

**Before an Independent Hearing
Commissioner Appointed by
Selwyn District Council**

IN THE MATTER of the Resource Management Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER a Resource Consent Application for
land use consent to erect and operate a
supermarket at 157 Levi Road,
Rolleston by Foodstuffs (South Island)
Properties Limited (RC216016)

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF Gabriel Wilson Ross

Associate Principal Landscape Architect

7 July 2022

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERTISE

1. My full name is Gabriel Wilson Ross, and I am an Associate Principal Landscape Architect at Boffa Miskell Limited, a national firm of consulting planners, ecologists and landscape architects.
2. I am a registered member (2019) of the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects (NZILA) and a former registered Landscape Architect of the British Columbia Society of Landscape Architects (BCSLA 2011-2021). I hold the qualifications of a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture with Honours Degree from Lincoln University.
3. I have been involved in a wide range of projects throughout my 22 years in the industry working as a Landscape Architect in New Zealand, China, and Canada. This has included Landscape Effects Assessments (LEA) for rural-residential, rural development, wind farm and aquaculture projects in Auckland and surrounding regions.
4. More recently I have been involved in several projects looking specifically at rural and urban amenity matters in the Selwyn and Christchurch City Districts including a meat plant, a contractor's yard, numerous commercial developments, an area of plantation forestry and marine structures. I have completed both Assessments for Applicants and Peer Reviews of LEA for Regional and District Councils. I am therefore qualified to provide landscape and visual amenity evidence for this project.
5. In this matter, I was engaged by Selwyn District Council (SDC) to provide a peer review of the applicants LEA and proposed landscape plan for the Site.
6. I have visited the Site and the broader context on 21st January 2022. I am also familiar with the area more generally having travelled past the site for several years to utilise local sporting facilities.

CODE OF CONDUCT

7. I confirm that I have read the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses 2014 contained in the Environment Court Practice Note and that I agree to comply with it. I confirm that I have considered all the material facts that I am aware of that might alter or detract from the opinions that I express, and that this evidence is within my area of expertise, except where I state that I am relying on the evidence of another person.

SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

8. In my evidence, I will:
- a) Briefly discusses my involvement with this proposal.
 - b) Discuss the contextual setting of the Site.
 - c) Discuss the proposal and the level of landscape and visual effects; and
 - d) Respond to submitters and outline a summary of key issues.
9. I will focus exclusively on landscape related character, visual and amenity issues. Consideration around appropriateness of the development location and built form layouts are covered in the SDC Urban Design evidence by Ms Wolfer.
10. Generally, I am in agreement with the Applicants LEA findings but have assessed the proposal as having *Low to Moderate* landscape and landscape and visual effects rather than the Applicants LEA assessment of *Low to or Low to Moderate*.
11. I have recommended a number of consent conditions and some design refinements in our LEA Peer Review¹ to help move the effects towards the *Low* end of the effects scale.

¹ BML LEA Peer Review dated 17th March 2022.

LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT HISTORY

12. Boffa Miskell Limited (BML) was engaged by the Selwyn District Council to undertake a peer review of the landscape assessment and landscape plan² (LEA) contained within the AEE of the Application.
13. My focus related solely to landscape and visual effects, planting and rural amenity. Urban design and related matters were reviewed by SDC Urban Designer, Ms Wolfer.
14. The first stage was a desktop review of the LEA and its findings, including:
 - a) The methodology used.
 - b) The selection of visual assessment viewpoints and visibility assessment.
 - c) The landscape context and site description and analysis.
 - d) The landscape and visual effects assessment in relation to the relevant statutory assessment matters.
 - e) Any assessment undertaken to evaluate the cumulative visual effects.
 - f) Feasibility and effectiveness of any proposed mitigation.
 - g) Review of SCD urban design peer reviewer Ms Wolfer RFI questions.
15. Following the initial desktop review, Landscape Architect James Bentley and myself visited the Site and the broader surrounding area on the morning of 21st January 2022.

² Prepared by RMM Landscape Architects.

16. Shortly following the site visit, we issued a request for information³ via email with additional questions for the applicants.
17. A detailed RFI⁴ response from the applicant was received on the 25th February 2022 which included several clarifications and some minor updates to the Landscape plan.
18. In conjunction with Ms Wolfer, we compiled a list of clarifications and recommendations on 10th March 2022 which was forwarded to the SDC Planner to review with the Applicant. No formal response was received in relation to these.
19. We proceeded to prepare our LEA Peer Review and issued this on 17th March 2022.

SITE AND EXISTING ENVIRONMENT

20. The Site is a 7.24 ha triangular tract of land currently largely surrounded with shelterbelts and is zoned under the operative Selwyn District Plan (SDP) as Living Z. Levi Road forms the north-western boundary with Lincoln-Rolleston Road defining the south-western boundary.
21. Views into the Site are generally restricted to vehicle entry points from both Levi and Lincoln-Rolleston Roads. An existing dwelling with ancillary buildings occupies the northern part of the Site with internal fence lines, hedges and shelterbelt plantings.
22. The adjacent built form of development to the north, west and south of the Site is typically low density single-storey residential typologies within the Living 1 & 1B zones and within the new urban growth area (Living Z).
23. To the east and within the operative District Plan Inner Plains zoning, existing development is typically of more rural character and

³ BML email issued 21/01/

⁴ Aurecon letter dated 25/02/22

more widely dispersed and includes both residential and farming related buildings.

24. To the south-west of the Site along the Lincoln-Rolleston Road lies larger lifestyle blocks and boundary planting. This separates the more higher density residential developments north of Lowe Road and the more recent development of Rueben Ave to the south.
25. Under the Proposed Selwyn District Plan (PSDP) the Site would change to a General Residential Zone with the land east of the Site boundary changing to a General Rural Zone.
26. The land to the northeast of the Site is subject to Plan Change 71 (PC71) that, should it be approved, will change the proposed General Rural Zone immediately to the east of the Site to Residential use.

THE PROPOSED ACTIVITY

27. The proposed activity includes the primary 7,232 sqm footprint supermarket building located in the north-eastern corner of the Site. The building ranges from 7.4m to a maximum height of 12.3m above the finished floor level. Facades consist of a mix of metal profile, precast concrete of smooth and textured finishes and glazing. Some decorative architectural details are included. The colour scheme is primarily Sandstone Grey with Black Zero accents. The corporate 'PnS' yellow is restricted to the main signage panel and signage and entry panels.
28. Extensive areas of parking wrap around three sides of the building providing 517 spaces. A goods and services lane access runs along the eastern side of the building.
29. Vehicle access is proposed at two locations on the Lincoln-Rolleston Road with four entry points on Levi Road. The primary entry is on the south-west side of the building with a 'click and collect' facility on the north side of the building. Service and delivery

yards along with staff parking are located on the eastern corner of the building.

30. Two 8m tall⁵, 2m wide, 0.65m thick pylon signs are proposed at the southern entrance off Lincoln-Rolleston Road and centrally at the main entry along the Levi Road boundary. Other access points will receive 1.5 high and 1.2 wide welcome or exist signs in the PnS yellow colour. Signs are noted as being up lit at night.
31. The parking area will be lit with light-poles spaced on the centre line of parking rows. Other external lighting of landscape and wayfinding elements will be determined through the future detailed design process.
32. Three pedestrian access routes are noted in the LEA from each of the Levi Rd and Lincoln-Rolleston Road boundaries. Of these only the two primary 3.5m wide entries of the Lincoln-Rolleston Road offer a relatively direct clear access to the building's main entry.
33. Public cycle parks are provided on the southern corner of the building. Additional secure staff cycle parks and a seating area is provided adjacent to the staff parking area on the eastern corner of the building.
34. The proposed landscape treatment includes a combination of massed planting beds, pleached and smaller scale hedges and specimen trees around the perimeter boundary. Of note includes the 'Northwest open space' on the intersection of Levi and Lincoln Rolleston Roads that also provides an overland flow and detention area for stormwater, as well as a smaller stormwater basin on the southern corner of the Site. A 10m wide native biodiversity planting strip with acoustic fencing is proposed along the north-eastern boundary.
35. Within the north and eastern sections of the parking area specimen trees are spaced regularly approximately every three pairs of

⁵ Scale reduced as part of RFI response from the original 10m height proposed in initial application.

parking lots. The southern corner of the parking area has relatively little trees within the hardstand area.

36. Two options for the north-eastern boundary biodiversity planting strip are proposed with the 2m boundary acoustic fence being offset back into the planting area if the proposed Plan Change 71 covering the land immediately to the north is adopted. As per the Commissioner's interim recommendation⁶ this appears the most likely outcome.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

37. Statutory context and requirements are dealt more comprehensively within the report prepared by Ms Anderson and within Ms Wolfer's evidence; however the following aspects are pertinent to my evidence.
38. The existing Living Z and proposed General Residential zoning of the Site under the OSDP and PSDP form an important part of the baseline for the landscape effects assessment. The current Living Z zoning anticipates medium density with a mix of one and two storey dwellings.
39. The Rolleston Structure Plan has been considered as an indication of Council aspirations for the long-term development of Rolleston which indicates medium density residential.
40. The National Policy Statement on Urban Development 2020 (NPS-UD), Enabling Housing Supply Amendment Bill, and Private Plan Change 71 relating to the neighbouring area have also been considered, particularly in regard to the greater building heights and densities permitted under the NPS-UD.
41. Part B – Section 3.4 and Section 4.1 of the Selwyn District Plan zoning along with the elements set out in the Outline Development Plan provide guidance on the anticipated residential character and

⁶ PC71 Commissioners Interim Recommendation dated 7 June 2022.

amenity of the existing zoning further assist in determining what the appropriate baseline development for the assessment is.

42. As the proposed supermarket development is not anticipated under the operative or proposed Selwyn District Plans the matters of discretion for large-scale commercial developments in the Business 1 Zone Part C – Section 16 – Business Zone Rules – Buildings provides some general measures around providing quality public open spaces and streetscape interfaces to assess the PnS proposal against.
43. The Proposed Selwyn District Plan (PSDP) and the PSDP Outline Development Plan which represents a more simplified version from the Operative SDP ODP highlights the need for an appropriate transition and boundary treatments along the residential and rural activities boundaries.

RESPONSE TO SUBMISSIONS

44. Of the 49 submissions received, 22 support the proposal with the remaining opposing it. Of those that oppose, 9 submitters specifically cite landscape and visual concerns. Principal concerns relate to rural amenity, lack of planting, landscape and visual effects and visual dominance of the main building.
45. I have summarised the key elements of concerns raised by submitters below along with, when appropriate, referencing recommended conditions and design refinements as set out in the LEA Peer Review.

Effects on rural & residential amenity

46. Two submissions⁷ state that the large commercial building with associated parking areas and the increased activity associated with

⁷ Richard Gould (6), Janelle Rea (32),

- the supermarket operations will adversely impact the existing rural, semi-rural, and residential amenity values.
47. Submissions also noted that the proposal will have adverse landscape and visual effects on land zoned for residential development and represents a significant landscape change not anticipated in the ODP⁸.
48. The Site and areas surrounding it are in a state of transition from rural and semi-rural to more urbanised residential land uses. With the likely approval of PC71 the rural character of the site and the surrounding land to the north and north-east is expected to change to an urban residential character in the near future.
49. The PnS proposal will unavoidably result in a different landscape character when compared to the anticipated residential use under the Operational or Proposed Selwyn District Plan.
50. While the type of amenity and landscape effects will be different, overall, I agree that the Applicants proposed landscape treatment will contribute positively to the landscape amenity values of the development provided the recommended changes and additional conditions noted in the LEA are adopted⁹.
51. Furthermore, the proposal will offer a comprehensive designed outcome under one landowner, which would be different from a series of different landowners if the land were residential. This would bring a more consistent approach to planting and mitigation.
52. Temporary effects in amenity during the civil works construction period¹⁰ was noted as a concern in two of the submissions. In my view these effects should be manageable through appropriate conditions around timing of works, traffic, dust, and noise. These effects would also be expected under a permitted residential development scenario which could, depending on developer

⁸ BTW Company on behalf of Harbour Building Partnership (43) and Group (44)

⁹ Pg 11, Section 9 of the Boffa Miskell Peer Review of Landscape and Visual Effects Assessment.

¹⁰ BTW Company on behalf of Harbour Building Partnership (43) and Group (44)

phasing, be more protracted than the proposed supermarket development.

Lack of Planting

53. Inadequate or low landscaping particularly along the Lincoln-Rolleston Road boundary was mentioned in four submissions¹¹ as being insufficient to buffer noise or beautify the area.
54. As far as I am aware the landscape planting is not intended to provide acoustic buffering so I do not specifically address this matter.
55. While for the most part, I support the proposed landscape planting scheme, I agree with the submitters on this issue. The proposed mixed tussock planting with Ribbonwood, Cabbage tree and Lancewood along the Lincoln-Rolleston Road frontage is inadequate in terms of numbers, placement and species to provide sufficient filtering of views to both the adjacent parking area, and the main PnS building.
56. The proposed informal landscaping within this landscape strip also does not reflect the intentions of the Rolleston Structure Plan¹² which seeks a more formal avenue type of planting with specimen trees along Lincoln Rolleston Road. While this could occur within the public realm, it is considered more appropriate to develop this within the proposed landscape strip to ensure this planting and associated mitigation values is implemented as part of the PnS project.
57. As noted in Ms Wolfer's evidence if this site would be subdivided into individual sections and be developed for medium density housing, each site would currently have to provide 1 tree per site; should the site be developed in line with the provisions of the B1

¹¹ Alan & Kathreen Haylock (7), Shona Robb (28), BTW Company on behalf of Harbour Building Partnership (43) and Group (44)

¹² Rolleston Structure Plan, figure 7.3, page 98

rule package¹³, then the landscaping strip requires a minimum of two trees per 10m road frontage.

58. My recommendation to address this issue is to add additional specimen trees and align and space them in a way to support the creation of an avenue along the Lincoln-Rolleston Road. Deciduous tree planting similar to what is proposed along Levi Road is considered an appropriate approach. Species selections should provide interest (e.g. change colour), vertical form and canopy suitable to provide for shade over the pedestrian pathway.
59. The southern corner of the parking lot does not receive a specimen tree layout consistent the balance of the parking area. This will allow clearer views from the Lincoln-Rolleston Road corridor to the proposed building. As this will be a prominent view for people travelling north bound along the Lincoln Rolleston Road it would be helpful to add additional trees to provide additional visual screening of the building form and reducing the apparent scale of the parking lot.
60. My recommendation is to add approximately 8 - 10 specimen trees to the south-east corner area of the parking area consistent with the layout proposed in the western section of the parking lot.

Landscape and Visual Effects

61. Three submissions¹⁴ specifically note adverse landscape and visual effects with reference to the proposed building being designed to stand out and be visually dominant, and the proposed land use being incompatible with the existing residentially zoned areas.
62. The proposal will obviously have different landscape and visual effects than that of the baseline permitted residential development. The proposed supermarket will be viewed as a large building form setback from the road boundaries by the extensive parking area.

¹³ District Plan Review BS002 – Business Interface

¹⁴ BTW Company on behalf of Harbour Building Partnership (43) and Group (44), Nicholas & Glenda Brown (38),

Commercial branding and signage will be visible on both the façade and pylon signs at the site entries.

63. In comparison, a permitted baseline development could result in residential built forms closer to the boundaries and covering a larger proportion of the perimeter of the Site. While a more diverse range of façade treatments, colour and materiality would be likely, the overall bulk and mass of built form of medium density residential development on the Site, in my opinion, could collectively read as greater than that expected from the PnS development.
64. In my view, this change in landscape character from residential to more commercial in nature is not necessarily a highly adverse outcome, provided the proposed PnS landscape treatment is well executed and maintained through to maturity. The large building is sited away from adjacent residential areas.
65. Compared to a permitted residential development scenario where landscape treatments and quality of landscape maintenance can be dependent on multiple individual developers and landowners, a comprehensive construction and maintenance approach across the entire site, in my experience, offers a greater level of certainty.
66. As noted in the LEA Peer Review recommended conditions, some controls on minimum soil volumes for trees within hardstand areas are recommended. This will help ensure sustainable support long term growth and health of trees and vines which is often a challenge in parking areas within large format commercial developments.

Visual Dominance

67. Four submissions noted the commercial character of the PnS building is designed to stand out and dominate a location¹⁵. One

¹⁵ Alan & Kathreen Haylock (7), Patrick Westerlund and Linda Ili (24), Shona Robb (28), Ian Paki (30), Nicholas & Glenda Brown (38),

submission noted this would detract from the natural vistas of the Port Hills¹⁶.

68. I agree the bold colour and branding of the proposed supermarket is obviously intended to be visible.
69. As noted above, I have recommended conditions for additional specimen tree planting along the Lincoln-Rolleston Road boundary as well as within the parking area. This will assist to reduce the visual dominance of the main building by filtering views of the building.
70. As covered in Ms Wolfer's Urban Design evidence, the proposed roadside Pylon signs are recommended to be reduced from the current proposed 8 meters to 6 meters in height and 13 square meters in area with limits placed on times level of lighting of these. I agree that this will reduce the visual dominance of the pylon signage when viewed from the road corridors and, to a degree, adjacent residences. The 6-meter high will be more appropriate in scale to a residential context.
71. In relation to concerns the proposal will detract from the natural vistas of the Port Hills, whilst there are potentially some limited views currently, the existing shelterbelts on the Site largely obscure views across the Site to the Port Hills. The proposed development may, in the short term, offer improved vistas as the existing shelterbelts are removed opening views up across the parking area. Once the proposed trees reach mature heights, it is expected the longer views to the Port Hills will again be largely screened.
72. The primary existing viewshaft currently affording 'views and vista' to a small section of the Port Hills will be preserved down the Lincoln-Rolleston Road corridor.
73. The roadside pylon signage will be visible on the left hand side of this viewshaft when looking towards the south-east but will not be out of character with the existing powerlines on the west side of the road

¹⁶ Richard Gould (6)

and other ancillary road signage. Recommended conditions to reduce the height of the proposed pylon sign and introduce additional trees along the Lincoln - Rolleston Boundary will assist to reduce the visual dominance of the sign.

74. In the long term, the proposal will, in my view, not detract from vistas any more than a permitted residential development scenario that could include built forms and vegetation up to a similar height dispersed more widely across the Site.

Lighting effects

75. Several submissions noted the extra lighting associated with the building, signage and parking areas will impact on the evening darkness in the surrounding properties¹⁷.
76. The applicant has not provided any detail around proposed lighting or mitigations to address potential nuisance effects of this on surrounding properties. Accordingly, I have recommended a number of conditions addressing light spill, light colour, time of operation and recommended compliance with AS/NZS4282:2019 Control of obtrusive effects of outdoor lighting.
77. With appropriate design controls and the recommended additional planting to provide further screening of the parking area I am confident that these lighting concerns can be addressed.

OTHER MATTERS

78. Several other issues were identified in the LEA Peer Review that were not covered in the submissions.
79. The proposed interface treatment on the north-eastern boundary seeks to balance visual screening of the PnS building from viewers

¹⁷ Alan & Kathreen Haylock (7), Maryana Hamilton (14) Patrick Westerlund and Linda Ili (24), Shona Robb (28), Ian Paki (30), Nicholas & Glenda Brown (38), BTW Company on behalf of Harbour Building Partnership (43) and Group (44)

viewing the development from the north-east with avoiding excessive shading effects on the adjoining land.

80. The currently proposed species assembly for this strip is noted in the Applicants LEA¹⁸ as being expected to take 10 years to achieve effective screening. In my opinion this timeframe is too long, and I recommend that the Applicant review the proposed species mix by introducing approximately 5-8 additional fast-growing trees species. These will provide a degree of screening within a 2-5 year timeframe and reach 8-12 meters in height at maturity to screen the taller portions of the PnS building.
81. Design of the plant layout in the biodiversity planting strip should avoid placing trees near the boundary that will create excessive shading beyond that already anticipated from the PnS building. Ideally mature heights will be such that the need for periodic hedging or topping is avoided.
82. *Fuscospora cliffortioides* (Mountain beech) is proposed in the parking area and biodiversity strip. In my experience this species can struggle in the dry plains environment, particularly given the stresses of an urban setting in hardstand areas. I recommend substitution of this species for one more suited to the Rolleston climatic conditions.

CONCLUSION

83. This resource consent will change the character of the existing Site with a landscape outcome different from the residential landuse anticipated under the current and proposed District Plan. The Site is a tract of land that is located within a local context that is undergoing change.
84. The principal concerns around the visual and landscape effects of the proposal hinge around a large format commercial land use being located within a residential context. In my view, these

¹⁸ RMM LEA p.24

concerns will be adequately mitigated through successful implementation of the proposed landscape design with adoption of the conditions recommended in the Boffa Miskell LEA Peer Review.

85. Assuming the recommended conditions are accepted I would assess the proposals landscape and visual effects as being Low to Moderate. It is anticipated that these effects will decrease to the low end of the scale in the longer term (15+ years) as the proposed landscape matures.

Gabriel Wilson Ross

Associate Principal Landscape Architect

Boffa Miskell Limited

7 July 2022