

Natural Features and Landscapes

Issues

- Identification and protection of the Outstanding Natural Features and Landscapes (ONFLs) and Visual Amenity Landscapes (VALs) in the District Plan needs to be consistent with best practice, the CRPS criteria, the Canterbury Regional Landscape Study 2010 and the Timaru Landscape Study 2018.
- There are currently no specific rules for managing activities in the visual amenity landscape areas and the rules for outstanding landscape areas are dated.
- There is a need to update the identification of ONFL and VAL areas in the District Plan to ensure that they capture all areas of significant landscape values.

Operative District Plan Approach

The Operative District Plan identifies outstanding landscape areas and significant amenity landscapes on the planning maps. However, there are no specific outstanding natural features, areas of outstanding or high natural character or heritage landscapes currently identified in the District Plan.

The objective and policy framework for the management of outstanding natural landscapes and amenity landscapes seeks to:

- Identify, protect, and enhance outstanding landscape values of the District.
- Protect and enhance the natural character of the landscape from inappropriate subdivision and the adverse effects of any use or development of land.
- Avoid subdivision, use or development which has the potential to modify, mask or detract from important landscape areas, or mitigate or remedy adverse effects.
- Set out the management outcomes for various specific landscape areas.

The rules that manage activities in outstanding landscape areas are found in the Rural 1 and 5 zones only, and these manage a range of activities within outstanding landscape areas such as new walking tracks, fences, vehicle and stock access tracks, buildings, tree planting, woodlots and forestry. There is no rule approach that is specifically targeted towards managing effects on landscape values within significant amenity landscapes.

Proposed Plan Approach

The objective and policy framework is intended to provide clear direction on the necessity for the protection of ONFL as a matter of national importance and management of VALs to protect amenity values. The rules enable some activities that currently occur to continue without the need for resource consent, and to manage those activities that are likely to have adverse effects on the values of ONFL and VAL.

Changes

The policies seek to ensure the protection of the qualities of the ONFLs and maintenance of VALs, by managing activities in a comprehensive manner and by providing clear direction on when and where activities or effects should be avoided or managed.

- Permitted activities that recognise established activities such as farming and the need for some buildings associated with anticipated activities.
- Consent is required for activities such as the construction of walking and cycling tracks and roads and farm tracks, large scale buildings, plantation forestry, subdivision, and mining and quarrying that could affect the identified qualities of the ONF/L/VAL.
- A specific rule relating to farming intensification in ONL and ONF areas.

Summary of key rules

Permitted activities

- Farming related buildings, structures and irrigators, other than fences, and public amenity buildings subject to standards
- Earthworks subject to standards
- Network utilities subject to standards
- Fences subject to standards
- Tree planting subject to restrictions
- Farming with limitations on new areas of farming or increased intensity.

Controlled activities

- New walking or cycling tracks
- Plantation forestry in VAL.

Restricted discretionary activities

- Farming related buildings, structures and irrigators, other than fences, and public amenity buildings in the Rural Lifestyle zone within the Geraldine VAL
- Earthworks subject to standards
- Network utilities subject to standards
- Fences subject to standards
- Tree planting subject to restrictions.

Discretionary activities

- New roads and farm tracks
- Subdivision.

Non-complying activities

- Plantation forestry in ONFL
- Mining and quarrying.

Reasons

The Council is required to identify and protect and outstanding natural features and landscapes, from inappropriate use and development as a matter of national importance under the RMA (section 6b). The RMA also requires the maintenance and enhancement of amenity values and the quality of the environment (s7c and s7f). The provisions also ensure that the Plan is consistent with the RMA and Canterbury Regional Policy Statement. The provisions provide for the protection of landscape values from inappropriate use, subdivision and development by clearly identifying areas with values and appropriately managing activities.

What it Means in Practice

- The proposed policy approach and rules will be clearer and more directly focused upon managing effects on the qualities of the ONFLs and VALs
- Existing farming activities can continue without resource consent but farming intensification or spread will require resource consent in ONFLs
- Activities that may generate significant adverse effects on the values of the ONFLs will require resource consent
- The policy framework and rules will enable applications to be declined. This is likely to potentially limit some activities and development.

