

Assessment of Landscape & Visual Amenity Effects

Conical Hill Switchback™

Hanmer Springs



12 February 2021

FOR RESOURCE CONSENT

rough & milne landscape architects

Document Quality Assurance

Bibliographic reference for citation:

Rough and Milne Landscape Architects Ltd. Assessment of Landscape and Visual Amenity Effects of Conical Hill Switchback™, Hanmer Springs. 12 February 2021.

Date: 12 February 2021
Status: FOR RESOURCE CONSENT

Prepared for:

Hanmer Springs Thermal Pools & Spa

Prepared by:

Rough and Milne Landscape Architects Limited
69 Cambridge Terrace
PO Box 3764
CHRISTCHURCH 8140
Ph: 03 366 3268



.....
Angie Nelson
Landscape Architect

Reviewed by:



.....
Tony Milne
NZILA Registered Landscape Architect

Use and Reliance

This report has been prepared by Rough and Milne Landscape Architects Limited on the specific instructions of our Client. It is solely for our Client's use for the purpose for which it is intended in accordance with the agreed scope of work. Rough and Milne Landscape Architects does not accept any liability or responsibility in relation to the use of this report contrary to the above, or to any person other than the Client. Any use or reliance by a third party is at that party's own risk. Where information has been supplied by the Client or obtained from other external sources, it has been assumed that it is accurate, without independent verification, unless otherwise indicated. No liability or responsibility is accepted by Rough and Milne Landscape Architects Limited for any errors or omissions to the extent that they arise from inaccurate information provided by the Client or any external source.

1.0	INTRODUCTION	4
1.1	Purpose and Scope	4
1.2	Methodology.....	4
2.0	THE PROPOSAL	7
2.1	Description of the Proposal	7
3.0	THE EXISTING ENVIRONMENT	10
3.1	The Receiving Environment	10
3.2	The Site	15
3.3	Receiving Environment & Site Landscape and Amenity Values	19
3.4	Relevant Statutory Provisions	21
4.0	ASSESSMENT OF LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL AMENITY EFFECTS	26
4.1	Assessment of Landscape Effects.....	26
4.2	Assessment of Effects on Visual Amenity Values	27
4.3	Assessment of Relevant Statutory Provisions	38
5.0	CONCLUSION	40
6.0	APPENDIX 1: HDP CHAPTER 4 ASSESSMENT MATTERS	41

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose and Scope

Rough and Milne Landscape Architects (**r+m**) have been engaged by Hanmer Springs Thermal Pools & Spa to assess the landscape and visual effects of the proposed Conical Hill Switchback™ within the Conical Hill Reserve (**the site**), an 11.7ha property located at the north end of Hanmer Springs township in North Canterbury.

The preparation of this assessment of landscape and visual effects has included:

- Discussions with the Client and Project team;
- A site visit on 7 December 2020 and 17 January 2021;
- A review of relevant documents;
- A description of the proposal;
- A description of the site and surrounds;
- An analysis of the existing landscape character and values of the site and receiving environment;
- A detailed assessment of landscape and visual effects; and
- An assessment against the relevant landscape assessment matters within the District Plan.

This report shall be read in conjunction with the A3 Graphic Attachment (**GA**) prepared by **r+m**, dated 4 February 2021 that contains the relevant District Planning map, the overall development plan, Switchback™ concept design, a viewpoint location map and photographs of the site taken from the surrounding public places. Visual simulations have also been prepared by **r+m** in a second accompanying document, dated 3 February 2021.

1.2 Methodology

The methodology and terminology used in this landscape assessment has been informed by the NZILA's Best Practice Guide¹, the draft NZILA Aotearoa NZ Landscape Assessment Guidelines 2020², and the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (**GLVIA**)³

The NZILA Best Practice Guide and the GLVIA document are recognised within the industry as providing 'good practice guidance' in the assessment of landscape and visual effects under the RMA. These documents recommend that a landscape and visual effects assessment uses a scale to assist in describing the degree of effect resulting from a proposal. This report has adopted the seven-point

¹ New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects Best Practice Note 10.1 – Landscape Assessment and Sustainable Management.

² Currently in draft form, prepared as an updated version of the NZILA Best Practice Note 10.1 which will be ratified in 2021.

³ Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition, 2013. Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment.

‘landscape effects’ and ‘visual effects’ scales commonly used by practitioners, which are outlined below.

Landscape Effects Rating Scale

Magnitude/Degrees	Use and Definition
Very Low	Negligible loss of or modification of key elements, features, characteristics, and/or values of the baseline. Influence of new elements on landscape character and/or landscape value is barely discernible.
Low	Very little material loss of or modification to key elements, features, characteristics and/or values. New elements integrate seamlessly into the pre-development landscape character and/or landscape values.
Moderate-Low	Minor loss of or modification of one or more key elements, features, characteristics and/or values. New elements are not uncharacteristic within the receiving landscape and do not disturb the pre-development landscape character and/or landscape values.
Moderate	Partial loss of or modification of key elements, features, characteristics and/or values. The pre-development landscape character and/or landscape value remains evident but is changed.
Moderate-High	Modifications of several key elements, features, characteristics and/or values. The pre-development landscape character and/or landscape values remain evident but materially changed.
High	Major modification or loss of most key elements, features, characteristics and/or values. Little of the pre-development landscape character remains and amounts to a significant change in the landscape character and/or landscape values.
Very High	Total loss of key elements, features, characteristics and/or values. Amounts to a very significant change in landscape character and/or landscape values.

Visual Amenity Effects Rating Scale

Magnitude/Degrees	Use and Definition
Very Low	Negligible loss of or modification to key elements, features and/or characteristics of the baseline. Visual influence of new elements is barely discernible.
Low	Very little material loss of or modification to key elements, features and/or characteristics. New elements integrate seamlessly into the pre-development visual environment.
Moderate-Low	Minor loss of or modification to one or more key elements, features, and/or characteristics. New elements are not uncharacteristic within the visual environment and do not disturb the pre-development visual amenity.
Moderate	Partial loss of or modification to key elements, features, and/or characteristics. The pre-development visual amenity remains evident but is changed.
Moderate-High	Modifications of several key elements, features and/or characteristics. The pre-development visual amenity remains evident but materially changed.
High	Major modification or loss of most key elements, features and/or characteristics. Little of the pre-development visual amenity remains and amounts to a significant change in visual amenity values.

Very High

Total loss of key elements, features and/or characteristics, which amounts to a very significant change in visual amenity.

2.0 The Proposal

2.1 Description of the Proposal

The proposed development seeks to establish a passenger zipline, called the Conical Hill Switchback™, starting from the top of Conical Hill and traversing around the west side of Conical Hill. This will consist of the establishment of one ride line, seven towers to support the ride line, and two structures providing platforms for rider access. The start station will be located at the top of Conical Hill at 547.534 masl and the stop station will be located at 487.534 masl on the south face in a clearing towards the bottom of the hill.

Refer to Sheets 11 of the GA for the overall development plan, Sheet 13 – 16 for the design and heights of the towers and Sheets 17 – 27 for the design of the start and stop station platforms.

The Switchback™ Track & Towers

The ride itself will consist of a cable track which changes direction at seven towers, which also provide tension and anchoring. There are three different tower designs, these vary in height as per the schedule on Sheet 13 of the GA, but generally will be between 6 to 10.2m high. Towers will have a paint or powdercoat finish in a dark recessive colour with LRV less than 10%. Recommended colour options, selected from the Hanmer Springs Design Standards roof colour options, are ColorCote⁴ Karaka, Grey Friars or Ironsand or Resene⁵ Pine Tree, Rangoon Green, or Maire. Most of the towers are located within the treed setting on the west face of the hill. Selective tree removal will be required for construction of the towers and to establish the minimum clearance for the ride. The preliminary investigations for the track alignment and tower locations, undertaken by Holmes Solutions, identifies a minimum of eight trees which require removal, however further investigations are required.⁶

The Start Station

The start station is located at the top of Conical Hill adjacent to a high point near the north boundary of the Reserve, to the north of the existing lookout structure. *Refer to Sheet 11 & 17 of the GA.* The start station structure will consist of a platform where riders will begin the ride. The platform will have a finished floor level of 547.534 masl. This structure will include gated access to ensure safety of users as well as security outside operating hours. The platform will be fully covered to provide weather protection for riders and staff on the platform. A lockable storage bench along the side of the platform will be used for equipment. Solar panels are proposed to provide power for the ride operation system and for battery recharge, these will be mounted on the roof of the structure. The start station will be accessed by the existing walking tracks. Vehicle access will be required for construction and then daily operations by staff, which will utilise the existing forestry road from the back of Conical Hill. This will be utilised by a single vehicle which will be parked near the top station during operating hours.

A single accessible toilet will also be installed near the platform. The accessible toilet is an off-the-shelf product from Norski Fibreglass Products Ltd, as shown on Sheet 22 of the GA. Vehicle access will be required to service the toilet periodically and will utilise the existing forestry road.

⁴ *Colour Palette*. Retrieved from: <https://www.colorcote.co.nz/colour-design/colour-palette/>

⁵ *Hanmer Springs Palette*. Retrieved from: https://www.resene.co.nz/homeown/use_colr/Hanmer_Springs.htm

⁶ *Hanmer SWITCHBACK™ Project: Tree Removal*. (2020). Holmes Solutions.

The Stop Station

The stop station is located on the south facing slope near the base of Conical Hill. The structure is positioned within an open clearing in which native revegetation planting has recently been undertaken. The clearing includes an area of approximately 9,300 m²; trees have been removed for safety reasons and revegetation has been implemented in accordance with the Conical Hill Revegetation Plan prepared by Align for the HDC⁷. The stop station structure will consist of a platform where riders finish the ride, which will have a finished floor level of 487.534 masl, and track access back to the hill track. This structure will be gated to ensure safety of users as well as security outside operating hours. The platform will be fully covered to provide weather protection for riders and staff on the platform. A storage cabinet at the back of the platform will be used for equipment. Solar panels are proposed to provide power for the operating system, and these will be mounted on the roof of the structure.

Access to the stop station during construction will be facilitated from the existing track at the base of the clearing, which is accessible from the forestry road.

Platform Materials and Finishes

Both the start and stop station will largely comply with the Hanmer Springs Design Standards, as per the Hurunui District Plan 4.6 and 4.21 Standards. The platforms will consist of a timber deck measuring 8.1 x 3.2 metres (28.3 m²), with steel posts and roof, timber balustrade and timber gates. The 3.2 x 1.1 metres (3.5 m²) storage cabinet / bench shall be finished with vertical timber battens. Other than the proposed storage, the structures will be open air, with timber balustrades but no walls. All timber will be left to weather naturally or be stained with a transparent coat that does not change the timber's natural colour, as per the Hanmer Springs Design Standards (4.21.14(c)).

The proposed roof structures will be ColorSteel⁸ roofing in a dark recessive colour from the Hanmer Springs Design Standards roof colour options, to be selected from the dark greys, greens, tans or browns with an LRV less than 10% (4.6.19(h)(ii)) recommended colours are Grey Friars or Ironsand. Steel posts will be finished in the same colour. The roof will be a gabled form, though asymmetrical, to maximise the north facing section for affixing solar panels. A roof pitch of 20 degrees has been proposed, as per the Design Standards for accessory buildings (4.21.14(b)(ii)).

Earthworks

Earthworks will be required to construct foundations for the start station platform, provide access onto the platform, create a small flat area for rider briefing/waiting adjacent to the platform and install a single toilet nearby. *Refer to Sheet 18 of the GA.* Earthworks for the start station platform are anticipated to include an area of 96 m² with volumes of 24 m³ of cut and 2 m³ of fill.

Earthworks will also be required to cut a track into the hillside to provide an accessible path connection from the proposed stop station platform to the existing Conical Hill walking track, as well as for the construction of foundations for the platform. *Refer to Sheet 24 of the GA.* Earthworks in this area of the site is anticipated to cover an area of 176 m² with volumes of 71 m³ of cut and 2 m³ of fill.

⁷ *Conical Hill Revegetation Plan.* (2016). Align & Hurunui District Council.

⁸ *ColorSteel Colours.* Retrieved from: <https://www.colorsteel.co.nz/colours/>

Earthworks associated with the construction of the towers will include access, levelling around the tower base location (approximately a 2m radius), and excavation for the tower foundations, as noted on Sheet 13 of the GA.

Revegetation Planting

Revegetation of areas disturbed during construction will be undertaken using indigenous plants from the Conical Hill Landscape Concept Revegetation Plant Palette⁹ but otherwise no mitigation planting is proposed.

⁹ *Conical Hill Reserve Landscape Concept Plan*. (2018). Align & Hurunui District Council.

3.0 The Existing Environment

This section describes the landscape setting of the wider receiving environment and the application site (**the site**), followed by an analysis of the values, character and quality of the landscape.

3.1 The Receiving Environment

Site Location & Extent of the Receiving Environment

The site is Conical Hill which is located at the north end of the Hanmer Springs township in North Canterbury. *Refer to Sheet 4 of the GA.*

The receiving environment is defined as the area surrounding the application site that may be affected by the proposed activity, although the visibility of the proposal may extend beyond this. For this application, the extent of the receiving environment encompasses Hanmer Springs township and the south facing slopes of the Hanmer Range, which form a landscape backdrop, or 'visual catchment' from viewpoints within the township.

Historical & Cultural Context

The historical and cultural context of Hanmer Springs is strongly linked to the discovery, expansion and continued use and popularity of the Hanmer Springs thermal pools. In addition to this, the area has played an important role in the establishment of forestry activities within New Zealand. With both activities still present today and contributing strongly to the identity of Hanmer Springs; the following paragraphs provide a description of the evolution of these activities.

Hanmer Springs was first discovered by travelling Māori, but there have never been signs that they permanently settled in the area. The Ngāi Tahu name for the area is Te Whakatakanga o te ngārahu o te ahi a Tamatea, which means the resting place of the ashes of the fires of Tamatea, following legends of fire sent from North Island volcanoes to warm Tamatea and his party, part of the fire landing and giving rise to the hot springs.¹⁰

The town of Hanmer Springs is named after Thomas Hanmer, an immigrant from Hanmer, Wales. He arrived in New Zealand in 1852 and joined a party of surveyors in the Amuri District, searching for suitable farming land. He was the first to survey the Hanmer Springs area, although he never lived in Hanmer Springs, he was part owner of the Hawkswood Station from 1852-1855 and the manager of St. Leonards Station from 1855 to 1857, before moving to Queensland, Australia.

The hot springs were discovered in 1859 by William Jones, then the Manager of St. Leonards Station. Following this, Hanmer Springs was recognised as a potential location for a health resort and the land around the springs was set aside as a reserve by the Nelson Provincial Government in 1860. The area around the pools lay undeveloped for many years due to poor access into the region. However, popularity quickly increased following the completion of a railway between Christchurch and Culverden, the construction of a bridge at the gorge of the Waiau River and the beginning of a regular coach service between Hanmer Springs and Culverden. The hot springs were officially opened in 1883.¹¹

¹⁰ Hanmer Springs Thermal Pools Reserve Management Plan. (2011). Hurunui District Council.

¹¹ Hanmer Springs Thermal Pools Reserve Management Plan. (2011). Hurunui District Council.

As popularity of the hot springs grew, so did the township of Hanmer Springs. Hotels and a military hospital were established near the hot springs, later followed by the restaurants, retail and tourism activities present today as well as residential and holiday homes. Many of the historical buildings have been preserved, including the Queen Mary Hospital, Hanmer Springs War Memorial Hall, Hanmer Springs Post Office, the Powerhouse and the Hanmer Springs Hotel.

Over time Hanmer Springs town has changed from a quaint and quiet town to a hub of tourism activities, drawing in international and local tourism to experience the hot pools and recreational offerings of the town and surrounding landscape. Development within Hanmer Springs today is largely characterised by the hot pools and recreation activities including an extensive network of mountain bike tracks to the west and north of the township, golf courses, pitch 'n' putt, jet boat tours through the Waiau Gorge, horse trekking, scenic flights and quad bike tours.



Figure 1: Hanmer Springs General Store 1800s ¹²

Forestry began on the land and slopes surrounding Hanmer Springs in the early 1900's. The Forestry Branch of the NZ Department of Lands and Survey acquired some of the land set aside within the reserve around the springs, incorporating this into the Hanmer State Forest, and began to establish exotic trees for forestry. In 1919, the Forestry Branch became the State Forest Service and in 1958, it acquired Conical Hill Reserve. In 1970, the State Forest Service set aside the Hanmer Heritage Forest land with the primary use to be recreation. ¹³

In 2000, the Government sold the North Canterbury Crown Forests to Ngāi Tahu as part of a Treaty of Waitangi settlement and the land was passed from public to private ownership. Land that was unproductive for forestry was passed to either the Department of Conservation or the Hurunui District Council. At this time, the ownership and management of Conical Hill transitioned to Hurunui District Council. Both Conical Hill and the Hanmer Heritage Forest continue to be important recreational assets. ¹⁴

¹² Hanmer Springs General Store 1800s. Retrieved from: <https://hanmersprings.co.nz/about/our-story/our-history/>

¹³ A History of the Hanmer Heritage Forest. (2014). Hanmer Heritage Forest Trust.

¹⁴ A History of the Hanmer Heritage Forest. (2014). Hanmer Heritage Forest Trust.

Landform

The Hanmer Range consists of steep slopes with narrow and rounded ridges, rocky outcrops and scree slopes. To the north of Hanmer Township, Mount Isobel reaches 1319 masl and Dumblane Peak reaches 1303 masl. These peaks form a backdrop in views from Hanmer Basin and the township when looking to the north.

The Hanmer Basin is described as an *'intermontane basin with extensive gently sloping alluvial fans, terrace lands, floodplains and associated hills'*.¹⁵ It is contained by the Hanmer Range to the north and Amuri Ranges to the south. Relatively flat, open and elongated, the basin measures approximately 16km long (east-west) and 5km wide (north-south).

On a smaller scale, a number of natural features define and constrain the township of Hanmer Springs. To the north, the lower slopes of the Hanmer Range and the distinctive Conical Hill, one several hills at the base of the range, form a natural backdrop to the township. To the east and west, Dog Stream and Chatterton River, respectively, define the edge of the township. Primarily due to the aforementioned features, views from within the township are relatively contained and are generally towards Conical Hill and the Hanmer Range to the north. Urban development on the lower slopes of Conical Hill has afforded views to the wider Hanmer Basin from this part of the township.

Geology

The underlying geology of the Hanmer Range is Mesozoic Torlesse Supergroup greywacke and argillite (strong sedimentary). Soils are mainly shallow, stony steepland soils and show increasing leaching with increasing altitude and rainfall. Within the Basin, soils are primarily formed from Pleistocene glacial outwash gravels and sands (loose sedimentary) which are fertile but prone to drought.¹⁶

Climate

The climate is considered to be 'continental' with hot summers and cold winters. Average rainfall per year is between 1200 to 2000 mm and is wetter towards the continental divide. Frosts are possible throughout the year and winter brings substantial snow fall. In spring and early summer, warm and dry 'foehn' winds occur down the leeward side of the mountain range.¹⁷

Landcover

Vegetation across the Hanmer Basin floor is largely pastoral and agricultural including short-rotation crops and exotic grassland for grazing sheep and cattle. Linear shelterbelts consisting of exotic conifers and poplars are aligned with roads and fence lines. Riparian vegetation along the rivers and minor waterways crossing the valley floor consists primarily of exotic deciduous trees including willows. Blocks of forestry are located sporadically across the west of the Basin with a greater concentration to the east (Hanmer Forest) and on the lower slopes of the Hanmer Range, as shown in Figure 4 below. The lower slopes, particularly north and east of Hanmer Springs township are forested with exotic conifers, which are periodically harvested in large blocks.

¹⁵ Lucas Associates. (1995). *Landscapes of the Hurunui District – Report to the Hurunui District Council*. Christchurch, N.Z.

¹⁶ McEwen, M. (1987). *Ecological regions and districts of New Zealand*. 3rd rev. ed. Department of Conservation, Wellington, N.Z.

¹⁷ McEwen, M. (1987). *Ecological regions and districts of New Zealand*. 3rd rev. ed. Department of Conservation, Wellington, N.Z.

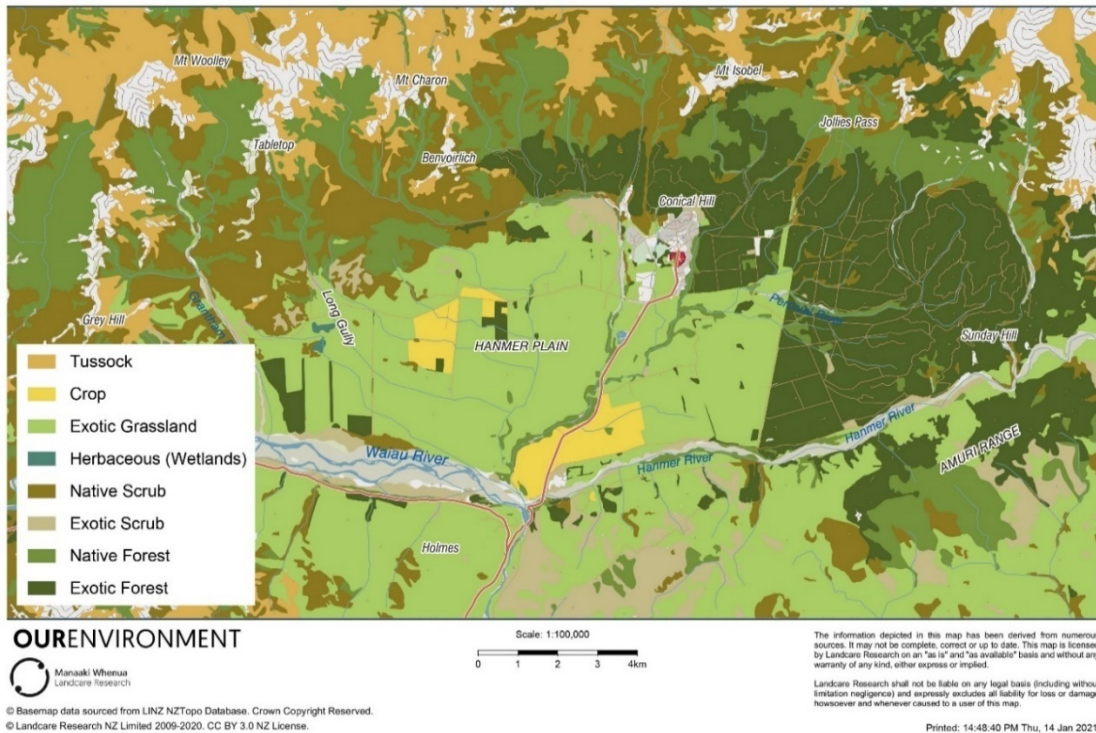


Figure 2: Hanmer Basin Vegetation Map ¹⁸

Native vegetation is largely confined to the Hanmer Range and consists of tussock grassland and sub-alpine scrub including Manuka (*Leptospermum*) and fern, with pockets of native beech forest, ¹⁹ primarily mountain beech with discontinuous stands of red and silver beech. ²⁰

Within Hanmer Springs township, vegetation is diverse and includes densely planted exotic trees and hedges, which contrast with the open farmland of the Basin. Large mature trees are particularly prominent through the heart of the township along Amuri Avenue and within Queen Mary Reserve, a number of which are protected by the District Plan. Many of these mature trees are exotic evergreen conifers which originate from North America and are typically found in alpine environments. This contributes to the alpine character of Hanmer Springs township, which is reinforced by under-plantings of tussocks and sub-alpine shrubs, with views through the trees of the surrounding mountains. Beyond the village centre, an alpine character is also afforded by the plantations of conifers on the lower slopes of the Hanmer Range, especially in the context of views to the often snow-capped mountains.

Land Use

The lower slopes of the Hanmer Range are highly modified by forestry while the tops and upper slopes are less modified with pockets of remnant native beech forest and revegetating scrub. These areas are for the most part encompassed by the Hanmer Forest Park and the St James / Molesworth Conservation Areas, which provide a significant recreation amenity for the region, with many mountain bike and tramping tracks.

¹⁸ Land Cover Database Vegetation. Retrieved from: <https://ourenvironment.scinfo.org.nz/maps-and-tools/app/#>

¹⁹ Lucas Associates. (1995). *Landscapes of the Hurunui District – Report to the Hurunui District Council*. Christchurch, N.Z.

²⁰ McEwen, M. (1987). *Ecological regions and districts of New Zealand*. 3rd rev. ed. Department of Conservation, Wellington, N.Z.

Within Hanmer Springs township, commercial development including restaurants, shops, hotels and tourism activities are concentrated along Amuri Avenue and Conical Hill Road. To the north and east of this commercial district, residential development is concentrated at the base of Conical Hill and west of Dog Stream Reserve. The Hanmer Springs Thermal Pools & Spa and Queen Mary Reserve are located on the west side of Amuri Avenue and back onto Hospital Stream and the Hanmer Springs Golf Course. A second area of residential development is located to the north-east of the golf course off Jacks Pass Road and Rippingale Road. Further residential development, including several yet-to-be-realised subdivisions, are located to the south-west of the town centre, concentrated to the west of Argelins Road and along Woodbank Road.

Built Form

Hanmer Springs is considered to have a ‘special alpine village character’ which is found in few other towns in New Zealand. In addition to the alpine vegetation, described previously, built form within Hanmer Springs contributes to an overall alpine character. In order to maintain this character, new development is informed by the Hanmer Springs Design Standards which are part of the Hurunui District Plan. Prior to the implementation of the Design Standards, it was considered that Hanmer Springs unique character was at risk of being spoiled as many buildings failed to harmonise with the landscape. Even with implementation of the standards, there is still a notable variability in the character of specific buildings and through different areas of town. These neighbourhoods, or ‘Design Areas’ have slightly different rules in the context of the Hanmer Springs Design Standards, some of which are more permissive of certain colours and cladding options.

A report prepared by Boffa Miskell in 2019²¹, assessed the existing character of these ‘Design Areas’ in order to inform the vision and purpose of the Hanmer Springs Design Standards moving forward. In this report, the neighbourhood at the base of Conical Hill is identified as demonstrating the most distinctive alpine character, although it is part of the ‘General’ design area. Dwellings within this area are predominantly low-key with timber cladding, stone walls, and often have steep-pitched gabled roofs with dark recessive colours, which blend and harmonise with the alpine surroundings.

The ‘Town Centre Business’²² design area encompasses the village centre along Conical Hill Road to the north of the intersection of Jacks Pass and Jollies Pass Road. It includes both heritage and alpine characteristics. Heritage characteristics are embodied by the Heritage Hotel and former post office building, while alpine character is recognisable in the recent purpose-built retail developments. The later display steep pitched roofs, stained timber and stone. There is a general cohesiveness to this area. The ‘Amuri Ave Business’²³ design area encompasses development along Amuri Ave as well as the Queen Mary Reserve. This area is described in the Boffa Miskell report as being less cohesive due to the presence of building conversions from residential dwellings to commercial premises.

Overall, while Hanmer Springs is considered to have a ‘special alpine village character’, there is still a notable variability in the character of specific buildings and through different areas of town. In turn this creates varied amenity throughout the township.

²¹ Boffa Miskell Limited. (2019). *Hanmer Springs Character: Review of Hanmer Springs Design Guidance Standards*. Report prepared by Boffa Miskell Limited for Hurunui District Council.

²² Boffa Miskell Limited. (2019). *Hanmer Springs Character: Review of Hanmer Springs Design Guidance Standards*. Report prepared by Boffa Miskell Limited for Hurunui District Council.

²³ Boffa Miskell Limited. (2019). *Hanmer Springs Character: Review of Hanmer Springs Design Guidance Standards*. Report prepared by Boffa Miskell Limited for Hurunui District Council.

3.2 The Site

Site Location & Access

As described previously, the proposed development is located within Conical Hill Reserve (**the site**), located at the north end of Hanmer Springs and the base of the Hanmer Range. The land is classified under the Reserves Act as 'Recreation Reserve' and covers a land area of 11.7 ha. The legal description is GAZ 85-1586 RES 3661 3802 Hanmer Plains RES BLKS I II Lyndon SD, LOT 28 DP 57326 BLKS I II Lyndon SD, LOT 8 DP 80164 BLKS I II Lyndon SD, LOT 142 DP 49223. Within the Hurunui District Plan, the land is zoned as Open Space and is located within the boundary of the Hanmer Springs Settlement area. *Refer to Sheet 6 of the GA.*

The main point of access to the site is from the north end of Conical Hill Road, where the existing walking track begins. A secondary path connects to the hill track from Acheron Heights. There is also an access track from Lucas Lane, a forestry road to the north, which terminates at the walking track just below the summit and several mountain biking and walking tracks, which access the site from the north and east. *Refer to Sheet 9 of the GA.*

Adjacent Land Use

The site, has boundaries with Ngāi Tahu forestry land, managed by Matariki Forests to the north, east and west. To the south, at the base of Conical Hill, the site has boundaries with private landowners. *Refer to Sheet 6 of the GA.*

Historical & Cultural Context

The site, comprising Conical Hill Reserve, is one of the most distinctive features of Hanmer Springs and a well-known recreation area. It is described as '*a significant aspect of the Hanmer Springs experience, particularly as a family outing or as a prelude to soaking in the thermal pools.*'²⁴



*Figure 3: Conical Hill with Hanmer Hall (left) and The Lodge (right)*²⁵

²⁴ Reserve Management Plan. (2012). Hurunui District Council.

²⁵ Conical Hill Hanmer Hall left The Lodge right. Retrieved from: <https://hanmersprings.co.nz/about/our-story/our-history/>



Figure 4: Conical Hill Road 1940s ²⁶

Historically, Conical Hill was covered in tussock and kanuka, reflecting the Māori name for Hanmer Plains, 'Mania Rauhea' which means 'plain of the shining tussock'. The zig-zag walking track to the summit was established in the early 1900's and has been popular for nearly a century. ²⁷ The land was planted in exotic forest as early as 1910 and was acquired by the State Forest Service in 1958. In 1993, Conical Hill Reserve was first gazetted as a recreation reserve and the Hurunui District Council was appointed to manage the reserve. ²⁸

Within the District Plan, the existing lookout structure and plaque are identified as a 'Historical Place', ID H101.

Existing Infrastructure

There are approximately 1.8km of formal tracks on Conical Hill, used exclusively for recreation. The tracks are wide and well-formed but have also been, over a number of years, subject to damage due to erosion and short cuts used by walkers. A lookout structure at the 550m summit, provides views overlooking the town, south across Hanmer Basin, and north toward Jacks Pass and the Hanmer Range. An interpretation panel located adjacent to the lookout identifies the surrounding peaks. Signage along the track is relatively new and there are several benches / tables located along the track and near the summit. ²⁹

Landform & Landcover

The Conical Hill Reserve site encompasses the southern extent and high points of a distinctive conical shaped hill located at the base of the Hanmer Range. The terrain is classed as medium to steep. The walking track begins from the end of Conical Hill Road at an elevation of 402 masl and follows a series of switchbacks up the south-east face of the hill to a high point and lookout structure at 552.50 masl. A second high point at 549.67 masl, and marked by a survey point, is located near the north boundary of the reserve with a subtle saddle at 544.50 masl located between them. *Refer to Sheet 8 of the GA.*

²⁶ Conical Hill Road 1940s. Retrieved from: <https://hanmersprings.co.nz/about/our-story/our-history/>

²⁷ Hanmer Springs Ward Reserves. (2012). Hurunui District Council.

²⁸ Conical Hill Reserve Forest Management Programme 2012 - 2022. (2012). Hurunui District Council.

²⁹ Conical Hill Reserve Forest Management Programme 2012 - 2022. (2012). Hurunui District Council.

The site is predominantly forested and enclosed except for clearings on the south face of the hill and around the summit. Vegetation has been categorised into seven different forestry types, described in detail in the Conical Hill Forest Management Programme ³⁰ and Figure 5 below, as:

1. *Beech/Manuka – dominated by manuka with groupings of mountain beech. Broadleaf, coprosma and other shrub species are also present as coming up under the manuka.*
2. *Broom – these areas are dominated by broom and have very little other species present other than some wilding pines near the summit and picnic table.*
3. *Fir/Pine – these appear to be self-sown wildings from the larger trees planted nearer the base of the Hill. These are still large trees and could be up to 60 to 70 years old.*
4. *Fir/Redwood/Pine – this is the original planting of trees estimated at around 1910. There are some significant specimens of trees here with the Grand Fir being notable in the District Plan. Some of these trees are over 40 metres in height. These trees are present right up to the border with residential houses.*
5. *Manuka – these areas are dominated by manuka and native woody shrub species with scattered wilding pines.*
6. *Pine over Manuka – these areas are dominated by dense wilding pines with a significant understory of manuka and broadleaf native species.*
7. *Young Exotic – there are two sites of young planted exotics which may have been planted by contractors unaware of the legal boundary. The north east block is Douglas Fir and is of harvestable age and size.*

³⁰ Conical Hill Reserve Forest Management Programme 2012 - 2022. (2012). Hurunui District Council.

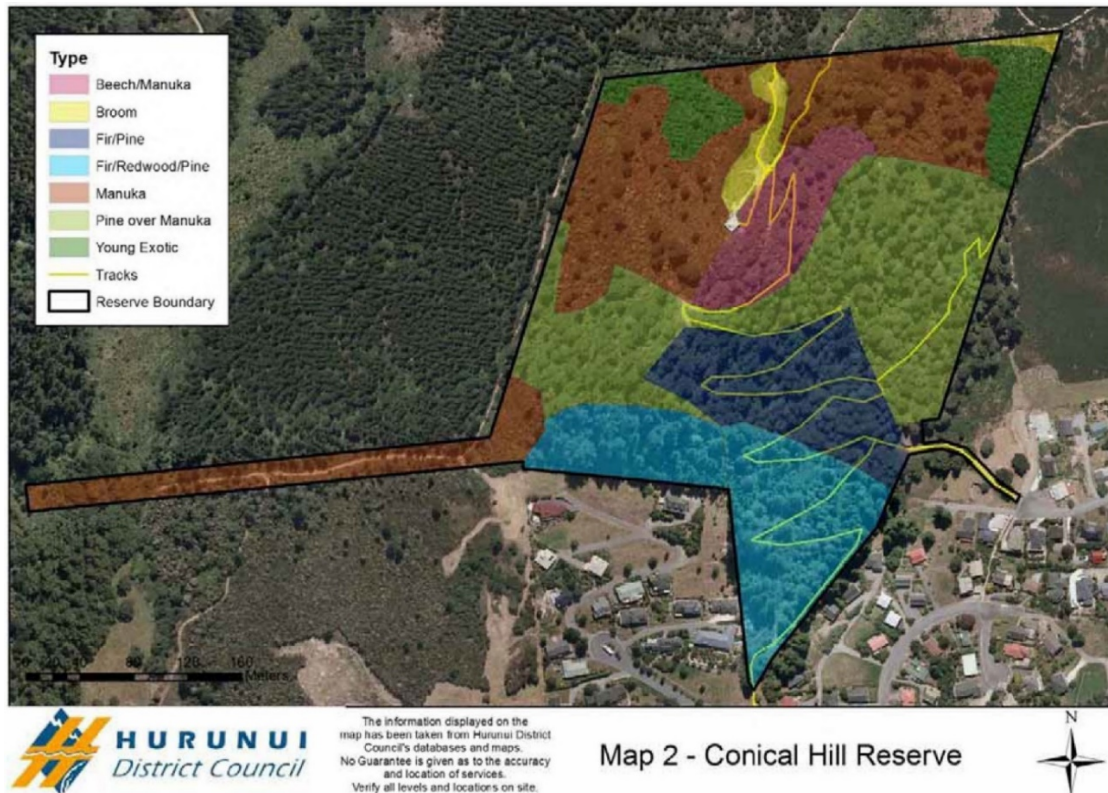


Figure 5: Conical Hill Forestry Types³¹

This document, having been prepared in 2012, is somewhat out of date and based on site visits and a comparison of aerial photography, it is notable that the area called Pine over Manuka has expanded into the Manuka area on the west slope, as there are now many pine trees of significant scale within this area. Refer to Sheet 8 of the GA.

In addition, the 2016 Conical Hill Revegetation Plan³² details the removal of a cluster of exotic pines near the base of Conical Hill for safety reasons. This zone of revegetation, as shown on Sheet 8 of the GA, covers an area of approximately 9,300 m² and overlaps with forestry areas Fir/Pine, Fir/Redwood/Pine and Pine over Manuka, as shown in Figure 5 from the 2012 Management Programme. It is understood that this work has been undertaken and native planting has been implemented although it has not yet successfully established. As it currently exists, the dominant vegetation within this area consists of many weed species which have become overgrown.

Reserve Management

Management plans for the reserve include the District Reserve Management Plan, the 2012 Conical Hill Forest Management Programme (prepared by Hurunui District Council and approved by the Hanmer Springs Community Board), the 2016 Conical Hill Revegetation Plan (prepared by Align in conjunction with HDC) and the 2018 Conical Hill Reserve Landscape Concept Plan (also prepared by

³¹ Conical Hill Reserve Forest Management Programme 2012 - 2022. (2012). Hurunui District Council.

³² Conical Hill Revegetation Plan. (2016). Align & Hurunui District Council.

Align in conjunction with HDC). The relevance of these documents is described in the Statutory Provisions section of this report.

3.3 Receiving Environment & Site Landscape and Amenity Values

The character of the receiving environment has already been discussed and can be neatly summarised as follows:

*Hanmer Springs has a special character found in few other New Zealand towns. That special character is a combination of the topography, the backdrop of hills, the extensive exotic tree planting in and around the town, the informal and unstructured appearance of the town, the sense of history, the quality and diversity of the design and appearance of many of the buildings, particularly in the older, established part of the town, and above all, the way in which most of the buildings blend and harmonise with their surroundings.*³³

The following provides a summary of the key landscape and amenity values identified relative to both the site and receiving environment.

Biophysical

- The Hanmer Range is recognised as an Outstanding Natural Landscape for its natural science values, including native vegetation and landform.
- Conical Hill is a distinctive conical landform feature.
- Climate extremes contribute to the character of the locality.
- The predominance of exotic conifers throughout the township and hill slopes.

Sensory / Perception

- Although not encompassed by the ONL, Conical Hill is a distinctive landform which forms a vivid and memorable backdrop to the township.
- Transient qualities related to seasonal changes which provide dramatic visual contrasts that are valued by residents and visitors – including snow fall and autumn colours.
- Sense of openness and enclosure – imparted by the contrast between the open rural land on the basin floor and the enclosed nature of the village centre, provided by the presence of mature trees and Conical Hill at a local scale and at a broad scale by the Hanmer Range to the north.
- Scenic quality relating to the alpine village character, particularly drawing on the large-scale mature trees, backdrop of Conical Hill and the Hanmer Range mountains and the informal and low-key built form.
- High scenic quality as experienced from the lookout at the top of Conical Hill providing a prospect of the basin landscape and wide scale.

³³ *Introduction*. (1989). Amuri County Scheme (p.4).

- Highly memorable setting derived from the mature exotic conifer trees throughout the town centre.
- Other transient attributes relate to a sense of tranquillity experienced from the walking track on Conical Hill which provides an escape into nature, in contrast to the 'hustle and bustle' of the township in close proximity below.
- Conical Hill has a sense of naturalness experienced both from the township and when on site due to the naturalised, albeit exotic, mature vegetation. This contributes to the site's forested character.
- The ONL has high aesthetic values due to memorable landscape elements including bare scree slopes and rugged mountain tops.

Associative

- The ONL is a shared and recognised value attributed to the surrounding mountain ranges enclosing the intermontane basin. The boundary of the ONL is generally aligned with the change in land use between existing forestry activities on the lower slopes and the upper slopes which are less modified.
- Very strong historic and heritage associations – including European land surveying and farming, forestry, the presence and use of the natural hot springs, the Queen Mary Reserve and military hospital, historic buildings and the Hanmer Heritage Forest.
- Hanmer as a destination for health and wellness is widely recognised in the community
- A growing recognition of Hanmer as a recreational destination offering diverse recreational opportunities.

3.4 Relevant Statutory Provisions

In relation to the proposed development both the Reserves Act and the RMA apply. The Reserves Act statutory framework gives emphasis on protection; the RMA emphasises sustainable management.

The Hurunui District Plan (HDP) gives effect to the RMA within the context of the Hurunui District.

Within the Hurunui District Plan (*refer to Sheet 5 & 6 of the GA*), the site is zoned as Open Space and sits within the Hanmer Springs Settlement Boundary. The zones adjoining the site are Residential 1H to the south and Rural to the north, east and west with much of this area falling within the Forestry Management Area. The ONL is removed from the site, being restricted to upper slopes of the Hanmer Range to the north, at a distance of approximately 800m beyond the Forestry Management Area.

In the context of the HDP, the proposal is a full discretionary activity.

In regard to the proposed development, consideration needs to be given to the landscape-related goals, objectives, policies, standards and assessment matters within Chapter 4: Settlements where appropriate.

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 4.3

To recognise that in the district, specific zones cannot be completely discrete in what they contain. Potentially conflicting activities are managed to ensure environmental standards, character and amenity values are maintained while not diminishing the value or detracting from the primary purpose of the zone.

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.

Objective 4.1

The protection and enhancement of the special qualities of the Hanmer Basin.

Policy 4.21

To ensure all residential and business developments are designed to maintain or enhance the amenity values and alpine character of the Hanmer Springs Township.

Policy 4.22

To recognise and promote the alpine village character of the township and the heritage values of the older part of the village.

Policy 4.23

To ensure that the individual character areas of the Hanmer Springs Township, as defined by the community, are maintained and enhanced through the design standards listed in the District Plan.

Policy 4.24

To protect potential notable specimens or groups of trees within Hanmer Springs to maintain and enhance the town's level of amenity.

Reserve Management Plan (2012)³⁴

The Reserves Management Plan (RMP) gives effect to the Reserves Act (1977) within the context of the Hurunui District. Under the Reserves Act, each reserve is classified according to its principal purpose. Conical Hill Reserve is classed as a 'Recreation' reserve, the purpose of which is described in the Section 17(1) of the Reserves Act as:

...for the purpose of providing areas for the recreation and sporting activities and the physical welfare and enjoyment of the public, and for the protection of the natural environment and beauty of the countryside, with emphasis on the retention of open spaces and on outdoor recreation activities, including recreational tracks...

It should also be noted that Conical Hill is located in the context of an 'Urban Area', Hanmer Springs township. 'Urban Areas' are identified in the RMP as being 'environments of special concern', and large areas of open space are described as important resources which must be managed in a sustained manner as they provide a range of opportunities including passive and active recreational pursuits and contribute to the overall amenity values of the township. In the context of Hanmer Springs town, the RMP describes the 'special qualities' of the town itself which should be integrated into the management of local reserves. This includes maintaining the alpine character of the town and creating an integrated network of greenways, open space and walkways through the township, linking residential areas with major recreational attractions and the town centre.

In the context of this proposal, the following district-wide Goals, Aims, Objectives and Provisions outlined in the RMP are considered relevant to an assessment of landscape and visual amenity effects:

Goal

To manage the reserves of the Hurunui District in a manner that meets the needs and expectations of the community, providing for recreational needs and ensuring the preservation of natural and physical resources.

Aim 2

The development and maintenance of reserve land and facilities to the appropriate standard which reflects their value, character, and use and to enable maximum public use, enjoyment and safety consistent with preservation of natural values.

Objective b

Developed and maintained recreation reserves for public enjoyment, protection of environment, and retention of principal tourism features.

Policy 16.1

The design of reserve structures shall take into account the natural or physical character of the environment and be in keeping with its use. All structure design shall work with each site rather than against it.

Policy 16.2

Designers should be aware of the interplay between their designs and the environment. Effort should be made to put some of the context into their design, whether it is geological landforms reflected in the roofline or the colours relating to the landscape.

Policy 19.2

The type of tree chosen for planting must be appropriate to each site, incorporating climatic conditions and with species selection enhancing the visual character of the area.

³⁴ Reserves Management Plan. (2012). Hurunui District Council.

Policy 20.3

Native species will be used wherever possible for planting on reserves, making up at least 60% of new amenity plantings, in accordance with the council's Biodiversity Strategy. The use of exotic species will be restricted to areas where exotics predominate and/or recreational use of the reserve would be enhanced by the use of exotics, e.g., for shade.

In the context of Conical Hill Reserve, the following management strategies are identified:

- *That the forest on Conical Hill be actively managed and maintained to a high standard in accordance with the Forest Management Programme 2012-2022, including the encouragement of native species regeneration.*
- *That the Hanmer Springs Gardener manage the implementation of this programme.*
- *That walking tracks to the Conical Hill summit be maintained to a high standard.*
- *That the Conical Hill summit lookout be enhanced and kept in a tidy condition, including the removal of weeds and exotic tree species blocking the view to the Hanmer Basin, and the installation of interpretation panel detailing surrounding place names which can be seen from the summit.*
- *That weed and pest control is regularly undertaken.*
- *That the eroded short cuts to the summit be closed or stabilised with steps as appropriate.*
- *That mountain bike and other wheeled vehicles be prohibited from the reserve.*
- *That a toilet be installed.*
- *That educational panels are installed along the walkway as appropriate to inform walkers of relevant flora and fauna.*

In regard to future development potential, important factors which must be considered with maintenance and any development proposals include:

- *Conical Hill is a Hanmer Springs 'icon'.*
- *The summit walkway is a significant aspect of the Hanmer experience.*
- *The reserve has been visited for almost a century and is testimony to the beginning of forestry in New Zealand.*

Conical Hill Reserve Forest Management Programme 2012-2022

The 2012 Conical Hill Forest Management Programme, prepared by Hurunui District Council and approved by the Hanmer Springs Community Board, recognises the significances of the reserve from both a local and regional perspective and provides a *'detailed yet fluid work programme for the reserve's development, planning and future use and be used as a working reference to ensure that decision making, and administration is compatible with the Conical Hill Reserve Management Plan'*.

The document outlines the key goal as:

To add to the Hanmer Springs wellness and educational experience by having a highly maintained, near natural and pest free environment on Conical Hill.

The management programme identifies key maintenance and development tasks which are important to the community. These are outlined as follows:

- *Want to tidy up the reserve, turn it from an "eye sore" to an "icon"*
- *Remove wilding conifers and other weed species*

- Upgrade the tracks
- Encourage native regeneration of tree species already making a presence on the reserve
- Have well maintained infrastructure on the reserve (tracks, signs, lookout, etc.)
- Reduce the risk of damage to neighbouring property by large trees on the southern boundaries of the reserve
- Have information boards on the track and at the summit

These tasks are described in additional detail, of note are the comments related to an anticipated visual change on the Hill as a result of weed control and tree harvesting activities, and the emphasis on the view from the lookout as being one of the most important aspects of the walking track experience. It is understood that the above tasks are ongoing and are managed by the Council’s Hanmer Springs Gardener. ³⁵

Conical Hill Revegetation Plan (2016)

The 2016 Conical Hill Revegetation Plan details the removal of a cluster of exotic pines near the base of Conical Hill for safety reasons and the subsequent revegetation of this area with native planting. This work has been undertaken as described in the Site Description section of this report, however, the revegetation planting has yet to establish and this area is currently dominated by weed species.

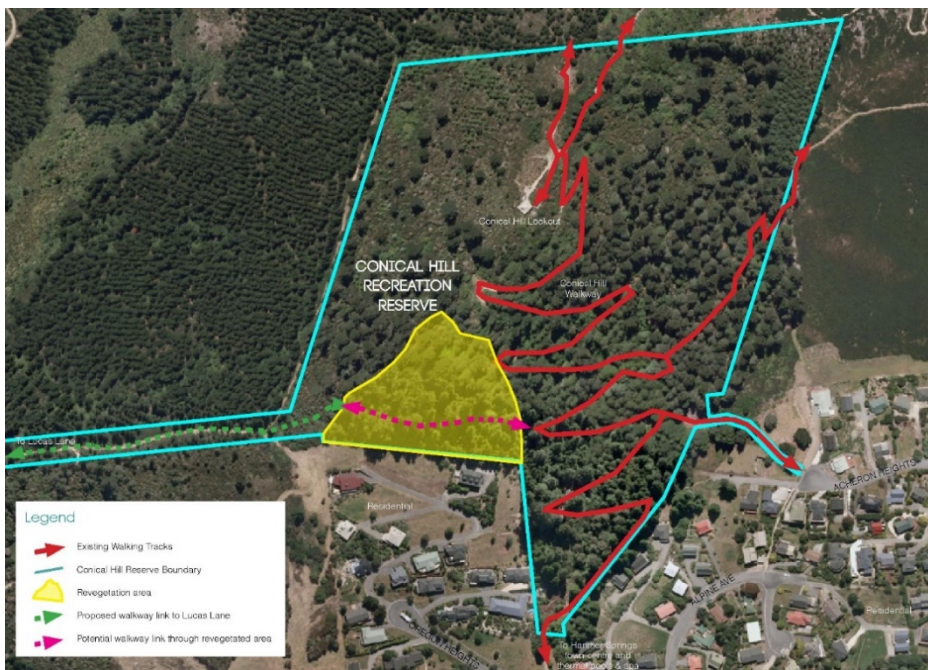


Figure 6: Conical Hill Revegetation Plan 2016 – revegetation area shown in yellow ³⁶

The revegetation planting which has been undertaken consists of a mix of natives; grasses, flax and tussocks include Carex, Dwarf Toe Toe, Mountain Flax, Harakeke, Snow Tussock, Silver Tussock and

³⁵ Conical Hill Reserve Forest Management Programme 2012 - 2022. (2012). Hurunui District Council.

³⁶ Conical Hill Revegetation Plan. (2016). Align & Hurunui District Council.

Red Tussock. Native scrub includes Mingimingi, Mountain Beech, Broadleaf, Kanuka and several species of Hebe. Trees include Ribbonwood and Totara.³⁷

Conical Hill Reserve Landscape Concept Plan (2018)

The 2018 Conical Hill Reserve Landscape Concept Plan, prepared by Align in conjunction with the HDC, has been prepared to address relevant objectives from the District Reserves Management Plan (2012), which have previously been described.

The concept plan seeks to address the following key components:

Create refurbishments in key areas implemented through:

- *Public amenities such as seating, bins, amenity features and hard surfaced environments; and*
- *Creation of a public toilet block representing appropriate placement, location and circulation around its immediate area.*

Increase legibility and information by:

- *Aligning path routes with desire-lines*
- *Wayfinding linkages*
- *Signage for user groups (pedestrian / vehicle prohibition etc)*
- *Stabilising eroded short cuts; and*
- *Entrance signs and information boards.*

Ecological planting design:

- *Enhancing existing native planting; and*
- *Establishing options for removal of weeds and exotic tree management.*

Accompanying issues and opportunities are described and followed by a series of diagrams, plans, imagery and a proposed plant palette for revegetation. It is understood that this plan has yet to be implemented.

³⁷ *Conical Hill Revegetation Plan*. (2016). Align & Hurunui District Council.

4.0 Assessment of Landscape and Visual Amenity Effects

4.1 Assessment of Landscape Effects

Landscape effects have been defined as those that ‘...derive from changes in the physical landscape, which may give rise to changes in its character and how it is experienced.’³⁸

Any natural or physical activity has the potential to alter the character of a landscape. Change to the character of a landscape need not necessarily be adverse and whether effects are adverse or not depend to a large extent on public expectation of what can be reasonably anticipated to occur in the landscape.

Allied to this is the receiving environment in terms of its existing degree of naturalness/ modification, patterns, scale, visibility and levels of public appreciation and to what degree these will change with the proposed development.

The landscape character of any area is derived from the combination of natural and man-made elements such as vegetation, landforms, waterbodies, buildings, roads etc. What distinguishes one landscape character from another is the extent of and way in which elements are combined.

Landscape Effects on the Site and Receiving Environment

The landscape character of the receiving environment has been described previously as a ‘low-key alpine village’ and the site itself has a forested character. The site provides a very popular recreational opportunity for both locals and visitors, as well as providing high sensory / perception values to the township.

The proposal will introduce a new recreation activity and associated towers and platforms within the Open Space Zoned area of Conical Hill.

In the context of the township, the addition of built form on the site will have adverse effects on the naturalness of Conical Hill to a very low degree. In the context of the receiving environment, the proposed built form is of a very small scale and requires minimal modification of vegetation and landform. Further, the landcover is already modified with a prevalence of exotic weeds through the clearing on the south face. In time, revegetation will improve the naturalness of the hill, which will also assist to absorb the introduced built form. Additionally, the design of the platforms is in keeping with the character of the receiving environment as the proposed forms, materials, colours and finishes have been informed by the Hanmer Springs Design Standards. Therefore, in terms of scenic quality, the proposed built form is not out of character with the setting and will not result in adverse effects.

The proposal itself is also in keeping with the recreational theme that is evident within Hanmer Springs township and is located in proximity to existing recreational activities including the walking track and lookout, as well as mountain biking tracks. While there is no discussion regarding a commercial zipline activity within the site in the HDP, Reserves Management Plan nor the Conical Hill Reserve Management Strategy documents, this does not preclude such an activity from occurring. Further, the

³⁸ The Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2002). *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*, 2nd edition, Spon Press. New York.

proposed zipline is highly compatible with the current recreation activities and ongoing management activities for the Reserve. The proposal will not prevent any of these activities taking place.

While the site is zoned as Open Space it is not open in the sense of an open character. The site is predominantly forested and enclosed except for clearings on the south face of the hill and around the summit. While it is proposed to undertake selective tree removal of mature trees for construction of the ride towers and provide the required clearances for the ride track, the forested character of the site will be maintained. The open character of the clearing on the south face of the site will inevitably be reduced by the introduction of built form, despite the small scale of the proposed structure. However, the current landcover within this area is temporary in nature and in time, due to ongoing revegetation efforts, the character of this area is due to change. In the future, this area will provide a native forested setting more in alignment with the current character of the site and with the ability to absorb the proposed built form.

When considering the landscape values of the site, it is anticipated that the proposal will have moderate adverse effects on the tranquillity of the hilltop lookout area through the introduction of a new hub of activity, the start station, which will be located on a second (lower) high point to the north of the lookout, and the ride track between the start and Tower 1. Aside from the start station and the first tower, the ride track is located on the west side of the hill, away from the existing walking track, so is unlikely to affect the landscape values associated with the Conical Hill walk experience.

In the immediate context of the hilltop, the proposed earthworks at the start station includes some levelling and cut/batter slopes at the hilltop to construct and provide access to the platform and create a level area for rider waiting/briefing. These modifications to the landform paired with the introduction of built form, will result in adverse effects on the naturalness of the landform to a low degree.

Landscape Effects Summary

To summarise, landscape effects as experienced from the township are assessed as including a slight reduction in the naturalness, this effect is assessed as very low and is mainly attributed to the presence of built form and activity on the south face of the hill. The built form itself is in keeping with the character of the locality, as a result I do not consider it likely that it will detract from the scenic quality of Conical Hill as experienced from within the township. Within the site it is anticipated that there will be effects of a moderate and low nature, experienced from the existing lookout and hilltop area which are anticipated to include a reduction in tranquillity experienced from the lookout as well as reduced naturalness of the landform due to the proposed earthworks and introduction of built form at the second high point.

4.2 Assessment of Effects on Visual Amenity Values

Amenity values are defined in the RMA as: *'... those natural or physical qualities and characteristics of an area that contributes to people's appreciation of its pleasantness, aesthetic coherence, and cultural and recreational attributes.'*³⁹

Amenity values encompass a broad range of issues and visual amenity is a measure of visual quality of a landscape as experienced by people living in, working in or travelling through it. It is invariably associated with pleasantness, memorability and aesthetic coherence of an area in a view. So, in essence, visual effects relate to *'... the changes that arise in the composition of available views as a*

³⁹ Resource Management Act 1991, Part 1 Interpretation and application - Section 2

*result of changes to the landscape, to people's responses to the changes, and the overall effects with respect to visual amenity.'*⁴⁰

In addressing the matter of effects on amenity, this assessment focuses on those of a visual nature and how they may affect the amenity values associated with the receiving environment.

The criteria applied to the assessment of visibility and effects on visual amenity includes the viewing distance, the viewing elevation and/ or the elevation of the works or proposal, the area of change, whether the proposal is in character with the view context, the level of activity visible and the degree of change in the view.

With regard to the effects of the proposal on visual amenity values, a hierarchy of descriptive terms to convey a definition of magnitude and degrees of effects on visual amenity is used, refer to the Methodology section of this report.

The previous description of the receiving environment and the site sets out the landscape context and proposal in detail.

Viewpoint Locations

In undertaking an assessment of the proposal on visual amenity, viewpoints representative of the views most likely to be important are identified and form the basis of this assessment. *Refer Sheet 28 of the GA.*

The main visual receptors of the Conical Hill Switchback™ will be those who are traversing the Conical Hill walking track, particularly the existing lookout, and those frequenting the viewpoints from public roads and recreation areas within Hanmer Springs township. The Switchback™ will also be visible to residents, particularly from dwellings on the lower slopes Conical Hill, which are located in close proximity to the proposed stop station.

Viewpoint 1 – Sheet 29 of the GA



Viewpoint 1 is located east of the intersection of Hanmer Springs Road (SH7A) and Argelins Road at a distance of approximately 2.3km from the site.

This view is likely to be experienced by the public, including a mix of residents of Hanmer, holiday homeowners and tourists, as they travel in a north-east direction on Hanmer Springs Road (SH7A) towards Hanmer Springs village. It is likely that this viewpoint will experience high visitor numbers as it is located along a key transportation route into Hanmer Springs. This view will typically be

⁴⁰ *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*, 2nd Edition, 2002. The Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, Spon Press. (page 12 – 2.15)

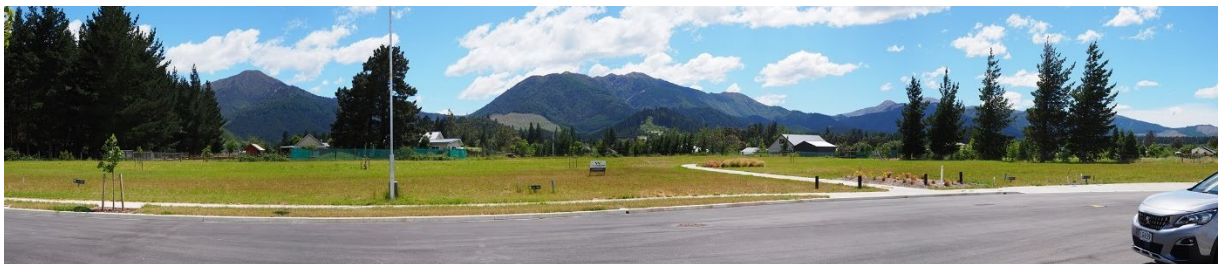
experienced while the viewer is in motion, travelling at 70 km per hour. Given the distance from the site and travelling speed, I consider that viewer sensitivity at this location is like to be low.

In the current view, the south face of Conical Hill is visible at the base of Mount Isobel, viewed from across an expanse of open paddock (zoned for residential development in the HDP). The bright green of the clearing on Conical Hill's south face is particularly prominent, contrasting with dark green forest across the rest of the hill, which visually ties in with the adjacent lower slopes of the Hanmer Range. Trees obscure Hanmer Springs village with the exception of several dwellings which are partly visible on the lower slopes of Conical Hill. Existing modifications within this view include built form, the road and footpath, fencelines, signage, exotic planting and shelterbelts, and a large-scale forestry cutting to the left of Conical Hill at the base of Mount Isobel. The scene has a general rural outlook and is not particularly scenic with the exception of the mountains which form a backdrop to the view.

From this viewpoint, the 6-metre-high profile poles for tower 7 and the stop station were visible, although to the average viewer they would not likely be noticeable given distance and their small scale in the wider scene. The profile poles for towers 1-6, on the west side of the hill, were not visible from this viewpoint.

The proposed stop station will be a small open-air structure utilising natural materials and recessive colours and finishes informed by the Hanmer Springs Design Standards. While it will potentially be visible it will not be visually prominent, particularly given the distance of this viewpoint location from the site and the small scale of the proposed platform in the context of the scene. Tower 7 will be finished in a dark recessive colour, paired with its narrow form and the distance from which it will be viewed, it will likely blend in with the existing pine forest and not be noticeable from this viewpoint. In the short term, the stop station will be more noticeable against the bright green of the existing clearing vegetation, which will contribute to adverse visual amenity effects assessed as very low. However, in the long term, as the existing revegetation planting becomes established, it is assessed that adverse effects on visual amenity will be fully mitigated.

Viewpoint 2 – Sheet 29 of the GA



This viewpoint is located at the north end of the new subdivision off Woodbank Road, adjacent to the pedestrian/cycle connection to Rippingale Road, at a distance of approximately 2km from the site.

This view is likely to be experienced by residents of the new subdivision as well as public users of the pedestrian / cycle path connection. It is likely that this viewpoint will experience low vehicle visitor numbers, as it is located within a residential cul-de-sac with no vehicle thoroughfare. The cycle and pedestrian connection will also likely be used by residents as a link to Rippingale Road and the golf course but may also be used by visitors and tourists for recreation. This view is considered to be representative of the views from private residences in south Hanmer Springs and along Woodbank Road. Given the distance from the site, I consider that viewer sensitivity to the proposal at this location is like to be low.

In the current view, the south face of Conical Hill is visible at the base of Mount Isobel. As in Viewpoint 1, several dwellings are visible on the lower slopes of Conical Hill while most of the township is obscured from view by trees. The bright green of the clearing on Conical Hill's south face is again prominent in this view as it contrasts with the dark green of the vegetation across the rest of Conical Hill and on the range behind. Existing modifications within this view include dwellings, the road and footpath, light poles, fencelines, signage, exotic planting and a large-scale forestry cutting to the left of Conical Hill at the base of Mount Isobel. The current scene portrays a generic rural outlook (although in time this will evolve to a residential setting) and is not particularly scenic with the exception of the mountains which form a backdrop to the view.

From this viewpoint, the 6-metre-high profile poles for tower 7 and the stop station were visible, although to the average viewer they would not likely be noticeable given distance and their small scale in the wider scene. The profile poles for towers 1-6, on the west side of the hill, were not visible from this viewpoint.

As in the assessment from Viewpoint 1, it is assessed that while the stop station may potentially be visible, it will not be visually prominent, given both distance and the 'light' structural design of the station. Tower 7 will be finished in a dark recessive colour, paired with its narrow form and the distance from which it will be viewed, it will likely blend in with the existing pine forest and not be noticeable from this viewpoint. In the short term, the stop station may be somewhat noticeable within the clearing, which will contribute to adverse visual amenity effects assessed as very low. However, in time, as the existing revegetation planting becomes established, it is assessed that adverse effects on visual amenity will be fully mitigated.

Viewpoint 3 – Sheet 30 of the GA



This viewpoint is located on Rippingale Road west of the Hanmer Springs Golf Course, at a distance of approximately 1.5km from the site.

This view is likely to be experienced by the public, including a mix of residents of Hanmer, holiday homeowners and tourists, while undertaking recreation activities within the Hanmer Springs Golf Course and traveling north along Rippingale Road, by vehicle, foot or bicycle. Given the distance from the site and the focus on recreation (recreation users are likely to be less sensitive to other recreational pursuits), it is considered that viewer sensitivity at this location is likely to be low.

In the current view, Conical Hill is clearly visible across the golf course against a backdrop of the ridgelines of the Hanmer Range. As in the previous views, the clearing is particularly prominent. At the base of the hill, several dwellings are partly visible, but for the most part residential development and the village centre are obscured from view. Existing modifications within the view include roads, footpaths, fencelines, the golf club building (on the right), a residential dwelling (on the left), street signs, manicured lawns, amenity planting and exotic trees, and a rest area with bench, drinking fountain and bins. The lookout at the top of Conical Hill is partly visible amongst the trees. The current

scene is that of a cultural landscape, evident in the residential dwellings and manicured golf course. The view conveys a sense of 'pleasantness' due to the openness of the golf course and scattering of large mature trees, as well as the scenic backdrop of the mountains.

From this viewpoint, the profile poles for tower 7 and the stop station were visible. In addition to these components, the proposed walking track access between the stop station and the Conical Hill track may be visible from this viewpoint location. In this view, as compared to previous viewpoints, more of the west face of the hill is visible. The profile poles for towers 1-6, located on the west face of the hill within the existing forest, were not visible. While several of the towers are taller than the 6m profile poles, it is unlikely that these will be visible given the height of existing trees on the hillside, many of which are in excess of 20 metres.

As in the previous viewpoint assessments, I consider that while the stop station may potentially be visible, it will not be visually prominent, given both distance and the 'light' structural design of the station. Tower 7 will be finished in a dark recessive colour, paired with its narrow form and the distance from which it will be viewed, it will likely blend in with the existing pine forest and not be noticeable from this viewpoint. In the short term, the stop station may be somewhat noticeable within the clearing, which will contribute to adverse visual amenity effects assessed as low. However, in time, as the existing revegetation planting becomes established, it is assessed that adverse effects on visual amenity resulting from the proposal will ease to very low.

Viewpoint 4 – Sheet 30 of the GA



This viewpoint is located on Rippingale Road near the intersection of Grantham Drive, at a distance of approximately 1.2km from the site.

This view is likely to be experienced by the public, including a mix of residents of Hanmer, holiday homeowners and tourists, while traveling north-east along Rippingale Road, by vehicle, foot or bicycle. This view is also considered to be representative of the views from private residences in west Hanmer Springs. I consider that viewer sensitivity at this location is like to be low, primarily attributed to the distance from the site which limits the amount of detail visible.

In the current view, Conical Hill is clearly visible against the backdrop of the Hanmer Range. As in previous viewpoints, the clearing on the south face of the hill is prominent and visible on the slopes below this are several residential dwellings; the village centre is obscured by trees. Existing modifications within the view include the road and footpath, residential dwellings, lawns and amenity planting, light posts, powerlines and fencelines. The golf course is located on the right of Rippingale Road in this view and this edge appears somewhat unkept with weeds and brush piles, whereas the left-hand side of the view is a typical manicured residential setting, scenic qualities in this view are attributed to the backdrop of Conical Hill and the mountain range.

From this viewpoint, the profile poles for tower 7 and the stop station were visible. In addition to these components, the proposed walking track access between the stop station and the Conical Hill track may be visible from this viewpoint location. In this view, as compared to other viewpoints, more of the west face of the hill is visible. The profile poles for towers 1-6, located on the west face of the hill within the existing forest, were not visible. While several of the towers are taller than the 6m profile poles, it is unlikely that these will be visible given the height of existing trees on the hillside, many of which are in excess of 20 metres.

A visual simulation has been prepared for this viewpoint and includes a comparison of the current view, a post-construction view and a view in the context of established revegetation planting (a 10-year timeframe). Refer to Sheet 3 & 4 of the Visual Simulation package.

As in the previous viewpoint assessments, I consider that while the stop station will potentially be visible, it will not be visually prominent, given both distance and the 'light' structural design of the station. Similarly, tower 7, located on the west edge of the clearing will be difficult to discern. This is attributed largely to distance when paired with the recessive colour and narrow form of the tower, as a result the tower will likely blend in with the existing pine forest and not be noticeable from this viewpoint. In the short term, the stop station may be somewhat noticeable within the clearing, which will contribute to adverse visual amenity effects assessed as low. However, in time, as the existing revegetation planting becomes established, it is assessed that adverse effects on visual amenity resulting from the proposal will ease to very low.

Viewpoint 5 – Sheet 31 of the GA



This viewpoint is located at the public open space within the village centre, on the east side of Conical Hill Road, at a distance of approximately 900m from the site.

This view is likely to be experienced by the public, including a mix of residents of Hanmer, holiday homeowners and tourists, visiting the Hanmer Springs village centre. It is representative of views looking north along Conical Hill Road within the village centre, in which Conical Hill is somewhat framed by the buildings and trees which line either side of the street. While this viewpoint will have high volumes of visitor traffic, it is also a complex scene in which there are many buildings, signs, parked vehicles and pedestrians. Although located in close proximity to the site and considered to be a key viewpoint for visitors and locals, viewer sensitivity is assessed as moderate, given the distracting elements within the village centre.

In the current view, Conical Hill is prominent in the background of the scene and is somewhat framed by the buildings and trees which line either side of the street. The rooflines of residential dwellings are visible on the lower slopes of the hill amongst trees. In the left-hand side of the view, buildings line the street in various architectural styles with competing signage, on street parking and street trees. Mount Dumblane is visible beyond these buildings in the background. The right-hand side of the scene opens to a manicured lawn, part of the village green at the corner of Conical Hill Road and Jollies Pass Road.

Trees line the north edge of the lawn and partly obscure Mount Isobel in the background. Other modifications in the view include footpaths, light posts, bicycle parks and street signage. This view portrays the busyness of the town centre in the context of a scenic backdrop of Conical Hill and the mountains.

From this viewpoint, the 6m profile poles for tower 7 and the stop station were visible. In addition to these components, the proposed walking track access between the stop station and the Conical Hill track may be visible from this viewpoint location. The profile poles for towers 1-6 were not visible and are unlikely to be seen from this viewpoint as they are located on the west face of the hill, which is not visible from this viewpoint location.

A visual simulation has been prepared for this viewpoint and includes a comparison of the current view, a post-construction view and a view in the context of established revegetation planting (a 10-year timeframe). *Refer to Sheet 5 & 6 of the Visual Simulation package.*

This viewpoint is much closer to the site than the previous viewpoints, as a result it is likely more detail will be noticeable and the movement of riders down the track has potential to attract the eye. As described previously, the stop station is a small, open-air structure, utilising materials with natural finishes and recessive colours informed by the Hanmer Springs Design Standards. Given the proximity to the site, the stop station will be visible from this location and although measures have been proposed to ensure the structure is appropriate to the setting, it is likely that a casual viewer will be able to notice the platform structure. While tower 7 is potentially visible, it will largely blend in with the existing pine trees due to its dark and recessive finish, as a result it is not likely to be noticed. In the short term, the stop station will stand out against the backdrop of the green vegetation of the clearing. As a result, adverse effects on visual amenity in the short term are assessed as moderate-low. It is anticipated that on establishment of the revegetation planting, adverse effects will ease to low. Further, I consider it likely this rating will fluctuate in times of busyness or not, as an active street scene in the foreground is likely to reduce the visual prominence of the proposal.

Viewpoint 6 – Sheet 31 of the GA



This viewpoint is located on Jacks Pass Road, north of the Hanmer Springs Health Centre and the Hanmer Springs Reserve and Playground, at a distance of approximately 750m from the site.

This view is likely to be experienced by the public, including a mix of residents of Hanmer, holiday homeowners and tourists, as they travel east on Jacks Pass Road toward Hanmer Springs village centre and while utilising the Health Centre and the north end of the Hanmer Spring Golf Course, Reserve and Playground. Given the proximity to the site from this viewpoint, it is likely that viewer sensitivity will be moderate.

In the current view, Conical Hill is clearly visible with Mount Isobel in the background to the left of the hill. The bright green of the clearing on Conical Hill's south face is particularly prominent, contrasting the dark green forest across the rest of the hill. Several dwellings are partly visible on the lower slopes

of Conical Hill and dwellings along Jacks Pass Road are prominent in the foreground of the view. Existing modifications in this view include the road and footpaths, powerlines, dwellings, fences, and exotic amenity planting. The view has a residential character, the middle and right dwelling portray a low-key alpine character with gabled roof forms and timber cladding. Conical Hill forms a scenic and natural backdrop.

From this viewpoint, the 6m profile poles for tower 7 and the stop station were visible. The profile poles for towers 1-6 were not visible and are unlikely to be seen from this viewpoint as they are located on the west face of the hill, which is not visible from this viewpoint location.

This viewpoint is much closer to the site than many of the viewpoints previously assessed, as a result it is likely more detail in terms of the visible structure will be noticeable and the movement of riders down the Switchback™ track has potential to attract the eye. As described previously, tower 7 will be located on the left-hand side of the clearing. While the tower is potentially visible from this distance, it will largely blend in with the existing pine trees due to its dark and recessive finish and narrow form, as a result it is not likely to be visually prominent. The stop station platform, although designed to comply with the Hanmer Springs Design Standards, will be more noticeable from this distance, particularly against the green vegetation of the clearing. As a result, adverse effects on visual amenity are assessed as moderate-low in the short term, easing to low on establishment of the existing revegetation planting.

Viewpoint 7 – Sheet 32 of the GA



This viewpoint is located at the west end of Chisholm Park on Chisholm Crescent, at a distance of approximately 700m from the site.

This view is likely to be experienced by the public, including a mix of residents of Hanmer, holiday homeowners and tourists, utilising the park for recreation. This view is also located in close proximity to the site and is representative of views from residences within the vicinity of the park and village centre. As a result, viewer sensitivity at this location is assessed as high.

In the current view, Conical Hill is prominent with a minor vegetated knoll to its left. In the background, Mount Isobel (right) and Dumblane Peak (left) are partly visible. The open lawn of the park and pond fill the foreground of the view with residential dwellings surrounding the park. Further residential dwellings can be seen beyond the park, with roof lines protruding between trees, and dwellings situated at the base of Conical Hill. The scene portrays a pleasant residential character with a scenic backdrop of Conical Hill and the surrounding mountains.

From this viewpoint, the 6m profile poles for tower 7 and the stop station were visible. In addition to these components, the proposed walking track access between the stop station and the Conical Hill track may be visible from this viewpoint location. The profile poles for towers 1-6 were not visible and

are unlikely to be seen from this viewpoint as they are located on the west face of the hill, which is not visible from this viewpoint location.

A visual simulation has been prepared for this viewpoint and includes a comparison of the current view, a post-construction view and a view in the context of established revegetation planting (a 10-year timeframe). Refer to Sheet 7 & 8 of the Visual Simulation package.

As in Viewpoint 6, this viewpoint is much closer to the site than the previous viewpoints, as a result it is likely more detail will be noticeable and the movement of riders down the track has potential to attract the eye. Given the distance from the site, the stop station will be visible from this location and although measures have been proposed to ensure the structure is appropriate to the setting, it is likely that a casual viewer will be able to notice the platform structure. While tower 7 is potentially visible, it will largely blend in with the existing pine trees due to its dark and recessive finish, as a result it is not likely to be noticed. In the short term, the stop station will stand out against the backdrop of the green vegetation of the clearing. As a result, adverse effects on visual amenity in the short term are assessed as moderate-low. It is anticipated that on establishment of the revegetation planting, adverse effects will ease to low.

Viewpoint 8 – Sheet 32 of the GA



This viewpoint is located on Clarence Valley Road, to the west of the site at a distance of approximately 580m.

Clarence Valley Road provides access into the Hanmer Range via Jacks Pass which is located at about 960 masl before descending slightly toward the Waiou Toa / Clarence River and continuing around to the west to Hanmer Springs Ski Area. The road is utilised primarily for forestry and ski field access and also provides access to several hiking tracks, including routes to Mount Isobel and the Chatterton River Tracks. This viewpoint will likely to be experienced by the public, including a mix of residents of Hanmer, holiday homeowners and tourists traveling north to access the recreation opportunities of the Hanmer Range. The road itself is steep, gravel and winds through dense stands of pine and vegetation with brief views, such as the one depicted from this viewpoint location.

In the current view, the densely forested west facing slope of Conical Hill is visible through a gap in the trees. The lookout structure can be made out atop the hill against the sky and the clearing on the south face is visible, though viewed on an angle. The form of Conical Hill is less distinct from the west, when not viewed as the backdrop to town, though it is still prominent in this view due to its close proximity. The scene conveyed is largely void of built form except for the lookout and on the far right in which some of the built form of the township can be made out between the trees, as a result the view appears highly natural, despite the vegetation being mostly exotic.

From this viewpoint, the 6m profile poles for tower 4 and the stop station were visible. Tower 1 is obscured by vegetation but may be visible from some locations as one travels along Clarence Valley Road. It is also possible that the start station may be visible from this viewpoint, and similar to the

existing lookout, may have a skyline effect. The profile poles for towers 2, 3, 5 and 6 were not visible. While several of these towers are taller than the 6m profile poles, it is unlikely that these will be visible given the height of existing trees on the hillside, many of which are in excess of 20 metres.

This viewpoint is located in close proximity to the site, as a result it is likely more detail will be noticeable. Given the angle of this view and the distance from the site, both the start and stop station will potentially be visible from this location. Although measures have been proposed to ensure the structures are recessive and appropriate to the setting, it is likely that a casual viewer will be able to notice these built elements. Tower 4 is also potentially visible although it will largely blend in with the existing pine trees due to its dark and recessive finish. These changes are very small in the context of the view and will likely contribute to adverse effects on visual amenity of a low degree.

Viewpoint 9 – Sheet 33 of the GA



This viewpoint is located at the turning circle on Oregon Heights, at a distance of approximately 200m from the proposed stop station.

This view is likely to be experienced by the public driving or walking on Oregon Heights, including a mix of residents of Hanmer, holiday homeowners and tourists staying in accommodation near this location. It is likely that this viewpoint will experience low vehicle visitor numbers, as it is located within a residential cul-de-sac with no vehicle thoroughfare. This view is located in close proximity to the site and is also representative of views from private residences within the neighbourhood at the base of Conical Hill. As a result, viewer sensitivity at this location is assessed as high.

In the current view, Conical Hill is located in very close proximity to the viewer and forms a visual backdrop to the view. Several residential dwellings are located in the foreground around a turning circle and parking area, which also features a manicured lawn and several trees. The dwellings portray some alpine characteristics such as gabled roof forms and timber cladding. They also have large bays of windows facing south towards views over Hanmer Basin. The cleared area on the south face of Conical Hill sits immediately above a dwelling on the right side of the view. Other existing modifications include retaining walls, footpaths, signage, fences, a lamp post, and utility box. Overall, the scene portrays a residential character, the surroundings mountains are not visible. Conical Hill forms a backdrop to the scene but cannot be seen in its entirety, only the clearing and adjacent pine forests on the south face are visible.

From this viewpoint, the 6m profile poles for tower 7 and the stop station were visible. In addition to these components, the proposed walking track access between the stop station and the Conical Hill track may be visible from this viewpoint location. The profile poles for towers 1-6 were not visible.

This viewpoint is located in very close proximity to the site, and to the stop station and tower 7 in particular, as a result a greater amount of detail will be visible, including the movement of riders along the track and on the stop station platform. Tower 7, located on the left side of the clearing, will be

visible from this location but will largely blend in with the existing pine trees due to its dark and recessive finish. The stop station will also be visible, although the platform is in keeping with the character of Hanmer Springs, through selection of appropriate form, materials, colours and finishes, the platform will be new and recognisable elements in the scene and constitute built form (though of a small scale) located on the hillside above the existing dwellings. As a result, adverse effects on visual amenity in the short term are assessed as moderate. It is anticipated that on establishment of the revegetation planting, adverse effects will ease to moderate-low, as the structure will still be visible but will appear settled in the landscape.

Viewpoint 10 – Sheet 33 of the GA



This viewpoint is located on the north side of the Lookout on top of Conical Hill, adjacent to the interpretive panel, looking to the north towards the start station and the first tower. This view is located within the site at a distance of approximately 35m from tower 1 and 90m from the start station. This viewpoint is located within the site and therefore any visual effects are not effects on the receiving environment.

This view is likely to be experienced by the public, including both locals and tourists utilising the Lookout. As this is a location at which users will be participating in a recreation activity and will be pausing to take in the scenery, it is considered that general viewer sensitivity at this location will be high.

The current view overlooks the second high point at the top of Conical Hill, beyond which Mount Isobel (right) and Mount Dumblane (left) are visible. Across the lower slopes of both peaks, extensive blocks of forestry and some tracks are visible, including a significant cutting toward the middle of the view. The upper slopes of the peaks appear rugged and natural with rocky outcrops and natural patterns of scrub vegetation. Other existing modifications in the view include the picnic table and bench seat near the top of the second high point, signage and the walking track / forestry road. The view has high scenic qualities, mainly attributed to the elevated view and visible mountain peaks.

From this viewpoint, the start station and tower 1 will be visible. The start station is located on the second high point near the north edge of the site, the current location of a picnic table and survey marker. A proposed toilet will also be visible adjacent to the start platform. There is an existing track access to this area already, as there is a mountain bike track accessible from the second high point. Tower 1 is visible just to the north of and below the lookout.

This viewpoint is located within the site in close proximity to the start station and tower 1, as a result a greater amount of detail will be visible, including the movement of riders along the track, as well as on and around the start station platform. Although the design of the platform is in keeping with the character of Hanmer Springs, through selection of appropriate form, materials, colours and finishes, the platform will be new and recognisable elements in the scene and constitute built form (though of a small scale) located on the hilltop. Similarly, tower 1 will be visible and is located below the viewer,

protruding from existing vegetation by about 3 metres, however, the proposed dark and recessive finish will minimise the degree of contrast with the surrounding vegetation. In the context of a scenic view and the natural landscape setting of the ONL encompassing the upper slopes of the Hanmer Range, adverse effects on visual amenity are assessed as moderate-low.

Visual Amenity Effects Summary

In the short term, adverse effects on visual amenity generally range from moderate to very low, with a lesser effect experienced when the proposal is viewed at a greater distance. From most viewpoints within the township, adverse effects in the short term are primarily associated with the visibility of the stop station platform within the clearing on the south face of the site. Against the bright green backdrop of the clearing vegetation, the stop station platform, although sensitively designed, is not settled into the landscape. However, in time, as the existing native revegetation planting becomes established, I consider that adverse effects on visual amenity will be reduced as the platform will be nestled amongst mature native planting and will become visually discrete from most locations.

4.3 Assessment of Relevant Statutory Provisions

The Hurunui District Plan sets out the relevant Objectives, Policies and Assessment Matters regarding landscape related matters. Key Objectives and Policies relevant to the landscape and visual amenity effects of this proposal have been identified in Section 3.4 of this report. The relevant Assessment Matters are included in Appendix 1. The following discussion provides an assessment against the identified Objectives, Policies and Assessment Matters.

The maintenance of the character and environmental quality of the settlements within the District has been described in Objective 4. The proposal is in keeping with the alpine character of Hanmer Springs and will not negatively impact the character of the settlement. The design of the proposed structures has been informed by the Hanmer Springs Design Standards to ensure the proposal complements the 'low-key alpine village' character of Hanmer Springs. This is achieved through use of low-key building materials like timber and coloured steel, which reflect the existing character of the village centre and the wider landscape setting.

In the context of the 'Recreation' reserve classification of the site and the underlying Open Space Zone (and Policy 4.3), I consider it unnecessary for the proposal to be completely discrete, as activities of a recreational nature could reasonably be anticipated within this zone. In the Landscape Effects and Visual Amenity Effects sections of this report I have addressed effects on the character and amenity values resulting from the proposal as experienced from the township and in the context of the Conical Hill walking track experience. I do not consider the proposal to diminish the value of nor detract from the primary purpose of the zone.

Policy 4.19 and 4.20 relate to the establishment of greenways and an open space network which meet the recreational needs of the community. The proposal is located within an existing Open Space Zone which has an established network of walking tracks. While this network will not be expanded as part of this proposal, as access to the platforms is largely via existing tracks, it will provide a new use and enjoyment of the reserve (4.24.11(a)) without significantly detracting from the existing amenity values.

Objective 4.1 seeks to protect and enhance the special qualities of the Hanmer Basin. In the context of the proposal, this includes ensuring the proposal promotes an alpine character and that the design and location of proposed structures is in sympathy with the environment, preservation of trees and important open space, appropriate landscaping for the setting, and protection of prominent skylines, ridgelines and natural features.

As described relative to Objective 4 above, the proposal promotes an alpine character (Policy 4.21, 4.22) through the specific design of the structures and selection of materials, finishes and colours, informed by the Hanmer Springs Design Standards (Policy 4.23). In addition, I consider the development form of the proposal to be of an appropriate scale in the context of the reserve and surrounding area (4.24.2(a), 4.24.11(b)).

In considering the location of proposed structures (4.24.17(a)(iii)), the start station is located at the top of a second high point at the top of Conical Hill. This location is to the north of the existing lookout structure and while some earthworks are required to situate the platform on the site, the 'light' structural design, use of timber and small scale ensure the structure is sympathetic to the environment. In the context of the natural landform of the hill and skyline (4.24.17(a)(vii)), I consider that the key views to consider are those from the township. In this context the start station structure will not be visible. While a brief skyline effect may be experienced from the viewpoint to the west of the site from Clarence Valley Road, I consider that visibility of this structure will not detrimentally affect the visual amenity.

The stop station is located (4.24.17(a)(iii)) in a clearing on the south face of the hill, while this area is currently open, it is in a state of transition, having recently been cleared of pines with revegetation planting only beginning to establish. In time, this area will reflect the forest character of the wider site, although planting is indigenous, which will nestle the stop station into the landscape. I have provided a detailed assessment from key and representative viewpoints, covered in the Visual Amenity Effects Section of this report and I consider that visibility of this structure will not detrimentally affect the visual amenity from surrounding areas.

In the context of residential amenity, I consider both the design and small scale of the proposed stop station will ensure the scenic outlook and visual amenity from nearby dwellings will not be detrimentally affected, this has been assessed previously in the context of Viewpoint 9 in the Visual Amenity Effects section of this report. Regarding other aspects of residential amenity, in particular, privacy (4.24.2(b), 4.24.3(c)), there is an existing walking track which overlooks the dwellings at the base of the hill, similarly, the proposed stop station will overlook these dwellings but will be located at a greater distance away from them. Therefore, this will not result in a significant change in the privacy experienced from these residences.

In the context of Policy 4.24, preservation of notable specimens or groups of trees, there are no notable trees identified on the District Plan within the site. However, in order to maintain the forested character of the site, very few trees are proposed to be removed (4.24.17(a)(v)). These are mainly those that are located in close proximity to the track or towers which would impact ride clearances. In addition, areas that are cleared for temporary access during construction as well as cuttings for establishment of platforms, are proposed to be revegetated with appropriate indigenous planting as per the Align Revegetation and Landscape Concept documents (4.24.17(a)(i)).

In the context of the district-wide Reserve Management Plan and more specific Conical Hill Reserve Management Programme, Revegetation Plan and Landscape Concept documents, I consider the proposal to be an appropriate response to the site. While these documents make no mention of a future commercial zipline activity, this does not necessarily preclude such an activity from occurring. Further, the proposed Switchback™ is highly compatible with the current recreation offerings and ongoing management activities for the Reserve and will not conflict with or prevent any of these activities from taking place. In addition, there are opportunities to progress some of these management activities in conjunction with this proposal, such as management of the existing revegetation area on the south face, removal of weed species, track improvements, additions of seating and signage, and improvements to the hilltop lookout area.

5.0 Conclusion

The proposed Conical Hill Switchback™ at Conical Hill Reserve is considered to be appropriately designed and sited within the reserve and in the context of the township, by taking into consideration the landscape character and values of the application site and surrounds.

An assessment of landscape effects has been undertaken in the context of the receiving environment and the site. Landscape effects as experienced from the township are assessed as including a slight reduction in the naturalness, the effect of which is rated as low and is mainly attributed to the presence of built form and activity on the south face of the hill. Within the site it is anticipated that there will be effects of a moderate and low nature, experienced from the existing lookout and hilltop area which are anticipated to include a reduction in tranquillity experienced from the lookout as well as reduced naturalness of the landform due to the proposed earthworks and introduction of built form at the second high point.

An assessment of visual amenity effects has considered the visibility of the proposal from key and representative locations. While some elements of the proposal will be visible, primarily the stop station, located in the clearing on the south face of the hill, I consider that the 'light' structural design of the station, paired with material and colour selection informed by the Hanmer Springs Design Standards will ensure that the proposed built form is in keeping with the character of the setting. Adverse effects on visual amenity are anticipated to range from moderate to very low in the short term. This is primarily attributed to the visual prominence of the clearing due to the weedy vegetation which has become established and which the structure will be seen in context with. In time, however, effects on visual amenity are anticipated to lessen as the existing revegetation planting becomes established and settles the built form into the landscape.

In the context of the statutory assessment against the relevant provisions of the Hurunui District Plan, I consider that the proposal fits comfortably within the Objectives, Policies and Assessment Matters and that the proposal will not result in detrimental effects to the character, environmental quality, amenity values nor the special values of the Hanmer Basin.

I consider that on the whole, the proposal will not be at odds with the surrounding environment and will represent a level of change that is acceptable within this setting.

6.0 Appendix 1: HDP Chapter 4 Assessment Matters

4.24 Assessment criteria – applicable to all zones

When considering an application and whether or not it can be granted pursuant to Part 2 of the Resource Management Act 1991, the Council will have regard to the relevant assessment criteria:

2. Site Coverage

- (a) *The extent of the compatibility of the structure with the residential scale and character of the site and surrounding area*
- (b) *Any adverse effects on the overall residential amenity values in terms of open space provision, vegetative cover and privacy*

3. Height

- (a) *The extent to which the proposed buildings will be compatible with the scale of other buildings in the surrounding area;*
- (b) *The effect of the increased height in terms of visual dominance by buildings of the outlook from other sites, roads and public open spaces in the surrounding area, which is out of character with the local environment;*
- (c) *The extent to which the increased height would have an adverse effect on the sites in the surrounding area in terms of loss of privacy through being overlooked from neighbouring properties;*
- (d) *The extent to which the proposed building will overshadow adjoining sites and result in reduced sunlight and daylight admission;*
- (e) *The ability to mitigate any adverse effects of increased height, such as through increased separation distances between the building and adjoining sites or the provision of screening*

6. Screening of non-residential activities

- (a) *The effect of reduced landscaping and screening in terms of the visual impacts of the buildings and the scale of these buildings;*
- (b) *The importance of landscaping and screening on the particular site concerned taking into account the visual quality of the surrounding environment; and*
- (c) *The extent to which the site is visible from adjoining sites and the likely consequences on outlook from these sites of any reduction in landscaping or screening standards*

11. Recreation activities

- (a) *The extent to which any recreational activity will result in levels of traffic and/or pedestrian activity which are incompatible with the character of the surrounding township, and the extent to which the proposal will add to the recreational opportunities of the area; and*
- (b) *The extent to which any proposed recreational building will be compatible with the character of the local environment, including the scale of other buildings in the surrounding area.*

17. Hanmer Basin

(a) General

- (i) That any landscaping is appropriate to the site and its environs, and is proposed as part of the development of the site;*
- (iii) That the design and location of any proposed building is in sympathy with the environment and that the view of the building from any roads, or surrounding areas is not considered to detrimentally affect the visual amenity of the area*
- (iv) The extent to which the proposal promotes the overall alpine character of Hanmer Springs;*
- (v) The extent to which an activity will preserve trees, retain open spaces of importance and introduce new tree species;*
- (vii) The extent to which any prominent skylines, ridgelines and natural features are protected;*