
PREFERRED OPTION REPORT TO DISTRICT PLAN COMMITTEE

DATE: 31/05/2018

TOPIC NAME: Research Sites in Rural Zones

SCOPE DESCRIPTION: Preferred Option Report for Research Sites in Rural Zones (RU012)

TOPIC LEAD: Robert Love

PREPARED BY: James Tapper

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

<i>Issue(s)</i>	<i>The existing provisions in the Operative District Plan relating to research sites in Rural Zones require updating to ensure they remain accurate and necessary.</i>
<i>Preferred Option</i>	<i>Option 2 – Edit Operative Provisions</i>
<i>Recommendation to DPC</i>	<i>That the preferred option for Research Sites in Rural Zones is endorsed for further development (targeted stakeholder engagement, Section 32 and Drafting Phase).</i>
<i>DPC Decision</i>	<i>That the Committee endorses the Preferred Option for 'Research Sites in Rural Zones' for further development and engagement.</i>



1.0 Introduction

A number of research entities operate sites in rural zones in the Selwyn District, including both Crown-owned and private organisations. The majority of research entities are primarily conducting research in the rural field, although some activities may be considered to be non-rural. In this regard, such activities are required to be assessed under Rule 9.4 of the Plan relating to non-rural activities in rural zones. Notwithstanding, that provision permits a range of activities when undertaken by an approved tertiary education provider or a Crown Research Institute.

The aim of this scope of work is to review whether the existing provisions remain relevant and appropriate for controlling the use of rural sites for research purposes in the district. In addition, this scope addresses the issue of land being used for research relating to Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) and determines whether it is appropriate to control this form of research through additional District Plan provisions.

2.0 Summary of Issues

There are very few issues with the existing planning framework relating to research activities within rural areas in Selwyn and for the most part, the Operative Plan rules remain effective. However, an issue of note, and one which has been raised through stakeholder engagement, is that the current rules package permits the use of land or buildings for rural based research activities so long as the activity is undertaken by a tertiary education provider or a Crown Research Institute (CRI). Where such activities are undertaken by a private operator, resource consent is generally required. Therefore, it is considered necessary to review whether it would be appropriate to also allow rural research activities by private companies to be undertaken as of right. This issue has been considered in the options provided in Section 8 of this report.

A second issue for consideration is whether the existing rule permitting research activities in Rural Zones (Rule 9.4.1.2) needs to be updated in order to provide further clarity and to ensure it is administered with consistency. In particular, the exclusion of 'conferencing' from being a permitted activity on rural research sites needs to be reviewed to ensure clarity.

Furthermore, it is considered relevant to review whether additional provisions should be inserted in the District Plan to control land uses involving research into GMOs. This issue is discussed in detail in Section 6 of this report.

3.0 Description of Existing Research Facilities in Rural Zones

There are two Crown research facilities located in the district's rural zones, both of which are used for agricultural related research. In addition, there is known to be one privately-owned research facility, being the Kimihia Research Centre operated by PGG Wrightson. Details of the existing research facilities based in rural zones are displayed in the table below:

Operator	Location	Type	Ownership
New Zealand Pastoral Agriculture Research Institute (AgResearch)	175 Boundary Road, Lincoln	Research farm	Crown
The New Zealand Institute for Crop and Food Research Ltd (Plant and Food Research)	1319 Springs Road, Lincoln	Research farm	Crown
PGG Wrightson Limited	742 Tancred's Road, Lincoln	Research farm and associated facilities	Private

Table 3.1 – Existing research facilities in the rural zones

Lincoln University (tertiary education provider) own and operate several research farms throughout the district. The farms are utilised by Lincoln University, as well as various Crown research organisations including Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research ('Manaaki Whenua'), AgResearch and Plant and Food Research.

The New Zealand Forest Research Institute Ltd (SCION), a Crown-owned organization, also undertakes research activities at various forest plantations across the district, including at forestry blocks in Burnham, West Melton and Craigieburn.

A description of each of the sites, including an outline of any resource consents applying to the sites, is provided below.

3.1 AgResearch

AgResearch own and operate a research farm to the north-west of Lincoln Township. The farm is contained over three adjoining blocks of land on the northern side of Boundary Road and is zoned 'Rural Inner Plains'. Research on the farm is currently related to endophytes (a form of naturally produced fungus) and the related effect on ryegrass production. As such, the majority of activities involve cropping trials as well as the grazing of sheep, cattle and horses for the purpose of testing the ryegrass produced on site.

Buildings on the site are in the form of farm sheds and tunnel houses. There are no substantial built complexes and the appearance of the site is not dissimilar to a standard farm. No resource consents currently apply to the site.

3.2 Plant and Food Research

Plant and Food Research operate research farms on three separate blocks of land in Lincoln. Their main research facility, including offices, is located in the Business Zone at 74 Gerald Street. Adjoining the main facility to the north is Rural Zoned land which is owned by Plant and Food Research and used as a research farm. Plant and Food also own two smaller research farm blocks. One further to the north, on the opposite side of Boundary Road and to the west of Lincoln Golf Course, and another block further to the west on Boundary Road.

All three sites are used for a range of breeding trials in relation to various crops and fungus, including peas, oats and mushrooms, as well as various soil sustainability tests relating to

fertilisers. Each site contains standard farm buildings including farm sheds and tunnel houses. The majority of testing is undertaken in laboratories located on Plant and Food Research's main site in the Business Zone. No relevant resource consents currently apply to the research farms.

3.3 PGG Wrightson

There is only one privately owned research facility located in the rural zone, being the Kimihia Research Centre, operated by PGG Wrightson. Resource consents to undertake this activity have been obtained and are displayed in the table below:

Date	Resource Consent Number	Proposal Description
January 2008	RC075490	Establish four accessory buildings with a combined area of 983m ² .
October 2009	RC095246	Relocation of office and toilet blocks onto site.
March 2017	RC175107	Construct a 710m ² extension onto existing research building.

Table 3.2 – Relevant resource consents obtained in relation to the Kimihia Research Centre.

The site is currently used predominantly for crop breeding, including the breeding of ryegrass, clover, herbs and forage. Several large-scale buildings exist at Kimihia, including propagation tunnel houses, offices, a laboratory and farm sheds. In addition, the facility contains a formed and sealed staff and visitor carpark area.

3.4 Lincoln University

Lincoln University own and operate a series of research farms in the district, including a research farm north of the main campus on Ellesmere Junction Road in Lincoln and the 'Ashley Dene' farm located across several blocks of land on either side of Ashley Dene Road in Springston.

The farms are used for a wide range of research activities associated with both the university and a number of CRIs and include various breeding trials and related activities. The sites do not contain any significant buildings and generally appear as standard, working farms.

3.5 SCION

SCION currently undertake research at a number of forestry sites throughout the district. Many of SCION's research activities occur on a council-owned parcel of land containing a planted pinus radiata forest. That site is located between Brookside Road and Burnham School Road in Burnham. The forestry site adjoins the Pines Waste Water Treatment Plant to the east and the Pines Resource Recovery Park to the north. A second forestry block used for research by SCION is located to the west of Thompsons Road in West Melton, between the primary and secondary stop banks associated with the Waimakariri River. Again, that block contains pinus radiata. Additional long term research is conducted by SCION on various forestry blocks in the High Country, including blocks near Lake Lyndon and Craigieburn.

It is noted that none of the sites used by SICON for research related activities contain any structures and the sites generally appear as standard planted forestry blocks. No relevant resource consents apply to the sites.

Research activities generally involve the taking of samples which are then taken back to a laboratory at SCION's main Canterbury facility in Christchurch. The two forestry blocks on the plains are predominantly used for trials of (non-genetically modified) clones of *pinus radiata*, while the high country sites involve the testing of both native and non-native forestry.

4.0 Statement of Operative District Plan Approach

Research facilities operated by tertiary education providers or CRIs are excluded from Rule 9.4 which would otherwise make the activity discretionary in the Rural Zone. Rule 9.4 and the relevant definitions are displayed below:

9.4 SCALE OF NON-RESIDENTIAL AND NON-RURAL ACTIVITIES

Permitted Activities – Scale of Activities

9.4.1 *Any activity which is not a rural activity or a residential activity shall be a permitted activity if the following conditions are met:*

9.4.1.1 *The maximum area of any site covered by building(s), loading, storage and waste areas used for any other activity on the site does not exceed 100m² and no more than two full-time equivalent persons are employed in undertaking any other activity on the site; or*

9.4.1.2 *The activity is undertaken by either an approved tertiary education provider (as defined in the Education Act 1989) or a Crown Research Institute involving the use of land or buildings for the purpose of growing or rearing of crops or livestock and associated monitoring of the environment for research and education purposes but excluding conferencing, accommodation, recreation and retail activities.*

Note: *Rule 9.4.1 does not apply to any temporary activity or any activity within the Porters Ski and Recreation Area, Rural Based Industrial Activity or any Other Industrial Activity (where Rule 9.5.1 and Rule 9.2.2 apply), or Utilities (where rules in Part C Rule 5 Utilities apply).*

9.4.2 *Any activity which does not comply with Rule 9.4.1 shall be a discretionary activity.*

DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
Institution <i>(from s159 of the Education Act 1989)</i>	means— (a) a college of education; or (b) a polytechnic; or (ba) a specialist college; or (c) a university; or (d) a wananga.
Research	means the use of land and buildings for the purpose of scientific research, inquiry or investigation, product development and testing, and consultancy and marketing of research information; and includes laboratories, quarantines, pilot plant facilities, workshops and ancillary administrative, commercial, conferencing, accommodation and retail facilities.
Residential Activity	means the use of land and buildings for the purpose of living accommodation and ancillary activities. For the purpose of this definition, residential activity shall include: (a) Accommodation offered to not more than five guests for reward or payment where the registered proprietor resides on-site; (b) Emergency and/or refuge accommodation; and (c) Supervised living accommodation and any associated caregivers where the residents are not detained on the site. Residential activity does not include: (a) Travelling accommodation activities (other than those specified above); and (b) Custodial and/or supervised living accommodation where the residents are detained on the site.
Rural Activity	means the use of land or building(s) for the purpose of growing or rearing of crops or livestock, including forestry, viticulture and horticulture and intensive livestock production and may include a dwelling.
Rural Based Industrial Activity	means an Industrial Activity that involves the use of raw materials or primary products which are derived directly from the rural environment, including agricultural, pastoral, horticultural, forestry, viticultural and crops.
Tertiary Education	means the use of land and buildings for the purpose of facilitating tertiary education, training, development and instruction and/or related research and laboratories; and includes ancillary and accessory administrative, cultural, commercial, communal, conferencing, accommodation, retail and recreation facilities.
Tertiary Education Provider <i>(from s159 of the Education Act 1989)</i>	means all or any of the following, but does not include an industry training organisation: (a) an institution; (b) a registered establishment; (c) a government training establishment;

	(d) any other person or body that provides, or proposes to provide, tertiary education and that is funded through non-departmental output classes from Vote Education.
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Table 4.1 – Relevant definitions in the Operative District Plan.

Rural based research centres often have a need to be located in the rural setting, as the environment allows them to undertake rural based research and associated activities. As such, the operative provisions permit agricultural-based research activities in rural zones provided they are undertaken by a tertiary education provider or a CRI. Where research activities do not meet the criteria listed in Rule 9.4.1.2, they are required to be assessed as a discretionary activity under Rule 9.4.2. On that basis, any privately owned research facility, or any facility looking to undertake research in relation to non-rural activities are not permitted by Rule 9.4.1.2 and are discretionary activities.

It is also relevant to note that in certain circumstances, a rural research-based activity looking to establish in the rural environment could be defined as a ‘rural based industrial activity’ depending on the nature of the land use. In that instance, the activity needs to be assessed under Rule 9.5 relating to rural based industrial activities. Notably, such activities are specifically excluded from Rule 9.4 regardless of whether the activity is undertaken by a tertiary provider or a CRI (as per the ‘Note’ under that rule). On that basis, a research facility with a rural based industrial component needs to be assessed under Rule 9.5, most likely as a discretionary or non-complying activity (depending on its ability to meet the stringent permitted activity standards). In addition, any research facility with a non-rural industrial component (known as ‘other industrial activity’ in the Plan) is assessed as a non-complying activity in the Rural Zone under Rule 9.2.2.1.

5.0 Relevant Background Information

Research facilities operated by tertiary education providers or CRIs were excluded from Rule 9.4 as a result of submissions on Variation 28 & 29 from Lincoln University, AgResearch and Plant and Food. The following submission points were made:

- The submitters saw the risk that research and associated activities undertaken by Lincoln University and CRIs in rural areas of Selwyn may not fit inside the definition of ‘Rural Activity’ and could be considered ‘industrial or other’.
- The submitters sought amendments to the rules to exempt education and research activities.
- Their operations represent a valuable resource that assists in the maintenance and development of the local, regional and national economy, and therefore were considered an efficient use of the rural land resource.

This submission was adopted by the hearing panel, ensuring the use of land or buildings for rural research activities by tertiary education providers or CRIs is excluded from Rule 9.4 in the Operative Plan.

6.0 Control of Research Activities Relating to Genetically Modified Organisms

The field testing and/or outdoor release of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) has the potential to result in significant adverse effects on human safety and the environment if it is not effectively managed. The Operative Plan does not currently contain any provisions relating to the testing or release of GMOs and it is therefore considered necessary to assess whether District Plan controls are needed in order to manage such activities in the district.

Based on the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) GMO register, there are currently no GMOs being tested in the district.¹ However, the following tests have been undertaken in the past:

Research Institute	Description	Trial Period
Kimihia Research Centre	Trial of genetically modified sugarbeet.	1999-2002
Plant & Food Research	Two separate trials of genetically modified potato cultivars.	1998-2003
Plant & Food Research	Trial of genetically modified onions.	2003-2008
Plant & Food Research	Trial of genetically modified cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower and kale.	2007-2013
Plant & Food Research	Trial of genetically modified onion, garlic and leek.	2008-2018*

Table 6.1 – History of GMO trials in Selwyn District.

*This trial has not commenced. Approval for the trial is due to expire in November 2018.

It is noted that no genetically modified crops or animals have been released in New Zealand to date.

In terms of the existing controls for the testing and release of GMOs, the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996 (HSNO Act) contains strict provisions which outline the process for any activities relating to GMOs. Specifically, prior to a GMO being imported, developed, field tested or released, the applicant must obtain approval from the EPA. Sections 34 to 38L of the HSNO Act govern the release of GMOs and outline a strict application process. All applications for the release of GMOs must be publically notified. As noted above, no GMOs relating to food, crops or animals have been released in New Zealand.

In terms of field testing of GMOs, sections 40 to 45A of the HSNO Act result in the following outcomes:

- Applications require an assessment of all of the possible adverse effects of the organism on the environment and on human health and safety.

¹ EPA's GMO field test register can be found here: <https://www.epa.govt.nz/industry-areas/new-organisms/rules-for-new-organisms/gm-field-tests/>

- An application for GMO testing can only be approved if, after taking into account all effects, the beneficial effects of having the organism in containment outweigh the adverse effects *and* the EPA is satisfied the organism can be adequately contained.
- In assessing the effects for the purpose of the decision, the EPA must take into account:
 - The adverse effects of having the organism in containment;
 - The probability of the organism escaping after considering all the controls to which the organism would be subject if the application was approved.
 - The effects of the organism if it were to escape.
- If approved, controls must be applied that provide for each of the applicable matters in Part 1 of Schedule 3 including:
 - Accidental release;
 - Exclusion of unidentified persons on site;
 - Exclusion of other organisms;
 - Inspection and monitoring;
- Any approval of field testing must include controls that ensure any organism of heritable material is removed and destroyed at the end of testing.

In summary, the HSNO Act contains a stringent process for ensuring any potential adverse effects arising from the testing or release of GMOs are avoided or controlled. The provisions of the Act require an assessment of the effects by both the applicant and the EPA before approval can be given. In addition, any approval must contain a series of controls to mitigate potential adverse effects.

On that basis, it is not considered necessary to control the testing or release of GMOs within the District Plan. The HSNO Act is a higher order document that applies stringent tests for applicants seeking to undertake activities involving GMOs. The provisions of the Act require environmental risk assessments and provide opportunities for decision makers to implement controls for GMO-related activities. As such, the requirements under the HSNO Act are considered to be much the same as what would be required by a resource consent process as a result of District Plan provisions, although the HSNO provisions carry greater statutory weight. Therefore, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication, it is considered appropriate to allow the testing and release of GMOs to be controlled by the HSNO Act.

7.0 Summary of Stakeholder Engagement

In establishing options for the control of research sites in rural areas of the district, the following key stakeholders were consulted with:

Stakeholder	Contact & Position
PGG Wrightson	Doug Cartridge, National Property Manager
AgResearch	Darryl Millar, Planning Consultant (Resource Management Group Limited ('RMG'))
Plant and Food Research	
Lincoln University	
SCION	Various
Environment Canterbury	Sam Leonard
Mahaanui Kurataiao Limited	Paul Horgan

Table 7.1 – List of stakeholders contacted.

It should also be noted that contact was made with Manaaki Whenua in relation to this scope of work. However, as it was established that Manaaki Whenua do not own any research facilities in the Selwyn, and given that they currently utilise the farms provided by Lincoln University for research activities, it was not considered necessary to seek comment from a Manaaki Whenua representative. A summary of the responses from each of the stakeholders listed in Table 7.1 is provided below.

7.1 PGG Wrightson

Mr Doug Cartridge stated that PGG Wrightson would prefer to see Rule 9.4.1.2 of the Rural Volume broadened to include rural research activities undertaken by privately owned operators, in addition to those undertaken by tertiary education providers and CRIs.

It is the preference of PGG Wrightson that the *“the use of land or buildings for the purpose of growing or rearing of crops or livestock and associated monitoring of the environment for research and education purposes”* be able to be undertaken as a permitted activity by private research entities in the Rural Zone.

Mr Cartridge asserted that private companies are involved in agricultural based research in the district and PGG Wrightson see no reason why it should only be tertiary education providers or CRIs that are permitted to undertake such activities.

7.2 AgResearch, Plant and Food Research & Lincoln University

Mr Darryl Millar, a planning consultant at RMG, provided feedback on behalf of AgResearch, Plant and Food and Lincoln University. Mr Millar stated that having reviewed Rule 9.4.1.2 of the Operative Plan relating to research sites in Rural Zones, he considers that it remains fit for purpose, subject to some minor amendments. In this regard, Mr Millar made the following points:

- The interpretation and application of the Rule 9.4.1.2 relies heavily on the definitions of ‘tertiary education’ and ‘research’. Hence, in Mr Millar’s opinion, the existing definitions would need to be rolled over into the Proposed Plan.
- Mr Millar has assumed that the reference in the rule to the Education Act 1989 is referring specifically to section 159 of that act, which includes a definition of ‘tertiary education provider’. Mr Millar notes that it is necessary to also reference any successor statute in the rule, in case of section 159 of the Education Act being repealed in the future.

- Similarly, in terms of Crown Research Institutes, Mr Millar notes that a reference to any successor organisations should be made in the rule.
- Mr Millar notes that the exclusion of ‘conferencing’ from being a permitted activity under Rule 9.4.1.2 is somewhat of a grey area. Activities such as field trips, discussion days, focus events and small-scale seminars regularly occur both outdoors and within buildings on research farms across the district and it is unclear as to whether these activities need to be considered as ‘conferencing’. Mr Millar suggests that the intention of excluding ‘conferencing’ from the rule in the first instance was to prevent large-scale functions or conference centres on research farms. As such, Mr Millar recommends that for clarity, the rule should exclude “conferencing (unless ancillary to the primary activity)” on the site.

Based on the above points, Mr Millar has recommended that the rule be amended to read as follows (note that changes have been indicated in **bold red**):

9.4.1.2 – The activity is undertaken by either an approved tertiary education provider (as defined in **section 159 of the Education Act 1989 or its successor) or a Crown Research Institute (**or successors**) involving the use of land or buildings for the purpose of growing or rearing of crops or livestock and associated monitoring of the environment for research ~~and~~, education **or tertiary education purposes** but excluding conferencing (**unless ancillary to the primary activity**), accommodation, recreation and retail activities.**

The feedback provided by Mr Millar on behalf of AgResearch, Plant and Food and Lincoln University has been considered in recommending an option for further development in Section 8 of this report, below. In addition, a number of the points raised have been given consideration in early sections of this report.

7.3 SCION

Contact was initially made with SCION via Mr Alan Leckie, a researcher working on behalf of SCION in Selwyn. Mr Leckie provided information on the type and location of research activities undertaken by SCION in the district and noted that SCION do not currently own or operate any buildings for research purposes in Selwyn.

Comment was then sought from SCION in relation to the Operative Plan provisions for rural research activities. Mr Graham Croker asked how ‘conferencing’ is defined in the District Plan given that the activity is excluded from being permitted under Rule 9.4. The term is not currently defined in the Operative Plan. However, Mr Croker’s concern was in relation to whether a field visit involving up to 40 researchers on a site over the course of a day could be considered ‘conferencing’. Mr Croker was informed that is not the intention of the rule and consent would not generally be required for such an activity. However, this is a matter that has been noted as requiring further clarification in the Proposed Plan provisions.

7.4 Environment Canterbury

ECan was sent a draft version of the preferred options report and noted that they had no substantial feedback on the topic. They were satisfied that the recommended option would not be inconsistent with the CRPS.

7.5 Mahaanui Kurataiao Limited

Mahaanui Kurataiao Limited were consulted to obtain feedback on behalf of ngā rūnanga in relation to the preferred option report. However, no feedback was received.

8.0 Summary of Options to Address Issues

8.1 OPTION 1 – Status Quo

This option would result in Rule 9.4 in the Operative Plan being inserted into the Proposed Plan unchanged.

Effectiveness in Addressing Issue:

The assessment of the Operative Plan rules in this report has not identified any significant issues with the existing framework for research activities in rural areas and as such, a continuation of the status quo could be considered a reasonable course of action. However, it should be noted that this option would not provide any concession for private companies undertaking rural research activities in the district, despite the nature of the activity being identical to rural research activities undertaken by tertiary education providers or CRIs. In addition, it would not clarify any of the matters raised via the stakeholder engagement process, including the issue of what constitutes ‘conferencing’ on research sites.

Risks:

There is a risk that this option would result in undue time and cost for private operators aiming to undertake research in rural areas of the district. The outcome of this option would be that tertiary education providers and CRIs could undertake rural-based research as of right, while private operators seeking to undertake the same types of activities would require resource consent.

Budget or Time Implications:

There would be very few budget or time implications in terms of the drafting of the provisions for this option given that Rule 9.4 could be carried over unchanged. However, it is reasonable to expect submissions in opposition from private operators undertaking research in the district should this option be adopted, potentially resulting in additional time and cost for Council.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that Council do not adopt this option.

8.2 OPTION 2 – Edit Operative Provisions

This option would result in Rule 9.4 being edited in the Proposed Plan to include research activities undertaken by privately owned entities as permitted activities, so long as the activities are associated with the growing or rearing of crops or livestock. Further clarity would be provided by inserting the definitions for ‘tertiary education provider’ contained in s159 of the Education Act 1989 into the Proposed Plan, as well as a definition for ‘Crown Research Institute’. This option would also provide for an addition to the rule that allows conferencing activities ancillary to the primary activity on a research site to be undertaken as of right.

Effectiveness in Addressing Issue:

Permitting research into the growing or rearing of crops or livestock by privately owned entities in the Rural Zone is considered to be a fair and reasonable outcome that is unlikely to result in any adverse environmental effects. As is the case with tertiary education providers and CRIs, private entities would be restricted to research into rural activities (relating to crops or livestock) and would still need to meet the built form standards of the Plan. As such, it is considered that permitting research activities of a rural nature by private entities is a pragmatic approach and is effective in addressing the issue raised in this report.

In relation to the recommendations made by Mr Millar (as outlined in Section 7), it is considered that in general, they would be effective in ensuring that there is clarity in terms of how the rule is to be applied. However, the recommendation to include references in Rule 9.4.2.1 to any potential successor of s159 of the Education Act or to CRIs carries risk as there is no certainty in terms of what could be included in any successor document or definition. It is considered a more effective method to insert the existing definition from s159 of the Education Act into the Proposed Plan, and to form an appropriate definition for CRIs.

Additionally, Mr Millar recommended that conferencing continue to be excluded from being a permitted activity under Rule 9.4.2.1, *“unless it is ancillary to the primary activity”*. The Operative Plan rule only permits research activities if they involve *“the use of land or buildings for the purpose of growing or rearing of crops or livestock”* and associated monitoring for research and education purposes. The addition to the rule is effective given that it is highly unlikely that a large-scale ‘conference’ in the traditional sense would be able to be held on land or in buildings being used for the growing or rearing of crops or livestock, or for monitoring. However, the addition to the rule would allow for site meetings, discussion days, seminars and similar activities both indoors and outdoors on the site. For further clarity, it is considered necessary to also insert a definition of ‘conferencing’ into the Proposed District Plan.

Risks:

The main risk with Option 2 relates to the use of research sites for ‘conferencing’ purposes. By allowing for conferencing at research sites that is *“ancillary to the primary activity”*, there is a risk that large scale conferencing could occur on site as of right. However, to be “ancillary” the conferencing would need to directly relate to the growing or rearing of crops or livestock and associated monitoring on the site. It is considered unlikely that large conference events would be

able to meet this requirement, and if such events were able to occur it is likely that they would be very irregular. Furthermore, the bulk and location standards of the Proposed Plan will still apply to the site, further reducing the likelihood of a large scale conference centre or similar building being established on a rural site. While it is necessary to identify this risk, it is considered highly unlikely that any conferencing ancillary to the primary activity at a research site would occur at a scale that would generate significant adverse effects.

Budget or Time Implications:

The implementation of this option would require some scale changes to the existing rules package. However, this is not considered to result in any significant budget or time implications.

Recommendation:

That Option 2 be adopted for further development.

8.3 Option 3 –Schedule Research Facilities

This option would provide for the removal of Rule 9.4.2.1 from the Proposed Plan and the subsequent scheduling of some or all existing research sites in Rural Zones. A new set of provisions would need to be drafted for the scheduled research sites, which would most likely permit rural research activities subject to meeting various performance standards.

Effectiveness in Addressing Issue:

While this option would provide an opportunity to address issues in relation to privately owned research facilities and the clarity of the existing rules package, it would not be effective in providing for future research farms to establish.

Risks:

There are significant risks with this option, most notably the fact that it would not allow for new research sites to establish in the rural environment in the future as a permitted activity. In addition, the footprint of the current operators would be limited to their existing sites.

Budget or Time Implications:

This option would result in addition time and money for Council without obtaining a better outcome than what could otherwise be obtained through Option 2.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that Council do not adopt this option.

9.0 Preferred Option for Further Engagement

The Project Team recommends that:

Option 2 for Research Sites in Rural Zones is endorsed for further development (targeted stakeholder engagement, Section 32 and Drafting Phase).