

**Specialist Response Template – Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 –
Substantive Application**

Technical Specialist Memo – LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

To:	Colin Hopkins – Lead Planner & Doug Fletcher – Principal Project Lead
From:	Simon John Cocker
Qualifications & Relevant Experience:	I hold the qualification(s) of: M.Phil Landscape Design from the University of Newcastle Upon Tyne, and have 35 years of experience in landscape architecture. I am a Registered member of Tuia Pito Ora / New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects. I have prepared expert evidence and technical assessments for resource consent applications, plan changes, and notices of requirement for designation and have appeared as an expert witness before consent authorities and the Environment Court on multiple occasions.
Preparation in Accordance with the Code of Conduct:	I confirm that I have read the Environment Court Practice Note 2023 – Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses, and have complied with it in the preparation of this memorandum. I also agree to follow the Code when participating in any subsequent processes, such as expert conferencing, directed by the Panel. I confirm that the opinions I have expressed are within my area of expertise and are my own, except where I have stated that I am relying on the work or evidence of others, which I have specified.
Date:	19 September 2025

1.0 APPLICATION DESCRIPTION

Application and property details

Fast-Track project name:	Drury Quarry Expansion – Sutton Block
Fast-Track application number:	FTAA-2503-1037 (EPA reference) + BUN60449474 (Auckland Council reference)
Site address:	121 MacWhinney Drive, Drury; 1189 Ponga Road, Drury; 2113 and Ponga Road, Papakura

2.0 Executive Summary / Principal Issues

The landholding includes four SEAs, and an area Outstanding Natural Landscape that overlays the northern portion of the Site. The project will mainly take place within the Special Purpose - Quarry Zone and that the wider Landholding allows for some separation between quarry activities and neighbouring residential viewing audiences. Activities in relation to mineral extraction are anticipated and the existing Drury Quarry has been in operation on the Landholding for approximately 80 years and imparts a strong influence on the landscape.

With regard to the Rural Zones / Mixed Rural Zone, the Project will occur across three areas with this zoning to the north west, north east and south east of the proposed quarry expansion. Since these areas interface with the Special Purpose - Quarry zone and the influence of the quarry will impact on the rural character and amenity values associated with neighbouring rural zones, where quarry activities occur in adjoining areas.

In discussing natural character effects, the LEA identifies a number of effected watercourses and wetlands and determines that these will experience a range of effects from Very low to Moderate. Taking into account offsetting and compensation, it determines that the level of effect will be managed and alongside the underlying zoning (special purpose – quarry), the adverse effects will be Very Low.

With regard to landscape effects, the LEA states that the proposal will avoid infringing on the ONL and notes that the subject Site does not demonstrate or contribute to the “sequence of mature and regenerating native forest”. It concludes that the adverse effect on the values of the ONL will be Low.

In addressing the level of effect on the values of the Kaarearea Pā, the LEA states that this feature adjoins the Special Purpose Quarry Zone, and this zone forms a part of its visual context. In conjunction with the proposed mitigation planting, it assesses the effect on the values of this feature to be Low-moderate adverse.

The LEA assesses the level of effect on the hydrological features and imbued values to be Low-moderate, whilst the level of adverse effect on vegetation are assessed as Low-moderate adverse.

The LEA identifies a number of view audiences that will experience an elevated level of adverse visual effect. These include:

For viewer group 4, where the level of effect will vary over the proposed stages of extraction with the level of effect peaking at Moderate during Stage 4 (where cut faces are most visible), before reducing to Low in Stage 5.

For viewer group 6 the level of effect is expected to increase to Low-moderate through Stage 2, then remaining at this level until Stage 5 when the level will increase to Moderate.

Viewer group 7 will experience a Low level of effect, increasing over Stage 2 to Low- moderate, and then peaking at Moderate during Stage 5.

The highest level of adverse effect is predicted for viewer group 8 where the level of effect is expected to fluctuate from Moderate-high in Stage 1, to Low-moderate in Stage 2, and then rise again to Moderate- High in Stages 3 and 4 and 5.

3.0 Documents Reviewed

- Boffa Miskell Ltd. Sutton Block Expansion. Landscape Effects Assessment. 24 March 2025;
- Boffa Miskell Ltd. Sutton Block Expansion. Attachment F: Fast Track - Auckland Council Response Supplementary Information August 2025;
- Memorandum from Boffa Miskell Ltd dated 1 August 2025 re s67 Request No. 1 (Parks Planning);
- General conditions – Drury Quarry Sutton Block (Ver. 12 August 2025).
- General conditions – Drury Quarry Sutton Block (Ver. 17 September 2025)

4.0 Additional Reasons for Consent Not included in AEE

n/a

5.0 Specialist Assessment

Introduction

Two site visits were undertaken, the first on 26 June 2025 when the site was observed from the wider landscape, and the second on 28 July 2025 to the site itself.

My review has been based on guidance provided in Te Tangi a te Manu / Aotearoa NZ Landscape Guidelines¹

A peer reviewer will typically review the assessment report, make a site visit, and write a short report confirming (or not) that the assessment:

- *follows a sound methodology and method for the purpose*
- *considers the relevant statutory provisions and any relevant ‘other matters’*
- *accurately describes, interprets, and evaluates the relevant landscape and natural character and values*
- *analyses the effects on landscape and natural character values in a balanced and reasoned way*
- *reaches credible findings supported by reasons*
- *makes appropriate recommendations with respect to findings*

Methodology and method

The Landscape Effects Assessment (LEA) explains, in section 2.0, that it was undertaken reference to the Te Tangi A Te Manu, and Quality Planning Landscape Guidance Note. Further it states that the assessment was undertaken from a Te Ao Pakeha world view using the terminology of Te Tangi a te Manu.

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

The LEA includes a ZTV analysis and visual simulations. The methodology for preparing the former is explained in section 2.1.5 and the LEA states that the visual simulations were prepared in accordance with NZILA Best Practice Guideline for Visual Simulations

The assessment includes a methodology and outline of the effects ratings used in Appendix 1.

I am of the opinion that an appropriate methodology has been adopted and executed in the preparation of the LEA.

Statutory provisions and any relevant ‘other matters’

The relevant statutory matters are identified and discussed in section 3.0 of the ALE and notes that the assessment criteria which deal with visual amenity (H28.7.2) are of particular relevance since these require consideration of whether the activity in close proximity to dwellings mitigates significant adverse visual amenity effects through screening and landscaping

It also notes the four identified SEAs located within the landholding, and the Outstanding Natural Landscape that overlays the northern portion of the Site.

Under ‘other relevant matters’, a review of material relevant to the consideration of cultural landscape values is appropriately addressed in section 2.1.3, with deeds of settlement and cultural values assessments listed.

Assessing the proposal against the relevant provisions, the LEA notes that project will mainly take place within the Special Purpose - Quarry Zone and that the wider Landholding allows for some separation between quarry activities and neighbouring residential viewing audiences.

Activities in relation to mineral extraction are anticipated and the existing Drury Quarry has been in operation on the Landholding for approximately 80 years and imparts a strong influence on the landscape.

With regard to the Rural Zones / Mixed Rural Zone, the Project will occur across three areas with this zoning to the north west, north east and south east of the proposed quarry expansion. Since these areas interface with the Special Purpose - Quarry zone and the influence of the quarry will impact on the rural character and amenity values associated with neighbouring rural zones, where quarry activities occur in adjoining areas.

The LEA opines that the rural character and amenity values of these three separate portions will change and therefore not reflect the anticipated characteristics and qualities associated with the rural zones.

I concur with the above opinions.

Description and interpretation of landscape and natural character and values

The existing environment is described in detail in sections 4.1 – 4.3 and correctly – in my view – describes how, whilst farmland characterises most areas to the east of the Landholding, lifestyle blocks have established in the area. Further, to the west, between the Landholding and State Highway 1, an area of land is in a period of transition from a rural land use to one supporting industry (light and heavy industry), as well as residential

developments. To the north west of the Landholding, Future Urban Zone land exists indicating future development radiating out from Papakura town centre.

The LEA correctly identifies that, in addition to the Landholding's Special Purpose zoning, another quarry exists to the north (Winstones Symonds Hill and Hunua Quarries), in which its surrounding context is also characterised by large lifestyle blocks and areas of pasture and vegetation

Natural character (with reference to the Biosearches Assessment of Ecological Effects) is evaluated in some detail in section 4.4, and – in section 4.5 – the landscape character is accurately evaluated. Section 4.0 helpfully includes consideration of cultural landscape values as section 4.1.

Effects on landscape and natural character values

The LEA explains that the effects considered include those that can occur in relation to changes to landscape attributes and values, character and visual amenity and confirms that the effects described are considered with the proposed mitigation measures implemented.

It states that in relation to this Project the degree to which landscape and visual effects are generated by a development depends on a number of factors, which include:

- The degree to which the Project contrasts, or is consistent, with the qualities of the surrounding landscape.
- The proportion of the Project that is visible, determined by the observer's position relative to the objects viewed.
- The distance and foreground context within which the Project is viewed.
- The area or extent of visual catchment from which the Project is visible.
- The number of viewers, their location and situation (static or moving) in relation to the view.
- The backdrop and context within which the Project is viewed.
- The predictable and likely known future character of the locality.
- The anticipated outcomes sought in the statutory provisions, including zoning.
- The quality of the resultant landscape, its aesthetic values and contribution to the wider landscape character to the area

I consider this approach and understanding to be appropriate.

Natural character effects

In assessing natural character effects on streams and wetland, the LEA determines that the resulting effects for Stream 1, 2b and the upper and middle portions of Stream 2, will be Moderate-High as but notes that much of the length of these streams are within the special purpose – quarry zone, with the exception of the upper portion of Stream 2 which is within the Mixed Rural Zone.

I concur with this assessment and observation and with the conclusion that, with the underlying characteristics of the zone's future environment, together with offsetting and compensation (within and beyond the site) adverse effects are anticipated to reduce to Low for Stream 1, 2b and the mid portion of 2 and Moderate for the upper portion of 2.

The LEA assesses the adverse effect on Streams 1b, 7 and 9 as being Low, and with the underlying Special Purpose Quarry zoning affecting Streams 1b and 7, together with offsetting and compensation measures, effects are considered to be Very Low.

With regard to Streams 4, 5 and 6 the LEA determines that the effects on natural character will be Low-Moderate. Taking the Special Purpose – Quarry zone in to account, which defines the anticipated future characteristics of this area, together with proposed offsetting and compensation, these effects are considered to reduce to Very Low.

I concur with the above assessed levels of adverse effect.

Turning to the effect on wetlands, the LEA determines that Wetland 2a north has the highest degree of natural character in both the biophysical attributes (considered Moderate) and experiential attributes (considered Moderate-Low) and that the removal of this wetland will result in Moderate adverse natural character effects. As a result of offsetting and compensation the level of effect will be managed and alongside the underlying zoning (special purpose – quarry), adverse effects are considered to be Very Low.

With regard to the other wetlands, the LEA assesses the level of adverse effect to be Low-Moderate, and with offsetting, compensation and the underlying zoning further considered, adverse effects are anticipated to be Very Low.

I concur with these above assessed levels of effect.

Landscape Effects

I concur with the LEA when it states that the proposal will inherently change from a primarily grazed pastoral farming landscape with indigenous areas of bush, to a quarry land use. But that the change will take place in the context of an existing quarry landscape which is linked both physically and visually by the northern portion of the existing quarry,

Further, I agree that the associative and perceptual understanding of the Site has to be considered in the context of the existing quarry activities although the expansion, particularly beyond the northern and eastern ridges will mean the activity will impact a different landscape catchment which includes and is influenced by attributes of greater value.

The LEA appropriately considers the various elements of ‘landscape’ individually. Under that theme, it determines that the resulting effect on landscape character will be adverse moderate. With regard to the adverse effect on topographical values, it assesses the level of effect as Low – moderate. In reaching this determination, it recognises that there will be a localised effect on topography, but notes that the Pā feature and Ōpaheke will not be affected. Discussing the proposed screening bund, the LEA recommends that this feature be contoured to achieve a natural repose to tie with the surrounding contours. This feature, and its character is illustrated in the Appendix F supplementary visual simulations.

The proposal will avoid infringing on the ONL and the LEA notes that the subject Site does not demonstrate or contribute to the “sequence of mature and regenerating native forest”. It concludes that the adverse effect on the values of the ONL will be Low.

In addressing the level of effect on the values of the Kaarearea Pā, the LEA states that this feature adjoins the Special Purpose Quarry Zone, and this zone forms a part of its visual context. In conjunction with the proposed mitigation planting, it assesses the effect on the values of this feature to be Low-moderate adverse.

On pages 32 and 33, the LEA assesses the level of effect on the hydrological features and imbued values to be Low-moderate, whilst the level of adverse effect on vegetation are assessed as Low-moderate adverse.

I am of the opinion that the above assessed level of adverse landscape effect are accurate, and the recommended mitigation measures are appropriate and supported.

Visual effects

The visual catchment and audiences are accurately described and identified in section 6.0. Visual effects are assessed in section 7.3 and helpfully summarised as Table 4 (pages 46 and 47).

For viewer group 4 (*Residents and road users along low elevation north facing slopes of Ararimu Road (e.g. in vicinity of Ramarama school, visitors to Ramarama school)*), the LEA determines that the level of effect will vary over the proposed stages of extraction with the level of effect peaking at Moderate during Stage 4 (where cut faces are most visible), before reducing to Low in Stage 5.

With respect to viewer group 6 (*Residents along elevated north facing slopes of Pratts Road, Otto Road, Ararimu Road, Hiwinui Road, Fausett Road and the elevated portions of Macted Road*), the LERA describes the level of effect as increasing to Low-moderate through Stage 2, then remaining at this level until Stage 5 when the level will increase to Moderate.

Similarly, the effects experienced by viewer group 7 (*Road users along SH1, Residents and road users west of SH1 in the predominately lowland agricultural areas (e.g. Great South Road)*) will experience a Low level of effect, increasing over Stage 2 to Low- moderate, and then peaking at Moderate during Stage 5.

The highest level of adverse effect is predicted for viewer group 8 (*Residents and road users along Sonja Drive, Laurie Drive and Ponga Road to the north of the site*), where the level of effect is expected to fluctuate from Moderate-high in Stage 1, to Low-moderate in Stage 2, and then rise again to Moderate- High in Stages 3 and 4 and 5.

The effect on these individuals was the subject of a s67 request which sought additional visual simulations and cross sections to better understand the relationship between the proposal and this audience.

I am of the opinion that the above assessed levels of adverse visual effect are accurate.

A s67 request generated by Auckland Parks sought additional information on potential adverse visual effects from surrounding identified public open spaces. The response included amended ZTV analysis with the specific reserves identified and a site specific open space assessment. The assessment determined that, at most the potential adverse visual amenity effect on the identified spaces would be Very low. I concur with this assessment and determination.

Comment on Proposed Conditions

The relevant conditions are 31 and 32. I recommend three recommendations for minor amendments to the wording of condition 32, with additional wording underlined below.

31. The objective of the Landscape and Visual Mitigation and Management Plan (LVMMMP) is to ensure that the ongoing landscape mitigation avoids, remedies or mitigates the actual and potential adverse landscape and visual effect of the Project where practicable.

32. The LVMMMP must include:

- (a) Details of the proposed planting types and specific locations to achieve the screening proposed, including identification of relevant staging of mitigation works;*
- (b) Details of the removal of the pine trees located along the western extent of the Project design;*
- (c) Buffer planting of approximately 15 m wide will be established along the western extent of the Project design following the removal of pine trees. This buffer planting must consist of a mix of exotic and native tree species consistent with those recommended in the LVA referenced in Condition 1;*
- (d) A bund will be progressively formed and established along the northern extent of the pit during Stage 1 and must remain in place until the commencement of Stage 5. The bund landform is to be graded such that it reflects and integrates with the surrounding contours for the duration of its existence;*
- (e) Buffer planting between the northern toe of the bund and the neighbouring Outstanding Natural Landscape (ONL) must be established following the completion of the bund. Buffer planting must consist of suitable exotic species consistent with those recommended in the LVA referenced in Condition 1;*
- (f) Buffer planting of indigenous trees must be interplanted near the crest of the newly formed eastern ridge (proximate to the pit edge). Buffer planting must consist of suitable indigenous species consistent with those recommended in the LVA referenced in Condition 1;*
- (g) Indigenous ecological mitigation planting to the south of the quarry pit east of Kaarearea Paa should incorporate some quick growing indigenous species to provide screening to views from the south and south west;*
- (h) Details of the alignment and type of any fencing proposed, and;*
- (i) The implemented planting shall be monitored and maintained for the duration of the Project.*

The latest iteration of the conditions accepted all but the suggested change to 32(h) above. This last recommendation was not accepted on the basis that the change was considered unnecessarily onerous and goes beyond what is strictly necessary to manage potential effects. I accept this rationale.

6.0 Section 67 Information Gap

I have identified that there are no section 67 information gaps.

Information gap	Nature of deficiency	Decision-making impact	Risk / uncertainty created
n/a			

7.0 Recommendation

I am of the opinion that the above referenced documents reach credible findings which are supported by reasons and make appropriate recommendations with respect to those findings.

I am supportive of the proposal from a landscape perspective.

8.0 Proposed Conditions

I have previously provided comment on the conditions where they apply to my area of expertise and I am accepting of the most recent draft of condition (17 September 2025).

9.0 Supporting Documents