

Memorandum

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Attention:	Mary Askey
Company:	Matakanui Gold Limited
Date:	17 August 2026
From:	Rhys Girvan
Message Ref:	Ardgour Rise – Realignment
Project No:	BM240011A

Background

Boffa Miskell Limited (BML) has been engaged by Matakanui Gold Limited (MGL) to prepare an updated landscape assessment of the amended Thomson Gorge Road realignment (Ardgour Rise) in response to Question 19 of the Panel's Request for Information #11 (RFI 11).

This memorandum updates the landscape memorandum prepared by BML dated 19 November 2025 and should be read alongside the previous Landscape Effects Assessment dated 30 May 2025 included as part of the Bendigo-Ophir Mine Landscape, Natural Character and Visual Effects Assessment (B.19). It is focused on the landscape and visual consequences of the amended Ardgour Rise alignment and does not revisit the broader landscape values assessment.

The Panel's request follows further work on the road design through the traffic and recreation expert process. The current alignment remains within the same broad corridor north of Shepherds Creek on the western slopes of the Dunstan Mountains and reconnects with Thomson Gorge Road toward Thomsons Saddle. It continues to pass through an Outstanding Natural Landscape (ONL) and Ardgour Conservation Area in the Upper Section. Compared with the alignment assessed in November 2025, the current design follows a longer, more winding route to achieve gentler road grades while continuing to avoid identified sensitive ecological areas within Ardgour Station.

The current alignment also passes through the area previously proposed for the Ardgour Sanctuary. MGL has advised that the Ardgour Sanctuary is no longer proposed and that a replacement sanctuary is intended at Battery Hill. The landscape effects of the proposed Battery Hill sanctuary are outside the scope of this memorandum.

Current design and earthworks

The current design covering approximately 14.2 km, is divided into the same four broad sections used for the previous assessment (see **Figure 1**). The proposed cut and fill quantities are compared with the Substantive and previously assessed November 2025 designs as set out below.

Road section	Original Design – 30 May 2025	November 2025 design Cut / fill (m ³)	Current Rev 5 design Cut / fill (m ³)	Maximum cut height
Lower (Chainage 0 - 5,076)	22,500 m ³ cut to fill	7,260.6 / 7,912.4	8,272 / 6,661	4.5m
Lower - Mid (Chainage 5,076 – 9,200)	23,000 m ³ cut / 15,000 m ³ fill	10,930.4 / 11,656.1	29,914 / 7,930	12.2m
Mid - Upper (Chainage 9,200 – 12,000)	15,000 m ³ cut to fill	11,683.8 / 12,667.2	11,470 / 4,748	6.6m
Upper (Chainage 12,000 – 14,200)	16,000m ³ cut to fill	1,953.4 / 1,605.8 (covers part length only)	10,392 / 6,851	6.1m

Based on the revised roading design, proposed cut volumes increase from approximately 31,828 m³ to 60,048 m³, while fill reduces from approximately 33,842 m³ to 26,190 m³. The greatest increase occurs within the Lower-Mid section, where the alignment has been reconfigured to traverse the slopes more extensively as part of achieving a generally gentler road grade. Within this section, localised cut batters reach approximately 12 m in height in the upper part of the Lower-Mid Section where the road sidles within visually contained north-facing slopes. This represents an increase in cut height from the maximum of 4 metres previously proposed.

In addition, earthworks within the Upper section of the road have increased as a consequence of modifying the existing 4wd access route to achieve an optimal road gradient. This requires new sections of road to deviate from the existing four-wheel-drive track to achieve a suitable road gradient, resulting in additional localised disturbance to landform and native vegetation.

The Lower and Mid-Upper sections remain generally in accordance with the previously assessed alignment, with the principal changes concentrated elsewhere along the route. The Lower Section adopts a more sinuous alignment as it ascends the toe slopes before continuing generally along the true left of the unnamed stream. The Mid-Upper Section continues to largely follow an existing access track below the ridgeline, with localised deviations where required to maintain a suitable road grade.

The project designer has advised that, where rock conditions allow, steeper 4(v):1(h) rock cuts may be adopted, reducing the horizontal extent and height of some cut batters. Final batter geometry and the management location for the excess cut have not been confirmed in the information provided (this being a matter for the detailed design). This conclusion assumes final batter treatment is optimised during detailed design to remain within the assessed road corridor and that excess cut is managed within an otherwise assessed or authorised disturbance area without creating additional disposal landforms. As with the current application, disturbed soil batters should remain subject to revegetation with grass or surrounding indigenous vegetation where practicable. The assessment also assumes that any localised widening, laybys, edge protection or other road-safety treatments required through detailed design can be accommodated without materially expanding the assessed road corridor.

In addition to the road alignment, a lookout is proposed near chainage 9,800. The lookout comprises a 30 m × 10 m platform positioned above the road at an elevation of approximately 930 masl. From this location, views will extend north-east towards Battery Hill and across the Shepherds Creek catchment, including the Shepherds ELF approximately 1 km away and at a lower elevation. These views will remain framed by the broader mountain backdrop of the Pisa Range beyond.

Landscape Effects Assessment

The landscape context and values relevant to Ardgour Rise remain as previously described. The route traverses the central western slopes of the Dunstan Mountains ONL through an area characterised by open mountain slopes, modified grassland and tussock vegetation, existing farm and four-wheel-drive tracks, and a strong sense of openness and remoteness. The road generally remains below the principal skyline, including where the Lower-Mid Section traverses the side slopes of the unnamed stream catchment, and does not alter the broader mountain crest or overall legibility of the Dunstan Mountains.

The current alignment will nevertheless result in a greater degree of physical modification than the November 2025 design. The more sinuous alignment and materially greater volume of cut will increase the extent and duration of exposed earthworks during construction, particularly through the Lower-Mid and Upper sections. Locally, cut faces, fill batters, construction machinery and the newly formed road will create a more pronounced engineered line across the mountain slopes and may disturb a greater area of existing landcover.

The gentler vertical alignment is beneficial in road engineering terms and may reduce the appearance of abrupt climbing sections. In landscape terms, however, that benefit is counterbalanced by the longer and more winding horizontal route and increased cutting. Where additional earthworks are proposed, effects should be managed by minimising disturbance to native vegetation as far as practicable and reinstating redundant sections of the existing four-wheel-drive track using suitable native vegetation and salvaged landcover material obtained from the expanded road footprint, where practicable. Notwithstanding these localised changes, the scale, formation and overall character of the road will remain commensurate with existing remote high-country vehicle access within the Dunstan Mountains.

Within the context of the central western area of the Dunstan Mountains, construction effects are assessed as remaining **moderate adverse**. This acknowledges the noticeable physical and experiential change associated with construction within an ONL, while also recognising that the works remain a relatively narrow linear intervention, generally seen below the skyline and within a corridor already influenced by farm and four-wheel-drive access. As the road formation is completed and disturbed batters are stabilised and revegetated, effects are expected to continue to reduce to **low-moderate adverse** over the longer term.

The proposed lookout will create a small additional area of physical modification adjoining the road formation. This will locally widen the disturbed footprint but remains closely associated with the road, below the principal skyline and within the same broader landscape setting. Subject to the final platform earthworks and edge treatment being integrated with the adjoining road formation, I consider this to represent a small incremental landscape effect that does not alter the overall landscape effects identified above.

At the scale of the wider Dunstan Mountains ONL, the current amendment does not materially alter my existing conclusions. The principal mountain landform, skyline, broad open character and transition through Thomsons Saddle remain legible, and the road continues to provide vehicle access which occupies a small part of the much larger ONL. While the increased earthworks will make the proposed road more locally apparent from some locations within the Site, this does not materially change the broader landscape pattern or the overall values of the ONL. In perceptual terms, construction activity will temporarily reduce the existing sense of remoteness, naturalness and quiet along the route. Once construction is complete, the road will remain a more formal and locally legible element than the existing farm tracks. Its function, however, remains consistent with maintaining vehicle access through this part of the Dunstan Mountains and toward Thomsons Saddle. The current amendment does not materially alter the broader effects on the landscape values associated with access and movement through the Dunstan Mountains, although the increased earthworks result in a greater local physical effect than previously assessed.

Visual Effects

Based on review of the revised alignment and cross-sections, the current alignment remains within the same broad visual catchment. On that basis, the range of distant receiving locations is not expected to materially change. The more sinuous alignment and increased cut may make portions of the road formation more legible in closer and oblique views during construction.

Views from Bendigo Terrace, Ardgour Road and associated dwellings will continue to be moderated by distance, viewing angle and intervening foothill and terrace landform. The closest and clearest views will continue to occur from users moving through the immediate road corridor and from adjoining elevated public land, including the Ardgour Conservation Area. From these locations, exposed cut faces and construction activity will be more apparent than the completed and rehabilitated road.

Overall, visual effects from public viewpoints are assessed as no greater than **low-moderate adverse** during construction, reducing to **low adverse** following completion and rehabilitation. Effects from private viewpoints are expected to remain no greater than **low adverse** during construction, reducing to **very low to low adverse** once disturbed batters are rehabilitated. The increased earthworks therefore increase the local physical prominence of the road but do not create a materially wider visual effect than previously assessed.

The proposed lookout will provide a deliberate stopping point from which users will obtain elevated views north-east towards Battery Hill and across the Shepherds Creek catchment. The Shepherds ELF will be visible at a distance of approximately 1 km and at a lower elevation, with the wider Pisa Range forming the mountain backdrop beyond. As the lookout is itself a proposed component of the Project rather than an existing public viewpoint, I have not treated users of the lookout as a separate existing viewing audience for the purposes of determining visual effects. The lookout will nevertheless provide a location from which mining activity will be readily apparent within a broader mountain panorama.

Conclusion

The revised Ardgour Rise alignment has been driven principally by road gradient requirements and continued avoidance of identified ecological constraints. The resulting alignment is more sinuous and, on the quantities provided, involves materially more cut and a greater combined volume of cut and fill. Nevertheless, the alignment remains within the same broad corridor and does not materially alter the broader visual catchment or the key landform and skyline values of the Dunstan Mountains ONL.

On balance, the overall construction landscape effect will remain **moderate adverse** at the local scale, reducing to **low-moderate adverse** as the road is completed and rehabilitation establishes. Public visual effects remain no greater than **low-moderate adverse** during construction and **low adverse** following rehabilitation. The current amendment therefore does not change the broader conclusions reached for Ardgour Rise, but it does introduce a greater local physical effect in some areas. This conclusion assumes final batter treatment and excess cut should be optimised as part of detailed design to remain contained within the assessed road corridor and ensure exposed batters remain subject to rehabilitation. Any additional disposal landforms or material expansion of the road footprint should be reviewed from a landscape perspective.

Recommendations

The landscape mitigation previously recommended remains appropriate to the amended alignment. Proposed Condition 44 (D.01) already provides for minimising disturbance to native vegetation, recovery and reuse of native tussock and seed where practicable, and prompt revegetation of exposed fill batters.

In addition, redundant sections of existing four-wheel-drive track should be reinstated using salvaged native landcover material from the expanded road footprint where practicable to integrate with surrounding landcover.

