

RURAL SUBDIVISION AND DEVELOPMENT 2006



LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

This guideline is the third of a set of three landscape management guidelines for Dunedin City. The purpose of providing guidelines is to help landowners and developers to integrate land use activities and development into the landscape. Guideline 1 contains information on the Landscape Management Areas identified in the Dunedin City District Plan. Guideline 2 deals with rural land use activities.

These guidelines can only be of a general nature. Because every site is different, it is not possible to offer specific advice. It is important that each individual site is assessed to determine an appropriate design solution based on site character and the specific development requirements. In some cases it is possible that the effects of the proposed activity or development may not be able to be adequately mitigated and may not be appropriate at all. Where the project has the potential to have significant impact on the landscape, it is recommended that advice from a professional landscape architect is sought.

RURAL SUBDIVISION AND DEVELOPMENT

Increasingly, people are seeking to live in rural parts of Dunedin City, particularly coastal areas. This means that many rural properties are being subdivided into smaller blocks and developed for 'lifestyle' purposes.

Rural subdivision and the resulting development usually introduce smaller scale landscape patterns created by additional buildings, driveways, services and plantings. This intensification, or 'domestication', can conflict with expectations of openness, naturalness and more expansive rural character.

This change need not necessarily be negative. It some cases it can be a catalyst for enhancing the environment. If inappropriately planned and developed, however, more intensive residential development in the rural landscape can destroy the values that attracted people to the area in the first place. There may also be potential for conflict with established rural activities.

These guidelines outline some general principles of landscape management which will help to promote development sensitive to the character of rural landscapes.

Cumulative effects

Different landscapes have varying abilities to absorb development before their essential character and the things that people value about them starts to be eroded. In some cases, a significant level of development may be acceptable or positive. In other cases, the limits of domestication may have been reached and any further development will result in unacceptable cumulative effects. Good design, sensitive to the character of the landscape is very important and will often be effective in successfully integrating development. There may be some instances, however, where the particular development is simply inappropriate, no matter what mitigation measures are planned.

For example, in a particular setting, the addition of one more house may mean that a threshold has been reached, beyond which the character of the area will be significantly altered and the landscape values reduced. In this situation, if mitigation measures are not considered adequate to address the effects, it may be inappropriate to grant resource consent for the development.



It is hoped that the principles outlined here will provide a useful starting point. If required, further advice can be sought from the Council's Landscape Architect. It is also recommended that City Planning staff be consulted as early as possible before project planning and design is too far advanced. Please direct any enquiries by phone to (03) 477 4000 or by email to planning@dcc.govt.nz. The Landscape Section of the District Plan should also be referred to, and can be accessed on-line at www.cityofdunedin.com/districtplan.

Subdivision design

Because subdivision sets the pattern for future development, appropriate design is vital if rural landscape character and values are to be protected and enhanced. The key principle to follow is to ensure that the layout of the subdivision (including access ways, building sites, planted areas and property boundaries) is sensitive to the character and form of the underlying natural landscape.





An insensitive development



Development designed to integrate

 Ensure that natural features such as waterways, rock outcrops, prominent ridges and existing plantings or natural vegetation are respected and 'worked around' in the design. These are the elements that give the area its distinctive character. Whilst they may create some constraints to development, their retention and emphasis will help protect rural amenity and enhance the character and value of the area being subdivided.

• Where possible, the natural drainage pattern of the site should be protected and emphasized through riparian plantings. This enhances the visual landscape and also helps to protect water quality.

> Modification to the landform of the site through major earthworks should be minimized as much as possible. The natural contours are a significant component of the landscape character. Development should be designed to fit around and respond to the landform, rather than the landform altered to accommodate development.

> Any areas of significant native vegetation such as forest remnants or wetland areas should be protected by fencing off from grazing, and restored or extended as appropriate.

Site boundaries can become highly visible features in the andscape where they are defined by fences, plantings or an edge between different land uses e.g. between a grazed paddock and a woodlot. It is therefore important that these be located to relate to the pattern of the existing or natural landscape e.g. landform features or existing vegetation.

Rural areas are characterised by a predominance of natural features over built. Because of this, it is usually preferable to ensure that building platforms are sited where they are not unduly prominent. This can often be achieved through clustering with other buildings to retain a sense of spaciousness; avoiding highly visible locations such as ridge tops; and, where appropriate, ensuring that there is screening from roads or neighbours.

Roads and access ways should be carefully sited to have minimal visual impact. This can be achieved by following natural contours. It can also be achieved by locating them to relate to existing edges in the landscape (e.g. a change in grade or the edge between trees and grassland) rather than cutting across open areas where they will become prominent features. Major earthworks involving large areas of cut and fill should be avoided.

In some cases, it may be appropriate to control the landscape effects of future development on the individual sites within the subdivision through covenants or other instruments. Aspects covered could include site plantings, fencing, driveways and management of significant areas e.g. native bush areas. It may also be appropriate to provide for collective management of key parts of the site to retain a rural or open character.

Buildings

As a general principle, rural character is best protected where buildings are designed to integrate with the landscape and not be unduly prominent. This involves careful location to avoid highly visible sites. It also means avoiding design styles, materials and colours imported from urban or foreign contexts, which are inappropriate to the rural setting. In some situations it may be appropriate to introduce buildings that create significant contrast but this needs to be handled with great care, and professional design advice is strongly recommended if this approach is to be taken. Adoption of the following principles will help to ensure that buildings integrate comfortably with rural landscape settings.



Building located and designed for maximum impact





Building located and designed to integrate with lesser impact and set back from the road

Where possible, site a new building in association with a stronger natural feature e.g. a group of trees. Ensure that it has a backdrop of land or vegetation rather than sky as seen from main viewpoints. Seek to avoid prominent ridgelines, spurs and hilltops.

In siting, take care to minimize the need for any earthworks and align the building with the direction of the landform. Blend any cut and fill required with the surrounding natural contours. Avoid importing standardized building designs which do not adequately take into account the features and character of the site.

Site at a distance from adjacent roads wherever possible to retain the spaciousness of the rural landscape. Take care not to block or detract from any significant views.

• Where other buildings already exist, site the new building to visually relate to the group rather than be seen as an isolated element. Any accessory buildings and structures (e.g. water tanks, sheds or telecommunications dishes) should be located and designed to relate to the main building and have minimal visual impact.

Aim to relate the building to the land by keeping it as low as possible. The proportions should be wider than higher. Relate floor levels to the ground level and avoid high foundations.

Traditional, simple, non-fussy designs are likely to integrate most readily into the rural setting. Where practicable, relate roof shapes to the lie of the land and break up large wall and roof planes. Provide for eaves and the shadow line they create which help to tie the building visually with the land.

Use materials which occur naturally in the area e.g. local stone or timber, or materials that have traditionally been used in rural buildings e.g. appropriately coloured corrugated iron. Materials with a rough, coarse texture will help to minimize light reflection. Do not use a great variety of different materials. Keep the effect simple.

Minimise the visual impact of buildings by using colours which blend with, or provide subtle contrast with, the background landscape. Avoid sharp colour contrasts. Generally, roofs should be darker than walls to help visually relate the building to the land.



The design and character of plantings, fencing, driveways and other aspects of site development around rural houses can determine whether the development integrates with and enhances landscape values. Adoption of the following principles will help to ensure that local rural character is sustained.

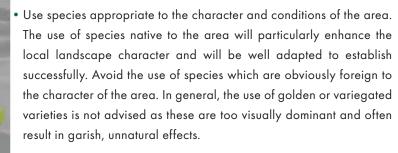


Inappropriate site development



A more appropriate response to the site

Rural planting schemes need to be of a scale and character appropriate to the landscape. Small scale garden plantings without an adequate framework of larger scale species are unlikely to provide for adequate shelter and context, and will often appear fussy. Planting of adequate scale can be used to mitigate the prominence of buildings through screening, providing a backdrop or visually balancing the buildings and structures.



Wherever possible, locate plantings to reinforce the character of the natural landform rather than introduce a new element unrelated to the shape of the land.

• Wherever possible, avoid using built structures. Use naturally planted batter slopes instead of retaining walls, and planting in place of screen fencing.

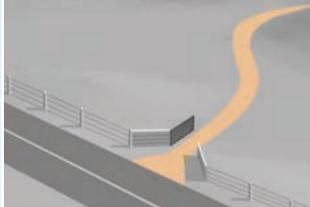
Driveway with a rural characte

appropriate urban-style driveway treatm



Gateway as a statement - usually inappropriate in the rural landscape

• Avoid the use of fencing styles that draw attention to themselves e.g. white painted posts and rails or suburban paling fences. Instead use traditional rural materials and details. Elaborate monumental gateway features should be avoided. Where possible, use planting to define boundaries rather than fencing.



 Avoid the use of sealed surfaces for driveways where possible in favour of gravel using local stone chip. Kerb and channel edging to driveways introduces a character that is too hard and formal to fit comfortably in the rural landscape. Instead, use soft edges and grassed drainage swales. Minimise lighting of driveways.





Underground services wherever possible

• The impact of services and utilities should be carefully controlled to avoid an effect of visual 'clutter'. Wherever possible, power and phone lines should be placed underground.