

WAIKATO DISTRICT COUNCIL

Under: the Resource Management Act 1991

In the matter of: **Proposed Subdivision of 635
Whatawhata Road**

SUMMARY EXPERT STATEMENT OF REBECCA RYDER (LANDSCAPE) ON BEHALF OF WAIKATO DISTRICT COUNCIL

Introduction

1. I was initially engaged by Waikato District Council to review the Landscape and Visual Effects of the above subdivision application. Following my review of the information, I concluded that there was insufficient information in order for me to determine the nature of the landscape and visual effects of the proposal. Boffa Miskell Limited (BML) were therefore engaged by Waikato District Council to undertake an independent Landscape and Visual Effects Assessment (LVA) for the proposed 10-lot subdivision.
2. The purpose of this summary is to provide an overview of the key points contained within my LVA dated 26th September 2019, attached as Appendix D to the S42A report.
3. In preparing the LVA and this summary statement, a site visit was carried out on 24th June 2019 with the applicant and council's processing planner.

Expertise

4. I am a Landscape Architect and Director, of the firm Boffa Miskell Limited (BML), a multidisciplinary company with expertise in planning, design, ecology, landscape planning, cultural heritage, graphics and mapping.
5. I have been with BML since 2001. I am experienced in the areas of landscape architecture and visual assessment. I have given expert witness evidence in this area of expertise before numerous district and regional councils and the Environment Court.
6. I hold a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture (Honours) from Lincoln University and am affiliated to the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects as a Registered Landscape Architect. I am also a member of the Resource Management Law Association of New Zealand.

7. I have considerable experience assisting Councils in the peer review of applications. I have undertaken a number of district and regional wide natural character and landscape studies and equally numerous assessments for both plan change and resource consent applications.

Summary of LVA

Site Context

8. The site comprises the old Westlands Country Club and Golf Course extending from SH23 (Whatawhata Road) to the south, meeting rural properties and the Taitua Arboretum at its southern boundary.
9. Sited within the peri-urban western edge of Hamilton City, the proposed subdivision sits in a wider landscape context comprising an interplay of rolling pastoral and urbanised hills with valleys connecting to pastoral plains. Road networks extend along the foothills and atop the ridgelines of these hill ranges. Clusters of rural residential housing and rural housing are sited along the road corridors, including Howden Road to the west of the site.
10. The plains are compartmentalised into grazing paddocks and reflect the broader and iconic Waikato Plains. Vegetation cover in the wider landscape comprises mainly exotic tree and shrub vegetation. The predominant land cover comprises productive pasture and cropping, with the site and its immediate surrounds providing a unique clustering of large exotic and native tree cover.
11. The site sits on the cusp of a rolling hillside with the eastern edge of the site siting on the mid to lower slopes of the hillside. The mid to western portion of the sites falls to the lower rural plains landform with knolls and mounds sited throughout from the remnant golf course.

Unique characteristics

12. The site has operated as a non-rural activity for some time as part of the peri-urban extent of Hamilton City, firstly as a golf course and secondly as a manicured rural residential lot. It resides alongside the Taitua Arboretum and Stonebridge farm park subdivision, which collectively display a rural residential and peri-urban character. The site itself is tucked at the toe of these features and in itself displays an extension of the manicured and non-productive land use, characteristic of its historic use as a golf course. Elements within the site that contribute to its function in the wider landscape include an existing mature canopy vegetation, defined open spaces characteristic of the golf course and man-made ponds. The proposed subdivision includes additional

elements which complement existing, including a new wetland, pond and shelter planting and large areas of Redwood trees to the western boundary. These have been installed by the applicant to strengthen the natural features and framework around the site.

13. The site has in its historical and proposed land use a transitional landscape character that sits within a pocket of rural residential land use. The treed nature of the site and its connection to the adjoining Taitua Arboretum, whilst the proposed housing, less dense in clustering, connects to the pattern of built form along the adjoining Stonebridge Farm Park to the east.

Effects

14. The proposed house sites will only require a low degree of changes to the landform for establishment of the building foundations, with no planned changes to the overall landform of the site. The management of the waterways have been enhanced with the inclusion of wetland areas and riparian planting. Vegetation patterns are being reinforced on site to strengthen the framework planting within the site and connect to the Taitua Arboretum adjacent.
15. The site provides an existing character which differs to the typical rural land uses that are present within the broader landscape. It offers a substantially treed landscape area which links to the parkland character of the adjoining Taitua Arboretum. The proposed subdivision has potential to introduce **low to moderate adverse landscape effects upon the wider rural character**, which can be suitably mitigated through the inclusion of design measures and management of building site locations.
16. The visual catchment is largely confined with potential short term adverse visual effects of a **low to moderate** nature for the adjoining properties along Stonebridge Road. Mitigation measures are recommended within section 6.0 of the LVA report to minimise this effect. A condition of consent is recommended to require these measures to be included within a Landscape Management Plan (LMP). This LMP should be prepared for the approval of Waikato District Council.
17. It is acknowledged that implementation of the mitigation planting along the eastern boundary has largely been implemented and over time as it establishes the **visual effect on the adjoining properties** will be reduced to a **low** level in the medium term (5 – 10 years).

Statutory Analysis

18. Analysis against the District Plan demonstrates the different expectations of the rural zone to what occurs within the site and immediately surrounding the site. When assessed against these provisions the potential for adverse landscape and visual effects is of a **low to moderate** degree. Therefore, the inclusion of the recommendations set out in Section 6.0 of the LVA, and the retention of the design as it is presented, this level of effect can be reduced to a **low** degree.

Mitigation Measures

19. A series of design controls are proposed to maintain the existing character and to ensure the proposed built form, earthworks, infrastructure and planting retain and strengthen the features of the site. These are set out in Section 6.0 of the LVA report and comprise:

- a. Vegetation mitigation including existing mature vegetation
- b. Buildings and structures design controls on colour, form, location
- c. Material controls
- d. Earthworks controls
- e. Fencing controls
- f. Lighting and utility controls

20. In my opinion and given the applicant has already implemented and maintained the vegetation framework, these measures will suitably mitigate the identified adverse effects.

Summary

21. Overall the site provides an existing character which differs to the typical rural land uses that exist within this broader landscape. It provides a substantially treed landscape area which links to the parkland character of the adjoining Taitua Arboretum. The proposed subdivision has potential to introduce low to moderate adverse landscape effects upon the wider rural character, which can be suitably mitigated through the inclusion of design measures and management of building site locations.

22. The visual catchment is largely confined with potential short term adverse visual effects of a low to moderate nature for the adjoining properties along Stonebridge Road.

Mitigation measures are recommended and should be included as recommendation outcomes of a Landscape Management Plan.

23. Analysis against the District Plan demonstrates the different expectations of the rural zone to what occurs within the site and immediately surrounding the site. When assessed against these provisions the potential for adverse landscape and visual effects is of a low to moderate degree. Therefore, the inclusion of the recommendations set out in Section 6.0, and the retention of the design as it is presented, this level of effect can be reduced a low degree.

Dated: 30.06.2020



Rebecca Ryder

Landscape Architect

