

BEFORE THE DUNEDIN CITY COUNCIL

UNDER	the Resource Management Act 1991
IN THE MATTER	an application for resource consent of LUC-2017-98
BY	John Fairweather Applicant

BRIEF OF EVIDENCE OF MICHAEL WILLIAM MOORE

Introduction

1. My name is Michael William Moore. I hold the degrees of Bachelor of Science from the University of Canterbury, Master of Regional Resource Planning from the University of Otago and the Diploma of Landscape Architecture from Lincoln University. I am a registered member of the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects.
2. I have thirty one year's professional experience and am currently an independent consultant landscape architect based in Dunedin. Prior to this I worked for the Dunedin and Palmerston North City Councils. My work experience includes the preparation of visual and landscape effects assessments, evidence for Council and Environment Court hearings, and site planning and design for development projects. I have also undertaken assessments and mapping to assist in the preparation of landscape protection provisions in District Plans and other statutory documents. I have prepared landscape and visual assessments for numerous rural building projects of various scales and locations within Dunedin and other parts of the South Island.
3. Although this is not an Environment Court hearing, I have read and agree to comply with the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses (Environment Court Practice Note 2014).

Background

4. In February 2017, I was commissioned by the applicant, to prepare a landscape and visual assessment report in support of the proposed building platform at 533 Mt Cargill Road, Dunedin. My report, dated 21 February 2017, forms part of the application documentation.

Scope of evidence

5. My evidence addresses the landscape and visual effects of the proposed development and is structured as follows:

- Site and area description.
- The landscape values.
- The proposed development and mitigation measures.
- Landscape effects.
- Visual effects.
- Statutory Planning Assessment.
- Comment on the Council Officers Reports
- Conclusion.

An A3 graphic supplement forms part of my evidence.

Site and area description

6. As illustrated in **Figure 1**, the site is located on the eastern slopes of Weatherston Hill and within the valley associated with Cedar Creek. It extends from near the Weatherston Hill summit (approximately 380m) to the valley base. The land slopes moderately steeply to the east and the proposed building site (which has been cleared of trees) is a flatter area located at approximately the 295m contour where there is an existing access way from Mt Cargill Road. The geology is volcanic and the property is covered in a mix of regenerating native forest and exotic plantation forestry. The exotic trees are largely Eucalyptus but there is also Wattle, Fir and Macrocarpa, with a dense, largely native understory beneath the forestry canopy. Historically, there was a farm house at the termination of the accessway.
7. **Figure 2** is a plan of the property illustrating various zones of different vegetation character across the site. These can be described as follows:
 - Zone A – areas of regenerating indigenous vegetation.
 - Zone B – Area of partially harvested exotic plantation.
 - Zone C – Mature Macrocarpa shelterbelt and other exotics forming a screen along the southern boundary.

- Zone D – Exotic plantation areas to be retained at present – likely to be ready to harvest in 10 – 15 years.
 - Zone E – Exotic plantation area ready for harvesting.
8. The Cedar Creek catchment is the primary landscape context of the site and is characterized by a patchwork of various vegetation cover, including regenerating native forest (Kanuka dominated on higher slopes), gorse, broom, and exotic forestry woodlots. The landscape reflects changing land use, from historic farming to regenerating native bush and forestry. To the south of the site, Mt Cargill Road crosses into the upper Weatherstons Creek catchment and in this area, the land use is a patchwork of pasture, exotic woodlots, exotic scrub and regenerating native bush, with a number of dwellings located both near the road and at lower levels amongst woodlots and bush. Further south, a quarry is located near the summit of Mt Cutten.
9. **Figures 3 - 7** illustrate the character of the site and area.

Landscape Values

10. This area is within the Flagstaff Mt Cargill Landscape Conservation Area (FMCLCA) in the Operative Dunedin City District Plan. The 'features and characteristics to be conserved' listed in section 14.5.3 (a) (ii) that are generally relevant to this site and application, are as follows:
- The visual dominance of natural landform and other natural elements (such as remaining indigenous vegetation) over cultural or human-made landscape elements e.g. buildings or plantations.
 - The extent, integrity, coherence and natural character of the major natural elements such as landform, streams and areas of indigenous vegetation.
 - The extent and quality of views from the principal public routes and viewpoints.
 - The skyline generally defined by natural elements.
 - The large diversity of indigenous vegetation types including:
 - Cloud forest of *Libocedrus* and some podocarps (Leith Saddle and Mt Cargill)

- Podocarp broadleaf forests
- Various shrublands.

11. In the proposed Dunedin City District Plan (2GP) the site is included within the Flagstaff – Mt Cargill Significant Natural Landscape (FMCSNL). The ‘values to be protected’ as discussed in Section A3.3.2.2 that are generally relevant to this site and application, can be summarized (with some interpretation required) as follows:

Natural Science Values

- Distinctive natural landforms including the volcanic peaks.
- Significant areas of indigenous vegetation (listed).

Cultural / Historic Values

- Places with values of significance to manawhenua as listed, including the volcanic peaks of Mihiwaka, Mt Kettle and Mt Cargill (cultural identity markers).
- The area has recognized value to the community as a natural landscape backdrop to Dunedin City, a recreational resource close to the city, a natural northern approach to the city. The hilltops are distinctive landmarks.

Aesthetic and amenity values

- The area is highly visible and forms the backdrop to urban Dunedin, the west harbour and Blueskin Bay.
- Whilst aesthetic values are variable, the area contains striking and memorable landforms, some of which are iconic landmark features of Dunedin, as well as areas with high naturalness values.
- The area is valued as a natural setting for recreational activities and affords scenic and panoramic views.

12. In my assessment, the area in the vicinity of this property has landscape values of moderately high significance. These are based on the distinctive natural landforms of Weatherston Hill and Mt Kettle, and the significant presence of native vegetation but are modified by a somewhat incoherent vegetation pattern. This is due to a large extent to the presence of the blocks of exotic woodlots and remnant shelter trees

which stand out from the native bush due to their different scale and colour, and which do not relate to the landform. The exotic trees on site contribute to this incoherence. The area to the south of the site which is more pastoral, also suffers from incoherence in the vegetation patterns and natural landscape qualities in this area are also reduced by the presence of the quarry. As experienced from Mt Cargill Rd at least, this area has a more domesticated character than the Cedar Creek catchment.

The proposed development and mitigation measures

13. The proposed development involves provision for erection of a dwelling, along with accessory buildings as appropriate. There is no specific proposal at present and instead, an envelope approach to control the scale and character of future development, is proposed, with the recommended mitigation measures, as outlined below. At present, the exotic trees on site provide a strong tree framework to the proposed house site that provides significant screening. It is proposed to harvest a large portion of the exotic forestry trees on the upper part of the site, and this will be done before any house is built. This means that the house site will be significantly more open than at present.
14. **Figure 8** illustrates the location of the proposed building platform. This is 30 x 30m in area and is located to coincide with an area of flatter contours. Figure 8 amends the development concept plan included with the application documents to hopefully, more clearly describe the management intentions for the site vegetation.
15. The mitigation measures recommended to ensure that development integrates acceptably and minimizes any adverse landscape and visual effects, are as follows:
 - (a) All buildings, including accessory buildings, are to be located within the identified building platform (see Figure 8).
 - (b) All buildings shall be a maximum of 6m height above existing ground level.

- (c) All buildings shall be finished in naturally weathered timber or locally appropriate stone, or in colours that have low levels of contrast with the colours of the wider bushland setting. Painted surfaces will have light reflectivity ratings of no more than 15%.
 - (d) All services are to be located below ground
 - (e) The driveway is to retain an informal rural character with gravel surface and soft edges (i.e. no kerbs). Monumental gates and driveway lighting are not permitted.
 - (f) All existing areas of predominantly indigenous vegetation (Area A) are to be retained and managed to protect and enhance their natural character values.
 - (g) The area labelled 'bush regeneration area' (Area B) has already been partially harvested. It is proposed that harvesting in this area is completed and that the area is to be managed to encourage natural regeneration of indigenous species and to control regrowth or establishment of exotic species.
 - (h) The existing vegetation in the area labelled 'screen planting area' (Area C) is to be managed to ensure that its role in providing screening and / or planted context (and shelter) to the house site is maintained.
16. Areas D and E indicate the parts of the site where existing exotic species are to be harvested. It is intended that area E will be harvested soon. Area D will not be ready for harvesting for 10 – 15 years and the applicant wishes to ensure that the right to harvest the trees in this area this area is retained. It is also the applicants wish that future use and management of areas D and E is left to the discretion of the owners of the property and not controlled further, by specific conditions of consent. The most likely scenarios for the long term management of areas D and E are natural regeneration of indigenous species, replanting of some of the area as a woodlot, establishing pasture and grazing (at least on the less steep parts), or various combinations of these. It would be my

recommendation that in Area D2 at least, the long term management is natural regeneration of indigenous vegetation to protect and enhance the natural character and amenity values of the area and particularly as viewed from Mt Cargill Road.

Landscape effects

17. This area has moderate – high natural landscape values based on the distinctive natural landforms, the significant presence of native vegetation and the limited impact of structures. These values however, are modified by forestry activities and a degree of incoherence in the vegetation patterns, and given the degree of existing modification the area is not highly sensitive to change.
18. The application will result in one additional house, and whilst the site will be less tree'd than it is presently (given that harvesting of the exotic woodlot species is planned), there will still be a planted context and significant screening from surrounding roads. The character of the site is already significantly modified by exotic forestry and houses are part of the character of the nearby rural landscape to the south. In the area of the proposed building platform itself, natural landform and vegetation cover has already been modified and there will be no additional effects associated with creating access to the site as this already exists. Whilst a new building will be erected, it will have low visual prominence (given the mitigation measures proposed and low visibility from surrounding roads) and any adverse natural character effects will be offset in the long term by the proposal to manage the higher and most visually prominent part of the property to regenerate to indigenous forest. This will eventually blend with the adjacent bushland and extend the area of native forest cover.
19. Overall, it is my assessment that any adverse landscape character effects of the proposed development will be minor. In the long term, I believe that regeneration of native bush cover on the higher slopes will have a positive effect on natural landscape values that will outweigh any adverse effects of further domestication associated with the house.

Visual effects

20. Visibility of the site is very limited given its valley location and the extent of the bush and tree cover in the area. The relevant viewpoints are limited to Mt Cargill Road and Green Road and these are discussed below:

Mt Cargill Road adjacent to the south

21. Figure 3 illustrates a view toward the site from Mt Cargill Road near the access driveway. There are no other viewpoints toward the site of any significance to the south of the property. Existing vegetation both in front of the property and that proposed to be retained for screening purposes, will ensure that there is no visibility of the proposed house from this part of Mt Cargill Road.

Mt Cargill Road adjacent to the east

22. Mt Cargill Road borders the eastern boundary of the property. As Figure 4 illustrates, visibility toward the house site is virtually entirely screened by the roadside vegetation and other intervening vegetation. Visual effects from this section of Mt Cargill Road will be negligible, at least in the medium term.
23. Should the exotic trees in the area of the property by the eastern boundary be eventually harvested, visibility toward the house site would probably increase over an approximately 100m length of Mt Cargill Road. Whilst there would still be a significant strip of trees within the road reserve, it is possible that some modification of this vegetation would be required due to destabilisation effects of adjacent tree removal. Assuming a period of greater visibility of the house from this section of the road, it is my assessment that any adverse visual effects would be minor due to:
- Screening provided by remaining vegetation within the road reserve and / or the regrowth of new vegetation which would

replace the loss of any existing screening in at least the medium term (5 – 10 years).

- The combined effect of significant viewing distance (over 320m), land / planted backdrop and controls of building height and colour.

Mt Cargill Road to the north

24. Figures 5 and 6 are from two of only a few places on Mt Cargill Road to the north of the site where views up the Cedar Creek valley are possible. Viewing distances are 1.2 and 2.6km respectively. From this direction, a house on the proposed building site will be visible as the Eucalyptus dominated woodlots will be removed. The house will however, be seen against a backdrop of the trees along the southern boundary and this, combined with the proposed height and colour controls and the considerable viewing distances, will ensure it is not visually prominent. Of more significance in terms of visual effects and change to the landscape than the proposed house, will be the removal of the woodlot. The boundary Macrocarpa trees will however, still be seen on the skyline. In my assessment any adverse effects associated with visibility of the proposed house will be minor from these viewpoints, and in the long term the replacement of exotic woodlot by native bush cover on the upper slopes will have a positive effect.

Green Road

25. Green Road is a minor rural road running between Mt Cargill and Blueskin Roads. The property is visible from a few places along this road at distances of approximately 1.0 – 1.2km, as Figure 7 illustrates. With the woodlot trees removed, the proposed house will be visible and will have a planted backdrop. This backdrop, combined with the proposed height and colour controls and the considerable viewing distance, will ensure it is not visually prominent and will integrate acceptably. In my assessment, any adverse visual effects associated with the house will be minor. Eventually, the expanded native bush cover on the slopes above the house site will have a positive visual effect.

Statutory planning assessment

Dunedin City Operative District Plan

26. The objectives and policies relevant to the landscape effects of this application are found in the Rural and Landscape sections of the Dunedin City District Plan. These have been outlined in my report and can be summarized as follows:
- Maintain and enhance the amenity values associated with rural character and effects on the amenity of adjoining properties.
 - Avoid or mitigate adverse effects on landscape management areas and conserve their important features and characteristics – in this case, the visual dominance of natural elements, the natural character, the quality of views from public viewpoints, and the skyline generally defined by natural elements.

Effects on rural character amenity values

27. In my assessment, the proposed new house will have minimal impact on rural character and amenity values. Given that regeneration of indigenous vegetation is proposed for the upper part of the property associated with the house development, there will be positive effects on amenity values in the longer term. The natural / built balance will be adjusted slightly, in favour of the built, but given the mitigation controls proposed, impacts will be minimal. There are no neighbours who will be affected visually, and visual effects generally will be confined to a handful of fairly distant viewpoints on the surrounding roads.

Effects on the values of the Flagstaff Mt Cargill Landscape Conservation Area (FMCLCA)

28. The visibility of the site is very limited and the controls proposed over the scale and visual character of the proposed building will ensure that where it is seen, it is not visually prominent and that it integrates well with its natural landscape setting. Taking a wider view of its landscape context, it will fit in with the rural houses in the area directly adjacent to the south. Given the proposed controls, the house will have minimal

effect on the dominance of the natural landscape elements. In the longer term, the proposal for natural regeneration of the higher slopes of the property will result in greater dominance of natural elements. No skylines or significant views will be impacted. I am not aware of any Manawhenua values that will be impacted.

Proposed 2GP

29. The 2GP is still in its early stages and subject to challenge, and little weight can yet be given to it. The relevant objectives and policies however should be given some consideration. Those dealing with landscape matters have been identified in my report and can be summarized as follows:

- Ensure that amenity levels in surrounding properties and public areas are maintained. Buildings should be appropriately set back from boundaries and of a height that maintains amenity.
- The values identified for Significant Natural Landscapes (SNL's) are to be maintained or enhanced – those relevant to this site include naturalness, aesthetic coherence and natural skylines. New buildings are to have colours and materials that minimize reflectivity and visual prominence.

Effects on amenity

30. The proposed house will slightly alter the built / natural balance in its vicinity but the proposed mitigation measures (along with the minimal visibility) will ensure that its visual prominence is low and that its effects on naturalness are no more than minor. Eventually, regeneration of native bush cover associated with the development will more than compensate for any effects of increased domestication. Houses are part of the rural landscape character in the area directly adjacent to the south and this proposed dwelling will integrate readily in this context. There may be some adverse effects associated with night time lighting but given that there are already houses and associated lighting in the area adjacent to the south (and visible up Cedar Creek valley from points below) these will be minor at worst.

Effects on the values of the Flagstaff Mt Cargill Landscape Significant Natural Landscape (FMCSNL)

31. Considering the mitigation controls proposed, the proposed development will have minimal adverse effect on the natural landscape values and will, in the longer term, result in extended indigenous forest cover. The house will have very limited visibility and low visual prominence.

Comment on the Council Officer's reports

32. The main issue arising from the reports of Councils Planner and Senior Landscape Architect is that additional and strengthened mitigation measures are seen to be required in order for the effects on amenity and landscape values to be considered acceptable. To this end the conditions recommended include:
- (Condition 5) A reduction in the maximum building height from 6m proposed, to 5m.
 - (Condition 9) A lighting plan for buildings including the requirements for outdoor lighting to be down lighting only, of low luminance, and limited to the approved building platform.
 - (Condition 11) A landscape plan for the area labelled screen planting area in the event that the Macrocarpa shelterbelt is removed with the objective of providing screening of residential activity within the landscape building platform from 539 Mt Cargill Road and Mount Cargill Road.
 - (Condition 12) A landscape structure plan for the areas north and east of the dwelling, to mitigate its visual dominance and domestication effects from viewpoints on Mt Cargill and Green Roads. This plan is to include provision for new native vegetation established on the northern and north eastern side of the building platform, additional landscaping on the north and north east boundaries, and temporary retention of the exotic woodlot around northern and north eastern aspects of the building platform until such time as native planting is established and providing partial screening of the dwelling.

- (Condition 15) A bush regeneration management plan for the identified Bush Regeneration Area.
 - (Condition 16) An additional bush regeneration area protecting a 10m wide planted area along the north and north east side of the building platform, protected by covenant with Council.
33. I note that recommended Condition 13 addressing building colour, doubles up and conflicts with, condition 6, and that recommended condition 14 essentially repeats condition 5.
34. As regards the recommended reduced maximum building height (Condition 5), it is my assessment that a reduction of 1m makes little difference in terms of visual impact in this situation, given the presence of a backdrop and land and / or existing mature vegetation from all surrounding viewpoints. I do not consider that 6m is inappropriate.
35. Proposed Condition 9 regarding outdoor lighting is acceptable to the applicant and will help to further minimise building impact.
36. Regarding proposed Condition 11, requiring a landscape plan for the area labelled screen planting area in the event that the Macrocarpa shelterbelt is removed, it is my assessment that this is unnecessary. The vegetation in this area includes the large boundary Macrocarpa shelter trees, but also younger Macrocarpa and Eucalyptus as well as native understory species and if the larger Macrocarpa were removed, there would still be significant screening from the other vegetation. To enhance certainty around the effectiveness of this screening the amended development concept plan has widened the screen planting area (Area C) so that it is now shown as 20m wide to the west of the driveway (it remains 15m wide to the east). It is my recommendation that a condition pertaining to this screen planting area should read more or less as follows:

The vegetation within the screen planting area (Area C on the Development Concept Plan) shall be managed to ensure that effective screening of the building platform area from Mt Cargill Road to the south, and the visual effect of a strongly planted backdrop to the building platform area from viewpoints to the north and north-east, is maintained.

37. As far as proposed Conditions 12 and 16 are concerned, requiring plantings and protection of these in areas to the north and east of the building platform and along the northern and eastern boundaries, and the temporary retention of exotic trees, I comment as follows:
38. It is my assessment that the mitigation measures already proposed i.e. height and colour controls and protection of backdrop plantings, are sufficient to appropriately protect against undue building prominence and domestication effects. Viewing distances from north and north-east viewpoints external to the site are long, and viewpoints are limited in number. Where the house is visible the proposed design controls will ensure it has low visual prominence. Where it is noticed, I do not believe its presence will adversely affect landscape values in more than a minor way. The house site is at the edge of an area with existing dwellings some of which are (or will be) also visible in views toward the area. The natural character of the wider area is already modified by the presence of forestry and exotic scrub, and (to the south) by existing buildings and agricultural land use. It is not of such significance as to make complete avoidance of the visibility of buildings required in my assessment.
39. The landform to the north and east of the building platform falls away and whilst planting in this location could provide screening from lower viewpoints (Mt Cargill Road), it would take a long time to become effective and could conflict with providing for views from and sun to, the house site. Given the higher elevation of Green Road it would not be effective in screening from that viewpoint. Planting on the eastern boundary is impractical given the existing plantation trees both within the property and within the road reserve. Planting on the northern boundary is too far from either the house site or significant viewpoints to be effectively located in relation to the viewpoint, and would need to be of significant scale to be of any use in providing screening.
40. With regard to proposed Condition 15, I believe that a management plan for the proposed Bush Regeneration Area is appropriate and will help to ensure that the natural character values in this area are appropriately protected and enhanced. The most significant issue is likely to be control over the regrowth of exotic trees. In general however, the natural regeneration of native species that is evident in the area provides

confidence that successful reestablishment of bush cover will be successful.

Conclusion

41. The property is within a 'Landscape Conservation Area' overlay in the Operative Dunedin District Plan and a 'Significant Natural Landscape' overlay in the Proposed Dunedin City District Plan (2GP). The landscape values these overlays seek to protect are largely related to natural character. The area which forms the context of the site has moderate – high natural character in my assessment, with landscape values that are modified to an extent by the presence of exotic woodlots and some resultant incoherence in the vegetation patterns.
42. The proposed development will result in one additional house in this area. This will integrate well in the context of existing rural houses in the area directly adjacent to the south and because the proposed mitigation measures will ensure it is not visually prominent. To compensate for any effects of increased domestication, the proposal includes the requirement to manage the higher, more visually prominent part of the property to regenerate in indigenous forest cover. This will have significant positive effects on landscape and visual values in the long term.
43. It is my assessment that any adverse landscape character effects associated with the proposed house will be minor. In terms of visual effects, the site has low levels of visibility from surrounding viewpoints. Considering this, and the mitigation measures proposed to minimize prominence, any visual effects will be minor at worst.
44. It is my conclusion that the proposed development is generally consistent with the landscape relevant provisions of the Operative and Proposed Dunedin District Plans.

Mike Moore

Landscape Architect

