

IN THE MATTER

of the Resource Management Act 1991
(RMA or the Act)

BETWEEN

The proprietors of Hauhangaroa No 6.

AND

Taupō District Council

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF REBECCA KEREN RYDER
ON BEHALF OF TAUPŌ DISTRICT COUNCIL**

22 APRIL 2020

(LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS)

Contents

INTRODUCTION	3
QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE	3
MY ROLE	3
CODE OF CONDUCT	4
SCOPE OF EVIDENCE	4
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
STATUTORY CONTEXT	8
TECHNICAL REVIEW OF SUPPLIED TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT – LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS	10
REMAINING ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED	12
Appropriateness	13
Road corridor and designation	15
CONCLUSIONS	18

ANNEXURES

Annexure A –Boffa Miskell Peer Review Memorandum (2019)

Annexure B - Boffa Miskell Advice to Taupō District Council (2008)

Annexure C – NZILA Best Practice Note – Landscape Assessment and Sustainable Management 10.1

INTRODUCTION

1. My name is **Rebecca Ryder**.
2. My evidence is given on behalf of the Taupō District Council (TDC) in a review capacity in relation to an application filed by the proprietors of Hauhangaroa No 6 (the Applicant) seeking a private plan change (**PPC36**) pursuant to Section 73(2) of the RMA 1991 (the Application). My evidence relates to landscape and visual effects of the Proposal.

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

3. I am a Landscape Architect and Director, of the firm Boffa Miskell Limited (**BML**), a multi-disciplinary company with expertise in planning, design, ecology, landscape planning, cultural heritage, graphics and mapping.
4. I have been with Boffa Miskell Limited since 2001. I am experienced in the areas of landscape architecture and landscape and visual assessment. I have given expert witness evidence in this area of expertise before numerous district and regional councils and the Environment Court.
5. 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.
6. I have considerable experience assisting Council's 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.

MY ROLE

7. I provided Council with a report on the landscape (including natural character) and visual effects aspects of the Application (**my Report**) in December 2019. This report identified gaps in information and requests for further assessment and information and I understand was forwarded to the

Proponent's Resource Management Planner (refer Annexure A). I reaffirm the contents and conclusions of this report, subject to the matters noted in my evidence below.

8. By way of background, Boffa Miskell Ltd, were engaged by Taupō District Council in 2007 to advise on a private structure plan for the site. The work was initially contracted to provide a peer review, however only reached the provision of a file note and a peer review letter of the Opportunities and Constraints phase of the private plan change. These documents are attached in Annexure B of this evidence.
9. In preparing my report and this evidence, an additional site visit to the site and surrounding area was carried out on 31st of January 2020. This site visit was undertaken in part with the applicant's representative, and the applicant's expert Landscape Architect, Ms Mary Monzingo. During the site visit we visited the land based visual catchment and traversed the site by vehicle.

CODE OF CONDUCT

10. I have read the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses, contained in the Environment Court Consolidated Practice Note (2014) and I agree to comply with it. I can confirm that the issues addressed in this statement are within my area of expertise and that in preparing my evidence I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions expressed.
11. As a Registered Landscape Architect, I am also bound by the NZILA¹'s code of ethics.

SCOPE OF EVIDENCE.

12. This statement of evidence covers the following:

¹ New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects

- (a) [A summary of my evidence \(Executive Summary\);](#)
- (b) [Statutory Context;](#)
- (c) [Technical Review](#) of the application, in particular comments on the landscape and visual effects assessment of the Application contained in my report (Assessment of Application);
- (d) [Remaining Issues to be addressed, and](#)
- (e) [Conclusion.](#)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

13. I was engaged, by Taupō District Council, to review the landscape (including natural character) and visual effects of the Application. Following my review of the information provided, I concluded that there was insufficient information in order for me to recommend whether the zone change should proceed on landscape grounds, and also that I, therefore could not concur with the findings and recommendations of the Monzingo Landscape Assessment.
14. Through my review, site visit, and recognised in earlier advice to Taupō District Council, the site has different degrees of sensitivity, including areas of high sensitivity to change adjacent to the lake and identified Outstanding Landscape Area (OLA60), areas to the west adjacent the existing rural and areas adjacent the stream. Lower lying areas to the north west are likely to have a lower sensitivity to change and it would assist the response to the SSSP and TDP for the landscape assessment to demonstrate these differences. At this point in time this has not been provided.
15. As I understand the road access will need to be subject to a separate resource consent process and does not form part of the plan change. The road access to enable the development traverses OLA60 and SNA62 areas and forms a fundamental element to considering the appropriateness of the land use change.

16. The OLA is sited adjacent to the area identified for the plan change, and whilst not part of the 'packaged zone change' sought in the proposal, is affected by the proposed application, both by adjacent effects and future direct effects. The latter being the indicative road alignment to enable the land use change, which traverses the OLA60. Further material discussed in this evidence has attempted to outline the 'look and feel' of the proposed road in the OLA but does not extend to providing certainty around how it will be provided for, and subsequently the package of measures to avoid or otherwise manage adverse effects.
17. The remainder of the site, identified for the proposed plan change, comprises an elevated plateau of rural land use used for mainly grazing purposes. The margins of the lake, including the identified OLA60, display areas of regenerating native bush cover. This native bush cover adjacent to the lake margin forms part of the natural character of the lake and stream margin which adjoins the site to the south.
18. I express a view in this evidence (as I did in my report, Annexure A) that the landscape and visual assessment, in its current form, does not sufficiently assess landscape and visual effects, in particular RMA Part II, Section 6a and 6b matters. To date no further assessment, addressing these issues, has been provided. However, I note that a set of draft provisions and an updated concept plan (dated 9th of April 2020) have been provided (Refer to Planning Evidence of Mr Bonis), along with some visual material relating to the proposed access road into the site. At the time of writing this evidence, any supplementary landscape and visual assessment response as discussed with Ms Monzingo on site and the subject of my Report (Annexure A) has not been received.
19. The assessment of landscape effects for a land use change and plan change, requires consideration of the capacity of the landscape to accommodate the change and whether any identified landscapes will be affected by the proposal. Further information received on the 6th of April 2020 provides graphic material addressing a potential alignment of road access into the site, a concept plan and draft provisions.

In total therefore in producing this evidence I have considered the following as provided:

- The plan change application, (initially lodge in December 2017) and associated Landscape and Visual Assessment by Mary Monzingo (Dated December 2017)
- Graphic Modelling of possible access road (received 6th April 2020)
- Updated Appendix 8 (received 9th April 2020) including updated Concept Plan.

20. The further material whilst contextually helpful is not supported or underpinned by an updated assessment of landscape, natural character and visual effects. In order to address effects, the method of assessment should identify the sensitivities, magnitude of change, the potential effect and measures to avoid, remedy and mitigate the identified effects. The level of effect is not yet sufficiently identified in order to consider the landscape implications of the Plan Change. Recommended measures, firstly identified in the assessment, should then be inserted as provisions for subsequent development. This will enable Council to manage and monitor the acceptable level of landscape effects.

21. Subsequently, I am not, as an expert able to state confidently that the material accompanying the Plan Change **demonstrates that the proposed land use change can be successfully integrated into a sensitive landscape, and potential adverse effects sufficiently mitigated.** Without further and appropriate assessment and detail to proposed provisions, I do not consider there is sufficient information to demonstrate that Part II, S6 effects matters have been addressed.

22. The second focus of this evidence is, if and should the assessment be able to address Part II, S6 matters pertaining to landscape and natural character, the assessment should identify the methods (and therefore associated plan provisions) as to how the development will be integrated into the site. As highlighted in my report (Annexure B), there is appropriate

methodologies that can be employed to address mitigating visual effects, natural character effects and landscape character effects. The proposed measures within the draft provisions provide direction however are not accompanied by an assessment. They are also considered to be imprecise and uncertain in terms of application. In my evidence I outline the methods, in my experience with plan changes that could assist the Proponent in responding to the matters raised.

STATUTORY CONTEXT

23. The site is subject to provisions in the Waikato Regional Policy Statement (WRPS) and the Waikato Regional Plan (WRP). The WRPS implements the methods for identification and management of Outstanding Natural Features and Landscapes and Natural Character. Identification of Natural Character areas is only required within the coastal environment and the WRPS also sets the framework for natural character outside of the coastal environment.
24. Part B, Section 12² of the WRPS sets out policies and the approach for assessment of Outstanding Natural Features and Landscapes (ONFL), Natural Character and Amenity. Map 12.1 details the identified regional ONFLs which set the framework and extent of the Lake Taupō ONFL. Part B, 12B sets the landscape assessment approach for assessing landscapes and 12C addresses natural character assessment criteria. Table 12.2 provides typical factors under the three dimensions of landscape for assessing landscapes.
25. This is followed through into the Taupō District Plan³ (TDP) where it addresses matters of national importance at 1.2.1 and other matters at 1.2.2.

² <https://www.waikatoregion.govt.nz/assets/WRC/Council/Policy-and-Plans/RPS-Regional-Policy-Statement/RPSv2018-PartB.pdf>

³ <https://Taupo.isoplan.co.nz/eplan/#Rules/0/41/1/4514>

26. Section 3b of the TDP addresses the objectives and policies pertaining to the Rural Environment, as the site is currently zoned. These provisions set out the landscape outcomes anticipated, and provide a contextual background as to the landscape and amenity expectations of the existing zoning.
27. Section 3h of the TDP directly addresses landscape, natural character and amenity values. Policies are provided to address protection of Outstanding Landscape Areas from adverse effects on the landscape attributes (Listed in Schedule 7.1 of the TDP). Relevant policies to respond to in the assessment include 3h.2.1, 3h.2.3 and 3h.2.4.
28. Fundamentally the assessment accompanying the Plan Change should address the effects of the land use change on rural character, looking to the effects on the attributes of the identified OLA, within Section 3h of the TDP.
29. In undertaking a best practice approach to landscape effects assessments the NZILA Best Practice Note – Landscape Assessment and Sustainable Management 10.1 (Refer to Annexure C) provides guidance. This Guidance includes:
 - Understanding the three dimensions of landscape, also identified in the identified OLA60, as Biophysical features, sensory qualities and associated meanings.
 - Characterisation of the landscape interprets the composite and cumulate landscape character.
 - Evaluation of the landscape and its factors, values and associations.
 - Assessment of effects on the character, in this case, rural character, natural character, amenity values, and on the attributes of OLA60.
 - The application of this assessment uses a seven point scale to assess the magnitude and importance of conditions, change or effects.

- Change management – methods for managing change and recognising landscape values and attributes in that change.
30. The Monzingo LVA report does not comprehensively address the above policy matters nor Guideline principles and as such my report identified some of these gaps. The assessment only considers the provisions of the residential zone and does not evaluate the effects on rural character or the effects on the attributes of the OLA60. Overall in order to address the appropriateness of the land use change and to address the statutory context the landscape assessment should address the above stated objectives and policies and those requested additional information set out in the peer review report (Refer 4a – 4d in Annexure A).
31. Only with this information, inclusive of whether adverse effects on the identified regional and district OLA can be avoided, remedied or mitigated am I able to evaluate whether the proposed land use change on the landscape values, including rural character, can be accommodated on the site, and therefore the Plan Change supported. .

TECHNICAL REVIEW OF SUPPLIED TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT – LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS

32. A summary of my input into the application to date includes;
33. The initial review of the Monzingo Landscape Assessment and application identified areas requiring further information. In summary this sought to;
- (a) Address Part II matters relating to landscape and natural character effects of the proposed land use on the identified OLA and Natural Character.
 - (b) Sought clarity on the matters that should / would be present in provisions to mitigate / integrate subsequent development into the landscape.

- (c) Requested for additional contextual information in relation to the road access, earthworks and associated vegetation.
 - (d) Requested consideration of cumulative visual effects associated with the proposal.
 - (e) Requested a clear summary of effects and application of a seven-point effects assessment scale⁴.
34. A site visit was undertaken on 31 January 2020 with the applicant's landscape expert Ms Monzingo. Here agreement was reached to the assessment in terms of the visual catchment and viewing audience. Site photographs were also sought and were jointly undertaken by the applicants' landscape architect, Mary Monzingo and myself. During the site visit a variety of methods were discussed for integrating development. These included provisions of land use changes to margins, greater understanding of road access effects and land use controls pertaining to built form, vegetation and other structures.
35. I left the site visit with the understanding that further information and a more thorough and robust visual and landscape assessment would be provided to address these matters.
36. Additional information was received in two parts. First a graphic modelling and fly through was provided of a possible road alignment and bridge access (received 6th of April 2020). Secondly a package of updated information (received 9th of April 2020) for Appendix 8 Outline Development Plan / Concept Plan. It should be noted the 3D modelling of the road is, at best, indicative and as I understand it not part of the Plan Change, subject to separate resource consent, and not tied to the Plan Change through any other legal mechanism.

⁴ Refer 4 h of Boffa Miskell Ltd Peer Review Memo -Annexure A

37. The updated Appendix 8 Outline Development Plan, inclusive of the Concept Plan addresses 'Anticipated Environment Outcomes' in its Section 5. This provides a high-level commentary on urban design and visual amenity outcomes and includes the identification of matters such as building height, exterior colour controls, lighting etc. This information however did not include measurable provisions in relation to landscape and visual effect matters, in particular consideration of building heights in sensitive areas. I am also unclear as to how prescriptive these matters are in relation to subsequent development, a matter which I understand Mr Bonis has considered in his evidence.
38. Overall the information provided by the applicant is insufficient in order to assess fundamental effects associated with the Plan Change request in particular the Part II S6 matters, being effects on the identified Outstanding Natural Features and Landscape and Natural Character effects.

REMAINING ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

39. The application places considerable reliance on the Southern Settlements Structure Plan (SSSP), as a prerequisite to development. As I understand it, the SSSP identified non growth areas where development should be avoided. All the identified areas where growth could happen requires a Section 32 report, and appropriate merits based assessment under the requirements of the Resource Management Act to support rezoning. Therefore, consideration of appropriateness of the site and its' surrounds, with regard to landscape capacity is to be addressed as part of the landscape assessment.
40. In my opinion in order to address the fundamental considerations of landscape and visual effects matters, based on my experience with plan changes, falls to three areas.
- (a) Addressing of landscape character and capacity for change to inform the **appropriateness** of the land use.

- (b) Addressing the **road corridor** in detail the degree of landscape effect on the dimensions of landscape identified within the OLA and adjacent effects on the OLA to provide context that subsequent roading and public access would be able to be provided.
- (c) Addressing **site design measures** that respond to identified landscape and visual effects. Including the detail of proposed provisions to achieve the anticipated outcomes sought.

Appropriateness

- 41. The assessment of effects should be comprehensive enough to identify the capacity of the landscape to accommodate the change, identify and protect sensitive areas where development is inappropriate, and / or identify management and mitigation regimes to reduce or mitigate these effects. This is undertaken by a number of steps within landscape, natural character and visual assessments. Considering the landscape sensitivity including its processes, patterns and elements is fundamental to addressing the appropriateness of land use change. Important to this is the application of an appropriate scale and characterisation of that scale in the context of the site and it's surrounds.
- 42. As part of this the consideration of the effects on sensitive landscape such as the OLA remain unanswered with regard to the certainty around the degree of effect and whether the effect can be avoided, remedied or mitigated. Whilst separated from the application, the provision of a road through to the OLA, including an unknown quantity of vegetation disturbance and slope modification is considered to be part of the 'package' of resultant effects that would occur as a consequence of the Plan Change.
- 43. The two land uses, roading and future subdivision, are in my opinion integrally linked with regard to landscape and visual effects. To consider the proposed land use change with no practical access, does not address

the effect a future road has on the attributes of the OLA and the adjoining effects of the proposed development together. For example, the removal of vegetation for the access road, may increase the visibility and temporary visual effects of the residential subdivision. Conversely the reduction in consistent native vegetation cover may increase the adjacent effect the proposed residential development may have on the attributes of the OLA. For that reason, I find it difficult to extract one effect from the other in considering the landscape effects of the overall land use in comprehensive terms.

44. In my opinion the site has potential to accommodate change, however in the application's current form, and based on the assessment received to date, I am not confident there is enough certainty that the landscape sensitivities and effects have been addressed in the Proposed Plan Change package. These matters are addressed under 4 a – 4 d of my report (Refer Annexure A) as follows:
- a) *Analysis of the site-specific landscape values.*
 - b) *Assessment of the site-specific landscape sensitivities, identification of the nature of the effect (beneficial, neutral or adverse) and the degree of effect.*
 - c) *Application of a 7-point assessment scale with evaluation of the level of effect in regard to the NZILA Best Practice Guide 10.1 and relativity to the Resource Management Act 1991 terms of less than minor, minor, more than minor.*
 - d) *Assessment of effects upon the natural character of Lake Taupō and it's margins, taking into account Waikato Regional Council's RPS.*
45. The outcomes within the ODP provide direction, however further detail is needed to provide confidence and prescriptiveness of provisions. This is to ensure the function of measures and their application spatially is linked to their role of managing identified effects. For example, identifying overlays where building height restrictions would be required, e.g. top of escarpment edge.

Road corridor and designation

46. The mechanism by which the road access and location of the associated corridor is not included in the proposal. This is fundamental to enabling the subsequent development and remains at best speculative with regard to location and extent of modification required to the slope.
47. In my experience road corridors are commonly identified at an initial stage, and accompanied by an appropriate assessment. Given road connection to the Plan Change area will traverse an identified OLA far greater certainty is required regarding its location, width and parameters around disturbance to the slope and its vegetation cover. This also extends to the pedestrian path identified in the Concept Plan. This information will then enable a degree of certainty to consider whether the effects can be suitably mitigated.
48. I acknowledge the visual material provided envisages an integrated road, stream crossing and heavily vegetated margins. Given this is a critical and enabling element of the plan change, in my view this should be addressed with more certainty, preferably as part of the plan change or proceeding such by way of consents. There remains, in my view, significant risk that vegetation removal and bank stabilisation measures could vary substantially from what is envisaged. The total 'bucket' of landscape effects associated with the plan change needs to be cognisant of and the road and bridge access, and associated provisions to manage effects accordingly considered. This would include the inclusion of landscape assessment criteria on the site-specific values, should variance in any outcomes occur.

Site Design Measures

49. The ODP supplied expresses high level outcomes and anticipated outcomes within it. These respond to some of the matters raised in the Boffa Miskell Peer Review Memorandum⁵. However, in my view it does not yet connect the sensitivities identified in the assessment to a set of tangible provisions that will manage the outcomes that are inserted into the Plan.
50. There are measures that seek to address integration with the surrounding rural landscape, however do not provide any degree of certainty around scale
51. I am mindful that subsequent subdivision / resource consent application(s) will provide more certainty however the outcome for each of the broader measures should be articulated and linked to the mitigation role they provide.
52. For example, the proposed indigenous planting around the periphery of the site provides a landscape buffer role. The parameters and function of this should be clarified and linked to the landscape outcomes sought, including at a minimum associated species, widths and planting densities. This should include scale, alignment and is it public or privately managed. At best there is considerable uncertainty in terms of the administration of these measures during any subsequent subdivision / resource consent process, with the degree by which the efficacy of such measures ranging from successfully mitigating effects, to not at all, or even generating adverse effects.
53. In similar plan changes (Tauriko Business Estate (Tauranga), Piripai / Opihi Residential Plan Change (Whakatane)) a degree of certainty around the scale of vegetation and its role is provided to ensure growth heights, maintenance and function. All of which provide measurable, and certain, outcomes for assessment at resource consent stage and beyond.

⁵ Refer Page 3 of Boffa Miskell Peer Review Memorandum, Annexure A.

54. Similarly, in the peer review I identified design measures considerations including:
- (a) Addressing variance of building scale responding to sensitivities of the site;
 - (b) Align roads and roading to natural contours and manage the effect of earthworks;
 - (c) Lighting;
 - (d) Ancillary building and structure controls;
 - (e) Viewshaft management; and
55. The ODP supplied responds to these at a high level, however in my view needs to contribute with characterising the mitigation outcome sought for the identified effect. An example of this is the provision of housing along the top of the lake edge escarpment has no differentiation of building height controls as compared to the remainder of the site. This is an area where the plan change can 'zone' or 'overlay' provisions to respond to identified sensitivities. In doing so this can address mitigation parameters for the identified visual effects.

CONCLUSIONS

56. In conclusion, my peer review assessment remains as per my position in my original memo dated 17th December 2019. In that overall it is considered that the Landscape and Visual Assessment (LVA) is high level and requires a further level of detailed assessment for a plan change of this scale in a sensitive landscape.
57. The assessment and application material need to demonstrate that the proposed land use change can be successfully integrated, and potential adverse effects sufficiently mitigated. The inclusion of design and mitigation measures to manage the successful integration through a subsequent resource consent process is recommended. This approach is often taken for plan changes and ensures consistency at resource consent level.

Rebecca Keren Ryder

22 April 2020



**Annexure A – Peer Review Memorandum of Monzingo
Landscape and Visual Assessment, December 2019.**



Memorandum

Auckland
Level 3, IBM Centre
82 Wyndham Street
PO Box 91250, 1142
+64 9 358 2526

Hamilton
PO Box 1094, 3240
+64 7 960 0006

Tauranga
PO Box 13373, 3141
+64 7 571 5511

Wellington
PO Box 11340, 6142
+64 4 385 9315

Christchurch
PO Box 110, 8140
+64 3 366 8891

Queenstown
PO Box 1028, 9348
+64 3 441 1670

Dunedin
PO Box 657, 9054
+64 3 470 0460

Attention: Hilary Samuel, Senior Policy Advisor, Taupō District Council

Company: Taupō District Council

Date: 17/12/2019

From: Rebecca Ryder, Landscape Architect (Boffa Miskell)

Applicant: The proprietors of Hauhangaroa No 6.

Application: Whareroa North – Private Plan Change

Proposal: Application to change the Taupō District Plan pursuant to Section 73(2) of the RMA 1991

Internal (ref): BM19765

Dear Hilary,

We write in response to the briefing email dated 02/09/2019 which sought my professional technical review advice on the above application from a landscape and visual effects perspective. As part of this review we consider the application as within the Southern Settlements Structure Plan (SSSP), May 2013.

1. Project Summary

It is understood the application is for a Proposed Plan Change from rural to residential for an area north of Whareroa. The proposal is for approximately 140-160 lots, between 500m² to 1100m² (average in Whareroa between 600-750m²). This will represent an approximate 100%+ increase in the dwellings in Whareroa Village¹.

The proposal does not recommend mitigation / design controls on the new subdivision (e.g. covenant planting, height, density or colour restrictions) or introduce Specific Requirement Areas (SRA) as can be found in Kinloch / Lake Ohakuri Development Zone under the Taupō District Plan (TDP).

It is understood that should this plan change be granted, at resource consent the subdivision will require assessment under Rule 4a.3.2. Under this rule the council will reserve control in matters such as; Design and layout in relation to access, earthworks and vegetation removal, effects on landscape and natural values areas (such as the effects on OLA20/60) and be able to introduce general conditions (Sn108/220 RMA).

I note that RC applications will likely be a stage by stage basis. Therefore, the processing will not include / address any landscape and visual effects of the development as a whole.

The following addresses the key matters requested by TDC. This memorandum does not form the full peer review but identifies the key gaps and concerns that require addressing within the application.

As you are aware, I have visited this site previously and provide Taupo District Council advice in 2007 and 2008. Following this visit we identified sensitivities of the site and some recommended objectives and supporting principles for a plan change. This correspondence is available upon request.

In light of the below matters raised, I recommend that a joint site visit is undertaken with the applicant's landscape architect to discuss and identify methods to address the sensitivities of the site and its surrounding visual catchment.

¹ Brief count is 80(ish) residential from aerial. According to SSSP Whareroa has 53 vacant lots with Titles (residential)

2. Statutory Context

The SSSP identifies the site as forming part of the Urban Growth Area, with associated community facilities, possible commercial development, reserves and key infrastructure requirements². Whareroa North is identified as a Future Urban Growth Area and the SSSP addresses the approach to considering the landscape and natural values in its planning. It notes:

“One of the ways in which Net Environmental Gain can be achieved is through protection of remaining significant natural areas in return for the ability to specific areas of indigenous vegetation, or the enhancement of landscape values through planting or protection of open space in return for development rights. A landscape or ecological assessment by a qualified person at the time of resource consent or plan change is the best way to determine the most appropriate way to achieve Net Environmental Gain in Landscape and Natural Values areas.”

This is followed by General Matters to be Considered³ where it addresses considerations Landscape and Natural Values. More specifically to the site the SSSP states:

The area identified for future growth has been the subject of a number of technical investigations undertaken by the landowners, in consultation with TDC staff, over the last 10 years. These investigations include engineering assessments (including geotechnical and servicing assessments), archaeological investigations and assessments with regard to the potential ecological and landscape impacts of development in this growth area. However, it must be noted that whilst TDC staff (and consultants) have reviewed these reports, they have not been part of any formal planning application or process and the inclusion of this growth area within the Structure Plan does not lessen the requirement for a formal plan change process to occur before this site is potentially rezoned, subdivided and developed. There are also issues that will be required to be addressed and resolved as part of any plan change process and these are detailed in the text below⁴.

Considerations in the assessment of landscape and visual effects for the private plan change must include those matters addressed on Page 49 of the SSSP (highlighted in bold):

*As a result of this Structure Plan assessment, any plan change proposing future development in **Whareroa** future growth area shall consider (but not be limited to) the following:*

- *Potential effects of development on the significant natural area (SNA) including assessment against the relevant objectives, policies, and implementation methods of the Taupō District Plan, Waikato Regional Policy Statement and Region Plan;*
- ***Potential effects of development on the Outstanding Landscape Area (OLA) including assessment against the relevant objectives, policies, and implementation methods of the Taupō District Plan, Waikato Regional Policy Statement and Regional Plan;***
- *Ecological effects of the removal of indigenous vegetation (if any) and potential for new ecological corridors and connections to be made;*
- ***Landscape effects of built structures and visible infrastructure including roads, retaining structures and the bridge within sensitive landscape areas;***
- *Any need for potential erosion control;*
- ***Potential conflict that may arise between the desire for views and new vegetation planting; The opportunity to create new recreation areas within the site and connections to other recreation corridors and the Lake;***
- ***Retaining buffer vegetation between the built environment and remaining farm land; and***

² Refer Page 18 of SSSP

³ Refer Page 39 of SSSP

⁴ Refer Page 48 of SSSP

- ***The visual effects of new development when viewed from the existing settlement and from the Lake.***

It is expected that by addressing the above matters, the Private Plan Change would address matters of control and rules to address identified effects. The LVA can provide recommended measures to manage effects that can be included in the Private Plan Change. In my opinion leaving effects matters to be addressed at resource consent stage, does not address outstanding matters not previously addressed in the SSSP and clearly sought as an outcome by the SSSP of a plan change for the site.

To assist there are existing provisions of the Taupo District Plan (TDP) which include references to relevant design guidelines. Section 3h of the TDP includes reference to relevant design guidelines. The Taupō District Council Design Guide for Rural Subdivision Amenity and Character also provides visual guidance for OLA objectives, policies and rules (4a.3.2.(e)). – Matter that requires particular attention by a landscape expert in the preparation of plan change application.

The LVA provides a comprehensive assessment against the TDP objective and policies and LVA relies upon the Residential Section of the District Plan to control the scale of structures.

Mitigation - Are the recommended mitigation measures likely to be effective?

The rules and standards within Section 4a Residential Environment of the TDP apply building coverage, height and setback constraints. There are no requirements on visual aspects (e.g. design, height, colour, materiality, LRV etc). If available the adoption of an SRA approach (similar to Kinloch) is recommended in that vegetation patterns, height, density, materiality etc are all controlled – in order to assist the development, integrate into the surrounding landscape.

The applicant's assessment recommends a number of measures to be dealt with through the RC process. In my view when considering plan changes the outcomes sought and 'parameters' on the development should be clearly identified. This is in order to protect the identified values of the SNA / ONL / Landscape Character / Amenity Values – from adverse effects identified from residential development.

These measures could include;

Native Planting:

- Consider the covenant of existing planting (where it is required to strengthen patterns and provide mitigation);
- Increase the planting in areas of heightened sensitivity. Including;
 - The interface between the rural to the west
 - Strengthening canopy vegetation in existing native bush
 - Utilise vegetation to screen buffer / along sensitive escarpments edges
 - Consider avoiding straight edge and integrate native vegetation as reserve edge to rural boundary
 - Provide vegetation to provide backdrop for the development when viewed from existing residential to the lake.
- Paragraph 8.6 of the LVA identifies that limits on the reflectivity of exterior surfaces of building and fences would help to avoid, remedy or mitigate potential adverse landscape and visual effects arising from the buildings and fences;
- Addressing variance of building scale responding to sensitivities of the site;
- Align roads and roading to natural contours and manage the effect of earthworks;
- Lighting;
- Ancillary building and structure controls;
- Viewshaft management; and

- Consider that this area would warrant the application of a Specific Requirement Areas (SRA) e.g. Kinloch / Matuapa Hill etc.

3. Assessment Approach

To assist in evaluating the effects it would assist the application for the LVA to integrate recognised industry approaches for the assessment of landscape and visual effects. Included within this would be the application of a recognised effects rating scale⁵. The degree (level) in conjunction with the nature of effect, by following this approach, should be identified and described on a 7-point scale.

More commonly now LVA reports distinctively separate landscape and visual effects as two separate assessments. This follows numerous outcomes from Environment Court where these distinctions are made. It would be helpful to demonstrate this distinction in the assessment to distinguish the effects on the landscape character and effects on the visual catchment and its visual amenity.

To further demonstrate the conclusions and considerations of visual effects use of imagery / site photos or simulations with the LVA assessment is considered necessary. This imagery will be useful to further understand the viewing audience, reinforce commentary/assessment in the report and to gain a greater understanding of the site.

Existing Landscape Values

The LVA report provides a high-level description of the surrounding landscape and site which is helpful. To further understand the landscape sensitivities that require management it is recommended the assessment include detailed analysis of the existing landscape sensitivity of the site and its capacity to accommodate change.

On review and based on earlier advice to Taupo District Council the site has different degrees of sensitivity, including areas of high sensitivity to change adjacent to the lake and ONL, areas to the west adjacent the existing rural and areas adjacent the stream. Lower lying areas to the north west are likely to have a lower sensitivity to change and it would assist the response to the SSSP and TDP for the LVA to demonstrate these differences.

Landscape Effects

The plan identifies a large area of regenerating scrub that is 'likely to be removed' (identified in plan – as area to the north west of proposed subdivision). This vegetation removal is not assessed in the LVA report and remediation and mitigation measures are not currently incorporated. Through the review of the application it is considered that this area of native vegetation is an important feature that positively contributes to the character of the area and provide a medium for visual integration and screening of built form. Whilst the vegetation is not identified as having notable landscape value for landscape overlay identification in the operative District Plan, it remains a contributor to the landscape character and should be considered in the assessment.

OLA – The particular values of OLA 60 / 20 are described in the report. The report concludes that the TDP provisions remain unchanged (in particular resource consent requirements around structures and earthworks in the OLAs). This proposal includes earthworks, structures (retaining) within the OLA. No further assessment on the dimensions and factors, values and associations of the two OLA has been undertaken.

As built development, attributed to future housing, will be outside of the OLA area the report considers there are 'no' adverse effects on the OLA. However, consideration of adjacent effects is a consideration that whilst not driven by policy is considered to be best practice, and this is supported by the Environment Court.

The boundaries of the OLA derive from the characteristics and qualities of the feature/landscape itself (not the physical line on the planning maps). As the majority of site lies between three outstanding landscapes/features all three of these should be considered in the landscape assessment with a focus on the broader continuity of the landscape and specifically addressing potential effects on the adjacent OLA. Equally the proposed road and earthworks associated reside within the OLA and these effects

⁵ NZILA Best Practice Note: Landscape Assessment and Sustainable Management 10.1

should be considered against the dimensions (factors, values and associations) and their respective attributes of the OLA.

The LVA report correctly identifies that the built development, attributed to future housing, is not within the OLA. The development remains adjacent to OLAs and the potential effects on the broader factors, values and associations of the OLA should, for robustness, be addressed. There is potential for the development to affect the sensory and associated attributes of the OLA and it is recommended that the adjacent and overall effect on these values are addressed in the assessment.

Natural Character

The LVA identifies that the proposed access road and development is 'well set back' from the lake and river margins and that the resource consent processes which will ensure the minimisation and mitigation of adverse effects on natural character will be required. Natural Character is currently defined in the Taupo District Plan as the Foreshore Protection Area overlay (defined in the definitions). The proposed plan change ought to be showing the proposed road and associated earthworks with the FPA overlay (as defined in the definitions). From this identification of the effects on the identified natural character areas, via the Foreshore Protection Area can be addressed.

It is important to note that Natural Character is a concept that occurs on a continuum and consideration of the Waikato Regional Policy Statement, Objective 3.12 b) should also be considered in the assessment.

In my opinion as the proposed development site forms part of the wider lake margins. Further analysis should be undertaken to consider the policy overlays relating to natural character and consider the wider margin and the proposal's adjacent effect on these values. Human modification is a key indicator in the impact on natural character and for this reason a Natural Character assessment should be included within the assessment report.

Visual Assessment

A broad visual catchment has been identified in the LVA (Paragraph 7.0). The assessment does not go on to identify the typical 'viewing audience', or the nature and degree of effect on the viewing audience. Representative viewpoints are needed to assist in demonstrating the analysis undertaken from representative viewpoints, instead concluding that when the development will be seen it will be similar to those created by the existing Whareroa Village. The magnitude of visual change is not identified for the viewing audience and in turn the level of visual effect is not clearly identified.

In our view the LVA should address additional views of the development from Rangitukua Scenic Reserve, representative private views of surrounding neighbours including Whareroa Station, and Whareroa village and the users / visitors to the Whareroa village.

This visual assessment should consider the development as a whole, including considerations of anticipated buildings, the proposed access, earthworks and any landscape remediation or mitigation measures and the effectiveness of these.

Cumulative Landscape and Visual Effects

The assessment does not address cumulative landscape and visual effects (effects of the proposal in conjunction with previous development). The LVA should consider cumulative effects of the proposed development on the landscape, particularly with regard to the extension of the Whareroa Settlement into the rural landscape. It is noted that the Southern Settlement Structure Plan theoretically addresses the cumulative landscape effects however further consideration of the cumulative visual effects should be considered as part of this plan change.

4. Assessment Responses

In order to better understand the actual and potential landscape and visual effects of this proposal, we recommend the applicant's expert Landscape Architect addresses the following matters:

Landscape Effects

- a) Analysis of the site-specific landscape values.
- b) Assessment of the site-specific landscape sensitivities, identification of the nature of the effect (beneficial, neutral or adverse) and the degree of effect.
- c) Application of a 7-point assessment scale with evaluation of the level of effect in regard to the NZILA Best Practice Guide 10.1 and relativity to the Resource Management Act 1991 terms of *less than minor, minor, more than minor*.
- d) Assessment of effects upon the natural character of Lake Taupo and it's margins, taking into account Waikato Regional Council's RPS⁶.

Visual Effects

- e) Clear identification and representation of the visual catchment and identified viewing audiences by way of mapping and photography.
- f) Application of a 7-point assessment scale with evaluation of the level of effect in regard to the NZILA Best Practice Guide 10.1 and relativity to the Resource Management Act 1991 terms of *less than minor, minor, more than minor*.

Mitigation Methods

- g) Identification of methods to manage the effects of activities including addressing vegetation management, viewshafts, and built form, scale and colour.
- h) Clear summary of level of landscape and visual effects with regard to NZILA's Best Practice Note and relativity of effect in regard to the terms within the Resource Management Act 1991.

5. Summary

Overall it is considered that the Landscape and Visual Assessment (LVA) is high level and requires a further level of detailed assessment for a plan change of this scale in a sensitive landscape. At this point the assessment needs to demonstrate that the proposed land use change can be successfully integrated, and potential adverse effects sufficiently mitigated. The inclusion of design and mitigation measures to manage the successful integration through a subsequent resource consent process is recommended. This approach is often taken for plan changes and ensures consistency at resource consent level.

As discussed, a combined site visit with technical experts is recommended when parties consider this appropriate.

Kind Regards,

BOFFA MISKELL LTD



Rebecca Ryder
Associate Partner / Landscape Architect



⁶ <https://www.waikatoregion.govt.nz/Council/Policy-and-plans/Regional-Policy-Statement/RPSfactsheets/Landscapes-including-seascapes-natural-character-and-amenity/>

**Annexure B – Boffa Miskell Ltd Advice to Taupo District Council
(2008)**



Auckland Fax: 64 9 359 5300
P O Box 91250
Level 3, IBM Centre
82 Wyndham Street
Tel: 64 9 358 2526

Tauranga Fax: 64 7 571 3333
P O Box 13373
Level 2, 116 on Cameron
Cnr Cameron Road & Wharf Street
Tel: 64 7 571 5511

Wellington Fax: 64 4 384 3089
P O Box 11340
Level 9, Hewlett Packard Building
186-190 Willis Street
Tel: 64 4 385 9315

Christchurch Fax: 64 3 365 7539
P O Box 110
Level 6, Brannigans Building
86 Gloucester Street
Tel: 64 3 366 8891

Project Number: T07091	Project Name: Whareroa Structure Plan (Peer Review)
Date: 5th July	Author: David Eustace, Rebecca Ryder Status: Preliminary

The following notes have been developed in response to the Stage 1-3 outputs (Scoping, Consultation and Research/ Analysis) as circulated to the broader project team before the June 22nd project meeting. The purpose of this feedback is to identify any information gaps before proceeding with the following stages of the structure planning process.

1.0 General Comments about Structure Plan Process

1.1 Scope / Extent of Structure Plan

The District Growth Management Strategy DGMS (p.33) anticipates that the south western growth area will need to cater for up to 10% of the District's growth which equates to some 600 residential lots. The distribution of these lots amongst the three identified growth locations (Whareroa North, Te Puke Road, Omori Road) should be based on a comprehensive analysis of the entire south western growth area. This analysis would determine the relative demand and capacity for growth in Whareroa.

Section 11.2 of the DGMS identifies the following Action:

'Prepare a structure plan for the Stage 2 Land Development Areas identified at Whareroa, Omori and Te Puke Road (South Western Settlements).'

This would suggest a single structure plan be developed for the entire south western growth area. Given the proximity of the three individual settlements and inter-relationships in terms of broader landscape, landuse and service issues, I would recommend this approach. Focussing on the Whareroa North property and immediately adjoining areas alone will limit the degree to which broader growth management issues will be addressed. If this focussed approach is followed however, the assumptions must be clearly stated and tested.

Due to the focussed approach taken to date, the use of the term 'structure plan' is seen to be misleading. The Quality Planning definition of Structure Plan (<http://www.qp.org.nz/plan-topics/structure-planning>) reads as follows:

Structure planning is a valuable way to achieve integrated management of the effects of (re)developing larger land areas held in multiple ownerships. It is a key tool in addressing sustainable management of natural physical resources, particularly in an urban context.

The more focussed approach currently being undertaken for Whareroa North would be more correctly termed as a master planning process.

1.2 Site context and Definition of Structure Plan area

If the above (a comprehensive south-western growth areas structure plan) is not practical at this stage, the broader Whareroa context must still be addressed. At present, Appendix 4 to the Project Scoping Report (Lewis Consultancy Ltd) indicates a Structure Plan Area within a ~4km diameter circle centred roughly on the existing Whareroa settlement. Consultation to date has indicated that there is no intention among adjoining landowners to redevelop or subdivide in the short to medium term. This has considerable implications for the

proposed structure and density of the Whareroa North growth area in terms of land use relationships and interfaces. In the following stages of the structure plan process, the growth (or lack of growth) and future development of the full structure plan area must be taken into account.

1.3 Consultation

A summary of key themes and issues identified during consultation (i.e. needs assessment) would be an invaluable tool for the subsequent stages of the structure plan process. The role of a needs assessment would be to inform, supplement or evaluate stakeholder aspirations. The needs assessment could help to formulate design objectives and would influence the form of the proposed development and structure plan, lot size and mix, provision of open space and community facilities etc.

It is also recommended that follow-up consultation with relation to design alternatives be programmed to allow for ongoing input and to ensure that design responses are measured against identified issues.

1.4 Overall Outcomes & Deliverables

At this stage, the proposed outcomes/ outputs of the structure plan are unclear. These should be clearly outlined to ensure that the process is able to deliver the necessary results.

2.0 Landscape Issues:

2.1 Taupo District Draft Landscape Study:

As raised by Council staff during the project meeting, the Draft District Landscape Study will need to be taken into account by the applicant; particularly with regards to the specific and cumulative effects of further development upon identified Outstanding Landscape Features (OLF). This would require an analysis of the effects of Whareroa North development upon the Rangitukua and the Lake Taupo margins (shoreline to most dominant ridgeline).

Landscape, natural character and visual/amenity effects will need to consider the cumulative effects upon OLF as well as the broader rural landscape. This will require consideration of the anticipated effects of Te Puke Road and Omori Road growth areas.

2.2 Effects of / Lessons learned from existing Whareroa settlement:

The existing Whareroa settlement provides a valuable assessment tool which should inform future growth of the Whareroa North area. An analysis of the existing settlement and its relationship to the broader landscape would identify issues and areas of concern that would provide direction to the structure and design of Whareroa North. Examples would be the treatment of interfaces between allotments and adjacent areas of native vegetation / landscape features and the lack of built form design controls (such as colour/ reflectivity controls). Some analysis has already commenced through community consultation etc. and it is recommended that this is expanded upon and included within the assessment of landscape and visual effects.

2.3 Future Provision of Open Space and Community/ Recreational facilities

Consultation undertaken with property owners of the existing Whareroa Village has identified the need for additional open space and recreational facilities. This need is likely to increase with future population growth. The form and scale of these elements will be dependant upon the type of development proposed in Whareroa North. It is recommended that this existing / future need is addressed as part of the needs assessment.

3.0 Urban Design Issues:

3.1 Market Analysis

Whareroa has a low (approx. 5%) permanent population with the remainder of the settlement catering for the holiday market. At present the assumption seems to be that the Whareroa North growth area will

accommodate a similar resident/ visitor mix. It is recommended that this assumption is tested through market analysis as there are significant design implications if this mix were to change. If, for example, the resident population was to increase in the future, this may have impacts on the demand for community infrastructure such as open space, commercial property and further recreational infrastructure. This is also likely to influence the lot mix in terms of providing for a variety of lot sizes and types.

3.2 CPTED – Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design.

The risk of crime is a significant factor for any community with low occupancy rates. Various studies¹ show a direct correlation between low owner-occupier rates and burglary rates. As such it is recommended that an analysis of the existing crime context is undertaken for Whareroa and adjacent settlements to determine whether or not an issue exists that will influence the structure and design of the Whareroa North area. It is noted that crime was an issue raised during community consultation.

CPTED principles should also be taken into account when developing any scheme plan in the future including (but not limited to) the following:

- Lot and Architectural design
 - Fences – permeability and height
 - Orientation of lots and houses toward public open space areas
- Walkway connections within streetscape and open space
- Location and role of future supporting activities (e.g. community, commercial, recreational)
- Open Space design –
 - connectivity of open space;
 - visibility from public space;
 - size of open space;
 - User groups and their effect
- Street lighting effectiveness (and its effects upon Landscape and natural character issues stated in 2.1 above)

3.3 Site Analysis / Mapping

Greater clarity with regards to site conditions, opportunities and constraints could be achieved through a mapping analysis that would allow land use, topographical, service/infrastructure, archaeological, cultural landscape, ecological and other layers to be read together. Site analysis mapping (through the use of visual material such as maps, plans and diagrams) would be recommended as it will promote a better understanding of the inter-relatedness of issues and proposed management approaches to be used. Clear visual material such as maps, plans and diagrammatic representations will assist greatly in the spatial understanding of issues and solutions.

Refer Kinloch/ Taupo West Rural Structure Plans and Quality Planning website.

3.4 Design Principles

A set of site specific design principles / objectives is a desirable outcome of the research / analysis phase or following opportunities and constraints phase. The preliminary Landscape Character and Context includes a summary of policy statements related to urban design and landscape issues. It is recommended that these are used as a basis for developing design principles/ objectives that will provide a framework for the design phase. These principles would also be useful as evaluation criteria to measure the benefits of design alternatives.

1 Police Practice in Reducing Residential Burglary: Literature review Ministry of Justice, 2001 NZNSCV .

22 October 2008

Gemma Platts
Taupo District Council
Gillespie Plaza
22 Heuheu Street,
Taupo
gplatts@taupo.govt.nz

Boffa Miskell



Dear Gemma

Re: Whareroa Structure Plan : Peer Review of Landscape and Urban Design Matters

Thank you for forwarding the updated opportunities and constraints information for the Whareroa Structure Plan. The updated information follows on from some preliminary opportunities / constraints information reviewed by Boffa Miskell in September 2007. During the review meeting in September 2007, it was expressed by Council that the mapping of opportunities and constraints would greatly assist in the understanding of the structure plan area. The new information and mapping achieve the goal of providing further clarity about the broader site, particularly with regard to physical and environmental constraints.

A number of minor matters arose in the review of the document and these have been set out below:

1.0 Landscape Values Mapping

Figures 4 and 4A map the Outstanding and Amenity Landscape Areas identified in the District Landscape Study. All other areas are identified as having no landscape values. The remaining areas of pasture sitting outside identified landscape areas are not necessarily unconstrained. Chapter 3B of the District Plan sets out various policies and objectives of relevance to rural landscape character and amenity. These policies and objectives need to be considered for the open rural areas of the structure plan to ensure that the future land activities relate appropriately to the surrounding rural landscape.

Identifying these areas as 'unconstrained' is potentially misleading and a more appropriate response might be to identify interfaces with adjoining ONLs and rural areas as requiring sensitive design treatment. As suggested in previous feedback, there is an opportunity to explore options for the treatment of site interfaces to avoid the sharp delineation between residential and adjoining rural land as has occurred at the southern edge of the existing settlement. The interface between future residential areas and the identified Outstanding Natural Landscape area should also be addressed in the next phase of the structure plan.

2.0 Combined Constraints Map

Map 5 overlays the preceding constraints maps to give a combined sieve map. It appears that the constraint sieve ratings are not entirely consistent with the stated approach. Given that any constraint mapped as 'high' in Maps 1a, 2a, 3a and 4a, should be mapped as 'high' in the combined map, the Karangahape Cliffs ONL unit should be identified as high rather than medium. I would also advocate an approach whereby landscape 'buffers' are incorporated into the structure plan to ensure that subdivision does not occur immediately adjacent to identified landscape feature.

3.0 Matrix Factors

Moving on from the constraints maps, the matrix in Appendix 3 explores opportunities and constraints under numerous factors. Other factors that could be considered include;

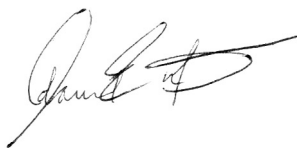
- i) Views from Lake Taupo and anticipated outcomes in terms of the broader landscape.
- ii) Settlement / subdivision pattern, density and potential allotment sizes.

It is assumed that these matters will be addressed in the next phase of the project when growth scenarios are developed.

Please feel free to give me a call on (07) 571 5631 if you would like to discuss any of the above.

Yours sincerely,

BOFFA MISKELL



David Eustace
Urban Designer / Landscape Architect

**Annexure C – NZILA Best Practice Note – Landscape Assessment
and Sustainable Management 10.1**

BEST PRACTICE NOTE
LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT AND
SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT **10.1**



Members Documentation



NEW ZEALAND INSTITUTE
OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

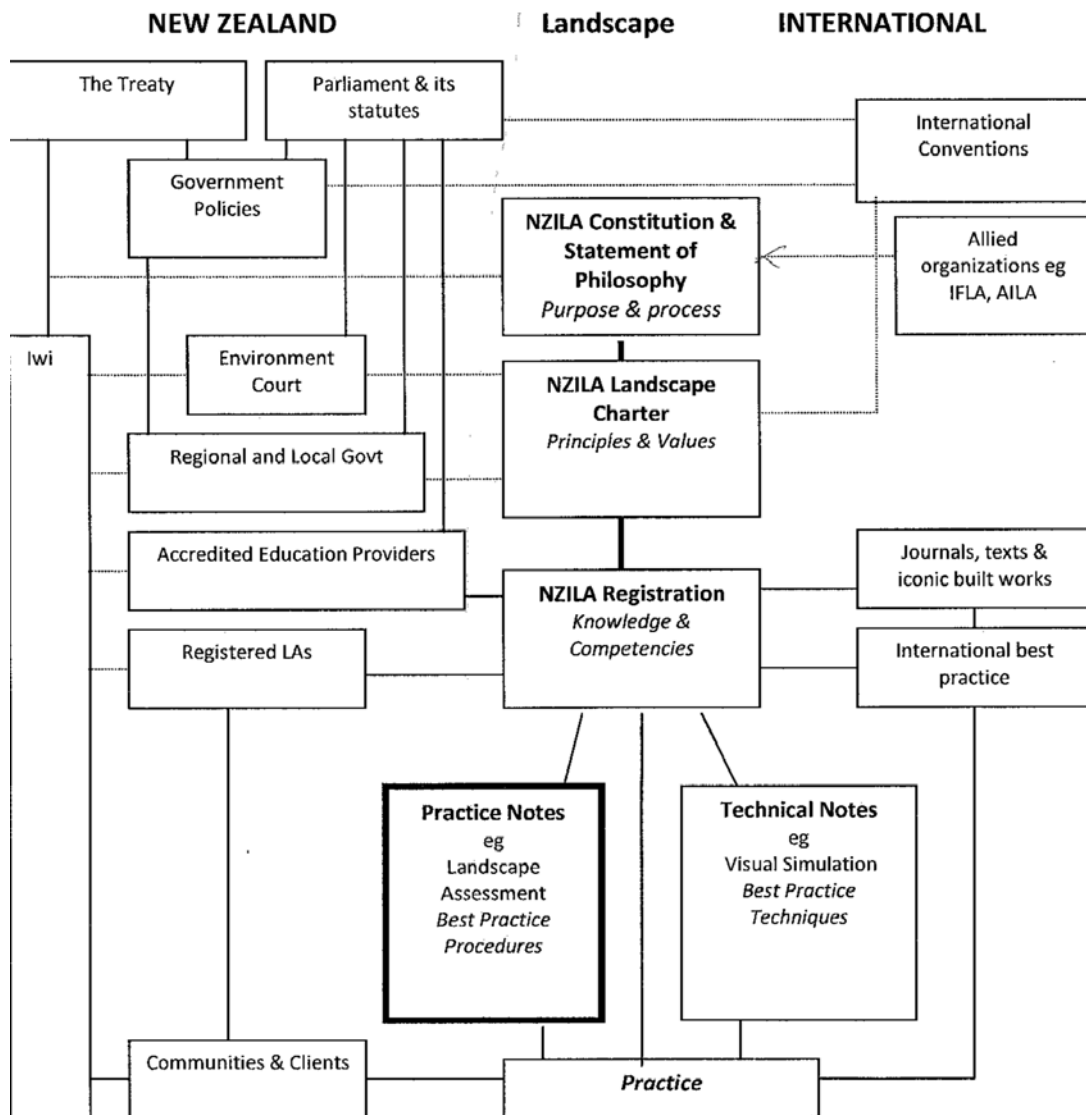
www.nzila.co.nz
info@nzila.co.nz

Background

In August 2008, the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects (NZILA) Education Foundation hosted a Landscape Planning Initiative (LPI) in Christchurch. The purpose of the initiative, which was attended by over fifty practising landscape planners and landscape architects, was to discuss a range of Resource Management Act (RMA) matters relative to the preparation and presentation of expert landscape evidence at Council Hearings and the Environment Court.

The major outcome from the Landscape Planning Initiative was the directive that a series of best practice notes be prepared, and that these should be aimed at landscape practitioners and decision makers involved in the planning, design and management of our diverse and distinctive landscapes. The Landscape Assessment and Sustainable Management Practice Note is the first in a series of Practice and Technical Advice notes which will be progressively published by the NZILA.

The following diagram outlines key relationships between this Practice Note and other types of professional guidance and related institutions and sources.



INTRODUCTION

Purpose and Focus

This Practice Note is aimed at decision makers, environmental professionals, and landscape practitioners involved in the planning, design and management of New Zealand's diverse cultural and natural landscapes. It sets out principles for an integrated approach to landscape assessment as the basis for the sustainable management of landscape as a natural, physical and cultural resource.

The Practice Note is focused upon the matters recognised as being the expertise of professional landscape architects. It acknowledges that there are others who have complementary expertise over different realms of landscape, including those holding mana whenua and/or mana moana, and those with particular knowledge of natural science or cultural values.

Scope and structure

This Practice Note sets out a landscape assessment protocol for both natural and cultural settings. Whilst the primary focus is upon sustainable management under the RMA, the guidelines also have relevance to related statutes, such as the Conservation, Reserves and Local Government Acts. The emphasis is upon a generic process rather than upon specific techniques. The Practice Note also includes a suggested set of definitions.

The Practice Note is in two parts:

1. An outline of the landscape assessment process and definitions, and
2. Guidance on practice applications.

It is intended to be complemented by a series of Technical Notes on specific techniques and aspects of landscape assessment. These will be prepared and published progressively. The Practice Notes are published as 'live' documents that will be regularly reviewed and revised over time in the light of evolving understandings and protocol.

THE LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

This assessment process is presented as a guide rather than a prescription. The detailed programme of work for any particular assessment will be specific to the issue being considered and the decision making context. The most significant distinction in everyday practice is between landscape assessment undertaken as part of policy and plan making, and assessment associated with a specific project. However, such differences are in emphasis rather than fundamental process. Different types of assessment are treated below as variations within a common framework.

The detail of an assessment process always reflects to some degree the expertise and style of the assessor. Landscape assessment is an expert skill, not an exact science. Nonetheless, there are a number of common stages of assessment that are widely recognised, which in combination should ensure the integrity of an assessment. Not all stages will be required in every situation.

Scope: Identification of:-

- The purpose and focus of the assessment
- The landscape issues being considered
- Those holding mana whenua and mana moana
- Key stakeholders
- The policy context
- The terms of reference of the study

Description: A systematic account of *landscape attributes* in the assessment area. These will include:-

- Biophysical elements, patterns, and processes
- Sensory qualities
- Spiritual, cultural and social associations, including both activities and meanings.

Where relevant, a description of a proposed project will be undertaken. The description phase may involve collaboration with tangata whenua, stakeholders, communities, and other experts, utilising a range of sources of information.

Characterisation: Expert interpretation of *landscape character* based on *classification* of different types of landscape, through:-

- Identification of patterns of natural and cultural features, processes and influences.
- Analysis of their characteristics and spatial location, and the extent to which they are distinctive, representative or typical at the different scales.

Evaluation: An explicit account and weighing up of the *landscape values* of the existing landscape including those expressed within the statutory context of the assessment. This stage will include engagement as appropriate with tangata whenua, communities, stakeholders and interest groups.

Condition and effects: An analysis of the way the landscape(s) are likely to respond to change, including:

- Landscape *resilience*, and *capacity*
- Landscape *sensitivity* and *vulnerability*
- Opportunities, risks and threats

Change management: Identification of ways and opportunities to ensure and enable *sustainable landscape management* in response to the existing trends and any proposed or anticipated change. This may include:

- Statutory and non statutory plan objectives, policies and methods
- Consideration of alternatives, and their costs and benefits
- Identification of ways to enhance or create values
- Actions to avoid, remedy or mitigate adverse landscape effects

Presentation: Reporting of the relevant findings from the assessment in a suitable format, for example as a report to a council, developer, iwi or community, or as evidence to a Council Hearing or the Environmental Court. This may include a process of critique, such as peer review of the draft report or evidence, and appropriate acknowledgements.

THE LANGUAGE OF ASSESSMENT

This section explains the technical terms [in italics] used in the guide

Landscape is the cumulative expression of natural and cultural features, patterns and processes in a geographical area, including human perceptions and associations.

Landscape attributes comprise biophysical features, patterns and processes; sensory qualities; and spiritual, cultural, and social associations, including both activities and meanings.

Landscape character is a distinctive combination of landscape attributes that give an area its identity.

Landscape classification is the placing of landscapes into different categories based on their character or type.

Landscape amenity is the natural and physical quality and character of an area (landscape) that contributes to people's appreciation of its pleasantness, aesthetic coherence, and cultural and recreational attributes (RMA 1991).

Landscape value derives from the importance that people and communities, including tangata whenua, attach to particular landscapes and landscape attributes.

Landscape evaluation is the process of identifying and/or comparing landscape values.

Landscape resilience is the *ability* of a landscape to *adapt* to change whilst retaining its particular character and values.

Landscape capacity is the *amount* of change that a landscape can accommodate without substantially altering or compromising its existing character or values

Landscape sensitivity is the degree to which the character and values of a particular landscape are susceptible to the scale of external change.

Landscape vulnerability is the extent to which landscape character and values are at *risk from a particular type* of change.

Sustainable landscape management recognises and protects the distinctive, representative or typical attributes that define landscape character and values, through a process of integrated assessment, planning and design to meet the needs of both present and future generations.

Natural Character is the expression of natural elements, patterns and processes in a landscape.

Outstanding Natural Landscape is a natural landscape that is particularly notable at a local, district, regional or national scale.

PRACTICE APPLICATIONS

This section describes best practice for the assessment stages outlined above.

Scope: The essential feature of landscape assessment in New Zealand is its focus upon sustainable management and sustainable development of the landscape. The three core activities of landscape architecture to which landscape assessment contributes - landscape planning, design, and management - are all aimed at directing and shaping landscape change in order to achieve the purpose of relevant statutes and related community goals - broadly defined as sustaining environmental integrity and enhancing human wellbeing.

Landscape assessment can contribute in two ways. Its traditional role has frequently been to identify the landscape attributes and values that need to be protected in the public interest, as part of a process of environmental conservation and sustainable management of resources. These aspects are largely covered by various provisions of Part II and III of the RMA, in plans and strategies prepared under a number of other statutes such as the Reserves Act, the National Parks Act, The QEII National Trust Act, The Historic Places Act, The Crown Pastoral Land Act, the Conservation Act, and in Resource Management Plans prepared by Iwi authorities.

An equally important role of landscape assessment is to identify ways in which landscape can be managed to better achieve wider goals of sustainability, sustainable management, and sustainable development. Landscape assessment supports the identification of environmental issues, opportunities and management options, and with appropriate expertise and collaboration can provide the knowledge and skills needed to integrate different values, functions and activities within a particular landscape setting. This role addresses the overall purpose of the RMA, and the implementation of other statutes with broad goals of sustainable development, such as the Local Government Act.

Landscape assessment can be undertaken at a range of scales, and for a range of purposes, from strategic policy to the effects of a small project. It is frequently undertaken in collaboration with other disciplines, tangata whenua and communities. The scoping stage will include identification of these potential and desirable collaborations, including those holding mana whenua and mana moana. It will identify the relevant statutes and policies, and set out the precise terms of reference of the assessment, including limitations and exclusions.

Description: Landscape attributes fall into three broad categories: biophysical features, patterns and processes; sensory qualities; and spiritual, cultural and social associations, including both activities and meanings.

Biophysical features, patterns and processes may be natural and/or cultural in origin, and range from the geology and landform that shape a landscape to the physical artefacts such as roads that mark human settlement and livelihood.

Sensory qualities are landscape phenomena as directly perceived and experienced by humans, such as the view of a scenic landscape, or the distinctive smell and sound of the foreshore.

Associative meanings are spiritual, cultural or social associations with particular landscape elements, features, or areas, such as tupuna awa and waahi tapu, and the tikanga appropriate to them, or sites of historic events or heritage. Associative activities are patterns of social activity that occur in particular parts of a landscape, for example, popular walking routes or fishing spots.

Associative meanings and activities engender a sense of attachment and belonging, and in the context of Aotearoa / New Zealand include places and associations of particular importance to tangata whenua.

Where a project description is undertaken, it should include an account of the biophysical, sensory, and associative attributes of the project.

Biophysical, sensory and associative attributes of landscapes and projects should all be described in a systematic way that others can understand, review and critique. This will help ensure the account is both valid and reliable. Validity indicates that the description actually relates to the phenomena it claims to describe. Reliability indicates consistency of approach to description. Appropriate collaboration and peer review by those with specific expertise and/or mana whenua and mana moana, are important in achieving a credible account.

Characterisation: Landscape characterisation is a process of interpreting the composite and cumulative character of a landscape - how attributes come together to create a landscape that can be distinguished from other landscapes. International best practice in characterisation has two dimensions of classification: the identification of distinctive types of landscape based on their distinctive patterns of natural and cultural features, processes and influences; and their geographical delineation. There is typically also a spatial ordering or hierarchy of landscape types and areas, classified at different scales. Characterisation does not rank or rate landscapes against each other - all landscapes have character.

While there is not a standard approach to landscape characterisation in New Zealand, attributes that typically shape the character of New Zealand landscapes include: geological origin and geomorphology; natural ecosystems; vegetation cover and land use history; spiritual and cultural associations; and patterns and intensity of current development. In the absence of a standard method of characterisation, it is important to ensure that the sources of data and methods of deriving categories and areas are credible and explicit.

Expert characterisation of landscape can be enhanced and underpinned through appropriate engagement with relevant communities, including those holding mana whenua and mana moana.

Evaluation: Evaluation is the systematic process of identifying and comparing landscape values within the assessment. It determines the attributes and characteristics of a landscape to which people and communities including iwi attach particular value, and those in which there is a wider public interest, and weighs them up within the relevant statutory and policy context. Explicit selection of criteria, and use of consistent evaluative terms and measures, is an essential part of the comparative evaluation stage. Appropriate engagement with tangata whenua, communities and interest groups is important to the credibility of the evaluation.

The guiding source of comparative evaluation criteria should be the purpose and provisions of the statute under which the assessment is being undertaken. The RMA and LGA are typically the enabling statutes for landscape assessment, and have broad goals related to the sustainable management of natural and physical resources, including landscape, and the sustainable development of communities, within which there may be provisions specific to landscape or to landscape related values or functions.

Complementary sources of comparative evaluation criteria are the statutory instruments and related non statutory plans relevant to the landscape under assessment- for example, the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement, relevant National Policy Statements, Regional Policy Statements, Conservation Management Strategies, and District and Regional Plan Objectives, Policies and Rules, Long Term Council Community Plans, Iwi Resource Management Plans, and relevant local area, catchment, structure and asset management plans.

A widely used system of evaluation currently in use in New Zealand is the so called 'Amended Pigeon Bay Criteria'. These have evolved from a list of factors used to assess landscapes. They are not exhaustive nor do they necessarily apply to all landscapes. There is, however, accumulated case law and a level of acceptance of their use as a framework for landscape assessment. The 'Amended Pigeon Bay Criteria' can usefully be framed within the three broad categories of landscape attributes used in the description stage, that is, biophysical features, patterns and processes, sensory qualities, and associative activities and meanings.

Each evaluation should use internally consistent evaluative terms that relate to the characteristics and factors being assessed. For example, rarity is a term that describes the relative frequency of a landscape type or feature; coherence describes the structural qualities of a landscape, for example the spatial patterns of landform and vegetation; integrity describes the quality of the relationships within the landscape, for example the health of ecosystems. It is helpful to users of an assessment if the terms used in the evaluation are defined.

Condition and effects: Analysis of landscape condition is focused upon understanding the functioning of a landscape and the way that the landscape systems are likely to respond to external change. It may assess the resilience of the character and values in a landscape, and their capacity to accommodate change. It may also assess the sensitivity of landscape character and values to change, and their vulnerability to particular types of change. The analysis should identify the opportunities, risks, threats, costs and benefits arising from potential change.

A project based assessment also determines the types of effects that are likely to arise from the project, including actual, potential and cumulative effects, and their relative magnitude and importance. The RMA recognises different types of effect, which need to be clarified when making assessments.

It is also important to use a robust and consistent rating scale for assessing the magnitude and importance of conditions, change or effects. The following seven point scale is a useful guide:

Extreme/very high/high/moderate/low/very low/negligible

The application of these categories is always relative to the context of the assessment.

Assessment of landscape conditions, change, and effects may complement other assessment activities, such as cultural and social impact assessment of effects on tangata whenua and communities, or engineering and science assessments.

Change management: All landscapes are dynamic and continually change. Landscape assessment is not about how to ‘freeze’ a landscape in a particular state. It is always about managing the direction and consequences of change, and how to sustain landscape values and attributes over time. An essential part of assessment is the identification of strategies and methods to manage change. These may include: expression and recognition of the visions and aspirations of communities including tangata whenua; Mātauranga Māori; policies, plans and institutional initiatives to achieve desirable outcomes; and design measures to create new values and to avoid, remedy, or mitigate adverse effects, including the consideration of alternatives.

Presentation: The stages of landscape assessment described above do not constitute the headings for an assessment report. These must be developed for the purpose at hand and in accordance with the relevant statutory requirements and protocols. For example, material from a landscape assessment presented in the Environment Court must comply in form and content with the protocols for preparation and presentation of evidence. This will be different from the format adopted for a report to a client, a community, or a council.

It is important to include accurate reporting of consultations and engagement with tangata whenua, communities and interest groups, and acknowledgement of sources.

Peer review of landscape assessment reports is good practice, and can increase the credibility of the process and its outcomes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This guide has been prepared by Frank Boffa and Simon Swaffield on behalf of the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects Education Foundation. The content is based upon the outcomes of two workshops and related working groups between 2008 and 2010. Around 50 senior members of the NZILA contributed to the workshops and to preparing the document, a number of whom have also provided helpful and thoughtful comments upon various drafts. We have also received helpful comment, through Alan Titchener, from Karl Nixon of Nga Aho. We thank and acknowledge all who have contributed in different ways. Responsibility for the final content and for any errors or mistakes remains with the co authors.