

Memorandum



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Attention: Trevor Ellis

Company: Waimakariri District Council

Date: 22/04/2020 (revision following comments)

From: Yvonne Pfluger; Senior Principal Landscape Planner

Message Ref: Rural Boundary Outline for District Plan Review (DPR)

Project No: C17060F

Background

Boffa Miskell Ltd (BML) prepared an assessment of the rural character of the rural zone¹ for WDC in 2018 to support its review of the operative District Plan which includes a review of the zoning and associated provisions for the rural area of the District. The assessment informs the management of activities and effects within the Rural Zone, including the relationship with rural residential activities and existing small-lot rural development. Small lot semi-rural land use has emerged through subdivision at or close to the current minimum standard of four hectares (as a permitted activity), as well as through the creation of Residential 4A and 4B Zones (5000m² and one hectare size average) that adjoin rural zoned land. This popularity of small-lot subdivision has been a noticeable feature of rural development during the last ten years, and has been identified as a concern for some during community consultation on the Draft District Development Strategy in 2017.

We understand that for the District Plan Review (DPR) WDC's preferred option is to have 2 zones, based on differing factors, but using the character line that 'divides' east and west of the District as the zone boundary. Currently, WDC proposes that the permitted size for subdivision of properties would be 4ha to the east (proposed Rural Lifestyle Zone) and 20ha to the west (Rural General Zone). This would be a change from the status quo where the District Plan allows for 4ha subdivision across the entire Rural Zone.

This memorandum outlines our recommendations in relation to the location of the Rural Boundary line within Waimakariri District that separates the more developed eastern part of the district (Rural Lifestyle Zone) from the less developed western part (Rural General Zone). The map included in Appendix 2 shows the proposed location of the Rural Boundary Line.

The difficulty in defining the line was that the existing rural character as it relates to rural lifestyle development with existing residential buildings does not necessarily reflect the existing size of subdivided lots if they are undeveloped. It is understood that these existing smaller lots (between 4 and 20ha) on the western side of the boundary line are subject to a grandfather clause to protect their existing development right in relation to the establishment of a residential unit on the site. However, existing lots that cannot achieve a minimum density of 20 hectares to the west of the line would be limited in their ability to be further subdivided, maintaining the existing development density in the areas in the proposed Rural General Zone.

¹ Waimakariri District - Rural Character Assessment, Rural Zone – Character Assessment Report, prepared for Waimakariri District Council, June 2018

Scope and Methodology

Following the preparation of the assessment report outlined above, Boffa Miskell has been engaged in early 2020 by WDC to assist with advice in relation to the issues described above. BML considered a preliminary line drafted by WDC with a specific focus on the hill country fringe of the Loburn Sefton Downlands Character Area to determine if this area should be excluded from the proposed Rural Lifestyle Zone. The review and refinement of the line described below is based on the existing rural character of the area, as one element being considered by WDC.

As a desktop exercise BML used GIS analysis prior to site investigations to get a good understanding of the landscape characteristics, including slope, elevation, lot size and aerial photography. Based on these initial findings a draft line was issued to WDC for review and comment. On 13th February 2020 a site visit was undertaken by Yvonne Pfluger, Landscape Planner at BML to ground truth and refine the draft line. As part of this site visit the Loburn Sefton Downlands and Okuku Ashley Plains Landscape Character Areas were assessed from public roads. This short report outlines the rationale for the location of the Rural Boundary Line and any changes that were made following the site visit.

A photo attachment with photographs taken during the site visit in February 2020 is included with this report to illustrate the landscape characteristics in relevant areas (see Attachment 1).

Wider Landscape Character Description

Ashley Forest, even though located within Hurunui District, forms the visual backdrop to the Lowburn Sefton Downlands Character Area. The plantation forest is mostly located on the rising terrain of Mt Grey with the surrounding downlands area creating a transition both in landform and land use.

Part of the downlands area is medium and small sized pastoral farming, with small tracts of forestry and vegetated gullies extending into the area from the adjacent steeper slopes. A small part of the Ashley Forest extends into this character area and there are also some plantation forestry operations and woodlots scattered throughout. The area around Loburn and Loburn North is more closely vegetated with exotic shelterbelt and amenity plantings. Other areas are predominantly used for pastoral grazing and size of land holdings varies with larger lots present in some parts as described in more detail below.

The buildings in the downlands range from homes and farm utility sheds clustered in well- established settings to relatively new medium to large residential dwellings. The latter appear to be more numerous, located on evenly dispersed rural residential parcels fanning out from the Ashley/Rangiora area, breaking up open farmland into smaller scale blocks.

The long established Loburn North, Loburn and Sefton settlements are recognised local communities. The more densely settled areas are separated by medium to large areas of productive farmland.

The rural character resulting from the settlement pattern and density of small rural lots of this downlands landscape is between the denser 'settled' Oxford Downlands and the predominantly farmland rural character of the Mt Thomas Downlands.

On Site Findings and Recommendations

Sefton Downlands- east west of Ashley

The rolling hills of the downlands support a relatively fine grain of subdivision as well as pastoral farmland. While not all developed, the settlement pattern is distinctly rural residential in some pockets such as Copples and Forestry Road. The level of development in the western downlands is much lower, which means that the character is predominantly rural with productive land use as a focus, rather than rural residential/ lifestyle like in the more eastern parts (such as along most of Marshmans Road and Carrs

Road). The downlands accessed off Marshmans Road are more rolling and some parts of this area contain larger paddocks and farms.

The amendments to the originally proposed line along Marshmans Road area are quite small with the main change occurring along Ramsay Road where lots are generally larger and mostly undeveloped. The rural character along Copples, Douds and McLeods Road has been largely compromised by residential/ lifestyle development while the downlands on both sides of Ramsay Road maintain their openness and dominance of pastoral land use. It is considered desirable to avoid the spread of residential uses onto the upper downlands, as has occurred at the top of Copples Road along Shaw Creek (Ribbonwood) and Stony Creek. By maintaining larger lots along Ramsay Road a break between the existing lifestyle development can be retained.

While a small settlement exists at the top of Forestry Road (located within Hurunui District) and lifestyle development extends along Forestry Road itself, the area around Gorries Road displays an open, pastoral character, similar to upper Mowatts Road where the gravel roads connects to the forestry roads within the plantation forest.

Loburn Downlands- west of Ashley

The rural residential settlement pattern is distinctive in some clusters off Carrs Road. Northeast of Carrs Road the downlands rise relatively steeply and dwellings can be found along the escarpment near the road with an outlook over the plains. From Carrs Road in the Loburn area, the relatively abrupt rise in slope and layers of vegetation limits views to the development. Development in the eastern part of this unit is more visible due to the greater road access and less complex topography, however, the established shelterbelts help filter and break up views.

While the development along Carrs Road is more or less continuous between the settlement of Ashley and Doyles Road, to the north of this developed area lies an approximately 2km long section with a mix of larger and medium sized sections as the escarpment is located closer to Carrs Road. It is desirable to keep a gap in the development along Carrs Road to the south of Loburn North, taking into account the landform where the escarpment is in closer proximity to the road.

At the Makerikeri River a number of lifestyle sections extend upstream from the Carrs Road bridge, which represent sprawling development from Loburn North. It appears that the undulating hill country is attractive for rural living and there are areas, such as along and south west of Loburn Kowai Road where development has taken place on the hill/plateau areas. This type of development creep is considered to be undesirable from a visual perspective as it is generally against the grain of the landscape and does not follow the undulating landform.

From around Kingswood Downs northwards the level of development becomes much more sporadic and open pastoral land uses dominate towards the Grey River, apart from a more developed area between Mt Grey Road and Loburn Terrace Road. This existing rural lifestyle area follows the road corridor towards the Grey River, which is located in the low-lying parts of the landform and further spread onto the downlands to the north of Bradys/ Thompsons Road should be avoided.

Along the western boundary in the lower-lying Okuku- North Lowburn Downlands the demarcation of the Rural General Zone was moved further east based on the on-site findings, since there is currently significantly less rural lifestyle development west of North Loburn School (Thompsons Road). The consented high density subdivision (sections around 2000m²) in the triangle Pitville/ Chapel/ Loburn Whiterock Roads currently still displays a rural land use and character, since residential buildings have not been established yet. This character would, however change significantly once development takes place.

There are some areas, such as along Loburn Whiterock Road (west of Grey River) where sections are subdivided but very few residences have been built. This means the existing character is still rural.

Appendix 1 – Graphic Attachment

Sefton Downlands- east west of Ashley



Photo 1

*Copples Road with
extensive lifestyle
development*



Photo 2

*Upper part of
Douds Road
looking across
undeveloped
downlands along
Ramsay Road*



Photo 3

*Top of Forestry
Road looking
across Gorries
Road*

Loburn Downlands- west of Ashley



Photo 4

*Mowatts Road
looking south
across
downlands
largely used
for pastoral
grazing*



Photo 5

*Carrs Road
looking
towards
existing rural
residential
development
on the
escarpment to
the east*



Photo 6

*Doyle Road
looking north
across
downlands
where the
escarpment
has not been
developed yet
above Carrs
Road*

Loburn North Downlands- west of Ashley



Photo 7

Makerkeri Road at Carrs Road intersection with a number of smaller rural residential sections

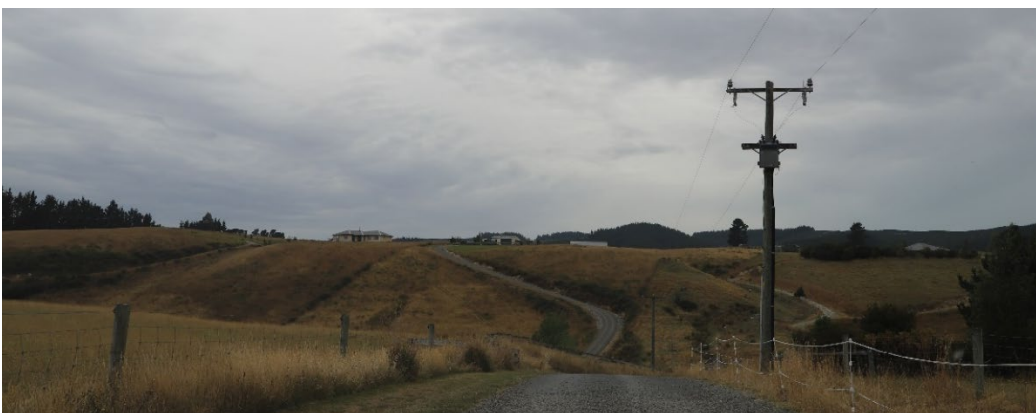


Photo 8

Subdivision on downlands west of Loburn Kowai Road



Photo 9

Corner Loburn Whiterock Road/Chapel Road where dense residential development is consented in the triangle with Pitville Street

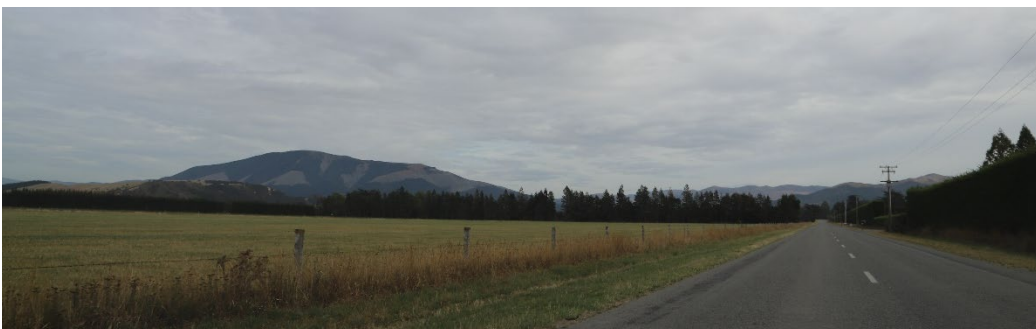
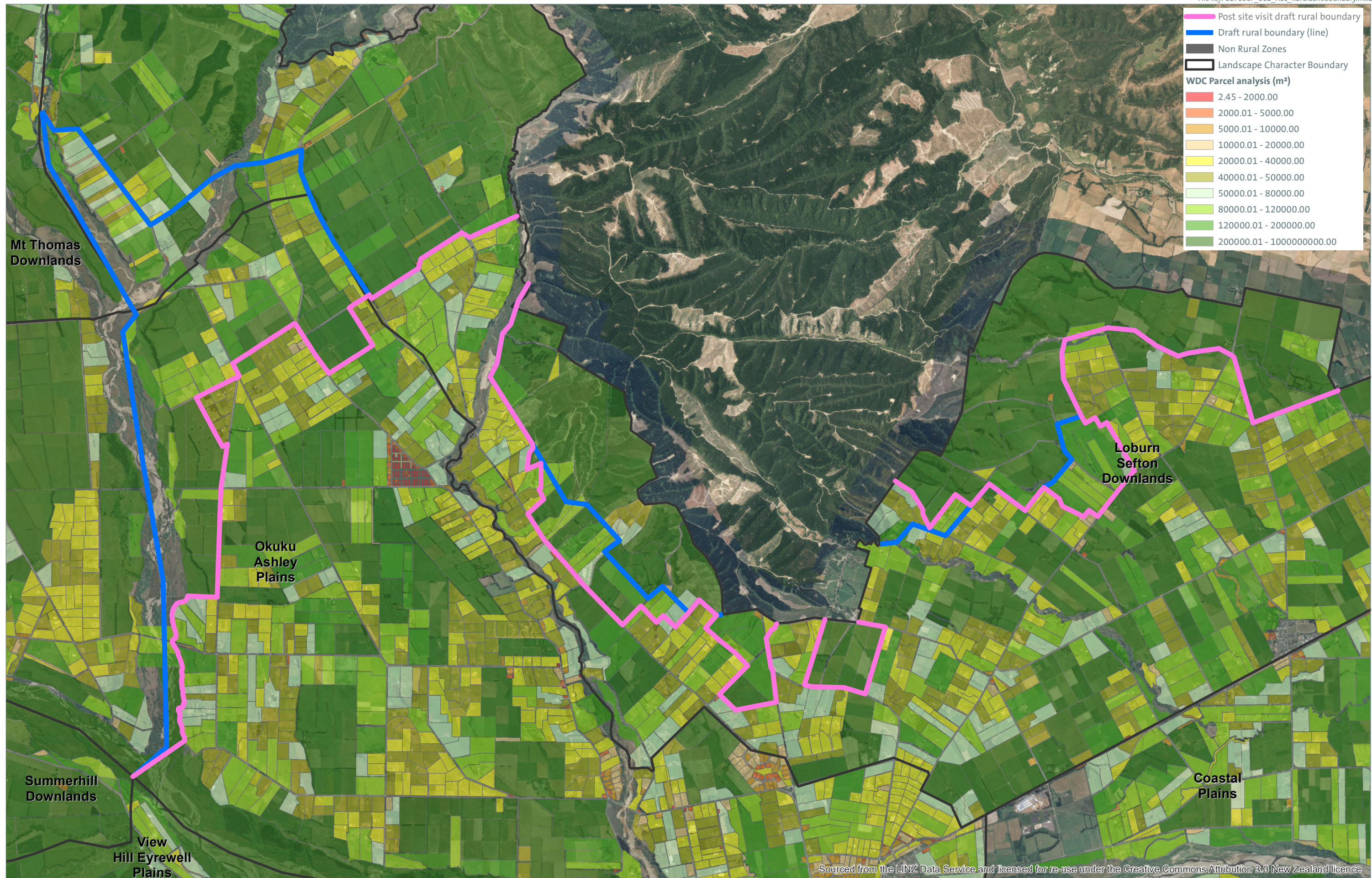


Photo 10

Loburn Whiterock Road on the northern side of the Grey River where agricultural use dominates

Appendix 2 Rural Boundary Map (A3)



Data Sources:

Zone boundaries sourced from WDC
Topo maps sourced from LINZ topo 50 map series

Projection: NZGD 2000 New Zealand Transverse Mercator