscape Study:

This document states that with regards to landscape values; *“To many New Zealanders the Plains landscape is the very essence of Canterbury. The contrast between the unmodified ‘natural’ hills and the manicured patchwork quilt of the plains has been recognised as distinctive through literature, art and visitor data”... To geomorphologists, the Canterbury Plains are classic outwash plains... To tangata whenua, the plains contain the great taonga, the rivers and wetlands*”³.

The study goes on to say under ‘Degree of Naturalness’;

“Because of the lack of landform variety, it is the landcover and land use patterns that dominate the character of the Plains. The landscape is perceived as un-natural apart from its soils, the limited remnant natural features such as wetlands, forest, shrubland, and grassland pockets, and the braided rivers, the latter are the most important natural feature. Viewed from higher ground or from the air the Plains are certainly expressive of their formation but at a scale not readily experienced at ground level. An elevated vantage point is best from which to experience the subtlety of the natural soil and drainage patterns that occur across much of the landscape. The developed Plains are very important to the region’s landscape image, however their lack of naturalness suggests that they do not meet the criteria of S6(b)” ⁴.

The ‘Upper Plains’ land type sits within a larger landscape category ‘Low Altitude Plains Landscapes’. Typically this comprises *‘shallow droughty soils and variable loess cover* ⁵...

I understand that the 1993 Canterbury Regional Landscape Study has undergone a review (2010) and that the findings for this area are not significantly different from the original study.

PROPOSED PLAN CHANGE

I am familiar with the information and plans that make up the proposed Plan Change request. In this assessment I will not review all of the various plan provisions and mechanisms that are proposed to direct the changes to the landscape. Others will cover this. This assessment will focus on the changes to the landscape set out by the Outline Development Plan (ODP) – **attachment 1**. It is my understanding that any development not in accordance with the ODP would be at minimum a discretionary activity requiring resource consent.

Outline Development Plan

The landscape change that would occur following implementation of the ODP would change the environment from several large open rural paddocks and a narrow treed block (‘homestead and sheds block’), to a low-density residential land use. The homestead and garden, various sheds and outbuildings and the woodlot block to the north of the

³ Canterbury Regional Landscape Study, Volume 1, prepared for the Canterbury Regional Council, Boffa Miskell and Lucas Associates, October 1993, page 39.

⁴ Canterbury Regional Landscape Study, Volume 1, prepared for the Canterbury Regional Council, Boffa Miskell and Lucas Associates, October 1993, page 40.

⁵ Ibid, page 39.

homestead and west of the sheds are clustered in such a way that they can be potentially retained within a single privately owned allotment and incorporated within the development. A maximum of 125 allotments at an overall average lot size of 1 hectare are anticipated⁶. The pattern of development would follow a 'loosely' radiating form in terms of lot densities where the largest lots would be located around the north, northwest and northeast parts of the site, with the relatively smaller lots located closer to the more settled areas and main transport routes.

The majority of the lots would be accessed via an internal roading network which would vary in road width and hierarchy depending on density of development. There would be two main access points into the development, both located on Bangor Road. Three other potential connections are provided for, two offering additional links to Darfield Township, via Cridges Road and the Pearson block if these neighbouring properties were developed in the future. A third potential roading connection is proposed to the north site boundary future-proofing further northward urban development.

It is likely that the majority of the shelterbelts currently located on site would be retained in private ownership for pragmatic reasons (providing immediate wind shelter and privacy). The ODP neither proposes their removal or retention. Rural residential development generally results in a high amenity outcome which is not usually reliant on the retention of existing vegetation patterns. Whether this existing planting is retained or not would be better determined at subdivision design phase. However, other than serving a practical role, the layout of the existing vegetation on site and indeed in the contextual setting strongly informs the cadastral pattern or 'grain' of the land and hence the general layout of the ODP's roading and development densities.

It is acknowledged that any various future owners would develop each lot and likely put in their own shelterbelts along boundaries along with other planting to provide additional shelter from strong winds. To that end it is anticipated that vegetation patterns overall would gradually increase over time.

It is understood from NZTA that the shelterbelt located just outside the site along Bangor Road will be removed in the near future (see **figure 7**). Doubtless, individual owners would plant up their individual frontages with Bangor Road to provide privacy, southerly shelter and a buffer to vehicle movements. Also of note is a proposed 20m building setback along Bangor Road. This would ensure that dwellings did not extend close to the road and that open space and vegetated patterns continued to dominate views from the road corridor.

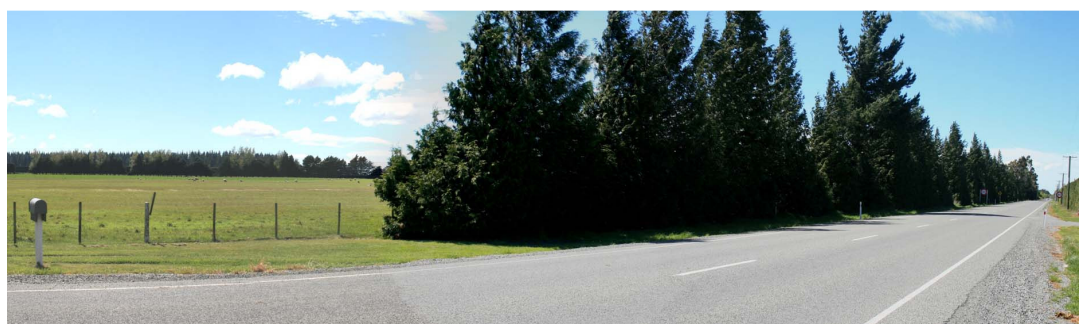


Figure 7: View eastwards down Bangor Road including the less formal shelterbelt which is to be removed by NZTA in the future.

⁶ At this stage the final size of the stormwater management area (if necessary) is undefined. A provisional size of 1.7ha has been allowed for in the ODP. Final lot numbers may change slightly during subdivision design stage, but will nonetheless comply with the permitted 1 ha average lot size across the site.

The 'watercourse/water races' crossing the site would be retained and their margins enhanced for amenity reasons and protected by way of a 10m building and earthworks setback rule. I understand that ownership of the water races would be conditioned at subdivision stage and that it would be possible that these water races be ultimately monitored and managed by a residents group.

A 1.7 hectare stormwater management area⁷ is indicated, located in the site's (lowest) southeastern corner. This area would be maintained as mown grass. Individual coniferous⁸ trees (e.g. redwoods) would be planted around the periphery of the area contributing high levels of amenity.

Boundary fencing, if handled poorly, has the potential to introduce an overly 'urban' character to the site, reducing levels of openness and ruralness. For this reason, a rule on fencing is provided restricting fencing to highly transparent typologies that express an obvious rural vernacular. This rule will align with the intent of chapter 5 of the Rural Residential Strategy 2014⁹.

In addition to the layout and overall character described above, the detail of the proposed Plan Change request would align with a suite of provisions that have become increasingly recognised by the Council following the release of the Land Use Recovery Plan and Rural Residential Strategy (June 2014). These provisions will control the way in which the overall site and individual lots can be developed in order to maintain a low-density residential character and which include such aspects as:

- Built site coverage.
- Building height.
- Building setbacks from boundaries.
- The type, height and extent of any permitted boundary fencing.
- Building densities.

The general layout of the proposed new L2A Zone can be seen on the attached ODP. It is the changes to the site and changes to the site's context arising from this that I have assessed with regards to any effects on landscape character and rural amenity.

RELEVANT STATUTORY DOCUMENTS

Notwithstanding the sites 'Deferred' status, signaling a strong intention for the land's future zoning, it is worth considering the statutory documents listed below that would be relevant to any effects on landscape and rural amenity arising from the proposed Plan Change. In this way the proposal can be robustly tested, to provide Council with certainty of outcome.

- The Resource Management Act 1991(RMA),
- The Canterbury Regional Policy Statement (RPS),
- The Natural Resources Regional Plan (NRRP)
- The Selwyn District Plan,

In addition, the adopted Selwyn District Council Rural Residential Strategy (June 2014) gives some guidance regarding how rural residential development is best managed in the District.

The following section will summarise the guidance that the above documents provide in an assessment of the landscape effects of the proposed Plan Change. Following my

⁷ Actual requirement of (and thus, size to be confirmed).

⁸ Evergreen trees are best suited around stormwater basins, as they drop fewer leaves that might otherwise impede the stormwater system's functioning.

⁹ Paragraph 5.26 and Fig 15 'Rural residential fencing typologies'.

assessment of the effects of the proposed Plan Change in the subsequent section, I will test the consistency of the proposed Plan Change with these documents in the conclusion.

The Resource Management Act 1991

Part II (Purpose and Principles) of the Act sets out matters to be taken into consideration when carrying out assessments of the effects of development on landscape and amenity. This is found under all parts of Section 5 (Purpose) and Section 7 (Other Matters – specifically b,c,f,and g).

- (1) The purpose of this Act is to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources.
- (2) In this Act, ***sustainable management*** means managing the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources in a way, or at a rate, which enables people and communities to provide for their social, economic, and cultural well-being and for their health and safety while—
 - (a) sustaining the potential of natural and physical resources (excluding minerals) to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations; and
 - (b) safeguarding the life-supporting capacity of air, water, soil, and ecosystems; and
 - (c) Avoiding, remedying, or mitigating any adverse effects of activities on the environment.

The proposed rezoning will not hamper any reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations. The development of the site would represent a minor reduction in productive land in the context of the Canterbury Plains within Selwyn District. The significant increase in large-scale vegetation cover (trees), following development of individual allotments will benefit soil and water resources, by providing shelter from prevailing winds, particularly the north-westerly and by reducing the need for irrigation.

Under Section 7(c) of the Act; the maintenance and enhancement of amenity values is provided for. The RMA interprets amenity to mean; ... *“those natural or physical qualities and characteristics of an area that contribute to people’s appreciation of its pleasantness, aesthetic coherence and cultural and recreational attributes”*.

Under Section 7(f) of the Act; the maintenance and enhancement of the quality of the environment is provided for.

Regarding ‘aesthetic coherence’, ‘aesthetics’ are concerned with beauty or the appreciation of beauty while ‘coherence’ is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as ‘the quality of forming a unified whole’.

The site is currently largely open. Following development of the individual allotments this will change, over time, to a more intimate character contributed by the additional dwellings, shelter and garden plantings. The proposed rezoning will see a reduction in rural outlook and open space than what is currently the case. In my opinion, a low-density pattern of residential development here will contribute a different type of amenity, largely through a substantial increase in vegetation type and pattern, but also through additional built forms. Levels of amenity will be largely reliant on the various individuals’ landscape treatment of their site frontages. There is already precedent for the type and level of amenity anticipated in this type of low density residential development, which can be seen in other areas, not necessarily limited to the Selwyn District, that have recently undergone rezoning from rural to residential land use. There is no reason to expect that these patterns of development would not continue on the proposed site with the provisions set out in the ODP and various rules.

Thus it is expected that high levels of amenity and environmental quality will be achieved following the implementation of the ODP. And so Section (c) and Section (f) matters in the RMA will be achieved.

The Land Use Recovery Plan (LURP)

The LURP directs regional and district councils via policies and rules to assist in the recovery of communities including housing and businesses following the Canterbury earthquakes. (Note – Darfield is located beyond the Christchurch metropolitan boundary so the LURP is not applicable here).

The Canterbury Regional Policy Statement (CRPS)

The CRPS forms the basis for the development of Regional and District Plans. Landscape matters are discussed in Chapter 8. To summarise, the CRPS states its primary issue on landscape as *‘any adverse effect on the integrity, distinctive characteristics and contribution to a regional sense of identity of wetlands, the coast, lakes and rivers, natural features and landscapes, indigenous flora and fauna, heritage values, and the relationship of Tangata Whenua with these things’*.

The Objectives of Chapter 8 then seek to protect or enhance these *‘wetlands, natural features and landscapes, indigenous biodiversity, ecosystems, historical and cultural heritage, places and buildings’* where they contribute to Canterbury’s distinctive character.

In Part 4: ‘Summary of Significant Resource Management Issues of the Region’, Chapter 8 - the issues pertaining to Landscape, Ecology and Heritage are found as set out below:

“Adverse effects of the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources on the integrity, distinctive characteristics, and contribution to a regional sense of identity of:

- (d) wetlands, including their overall area and functioning.*
- (e) the natural character of the coastal environment, wetlands, lakes, rivers, and their margins.*
- (f) natural features and landscapes including their cultural, amenity and recreational values.*
- (g) indigenous vegetation, habitats of indigenous fauna and ecosystems.*
- (h) the historical and cultural heritage of Canterbury including its amenity and recreational values.*
- (f) the relationship of Tangata Whenua and their culture and traditions with their ancestrallands, water, sites, wahi tapu, and other taonga”.*

In Part 20: ‘Integration of Resource Management Processes’, Chapter 20.4 – regional significance is discussed. Firstly, an area of land has to meet a series of criteria (labeled ‘(1) Matters’). These matters, listed a-k outline what constitutes regional significance under a series of headings. From testing the site against these criteria, it unsurprisingly meets none of them and therefore does not reach the status as a landscape of regional significance.

Chapter 12A (C12A) provides for rural residential development, which it defines as meaning *“Residential units outside the Urban Limits at an average density of between 1 and 2 households per hectare”*¹⁰. However, the site is not included within the ‘Urban Design Strategy’ area defined in Map 1, Chapter 12A. Therefore this chapter of the CRPS does not apply to this application.

¹⁰ Regional Policy Statement, Chapter 12A, P24.

The Decisions on the PCRPS have been released and the CRPS has been operative since 15 January 2013. Landscape matters are discussed in Chapter 12. Most of the material within this chapter relates to the protection of Outstanding Natural Landscapes. The site and contextual area is not subject to any Section 6 (a) or (b) matters. However, Objective 12.2.2 '*Identification and management of other landscapes*', and Policy 12.3.3 '*Identification and management of other important landscapes*' need to be considered.

Objective 12.2.2 seeks to recognise landscapes that are not outstanding but are nonetheless important at a regional, district or local level. The identification of such landscapes would be recorded at a territorial authority level and would be primarily concerned with the protection of amenity landscapes through landscape controls. Policy 12.3.3 would then come into play by identifying, protecting and appropriately managing such important landscapes and setting out various methods for achieving this.

The site is not 'important' at a regional, district or local level. It is not mapped as such in the District Plan and would be unlikely to be. And so the above objectives and policies from the CRPS would not be relevant to the proposal.

Proposed Plan Change 1 to the operative CRPS (Development of Greater Christchurch, 1998)

(Note – Darfield is located beyond the UDS boundary so Plan Change 1 is not applicable here)

Policy 6 outlines locations, densities, numbers and sequencing for rural residential development in a number of growth areas. The policy serves to ensure that sufficient land is available for population and economic growth and that supporting infrastructure can be provided for in a timely manner.

Policy 14 provides additional guidance for territorial authorities in determining locations for rural residential development, not already zoned in district plans. A list of methods to achieve appropriate rural residential development outcomes are then set out, followed by a discussion on anticipated environmental results¹¹. Where relevant to landscape, these include intensification of residential areas rather than continued peripheral development, encouraging sustainable forms of transport including walking and cycling, retaining and improving the natural environment, minimising cumulative effects of development, improving the transition between urban and rural land use. Other anticipated outcomes include high quality urban design, provision of a wide range of living options, and the protection of amenity. The ODP and various provisions achieve the landscape policies and anticipated outcomes of the CRPS through:

- a) A proposed minimum net density of 1-2 household lots per hectare;
- b) integration with the Darfield township and settlement where the development will not appear sporadic or as a disconnected encroachment into the rural landscape;
- c) not overwhelming or eroding the highly valued character and amenity of the rural landscape around Darfield;
- d) consolidating an existing settled area and not constituting a 'dormitory' area within the rural zone;
- e) an integrated design for subdivision and land use;
- f) avoiding reverse sensitivity effects;
- g) recognising key existing infrastructure and not compromising the operation of these activities;
- h) avoiding significant ecological effects;
- i) not compromising Canterbury's regional sense of identity.

¹¹ 12A.6 Anticipated Environmental Results 19 May 2010.

The Selwyn District Plan

Part B1.4 in the Township volume of the Plan mentions landscapes and its values held by the community. The Plan identifies outstanding natural landscapes in the following way:

“A ‘shared values’ approach was adopted. The Council consulted with residents, landowners, occupiers, tāngata whenua and interest groups about any areas or natural features which they considered to be outstanding in each geomorphic area. The participants then identified activities which they thought had effects which were appropriate and inappropriate within these outstanding areas or natural features. The discussions were facilitated by a professional landscape architect, and form the basis of the policies and rules in this plan. Throughout this process the Canterbury Plains were identified as special, but did not meet the rigorous test that section 6(b) requires when determining landscapes are ‘outstanding’”¹².

The subject site does not fall within any identified outstanding natural landscapes or contain any features identified on the planning maps.

The current L2A (Deferred) zoning for the site signals a likely future transition to a low-density residential zone (L2A) - subject to Council’s satisfaction of any outstanding matters enabling uplifting the site’s ‘deferred’ status¹³. A rezoning to L2A would increase the Districts’ capacity for provision of rural residential living. The proposed Plan Change intends to provide a high amenity rural residential living environment. The new area of zoning will enable development consistent with the included ODP.

Landscape and amenity matters are addressed in the Plan in both the Rural and Township volumes and contain a number of objectives and policies that any new development must meet.

In the SDP, Rural Volume / Part B – Growth of Rural Area the issues identified are largely concerned with how the demand for varied living opportunities might be met in the rural zone, how the potentially adverse effects of development can affect natural and physical resources, and rural character, the problems created through reverse sensitivity and the dilemma of how residential density can be managed solely through subdivision methods.

Because the site context includes living zones (L2A1 and L2 Zones), and that the proposed development will provide a low-density residential zone, the objectives and policies relating to amenity need to be largely addressed under the Township volume. In this volume an additional issue identified is concerned with the effect of any activity that makes townships ‘less pleasant places to live or work in’. Reverse sensitivity is also an issue identified in the Plan for the more built up areas.

It is important that the uplifting of the sites deferred status and re-zoning of the site - effectively from Rural (Outer Plains) Zone to a low-density residential zone does not offend the policies and objectives outlined above. With regards to landscape matters, I consider the specific policies and objectives are: Objectives B4.1.1 and, B4.1.2 and Policies B4.1.1, B4.1.1, B4.1.9, B4.1.11, B4.1.12 and B4.1.13, Objectives B3.4.1, B3.4.2 and Policies B3.4.1, B3.4.3, B3.4.16, B3.4.17 and B3.4.20.

The Plan anticipates that by implementing the objectives and policies from Section B3.4 the quality of the environment following this Plan Change should result in

- a) *‘Variation in activities in the rural area on the Plains.*
- b) *Buildings are low rise (1 or 2 storey) and surrounded by vegetation cover rather than hard standing.*

¹² Part B1.4, page B1-034.

¹³ Lifting of the land’s deferred status currently pending an upgraded water supply, provision of an ODP to be included in the Selwyn District Plan including measures to address reverse sensitivity effects.

- c) *Utilities are made of low reflective materials.*
- d) *Nuisance effects may occur from time to time from temporary or seasonal activities, but these effects should be mild and typical of the rural environment.*
- e) *Buffer zones are maintained between residential activities and activities with which they may be incompatible’¹⁴.*

Selwyn District Council Rural Residential Strategy June 2014 (RRS14)

The Selwyn District Council has prepared a report following the special consultative procedure under the Local Government Act. While this report is primarily concerned with the Living 3 Zone located within the ‘commuter belt’ of Christchurch (which excludes Darfield), it is considered helpful to follow the direction of how low density residential development¹⁵ within the rural area of Selwyn District is anticipated and thus best managed. The report was adopted by Council on the 25th of June 2014. This report identifies several guiding principles and anticipated outcomes that low density residential development should achieve. The site is outside Christchurch’s commuter belt (which doesn’t quite reach Kirwee). However, many of the principles contained within the RRS14 can be used as a useful guide to help prepare this application.

The report finds that lot sizes in the range of 0.3ha to 2ha as being ‘...better able to demonstrate the residential and rural character elements that typify rural residential environments, with the overall number of lots within any given location also being an important consideration.’ It also mentions that: “The density requirement of one to two households per hectare in Chapter 6 of the CRPS enables the clustering of development, while providing flexibility to provide a variety of lot sizes and innovative living environments in response to constraints and site context. It also ensures that there is sufficient open space within any given rural residential node to achieve the necessary character”. The application is consistent with this.

The RRS14 is divided up into seven sections (Sections 2 through 8). Section 2 outlines the background information on the sub-regional and district planning initiatives, now advanced in the RRS14. Section 3 covers the historic methods where rural residential development was managed in the District. Section 4 identifies the issues and tests several different rural residential development typologies. Section 5 discusses the guiding principles on how the various areas identified for rural residential development were selected and how these areas could be managed. Section 6 applies the rural residential location criteria and firms up and identifies 14 locations adjoining existing townships that could be appropriate for rural residential development (Darfield is not included). Section 7 outlines the information SDC expects to see included in plan change requests to meet Council expectations and Section 8 introduces the monitoring and review processes required to ensure that the strategy continues to effectively and sustainably manage rural residential development.

While Darfield has not been identified as a ‘suitable location’ for rural residential development as it is beyond the RRS14 study area, a number of the elements listed in the report are nonetheless relevant and apply to low density residential activities in general, including the site.

In paragraph 5.18, the ‘peri-urban’ form of development is described as the “environments (that) occur where rural and urban activities merge at the interface between Townships and the countryside”

¹⁴ Selwyn District Plan - Rural Volume | PART B - People's Health, Safety and Values, page B3-051.

¹⁵ I consider ‘rural residential development’ and ‘low density residential development’ to mean the same thing.

Benefits of the form of peri-urban low density residential development are identified. This proposal is consistent in spirit with 'peri-urban development', that is, development adjoining an existing township in the District (Darfield in this case).

ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS ON LANDSCAPE AND AMENITY

The primary change to the landscape following the proposed rezoning will be a transition from several large open paddocks and shelterbelt planting, plus an area containing the homestead, various outbuildings and some associated amenity/shelter planting to a pattern of built development consistent with that indicated on the ODP. These changes will affect the way the area is perceived and will alter the current levels of rural amenity and landscape character. There will be effects on observers from outside the site, such as neighbours, travelers passing by on Bangor Road / SH77 and West Coast Road / SH73, local residents who pass through the contextual area in day-to-day activities, in particular those going to and from the several living zones surrounding part of the site, people traveling by rail and by the users of the site itself.

To reiterate, low density residential development typically exhibits high levels of amenity. This is expected to also be the case following development of the ODP. A sense of openness and abundant greenery will prevail over built forms. To this end, any proposed planting along site boundaries is limited to a low 3-4m tall hedgerow along SH73 which is intended to provide residents with a degree of privacy and visual buffering to vehicle movements along the state highway.

When considering and articulating how the proposed plan change will affect landscape character and rural amenity, I have separated out any potentially affected parties under three groups including:

- Users of public Roads including West Coast Road and Bangor Road;
- Users of the rail corridor, and;
- Neighbouring Residents.

Users of public roads

The majority of the site is largely visually obscured from Bangor Road due to an existing mixed species shelterbelt located within the road reserve. However, there are glimpses possible through a few gaps in the shelterbelt where farm entry points are located (**figures 5 and 6**) including the driveway to the homestead.

It is understood that this planting is to be removed by NZTA¹⁶. Following removal of these trees, views into the site from Bangor Road would be unobstructed. The proposal would introduce at least 14 dwellings to views from Bangor Road where some of the smaller lots (average 3700m² lot size) would be located. Other dwellings further northwards may be visible from this road in the short to medium term before planting established on private allotments. It is anticipated that overall levels of rural amenity will ultimately be high due to the buffering and screening of views through ongoing planting on private lots. This planting would doubtless occur for at least three reasons; there is a proposed 20m deep building setback located here, planting would provide shelter from cool southwesterly winds and planting would provide a useful buffer to traffic movements on Bangor Road. To put things in context, existing L2 and L2A1 zoning to the south of Bangor Road, opposite the site has enabled a pattern of low density residential development which currently forms one edge to Darfield's living zone and already impacts on the rural amenity from Bangor Road in the vicinity of the site already (**figure 8**).

¹⁶ For reasons of shading causing icing on the road, maintenance costs and concealment of site entrances.



Figure 8: *Low density residential development on Piako Drive (Living 2 Zone).*

Views from the popular and well used West Coast Road/SH73 are more open, where clear views into and across the site to the foothills of the Southern Alps including the Russell Range are currently enjoyed. At present this site boundary is marked by a standard 1.2m tall post and wire rural fence and low gorse hedge. From this road the vista would change considerably from one of predominantly open rural land to a mosaic of built development and vegetated patterning. Over time, views to the northwest across the site to the foothills would be potentially precluded where private planting extended close to the site boundary. In addition to these anticipated private plantings, it is proposed as part of the ODP that a low¹⁷ hedgerow be located along this boundary. The purpose of this planting is not to screen development within from public viewpoints, but to provide occupants of the site with a degree of buffering to traffic movements along the West Coast Road.

Although Bangor Road provides the northern entry to the 'Inland Scenic Route', the largest number of public road users would be travelling on West Coast Road which provides one of Canterbury's two direct links with the West Coast. However it is noted that rural views from West Coast Road are largely curtailed to the northeast by existing L2 development. This forms the northern extent of Darfield's living zone and is located partly opposite the site, accessed via Horndon Street. Therefore any noticeable changes to the site and any potential reduction in rural amenity experienced from SH73 would be tempered by existing similar density residential development opposite (**figure 9**).



Figure 9: *Low density residential development visible from West Coast Road/SH73 opposite the site accessed via Horndon Street (Living 2 Zone). Rail corridor in foreground parallel with SH73.*

Users of the rail corridor

Views from the rail corridor have not been specifically assessed. However, the rail corridor is more or less visually open relative to the site, and so it would be expected that there would be clear views into and across the site from this more elevated viewing position. In the short to medium term, rail users (travelling between Christchurch and the

¹⁷ The hedgerow would be a single species capable of reaching 3-4m in height at maturity and which would not require trimming.

West Coast) would look westwards across the site which would include 6-7 dwellings and their curtilage areas, outbuildings and establishing shelter and garden plantings in the view. It is noted that the rail corridor currently passes close by existing low density residential development located on Horndon Street and McHugh Crescent and so this type of development is already part of the contextual setting here (see image above).

Neighbouring Residents

I consider neighbouring residents to extend slightly beyond properties directly abutting the site boundaries. This is reflected in the extent of the mapped receiving environment shown on **figure 2**. These neighbours - in particular those south of Bangor Road have their views effectively screened or buffered from the site by a combination of the site's shelterbelt planting and their own boundary shelter and amenity planting and fencing. This will change when NZTA removes the established tree planting along Bangor Road - views into the site will become unobstructed in the short to medium term before plantings on individual allotments establishes. Of course the Bangor Road corridor itself provides physical separation to these properties from the site now. These neighbours south of Bangor Road are also located within existing areas of low density residential development and therefore have limited views to a rural landscape already. For the above reasons, any changes to the site in landscape terms appreciated by neighbours south of Bangor Road would be reduced.

However, there are six neighbours who directly abut and overlook the site. These neighbours are identified on **figure 2** and occupy either lifestyle-sized rural land parcels or low density rural residential properties.

Two of the five neighbours directly overlooking the site are located in L2 and L2A Deferred zones. And so these neighbours - currently located at the transition between Darfield's living and rural landscape would be cognisant of being amongst other lower density residential development. Notwithstanding this, for these two neighbours their limited vista¹⁸ will change from one of open verdant pasture with the foothills and Russell Range rising above it to that of a series of dwellings and over time establishing private plantings on individual allotments.

The remaining four neighbours occupy relatively new dwellings on 4ha blocks to the north and west of the site. These properties are largely devoid of internal vegetation cover and the site boundaries in the vicinity are also unplanted, and so views into the site are unencumbered. Three of these four neighbours' dwellings are located relatively close to the site boundary. For these three neighbours their south and east vistas will change from looking across open pasture to that of a series of dwellings with establishing private plantings. Of note, the larger of the proposed lots (average 2ha) would be located in the northern part of the site where three of these four neighbours' homes are located. Here, the density of proposed built development will be lowest, with open space and greenery dominating built forms. The fourth neighbour, whose brand new home is near the southwest corner of the site will be near the highest density part of the ODP where lots average 3700m². This neighbour attended the drop in session and understood that potentially up to 2 lots would border their eastern boundary. The outcome following development of the ODP would be a change in, rather than a decrease in amenity. Broad expansive rural views would change to a mixed mosaic of plantings, open space and built development. Notwithstanding this, it is inevitable that this neighbour would welcome, and add to, any planting carried out by residents of the new zone along their shared eastern boundary which would offer some protection from the cool easterly winds, but retain the key northwestward aspect.

¹⁸ One dwelling overlooks the site from the upper storey only (an evergreen shelterbelt is located on the boundary).

Summary

To summarise, there are several neighbours discussed above that would be aware of a significant visual change to the site from within their properties as a result of the ODP. Of course 'landscape effects' or effects on 'landscape character' beyond purely visual need to be considered too. It is likely that any residents currently located on the fringes of west Darfield, and for most, living in low density residential areas are well aware that they are living in an area that was recently an open rural working landscape. On the other hand, it is also likely that these residents appreciate living at the 'edge' of an open rural landscape, even though they cannot necessarily see it. This is largely due to the significant shelterbelt planting screening the majority of the site's southern boundary but also includes establishing shelter and amenity planting on neighbouring properties themselves. This combined vegetation – put in for shelter and amenity purposes for the most part precludes an open rural outlook for the majority of the sites neighbouring residents in any case. However, this excludes the four properties to the north and west. For these four, their location is currently 'surrounded' by an open working rural landscape. Views into the site are completely open. For these residents the currently high level of rural amenity would remain following implementation of the ODP, but would change from one of openness to a pattern of built development and establishing planted patterns on private lots.

AVOIDANCE, REMEDIATION AND MITIGATION OF ADVERSE EFFECTS

Avoidance

As discussed above, any potential adverse effects will be minor. Notwithstanding this, it is proposed that the ODP and rules follows the guidelines adopted in the June 2014 Rural Residential Strategy that responded to findings from the Land Use Recovery Plan (LURP) process. This includes such things as any building be setback 20m from West Coast Road / SH73 and Bangor Road / SH77. This will ensure that the intervening area within the setback will be dominated by open space and vegetation rather than built forms. Of note the standard setback in the Plan for rural zoned allotments *greater than one hectare* is 10m from a road boundary¹⁹. In the Townships Volume for the various Living 2 Zones, the typical road boundary setback is only 4 metres, increased to 5.5 metres for street facing garage doors.

The larger sized lots (2ha average lot size) are proposed to be located to the north and east of the site. This will ensure that living densities along here will be lowest. This will serve to minimise any visual impact and reverse sensitivity effects on adjacent rural properties, particularly for the three properties located close to the site's northwestern corner and on users of SH73. The purpose of positioning these larger allotments here is to also reduce any potential effect of 'intensifying' the rural landscape in this part of the site that is furthest from Darfield. The majority of lots along the site boundary with West Coast Road will be similarly restricted to an average lot size of 2ha each. The smaller allotments will be located adjacent to other neighbouring L2 and L2A Deferred Zones and along Bangor Road (close to Darfield's existing settlement and a key transport corridor). The intention of this is firstly, to create a gradation in development intensity and built landscape change that reflects current dwelling density patterns in the contextual area and secondly to place the higher density living areas closest to key circulation linkages and Darfield High School.

¹⁹ Rule 3.13; Table C3.2 – Setbacks from Boundaries

Remediation

The water races that traverse the site will be protected from development by way of a 10m building and earthworks setback. The purpose of this is to reduce the potential adverse effects of locating buildings near waterbodies and therefore reducing levels of natural character through building domination. It is anticipated that this generous setback will encourage individual owners to plant up their water race margins which will provide an increase in the overall amenity of the site. As they currently stand, the water races are utilitarian in form providing stock watering.

Mitigation

As mentioned earlier, the general outcome of rural residential or low-density residential development such as what is being proposed in the ODP is one of high amenity. Therefore there are no mitigation measures proposed in the ODP such as screen or buffer planting other than what is proposed below.

RECOMMENDED RULES

The proposal will be consistent with the general rules for low density residential development set out in the LURP. There are also several specific site-based rules proposed with regards to landscape matters as part of the ODP. These are as follows:

1. That the three different average development densities are located in the parts of the site indicated on the ODP.

Reasons:

- To ensure that the proposed development has the greatest degree of compatibility in landuse pattern with surrounding existing and future²⁰ zoning.
- To address Council's concerns regarding reverse sensitivity effects by locating the largest lots (with fewest occupants) around the north and northwest site boundaries.
- To allow for, at subdivision design stage a variety of lot sizes within each development density which would avoid a monotonous pattern of development.

2. That there is a minimum 20m building setback for any lot adjoining West Coast Road / SH73 and Bangor Road / SH77 as indicated on the ODP.

Reasons:

- To ensure that any dwellings are well set back from a state highway.
- To allow for ample open space beside well-used public corridors and to avoid as much as possible, built forms encroaching on rural views.
- To allow for open space and greenery to continue to dominate built forms.
- To maintain rural amenity.

3. That a low hedgerow capable of attaining a maximum of 3-4m in height (not requiring regular trimming) be located inside the site boundary with West Coast Road and placed in private ownership.

²⁰ There is an area of L2A Deferred Zoning next to the site.

Reasons:

- To provide occupants of the site with a visual buffer to traffic movements along West Coast Road.
 - To ensure that the amenity role of the planting continues to be effective and enduring.
4. That there is a 10m building and earthworks setback from the watercourses traversing the site.

Reasons:

- To avoid built forms adversely affecting natural character of the watercourses and to reduce any physical impact of construction on the watercourse margins.
5. That any boundary fencing (if used) is not solid, but is either post and rail, post and wire or traditional deer/sheep fencing. *Solid fencing to provide private outdoor courtyards, pool areas etc., and located within the house curtilage area is permitted.*

Reasons:

- To provide a degree of openness and ruralness within the site.
- To distinguish low density residential areas from urban environments.
- To manage stock.

CONCLUSION

The primary issue to consider, with regards to landscape effects is whether the visual and landscape changes to the site that would be expected following an uplifting of the deferred status enabling rezoning from rural to low-density residential would be sufficient to trigger potential adverse effects on rural amenity and the quality of the environment. Presently the site, currently zoned Living 2A Deferred, overlying a Rural (Outer Plains) Zone is characterised by abundant open space and greenery, rather than buildings.

The outcomes expected from the ODP and proffered rules would see the site change to a low-density residential zoning pattern. A maximum of 125²¹ dwellings would be accommodated within the 130 hectare site combined with abundant levels of open space and greenery. General levels of amenity are anticipated to be high, as they generally are with such development as what is being proposed here.

To this end, the proposal is not incompatible with its setting for the following reasons:

- i. There is already significant low density residential development present around nearly half of the sites perimeter.
- ii. The site is well separated from the Hawkins River and foothills, including the Russell Range. There is significant open rural landscape between the site and these key landscape features, and so their levels of naturalness will not be affected.
- iii. Built site coverage is limited to 10% as per the standard L2A1 Zone rule which is low. The proposal limits the numbers of dwellings to a maximum of 125. Open space and greenery will continue to prevail.
- iv. The site is physically 'cradled' between two state highways and the Midland Railway. A change from rural landuse to a low density

²¹ This figure would be confirmed following final design and sizing of stormwater management area at subdivision design stage, but would nonetheless meet Council's requirement for a 1ha average lot size across the site.

- residential pattern of development is logical, as the site is appended to an existing settlement (Darfield).
- v. Any neighbours who would have their rural outlook changed following the proposal are limited in number.

For the above reasons, the proposal would have a high degree of compatibility within its local context.

In addition, the limited number of proposed dwellings will be compatible with, rather than dominate their setting. This is largely due to the location of the site itself which is near an existing settlement (Darfield). In landscape and visual terms, it is preferable that additional built development in the rural landscape is appended to existing settlements (as opposed to open settings where natural patterns are far more prevalent and vulnerable to the addition of built forms).

Further, the proffered rules will ensure that the proposal is not incompatible with its rural setting. For these reasons, and considering the details discussed in the body of this assessment, the effects of the proposal would be less than minor with regards to landscape matters.

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June 2015

APPENDIX 1

OUTLINE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

