

Landscape Assessment Report: The Clearing

Hurunui District Council

187-193 Carters and 52
Amberley Beach roads,

8 November 2022



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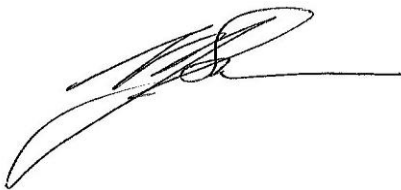
Proposed Subdivision, 187-193 Carters and 52 Amberley Beach roads, Amberley, 8 November 2022

Date: 8 November 2022

Status: For Resource Consent

Prepared for: Hurunui District Council

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose and Scope

Rough Milne Mitchell Landscape Architects (**RMM**) has been engaged by Hurunui District Council (**the Applicant**) to assess the actual and potential landscape and visual effects of a proposed subdivision located at 187-193 Carters and 52 Amberley Beach roads, Amberley (the site). Refer Figure 1 below. The scope of the work includes an assessment on whether the proposal delivers the outcomes sought by the provisions in the DP, and a consideration of the submissions received by the public.

The site is zoned Residential 1A. The proposed subdivision is part of a staged residential development referred to as The Clearing and comprises Stages 3 – 6 immediately adjoining Stages 1 and 2 (RC 2101850). An application for Resource Consent (RC220060) has been lodged and as part of this an Urban Design Report has been provided. The proposed subdivision is a **non-complying** activity under the Hurunui District Plan (HDP). The non-compliances of relevance to the landscape assessment are the percentage of average lot areas, shape factor standards and lot size adjoining the rural zone.

As a non-complying activity, the proposal must satisfy the objectives and policies of the HDP or effects must be no more than minor. Accordingly, the proposal is assessed against the relevant objectives and policies of the HDP relating to character and amenity values, including the urban / rural interface and also provides an assessment of the proposal in relation to the landscape values within the receiving environment.



Figure 1. The Site

This report is set out under the following headings:

- A description of the proposal.
- Description of receiving environment, including the site. The existing environment is described in terms of the current landscape's physical, perceptual, and associated attributes.
- Identification of existing landscape and visual amenity values. These are based on site observations, and a review of existing information.
- Relevant statutory provisions. The statutory provisions are found within the Hurunui District Plan (HDP). Those provisions directly relevant to landscape and visual matters form the framework for the assessment of the proposal against the HDP provisions.
- An assessment of landscape and visual effects.
- Submissions.
- Recommendations.
- Conclusion.

The report is accompanied by a Graphic Attachment (**GA**), that contains maps and aerial images of the site location, the relevant District Plan planning maps, plans of the proposed subdivision, photographs of the site from within the site, and photographs of the site taken from the surrounding public places.

The table included in Figure 2 outlines the rating scales that are referred to in this report. The table included in Figure 3 is a comparative scale for the RMA s104D 'gateway' test for non-complying activities.

| | | | | | | |
|----------|-----|----------------|----------|-----------------|------|-----------|
| Very Low | Low | Low - Moderate | Moderate | Moderate - High | High | Very High |
|----------|-----|----------------|----------|-----------------|------|-----------|

Figure 2. The seven-point landscape and visual effects rating scale¹.

| | | | | | | |
|-----------------|-------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------|-----------|
| Very Low | Low | Low - Moderate | Moderate | Moderate - High | High | Very High |
| Less than Minor | Minor | | More than Minor | | Significant | |

Figure 3. The comparative scale of degree of effects².

¹ 'Te Tangi a te Manu: Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines'. Tuia Pita Ora New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects, July 2022.

² Ibid

2 The Proposal

2.1 Description of the Proposal

It is proposed to subdivide 32.73 ha of rural land that is zoned Residential 1A, on the southern boundary of Amberley for residential purposes. The site is located at the southern approach to the Amberley township. The site adjoins SH1 along the western boundary, the urban area of Amberley township to the north, Stages 1 and 2 of The Clearing to the east and rural land to the south. Refer GA, Sheet 1, The Clearing MasterPlan.

The subdivision comprises 201 residential lots, six roads to vest, one access lot, five local purpose reserves and one balance lot that will be constructed over four stages, being Stages 3 - 6.

An Urban Design Masterplan and Design Guideline document has been prepared by Novo Group to inform aspects of the development. The document includes an analysis of Amberley and the site potential, the site design, a Master Plan based on the subdivision layout, public reserve areas and design guidelines relating to street design, features, green space, playground design, lot designs a materials and planting palette and fencing options. According to the Urban Design Assessment provided as part of the application the design guidelines will form private covenants, which will seek to retain or enhance the amenity values of Amberley

The following description and intended outcomes are based on the material provided by the Urban Design Masterplan and Design Guideline document and the application.

Access and layout

The subdivision will be accessed via Carters Road and a through road from Stage 1-2 of The Clearing. The layout of the subdivision is proposed around an internal spine road that will connect to Carters Road via a road outside the site to the northwest³ and will traverse the site in a gentle curve, trending west-east connecting to the consented Stage 1-2 development of The Clearing. The spine road will include a footpath on both sides of the road. Several local loop roads will provide internal connections to the lots and will include a footpath on one side of the road. There are no cul-de-sacs proposed within the subdivision.

The Masterplan Concept Design Draft shows that street trees will be provided at 20 m centres on both sides of the central spine road except for a one residential block. Clusters of specimen trees are shown at paved thresholds indicating the main entrance and entrances to green space.

The streets are designed to be interactive with combined footpaths and cycleways separated from the roadway by planting strips and parking bays.

Pedestrian / cycle connections are shown through green open space to internal roads.

Lots

The 201 lots range in area from 400 m² – 1,028 m². Refer GA, Sheets 12 – 14. However, only one lot is proposed over 1000 m² with the balance lots mostly between 400 – 771 m². The average lot size will be 542 m². All dwellings will be single story. Although the design guidelines state that outdoor living will be north facing areas where possible, it is noted that for the lots adjoining SH1 outdoor living areas will be confined to the NE side of the dwelling to meet acoustic and vibration levels. Utility areas are required to be set back from front yards and screened.

³ Consented as part of the adjacent Amberley Retirement Village and according to an intersection scheme plan and agreement with NZTA

Green Space

Five lots equating to an area of approximately 34,711 m² have been set aside for utility and stormwater management coinciding with part of the historic water course referred to as Dry Gully that traversed the site. These areas have been designed to fulfil their stormwater function, while also providing amenity in the form of a walkway, a centrally located playground and indigenous planting, although no detail planting plans are provided. All green reserve areas adjoin both local roads and residential lots. Footpaths across green spaces provide thoroughfares to surrounding streets.

Boundary treatment

The dwellings will be set back 4.5 m from the road frontage and according to the design guidelines front yard fences are not permitted. The design guidelines restrict fencing materials to those consistent with the materials of the dwelling and specifically excludes corrugated iron fences.

The application states that fencing adjacent the utility / stormwater management areas and reserve areas will be visually permeable open-style pool fencing in matt black and planting will be in accordance with CPTED principles.

An acoustic barrier will be provided along SH1 / Carters Road and will consist of a 1 m high bund plus a 2 m high fence. A variety of materials are mentioned as suitable for the 2 m high fence but it is understood that it will most likely be a paling fence.

The planting along the acoustic bund is intended to be layered, textured planting, and made up of low shrub native species such as *Muehlenbeckia*, *Corokia*, *Grislinia*, and *Phormium*. All planting will be evergreen species to ensure permanent foliage, colour and screening. Planting will be integrated and designed to accompany existing road reserve planting for consistency and a cohesive visual amenity.

A landscape strip within private lots and the reserve areas is shown along part of the boundary adjoining the Rural Zone on the Landscape Concept Plan. No width is specified but it measures 5 m in width according to the relevant scale.

Materials Palette

The materials palette restricts exterior cladding materials for dwellings, accessory buildings and driveways to high quality new materials, permanent materials with restrictions on concrete driveways, and the use of unpainted or galvanised iron cladding. Fencing materials must be consistent with materials of the dwelling, utilising natural materials where possible and corrugated iron fences are not permitted.

3 Landscape Description

3.1 Description of the Receiving Environment

The site is situated in the Hurunui District, North Canterbury on the southern outskirts of the Amberley township, 10 km south of the wine producing area of Waipara, 4 km north of Leithfield and 50 km north of Christchurch city.

At a broad scale, Amberley is a rural service town located on State Highway (SH) 1, surrounded by the rural landscape of the east coast lower alluvial plains at the northern extent of the Canterbury Plains and Pegasus Bay. Amberley is enclosed by the foothills of the Lowry Peaks Range and Doctors Hills and Mt Grey rising from 200 – 1400 masl to the west and soft rock hills of Mt Cass to the east. The township lies south of the Waipara River and north/northeast of the Kowai River. Amberley Beach stretches along the coast between these two river outlets. The rural landscape is dominated by high producing grassland, crops, forest plantations and vineyards.

The receiving environment is largely confined to the immediately adjoining rural pastoral farmland south of the site, SH 1 to the west and Residential 1A and Industrial zones opposite the site further to the west, the Residential 1A and Residential 3 zones of the Amberley township to the north, and Residential 1A zones comprising Stages 1 and 2 of The Clearing to the east. Of note is that the Mt Grey/Maungatere and Mt Cass ONL and ONF landscapes are prominent features of the receiving environment and general vista from SH 1, albeit at a distance.

The SH is the main transit route along the east coast of the South Island. The section most relevant to the proposed subdivision is the southern approach to, or departure south from Amberley township. The scenic experience afforded to travellers from this section of the SH is key aspect of amenity and contributes to the character of Amberley as a rural service town. This section of the SH is characterised by views to the east of wide mown grass verges, established planting alongside a sweeping 'S' bend in the road effectively slowing traffic approaching the township. Immediately adjoining the site, a verge of native vegetation and views over pasture towards the distant low Teviotdale Hills and Mt Cass (1144 masl) contribute high aesthetic values. When travelling south views are directed to the west (rather than east towards the site) over a generous landscape strip, access lane, vegetated garden frontages with distant views to Ashley Forest and Mt Grey (1142 masl). Although, the change from rural to a Residential 1A zone is anticipated by the Residential 1A zoning, the SH 1, rural and residential interface is an important component of the SH experience, amenity and rural character of Amberley township.

The HDP planning map shows the southern settlement boundary to Amberley adjoining the rural zone identified by what is assumed to be a building restriction line.

The Residential Zone adjoining the northern boundary of the site is consented to be developed as Retirement Living and as part of that consent access to the site will be provided via the retirement village from Carters Road / SH1.

3.2 Description of the Site

The site is located at the southern approach to the Amberley township. The site is roughly an 'L' shaped area of land that adjoins SH1 along the western boundary, a private 3695 m² property, the Residential 1A and Residential 3 zones of the Amberley township to the north, Residential 1A zones comprising Stages 1 and 2 of The Clearing to the east and the 6790 m² property containing the Croft dwelling and three individually owned 4 ha farm blocks to the south.

The site is 32.73 ha and currently used for pastoral farming. Two farm storage sheds and deer pens are located on the site. An abandoned river meander (known as Dry Gully), previously a tributary of the Kowai River, has created undulating topography and incised channels up to 3.6 m deep running west – east across the site from SH1. As noted in the application, the site is otherwise generally flat, with an overall gradient toward the east. Isolated clumps of gorse and hawthorne are located across the site. Several established specimen ash trees and a mature walnut tree are existing within the Dry Gully. Refer GA, Sheet 11, and Photograph 1 below.



Photograph 1. Dry Gully and existing ash trees

The boundary with SH is well vegetated by native planting along 295 m of the 392.5 m SH1 road reserve bounding the site with a Leyland cypress hedge extending part way for 97.5 m from the southwestern corner. Internally a cluster of mature eucalyptus trees and an established pine shelterbelt runs east west and bisects the northern part of the property.

The main Amberley underground sewer line also runs east-west across the site and a drainage channel (Teviots Drain) passes along the eastern boundary of the site (in common with Stages 1 and 2).

The site is currently accessed from the eastern end of the site via Stage 1 and 2 or from the Crofts driveway along the southern boundary.

3.3 Landscape Values of the Receiving Environment

The existing landscape and visual amenity values form the baseline, along with the policy provisions, for an assessment of landscape effects. Current best practise is guided by the Te Tangi a te Manu: Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines⁴, with landscape values derived from three broad categories of landscape attributes focussing on:

⁴ 'Te Tangi a te Manu: Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines'. Tuia Pita Ora New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects, July 2022

3.3.1 *Physical Attributes*

“**Physical** means both the natural and human-derived features, and the interaction of natural and human processes over time.” Typical physical factors include geological, ecological, and biological elements within the landscape.

The broader landscape is part of the North Canterbury plains formed by glacial outwash gravels and alluvial deposits. Refer GA, Sheet 04. The shallow stony, droughty soils are prone to drying out resulting in characteristic seasonal changes to the rural landscape where pastoral changes are evident, from green verdant pasture to dry yellow brown pasture depending on the extent of available irrigation. The Amberley settlement plays an important role as a rural service town and although rapidly expanding it retains a focus on the main street / SH and a small town rural character interspersed by established trees.

The Kowai River South Branch is a key feature of the plains forming the western edge of the township. Dry Gully is an abandoned meander of the Kowai River and references the natural processes and typical mobility of rivers on the Canterbury Plains.

3.3.2 *Perceptual Attributes*

“**Perceptual** means both sensory experience and interpretation. Sensory appreciation typically occurs simultaneously with interpretation, knowledge, and memory.” Typical perceptual factors relate to experiential and aesthetic qualities such as naturalness, visual coherence, legibility as well as transient aspects.

The site is an important and memorable part of the southern approach to the Amberley township, a rural service town at the northern extent of the Canterbury Plains particularly as the road curves just before the Amberley sentinel posts (pou) and town sign (refer Photograph 2), bounded by generous mown grass berms and dense well established native planting. The flat and open space character of the site affords a scenic outlook over pastoral farmland to the Teviotdale hills, Mt Cass to the east (refer Photograph 3) and from SH1 views to Ashley Forest / Mt Grey to the west are important and dominant features within the receiving environment. The Kowai River forms a natural barrier to the town in the west.

These features contribute to the perception of a rural working landscape with a pleasant open character that exhibits seasonal changes and the expansive views across predominantly pastoral farmland punctuated by dwellings surrounded by amenity and shelter trees. In addition to the surrounding hills the vistas convey a visually coherent outlook that has high amenity and aesthetic value.

Transient values are associated with drought, season changes, weather systems and light effects, which at times of the day / year emphasise the subtle topography resulting from historical river braids across the otherwise flat plains landscape contributing further to high aesthetic values.

3.3.3 *Associative Attributes*

“**Associative** refers to the intangible things that influence how places are perceived – such as history, identity, customs, laws, narratives, creation stories, and activities specifically associated with a landscape.” Typical Associative factors includes cultural (tangata whenua) and historic values as well as shared and recognised attributes such as recreational opportunities.

There are no cultural or historic sites of significance within the receiving environment listed in the District Plan or obvious from site investigations.



Photograph 2. Amberley entrance pou from SH 1



Photograph 3. View from SH 1 looking east over the site

4 Submissions

A total of 20 submissions have been received on the proposed subdivision. Of these 17 submitters oppose the proposed subdivision in part, two submitters were in support and one was neutral. The issues raised by submissions on the proposed subdivision include concerns about the retention of a rural town character, the number of lots below the minimum average lot area, the lot size adjoining the rural zone, the number of lots that will not comply with the minimum shape factor dimensions, the reduced road widths and noncompliance with footpaths requirements on both sides of the roads.

The submitters concerns are noted and addressed in the body of this report.

5 Assessment against the Relevant Statutory Provisions

5.1 The Hurunui District Plan

The Hurunui District Plan (HDP) sets out a number of subdivision related rules which any new development is expected to comply with. Non-compliance with these rules triggers a non-complying activity status for the proposed subdivision.

The rules relevant to landscape include minimum and average allotment areas, and shape factor dimensions (refer Rule 4.6 and Rules 5.5.9-1 and 2). Alongside these rules, the District Plan sets out bulk and location provisions, which seek to ensure that residential sections remain characterised by open space, with opportunities for tree and garden plantings to maintain visual amenity, spaciousness, privacy, access to sunlight and daylight and to ensure buildings remain compatible with the scale and effects of other buildings in the surrounding environment. These rules were established with reference to the Amberley Town Concept, a landscape study prepared by Graham Densem Landscape Architect for the Hurunui District Council, May 2007. Further non-compliances are triggered by the roading requirements.

An assessment is undertaken with reference to the relevant landscape values and also on the objectives and policies relevant to landscape contained within the following chapters of the Hurunui District Plan:

Chapter 4 – Settlements

Chapter 5 – Subdivision

5.1.1 Chapter 4 – Settlements

Objective 4 Adaptive, vibrant and healthy settlements that meet the economic, social and cultural needs of the district and North Canterbury; while retaining their own character, environmental quality and sense of community.”

Policy 4.1 To identify areas for residential development, which provide for the present and future urban development needs of the district, provided that:

(iv) Potential adverse effects on the amenity values of residents in adjoining areas can be avoided, mitigated or remedied

Policy 4.8 To maintain each settlement’s traditional, residential character in Residential 1 zones with a predominance of detached dwellings on individual lots while allowing flexibility in lot sizes

within each subdivision, provided multiple lot subdivision is undertaken in accordance with an approved concept plan

Policy 4.12 To provide for a low density residential environment at the outer edges of larger settlements, with single detached dwellings on large allotments

Open Space policies

Policy 4.19

To promote the establishment of an integrated pattern of greenways and open spaces through the settlements.

Policy 4.20

To provide for open space zones to meet recreational requirements within settlements, which maintain and enhance amenity values and provide connectivity and public access.

Amberley Policies

Objective 4.2 seeks to ensure “Amberley is a vibrant, rural township providing residential and business facilities and associated infrastructure and support services, to meet the economic, social and cultural needs of the Hurunui District and North Canterbury; while retaining its country town character, sense of community and connectivity with its rural surroundings.”

Policy 4.34

To recognise and manage the potential for reverse-sensitivity effects caused by residential and other sensitive activities located in close proximity to State Highway 1, the Main North Line, or industrial or business activities.

5.1.2 Chapter 5 – Subdivision

Objective 5 seeks “subdivision and its subsequent development is designed to ensure that the adverse effects on the environment are minimised, and the character of an area is maintained.”

Policy 5.4

To ensure that subdivision and subsequent development results in a pattern and density of land use which protects, and where appropriate enhances, the character, values and natural and physical resources of the environment which may include:

- Physical characteristics*
- Natural character of the coastal environment, indigenous wetlands, lakes and rivers and their margins.*
- Indigenous biodiversity and ecological values.*
- A sense of openness and a predominance of productive activities in rural areas*
- Landscape values*
- Archaeological, cultural and heritage resources, including resources with Ngāi Tahu cultural values.*
- Specific values and sites of significance to Ngāi Tahu*
- Amenity values and sense of place.*

Policy 5.5

To manage the density of development, particularly in residential zones, through specifying minimum lot sizes and ensuring compliance with those densities through the subdivision process.

Policy 5.6

To ensure that subdivision is designed to avoid, remedy or mitigate potential reverse sensitivity effects on other land uses.

5.1.3 **Assessment Matters**

The assessment matters are a guide to addressing the intended outcome of the objectives and policies outlined above and a response is included under the clauses set out below.

The following matters shall be considered in the assessment of any resource consent in Amberley Township:

(a) Town character and amenity values

The country character of Amberley Township as outlined in the Amberley Town Concept Landscape Character Study (Densem 2007), including:

(i)

Retaining and enhancing a green, leafy townscape with existing trees and simple spacious streets and subdivisions, where practical;

(ii)

Aligning subdivisions and streets in the north and north-west to look towards rural landscapes and features such as Amberley Downs or Mt Grey, where practical;

(iii)

Retaining open vistas at the entrance to the township as viewed from Carters Road/SH1. (This needs to be balanced with assessment matters for noise and vibration, below);

(iv)

The landscape value of the belt of trees on the west side of Carters Road/SH1 between Bank Street and Chamberlains Park and the value in retaining them; and

(v)

Whether the development provides for simple, spacious street-scaping and wide road reserves, with grass verges and trees and little or no street furniture.

Response

The HDP objectives, policies, rules and assessment matters are inter-related and seek to ensure the rural country character and amenity outcomes will be achieved.

The green leafy townscape and spacious streets will in general be provided by the proposal although the application acknowledges the road widths will not strictly comply. However, the primary road reserve will be 18 m and will provide an 11m wide carriageway to accommodate two-way traffic, parking and kerb and channel on either side. The road reserve is sufficiently wide enough to provide a 1.5 m footpath, grass berm and tree planting to either side. The secondary roads within the development will provide a 9 m wide carriageway, a 1.5 m footpath and 1.5 m berm to one side and a 3 m berm opposite with opportunity for street tree planting. The design guidelines illustrate Interactive streets with shared pedestrian and cycle pathways, low planting within, grass verges and street trees.

The streetscape design also incorporates paved thresholds, and specimen trees to indicate the main entrance and entry points to green open space. Paved thresholds tend to be an urban feature uncommon in rural towns. It is suggested that any paving is limited and low key rather than a high contrast feature. Importantly the green open spaces throughout the site front onto the road reserves in multiple places, which depending on the final planting design are assumed to provide good surveillance from adjoining streets and address any safety concerns. The design guidelines intend a gateway feature incorporating lighting, signage and presumably materials that reflect a rural character, although no specific design is provided.

A green leafy outcome is recognised by substantial street tree planting and within the green space reserve / stormwater management areas. Tree species will be consistent with the HDC Tree Management Policy and therefore likely to thrive and blend into the treed character of the locality. However, it is not clear whether or not the existing ash and walnut trees on the site within the Dry Gully will be retained. It is recommended these are identified on the plan and incorporated within the design if practicable for instant amenity.

The retention of open vistas at the entrance to the township is identified by the DP as an important part of the town character and amenity. Currently the proposed subdivision will not achieve open vistas across the site because of the proposed 3m high acoustic barrier designed to address noise mitigation to a number of small lots (22) along the 392.5 m site frontage to SH1.

However, vistas and noise mitigation **could** be improved through design including larger lots, increased building setbacks and incorporating the existing Dry Gully feature as an open space reserve extending from the SH 1 boundary. Dry Gully is identified on the earthworks plan as an incised gully between 1.5 – 3.6 m deep that meets the site boundary with SH 1 in two locations. Currently, the proposal shows that the gully adjoining the SH will be filled up to 2.3 m to a finished surface level to accommodate up to six lots (264 – 269).

Elsewhere the subdivision layout and design utilises the natural topography of the site by incorporating Dry Gully, which has a dual purpose functioning as stormwater management areas and green space reserves, including public walkways and a playground. The playground structures are described as being constructed from natural materials and in that regard will befit a rural character.

While it is acknowledged that the proposal shows that part of Dry Gully will be set aside as open space reserve and storm management area throughout the site, it is considered that if these areas were reworked then positive benefits to amenity, natural and rural character values from SH1 could result without undue effects on lot yield to meet the town character and amenity values assessment matter and associated objectives and policies.

(b) Residential Zones

(i)

Whether the proposed allotments are of a sufficient size and shape to maintain private gardens on all sides;

(ii)

In the Residential 1 Zone, whether allotments less than the average size are designed and sited to avoid pockets of dense development, unless they are part of an approved concept development plan;

(iii)

The use of reserves, tree belts, stormwater swales and other features to divide residential areas into defined neighbourhoods and avoid a sense of 'vast' residential areas;

(iii)

The retention of mature trees on both private and public land subject to developments;

(iv)

Whether the development avoids overtly urban characteristics: eg community gates, cul-de-sacs, private lanes, large numbers of back sections or south-facing lots, high front fencing; and

(v)

Restrictions on fencing of lots adjoining reserves, walkways or roads on which lots do not have access, to avoid establishing alleyways ringed by high fencing.

Response

Overall, for the most part the proposed subdivision indicates that it will be possible for the proposed lots to be surrounded by private garden despite several lots not achieving the minimum shape factor. And although a substantial amount of the lots will be less than the average size, at least 36 lots are designed and sited to overlook open space reserves or will be separated by roading. However, there are two areas within the site where the size of the lots is of concern. These are where lots are located along the SH 1 boundary and along the adjoining rural boundary with potential for reverse sensitivity and adverse effects on rural character and amenity. In this regard the proposed subdivision layout does not meet the intended outcome relating to the rural urban interface and mitigation of reverse sensitivity.

The use of reserves and storm water management areas that coincide with the existing natural feature known as Dry Gully is a positive aspect of the proposal and affords a unique identity and

contributes high amenity values within the subdivision by providing spatial separation within a suburban setting, a natural green outlook and recreational connections throughout the site. Although established ash and walnut trees were identified on the site within the Dry Gully they are not specifically shown to be retained. As previously noted, it is considered that these trees will contribute to an instant high level of amenity for the open space areas of the site and should be retained.

The ability to provide wider connections to Amberley from the site is constrained by the SH designation along the western boundary, the adjoining rural zone to the south, and private land developments to the north. Therefore, external connections are of key importance to maintain good connectivity and accessibility to the wider Amberley township. The proposal generally provides an easily accessible and well connected internal layout with a rational hierarchy of roading. The subdivision relies on a central spine road to provide a connection to the wider community and local destinations via Stage 1 and 2 and to SH 1/Carters Road via an adjoining development. Cul-de-sacs are avoided and internal local roads and pathways through the open space reserves provide diverse options, are coherent and logical.

While the layout avoids urban characteristics this in part relies on the design guidelines, which refer to landscape plans. However, it is not clear whether the guidelines or a landscape plan will form a condition of building consent for each lot or be a private covenant registered on each title with compliance resting with the individual landowner.

The landscape plans generally incorporate the HDP rules applicable to the R1 A zone and intend utility areas to be screened from public view, and materials for other built structures such as garden sheds to be consistent with the residential dwelling situated on the lot. The material palette for housing is restricted to permanent materials but confusingly includes wood and rejects unpainted galvanised iron even though this is a typical rural material. Similarly, the fencing materials are limited to those consistent with the dwelling, natural materials and corrugated iron fences are not permitted. The restrictions on the use of galvanised corrugated iron seems contrary to the rural character anticipated by the HDP.

However, a spacious streetscape will be maintained by the 4.5 m building setback and the lack of front yard fencing. Internal fencing between lots is limited to 1.8 m in height. Within the 201 lot subdivision, 22 back section lots are shown equating to 10 % of the lots. Despite this no more than two lots will be accessed from a single accessway. Seven of these back sections also adjoin open space reserve areas. Overall, the proposed guidelines will ensure a spacious open street scape dominated by vegetation rather than built form

Fencing is restricted to pool fencing on lots adjoining the open space reserves and storm management areas. Although pool fencing is open and will address safety issues it does not provide the rural character envisaged by the DP provisions. Post and rail is a typical fencing style within Amberley even in the newer subdivisions. So, it is considered that post and rail or post and wire fencing along reserves and the rural boundary would be more appropriate to maintain a rural character while remaining open for safety purposes.

If recommendations relating to the subdivision layout, lot sizes, existing trees, fencing materials and styles are adopted then it is considered that the proposal will align with the HDP provisions for the residential zones relating to the assessment matters above.

(b) Residential 1 and 2 Zones

In addition to those matters for Residential Zones, above:

(i)

In the Residential 1 Zone, whether the overall building density (total number of dwellings over total land area of the site, including amenity areas, reserves and open spaces) is in keeping with average density set under [Rule 5.5.9](#);

(ii) N/A

(iii)

Whether the overall building density (total number of dwellings over total land area of the site, including amenity areas, reserves and open space) is consistent with the relevant standards and terms;

(iv)

Whether those matters listed in [Rule 5.5.11.1\(a\)\(xi\)](#) have been addressed by the comprehensive development plan; and

(v)

In both zones, whether a sense of openness and leafiness can be retained in higher density areas through the use of public or shared space, landscaping, fencing restrictions, building design or other techniques.

Response

To avoid undue repetition, these matters are addressed above and in the discussion of landscape effects below.

6 Discussion of Landscape Effects

6.1 Potential Issues

The potential issues arising from the proposed subdivision are increased density, the urban / rural interface, retention of a country character of Amberley and rural amenity, including open vistas. The following discussion focusses on these issues.

6.2 Assessment of Landscape Effects

“A landscape effect is a consequence of changes in a landscape’s physical attributes on that landscape’s values. Change is not an effect: landscapes change constantly. It is the implications of change on landscape values that is relevant⁵.”

The values associated with the landscape are clearly set out in the landscape character study for Amberley prepared by Graham Densem in May 2007, where it was noted that Amberley’s country town character was defined by its spaciousness, open vistas and in particular the low impact from fencing, a predominance of grass, and a frequency of trees. Mr Densem also noted that section sizes of 700 m² enable a gardened tree-clad small town atmosphere to be maintained. Mr Densem’s report, informed Plan Change 13, which resulted in the current rules in the Operative District Plan.

Density

A low density residential zone typically provides for low density spacious living on the periphery of an urban area where more intensive residential development is inappropriate. Larger lots allow for road and internal boundary setbacks to maintain privacy and outlook, avoid effects of shading and visual dominance on adjoining properties and maintain a streetscape character through tree planting etc. The settlement pattern of Amberley tends towards larger properties around the peri-urban interface, and in the older established areas of the town with smaller properties located within the newer subdivisions close to (within walking distance of) the commercial centre.

⁵ ‘Te Tangi a te Manu: Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines’. [Final Draft subject to final editing, graphic design, illustrations, approved by Tuia Pito Ora/NZILA 5 May 2021]. Page 61.

The proposed subdivision provides 201 lots ranging between 400 m² to 1038 m² in size, although the bulk of the lots are in fact between 400 – 700 m² and only one lot is over 1000 m² in size. Clearly the subdivision will not comply with the minimum average lot area requirements for the Residential 1A Zone because. While the District Plan provides for up to 20 % of the lots to be less than 700 m², the proposal shows 87% of the lots will be less than 700 m². This equates to 175 of the 201 lots within the subdivision at less than 700 m² in area. In addition, 19 of the lots will not meet the 15 metre by 15 metre shape factor requirement. It is understood that according to the subdivision application⁶, a complying subdivision would yield 155 lots at an average of 700 m².

The 20% threshold rule aims to provide a variety of section sizes while maintaining an overall spacious low density living consistent with the settlement pattern and rural character of Amberley as a local service town. Of concern is that if the bulk of lots are less than the minimum average then adverse effects on privacy, outlook, sun / shading, rural character and visual amenity may occur. This may arise for the following reasons:

- an inability for dwellings to be surrounded by garden
- a reduction in space for tree planting, therefore less trees will be planted
- that trees are more likely to cause shading and nuisance effects within small sections
- a closer proximity to neighbours means less privacy and hence a greater reliance on tall fencing rather than post and rail and planting

However, although the subdivision will not meet the minimum average lot areas it does have capacity to provide a greater percentage of smaller lots (and lots that do not meet the shape factor requirement) without adverse effects on amenity. This is because the internal layout and design includes a generous amount of public open green space adjoining smaller lots and small residential blocks where roads provide some internal separation. Furthermore, the application demonstrates the ability for the lots that do not comply with the shape factor can readily accommodate a dwelling with a bespoke design. It is considered this will also introduce some diversity and avoid a line of similar typology dwellings on equally sized lots, which although aesthetically coherent may convey a somewhat twee outcome. Similarly with regard to diversity it is questioned why the subdivision will be restricted to single storey detached dwellings when the maximum height is 8 m under the DP. The option of a two storey dwelling, while still subject to 35% site coverage and setbacks could potentially enable a larger area of a lot to be utilised as open space or planting while providing the option of a larger dwelling providing a greater diversity of built form. Also of note is that a greater percentage of smaller lots will satisfy the general concerns relating to residential development sprawl over arable, productive farmland.

However, while the subdivision can support a greater proportion of smaller lots the exception is along the urban rural interface and the boundary adjoining SH1 where an increased density inevitably reflects an urban outcome with adverse effects on a rural town character, reverse sensitivity issues and amenity both internal and external.

Urban Rural Interface

Of key relevance to landscape effects is the urban / rural interface of the proposed development particularly given the decreased size of lots located along the rural boundary. The District Plan specifies that lots adjoining the Rural Zone are required to be a minimum of 1,100 m² in area.

In reality a 1100m² lot equates to the typical ¼ acre section that could contain a three bedroom house, garaging, a generous lawn area and large trees. The lots at the urban rural interface around

⁶ Application for Resource Consent, Davis Ogilvie, refer Page 29

Amberley are typically larger than 1100 m². The settlement pattern of Amberley demonstrates that along the western boundary of the town lots are generally over 2000 m², to the east over 1151 m² up to 2400 m² and to the north ranging from 1000 m² to over 4000 m².

Twelve lots adjoin the rural zone along 302.8 m of the 547 m southern boundary and range between 703 – 771 m² (average area of 732 m²). So, all are considerably less than the 1,100 m² required. There is no apparent reason given by the proposed subdivision for the reduced lot sizes, although it is noted that the layout shows that approximately 244 m of the rural boundary will consist of open space reserves. However, the concern is the density of the cluster of 9 lots at the south-eastern extent of the subdivision and three lots at the southwestern extent, which will introduce an urban outlook to the adjoining rural zone, will limit tree planting and may arise in potential reverse sensitivity effects. It is considered that lots adjoining the rural zone can readily comply with the minimum lot size and should do so to reflect an open character and transition to the adjoining rural landscape that is consistent with the balance or the peri-urban interface surrounding the Amberley township.

The HDP planning maps indicate a dashed line along the southern boundary of the site where the R1A zone adjoins the rural zone. The dashed line is identified on the planning map legend as a building restriction line but may also refer to the intended establishment of a landscape buffer along this zone boundary. The proposed subdivision masterplan shows a 5 m wide planting strip along the entire length of the rural urban interface as a buffer to the rural zone. It is not clear whether there are any fencing restrictions along this boundary and / or how the landscape strip within the lots will be enforced or maintained with any degree of consistency.

The type of fencing along the interface has the potential to reflect an urban character that is detrimental to rural character and amenity if a standard 1.8m paling fence is constructed. Furthermore, access for maintenance of the proposed buffer planting will be an issue. It is recommended that a post and rail or post and wire fence is constructed to maintain an appropriate rural / urban interface.

Visual Amenity and Rural Character

“Visual effects are a subset of landscape effects. They are consequences of change on landscape values as experienced in views. They are one technique to understand landscape effects.”⁷

The proposed subdivision bounds SH 1 and potential effects on visual amenity are likely to arise from the acoustic barrier and dwellings that will be visible from the SH1 approach to Amberley township.

Effects include reduced visual amenity for viewer’s travelling along SH and a reduced rural character at the entrance to Amberley. Additional effects on amenity will arise for the residents occupying these lots adjoining the SH1 boundary. These values are recognised by the Landscape Character Study and the HDP as of key importance to the development of Amberley township.

An acoustic barrier has the potential to reflect an urban rather than a rural character and is largely driven by spatial considerations, where available land is restricted in an urban setting. The effects of the acoustic barrier are two fold, both external to views and the experience from SH 1 approaching the entrance to the rural service town of Amberley and also internal to the subdivision.

Opposite the site to the west, the acoustic issues on the residential zone are mitigated by the larger size lots, larger setbacks from the SH, landscape strips and a narrow access road within the road reserve. Refer Photograph 4 below. This results in a low key spacious and high amenity character

⁷ ‘Te Tangi a te Manu: Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines’. [Final Draft subject to final editing, graphic design, illustrations, approved by Tuia Pito Ora/NZILA 5 May 2021]. Page 61.

to the entrance of Amberley befitting the rural environment where space is at lesser premium than an urban situation. The western edge to SH 1 also provides a clue as to what constitutes an appropriate response to retaining the country town character and amenity anticipated by the HDP.



Photograph 4. Entrance to Amberley showing landscape strip and access lane alongside SH 1

Viewpoints 1- 4 (refer GA, Sheet 07-11) illustrate views from the SH1 looking towards the site at varying distances. The site is an important part of the arrival experience into Amberley. It is a memorable stretch of the road where traffic slows to navigate a bend and arrive at the entrance 'pou' feature west of the site. The site is immediately identifiable by the wide grass verge and native planting along the road reserve boundary with the site with a vista to the rural landscape and distant hills.

Views into the site are restricted by roadside vegetation on adjoining properties so the key public views are currently experienced for a relatively short distance along SH1 where it traverses alongside the site boundary. The proposal will result in a noticeable visual change from the currently undeveloped pastoral land, noting that the DP does anticipate that the site will be developed for residential purposes. This means that an assessment of effects must take into consideration the permitted baseline that anticipates views of dwellings, and other elements associated with a subdivision, such as lighting etc from SH1. These are deemed to be acceptable effects, notwithstanding that the HDP objectives and policies direct development to retain the

character of a country town while also ensuring that subdivision is designed to avoid, remedy or mitigate potential reverse sensitivity effects.

The obvious change arising from the proposed subdivision will be the removal of the existing cypress hedge, the infilling of the Dry Gully depression along the front part of the site bounding SH1, the establishment of a 1 m high bund and 2 m high paling fence and a row of at least 21 rooflines. It is understood that the native planting along the road reserve will remain in place.

An acoustic barrier is required because the proposed subdivision layout shows that dwellings will be located within 40 - 100 m of the nearest SH road lane. According to the acoustic report⁸ acoustic effects will be experienced within 40 – 100 m from the nearest marked traffic lane of SH1 on 22 lots (lots 257, 256 – 279) directly adjoining the SH and a further 28 lots (lots 238-244, 247 – 256, 280 – 283, 285, 286, 288-293) that are located within the subdivision.

As mentioned above, the proposed acoustic treatment consists of a 1 m high planted bund and a 2 m high paling fence, in addition to acoustic upgrades likely required to the standard construction of a residential building envelope. This only applies to a single storey dwelling so it is assumed that lots adjoining SH1 within the area affected by noise and vibration will be restricted to single storey dwellings.

Internal effects arising from a 3 m boundary wall to the west and 2 m internal boundary fencing include potential overshadowing, visual dominance and a restricted outdoor living area occurring to 22 lots. The proposed subdivision layout shows 13 lots at 400 – 500 m², six lots at 500 m², one over 600 m² and two lots up to 706 m² directly adjoining the SH1 boundary.

The Photograph 5 aerial below shows lots adjoining SH 1 in Rolleston. The 5 m road reserve contains a bund and paling fence. The lot dimensions are approximately 16 m wide x 45 m long (720 m²) and dwellings are set back 20 m from the lot boundary. This is not achievable for the lots proposed by The Clearing subdivision adjoining the SH, which range from 410 m² dimensioned as 17.38 m x 21.97 m.

It is clear that the small lot size and orientation will severely constrain the ability to achieve a north facing outdoor living area with a noise level below the NZTA guideline levels. The lots are relatively small and narrow orientated east – west so the northern aspect of the dwelling will face directly towards the adjoining lot. The narrow setback to the north will be unlikely to provide a generous outdoor living area. This means that the outdoor living areas will be restricted to the northeast sides of the dwelling, which faces the street. Outdoor living areas will therefore require some landscape treatment for privacy noting that no fencing is permitted within a 4.5 m setback from the road and the setback will also need to accommodate a driveway and offroad vehicle parking. Essentially effects are compounded by reduced setbacks, small lot size and the lot layout along the boundary with SH1.

An acoustic bund and fencing typically afford an engineered functional outcome that is contrary to a rural character. An example of such treatment is illustrated below in Photograph 6. Furthermore, the acoustic barrier is proposed to be located within the lot boundaries. Issues relating to acoustic bunds and fencing are identified in the NZTA Guide where for most types of barrier, access is required to both sides for maintenance and therefore locating a barrier on or within a cadastral boundary can be problematic. An acoustic barrier located within a cadastral boundary is a landowner's responsibility and the lack of direct access and varying ownership can result in an unsightly barrier when viewed from the SH. The planting of appropriate vegetation over the bund by the developer is therefore key to a good outcome. The acoustic fence will be a 1.8m high paling fence designed to obstruct views into and out of the site. This will afford a blank edge to the SH.

⁸ Subdivision Application The Clearing, Amberley UWC Ltd. May 2022. Appendix 9. Acoustic Engineering Service Ltd, File Ref:AC22032-02-R1

Other issues include potential for graffiti to occur on a continuous paling fence over a distance of approximately 391 m, litter traps and the creation of unsafe areas (refer CPTED).



Photograph 5. Aerial showing two different acoustic treatment scenarios in Rolleston suburb adjoining SH 1. Reserve strips are 5m and 40 m respectively. Dwellings set back 20 m and approximately 60 m from the SH 1 road reserve boundary



Photograph 6. An acoustic bund and paling fence within a 5 m wide reserve. The bund and paling fence is similar to that proposed by The Clearing subdivision but will be located within the lot boundaries



Photograph 7. 40 m wide reserve with mounds and planting, dwellings set back over 60 m



Photograph 8. Alternative acoustic treatment showing different maintenance regimes due to individual ownership

Overall, it is not considered that the lot layout and acoustic bund will it maintain a rural character to the approach and entrance to Amberley township nor provide a reasonable level of amenity for future residents. Therefore, it is recommended a different strategy is applied to the subdivision design and layout to address the acoustic effects, while maintaining a rural character and amenity to the entrance of the Amberley township. The strategy may require consideration of the lot layout and orientation, larger lot sizes, landscaped setbacks and potentially acknowledge / integrate existing landscape features including the Dry Gully, which adjoins the SH road boundary. This could also promote the option of providing future connectivity if the SH status and or speed limit changes in the future. Furthermore, any noise barriers adjacent to the SH should not be within individual sections but be located within a council reserve.

Fencing materials are a key element of design and can affect the character of the street environment. The proposed subdivision acknowledges the character of Amberley recognising that front fences particularly in the older part of town are generally low or absent. Garden planting therefore merges visually with the street creating a sense of spaciousness. Fences up to 1.8m are restricted to internal boundaries and must be consistent with the materials of the dwelling assuming that adjoining neighbours dwellings are constructed of similar materials. However, the fencing along the open space reserve areas is proposed to be open style metal pool fencing. This is a typical hard, slick urban response. In the newer areas of Amberley there is a prevalence of post and rail fencing, which achieves a similar outcome while providing a rural character. Refer Photograph 9 below. It is recommended that boundary fencing along the stormwater management areas and open space reserves be restricted to post and rail or post and wire. Fenced lots to contain dogs and children may be achieved through attaching wire mesh or similar to the inside of a post and rail fence without adverse visual effects.



Photograph 9. Fenced property on Amberley Beach Road

Amberley is typically a well treed town resulting in a green leafy character, softening the dominance of built form. The predominance of exotic species provides dramatic seasonal changes that contribute to the transient amenity values of the locality. The importance of the proportion of larger to smaller lots is discussed above, noting that the Landscape Character Study recommended lots of about 700 m² be required to accommodate tree plantings and retain the treed character of

Amberley. Smaller lots at 400 m² will tend to rely on public plantings in streets and parks for a treed character so an over abundance of small lots will mean less trees resulting in a more urban character. However, there are generous open green reserve areas throughout the subdivision and these afford the opportunity for large tree planting that will remain protected. The design guidelines for the subdivision refers to the HDC Parks and Reserves Species list for appropriate trees. These are mostly exotic deciduous trees, which are appropriate for street trees but less appropriate for stormwater management areas / open space reserve areas, the SH1 road reserve boundary and the buffer along the rural boundary where native species (trees, shrubs, grasses and sedges) should dominate plantings to enhance natural character.

7 Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the above assessment and will enable the proposed subdivision to achieve effects that are less than minor and meet the HDP provisions relevant to landscape values:

- Acoustic treatment to SH1 be provided within a reserve area for ease of maintenance to enable a consistent dense cover of native vegetation up to at least 2 m in height.
- Lots to be a minimum size of 1000m² along the SH1 boundary and setback to achieve a primary north or north west outdoor living area where the noise level is below the NZTA recommended guideline.
- Lots to be a minimum size of 1100 m² along the rural boundary.
- Two storey dwellings up to 8 m permitted according to the DP provisions except on lots that will be affected by noise restrictions.
- Fencing along the rural boundary to be post and rail or post and wire.
- Fencing along the reserve, open space boundaries to be post and rail or post and wire
- Fencing materials on lots to include corrugated iron and timber
- Planting along the rural boundary to consist of native species, a minimum width of 5 m, irrigated and maintained by individual lot owners to result in dense vegetation up to 2 m in height
- Planting within reserves and storm management areas to include a balance of native and exotic trees to result in a prevalence of natural character, visual amenity and address safety issues where public access is provided.
- Provide a potential pedestrian / cycle connection to Carters Road in the event the road status changes in the future

8 Conclusion

It is proposed to subdivide an area of land located at 187-193 Carters and 52 Amberley Beach roads, Amberley known as The Clearing.

The site is zoned Residential 1A and as such the District Plan anticipates that the application site be used for residential purposes. The subdivision layout has been designed to ensure that a variety of section sizes and shapes are provided to meet market demand. The proposal is non-complying with a number of the HDP rules and those most relevant to landscape are set out at rules 4.6 and 5.5.9-1 and 2.

Overall, it is considered that while the change in use from rural to residential activities is anticipated in this area the adverse effects on the amenity and rural character landscape values of the site and its receiving environment will be more than minor and will not satisfy the DP provisions. However, if the recommendations set out in this report are applied then adverse effects will reduce and the relevant HDP provisions will be met.