

Before the Independent Hearing Panel
appointed by Environment Southland and
Gore District Council

Under the Resource Management Act 1991

In the matter of an application by Gore District Council for resource consent to
establish the Longford Bridge across the Maitara River

Statement of evidence of Michael Anthony Pentecost

2 December 2020

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**anderson
lloyd.**

Introduction

- 1 My full name is Michael Anthony Pentecost.
- 2 I am a Registered Landscape Architect with over 16 years' experience in all areas of Landscape Architecture, including education (contract lecturer at Lincoln University), design (Senior Landscape Architect on major infrastructure projects, including Christchurch Southern and Northern Arterial Motorways), and landscape assessment (landscape and visual assessment ranging from residential developments, industrial sites and infrastructure).
- 3 I hold a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture Degree from Lincoln University
- 4 In January of 2020 Align Ltd was engaged by Gore District Council to complete a landscape and visual impact report regarding the proposed Longford Bridge. The scope of the project was to carry out a site visit, visual assessment, and to produce visuals to support the report (these were based on computer modelling to aid in accuracy). This report was carried out by myself (Mike Pentecost) with assistance from intermediate Landscape architect Tim Reed and Junior Landscape Architect Jordan Derecourt.
- 5 In preparing this statement of evidence I have considered the following documents:
 - (a) the Assessment of Environmental Effects (**AEE**) accompanying the resource consent application;
 - (b) submissions relevant to my evidence;
 - (c) the section 42A report;
 - (d) resource consent application and supporting plans;
 - (e) Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment and Peer Review prepared by Mike Moore (Registered Landscape Architect); and
 - (f) Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment and Peer Review prepared by Yvonne Pfluger (Registered Landscape Architect).
- 6 The peer review prepared by Yvonne Pfluger was sought by GDC as Applicant, prior to receipt of the s42A report. A copy is attached as **Appendix 1**.

Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses

- 7 While this is not a hearing before the Environment Court, I have read the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses contained in the Environment Court Practice Note 2014. I have complied with it in preparing this evidence and I agree to comply with it in presenting evidence at this hearing. The evidence that I give is within my area of expertise except where I state that my evidence is given in reliance on another person's evidence. I have considered all material facts that are known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions that I express in this evidence.

Scope of evidence

- 8 This evidence addresses:
- (a) existing landscape character;
 - (b) landscape and visual impacts of the proposed bridge;
 - (c) alternative structures;
 - (d) alternative locations;
 - (e) assessment against statutory provisions; and
 - (f) conditions of consent

Executive summary

- 9 The following evidence is drawn from my original site visit and report (dated August 2020) as well as subsequent peer review reports carried out by Mike Moore – registered landscape architect (dated 19th November 2020) and Yvonne Pfluger – registered landscape architect (dated 24th November 2020). The additional information and assessment from both peer review reports has helped me to expand on my original report, and is summarised below:
- (a) the character of the existing landscape is recognised as being rural, and highly modified as well as being surrounded by residential (to the east) and commercial (to the west) built form outside of the flood plain. In this setting the general visual effects of the bridge can be absorbed readily;
 - (b) the lack of a cultural impact assessment makes it difficult to address some key issues such as cultural / heritage effects and effects on the cultural landscape values of tangata whenua. I understand that

Hokonui Rūnanga may present on this matter in the course of the hearing;

- (c) the visual effects on residential properties near the proposed bridge will generally be adverse – mainly due to the scale of the proposed bridge and interruption of existing views to the greater landscape to the north and north west;
- (d) elevated properties to the north west of the preferred location for the proposed bridge will experience less visual impact due to the existing built form of east Gore creating a backdrop of houses and the mast of the proposed bridge being below the skyline;
- (e) my conclusion is that the visual impacts on the general landscape are low to moderate dependent on the viewpoint, except in the instance of the River Terrace / Huron Street corner – where the impacts are high due to the scale and proximity of the proposed bridge. These visual impacts are offset somewhat by the positive functions of the bridge and its simple and functional design. I do not consider the design to be offensive or over embellished – although recognise that the style of the bridge is likely to be assessed by individuals in a subjective fashion;
- (f) alternative locations have been explored and none of those put forward present a clear advantage over the preferred site. It is noted that alternative locations may lessen effects on a specific audience – but is likely to create more adverse effects for another specific audience;
- (g) alternative bridge forms have also been explored but are assessed as providing no advantage with regards to visual impacts from identified viewpoints;
- (h) there are positive functions of the proposed bridge including enhanced pedestrian and cyclist connectivity, enhanced recreational opportunities, wayfinding (the mast can be seen and recognised easily from the greater network).
- (i) the proposed bridge has been assessed against the relevant policies and objectives as identified in the Gore District Plan, Southland Regional Policy Statement and Resource Management Act 1991. The effects of the proposed bridge on the Mataura River (ONF) are limited due to the design – with key attributes being its suspended deck (without piles or piers within the river channel) and limited earthworks within the river channel. The effects on views to the

Hokonui Hills (ONL) are also generally limited due to the position and form of the bridge – with key attributes being its visually permeable structure and location close to existing built form. It is noted, however that the visual effects on properties in close proximity to the proposed bridge are in some cases high. The landscape character is recognised as highly modified, rural. This extends to the wider landscape and to this end the bridge is not viewed as an inappropriate inclusion.

Cultural impact assessment

- 10 The original report (Align) did not have the benefit of a cultural impact assessment which means that the landscape and visual impact reports have not assessed effects on cultural / heritage or associative values. I understand that Hokonui Rūnanga may present on this matter in the course of the hearing.

Landscape and visual impact assessment

- 11 I visited the site and general area on the 9th and 10th of February 2020, and this site visit was used to inform my assessment of the landscape character. The site has been assessed as rural in character, as it exists on the floodplain of the Maitara River. This rural setting is characterised by the open, exposed and sparsely vegetated landscape – a key feature being the spacious qualities experienced when in the flood plain itself. This flood plain is described as highly modified due to the agricultural practices and other evidence of human intervention such as power lines, fences, and paths.
- 12 The wider landscape provides a backdrop which includes distant views up the Maitara River (ONF) to the rural landscape, which includes the Hokonui Hills (ONL) to the north-west.
- 13 The township of Gore is divided from the urban area of East Gore by the river, with the high stop banks accentuating this division. The urban area extends up the slopes of the river terrace on both sides of the river – this has the effect of creating an urban backdrop which helps to absorb the proposed bridge structure where it is viewed from the elevated dwellings situated to the north west of the proposed bridge site.

Visual impacts

- 14 The proposed bridge has been assessed with a focus on providing an impartial analysis of it based on its bulk, form and other features such as visual permeability and colour. I understand that some of the key reasons

for the cable stay design are a response to pragmatic considerations such as the need to avoid bridge supports within the river channel and flood plain, as well as limitations on the positioning of anchors for alternative bridge forms.

- 15 Key features of the proposed bridge are identified as:
- (a) the height of its mast (39m) – This results in the dominance of the mast form from some viewpoints (particularly the corner of River Terrace and Huron Street). A positive aspect of the mast is its presence as a wayfinding feature in the context of the proposed path;
 - (b) the light colour of the mast – An attribute which is considered to reinforce the simplicity of the structure. This also makes the mast less intrusive when viewed from a low angle and at closer range as the background generally has a higher percentage of sky;
 - (c) the good visual permeability of the supporting cables – which allowed for a lighter structure than some traditional bridges;
 - (d) the low profile of the deck component of the bridge as well as the lack of pile and support within the river channel. This was viewed as less visually intrusive than some alternatives, which involved more superstructure above the deck (such as the network arch alternative); and
 - (e) the modification required to the landform and associated earthworks on the western bank of the Mataura River.
- 16 The bridge has a simple and functional design, and is of a scale which makes it reasonably easily absorbed into the landscape from a distance, although its vertical presence means it becomes more dominant the closer the viewer is to the structure.
- 17 It is evident from the submissions that the architectural style of the bridge is viewed in a variety of ways by different individuals – with some submitters in support calling it ‘striking’ and ‘elegant’, while some submitters in opposition felt that it ‘did not blend with the natural landscape’ and was a ‘blight on the environment’. All these terms and descriptions are highly subjective and reflect the views of an individual. Whilst I have deliberately not commented on the style of the bridge (in the Align report), in my opinion the proposed bridge is not necessarily out of context, and features such as the visual permeability aid in the absorption of the structure into the landscape.

Alternative structures

- 18 As part of the original report (Align) I carried out a comparison between the proposed cable stay bridge structure and an alternative network arch structure to assess the possibility that this form may lessen the visual impact. In my opinion the network arch bridge would not lessen the visual impact, and from some viewpoints would introduce more structure. The alternative design would not provide any advantage with regards to landscape and visual impact and would not influence the ratings in the original (Align) report from viewpoints 1 (corner of Avon Street and Richmond Street), 2 (Waipahi Highway Bridge) and 3 (corner of River Terrace and Huron Streets). The network arch bridge form would have a different effect from viewpoint 4 (corner of Norton Street and Garnet Street) due to the lower form – but if the structure were the same colour as the proposed bridge would still incur the same rating (**moderate-low**).

Alternative locations



Figure 1: Alternative Bridge Locations

19 As part of the design process several alternative locations (see Figure 1: Alternative Bridge Locations) were explored and excluded for a variety of reasons such as distance from the township and engineering considerations. I have carried out a desktop assessment alongside the site information gathered in February to explore the visual effects of locating the proposed bridge in any of these locations. It must be noted that this assessment did not include a specific site visit.

- (a) Option A - Rock Street alternative alignment. This location is closer to the Waipahi Highway and would exist in the same context as the current proposed site. The visual effects here would be similar, with

some dwellings which may currently have uninterrupted views up the Maitava River likely to be affected. Depending upon the exact position of the viewer, the visual effects associated with this site would be no less than the rating applied to viewpoint 2 (Waipahi Highway Bridge) in the original report (moderate). The audience most affected would be residents of the properties along the river front between Latham Lane and Nelson Street. The visual effects as measured from these properties is likely to be similar or equivalent to those applied to viewpoint 3 (corner of River Terrace and Huron Streets) in the original report (high). Viewpoint 1 in the original report (corner of Avon Street and Richmond Street) would be similar (moderate), or possibly lower due to the increased distance. The view shown in figure 2 of the Mike Moore report (from the picnic area adjacent Woolwich Street) would also be moderated somewhat by the extra distance from the viewer. The rating from viewpoint 4 (corner of Norton Street and Garnet Street) would remain unchanged (moderate-low). The landscape character here is judged as similar to the preferred location (close to Church Street, Huron Street intersection), although the landing on the western bank would be within the existing commercial built environment – the effects on landscape character would not change in relation to the original (Align) assessment;

- (b) Option B - Denton Street alternative alignment. This location is approximately 250 metres north of the preferred location and would connect Denton Street with the layby / picnic area adjacent Woolwich Street. This location would see the bridge angled across the river channel, presenting a slightly foreshortened view of the structure. The visual effects from viewpoint 3 (corner of River Terrace and Huron Street) would likely be less than the current rating of high, and may be rated as moderate-high, due to increased distance and the foreshortened angle. The rating from viewpoint 2 (Waipahi Highway Bridge) which is currently rated as moderate, would be likely to become lower due to the same reasons – becoming moderate-low. The ratings from viewpoint 1 (corner of Avon Street and Richmond Street) and viewpoint 4 (corner of Norton Street and Garnet Street) would remain unchanged. It is likely that the properties on Oxford Street and Hamilton Street may have increased visual connection to the mast, but that the stop bank will obscure much of the structure.

The viewpoint presented in Mike Moore's peer review report will be the most affected as bridge would be very much in the foreground as the view looks towards the south west from the picnic area, there would also be associated effects such as increased user numbers.

The context here also means the structure is positioned in such a way that it does not have as much connection with the residential areas, and as such may have greater visual impact from other viewpoints within the rural and recreational areas nearby. The landscape character here is still highly modified, rural – but the relationship to the built form of Gore township is less direct. It is likely that the effects on landscape character may be slightly higher in this position due to the more rural setting; or

- (c) Option C - Maitland Street alternative alignment. This location is almost 1 kilometre upstream of the preferred location. This location is much more isolated from the residential area, and the proposed bridge is less likely to be readily absorbed into the landscape. This location is on the fringe of the original study area, and as such does not relate closely to the viewpoints 1 (corner of Avon Street and Richmond Street), and 2 (Waipahi Highway Bridge). Viewpoint 3 (corner River Terrace and Huron Streets) will incur a lower impact due to distance, and viewpoint 4 (corner Norton Street and Garnet Street). Viewpoint 4 (corner Norton Street and Garnet Street) would remain with a **moderate-low** rating as per the original report. The effect on landscape character here follows on from the desktop analysis of options A and B, with the separation from the built form of Gore township even greater – as above this is likely to create higher effects on the rural landscape character.

- 20 In my opinion, and from the available information, none of the alternative sites presented a clear advantage over the preferred site (in landscape and visual terms). In terms of connectivity, positioning the bridge further away from the central business district may reduce opportunities for access to a diverse range of users. The further the structure is positioned from the built form of the residential and commercial areas, the less likely it is that the structure will be readily absorbed into the rural landscape. It is also noted that there are other reasons for the preferred location which would be covered by other experts – not related to landscape and visual considerations.

Statutory Provisions

- 21 The original report (Align) identified relevant statutory provisions and undertook the assessment in that context but did not provide any specific assessment against relevant policies and objectives. Mr Moore correctly points out that this would be helpful, and to this end has provided a series of tables laying out statutory context and assessment of the proposal

against these. I have replicated this approach and added my assessment in the table below:

Gore District Plan	
Provision	Assessment
<p>Objective 2.2.3 (1)</p> <p>To protect the district's outstanding natural features and landscapes</p> <p>Policy 2.2.4 (5)</p> <p>Liaise with Environment Southland on all RMA processes to ensure that the natural values of the Mataura River are protected.</p>	<p>The landscape character in which the proposed bridge would be positioned is recognised as rural, and highly modified. The presence of man-made structures here is part of that character.</p> <p>The design of the proposed bridge limits its effect on the Mataura river (ONF) due to its suspended deck and limited interference with the river channel.</p> <p>In my opinion the scale and form of the proposed bridge is readily absorbed into the greater landscape (due to features such as visual permeability and simplicity). The views to the ONL are generally retained, again due to the visual permeability.</p>
<p>Objective 2.4.3 (1)</p> <p>To preserve the natural character of the margins of the Mataura River.</p> <p>Policy 2.4.4 (1)</p> <p>Control the adverse effects of land use on the margins of the of the Mataura River</p>	<p>As above, the bridge structure will be an addition to an already highly modified landscape.</p> <p>The effects relating to the modification required on the river margin are limited due to the design of the proposed bridge and will provide opportunities for planting of local native plant species.</p>
<p>Objective 3.3 (1)</p> <p>Maintain and enhance amenity values of the various localities within the district whilst respecting the different values and characteristics that exist within each area.</p>	<p>As above the form and scale of the proposed bridge is in keeping with the character of the landscape.</p> <p>The bridge also represents opportunities for enhanced amenity values by providing access to recreational opportunities that may otherwise be unavailable. The proposed bridge will also provide wayfinding and enhanced legibility to the proposed walkway.</p> <p>The preferred location of the proposed bridge does have high visual effects on properties in close proximity. The adverse effects the proposed bridge will</p>

	create on these properties is not effectively mitigated.
<p>Objective 3.3 (2)</p> <p>Ensure that the effects of land use activities do not adversely affect the quality of the environment and are compatible with the characteristics and amenity values of each locality.</p> <p>Policy 3.4 (2)</p> <p>Control the adverse effects of land use activities on the environment.</p>	<p>As above, the proposed bridge will provide enhanced opportunities for access and recreational use of the area. This is seen as compatible with current land use.</p> <p>As above.</p>
<p>Objective 3.3 (7)</p> <p>Ensure that the effects of earthworks and other land disturbance are avoided, remedied, or mitigated.</p> <p>Policy 3.4 (11)</p> <p>Ensure that the effects of earthworks and other land disturbance are avoided, remedied, or mitigated.</p>	<p>As noted in the assessment of policy 2.4.4 (1) the earthworks associated with the proposed bridge will provide opportunities for local native planting.</p> <p>The bridge design also limits the need for bridge structure within the river channel.</p>
<p>Objective 7.3 (2)</p> <p>To ensure the location and design of utilities avoids significant adverse effects on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The natural character of wetlands, and lakes and rivers and their margins. b) Outstanding natural features and landscapes. <p>Policy 7.4 (4)</p> <p>To protect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The natural character of wetlands, and lakes and rivers and their margins. b) Outstanding natural features and landscapes. 	<p>As above, see assessment response to objective 2.2.3 (1)</p>

<p>Southland Regional Policy Statement 2017</p>	
<p>Provision</p>	<p>Assessment</p>
<p>Objective BRL.1 – Lake and riverbed values.</p> <p>All significant values of lakes and rivers are maintained and enhanced.</p>	<p>See assessment responses above relating to objective 2.2.3 (1) in the Gore District Plan</p>
<p>Objective LNF.1 – Identification and protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes.</p> <p>Southlands outstanding natural features and landscapes are identified and protected from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.</p>	
<p>Policy LNF.4 – Protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes.</p> <p>Local authorities shall protect outstanding natural features and landscapes from inappropriate subdivision, use and development by having regard to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Whether the adverse effects on outstanding natural features and landscapes are avoided. b) The extent to which the outstanding natural feature or landscape would be modified or damaged including duration, frequency, magnitude or scale of any effect. c) The irreversibility of adverse effects on outstanding natural features or landscape values. d) The resilience of the outstanding natural feature or landscape to change. 	<p>As above</p> <p>See assessment responses above relating to objective 2.2.3 (1) in the Gore District Plan. The design of the proposed bridge minimises the physical modification to the existing river channel and bank.</p> <p>The existing landscape here is highly modified and has existing built form as part of its character.</p> <p>The additional structure does have adverse effects on the spaciousness of the rural landscape here, but this adverse effect is not considered major as the</p>

<p>e) Opportunities to remedy or mitigate previous adverse effects on the outstanding natural feature or landscape.</p> <p>f) Whether the activity will lead to cumulative adverse effects on the outstanding natural feature or landscape.</p> <p>g) The relationship of the landscape to the surrounding environment.</p>	<p>location is close to existing built form (residential and commercial properties, and the existing Waipahi Highway bridges).</p> <p>The only opportunity identified would be related to planting local native plant species as part of the site works.</p> <p>See assessment response to Policy LNF.4 – Protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes – points c and d.</p> <p>See assessment response to Policy 7.4 (5). The location fits within the built environment of Gore township, although for some residential properties it will interrupt current views to the greater landscape.</p>
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Resource Management Act 1991	
Provision	Assessment
<p>Section 6 (a)</p> <p>The preservation of the natural character of rivers and their margins, and the protection of them from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.</p>	<p>See points above. The river margins are already highly modified and the immediate surrounding landscape has a high degree of built form. The proposed bridge does not represent inappropriate development in my opinion due to the surrounding built form and highly modified landscape in both the immediate location as well as the wider landscape.</p> <p>It is worthy of note that this does not include the complete assessment of associative values as the cultural impact assessment is not available.</p>
<p>Section 6 (b)</p> <p>The protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.</p>	<p>As above.</p>
<p>Section 7 (c)</p> <p>The maintenance and enhancement of amenity values.</p>	<p>The proposed bridge will provide enhanced amenity values by providing access to recreational opportunities that may otherwise be unavailable. The proposed bridge will also provide wayfinding and enhanced legibility to the proposed walkway.</p>
<p>Section 7(f)</p>	<p>As above.</p>

Maintenance and enhancement of the quality of the environment.	
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Conditions of consent

- 22 The following is proposed as conditions should the proposed development be approved:
- (a) paint and other colours be light tones (off white / gray) and be a low reflective finish (matt or low sheen);
 - (b) any lighting will be functional only, with required lighting designed to minimise impact on surrounding residential properties; and
 - (c) provide mitigation planting appropriate to the scale of the bridge, the natural character of the area and flood protection requirements. The plantings will also respond to functional requirements such as CPTED. These mitigation plantings would be designed to integrate the modified landform associated with the proposed bridge with its flood plain setting – and use local native species where possible.
- 23 I have reviewed the conditions of consent proposed in the evidence of Ms Claire Perkins and confirm these are appropriate for managing potential landscape effects.

Conclusion

- 24 The proposed Longford cable stay bridge has been assessed by myself, as well as peer review assessments by Mike Moore (registered landscape architect) and Yvonne Pfluger (registered landscape architect), and in general the characterisation of the landscape and proposed structure is consistent. My original report (Align) focuses on the structure in an empirical way, which assesses the visual aspects without attributing value to the architectural style. The peer review reports offer further insight and additional assessment which help produce a broader overall assessment.
- 25 It is my opinion that the bridge and associated path would have many positive effects and functions – including connectivity, recreational opportunities, increased public engagement with the local landscape and wayfinding. I would also expand my assessment of the proposed bridge to recognise that in the context of the highly modified and expansive landscape it is not necessarily out of context, and design features such as visual permeability, low profile of the deck and simplicity make it readily absorbed into greater landscape.

- 26 It must also be recognised that for residential properties in close proximity to the proposed bridge will have a significant effect on views and the perception of an open and expansive landscape. In my opinion alternative bridge forms will not avoid or mitigate this as outlined above.
- 27 It is understood that appropriate engagement with tangata whenua is currently being undertaken, which will further inform the decision-making process – and may also provide further opportunities to add a cultural narrative to the proposal.

Dated this 2nd day of December 2020

Michael Anthony Pentecost

Appendix 1 – peer review prepared by Yvonne Pfluger

Applicant Gore District Council

Longford Bridge, Mataura River, Gore
Peer Review of Landscape & Visual Effects Assessment
Prepared for Gore District Council

24 November 2020

Document Quality Assurance

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Prepared by:	Yvonne Pfluger Associate Partner/ Landscape Architect Boffa Miskell Limited
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Status: Final	Issue date: 24 November 2020
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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Boffa Miskell Limited (BML) have been engaged by Hashem Ramezan-Zadeh of Gore District Council (GDC) to undertake a Peer Review, in relation to the application for land use consent for the construction of a new bridge across the Mataura River, connecting East Gore and the main Township.
- 1.2 Gore District Council proposes to construct a shared pedestrian and cycle bridge spanning the Mataura River as part of the Longford shared path connecting the residential area of East Gore to the other side of town including the CBD and schools. The bridge structure is proposed to span the Mataura River in the vicinity of the intersection of Huron Street, Church Street and River Terrace to a new embankment on the opposite side of the Mataura River. A shared path would traverse the grassed floodplain to connect with the bridge. The bridge would also accommodate a new wastewater line that currently needs to be connected across the Mataura River.
- 1.3 The Assessment of Landscape and Visual Effects Report (dated August 2020) was prepared by Mr Pentecost from Align (referred to as the “Align Report” throughout this peer review). Assessment photos and visual simulations have been included in the Appendix of the Align Report to illustrate the assessment.
- 1.4 The intent of this peer review is to verify the findings outlined in the Landscape Assessment in relation to visual amenity and landscape effects of the proposed bridge and identify any issues for consideration or key issues missed.
- 1.5 The Align Report outlines that the site is within the rural and residential zone, as well as the Mataura River 20 metre buffer zone.

2.0 Peer Review Approach

- 2.1.1 Due to the short timeframe available for the preparation of this peer review, its focus is on the findings to verify the anticipated level of landscape and visual effects.
- 2.1.2 The Methodology of the Align Report applies a seven point scale to assess levels of effect from Very high to Very low, which is considered appropriate (Table 2 of report). While the definitions for the scale of effects in Table 2 have been revised by landscape practitioners since the 2000 MFE document referred to in the Align Report¹ through best practice guidance in 2010², in general terms the assessment structure is in line with best practice guidance. It should, however, be noted that there is an underlying assumption in the Align Report that all visual and landscape effects relating to the proposal are adverse - an assumption that I do not necessarily concur with.

¹ Goodman, de Lambert, Dawson, McMahan & Rackham (2000). Impact of development on rural landscape values. Ministry for the Environment.

² NZILA Education Foundation (2010) Best Practice Note 10.1: Landscape Assessment and Sustainable Management

- 2.1.3 It is noted that the Report did not assess natural character effects, which would be relevant under RMA section 6(a) and several plan provisions (see Table 1).
- 2.1.4 The scope of this peer review did not include an assessment against the relevant statutory assessment matters.
- 2.1.5 In order to gain an understanding of the landscape context and to verify the site description and analysis, a site visit was undertaken on 20/11/2020. As part of these on-site investigations the bridge site, its surroundings and the residential areas highlighted as potentially affected in the Align Assessment Report were visited.

3.0 The Proposal

- 3.1 The site for the proposed bridge structure is situated approximately 800m north east of the main street of the township of Gore and 650m upstream of the existing highway bridge.
- 3.2 The proposed bridge structure consists of a tall mast (39m), which serves as the support for steel cables which are attached along the length of the bridge deck to create a suspension bridge without pillars in the riverbed. The bridge requires deadman structures next to the mast which anchor the cables as they rise to the top of the mast.
- 3.3 It is currently proposed to colour the mast in white, but this is currently undergoing a design review to incorporate cultural design input, if considered appropriate by mana whenua. It is considered that darker more recessive colours would potentially reduce the visibility of the proposal where visible against a landform backdrop.
- 3.4 It is understood that a suspended bridge without pillars in the riverbed is required for flood protection purposes. The bridge needs to be at the height of the stopbanks to allow for a 200 year flood to pass through. There were two options for the suspended bridge design, shown in the report. The other option is approximately half the height, but requires two relatively bulky arches to support the bridge structure.
- 3.5 The bridge has the dual purpose of also accommodating the wastewater line that needs to cross the river in this area underneath the bridge deck.
- 3.6 No structural landscaping is proposed as part of this application.

4.0 Site and Landscape Context Description

- 4.1 The existing environment and site context are adequately described in the Align Landscape Assessment, and I agree with this description on the whole.
- 4.2 As described in the report, land use within the broader landscape is varied. I agree that there are three distinct character areas which are influenced by development patterns - suburban/ residential tree-lined streets to the east; rural character within the

open, expansive area of floodplain to the north-west; and industrial land uses on the western side of the river.

- 4.3 The Mataura River creates a dividing natural feature which separates Gore Township and East Gore urban areas. This effect is accentuated by the height of the flood protection stop banks obscuring views to the Mataura River. The stop banks that line the Mataura River form an unnatural visual and physical barrier between the township and the river, disrupting the otherwise flat and expansive floodplain along the river. Due to the stop banks there is a visual disconnection between the lower-lying residential and industrial areas and the active riverbed.
- 4.4 On the eastern side of the river the stop banks extend from the north as far as the proposed bridge location at the corner Huron Street and River Terrace. From there south toward the SH1 bridge, residential areas are located on the terrace landform, which means no stopbank is required between River Terrace and the waterway's edge. A double row of amenity trees between River Terrace and the river margin provides a visual buffer between the elevated residential areas and the waterway.
- 4.5 On the western side of the river the stopbanks continue along the edge of the built-up industrial area as the floodplain widens to the north of the proposed bridge location. Amenity trees are planted along the stop bank between the SH1 bridge and the corner of Richmond Street and Avon Street where the bridge is proposed.
- 4.6 Overall, the river is visually enclosed within the Gore township area due to both stopbanks and existing amenity planting, while the floodplain opens up visually to the rural area in the north west of the proposed bridge location.
- 4.7 As described in the report, the landform backdrop to the north west is formed by the Hokonui Hills in the distance. This prominent landscape features defines the skyline from most residential areas in East Gore in their view in a north-westerly direction. The foreground to these views is formed by Gore Township and the industrial area to the south and the Mataura Floodplain to the north.

5.0 Assessment of Visual Effects

- 5.1 The Align Report has identified four representative key viewpoints within Gore township that illustrate the range of visual effects that would be experienced in relation to the proposal. Based on my on-site findings I consider the choice of viewpoints representative and relevant (see viewpoint map in Appendix A, Figure 1).
- 5.2 Given the relatively enclosed nature of the riverbed, visibility of the proposal is confined from short-distance viewpoints (VP1-3). In the western hill suburbs of Gore long-distance views of over 1km can be gained along the terrace (VP4).
- 5.3 The following key views were included in the Align Report:
 - VP 1- Gore (west bank) Industrial Area (corner Avon/ Richmond Streets)
 - VP 2- the SH1 bridge downstream of the proposal
 - VP 3- East Gore (east bank) Residential Area (corner River Terrace/ Huron Street)

- VP 4- Gore (western hill suburbs) long distance view from Norton Street

- 5.4 Visual simulations were also provided as part of the proposal in Appendix A for the four viewpoints. The methodology and validity of the visual simulations has not been investigated as part of this peer review, but there was no reason to question the fact that they were prepared in line with NZILA best practice guidance as outlined in the report. The photographs provide the required details in terms of focal length, viewing angle and distance.
- 5.5 A detailed visibility analysis was provided in the Align Report under section 3.2. The assessment of visual effects states that it takes into account the proximity, orientation and nature of the viewing audience with relation to the proposed bridge structure which is considered an appropriate approach. However, as outlined in 5.10, I consider that this approach has not been fully applied in the visual assessment.
- 5.6 Viewing distances have not been provided with the assessment, but they were measured in Google Earth for this peer review to provide context for the potential visibility of the proposal from the viewpoints outlined below.
- 5.7 The screenshots of visual simulations provided in the Align Report are included below for illustrative purposes (Figure numbering and captions as per Align report).

5.8 Viewpoint 1 – Corner Avon/ Richmond Streets



Figure 9: Viewpoint 1 – Post development. Showing the proposed bridge structure visible behind the stop banks.

- 5.8.1 Viewpoint 1 is located below the stopbank at a distance of around 240m from the mast. The Align Report assesses the visual effect as follows:
- “The adverse landscape and visual effects from viewpoint 1 are rated as moderate.”*
- 5.8.2 The visual assessment highlights that the mast would be seen in the context of existing power lines and that only the upper part of the mast would be visible behind the stopbank. The assessment does not take into account the sensitivity of the viewing audience in this location - which would be very low and not permanent given that it is an industrial area.

- 5.8.3 The visual context from this viewpoint contains a number of other structures and the stopbank in the foreground is, in my view, a dominant feature. In my view, the **visual effect from this location would be low and not adverse** given the existing modifications in the view and the low sensitivity of the viewing audience, who would only gain glimpsed views from their industrial premises or when travelling the road.

5.9 Viewpoint 2- SH1 bridge downstream



Figure 11: Viewpoint 2 - Post development showing proposed bridge structure.

- 5.9.1 Viewpoint 2 is located at the same elevation as the proposed bridge at a distance of around 650m from the mast. The Align Report assesses the visual effect as follows:
- “The adverse landscape and visual effects from viewpoint 2 are rated as **moderate.**”*
- 5.9.2 The SH1 bridge is frequented by cars travelling through Gore and local pedestrians/ cyclists (albeit fewer in numbers). As outlined in the Align Report the users would be transient. The views to the proposed bridge would be open on the western and central part of the bridge, while trees along the riverbank obscure views from the western part of the bridge. The views are perpendicular to the direction of travel and can only be gained for a short time while crossing the bridge, as outlined in the Report.
- 5.9.3 While the proposal will be clearly visible in these transient views, I do not consider that it would be visually dominant at a distance of 650m, given its slender, mostly transparent design. In my opinion, the **visual effects would be low**, given the orientation of the view along the road and the short duration of exposure. If the effects are perceived as adverse would depend on the viewer (see also Section 6).

5.10 Viewpoint 3- corner River Terrace/ Huron Street



Figure 13: Viewpoint 3 - The viewpoint from the corner of River Terrace and Huron Street post development.

- 5.10.1 Viewpoint 3 is located below the stopbank at a distance of around 110m from the mast. The Align Report assesses the visual effect as follows:

*“The adverse landscape and visual effects from viewpoint 4 are rated as **high**.”*

- 5.10.2 This viewpoint was chosen to illustrate the view from a number of residential properties near the Mataura River east bank that would potentially gain views of the proposal. The Align Report shows in Appendix B the ten residential properties that would potentially be able to experience moderate to high visual effects in relation to the proposal (see screenshot below).



Align Figure 1 (Appendix B): Context and properties with moderate - high visual effects

- 5.10.3 While I did not gain access to these individual properties, I consider that at least part of the proposed bridge mast would potentially be visible from these residences. 51 Huron Street is low-lying and the intervening stopbank would block the majority of views with only the top of the mast visible.
- 5.10.4 Residences at 39, 41 and 43 Huron Street are slightly elevated, but on the eastern side of Huron Street; their views would be relatively open. The remainder of the highlighted residences (30, 32, 34 and 36 Huron Street and 29 and 32 Halton Street, see figure above) are located along the escarpment above River Terrace. For most of the properties along River Terrace amenity trees along the riverbank and other foreground vegetation would partially obscure views towards the proposal. In this sense the close distance, open view towards the bridge as shown on Visual Simulation 3 can be taken as a worst-case scenario in terms of visibility.
- 5.10.5 The views from these private residences are permanent views (as opposed to VP 1 and 2) and there is a higher potential for the viewers to perceive the change as adverse. I consider that the **visual effect would be moderate- high for up to half of the ten** properties, and would likely be adverse. For the other properties the adverse effect would in my view be **moderate**, given that the proposed mast is slender and continues to allow for long distance views to the Hokonui Hills. In summary, I consider that the visual effects would translate to a more than minor effect for up to ten private properties shown in Appendix B of the Align Report. More detailed site investigations would be required to ascertain visibility from individual properties.

5.11 Viewpoint 4- Norton Street



Figure 15: Viewpoint 4 - The viewpoint from the corner of Norton Street and Garnet Street post development. The bridge links the urban areas, however the structure is within context

- 5.11.1 Viewpoint 4 is located below the stopbank at a distance of around 1,050m from the mast. The Align Report assesses the visual effect as follows:

“The adverse landscape and visual effects from viewpoint 4 are rated as moderate-low.”

- 5.11.2 The western part of Gore is located along several terraces that provide for elevated views towards the east. Properties located along the escarpment of the terrace would be able to see the bridge mast as an element in the distance adjacent to the river. From here the proposal would be seen in the context of the surrounding urban areas, with Gore industrial areas in the foreground and East Gore in the background.
- 5.11.3 In my view, the proposed mast would only be a small, visually subservient element in the landscape from this viewing distance and I consider the **visual effects to be very low and not adverse.**

5.12 Conclusion Visibility and Visual Effects

- 5.13 The Visibility Analysis provides the following summary on p 21:

“The proposed bridge structure will be visible from existing residences along River Terrace and from the existing residences on the higher ground to the north east of the subject site (including but not limited to Norton Street, North Terrace and Garnet Street)

The surrounding roads are below stopbank level, which have the effect of obscuring direct views to the bridge from surrounding roads. The trees on the stop bank create further screening – and the added height of this screening will obscure views of the mast at times to the transient road user.”

- 5.14 I concur with this summary, but as highlighted above the rating of visual effects from individual representative viewpoints is higher than I would anticipate. In my view, the Align Report focusses on visibility, rather than visual effects which should also take into account the viewing context, the sensitivity of the viewing audience and the permanence of the view.

6.0 Assessment of Landscape Effects

- 6.1 The landscape effects are addressed under Section 3.1 of the Align Report, which describes the physical, perceptual and amenity effects of the proposal.
- 6.2 The Report assesses the **physical effects** of the proposed bridge structure on the subject site as moderate - low. In my view the physical effects of the suspension bridge are low, given that very limited earthworks are required and no pillars need to be erected in the riverbed. The physical modification required in addition to the existing stopbanks is comparatively small. Either way, I concur that such physical effects would be no more than minor.
- 6.3 The **perceptual effects** of the proposed bridge structure are assessed as moderate – low in the Align Report. The reasons for this include the reduction of openness across the river/ floodplain; increase in modification and level of recreational activity due to the improved connectivity provided by the bridge; and change in outlook towards the Hokonui Hills. While I agree that these may be potential effects relating to the establishment of the bridge, I do not consider them to be necessarily adverse (see below). Given that the proposal is located only approximately 650m upstream from an existing highway bridge, I do not consider that there would be adverse effects on the “level of isolation” that can be experienced in the area. In my view, the proposed

improvements of a shared pathway will substantially improve the amenity that can be experienced by a wider group of recreational users in the area.

- 6.4 In the Report the **landscape amenity effects** of the bridge structure are assessed as moderate. I agree that this would apply to the up to ten residential properties that would experience a moderate or moderate- high visual effect as outlined above. I concur that the following statement from the report applies to such properties:

“The area with highest amenity value is looking from the eastern banks of the Mataura River north-west to a rural outlook. The proposed bridge structure would disrupt the sense of spaciousness through the addition of another built form within the landscape which is otherwise relatively uncluttered by artificial structures.”

- 6.5 I equally consider the following statement correct that highlights the positive effects:

“For recreational users, such as walkers and cyclists, the proposed bridge structure will result in enhanced amenity value, due to the associated recreational opportunities and connections across the Mataura River.”

- 6.6 In addition, I consider that there may be other potential positive landscape effects relating to the proposed bridge that the Align Report does not take into account. In my view such potential positive effects include the following:

- The connectivity of the active travel network for pedestrians and cyclists will be enhanced. Through the connection with the shared pathway, a safe route with high amenity can be provided.
- The accessibility and functionality of the green corridor associated with the river will be enhanced. This means that a wide range of users will be able to enjoy the open space associated with the Mataura River within Gore Township.
- While the bridge design may not be equally liked and appreciated by various members of the public, it will provide a high-quality design solution to resolving both an existing transport (cycleways connection) and infrastructure (wastewater connection) issue.
- The proposed bridge will form a new landmark within Gore and will provide a sense of place associated with it. Generally, unusual designs for larger-scale structures and buildings attract reactions by the viewing audience - both positive and negative. The design of the bridge will, in my view, ensure that the structure will contribute as a feature to the identity of Gore Township, rather than solely responding to a utilitarian requirement.
- The light-weight design will minimise bulk and will not block any of the views through a transparent network of cables suspending the bridge and a slender mast structure. While the height of the mast leads to wider visibility, the reduced bulk means that views to the backdrop of the structure can be maintained.

7.0 Conclusion

- 7.1 Based on the review of the Align Report and my own site investigations, I consider that the proposal would have moderate or moderate-high visual effects on around five to ten residential properties in the vicinity of the eastern approach to the bridge. It is likely that these residents may perceive these visual amenity effects as adverse. Given that the bridge is located within a township, this is considered to be a low number of affected residences.
- 7.2 Overall, the views to the proposal are limited due to the presence of stopbanks along the Mataura River blocking most other short-distance views. I consider that the visual effects from other viewpoints would be low at most, as they are either located at long viewing distances (VP4) or with a transient viewing population (VP 1 and 2).
- 7.3 While the bridge design with a 39m high mast will lead to a higher level of overall visibility, I consider that the light-weight, low-bulk structure would ensure that views to the backdrop of the visual catchment (eg Hokonui Hills) can be maintained.
- 7.4 While some viewers may perceive the effects associated with the proposed change as adverse, I consider the high-quality design of the structure to provide visual interest as a landmark that leads to low physical effects on the Mataura River.
- 7.5 Once the bridge is established as a link as part of the shared pathway concept along the Mataura River, I anticipate that the positive urban design and amenity effects outlined above would generally outweigh any adverse visual effects associated with change observed in this context.