

Proposed Farm Chief Development, 30 Wallacetown Lorneville Highway

Landscape Effects Assessment Report

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Introduction

P A and J M Family Trust are applying for Resource Consent to develop a Farm Chief agricultural machinery sales and services operation at 30 Wallacetown Lorneville Highway, Lorneville. The site is zoned Rural in the Invercargill City District Plan and in accordance with Rule RURZ R3 the proposed development is a non-complying activity.

The purpose of this report is to provide an assessment of the landscape effects of the proposed facility. The report will be structured as follows:

- Methodology.
- Site and area description.
- Landscape Values.
- The proposed development.
- Recommended mitigation measures.
- Landscape effects.
- Proposed Invercargill City District Plan provisions assessment.
- Conclusion.

Methodology

This assessment follows the concepts and principles outlined in the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects (NZILA) Best practice guidelines¹, and has been informed by a review of the relevant statutory provisions and a site visit on 16 January 2024.

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

Site and area description

The site is a 4.6ha rural zoned property located on the north side of Wallacetown Lorneville Highway at Lorneville, north of Invercargill (see **Figure 1**). The landform is flat and the site is currently developed as open paddocks with no permanent structures present other than farm fences. There is a discontinuous gorse hedge on the southern (highway) boundary and some macrocarpa and pine trees on the western and northern boundaries.

A railway line (the Ohai line) is adjacent to the western site boundary, whilst to the north there is a 5.6ha rural property and dwelling (24 Wallacetown Lorneville Highway). The driveway to this dwelling runs along the site's eastern boundary and beyond this there are commercial premises, including on land zoned Business (Rural Service) in the ICDP. The land directly across the road to the south of the site is zoned Rural but is host to a (currently disused) hotel and liquor store, as well as the Lorneville stockyards. To the south-east (also across the highway) the land is zoned Business (Rural Service) and is occupied by a timber yard.

Beyond the hub of commercial development at Lorneville, the land is zoned rural and has a generally open rural character, but there are also areas with smaller lot sizes and a residential character. In general, plantings are dominated by exotic species.

Figures 2 - 5 illustrate the character of the site and wider landscape context.

Landscape Values

Landscape and landscape values are defined in the NZILA Landscape Assessment Guidelines² as follows:

'Landscape embodies the relationship between people and place. It is the character of an area, how the area is experienced and perceived, and the meanings associated with it.'

² Te Tangi a te Manu, Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines, Tuia Pito Ora New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects, July 2022.

Landscape values are *'The reasons a landscape is valued. Values are embodied in certain attributes'*.

The ICDP includes provisions that seek the maintenance and where practical, enhancement of rural character and amenity values³. The Rural Zone chapter describe the rural zone as having *'a character of openness'* and as a *'dynamic working environment within which productive primary use is the dominant land use.'*

In my assessment, the landscape values associated with rural character typically include openness (low impact of built form relative to natural elements), naturalness (dominance of natural elements and legibility of natural landforms), and rural land uses. In this instance, the site is located on the interface of the Rural and Business (Rural Service) zones, and the impact of existing built development (within both zones) considerably modifies rural character and associated amenity values, giving the area a dominantly rural service hub / settlement character.

The proposed development

As shown in **Figures 6 and 7** it is proposed to establish a Farm Chief facility on the site for the sale and servicing of agricultural machinery. This will involve:

- the erection of a building with a footprint of 70 x 30m building, and a height of 9.5m. This will be clad in 'Paneltec Indurabond' and colorsteel and finished in Farm Chief corporate colours of dark grey and red. The building will be rectangular in form with a shallow gabled roof.
- A sealed driveway from Wallacetown Lorneville Highway, leading to sealed areas surrounding the building on all sides. These will be utilized for car parking and a wash bay as well as vehicle maneuvering.
- A 4.5 x 2.05m pylon sign by the driveway entrance off the highway.

³ ICDP RURZ-02, RURZ-P1 and RURZ-P3

- Machinery display areas between the building and the highway.
- Security fencing around the western end of the building.

The gorse hedgerow along the highway boundary will be removed. Likewise, the *Macrocarpa* trees near the western boundary, which are nearing the end of their useful lives, will also be removed. The area around the building will be grassed and maintained by mowing. The remainder of the property will be either grazed or also maintained by mowing and will remain open grassland.

As shown in Figure 6 tree planting is proposed to soften / balance the visual impact of the building. The adjacent residential property to the north is already well buffered by existing plantings (on that property), however, to assist to mitigate any adverse effects, it is proposed to establish additional screening along the northern boundary. Likewise, a planted screen for shelter and visual screening is proposed along the western boundary, set back appropriately from the railway line. Figure 6 illustrates the landscape concept plan, and **Appendix A** includes a proposed specification and schedule. It is recommended that the following condition (or similar), which references the landscape treatment, is imposed.

The planting illustrated in Figure 6 and specified in Appendix A, is to be implemented within 6 months of the completion of the building. This planting is to be maintained thereafter, to ensure successful establishment and on-going softening and visual mitigation of the proposed facility on amenity values.

Landscape effects

Definitions

Landscape effects are defined as follows:

‘An adverse or positive outcome for a landscape value as a consequence of changes to a landscape’s physical attributes.’⁴

As per the NZILA Landscape Assessment Guidelines, visual effects are understood as a subset of landscape effects and defined as *‘a consequence for landscape values as experienced in views’*.

I assess the landscape effects of the development against the landscape values discussed above, and those inherent in the relevant statutory provisions. Landscape effects may be positive or adverse in nature, and I rate the degree of effect in terms of the following 7-point rating scale. The relationship of this scale to the relevant RMA terminology is also shown.

Degree of effect assessment scale

<i>Very low</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Low-mod</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Mod-high</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Very high</i>
<i>Less than minor</i>		<i>Minor</i>	<i>More than minor</i>		<i>Significant</i>	

Physical effects

The proposed development will result in another rural service building in an area already characterised by such buildings, and other commercial premises. It will reinforce the rural service centre / settlement character at the expense of open rural character, but in my assessment, landscape sensitivity to development of this nature is low, due to the existing character.

There will be some relatively minor earthworks required (given the flat terrain) and no significant vegetation will be impacted. The proposed planting will contribute some amenity when well established that will help to visually balance / soften the impact of the large building and to mitigate the effects of additional visual ‘clutter’ associated with displayed machinery and parked vehicles. Overall, I assess physical effects on the landscape values as adverse / low.

⁴ Te Tangi A Te Manu, Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines. Tuia Pito Ora New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects, July 2022.

Visual effects

The key viewers that will be impacted by the proposed development are Wallacetown Lornville Highway users and adjacent residents. As regards the latter, I consider that the residents of 24 and 70A Wallacetown Lornville Highway are potentially impacted. Whilst there are other dwellings in the area surrounding, the proposed facility will be effectively screened from these places by existing plantings and / or built form.

Views from Wallacetown Lorneville Highway (see Figures 2 and 3)

Currently, the site is semi-screened from Wallacetown Lorneville Highway by the gorse hedgerow on its southern boundary. Where visible through or beyond this, it is seen as open paddocks with blocks of large exotic trees behind. In my assessment, rural amenity values are reduced by the impact of the adjacent commercial development and are modest.

The proposed development will result in the views into the site being opened up with the removal of the hedgerow, and a change in the character of site from rural paddock to one dominated by a large commercial building with associated displayed machinery. Essentially, the development will extend the area of 'rural service commercial' character approximately 200m westward. I consider that the area has low sensitivity to this change and that visual effects on landscape values will be adverse / low.

Views from 24 Wallacetown Lornville Highway (see Figure 4)

Southward views from this property to the north of the site, are generally well screened by plantings (on the property), and the dwelling appears to orientate mainly northward. Views across the site can, however, be obtained from places near the boundary and these are of open paddock with transient highway traffic and existing commercial buildings seen beyond the gorse hedgerow beyond.

The proposed development will result in the erection of a large commercial building approximately 90 – 130m from the boundary with parked vehicles and machinery

potentially somewhat closer. The proposed screen planting along the site's northern boundary will quickly (within 5 years) completely screen any views. Considering the degree of existing and proposed screening, I assess the visual effects as adverse / moderate-low, quickly transitioning to adverse / very low as the screen plantings establish.

Views from 70A Wallacetown Lornville Highway (see Figure 5)

This property is located to the west of the railway and the house is located in its north-west corner, some 300m (approx.) from the proposed building site. Figure 5 is a view from the highway adjacent to the property, however, there would be greater visibility of the building site from the vicinity of the house. Currently, views eastward from this property would be of open paddocks with the commercial buildings to the west and south of the site in the background. The *Macrocarpa* trees would break this view up to some extent and provide some screening.

The proposed development will result in a new commercial building in closer proximity to those already existing, and some associated reduction in rural amenity. This effect will be limited by the fact that commercial buildings are already elements within the view. The proposed shelter / screen planting will progressively mitigate adverse effects on rural amenity and I rate visual effects from this viewpoint as adverse / moderate-low, reducing to adverse / very low as the boundary plantings mature. I estimate this transition taking approximately 5 – 7 years.

Landscape effects – conclusion

Overall, given the above assessments of the physical and visual effects, it is my conclusion that the effects of the proposed development on the landscape values in this area will be adverse in nature but low in degree. This is because whilst the development will further erode rural character, the commercial character on adjacent sites already impacts the rural amenity values and the character of the proposed development will integrate with this existing character readily. The railway to the west forms a strong boundary to this area, and the presence of commercial / rural service development across the highway to the south also aids integration.

Proposed Invercargill City District Plan provisions assessment

As discussed above, the proposed activity is a non-complying activity in the ICDP. In the table below, I copy the plan provisions relevant to the landscape effects of the proposed facility and provide brief comment.

Invercargill City District Plan

Objective / Policy	Comment
<p>RURZ-O2 <i>Provide for the use and development of land within the rural area while maintaining, and where practical enhancing, amenity values.</i></p>	<p>The site is within the rural zone but is directly adjacent to land zoned Business (Rural Service) and developed as a rural service settlement. The proposed development will reinforce the existing rural service settlement character and will integrate readily with low adverse effects on existing amenity values.</p>
<p>RURZ-P3 Non-Rural Activities: <i>To avoid activities that do not have a need to locate within the Rural Zone and which would result in adverse effects inconsistent with the function, character and amenity provided for by the Rural Zone.</i></p>	<p>It is my assessment that the proposed facility will result in no more than minor adverse effects on rural character and associated amenity values in this locality, given the existing character of the area.</p>
<p>RURZ-P20 Signage: <i>To protect the amenity of the Rural Zone by controlling the size and nature of signage and require that any signage should relate to the activity being carried out on the site.</i></p>	<p>The proposed signage includes signage on the building as well as a pylon sign by the site entrance. This will be consistent in character with existing commercial premises signage in the area and will integrate unremarkably with the existing character.</p>
<p>RURZ-P25 Height and Location of</p>	<p>The proposed building is well set back from the</p>

<p>Structures:</p> <p><i>To manage the scale of development in rural areas is an important dimension of amenity, recognising that the height and location of structures are main components of that.</i></p>	<p>site boundaries and is lower than the Rural Zone maximum building height standard. It is consistent with other rural service commercial buildings in the vicinity in terms of scale.</p>
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Conclusion

The site for the proposed Farm Chief development is zoned Rural but is adjacent to a Business (Rural Service) zone and the rural character and amenity values in this area are highly modified by existing commercial buildings and associated development. I consider sensitivity to development of the character proposed is low.

The proposed development includes measures to mitigate adverse effects on the rural landscape values including boundary plantings to screen views from nearby residential viewpoints and establishment of tree groupings to provide softening and screening of the building and associated security fencing, sealed surfaces, and parked vehicles. Generally, however, the development will integrate readily in this context and represents a modest extension of the existing rural service commercial environment into the rural surroundings. I have assessed effects on landscape values as adverse / moderate-low (minor) at worst and reducing as mitigation planting matures.



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Appendix A: Proposed Mitigation Planting Specification

Boundary screen plantings

Areas to be planted are to be fenced from stock grazing as required, and pest plants and animals are to be controlled. If required, plants are to be provided with an eco-shelter for protection against animal browse.

Prepare the areas for planting and implement planting in accordance with best horticultural practice. Use fertilizer tablets or granules to assist establishment and growth as appropriate. Plant one row of the species scheduled below at approximately 1.5m spacings.

Irrigate plants and use mulch as required for successful establishment and growth. Control competing grasses and weeds until well established. Monitor plantings for survival and immediately replace dead plants.

<i>Botanical name</i>	<i>Common name</i>	<i>Minimum grade</i>
<i>Pittosporum tenuifolium</i>	<i>Kohuhu</i>	<i>Pb3</i>

Tree groups

1. Trees shall be of nursery container stock and of good form that is true to species. Each tree must have a well-developed and well-shaped trunk and stem and branch placement. Plants shall be healthy, vigorous and free of disease, injury, parasites or insects and shall not be pot-bound. All root balls shall retain their shape and hold together well when removed from their containers.
2. Trees shall be a minimum grade of 2m above ground level.
3. Trees shall be planted in accordance with best arboricultural practice and in the locations shown in Figure 6.

4. Tree pits shall be at least 150mm wider than the root spread and at least 150mm deeper. The bottom and sides of the hole shall be scarified to facilitate root penetration and free drainage. The backfilled soil shall be a 50 / 50 mix of topsoil and compost. Ensure that there is a topsoil / compost depth of at least 400mm.
5. Trees planted shall be double staked using 50 x 50mm timber stakes of uniform appearance of a length suitable to effectively support the tree. Tree ties shall be 30mm 'Anwal Easy Tie' or similar and connected to the tree in a manner which avoids damage to the bark and in accordance with best arboricultural practice.
6. Trees are to have a minimum circle of woodchip mulch of 0.5m diameter. The woodchip mulch is to have an approximate settled depth of 75mm. Ensure that woodchip is not placed up the trunk of the tree to avoid issues of trunk burn.
7. Trees are to be watered at the time of planting and thereafter as required to ensure optimum survival and establishment. Any trees that fail to thrive or die are to be replaced immediately.

<i>Botanical name</i>	<i>Common name</i>	<i>Minimum grade</i>
<i>Alnus cordata</i>	<i>Italian Alder</i>	<i>2m height</i>
<i>Quercus palustris</i>	<i>Pin Oak</i>	