

APPENDIX FIVE

Technical Report on Landscape



Ashburton District Plan

Proposed Plan Change No. 2

Business 9 Zone North East Ashburton

Section 42A Report – Landscape

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LANDSCAPE REPORT - ASHBURTON PROPOSED BUSINESS 9 ZONE

This report has been prepared by **William Hemming Field** - Principal Landscape Architect of Boffa Miskell Limited - Planners, Landscape Architects and Ecologists, with the qualifications of Bachelor of Landscape Architecture (with 1st class honours), Bachelor of Fine Arts (University of Canterbury), and professional associateship with the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects.

The report has been prepared to provide advice on landscape effects in relation to Plan Change 2, and is further to a technical report prepared by Boffa Miskell, which formed part of Council's Section 32 Report.

Report Scope

The report includes the following:

- A description of the site and the surrounding locality in relation to landscape values.
- A description of the types of effects that could be anticipated from industrial business development on those existing landscape values.
- Identification of options for mitigation that could be adopted. These could include buffers, setbacks, height controls, and landscape standards.
- Specific recommendations as to the appropriate width of a buffer to protect landscape/amenity values, any additional setbacks if required, landscape treatment within the buffer and the wider industrial zone and the height of buildings.
- Response to submissions made on the proposed Plan Change.

Description and Values of the Site and Surrounding Landscape

The site is surrounded on three sides by an agricultural landscape typical of the patchwork Canterbury Plains. To the east of the site is generally zoned Rural B with a minimum allotment size of 50 hectares. This area is a highly modified landscape with geometric grids of paddocks, shelterbelts and road/rail networks with scattered structures of farm houses and out-buildings. Across SH 1 is a Rural A Zone with a minimum allotment size of 8 hectares. This zone is currently very similar in rural character to the Rural B zone adjacent to the site.

Surrounding landuses include dairy and other stock farming, cropping (wheat, barley, oats, rye corn, maize), and industrial activities associated with farming such as meat processing works. Also within the surrounding landscape are the Fairton Freezing Works (zoned Business 6 adjacent to the site), a small area zoned Business 7 adjacent to the west of the site, the township zone of Fairton, and the Ashburton Aerodrome (scheduled permitted activity in the Rural B Zone).

These surrounding rural landscapes are highly managed. They have a tidy appearance that has a visual coherence and moderate degree of rural amenity value. The tidy geometric simplicity, openness and large scale of these rural landscapes contribute to their rural amenity values.

To the southwest of the site is a Rural Residential Zone. In this zone, the visual density of dwellings and lots appears higher than the rural zones. The minimum lot size is 1 hectare. Currently, lot sizes in the adjacent rural residential area approximately range from 1 hectare to 6 hectares with some smaller lots less than 1 hectare in places.

This area retains a rural character with small paddocks associated with houses, shelterbelt plantings and farm post and wire/rail fencing along boundaries, farm utility buildings, and some stock grazing. The character of the Rural Residential Zone is relatively domesticated compared with the Rural B zone. This is visibly apparent with the uniform spread of houses and gardens, the manicured gardens and edges of roads, and the enclosure created by buildings and planting of open views of the broader landscape. The fine grain rural scale and well-maintained appearance of this area makes it an attractive residential area with characteristics of the rural environment.

The site itself is part of the Rural Zone and is rural in character. It is currently managed as farmland with paddocks, shelterbelts and farm buildings. Part of the site has been used as a piggery. Shelterbelts and farm fences dissect and frame parts of the site. Views into the site are often obscured by boundary shelterbelts. The site is made up of broad scale paddocks with many open views to the surrounding landscape and inland hill country/mountains. The existing open paddocks and shelterbelts contribute to the rural amenity values of the site and surrounding landscape.

Anticipated Landscape Effects of the Industrial Business Development

In my opinion, the types of landscape effects that could be anticipated as result of a change in zone and land use from rural farming to business and industrial use, would be:

1. Replacement and reduction of the open character of the rural landscape in the area.

2. Removal of existing shelterbelt plantings could reduce the rural character of the site when viewed from the surrounding landscape, and the potential to integrate the site to the rural landscape along boundary edges.
3. A greater sense of enclosure and reduced rural outlook could occur from some viewing places.
4. Potential for commercial character to dominate the rural outlook from the surrounding landscape.
5. Night lighting could urbanise the rural outlook and character in the area.
6. Large-scale buildings have the potential to visually dominate the rural landscape.
7. Signage and visually extensive carparking could dominate and commercialise the rural amenity.
8. The appearance of utility/industrial facilities and structures could have an adverse effect on the rural character.
9. Business development potentially creates significant adverse effects on rural landscape, amenity values, outlook and character from the Rural Residential zone.

When there is a change in land use from Rural to urban (industrial) the potential changes can be significant. Some of these effects can not be avoided with the proposed change in land use but they can be mitigated or reduced by providing some controls through site and building design.

Proposed Mitigation of Potential Adverse Landscape Effects

The following are recommendations aimed to avoid, remedy or mitigate the potential adverse landscape effects identified above:

Landscape Treatment

In my opinion, a landscape buffer of 75-100 metres between the Rural Residential Zone and the proposed Business 9 Zone would provide a suitable distance that would retain a sense of rural outlook and amenity that is consistent with the scale and dimensions of open space in the rural residential zone. In my view, from a landscape effects base, the width of the buffer could vary between 75-100m depending on the proximity of neighbouring houses, however I understand that from a district planning perspective some certainty in the position of the buffer is preferable.

This buffer should include mounding and evergreen and deciduous tree plantings and shelterbelt-style screening. Three metre high grass mounding would contribute to mitigating both potential noise as well as providing visual screening of the industrial activities from the

rural residential zone. In my opinion, these screening and amenity landscape elements should be predominantly located on the Industrial side of the buffer to maintain an open space outlook and surveillance into the buffer area from neighbouring residents.

I acknowledge that surveillance could occur from the proposed industrial/business zone side of the buffer and also note that planting and fencing that would potentially screen surveillance could occur on either boundary.

The buffer zone also creates potential opportunities for walkways, cycle ways, stormwater management, and community facilities i.e. playgrounds. In introducing these components or activities into the buffer, the Council needs to ensure that CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) principles are adopted. The following four principles form the foundation for the National Guidelines for CPTED in New Zealand. These are:

Surveillance and sightlines - places where public spaces are overlooked with clear sightlines and appropriate lighting provide for good visibility. Promote a compatible mix of uses to increase the use of the public space.

Access Management – methods to attract people to some places and restrict them from others. Places with well defined routes, spaces, and entrances that provide for convenient and safe movement without compromising security.

Territorial Enforcement – clear boundaries to encourage community “ownership” of space. Places that promote a sense of ownership, respect, territorial responsibility and community.

Quality Environments – a good quality, well maintained place that attracts people and supports passive surveillance. Places laid out to maximise safety and help orientation and way finding. Well designed, managed and maintained places. Spaces designed with management and maintenance in mind to discourage crime and promote community safety.

These principles should be considered when developing the landscape design for the buffer area.

It is also my opinion, that the layout of the proposed rezoned area be master planned to retain existing shelterbelts where practicable and provide for new shelterbelt plantings that integrate the site into the surrounding landscape, particularly at the boundary edges. I understand and

support that the Plan Change requires a Structure Plan to be prepared prior to subdivision approval.

Building Design

In my opinion, due to the significance of landscape change, some controls should be placed on building design. For example;

- Limit the height of buildings to 10 metres which is consistent with the rural-residential area.
- Develop building design guidelines that control the bulk and location of buildings around the perimeter of the site. These should aim to reduce the potential for extensive continuous and blank facades without any windows particularly facing the proposed buffer zone. Public safety is of importance and cycle/walk ways should be open to surveillance from buildings wherever possible.
- Buildings visible within 50m of the buffer area should be painted colours that are consistent with tones and hues of the rural plains landscape – that is, colours in earth tones of greys and ochre browns and greens. A recommended palette of British Standard colours is illustrated as part of the Section 32 assessment. All colours have a reflectivity value of less than 50%. The purpose of this palette is to integrate the visual appearance of potentially large buildings into the surrounding rural landscape environment. Dark toned and low reflectivity colours generally have the effect of reducing the visual bulk of buildings.

Car Parking

Along the edge of the Rural Residential Zone and Company Road large areas of carparking should be located away from the perimeter of the site where possible. Any carparks that are visible from beyond the site should be screened with evergreen edge planting.

Fences

No tall solid fences. Timber post and rail or post and wire for boundary fences. Hedges along boundaries would also be appropriate. These types of fences would help integrate edges into the rural surroundings and provide for greater surveillance particularly into the buffer area.

Lighting

All lighting around the perimeter of the site should be low level lighting directed downwards with a covered shade.

Signage

No advertising or signage facing the rural-residential zone. All signage should be concentrated at the entry points to the site and within the site. Avoid signage including on buildings around the boundaries of the site.

Storage Areas

Storage and utility areas should be screened by hedges or mounding along the Rural Residential Zone boundary.

Plan Change Main Findings

The Section 32 assessment concluded that a 75-100 metre buffer with attractive landscape treatment and screening would mitigate the potential loss of rural outlook and amenity from the residents living in the adjacent Rural Residential Zone. This size buffer would provide an appropriate scale of open space adjacent to the Rural Residential zone. This buffer also supplemented by building design controls to ensure that the business and industrial development that would occur on the site is visually harmonious with the surrounding rural landscape. I am supportive of these findings.

If these mitigation measures were included as part of the proposed rezoning of the site, the potential adverse effects on the rural amenity of the surrounding landscape would be minimal. The rezoning would change the character of the site and the outlook from the surrounding area but appropriate mitigation would maintain a level of amenity appropriate to the site and surroundings.

Response to Submissions

I have read the submissions and summarise the key points relating to landscape effects as follows:

1. Potential adverse visual effects, impact and changes.
2. The rural residential buffer zone to be a minimum of 100 metres in width.
3. Trees and planting to be established in the buffer zone as a priority.
4. Adverse effects of night-lighting.
5. Request for a 300 metre wide buffer zone.
6. Request that the buffer zone remain at a minimum 50 metres in width

The issue of an appropriate width for the buffer zone occurs in the submissions for both visual landscape and noise effects reasons. From a landscape effects perspective, a 100 metre buffer provides for an appropriate open space landscape area adjacent to properties in the existing rural residential zone. This is consistent with the open space outlook of the rural residential

properties with a minimum lot size of 1 hectare. The proportions of a 1 hectare lot are can be 100 metres by 100 metres, although lots can be rectangular with proportions along the lines of 75 metres by 133 metres. In the adjacent rural residential zone lot sizes generally appear to be approximately 2 hectares in size (200 x 100 metre proportions) with some subdivided 1 hectare lots with 100 x 100 metre proportions.

In my opinion the proposed landscape buffer should ideally be 100m but at an absolute minimum 75 metres in width provided a high standard of landscape design is established and the mounding is located closer to the buildings and development in the industrial area and not the rural-residential area. Along the Northpark Road boundary of the Plan Change site, it is recommended that there is a 100 metre wide buffer zone. This would maintain an open space outlook for properties located close to Northpark Road in the rural residential zone.

A three hundred metre wide buffer as proposed by some submitters would provide a more than adequate area of mitigating open space. In my opinion, this size is not necessary to mitigate the potential landscape effects of the proposed Plan Change. Conversely, a fifty metre wide buffer as proposed in the Plan Change would not adequately mitigate the potential landscape effects. In my opinion, a continuous fifty metre width would not provide an adequate boundary buffer along the rural residential zone that would mitigate the loss of open space outlook reasonably expected in a rural residential with a minimum lot size of 1 hectare.

Some submitters comment and imply that there will be an adverse change in the landscape character of the area. There will be a change in landscape character however, in my opinion, if appropriate landscape mitigation (as discussed previously) is included as part of the Plan Change this change will not adversely affect the amenity outlook of the rural residential zone in a way that is more than minor. The change within the buffer area will be from open rural amenity to a smaller scaled park-like open space outlook that is consistent in scale and landscape character, and quality, with the rural residential zone.

Any potential adverse landscape effects of night lighting can be mitigated by lighting design and location around the perimeter of the Plan Change site particularly adjacent to the rural residential zone. In time as trees and plantings establish in the buffer zone, illumination from night-lighting will be further mitigated.

I concur with the submitter that emphasised the importance of early planting and landscape treatment of the buffer zone as a priority to developing the plan change site. This would provide early landscape mitigation while works develop onsite, and would allow for site stormwater management, recreational use, as well as generally improve the amenity outlook neighbouring residential properties.

Conclusion

To conclude, if the proposed design standards, landscape treatment and minimum 75 metre buffer width are included as part of the Plan Change proposal, then a land use change in this area from rural to industrial/business would not adversely affect the amenity quality of the landscape in a way that was more than minor.