

**Before an Independent Hearing Panel
Appointed by Wellington City Council**

In the Matter of the Resource Management
Act 1991

And

In the Matter of a Notice of Requirement to
designate land for
Airport Purposes
known as the Main
Site NOR.

And

In the Matter of a Notice of Requirement to
designate land for
Airport Purposes
known as the East
Side Area NOR.

Statement of Evidence of

Frank Boffa

For Wellington International Airport Ltd

Dated: 5 May 2021

1. Introduction

- 1.1 My name is Frank Boffa. I am a Landscape Architect. My qualifications include a Bachelor Degree in Landscape Architecture (University of Georgia, USA) and an Honorary Natural Resources Doctorate (Lincoln University, NZ). I am a Life Member and Past President of the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects. Subsequent to retiring from Boffa Miskell approximately 7 years ago, I have been practicing as a self-employed Landscape Architect.
- 1.2 My professional experience includes landscape and visual effects assessments throughout New Zealand for both public and private organisations and individuals. I have also been involved with the preparation of visual simulations for a wide range and scale of projects. I have also re-visited sites following the implementation of projects in order to assess the accuracy of the simulations prepared prior to construction. In this regard I can confirm that in all cases, the simulated views have been fair and accurate illustrations of the various projects. I have also been involved in advising and preparing mitigation proposals where this has been required.
- 1.3 While this is not an Environment Court hearing, I nonetheless confirm that I have read the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses issued as part of the Environment Court Practice Notes. I agree to comply with the Code and am satisfied that the matters which I address in my evidence are within my field of expertise. I am not aware of any material facts that I have omitted which might alter or detract from the opinions I express in my evidence. I understand that I have an overriding duty to assist the hearing in an impartial manner and that I am not an advocate for the party which has engaged me.

2. Scope of Evidence

- 2.1 In this matter I have been asked by Wellington International Airport Limited (WIAL) to provide evidence on the Visual Effects of the proposed Designation Outcomes and in particular, those effects related to the Terminal, South Coast and the East Side Precincts. I was also engaged to prepare a series of visual simulations depicting the likely outcome of the Designations. Boffa Miskell (Wellington) assisted me with the computer generated simulations.

2.2 My evidence is based on the Visual Effects Assessment work I carried out for WIAL. This work, which accompanied the AEE for the East Side Area Notice of Requirement includes the following documents -

- Visual Effects of Designation Outcomes, December 2019.
- Visual Effects Graphic Supplement, December 2019.
- Response to Further Information Request, November 2020.
- Further Information Graphic Supplement, November 2020.

2.3 In preparing this evidence, I have reviewed the following (in so far as they are relevant to my area of expertise) :

- (a) The two NOR and associated Assessment of Environmental Effects (AEE) documents;
- (b) All further information provided by WIAL in response to requests issued by Council;
- (c) The reports and statements of evidence of the other witnesses giving evidence on behalf of WIAL;
- (d) The section 42A report and its relevant appendices;
- (e) Relevant Public Submissions
- (f) I also attended the two Open Day Meetings held at Rydges Airport Hotel on 20 January 2021

3. Visual Effects Assessment Overview

3.1 Landscape Context

The original development of the airport between 1956 and 1959, and its subsequent further development in 1972, when an area was reclaimed to extend the runway, has had a significant effect on the existing landscape character of the Rongotai Isthmus and Lyall Bay generally. In its current landscape setting, the airport and its associated infrastructure, together with the adjoining developments, namely Wellington's Wastewater Treatment Plant and sewer outfall, Miramar Golf Course, adjacent residential development, roads and infrastructure have all contributed to a substantial modification of the landscape, particularly along the eastern side of Lyall Bay. Notwithstanding these changes, there are extensive areas of land zoned Open Space around the surrounding hills as well as the beach itself, and the rocky headlands on the eastern and western shores that define Lyall Bay. In terms of recreational use, the Lyall Bay area maintains a high level of use including the interest generated by the airport and its aviation activities.

3.2 District Plan Provisions

In terms of the Wellington City District Plan, there are no specific view protection provisions, such as identified viewshafts or view corridors, within the airport or its immediate surrounds. Notwithstanding this, while no resident has a right to a view, adverse impacts on private residential views may be relevant in relation to amenity considerations where views may be blocked rather than modified in terms of what is seen. In the context of this assessment, and based on potential viewing areas, there are unlikely to be areas or particular viewpoints beyond the confines of the airport, from where views will be blocked or rendered completely out of character with what currently exists. All affected views will largely be modification to existing views, rather than the screening of views in general. Accordingly, the level of the effects of these modifications will vary according to the particular characterisation of each viewpoint.

3.3 Assessment Methodology

I approached my visual assessment in the following manner –

- (i) Review of existing landscape content and setting of the airport and, as relevant, the proposed Designations.
- (ii) Site visits to identify likely viewing areas, viewing audiences and the selection of potential representative simulation viewpoints from publicly accessible locations.
- (iii) Analysis of viewpoint characteristics relative to the makeup, configuration and extent of views as illustrated from each of the viewpoints.
- (iv) Preparation of a representative visual simulation as a basis for the identification and assessment of likely visual effects.
- (v) Assessment of visual effects based on the magnitude of change, nature of the effects and the level of effect.
- (vi) Consideration of cumulative effects as and where appropriate.
- (vii) Consideration of possible mitigation measures where appropriate.

3.4 Viewpoint Selection

In order to locate a representative range of viewpoints for the preparation of visual simulations to assist with the assessment of visual effects, a survey of the area within the airport's viewshed was carried out. Based on these field investigations, six representative viewpoints from publicly accessible locations were selected. The viewpoints selected also represent locations from where the effects were likely to be the most apparent and from locations that, given the airport is a major facility in the area, would be the most sensitive such as from residential and recreational areas. During the preparation of the assessment, additional visual simulations were prepared from two residential properties with the consent of the landowners. These two properties in Bunker Way and Raukawa Street, to the east of the golf course in the Strathmore area, are directly adjacent to and have relatively clear views to the proposed East Side designation area.

3.5 Simulated Viewpoints

The viewpoints selected for visual simulations purposes were as follows –

VP1	Public Walkway off Kekerenga Street, Strathmore Heights
VP2	Bunker Way, Strathmore Heights
VP3	Townsend Road, Seatoun Heights
VP4	Wilberforce Street, Seatoun Heights
VP5	Beach adjacent to Maranui Surf Club, Lyall Bay
VP6	Hornsey Road, Melrose
VP7	17 Bunker Way
VP8	50c Raukawa Street

In addition to the above, and in response to a Wellington City Council Section 42 Request, the following additional simulations were prepared –

VP9	Stewart Duff Drive
VP N2 A & B	Bunker Way (night view)
VP N4 A & B	Wilberforce Street, Seatoun Heights (night view)
VP N5 A & B	Maranui Surf Club (day and night views)
VP N10 A & B	Lyall Bay Beach East (day and night views)

4. Summary of Assessment

- 4.1 Having considered the relevant public submissions and the Council Report, I confirm my original conclusions outlined in my Visual Effects Assessment Reports and illustrated in the accompanying Graphic Supplements which illustrated the visual simulations. In summary my conclusions were as follows –
- 4.2 From the **Strathmore Heights area** views are unlikely to be adversely affected or compromised as any airport modifications will occur within the foreground view which tends to be looked over rather than into. The extensive views residents of this area enjoy are unlikely to be adversely affected. Visual effects from this general area are likely to be moderate to low overall.
- 4.3 While views in general from the **Bunker Way area** will not be screened, there will be significant changes to the foreground and middle-ground views from some locations, particularly those areas enjoying views to the south over the existing golf course. Visual effects from some residential properties may likely be very high depending on the location and orientation of particular viewpoints. While appropriate mitigation will assist in reducing visual effects, there will be a permanent change to some foreground and middle-ground views. Notwithstanding this, there will be no screening or blocking of views, particularly those more expansive views extending beyond the immediate foreground. Visual effects in general from this general area are likely to be high to very high. While individual views from other properties on **Bunker Way** have not been assessed, it is likely there may be other properties where visual effects may be similar to those at 17 Bunker Way. Notwithstanding this, there appear to be other properties on Bunker Way where the effects are likely to be less than the high to very high visual effects from 17 Bunker Way.
- 4.4 From the **Raukawa Street property**, where visual effects were assessed as being high to very high, is unlikely to be typical of other residential properties on Raukawa Street. Most other properties on this street are at higher elevations and are likely to look over the area, rather than into the proposed aircraft and airport activities area. Properties in this street also appear to be largely screened by intervening vegetation along the hillside face thereby screening most views to the designation area.

- 4.5 From distant and elevated locations in the **Seatoun Heights area**, while the change to the southern section of the golf course will be apparent, the visual effect of this change to the view will be relatively low. From this general location, the most apparent change will be the expansion of the main terminal buildings. While these structures will be clearly visible, they will not detract from or interfere with the expansive views enjoyed from the general area. Visual effects overall from this area will be in the moderate to low range.
- 4.6 From the **Lyll Bay foreshore and Parade area** the taxiways and aircraft operational area will generally not be visible. From these general locations, while the expanded terminal buildings and the large retaining wall will be visible the change will largely be seen to be consistent with the scale and pattern of development and will generally maintain the existing landscape character and visual amenity values of the area. Overall, the visual effects are assessed as being moderate and while apparent, will not be uncharacteristic with the landscape character of the area.
- 4.7 From the **Melrose area** distant views of the expanded airport facility will be visible in the middle ground view. There will be no changes to the foreground and background views which are the main features of the expansive views obtained from this area. Overall, the level of visual effect from the Melrose area is assessed as being low.
- 4.8 The overall visibility and effect on **public views in general** will not be extensive given the existing character of the area, the context and containment of the modifications envisaged and the screening effects of intervening landforms, structures and vegetation.
- 4.9 **Night Lighting.** While night lighting effects were not specifically commented on in visual effects submissions, I concluded that the proposed LED lighting would generally be less apparent and “softer appearing” overall than the current airport and surrounding area lighting. As a means of reducing the visual effects of night lighting I suggested the following measures be considered –
- Sometime before or at the time of implementing the terminal and apron expansions, consideration be given to the use of LED lighting to the areas currently lit with the more traditional orange floodlighting.

- That the glass facades on the eastern side of the terminal expansion utilise a more tinted and/or opaque glass to reduce the night time effects towards the Strathmore residential area and the Bunker Way area in particular.

5. Submissions on Visual Effects

5.1 Effects on Views

With respect to effects on views, submitters have commented as follows –

- Substantial negative impacts on views resulting in a loss of amenity.
- Significant visual effects to residential communities.
- Severely impact on houses above the Golf Course.
- Reduction to views looking out from properties in Strathmore Park area.
- Effects on Melrose views.
- Reduced quality of life properties currently enjoy.

While submitter comments on effects on views all tend to be of a very generic nature, other than the Rotes who live at 17 Bunker Way, and submissions from residents at 12 and 14 Bunker Way, there appear to be no individual references to specific property views. While I only visited two individual properties, I have had a close look at the local and wider viewing area and consider that there are few properties from where there are likely to be significant visual effects. With regard to the Strathmore Heights area, I noted on page 15 of my December 2019 Visual Effects Report that the more elevated properties in the Kekerenga and Ahuriri Street area, largely appear to be partially screened from the proposed developments and in particular, the proposed aircraft operational and taxi-way areas on the southern part of the Miramar Golf Course. This is primarily due to their elevation and the screening effects of intervening landforms, buildings and vegetation. Notwithstanding this, it is likely there may be localised views from properties in this general area. Views of and to the expanded terminal area (noting that buildings of this nature are already provided for by the existing airport zoning), are likely to be more visible, however, while they may be seen, they will appear to be

part of the built fabric of the airport and will not block the expansive views obtained from this area in general. Being lower in elevation, views from the Tairaroa and Raukawa Street areas are likely to be similar but less extensive.

Where views are restricted I also noted that residential views to Lyall Bay, Evans Bay and the background hills will not be screened or compromised when viewed from this general area. In this regard, middle ground and background views will not be adversely affected. The main effect on views from this area will be seen as a change to the composition or make-up of the foreground view, which in most cases will be overlooked, rather than looked into.

Notwithstanding this, and even though there will be a significant change to part of the Miramar Golf Course, there will not be a loss of key features to views in general from this area.

With regard to views from the Melrose area, Visual Simulations 6A, B & C clearly show the likely visual effects of the designation outcomes. From this general location, part of the Miramar Golf Course, which is currently visible, will be obscured by the terminal building. With the southern part of the golf course being converted into taxiways and aircraft operation areas, the only remaining visible part of the golf course will be to the north of the terminal buildings. The large retaining wall in the area between the Water-treatment Plant and the Terminal building will be visible as will the expanded area for aircraft operations to the south and east of the Terminal Area. All changes and modifications to the expansive views obtained from this area will occur within the middle ground. There will be no changes to the foreground or background views. In my opinion the visual effects on views from the Melrose area will be low with most of the key elements in the view retained, albeit somewhat different in the middle-ground of the view.

5.2 Loss of Green Area

With regard to the loss of part of the golf course and the increase in paved areas, submitters commented as follows –

- Airport would look worse than a golf course as people like to see green spaces and not concrete.
- Would be a significant negative modification dominated by asphalt.

- Significant increase in tarmac will adversely change perception of size and impact of airport to residents. The current airport is somewhat contained with large green areas.

In my opinion the loss of part of the golf course will not alter the perception of size or the impact of the airport to residents. As noted previously, only a small number of people are likely to have views of the affected area of the golf course due to its position relative to the surrounding topography and vegetation. In addition, the overall landscape context of the airport will not change as its wider open space setting, being the surrounding hills, coastline and extensive open spaces around Lyall Bay will remain intact, nor will they be screened from view.

While there will be a change to part of the golf course, the effect of this will not generally be seen as being extensive or indeed intrusive in that the changes will largely be seen as an extension to the airport which is a prominent feature in the Lyall Bay landscape. While there will be a reduction in the extent of open space relative to the golf course, the effects of this will not be significant given its wider landscape context in general. In this regard, the only location from where a full uninterrupted view of the change will be visible, will be from the public walkway off Kekerenga Street (VP1). Currently this walkway is not well maintained and appears to be used infrequently.

5.3 Engineered Retaining Wall

Submitter comments on the retaining wall were as follows –

- The proposed wall will increase the scale of visual effects significantly and especially to residents to the east.
- The retaining wall will have a negative long term impact.
- There is no consideration of how to minimise the effect of the height and length of the wall, or to maximise the degree of natural treatment.
- The substantial retaining wall will be visible from Lyall Bay Beach.

- The wall violates the District Plan height planes.

The visual effects assessment took into account all visual effects including the retaining wall. All visual simulations depict all of the elements proposed. Residents to the east, other than some properties on Bunker Way and another on Raukawa Street, are unlikely to see much if any, of the retaining wall. While the retaining wall will be visible from Lyall Bay Beach, its visual effects will not be significant in the context of its landscape setting.

Consideration has been given as to how the effects of the retaining wall can be reduced. This is illustrated in Figure 7 of the December 2019 Graphic Supplement. While these concepts are indicative, they suggest approaches that can be further developed to reduce the visual effect of the wall.

With regard to a submitter comment that the retaining wall violates the District Plan height planes, my understanding is that this is not the case.

With respect to the Main Site Designation I note that a submitter commented on the additional height of buildings in the terminal precinct going from 25m to 30m. My understanding is that this increase relates to a small footprint. That area is incorporated with and shown on the visual simulations. The simulations show this increase in height covering the possible inclusion of two further structures similar in use and form to the hotel and carpark building that currently exists. These additions have been taken into account in my visual effects assessment, and my conclusions about the effects of these elements.

6. Council Report and Response

- 6.1 I have read both the Planners Report and Ms Simpson's Urban Design & Landscape Assessment Reports. As my scope of work and assessment focussed primarily on visual and landscape effects in the context of views, I will not comment on specific urban design matters raised by Ms Simpson in her reports. Notwithstanding this, I am in general agreement with some of her suggestions, which are endorsed in the Planners Report, that the preparation of appropriate Urban Design Guidelines may further assist in achieving better built form designation outcomes. I also agree with Ms Simpson's conclusions that the urban design and landscape effects are capable of being satisfactorily mitigated.

6.2 I do not however, agree with Ms Simpson's view that the removal of the small hillock to the west of Stewart Duff Drive, and the earthworks associated with the expansion of the taxiway over part of the existing golf course will have unacceptable negative effects.

6.3 During my earlier involvement with this project, I sought clarification on the extent of the taxiway areas and the associated adjacent earthworks and retaining wall. As a result, some adjustments and revisions were made to the area and my understanding is that what is now proposed represents the minimum areas required to satisfy safety and operational requirements. As detailed engineering design work has not been carried out at this stage, the visual simulations illustrate possible design outcomes with respect to the retaining wall, which I note Ms Simpson refers to as being 30m in height and approximately 500m in length. The outline of the retaining wall we have indicated and simulated, is based on a two tier wall having an overall length of approximately 490m. The varying heights of the wall as follows –

- 135m less than 10m in height
- 170m less than 20m in height
- 175m less than 30m in height
- 10m would reach 30m in height
- 490m total length of wall at taxiway level

The rake of the wall is based on a 3:1 slope which I consider would provide sufficient scope for the suggested public access at around the 20m level, including the incorporation of a range of façade treatment options that would be further investigated and resolved during the engineering design phase.

6.4 With regard to the removal of the small hillock that is referenced in Ms Simpson's reports, I do not agree with her assessment that the removal of the hillock would have a "high negative effect given the permanence of the change and the erasure of a characteristic landscape". I am very familiar with the south coast landscape and have been involved in a number of landscape and natural character assessments of the area, and more recently the wider Lyall Bay area. In none of these assessments has the remnant hillock been referred to as a notable or significant landscape element or feature. I am also unaware of the hillock being identified

or indeed noted or referenced in any of the relevant statutory planning documents. It is my understanding that the reconstruction and expansion of Wellington Airport in the 1950's and the creation of Stewart Duff Drive, resulted in the severing of the hillock from the adjacent coastal hillside that now accommodates the Wellington Wastewater Treatment Plant site. The landscape context of the hillock in its present form is, in my opinion, seen as being more a part of the considerably modified airport character area rather than the more natural south coast landscape as such. In my opinion, the removal of the remnant hillock, while being a change to what currently exists, will not be what Ms Simpson considers to be "a high to very high negative effect, of geographical magnitude" (NOR Main Site Report, page 20).

7. Conclusions

- 7.1 Based on my visual effects assessment there are unlikely to be areas or particular viewpoints beyond the confines of the airport itself, from where views will be blocked or rendered out of character with what generally and currently exists. All affected views, in my opinion, will largely be seen as a change or modification to existing views rather than the screening of those views.
- 7.2 As noted in my visual effects assessment, there are properties on the lower section of Bunker Way and a property on Raukawa Street from where the changes to their foreground/middleground views are likely to be considered as being significant. I understand the owners of 17 Bunker Way appear to be the only residential property owners who have submitted on visual effects as they relate to their specific property, are having discussions with the Airport.
- 7.3 While there may be other properties in the lower Bunker Way area that may also be affected visually, I have not visited any of those properties. Notwithstanding this, I acknowledge there may be a loss in overall amenity from some of these properties. From all other properties beyond those noted above, I consider the visual effects of the outcomes of the East Side NOR are likely to be low.

Frank Boffa

5 May 2021