

**Before a Hearings Panel appointed  
by the Selwyn District Council**

**Under**

the Resource Management Act  
1991

**And**

**In the Matter**

of a submission (DPR-0395) on the  
Proposed Selwyn District Plan by  
Castle Hill Adventure Tours Ltd  
seeking rezoning of RS40841 (CFR  
CB312/468) West Coast Road,  
Selwyn District

## **Joint Witness Statement (Landscape)**

Dated: 11 May 2023

---

## INTRODUCTION

1. As requested by Mr. Paul Smith (Landscape Architect) and approved by the Commissioners by way of Minute 49, dated 19 April 2023, Mr. John Reid (submitter), Mr Smith, Mr. Jon Trewin (Policy Planner) and Mr. James Bentley (Landscape Architect) have co-operatively worked through a Master Planning process for the Castle Hill Visitor Zone (**CHVZ**).
2. The purpose of this Master Planning process was to work with Selwyn District Council (**Council**), as they fundamentally agreed with the proposed zone. However, there was concern regarding the nuances of the policy provisions for the CHVZ and the Outline Development Plan (**ODP**).
3. A project team workshop, attended by Mr. Smith and Mr. Reid occurred on Friday 28 April 2023 to address the concerns raised in Mr. Bentley's Statement of Evidence, dated 14 April 2023.
4. The outcome of this internal workshop fed directly into a workshop with Council and held on Monday 1 May 2023. A following workshop occurred on Friday 5 May 2023, and Tuesday 9 May 2023. These three workshops, attended by the above-mentioned people have resulted in an updated set of policy provisions for the CHVZ and an updated Outline Development Plan (**ODP**).
5. This Landscape Joint Witness Statement has been jointly prepared by:
  - (a) Mr. Paul Smith on behalf of Castle Hill Adventure Tours Ltd; and
  - (b) Mr. James Bentley on behalf of Council.
6. The Witnesses confirm that the workshops have been conducted in accordance with the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses contained in the Environment Court Practice Note 2023 and this JWS has been prepared in accordance with Appendix 3 to that document.

## Issues Raised and Discussed

7. The focus of the landscape workshops and conferencing was on:
  - (a) the spatial arrangement of development and retention of open space,
  - (b) the size, scale and number of buildings,
  - (c) difficulties with the legibility of the policy provisions, and

- (d) that a comprehensive landscape effects assessment of the proposal hasn't been undertaken following the changes to the CHVZ policy provisions and ODP.

## THE ISSUES

### Summary of Matters Agreed

- 8. All experts agree that:
  - (a) The remove 'rural' from the zone's proposed name,
  - (b) the proposed CHV zoning is appropriate,
  - (c) the site has potential to accommodate additional development associated with visitor accommodation, and
  - (d) it is appropriate for a comprehensive Landscape Master Plan for the entire site to be prepared and approved by Council prior to the first resource consent is lodged.

### ***Name of Zone***

- 9. It was agreed to remove the word 'rural' from the proposed zone name, as it was considered that the word did not contribute anything meaningful to the overall purpose of the zone. Based on this, it was agreed that the zone should be referred to as 'Castle Hill Visitor Zone' or CHVZ.

### ***Spatial Arrangement***

#### Issue

- 10. The principal issue outlined within the evidence of Mr. Bentley concerned the proposed Visitor Accommodation development along the southern boundary of the site which would be incongruous to the landscape and create adverse landscape effects to the broader landscape values associated with the ONL<sup>1</sup>. This is due to:
  - (a) development being prominent along the top of the scarp when viewed from the south,
  - (b) development may be seen on the skyline when viewed from the south,

---

<sup>1</sup> Para 6.29 – 6.30 of Mr. Bentley's evidence dated 14 April 2023

- (c) planting along the top of the scarp face would not respond to the openness of the terrace, and would interrupt views to Castle Hill, when viewed from the Castle Hill Village, and
  - (d) the reliance on trees for screening purposes may be problematic due to the intermontane basin climate, which means trees take longer to grow.
11. Mr Bentley's evidence goes on to suggest that clustering development within the northern half of the site and open space predominating the southern part of the site would alleviate the above-mentioned issues. However, this is coupled with other concerns around the number and height of buildings.

### Resolution

12. The updated ODP has been arranged in a manner that all future built form (apart from a small Maintenance Sub-Area) will be situated within the northern half of the zone, within the Development Sub-Area and the majority of the southern half of the zone will consist of a nine-hole golf course within the Recreation Open Space Sub-Area.
13. The campground facilities are currently consented within the northern half of the site. The updated wording of the policy provisions no longer provides for the campground facilities, as the future 'visitor accommodation' development will replace them.
14. With the removal of the campground, this has resulted in a loss of accommodation for onsite staff. This is problematic for the operation of the facility due to its remote location and the total number of staff that will be required, including shift workers. With a reduction in campervan and tent sites and their associated Toilet and Kitchen facilities, it was agreed that additional buildings for staff accommodation and hostel accommodation, for busy seasons and to alleviate staff accommodation issues at the nearby Porters Ski Field, could be included in the Development Sub-Area.
15. As per the original submission, and the above changes, the northern half of the site would be divided into the Land Management Sub-Area and three different development sub-areas. It was agreed that three different development sub-areas would unnecessarily constrain the future design and layout of the development, including the constraints of and a potentially better design outcome if the tourism / ice skating rink building was relocated.
16. It was agreed that with appropriate updates to the policy provisions, the northern half of the zone should form the 'Development Sub-Area', with the exclusion of the Land Management Sub-Area.

### ***Size, Scale and Number of Buildings***

17. Firstly, regarding the consented environment, Mr. Trewin informed Mr. Smith and Mr. Bentley that the tourism / ice skating rink building (unlabelled building) as illustrated on the approved RC205401 plan was not consented. The RC205401 decision included a note stating that this building would require a future resource consent. There was no other commentary in the decision regarding this building.



### ***Issue***

18. Mr. Bentley raised concern regarding the number and height of buildings, including their overall building coverage as provided by the provisions in the Visitor Accommodation Sub-Area. This included understanding the difference between what is consented and what the zone provides for.

### ***Height - Analysis and Resolution***

19. Regarding building height, the policy provision – REQ2 Height has been updated as follows:
- (a) Terraced housing, and staff and hostel accommodation, will have a maximum height of 9m when within 130m of the state highway and a maximum height of 12m when beyond this setback (previously 15m).
  - (b) Hotel, conference and spa facilities will have a maximum height of 8m, (previously 15m).

- (c) The tourism buildings will have a maximum building height of 12m (not changed)<sup>2</sup>.
  - (d) Golf clubhouse and restaurant will have a maximum height of 8m, (previously 15m).
  - (e) A storage and maintenance building will have a maximum height of 8m (previously 12m).
  - (f) Any other building will have a maximum building height of 8m (previously 12m).
20. The reduction in height will assist to reduce the potential adverse visual effects as previously assessed by Mr Smith and Mr Bentley. The reduction in height will be more in line with the 8m height limit in Castle Hill Village, albeit this development will appear as a hotel / visitor accommodation complex in which taller buildings are more commonplace. Additionally, potential adverse visual effects are avoided, remedied and / or mitigated by:
- (a) The height setback for visitor accommodation will mean that taller buildings will be located further from the state highway, where the ground is lower down when compared with the highway which assists with mitigating the 3m increase in height.
  - (b) The Landscape Master Plan and its associated package of information will illustrate the location, size and height of every building, the high-level landscape treatment of the entire site, and how the design decisions will integrate the development into the site, with the character of the Castle Hill Village and protect the landscape characteristics and values of the outstanding natural landscape.
21. Overall, Mr. Smith and Mr. Bentley agree that the proposed height restrictions are appropriate.

*Number of buildings and their overall building coverage - Analysis and Resolution*

22. The below table compares the previously consented built form within the site with what is provided for by the proposed CHVZ.

---

<sup>2</sup> We acknowledge that the large building located close to the State Highway does not form part of RC205126 and that this has been referred to as the Ice Hockey Building.

**Table 1: Comparison of RC145279, RC205401 and proposed CHVZ**

Approved Buildings via RC145279 Measurements taken from Mr John Cooks Landscape Report.		Approved Buildings via RC205401 Measurements taken from the Approved Plan (excluding Ice Hockey building).		Proposed CHVZ	
16 Cabins	680m <sup>2</sup>	-	1,120m <sup>2</sup>	Terraced Housing	4,000m <sup>2</sup>
32 Campervan / Caravan Parks.  The maximum size of a campervan is 12.6m x 2.55m, being 32m <sup>2</sup> .	1,024m <sup>2</sup>		1,024m <sup>2</sup>		
A general camping area	-	-	-		
A tepee camp area with performing stage.	-	-	-		
Manager Residence and Office	182m <sup>2</sup>	-	-		
Kitchen Block	71m <sup>2</sup>	-	120m <sup>2</sup>	Staff Accommodation	200m <sup>2</sup>
Ablutions and Laundry Block	94m <sup>2</sup>	-	120m <sup>2</sup>	Hostel Accommodation	200m <sup>2</sup>
Accommodation Buildings	2,051m <sup>2</sup>	-	2,384m <sup>2</sup>	-	4,400m <sup>2</sup>
L Shaped Buildings	360m <sup>2</sup>	-	360m <sup>2</sup>	<u>Remove</u> L Shaped Buildings	0m <sup>2</sup>
Building between L' Shaped Buildings	56m <sup>2</sup>	-	72m <sup>2</sup>	-	-
Clubhouse	180m <sup>2</sup>	BBQ Clubhouse	640m <sup>2</sup>	Clubhouse & Restaurant	1,200m <sup>2</sup>
-	-	Restaurant	364m <sup>2</sup>		
-	-	Pond Building	56m <sup>2</sup>	-	-
-	-	-	-	Tourism Buildings / Ice Skating Rink	3,500m <sup>2</sup>
-	-	-	-	Hotel, Conference and Spa Building	2,500m <sup>2</sup>
-	-	-	-	Retail Buildings	600m <sup>2</sup>
Recreation Buildings	596m <sup>2</sup>	-	1,492m <sup>2</sup>		7,800m <sup>2</sup>

Development Sub-Area Total (Accommodation and Recreation Buildings)					12,200m <sup>2</sup>
Golf Course Manager Dwelling	200m <sup>2</sup>	-	266m <sup>2</sup>	Recreation Open Space Sub Area	0m <sup>2</sup>
Recreation Open Space Sub-Area					0m <sup>2</sup>
Utility Area Shed	72m <sup>2</sup>	-	160m <sup>2</sup>	Maintenance Workshop	150m <sup>2</sup>
Maintenance Sub-Area					150m <sup>2</sup>
Land Management Sub-Area					0m <sup>2</sup>
Overall	2,919m <sup>2</sup>		4,302m <sup>2</sup>		12,350m <sup>2</sup>
Density of Development within the 17.359ha site.	1.7%		2.5%		7.1%

23. Extensive conversations have been based around the increase in built form that will be provided by the CHVZ when compared with the consented environment. Several rules have been included in the CHVZ to assist with mitigating the potential adverse effects of a future development within the site. This includes:

- (a) CHVZ-REQ1.1 – provides a maximum floor area for each building type, rather than an overall floor area for the development area.
- (b) CHVZ-REQ1.2 – does not allow the floor area of one building type to be transferred when calculating the maximum floor area for another building type.

The importance of this, is that it provides certainty on the scale of each activity within the site, and if one activity did not occur, it is seen as providing for additional open space rather than allowing for an increase in another activity.

- (c) CHVZ-REQ5.1 and 5.2 – The requirement to prepare a comprehensive Landscape Management Plan, which outlines the way in which the Landscape Master Plan achieves the CHVZ Objectives, Policies and Rules, and have it approved by Council, prior to any resource consent being approved.

The information and level of detail that the Landscape Master Plan and its associated package of works is required to include has been agreed upon.



This is because these rules ensure that a rigorous master plan process is undertaken, a future development will achieve the CHVZ objectives, policies and rules and it give Council the ability to decline a poorly designed development.

24. Overall, there remains a level of concern between Mr. Smith and Mr. Bentley concerning building coverage restrictions. Mr. Bentley requests (refer to the end of the JWS) that a comprehensive landscape effects assessment is undertaken prior to the finalisation of the CHVZ ODP and supporting provisions are then aligned. Both Mr. Smith and Mr. Bentley agree that there is merit in developing a Landscape Master Plan, following a landscape effects assessment and the approval of the CHVZ, that will be required to be approved by Council prior to any future resource consents are applied for and approved.

### ***Legibility of the Policy Provisions***

#### **Issue**

25. During the workshops, Mr. Bentley outlined that the policy provisions were formatted and worded in a way that individually focused on what built form and what activity went in each sub-area. In this review, Mr. Bentley considered that the 'overview' should include text outlining the development within each sub-area, as to make it easier to understand what goes where.

#### **Resolution**

26. The CHVZ Overview statement has been updated to describe what built form and activities will be situated within each sub-area.
27. Additionally, the wording, formatting, layout and arrangement of the policy provisions have been updated so they flow more logically.
28. Overall, Mr. Smith and Mr. Bentley have agreed to the updated formatting to the policy provisions.

### **Summary of Matters Disagreed**

29. Despite agreement over much of the provisions and content of the CHVZ and its policy provisions, Mr. Bentley raises concerns that a comprehensive landscape assessment has not been undertaken reflecting the substantial changes to the proposal.
30. Within Mr. Bentley's evidence, Mr. Bentley raised concerns around the location of the Visitor Accommodation and specifically the number, height and scale of buildings associated with the Visitor Accommodation located in the southern part of

the site. Whilst some changes to building height and location have been broadly agreed, Mr. Bentley remains unconvinced around the building coverage of new Apartment Buildings/ Terraced Housing as expressed within CHVZ-REQ1. This is a particular issue in regard to the substantial increase in overall building coverage from what was previously consented within the northern part of the site. The now proposed scale and location of these buildings (and cumulatively with the other proposed buildings) has not been appropriately assessed.

31. Mr. Bentley also queries the scale, height and location of the Tourism Building(s), especially the large ice hockey building. As mentioned in Paragraph 17 above, during the final workshop session, we learnt that this large building does not form part of the consented environment. Based on this, Mr. Bentley and Mr. Smith consider that this building can no longer be relied upon in the development of the ODP. In the absence of a landscape assessment, both Mr. Bentley and Mr. Smith are concerned about the scale, bulk and location of this building. Mr. Bentley and Mr. Smith consider that the scale, bulk and location of this building may have landscape and visual effects that have not been appropriately assessed as part of this plan change exercise and which may lead to significant adverse effects to the ONL.
32. Mr. Bentley, therefore remains of the view that whilst he agrees in principle that a bespoke Castle Hill Visitor Zone would be appropriate, there are currently too many uncertainties to the proposal that, in his view, do not adequately give assurance that the identified outstanding natural landscape values will be protected.
33. In light of the recent information, Mr Smith is of the opinion that the proposed Castle Hill Visitor Zone would remain appropriate if the policy provisions are updated so they did not provide for the large ice hockey building (one quarter of all built form) and its associated activities. This is because the consenting pathway, including the upfront requirement of a comprehensive Landscape Master Plan and a package of information will provide Council assurance that the future development provided for meets the CHVZ objectives and policies.




---

Paul Smith  
11 May 2023




---

James Bentley  
11 May 2023