

8 April 2021

REF: Plan Change Request, West Melton
TO: Hughes Developments Ltd
FROM: Paul Smith, Registered Landscape Architect – Rough & Milne
Landscape Architects
SUBJECT: Landscape Comment – Plan Change Request, West Melton

LANDSCAPE COMMENT ON A PROPOSED PLAN CHANGE AT 163 HALKETT ROAD AND 1066 WEST COAST ROAD, WEST MELTON

Introduction and Scope

A Private Plan Application Request is proposed to change the Inner Plains Zone to Living West Melton – Medium Density Zone within 163 Halkett Road and 1066 West Coast Road (**the site**). This site is situated immediately east of West Melton's northern residential area, as illustrated on Appendix 2.

The proposed plan change application, including its appendices describes and illustrates its location and the proposal, which is relied upon and not repeated for this landscape comment. The proposed Outline Development Plan (**ODP**), which has been updated is included on Appendix 1 and 2 to this comment.

Rough and Milne (**r+m**) have been requested to provide a landscape comment that briefly responds to Points 15 and 18 within Selwyn District Councils Request for Further Information (**RFI**), dated 3 February 2021.

For ease of reading, Councils RFI Points 15 and 18 are included below.

15. Please provide a visual assessment of the impacts for adjoining residential and rural sites that will occur from the proposal. Please provide details of how the proposal mitigates a compromised rural outlook (what measures are taken and where).

18. Please provide a landscape assessment, which highlights the existing natural and heritage features of the site and their value. This would be an appropriate place to discuss fencing also. How are potential reverse sensitivity issues between residential housing and operating farming addressed?

To respond to these two points this landscape comment provides the following:

- A description of the existing landscape and visual character of the site and its surrounds.
- A description of the change in character that will be brought about by the proposal.
- A description of the actual and potential visual effects arising from this change.
- A description of any potential avoidance and mitigation measures that should be considered, including the proposed boundary treatment of the site.

A site visit was undertaken on 15 March 2021. This landscape comment should be read in conjunction with Appendix 1, 2 and 3 which includes the proposed ODP, a viewpoint location plan and context photographs of the site and its surrounds.

The Receiving Environment

Wider Context

West Melton and the site's wider landscape context is historically known for its agricultural, horticultural and equine activities.

West Melton historically comprised of a service station and restaurant / pub on the corner of a crossroads. West Melton's location and being a service town to the wider rural area is one of the primary reasons it has grown to the size it is today. This is similar to the service towns dotted around Christchurch within the Selwyn District.

The Boffa Miskell Selwyn District Landscape Study¹ identifies West Melton as being part of the 'Low Altitude Plains' landscape character area. As described in this landscape study, this character area consists of flat to gently undulating topography, a mosaic of pasture, linear roads, shelterbelts, fenced paddocks, irrigation pivots, and small townships which lie some 20kms from Christchurch City.

The Key Landscape Characteristics of the Low Altitude Plains Area, include:

- *"Flat, open and expansive plains which have little topographical relief.*
- *A largely linear landscape which is emphasised by the characteristic shelterbelts and dissecting roads, as well as the central spine of the Waikirikiri /Selwyn River.*
- *Broad scale, highly modified agricultural land use.*
- *Very little native vegetation.*
- *Distant backdrops of the Te Whata a Rama/Torlesse, Benmore and inland Craigieburn Ranges."*²

¹ Boffa Miskell Limited 2018. Selwyn District Landscape Study: Landscape Characterisation and Evaluation Report. Report prepared by Boffa Miskell Limited for Selwyn District Council.

² Boffa Miskell Limited 2018. Selwyn District Landscape Study: Landscape Characterisation and Evaluation Report. Report prepared by Boffa Miskell Limited for Selwyn District Council. Page 19

The Selwyn District Landscape Study identifies the Outstanding Natural Landscape (**ONL**) and Visual Amenity Landscape (**VAL**) within the Selwyn District. The Low Altitude Plains Area, including the site have not been identified within an ONL or VAL.

The Site and its Local Context

The site is located at 163 Halkett Road and 1066 West Coast Road, legally described as Lots 1 and 2 DP 34902 and is 20.687ha in area.

The site is situated between Halkett Road to the north, State Highway 73 (**SH73**) to the south and immediately west of West Melton. The site is generally flat and appears to be primarily used for equine activities. The northern two-thirds of the site contains a horse track. In addition to the shelterbelts along the site's boundaries, the southern third of the site contains a number of shelterbelts that separate smaller paddocks from one another. Situated between the horse track and horse paddocks is a dwelling and horse stable. Refer to Appendix 3, Photographs 1 – 4, and 13 - 15.

The boundary treatment of the site consists of:

- The site's northern boundary consists of a post-and-wire fence and grazed pasture, some of which is overgrown.
- Shelterbelts extend along the site's eastern and southern boundary lines. These shelterbelts are situated within both the site neighbouring properties within 133 Halkett Road and 1050A West Coast Road.
- The site's western boundary predominantly consists of 1.8m tall timber paling fences. These fences are associated with the residential properties within West Melton township.

The generally flat topography of the site is remnant of and consistent with the Low Altitude Plains landscape character in which it sits. The land use activities of the site have modified it from its historic indigenous vegetation cover to its current primarily pasture cover and equine use. Due to this, it is considered that the site displays a low-moderate degree of natural character³, which is similar to the majority of the Inner Plains.

In addition to the above, whilst visiting the site we were unable to find any remnant historic features or indigenous vegetation⁴.

To the north and east of the site are rural lifestyle properties and rural properties which contain a general mix of agricultural, horticultural and equine activities, as well as living activities.

The site's southern boundary fronts SH73 with Wilfield Subdivision / West Melton to the south of the state highway. The properties that border SH73 are approximately 2,500m² to 5,000m² in area. Whereas the majority of the residential properties within the Wilfield Subdivision are approximately 1,500m² in area. The Wilfield Subdivision road frontage treatment consists of a 2 – 2.5m high earth mound and a typical post-and-rail fence that runs parallel to the road. This earth mound is covered

³ Selwyn District Councils Request for Further Information - Point 18.

⁴ Selwyn District Councils Request for Further Information - Point 18.

in a mix of mown grass, native grasses and flaxes, exotic amenity trees. Post-and-rail fences demarcate boundary lines.

The site's western boundary is adjacent to the Gainsborough Subdivision which is part of the West Melton residential area. Similar to South West Melton, these residential properties are considered large, all being in excess of 2,100m². However, the density of properties within North West Melton are clustered. Some clusters consist of properties that are 1,200m² in size, with other clusters being 2,000 – 3,000m² in size. These clusters are varied, however as a whole, they provide a sense of spaciousness within a residential development that is surrounded by rural land.

North West Melton's southern boundary along SH73 consists of an internal earth mound approximately 2m high and an external shelterbelt that is maintained at varying heights. It is maintained at varying heights because it is situated within multiple properties and is maintained by different owners.

North West Melton's northern boundary along Halkett Road consists of two different types of 1.2m tall post-and-rail fences, separated by Weedons Ross Road. East of Weedons Ross Road, towards the site, the post-and-rail fence has three rails. West of Weedons Ross Road, it consists of two rails.

Pressures and Threats to Selwyn's Landscape Values

The Selwyn District Landscape Study identifies Pressures and Threats to Selwyn's Landscape Values. These pressures and threats are predominantly focused on the ONLs. However, this landscape study mentions general threats to the landscape values within Selwyn, some of which are important to recognise for this proposal, as included below.

- *"Housing is developed in locations that detract from open and natural characteristics or in more intensive clusters that contrast with the mosaic pattern or open coastal character that currently exists.*
- *Cumulative change i.e. landscape change arising over time from incremental development or "creep" where an existing modification in the landscape is used to justify further change."*⁵

Additionally, as outlined in the Selwyn District Plan⁶, it is important to recognise that the land between Christchurch City and West Melton provides a rural landscape which contrasts with the urban landscape of the city. As such, the growth of these townships is important to consider when assessing a plan change such as this one.

Operative and Proposed Selwyn District Plan

As described, the site is within the Inner Plains Zone, as per Council's Operative District Plan. Council notified their Proposed District Plan in November 2020. Under the Proposed District Plan, the site is within the General Rural Zone.

⁵ Boffa Miskell Limited 2018. Selwyn District Landscape Study: Landscape Characterisation and Evaluation Report. Report prepared by Boffa Miskell Limited for Selwyn District Council. Page 63.

⁶ Operative Selwyn District Plan – Policy B1.4.12.

Visual Effects Assessment

Halkett Road

The updated ODP, as illustrated on Appendix 1, illustrates that future properties adjacent to the site's northern boundary will not be accessed via Halkett Road.

It is evident within the local area that the northern boundary of existing properties that line Halkett Road do not contain tall vegetation. It is my observation that this is so these properties are not shaded.

The proposal will result in large lot residential properties being located alongside Halkett Road. Once fully developed these properties will visually accord with the larger lots immediately west of the site.

The western edge of West Melton is not defined by any landscape element, being topography, a river or a road. Due to this and the site being relatively narrow, the extension of residential development along Halkett Road in itself will not be visually adverse as future development will visually accord with the existing development. Rather, it is considered that potential adverse visual effects will result more from the way in which the proposal visually forms part of, or visually discords with West Melton.

To mitigate this potential adverse visual effect and to provide visual continuity so future development is a visually cohesive part of West Melton, it is recommended that the landscape treatment along Halkett Road is similar to the existing development to the west.

To achieve this, it is recommended that the same post-and-rail fence and internal fences, as those immediately west of the site are used as. Also, if there are any rules regarding plant species / vegetation, these should also form part of the proposal.

State Highway 73

The updated ODP, as illustrated on Appendix 1, provides for the landscape treatment of the site's southern boundary, as it fronts SH73. Also, that future properties adjacent to the site's southern boundary will not be accessed via SH73.

The site's southern boundary contains a shelterbelt. There is currently a gap in this shelterbelt. to provide access to the existing dwelling. The proposed road does not line up with this gap. Due to the width of this future road and to provide sightlines, the gap in the shelterbelt will be quite large. This large gap in the hedge will provide time for SH73 road users to understand that the site is no longer rural, and that it forms part of West Melton's residential neighbourhood. When seen in this context, a shelterbelt will not be entirely in keeping with the residential development.

Similar to Halkett Road, it is recommended that the boundary treatment is visually cohesive with nearby boundary treatments. A shelterbelt will not be used, therefore the boundary treatment to the immediate west is of less relevance.

The site forms part of the entry into West Melton. This in itself will visually accord with the residential development within Wilfield subdivision to the south. In addition, the landscape

treatment has the ability to visually tie in with the landscape treatment immediately south of SH73 and the landscape treatment at the Iris Taylor Ave intersection and west of this intersection. Specifically, if post-and-rail fence designs and the plant palettes should be in keeping with the existing fencing and the general plant palette located at the Iris Taylor Ave Intersection.

If the above recommendations form part of the proposal, it is considered that the proposal will affect the visual amenity experienced by SH73 road users to no more than a low degree.

Rural Properties East of the Site

As discussed above, the site's eastern boundary is adjacent to rural lifestyle properties. Specifically, the site is adjacent to 133 Halkett Road and 1050A West Coast Road. Both approximately 2ha in area, each containing a residential dwelling, outdoor living areas, a long driveway, and amenity trees. The majority of each property is maintained in pasture.

The site's eastern boundary is lined with a coniferous shelterbelt which are situated within both the site and within the neighbouring properties. The northern half of the shelterbelt is maintained at approximately 6m tall. The southern half is not maintained and is standing approximately 10m tall.

These shelterbelts, being relatively wide, provide a near on solid wall in which the plan change will not be seen from. It is likely that the northern half of this shelterbelt will be retained in its current state by the neighbour as to continue to provide the same visual amenity that they currently experience. The neighbour will not be able to maintain the eastern side as it protrudes into future residential properties. It is recommended that a legal instrument or condition of consent is used to provide the neighbour certainty that the eastern side will be maintained in its current or similar state.

The southern half of this shelterbelt, as it will negatively impact on solar gain is likely to be reduced in height or entirely removed. To maintain the current outlook that is experienced by the neighbour, it is recommended that the shelterbelt is retained and maintained at the same height as northern half of this shelterbelt, within 133 Halkett Road. This will provide the same amount of morning solar gain along the site's entire eastern boundary and will increase the afternoon solar gain within 1050A West Coast Road. Also, it will provide a cohesive boundary treatment and will maintains the rural outlook experienced by these two neighbouring properties.

Residential Properties West of the Site

As discussed above, the sites western boundary is adjacent to the Gainsborough Subdivision which is part of the North West Melton's residential area. These residential properties, when compared with a regular residential subdivision are considered large all being in excess of 2,100m². The majority of the dwellings within these properties are single storey (one two storey dwelling) and most of the site's boundary line consist' of a 1.8m tall timber paling fence.

Properties Adjacent to the Site's Western Boundary

The properties that are adjacent to the northern half of the site's western boundary, north of and including 46 Rossington Drive, in general, would appreciate their open north-east and eastern outlook, which consists of open paddocks and a big sky landscape.

The outlook from the properties that are adjacent to the southern half of the site's western boundary south of 46 Rossington Drive, consist of a shelterbelt extending in a general north to south direction. This is a rural element that is consistent with the wider surrounding rural landscape character. This outlook, even though it may affect solar gain, may be appreciated by those who enjoy a rural outlook.

As of right, the site's landowner can plant a shelterbelt along the site's western boundary. When mature, a shelterbelt will negatively impact on the solar gain of all these neighbouring properties and negatively impact on the big sky landscape that the residents may appreciate. On a side note, no matter what boundary treatment occurs along the site's western boundary, it will not impact on the neighbour's views to the Southern Alps or their afternoon solar gain.

The proposed plan change will result in an extension to the residential development within North West Melton. The 1.8m high timber fences will provide some visual mitigation. However, the upper parts of dwelling, including their rooflines, streetlights, street trees, amenity trees and other tall residential activities will be seen.

The loss of the immediately adjacent rural land with the replacement of residential development would change the immediate outlook experienced from these properties. Pragmatically, future residential development would preclude shading of these residential properties and would continue to provide for a big sky landscape. Also, because the site is relatively long and narrow, the further afield rural land, which is not that far from these properties will still be appreciated and form part of their sense of place.

On balance, protecting solar gain and the big sky landscape that is appreciated, but removing the immediately adjacent rural land will affect the visual amenity experienced by these landowners to a low to moderate degree.

38 Rossington Drive

As illustrated on the ODP a vehicle, cycle and pedestrian connection will be provided from Brampton Drive through the northern 13m of 36 Rossington Drive and into the site. For reference, most of 36 Rossington Drive including its dwelling will remain. This will result in a new road being situated immediately south of 38 Rossington Drive. A road, pathway and their associated use may potentially adversely affect the visual amenity gained from this neighbouring property.

The 13m wide road reserve is likely to contain a 7m wide carriageway with a 2m wide footpath along its northern side. This provides for a 2m wide grass verge north of the footpath and south of the road. It is recommended that a hedge is located adjacent to 38 Rossington Drives southern boundary as to visually mitigate vehicle movements and continue to provide a vegetated outlook immediately south of their boundary.

Recommendations

With regard to the above assessment the following boundary treatments are recommended:

- The ODP shall include a green landscape treatment symbol along the site's northern, eastern and southern boundaries. As well as the sites boundaries where it adjoins 38 Rossington Drive's southern boundary line. This landscape treatment symbol shall be different to an acoustic landscape treatment as these can be different things.
- The site's northern boundary shall consist of a post-and-rail fence that is identical to the post and rail fence located immediately west of the site, along the southern side of Halkett Road. Also, if there are any rules regarding plant species / vegetation along the neighbour's boundary, these should also form part of the proposal.
- The entire shelterbelt along the site's eastern boundary shall be maintained in its current or similar state as borders 133 Halkett Road.
- The site's southern boundary shall consist of a minimum of two layers being a post-and-rail fence and a mix of native vegetation. The post-and-rail fence shall be identical to that used on the southern side of SH73. The plant palette shall be in keeping with the general plant palette located at the Iris Taylor Ave intersection. Lastly, the plant species used, and their location shall be able to entirely screen the façade of a single storey dwelling.
- The landscape treatment of the grass verge immediately south of 38 Rossington Drive shall contain a hedge that is consistent with hedge species within West Melton.

Conclusion

A plan change to provide for residential development is proposed within the two properties 163 Halkett Road and 1066 West Coast Road that are immediately east of West Melton's northern residential development.

This landscape comment is to respond to Selwyn District Council's Request for Further Information Points 15 and 18. With regard to these points:

- The site displays a low degree of natural character.
- From our on site investigations there are no remnant historic features or indigenous vegetation that may be affected by the proposal.
- If the recommendations are adopted, the proposal will provide for a cohesive landscape treatment of the site's northern, eastern and southern boundaries that visually accord with the landscape treatments along Halkett Road, 133 Halkett Road's western boundary and SH73, respectively.
- On balance, the visual effects experienced by the neighbours within the residential properties to the west will be of a low to moderate degree.
- If the recommendations are adopted, the proposed plan change, at most, will have a very low degree effect on the visual amenity experienced from the rural properties to the east.