

Meeting Notes – Landscapes Reference Group - February 2022

Part 1 – 10 February (7.00 – 9.00pm)

Agenda Items

1. Implications of the SAL landscape
2. Landscape criteria and assessment, case study using Akatarawa
3. What are the options to integrate into district plan

Implications of the SAL landscape

Group discussed the draft SAL rules compared to the current operative rules:

Earthworks questions:

1. Question around the exception for the Royal Wellington Golf Club and explanation that the maximum area standards would be exceeded for regular maintenance of fairways for the golf course.
2. Question around earthworks being permitted for bridges and tracks for forestry. Explained that these rules will be covered under the rules for plantation forestry, with bridges over rivers managed by Regional Council.

Discussion around reflectivity standard and reference to BS5252 which identifies light reflectance values (LRV). It's possible that that these standards will not be relevant or even that some SAL areas are more relevant than others. Confirmed it is about the reflectivity value (less than 30%) rather than colour. This is not an uncommon practice in integrating buildings into landscape. The provision provides for a colour choice from the palette which must satisfy two criteria; namely the maximum reflectivity value (less than 30%) and only from the identified groups A, B or C in the British Standard (BS) 5252 which is recognised by all major paint manufacturers. Question about whether a resource consent be applied for a colour outside the scope. Yes, it could as a "matter of consideration"

Second dwellings - draft states consent needed for more than 1 dwelling per site, but it does allow for a family flat without consent. It shouldn't be an issue to amend this as most of these sites are low density and it would be more about the site coverage.

Minor accessory structures, eg: sheds, playhouses would like to see these permitted. Would be based on the height, site coverage etc

Discussed the importance of character in an area.

Confirmed that driveways are not considered structures, they are ground treatment

CRG queried the impact of SALs on the southern growth area. This is a separate issue between council and landowner (GTC). Community Reference Group (CRG) asked why this area is not considered an SNA?

Reasoning is that SNA does not include plantation forestry. A number of SNA pockets have been identified on this land. The pockets are mostly on the slopes/unbuildable land. This area can be reassessed if necessary.

There are not many differences between the draft policies and the current operative plan. A group member requested a full cross reference table noting all the differences (tracked changes document) instead of a simplified table. This could be done if the group agrees they want this and also depending on which decision is made on how we go forward with SALs.

Question raised about why plantation forestry is controlled when it wasn't previously? Explained that the NES for plantation forestry sets the regulations.

Question about whether SALs are still policy directed? We are waiting for these reforms. How and when we do not know as yet. The RPS states that council MAY identify landscapes – which is therefore at discretion of the council to include.

Akatarawa workshop

Using Akatarawa valley (proposed Akatarawa Pass SAL #5) as an example

Discussed the methodology topics of:

- natural science (geology, landforms, water -all forms, ecology, vegetation, natural elements processes and patterns)
- sensory (how we 'read' or perceive the landscape - using all the senses)
- shared and recognized (whakapapa, identity, iconic, past and continuing, activities including recreation)

Discussion around what the group thinks about the characteristics of the area and what is missing. CRG provided input and identified values.

Changes in land coverage are also taken into consideration, ie: forestry and the cycle of harvest, reforestation

Thinking about local landmarks including barren hillsides, shipping containers. Some people may find these areas ugly, but it's subjective from person to person. Rural areas often consist of these types of landscapes that have organically developed over time. Appreciate the range of people and buildings and use of land. Agreed that the group wouldn't want it all looking the same

The landscape assessment was shared and explained what was recorded under each factor for the Akatarawa area

A comment was made that the word "landscape" is narrower than the RPS criteria and disagrees with the RPS. Also mentioned that a lot of the land is erosion prone (class 7 and 8) particularly some sites in the West. Land use factors need to come into this. Stewarding land for soil and water conservation. CRG mentioned that we need to enhance what we have got

The Landscape Specialist (LS) confirmed that land use has been considered and existing use has been considered in the report.

A comment made that the test is human-centric and raised a concern that other species weren't being considered. Explained that this is covered under natural science (rarity and ecosystem functioning) and this is also reviewed by ecologists

Boundary discussion

The existing area is defined to the district boundary to the north, ridgelines (ONFL) to the east and west and to the south – the spur edges of the upper valley including the historic settlement of Cloustonville

Discussion around whether the decision for the boundary is subjective. It is subjective but it's based on professional rigor and best practice. Landscapes are qualifiable rather than quantifiable. Clarified that it's an evaluation based on values and logical landforms. Areas to the south were not identified as an SAL due to some of the qualifying factors not being met

Question was raised about why the area south of the boundary didn't meet the criteria due to the historical associations in Cloustonville. It has been defined with the "approach and departure" experience through the saddle and the 2 spurs on either side as a clear definition

Question raised about who "amenity" is important to. Explained that it is everybody's – the community, the residents of the area.

Agreed to discuss item no.3 on the agenda at the next meeting.

Part 2 – 17 February (7.00pm to 9.00pm)

Agenda for this meeting:

- Implications of the SAL overlay (using Akatarawa Valley as a case example)
- Workshop on the values of the Akatarawa Valley and how the boundary of the overlay was identified and whether this should be amended
- Options for including the SAL overlay in the draft plan change

Boundary

- Community Reference Group (CRG) questioned if this be extended further South to Karapoti or further North. The Landscape Specialist (LS) advised a case would need to be made to extend the boundary – on what values would be gained or if the boundary was to be reduced, what would be lost.
- Question asked if there could be a "cluster" or "bubble" or does it need to be a whole section of land. Would the Karapoti area be more suited to be included in the ONFL due to the history, such as the Karapoti Classic etc? There needs to be a logical place to create the boundaries.

- Question asked, how does the Akatarawa Valley differ from other areas in Upper Hutt such as Whitemans Valley? LS explained that Whitemans Valley does not have as much indigenous vegetation due to farming over time. Akatarawa has Mana Whenua values, prominent topography, freshwater values (river) and historical associations.
- Discussion around the maori use of land and whether Akatarawa was historically important. Talks with Ngati Toa have confirmed the area was mostly used as thoroughfare as opposed to settlement.
- CRF suggestion that the boundary could be moved up to Fern Valley where there are no inhabited properties.

Naming of the area

- CRG suggestion that the name could be Akatarawa Pass if the area was to be reduced. Another suggestion could be to match the Kapiti district naming – Tararua / Akatarawa Foothills

Options to incorporate SALs into the plan change?

- Options include:
 1. As currently proposed (Overlay SAL area, with rules and policies)
 2. Remove SAL entirely from Plan Change (leave development to zoning only)
 3. Retain the mapped SAL overlay areas and record the special amenity values but don't have any rules specifically. Instead, include a policy approach that requires Resource Consent applications (that don't meet the zone bulk and location standards to also consider the impact on those values as part of the assessment).

CRG questioned whether the SAL rules could be somehow incorporated into the proposed PC50 (residential and rural zone review), and include another overlay or precinct? Reply is that would not be able to deliver the same recognition of the SAL values.

CRG mentioned that if it is not mandatory to add SALs to the district plan, let's not do it.

Concerns noted by CRG:

- There is a current cost for resource consents, but will they cost more with extra overlays and rules
- What if we were to leave the SALs out of the district plan and left the rules to the current zone, would this leave these areas unprotected. Yes.
- If SAL overlays are added to the plan would this introduce national regulations such as plantation forestry?
- Land ownership is temporary. We need to consider that we are not the only species
- Loss of freedom
- Prohibited use – there are no prohibited activities.
- No one can predict what will happen in 10 years' time, so let's do what we can now to protect what we have

If we do nothing to add these SAL areas, what are the risks to the environment and values. Only the underlying zone provisions will apply and decisions on resource consent applications will not be required to consider the SAL overlays.