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Comments on a Substantive Application under section 53 of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024: Landscape and Visual Assessment

Fast-track project name	Mt Welcome, Pukerua Bay, Porirua
Fast-track application no.	FTAA-2603-1181
PCC reference	RCO26120

Technical area	Landscape and Visual Assessment
Date	30 July 2026
Author	Andrew Gray - Landscape Architect (BLA, B. Hort)
Statement of expertise	I am employed as a Landscape Architect in the Infrastructure Group, Parks Team of the Porirua City Council. I hold the degree of Bachelor of Landscape Architecture (Honours) from Lincoln University, Canterbury and a Bachelor of Horticulture from Massey University, Palmerston North. I am a Registered Member of the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects and past Executive committee member of the Institute. I have over 30 years work experience as a Landscape Architect in NZ.
Code of conduct	I confirm that I have read and agree to comply with the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses contained in the Environment Court Practice Note 2023. This technical memorandum has been prepared in accordance with that Code. Unless I state otherwise, the opinions I express are within my area of expertise, and I have not omitted to consider material facts that might alter or detract from the opinions that I express. My employer, Porirua City Council, has agreed to me preparing this report in accordance with the Code of Conduct.
Documents considered	Appendix 21 - Landscape and Visual Effects Assessment Appendix 22 - Masterplan and Landscape Urban Design Strategy Appendix 23 - Landscape and Ecology Plans parts A & B Appendix 30-32 SH59 Proposed Contours

Technical Review Comments

1. Summary

In principle I agree with the main findings of the Landscape and Visual Assessment (LVEA) findings and conclusions provided by the applicant's consultant landscape architect.

The key finding of the LVEA are:

- (1) Council changed the zoning of the Site to enable greenfield medium density residential development and a neighbourhood commercial centre.
- (2) There is a small viewing catchment for the Site and for most of those who can see the Site, their views are either (a) only of portions of the Site or (b) transient or short-term views.
- (3) While the site has natural and amenity values, the parts of the site that are proposed to be developed have not been identified as a Special Amenity Landscape (SAL) or an Outstanding Natural Feature or Landscape (ONFL) in the PDP; nor is it identified as being within the landward extent of the coastal environment.
- (4) The proposed earthworks will strongly contrast to the current greenfield character of the site and there will be a reduction of the Site's natural character values, but such changes are anticipated by the Porirua District Plan's (PDP) provisions.
- (5) The Visual effects of the development area will range from Very low to Low-Moderate.

2. Information gaps

The key aspect that has been overlooked by the submitted LVEA is the impact of the earthworks required for the formation of the entrance into the development on SH59. The proposed roundabout results in the removal and loss of existing native vegetation and tall cut faces orientated towards the State Highway. The cut faces and loss of vegetation are shown in **Figure 1** below.

This is a significant omission as, while it is outside the applicant's ownership, the earthworks are arising because of the development and are included within the Fast Track resource consent application.

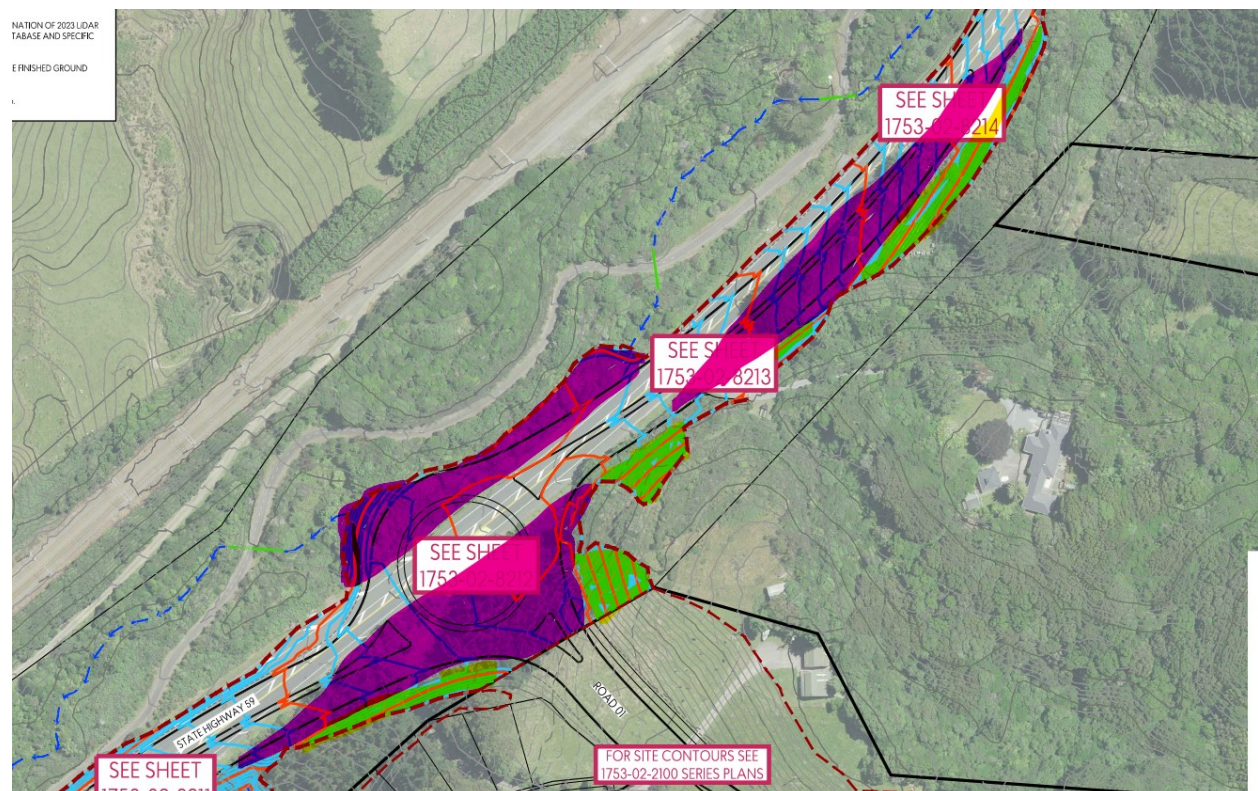


Figure 1: Proposed works within SH59 corridor.

Purple highlights = loss of vegetation and Green highlights = cut faces

The drawings contained in Appendix 30-35 - 1753-02-8300-R2-SH59-Roading, show areas of 'grass berm' and 'batter slopes / Landscaped Area'. However, these do not include large areas of the batter

slopes facing the road reserve. Drawing 8302 states in relation to roundabout itself that '*Landscaping to be confirmed at next phase of design*'.

The affected SH59 land is in part zoned Future Urban Zone (FUZ) in the PDP. The PDP includes the following relevant objective for FUZ:

FUZ-02 Character and amenity values of the Future Urban Zone

The Future Urban Zone supports appropriate rural use and development, and maintains the character and amenity values of the General Rural Zone until such time as it is rezoned for urban purposes.

No commentary has been provided in the LVEA as to whether the proposed vegetation removal and earthworks will maintain the character and amenity values of the General Rural Zone. Nor does the LVEA address how the visual effects arising from these changes will be mitigated. The table contained in section 4.17 of the LVEA report briefly covers SH59 and notes:

The vegetation along the boundary of the Site and the highway reserve land would partially or completely block views of the Site. Viewpoint Two would be comparable to views of the Site when travelling north along State Highway 59 and the author therefore addressed the potential effects under that viewpoint.

This is true for the majority of SH59, except for the entrance where the existing vegetation is being removed and reasonably large cut faces (up to 12 metres high) are being formed which open up views into the site.

The other aspect that is of concern is that the mitigation planting within the SH59 corridor to visually remedy the cut faces and vegetation loss is not defined. Neither the current Masterplan and Landscape Urban Design Strategy document attached to the application at Appendix 22, nor the Landscape and Ecology Plans address the SH59 land. The only reference to this part of the proposed development in terms of planting and landscape effects mitigation is on the plan below which has a label which states "*proposed roundabout planting to be considered separately*".

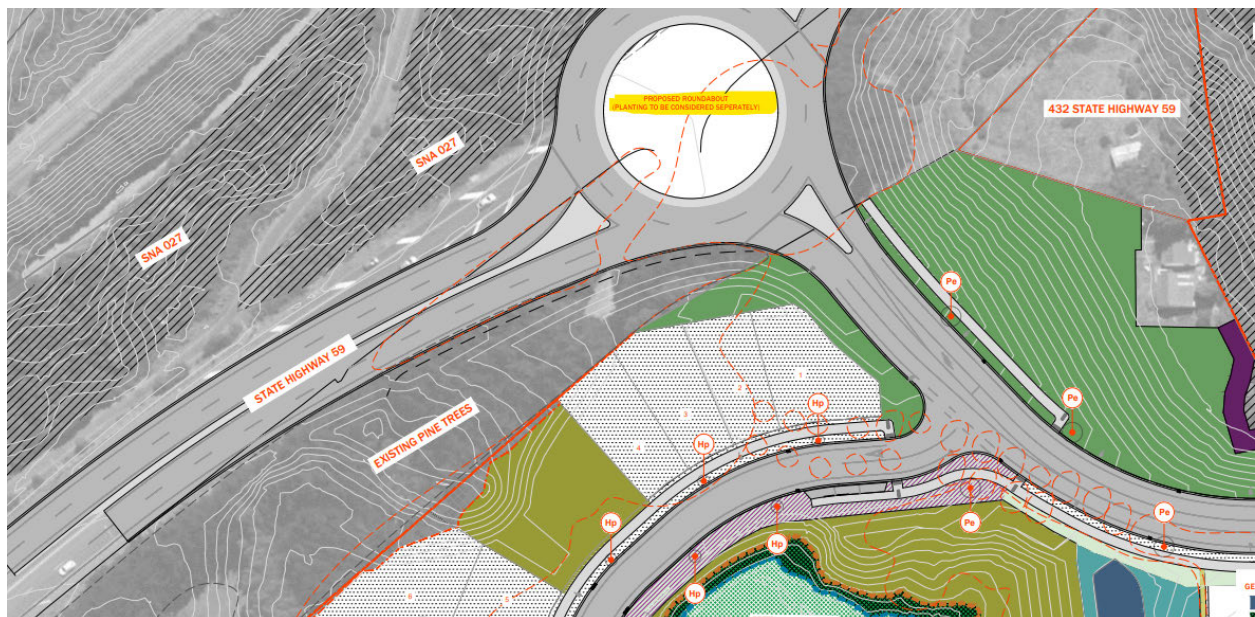


Figure 2: LEP plan showing that the planting proposals do not include the SH59 road reserve (highlight added)

Source: Appendix 23 - Landscape and Ecology Plans Part A, drawing L2.10

Given the potential visual impacts on users of a State Highway at relatively close proximity and the policy direction in DEV-NG-P2-2, I consider that this area is worthy to be a viewpoint considered by the application in the LVEA.

The LVEA references an excerpt from the PDP policy DEV-NG-P2 which addresses subdivision in the Northern Growth Development Area. The relevant part of the policy is set out below (emphasis added):

Provide for subdivision in accordance with the Northern Growth Development Area Structure Plan, and where the design and layout of the subdivision:

1. *Integrates the topographical, natural and physical characteristics, constraints and opportunities of the Development Area;*
2. *Minimises landscape and visual effects of development both within the site **and on views of the site from transport corridors**, the existing Pukerua Bay urban area, and Whenua Tapu cemetery, through:*
 - a. *Minimising earthworks and the modification of landform where practicable;*
 - b. *Integrating the transport network with the existing landform to the extent practicable;*
 - c. ***Providing landscaping within road corridors;***
 - d. *Creating open space linkages and networks; and*
 - e. ***Retaining existing indigenous vegetation;***

[...]

The Northern Growth Development Area anticipated an entrance in this area as shown on the Structure Plan contained in *DEV-NG-Figure 1 Northern Growth Development Area Structure Plan*. However, I consider that the lack of mitigation plans for the SH59 road reserve is not meeting the requirements of policy DEV-NG-P2 identified above.

3. Areas of Agreement

The provision of the ZTVs (Zones of Theoretical Views) in the LVEA (Landscape, Visual Effects Assessment) appendix 21 b) assists informing the visual impact beyond the site.

These do suggest that the housing at the end of Gray Street could have views to the Site. I considered whether this is an additional viewpoint that should also be addressed in the LVEA. but I note that the report has covered this matter at point 4.17 and I concur with the findings.

Overall, the proposed development is balancing a reasonable level of development that protects aspects of the natural character of the Site's landform given the Medium Density Residential Zone.



Figure 3: Birds eye view of post development supplied by applicant.

I agree that over time the retained open space landscapes will transform from grazed pasture to more woody vegetation cover, which will have higher natural character vegetation values compared to the present agricultural grasses.

I consider that, from a landscape and visual amenity perspective, the proposal generally aligns with the broader development concept for the Site that is set out in Northern Growth Development Area chapter of the PDP and the associated Structure Plan. The proposed roads, medium density residential areas, neighbourhood centre area, and freshwater management areas are all generally in the vicinity of where they are shown on the Structure Plan.

In principle, I agree with the main findings of the Landscape and Visual Assessment (LVEA) findings and conclusions provided by the applicant's consultant landscape architect.

4. Matters in contention.

The main matter in contention is the area around the SH59 entrance within the NZTA road reserve where the applicant is modifying the landform. As addressed above, there is lack of any information on how the visual impacts upon views along this transport corridor will be mitigated.

5. Proposed conditions

I note that the proposed conditions in *Appendix 07 - Proposed Conditions of Consent* include a requirement at land use condition 32 for details of the 'final' site intersection connection to SH59 to be provided for certification. This condition does not address landscaping within the SH59 road reserve.

I consider that additional consent conditions should be provided to address the visual mitigation of the entrance to the site and the associated cut batters within the State Highway 59 (SH59) road corridor. Particular attention should be given to remedying any loss of native vegetation around the Taupo Stream on the north-west side of SH59 by the proposed entrance intersection and any resulting cut faces, as well as remedying the tall cut batters faces created on the south-east side of SH59 for forming the entrance into Mount Welcome and maintaining the character and amenity values of this area in the General Rural Zone. Any proposed landscaping will need to be developed in conjunction with NZTA as the road controlling authority.

6. Conclusion

I agree with the main findings of the LVEA. The key points are:

- (1) Council have changed the zoning of the Site to enable greenfield medium density residential development and a neighbourhood commercial centre.
- (2) There is a small viewing catchment for the Site and for most of those who can see the Site, their views are either (a) only of portions of the Site or (b) transient or short-term views.
- (3) While the site has natural and amenity values, the parts of the site that are proposed to be developed have not been identified as a Significant Amenity Landscape (SAL) or an Outstanding Natural Feature or Landscape (ONFL) in the PDP; nor is it identified as being within the landward extent of the coastal environment.
- (4) The proposed earthworks to form the building platforms and roads will strongly contrast to the current greenfield and there will be a lowering of the Site's natural character values, but such changes are anticipated by the PDP provisions.