

Appendix I

Specialist's Evaluation – Landscape

Memorandum

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Attention: Paul Ryan

Company: Hamilton City Council

Date: 12/05/2025

From: Jo Soanes, Landscape Architect, Boffa Miskell.

Message Ref: Landscape Visual Assessment Memorandum - Rotokauri Strategic Infrastructure Requirement – Technical Specialist Report for Section 42A Reporting

Project No: BM240780

Version: Final rev 2

Purpose

1. This memorandum has been prepared to provide technical assessment under section 42A of the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA), in respect of effects on the visual landscape in relation to the Rotokauri Strategic Infrastructure Requirement (the Requirement).

Introduction

2. My name is Jo Soanes. I am a Senior Principal Landscape Architect at Boffa Miskell Limited, a position I have held since April 2018. Previously, I worked at WSP Opus for nine years. I have a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture with Honours from Lincoln University.
3. I have 20+ years' experience working with landscape and visual issues. I have a broad skills base with experience spanning landscape planning, assessment and design for a diverse range of projects in both urban and rural contexts. I have practised as a Landscape Architect in Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington and Christchurch, undertaking work for a wide range of clients, ranging from local and regional councils, central government, educational institutions to private companies and developers.
4. I have previous experience in providing expert evidence on landscape and visual effects at council hearings for resource consent applications and notices of requirement, including Hamilton City Council.

Code of Conduct

5. I have read the Environment Court Code of Conduct for expert witnesses contained in the Environment Court Practice Note 2023 and agree to comply with it. I confirm that the opinions expressed in this memorandum are within my area of expertise except where I state that I have relied on the advice of other persons. I have not omitted to consider materials or facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions I have expressed.

Scope

6. This memorandum covers the following:
 - a. The relevant environmental effects of allowing the Requirement and whether any adverse effects will be acceptable,
 - b. Relevant matters raised, and relief sought, in submissions,
 - c. Relevant statutory considerations,

- d. Recommended amendments and/or additions to the Requiring Authority's proposed designation conditions¹.

Executive summary

7. In my opinion the anticipated landscape and visual effects resulting from the designation and proposed works, when managed under appropriate conditions, will be acceptable. The landscape and visual effects will be temporary in nature and are able to be mitigated through the proposed urban design and landscape planning measures and the proposed infrastructure aligns with the anticipated urban transition of Rotokauri.
8. Overall, I agree with the content, findings and effects ratings reported in the LVA. However, in my opinion, additional designation conditions, are required to ensure that the proposal is implemented in a manner which is consistent with the intended outcomes of the proposals, I have provided designation conditions at the end of my memorandum to ensure that these outcomes are achieved.

Documents considered

9. The following documents have been considered in the preparation of this assessment:
 - a. Rotokauri Strategic Infrastructure Designation: Notice of Requirement: Final Report 19 September 2024: Prepared by Beca Limited for Hamilton City Council, (the NOR).
 - b. Appendix B1.1 to the NOR – Concept Design Drawings.
 - c. Appendix H to the NOR – Landscape and Visual Assessment. Prepared by Beca Limited. 24 April 2024.
 - d. Appendix J to the NOR – Urban and Landscape Design Framework (ULDF). Prepared by Beca Limited. June 2023.
 - e. Appendix G to the NOR – Ecological Impact Assessment. Prepared by Beca Limited. 24 April 2024.
 - f. Appendix I to the NOR – Cultural Impact Assessment. Prepared by Te Haa O Te Whenua O Kirikiriroa (THaWK). February 2021.
 - g. Rotokauri Arterial Network Designation Notice of Requirement – Part 1 response to Section 92. Prepared on behalf of Hamilton City Council as the Requiring Authority. 31 January 2024.
 - h. Rotokauri Strategic Infrastructure Notice of Requirement – Part 2 response to Section 92 further information request. Prepared on behalf of Hamilton City Council as the Requiring Authority. 24 April 2024.
 - i. Hamilton City District Plan.
 - j. Te Tangi a te Manu Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines, Tuia Pito Ora New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects. July 2022.
 - k. The submissions listed in Table 1.

Table 1 Submissions that raise landscape matters

Number	Submitter
6	Te Rapa Gateway Limited
7	Steve Godley & Adam Marsh
9	Steve Nuich, Sophia Anne Nuich, Gibson Nominees Limited, Ivan Selak

¹ See s10 of the NOR.

Number	Submitter
13	Hounsell Holdings Limited, Rotokauri Farming No3 Limited and Hamilton JV (N3) Limited
16	Phillip Ross Laird and Franklaw Trust Ltd

I. Summary of submissions provided by Hamilton City Council.

Site Visit

10. On 31/10/2023, I undertook a site visit, along with Tonkin and Taylor, Beca and requiring authority representatives. As part of the visit, we looked at the surrounding area to understand the nature of the existing environment, proposed Requirement, and its physical and visual relationship to the surrounding landscape context.

Methodology

11. I was commissioned by Hamilton City Council (HCC) in 2023 to peer review the *Landscape and Visual Assessment* (LVA) (Beca, 3 August 2023) for the proposed Requirement.
12. I undertook an initial peer review of the LVA to confirm whether the assessment can be relied upon or identify issues that require further consideration or matters with which I disagreed. I analysed the adequacy of the assessment method and its reporting and considered the outcomes of the assessment against the provisions of the Hamilton City District Plan.
13. My initial peer review concluded that the LVA uses NZILA best practice assessment techniques as outlined in the Te Tangi a te Manu landscape methodology. However, I advised that further information was required before a determination on the overall effects ratings could be confirmed.
14. I sought further information on five matters, which are listed in Table 2 below. These matters were included in the s92 request for further information, and the Requiring Authority responded to them in its Part 2 response to the s92 request (24 April 2024). No response was provided on question 73 and therefore it was agreed with the processing planner at the time Kylie O'Dwyer that this question regarding compounds and laydown areas could be covered within conditions.
15. The Requiring Authority lodged an updated LVA with its Part 2 response to the s92 request. This is the LVA that was notified and which I analyse below.

Background and Proposal

16. I have relied on the proposal description in Section 3 of the LVA, and I agree with the description as stated in it. I have read and agree with the information and analysis provided in Section 4 Existing Environment.
17. Overall, because of the anticipated change from rural to urban land use, I agree that the future environment will differ significantly from the existing rural landscape, which has a low sensitivity to change.

Analysis

18. In Table 2 (below) I have summarised my analysis/response to the two Section 92 responses listed earlier in this memorandum as 9(g) and 9(h) and included a determination of my acceptance of the response. For brevity I have only provided detailed information for the contested Section 92 response.

Table 2: Summary of my review of the Requiring Authority's responses to the Section 92 further information request

#	Topic heading and question (in bold)	Summary of the Requiring Authority's response	My review of the response	Do I accept this response?
69	Proposal/Construction information			Yes
70	4 Existing Environment			Yes
71	5.2.1 Temporary Landscape Effects on the Existing Rural Landscape			Yes
72	Natural Character Effects			Yes
73	Appendix 1 Figure 1 Please confirm whether it is assumed that Construction compounds ² are going to be located offsite and whether they have been considered in this assessment.	The Requiring Authority declined to provide a response. ³	Although projects of this type and scale have the potential to generate effects across a large geographical area. I consider that construction compounds are concentrated areas of activity and have the potential to result in the highest level of adverse effects for a prolonged period. It may be possible to condition lighting effects and some visual effects, however, this will not be able to be determined without first assessing the potentially effected audiences.	The Designation must be subject to conditions to manage the effects of construction compounds.

19. I agree with the level of effects anticipated in the assessment, which are set out in the LVA at Section 5 Natural Character Effects and Section 6 Landscape and Visual Effects.
20. However, I note that the "Moderate" adverse visual effects anticipated to be experienced in Viewpoint 4 Te Kowhai Road includes residential audiences and the Brylyn Rest Home. Based on the 7-point scale provided in Te Tangi a Te Manu (see Figure 1) this would equate to a "more than minor" level of effects in relation to RMA situations. Similarly, "Low" adverse can be interpreted as "minor"⁴.
21. As a result, I consider that it is appropriate that mitigation strategies and measures are proposed at the developed/detailed design phase of the proposal to reduce adverse visual effects on residents in proximity to Te Kowhai Road and the Brylyn Rest Home. I have included this in the recommendations section of this memorandum.

² Contractors' equipment and materials storage areas, site offices, car parks, and assembly areas

³ See the Requiring Authority's Part 1 response, dated 31 January 2024, to Section 92 further information request.

⁴ Source of "Minor", 'less than minor', 'no more than minor', 'significant' Table, Te Tangi a Te Manu Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines, July 2022, Page 151.

Figure 1 The significance of visual effects⁵



Matters raised in submissions

22. Five submissions raised concerns about the Requirement's landscape and visual effects – see Table 1 above.

Submission 6 – Te Rapa Gateway Limited (TRGL).

23. TRGL opposes the proposed designation because of its extent, and it severs their site into two separate lots, which negatively impacts development potential and access. The Te Kowhai Road West Extension further impacts key access, developable land and buffer areas. TRGL states these impacts have not been adequately addressed in the application or alternative assessments.

Response to Submission

24. In my opinion, the bisection of the submitter's site will not result in adverse effects on the landscape pattern and features. The land designation provides for anticipated outcomes of the Requirement, including roading infrastructure and sufficient area to accommodate associated infrastructure such as stormwater, services, and landscaping. The ULDF provides a comprehensive design response for the submitter's site's interfaces with the designation.

Submission 7 – Steve Godley & Adam Marsh

25. The submission opposes the NOR based on several aspects related to landscape and visual effects. The submitters assert that the NOR's concept design and boundary do not support the development of a high-quality urban environment in Rotokauri North because, in their opinion:
- Portions of the northern length of the northern arterial will have residential zoning on both sides, leading to severance and potential landlocking of sites, restricting access to the roading network.
 - The design fails to create an attractive gateway into Rotokauri North.
 - There is a lack of certainty on the interface expected between urban development and arterial roads.
 - The 15-year lapse date may hinder the development of surrounding land, creating a disconnect between development timing and road network implementation, which threatens the integrated urban environment outlined in the Rotokauri North Structure Plan.
 - The proposed conditions do not adequately address staging issues with construction, landowner input into management plans prior to approval, nor a resolution for unresolved concerns, and the Landscape Management Plan lacks sufficient detail to ensure high-quality environments and does not integrate urban design considerations.

Response to Submission

26. The comprehensive ULDF provides detail about how development will occur, and the implementation of the frameworks will be further detailed through the detailed design stages and the Landscape Management Plan (LMP).
27. I also advise that the development of the LMP should include the engagement of and consultation with adjacent landowners to ensure that there are no unintended consequences resulting from the LMP and

⁵ Source of Figure 1: Te Tangi a Te Manu Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines, July 2022, p151.

the LMP can be integrated with adjacent land. I have recommended the LMP condition be amended to specify what is included in the LMP see under the heading “Designation Conditions” below. The ULDF identifies gateway opportunities for Rotokauri, including a gateway to Rotokauri North at Te Kowhai Road. While no detail is provided, it is anticipated that this would be developed as part of future design stages.

Submission 9 - Steve Nuich, Sophia Anne Nuich, Gibson Nominees Limited, and Ivan Selak.

28. The submitters express concerns about the design and implications of the NOR concerning wetlands D6C, G8, and G7, particularly as Wetlands G8 and D6C are on their land. The designs in the NOR differ significantly from those consented in the Greenway Fast-Track process, creating uncertainty about the required land areas and the remaining developable land. The footprint of Wetland G8 in the NOR is larger than the previously designated Wetland 8A, complicating future development planning.
29. The submitters assert that integration of the NOR with the Greenway and adjacent developments is critical, as surrounding developments may progress before the minor arterial's completion. The submitters advocate for improved collaboration between the requiring authority and developers to optimize design details, particularly for stormwater management, to ensure effective integration with neighbouring properties. The draft conditions lack requirements for collaboration or information sharing, which is essential for coordinating developments efficiently.

Response to Submission

30. I recommend that the proposed designation conditions be amended to require the design of the works subject to the Rotokauri Strategic Infrastructure Requirement to align with the consented design of the Greenway, particularly the wetland designs.
31. As stated above, I also advise that the development of the LMP should include the engagement of and consultation with adjacent landowners to ensure that there are no unintended consequences resulting from the LMP and the LMP can be integrated with adjacent land. I have recommended the LMP condition be amended to specify what is included in the LMP – see under the heading “Designation Conditions” below.

Submission 13 - Hounsell Holdings Ltd, Rotokauri Farming No3 Ltd and Hamilton JV (N3) Ltd

32. The proposed designation boundary encroaches on the submitters' land, affecting the landscape through the introduction of a Minor Arterial corridor and artificial wetlands.
33. Differences between the Notice of Requirement (NOR) and the Fast Track consented design create inconsistencies in wetland size and placement, impacting visual integration with the existing environment.
34. The submitters are concerned about the visual effects on residential properties during construction and operation arising from the proximity of the proposed road to residential dwellings.
35. Misalignment between NOR Road typologies and the submitter's Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP) may lead to inefficient land use, affecting landscape cohesion.
36. The submitter requests that the NOR reflect updated designs from the Fast Track process to minimize unnecessary impacts on the visual and environmental character of the property.

Response to Submission

37. The introduction of a Minor Arterial corridor and artificial wetlands onto the submitters' land has implications for visual integration, land use efficiency, and the overall character of the site.
38. The inconsistencies between the Notice of Requirement (NOR) and the Fast Track consented design in terms of wetland size and placement may affect landscape coherence. The Rotokauri Structure Plan⁶ and the ULDF emphasize the need for wetlands to be seamlessly integrated into the urban environment, not only for stormwater management but visual amenity.

⁶ Policies 3.6.1.1a - Hamilton City Council Operative District Plan, 3.6 Rotokauri, dated 18 October 2017 (amended 6 March 2025). [accessed online – 2 April 2025]

39. I recommend that a designation condition be included to require wetland design to align with best practice landscape principles. This is to avoid wetlands having an engineered “hairy bathtub” appearance and to achieve instead a more naturalised appearance that will integrate the wetlands with the landscape.
40. I recommend that the proposed designation conditions be amended to require the design of the works subject to the Rotokauri Strategic Infrastructure Requirement to align with the consented design of the Greenway, particularly the wetland designs.
41. The ULDF provides a comprehensive guideline to ensure cohesive urban design⁷ and landscape outcomes. I recommend a new designation condition that specifies the content of the LMP⁸. This will assist in providing certainty about design outcomes.

Submission 16 - Phillip Ross Laird and Franklaw Trust Ltd

42. This submission raises concerns about the designated works’ proximity to the submitter’s dwelling and their visual effects during construction and operation. It asserts that the Council has not adequately considered alternative road locations that could minimize the effects on this property. It seeks for all possible measures to be taken to minimize effects on the submitter’s property.

Response to Submission

43. I acknowledge the concerns raised regarding visual impacts on the submitter’s dwelling and property. Protecting visual amenity is a key consideration in ensuring a high-quality urban environment. The potential effects on visual amenity during the construction and operational stages of the designation will be managed through preparation and implementation of the LMP.
44. Development will generally occur in stages, so this property will not be subject to elevated construction effects over the entire construction period. As I have mentioned earlier, it is important to consider the location of construction compounds to ensure they are located an appropriate distance from private residences to minimise effects on their occupants during construction. I have recommended an amendment to the proposed designation conditions to manage these effects.

Statutory considerations

45. The Requirement is located within the Rotokauri growth cell, one of four areas planned to support Hamilton’s future expansion. The Rotokauri Structure Plan is part of the Hamilton Operative District Plan; it aims to achieve sustainable, integrated and people-focused mixed-use development based on best practice urban design principles⁹.
46. I have reviewed the relevant landscape and visual provisions contained in the Resource Management Act, Waikato Regional Policy Statement, and Hamilton City Operative District Plan that are outlined in Section 9 of the NOR (pages 73 – 107), and I agree with the comments on those provisions. In my opinion, based on that analysis, the Requirement is consistent with those provisions.

Conclusions

47. In my opinion, the designated works, managed by appropriate designation conditions, including those I have recommended, or similar, will have acceptable effects on the visual landscape.
48. Landscape and visual impacts result from natural or induced change in the components, character or quality of the landscape. Usually these are the result of landform or vegetation modification or the introduction of new structures, facilities or activities. All these impacts are assessed in the LVA to determine their effects on character and quality, amenity as well as on public and private views.

⁷ “Cohesive urban design” refers to the thoughtful planning and development of urban spaces to create a harmonious, functional, and aesthetically pleasing environment.

⁸ See paragraph e.

⁹ S3.6 a of the Hamilton City Operative District Plan

49. I agree with the landscape effects assessment that temporary landscape effects will be “low” and long-term effects on the landscape will be “negligible”, as the network aligns with the urban vision for Rotokauri.
50. Similarly, I agree with the visual effects assessment and potential impact of the Rotokauri Strategic Infrastructure Project from seven key viewpoints. Overall, temporary effects during the construction period will range from “low” to “moderate”, but due to the anticipated urbanisation, long-term visual effects will be “negligible” across all viewpoints.

Recommendations

51. Following review of the LVA, submissions and conditions, I recommend the following inclusion to Conditions.
- a. Conditions 13.1 – 13.3: include further detail around what is to be included in the landscape management plan to ensure the LMP sets out the framework for integrating the Rotokauri Strategic Infrastructure project into the surrounding environment. It will provide guidelines for the design, implementation, maintenance and monitoring of landscape elements.
 - b. During detailed design, ensure the designated works integrate with the Rotokauri Greenway and its associated wetlands.
 - c.
 - d. Include a condition to review the location of construction compounds to ensure that residential properties are not overly impacted for a prolonged period.

Modifications to the Requirement

52. I recommend no modifications to the Requirement.

Designation conditions

53. I recommend the following additions to the requiring authority's proposed designation conditions¹⁰ to ensure that adverse landscape, natural character and visual amenity effects are managed appropriately through the detailed design of the proposal:

1) Landscape Management Plan (LMP) Condition (13.1 - 13.3)

The LMP condition is lacking detail. I recommend that detailed objectives and content specification are included to enable a robust review of the LMP when it is certified.

I also recommend that engagement with stakeholders is required when the LMP is prepared.

The key objectives of the LMP should be to:

- a. Integrate roading and stormwater infrastructure into the existing and future urban landscape.
- b. Minimize adverse visual impacts on residential areas, ecological sites, and open spaces. Enhance biodiversity and ecological corridors
- c. Ensure that the proposed central green corridor is developed in line with the policy 3.6.1.1a of the Hamilton City Council Operative District Plan.
- d. Ensure landscape treatments align with the Rotokauri Structure Plan and the Urban & Landscape Design Framework (ULDF),

¹⁰ See s10 of the NOR.

- e. Promote active transport networks, including safe and attractive pedestrian and cycle pathways.

I recommend that the Landscape Management Plan (LMP) content should include the following:

- 1. Introduction**
 - a. Background
 - b. Purpose and Scope
 - c. Objectives
- 2. Consultation**
 - a. Stakeholder Engagement
 - b. Compliance
- 3. Mitigation Purpose, Priorities and Outcomes**
- 4. Landscape Design**
 - a. Road Corridor
 - b. Greenway Integration
 - c. Wetland and Stormwater Treatment Areas
 - d. Roding Interfaces – Residential and Commercial
 - e. Gateway Treatments
- 5. Proposed Planting**
 - a. Planting Plans
 - b. Planting Schedules
 - c. Landscape Specification
 - d. Plant Supply (confirmation around eco sourcing / whakapapa sourcing)
 - e. Landscape Procurement
- 6. Implementation, Maintenance and Monitoring**
 - a. Scope
 - b. Timing and Staging
 - c. Site Preparation
 - d. Vegetation Maintenance
 - e. Monitoring
 - f. Reporting

2) I recommend that, during the development and detailed design of the proposal:

- a. A landscape and visual amenity assessment is undertaken to determine the potential effects related to the location of construction compounds.
- b. Stakeholder engagement is undertaken with residential audiences near Viewpoint 4 Te Kowhai Road to determine the potential visual effects on these audiences and to determine how these effects could be mitigated.
- c. Design of the works subject to the Rotokauri Strategic Infrastructure Requirement to align with the consented design of the Greenway, particularly the wetland designs.
- d. Requirement for wetland design to align with best practice landscape principles. This is to avoid wetlands having an engineered “hairy bathtub” appearance and to achieve instead a more naturalised appearance that will integrate the wetlands with the landscape.