

Memorandum

TO: Jeremy Grey, Planner

FROM: Barry Knox, Landscape Architect

DATE: 2nd August 2016

SUBJECT: **LUC-2016-189, 40 BEACH STREET. COMMENT FROM LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT.**

This memorandum is in response to the request for comment on the above application, which seeks to undertake large scale earthworks of approximately 45,000m³, above the current working area of Port Chalmers. This site was the subject of earlier emergency earthworks to stabilize the slope on Flagstaff Hill and the proposed work is designed to complete stabilization of the slope. It is proposed that the excavated material will be taken to a disposal or storage site by either rail or road but this has not been established at this stage.

Overall the activity is required to be assessed as a restricted discretionary activity under the earthworks rules of the operative District Plan and the Council's discretion is limited to the range of matters identified under Rule 17.7.5. My comments will focus on elements of natural character and visual amenity.

The application includes a report by Michael Moore which addresses landscape issues in a comprehensive manner and recommends mitigation measures, including planting and site restoration approaches.

I visited the site with Jeremy Grey on 1 May 2016 and subsequently forwarded an opinion on the degree of the effects of the proposed earthworks to assist with the notification decision. Photographs taken during this visit, included as Appendix 1, indicate the scale and potential visibility of the proposed work.

General Comment

The earthworks proposed in this application are of a significant scale, and I consider the adverse effects of such work on landscape character and visual amenity would be potentially significant, particularly at the early stages. In this regard I agree with the comments made by Mike Moore, who notes in his report,

"The adverse natural landscape character and visual effects on the headland must be considered within the context of the surrounding port – which is a highly modified environment. This context reduces their significance in my opinion. Considering the history of modification, the port setting and the mitigation planting proposed, I assess the adverse natural landscape character and visual effects as significant initially, reducing to moderate in the medium term (5-15 years –as the bench plantings establish and grow, and as natural softening of the lower slopes occurs), and reducing to minor in the long term."

Technically the initial adverse effects on natural character and amenity are assessed in the application landscape report as significant, reducing to moderate in five to fifteen years, and minor in the long term.

There are a number of factors which assist with reducing the potential significance of these adverse effects. In terms of its requirement, it appears to be a necessary corollary to earlier emergency work, and my understanding is that proposed new earthworks will provide a greater assurance that Flagstaff Hill will be more stable as a result. Another factor is the Port Chalmers industrial setting which by its nature reduces the significance of effects on surrounding natural character and acts as a visual counterpoint. With regard to visibility, this is a prominent and reasonably central focal point of Otago Harbour which can be seen from key locations on the peninsula, and from north-east of Port Chalmers.

Overall it is likely that this work, if it proceeds, would have significant initial adverse effects on local natural character and visual amenity, and be visible from key viewpoints. However, it also appears to be work that is required for security and safety for the Port working environment. If mitigation work is carried out as detailed in the application these effects would be ameliorated in time, and become no more than minor.

Recommended Condition

Should consents be approved, I recommend that all the recommended site restoration measures and proposed planting forwarded in the Mike Moore report attached to the application should be fully implemented.

This would be likely to be proceeded with if consent is granted in any case, but in my opinion greater certainty would follow from such a consent condition. The following (or similar) condition could be attached:

- *All planting and site development recommendations outlined or detailed in the "Landscape Development and Management Plan, 10 December 2015", included with the application document, shall be implemented and managed in a timely manner.*

Barry Knox
Landscape Architect.

Appendix 1. Photographs Taken 1 May 2016.



View from Beach Street towards the south east showing material to be removed and reshaped for greater safety and site geotechnical security.



View from the top of the proposed area for removal, close to older site Macrocarpa trees. This is towards Harwood on Otago Peninsula, to the south-east.