

Appendix H

Landscape / Visual Review (Isthmus Group)

PREPARED ON BEHALF OF HAMILTON CITY COUNCIL
TE RAPA BYPASS: LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL REVIEW
LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL REVIEW: SUBMISSIONS REVIEW
MAY 2008

Job Name: Te Rapa Bypass: Landscape and Visual Review
Report Name: Landscape and Visual Review: Submissions Review
Client Name: Hamilton City Council
Our Reference: 2410/C2/EG
Date: 6 May 2008

Emma Golightly
Isthmus Group Limited
43 Sale Street
PO Box 90 366
Auckland

Tel: 09 309 9442
Fax: 09 309 9060

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 My name is Emma Golightly. I am a Senior Landscape Architect at Isthmus, a New Zealand-wide practice specialising in landscape architecture and urban design.
- 1.2 I hold a Masters of Landscape Architecture from Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh and I am a Chartered Landscape Architect and Member of the British Landscape Institute.
- 1.3 I have over seven years of experience in the United Kingdom, during which time I have undertaken a wide range of both townscape and landscape assessment work including environmental impact assessments, planning supporting statements and public inquiry evidence for various types and scales of developments including housing, retail, tourism, business parks and quarry and mineral planning. I have recently completed an assessment for a wind farm in the Wairarapa, a sand mine in Matamata and a peer review for a landfill site in Glenbrook.
- 1.4 Stage 1 of the initial review process, including the Section 92 request for further information, was carried out by James Bentley, who joined Isthmus as a Senior Landscape Architect in 2006. James holds a Bachelor of Arts and Diploma in Landscape Architecture from the University of Gloucestershire and is a Chartered Landscape Architect and Member of the British Landscape Institute.
- 1.5 James has eight years experience in landscape planning, design and environmental matters in the United Kingdom. He has carried out a wide range of assessment projects including commercial, industrial, infrastructure projects, minerals extraction and restoration schemes for government departments, local authorities and private companies. New Zealand experience includes a peer review of the landscape material for the Moturimu wind farm applicant and subsequent landscape and visual assessment for a proposed wind farm in South Taranaki. James has provided evidence to Council hearings, is familiar with resource management issues and processes and is a member of the Resource Management Law Association of New Zealand.
- 1.6 Isthmus were commissioned by Beca Carter Hollings and Ferner Limited to assess the landscape and visual component of the Notice of Requirement (NoR) on behalf of Hamilton City Council in mid 2007. Throughout the project, Isthmus highlighted several omissions from the NoR and asked that Transit New Zealand, through a section 92 request, carry out further studies with regard to the landscape and visual assessment, that would assist in the greater understanding of the proposal and the level of likely effects.

1.7 In January 2008, the NoR was formally notified by the Council and a number of submissions were received.

1.8 This review will cover the following:

- Overview of information requested by Beca Carter Hollings and Ferner Ltd under Section 92 of the Resource Management Act 1991, the response from Opus International Consultants Ltd and the adequacy of the response in addressing matters raised;
- An assessment of the actual and potential effects and the adequacy of the mitigation measures proposed;
- A response to the relevant Submissions; and
- Recommendations for conditions placed on the designation, should Council decide to grant consent.

2.0 SECTION 92 REQUEST

2.1 Overall, the NoR Landscape Assessment prepared by Opus International Consultants Ltd on behalf of Transit New Zealand was found to be notably general and brief, especially within the mitigation and level of effects paragraphs, however the context was considered to be well appraised. Table 1 summarises the extent of additional information requested, the response and the adequacy of this response received, which accompanied the letter sent by Beca on 21 December 2007.

Table 1: Request for Further Information

Section 92 Request	Response	Adequacy of Response
49. A more definitive strategy is required with some concept visionary objectives stated. Provide more information regarding the Landscape Strategy and Landscape Objectives, in the form of plans and accompanying text.	Indicative landscape mitigation plans which identify the extent and type of landscape planting proposed and summarises the overall conceptual landscape strategy and objectives.	Satisfactory, however remain unsure of why a decision can't be made with regard to the surfacing to be used.
50. Provide more information relating to the types and forms of acoustic mitigation proposed particularly in light of the future intensification of neighbouring development in the area.	Indicative cross section and mitigation drawings of the potential type and form of potential acoustic mitigation and opportunities for integration in relation to both the existing rural context and potential future intensification of development in the area.	Satisfactory. The designs of walls supplied indicate what is likely to be used, and this gives a better idea of the likely level of impacts.

Section 92 Request	Response	Adequacy of Response
51. Provide more information relating to the assessment of landscape effects.	Summary of landscape effects.	Satisfactory. The description of existing landscape and effects provides a greater understanding of the proposals.
52. Provide more detailed assessment on how the route will impact upon views from the ridgelines to the west.	Further detail on the visual impact in viewpoints from the ridge areas of the west of the Bypass.	Satisfactory, although not evident within the photomontages (due to the distance of the viewpoints selected and that the planting is shown at years 8-10), the acoustic wall could have potential adverse visual effects during the first few years after completion.
53. Provide additional photomontages (ortho rectified) superimposing the route from significant viewpoints, being both those resulting from existing development and factoring in likely significant viewpoints resulting from the September 2007 Rotokauri Structure Plan. In particular photomontages of the appearance of the raised components of the bypass (i.e. the view of the embankments) are paramount.	Photomontage artist impressions, which provide an indication of the extent of the proposal within typical viewing locations, particularly in relation to the raised components of the proposal such as fill embankments and over bridge structures.	Photomontages are an improvement, although one from SH1 (Great South Road) would have been useful looking towards the intersection. The oblique photomontages provide a useful overview.
54. Provide more information regarding the design of the bridges, in particular their visual appearance. Photomontages of these will assist in an assessment of their bulk and general appearance.	As for 53.	As for 53.

2.2 Following the section 92 request, it was considered that the level of information provided was adequate for the application to be considered in greater depth and for the changes to be visualised.

3.0 ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS

3.1 A description of the broader context is outlined within the NoR which identifies the key landscape characteristics, including physical and perceptual attributes.

3.2 Key attributes of the surrounding landscape character include the following:

- Low lying river plain dissected by small streams;
- Gently undulating farmland framed by exotic tree planting, hedgerows and shelterbelts;
- Variety of built form ranging from large scale utilitarian industrial and commercial development to individual dwellings and rural subdivision; and
- Rural/urban interface landscape character.

Landscape and Visual Effects

3.3 Effects fall into two types:

- a) Landscape Effects; and
- b) Visual Amenity Effects.

Landscape Effects

3.4 In essence this entails an assessment of whether the completed Bypass will be appropriate in this landscape, taking into account effects on physical, perceptual and associational aspects of 'landscape.'

3.5 In my view, The Assessment correctly identifies the landscape as having a low to average landscape quality with an average to good ability to accommodate change. Reasons include the relatively subdued topography, vegetation structure and presence of existing industry and transportation routes. The site is not identified as having any Resource Management Act section 6(b) outstanding features or classified as an important landscape that may warrant specific protection.

3.6 A potential issue is the loss of existing vegetation structure. However it is considered that the land has been considerably modified and does not possess a landscape value of significance. There is an opportunity to add to the existing vegetation resource with the use of an extensive programme of native and exotic planting, which will not only mitigate any potential effects generated by the proposed Bypass, but also provide an enhancement to the ecological value of the area.

3.7 The Bypass forms part of a wider area of development including industrial, commercial and residential land which in the long term will significantly expand the urban limits of Hamilton, as identified in the draft

Rotokauri Structure Plan. This development will significantly alter the existing landscape character within which the Bypass will be located.

- 3.8 The site is logical for such a Bypass in terms of sustainability, to the extent it is adjacent to an existing industrial and residential area, and will eventually provide the framework for a controlled expansion of the built form whilst providing the opportunity to create a northern gateway to Hamilton.

Visual Amenity Effects

- 3.9 The visual amenity effects will relate to the temporary effects which will arise during the construction period of the Bypass and to the longer term effects following its completion.
- 3.10 The viewing audience within the visual catchment has been comprehensively identified, and includes both passers-by and residents.
- 3.11 The Assessment correctly identifies the visual catchment area from where the proposed Bypass might potentially be seen, and illustrates the appearance from seven representative viewpoints and three oblique viewpoints. I consider the selection of viewpoints to be fair.
- 3.12 The photomontages demonstrate the effects of the proposals with mitigation planting at approximately 8-10 years old. In general I agree with the summary provided for the viewpoints.
- 3.13 The degree of effect from adjacent roads and dwellings is assessed. In summary the effects are assessed as moderate to significant, depending on the proximity of the Bypass to dwellings and the elevated sections of the route. The degree of visual effects will decrease with distance. The majority of visual effects can be successfully mitigated against with proposed planting, however the ability to mitigate the elevated sections is limited. I agree with this assessment.

Mitigation

- 3.14 The Assessment recommends extensive planting by way of proposed mitigation. A variety of different planting areas are identified on the Indicative Landscape Mitigation Plans produced by Opus which include mass planting for screening purposes and revegetation of gully margins to improve habitat and ecological value.
- 3.15 Specific mitigation proposals for the effects of noise include the use of acoustic earth bunds and fence type solid barrier. It is recognised that the visual effects of the solid barriers on the landscape character

will be greater than the bunds, however their implementation will be kept to a minimum within the overall scheme. The visual effect of the acoustic walls will be adequately mitigated by the associated proposed planting measures and also the detailing of the wall itself, including texture and pattern elements.

- 3.16 I consider that these mitigation measures are appropriate and would screen visual amenity and noise effects, particularly as the proposed planting matures over the long term.

4.0 RESPONSE TO SUBMISSIONS

- 4.1 A total of forty-one submissions were received, six of which raised landscape and visual issues.

General Landscape and Visual Effects

- 4.2 Rodger Murray, Jean Murray and Dean Murray raise the issue of the Bypass adversely affecting the amenity of residents as a result of increasing traffic volumes, noise and the negative impact on rural views. Rodger Murray and Jean Murray further submit their disagreement as to the wider area being an extensive roading network, modified farmland with a relatively low density of dwellings. A recommendation is submitted that Transit modify the requirement or impose specific conditions such as will address the question of mitigation against noise and visual effects.
- 4.3 Similarly, Ian and Carolyn Henson are concerned with the loss of amenity and pollution issues in respect of traffic movement. A recommendation is submitted that the Bypass be moved in a north-western direction and that Transit give consideration to loss of visual amenity and mitigate the noise problems caused by the road.

Response

- 4.4 No evidence is provided to support or detail these claims, which are addressed in the AEE. A significant programme of planting associated with the Bypass has been proposed which will mitigate loss of rural amenity as far as possible. The rural status of the surrounding landscape character is subject to change in the long term as the draft Rotokauri Structure Plan has identified this area for industrial, commercial and residential land.

Embankments

- 4.5 Porter Properties oppose the embankments extending approximately 2.7km varying between 7-9m in height from Te Kowhai Road to Avalon Drive. A recommendation is submitted which recognises the need for the importance of industrial/commercial and business activities have views/visibility/profile to and from the State Highway.

Response

- 4.6 The embankments serve the purpose of enabling the bypass to be bridged over the existing and proposed local roads. Acoustic walls can be designed and integrated into the embankments which will assist in mitigating noise. These embankments are proposed to be planted using native structure plants which will assist in screening the acoustic walls and softening the profile of the embankments.

Cycleways / Walkways

- 4.7 Hamilton City Council as a submitter do not support the further investigation suggested as to the location and treatment of cycleways/walkways which may be better located on local roads.

Response

- 4.8 It is considered that provision will be made for the safe integration of both cycleways and walkways in close proximity to the Bypass in line with Hamilton City Council's Walking and Cycling Strategies.

General Landscape Recommendations

- 4.9 Hamilton City Council submit the recommendation that if fill is stored on site, remedial planting/screening will be required whilst the material is stockpiled. In addition, the proposed landscape and planting plan should be subject to the approval of Hamilton City Council or nominee.

Response

- 4.10 It is considered that these recommendations can be incorporated as conditions placed on the designation.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 It is considered that the proposed mitigation measures will be appropriate to lessen the potential landscape and visual effects. The following are recommendations for conditions which should be included should Council decide to grant consent:

- A detailed Planting Plan and Earthworks Plan prepared by a suitably qualified specialist to be approved by nominees of both Waikato District Council and Hamilton City Council, prior to construction of the Bypass. The Planting Plan should include plant species, size, density, location and number at time of planting. The Earthworks Plan should show both existing and proposed contour levels;
- Engagement of a suitably qualified Landscape Architect to supervise the planting and construction of acoustic earth bunds;
- Should it be necessary to store fill or stockpiles of topsoil/subsoil on site, temporary remedial planting/screening will be required whilst the material is stored. The remedial planting will be subject to approval by both Waikato District Council and Hamilton City Council; and
- The design of acoustic barriers and their location will be subject to approval with both Waikato District Council and Hamilton City Council.

Emma Golightly
Senior Landscape Architect
Isthmus
25 March 2008

Reviewed:
James Bentley
Senior Landscape Architect
Isthmus
6 May 2008

