



Kinloch Community Association

Regarding the Application by Seven Oaks Kinloch Limited for land use consent (RM240388), subdivision consent (RM240389) and variation to subdivision consent (RM200118B)

Comments on the Peer Review by Ms Julia Wick provided to Lousie Woods, Taupo District Council on 8 October 2025

Ron McPhail, Kinloch Community Association
Tuesday 14 October 2025



Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the independent landscape and visual assessment undertaken by Julia Wick, as a Senior Landscape Architect with Boffa Miskell Ltd. Our comments on this peer review of the landscape and visual assessment (LVA) prepared by Mansergh Graham Landscape Architects are set out below.

Description of the Proposal

Julia Wick has stated that:

‘While not addressed in the applicant’s original assessment, it is understood that:

- Lighting will be consistent with the existing Seven Oaks subdivision, with restrictions near reserves and stormwater areas.
- Building materials will use darker hues with low reflectivity, and road corridors and stormwater areas will be planted.’

These issues were initially addressed in the ‘Recommended Consent Conditions’ as an appendix to Louise Wood’s Section 42A report provided at the commencement of the hearing; and which Julia Wick said she had reviewed. Since then, revised conditions of consent have been proposed by the applicant, with amended versions, track changes and new numbering. Julia Wick went on to recommend in her Conclusion that: “It would be good to update these conditions to ensure they reference the latest landscape planting plans and recommendations around lighting.”

We agree that an updated set of conditions should be prepared.

We have found the whole application process has been piecemeal, with multiple requests from council for further information, and ad-hoc provision of key details for the proposed subdivision and associated works. As submitters, this has been very confusing, highly time consuming, and raises the question of whether council should ever have accepted this second version of the development proposal in the first place – given how it was obviously inadequate on lodgement. For example, lighting details were initially overlooked, and planting plans have been provided in successive details, yet still not complete. There are also different versions of the conditions proposed, with renumbering and track changes shown – which adds to the complicated picture we are faced with here.

It is also surprising that Julia Wick, as a professional expert witness did not undertake a specific site visit for this ‘independent’ peer review. Further, Julia Wick did not even visit the new northern viewpoint, when it was the submitters that identified this gap in the original LVA. This desk-top review simply concurs with what the original LVA states.

We would have expected much more from a professional expert peer review of this LVA under the circumstances. We have explored commissioning an independent review by a



professional Landscape Architect of all the landscape and visual assessment details provided to date; but would've needed additional time and funding to complete this exercise adequately, and to meet the timeframe set out under Minute 3.

Effects on Landscape Character

We disagree with Julia Wick's comment that 'the western density transition ends abruptly, creating an imbalance and reducing overall village legibility from a landscape perspective, in contrast to the more consistent alignment with cadastral boundaries in central and eastern Kinloch.' There is no logical reason to state that the zone should align with the cadastral boundaries. This arbitrary line for residential zoning disregards the communities' aspirations through the KCSP/District Plan as to where development will occur and at what densities. If the area is developed as residential, visually it would be out of balance with Locheagles on the eastern side of Kinloch which has a large area of planted reserve mitigating the residential development. A transition from the Residential Zone to Low Density Zone will still be in place if the subdivision does not proceed. Also the density of housing on the Seven Oaks subdivision (Stages 1 to 8) at 136 lots is actually higher than the density on Locheagles on the eastern side at 125 lots so to say that increasing density on the western side balances the land use is not correct.

On 1st May 2024 Louise Wood, Senior Resource Consents Manager wrote to Sarah Hunt, Cheal Consultants Ltd regarding the processing of the first Seven Oaks Resource Consent Application for 100 lots, that was subsequently withdrawn. She stated under the heading Density/Character and Amenity that 'the vast majority of submissions raised concerns about the proposal being a significant deviation from the Kinloch Community Structure Plan (KCSP) and District Plan in terms of the density of development proposed, and the concerns regarding the adverse effects on Kinloch's unique character and amenity, and its village 'feel'.

She continued with the very significant comment "As it stands, following an initial assessment of the proposal and taking into account the submissions, it is likely that the recommendation of the section 42A report will be to decline the application. She said this is based on: The additional density of lots proposed is significant at 84 more lots than specified within the Kinloch Residential and Low Density zones. 17 of those lots are well below the minimum and average lot sizes for the Kinloch residential zone (800 sqm to 100 sqm). The scheme plan layout does not reflect the radial density layout to decreasing density to the north as expressed by the KCSP and District Plan Kinloch subdivision rules. Inconsistency with the District Plan objectives and policies... The resulting adverse effects on character and amenity will likely be more than minor, to significant '. So, what has changed in the new proposal? Very little. The number of lots has only been reduced by 17 and the minimum lot size at 800 sqm and average lot size at 1284 sqm is well below the minimum and average lot size of 1ha and 1.5ha for the Kinloch Low Density Zone.

There are other significant departures from what the Taupo District Plan requires in the Low Density Residential Zone, including a greater coverage of 30% (exceeding the limit by an additional 25%), and the proposed building setbacks of 3m (front boundary) and 1.5m (other



boundaries) are also non-compliant, encroaching into the required 10m setback by 7m and 8.5m respectively, and garages encroaching by 5m! There are also encroachments into the recommended ecological buffer area with buildings closer to the reserve boundaries and recognized Significant Natural Areas (SNAs) than required.

Hence, we find it surprising that Julia Wick's peer review did not turn greater attention in this revised (second) proposal to increased mitigation measures and updated conditions to control amenity, aesthetics and visual impacts – particularly being aware of these significant changes to the intensity of development remaining after the first 100 lot subdivision proposal was withdrawn. One would've thought that Julia Wick would have focused on such aspects recognising that her first peer review of the 100 lot proposal had overlooked the key issues raised by Council's planner back then – i.e. significant deviations from the District Plan and the concerns regarding the adverse effects on Kinloch's unique character and amenity, and its village 'feel'.

Visual Effects

The peer review states that the visual effects for the viewpoint/ viewing audiences will be very low. Julia Wick has only considered one viewpoint (12) on Lochridge Estate. With allowed building coverage of up to 30% and no plot ratio this subdivision could result in high density development which far exceeds the visual landscape allowed for in the Kinloch Community Structure Plan/District Plan/2050 Growth Management Strategy for this low density residential zone. Even with building height restrictions applying to the lots adjoining Okaia Stream Scenic and Otaketake Stream Scenic Reserves, there will still be a visual dominance of the high density urban built form – especially without further height and plot ratio controls on all the other buildings.

The different versions of the draft conditions indicate planting within the road reserve, and for habitat links and stormwater reserve areas. The LVA peer review should have required additional planting to soften the high intensity built form proposed – particularly within and around the development area boundaries, rather than rely on DOC owned reserve land. A buffer area of indigenous planting should be required at the interface with residential development and then protected with consent notices on the titles. These conditions should also have required further controls on lighting under the circumstances, with better use of low bollards and downlighting, instead of tall lamp posts or lighting fixed to high buildings, especially with reduced setbacks near the DOC Reserves.

Julia Wick did highlight the lack of assessment for vegetation removal, earthworks and the significant cut and fill of 1.5m – a significant change to the existing environment. Additional planting, height controls on built environment, and ecological buffer areas of indigenous plant species would help mitigate such adverse effects on the environment. Julia Wick has provided further comment on the need for a detailed planting plan, with species selection and planting sizes - along with the inclusion of maintenance, monitoring, and implementation notes, which are all considered appropriate to support the successful establishment of the planting.



Therefore, the current draft conditions need to be updated to address visual planting / softening of built form, and the ecological buffer adjoining the reserves (SNAs 152 and 170), and improved lighting controls. This would be in line with the recommendation for updated conditions from Julia Wick.

Conclusion

This non-complying development will significantly change the density pattern anticipated under the Taupo District Plan for the Low Density Residential Zone; and this is totally contrary to the District Plan objectives, policies, and rule provisions in that zone.

However, the Reporting Officer has recommended this be granted consent – which will undermine all public confidence in the District Plan being upheld by council, and with a significant adverse effect on the integrity of the District Plan. This is effectively approving a very different intensity of development by way of a non-complying resource consent; which was never envisaged when the District Plan provisions were approved through a consultative RMA plan change process.

The correct procedure for any plan changes is a well-informed process under the RMA where the affected parties, tangata whenua and local community are fully engaged in any proposed rezoning approaches under the District Plan. It is noted that this has been acknowledged by the Environment Court when similar such matters have been appealed.

We disagree with Julia Wick's assessment in her peer review of the LVA that the effects of the proposal are less than minor. Julia Wick should have addressed the need for further mitigation measures, increased screen planting and additional enhancements given the significant deviation from Low Density Residential Zone rules for setbacks, plot ratio, building height controls, building coverage, earthworks, and lot size / density.

Accordingly, an updated set of conditions is required to demonstrate how further mitigation measures and increased screen / buffer planting can be established.

Further, when considering the numerous breaches of District Plan rules, the non-complying status, and being contrary to the specific objectives and policies for density in this Low Density Residential Zone, this proposal should be amended to provide a reduced number of lots in greater compliance with density requirements, in addition to the improved landscape and lighting provisions.

Alternatively, the Seven Oaks Kinloch Ltd application, if unchanged, should be withdrawn or declined consent.