

BEFORE HEARING COMMISSIONERS

IN HURUNUI

UNDER THE

Resource Management Act 1991 ("**Act**")

IN THE MATTER OF

Notified resource consent applications **RC220060** and **RC220072** for subdivision and land use consent for Stages 3-6 of a multi-staged residential development known as "The Clearing", located at 64 Amberley Beach Road and 187 Carters Road, Amberley

BETWEEN

UWC LIMITED

Applicant

AND

HURUNUI DISTRICT COUNCIL

Consent authority

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF ANNE ELEANOR WILKINS

Commissioner: Dean Chrystal (Chairperson)

Commissioner: Dave Smith

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 My full name is Anne Eleanor Wilkins. I am the Principal Landscape Architect and Urban Designer at Novo Group.
- 1.2 I hold a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture with Honours from Lincoln University. I am a fully Registered Landscape Architect of the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects (the NZILA). I have a working knowledge of the NZILA guidelines for Assessment; *Te Tangi a te Manu*.
- 1.3 I have over 14 years' experience in landscape architecture and urban design. During this time, I have undertaken landscape and visual effects assessments across a broad range of project areas throughout New Zealand, including subdivisions, commercial developments, infrastructure, coastal works, marina developments, sport and park spaces, reserves, transmission lines, road projects and housing developments, for a wide range of clients including development groups and local authorities.
- 1.4 I have experience in providing landscape and visual effects assessments for developments of a similar nature, working on behalf of both applicants and councils. I am on various panels across New Zealand to peer review landscape development assessments. I have attended hearings, given evidence, and provided expertise, on a variety of landscape matters, including residential subdivisions similar to the proposal.
- 1.5 I have been involved in the development of The Clearing project since 2021, undertaking master planning in coordination with the wider design team where urban design principles were included as key drivers for the overall layout and development of the area. I assisted in developing the masterplan in response to pre-application meetings and feedback from Hurunui District Council. I prepared the *Urban Design Masterplan Stage 3-6 (2021 -2022)*, and the *Urban Design Report 2022 Stage 3-6* for the project and I attach this evidence as **Appendix 1**.
- 1.6 Subsequently, changes have been developed to the overall Landscape Masterplan in response to Hurunui District Council feedback and review. These are detailed below, and I have attached this evidence in **Appendix 2**.

2 CODE OF CONDUCT

- 2.1 I have read the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses contained in the Environment Court Practice Note 2023. I have complied with it in preparing this evidence and I agree to comply with it in presenting evidence at this hearing. The evidence that I give is within my area of expertise except where I state that my evidence is given in reliance on another

person's evidence. I have considered all material facts that are known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions that I express in this evidence.

3 SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

3.1 My evidence is presented on behalf of the applicant, UWC Limited and details the matters regarding landscape and urban design associated with Stage 3-6 of the proposed development project known as 'The Clearing'. The scope of my evidence covers:

- Proposal overview; referring to the urban and landscape design Masterplan principles, and the character and amenity values of the site.
- Urban Design Report Summary; including the HDC policy matters regarding urban, landscape, subdivision, and open space connections.
- Council Landscape Assessment and s42 Report.
- Submissions; regarding landscape and urban matters.
- Conclusions

3.2 In summary, I consider the issues relating to urban and landscape matters is in regard to:

- The density of lot sizes along the rural interface.
- The density of lot sizes along the Carters Road / SH interface and acoustic bund treatment.

4 THE PROPOSAL

4.1 The Masterplan

4.2 The Clearing (Stage 3-6) development forms part of the larger area for residential development located off Amberley Beach Road. The Clearing Stage 1-2 was submitted for resource consent in 2021 and is currently being built. The full details of the proposed development, including the connections, linkages, urban design fabric and environment, and the proposed landscape and urban treatments, are itemised in the Urban Design Masterplan.

4.3 In summary, the proposal development is an extension of proposed residential development occurring to the east of this proposal. The development will provide a mix of house and lot sizes in a location which is well served by existing and future amenities. A strong circulation and green network provide a base for the development, recognising the residential character of the receiving environment and town.

4.4 An updated Masterplan (**Appendix 2**) has been organised in response issues raised by Council, submissions, and Councils Landscape Architect (the LVA by RMM). This is itemised in more detail following, but can be summarised as:

- The addition of a length of green space running from Carters Road corner along the rural boundary interface. While this was included for stormwater management, this will have the added benefit of acting as a buffer area in the southwest corner along the rural boundary interface, to allow for additional greenspace and soften the visible area near the entrance to Amberley. This will result in the addition of approximately 900m² of greenspace in the gateway / rural interface area.
- The amendment of lots in the southwest area, which have been increased in size and reduced to 4x lots only in this area. Lot 256 and 255 will now be 700m², Lot 254 will now be 796m² and Lot 253 will now be 860m², to allow for the rural boundary interface and the corner area at the gateway entrance to Amberley.
- A post and rail fence and the addition of extensive planting (to be 3 metres wide) along the rural boundary interface. This will result in upwards of 6000m² of planting along the rural boundary.

4.5 Character and Amenity

4.6 Key considerations for the proposal regarding character and amenity include:

- The site is zoned residential i.e., the anticipated landscape character is a modified, residential environment.
- No large areas of vegetation or key trees are to be removed. The proposal will introduce large areas of native and biodiverse planting, tree-lined streets, and extensive boundary planting.
- Amenity values are enhanced by the extensive public green spaces included in the development, being upwards of 3.2 hectares, that responds to the natural topography of the landscape.
- High quality streetscapes, landscaping and individual lot design controls are included.

4.7 The proposal site is zoned residential. In an ever-increasing demand for housing in North Canterbury the development essentially utilises the last highly sought after residential land in the area, located near the dynamic Amberley township. The eastern boundary is adjacent to the State Highway 1 (Carters Road). The site is bordered by existing residential

developments to the north and east, the proposed Lifestyle Village development to the immediate north, and rural residential land to the south and east.

- 4.8 The proposal is situated on undeveloped rural land (with residential zoning). The site has few existing shelterbelts, drainage basins, dry channels, and clusters of exotic landscape shrubs and trees throughout the landscape. Vegetation types in the receiving environment are predominantly exotic species with few native planting areas along the road boundary on the western side. The proposed development will introduce a significant amount of new planting and landscaping, as well as public space and reserves, significantly benefiting the biophysical environment, while catering to sought after residential land in the area.
- 4.9 The green network proposes several local reserves and pocket parks to provide amenity to future residents. The Clearing proposes three large additional neighbourhood reserves to provide amenity for residents being within a 3-minute walk, or 300m radius. The sizes of the reserves will range between 7500m² to 17,500m² with linking passages in between to create a cohesive green network. The reserves will also act as a storage basin for excess water and can be used as a reactional facility through dry months of the year. A playground is proposed within one of the three reserve areas. The reserves are designed to make the most of the sweeping form of the natural gully areas, and existing mature trees. This celebrates and maintains the natural character of the site while allowing for residential development as per the District Plan zoning. Additionally, the development will maintain amenity via design controls e.g., front yard requirements of 4.5m, 35% site coverage, and minimum side yards etc.

5 SUMMARY OF URBAN DESIGN REPORT

- 5.1 Overall, the Urban Design Report concludes that the proposal acceptably aligns with the aims of the relevant provisions of the Hurunui District Plan and Township guides relating to landscape and urban design, as well as the Ministry for the Environment urban design principles. The development provides for a unique, high quality residential area, as anticipated under the District Plan, that has been suitably designed in alignment with urban design protocols and principals.
- 5.2 **Design Drivers and Principles**
- 5.3 The guiding Urban Design Principles for the development of the overall Masterplan included:
- i) **Movement and Activity:** creating links to residential areas in the vicinity. Allowing for safe movement corridors that are tied to existing pedestrian crossings in the vicinity.

- ii) Wayfinding: concise and clear markers at the entrance to highlight the unique development. Create landmark plantings and signage to ensure a strong aesthetic is achieved.
- iii) Connections: located at the entrance to Amberley off State Highway 1 and main roads. Ensure key connections to the wider town is maintained. Create shared and connected communities with links and flows throughout the development providing an integrated design response to the wider community.
- iv) Amenity: wider township areas to link up to create ease of movement. Create convenience so that residential users can utilise spaces 'close to home'. Ensure high quality public amenity, spaces, and streetscapes to encourage community interaction and quality in delivery.
- v) Design guide and controls: develop a high quality guide to ensure an array of materials, designs and materials for each residential property meets a cohesive aesthetic.

5.4 The Urban Design Principles for The Clearing development were shaped utilising the Ministry for the Environment principles, outlined in the document *People Places Spaces* document, which is endorsed by the New Zealand Urban Design Protocol. These are detailed in the Urban Design Report and includes integration, connectivity, legibility, and identity which has been applied using cycle and pedestrian links, tree-lined streets, high quality materials and design guides / controls.

5.5 **Hurunui District Plan (HDP)**

5.6 **Objective 4** (HDP) outlines specific intentions for character and amenity in relation to residential development in the district. **Policy 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.8, 4.9, 4.11, and 4.12** include provisions for residential zoned land, to allow for a range of different lot sizes and typologies, while protecting residential amenity.

5.7 The development proposal will contain detached dwellings on separate privately landscaped lots, and the Masterplan and associated design guidelines will provide for an approved concept plan in this instance. A cohesive visual character will be ensured, via the design guides, to present 'The Clearing' as a unique community, that is similarly place based and appropriate to Amberley. 'The Clearing' has legible entrances and links, and has a strong cohesive identity formed by the gateways and the design guide controls. Amenity values and character will be protected via boundary planting and high quality streetscapes and the design guides for each lot.

- 5.8 **Objective 4.2** (HDP) outlines specific intentions for open space in the district. **Policy 4.19** and **4.20** outlines the promotion of integrated patterns of greenways and open spaces to meet recreational requirements and create good connections and public access.
- 5.9 The Clearing includes upwards of 3.2 hectares of public green space, not including the areas of planting associated with the boundary and streetscapes. The development has been designed around the natural contours of the landscape. The stormwater basins have been located along the natural sloped areas of the site to enhance the natural ecosystems and minimise earthworks and disruption. There is very little vegetation on the site currently, given its currently operating as rural land, however where there are sporadic trees or vegetation efforts will be made to retain where possible. The proposal presents a development that is responsive to the environment in which it is located. The Masterplan design was also prepared in alignment with the *Hurunui District Council Tree Management Policy* document outlining appropriate features, trees, species, and development maintenance in relation to landscaping.
- 5.10 **Objective 5** (HDP) outlines specific intentions for subdivision development in the district. **Policy 5.3, Policy 5.4, and Policy 5.5** outlines the requirement for subdivision designs that protects and enhances values such as environmental, natural, openness and amenity.
- 5.11 There are 201 lots proposed for the development to ensure a good level of residential resource is provided for in the future. The pattern of the subdivision aligns with development in the area, while protecting the environment in which it is situated via extensive planting, green open spaces, and design controls for each allotment.
- 5.12 **Amberley Character Study 2007**
- 5.13 The '*Amberley Town Concept: A Landscape Character Study*', by G. Densem was undertaken in 2007 for Hurunui District Council. The study outlines a community-based vision of growth anticipated in Amberley and analyses the development and history of place, alongside an analysis of the existing township character.
- 5.14 The document is dated from 2007, upwards of 15 years ago. At the time, the population was only 1,300. The township since has seen exponential urban and residential growth, and overall rapid growth in North Canterbury and Amberley has been experienced. Essentially, Amberley offers an adapted landscape character from that which is expressed within the Study. Particularly the appropriateness of the 700m² lot size outlined in the Landscape Character Study in the Urban Design Report given the above factors. While generally the analysis of the overall General Character remains the same, the growth patterns, new subdivision and residential expansion in the town, and the social climatic changes

experienced in the last 15 years must be considered on balance, to deem what is acceptable now, and most importantly, in the future.

- 5.15 Overall, the design of the Masterplan, largely meets the objectives of the ‘*Amberley Town Concept: A Landscape Character Study*’, notably Section 3, Section 4 and 5 Residential Character and Street Character, and Section 9 Town Expansion.

6 LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT & S42 REPORT

- 6.1 The Hurunui District Council commissioned a Landscape and Visual Effects Assessment (LVA) to assess the urban and landscape components of the proposal, which was undertaken by RMM. The report suggested amendments to enable the proposal to achieve effects that are less than minor¹. An updated Masterplan has been organised (attached in **Appendix 2**) and is summarised in more detail in **Figure One** below. In my opinion, because of the amendments made to the Masterplan (given most of the suggested amendments have been applied or partially applied) and for the reasons outlined following, the proposal can be assessed as less than minor under the evaluation method applied in the LVA.

Masterplan Feature	LVA Recommendations	Masterplan Amendments
Acoustic Fence	Locate the acoustic fence within a reserve area.	See outline below.
Lot Density: Lots 167 – 175 & Lot 253 - 258	Minimum size of 1100m ² for the 13x lots located along the rural boundary.	See outline below.
Lot Density: Lots 259 - 279	Minimum size of 1100m ² for the 21x lots along the SH boundary.	See outline below.
Dwellings	To be able to be 8m in height (two storey) aside from in noise restriction areas.	Amended.
Fencing	To be post and rail along rural boundary.	Amended.
	To be post and rail along reserves.	Amended.

¹ Refer to Section 7 of the RMM LVA Report.

Masterplan Feature	LVA Recommendations	Masterplan Amendments
	To include corrugated iron and timber.	The boundary fences are to be timber to align with the Design Standards and Guide in Stage 1-2. These fences will be of a high-quality Boundaryline typology (or similar).
Planting	A 5m strip of planting of native species up to 2 metres in height in individual lots along the rural boundary.	Amended ²
	Balance of native and exotic in Reserves and Stormwater Areas	Amended.
Pedestrian / cycle	Provide a connection to SH1.	Not achievable (given Traffic safety recommendations).

Figure 1: Masterplan Amendments

6.2 I reference the s42 Report which reads in paragraph 64 and 65, that while the subdivision would not meet the minimum average lot area, it does have the capacity to provide for a greater number of smaller lots without adverse effects on amenity. The report notes that this is due to the generous amount of public open green space. I also agree with the statement that a greater percentage of smaller lots may also contribute to concerns relating to residential spread over arable productive farmland; I concur it is important to make the most of the available residentially zoned land to avoid this scenario.

6.3 Paragraph 65 references the exception to this is the lots along the SH boundary and the lots southern rural boundary, and for this reason I have focused below, and consider the areas of contention being, the two interfaces specifically the 21x lots along the SH and the 13x lots along the rural boundary.

6.4 Acoustic Fence and State Highway Interface

6.5 The intent of the bunding and associated acoustic fence is to create a combined wide buffering strip that includes significant planting and screening to create an offset from those lots bordering the State Highway. With the existing road reserve considered, and the 5.5 metre wide area of bunding and planting, paired with private backyard areas, any dwellings would be upwards of 25 metres from the road.

² In part as a 3 metre wide strip of native planting has been added to the length of the rural boundary interface to be consistent with Stage 1-2.

- 6.6 The cross section in **Figure Two** below (and detailed in **Appendix 2**) depicts the intended offset of the properties bordering Carters Road, with the bund and acoustic fence, a standard house and outdoor living area to give an indication of the scale of the setback.

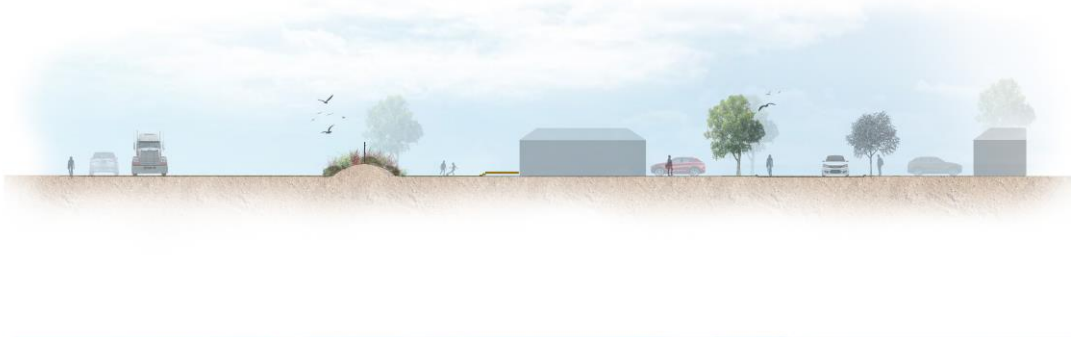


Figure 2: Cross Section of Planted Bund

- 6.7 Regarding the smaller lots along the State Highway interface, these 21 lots will be considerably screened and be controlled by design guides to contain area of open space within each yard. Overall, I consider the any lots below 700m² are offset by the considerable areas outlined for open public green spaces across the larger area, as referenced in the s42 report as above. However, an amendment to the Masterplan has been included to allow an area of increased lot sizes in the southwest corner located by the entrance to Amberley, whereas an additional wide strip of green space and associated planting has been applied along the rural boundary corner. These lots are in the more 'visible' area at the southwest corner near the rural interface. This area of green space is over approximately 12 metres wide (approximately 900m² in area).
- 6.8 Regarding visual amenity, the above 5 metre wide planting and bund will provide for considerable screening along the Carter Road interface. The 21 lots located along this boundary will be buffered and offset, with only partial views of sections of roof lines or built forms visible. Additionally, the views will be experienced at speed, by transient viewers traversing the road corridor which tend to be less sensitive than fixed viewers. Any discernible visual change created by the increased density will be in passing and temporary in nature. In any case, the site is zoned residential, and the character of this interface is not anticipated to be that of rural under the DP i.e. no requirements for 1100m² lots along the road interface.
- 6.9 Rural Boundary Interface**
- 6.10 13 allotments in total are adjacent to the rural boundary along the southern edge of the proposed development. This is not a substantial number of allotments, given the site is zoned residential and this is the anticipated character of this environment. The length of the rural

interface is upwards of 580 metres in total. Only just over half (approximately 300 metres) of this boundary is dedicated to residential allotments. The other half is large expansive areas of open green space; approximately 277 metres of this boundary, being that of the reserve space associated with Teviot's Drain and the dry gully reserve areas, providing for open space (whereas this could be built up residential allotments). In my opinion, 13 sections along this boundary would be easily absorbed, and a highly acceptable outcome for this interface.

- 6.11 Lots 253 – 258 have been revised, resulting in a decrease of 2x lots, resulting in 4x lots of over 700m² at the rural / state highway interface. Lots 167 – 175 are to be retained as is the current arrangement. I find the offset of 110m² lots at this location will not achieve any significant difference in density, that would be discernible or apparent along this interface from any distance.
- 6.12 Regarding visual effects, viewing parties are very limited. The area of Lots 167 - 175 are located upwards of 350 metres from Carters Road and are not visible from any other public locations. Overall, this interface borders only one rural paddock, and 1x associated rural-residential dwelling, to the south. Furthermore, these views will be screened via planting and fencing, which will significantly offset any built forms.
- 6.13 Despite the above, as per the RMM Report recommendation, a wide strip of planting has been added along the rural boundary interface and the fencing amended to be a post and rail treatment. I note that to be consistent with the Stage 1-2 of the development (already consented), the planting strip should be 3 metres wide which is still significant and sufficient to meet the same design intent of softening this interface i.e., layered native vegetative planting.
- 6.14 Paragraph 69 in the s42 Report notes that planting and fencing provisions would go some way in mitigating the effects of the lot sizes but does not protect the landscape character and visual amenity from the adjoining rural site. In summary, I consider the development proposal can maintain visual amenity values along this interface, given that 13 lots spanned across the over 580 metre length rural interface, is very minimal, and considering that over half the boundary is dedicated to open green space whereas comparatively this could potentially all be residential allotments under the District Plan zoning. Additionally, amendments have been made to include extensive planting and fencing treatments, despite the limited viewing parties.

7 SUBMISSIONS

- 7.1 A total of 19 submissions were received, with 17 in opposition, one in support and one neutral. 13 submissions noted landscape and urban matters, largely regarding lot sizes and

densities. The key themes of these submissions include lots below 700m² and associated amenity values and retaining a 'town-country' aesthetic.

- 7.2 Each lot will also be required to have private outdoor green space, maintaining an overall maximum building coverage of 35% and guided by a Design Guidelines to maintain high-quality individual lot environments. The lots will contain driveways, houses characteristic of typical suburban low density housing. The masterplan includes large areas of green open space for recreational areas, including grassed areas, trees, seating and pathways for walking and cycling, as well as a large playground (to be developed). The extensive areas of green, open spaces will offset any smaller lots.
- 7.3 The site was developed around the existing Amberley township guides and planned networks. The development links to the proposed Lifestyle village to the north and the various developments within Amberley. The residential buildings will all be linked, and cohesive as no front fences are allowed through the development.
- 7.4 The development is designed to achieve a range of lot sizes. The development contains multiple 'options' of typologies and sites that create a mix of diversity for interest. These options provide an adaptable community that ensures a range of living arrangements and designs to facilitate the ability to respond to social and economic changes (MfE Principles).

8 SUMMARY

- 8.1 The development proposal of The Clearing is within zoned residential land, and will provide for high quality living, while also providing for upwards of 3.2 hectares of reserve green space that contributes to amenity and open space for the wider community. The design has pre-emptively considered landscaping, layout, urban treatments, connectivity, open spaces, and lot specific design controls to lessen any potential effects on the surrounding environment. Furthermore, additional amendments have been applied to the Masterplan to suitably respond to any additional concerns regarding density along the road and rural boundary interfaces. In my opinion the development can be successfully integrated into the landscape fabric and the visual environment.

09 May 2023

Anne Eleanor Wilkins