CHRISTCHURCH CITY COUNCIL

PROPOSED SUBDIVISION AND LAND USE RESOURCE CONSENT

Braeburn Property Ltd – Portlink, 320 and 320A Cumnor Terrace, Christchurch

LANDSCAPE PEER REVIEW & VISUAL ASSESSMENT

To: Rachel Cottam, Senior Planner, Christchurch City Council

Copy: Paul Lowe, Manager Resource Consents, Christchurch City Council

From: Jeremy Head, Registered NZILA Landscape Architect
Jeremy Head Landscape Architect 2022 Ltd.

Date: 18 May 2023

Introduction

I have been asked to peer review and provide further landscape-related advice regarding the Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) authored by Nika Kent and Chris Greenshields from DCM Urban for the Applicant (Braeburn Property Ltd).

I have read the AEE, VIA[1] and VIA Addendum[2] and visited the site on 14 December 2022 and 8 and 9 May 2023. During all site visits I observed the site from multiple points within the receiving environment. Following the first site visit and the earlier iteration of the Proposal and VIA, I provided a series of landscape-related questions that were included in a Council Request for Further Information (RFI). These questions have been answered by the Applicant by way of the 23 March 2023 addendum to the original VIA. I have also attended two workshop discussions at the Christchurch City Council offices, one which included the Applicant and the Applicant's technical experts.

The purpose of my report is twofold. The first is to carry out a peer review of the DCM Urban VIA (from hereon, any reference to 'VIA' includes the VIA addendum), and secondly, to expand on matters further where necessary. Within the VIA, I agree with the site and context description, assessment methodology used which includes the widely accepted 7-point scale of effects and in some cases what the likely visual effects will be arising from the Proposal. My report will not repeat these aspects, other than where I disagree with a statement made in the VIA or where I believe additional information or further 'fleshing out' of the potential landscape effects may be of benefit to the decision maker.

I understand that Council agreed with the Applicant that a 'visual effects' assessment carried out by a suitably qualified landscape architect would be sufficient for inclusion in the Application. Visual effects are a subset of and help to inform landscape effects, or in other words, changes in landscape character brought about by (any) proposal. Visual effects concern changes in views and the amenity derived from views. As such, my report will be limited to address the potential visual effects arising from the Proposal.

My report reviews and assesses the proposed departures from the requirements of the Outline Development Plan[3] for the site, specifically addressing the changes in building height and changes to the building setback.

[1] Subdivision and Land Use Resource Consent Application, Braeburn Property Ltd, 320 and 320A Cumnor Terrace, Christchurch, prepared by Novo Group Ltd (24 November 2022).
[2] Resource Consent RMA/2022/3611 – RFI Response Land Use and Subdivision Application 320 and 320A Cumnor Terrace, Christchurch, prepared by Novo Group Ltd (23 March 2023).
[3] Appendix 16.8.3i – Portlink Industrial Park Outline Development Plan (April 2016), Christchurch District Plan.

The methodology underlying my assessment and additional advice is based on the recent NZILA Landscape Assessment Guidelines (2022)[4].

I understand that:

- The site is zoned 'Industrial General' and is subject to an Outline Development Plan. Relevant to the Proposal, and part of the ODP, is a 'Landscape and Stormwater Area (Green Space)' and '11 m Building Height Limit Area' both of which the Proposal partly overlays.

- To date, part of the 'Landscape and Stormwater Area (Green Space)' has been encroached upon by the Applicant and paved in asphalt, edged with concrete kerb and channel. The area has been fenced with a 2 m high chain mesh security fence. As such this Application is partly a retrospective one.

- The new paved surface where the buildings are proposed to be located is on fill material approximately 1-2 m (maximum) above natural ground level. This filling was consented but was not established as part of a finished subdivision. Legal advice for Council is that building height shall be measured from original ground level prior to filling. This increases the actual building height exceedances. Natural ground level is taken in my report to be 2 m below the current paved surface.

- 'Buildings' in the case of the Proposal may include *"any structure, whether permanent, moveable or immoveable; and/or any erection, reconstruction, placement, alteration or demolition of any structure or part of any structure within, on, under or over the land; and any vehicle, trailer, tent, marquee, shipping container, caravan or boat, whether fixed or immoveable, used on-site as a residential unit or place of business or storage."* [5]

- Potential items that may be realistically anticipated in an industrial context such as the site may also include the outdoor storage of things such as pallets, pipes, construction timber, logs, scrapped vehicles and metal and the like. Most of these items could not be stably / safely stacked 11 m high without a support structure, at which point these items would fall under the definition of a 'building'.

- Shipping containers have a poorer aesthetic appearance than permanent walled/roofed buildings generally. The Applicant's landscape architect agrees with this[6]. The outdoor storage of materials discussed above would likely have slightly lesser adverse visual effects compared with shipping containers which are more bulky. As such, the appearance of stacked shipping containers which are on site now and where the visual effects are obvious, can be assessed as a 'worse case' scenario outcome for the site.

- It is not considered fanciful that industrial buildings within the site, outside the 11 m Building Height Limit Area could be 20 – 25 m high. This part of the site has no building height limit.

[4] Te Tangi a te Manu – Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines (2022). Prepared by Gavin Lister, Rachel de Lambert and Alan Tichener.
[5] Letter from Brookfields Lawyers to CCC regarding the definition of a building to be used (26 July 2022).
[6] Original VIA, Section 3.2.

- Permitted built development within the site will obscure some people's views of parts of the Port Hills / Crater Rim landscape.

- The Proposal's overall activity status is discretionary[7].

I structure my report under seven topics:

1. Receiving environment.
2. Background to Outline Development Plan.
3. Community concerns.
4. The effectiveness of the cross section diagrams used and relied on in the VIA.
5. Discussion on the visual effects of the Proposal in the VIA.
6. Proposed mitigation.
7. Peer reviewer's opinion of likely visual effects.
8. Recommendations.

1. Receiving Environment

Although not named or mapped as such in the VIA, a receiving environment has been alluded to at paragraph 3.5 and in *'A. Viewpoint and Visualisation Locations (1:10,000)'* in the VIA.

To clarify, a receiving environment is an area (normally mapped) that includes the extent where the effects of a landscape change may potentially be adverse. Such an area is typically determined firstly through desk top evaluation, followed by careful field study. Changes to the landscape brought about by (any) proposal will often be visible from outside the receiving environment; however, as is often the case any potential effects from here will be acceptable (less than minor). This is usually due to the view distance from the landscape change and the nature of other contextual development in the scene, where the visual prominence and contrast of the change with its setting will be sufficiently diluted.

Following three site visits, and for completeness, I have prepared a receiving environment map for the Proposal (**Attachment 1**). In my opinion, the visual effects of the Proposal will be potentially adverse within this area requiring detailed assessment. The VIA includes viewpoint locations (1, 2, 5, 6, 7 and 8) which fall outside my Attachment 1 receiving environment area. A determination is made in the VIA that any adverse visual effects of the Proposal from these locations following mitigation will be 'less than minor'. Following viewing the site from these more distant locations, I agree with this conclusion. As such I comment no further on the visual effects of the Proposal from beyond the receiving environment mapped in Attachment 1.

The receiving environment illustrated at Attachment 1 includes both public and private audiences. These groups include the following:

- Residents of Ferry Road, Gould Crescent, Long Street and Barton Street (fixed, long-term views).
- Travellers on the road network, including cyclists and pedestrians (transient, short-term[8] views).
- Travellers on Tunnel Road / SH74, (transient, short-term[9] views).
- Recreationists on the public riverside tracks including the Tow Path, footbridge over the 'Woolston Cut', Gould Reserve and riverbank area including the

[7] Statutory Framework section, Subdivision and Land Use Resource Consent Application, Braeburn Property Ltd, 320 and 320A Cumnor Terrace, Christchurch, prepared by Novo Group Ltd (24 November 2022).
[8] When passing through an area without generally stopping.
[9] When passing through an area without generally stopping.

Opawaho / Heathcote River and 'Woolston Cut' (transient, short-medium[10] term views).

The visual effects of the Proposal, within the receiving environment will be influenced by existing levels of amenity and expected ongoing levels of amenity in the area. The VIA does not describe the landscape context proximate to the site in detail. From my site visits, the surrounding residential area has pleasant levels of amenity due to tall front fences being largely absent on road frontages, well kempt gardens, well-maintained dwellings, and 'quiet'[11] streets (**Attachments 5, 6, 8 and 9**). The minimal front fencing provides a clear visual connection between the private and public realm / streetscape. It is likely too that the low level of front fencing is due to a friendly close-knit community and enables some occupants to have clear views to the river environment and beyond to the Port Hills backdrop.

The riverbank areas are neatly mown and include large deciduous trees dotted about. In other areas swathes of native riparian vegetation form more natural riparian margins. Well-formed asphalt paths provide easy access through the area. On the true right of the Opawaho / Heathcote River, and true left between Gould Crescent and Tunnel Road / SH74 meandering 'single' tracks winding through native vegetation provide access to a popular off-road environment for walkers and mountain bikers. During my site visits, several people passed by on foot or by bike on these tracks. For many, views within the receiving environment rest on the Port Hills backdrop and enclosure provided by Montgomery Spur and Mount Pleasant Spur. The tidally influenced Opawaho / Heathcote River and the Port Hills backdrop, with its seasonal changes in grass colour, punctuated with frequent rock outcrops and changes in light are particularly important natural landscapes and points of focus in the area. These features are an important source of amenity, doubtless valued by locals and those passing through the area.

As such, it is my conclusion that for those residing in the area and passing through on foot or by bicycle, existing visual amenity values are moderate – high, lessened by the proximity to the industrial zoning nearby, including the site. For those in motor vehicles passing through on Tunnel Road, Ferry Road and Dyers Road existing amenity is moderate, lessened by the road environment itself, and industrial zoning, particularly evident where the stacked containers on site are visible from Ferry Road and Dyers Road.

2. Outline Development Plan (ODP)

The VIA does not describe the background behind the ODP which I consider to be relevant. Of note, the Applicant's planner states at paragraph 67 of the AEE: *"While the District Plan does not provide the rationale for the 11-metre building height restriction in the northern part of the ODP, it is likely to have been put in place to protect the visual amenity of the public recreating in the river corridor and the residential neighbours that look across the site."* This is a fair assumption. To shed more light on this, I have read the landscape evidence prepared by Andrew Craig for CCC in June 2009. That evidence responded to the site's original private Plan Change request to rezone the site from a Rural Zone to a Business Zone. Mr Craig's evidence included some key points, relevant to the Application now, that I include below:

- There is the potential for business development to generate significant effects on amenity unless adequately mitigated by extensive tree planting (paragraph 3.27).

[10] When passing through an area and occasionally stopping where there may be open space, seating, interpretation etc.
[11] Not in terms of audibly, but due to the slow pace, few traffic movements and 'pedestrian friendly' ambience.

- The rural Port Hills contribute significantly to local landscape character. *"The main threat from physical activity on the visual amenity of the Port Hills is building height which has the potential to block views. If accepted, permitted buildings up to 15 metres in height* [critical standard] *will have the potential to substantially interrupt views of the Port Hills as seen from Tunnel Road and for those residents living alongside the Heathcote River on the bank opposite the subject site. Further they could affect nearby resident's views from the lower slopes of Mt Pleasant across the city to the Alps. The same could apply to Tunnel Road users travelling to the city*." (Paragraph 4.24).
- The District Plan (then and now) considers the The Opawaho / Heathcote River to be an outstanding natural feature and landscape subject to s6(a)[12], (b), (d)[13] and S7(c)[14] of the RMA (paragraph 4.8).
- Preference for a clear demarcation between buildings and the natural character of the waterway margin. Paragraph 4.10 includes: *"…This is particularly important where buildings are of an industrial nature and are unlikely to have high landscape amenity within each lot. Such a situation will arise should the proposed plan change proceed, particularly where the buildings are potentially quite tall."*
- Preference for generous building setbacks from the river. Paragraph 4.17 includes: *"…By requiring the width of the building setback to be 50 metres from the riverbank, apparent natural character and amenity of the waterway margin will prevail despite the presence of large industrial buildings beyond."*
- Concern over building dominance of the highly natural river environment (paragraph 4.23).
- Loss of views due to high buildings (paragraph 4.24 and 4.25). At the time a 15 m height limit was being sought. While Mr Craig was preparing his evidence an 11 m height limit was proffered by the Applicant at the time extending southwards from the north end of the site for 130 m. Mr Craig considered this to be insufficient and favoured an 11 m height Development Standard and 15 m Critical Standard across the entire site.
- Requirement for a generous landscape buffer (50 m) to help mitigate the effects of industrial development on the site for occupants of adjoining residential areas was also favoured by Mr Craig. Paragraph 4.55 includes: *"…Reliance therefore has to be placed on the landscape enhanced esplanade reserve in order to provide amenity for the Heathcote River corridor and Living 2 zone beyond."*

Several submissions were received including from the Applicant at that time, seeking to reduce the Council's recommended 50 m river setback to either 20 m or 30 m. By contrast, other submissions included preferences for 75 m, 100 m or 150 m river setbacks. Some submissions sought substantial planting to provide screening and maintain amenity, including for pedestrians. Another submission sought low reflectivity colours, to help mitigate the adverse effects of built bulk and scale.

Mr Craig concludes and recommends that while the change from a Rural to Business zoning will be a radical change, *"…it is not out of the question that a reasonably high level of amenity can be achieved by a Business 4 zone if all landscape concerns such as a Tunnel Road landscape buffer,* ***reduction of height of buildings and adequate setback from the river can be provided and maintained in future****."* (From paragraph 6.4, my emphasis added in bold). Mr Craig considered an adequate river setback to be 50 m and maximum building height to be 11 m (Development Standard) and 15 m (Critical Standard) within the site.

[12] The preservation of the natural character of the coastal environment (including the coastal marine area), wetlands, and lakes and rivers and their margins, and the protection of them from inappropriate subdivision, use and development:
[13] The maintenance and enhancement of public access to and along the coastal marine area, lakes, and rivers:
[14] The maintenance and enhancement of amenity values.

And so, the current ODP is a compromise of sorts where the river setback provided by the 'Landscape & Stormwater Area (Green Space)' is approximately 30 m deep (from the northern site boundary) and approximately 25 – 30 m deep (from the western site boundary). Building height at the northern end of the site is limited to a maximum height of 11 m above natural ground level (pre-filling of site / paving) for approximately 130 m – 180 m from the northern edge of the buildable lot area, while the rest of the site has no building height limit.

3. Community concerns

In my opinion, adherence to the approved ODP would provide a satisfactory outcome in terms of the visual effects generated by permitted activity and the maintenance of amenity values, taking into account the site's industrial zoning. This is perhaps proven by the recent public complaints regarding the built intrusion into the Green Space Area / building setback area and the visibility of over-height buildings. This effect is partly due to the raising of the ground level of the site following filling. During my site visits, containers were stacked up to 6 high at the front rank (15.6 m high excluding the raised site level), located within the 11 m height limit area. Council have been provided with a summary of the public concerns. These include the below (reworded, unless left in italics) which I consider to be relevant to visual effects and amenity values. They are also points I generally agree with although I may word things differently. I have omitted any concerns that would occur with a permitted scenario or where concerns are speculative / without substance:

- Containers create a greater adverse effect than a standard industrial building.
- The height of the proposed buildings is significantly over the 11 m height requirement.
- The effects of the industrial rezoning were expected but not at the scale of what has been established without consent.
- The Opawaho / Heathcote River alone is not an adequate buffer between the residential zone and industrial activity.
- The visual intrusion is considered significant due to the ineffectiveness of new landscape works mitigating the visual effects in the short term.
- *"The area of Woolston is considered to be a scenic part of the city as it displays the multiple vantage points of the Port Hills and the Heathcote River and is considered a peaceful beautiful recreational area. The walkway adjacent is very popular and well used."*
- *"Vantage points of the container activity can be seen by local residents, commuters and those utilising the Heathcote River and its margins. There is concern that the character of the historic area will be lost."*
- The 2.4 m high acoustic fence will introduce an element with a dominant effect on the visual amenity for all residents who pass by on Tunnel Road and Ferry Road and residents of Gould Crescent and Long Street who face the site.
- The increased site levels exaggerate the visual bulk even at permitted height levels.
- Mitigation screening is achievable only at lower levels (in the short – medium term).
- The higher buildings are screened only when viewed across a solid bank of containers in the foreground and from proximity when the view angle is steep. Much of the viewing will be from a greater distance, from a flatter angle or through gaps in the 'front rank'.

4. Cross Section Diagrams

The VIA includes two section views *('B. Baseline/ Proposal Section' and 'B Gould Crescent Section')*. Both are set perpendicular to the northern site boundary and run roughly north south. Both include the proposed building location and heights and the location of sightlines,

taken from a view height approximately 1.65 m (approx. eye height) above the ground at two offset distances. The permitted baseline is incorrectly shown and should extend from natural ground level. Of note, in a permitted scenario, buildings 11 m high above natural ground level will screen some southward views to the Port Hills from some viewpoints north of the site (**Attachment 5**).

The proposed over-height buildings encroach into the 'Landscape & Stormwater Area (Green Space)' forming the 'front rank'. The VIA sections then illustrate built height gradually increasing southwards up to 18 m high (above the paved surface). The intention is that these higher buildings will be kept below the sightline, set by the 'front rank'. This of course relies on 11.6 m high buildings above the new raised/paved surface being located in the 'Landscape & Stormwater Area (Green Space)' (buildings rendered in blue). In a permitted scenario, the sightline is flatter, as the buildings are lower, and set further back compared to the Proposal (**Attachment 2**).

Buildings up to 18 m high (above the paved surface) will be substantially more than the permitted approximately 9 m maximum height limit in this area given the site has been raised on 2 m of fill. While an 18 m height limit may be less discernible from some nearby locations to the north and from ground level, the graduated height up to 18 m will be dominant from the east, with these effects falling on occupants with permanent long-term views including the occupants of fifteen dwellings on Ferry Road[15]. These parties and the Proposal's effects on them are not addressed in the VIA. While Ferry Road is busy, closer and between these parties and the Proposal, this makes their vistas to the Port Hills / Montgomery Spur doubtless more valued. The Proposal will intrude into these vistas, blocking views to Montgomery Spur (**Attachments 1 and 3**). At paragraph 3.4 in the VIA, 'side on' effects from the east are briefly mentioned where a 'Low' / less than minor effect is found due to the mitigating effects of 'separation distances, wider available views and intervening vegetation associated with the Heathcote River'. I disagree with this conclusion.

The graduated side profile will also be apparent in short–medium term views for the public travelling by on Ferry Road and the Tow Path within the mapped receiving environment, screening part of the Port Hills ridgeline (short–medium term views) (**Attachment 3**). These parties and the effects on them are not addressed in the VIA either.

The VIA states at 3.4 that the gradually increasing height would 'not be visible'. This would only be the case from nearer northern viewpoints, e.g., viewpoints 6, 12 – 14 and 16 (**Attachments 1 and 2**). In addition to the above adversely affected parties, the graduated building height up to 18 m will be more apparent from the north to 'flatter' more distant views e.g., viewpoints 5, and 7 - 11 (**Attachments 1 and 2**) and from near views from the second storeys of dwellings to the north of viewpoint 6 (**Attachment 1**), of which there are some.

5. Discussion – VIA's Visual Effects Conclusions

As discussed, the Proposal seeks permission for a range of building options as defined above in the introduction to this report. The VIA states at 3.2: *"While it is accepted that outdoor storage (including shipping containers) has lesser aesthetic appeal compared to buildings (where architectural form and materiality can reduce visual effects), and likely result in a change to the perceived pleasantness of the site and surround environment, the potential visual bulk, height and scale remains comparable."* I agree with this statement. The visual effects of the shipping containers can be seen now. By nature, shipping containers vary in colour, branding graphics, and physical condition. Some may be rusty and/or include graffiti. They regularly change in their stacked arrangement and can often be seen being

[15] 853 – 909 Ferry Road

moved about. For these reasons a stack of shipping containers between 11.6 m and 18 m high above the new site level will have greater adverse effects than likely permitted built industrial development such as warehousing would.

Visual effects are discussed throughout the VIA although in my opinion, briefly. A statement is made at 3.1 where the *"…site is considered to have low sensitivity to change"*. What that change may be, is unclear and could mean anything. A more relevant question to ask in this case is how sensitive the occupants in the receiving environment are to change within the site. That will be discussed shortly in Section 7 below.

At paragraph 3.3 in the VIA the effects of the 13 -16 m sealed encroachment into the Green Space Area are stated as having 'low' visual effects compared to buildings. I agree with this in principle; however, this does not mean the encroachment is appropriate. The encroachment has several adverse effects on landscape - beyond the visual.

The 2.4 m high acoustic fence on top of the 2 m high bund (4.4 m overall height) will provide immediate screening to the first and partly second tier of containers / equivalent building. To closer views, such as from the track on the true right of the river much more of the proposed buildings will be screened, due to the steep view angle. However, the fence itself will have its own adverse visual effect, comprising a 2.4 m high non-natural, continuous form adjacent to the highly natural river corridor. Fences are not permitted within the 'Landscape & Stormwater Area (Green Space)'[16]. However, over time the fence will be screened by the proposed planting (all going well) but only from the medium term[17] onwards. In the short term this structure will appear dominant, particularly for the public located within the esplanade reserve / track to the north of the bund.

The VIA refers in several places to the 11.6 m height limit having little additional effect when compared to the 11 m maximum permitted building height. In principle I agree with this. A 0.6 m increase is not great relative to 11 m (approximately 5% higher). The concern lies with the 11.6 m height being measured from the new site level, as opposed to existing ground pre-filling. The buildings' encroachment closer to the northern site boundary will exacerbate the height exceedances. From the eight properties on Gould Crescent[18], nine on Long Street[19] and from 90 Barton Street, the buildings will be closer and due to the effects of perspective will appear to 'loom up' higher given the site has already been raised by up to 2 m. As such, the 4.4 m high screen (bund + fence) will have less screening effect than it would were the buildings set back at permitted heights as per the ODP. The visual effects on these parties are of concern and will be discussed further in Section 7 below.

At paragraph 3.4, the VIA states that the visual effects of the 11.6 m – 18 m proposed building height further north on the site will generate a 'low' magnitude of change. Presumably this means within the site although this is unclear. Later the VIA states that from the east, the potentially higher built form will be apparent. I would omit the word 'potentially'. The higher built form will be very apparent given the permitted approximately 9 m maximum height baseline now the site has been raised by up to 2 m. These effects will be felt from several residences on Ferry Road as well as on the public passing by. The effects are concluded in the VIA to be 'low' (less than minor). I disagree with this conclusion which will be discussed in Section 7 below.

At paragraph 3.5 a table is included in the VIA where the effects 'after mitigation measures' are stated. At paragraph 3.6, vegetation with a mature height of 8 m is mentioned, which possibly corresponds to 'after mitigation measures' although this is not explicit. There is no

[16] Rule 16.4.4.2.3 (ii) C; Christchurch District Plan.
[17] After approximately 5 – 7 years as long as good growing conditions are provided.
[18] 32 – 38, 44, 44A, 52 and 54 Gould Crescent.
[19] 16 – 30 Long Street (and 45 Bamford Street).

indication as to when the proposed vegetation is expected to reach heights of 8 m. There is existing native vegetation including Tasmanian ngaio along the base of the bund on its north side now which is approximately 5 m high. When this was planted is unknown.

All residual (post mitigation maturity) visual effects in the VIA are deemed 'less than minor', and the magnitude of change from all nine viewpoints is assessed as 'Very Low' or 'Low'. I disagree with some of these conclusions which will be discussed below in Section 7. Of note, the table excludes any reference to the permanent occupants of Long Street, Barton Street and Ferry Road.

6. Proposed Mitigation

Mitigation measures include the existing bund, existing vegetation, proposed vegetation and an acoustic fence. On face value, these form a comprehensive suite of mitigation measures. In time, as stated in the VIA at paragraph 3.6, the mature height of the mitigation planting will be 8 m. I agree with this given the climatic conditions, putting to one side the ground conditions which will be discussed next. In the response to the RFI, two tree species *Plagianthus regius* (lowland ribbonwood) and *Tilia cordata* (small leaved lime) are stated as being able to reach 12 m and 15 m in height respectively. These heights accord with the Southern Woods website which assumes good growing conditions. Nonetheless, the maximum 18 m building height above the new site level cannot be fully mitigated from views from the east by what is proposed – even in the long term.

The Applicant stated in one of the RFI responses that the bund is constructed from crushed concrete with a 300 mm layer of topsoil that was grass seeded for stabilisation. Later, the Applicant commented that the topsoil was possibly 600 mm deep, although this was not confirmed in writing. From walking along the bund, the ground felt very firm underfoot. There was scant evidence of any woody vegetation naturally establishing on its surface, which suggested poor growing conditions. The Applicant also responded after discussion with Outerspace (the landscape contractor engaged by the Applicant to implement the proposed planting). Outerspace confirmed that 300 mm topsoil depth will be sufficient to implement the proposed planting (RFI response point 5). The proposed planting includes 18 trees, each 2.5 m tall at time of planting. Additionally, over 600 trees at smaller grades are proposed in the Esplanade Reserve and along the Tunnel Road boundary.

In my experience tree species will not survive for long in 300 mm or even 600 mm of topsoil over compacted, crushed concrete. Grasses and ground cover plants may grow satisfactorily, although such plants will have little mitigating effect. Trees generally need at least 1 m of good soil depth for long term root growth, preferably not on top of crushed concrete formed at a 2H / 1V slope. Cabbage trees, of which 41 are proposed, have deep tap roots, extending far deeper than 1 m. In my opinion there is a fatal flaw in the mitigation methodology regarding planting on the existing bund. It is highly likely that the plants will fail to thrive and will eventually be overtaken by rank grass growth. At this point, mitigation duties will only be able to rely on the acoustic fence, and any existing retained vegetation.

Vegetation monitoring and maintenance will be critical. Outerspace state that they will maintain the planting for 3 months (RFI response point 6). This is very brief. The site is required to be maintained for two years following issue of the Section 224 Certificate ('defects liability period') as a minimum. Prior to issue of the Section 224, the site will have been planted. It would be beneficial for the Applicant that this planting is maintained up to this point to avoid costly maintenance/plant replacement being required in the defects liability period. As such, the maintenance of the planting should occur regularly for longer than 2 years overall.

7. Peer Reviewer's Summary of Potential Visual Effects

The following sets out what in my opinion the visual effects will be arising from the Proposal beyond what could occur in a permitted scenario and why. The following assumes 11.6 m – 18 m high buildings (above the new site level) will be constructed at the same time. The following also assumes the bund will be improved from its current condition, or replaced, providing for adequate plant establishment. Otherwise, the 'initial' effects set out below will prevail into the long term. The rankings below use the same continuum / definitions that are included in the VIA under Section 2.3 for consistency. I have included the widely accepted seven-point scale of effects with equivalent RMA effects from the NZILA landscape assessment guidelines: Te Tangi a te Manu (**Figure 1**).

Figure 1

Views from fifteen Ferry Road dwellings within receiving environment (nos. 853 – 909 Ferry Road) - long term, fixed views (Attachment 1)

'**Moderate-High**'[20] (more than minor) adverse effects initially, reducing over time to '**Moderate**'[21] (more than minor). This is due to loss of the visibility of the majority of the Montgomery Spur ridgeline. Buildings will dominate part of the Port Hills Backdrop beyond what would occur in a permitted scenario. The north-south 'stepping effect' proposed will not benefit these parties. The permitted height limit provides for buildings to sit below the ridgeline which is a well-planned outcome, where the attributes and values of the contextual landscape have been carefully considered. Mitigation planting will have a negligible effect from here (**Attachment 3, upper image**).

Views from Gould Crescent dwellings within receiving environment (nos. 32 – 38, 44, 44A, 52 and 54 Gould Crescent) - long term, fixed views (Attachment 1)

'**Moderate**' (more than minor) adverse effects initially, reducing over time to '**Low-Moderate**'[22] (minor). This is due to the buildings being closer and higher. The 11.6 m high 'front rank' will be approximately 13-16 m closer than where the stacked containers extend currently. Due to the effects of perspective, the encroachment will be apparent, where the visual effects of increased bulk and scale will come into play. The 18 m high buildings will be more visible where the sightlines are flatter from the second storey of some dwellings. Over time the additional mitigation planting will help to screen and offset the effects of increased building height and proximity, although the upper parts of the buildings will remain visible. (**Attachment 5 lower image**).

Views from remainder of Gould Crescent dwellings within receiving environment - long term, fixed views (Attachment 1)

'**Moderate-Low**' (minor) adverse effects initially, reducing over time to '**Low**'[23] (less than minor). The buildings will be seen through gaps in the neighbouring residential fabric. In a permitted scenario, built forms in the 11 m height area would be barely visible. The 18 m high buildings will be partly visible from further away where the sightlines are flatter and from the second storey of some dwellings. Over time the additional mitigation planting will help to

[20] Moderate-High – effects are discernible and change the quality of the existing view, potentially with the loss of views.
[21] Moderate – effects are discernible and have an effect on the quality of the view but with the main 'view qualities' still intact.
[22] Moderate-Low – effects are discernible and start to adversely affect viewer experience.
[23] Low – effects which are discernible but do not adversely affect the viewer experience.

screen and offset the effects of increased building height and proximity, although the upper parts of the buildings will remain visible. (**Attachment 5 upper image, Attachment 6 lower image**).

Views from Long Street and Barton Street dwellings within receiving environment - long term, fixed views (Attachment 1)

'**Moderate**' (more than minor) adverse effects initially, reducing over time to '**Low**' (less than minor). This is due to the buildings being closer and higher. Buildings will tend to 'loom' above the river environment. For these parties' outlook, the river environment doubtless provides high amenity value, possibly evident in the general absence of high front fences. Over time the additional mitigation planting will help to screen the effects of the higher, closer built forms (**Attachment 9, Attachment 10 upper image**).

Views from travellers on the road network, including cyclists and pedestrians within receiving environment - transient, short-term views (Attachment 1)

'**Low**' (less than minor) adverse effects initially, reducing over time to '**Very Low**'[24] (less than minor). This is due to the transient nature of views to the Proposal which will often be glimpses, the screening effects of existing intervening buildings and planting. Over time the additional mitigation planting will help to offset the effects of or partially screen the higher built forms from view (**Attachments 2 - 10**).

Views from travellers on Tunnel Road / SH74 within receiving environment - transient, short-term views (Attachment 1)

'**Low**' (less than minor) adverse effects initially, reducing over time to '**Very Low**' (less than minor). This is due to the transient nature of views to the Proposal which will often be at open road speeds. Over time the additional mitigation planting will help to offset the effects of or screen the higher built forms due to the steep view angles from the road.

Views from recreationists on the public Tow Path and Tow Path Reserve - transient, short to medium-term views (Attachment 1)

'**Moderate**' (more than minor) adverse effects initially, reducing over time to '**Moderate-Low**' (minor). This is due to loss of the visibility of part of the Montgomery Spur ridgeline. Buildings will dominate part of the Port Hills Backdrop beyond what would occur in a permitted scenario. The Proposal will be seen in context of the historic reserve, river environment when stationary particularly. Mitigation planting will have a negligible effect from here. However, some views will be via glimpses when passing through (**Attachment 3, lower image, Attachment 4, upper image**).

Recreationists on the public riverside paths including the footbridge over the 'Woolston Cut', Gould Reserve, 'Woolston Cut' (constructed) riverbank area, within receiving environment - transient, short-medium[25] term views (Attachment 1)

'**Low**' (less than minor) adverse effects initially, reducing over time to '**Very Low**' (less than minor). This is due to the transient nature of views to the Proposal, intervening vegetation and buildings. Over time the additional mitigation planting will help to offset the effects of or screen the higher built forms due to the steep view angles from locations close to the site.

[24] Very Low – effects which are negligible or are not readily discernible.
[25] When passing through an area and occasionally stopping where there may be open space, seating, interpretation etc.

Recreationists on the public riverside paths on both sides of the Opawaho / Heathcote River within receiving environment - transient, short-medium[26] term views (**Attachment 1**)

'**Moderate**' (more than minor) adverse effects initially, reducing over time to '**Very Low**' (less than minor). This is due to the proximity of the 2.4 m acoustic fence which introduces an obvious built structure to an otherwise natural environment and the visibility of the buildings 'looming' above the top of the fence. These effects are mitigated by the transient nature of views and the partial screening effect of existing vegetation. Over time the additional mitigation planting, when 8 m high will likely screen the fence and buildings from view (**Attachments 5, lower image, Attachment 9, upper image**).

Conclusion

The purpose of this peer review and additional visual assessment input is to provide the decision maker with further information regarding the Proposal's potential visual effects. The Portlink Industrial Park Outline Development Plan includes the provision of a generous building setback from the river in which ample space is provided for mitigation planting. The intent is that the setback provides for dense greenery, including tall trees, maintains the Garden City Image and strengthens the edge between the industrial zone and the highly natural open space of the river corridor. The adjacent residential zone would also benefit from such a vegetated buffer where the buffer would potentially and ultimately screen tall industrial buildings from view. Unfortunately, much of that area has been paved over by the Applicant. In doing so, ground level has been artificially raised by approximately 2 m precluding planting and the benefits of such planting for both residents and visitors to the area. Local amenity values include an outlook to the Opawaho / Heathcote River and the Port Hills which will be impinged upon to varying degrees by the Proposal. To further ensure amenity levels are maintained, the ODP includes an area of reduced building height (to 11 m maximum above natural ground level) to avoid industrial buildings visibly dominating the natural river environment and interrupting Port Hills vistas.

In my opinion, the Proposal departs from the primary intent of the ODP by encroaching into the Green Space setback with fill, hardstand and a proposal to construct over-height buildings. Shipping containers will have greater adverse visual effects than permanent walled/roofed buildings. Other industrial 'buildings' at similar proposed heights may include the outdoor storage of various materials such as pallets, pipes, construction timber, logs, scrapped vehicles and metal and the like. However, at heights such as what is proposed, these items would doubtless need to placed within a support structure, where they would be classified as a 'building'. It is concluded that the visual effects of these outdoor storage items will be slightly better than shipping containers, due to shipping containers' bulk and visual 'solidity'. As such, shipping containers form a worse-case scenario.

The proposed 11.6 m – 18 m high buildings set above the raised / paved site level would be approximately 2.6 m – 9 m higher and 13 -16 m closer to the river / open space and public view than what is permitted. Given the site filling / ground level raise of at most 2 m, permitted buildings within the 11 m Height Limit Area in the ODP would need to be no higher than 9 m. The available planting width is limited to the existing 12 m wide bund which in its current state is unlikely to effectively support the proposed mitigation planting.

My conclusion is that the Proposal as it is currently presented will generate adverse visual effects that will be at worse '**Moderate-High**' initially for some residents on Ferry Road where their views of the Port Hills / Montgomery Spur will be interrupted by over-height built forms reducing over time to '**Moderate**' (both effects are more than minor). However, for the

[26] When passing through an area and occasionally stopping where there may be open space, seating, interpretation etc.

remainder of potentially affected parties, the effects are less than this, between '**Moderate**' (more than minor) and '**Low**' (less than minor) initially depending on location and nature of view. Over time as the mitigation planting matures, the residual effects will reduce for most parties to '**Low**' or '**Very Low**' (both effects are less than minor). However, for some parties residual adverse effects will remain at levels greater than this.

With more detailed assessment from the Applicant, including additional view line / sections and possibly representative 'before and after' visualisations, my conclusions above may alter.

8. Recommendations

My preference is that the specifics of the ODP regarding building height above natural ground level and location are upheld. However, if the decision maker was of a mind to grant consent, I make the following recommendations which will go some way to reduce adverse visual effects in my opinion:

1. A 10.5 m maximum building height (four containers equivalent), measured above the paved surface, within the 11 m Building Height Limit area in the ODP grading upwards from the north and east boundaries westwards and southwards to a maximum height of 16 m (six containers equivalent) measured above the paved surface forming a 'building envelope' and upper 'building ceiling' (**Attachment 11**).

   Reasons:

   (1) To mitigate the visual effects of the over-height built forms and retain views to the Montgomery Spur ridgeline when viewed from Ferry Road residences (discussed above).

   (2) To avoid bulk and scale effects of over height-built forms when viewed from Gould Crescent residences immediately to the north of the site (discussed above).

   (3) To enable the over-height buildings to be screened from view by the acoustic fence from the true right of the river.

   (4) To enable the mitigation planting to achieve a screening effect in less time.

2. The 2.4 m high acoustic fence is finished in a recessive colour.

   Reasons:

   (1) To mitigate the visual prominence and dominance of a non-natural structure within the highly natural river corridor.
   (2) To enable the proposed planting to be the focus.

3. Buildings or storage up to a height of 5.5 m (two containers equivalent) may be located in the 13 – 16 m area of existing paving / former Green Space Area to the north of the 11 m Building Height Limit Area on the ODP.

   Reasons:

   (1) To accept that the area will no longer be used as a Green Space Area.

(2) To ensure that at most two containers may be stacked here or equivalent building/s where they will be screened to most views by the bund/acoustic fence.

4. The bunding adjacent to the 11 m Building Height Limit Area in the ODP are 2 m high and constructed / reconstructed to enable planting to establish quickly and thrive, with all plants able to reach their mature heights.

   Reasons:

   (1) To ensure that the mitigation planting establishes, thrives and can mature to natural heights to achieve a satisfactory screening effect.

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18 May 2023