

**BEFORE A COMMISSIONER APPOINTED BY SELWYN  
DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**IN THE MATTER OF**     the Resource Management Act 1991

**AND**

**IN THE MATTER OF**     application by KeaX Limited for  
resource consent to establish a solar  
array at 150 Buckleys Road, 115  
Buckleys Road and 821 Hanmer Road,  
Brookside

**HEARING STATEMENT OF GRAHAM DENSEM  
ON BEHALF OF THE COUNCIL  
(LANDSCAPE)  
27 FEBRUARY 2023**

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1. Further to my Landscape Review of 19 September 2022, I remain satisfied that the landscape effects of this proposal, both visual effects and those on landscape character, will be less than minor once mitigated (screened) as proposed.

### **Visual Effects**

2. These would be 'more than minor' for neighbours and road users without screening, but would be suitably screened as now proposed, and are therefore 'less than minor'.
3. Approval, if granted, should be conditional on the screening achieving its stated purposes and time frames. My acceptance is entirely dependant on the screening being effective. See 'Uncertainties' below.

### **Effects on Landscape Character**

4. These will be 'Moderate-High' on site, but once screened will be confined within the site. Effects beyond the site will then be minor. In terms of the total range of class 2 & 3 soils within Selwyn District, the 258ha of this site are an insignificant loss.
5. My earlier assessments were on the basis of the loss being temporary, based on this being a 35-year lease, but I now understand the requested consent would be open-ended. I therefore have given thought to whether this changes my assessment. My conclusion is that it does not, given the small amount of productive land lost to primarily agriculture, in the context of the Lower Plains of Selwyn District in total.
6. I do not accept that the agricultural character of the site is maintained by the green sward beneath the solar panels. Visually, the site will become dominated by the mass of solar panels. The landscape character will be of different landscape texture, from removing the pattern of internal fences and trees and emphasising the peripheral ones. Also, from closing the site to views from outside. The green sward, while supported, is subsidiary to the dominance of the panels.
7. I support the observation of Mr Green, neighbouring farmer, who stated in his submission last Thursday that he '*regards the district around Brookside as part of a green belt outside Christchurch.*' While this voices a probably widely-held view throughout the district, and also is my professional view, the District Plan makes no effective provisions for maintaining the 'green' character of modified rural landscape, and I therefore must conclude that loss of the 258ha concerned, while it seems extensive locally, is not contrary to any provisions of the District Plan.
8. While 'small' in the context of the Lower Plains, and beyond the scope of this hearing, the cumulative effects of several such applications would at some point become significant to the landscape character of the Lower Plains. I therefore draw attention to Recommendation 6 of my Landscape Review  
*'that the Council continue to monitor the potential for cumulative effects arising from applications for renewable energy schemes within its rural areas, notably the loss of rural landscape amenity and productive soils.'*

### **Uncertainties**

9. Mr Van d. Val's submission refers to submitters' uncertainties that the effects will be as indicated by the applicant (his paras 29 – 36). Concerning landscape mitigations, I accept

there is a degree of uncertainty. While the Proposed Site Vegetation Plan is at small scale and is schematic, I accept that in its latest form it is a suitable basis for consent purposes. Should the Council decide to grant consent, I have indicated the following, to lessen uncertainties for neighbours:

- That I accept the species proposed are capable of forming the necessary screen, although with no guarantee as to growth rates. To this extent, the Draft Conditions require a Landscape Management Plan be approved, providing details of species, spacing and timing in establishing the screening. (Draft Conditions 14 - 21);
- The responsibility for performance is on the applicant. To this end, the Draft Conditions require the applicant to ensure the planting plan is prepared by a suitably qualified person, that the applicant comply with all approval plans (Draft Conditions 5, 6) and that planting be of the prescribed height before construction (Clause 20);
- The Draft Conditions require the screens to be maintained over time and if necessary, replaced (Draft Condition 27);
- I have suggested, although unsure if incorporated in the Draft Conditions, that the Council maintain a notifications procedure for neighbours in the event that any specific issues may arise that affect a neighbour, such as transparency or gaps.

### **Glare and Glint**

10. This has been addressed by a specialist. I am satisfied with his conclusion that the effects for neighbours and motorists to the east, north and west can be screened by planting. However, any transparency of a screen at lower levels, even a single tree, could allow annoying reflectivity for a neighbour. I propose this also be dealt with through the notifications procedure suggested in the final bullet point above.

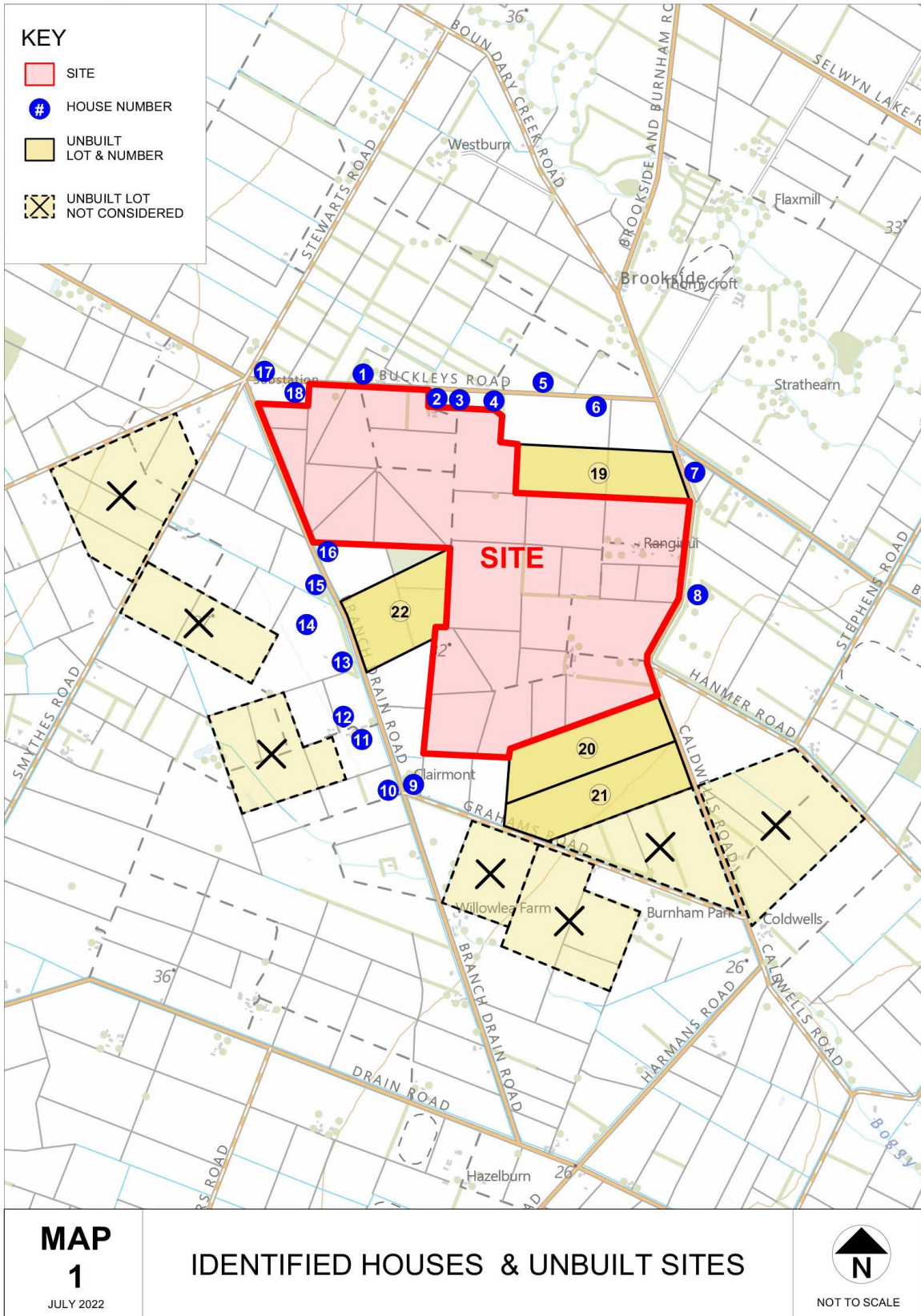
### **Appended**

11. Appended to this Statement are:
- **Map 1** from my Landscape Review, which identifies properties referred to, and
  - **Table 1 from that Review**, which
    - (i) summarises my assessments under various conditions of screening;
    - (ii) relates property addresses to site numbers, and
    - (iii) relates assessed effects ('Low', 'Very Low' etc) to RMA-equivalent effects (More-Than-Minor; etc).

In Table 1, it is **column 4** that contains my assessment of effects with screening as proposed for this development.

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**Graham Densem**  
*Landscape Architect*  
27February 2023.  
v.02, 27Feb2023



**TABLE 1: ASSESSMENTS OF VISUAL EFFECTS  
FROM BUILT AND UNBUILT LOTS**

Site no.	address existing house	Boffa Miskell assessments		G. Densem assessments			Comment
		1. <i>before screen growth</i>	2. <i>with screen</i>	3. <i>before screen growth</i>	4. <i>with screen</i>	5. <i>if screen lost</i>	
EFFECTS FROM BUILT LOTS (Boffa Miskell Site Numbers)							
1	150 Buckleys Road						NOT CONSIDERED
2	115 Buckleys Road						NOT CONSIDERED
3	105 Buckleys Road	Low	V. Low	Low	V. Low	High	v. close (60m), existing screen
4	79 Buckleys Road	V. Low	V. Low	Low	V. Low	High	close (100m), exist screening
5	56 Buckleys Road	V. Low	V. Low	V. Low	V. Low	Mod	mod. distant (300m), exist screening
6	23 Buckleys Road	V. Low	V. Low	V. Low	V. Low	Mod	mod. distant (350m), exist screening
7	932 Hanmer Road	V. Low	V. Low	V. Low	V. Low	Mod	mod close (230m), existing screen
8	870 Hanmer Road	Low	V. Low	Low	V. Low	High	close(100m), existing screen
9	180 Grahams Road	Mod Low	V. Low	Mod Low	Low	Mod High	close (150m), 2-storied, exist screening
10	191 Branch Drain Road	V. Low	V. Low	V. Low	V. Low	V. Low	screened by house 9
11	229 Branch Drain Road	V. Low	V. Low	V. Low	V. Low	Low	mod. close (300m), existing screening
12	233 Branch Drain Road	V. Low	V. Low	V. Low	V. Low	Low	mod. close (300m), existing screening
13	265 Branch Drain Road	Low	V. Low	Low	V. Low	V. Low	distant, exist screen permeable
14	277 Branch Drain Road	V. Low	V. Low	V. Low	V. Low	V. Low	distant, back from road
15	313 Branch Drain Road	V. Low	V. Low	Low	V. Low	Mod Low	mod. close (200m), exist screening
16	324 Branch Drain Road	V. Low	V. Low	Mod Low	Mod Low	V. High	v. close (40m), exist screen permeable
17	10 Stewarts Road	V. Low	V. Low	Low	V. Low	Mod	close (100m), exist screen, sub-station
18	187 Buckleys Road	V. Low	V. Low	Low	V. Low	V. High	v. close(50m), exist screen, 2 sides
EFFECTS FROM UNBUILT LOTS (G. Densem Additional Numbers, see Map 1)							
19	893 Hanmer Road			Mod High	Mod Low	V. High	v. close, 2 sides, exist screen permeable
20	Caldwell Road I			High	Mod Low	High	v. close, long frontage
21	Caldwell Road II			Low	V. Low	Low	distant, screened by site 20
22	198 Branch Drain Road			High	Mod Low	High	v. close, 2 sides

**RMA-EQUIVALENT EFFECT**

	<b>MORE THAN MINOR</b>
	<b>MINOR</b>
	<b>LESS THAN MINOR</b>

**NOTES**

<b>1. before screen growth:</b>	1 & 2 from Boffa 'Landscape & Visual Effects Assessment', Table 2, pp.17-21. Refers to effects on neighbours without (year 1) and with (year 5) mitigation on application site, including screening on neighbours properties.
<b>2. with screen:</b>	
<b>3. before screen growth:</b>	3 & 4: G. Densem review of columns 1 & 2 but excluding screening on neighbour's sites
<b>4. with screen:</b>	
<b>5. if screening lost:</b>	5: G. Densem added assessment of effects on neighbours if relevant screening were lost from the application site and neighbour's site.