

Craig Barr for QLDC – Summary of Evidence, presented 8 March 2016

Hearing Stream 1B

My name is Craig Barr and I am a senior planner at the Council. I have prepared the officer's report on the proposed Landscape (6) Chapter. I have been involved with the District Plan Review since the formal commencement of the review in 2014 and am the principal author of this chapter and other Proposed District Plan chapters including the 3 Rural Zones, Wilding Trees and Indigenous Vegetation chapters.

The District's landscapes and natural resources are a significant resource, not only to the District, but to the Otago region and the country in terms of economic, social and cultural well-being.

Management of Character

The Operative District Plan framework for managing subdivision and development in the Rural Zone is different to many other parts of rural New Zealand in that there is no minimum allotment size. From a landscape management point of view, this has the benefit of preventing any preconceived development rights associated with subdivision or a minimum landholding area. However, it has presented issues in terms of the subjective determination of what a landscape should be, and whether the District Plan is effectively managing development, especially cumulative effects of development.

Despite these difficulties, retaining the 'discretionary regime' with no minimum site or density size is still considered the most appropriate method to manage the landscape resource because it maintains and reinforces a landscape-based management regime that demands a site specific design response.

While retaining the fundamental components and processes of the Operative District Plan framework, I consider that substantial improvements have been made in the Proposed District Plan to ensure that the landscape is appropriately managed, and that the process for consenting is more certain, efficient and effective.

'Rural Landscape' classification

From an administration perspective one improvement is the creation of a new single classification of 'Rural Landscape' for all remaining areas that are not Outstanding Natural Features and Landscapes. It is not a dumping ground for everywhere else, or a simple

consolidation of the operative district plan's 'visual amenity landscape' and other rural landscape areas but addresses the following:

- A deficiency with the Operative Plan's 'visual amenity landscape' provisions, in that they anticipate the maintenance, if not the creation of, a specific type of landscape, that is 'arcadian' or 'pastoral in the poetic sense'. However, much of the rural land that falls within this classification has varying types of landscape character.
- There are areas within the existing 'visual amenity landscape' that are actual rural working landscapes, characterised by relatively large paddocks and an absence of domestic buildings and domestic elements.
- Generally, the 'Visual Amenity Landscape' provisions focus on the maintenance of buildings being present but ensuring that they are not inappropriate or dominant.

I consider that the policies of the 'Rural Landscape' classification do not discourage the type of development envisioned under the Operative Plan's Visual Amenity framework if the circumstances favour this, but they do require consideration of a landscape's character in its own right.

- One of these is the appreciation of openness within the valley floors and other locations within the 'rural landscape'.

Further to Dr Read's evidence and questioning on 7 March, I wish to emphasise that managing rural character within the Rural Landscape Classification areas are applicable and relevant under s7(c) because, if this element of the landscape is not appropriately managed then the overall appreciation of amenity values could be lowered. In my opinion the resource would not be effectively managed.

Objectives and Policies

Turning to the objectives and policies overall, the Proposed District Plan Landscape Chapter provides a balanced response to protect the landscape resource while being able to contemplate changes through other activities. These activities include established activities in the rural areas such as farming, and activities likely seek to locate in rural areas, such as the opportunity for rural living, new urban development, or tourism based development including commercial recreation.

I consider that the identification of landscape lines will bring benefits to the community by providing certainty where these areas are located across the District. I consider that the

landscape lines will increase the efficiency of district plan administration, and will also bolster confidence in the administration of the district plan.

The Operative District wide Landscape Chapter has one landscape objective and 43 policies grouped into 17 themes. By comparison, the Proposed Landscape Chapter has 8 objectives and a total of 39 policies.

There has been a concerted effort to ensure that the policies, particularly in the new Rural Landscape Classification, do not lean toward the maintenance or creation of a certain type of landscape. This was a deficiency identified with the Operative District Plan in that the Visual Amenity Landscape policies focused on a landscape idealism, which led to areas being effectively missed out from being managed.

The operative provisions that seek to create or maintain a landscape that is 'pastoral in the poetic sense' do not place sufficient emphasis on the character of a landscape in its own right.

I consider that the proposed policies rectify this by having policies that require consideration of landscape character, amenity and quality. The relatively high level use of these elements within the landscape chapter will assist with determining the merits of development proposals no matter what type of landscape the site is located within.

Concerning the cumulative effects of development, the objective, policies and assessment matters do not use quantifiers to judge whether a cumulative adverse effect would occur because there is no required minimum allotment size. The proposed landscape provisions are focused on a design led response. The landscape is not homogenous and there will be locations that are better suited to absorbing development than others.

There have been suggestions made in the submissions to delete the landscape chapter and relocate the higher level components of it into the Strategic Direction Chapter and locate more specific, finer grained policy in the respective zone chapters. I see significant problems with this because it would require a multitude of policy to reflect the outcome sought in the respective areas. Just like the deficiency with the Visual Amenity Landscape these could miss the mark. I consider that this type of landscape management framework could lead to significant inefficiencies in terms of administering the respective zones and the overall thrust of the proposed district plan.

In addition, the Council has identified land that has either become, or has capacity to absorb rural living development as additional Rural Lifestyle Zoned land.

Submissions also emphasise that farming has been overstated and that not enough emphasis is placed on other 'rural' activities that seek to locate within the rural areas and utilise rural resources. I wish to emphasise that other activities in the rural zone that could include tourism activities, golf resorts and rural living are contemplated in the landscape chapter and the Rural Zone objectives and policies, the latter will be discussed at the Rural Hearing. I also consider that it is important to note that other activities are relatively recent and have not had the same influence on the landscape that pastoral farming has had since the late 19th Century.

Several submissions seek that the landscape chapter is changed to be more enabling and employ language that renders rural living and non-farming development in the Rural Zone as inevitable and that the policy should focus on ensuring appropriate development outcomes.

I am reluctant to accept these because the changes sought are too enabling and are on the premise that farming and rural productive activities are irrelevant. I wish to emphasise that the proposed policies cover the entire district, not just the valley floor of the Wakatipu Basin.

I consider that the landscape chapter strikes a balance at managing the landscape resource over the entire district, while being able to contemplate the appropriateness of activities within a local context.

Provisions are too restrictive

Submissions also maintain that the provisions are too restrictive; I have considered these and my position has moved on a number of policies from the notified version.

These are:

- (a) A new policy 6.3.1.12 has been recommended for inclusion in the chapter to recognise the importance of the contribution that regionally significant infrastructure makes to social and economic wellbeing and health and safety, notwithstanding the importance placed on landscape values and location constraints in the District often faced by infrastructure providers;
- (b) An amendment to Policy 6.3.1.4 so that it specifies that it applies to urban development, and removes the potential for unintentionally including all development, such as rural living;

- (c) An amendment to Policy 6.3.1.5 to recognise that resort zones are also important for tourism and commercial recreation based activities to the District; and
- (d) An amendment to Policy 6.3.1.7 so that it is more focused on the impacts of development on the night sky landscape.
- (e) An amendment to Policy 6.3.5.5 so that it better acknowledges that development could be appropriate without having to locate in the least visible locations on a site.
- (f) Clarifying provisions 6.4.1.2 and 6.4.1.3 such that the landscape chapters objectives and policies are applicable on a District Wide basis, same as the ODP District Wide Chapter, and that the application of the assessment matters are applicable to the Rural Zone.
- (g) Removal of provision 6.4.1.4 because the landscape classification relating to the lakes and rivers have been identified on the planning maps.

I have considered the submitters concerns, however I do not consider that the adoption of phrases that seek to: 'provide for' or: 'enable development that minimises adverse effects' will enable the Council to fulfil its functions and appropriately manage this important resource.

I am happy to answer any questions.