Boffa Miskell

Resource Recovery Park LVEA – Peer Review response

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A landscape and visual effects assessment report (LVEA) was prepared to support an application for a Resource Recovery Park resource consent in December 2022. An addendum to the report was prepared (dated 31 March 2023) with amended landscape plans and supporting cross sections to assist with understanding visual effects from property on Mary Huse Grove and along the Te Awa Kairangi/Hutt River walkway.

The application site is at 30 Benmore Crescent, Manor Park, Lower Hutt. The proposal is for a resource recovery park operations yard occupying 5.785 hectares in the south-western part of a 13.2-hectare property. The proposal includes a range of large buildings, yard spaces and landscape planting along the development site boundaries.

The LVEA and addendum have been peer reviewed by Rose Armstrong (Isthmus Group Ltd) with a report submitted to Council dated 14th September 2023. The following provides a response to the recommendations made in the peer review. At the time of the peer review, Waste Management were considering alternate building layouts within the site. While it has since been determined that the building layout will not change, since that time the placement of a new water tank has been added to the design. This tank is required for fire fighting purposes. The placement of the new water tank is illustrated on the attached drawing 600 and has been considered within the response below. Since the time of writing the LVEA, vegetation removal has been carried out across the site as part of the earthworks consent. This has included the removal of a large macrocarpa tree which was visible in views from properties on Mary Huse Grove. The effects of this vegetation removal and the addition of the water tank have been addressed within the response below.

The response to the peer review below has been prepared by Emma McRae, a Principal Landscape Architect at Boffa Miskell. I reviewed the original LVEA report and am familiar with the site and the project. As part of this response, I have undertaken a further site visit to review the site from the surrounding area on 18th July 2025, given the time that has passed since completing the original LVEA and the Addendum and that the earthworks consent has now been actioned.

Peer Review response

The peer review notes that the methodology used for the LVEA is in line with best practice as recommended in Te Tangi a te Manu, the assessment guidelines provided by Tuia Pito Ora, the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects. Assessment of effects are considered in Section 7 of the peer review and difference of opinion is noted below with further commentary where there is a need or opportunity to address effects through amendments to the development proposal.

Natural character

Ms Armstrong has assessed natural character effects as a short-term adverse perceptual effect of Low-Moderate as experienced from Taita and in distant/elevated views. In close views from the River Trail, the effects are considered Moderate adverse in the short-term. Effects are assessed as Low adverse from both locations once proposed mitigation planting is established.

The LVEA assessed long-term overall effects on natural character, as defined in Te tangi a te Manu as Neutral with the mitigation proposed. Ms Armstrong highlights the need to consider both perceptual matters alongside natural science matters, which combine to create “character”. Ms Armstrong also raised the permanence of planting proposed outside the site along the Te Awa Kairangi boundary.

Section 5.2.16 of the LVEA notes that until proposed planting is established, there will be an adverse effect on the experiential component of the natural character of the Hutt River. This is as the viewer passes the site (approximately 500m distance). At a wider scale, the site is a small component of a large landscape with mixed land use and level of natural character. The overall assessment of effect on natural character is considered neutral in the long term, as assessed in the LVEA. This level of effect is derived from the assessment as outlined in the table at 5.2.17.

It is agreed that there will be a change to experiential values from nearby the site resulting in a Low level effect, however the overall effect on natural character, where abiotic, biotic and experiential effects are combined, against the scale of the site within the wider landscape of the Hutt River, is considered neutral.

The planting outside of the site and along the southern site boundary is proposed to provide a dual benefit of ecological/amenity enhancement along the river corridor and screening of the proposed development site. A formal approval will be required from Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) that provides for the planting to be maintained by the applicant through to establishment and retained in place as proposed over the long term. A condition of consent can be included to ensure this approval is in place prior to commencement of any site development. It is anticipated that this will be supported by the Council, based on the River Corridor Project Plan description of anticipated revegetation work along this section of Te Awa Kairangi (refer section 3.6.4 of the LVEA).

The LVEA does not describe site fencing, although it is mentioned at 5.2.15 in the context of change in experiential values along the river corridor trail. The site boundaries along the river and rail corridors will be fenced with 1.8m high security fencing. The locations of this fencing have been illustrated in the landscape cross sections on drawing 601. It is proposed that this fencing incorporate shelter cloth to screen potential effects of light spill on the railway line until planting is established. Shelter cloth should be black or green in colour to blend in with the proposed vegetation. Until planting is established at (5 years), the upper portion of the fencing will be visible intermittently from the river corridor trail. Fencing will not result in any change to natural character assessment and will sit comfortably in the river corridor environment where there is a mix of fencing treatment along private property boundaries.

Landscape

Ms Armstrong rates the long-term landscape effect as Low adverse. This is consistent with the LVEA findings that also conclude Low adverse effects at a landscape scale. I can confirm that the amendments to the proposed development that were assessed in the addendum did not change the landscape effects assessment in the original consent application LVEA. The addendum was focussed specifically on the visual effects assessment.

Visual amenity

The peer review concurs with visual effects assessment from Te Awa Kairangi/Hutt River and from Mary Huse Grove (road corridor). I can confirm that the density of planting proposed (between 1m and 3m spacing dependent on species) will screen the proposed development as illustrated in the cross sections in relation to these views (refer landscape drawing 601).

Ms Armstrong has provided site line information that shows that in views from the backyard, in close proximity to the dwelling, the top of the proposed buildings will be visible from #29 and #31 Mary Huse Grove. I agree that this is the case, altering the assessment to low adverse (the same as #32) and in agreement with Ms Armstrong.

I can confirm that the planting in this area as proposed is at a density (and size at the time of planting) and in a location that will achieve the intended screening. Ms Armstrong and I agree that the planting will result in no visual effect from these private properties after 5 years.

To ensure that the planting will mitigate visual effects as intended and consider the impact of further vegetation clearance associated with recent earthworks at the site, I have reviewed the landscape plan documentation (both included in this consent application and being completed to satisfy conditions of earthworks consent), visited the site and Mary Huse Grove and updated the related visual illustrations from Mary Huse Grove (refer updated visualisations in VS4, VS5 and VS9).

The updated illustrations show that while vegetation has been removed from within the site, a staggered line of tree planting along the top of the bank within the site will screen the buildings from view after 5 years of growth from back yards with only the top of the buildings visible from Mary Huse Grove. Additional planting is also now proposed within the site adjacent to the RTS building and in other locations within the site where planting was able to be achieved without compromising vehicle circulation areas. This planting will provide further screen planting situated between the proposed building and houses on Mary Huse Grove.

In relation to the new water tank, a new bund with planting has been proposed to screen this element visually from Mary Huse Grove. As illustrated by the landscape cross sections, the proposed tank is to be buried 2m lower than the RTS building floor level, and incorporates a bund with planting on the eastern side which will include larger grade trees (3-4m at the time of planting) to provide screening in views from the street on Mary Huse Grove. To further assist with integrating views of the tank with the bund planting from the street on Mary Huse Grove, it is proposed to paint the tank in a brown/green/grey colour which will integrate it into views with the planting. With this mitigation in place, effects remain as assessed in the LVEA and Addendum.

Cross section 1 illustrates that visibility of the tank will be screened by the railway embankment from the nearest dwelling at 32 Mary Huse Grove and effects remain low adverse as noted above.

There is a difference of opinion in visual effect assessed in distant views (refer visual illustrations 19-21 in the application). Ms Armstrong considers that the development of the site will result in "*a slightly higher adverse effect than assessed…"* however this "*could be mitigated with internal planting to the site, to integrate the site and new buildings in the natural context*". I assessed the effects from this view as Low adverse reducing to Very Low in the long term and with mitigation planting and do not consider effects to be slightly higher as described. The site is a small component in the wider landscape with the natural character and visual amenity of the hills and river in the view remaining prominent.

However, the suggestion that further planting within the site is considered has been explored, with new planting proposed. The new planting is discussed below.

Peer review recommendations

The peer review specifically recommends that Hutt City Council seek further information on 5 matters, each listed below followed with my response.

1. *Assessment of the proposed industrial landuse inside the river corridor against landscape outcomes anticipated by the Hutt River Environmental Strategy*

The Hutt River Environmental Strategy explains how the community's long-term vision for enhancing and managing the Hutt River environment will be achieved. The strategy seeks to protect and strengthen the river values through careful management, environmental improvements and recreational development alongside the flood protection measures. It is an integrated approach that will see the river environment improved while also reducing the flood risk over time.

The proposed development site is part of the valley floor landscape. There is a range of landuse along the valley floor and in the vicinity of the site as described in the LVEA. The proposed development will not

compromise the ability to manage the balance between ecological enhancement, recreation use, and flood management associated with the river corridor that is managed by GWRC and Hutt City Council.

The interface between the public land associated with the River and with private property (the site) is to be extensively planted in native vegetation with the river trail slightly re-routed to provide an easier contour and more direct route along the river and over the existing Dry Creek bridge. The proposed planting will increase the biodiversity value of a section of the corridor. People will continue to be able to enjoy the river trail as it passes the site and there will be improved vehicle access to the rivers edge for any future flood protection and management works. The proposed development will result in improved recreational, environmental and flood management conditions in this area of the river corridor as anticipated in the Environmental Strategy.

2. *Details on proposed fencing included in the proposal, and analysis of the related effects.*

This is discussed above as it was a matter raised in the peer review under natural character assessment. A timber paling fence along the boundary will not alter landscape and visual effects as assessed in the LVEA or addendum and will not be an unexpected element in the river corridor landscape. There are already timber paling boundary fences along the residential property boundaries on Mary Huse Grove that back onto the river.

3. *Advice on how proposed mitigation planting on GWRC land (outside the site's boundaries) will be assured in the long-term, to safeguard the assessed effects (if this is not provided in the AEE);*

This matter is also addressed above under natural character assessment. The proposed planting within the GWRC land represents an ecological and amenity enhancement to a section of the river corridor landscape and delivers landscape treatment described in the River Corridor Project Plan (Pomare Rail Bridge to Silverstream Bridge section). Planting as proposed aligns with the operational guidance produced for GWRC staff to assist in *Integration native planting and flood protection (2021)*. The planting will not compromise recreation value and use and provides for improved access (via the site) for operational management along the river corridor.

Obtaining agreement to allow the applicant to carry out and maintain the planting until it is suitably established and ensure that it remains in place to help screen the development site in the long term, can be a condition of consent. This agreement could take the form of a landowner approval from GWRC. Established native vegetation will be easier for the GWRC to manage than grass or the current weedy boundary edge. There would be no logical reason for the planting to be removed in the future.

4. *Assurance that mitigation planting intended to conceal the proposal from Mary Huse Grove will be closely spaced, to achieve optimum screening of the new buildings;*

The landscaping concept for planting intended to mitigate visual effects from the properties at the southern end of Mary Huse Grove is shown in revised landscape plans and in the visualisations VS4, VS5 and VS9. An addendum to the application was submitted with an updated proposal for trees to be planted at 2-3m height at the time of planting at the top edge of the embankment that falls down to the site boundary with the rail corridor. Cross sections were prepared to illustrate screening achieved after 5 years of planting establishment. These drawings have since been updated to incorporate the additional areas of planting, and the use of larger grade plants (3-4m in height) in strategic screening for residents of Mary Huse Grove (drawing reference BM210903-601 revision D).

A condition of consent can be included to ensure that a detailed planting plan is submitted for this area of the site showing planting location, plant species choice, size at time of planting, spacing and layout that will optimize screening from the properties at Mary Huse Grove. It is not unusual for this level of planting detail to be specified in a condition of consent and this also allows for confirmation of plant availability from nurseries closer to the time of implementing any approved planting programme. The drafting of the condition can specifically include the requirement for the above detail with a statement of intention to *optimize screening and speed of planting establishment to reach 8m screening height after 5 years* and as illustrated on the cross sections.

Ground conditions and maintenance will also play a role in optimized planting growth. This can also be subject to standard conditions of consent that require suitable soil quality and depth, mulch and fertilizing, pest protection and maintenance to control competition from any weed growth for example.

A revised visual illustration has been prepared to show the proposed buildings in the view from Mary Huse Grove (from the street) with planting at the top of the bank that is 3-4m high when planted and which would reach 8m after 5 years of growth. This can be achieved with a mix of spacing (dependent of species type) that ranges from 1m-3m. The revised illustration takes account of the site vegetation clearance that has occurred since the time of writing the LVEA and the proposal to use advanced grade (size) tree species along the top of the bank.

5. *Assurance that substantial planting will be included across the site internally (along Dry Creek and around the new buildings), to integrate the new buildings into the river corridor in elevated views from the surrounding context.*

The earthworks consent for the development site and wider property has been approved with earthworks well underway. A comprehensive planting programme for Dry Creek is a condition of that consent and requires a 20m wide corridor of mixed native planting along the creek (10m either side of the centre of the water way). This will provide for ecological enhancement, amenity, and help visually integrate new development and use into the wider site as viewed from elevated areas to the east.

Opportunities for further planting within the site have been explored, however the operational requirements of traffic movement in and out of the buildings and around the site mean practical locations for large trees to establish are challenging to find. The proposed development occupies less than half of the wider property and is contained to one side of Dry Creek. The creek planting coupled with significant areas of new planting along the site boundaries provide a boundary framework of native planting across a large area around the site.

Despite the operational challenges, new planting sites totalling 1290m^2 in area within the site have been identified. New planting in these locations will specifically address the recommendations in the peer review to further integrate development into the site and will assist further in screening the buildings from Mary Huse Grove over time. This planting is identified on the updated landscape plan attached (BM210903_600 Revision C)) and are shown where relevant in the updated visual illustrations and cross sections (drawing BM210903_601 Revision D).