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LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

To                    Michaela Groenewegen  
                          Clutha District Council

From                 Mike Moore

Date                 12 July 2024

**Subject             239D Moturata Road, Taieri Mouth, Subdivision Proposal  
                          Assessment of Landscape & Visual Effects, Peer Review Report**

## Introduction

Clutha District Council (CDC) have received an application from Clark and Megan Campbell for a two-lot subdivision at 239D Moturata Road, Taieri Mouth. The effect of the subdivision would be to create one additional lot with a building platform. The application is supported by an Assessment of Landscape and Visual Effects, dated 7 December 2023, prepared by Site Environmental Consultants (the SEC report). A further memorandum dated 18 March 2024, from Site Environmental Consultants (the SEC memo) has also been submitted in response to a s92 further information request by CDC in relation to the effects of the proposed development on existing and proposed dwellings within 200m of the proposed new building platform.

This report has been commissioned by CDC to provide a peer review of the SEC assessment. It is informed by the principles set out in the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects (NZILA) Landscape Assessment Guidelines<sup>1</sup>, and a site visit on 10 July 2024. I have also reviewed the submissions received on the application. The report is structured under the headings suggested in Te Tangi a te Manu for peer reviews.

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<sup>1</sup> Te Tangi a te Manu, Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines, Tuia Pito Ora New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects, July 2022.

## **Conflict of Interest declaration**

I have previously undertaken work for the applicants, preparing a landscape concept plan in support of a dwelling design for the approved building platform on this site (plan dated September 2019). The dwelling proposed was an earlier design and not the one that is now consented on proposed Lot 1.

I do not consider that this creates a conflict of interest and have alerted both CDC and the applicant's planner of this background. I understand that neither party considers that this creates a conflict which would make peer reviewing the SEC assessment for the proposed subdivision inappropriate.

## **Purpose and method of review**

As outlined in Te Tangi a te Manu, the purpose of a peer review is an appraisal of the assessment, not a parallel assessment. The matters to be reviewed include appropriateness / adequacy of the:

- assessment method used.
- consideration of the relevant statutory provisions.
- description and evaluation of the landscape character and values.
- project description and appropriateness of mitigation proposed
- analysis of landscape effects.
- overall findings and recommendations.

## **Methodology**

In paragraph 1.2 the SEC report states that it follows the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects Te Pito Ora landscape assessment guidelines. In general, with some reservations expressed in the sections below, I consider that this is a fair statement.

## Existing Landscape

Figure 1 in the SEC report illustrates 'context' and Section 2 discusses the relevant landscape context as including the area encompassing the original 9-lot subdivision, the 16-lot subdivision to the north, and the coastal terrace. I consider that this is appropriate and note that the site is within an area that is transitioning from a rural to a rural-residential scale and character between Moturata Road and the coast.

Section 2 of the report describes the character of the area, including that the site was part of a now fully developed 9-lot subdivision and that there is another more recent 16-lot subdivision adjacent to the north. The topography is described as *'gentle slopes that descend from Akatore Road to a small coastal terrace that ends at the shoreline escarpment...'* Attributes and values are discussed under biophysical factors, associative factors and perceptual factors headings including (my summary)

- the coastal terrace.
- a degree of remaining rural character.
- regular topography and open pasture.

Referring to the Coastal Environment of Otago Natural Character and Outstanding Natural Features and Landscapes Assessment<sup>2</sup>, the report notes that the site falls within an area that has been assessed as having a medium-high degree of natural character.

I consider this description / analysis to be fair, albeit brief. Other attributes I consider relevant include:

- The site is located on an uplifted coastal block along the Akatore Fault which is close-by to the west. The landform of the area has a subdued broad spur and minor gully patterning and a key feature in the vicinity of the site is the gully / watercourse system, now highlighted by indigenous plantings.
- The schist rock shelves (mentioned in the SEC report para 2.2) are noted in the CDP, Table 13.3B, as an outstanding natural feature (the Otago Coastal Schist section).

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<sup>2</sup> Coastal Environment of Otago Natural Character and Outstanding Natural Features and Landscapes Assessment, Clutha District Section Report, 15 May 2015, Otago Regional Council & Clutha District Council

- The area has a still evolving rural-residential character and built density.
- The area has Kai Tahu cultural landscape values recognized generally, in the Statutory Acknowledgement for Te Tai o Arai te Uru (Otago Coastal Marine Area). Otuarae is the name of the headland to the north-east of the site and there are wahi tapu values associated with a cave.<sup>3</sup>

Also of relevance is the background assessment in the Coastal Environment of Otago Natural Character and Outstanding Natural Features and Landscapes Assessment report (referred to above) relating to natural features and landscapes within the coastal environment. In this document, the site falls at the northern end of the Akatore Coast landscape character unit which has an ‘overall landscape values rating’ of Medium-high and which is not classed as ‘outstanding’.

## **Proposal**

The SEC report describes and illustrates the proposed development clearly in Section 4, Appendices B and C, and Figures 1 and 2.

I note that there are some minor inaccuracies associated with the ‘consented residential sites – potential dwellings’ locations in Figure 1, which do not take into account ‘no build covenant areas’ on the subdivision to the north of the site.

## **Statutory planning provisions**

Section 3 of the SEC report addresses the statutory context, correctly highlighting the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2010 (NZCPS), the Otago Regional Policy Statement 2019 (ORPS), and the Subdivision and Coastal Resource Area sections of the Clutha District Plan 1998 (CDP) as the documents of relevance. I consider that the majority of the relevant provisions in these documents are included but note that NZCPS

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<sup>3</sup> Coastal Environment of Otago Natural Character and Outstanding Natural Features and Landscapes Assessment, Clutha District Section Report, 15 May 2015, Otago Regional Council & Clutha District Council (CL3. Taieri Mouth).

Policy 15, relating to natural features and natural landscapes in the coastal environment, is also relevant.

Paragraph 3.11 summarizes the statutory context section stating:

*'The assessment of the proposed subdivision includes two steps with the first being a consideration of the proposal against the natural character values of the coastline. The second step considers the potential effect of the residential dwelling on the building platform that would result. The emphasis of the second step is on visual effects.'*

I have some reservations about this and consider that the statutory framework leads to an assessment of the proposal as a whole (subdivision providing for new dwelling, plantings, driveways etc), that appropriately focuses on:

- The effects of the proposed development on the natural character of the coastal environment in this area – in particular (in terms of NZCPS Policies 13 and 15) whether it needs to avoid all adverse effects or only significant adverse effects.
- The effects of the proposed development on landscape values including those experienced in views<sup>4</sup>.

The two-step process referred to in the SEC report relates to the requirement under CDP Rule COA.4 to obtain a further consent for the specific building design as a controlled activity.

I note that NZCPS Policy 13(2) distinguishes between natural character and natural features and landscapes, suggesting that separate natural character and landscape effects assessments are appropriate.

For clarity, I outline below, my understanding of the key issues arising from the statutory provisions.

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<sup>4</sup> See Te Tangi a te Manu para's 6.08 & 6.09.

| Issue   | Statutory provision   |
|---|---|
| <p>The preservation of the natural character of the coastal environment.</p> <p>Avoid significant adverse effects and avoid, remedy or mitigate other adverse effects of activities on natural character in all other areas of the coastal environment (i.e. areas that do not have outstanding natural character).</p> | <p>RMA 6(a)<br/>                     CDP Policy SUB.10<br/>                     CDP Objective COA.1<br/>                     CDP Policy COA.1<br/>                     CDP Policy COA.10</p> <p>NZCPS Policy 13 (1) (b).<br/>                     ORPS Pol 3.2.10</p> |
| <p>Avoid significant adverse effects and avoid, remedy or mitigate other adverse effects of activities on other natural features and natural landscapes in the coastal environment (i.e. areas that are not outstanding natural features or landscapes).</p>  | <p>NZCPS Policy 15 (b)<br/>                     ORPS Policy 3.2.6</p>   |
| <p>Ensure subdivision, use and development of the coast, and in particular buildings and structures, avoids, remedies or mitigates any adverse effects on amenity values.</p>   | <p>CDP Policy COA.1</p>   |

### **Landscape (including visual) effects**

The SEC report provides an assessment of ‘landscape, coastal character and visual effects’ in Section 5 and in Section 6 discusses these in relation to the relevant matters arising in the statutory context. The SEC memo also provides further commentary. My interpretation of the key findings of the SEC analysis, along with peer review comment, is as follows.

## **Landscape effects**

### SEC Assessment

Landscape effects will be adverse / low-medium in the short term (1 – 5 years), becoming adverse / low in the longer term. Reasons given are:

- additional built form continues the effects of the previous subdivision on rural openness.
- More indigenous planting and stricter building height controls help to mitigate the degree of adverse effect.
- The suite of mitigation measures proposed are consistent with those underpinning the existing development and will result in an effect that is consistent.
- The proposed Lot 2 BP is setback from the coastal terrace to a similar degree to existing / consented development

### Peer review comment

I consider that the SEC analysis is brief but reaches reasonable conclusions regarding the nature and degree of landscape effects. I note that the area (including both the original 9 and 16 lot subdivisions) is currently undergoing a transition from an open, larger scale rural character to a more built, planted, and smaller scale rural residential character and I agree that within this context the proposed development represents a relatively minor intensification that will not fundamentally alter the character or landscape pattern. The proposed subdivision will result in lots that are still in scale with those in the surrounding area and the additional built form will be able to be accommodated without disruption to the planted gully system landscape framework. There will be no adverse effects on the coastal schist rock shelves and the site does not directly impact the Otuarae headland. The proposed mitigation measures will ensure good integration with the existing character of the rural-residential environment.

In section 7, the SEC report introduces an adverse / very low effect rating for residual landscape effects (10+ years), which contradicts the assessment in paragraph 5.5. I consider the adverse / low rating more appropriate.

## **Natural character effects**

### SEC Assessment

Natural character effects will be adverse / low in the short term (1 – 5 years), becoming adverse / very low in the longer term. Reasons given are:

- natural character is already very modified due to historic clearance of indigenous vegetation for farming and the additional planting proposed will improve natural character.

### Peer review comment

Again, I consider that the SEC analysis is brief but reaches reasonable conclusions. Whilst natural character is relatively strongly expressed below the coastal terrace, it is now significantly modified by rural residential development above this and one more dwelling involving little change to the overall built density in the wider area will not result in more than minor adverse effects on the degree of naturalness, nor the natural character attributes (natural landform / indigenous vegetation / natural coastal processes etc). I consider that adverse natural character effects will not be significant in this context and that the proposed conditions will appropriately mitigate them.

## **Visual amenity effects**

### SEC Assessment

Visual effects will be adverse / low-medium in the short term (1 – 5 years), becoming adverse / low in the longer term (10+ years). Reasons given are:

- The proposed Lot 2 building will be prominent when first established but will blend in as planting establishes.
- From the houses above to the west, there will be greater built impact but there is already built impact associated with Lot 1.
- From 239f Moturata Road the proposed Lot 2 development will be screened by the additional planting to be undertaken on Lot 1 and by the Lot 1 dwelling.



- From 239e Moturata Road building on proposed Lot 2 will be visible along with that on Lot 1 and on the Lot 9 and 10 sites on the adjacent subdivision to the north.
- From 239c and 239b Moturata Road buildings on both Lots 1 and 2 will be visible over the intervening screen plantings but unlikely to be main focal points in the wide coastal vista(?).
- From 229 Moturata Road and sites accessed from Otuarae Drive the boundary screen planting will screen views of lot 2 as it matures.

#### Peer review comment

I consider that it would have been useful to have had effects on visual amenity rated in terms of their nature and magnitude from each of the various viewpoints discussed in the SEC memo. In general, however, I agree with the SEC analysis that given the number of dwellings already consented in the area, the addition of the Lot 2 dwelling (controlled as to height, and colour and with additional mitigation planting proposed) will not result in adverse effects on views from these properties that will be greater than low-medium (minor) in magnitude.

I consider that effects from residential viewpoints to the north (Otuarae Drive area) will be effectively mitigated by the proposed planting and by the likely northward orientation of dwellings in this area, away from the site. Likewise, I agree that effects from 239f Moturata Road will be low given the intervening effect of the consented house on Lot 1 and the further plantings proposed. The most impacted properties are 239c Moturata Road and 239e Moturata Road due to their relative proximity to the site and their similar / only slightly higher elevation. Considering that the Lot 2 built form will be seen in the context of the consented built form on Lot 1 and (to a lesser extent) further dwellings accessed from Otuarae Drive I consider that the SEC assessment, which finds that effects are adverse and in the low-medium range of magnitude - reducing as planting progressively screens and softens, is fair.

## **Design response**

Appendices B and C of the SEC report outline the mitigation conditions to protect natural character and landscape values. In my assessment the key measures are:

- Restriction of all buildings to the proposed 30 x 30m building platform.
- Building height restriction of 5m.
- Building materials and colour controls.
- Additional planting.

I consider that these measures are generally appropriate and will be effective in integrating the proposed new dwelling. I note that further mitigation of the visual prominence of built form on the Lot 2 BP could be achieved by adjusting the BP location to a lower point further west on the lot and / or by imposing a more restrictive building height maximum such as 4m (which I believe is a workable height).

As regards the planting proposed, I consider that Planting Condition 3 should be reworded to clarify that only locally appropriate indigenous species are to be used. I consider that Planting Condition 5 does not provide the most appropriate target and instead, recommend a condition that requires management of the planting to ensure it establishes successfully and to ensure its screening / mitigating function is maintained on an on-going basis. This should include a requirement to replace any plants that die or fail to thrive.

## **Conclusion**

This peer review has found that the SEC report is acceptably consistent with best practice methodology and whilst brief, has reasonably assessed the landscape, natural character and visual amenity effects of the proposed development. These matters arise from the statutory context and are relevant to address. Overall, I assess its conclusions as sound.

## Recommendations

1. That consideration be given to further mitigating the effects of development on Proposed Lot 2, on the visual amenity of the dwellings to the west of the site by locating the BP approximately 10m further west (which would result in it being generally lower and more closely associated with the proposed contextual / screening plantings) and / or by reducing the maximum building height to 4m.

2. Amend Appendix C as follows:

*(3) Planting is to be undertaken with the native species listed below, or other locally appropriate indigenous species capable of reaching at least 4m height and suitable for successful establishment in this area.*

*(5) Planting is to be maintained to encourage successful establishment and is to be managed to ensure that its screening / mitigating function is sustained on an on-going basis. Any plants that die or fail to thrive are to be replaced as quickly as practicable.*

Mike Moore

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