



Memorandum

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Attention: Louise Wood, Senior Resource Consents Planner - Kaiwhakamahere Whakaaetanga Rawa Taiao

Company: Taupō District Council

Date: 8 October 2025

From: Julia Wick, Senior Principal Landscape Architect, Boffa Miskell Ltd.

Subject: Landscape Peer Review of Resource Consent Application by Seven Oaks Kinloch Limited for the proposed subdivision and land use consent – reference RM240388-389 & RM200118C.

Introduction and Overview

This report provides a peer review of the landscape components of the resource consent and land use consent applications by Seven Oaks Limited. The application seeks to subdivide land to create 83 residential lots, four reserves, and seven road lots across six stages. The proposal also includes earthworks cut and fill to construct roads and the extension of water and wastewater infrastructure to service the development. Future development on the residential lots is to exceed the provisions relating to combined coverage, plot ratio, setbacks, and earthworks.

The application relates to the following properties Otaketake Drive, Kinloch (Lot 202 DP 606472), 25 Kahikatea Drive, Kinloch (Lot 2 DP 514174) and 27 Kahikatea Drive, Kinloch (Lot 1 DP 514174). These properties are collectively referred to as “*the site*” throughout this peer review.

In January 2024, I was engaged by Taupō District Council (TDC) to undertake a peer review of the Landscape and Visual Assessment Report (“the LVA” or “the assessment”) prepared by Mansergh Graham Landscape Architects in 2022 for the Seven Oaks Subdivision at Kinloch. This original application was later withdrawn, and a revised proposal was lodged in November 2024. TDC determined that a peer review of the LVA was not required for the revised application. Since then, the proposal has been amended, the publicly notified, submissions received, and a hearing was held in August 2025.

For clarity, I was not involved in the preparation of evidence or appearance at the hearing, nor in any further peer review undertaken following my earlier review in January 2024.

The purpose of this current review is to assess the potential landscape and visual effects of the proposal, as requested by the Independent Commissioner (refer Minute [3]). Specifically, this review provides an independent peer review of the landscape and visual assessment submitted with the application, including the supplementary assessment prepared from a viewpoint to the north of the site.

While this report does not respond to individual submitters’ concerns, I note for completeness that I have read and considered the submissions received through the hearing process to provide context. The majority of submissions expressed concern that the proposal represents a significant departure from the Kinloch Community Structure Plan (KCSP) and the District Plan, particularly in relation to the proposed development density and the potential adverse effects on Kinloch’s distinctive character, amenity, and village ‘feel’.

The following documents have been reviewed as part of this peer review:

Application Documents:

- Appendix 4: *Landscape character Assessment*, prepared by Mansergh Graham Landscape Architects, dated August 2024.

Council Planners Section 42A Report

- *Section 42A Planning Report*, Prepared by Louise Wood, Senior Resource Consents Planner, Taupō District Council, for the hearing held, 27 – 28 August 2025
- Appendix A - *Scheme Plans [Subdivision, Earthworks, Reserves, Building Setbacks]*.
- Appendix B - *Summary of Submissions*
- Appendix C - *Kinloch Background & KCSP*
- Appendix D - *Kinloch Community Structure Plan Density Areas - Map*
- Appendix E - *Kinloch Subdivision Areas Map*
- Appendix I - *Recommended Conditions*
- Appendix J - *Table of Development Controls*

Applicant Evidence

- *Statement of evidence* Michael Graham, Landscape Architect for Seven Oaks Kinloch Limited, dated 12 August 2025

Submitter Evidence (as it relates to Landscape and visual matters)

- Bruce Campbell
- Maree Joselyn Drury - Te Kowhai Ridge Residents Society
- Kinloch Community Association
- Laurie Burdett

Information Presented at hearing

- *Kinloch Topography Map*, prepared by Mansergh Graham, dated August 2025

Other Material (Minute 2)

- *Supplementary Evidence* of Michael Graham, Landscape Architect for Seven Oaks Kinloch Limited, dated 11 September 2025
- *Submission on the Supplementary Landscape Visual Assessment*, Kinloch Community Association dated 15 September 2025
- *Submission on the Supplementary Landscape Visual Assessment*, Bruce Campbell, dated 20 September 2025
- *Supplement to Seven Oaks Kinloch Ltd Resource Consent Application*, Te Kowhai Ridge Residents Society

This review addresses the following matters

- a) A review of the landscape and visual assessment submitted with the application (“*the assessment*”), including the supplementary assessment prepared from viewpoints to the north of the site, including identifying any gaps and providing comments on the methodology;
- b) The findings of the Assessment of Effects conclusions; and
- c) Any key landscape recommendations, including amendments to the draft conditions.

Summary of Review of the Assessment (including Methodology)

I have a sound understanding of the Kinloch and wider Taupō area, having undertaken multiple landscape and visual peer reviews and assessments within the district. I have not undertaken a site visit for this review, although I last visited Kinloch/Taupō in April 2025 and remain familiar with the area and its ongoing development. I have not visited the new northern viewpoint location and have therefore relied on applicant and submitter information supported by desktop analysis.

A methodological flowchart is provided in Appendix 1 of the Assessment. The methodology aligns with Te Tangi a te Manu – Aotearoa Landscape Assessment Guidelines (2021) and is considered appropriate for the context, scale, and nature of the proposal. The report includes a comparison between the assessed levels of effect and their RMA equivalents (less than minor, minor, and more than minor) ¹ and aligns with the below extract from Te Tangi a te Manu.



Figure 1: 7-point scale as it relates to RMA terminology, refer Te Tangi a te Manu Page 151

Attachment Nine of the Assessment provides the rating system used, based on the seven-point scale, along with descriptions corresponding to each rating. I note that under this rating, a “very low” effects rating is described as having a “*very low level of effect on the character or key attributes of the receiving environment and/or the vista within which it is seen; and/or a very low level of effect on the perceived amenity derived from it.*” This differs slightly from the Boffa Miskell rating scale, where we define “very low” as a “*negligible loss of or modification to key elements, features, or characteristics of the baseline, i.e., approximating a ‘no change’ situation, with negligible change in views.*” I acknowledge this difference and confirm that, for the purposes of this peer review, I have adopted the descriptions as provided in Attachment Nine of the Assessment to ensure clarity and consistency.

The applicant’s assessment is well-structured and supported by maps, GIS analysis, and photographs. Eleven viewpoints were used, representing a range of viewing audiences and distances, and include visual simulations illustrating the indicative bulk and massing of the proposed development. Viewpoint data and methodologies are clearly identified and adhere to NZILA best practice².

¹ This 7-point effects scale is also reproduced in Attachment 9 of the Assessment

² Best Practice Guide Visual Simulations BPG 10.2, NZILA Education Foundation, 2010

The introductory and contextual sections (pages 4–12) provide a detailed description of the wider and local landscape, covering the physical, perceptual, and associative attributes of the Kinloch environment. In summary, the assessment identifies the following key points:

Wider Context

- Site lies within Kinloch on the northern shore of Lake Taupō, between Te Kauwae and Whakaroa peninsulas.
- Dominated by Lake Taupō, volcanic landforms of the Taupō Caldera, and distant views to Mt Ruapehu.
- Landscape shaped by past volcanic activity, erosion, and human modification (forestry, farming, urbanisation).

Land Use and Settlement

- Surrounding area includes pastoral land, production forestry, and remnant native vegetation.
- Kinloch village evolved from a holiday settlement to a residential community with a marina and golf course.
- The Kinloch Community Structure Plan (KCSP), identifies high and medium-density zones and future connectivity through the site.

Perceptual Qualities

- Key visual features: Lake Taupō, enclosing topography, rural landscape, and distant volcanic backdrop.
- Amenity influenced by a mix of urban nodes, reserves, pastoral farmland, and forestry.

Associative Values

- Area holds strong Māori cultural significance (Ngāti Tūwharetoa rohe).
- Nearby Outstanding Natural Landscapes (OLAs) and Significant Natural Areas (SNAs) protect key landscape features.
- Supports valued recreation and scenic experiences (walking, cycling, water-based activities).

Overall Character and Value

- Wider landscape: moderate to high amenity value, defined by natural and scenic qualities.
- Application site: modified and unremarkable but contributes to the visual context of the surrounding valued landscape.

Existing Site – (refer Photographs)

- Size and Location: 15.5 ha of elevated land west of Okaia Stream Scenic Reserve, forming an extension of the Seven Oaks Development within the KCSP area and zoned residential under the TDP.
- Boundaries: East – Okaia Stream Scenic Reserve (SNA 170) South – Existing Seven Oaks stages West – Otaketake Stream Scenic Reserve (SNA 152) North – Open pastoral terrain extending toward Whangamata Road

- Setting: Enclosed by SNAs, separated from Kinloch village, and approximately 100 m from the Outstanding Landscape Area (OLA 28).
- Topography & Cover: Undulating, north–south slope; predominantly pasture with a farmhouse, tracks, fences, and a rock outcrop.
- Views: Rounded ridgeline with expansive southward views to Lake Taupō, Locheagle Rise, and Whakaroa Point; screened from lower elevations by reserve vegetation.

Description of the Proposal

The site is zoned Low Density Residential (LDRZ) and General Residential (GRZ – DEV1 Kinloch) under the Operative District Plan and requires consent as a non-complying activity due to proposed lot sizes within the LDRZ.

The proposal is described (pages 13–14). Planting is shown indicatively, with assumptions made regarding stormwater and amenity planting, and no further mitigation planting recommended. Height restrictions apply to lots adjoining the Okaia and Taketake Reserves, and within Stage 12 (approximately 50 buildings).

While not addressed in the applicant's 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.

It would have been useful for the assessment to include a description of the existing lighting environment within the Kinloch area, together with further detail on the proposed lighting for this application and any associated adverse amenity or visual effects on the surrounding environment. A subsequent brief assessment of lighting was provided in the evidence-in-chief of Mr Graham, who identified that the same standard of road lighting will be applied as in the earlier stages of the Seven Oaks subdivision. Conditions 34(d) and (e) address detailed outdoor lighting matters, particularly in relation to setbacks from the scenic reserve. The assessment concluded that any additional lighting from residential dwellings within this development would appear as part of the broader night-time lighting of Kinloch, maintaining a similar level of visual coherence with the existing night lighting pattern of the village. I agree with this assessment.

Review of the Assessment of Effects

The Assessment of Effects is appropriately broken down to consider the potential landscape character, natural character and visual (amenity) effects of the Project; addressed in turn below.

Effects on Landscape Character

An assessment of landscape effects is provided in Paragraphs 49–53 of the report, with which I broadly agree. The assessment identifies that Kinloch's urban form is evolving, with smaller lots near the lake transitioning to larger lots further inland. The Kinloch Community Structure Plan (KCSP) sets anticipated densities and guides growth, but the western density transition ends abruptly, creating an imbalance and reducing overall village legibility from a landscape character perspective, in contrast to the more consistent alignment with cadastral boundaries in central and eastern Kinloch. Overall, the assessment concludes that landscape effects are very low on the wider landscape and very low positive on the landscape values surrounding the site. Noting that the increased density is largely contained within the ridgeline and reserve planting, visible only from distant elevated viewpoints, and mitigated by larger peripheral lots, stricter height controls, and improved transition alignment.

Importantly the site is not located within any identified Outstanding Natural Features or Landscapes (ONFs/Ls) or areas of high natural character. It also does not contain any natural wetlands, lakes, or rivers.

One gap in the assessment is that it doesn't appear to consider the physical landscape in detail, such as vegetation removal or earthworks, which can alter the site's character or value—typically a component of a comprehensive landscape and visual effects assessment. The proposed earthworks involve cut and fill up to 1.5 m, with setbacks from the DoC boundary. While these changes are necessary for street network establishment and urban development, they will slightly diminish the site's rolling character, although key high points and the general north–south topography will be preserved. Vegetation retention on site is not anticipated, though the land is currently pasture and not subject to any SNA overlay or protected vegetation.

While I broadly agree with the assessment's findings, in my view the combination of earthworks, vegetation removal, and slight increased built density—although visually balanced and primarily visible at a distance—overall I agree that landscape effects will be very low³.

Planting

At the time the LVA Assessment was prepared, only an initial overview planting scheme had been developed based on an indicative layout, outlining proposed street tree species and general planting areas. Since then, a more detailed set of planting plans has been prepared by the applicant team, covering streetscape, amenity, and stormwater reserve planting. I have reviewed these plans and consider them appropriate, particularly with regard to the use of indigenous species within the stormwater reserves and amenity planting throughout the subdivision. The planting design will assist in integrating the development into its surrounding context. The proposed species selection and planting sizes (1.5–2 m at the time of planting), along with the inclusion of maintenance, monitoring, and implementation notes, are all considered appropriate to support the successful establishment of the planting.

Effects on Natural Character

The assessment concludes that as the development does not encroach upon the Lake Taupo Outstanding Landscape Area or its margins, nor on SNA 152 (Otaketake Stream Scenic Reserve) or SNA 170 (Okiaia Stream Scenic Reserve), the key attributes of these areas remain unaffected. The proposal is considered to have a very low positive effect on the perceptual natural character of the stream reserves, with the contrast provided by the adjacent residential development subtly enhancing the sense of naturalness, and it has no adverse effect on Lake Taupo. I agree with this assessment.

Visual Amenity / Visual Effects

An assessment of visual amenity effects is provided on pages 17–22 of the report, supported by a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) analysis, site photographs, and visual simulations illustrating the proposed development's bulk and location. The ZTV analysis is a useful tool but should be interpreted cautiously, as it represents a theoretical worst-case visibility scenario rather than actual "real world" views. While it accounts for surrounding vegetation, topography, and existing structures, it does not include proposed on-site planting and may be misleading in areas with raised, sparse, or deciduous vegetation, particularly in winter. For a more accurate assessment, ZTV results should be considered alongside a "bare earth" analysis.

It is noted the assessment includes a section on Visual Absorption Capability (VAC). VAC is a traditional tool used to assess a landscape's ability to accommodate development without significant adverse visual effects, considering factors such as topography, vegetation, and existing built form. While VAC can provide useful context, modern landscape and visual assessments focus more on landscape character, visual amenity, and specific viewpoint analysis rather than relying solely on VAC ratings. In this assessment, VAC has been considered as a supporting concept, but conclusions are primarily based on detailed visual analysis, photomontages, and mitigation measures, providing a more robust and site-specific evaluation of effects.

The simulations which support the assessment are useful to indicate an overall sense of height / bulk and location of the proposal.

³ When adopting the descriptions for the rating scales as set out in Attachment Nine: Landscape And Visual Amenity Effect – Rating System

I broadly agree with the description of potential visibility. It is noted that the visual effects to the north of the site were not initially considered in the assessment. This issue was raised in submissions and during the hearing process (refer Commissioner Minute 2), with additional analysis and photomontages provided by Mr Graham.

The following tables provide a review of the assessment of effects from public and private vantage points respectively. Comments are provided where relevant or where there is a difference of professional opinion on levels of effect.

Location	Viewpoints	Assessment	Review
Proximity View Locations	VL2 – VL6	Very Low	Very Low
Intermediate View Locations	VL7 and VL8	Very Low	Very Low
Distant View Locations	VL9 – VL 11	Very Low	Very Low

Viewpoint 12

The assessment notes that View Location 12, located 1.6 km north of the site, captures undulating terrain, sections of the Lochridge and Seven Oaks Terraces developments, and distant reserve vegetation framing Whangamata Bay. The proposed development sits among previously consented subdivisions and is likely to be perceived as a continuation of existing residential areas rather than altering the skyline. Variations in lot spacing, layout, and foreground dwellings help obscure perceived density, while street planting and diverse building forms further reduce visual impact. From this viewpoint, the assessment states that the development integrates well with its surroundings, with adverse effects on visual and amenity values assessed as very low and that given the planned shift to residential use and the presence of existing development, the visual effects are considered acceptable.

Overall I agree with these findings that visual effects for the viewpoint / viewing audiences will be very low⁴.

Visual Effects Summary

Taking into account the additional information received through the hearing process, a comprehensive assessment of visual effects has been provided, covering both nearby and more distant views, supported by photographs and photomontages. The site is zoned for residential activity (Kinloch Low Density), and the effects of the proposed development above this baseline have been considered. Reasonable assumptions regarding building height, form, and location have been made at this stage. Overall, adverse visual and amenity effects are rated very low, varying with distance, and the overall impact on the existing environment is considered less than minor. I concur with this assessment⁵, noting the anticipated shift in the landscape's built character, the development's alignment with the broader Kinloch area, the internal placement of higher-density zones which limits visibility, and mitigation provided through the stormwater reserve and strategic sleeving of surrounding development and built form.

Conclusion

The Landscape and Visual assessment appropriately addresses the relevant statutory provisions and provides a thorough and comprehensive evaluation of effects on both the immediate site and the wider environment.

I generally agree with the findings and conclusions of the assessment, including the additional information provided, with only minor, non-material differences of opinion regarding levels of effect on certain landscape

⁴ When adopting the descriptions for the rating scales as set out in Attachment Nine: Landscape And Visual Amenity Effect – Rating System

⁵ Ibid

character matters. The review has not identified any significant information gaps or areas that require further assessment, noting the supplementary information on lighting presented in the evidence in chief and the additional analysis from the northern viewpoint (VL12).

The conclusions of the assessment are consistent with the analysis undertaken, and I am satisfied that the landscape and visual effects of the proposal are less than minor. The assessment and application also include a series of draft conditions which, if implemented, would provide additional certainty regarding landscape effects and further support integration of the development into the surrounding environment. It would be good to update these conditions to ensure they reference the latest landscape planting plans and recommendations around lighting.

I trust this technical review provides sufficient information to inform your planning recommendation report. Please advise if any further clarification is required.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julia Wick', with a stylized, flowing script.

Julia Wick

Senior Landscape Architect

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