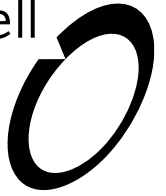


Boffa Miskell





# Commercial Complex, 561 Horotiu Road, Te Kowhai

Landscape and Visual Effects Assessment  
Prepared for Quattro Property Holdings Ltd



## Document Quality Assurance

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Reviewed by:	Andrew Cumberpatch Associate Principal Planner Boffa Miskell Limited	
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# Introduction

## 1.1 Scope of the report

Boffa Miskell Limited (BML) has been engaged by Quattro Property Holdings Ltd in October 2019 to undertake a Landscape and Visual Effects Assessment (LVA) for a proposed commercial complex at 561 Horotiu Road, Te Kowhai (the Site). The Site is zoned Country Living Zone within the Operative Waikato District Plan (the District Plan).

The LVA responds to a section 92 request from Waikato District Council (WDC) that an LVA be prepared as part of the proposed commercial complex consent application to assess landscape and visual impact of the development on the immediate and surrounding environment character.

## 1.2 Assessment Process

This assessment has been undertaken with reference to the Quality Planning Landscape Guidance Note (Boffa Miskell Limited)<sup>1</sup> and its signposts to examples of best practice, including: the UK guidelines for landscape and visual impact assessment<sup>2</sup> and the New Zealand Landscape Institute Guidelines for Landscape Assessment<sup>3</sup>. A full methodology is outlined in **Appendix 1** of this report. In summary, the effects ratings are based upon a seven-point scale which ranges from very low to very high.

## 1.3 Site Visit and Photographic Record

A site visit was undertaken on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> October by Jo Soanes, Landscape Architect. The weather during the site visit was sunny. With variable high cloud and good visibility. A principal focus for the site visit, was to better understand the development in relation to the site and surrounding context. Visits to the immediate local context were also undertaken to gauge the overall visibility of the site from the surrounding landscape.

During the site visit, photographs were taken from the surrounding area as representative of the wider public and private viewing audience. A selection of images is contained within the Graphic Supplement (**Appendix 2**) that complements this report. The site visit did not include access to the surrounding private properties.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.qualityplanning.org.nz/index.php/planning-tools/land/landscape>

<sup>2</sup> Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition, 2013

<sup>3</sup> Best Practice Note Landscape Assessment and Sustainable Management 10.1, NZILA

## 2.0 Existing Environment

### 2.1 Landscape Context

The Site is located within the Waikato District and is located approximately 280 m north of the intersection of Te Kowhai Road and Horotiu Road (**Appendix 2, Figure 1**). The existing environment is predominantly flat with a mixture of rural living and residential properties surrounding the Site, with larger lots on the periphery of Te Kowhai used for farming agricultural purposes. The only significant remnants of native vegetation follow the edge of the tributary stream, approximately 300m west of Site, that flows into the Waipa River which is approximately 2.5km west of Site. The vegetation surrounding the Site is predominately hedgerow planting and specimen trees along street frontages and defining lot boundaries.

Te Kowhai is located 15 km north west of Hamilton and in recent years has seen an increase in rural land to residential subdivision. The area surrounding the village consists of mainly dairy and cattle farms. The village- itself a primary/intermediate school, small dairy/takeaway, fresh vegetable and fruit store, a large park with a playground and skate park, and mechanics shop.

To the north, east and west of the Site is rural-residential living (Country Living Rural Zone), with a residential node to the south. The land to the east has recently been subdivided into rural-residential lots, which are currently under development. To the south, directly adjoining the site, is a large consented café located within a relocated church.

Existing development within Te Kowhai includes use of post and rail fencing, native planting associated with residential development and existing kowhai trees within road verges. These design elements provide context to the rural character of the village.

Horotiu Road is classed as an arterial road under the District Plan. The speed limit has recently been changed to 50 km/h.

### 2.2 Site Description

The Site is located at 561 Horotiu Road, Te Kowhai (**Appendix 2, Figure 3**). The site is a 5,029 m<sup>2</sup> land holding which is currently vacant pending the development of the proposed commercial complex. The subject site currently comprises a vacant small block of land, having been subdivided for the intention of containing a future commercial development.

The Site is principally flat pasture cover with no identifying characteristics within. A mature hedgerow is displayed on the northern boundary.

A Waikato Regional Drain traverses the site along the eastern boundary.

## 3.0 Relevant Statutory Provisions

### 3.1 Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA)

The purpose of this Act is to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources.<sup>4</sup>

The RMA provisions relevant to landscape and visual effects addressed in this report will be in respect of:

- **Section 6(a)** The preservation of natural character....;
- **Section 6(b)** The protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes from inappropriate subdivision, use, and development;
- **Section 7(c)** – the maintenance and enhancement of amenity values;
- **Section 7(f)** – the maintenance and enhancement of the quality of the environment; and
- **Section 8** - the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi shall be taken into account in achieving the purpose of the RMA.

### 3.2 Operative Waikato District Plan

Based on the Country Living zoning (**Appendix 2, Figure 2**), the key landscape and visual amenity considerations within the District Plan for the proposal are as follows:

#### **Objective 3.4.1**

#### **Policy 3.4.2**

*Natural features and landscapes, including locally distinctive landforms and prominent ridgelines, and general visual amenity values should be protected from inappropriate subdivisions, use and development, in particular by:*

*(b) ensuring that the visual effects of buildings can be absorbed without significant adverse effects on the landscape*

*(d) designing subdivision so that potential development, including building platforms, fences and vehicle accesses, are located sympathetically in the landscape.*

#### **Objective 13.4.1**

*Amenity values of sites and localities maintained or enhanced by subdivision, building and development.*

#### **Policies**

#### **13.4.2**

*Subdivision, building and development should be located and designed to:*

- (a) be sympathetic to and reflect the natural and physical qualities and characteristics of the area.*

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<sup>4</sup> Resource Management Act 1991 – Part 2 Purpose and Principles

- (b) *ensure buildings have bulk and location that is consistent with buildings in the neighbourhood and the locality.*

#### **Objective 13.4.4**

*Signs visible from public places do not compromise visual amenity or road safety.*

#### **13.4.5**

*The number, size, location and appearance of signs visible from public places should be compatible with the character and sensitivity of localities.*

### **3.3 Analysis and Assessment against Statutory Provisions**

Sited within the Country Living Zone. The key focus of the provisions includes the following:

- Amenity values;
- Visual integration of buildings and subdivision design including earthworks, vegetation management; and
- Signage design and location designed to not compromise visual amenity or road safety.

It should be noted that under the Proposed Waikato District Plan (the PDP) the Site is zoned Business, as is the adjoining site to the south (comprising the consented café). The site is not subject to any applicable policy overlays or areas of natural significance.

The assessment of landscape effects addresses the landscape character and rural character values attributed to the Site and its relationship to Te Kowhai village and future residential development. The assessment of visual effects addresses more specifically visual amenity and visual effects resulting from the proposed design.

## **4.0 Proposal Description**

The proposal is for a single storey commercial complex, comprising of both retail, and food and beverage facilities. The building is proposed to be positioned towards the north and eastern boundaries with south and west facing facades. The proposed single level retail centre will include:

- Seven retail tenancies with a combined floor area of 1,290m<sup>2</sup>.
- The food and beverage tenancies will have a predetermined area for outdoor seating.
- The building itself will be comprised of a mixture of building materials, with concrete and slatted timber weather boards used on the façade.
- 39 car parking spaces associated with the complex is to be accessed off Horotiu Road.
- Pedestrian access throughout the site is provided for via formed footpaths onsite, which will extend to Horotiu Road and connect to the proposed footpaths beyond the Site boundary.



- A freestanding sign, which is proposed to be 7.0m high and 2.5m wide maximum, will be located between the two proposed entrance / exits.
- The overall site will include landscape planting treatments including, visual mitigation and amenity planting that integrates the site with the surrounding rural landscape and the Te Kowhai village vegetation palette. Landscaped areas are proposed along the road frontage, within the car parking area and along the rear boundary for the Site. A Landscape Planting Plan is provided in **Appendix 2, Figure 8**.
- Water supply will be provided via two 25,000L water tanks. A swale will convey all storm events that exceed the loading of the stormwater soakage system.



Figure A: Proposed Retail Complex artist impressions (produced by Diverse Design). Note planting indicative only.

## 5.0 Assessment of Effects

Landscape and visual impacts result from natural or induced change in the components, character or quality of the landscape. Usually these are the result of landform or vegetation modification or the introduction of new structures, facilities or activities. All these impacts are assessed to determine their effects on character and quality, amenity as well as on public and private views.

In this study, the assessment of potential effects is based on a combination of the landscape's sensitivity and visibility together with the nature and scale of the development proposal.

Particular effects considered relate to the following:

- Visual amenity effects from public and private locations;
- Effects in relation to statutory provisions.

### 5.1 Landscape Effects

#### 5.1.1 Landscape Character Effects

Landscape character is derived from the distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occur consistently in a particular landscape. It reflects particular combinations of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use and features of human settlement. It creates the unique sense of place defining different areas of the landscape.

#### 5.1.2 Landscape Sensitivity

The existing landscape character transitions from residential, within Te Kowhai Village, to rural residential landscape to the north along Horotiu Road and Ngaruwahia Road. Rural lifestyle blocks and development is typically located the near main roads. Horotiu Road is a main arterial road within the area.

The landscape is not identified as a landscape or feature of significance or amenity value for the District. At a local level the Site is of low importance to the broader plains landscape.

#### 5.1.3 Magnitude of Change

Whilst in an area of rural land, the wider landscape pattern is a heavily modified environment with a main arterial route bordering the Site to the west and development either consented, or under construction along the southern and eastern boundaries. The proposed changes to the Site will see a land holding change from a rural residential landscape to an intensified retail development node accompanying consented residential development.

Whilst a change in immediate land use, the proposed retail development will not significantly alter the broader landform patterns of the wider area. It will sit within the changing rural residential landscape signalled by the proposed rezoning of the area under the PDP from Country Living Zone to future Business Zone.

The inclusion of the proposed retail centre at the northern end of the Te Kowhai village will see a low to moderate change to the existing rural landscape. Whilst the proposal seeks to undertake approximately 1,600 m<sup>3</sup> of earthworks over a 5,000 m<sup>2</sup> area, the overall landform of the Site will remain flat and tie in with adjacent land. The proposed changes to the landform will be low.

Within the Site the development will introduce a complete land use change from currently rural residential (country living) to commercial. The proposal will form a permanent change to the Site for some time with changes to the land use and landcover for the carparking, building development and associated landscape planting. The magnitude of change to the Site itself is low, due to the permitted residential development to proposed commercial, and therefore the integration of quality landscape planting and boundary treatments to reflect the Te Kowhai village character is recommended.

#### 5.1.4 Significance of Effect

The landscape patterns of the Site will be altered with the proposed commercial activity. Whilst surrounded by rural residential and proposed residential development to the east, it is important to reflect the existing rural character that is evident throughout Te Kowhai village. Integration of the new commercial activity into the landscape is required through the provision of elements that reflect the rural character of Te Kowhai village. These include:

- Kowhai specimen trees along the road frontage;
- Native planting and low hedging to provide partial screening of the car parking;
- Planting to assist in screening water tanks and effluent field;
- Timber boundary fencing (stained dark colour) and planting along the north and east boundary to screen rear of development for 557 Horotiu Road and future residential development; and
- Timber rail fence along road boundary to tie into adjacent Café Church development and wider Te Kowhai rural character.

### 5.2 Visual Effects

Assessing the magnitude of the visual effect considers the visual sensitivity and the potential magnitude of change which will result from the visibility of the proposed development.

#### 5.2.1 Visual Catchment

Representative viewpoints were identified following a field assessment of potential viewing locations in the surrounding visual catchment (refer to **Appendix 2, Figure 3**).

Due to the predominantly flat nature of the wider landscape context, the visual context of the Site is relatively contained to the immediate neighbours.

The viewing audience comprises people residing within or moving through the landscape in the form of:

- Viewers travelling in vehicles along Horotiu Road and Westvale Lane;

- Church café (consented);
- Immediate residents surrounding the Site (8 Westvale Lane, 557, 560A, 564A Horotiu Road); and
- Wider rural views from surrounding private properties.

The owners and occupiers of the properties at 571 Horotiu Road and 714 Te Kowhai Road have provided their written approval.

The visual context of the Site is constrained by the surrounding development and main arterial road of Horotiu Road. Representative viewpoints were identified following field assessment of potential viewing locations in the surrounding visual catchment.

### 5.2.2 Visual Sensitivity

Of the above viewing audience, the current bare paddock pasture outlook (permitted rural residential development) for the immediate neighbouring property at 557 Horotiu Road will have the greatest level of visual sensitivity. This results from the distance to the Site and the permanent visual change from bare paddock pasture to buildings and associated infrastructure including car parking and stormwater tanks. The main outside living area for property appears to be located to the north with minimal outlook to the proposed development. There is some existing vegetation screening along the boundary within 557. Combined with the proposed timber boundary fence and grassed swale, this will provide adequate screening between the property and the proposed development. The sensitivity of the properties residential viewing audience is considered to be moderate to low.

As the viewing audience retreats north views to the Site will reduce due to intermediary vegetation, 557 dwelling and the T-intersection with Horotiu and Ngaruwahia Road. This viewing audience is considered to have a very low visual sensitivity attributed to the extent and period of time the view is experienced and the context of the visual catchment.

Views from the west include the rural residential properties of 8 Westvale Lane, 564A Horotiu Road, 560A Horotiu Road and 560C Horotiu Road, which are considered to have a low level of visual sensitivity due to distance, orientation, existing vegetation and the changing surrounding land use.

Views from the south, from the Church Café are considered to be negligible due to the context of the proposal in relation to the proposed development.

### 5.2.3 Magnitude of Change

#### 5.2.3.1 Proximate Property 557 Horotiu Road

Views from the rural residential dwelling to the north of the Site will experience the most apparent change to the visual outlook. The pasture to the north is being converted to residential development and the church café is located further to the east with the proposed and the proposed commercial development between. The property is located within the context of changing land use.

The inclusion of boundary fencing, and planting will assist in screening the views from this property to the rear of buildings including service areas. The proposed fencing and planting will provide acceptable level of change to be moderate to low.

#### 5.2.3.2 Proximate Properties to the West

8 Westvale Lane is located on the opposite side of Horotiu Road from the Site. The dwelling within the property is setback approximately 60 m towards the rear of the property. The property is well contained by vegetation along the boundary that largely screens views of the Site.

564A Horotiu Road is located on this opposite side of Horotiu Road from the Site. The dwelling is setback approximately 75 m towards the rear of the property, with vehicle access from Horotiu Road. A dense hedge to a height of approximately 2m runs along the road frontage of this property; comprising a mixture of mature tree species. As such, views of the commercial development from this property are limited to partial views through vegetation.

560A Horotiu Road is on the opposite side of Horotiu Road from the Site. The dwelling on this property is setback approximately 35m towards the rear of the property, with vehicle access from Horotiu Road. As such, views of the commercial development from this property are limited to partial views through vegetation.

560C Horotiu Road is located on the western side of Horotiu Road, located northwest of the proposed commercial development. This property is located in excess of 70 m from the nearest boundary with the subject site. The property is mostly screened by existing hedge planting along the road frontage.

With the proposed landscape design including planting along the road frontage. The magnitude of change is considered to be low for the properties above, with the introduction of commercial development.

#### 5.2.3.3 Transient Views from Horotiu Road

The north and southbound views to the Site are restricted to views immediately before the Site and passing the Site. The proposed development within the Site is to be set back from the road and the proposed landscape planting provides amenity to the site and is in character with the surrounding Te Kowhai village. The development will also be viewed in context with the recently developed Church Café. The magnitude of change to the view will be limited to a moving viewing experienced at 50 km/h for vehicles or pedestrians and cyclists.

Due to the changing rural environment and the subdivision development within Te Kowhai and surrounding areas, the magnitude of change for transient views from Horotiu Road is considered very low.

#### 5.2.3.4 Views from Church Café

Magnitude of change for the Church café is considered negligible due to the complementary nature of the development and the anticipated commercial development adjacent to the café.

### 5.2.4 Visual Effects

The significance of visual effects considers the magnitude of change with the sensitivity of the viewing audience. Without the landscape planting treatment and building setbacks, the most apparent adverse visual effect will be on the residential property located at 557 Horotiu Road.

The visual effects associated with visual amenity are attributed to the aesthetic coherence and pleasantness of the proposed development. Like many retail and commercial developments their location is attributed to residential settlements they connect to, more so in smaller villages such as Te Kowhai. Integration of these features to ensure they recognise the key historic rural elements and landscape characteristics is important for the retention of the character of Te Kowhai village.

## 6.0 Recommendations

Taking into account the landscape and visual effects identified, the landscape planting plan includes mitigation measures required to ensure the integration of the proposal development into the landscape. Key design recommendations include:

- Kowhai specimen trees along road frontage;
- Native planting and low hedging to provide partial screening of the car parking;
- Planting to assist in screening water tanks and effluent field;
- Timber boundary fencing (stained dark colour) and planting along the north and east boundary to screen rear of development for 557 Horotiu Road and future residential development; and
- Timber rail fence along road boundary to tie into adjacent Café Church development and wider Te Kowhai rural character.

## 7.0 Conclusions

The proposed development is located within a landscape that is transitioning from country living to residential living and commercial development with the recently consented Church café. The site is currently zoned Country Living that is proposed to become Business Zone. The wider rural landscape is also changing to rural residential development. The site also borders a main arterial route with associated heavy traffic use.

The design of the proposal and planting is in keeping with the surrounding character and the location of the site in context to changing land use. The development is set back from Horotiu Road and adjacent residential properties. The visual effects are largely related to the changing land use and are viewed within the context of adjacent café development and proposed zone change from Country Living to Business Zone. Views of the site are available it is anticipated it will be visually in keeping with the surrounding development.

For one property due to their relative proximity to the site it is anticipated that they will experience moderate – low adverse visual effects.

In summary the proposal has the potential to generate low landscape and visual effects. Through the integration of quality landscape design to reflect the landscape character of Te Kowhai and soften the building development, the effects will be reduced to low effects over a period of time, whilst the development and planting establishes.

# Appendix 1: Landscape and Visual Effects Assessment Methodology

11 February 2019

## Introduction

The Boffa Miskell Ltd Landscape and Visual Effects Assessment (LVA) process provides a framework for assessing and identifying the nature and level of likely effects that may result from a proposed development. Such effects can occur in relation to changes to physical elements, the existing character of the landscape and the experience of it. In addition, the landscape assessment method may include an iterative design development processes, which includes stakeholder involvement. The outcome of any assessment approach should seek to avoid, remedy or mitigate adverse effects (see **Figure 1**). A separate assessment is required to assess changes in natural character in coastal areas and other waterbodies.

This outline of the landscape and visual effects assessment methodology has been undertaken with reference to the **Quality Planning Landscape Guidance Note**<sup>5</sup> and its signposts to examples of best practice, which include the **UK guidelines for landscape and visual impact assessment**<sup>6</sup> and the **New Zealand Landscape Institute Guidelines for Landscape Assessment**<sup>7</sup>.

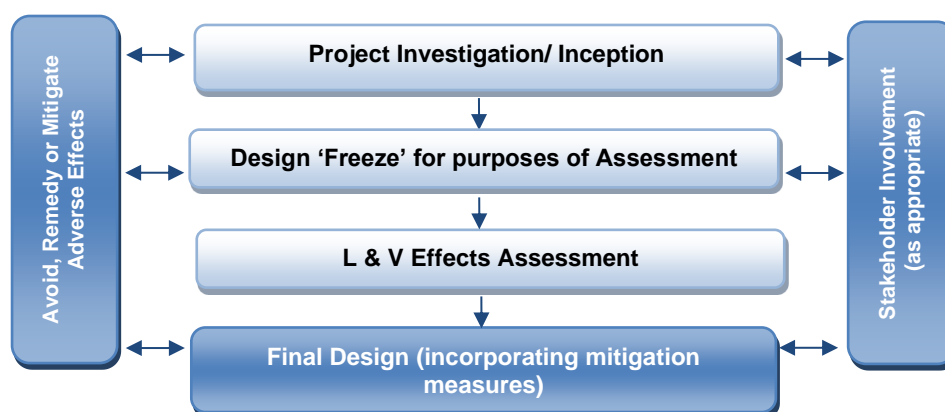


Figure 1: Design feedback loop

When undertaking a LVA, it is important that a **structured and consistent approach** is used to ensure that **findings are clear and objective**. Judgement should be based on skills and experience and be supported by explicit evidence and reasoned argument.

While landscape and visual effects assessments are closely related, they form separate procedures. The assessment of the potential effect on the landscape forms the first step in this process and is carried out as an effect on landscape elements, features and on landscape character. The assessment of visual effects considers how changes to the physical landscape affect the viewing audience. The types of effects can be summarised as follows:

**Landscape effects:** *Change in the physical landscape, which may affect its characteristics or qualities.*

**Visual effects:** *Change to views which may affect the visual amenity experienced by people.*

The policy context, existing landscape resource and locations from which a development or change is visible, all inform the 'baseline' for landscape and visual effects assessments. To assess effects, the landscape must first be **described**, including an understanding of the **key landscape characteristics and qualities**. This process,

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.qualityplanning.org.nz/index.php/planning-tools/land/landscape>

<sup>6</sup> Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition (GLVIA3)

<sup>7</sup> Best Practice Note Landscape Assessment and Sustainable Management 10.1, NZILA



known as landscape characterisation, is the basic tool for understanding landscape character and may involve subdividing the landscape into character areas or types. The condition of the landscape (i.e. the state of an individual area of landscape or landscape feature) should also be described together with, a judgement made on the value or importance of the potentially affected landscape.

## Landscape Effects

Assessing landscape effects requires an understanding of the landscape resource and the magnitude of change which results from a proposed activity to determine the overall level of landscape effects.

### Landscape Resource

Assessing the sensitivity of the landscape resource considers the key characteristics and qualities. This involves an understanding of both the ability of an area of landscape to absorb change and the value of the landscape.

#### **Ability of an area to absorb change**

This will vary upon the following factors:

- Physical elements such as topography / hydrology / soils / vegetation;
- Existing land use;
- The pattern and scale of the landscape;
- Visual enclosure / openness of views and distribution of the viewing audience;
- The zoning of the land and its associated anticipated level of development;
- The scope for mitigation, appropriate to the existing landscape.

The ability of an area of landscape to absorb change takes account of both the attributes of the receiving environment and the characteristics of the proposed development. It considers the ability of a specific type of change occurring without generating adverse effects and/or achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies.

#### **The value of the Landscape**

Landscape value derives from the importance that people and communities, including tangata whenua, attach to particular landscapes and landscape attributes. This may include the classification of Outstanding Natural Feature or Landscape (ONFL) (RMA s.6(b)) based on important biophysical, sensory/ aesthetic and associative landscape attributes, which have potential to be affected by a proposed development. A landscape can have value even if it is not recognised as being an ONFL.

### Magnitude of Landscape Change

The magnitude of landscape change judges the amount of change that is likely to occur to areas of landscape, landscape features, or key landscape attributes. In undertaking this assessment, it is important that the size or scale of the change is considered within the geographical extent of the area influenced and the duration of change, including whether the change is reversible. In some situations, the loss /change or enhancement to existing landscape elements such as vegetation or earthworks should also be quantified.

When assessing the level of landscape effects, it is important to be clear about what factors have been considered when making professional judgements. This can include consideration of any benefits which result from a proposed development. **Table 1** below helps to explain this process. The tabulating of effects is only intended to inform overall judgements.

Contributing Factors		Higher	Lower
Landscape (sensitivity)	Ability to absorb change	The landscape context has limited existing landscape detractors which make it highly vulnerable to the type of change resulting from the proposed development.	The landscape context has many detractors and can easily accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences to landscape character.
	The value of the landscape	The landscape includes important biophysical, sensory and shared and recognised attributes. The landscape requires protection as a matter of national importance (ONF/L).	The landscape lacks any important biophysical, sensory or shared and recognised attributes. The landscape is of low or local importance.



<b>Magnitude of Change</b>	<b>Size or scale</b>	Total loss or addition of key features or elements. Major changes in the key characteristics of the landscape, including significant aesthetic or perceptual elements.	The majority of key features or elements are retained. Key characteristics of the landscape remain intact with limited aesthetic or perceptual change apparent.
	<b>Geographical extent</b>	Wider landscape scale.	Site scale, immediate setting.
	<b>Duration and reversibility</b>	Permanent. Long term (over 10 years).	Reversible. Short Term (0-5 years).

Table 1: Determining the level of landscape effects

## Visual Effects

To assess the visual effects of a proposed development on a landscape, a visual baseline must first be defined. The visual 'baseline' forms a technical exercise which identifies the area where the development may be visible, the potential viewing audience, and the key representative public viewpoints from which visual effects are assessed.

The viewing audience comprises the individuals or groups of people occupying or using the properties, roads, footpaths and public open spaces that lie within the visual envelope or 'zone of theoretical visibility (ZTV)' of the site and proposal. Where possible, computer modelling can assist to determine the theoretical extent of visibility together with field work to confirm this. Where appropriate, key representative viewpoints should be agreed with the relevant local authority.

### The Sensitivity of the viewing audience

The sensitivity of the viewing audience is assessed in terms of assessing the likely response of the viewing audience to change and understanding the value attached to views.

#### **Likely response of the viewing audience to change**

Appraising the likely response of the viewing audience to change is determined by assessing the occupation or activity of people experiencing the view at particular locations and the extent to which their interest or activity may be focussed on views of the surrounding landscape. This relies on a landscape architect's judgement in respect of visual amenity and the reaction of people who may be affected by a proposal. This should also recognise that people more susceptible to change generally include: residents at home, people engaged in outdoor recreation whose attention or interest is likely to be focussed on the landscape and on particular views; visitors to heritage assets or other important visitor attractions; and communities where views contribute to the wider landscape setting.

#### **Value attached to views**

The value or importance attached to particular views may be determined with respect to its popularity or numbers of people affected or reference to planning instruments such as viewshafts or view corridors. Important viewpoints are also likely to appear in guide books or tourist maps and may include facilities provided for its enjoyment. There may also be references to this in literature or art, which also acknowledge a level of recognition and importance.

### **Magnitude of Visual Change**

The assessment of visual effects also considers the potential magnitude of change which will result from views of a proposed development. This takes account of the size or scale of the effect, the geographical extent of views and the duration of visual change, which may distinguish between temporary (often associated with construction) and permanent effects where relevant. Preparation of any simulations of visual change to assist this process should be guided by best practice as identified by the NZILA<sup>8</sup>.

When determining the overall level of visual effect, the nature of the viewing audience is considered together with the magnitude of change resulting from the proposed development. **Table 2** has been prepared to help guide this process:

<sup>8</sup> Best Practice Guide: Visual Simulations BPG 10.2, NZILA

Contributing Factors		Higher	Lower	Examples
The Viewing Audience (sensitivity)	Ability to absorb change	Views from dwellings and recreation areas where attention is typically focussed on the landscape.	Views from places of employment and other places where the focus is typically incidental to its landscape context. Views from transport corridors.	Dwellings, places of work, transport corridors, public tracks
	Value attached to views	Viewpoint is recognised by the community such as an important view shaft, identification on tourist maps or in art and literature. High visitor numbers.	Viewpoint is not typically recognised or valued by the community.  Infrequent visitor numbers.	Acknowledged viewshafts, Lookouts
Magnitude of Change	Size or scale	Loss or addition of key features in the view. High degree of contrast with existing landscape elements (i.e. in terms of form scale, mass, line, height, colour and texture).  Full view of the proposed development.	Most key features of views retained.  Low degree of contrast with existing landscape elements (i.e. in terms of form scale, mass, line, height, colour and texture). Glimpse / no view of the proposed development.	- Higher contrast/ Lower contrast. - Open views, Partial views, Glimpse views (or filtered); No views (or obscured)
	Geographical extent	Front on views. Near distance views; Change visible across a wide area.	Oblique views. Long distance views. Small portion of change visible.	- Front or Oblique views. - Near distant, Middle distant and Long distant views
	Duration and reversibility	Permanent. Long term (over 15 years).	Transient / temporary. Short Term (0-5 years).	- Permanent (fixed), Transitory (moving)

Table 2: Determining the level of visual effects

## Nature of Effects

In combination with assessing the level of effects, the landscape and visual effects assessment also considers the nature of effects in terms of whether this will be positive (beneficial) or negative (adverse) in the context within which it occurs. Neutral effects can also occur where landscape or visual change is benign.

It should also be noted that a change in a landscape does not, of itself, necessarily constitute an adverse landscape or visual effect. Landscape is dynamic and is constantly changing over time in both subtle and more dramatic transformational ways; these changes are both natural and human induced. What is important in managing landscape change is that adverse effects are avoided or sufficiently mitigated to ameliorate the effects of the change in land use. The aim is to provide a high amenity environment through appropriate design outcomes.

This assessment of the nature effects can be further guided by **Table 3** set out below:

Nature of effect	Use and Definition
<b>Adverse (negative):</b>	The activity would be out of scale with the landscape or at odds with the local pattern and landform which results in a reduction in landscape and / or visual amenity values
<b>Neutral (benign):</b>	The activity would be consistent with (or blend in with) the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape maintaining existing landscape and / or visual amenity values
<b>Beneficial (positive):</b>	The activity would enhance the landscape and / or visual amenity through removal or restoration of existing degraded landscape activities and / or addition of positive elements or features

Table 3: Determining the Nature of Effects

## Determining the Overall Level of Effects

The landscape and visual effects assessment concludes with an overall assessment of the likely level of landscape and visual effects. This step also takes account of the nature of effects and the effectiveness of any proposed mitigation. The process can be illustrated in Figure 2:

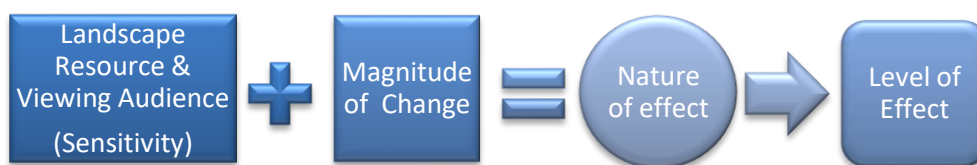


Figure 2: Assessment process

This step informs an overall judgement identifying what level of effects are likely to be generated as indicated in **Table 4** below. This table which can be used to guide the level of landscape and visual effects uses an adapted seven-point scale derived from NZILA's Best Practice Note.

Effect Rating	Use and Definition
<b>Very High:</b>	Total loss of key elements / features / characteristics, i.e. amounts to a complete change of landscape character and in views.
<b>High:</b>	Major modification or loss of most key elements / features / characteristics, i.e. little of the pre-development landscape character remains and a major change in views. <i>Concise Oxford English Dictionary Definition</i> <i>High: adjective- Great in amount, value, size, or intensity.</i>
<b>Moderate- High:</b>	Modifications of several key elements / features / characteristics of the baseline, i.e. the pre-development landscape character remains evident but materially changed and prominent in views.
<b>Moderate:</b>	Partial loss of or modification to key elements / features / characteristics of the baseline, i.e. new elements may be prominent in views but not necessarily uncharacteristic within the receiving landscape. <i>Concise Oxford English Dictionary Definition</i> <i>Moderate: adjective- average in amount, intensity, quality or degree</i>
<b>Moderate - Low:</b>	Minor loss of or modification to one or more key elements / features / characteristics, i.e. new elements are not prominent within views or uncharacteristic within the receiving landscape.
<b>Low:</b>	Little material loss of or modification to key elements / features / characteristics. i.e. modification or change is not uncharacteristic or prominent in views and absorbed within the receiving landscape. <i>Concise Oxford English Dictionary Definition</i> <i>Low: adjective- 1. Below average in amount, extent, or intensity.</i>
<b>Very Low:</b>	Negligible loss of or modification to key elements/ features/ characteristics of the baseline, i.e. approximating a 'no change' situation and a negligible change in views.

Table 4: Determining the overall level of landscape and visual effects

## Determination of “minor”

Decision makers determining whether a resource consent application should be notified must also assess whether the effect on a person is less than minor<sup>9</sup> or an adverse effect on the environment is no more than minor<sup>10</sup>. Likewise, when assessing a non-complying activity, consent can only be granted if the s104D ‘gateway test’ is satisfied. This test requires the decision maker to be assured that the adverse effects of the activity on the environment will be ‘minor’ or not be contrary to the objectives and policies of the relevant planning documents.

These assessments will generally involve a broader consideration of the effects of the activity, beyond the landscape and visual effects. Through this broader consideration, guidance may be sought on whether the likely effects on the landscape or effects on a person are considered in relation to ‘minor’. It must also be stressed that more than minor effects on individual elements or viewpoints does not necessarily equate to more than minor effects on the wider landscape. In relation to this assessment, moderate-low level effects would generally equate to ‘minor’.

The third row highlights the word ‘significant’ which has particular reference to the NZCPS and Policy 13 and Policy 15 and where on the effects-spectrum ‘a significant’ effect would be placed.

<u>Less than Minor</u>		<u>Minor</u>	<u>More than Minor</u>			
Very Low	Low	Moderate – Low	Moderate	Moderate-High	High	Very High
					<b>Significant<sup>11</sup></b>	

Table 5: Determining minor effects for notification determination and non-complying activities

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<sup>9</sup> RMA, Section 95E

<sup>10</sup>

RMA Section 95D

# Appendix 2: Graphics Supplement

## About Boffa Miskell

Boffa Miskell is a leading New Zealand professional services consultancy with offices in Auckland, Hamilton, Tauranga, Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin and Queenstown. We work with a wide range of local and international private and public sector clients in the areas of planning, urban design, landscape architecture, landscape planning, ecology, biosecurity, cultural heritage, graphics and mapping. Over the past four decades we have built a reputation for professionalism, innovation and excellence. During this time we have been associated with a significant number of projects that have shaped New Zealand's environment.

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