

S42A Landscape Report

Report prepared for Selwyn District Council

by Andrew Craig *Registered Landscape Architect*

April 2011

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of this report is to assess landscape matters arising from a private plan change request relating to two sites referred to as the 'Holmes' (92ha) and 'Skellerup' (72ha) Blocks. The land for both sites is currently zone Rural Outer Plains where the minimum dwelling density is 20 hectares. The request seeks rezoning of this to Living 3¹ effectively resulting in a rural residential type environment. Additionally each plan change site will accommodate five 4ha allotments thereby matching the minimum lot size for the Rural Inner Plains Zone.

1.2 It is understood that the proposed plan changes seek the following;

	PC 8 (Holmes)	PC9 (Skellerup)
<i>Number of allotments</i>	97 + 5x4ha lots	68 + 5x4ha lots
<i>Minimum allotment size</i>	4000m ²	4000m ²
<i>Maximum average size</i>	5000m ²	5000m ²
<i>Maximum size allotment</i>	40,000m ² (x5)	40,000m ² (x5)

The layout of the plan change sites is as shown in the request application as the Option 3 outline development plans (ODPs) dated 4 February 2011². By way of background, the current design has resulted from a series of options subject to discussion with Council officers over the last two years. Consequently the plans now incorporate a lot more green open space and have significantly less allotments than that originally proposed.

1.3 A central landscape issue is what would constitute a rural residential environment? The Council has recently prepared and notified Plan Change 17 which among other things sets out to define this. Further it attempts to direct the location and extent of future rural residential activity determined by a number of factors including those concerned with character and amenity. Plan Change 17 is not yet operative and so the direction it seeks has yet to be tested. To a certain extent the PC8&9 requests will do this which will include consideration of character and amenity. However other submitters in the course of making PC17 operative will also advance opinions on what constitutes rural residential activity, where it should be located and what its extent should be. Consequently these matters are not yet definitive, where at this stage they can only be regarded as iterative, particularly with reference to PC17.

1.3 The key issue concerning landscape matters centre on the question of how a rural residential zone is defined in terms of its character and amenity. Fundamental to this is what residents expect from such an environment. The overarching aim of PC17 is to meet those expectations, which will be described in more detail later. Concerning PC 8 and 9 the issue is whether these can be delivered.

1.4 To address these issues, it is intended to discuss the following;

¹ SDP proposed PC17 refers to the rural residential zone as Living 4

² ODPs prepared by Harrison Grierson Consultants Ltd

- The context of rural residential activity within the Canterbury Plains landscape.
 - What constitutes rural residential character and amenity?
 - Do the PC8 and 9 proposals align with what is expected of a rural residential activity?
 - Submissions
- 1.5 In preparing this report I have read the plan change request applications, especially focussing on the landscape assessment of environmental effects (AEE). I have also visited the sites with respect to the proposal.
- 1.6 It is not my intent to repeat the landscape assessment prepared by the applicant as I found this to be generally thorough. However, there are some points of difference concerning the conclusions which I will discuss in more detail. I will also consider the District Plan provisions and amendments proposed by the applicant.

2.0 The context of rural residential activity within the Selwyn rural district

- 2.1 The rural zones within Selwyn District are divided according to a combination of landform and land use. They include the following:
- Rural Plains - inner
 - Rural Plains - outer
 - Rural Port Hills³
 - Rural Malvern Hills⁴
 - Rural High Country⁵
 - Rural - Existing Development Areas
- 2.2 Fundamentally the difference between the zones centres on the proportion of open space to built form. This affects the presentation of rural character where the greater amount of open space there is the more rural an environment will appear. The rural Inner Plains is the densest rural zone at one dwelling per 4ha, ranging up to the High Country where the ratio is one to 100ha.
- 2.3 PC17 promotes an average site density of two dwellings per hectare. Consequently there is a significant eightfold increase in density between the Rural Inner Plains and the proposed rural residential zones. PC8 and 9 also advance the same density⁶ as that anticipated by PC17. However, the application sites are located within the Rural Outer Plains Zone where the site density is one dwelling per 20ha.
- 2.4 Under PC17 future rural residential zones will be encouraged to locate in the Rural Inner Plains Zone. One reason for this is that the zone is close to the District's major urban centres as well as that of Christchurch. In landscape terms, because the Rural

³ Includes Outstanding Natural Landscapes and Features

⁴ Ditto

⁵ Ditto

⁶ PC8 Amendment 47 Table C12.1 and PC69 Amendment 45 Table C12.1

Inner Plains is relatively dense and in land use terms complex, it is better able to absorb the presence of rural residential activity. That does not rule out the presence of rural residential zones within the Outer Plains Zone provided they are close to settlements, such as the case for PC8 and 9. In other words, they would need to maintain existing and anticipated landscape character patterns.

- 2.5 Finally with regard to the immediate landscape setting of the plan change sites, the applicant's landscape architect (Mr Ben Espie) has described this in some detail in his evidence. I generally agree with his observations in this regard.

3.0 What constitutes Rural Residential character and amenity?

- 3.1 Based on field observation and literature review, an idea of what constitutes rural residential development becomes evident. In generic terms perhaps the most apt description is as follows⁷;

'Rural residential development refers to land in a rural setting, used and developed for dwellings that are not primarily associated with agriculture. Some agriculture may take place on the land, however, [it will be] ancillary to the use for a dwelling. It is likely to be carried on for 'lifestyle' reasons and is unlikely to provide a significant source of household income. Rural residential land is typically also used for non-agricultural home occupations or for large gardens. These lots are larger than typical residential lots, but are usually too small for agricultural use.'

- 3.2 From the same source lot sizes greater than 4000m² are cited as constituting rural residential site density. Despite the site size, rural residential development is considered primarily a low density residential activity rather than a high density rural activity. Generally rural character and amenity starts to substantially diminish with a site density of less than 4hectares. Rural residential activity is not to be confused with rural lifestyle, which is essentially a rural activity undertaken on lots of no less than 4 hectares. Equally the rural residential zone needs to be distinguished from low density residential living environments (L2 for example) which are located within township boundaries, albeit at the perimeter.

- 3.3 In proposed PC17 rural residential activity is defined⁸ as follows;

The zone [proposed Living 4] is characterized by the presence of generally low density dwellings located on parcels that offer generous open space. Rural residential allotments are substantially larger than those found in the associated townships, but significantly smaller than rural zone lots. Living 4 Zones convey a strong rural character, while recognising that their primary purpose is for living. The location, extent, layout and site density of the Living 4 Zone convey a significant level of rural character and amenity in order to meet the expectation of residents for a semi-rural environment, rather than one that is perceived as a low density living zone.

⁷ Victorian Government 'Rural Residential Development Guidelines' 2006

⁸ SDC PC17 Draft Schedule of District Plan Amendments Attachment 1 'Amendment 3 – Zone Description'

- 3.4 One of the crucial concerns flagged in the above zone description centres on the expectation of residents. It is very important that residents within a rural residential zone are able to appreciate its 'rural flavour'. Without this the adjective 'rural' becomes redundant. With this in mind PC17 observes that the following characteristics need to prevail.

To achieve this anticipated character and amenity, Living 4 Zones are predominantly surrounded by the rural zone.

And goes on to state that;

'...minimum average lot sizes are reasonably large, with the building bulk and location development controls ensuring ample open green space is provided to preserve rural openness. Generally the number of allotments within any given rural residential node is low to avoid more urban characteristics.

- 3.5 To achieve the outcomes identified in PC17 rural residential activity will generally incorporate the following summarised characteristics.

- Lots greater than 5,000m²
- A limited number of lots
- Location proximate to urban centres
- Low site coverage – 10% or 400m², whichever is the lesser
- Setbacks – 20m from road boundaries and 15m from all other boundaries
- Transparent fencing

Other methods are encouraged to facilitate rural residential character and amenity. Principally this includes the avoidance of urban motifs such as;

- Kerb and channel
- Paved footpaths
- Street lighting – although this may be sparingly use at street intersections for example
- Street furniture such as seating and bus shelters
- Fancy subdivision gateways

- 3.6 Overall, it is anticipated that the Rural Residential Zone will be characterised by the presence of generally low density dwellings located in areas of generous green open space. This latter will primarily be provided by surrounding rural land. As discussed, it is expected that dwellings will be located on lots that are substantially larger than those found in the townships, but significantly smaller than rural zone lots. It is important that rural residential zones convey a strong rural 'flavour' while recognising that their primary purpose is for living activity. Consequently residents in the zone will have some appreciation that they live in a distinctly semi-rural environment, rather than one that is perceived as a low density living zone. As a result, the location, extent, layout and site density of rural residential zones needs to convey a significant level of rural character and amenity in order to meet the expectations of residents.

- 3.7 Meeting the expectations of residents is fundamental to how rural residential zoning is designed and implemented. As mentioned, rural residential zones will be primarily surrounded by the rural zone, while maintaining proximity to existing townships and settlements. The reason for this is so that the presence of infrastructure can be sustainably utilized, while advantage can be taken of nearby community facilities. In the development of rural residential zones, strongly developed linkages can therefore be developed, especially where they can take advantage of existing natural and physical features.
- 3.8 To achieve the above outcomes, minimum lot sizes will be reasonably large. Building bulk and location will also be controlled so as to provide ample green open space commensurate with the provision of rural 'flavour' and amenity. Generally the numbers of lots in a rural residential subdivision is not expected to be high, as this can lead to a more urban character. However, the layout of rural residential subdivisions can influence lot numbers and dwelling density. This aspect will be discussed in more detail shortly.
- 3.9 Where it is appropriate, the retention of typically rural features will help reinforce the sense of rural character in the Rural Residential Zone. This may include retaining existing shelter belts or significant tree groups, water races and rural heritage features if they exist. The protection and enhancement of natural features will substantially assist also, that provide significant amenity benefits to residents while enabling ecological and conservation values to establish.
- 3.10 The above then are the generic conditions which I would consider necessary to provide rural residential character and amenity. As alluded, there will be certain contextual circumstances where rural residential outcomes are delivered despite the conditions discussed above. In other words, there will be exceptions to the rule. This might occur where the following variables are present.
- A very low number of sub-standard (<5000m) lots, where the lot numbers are likely to be less than 10 or thereabouts.
 - The layout of lots – linear layouts will generally guarantee rural outlook for all as opposed to compact rectilinear layouts. Diagram 1 illustrates this effect.
 - Concentrating smaller lots on the periphery of Rural Residential Zones with larger interior lots – see Diagram 2.
 - The orientation of public open space – namely road corridors – as a means of providing visual connection to nearby rural environments.
- 3.11 As stressed, the most important outcome is for rural residential residents to appreciate the rural nature of their neighbourhood. They have to harbour some sense that they live in a rural setting, and in large part this is going to be dependent on the provision of at least some rural outlook. This will occur in combination with the aforementioned low building density and avoidance of urban motifs.

- 3.12 Ultimately, the basic test for any rural residential development proposal is going to revolve around one very simple question; *can future residents appreciate that they will live in a rural 'flavoured' setting?* Essentially this is the question to be asked of the PC8 and PC9 proposal, which I address next.

Surrounding rural area

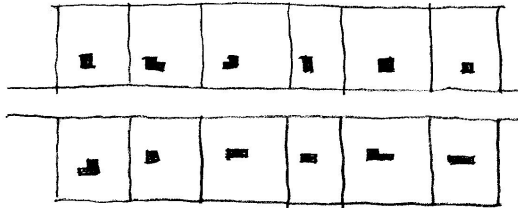
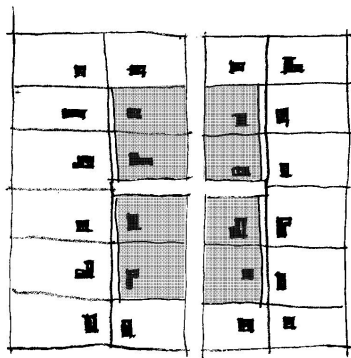


Diagram 1

Linear layout (top diagram) is better able to provide for rural residential outlook than a more compact layout (bottom diagram). Rural outlook for the interior sites is more difficult to achieve for the interior lots shown shaded in the bottom diagram.



Surrounding rural area

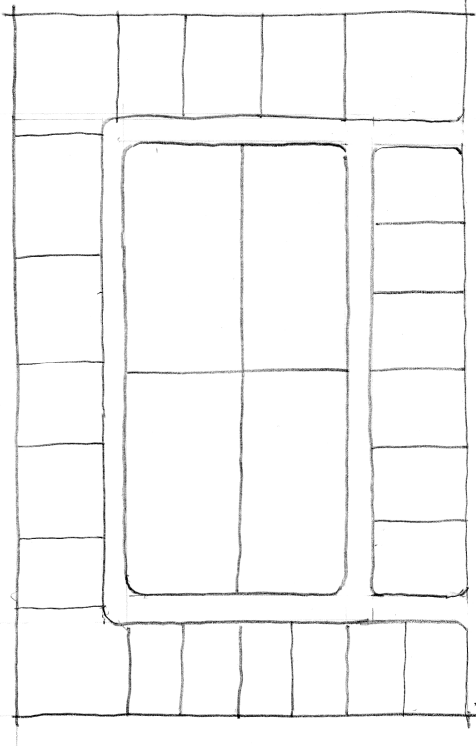


Diagram 2

By having smaller lots on the perimeter and larger in the middle, rural characteristics and amenity is more appreciable throughout the site

4.0 The PC8 and PC9 Proposals

- 4.1 In the Plan Change request landscape outcomes are addressed by Mr Ben Espie (landscape architect) and in the proposed amendments to the District Plan provisions. In the latter a number of rules are proposed that will in their implementation influence the landscape character and amenity of the application sites should they be re-zoned. These will be addressed in more detail shortly.
- 4.2 In his landscape assessment Mr Espie describes the landscape and visual effects that will arise from rezoning, concluding that essentially they will result in rural residential environment. For the most part I agree with his observations and analysis, although with respect to the proposal there are some small differences of opinion which I will address shortly.
- 4.3 In general terms on looking at both ODP's and the proposed rules it is evident that what is proposed will achieve high levels of landscape amenity. This will arise from the following conditions.
 - Land use that will largely be devoted to amenity landscaping although on the larger lots rural production may occur.
 - An average lot size of one dwelling per hectare.
 - A high proportion of green open space in proportion to built form – proposed site coverage for both plan change sites is lesser of 10% or 500m² [proposed rule 'Table C4.1 Site Coverage Allowances']. PC 17 is lesser of 10% or 400m².
 - Generous setbacks.

- The provision of large areas of internal open space (privately owned 'Countryside Area' to be used for rural production⁹) in association with some road corridors.
 - Proposed street tree planting.
 - The provision of a community focal point or reserve.
 - The provision of buffer planting (comprising native plants¹⁰).
 - The provision of rural type fencing (post and wire or post and rail) design and transparency [proposed rule 4.2.3].
 - The absence of urban motifs.¹¹
 - The retention of selected shelter belts and planting of others.
- 4.4 I accept Ben Espie's general observations that the rural character of the application sites will change existing rural character, particularly given that it is currently zoned 'Rural Outer Plains' where the minimum site density is one dwelling per 20ha. I also accept Mr Espie's analysis of effects within the receiving environment.¹²
- 4.5 Mr Espie stresses that the following factors will deliver rural character to future residents.¹³
- The provision of the open space corridors referred to as 'Countryside Areas' which will allow the infiltration of rural elements into each site interior while creating modules of development
 - The provision of large trees including shelter belts which will reinforce the aforesaid modules.
 - The avoidance of urban motifs or design characteristics.
 - Low site coverage and generous setbacks.
 - Sufficient open space within lots to enable some rural activity to occur.
- 4.6 I generally agree that this will be the case, although there are some aspects of the proposal that in my opinion require refinement in order to better deliver the kind of rural residential outcome anticipated by PC17. Or to put it another way, there are some gaps between what PC17 seeks and what is proposed. However, as discussed earlier PC17 is still in an iterative phase and so too through this process are the two plan change proposals.

⁹ Espie para.49

¹⁰ Espie para. 44

¹¹ Espie para. 79-80

¹² Espie: summarised in paras 89-92

¹³ Espie: summarised in paras 93 -96

5.0 Points of difference and recommendations

- 5.1 My chief concern relates to the high number of proposed allotments, particularly in the Holmes Block. Here the density effects are compounded by the 4000m² lot sizes and the compact rectilinear layout of the blocks. As discussed earlier, lots of less than 5000m² could easily be entertained in rural residential developments, provided other favourable factors are present – namely fewer lots overall and a zone layout that is more linear rather than cubic. I do acknowledge however that the ‘Countryside Areas’ that infiltrate the blocks significantly assists in the countering of these effects and therefore better assist the delivery of rural residential character. Nonetheless in my opinion I believe that the collective effects of the large number of lots in combination with the compact block layout can be countered by increasing most sub 5000m² square lots to a minimum size of 5000m² as indicated on the Appendix 10 recommended amended ODP. Not all lots would need to be 5000m², but this would only be workable where they adjoin or are opposite the rural zone or the proposed 4ha lots.
- 5.2 Additionally, I also recommend that the maximum site coverage is set at 400m² bearing in mind that this could be exceeded subject to application of the relevant assessment matters proposed by the applicant and / or those promoted by PC17. By setting these standards there is assurance that the rural residential experience will be unequivocally delivered.
- 5.3 The 5000m² minimum site size amendment would only apply to the lots in the Holmes Block as all the lots in the Skellerup Block are no less than 5000m².
- 5.5 Finally it would be desirable to provide a more robust and enduring boundary alongside the Burnham School Road frontage with respect to the Holmes Block. The reason for this is that it reinforces containment and the sense the block is a discrete rural residential entity. Another advantage is that it future proofs rural outlook should the adjoining rural land succumb to further residential zoning. And lastly it would help overcome reverse sensitivity effects from the adjoining rural land. The Appendix 1 map shows the extent and location of this ‘Countryside Area’.
- 5.4 With these recommended changes I am confident that rural residential outcomes will be achievable in concert with the standards being proposed by the applicant. I will address the proposed standards when considering recommended conditions of consent.
- 5.5 By way of assessing the proposal as a means of identifying potential points of difference, I have listed the following characteristics that should prevail in a rural residential zone. These are based on research and from onsite observations of existing rural residential developments in the Canterbury region, and are as follows.

- *The presence of substantial areas of open space in proportion to built form.*

This will be achieved subject to my recommended changes

- *A sense that the subdivision is located in a rural setting which is achieved through the provision of frequent views into the rural hinterland beyond.*

5.6 This will be achieved where a high degree of reliance is placed on the proposed 'Countryside Area' corridors which will provide rural type outlook for those dwellings located in the site interior. The only location where this will not readily occur from dwellings will be for those that do not directly adjoin the 'Countryside Area' or the adjoining rural zone, or proposed 4ha lots. Mr Espie argues that this will be overcome where residents will still appreciate their rural setting when accessing their properties via views along the road corridors to the rural land beyond, and that this will be facilitated by the linear layout of these. While this is true, relative to the lots facing the 'Countryside Area' or the adjoining rural zone, these interior lots will experience the least sense of rural character. One way to help overcome this is to reduce the site coverage from the proposed lesser of 500m² or 10% to 400m² universally and to have a minimum lot size of 5000m² for houses in such locations.

- *A generally low number of dwellings so as to avoid the collective effects of apparent relative high density.*

5.7 Overall for both blocks the number of lots is higher than what might be expected for a rural residential environment. One reason for keeping lot numbers low is to avoid the collective effects of houses which in my experience take on a suburban appearance despite the low density lot sizes. The photograph below illustrates this effect. However, to counter this, the applicant has effectively divided each block into a series of discrete residential enclaves separated by the 'Countryside Areas'. This has the effect of significantly reducing the collective effects arising from the presence of many dwellings, which in turn is reinforced by setbacks, site coverage and transparent fencing. Internal road corridors also facilitate this effect. So while the number of lots appears large in plan form, from ground level their extent is not going to be fully appreciated. The planting described in proposed standard [4.2.2] will also substantially assist in this regard.

- *Buildings that are well set back from road frontages (15 -20m) so as to provide a high level of green open space.*

5.8 Amendment [27] to Rule 4.9.25 proposes a 15m setback¹⁴ for the proposed L3 zone at Rolleston. This will achieve the desired outcomes that the setback rule seeks, namely the abundance of open space along road frontages. From on site observation of existing rural residential areas this I consider to be one of the key means of delivering the open space character necessary to achieving expected outcomes. However it is important that this takes place in the presence of other measures, namely transparent fencing which enables the flow of open space.

- *Relatively low site coverage – no more than 5% or 400m² – whichever is the lesser.*

5.9 The applicant's propose 500m² which is too high in my opinion. However, I acknowledge that there may be circumstances where this level of site coverage may achieve anticipated results, but these will be entirely circumstantial. So on that basis I

¹⁴ Except on corner sites one frontage can be 10m and internal boundary setbacks are 5m

prefer that the 400m² standard be applied where it is understood that anything in excess of that is subject to the necessary assessment or discretionary matters.

- *A minimum site density of 1 dwelling per 5000m²*

5.10 This density can be quite variable and will depend on other factors such as the number and orientation of lots, the availability of rural outlook, along with the configuration or proportions of subdivision layout. In this case there is limited opportunity to accommodate some sub 5000m² lots subject to the above variables, which in turn are reflected in my recommended conditions.

- *The lack of urban motifs such as paling fences, kerb and channel, fancy street furniture etc.*

5.12 For the most part the applicant proposes to avoid the above identified urban motifs. This would include avoiding the level of street lighting found in urban settings, since a characteristic of rural areas is quite high darkness at night. To achieve this, my recommendation would be to locate street lighting at intersections only for landscape amenity purposes; although I appreciate that there may be other matters to consider in this regard.

- *Transparent fences – especially within front yard (street frontage) setbacks.*

5.13 Standards are proposed that will result in the transparent fences which are considered necessary to achieve rural residential character and amenity.

- *The presence of large scale tree planting – that larger lot sizes will allow without unduly affecting neighbours.*

5.14 The applicant proposes standards ensuring tree planting is carried out within the road setbacks to a distance of at least 15m. It has also been my observation that residents will plant large trees in any case since they have sufficient land to do so. Further tree planting is also proposed for the road corridors in addition to the retention and planting of shelter belts. Consequently I am confident that sufficient tree planting will occur at a scale expected in a rural residential subdivision.

- *The provision of key views through the orientation or alignment of roads.*

5.15 This will be achieved because the road layout in both ODPs is linear and based on a grid pattern. Further the 'Countryside Areas' are also oriented in the same way and further terminate in rural areas, thereby providing views to them.

- *Some degree of separation from existing settlements so as to engender a sense of a discrete rural residential community.*

- 5.16 The Holmes Block lies opposite the L2 zone at Rolleston while the Skellerup Block does so in part – for about half its Dunns Crossing Road frontage. The other half is opposite the Rural Inner Plains zone. The L2 minimum lot size for Rolleston is 5000m² – about the same as that for the proposed Plan Change 8 and 9 sites. So in site density terms alone there will be little to distinguish the two adjoining zones. On this matter I note that the Selwyn District Plan has this to say about the character of Living 2 zones:

Density in Living 2 Zones is kept low thus reflecting the rural character by maintaining a sense of open space, panoramic views and rural outlook.¹⁵

And...

For low density Living 2 Zones, the careful consideration and application of design treatment to such matters as road formation, kerbs, letterboxes, power supply, entry treatment, fencing, landscaping, lighting and the like will ensure the retention of open, spacious rural character.¹⁶

These District Plan descriptions do prompt the question of; what is the difference between the PC8 and 9 proposals and the Living 2 zone?

It appears to me the difference is that the Plan Change sites will display characteristics which are distinctive as referred to in the above discussion leading to a rural residential flavour that is not otherwise provided for in the L2 zone.

- 5.17 Reinforcing a degree of separation between the existing Rolleston Living zones will also be the provision of a 'Countryside Area' alongside the Dunns Crossing Road frontage. It is also apparent from the ODPs that this separation will be further strengthened by the provision of 'rural buffer planting' for the Skellerup Block and shelter belt planting for the Holmes Block. The Skellerup block also has 4ha sites fronting over half of its boundary with the L2 land.
- 5.18 Overall therefore, both blocks will maintain a reasonably high level of separation from Rolleston Township aided by the foregoing factors and the low density L2 zone.
- *Integration with nearby settlements.*
- 5.19 In landscape terms integration concerns the high amenity connectivity with the surrounding environment. At best it capitalises on natural and physical opportunities to provide this and usually involves the sharing of common space. For example this may include the mixing of stormwater management with pedestrian and vehicle routes.
- 5.20 The proposals do allow for some degree of connectivity in this regard, but linkages to Rolleston to date are entirely reliant on existing roads. Public walkways are shown on the ODPs to follow Dunns Crossing Road but I am uncertain whether this is to be implemented as part of site development and whether they are within the legal road

¹⁵ SDP Township Volume Part B Growth of Townships – Residential Density Strategy

¹⁶ SDP Township Volume Part B Growth of Townships – Explanation and Reasons

or 'Countryside Areas'. A proposed amendment [49(f)] in the form of a discretionary matter suggests that this should be within the Countryside Area. Overall integration with Rolleston is presently limited in landscape terms although future development in the L2 zone may open up opportunities.

- *Retention, where appropriate, of characteristically rural features such as shelter belts and tree copses. Possibly too, historic or typical farm buildings.*

- 5.21 The ODPs indicate that shelter belts will be present as will tree copses within the road reserves. It is not clear from the ODPs which shelter belts are those being retained or intended to be planted. In any event the sites will display these features which typify rural Canterbury. In this regard I agree with Mr Espie when he states;

The Countryside Area and shelterbelt vegetation will mean that a rural productive character is particularly evident and, in the long term, visual evidence of residential land use will be subservient to this. [52]

- 5.22 As far as I am aware there are no other features on the plan change sites that would merit retention such as water races and historic farm buildings.
- 5.23 In summary, it would appear that the proposed plan changes will achieve the kind of outcomes expected for rural residential living, subject to some further amendment and refinement of some provisions.

6.0 Proposed District Plan Amendments

- 6.1 A number of amendments affect landscape character and amenity outcomes. Most will deliver desirable character and amenity outcomes, but some merit further consideration. These largely concern proposed standards where I have selected those of concern as follows.

Amendment 21 Insert new Rules 4.2.2, 4.2.3 & 4.2.4 for Buildings and Landscaping (Page C4-001 & 002) as follows:

For the Living 3 Zone at Rolleston identified on the Outline Development Plan in Appendix 37 the following shall apply:

4.2.2 Any principal building shall be a permitted activity if:

i) The area between all road boundaries (other than with State Highway 1) and a line parallel to and 15m back from the road boundary is landscaped with shrubs and specimen trees covering as a minimum the lesser of 30% of the area or 250m²; and

ii) The number of specimen trees in this area is not less than 1 per 10m of road frontage or part thereof; and

iii) The trees are selected from the list below planted at a grade of not less than Pb95; and

iv) Shrubs are planted at 'aa' grade of not less than Pb3 and a spacing of not less than 1 per square metre, typically located within a garden area dressed with bark chips or similar material; and

v) Any paved surface area within the area does not exceed 100m² in area.

***vi) The list of suitable specimen trees for the purpose of this rule is:
Maple, Silk Tree, Alder, Birch, River She Oak, Leyland Cypress,***

Monterey Cypress, Lacebark, American sweet gum, Magnolia, Pohutukawa, weeping Kowhai, Common Olive, Pine, Lemonwood, Kohuhu, Ribbonwood, Plane, Totara, Poplar, Oak, Elm, Michelia

vii) The Council will require a planting plan to be submitted at building consent stage, prepared by a suitably qualified landscape professional, identifying compliance with the above control.

viii) The landscaping shall be maintained and if dead, diseased or damaged, shall be removed and replaced.

Note: Rule 4.2.2 shall not apply to allotments of 4ha or greater in the Living 3 Zone identified on the Outline Development Plan in Appendix 37.

6.2 The rule above sets out in considerable detail landscaping requirements for road boundary setbacks. I think this rule will be very difficult for the Council to administer not only due to its complexity, but also because to implement it effectively it would need to be applied in an enduring manner. This would entail regular monitoring to not only ensure planting is carried out at site development, but that it remains so in perpetuity.

6.3 In my observation and experience people will naturally landscape road frontages in rural residential zones. I would therefore be confident that this will happen in the absence of such a rule, although assured outcomes are desirable in this case given the numbers of lots and the relatively small size of many. I do agree though that there is scope to control the location and extent of the area to be landscaped. Such a rule might read, or near equivalent, as follows:

That apart from one vehicle crossing and access not exceeding 5 metres in width all land within 15 metres of a road frontage, excepting State Highway 1, will be devoted to landscaping; including the provision of one specimen tree capable of growing to at least 8 metres high being planted for every ten metres of frontage and to be spaced at no less than 5 metres and no greater than 15 metres.

6.4 I would not include in the Plan recommended tree species although it might be desirable to alert people via an appendix to the District Plan listing undesirable species, as does the Christchurch City Plan. Some trees create a nuisance such as poplars whose root systems are inclined to invade underground services and disturb paving. Birches which are listed as recommended species contain known allergens and their planting should not be encouraged.

6.5 In summary landscaping rules should be kept to a minimum in living zones, especially where amenity land use is likely to occur in any case. However, it is reasonably common for the vendor or body corporate to impose landscaping conditions by way of covenants on land owners with a view to achieving particular landscape outcomes. Often these include building design controls. The overall aim is to achieve consistently high design standards throughout the subdivision. But such conditions would and should be in addition to Plan standards.

- 6.6 Minor changes are suggested in the discretionary matter below as shown – underlined.

Amendment 49 Insert new matter over which Council has restricted the exercise of its discretion at Clause

12.1.4.78 (Page C12-023) as follows:

In relation to the Countryside Area Management Plan required for the Living 3 Zone west of Dunns Crossing Road, Rolleston as shown in Appendix 37:

(a) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve open space and/or rural character across the Countryside Area(s) in a manner that is compatible with the surrounding rural residential environment;

(b) The adequacy of proposed mechanisms to maintain and manage the Countryside Area(s) long term in a consistent manner;

(c) Whether rural landscape, visual and amenity value characteristics of the Countryside Areas are able to be maintained;

(d) The extent to which potential adverse nuisance effects on occupiers of adjacent rural residential allotments will be internalised within the Countryside Areas;

(e) The extent to which adverse effects of plant pests and fire hazard risks will be avoided or remedied; and

(f) The suitability of proposed access within the Countryside Area(s) along Dunns Crossing Road.

Amendment 2 Insert Living 3 Zone and description into Table A4.4 – Description of Township Zones (page A4-011) as follows:

Zone Description

Living 3 As for Living 2 Zone, but with specific controls and design elements incorporated to ensure development of the land is reflective of and retains elements of rural character expected of the Living 3 zone, which in essence is a rural residential zone, so as to visually set the development apart from the neighbouring Living 2 urban area. ~~Similar to the Living 2 zone, larger sections (with a lower building density than Living 2), more space between dwellings, panoramic views and rural outlook are characteristic of the Living 3 Zone.~~

- 6.7 The reason for deleting the above sentence is that the Rolleston L2 zone sections at 5000m² are the same size as most of those proposed in the PC 8 and 9 blocks, so essentially there is no difference in building density.

- 6.8 Apart from the above no further changes are recommended.

7.0 Submissions

- 7.1 In reading the summary of submissions it is apparent that the salient landscape character concern focuses on site density where the one dwelling per hectare is

sought, largely to align with the density promoted by PC1. I am satisfied that rural residential character and amenity is achievable on lot sizes of less than one hectare provided certain conditions prevail. For the most part these will prevail with respect to the plan change sites subject to the conditions I recommend, as listed next.

8.0 Conclusion

8.1 The essential 'test' in the consideration of proposed rural residential zoning is whether it will meet the expectations of future residents. These people have to be able to appreciate that they do indeed live in a residential area that conveys a significant degree of rural character or 'flavour'. And that this has to be available to all residents. It is important therefore that the zone does not convey the sense that it is little more than a low density suburb, such as what might occur in the Living 2 zone or if rural residential areas become too large, with central lots detached and remote from much larger rural landholdings. While low density is a critical component of a rural residential zone, other conditions have to be present for it to embody rural characteristics. In summary these include;

- Rural outlook or its near equivalent
- The absence of typically urban motifs including 'fancy' street furniture
- Open space transparency – open fences
- A low proportion of built form to open space
- Prosaic road grid layout
- Bold and simple landscape elements – eg tree plantings
- Generous setbacks, especially from road frontages
- Discernable separation from urban centres or settlements
- Generally low number or allotments

8.2 Apart from the need to refine some aspects of them, the PC8 and 9 proposals generally meet all of these pre-conditions. The greatest departure from the above criteria concerns the number of allotments overall. I am aware that residents in rural residential communities prefer them to be relatively small although the threshold is not easy to pinpoint. This is largely because each zone and its design will present unique conditions that may affect the perception of size. In this case the problem of size is mostly addressed via the introduction of reasonably generous open space corridors that infiltrate each block – the 'Countryside Areas'. The effect is to create enclaves that are sufficiently separated so as to reduce the apparent overall scale of the entire zone. I consider these to be the features that redeem the proposals; the ones that tip the balance in terms of delivering rural residential character and amenity.

8.3 Another consideration revolves on the question of; how will residents (and visitors) perceive the overall scale of the zone? At ground level as opposed to a plan view, it is my observation that higher densities where there are many adjoining lots of less than 5000m² results in the domination of housing. There is a danger that this will occur for some parts of the proposal, hence my recommendation that the size of a number of lots is increased as identified on my Appendix 1 plan. Above that and with

all other conditions in place it is also my observation that it is very difficult to discern the full extent of a rural residential zone from any one vantage point. This is particularly the case on flat topography where panoramic views are precluded by intervening vegetation and buildings. For most of the proposed PC8 and 9 zones this will be the case, especially more so as vegetation matures and increasingly dominates the landscape.

- 8.4 Finally, I conclude that the proposed PC8 and 9 zones will largely deliver its future residents an environment that conveys rural residential character. However, in order to provide higher levels of certainty that this will in fact occur, I then make the following recommended amendments.

9.0 Recommended Amendments

The following are recommended with a view to providing a high level of assurance that rural residential results are achieved.

1. That the lots identified on the attached Appendix 1 plan are increased to a minimum size of 5000m².
2. That street lighting is located at intersections only (subject to meeting District Plan subdivision standards)
3. That the proposed plan provisions are amended as discussed above.

Andrew Craig *Registered Landscape Architect*

April 2011

References

Department of Sustainability and Environment (Government of Victoria, Australia) *Rural Residential Development Guidelines*, 2002

Ministry for the Environment *The impact of rural subdivision and development on landscape values*, 2000

Selwyn District Council *The Selwyn District Plan*