

Andrew Craig

Landscape Architect

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Memorandum subject to RMA s42a - landscape

Date 5th February 2025

To Selwyn District Council
Attn: Jonathan Gregg

From Andrew Craig – landscape architect

Subject Land use resource consent application RC 246059
At: 80 Struie Road, Hororata
Applicant: Ra Tuatahi No 1 Limited

Introduction

The purpose of this memorandum is to:

1. review the landscape AEE¹ accompanying the amended application, including confirmation of identified potentially affected parties;
2. review the applicant's response to a request for further landscape information (RMA s92) required arising from the above resource consent application (RC246059);
3. Consideration of the landscape mitigation measures offered by the applicant, and from these whether further conditions of consent are required;

In preparing this memorandum, a Site visit was undertaken on 16th January 2025.

¹ Landscape AEE addendum prepared by Anne Wilkins, Novo Group 27/08/2024

It is understood that:

1. The applicant seeks to establish a solar panel array with a coverage of approximately 10 hectares.
2. The site will include a 3 metre wide landscape strip comprising evergreen native trees located on the west, northwest and southeast boundaries.

RMA s92 information (RFI)

A request for further information was issued on 16th January, 2025 seeking the following further information, with brief commentary on the response:

1. Identification of potential adverse effects.

These are implied rather than explicitly stated. It is stated however that: *‘Overall, the proposal does not result in adverse effects on its own.’*² Nevertheless, the screening effect of proposed boundary planting and the inherent necessity of it suggests that there exist potential adverse visual effects they require mitigation³ – namely for the benefit of nearby residences. The proposed conditions of consent acknowledge this where it states that the boundary planting *‘screens the solar array when viewed externally to the Site’* and *‘prevents glare from the solar array from escaping onto neighbouring properties or roads.’*⁴ It is further noted that the applicant’s landscape architect regards the boundary planting as having a remedial effect providing for biodiversity and *‘...improving the overall physical health of the environment.’*⁵ In this regard it is noted that the remediation planting does not extend to the north east boundary. Nonetheless, I agree that it is not needed there for screening purposes as no nearby dwellings are potentially affected.

2. Consideration of the District Plan (both operative and review) provisions relating to utilities.

Information was satisfactorily provided in response to this.

² Visual Effects Assessment – January 2025 - paragraph 25 - i)

³ Op. cit paragraph 9

⁴ AEE Appendix E consent condition 15 (b) and (c)

⁵ Op. cit. Paragraph 20

3. A more detailed landscape plan indicating the location and extent of plant species to be used.

This has been provided and gives sufficient information to understand the proposed planting. It is noted that the planting will comprise evergreen native species and that all are capable of growing to sufficient height to effect full screening of the solar array. The species selected are reasonably fast growing provided they are regularly watered during dry spells. I note that a proposed condition of consent⁶ does indicate the provision of irrigation and then ongoing maintenance of planting. Given this in combination with spacing of planting, it is likely that full screening will be readily achievable within around 4 - 5 years depending on plant size at time of planting. Screening will become increasingly effective as plants mature.

In the meantime, the solar array will be visible from the nearest dwellings. Due to circumstantial conditions, it is likely the visual amenity effects on neighbours will be reasonably low to the extent that they will be less than minor. This also takes into account what the District Plan (both operative and reviewed) contemplates occurring within the zone regarding the presence of utilities including renewable energy production. So, the visual effects at the time of implementation will be no more than minor. And once the screen planting is established very low – they will be substantially less than minor. It is also noted that all the neighbouring dwellings are essentially oriented away from the site, although the dwelling at 90 Struie road does have an eastward view of it, but is otherwise mostly oriented north. Further, the distance of the dwellings from the site in combination with the relatively low height of the panels is such that the solar array will not dominate, despite being visible until the screen planting matures. Additionally, at about 10ha, the site is quite small and so the effects will not be widespread. Finally, the site is backdropped by the mature pines located south of the site alongside the Selwyn River. These will assist in the visual absorption of the solar array where both the trees and panels are dark in colour.

4. A condition of consent stating when planting is to be implemented, and indicating ongoing maintenance.

Appendix E (attached to the AEE) listing the proposed conditions of consent includes the preparation of a Landscape Management Plan (LMP) – conditions 15 – 21. A proposed requirement is that the LMP is submitted for certification by the Council at

⁶ Condition 16

least 30 days prior to the commencement of landscaping. It is further noted that the planting shall be carried out within the first planting season following the commencement of the solar array construction.

These proposed conditions in combination with the landscape plan will be sufficient to achieve the visual and landscape mitigation and remediation sought for the site.

Landscape AEE

Generally, the Landscape Assessment accompanying the consent application in addition to the RFI response is sufficient to ascertain potential landscape and visual effects arising from the proposal. As discussed, it is noted that the proposed planting will take some time to mature and effect full screening where I determine that the interim visual effects will be acceptable.

The conclusions reached in the landscape AEE regarding the character of the proposal and its effects are otherwise agreed with. Potentially affected parties have all been identified and the potential effects on them adequately considered. The conclusion that potential adverse landscape and visual effects will be low is agreed. They would therefore straddle the minor to less than minor range in accordance the following diagram extracted from the NZILA Assessment Guidelines.



Diagram From the NZILA Assessment Guidelines this diagram indicates the correlation between the spectrum of effects – bottom line - and their degree in RMA terms – top two lines.

No further conditions of consent are required.

Andrew Craig
Landscape Architect