

Resource Consent Application

Hunter Subdivision

50 Kalaugher Road

Geraldine



Landscape Assessment

Prepared By

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Chris Glasson is a qualified Landscape Architect with over 30 years in both the private and public sectors. He has the qualifications of BA, Dip.LA, and is both a Fellow and Registered member of NZILA. He has been director of Chris Glasson Landscape Architects Ltd for 25 years, based in Christchurch, but having undertaken work in China and Malaysia, and Qatar where the company has an office.
- 1.2 The company has undertaken landscape assessments as part of resource consent applications for subdivisions throughout the South Island.
- 1.3 Our role has been to undertake a landscape assessment for the site and to ensure that the proposed subdivision becomes integrated with its surroundings so as to reduce any potential impact.

2.0 THE PROPOSAL

- 2.1 G R K and K D Hunter wish to subdivide Lot 1 DP 324902 into two allotments at 50 Kalaugher Road, Geraldine. The land is currently zoned Rural 4 and the proposed activity is discretionary under the Timaru Council.
- 2.2 Proposed Lot 1 has an area of 4.98ha including the existing dwelling and driveway. The proposed Lot 2 has an area of 1.69ha and includes a proposed dwelling at the southwest end of the allotment.

3.0 THE GERALDINE CONTEXT

- 3.1 Geraldine is a delightful small rural town with a mixture of open space, built environment and much vegetation. When driving through Geraldine one is never fully aware of the extent of development as it is interspersed with a plentiful supply of park and rural land.

- 3.2 Geraldine lies between the Waihi River and the rolling Geraldine Downs and is pleasantly elevated and backed by a curve of distant mountains. Studded with trees by the early Canterbury settlers in their dream of literally transplanting England to the Antipodes, the town is the centre of a prospering farming region. For tourists enroute to the southern lakes or to Christchurch, they can linger in a relaxed small town enjoying the delights of cottage industry and crafts from the locality. Geraldine is also conveniently located near to the historic runs of Orari, Orari Gorge, Mount Peel, Mesopotamia, Peel Forest Park and other South Canterbury Reserves. It is a delightful location, enjoyed by locals and tourists.
- 3.3 Due to the town's undulating and incised topographical characteristics, one never fully realises the extent of the residential areas. There appears to be pockets of housing, separated by open space, river, deeply incised gullies and a prominent bush covered hillside.
- 3.4 Due to the town's layout, a memorable place has been created; dominated by the river, open space, a curved main road of appropriate dimension, and the overall influence of rural pastoral land on the town's outskirts and not far from the CBD.

4.0 TALBOT FOREST

- 4.1 Talbot Forest adjoins Geraldine on its northwestern flank and southeast of the proposed site. Its presence almost penetrates the town and the hillside on which it is located forms a distinctive and lasting feature of the township. Some large remnant trees still remain of what was a continuous podocarp forest cover on the eastern slopes from the Rangitata to the Waitaki River. The forest was mainly a totara-matai-rimu forest on the slopes with kahikatea stands in the damper areas. The removal of the forest cover for the timber industry was undertaken in the second half of the 19th and early 20th century, until there were only pockets left like Peel and Talbot forests.
- 4.2 The 26ha scenic reserve of Talbot Forest in Geraldine is considered to be a regionally significant natural landscape. It is classified as a lowland podocarp

broadleaved forest remnant fringed by exotic trees and modified vegetation on south facing rolling downlands. The ecosystem consists of emergent podocarps over a mahoe and mixed broadleaf forest. The main plant species are matai, kahikatea, totara, lemonwood, mahoe, pokaka, narrow leaved lacebark and pohuehue vine.

4.3 The most notable fauna include woodpigeon, brown creeper and the NZ long-tailed bat. Within the forest are bushwalks and mown public areas. Its uniqueness is its close proximity to an urban area and it forms a significant backdrop to Geraldine. As a result the forest does face pressure from domestic and noxious animals, stock damage and weedy growth such as old mans beard and blackberry.

4.4 The forest is a well-used community asset and in 1997 the Talbot Forest Working Group was founded to protect and enhance the vegetation remnants. As well, it was considered important to establish corridors of native plants, external of the forest, so as to encourage wildlife movement to the forest. The latter is something that Baybury Holdings is attempting to facilitate in the proposed Plan Change.

5.0 THE GERALDINE DOWNS LANDSCAPE

5.1 The hillside of the site is the most eastern part of the Geraldine Downs which flanks the north and west sides of Geraldine. The downs can be accessed via Tripp, Totara and Davies Streets, adjacent to the site. From these streets the land rises to hill ridges from which long distance views can be gained. This landscape is an undulating ridge-gully scenario and forms the backdrop to Geraldine, offering a very pleasant amenity in which to live. This includes a variety of aspects on these hill slopes, views to the plains and distant mountains, a pastoral land use with large allotments being common throughout.

5.2 The Geraldine Downs landscape is one of mixed land use, although generally of a pastoral grazing type. In certain parts rural residential and rural lifestyle development is a dominant element on the Downs, especially for Pye, Downs, Ribbonwood and Kalaugher Roads. Apart from Talbot Forest only small areas of

indigenous vegetation remain, as most of the vegetation is exotic forestry and shelterbelts.

- 5.3 I am aware of the existence of the Talbot Forest Working Group. That organisation also stated that Talbot Forest is too small to thrive on its own and requires the need for wildlife corridors in the vicinity to ensure a healthy ecology of the forest.
- 5.4 The Timaru District Council report on the Downlands (2008), undertaken by Boffa Miskell, classifies the landscape of the Geraldine Downlands as “a high amenity landscape for its natural landforms, remnant indigenous vegetation and picturesque landscape characteristics”. The report stated that the landscape character and amenity value of the Downs was highly valued by the community even though it was becoming increasingly residential.
- 5.5 While there has been a change to residential character and a loss of rural production in a small part of the Downs there has been habitat enhancement for some developments (P9 of Geraldine Downs - Issues and Opinions document).

6.0 THE SITE

- 6.1 The site, off Kalaugher Road, consists of an east and north facing aspect with the hillside sloping into a gully between Davies Street and the existing house site. The land cover is pastoral grassland with some recently planted native vegetation on the southern boundary and mixed vegetation surrounding the existing house.
- 6.2 Adjacent to the site on the west boundary are poplars and very tall eucalyptus trees.
- 6.3 The site is well off Kalaugher Road and is accessed by a long gravel driveway. An ephemeral damp area exists at the bottom of the site where sedge vegetation is growing.

- 6.4 Views are far ranging to Four Peaks, Mt Peel, Mt Hutt and beyond the Rakaia River, and of Banks Peninsula. There are no immediate houses, apart from the existing house, although numerous houses are visible to the south, mainly along Pye Road.
- 6.5 Proposed Lot 1 consists of the existing house and driveway with substantial mixed native and exotic planting with an overall massed appearance and very well maintained. On this lot there are a number of remnant lacebarks, the subject of a Significant Natural Areas (SNA) study by ecologist Mike Harding.
- 6.6 Proposed Lot 2 is located on the south and slightly elevated side of the whole property. In this location the neighbours eucalypts and poplars preclude views to the west, where to the south and east there are unencumbered views overlooking pasture and houses in Pye Road.

7.0 AMENITY VALUE

- 7.1 Under section 7(c) of the Resource Management Act, regard must be shown for *“the maintenance and enhancement of amenity values”*. Amenity values are defined as:

“those natural or physical qualities and characteristics of an area that contribute to peoples appreciation of pleasantness, aesthetic coherence and recreational attributes.”

- 7.2 Elements that contribute to amenity value in this location include rural open space, long distance views of mountains and plains, pasture, mature trees, and a general informality to the treatment of lifestyle blocks and smaller allotments.
- 7.3 The visual impact of additional features to the landscape can contribute to the maintenance, or otherwise, of the locality’s amenity value. The determinant of this is the effect from various viewpoints.

8.0 VIEWPOINTS ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 For the proposed Hunter site the main public viewpoint is on Davies Street, from the corner of Pye Road to within 50m of Tripp St. This is a distance of approximately 400m. The view is more predominant when travelling or walking in a northerly direction as the view shed is in the north-west sector. The distance to the site is between 1km to 1.3km. In the foreground is pasture and native vegetation in the gully leading up to the slope on which the house will be located. The poplars and eucalypts on the west boundary form a backdrop to the proposed house.
- 8.2 Although no other view of the site can be obtained from a public location, views can be gained from the sections and houses along Pye Road. This is an assumption made when standing on the proposed house site and viewing up to 21 houses located along Pye Road. The distances from these houses to the proposed house site is between 1.3 to 1.5km. There are two houses closer than this (access off Kalaugher Road) although they still retain a view to the north.
- 8.3 The houses in Ribbonwood Road, about 12 of them, do have their view obstructed by the eucalypts to their north, and only about 100 meters distant. The closest of these houses are about 250 metres from the back boundary of the proposed new allotment.
- 8.4 Overall, the views of the proposed house site are from a considerable distance, of a fleeting nature from Davies Street, and the house itself has the ability to become integrated with the landscape.
- 8.5 The location of Davies St, Pye, Ribbonwood and Kalaugher Roads is one of a modified environment. There are isolated remnant native trees on the site and in the locality and a regenerating area of native vegetation on the Keller property but the vegetation on individual allotments generally consists of a mixture of exotic and natives with shelter belts of eucalypts, poplars and conifers. The line of houses along the surrounding roads also contributes to a modified environment with an appealing surrounding amenity value.

- 8.6 While the proposed house will be located on a secondary ridgeline when viewed from Davies Street it does have a backdrop of poplar trees reducing its impact.
- 8.7 One further dwelling will not add any significant effect to the existing landscape character, nor will it diminish the amenity value, especially if it can be integrated with a swathe of native vegetation connecting to existing areas.
- 8.8 The proposed house will become contained and integrated with a backdrop of tall poplar trees, and the dense planting of native vegetation on the south and east sides of the allotment. This planting will assist to screen views of the site from Davies St and from the houses in Pye Road.
- 8.9 The visual effect will be further reduced if the proposed house is of a low profile style i.e. similar to the existing house on Lot 1 which is single storeyed with materials and colours of a recessive quality. In other words, the whole development must be in harmony with the existing context and this in turn will maintain the rural amenity.

9.0 MITIGATION MEASURES

9.1 To reduce any potential visual effect as well as integrating the proposed house into the rural context, the following measures could take place:

- Locate the house on the site, generally as indicated on the surveyor's plan.
- Limit the building height to 5.5m.
- Roof colour to be of low reflectivity and compatible to the existing house.
- Fences to be of a farm type (either timber post and rail or wire).
- Planting to complement the existing planting of mixed native trees.
- Develop a revegetation scheme that connects with the lower and wetland area and adjacent regenerating area to the south-east of the property (see Appendix 1.0 for revegetation).

10.0 ALLOTMENT SIZE

- 10.1 The size of the proposed allotments (4.89ha and 1.69ha) in the Rural 4 Zone is essentially a planning and sewage issue. However, the following is an analysis of how these allotment sizes are manifested in the rural environment.
- 10.2 Generally the size of the rural lifestyle properties on the Downs are between 1 to 10ha, which allows for houses to be integrated with vegetation. The existing allotment of the applicant and those that adjoin it total about 44ha in area, including 5 houses. The critical factors are the house setback from the road, site treatment, and how the development relates to other adjacent allotments in the locality so that an overall harmony occurs.
- 10.3 The proposed allotment 2 will be of a smaller size than most of the surrounding allotments. The important element with this allotment will be the house profile, materials and colours, the long setback from Kalaugher Road, and the revegetation scheme from the gully below the house so that an ecological corridor can be established. The allotment size is capable of absorbing house development within a substantial revegetation scheme.
- 10.4 The allotment sizes along Pye and Downs Roads all have an average of between 1400 to 1500m², and Ribbonwood Road of about 4400m².
- 10.5 It is evident from these average allotment sizes that the proposed two lots fits in-between the residential size of 1400m² and the 10ha lifestyle blocks, a size that is very adequate to maintain and even enhance the amenity value of the area with the addition of an ecological corridor of native vegetation.
- 10.6 The Council's 2008 Geraldine Downs study, currently a discussion document, identified areas capable of absorbing change. The proposed subdivision is outside these areas but on the edge of the "Rural Residential area on Tablelands" (Fig 5 of the Geraldine Downs Study and Appendix 2 of this report), and classified as a "Visually Sensitive Rural Landscape". However, it is close to the line which can also be regarded as being slightly arbitrary, given that the existing house is located in the "Visually Sensitive Rural Landscape."

10.7 The proposed allotment is setback from the existing house and could be considered to 'fit' the site because it is located between houses, like an 'in-fill' situation, and not going beyond existing developments on the Downs. As well, the area of housing south of the existing outer house contains - "the highest density of residential development on the Downs, capable of further development while retaining its strong sense of rural character and amenity", according to the study. It goes onto to say that - "larger allotment sizes can also absorb new development more easily" (page6).

11.0 STATUTORY CONTEXT

11.1 The most relevant objectives and policies of the Timaru District Plan relates to new development in the Rural 4 Zone under section 1.6 of the District Plan.

11.2 In this section the District Plan is concerned about limiting the effects of a development on the rural landscape values. The objective seeks to "protect and enhance the character and amenity of the district's landscapes".

11.3 Policy 1.6.3 (2) states:

"Protect the values of outstanding landscapes, significant amenity landscapes and other hill and high country areas from adverse effects associated with buildings and structures, subdivision, quarrying, tracks and roads and tree planting."

Comment:

11.4 The Geraldine Downs is not an outstanding landscape but could be classified as a significant amenity landscape (Environment Canterbury Landscape Study 1993) under this policy. Matters such as siting, materials, colours and tree planting, all of which the applicant has identified as matters to be addressed.

11.5 The important issue to consider is to maintain a harmony or coherency in the context of the rural environment in which the proposed change may occur. These matters are highlighted in the mitigation measures of assessment.

12.0 CONCLUSION

12.1 As with any development, small or large in the Geraldine Downs it is vital that it fits within the landscape. The landscape of the Downs is of an exposed nature, although much depends on the exact location of each site. The important issues with this proposed house site is that it is adjacent to a modified landscape of existing houses, is within the tablelands part of the Downs and not as exposed as the primary ridges, and that a corridor of native vegetation will be planted to link to existing regenerating vegetation.

13.0 APPENDICES (see also separate A3 Graphic Supplement)

APPENDIX 1.0 - REVEGETATION PROCESS

There are a number of reasons for planting:

- To attract and retain wildlife.
- To re-establish plant communities which were once present in the area.
- To enhance aesthetics.
- For weed suppression purposes.
- Some plantings are multi purpose and may achieve all of the above purposes.

Appropriate Species

Each planting site has a group of species best suited to the site. Typically, there is a moisture gradient from the wetter areas of the riparian strip through the damp areas at the base of the hill slope, and the drier areas further up the slope. The list below is not exhaustive but will be sufficient to establish a framework of vegetation in each of the sites and these species have a proven revegetation record. This will create a functioning ecosystem which will allow the development of more natural communities over time.

Initial Plant Species

broadleaf	lacebark
cabbage tree	lancewood
<i>Carex sp.</i>	lemonwood
coprosma	mahoe
five finger	mapou
flax	marbleleaf
kanuka	matai
kohuhu	totara

Timing

Once planted, the main stresses on plants are the lack of available water, shelter, and frost. Timing of planting can help alleviate some of these stresses, and may also assist in spreading the workload. Autumn plantings allow the establishment of a good root system while there is still some growth, which helps the plant get through the dry summer. However, there could be full exposure to the winter frosts, which could occur in Geraldine. Spring plantings avoid the frost but allow little time for root development before the summer. They can be useful where there is plenty of moisture available. Plants in damp conditions tend not to thrive over the cold of winter. Plantings in any wet areas are

probably best in spring (September). Any plantings on drier sites would benefit from the extra root development which comes from early plantings (after the rains have come in late April/May).

Spacing

Recommended spacing for wet sites is about 2m between plants and, for dry sites about 1.5m.

APPENDIX 2.0 – GERALDINE DOWNS STUDY - POTENTIAL LOCATION FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT (based on Fig5 p27)

