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LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

Resource Consent Application: ANISEED VALLEY FARM SETTLEMENT

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INTRODUCTION

1. Consent is sought to create a subdivision for the purpose of enabling 10 lots with residential building platforms within a rural environment. The site is situated at Aniseed Valley Road Aniseed Valley (LOTS 1 2 DP 12751) and is 34.33 ha in area. The site is on the southern side of the valley across the river from Aniseed Valley Road, and is zoned Rural 2. The following assessment will assess the effects of the proposal against the existing landscape context and character as well as the existing densities, in order to ascertain the landscape and visual effects of the increased density and built form within this environment.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. The site is an area I am familiar with and I have visited the site for the purpose of assessing the application and surrounding area in 2014 to consider the receiving environment; and revisited the site in 2015. The subdivision is designed to integrate into the environment through lot layout and building placement and utilising the natural features of the topography within the site. Additional planting will contribute to this to achieve a small subdivision anticipated to be farm settlement that lives in a rural environment and maintains a rural amenity. This is achieved by:
 - Clustering building forms together.
 - Providing a bridge across the Roding River which will enable more efficient use of the productive land.
 - Limiting road layout.
 - Building controls on height and external materials.
 - Keeping all buildings consistent in form and low and linear in a manner in keeping with the flat lines of the topography.
 - Locating residential lots to minimise visibility of buildings from Aniseed Valley Road.
 - Creating a buffer area of open space; and woodlot trees to soften any views of the proposed house sites and eventual buildings from Aniseed Valley Road.
 - Initiating a stream enhancement strategy through fencing off from stock and planting in selective areas.
 - Building on the existing rural landscape patterns including planting along the river verge, woodland/forest woodlots and native species for amenity and mitigation.

SITE CONTEXT

3. The site is located in Aniseed Valley, with the closest end of Aniseed Valley 5km from Richmond. The Barnicoat Range separating Richmond from the Aniseed Valley. The site is a further 3km up the valley on the southern side across the Roding River. Currently there is no bridge providing reliable vehicular access across the River to the site. There is a shallow point in the river that can be forded when the river is not in flood.
4. There is an existing rectangular corrugated iron 3 bay farm shed located with stock yards on the valley floor close to the river in the northern part of the site. This is currently the only building on the land.
5. The northern site boundary and most of the east and western boundary is delineated by Roding river as it curls around the site at the base of the valley. Land to the east is terraced land sitting above the river path, and extending up to a hillform to the south. A ridgeline running down from this hill creates a horseshoe bend in River, with flat land adjoining terraced land to the south. To simplify this description, the northern land adjacent to the river is largely flat pastoral land, sitting at the base of a hill form (Goat Hill). The land is pastoral and is grazed by cattle. There is a small woodlot on a steep east facing terrace riser. A small tributary stream runs down a narrow valley to join the Roding. This separates two flat pastoral areas. Poplar trees are located along the stream banks, and there are a small stand of Eucalypts at the eastern end of the site near the junction where the flat terrace land meets the slope of Goat hill behind, with the slopes also pastoral in character. A mixture of mainly exotic trees and shrubs are located along the banks of the Roding River on both banks.
6. The wider landscape is dominated by commercial pine forestry on the steep valley sides - especially on the southern valley flanks surrounding the site. Being a small valley with relatively steep sides, with in some instances limited road access (particularly on the southern side of the Roding), landuse options are limited. forestry is a dominant rural land use within Aniseed Valley and the surrounding back country hills. Areas of pasture occur largely on the valley floor and foothills adjoining the Roding River in pockets. Most residential farmlets and smaller lots associated with rural lifestyle living are in close proximity to both the valley floor and the Aniseed Valley Road. The residential character occurs for the first 8km of the Aniseed Valley, then this gives way to large pine forestry plantations and native bush in the more isolated upper reaches of the valley - where there is the Roding Dam built in 1904 which still supplies water to Nelson.
7. Values such as the rural outlook, privacy and achieving a rural character setting are important elements within this landscape.
8. The farmlets and rural residential character along Aniseed Valley Road has a relatively low density of housing typical of its Rural 2 zoning, although many of the lots are smaller than the 50 hectare lot size anticipated by the Zone. Smaller lots averaging at 2 hectares are scattered along the valley floor - often between the river and the road¹. Other rural lots with residential activity in the vicinity of the site are larger in size and incorporate

¹ Numbers 418, 442, 488, 497, 580, 582, 733, 874 Aniseed Valley Road – This incorporated a 5km stretch of Road/ River on the northern side of the river adjoining and either side of the site.

the sloping valley sides. These have a mixed use with pastoral farming on the flatter and gorse/ scrub or forestry on the steeper valley sides. The average size of these lots is 20ha².

9. The Aniseed Valley is a relatively isolated valley. The Aniseed valley road is not a through road, with some recreational activity associated with swimming holes in the river and some historic walks in the upper reaches of the valley. The Roding Valley terminates at the Roding Water Reserve.
10. There is a paper road that bisects the site, separating the ridgeline and flat pastoral land to the west from the flat terraced pastoral land to the east. This road connects to forestry land to the south of the property. There is no bridge that connects this paper road with the Aniseed Valley Road.

PROPOSAL

11. The application includes the following:
 - An 10 lot subdivision with lot sizes ranging from 3780m² to 17.2 hectares
 - The 10 lots will include two clusters:
 - o Cluster 1 (proposed Lots 1-5) in the western area of the site, and
 - o Cluster 2 (proposed Lots 6-10) in the eastern area of the site.
 - o A bridge will provide safe vehicular access to the site.
 - Building controls on all buildings to ensure a rural vernacular.
 - A landscape concept plan showing the proposed layout and native vegetation that will create privacy and a rural amenity for each house site. (See Landscape Concept Plan).
12. I visited the site prior to the development of the design and tested the subdivision design once completed by revisiting the site to consider landscape effects. This informed a set of mitigation measures and design controls which form part of the proposal. These measures include planting and constraints on building design and location, which are described below, and have been taken into account in the conclusions formed in this report.

TASMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

13. The site is situated in the Rural 2 Zone of the Tasman Resource Management Plan. It is my understanding that the minimum area of allotments created by the subdivision is 50 hectares except for utility or public work. All lots within the proposed subdivision sit below this threshold, therefore the effect of this variation must be considered carefully. The Policies that I have considered relate to land fragmentation and rural/landscape character and amenity. In particular:

² Numbers 613, 615, 677, 685, 727, 739, 755, 793, 807 Aniseed Valley Road – This incorporated a 5km stretch of Road/River on the northern side of the River adjoining and either side of the site

- 7.1.3.1** *To avoid, remedy or mitigate the adverse effects of subdivision of rural land, particularly land of high productive value.*
- 7.1.3.2** *To avoid, remedy or mitigate the effects of activities which reduce the area of land available for soil-based production purposes in rural areas.*
- 7.1.3.3** *To avoid, remedy or mitigate adverse actual, potential, and cumulative effects on the rural land resource.*
- 7.1.3.4** *To require land parcels upon subdivision to be of a size and shape that retains the land's productive potential, having regard to the actual and potential productive values, the versatility of the land, ecosystem values, the management of cross-boundary effects, access, and the availability of servicing.*
- 7.2.3.1** *Provision of opportunities to use rural land for activities other than soil-based production, including papakainga, tourist services, rural residential and rural industrial activities in restricted locations, while avoiding the loss of land of high productive value.³*
- 7.2.3.2** *To enable sites in specific locations to be used primarily for rural industrial, tourist services or rural residential purposes (including communal living and papakainga) with any farming or other rural activity being ancillary, having regard to:*
- (a) the productive and versatile values of the land;*
 - (b) natural hazards;*
 - (c) outstanding natural features and landscapes, and the coastal environment;*
 - (d) cross-boundary effects, including any actual and potential adverse effects of existing activities on such future activities;*
 - (e) servicing availability;*
 - (f) the availability of specific productive natural resources, such as aggregates or other mineral sources;*
 - (g) transport access and effects;*
 - (h) potential for cumulative adverse effects from further land fragmentation;*
 - (i) maintaining variety of lot size;*
 - (j) efficient use of the rural land resource;*
 - (k) cultural relationship of Māori to their land.*
- 7.4.1.1** *an appropriate level of rural character, ecosystems and amenity values.*
- 7.4.3.3** *To provide for the maintenance and enhancement of local rural character, including such attributes as openness, greenness, productive activity, absence of signs and separation, style and scale of structures;*
- 7.4.3.10** *To ensure the maintenance or enhancement of natural drainage features within rural catchments, and to avoid, remedy, or mitigate any adverse effects of storm water runoff.*
- 9.1.3.3** *To ensure that structures do not adversely affect:*
- (a) visual interfaces such as skylines, ridgelines and the shorelines of lakes, rivers and the sea;*

³ Tasman Resource Management Plan; 7/5

(b) *unity of landform, vegetation cover and views.*

9.1.3.6 *To manage activities which may cause adverse visual impacts in the general rural area.*⁴

14. I have also read Chapter 5 Site Amenity effects - in particular **Objective 5.1.2**⁵ which discusses avoiding adverse effects from the use of land on natural and physical resources, and **5.1.3.2** aimed at protecting natural character.
15. Under **Chapter 16** General Rules in the subdivision section of the Plan, the following is relevant for Rural 2 subdivision⁶. Council has reserved control over:
- 1) Shape.
 - 2) Access.
 - 3) The relationship of any new road with existing roads, adjoining land and any future roading requirements.
 - 4) Availability and provision of services.
 - 5) Location of building platforms.
 - 6) Location and effects of earthworks necessary to achieve (2), (4) and (5).
 - 7) Potential effects on rural character and amenity values.
 - 8) Potential effects on heritage protection and protected trees.
 - 9) The physical and legal protection of primary and secondary stormwater flow paths and indicative reserves.
 - 10) The extent and location of reserves.
 - 11) The appropriate setback of allotment boundaries from any dam, including the fullest extent of impounded water and associated spillway structures.
 - 12) Financial contributions.
 - 13) All matters referred to in Section 220 of the Act.
 - 14) Except as required by condition (f) of degree of compliance with any current Tasman District Council Engineering Standards.
 - 15) Effective stormwater management, including the use of Low Impact Design Solutions.
16. The Land Productivity classification of the soil (from AgNZ) has the soil classified into two different strips. The flat land closest to the river (the northern and north east land) is classed as "C" with the sloping elevated land (south and west) classified as "F" (see Figure 1 below). Land classified as "C" has some productive potential, whereas "F" is from my understanding more suited to its current use of Forestry. LandVision have written a land productivity report as part of the subdivision application. This report summarised that with the provision of the all weather bridge, pasture production would

⁴ Tasman Resource Management Plan pages 9/1-9/2

⁵ Tasman Resource Management Plan page 5/1

⁶ Tasman Resource Management Plan pages 16/79-16/70

improve due to farm management techniques, with the overall productivity yeild from the land improving⁷.

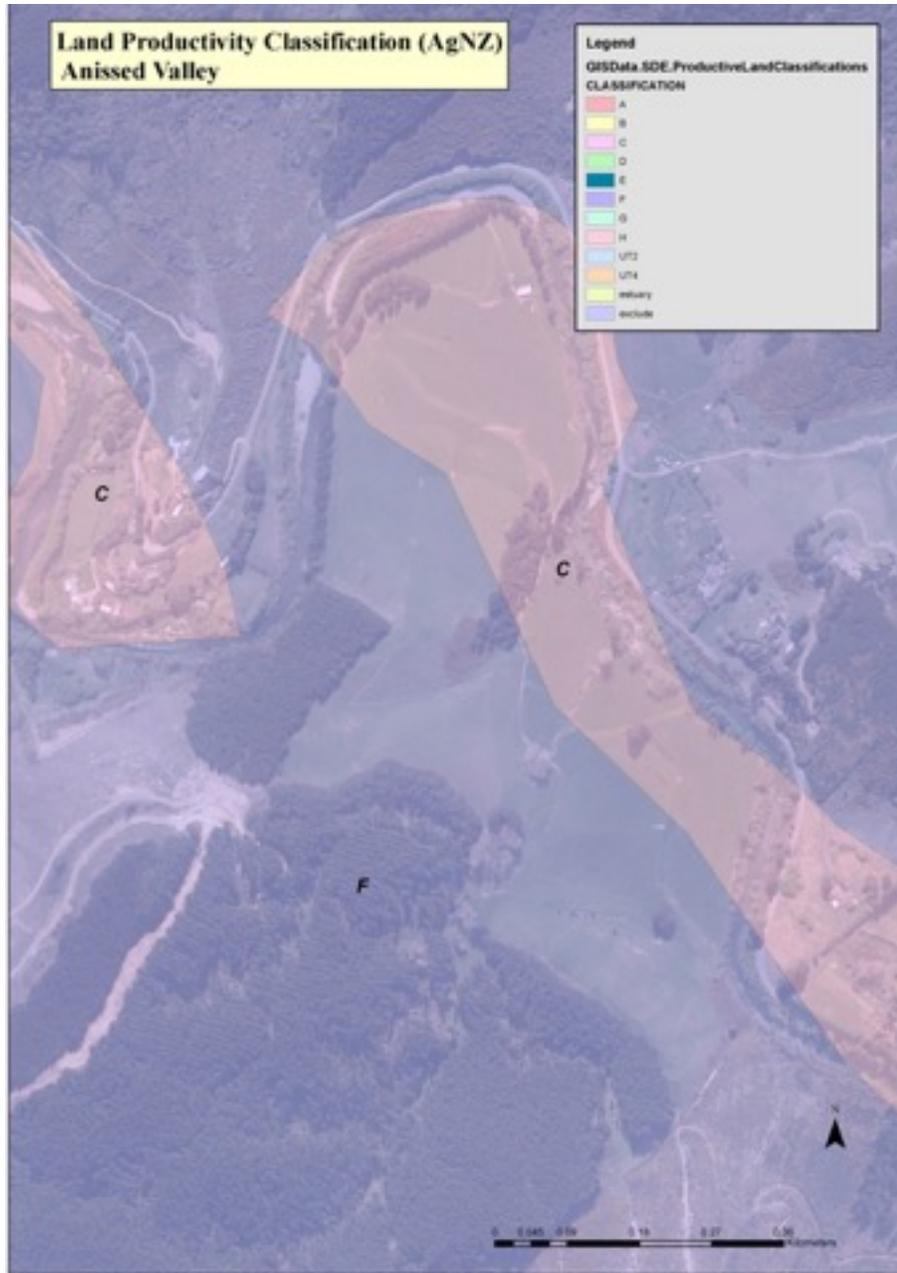


Figure 1: Land Productivity

⁷ LandVision Productivity Report page 2

17. Within the Plan under the principal reasons and explanation in Chapter 7⁸, the reason for the larger lot size for subdivision within Rural 2, is that the land is less productive and therefore a larger lot size is required to gain a living off the land. The demand for rural residential living in the Rural area is acknowledged in the Plan and Policies and Objectives have been included in the Plan to deal specifically with this issue in Chapter 7 under the heading: Provision of non soil based activities⁹. The issue being how to provide for non soil based activities without diminishing the rural productive use of the land.
18. **Objective 7.2.2** allows consideration of non productive use in Rural areas:
*Provision of opportunities to use rural land for activities other than soil-based production, including papakainga, tourist services, rural residential and rural industrial activities in restricted locations, while avoiding the loss of land of high productive value.*¹⁰
- With the supporting policies **Policy 7.2.3.1** and **Policy 7.2.3.2** included in the text on the previous pages.
19. I consider that the land is suited for the purpose of a small farm settlement including rural residential sized lots surrounded by a productive balance lot from a landscape character and visual effects perspective for the following reasons:
20. The rural productivity of the land has had a formative effect on the layout of the subdivision, with proposed lots and building platforms configured to achieve a balance lot which has retained much of its productive potential. The subdivision retains the productive landscape patterns with the flat land in the balance lot - with the exception of a terrace riser included in cluster 1-5. The sloping land of the balance lot retaining forestry/woodlot potential. The inclusion of a bridge is only made feasible through the proposed subdivision due to the inherent cost of this structure. The bridge increases the ability to use machinery and enables more ready transportation of either produce or stock. This in turn increases the potential yield and versatility of the productive block which has been kept as a large balance of land. The bridge increases the practicality of using of the slopes for forestry, as the wood can be transported from the site, and the potential to increase the productive yield of the flatter land. This is currently a stumbling block to realising the productive potential of the site. The loss of some of the land therefore should be considered in the context of the productive gains made possible through the provision of road access via a bridge.
21. The Road layout within the subdivision provides one access point to Aniseed Valley Road via a bridge (see subdivision plan). The road then separates to provide access to the two clusters, with Cluster 1 (proposed Lots 1-5) gaining a central access up a small gully to ensure limited visual effects, then forking to provide access to each lot. The proposed lots associated with Cluster 1 are all on elevated land that sit just above the flat pastoral floor. A steep terrace riser and a creek and paper road separate this cluster from Cluster

⁸ Tasman Resource Management Plan; page 7/4

⁹ Tasman Resource Management Plan; page 7/5

¹⁰ Tasman Resource Management Plan; 7.2.30 Provision for Non Soil Based Activities page 7/8

2 which is located along the base of a slope to the east. This terrace riser has an established woodlot on it, visually separating the two clusters.

22. The Road layout to Cluster 2 follows the base of the hillform on which Cluster one is located and then joins the path of the paper road. The access road to Cluster 2 follows the paper road then curls around the base of the slope of the large hill form further south, with the access running along the souther boundary of Lots 6-10, therefore creating an access of low visual effect. Each platform will have a private north facing amenity area in front of their building platform. Lots 6-10 are located along the base of the hill, with the productive flat land contained in the balance lot between their boundaries and the Roding River.
23. The idea of the farm settlement is bourne out of wanting to live sustainably within the land, with the land owners having grown up in the Valley. The large balance lot will provide the productive component, with rules and guidelines dictating the use of the land that is privately owned. The landscape plan shows how woodlots would be located on the steeper sloping land, with the flatter land more versatile in its potential for productive use. Stream management Plan has been written by Futureecology which demonstrates how the stream verges will be managed and maintained.
24. The surrounding pattern of development within the Valley (in the instances where there is a residence associated with the rural block) tends to fall below the anticipated lot size in the Rural 2 zone of 35 hectares. There are two main patterns - with lot sizes either well below the lot size (with an average of 2 hectare lot size); or still large but below the anticipated lot size (with an average of 20 hectares). This pattern is in part maintained by the proposed subdivision as the development maintains one large land block for productive purposes of over 29ha in area, and smaller rural residential clusters which are kept small yet are still rural in scale to enable rural lifestyle living. Through the subdivision there are opportunities to enhance the landscape character of the site through riparian ehancement. The stream is currently not fenced from stock and has a lack of riparian planting at present. This is a recommendation of this report, with a report from Futureecology setting out a planting plan and management regime for how this would be achieved.
25. As mentioned above, the proposed development will relate to the surrounding development pattern, through the retention of the balance Lot which is greater than 20ha in size. The two clusters (proposed Lots 1-5 and 6-10) are of a greater density than the smaller rural residential lots along the valley floor. The two proposed clusters have been grouped together and settled in to the landscape in locations recessed from the road, with the balance of open pastoral land forming a buffer between built form and the Aniseed Valley Road. Rural privacy, outlook and productivity are all achieved through the subdivision design, bolstered with proposed planting. The introduced landscape character will be of a rural aesthetic of high amenity, with lot sizes within the cluster averaging 4682m² and no smaller than 3780m². This maintains a rural character which will fit comfortably in to the receiving environment.

VISUAL EFFECTS

26. The location of the site and the winding narrow serpentine nature of the Aniseed Valley means that the visibility associated with the proposal will be restricted to the immediate

environment with a potential visual catchment of approximately 2km (along the Aniseed Valley Road). No neighbouring with a residential component shares a physical boundary with the site. Given the intervening vegetation along the riverside banks, visibility into the site from the road is restricted. I have taken a series of photographs largely from within the site to show context, with some photos along Aniseed Valley Road¹¹.

27. The Aniseed Valley Road is situated below the proposed building platforms which reduces visibility. The distance between the Road and building platforms varies, but at its closest point is approximately 110m between viewer and a future building, with proposed Lot 10 at the eastern end of the site closest to the Road. Intervening vegetation along the river verge restricts views into the site. This can be seen in the photos (taken in winter) with summer growth further restricting views in summer¹².
28. Neighbouring properties on the northern side of the Roding and the Aniseed Valley Road are separated by the River which has thick vegetation in the form of trees (Poplar, Willow and scrub) along the length of its banks. Views are not easily gained into the property unless the viewer is in a residence which is elevated from the valley floor. Of the residents that are elevated, there appear to be approximately six. I have included the address of these and their approximate distance from the proposed building location areas.
 - 613 Aniseed Valley Road - distance to closest building platform is approximately 240m.
 - 615 Aniseed Valley Road - distance to closest building platform is approximately 250m.
 - 677 Aniseed Valley Road - distance to closest building platform is approximately 1.1km.
 - 685 Aniseed Valley Road - distance to closest building platform is approximately 440m.
 - 739 Aniseed Valley Road - distance to closest building platform is approximately 450m.
29. All distances described above are indicative of a rural living distance between residences and therefore privacy is achieved for the existing Aniseed Valley Residences that may have views in to the subdivision. Some of the houses mentioned above do not face towards the site and all have amenity planting creating a private curtilage area around their houses. These will create an immediate foreground which will restrict views of the site. As mentioned earlier, views from lower elevations are not readily available due to intervening vegetation.
30. Architectural controls are proposed which will ensure compatibility of form and that they fit into the site and wider landscape context.

¹¹ See photographic attachment

¹² See photographic attachment

Vegetation

31. The site currently has a scattering of trees on the lower paddocks, some trees along the creek that divides the property, a woodlot on a east facing terrace riser and some shelterblocks along the Roding River (western and northern boundary). The dominant form of vegetation is pasture. The Canopy landscape concept plan focuses on some native planting along the creek verges, and amenity planting to integrate the proposed rural residential lots in to the site. The planting around the building platform will preform three purposes:
 - i. Provide privacy within the subdivision for new lot owners.
 - ii. Provide amenity within the subdivision.
 - iii. Integrate the anticipated houses in to the site to prevent any adverse visual effects.
32. The two areas most vunerable from external views are those when approaching the site from the west and from the east. Additional planting has been proposed in these two areas to ensure no adverse visual effects result. Currently there are shelterbelts which prevent views from the west along the western boundary. These will not be removed as they protect the lower land from erosion when the river is in flood.
33. Planting around the proposed building platforms provide integration screening which will be of mixed height and will consist of species suited to the environment. Some additional screen planting in the form of shelterbelts near the path of the river have been proposed to break up long views into the site. These will also aid in flood protection.
34. Futurecology have provided a planting plan and maintenance report for the proposed planting along the stream verges. This report has broken the stream into three planting and management areas, specifying weed eratication, revegetation species, and methods for best horticultural practice and maintenance of the areas¹³.

CONCLUSION

35. Consent is sought for the creation of an 10 Lot subdivision for the purposes of rural residential use within a balance of a larger productive blocks. The proposed subdivision layout introduces a rural residential lot size which is below that anticipated by the Rural 2 zone. Housing is introduced in two clusters which will not be prominent from public viewing points (being Aniseed Valley Road).
36. Proposed landscape planting will enhance the rural amenity and rural character. Enhanced public access across the bridge to access the Roding River esplanade strip is a public benefit that creates a new opportunity for the local community. The site has low to moderate visibility in terms of general views.
37. As discussed in the body of my report, individual building platforms are proposed to be mitigated through the landscape concept plan submitted with the building consent application. A stream/riparian enhancement plan should be implemented where the

¹³ See Futurecology Riparian Planting Plan Andrew and Jane Strange 2015

stock are fenced off from the stream and areas of the stream banks are planted in native riparian species. This should be used as the basis of a planting plan. This gives a simple plant palette which will integrate the development and create a sympathetic landscape pattern.

38. In my opinion this subdivision creates new living opportunities within the Aniseed Valley on a site which achieves good solar aspect which is hard to come by in the narrow confines of Aniseed Valley; with no adverse effects on landscape character or amenity.
39. The Farmsettlement principles emphasises sustainability and increased productive yield through intensive farming.
40. In terms of rural character, and appropriate level of openness, greenness and productive activity will be maintained¹⁴. A different rural amenity of high aesthetic is achieved through the subdivision layout. Design controls combined with the clustering and the retention of open productive rural space, separating built form from the Aniseed Valley Road and integrative planting create a cohesive subdivision design which is rural in appearance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. fencing of boundaries shall consist of post and wire or post and rail. No solid fences should be used.
2. Planting of riparian areas shall be consistent with that shown on the landscape concept plan.
3. A management plan shall be prepared as part of the private covenants of the subdivision.
4. The subdivision entrance from Aniseed Valley Road shall be kept rural in appearance. No lighting of the entranceway shall be introduced. Any formalisation of the entrance way that may occur in the future by the landowners will be kept minimal and consist of rural materials such as local stone and post and rail.
5. Lighting of access ways is seen as unnecessary in this situation. Any future lighting of entrances or entrances shall be subtle, with lights capped and downward facing to prevent light spill.
6. Exterior lighting around building platforms shall be capped and downward facing to prevent unnecessary light spill.
7. Colours of future residential buildings to be complimentary to the colours of the local landscape with a reflectance of no greater than 40% for the walls and 20% for the roof.
8. A residential building height control of 7m above natural ground level shall apply to proposed Lots 1-11.

¹⁴ refer Policy 7.4.3.3

9. All water and/or septic tanks shall be screened from public view with planting or built form.
10. A stream/riparian enhancement plan shall be submitted for approval by the Council and implemented. This will fence stock off from the stream and plant areas of the stream edges in native riparian species.
11. Lot 11 shall provide a landscape plan at the time of building consent. This landscape plan shall integrate the proposed building to ensure that the building is not noticeable from Aniseed Valley Road.
12. Earthworks for both the building platform and access road to Lot 11 shall be designed to marry in to the natural contours of the site as closely as possible to reduce the potential for adverse visual effects. The access route shall be designed by a suitably qualified engineer and shall follow the underlying topography, limiting effects on the ephemeral watercourses and stream. Excess fill shall not be pushed over on to the downward slope as this creates adverse visual effects. Any cuts shall be kept to a minimum where practical and reseeded in a local grass seed mix.
13. All power lines to be supplied in ground.

SIGNED:



Liz Gavin
Director: CANOPY
08 June 2015