

IN THE MATTER OF the Resource Management
Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER OF a private plan change
request ('Proposed (Private)
Plan Change 40:
Wallaceville') to the Upper
Hutt City District Plan made
by Wallaceville
Developments Limited.

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF MELISSA JANE DAVIS

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The evidence has been prepared in response to submissions received following the notification of the proposed Private Plan Change 40: Wallaceville.
- 1.2 The visual impact related submissions received are generally concerned with the protection of the Southern Hills Landscape overlay, the existing native bush vegetation that covers a large part of this land parcel in relation to the effects of future development. Some submissions request that this parcel of land become a public reserve.
- 1.3 My response to these submitters contains the following key points:
- Both the Landscape and Visual Assessment and the Urban Design assessment recognises the value of the hills south of Alexander Road;
 - The Plan Change does not seek to amend the provisions of the District Plan that already apply to the hillsides;
 - The area being re-zoned through the Proposed Plan Change is the flat triangle grassed area at the base of the escarpment only;
 - The proposed re-zoning proposed for this area is the Grants Bush Precinct;
 - The proposed re-zoning of this area is appropriate because the development provisions of the Grants Bush Precinct and Residential (Centres) Overlay allow for appropriate size and scale of development to occur; and
 - The size, location and topography of the site allows for such development and will not detract from the wider area's landscape context.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 My name is Melissa Jane Davis. I hold a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture from Lincoln University. I am a Registered member of the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects and Associate and Senior Landscape Architect with Harrison Grierson.

- 2.2 I appear in relation to a private plan change request ('Proposed (Private) Plan Change 40: Wallaceville') to the Upper Hutt City District Plan made by Wallaceville Developments Limited to rezone approximately 63 hectares of former Wallaceville Ag-Research site and a small part of the Trentham Racecourse property for residential and commercial uses.
- 2.3 I have approximately fifteen years' experience in providing professional landscape architecture services in both the public and private sector, ten of which have been with Harrison Grierson, working on a range of projects including a number of Landscape and Visual Assessments for private plan changes.
- 2.4 My involvement in the Wallaceville Plan Change Application commenced in July 2014. I am familiar with the subject site and its surrounds. I visited the area on Tuesday 22 July 2014 to undertake a landscape and visual assessment of the site and surrounds. The information gathered on this site visit informed the basis of the technical report I prepared. While preparing the technical report, I liaised with my colleagues Lauren White (Urban Designer), Andrew Jackson (Engineer) in respect to my findings and to inform landscape constraints and opportunities for the plan change.
- 2.5 Although this is a Council hearing I note that I have read the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses in the Environment Court Practice Note (2014) and agree to comply with the Code. Except where I state that I am relying upon the specified evidence of another person, my evidence in this statement is within my area of expertise. I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions which I express.

3.0 SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

- 3.1 In my evidence I propose to:
- a) Describe my technical report submitted with the Plan Change Request
 - b) Summarise and comment on the submissions received on the application that are relevant to my area of expertise;
 - c) Provide comments on the recommendation of the Officer's s Section 42A Report related to my area of expertise; and
 - d) Provide my recommendation on the Plan Change Request.

4.0 SUMMARY OF TECHNICAL REPORT

- 4.1 I prepared Landscape and Visual Assessment (LVA) as a supporting document to underpin the Wallaceville Plan Change application.
- 4.2 The LVA report is dated December 2014 and was submitted in the original plan change application. This report and its recommendations have been accommodated in the Structure Plan. The LVA report and its recommendations have not been modified/updated since its completion.
- 4.3 The report's main goal was to identify the key landscape and visual components within the proposed Structure Plan area, and assess the potential effects on the physical and visual landscape that may result from future development within the Structure Plan Area and provide suitable recommendations.

4.4 I would like to note here that the recommendations outlined were intended to inform and guide the Urban Design/Structure Plan development process. These recommendations were relatively broad and conceptual in nature with an intention that they would be further developed and refined during the evolution of the Structure Plan.

4.5 The methodology for the assessment was based on the following aspects:

- The extent to which any natural feature will be retained or enhanced;
- The ability of the site to absorb development;
- The suitability of any proposed mitigation proposals, and effectiveness of any existing or proposed mitigation mechanisms;
- The suitability of the site for development in relation to geological, topographical and ecological components;
- The potential effects development may have on the site; and
- Assess the distinctiveness of the site in respect to natural state, significance as a habitat.

4.6 The key findings of the assessment were that:

- The mature vegetation of Grants Bush, the stands of mature trees to the south-west and the mature trees along Ward Street create the sense of place, refer to the heritage of the site and are the key elements to retain;
- Appropriate development (use, location, scale and form) would result in little or no landscape or visual impact on the southern hills landscape overlay;
- There is an opportunity to visually connect the southern hills through appropriate development of the southern area within the Rural Lifestyle Zone portion of Alexander Road;
- Due to the site's location, scale, topography and surrounding environment, the site has low visual and landscape sensitivity; and
- For the same reasons the site is suitable for development of an urban nature.

4.7 Notwithstanding these key conclusions, I recommended the incorporation of key elements into the development in order to mitigate any potential negative visual effects. The conclusions and recommendations as noted on page 20 of the Landscape and Visual Assessment have been incorporated into the Structure Plan, with the exceptions of the recommendations that would be considered at a future concept or developed design stage.

4.8 The conclusions and recommendations that have been incorporated into the structure plan are:

- Promote the retention of the existing stand of mature bush known as Grant's Bush to acknowledge existing landscape character and sense of place;
- Promote the retention of the existing stands or mature trees in the south-western section of the site to acknowledge existing landscape character and sense of place;
- Promote the incorporation of green corridors into development layout (eg along boulevards and/or heavily planted tree-lined streets) for green linkages to provide landscape and visual amenity;
- Promote visual and landscape connection with Grant's Bush and the Southern Hills (eg use of appropriate species along streets, aligning streets for viewshafts);
- Promote visual connection of the chute into wider open space network;
- Promote precinct style development and zoning;

- Promote Ward Street character by retaining the significant tree species and campus layout/open space in the urban environment;
- Promote the protection and ongoing enhancement of the existing stands of mature vegetation and selected specimen trees that are to be retained; and
- Promote gateway/identity to the site from main access points through specific planting styles and/or landmark or heritage tree species.

5.0 RESPONSE TO SUBMISSIONS

- 5.1 Following the preparation of the LVA, the proposed Structure Plan and zoning was developed. The Plan Change includes rezoning the flat triangle area of land south of Alexander Road from Rural Lifestyle to Residential (Centres) Overlay and including it in the Grants Bush Precinct of the Structure Plan. The Residential (Centres) Overlay zoning and Grants Bush Precinct provide for mixed residential typologies with a building height of 8m and two storeys, and average lot sizes of 300m².
- 5.2 This change was a key matter raised in submissions and my evidence below addresses this rezoning.

Sub no	Submitter	Decision Sought	Reason for Submission	My response to Submission
S16.4	Mary Beth Taylor	Much lower density only on the flat triangle section of land, even lifestyle size or minimum 1 acre depending on the terrain.	The proposed plan change contains an unfavourable change to the land south of Alexander Road. Should be consistency and/or coherence in section size compared to the adjoining sections further south along Alexander Road.	The proposed Plan change to the area south of Alexander Road relates to the flat triangular enclave only. The remaining land (the slopes and bushed areas) will retain its existing Rural Lifestyle zoning. This pocket of flat land has a closer connection to the land directly to the north, and is disconnected visually from the sections further south along Alexander Road. I consider that future development of the flat triangle will be consistent with the density and character of the proposed Grants Bush Precinct on the northern side of Alexander Road. This precinct has mixed residential typologies with a building height of 8m and two storeys.
S17.2	Tony Chad	Hilly areas should not be rezoned from Rural Hill, flat area might be rezoned Rural Lifestyle.	Area has some very steep terrain with significant regenerating native bush which should be protected or worked around. If relevant, Southern Hills should be respected.	In my opinion, the area of flat land is acceptable for development as proposed under the Residential (Centres) Overlay zone / Grants Bush Precinct provisions for the reasons outlined below: The flat triangle of land is bordered by mature bush covered escarpments, which provide a significant backdrop to residential development. The scale of development proposed would be visually dominated by the existing mature bush covered escarpment, which in turn provides visual absorption for development. In addition, the topographical nature of the escarpment provides a natural visual enclave, thereby providing visual buffering

				<p>from the stretch of Alexander Road to the south of the site, and the small portion of road to the north. The physical enclosure of this portion of land and visual separation from the remainder of Alexander Road reduces the overall perceived cumulative effect.</p> <p>As discussed in the LVA the visual audience for this viewpoint was described as transitory passing motorists, cyclists and pedestrians. I further acknowledged that there would be some static views from future dwellings opposite the site, however I consider that these views would be offset by the visual amenity provided by the existing mature bush, and the height of the escarpment.</p>
S20.3	Forest & Bird	Land south of Alexander Road that is currently owned by WDL currently zoned Rural Lifestyle should be changed to Open Space.	<p>Paragraph 1 – Consider it would adversely affect the character of this prominent spur and nearby forest for even a single house to be built.</p> <p>Para 2 - ...Using land for housing will significantly effect the visual outlook of the 700+ medium density housing dwellers who will contact view the Ward Street Spur and forest.</p>	<p>Both the Landscape and Visual Assessment and the Urban Design assessment recognises the value of the hills south of Alexander Road. The character of this spur and nearby forest should not be taken in isolation – it is part of a wider landscape character where development has and is occurring at the base and in the foothills of the Southern Hills. Notwithstanding I note that the Plan Change does not seek to amend the provisions of the District Plan that already apply to the hillsides. The area being re-zoned through the Proposed Plan Change is the flat grassed triangle area at the base of the escarpment only. I consider that the proposed re-zoning of this area is appropriate because the development provisions of the Grants Bush Precinct and Residential (Centres) Overlay zone allow for appropriate size and scale of development to occur that will be consistent with the surrounding urban form of Wallaceville. The size, location and topography of the site allows for such development and will not detract from the wider area’s landscape context.</p> <p>In respect to the comments that the visual outlook of the 700+ dwellings will be significantly effected, given the topographical nature, size and location of this pocket of land I expect that this will have a very limited viewing audience, restricted to those dwellings directly opposite this site and as stated above I consider that the proposed development will not detract from the wider area’s landscape context.</p>
S20.4	Forest & Bird	WDL provide all land south of		I understand that Council does not wish to take the land as reserve, and further I can

		Alexander Road to UHCC as a reserve contribution		support the proposed rezoning from a landscape and visual effect perspective for the reasons stated above.
S20.5	Forest & Bird	UHCC protect land to the south of Alexander Road (eg as a scenic reserve) and recognise it as part of the protected Town Green Belt of Upper Hutt. In time, re-establish the wetland in the triangular grassed area	Refer S20.3	Refer to responses to S20.3 and S20.4
S10.9	Nick Saville	Area should be made a reserve	Hillside land labelled as 'Rural Lifestyle Zone' south of Alexander Road is identified in the <i>Southern Hills Environmental Management Study (2008, p23)</i> as having 'high landscape values'...Study also states: 'The key values of the Southern Hills landscape is to provide a largely undeveloped 'green' backdrop to the city'. Development would contradict this.	I agree with the statements regarding the Southern Hills high landscape values and that these provide an undeveloped green backdrop to the city. However I note that there is no change from the status quo to the area which is zoned Rural Lifestyle within the existing Southern Hills overlay provisions of the District Plan. It is only the flat triangle of land within the Rural Lifestyle Zone that does not have the Landscape overlay that is proposed to be amended by the Plan Change. This land is of a low-lying nature and I consider the potential visual and landscape effects that may arise from the development of this area to be less than minor here.
S15.1	Mears	Retain existing zoning.	Should not become public land.	WDL are proposing to change zoning to the flat triangle of land only as per the above responses, and the land will remain in private ownership and is not being vested as reserve/public land.
S16.3	Mary Beth Taylor	Make the hills on the land south of Alexander Road a reserve.	Southern Hills protection must be respected. Amendments need to protect the ecosystem and bird corridors...and to provide visual amenity for the development.	I recognised that the Southern Hills are a significant landscape feature. The hillside is managed under the existing provisions in the Southern Hills Overlay zoning of the District Plan. These existing provisions were developed in response to, and determined through the RMA process to be appropriate and provide the appropriate provisions to protect the visual amenity of the Southern Hills which in turn provide visual amenity for the development and the wider surrounding landscape.

6.0 THE SECTION 42A REPORT

- 6.1 The Officer’s report section 5.9 pages 60-63 relates to the land south of Alexander Road, in particular points 5.9.6 through to 5.9.11 address the matters raised by submitters that have also required a landscape and visual assessment response. The reporting officer supports the plan change proposals for this area in that the flat triangle of land is suitable for development under the Grants Bush Precinct provisions, and the status quo provisions of the District Plan shall continue for all remaining land at the hillside south of Alexander Road.
- 6.2 As noted above, I agree that it is appropriate to re-zone the flat triangle of area on the southern side of Alexander Road as proposed.

7.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 I support the rezoning of the flat triangle of land to the south of Alexander Road from Rural Lifestyle to Residential (Centres) Overlay, and the inclusion of this portion of land within the Grants Bush Precinct of the Wallaceville Structure Plan. This will protect unique site values of the remainder of the site and create a sense of place for this site and connect with the overall proposed development.
- 7.2 Overall I consider that the LVA recommendations have been integrated with the urban design process to achieve a plan change which encapsulates the intended spatial outcomes through relevant additions and amendments to the District Plan.
- 7.3 With regard to the submissions addressed above, my recommendations are to:
 - Adopt the small pocket of residential use on the flat triangle area of land south of Alexander Road;
 - Adopt the plan change for this area from Rural Lifestyle zone to Residential (Centres) Overlay;
 - Adopt the Grants Bush Precinct for the said parcel of land; and
 - Retain the existing zoning for the remaining hillside land on the southern side of Alexander Road.
- 7.4 I am of this opinion that these recommendations and their respective outcomes will deliver a high quality and varied residential environment for this enclave and will be well integrated with its existing context. These recommendations also enable the distinctive natural features of the site to be retained and protected through the existing zoning and Southern Hills overlay provisions.

DATE 2 July 2015
NAME Melissa Davis
POSITION Senior Landscape Architect
SIGNED 