

KLONDYKE WATER STORAGE FACILITY APPLICATION

SUMMARY STATEMENT: STEPHEN BROWN (LANDSCAPE)

April 2018

1. My evidence addresses the landscape, natural character and amenity effects of the proposed Klondyke water storage scheme, including those effects pertaining to:
 - a water storage facility next to Montalto Road;
 - an emergency outflow from the storage facility to the Rangitata River;
 - a white water, recreation course, also linked to the storage facility;
 - a new fish screen and by-pass to be located upstream from the existing RDR Canal 'sand trap';
 - modifications to that canal system to cater for increased water flows to, and connection with, the storage facility;
 - water abstraction from the Rangitata River; and
 - increased water abstraction from the Rangitata River.
2. In particular, my evidence:
 - Analyses the character of the landscape which frames the proposed Klondyke water storage site;
 - Explores the values of different parts of this landscape – with a particular focus on Outstanding Natural Landscapes (ONLs) near the application sites, Peel Forest Scenic Reserve and other areas of elevated sensitivity;
 - Identifies the receiving environments and audiences exposed to the proposal;
 - Evaluates the effects of the application on different sectors and audiences;
 - Sets out a series of key findings arising from my detailed analysis of the application;
 - Analyses the proposal's implications in relation to relevant landscape, amenity and natural character provisions; and
 - Outlines my conclusions about the overall acceptability of the proposal.
3. I don't intend to repeat what is already stated in my evidence, but rather, will focus on some of my key findings.

4. In looking first of all at the landscape which surrounds and frames the Klondyke Pond site, it is clear that the Rangitata River is both an important feature in its own right and major dividing line – between the alpine climes of Peel Forest Scenic Reserve intermixed with a transplanted colonial European landscape focused on Mt Peel Station, one side of the river, and the geometric grid of shelterbelt lined, paddocks at the edge of the Canterbury Plains, that defines the other side. The river corridor, extending up to its gorge and the margins of the Tara Hāoa Range, also marks the point of division between a series of landscapes that are generally accepted as being more natural and evocative of significant aesthetic appeal – reflected in the concentration of ONLs generally west of the Rangitata River's corridor and around its gorge – versus those that are more reflective of the rural production, 'working landscape' values that predominate across the Canterbury Plains.
5. Although the Klondyke storage facility site lies within the latter, there are few places that offer a better overview of this interplay and dichotomy than the tracks across Little Mt Peel's more elevated ridges and slopes. In addition, the proposed changes to the existing RDR canal and development of a new fish filter also remain on the more 'productive' and modified side of the Rangitata River, but also result in key components of the Klondyke project being located closer to the Rangitata Gorge and the main river fairway.
6. I have considered these factors, among others, and have ultimately determined that the scheme's effects are acceptable in terms of their landscape, natural character and amenity effects. In my opinion, these findings have been heavily influenced by the following factors:
 - the storage facility's profile, which would effectively mirror the 15-30m river banks and terrace 'steps' that enclose various parts of the existing river fairway;
 - the facility's physical separation from most nearby residential properties – with more than 350m separating its embankments from the Doyle residence and another 150m plus to the workers' houses next to Ealing Montalto Road.
 - the manner in which the existing landscape is already subject to a sequence of openings and enclosure – related to the way in which pine shelterbelts and open paddocks line key roads, such as Ealing Montalto Road: the pond embankments would reinforce this pattern for those travelling past it;

- the storage facility's location within part of the working landscape at the edge of the Canterbury Plains – both in relation to close-up views from Ealing Montalto and Moorhouse Roads, as well as over longer range, such as from the high tracks on Little Mt Peel;
 - the way in which the existing river bank and pines along it would screen most of the proposed storage facility when looking towards it from the river fairway and Rangitata Gorge Road;
 - the potential for the storage facility to open up new views towards Peel Forest Park and Little Mount Peel from near Moorhouse Road, in conjunction with the removal of existing pine shelterbelts;
 - an absence of any characteristics that would signal, or be noticeably associated with, the proposed water abstraction; and
 - the location of the proposed fish filter within part of the Rangitata River's 'curtelage' that is already enclosed by a steep (western) river bank and pines, a swathe of broom in its more immediate vicinity backed by farm paddocks, shelterbelts, production forestry and river terraces.
7. In addition, the new shelterbelts proposed would break up the profile of the storage facility as they start to mature. In particular, they would start to soften the profile of the facility's embankments and screen them from adjoining parts of Ealing Montalto Road. However, they have also been located so as to retain views towards the Mt Peel and Little Mt Peel for those looking down the axis of Moorhouse Road.
8. Even so, I recognise that embankments may well appear incongruous and artificial initially. However, this will change as grass cover and the marginal planting proposed starts to mature. In relation views from Little Mt Peel, this incongruity will be more apparent and enduring – with the reflective surface of the facility's water area inevitably drawing attention. Yet, the storage facility and its 'lake' will also remain anchored within that part of the landscape exposed to such vantage points that is already marked by the checkerboard of rural production across the Canterbury Plains.
9. In addition, I have considered the potential effects of a 'reduced pond option'. In my assessment, such an option would have a beneficial impact in relation to views down the axis of Moorhouse Road and would slightly reduce the extent of embankments

running next to Ealing Montalto Road. On the other hand, it would not appreciably alter, or reduce, the effects associated with the proposal in relation to the other viewpoints – such as those from the Peel Forest side of the Rangitata River or from Little Mt Peel.

10. In response to the Council Officers Report, I also comment in my statement that I agree construction activity could be an issue for neighbouring farm owners and occupants. In particular, I accept that it might be desirable to shift Construction Depot #2 closer to the Rangitata River bank – if that is possible – and I also agree with Ms Pfluger that it may be desirable to extend part of the proposed shelterbelt north of Moorhouse Road so that it screens more of the proposed pond embankments from the Doyle residence. Despite this, Ms Pfluger and I are in general agreement about:

- the overall level of effect that would be generated by the Klondyke project in respect of landscape and natural character effects;
- the limited impact that the project would have on the ONL values of the Rangitata River, together with Peel Forest Park Scenic Reserve and the Mt Peel Waikari Hills Conservation Area; and
- the overall acceptability of the Klondyke proposal.

11. On the basis of these considerations – also taking into account the proposed landscape conditions and specifications described in my statement, which address proposed mitigation – it is my assessment that the proposal is acceptable in terms of its landscape, natural character and amenity effects.

Stephen Brown

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