

**BEFORE A HEARINGS PANEL  
APPOINTED BY NELSON CITY COUNCIL**

**IN THE MATTER                      of Private Plan Change 28 – Maitahi Bayview**

**AND IN THE MATTER    of Clause 21 of the First Schedule of the Resource  
Management Act 1991**

---

**STATEMENT OF ANNE STEVEN TO PPC28 HEARING PANEL**

**DATED 18 JULY 2022**

---

---

Counsel: Sally Gepp  
Level 1, 189 Hardy Street  
Nelson 7010  
Tel: 021 558 241  
Email: [sally@sallygepp.co.nz](mailto:sally@sallygepp.co.nz)

1. There are no corrections to my evidence
2. The overall purpose of my evidence is stated in [42]. Broadly, it is to provide an opinion of the appropriateness of the development PPC28 would enable, with respect to the landscape values of the Site and the requirements of the relevant statutory provisions regarding their protection, maintenance and enhancement.
3. I would like to update [46]. Over the 16 and 17 July I have carried out additional visual and landscape assessment of the Site. I viewed the site from Grampians Reserve, Hanby Park, the true left Maitai River trail between the Waahi Takaro golf course and Hanby Park, and Britannia Heights (mainly Princes Drive). I also viewed the Malvern Hills from the Nelson marina and SH6 again given it was inclement weather on my last site visit. I also had the opportunity to look around the site yesterday afternoon via vehicle driven by Andrew Spittal.
4. With regard to describing the elements and features of the Site, these have been comprehensively documented in the various PPC28 technical and landscape documents, which I have relied upon to a large degree. The only areas of uncertainty relevant to landscape centre around remaining native vegetation cover (location and extent, species) and identification of all wetlands on the site. I noticed a lot of wet pugged ground on my site visit which Mr Spittal advised was due only to an excessively wet season. I note there is still uncertainty over whether the existing alignment of lower Kaka Stream is as natural as an assumed historical alignment around the western edge. I have assumed the western alignment is the more natural one.
5. Regarding the landscape character unit (LCU) framework for the Site, on further consideration my view is the southwest basin needs to be a separate unit as it is not part of the Kaka Stream system. I also see the lower Kaka Stream floodplain and the Walters Bluff area of the Malvern Hills ridge as identifiable sub-units, not LCUs on their own as I have mapped on my Fig. 1. I describe the LCUs in my Appendix C and rate them on attributes the key ones being legibility, intactness/natural character, openness and visual coherence. Overall, legibility is High, openness is Very High, intactness/natural character is no more than Moderate tending towards Low, and visual coherence is generally Moderate-High.

6. In describing the landscape context of the Site, an area of disagreement between myself and Mr Milne relates to the character of urban development on Nelson's hills. Urban areas only extend on to the lower slopes of the hill ranges to an altitude of 100-120m asl, occasionally as high as 150m. Urban development across upper slopes and on ridge summits is not characteristic (apart from the Port ridge). The hills backdropping Nelson city are dominantly rural landscape with relatively very little built development limited to their lower slopes, providing an effective greenbelt. The strong visual contrast and visual relief between intensely built-up coastal plain and open rural coastal ridges and interior valleys is characteristic and important for Nelson's identity.
7. There is agreement generally between myself and Mr Milne over the range of landscape values the Site has. We have both relied upon and accept the values scheduled in the BM Nelson landscape studies, as a starting point. Where we disagree is the spatial extent of those values, or which parts of the Site confer the values, and the degree of value (Low Moderate High ect). My process of evaluation was to first review and schedule the biophysical, sensory/perceptual and associative values (including tangata whenua values) documented in the RMM landscape reports and in the Nelson landscape studies. I augmented this data with supplementary information obtained from the RPS and NRMP and other strategy documents relevant to the area (such as the Nelson Halo project). The final step was to affirm the values through field work where possible. This mainly related to the biophysical and sensory values.
8. A key area of disagreement is whether Kaka Valley (as a whole) is a Significant Landscape. Mr Milne and Mr Girvan maintain a view that the Backdrop and Skyline areas and the Maitai River itself (including a narrow riparian margin, as mapped in the draft WWNP) are the only parts of the site that have Significant status. I maintain my view that the whole of Kaka Valley is Significant (amenity) Landscape and that Kaka Hill could be a Significant Natural Feature, based on the schedule of values I have set out in my Appendix D and summarised at [114]. I do not accept I have misinterpreted the findings of these studies or that I misrepresent the value of the landscape.
9. I agree with the analysis of values (although not necessarily the conclusions) set out in the 2005 and 2016 BM Nelson landscape studies which in my opinion

clearly refer to (at least) the valley floor area having the values with the river being a significant central element: *“coherent and picturesque scenic qualities contributing an iconic and memorable inland valley landscape setting in close proximity to Nelson”*. The Evaluation statement at the bottom of p28 in the 2016 Final BM Landscape Study: *“The Matai River within the Maitai Valley... is considered to form a Significant Landscape”* which Mr Milne and Mr Girvan are relying on does not reflect the description of attributes. Moreover in the summary Table on p40 of that Report the description is the “Maitai Valley”. It is given an overall landscape quality rating of High with Very High associative values related largely to its high recreational values (including the setting) and tangata whenua values. Further, earthworks, subdivision and development on the enclosing valley slopes are listed as a Potential Threat, indicating that these slopes must have value contributing to the overall value of the landscape of the valley. The extent of the Maitai Valley landscape unit is shown on the map at the end of my Appendix B showing that this unit includes the lower angle debris fans on both sides of Kaka Stream valley and the stream terraces.

10. In the 2005 study the entire site fell within either the Kaka Hill ridgeline/hilltop overlay (which included the Malvern Hills ridge) or the Maitai Valley Amenity Landscape. In this assessment the landscape value was considered to derive from the low density, open rural character in contrast to the urban areas and the prominent skyline ridges; the Malvern Hills ridge *“forms an important open rural backdrop to the more intensively modified coastal strip formed by these suburbs.”*; and the values for the Maitai Valley were similar to those described in 2016 but more specifically *“the picturesque scenic qualities of the landscape setting contribute to the high visual amenity values”*. The Maitai river itself was regarded as a significant landscape element within the valley unit.
11. There are four factors to bear in mind regarding the BM studies. A LCU was required to have Very High associative values and at least one other High rating to be Significant. This is a methodology unique to BM. Secondly, the ratings were applied to larger scale LCUs which do not necessarily capture or accurately reflect the specific values of the Site. Third, the LCU framework split the Kaka Stream valley into two then three separate units. An alternative valid approach is to assess the valley as a whole unit on its own. The fourth point to bear in mind

is that these studies have not been peer reviewed or gone through the rigorous testing process of a proposed plan change.

12. Regarding the Backdrop and Skyline areas, it is important to bear in mind these have only been delineated with respect to views from the city and SH6. They do not include all skyline and sensitive upper slope backdrop areas as seen from public viewpoints within the Maitai Valley.
13. The core landscape values of the site relate fundamentally to its highly open (unbuilt) rural character and related aspects of rural quiet and tranquillity and natural dark. The value of this landscape type is elevated due to being the setting for recreational activities along the Maitai River, and its function as greenbelt and distinctive rural backdrop to the urban areas. The site together with the public reserve land provides visual relief to the built up areas. The particular structure of landform and patterns of landcover and the way in which the site is viewed confer high visual amenity and aesthetic value overall, despite the weed burden and recent clearance. Clean landform or vegetated skylines and prominent ridgelines are a valued feature.
14. In my view Kaka Valley and the lower Maitai River valley is a “gateway” landscape, a concept embedded in policy NA 2.3.3 of the RPS and alluded to in the explanation and reasons for the rural Zone DO16.1.1x. I agree with Mr Milne that the experience of this landscape is from the valley floor. I do not agree that a gateway landscape can be reset to a location further up the valley, as the urban/rural boundary would not be as clear as it is now.
15. I maintain my view that the seaward side of the Malvern Hills ridge is part of the Coastal Environment. My reasons are that the ridge is in close proximity to the sea (less than 1km), it has a strong visual association with the sea and is likely it did and is able to support coastal forest.
16. Regarding visibility of the site, there is general agreement between Mr Milne and myself over the range of viewpoints that are relevant and the different viewing contexts as described in [155] to [157]. Since preparing my EIC I have viewed the site from additional places as described earlier. Referring to [157], there are also expansive views of the site from the Grampians reserve.
17. Mr Milne was critical of my examination of the Site in context from elevated viewpoints. With the exception of Sharlands Hill, I went to the same range of

viewpoints analysed in the RMM studies. There is no basis in landscape for excluding elevated public viewpoints or to downplay their significance. Some are less frequented than others and this must be taken into consideration. However future use must also be considered. Over time with growing population the desire - and need - to get out into the open spaces closest to Nelson is likely to increase. These are the places where once the top is attained, time is spent contemplating and enjoying the view. Even runners and bikers in my experience in sharing these sorts of places with them, or undertaking activities myself, stop at “the top” to enjoy the feeling of achievement which includes contemplating the view at least while you catch your breath. It is from these viewpoints that the broader structure and patterns of landscape especially topography and the overall patterning of urban landcover are appreciated.

18. There is a very good view into the Kaka Valley from the top of Sharlands Hill (refer photo p11, Appendix B Landscape Values and pp 25-26 Appendix F Visibility Analysis). Mr Milne does not appear to have visited this viewpoint as he refers mainly to Jacks Track which is more on the south side of the hill. He shows a photo on p8 of his EIC of the view similar to mine but this is a panoramic stitched photo on which he states he does not rely for assessment of effect. The view due north is dominantly of Kaka Valley, you have to physically turn to look west over the city. The separation between city and Kaka Valley is very clear. The juxtapositioning of urban area and rural lower Maitai Valley is no basis in my opinion for urban development to be seen as appropriate in the Kaka Valley, in fact the converse impression of the contrast with and sense of containment of the urban area is strong.
19. I have walked the ridge trail in the Grampians Reserve. Mr Milne assessed the visibility of the site from here as being “limited” and typically viewed along with most of the Nelson CBD and inner suburbs. My experience of walking the tracks revealed a different experience. I ascended from Melrose Park via Tawa Track and went up to the tower at the summit then walked down the ridge to Collingwood Street. There were many views of Kaka Valley and, often, only of Kaka Valley or the Malvern Hills ridge or Kaka Hill. Although a relatively distant view the detail of the valley and its landform and vegetation could clearly be seen. Many views along the track are framed views of Kaka Valley or the Malvern Hills ridge. What impressed me the most was that in almost all views,

none of the urban areas of the Brook or East Nelson could be seen. The contrast between urban coastal and open rural interior just one ridge back was complete. Another impression I took away with me was that from the ridge track there were not many views to the west due to enclosing vegetation alongside the track. Further, whilst I accept this was my experience on just one day in the afternoon, where available the view of the distant mountains to the west was disappointing due to glare and shadow combined with cloud cover, with an expanse of foreground of urban and industrial. The view north and east with the sun shining brightly on the landscape was more interesting and the preferred view. In summary Kaka Valley was more visible than I thought it would be based on Mr Milne's evidence and the views focused more on the site than I expected. I also observed that the site contributed significantly to the high amenity value of the landscape being viewed. (slide show 19 images).

20. I also visited the Port Hills ridge to observe the visibility of the Site from the residential areas here. In the majority of the views the mid to upper slopes of Kaka Hill and the southwest end of the Malvern Hills ridge are the visible, as very open, rural and green landscape, a mosaic of bush and green pasture. Very little of the PPC28 development would be visible. Slightly more would be visible from viewpoints at the north end of the ridge as more of the northwest side of the Malvern Hills ridge can be seen. Housing would be seen at a higher elevation and coming on to the ridgeline in these views. (slide show 4 images).
21. I also walked the true left Maitai River trail between the golf course and Hanby Park. The Site was more visible than I expected based on Mr Milne's analysis. Views are intermittent due to mature tree cover but most of the site is visible in a sequential way. Many of the views are of parts of the site pleasantly framed by trees. This field work confirmed to me the high aesthetic value of the site as the setting for the Maitai River recreational activity areas. (slide show 36 images).
22. There are areas of disagreement however over the extent of visibility and the degree of visual change to the landscape that would result from development enabled by PPC28. This analysis is set out in a table at [162]. Overall I assessed the magnitude of visual change to the landscape to be Moderate to High rather than Low to Moderate as assessed by Mr Milne. The exception is with respect to

views from the central city and port area where there would be very little change observed.

23. There is also disagreement over the potential for skyline effects. At [161] I demonstrated how effects of buildings on skylines could still occur despite provision X.5c , due to not all skyline areas being identified as Primary Ridgeline. I have done some further analysis to demonstrate this (image slide).
24. There is agreement between Mr Milne and I that the character of the landscape would be changed. This would be limited in degree on Kaka Hill and on the southwest end of Malvern Hills but would be marked within Kaka Valley and across the northwest side and summit of the Malvern Hills ridge. My opinion is that Mr Milne has understated the degree of change that would occur. I consider it would be High within Kaka Valley and across the Malvern Hills generally. I do not agree the reduction in openness would be “minor” as assessed by RMM. It would, inevitably, be high. I do not agree with Mr Milne that the new urban development would be consistent with existing landscape character.
25. I agree with Mr Milne’s assessment of the degree of existing natural character of the Maitai River and Kaka Stream corridors. I agree that there is potential for enhancement of natural character of rivers and their margins. I do not agree that there would be a significant improvement to the natural character of the site as a whole, due to the scale of development proposed, despite the potential for ecological gains. The outcome would most likely be dichotomous, with some areas of Very Low natural character (urban areas) and some areas of potentially High natural character evolving.
26. In my view the “tagging” of Kaka valley as a site for future urban development is not relevant and should not influence a landscape effects assessment.
27. Whilst aspects of the proposal would contribute positively to Nelson’s identity and distinctive character (such as ecologically improving Kaka Hill) other aspects would undermine the fundamental characteristics of open undeveloped rural hill backdrops and skylines, a strong greenbelt, and the quiet rural character of Kaka Valley. I do not agree with Mr Milne that the urban development would appear as infill and a logical extension of existing urban character.



28. With respect to effects on visual amenity, it is my view that the RMM visual effects assessment has understated the degree of adverse effect on visual amenity. The Low to Moderate ratings of adverse effect assigned by RMM appear to be influenced by the “tagging” of the site for urban development and the premise that the urban development would be consistent in character with existing development and appear as a logical extension.
29. There is potential for built form to appear on skylines despite proposed rule X.5c. Presence of urban density development along the upper slopes of the Malvern Hills would result in adverse effects on landscape character and visual amenity of a Moderate-High to High degree in my opinion. This is because these areas are highly valued for their undeveloped open rural character. There would be positive effects on the skyline and backdrop areas of Kaka Hill and the southwest end of the Malvern Hills ridge (west side only).
30. The visual amenity of seaward facing slopes would not be protected. They would be adversely affected to a High degree.
31. There would not be any loss of views from major transport corridors but there would be degradation of views. There would not be any loss or degradation to any Significant Views scheduled in Table 9.1 of the NRMP.
32. The PPC28 would result in development that detracts from the gateway landscape of the lower Maitai valley.
33. It would also not maintain or protect the features and attributes of the site to a degree that would maintain/protect the Significant landscape of Kaka Valley and the Malvern Hills Ridge. The significant feature of Kaka Hill would be protected and enhanced to a large degree. Urban development would degrade part of its “knobby knee” features. Fundamentally the picturesque scenic inland valley would not be retained.
34. The natural character of the coastal environment on the northwest side of the Malvern Hills ridge would not be preserved or enhanced. The remaining attributes of a high degree of openness and dominance of landform and vegetation would be removed by urban development albeit with pockets of new native planting. The spread of urban development above the existing urban areas constitutes escape through the greenbelt “cap” of the undeveloped backdrop ridgeline and expresses urban sprawl in my view.

35. There would be positive effects on natural values related to the restoration of Kaka Hill, extensions of open space to Branford Park, the stream corridor enhancements and revegetation areas through the residential zones, providing there is clear provisioning within Schedule X. There is some uncertainty that all wetlands have been provided for. A notable natural feature that has not been protected as a whole is the Kaka Stream floodplain.
36. The existing strong rural:urban boundary would not be sustained as it relies on the undeveloped open rural character of the Malvern Hills ridge and Kaka Valley/lower Maitai River valley.
37. My overall conclusion is that the development enabled by PPC28 is not appropriate development for the Site, with respect to its existing character and landscape values.

Anne Steven

Registered Landscape Architect

July 18 2022