

Memorandum

TO: Melissa Shipman, Planner

FROM: Barry Knox, Senior Landscape Architect

DATE: 22nd March 2017.

SUBJECT: **LUC-2017-98 533 MOUNT CARGILL ROAD. COMMENT FROM LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT.**

This memorandum is in response to a request for comment on an application to establish a dwelling on an "undersized" allotment in the Rural zone, which also has an overlying landscape management zone, the Flagstaff / Mt Cargill Landscape Conservation Area (FMCLCA).

The site for the proposed (as yet, not designed) dwelling is recognised as a largely undeveloped area with high natural landscape values. Currently the area is covered almost completely with vegetation – a mixture of existing natural indigenous species with woodlot *Macrocarpa* and *Eucalyptus* trees. I understand some of the exotic woodlot trees closest to the proposed dwelling site are proposed to be removed, which will reduce the screening these trees currently provide.

The site fails to comply with the minimum site area of 15 hectares as required by Rule 6.5.7(i) and this is therefore a non-complying activity.

I visited the site with Melissa Shipman on 15th March 2017.

General Comment

The application includes a report by Landscape Architect Mike Moore. This provides a full assessment with which I am in substantial agreement, except that in my opinion I differ from Mr Moore in terms of his overall assessment of the effects on landscape character. He recommends a suite of very worthwhile general mitigation measures for the dwelling, and promotes regeneration of native bush cover on the higher slopes. These measures, he assesses, will produce an activity which will result in adverse landscape character effects which would be minor initially, and positive in the longer term.

I consider there are too many unknowns in this proposal to categorically state these adverse landscape character effects would be minor. The main concern I have is how visually exposed a dwelling located here would be when some of the woodlot trees are removed, which I understand is proposed. This is quite an elevated site in a visually prominent location with no other obvious structures around. No specific dwelling design has been identified, and although I consider that the mitigation measures recommended by Mr Moore would go a long way to help mitigate any adverse effects on FMCLCA natural character values, my opinion is that in a sensitive site like this without more defined plans, the initial adverse effects would potentially be more than minor.

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

The Dunedin City District Plan outlines "*Features and Characteristics to be Preserved*" for the FMCLA. These are:

- *The visual dominance of natural landform and other natural elements (such as remaining indigenous vegetation) over cultural or human-made landscape elements, eg 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 following significant landform features listed in the NZ Geological Society Geopreservation Inventory for the Otago Region:*
Dunedin patterned ground (Flagstaff)
Organ Pipes (Mt Cargill).
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.
- *The values related to the cultural significance to Manawhenua of the summits of Mt Cargill, Mt Holmes, Mt Zion and Swampy Summit.*

In my opinion there is potential for some of these features to be diminished, at least at the proposed early stage. The natural landform totally dominates the area at the moment, even although the site has exotic woodlot plantings. Establishing a dwelling here, with removal of some woodlot screen planting would not only introduce a new "human-made landscape element", but may have a potentially more than minor adverse effect on the quality of longer distance views from the north and east. Appended photographs indicate this potential effect.

I consider this initial adverse effect on landscape character and FMCLCA values would be minor to moderate, especially if the proposed mitigation measures were to be incorporated. In the longer term, if native replanting of areas cleared of exotic woodlot vegetation was to be undertaken, this effect would be reduced.

As with similar recent applications, a key consideration is how effectively mitigation measures could be enacted, and how long it may be before effects could be reduced, should consent be approved.

Barry Knox
 Landscape Architect

Appendix 1. Photographs Taken 15 March 2017.



Photo 1. View from Mount Cargill Road towards the south. The dwelling is proposed around the middle of exotic planting on the west side of Weatherston Hill, to the right.



Photo 2. View from Green Road towards the south-west. The dwelling is proposed to be located approximately in the middle of the exotic planting shown here.



Photo 3. The proposed building site with eucalyptus trees towards the north.