

29 October 2024

Central Otago District Council
Planning Department
1 Dunorling Street
Alexandra 9320

Attention: Kirstyn Royce

Response to Peer Review of Landscape Assessment for RC230328

This letter has been prepared to raise the applicant's concerns with the peer review process and report prepared by Rachael Annan of SLR for RC 230328 dated 04 October 2024. This letter does not dispute the landscape issues, only the process and the quality of the report.

The applicant received two prices from Council from separate landscape firms for the preparation of the landscape peer review. The applicant chose to use SLR despite the fact that they were considerably more expensive than the alternative price. SLR were selected in the expectation that the higher price would be reflected in the quality and depth of the peer report review and that the report would adequately assess the in-depth landscape assessment and design produced by Align on behalf of the applicant.

The report contains the following errors:

- Incorrect organisation (Otago Regional Council) listed in the introduction
- Incorrect resource consent application reference
- Incorrect reference of location of QEII covenant on the site
- Incorrect page references to Align Landscape report
- Statement on page 2, paragraph 5 which states that the distinctive landscape characteristics were not given appropriate consideration. Within the Align report, section 5 sets out in detail the various distinctive characteristics of the site and surrounding area.

From the site visit:

- The landscape architect from SLR did not have a copy of any documentation on site and stated that the scheme plan had not been reviewed since the initial quote was provided in November 2023 (which was updated in 30/7/24).
- The landscape architect had limited understanding of the proposal and subject site and was apprehensive to engage with the applicant and the applicant's surveyor to understand crucial details of the application, specifically on the choice of building platform locations on the site and the reasonings behind this.
- CODC's consultant processing planner was unable to attend the onsite meeting to provide clarifications to the landscape architect. We do welcome a further site visit at any time.

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Content of report:

- The report does not refer specifically to the relevant matters of the ODP, just to the ‘assessment’. This appears as though the ODP has not been adequately considered or understood. For instance, the report references ‘valued landscape feature’ but this is not a term used in the District Plan.
- The report does not include any in-depth discussion on positives/negatives/design/mitigation of plantings, just “planting mitigation is a secondary consideration to an appropriate development approach.”
- Misleading comments surrounding the recognition of terraces within the Central Otago District Plan. While some terraces are recognised as Outstanding Natural Features, the terrace located within the subject site is not. Provisions are available within the CODP as a restricted discretionary activity to breach visual standards (including terraces) within the Rural Resource Area. This consenting pathway should be acknowledged along with the terrace forming a part of the landscape.
- Misleading comments on the arrangement of the proposed building platforms in a linear and row formation. Context surrounding the proposed size of the building platforms when considered in conjunction with approximate likely sizes of dwellings should be noted. While the platforms do border the subject site in a continuous formation, the size proposed would allow for dwellings to be established in various orientations and arrangements within the platforms, which would provide some deviation from the “row of dwellings” described within the peer review.

The peer review has also been reviewed by Julie Greenslade, the landscape architect from Align who prepared the landscape plan and assessment on behalf of the applicant. Julie has provided a response that is attached to this letter.

Given these concerns, the applicant requests that the current peer review be withdrawn, and an updated review be issued that addresses the above concerns. This updated report can subsequently be used within the s42A report, when this is prepared by the CODC processing planner.

The applicant also requests an itemised invoice be provided to justify the cost of the work completed to prepare the peer review. The applicant feels the SLR report is below expectation and offers no professional value, there are concerns on the potential for further costs eventuating from any additional work required to revise the existing peer review and it would be appreciated if this could be clarified by CODC.

The applicant fully intends to address key concerns briefly raised within the peer review and more directly communicated by CODC processing planner. Specifically, skyline breaches, allotment layouts and provision of planting, to ensure enough information on the proposal has been provided for the processing planner to make an educated and informed assessment and recommendation on the project.

Yours faithfully



Duncan White
Principal