

**BEFORE THE HEARINGS PANEL
FOR THE CENTRAL OTAGO DISTRICT COUNCIL**

IN THE MATTER OF the Resource Management Act 1991 (“the Act” or “the RMA”)
AND
IN THE MATTER OF Clutha Plains Trust Application, RC230328
 5 Māori Point Road.

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF RACHAEL ANNAN
ON BEHALF OF CENTRAL OTAGO DISTRICT COUNCIL**

7 APRIL 2025

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

- 1 My full name is Rachael Annan. I am a registered member of Tuia Pito Ora, the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects (NZILA) and hold a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture Degree (Hons.) from Lincoln University.
- 2 My professional experience involves over 20 years across the areas of landscape architecture, landscape planning and urban design review. In my current role I am employed by SLR Consulting New Zealand Limited as a Technical Director. I lead SLR's New Zealand based landscape planning work.
- 3 I have worked on rural and urban based projects for applicants and councils across New Zealand. I have provided expert evidence at both council hearings and the environment court. My project work has included consent and plan change applications and technical advice informing district plan preparation.

SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

- 4 My evidence provides an explanation and summary of landscape related concerns of the application. Relevant matters include the landscape character (landscape values), and visual amenity effects.
- 5 In preparing this evidence I have reviewed the application landscape evidence (25 March 2025) including updated application plans. I have also read through submissions related to landscape matters.

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR EXPERT WITNESSES

- 6 I have read and am familiar with the Environment Court's Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses (Environment Court Practice Note 2023) and agree to comply with it. My qualifications as an expert are set out above.
- 7 Other than where I state that I am relying on the advice of another person, I confirm that the matters addressed in this statement of evidence are within my area of expertise.
- 8 I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions I express.

CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES

- 9 In the rural environment the use of 'cluster' development, grouped dwellings with a share of remaining balance land, enables the retention of open space, be it for purposes including productive rural use or conservation. In this way, the *generic* rural landscape characteristic of 'open space dominating over built form' can be retained.
- 10 Cluster development provides a concentrated development pattern. To sufficiently address *distinct* local landscape values, such development also needs to be set out to avoid more sensitive and/or prominent landscape areas.
- 11 While this application sets out to achieve the former, the latter point is considered neglected. I consider that this remains the case with the recently provided revised design (Align, 25 March 2025).

LOCATION AND DEVELOPMENT APPROACH CONCERNS

Location

- 12 With regards to *distinct* landscape characteristics and qualities, landscape terraces are an identified local landform pattern contributing to the sense of place. The gradual sweeping curve (in plan view) of the upper terrace aspect of the site sits above a lower terrace and flood plains area of the site, adjacent properties, and the Clutha River/Mata Au and its margins. To each side of the river, the layered terraces of some scale and extent within the setting are key landform patterns of the valley area experienced south of Tarras where the application site is located.
- 13 Landscape matters associated with the terraces, as a defined horizontal landform pattern, include a level of visual prominence, particularly of development in proximity to a terraces 'leading edge'. The rural character, amenity and scenic quality of these more visually prominent areas are more sensitive to increased levels of built development, and consequent adverse effects on the local rural landscape character, values and derived visual amenity.
- 14 The following quote sets out the importance of a distinct area's landscape character in landscape assessment:

'It is important not to conflate specific and generic character. Specific character conveys more than generic character. It is often more pertinent to managing a

landscape's values than generic character. Even where it is generic character that is relevant (such as in response to a policy to maintain rural character), it will occur in the context of specific character. A pitfall is to focus on generic attributes (such as ruralness or naturalness) and overlook the specific character.'

(Te Tangi a te Manu, NZILA Landscape Assessment Guidelines, p. 124.)

Development Approach

- 15 The application remains a subdivision row, albeit with minor gaps and the doubling up of some allotments. Future dwellings will remain separately distinguishable, or near entirely so. By nature of its linear arrangement, the proposed subdivision misses the discrete ability of clustering to, in the first instance, sufficiently absorb the individual dwellings into groups.
- 16 In this broad rural valley setting, the concentrated density of the 16 x 2,000m² allotments will also encompass an overall length of approximately 770m. The application inherently lacks visual containment due to:
- (a) It's lineal and condensed density arrangement;
 - (b) The prominence of this near terrace edge location, whereby an 18m setback is ineffectual in this prominent location; and,
 - (c) The extent to which the terrace row like development pattern is at odds with the expansive rural setting.

Summary of findings

- 17 The relevant issue is not just the potential to screen the application, but the overall appropriateness of the development location and layout onsite. With reference to relevant policy matters including Policy 4.4.2 quoted below, adverse effects are not considered to be effectively mitigated by secondary measures of revised planting or reduced maximum building height. Further to this, the planting proposed near entirely sits between allotments, without some vegetation fronting future dwellings (still affording framed outlooks), the opportunity is lost to visually soften the built form.

'4.4.2 Policy – Landscape and Amenity Values

To manage the effects of land use activities and subdivision to ensure that adverse effects on the open space, landscape, natural character and amenity values of the rural environment are avoided, remedied or mitigated through:

(a) The design and location of structures and works, particularly in respect of the open natural character of hills and ranges, skylines, prominent places and natural features,

(b) Development which is compatible with the surrounding environment including the amenity values of adjoining properties,

(c) The ability to adequately dispose of effluent on site,

(d) Controlling the generation of noise in back country areas,

(e) The location of tree planting, particularly in respect of landscape values, natural features and ecological values,

(f) Controlling the spread of wilding trees.

(g) Encouraging the location and design of buildings to maintain the open natural character of hills and ranges without compromising the landscape and amenity values of prominent hillsides and terraces.'

18 The revised application has been considered as set out. However, supportable alternatives are considered available which could accommodate productive areas and existing pivot irrigation. Without directly designing the application, an approach which effectively addresses the following matters is recommended:

(a) Avoids a lineal allotment arrangement in the proposed upper terrace location above the escarpment;

(b) Relocates more than half of the proposed allotments away from this currently proposed location;

(c) Creates at least two very separate development areas onsite;

(d) Within these areas, breaks up the allotment pattern into more distinct (i.e., separate and distant), and discrete cluster arrangements, and;

(e) Is supported by a more effective planting framework, built form conditions and curtilage restrictions.

19 Cluster development can provide a positive outcome for rural landscapes when responsive to the distinct landscape character of its location. However, in combination, the proposed development pattern and placement onsite will serve to highlight, not to integrate the application. Relevant issues include landscape values and capacity of this location within the site, with associated visual prominence. On this basis, the

application is considered to set out overt domestication (urbanisation) within its receiving rural environment.

Rachael Annan

07 April 2025