

Longford Shared Path Bridge

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

Peer Review Report

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Prepared for Gore District Council by

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Introduction to peer review report

Gore District Council (GDC) have lodged a resource consent application to construct a bridge across the Mataura River, approx. 650m upstream from the existing State Highway 1 bridge. The proposed new bridge is to carry water pipelines and to provide a safer shared path link for cyclists and pedestrians, connecting the residential area of East Gore to the CBD and schools located in West Gore.

The application documents include a landscape and visual impact assessment in support of the proposal by Align Ltd, dated August 2020. The purpose of this report is to provide a peer review assessment of the Align Ltd report. It will also address the key landscape and visual amenity related issues raised in submissions, and an assessment of the proposal against the statutory provisions relevant to landscape and visual matters. The report will be structured as follows:

- Peer review of the Align Ltd report
- Comment on issues raised in submissions
- Assessment against the relevant statutory provisions
- Conclusion and recommendations

Peer Review of the Align Ltd Report

The following adopts the same structure and headings as the Align Ltd report and comments on its findings, based on my review of the report and a field inspection undertaken on 24 July 2020.

Introduction

This section of the Align report sets out the scope, landscape issues, key stakeholders / affected parties and methodology.

In my assessment, the report generally provides an appropriate overview of these matters with the following provisos:

- The report states that the site is within the rural and residential zone as well as the Mataura River 20m buffer zone, however, it is my assessment that the site does not extend into the Residential A zone.
- In section 1.2, the report omits acknowledgement that RMA section 6(b) is relevant. It does however list the Gore District Plan provisions that are relevant to outstanding natural features and landscapes (i.e. Objective 2.2.3 and Policy 2.2.4).
- I consider that Southland Regional Policy Statement 2017 Objectives BRL.1 and LNF.1, and Policy LNF.4 are also relevant.

I note that the methodology section (1.4) focuses only on the site visit, computer modelling and photomontages, and that other methodological matters are dealt with further into the report e.g. the rating scale used to describe landscape and visual effects. Whilst not addressed explicitly in this section, it is my assessment that the report methodology is in general conformity with the NZILA Best Practice Note (Landscape Assessment and Sustainable Management 10.1).

Existing Landscape

This section of the report provides a description, characterization, and evaluation of the landscape.

In my assessment, the landscape of the site and its wider context is accurately and helpfully described. I note that in discussing associative values (2.2c), the report notes that it has not had the benefit of a cultural assessment to inform it regarding cultural landscape values. This is a potentially significant weakness given that there is a Statutory Acknowledgement under the Ngai Tahu Claims Settlement Act for the Mataura, and the river clearly has significant values to tangata whenua.

In the evaluation section (2.4) the report notes that the site is within a ‘heavily modified environment’ and that ‘the rural context is seen as a key value’. I am in general agreement with this and would state the key points of my assessment as follows:

- The primary landscape context of the proposed bridge is the river floodplain. This is an area subject to powerful natural fluvial processes, expressed most strongly in the presence of the flowing water. The natural river landscape has now been significantly modified by the presence of stopbanks which contain it, and by rural land use (grazing) and development of parkland. There is now very little indigenous vegetation remaining and natural character values are low. There are however, amenity values associated with the river corridor associated with rural character, spaciousness, and the naturalness associated with the water and dominance of natural over built elements. I assess these amenity values as being of moderate – high significance given the urban context.
- The wider landscape context of the proposed bridge site is the town of Gore. The character of the urban environment adjacent to the site varies to either side – being suburban to the east and industrial to the west.

Condition and effects

This section of the Align report discusses the landscape and visual effects of the proposed development. Below, I outline my summary of the keys points made and provide my own assessment in response. For consistency I will use the effects rating scale adopted in the Align report (Table 2)

Landscape effects

The Align report

The Align report highlights the following physical effects and assesses them as (adverse) moderate – low:

- Alteration of landform, but within a context of already modified landform (stopbank) and fits with the existing landforms.
- The bridge, including a dominant mast and secondary dead-man anchors, which provides a physical connection across the river and a link in the development pattern.

The report discusses the following perceptual effects and assesses them as (adverse) moderate – low:

- Greater connectivity within Gore across the river, providing greater opportunities.
- Reduction in the sense of spaciousness. The presence of the bridge, along with the activity of users on it, will result in a reduced sense of ‘isolation’ within parts of the riverside environment.

The report highlights the following amenity effects and assesses them as (adverse) moderate:

- Decreased spaciousness due to the additional built form and the obstruction of rural views from eastern side viewpoints. From other areas where the bridge will be seen in the context of other built form there would be less adverse effect on amenity values.
- Potential for adverse effects associated with noise of bridge users and loss of privacy from eastern side areas.
- Enhanced amenity values for recreational users of the bridge
- Temporary adverse amenity effects arising from the construction phase of the project.

The Align report gives no assessment of the cultural / heritage effects on the basis that a cultural assessment has not been carried out.

My assessment

Landscape effects describe the impact of the proposal on the landscape elements, patterns, and processes, and its character. Their significance is determined with reference to the value and sensitivity of the landscape, and the scale and character of the proposal. The nature of the landscape effects may be positive, neutral or adverse.

In my assessment, the key factors to note, in regard to landscape effects of the proposed development, are as follows:

Biophysical factors

- The proposed bridge will span the active river channel and there will be no permanent pier structures within this. This means that most of the time (i.e. other than during flood events), natural processes will continue to operate unconstrained.
- The bridge structure will rest on the existing stopbank on the eastern side of the river but will require a new teardrop shaped landform to be created on the western side of the river within the floodplain and unconnected to the western stopbanks. This will appear as an isolated, artificial landform that will further modify the natural landform character of the river landscape. No detail has been provided on how this new embankment is to be revegetated, although tussocks are suggested in part, in the photomontages. Deadman structures will also be required on the western bank. The plans included in the Align report show no significant permanent landform modification associated with these.
- The footprint of the proposed works is relatively small. No significant vegetation will be impacted but existing river bank and river margin areas will be subject to construction related earthworks and will require reinstatement.
- A new bridge of significant scale is proposed (90m long, 3m wide, and 39m high), which will be linked to the adjacent built form by pathways. This will become a major feature and focal point within the river landscape. The bridge is of asymmetric, contemporary design and is visually 'light' with low bulk. In introducing a major new built element, it will further reduce the natural character of the river landscape. In my assessment, the significance of this is low, given the already highly modified context.

Sensory factors

- Despite the modification, the Mataura River floodplain has moderate – high legibility as an area subject to powerful natural processes (e.g. minimal presence of built elements). The proposed bridge will reduce this to a moderate extent but the form of the structures is necessarily responsive to the natural processes (e.g.

the minimal ground / water contact and the shape of the proposed western embankment). Unlike the existing bridges across the river downstream, the proposed bridge will not cross the entire river flood plain and will need an artificial landform to be created on its western side within the floodplain. This will have some modest adverse effects on the legibility of the river landscape.

- Naturalness of the landscape will be further reduced by the addition of a significant new structure but the significance of this will be mitigated by the already highly modified setting, the modest footprint of the structure and associated earthworks, and the visual lightness of the structure, allowing the river to flow beneath with no further modification to its active bed.
- Aesthetically, it is my assessment that the bridge design is elegant and will enhance the memorability of the river landscape, becoming a feature of interest and a landmark.
- Wild and scenic values associated with this section of the river are modest, given the current level of modification and the wider urban context. This setting does not call for a bridge design response aimed at being as visually recessive as possible, and it is my assessment that the proposed design, with its tall asymmetric mast expressive of the engineering requirements, is appropriate.
- There will be some modification to values of quietness and seclusion within the riverside area due to the new structure and users on it. In my assessment these effects will be modest in magnitude given that the area is already used recreationally.

Associative values

- The Maitara River has a statutory acknowledgement under the Ngai Tahu Claims Settlement Act and is clearly significant to tangata-whenua. Values mentioned in this acknowledgement include important mahinga kai, traditional trails and tauranga waka, and the mauri of the river. It will be important to seek tangata whenua input to assess the impact of the proposed bridge on these values. Whilst no cultural assessment has been undertaken, I note that Hokonui Runanga have submitted in opposition to the application citing amongst other factors, potential impacts on a known archaeological site, impacts on the flight paths of avian taonga species, and the visual impact on the Maitara River.

- The Mataura River is subject to the Mataura River Water Conservation Order 1997. The outstanding features listed are ‘outstanding fisheries and angling amenity features’. Given the levels of existing modification, urban context, and existing recreational usage of this section of the river, it is my assessment that the proposed bridge is unlikely to have significant adverse effects on angling amenity values to do with natural character or solitude.
- The Mataura River is identified as an outstanding natural feature in the GDP, with Objective 2.2.3(1) of the plan being the protection of the District’s outstanding natural features and landscapes, and Objective 2.4.3(1) being the preservation of the natural character of the margins of the Mataura River. The naturalness of the river landscape generally then, is clearly a community value. The section of the river that runs through / beside the urban area of Gore however, is already significantly modified by stop banks, rural land use activities and existing bridges and in this context, it is my assessment that adverse natural character effects associated with the proposed new bridge will be relatively low in significance.
- Trout fishing and the Mataura River are key aspects of the Gore District identity. In my assessment, the visually striking bridge structure will highlight and celebrate the river, and will provide more opportunity for recreational experience and enjoyment of it.

Landscape effects – overall assessment

I consider that the Align report overemphasises the adverse effects of the proposed bridge to a degree. The table below summarises my assessment of the landscape effects. My conclusion overall, is that the proposed bridge will have positive effects on the landscape character.

<i>Effect type</i>	<i>Nature Magnitude</i>	<i>Key reasons for rating</i>
<i>Biophysical</i>	<i>Adverse / low</i>	<i>The bridge will introduce a new large scale infrastructural element to the built fabric of the town, providing another linkage across the Mataura River. Natural character will be</i>

		<i>further modified by the proposed new embankment and introduction of a significant new structure. There will be no significant effects on vegetation or normal river flow. The already highly modified floodplain character and the urban character of the wider context minimises the significance of adverse natural character effects.</i>
<i>Sensory</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Whilst there will be adverse effects on experiential naturalness and associated qualities of quietness and solitude, these will be small given the existing level of modification and recreational usage. In my assessment, these adverse effects will be outweighed by positive effects of an aesthetically elegant new feature that sits 'lightly' in the river landscape. I consider that the bridge will fit acceptably in this setting, given the wider urban context.</i>
<i>Associative</i>	<i>Neutral (provisional rating only)</i>	<i>The neutral rating reflects uncertainty around effects of the proposal on Maori cultural values (given the absence of a formal cultural effects assessment), and my assessment that minor adverse effects on recognised values associated with naturalness of the river margins will be counterbalanced by the positive effects of a new structure that celebrates the Mataura River – one of the main features of the Gore District.</i>

Visual effects

The Align report

The Align report notes that *'the form of the proposed bridge structure ensures that there is a large area to be considered as the receiving environment'*. It identifies 4 viewpoints for assessment and notes the *'these viewpoints have been assessed as the key points where there will be direct visual connection to the proposed bridge structure'*. Photo-montages *'formatted as per the NZILA best practice guide'* from these viewpoints are

provided. The viewpoints assessed, the visual effects ratings, and the key conclusions are as per my summary below.

Viewpoint	Adverse effect rating	Key factors noted
Corner – Avon and Richmond Streets	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative of views from the industrial area adjacent to the site to the west. • Grassed stop-banks obscure views of the river but the bridge mast will be visible. • Existing power poles will mitigate the effect of the bridge
Waipahi Highway (State Highway 1) bridge	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative of a key route into / out of Gore viewed by many transient road users (incl pedestrians). • Existing view has a high level of rural character although some residential dwellings are visible in the distance. • The proposed bridge will be highly visible and a dominant element in a rural setting. • The mast will breach the skyline.
Corner – River Terrace and Huron Street	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative of views from residential dwellings which have an expansive, predominantly rural outlook. • The proposed bridge will be relatively close and highly visible. • The mast, handrails and deck will breach the skyline • Due to its scale, the bridge will be a dominant feature and create a significant change to the outlook in this area.
Corner – Norton and Garnet Streets	Moderate - low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative of higher elevation surrounding areas. • The bridge will be seen in context with industrial commercial land use in front and suburban development behind – which will absorb it.

The Align report concludes that in general, the proposed bridge is more readily absorbed in eastward looking views which include more built form than in westward looking views, with less built background.

My assessment

Visual effects describe the impact of the proposal on the views available to people and the impact of this on amenity values. Amenity values are defined in the RMA as:

‘those natural or physical qualities and characteristics of an area that contribute to people’s appreciation of its pleasantness, aesthetic coherence, and cultural and recreational attributes’.

Visual effects are determined with reference to the sensitivity of viewers to change and the value placed on existing views, and the scale and character of the proposal. The nature of visual effects may be positive, neutral or adverse.

It is my assessment that the photo-montages provided in the Align report are acceptably accurate, and provide useful indications of the visual effects from the viewpoints chosen. I agree that the 4 viewpoints assessed are relevant but consider that it would also appropriate to review a few others as well. My viewpoint assessment is as follows:

Corner - Avon and Richmond Streets (see Align report Appendix A, Figure 2)

Relevance of viewpoint	This viewpoint has been assessed in the Align report and is considered generally representative of the closest views toward the site from the industrial zoned area to the west.
Viewers / Viewer sensitivity	This is predominantly an urban industrial environment and viewers are unlikely to be particularly focussed on the wider landscape. I assess viewer sensitivity as low.
Approx. distance to the proposed bridge	Approx. 310m
Existing view description	The grassed stop-bank forms a strong visual boundary to this space and screens the river floodplain. Medium – longer distance landscape elements can be seen over its top, including dwellings and rural land to the east of the river. A power line crosses the stop-bank and the upper portions of its support poles can be seen partially screened over the top of the stop bank, along with the tops of trees on the floodplain.

Description of visual effects	The visual effects of the bridge are helpfully illustrated in Align report Appendix A, Figure 3. Only the mast and cables will be visible over the top of the stop bank. Whilst these will have low bulk, the vertical form of the mast, seen against the rural hills and the sky will attract attention and be a visual focus. The bridge will be partially seen only, but will be comprehended as being within the rural / river flood plain landscape on the edge of the urban area. The mast, offset from the vertical, and in combination with the cables will create a permeable triangular form that will have a sculptural rather than utilitarian effect.
Visual effects assessment	Overall, it is my assessment that the visual effects of the proposed bridge from this viewpoint will be positive.

State Highway 1 bridge (see Align report Appendix A Figure 4)

Relevance of viewpoint	This viewpoint has been assessed in the Align report. It is on a major transportation route and is also representative of viewpoints on the western river banks below the bridge
Viewers / Viewer sensitivity	Viewers will include motorists and pedestrians on the bridge and recreationalists on the western river banks. The bridge users views will be generally fairly fleeting. I rate viewer sensitivity of highway users as moderate and that of riverbank users as high, reflecting their likely different degree of interest in the visual amenity values of the area.
Approx. distance to the proposed bridge	Approx. 680m
Existing view description	This is a view upstream, along the floodplain. The flowing river is the key feature, with grassed embankments and exotic trees to either side. The floodplain corridor has rural landscape character but urban land use is visible to either side.
Description of visual effects	The visual effects of the bridge are helpfully illustrated in Align report Appendix A, Figure 5. The new bridge will be visible in the middle distance and seen extending out into the rural flood plain from the

	urban land use on the eastern bank. The structure will be visually 'light' with minimal bulk and with its raked back mast and asymmetric triangular form, will have a sculptural appearance. The proposed 5m high embankment on the western side will integrate well with the bridge structure from this viewpoint and have comparatively low visual impact.
Visual effects assessment	Overall, it is my assessment that the visual effects of the proposed bridge from this viewpoint will be positive.

Corner – River Terrace and Huron Street (see Align report Appendix A Figure 6)

Relevance of viewpoint	This viewpoint has been assessed in the Align report and is representative of views toward the bridge site from close proximity viewpoints on River Terrace, Huron Street and some (more elevated) adjacent residential properties.
Viewers / Viewer sensitivity	Viewers will include recreationalists and residents. I assess viewer sensitivity as high given that visual amenity is likely to be important to both these groups
Approx. distance to the proposed bridge	Approx. 40m
Existing view description	The view is across the river in the foreground and north-westwards up the river floodplain toward the distant mountains. The northern edge of residential Gore is visible on the western side of the river and the Hokonui Hills are a striking feature beyond. The riverside landscape has an open and spacious rural character.
Description of visual effects	The visual effects of the bridge are helpfully illustrated in Align report Appendix A, Figure 7. The new bridge will be highly visible in the foreground of the view and will become the major feature. The decking and handrails will block views up the river and the 39m high mast will be only approx. 110m distant. This means that despite its slender form, it will have a visually dominating effect. There may be more recreational users present as a result of the bridge but there is already a walking track, and walking / cycling use of the area. Users of the

	bridge will however, be at a higher elevation than they are presently – which may give rise to adverse privacy effects on some of the adjoining residents. In my assessment the bridge is an aesthetically attractive structure but in this case, given its proximity and relative scale, visual amenity effects on the existing open and attractive rural views will be adverse, particularly for non-transitory viewers (i.e. adjacent residents). Adverse effects will also apply at night if the bridge structure is lit in any way.
Visual effects assessment	Overall, it is my assessment that the visual effects of the proposed bridge from this viewpoint will be adverse / high

Corner – Norton and Garnet Streets (see Align report Appendix A Figure 8)

Relevance of viewpoint	This viewpoint has been assessed in the Align report and is generally representative of views toward the bridge site from elevated viewpoints in the northern part of Gore, including public roads and private residences.
Viewers / Viewer sensitivity	Viewers will largely comprise residents of the area. I assess viewer sensitivity as to the quality of the outlook from this area, as likely to be high.
Approx. distance to the proposed bridge	Approx. 1050m
Existing view description	This view is across residential and commercial / industrial development in the foreground to the rural swathe of the river floodplain and the river itself. Beyond, is the urban area of East Gore with rural hills forming the background.
Description of visual effects	The visual effects of the bridge are helpfully illustrated in Align report Appendix A, Figure 9. The bridge will be seen against the backdrop of the buildings in East Gore and the rural hills behind. Despite its low bulk, it will appear as a focal point due to the vertical form and white colour of the mast which will contrast with the landscape surrounding. Its function will be clear, given the visibility of the river and it will appear

	as a visually striking feature of interest.
Visual effects assessment	Overall, it is my assessment that the visual effects of the proposed bridge from this viewpoint will be positive.

Church Street near intersection with Huron Street (see Figure 1, attached)

Relevance of viewpoint	This viewpoint has not been assessed in the Align report but is assessed here as representative of lower elevation viewpoints within the residential environment east of the site.
Viewers / Viewer sensitivity	Viewers will largely comprise residents of the area. I assess viewer sensitivity as to the quality of the outlook from this area, as likely to be high.
Approx. distance to the proposed bridge	Approx. 60m
Existing view description	This a view north-westward from within an area with suburban landscape character. The grassed stop bank along with some deciduous exotic trees blocks views of the Mataura River but the urban area of Gore on the opposite side of the river can be seen across the top of the stop bank in the mid distance, with the Hokonui Hills beyond.
Description of visual effects	From this viewpoint the bridge will be seen obliquely, extending back from the top of the stop bank – its deck, hand rails, mast and cables all visible, and seen against the backdrop of the town across the river and the sky. Despite the light mass of the structure, it will have a visually dominant impact given the 39m height of the mast just 150m (approx.) distant. In my assessment the bridge is an aesthetically attractive structure but in this case, given its proximity and relative scale, visual amenity effects will be adverse. Adverse effects will also apply at night if the bridge structure is lit in any way.
Visual effects assessment	Overall, it is my assessment that the visual effects of the proposed bridge from this viewpoint will be adverse / high

Picnic area adjacent to Woolwich Street approx. 260m north of the bridge site (see Figure 2, attached)

Relevance of viewpoint	This viewpoint has not been assessed in the Align report but is assessed here as a popular recreational area close to the site to the north.
Viewers / Viewer sensitivity	It is assumed that viewers will largely comprise local Gore residents. Given their recreational motivation, I assess viewer sensitivity as to the quality of the outlook from this area, as likely to be high.
Approx. distance to the proposed bridge	Approx. 260m
Existing view description	This is a southward view from the east bank of the river. The houses and plantings of East Gore can be seen behind the grassed stop banks on the eastern side of the river and the State Highway 1 bridge is visible some 920m in the distance. Across the river, the rural landscape of the flood plain provides the foreground to views of urban Gore behind, including the clock tower and industrial buildings approx. 500 – 900m distant.
Description of visual effects	Given its scale, the proposed bridge will be the dominant feature from this viewpoint. It will partially obscure views of the residential development east of the river and will be seen in a low density urban context. In my assessment its visually 'light', asymmetric, triangular form will be aesthetically pleasing and interesting and in this context, it will have low impact on natural character values, which are already very modified.
Visual effects assessment	Overall, it is my assessment that the visual effects of the proposed bridge from this viewpoint will be positive.

Visual effects – overall assessment

It is my conclusion that in general, the proposed bridge will be an element that will have positive visual amenity effects in the Gore landscape. This is on the basis of my assessment that it is an aesthetically elegant structure with sculptural qualities based on its 'light', visually permeable form and the legibility of its function in its form, and that the peri-urban, highly modified character of the river landscape in this area provides readily for visual integration. I recognise that aesthetic responses are inherently personal and subjective, and that not everyone will share this view.

Notwithstanding my positive assessment in general, it is also my conclusion that the proposed structure will have significant adverse visual amenity effects where it is in close proximity to residential dwellings. The specific effect will vary depending on whether the whole bridge is visible, or just the mast and cables but in all cases adverse effects associated with the visual dominance of an uncharacteristically high structure will occur. From some viewpoints adverse effects will also include the blocking of currently open rural views. I consider that adverse effects associated with visual dominance on residential viewpoints are likely within approx. 250m of the mast. The significance of dominance effects will be less on transient viewers e.g. those using River Terrace or the walkway to the north of it, as the duration will be much less.

Change management

The Align report

In this section the Align report notes that *'the landscape effects associated with the proposed bridge and associated peripheral structures in their current form are significant and will be difficult to avoid, remedy or mitigate'*. It also suggests that plantings around the proposed earthworks present enhancement opportunities.

Mainly though, this section provides a comparison assessment of an alternative bridge design – an arch network cable bridge (arch bridge), which is lower (18m), and symmetrical and more traditional in form. No specific conclusions are reached as to

which design is preferable in terms of landscape and visual effects, however the report notes that:

- From viewpoints 1 and 2 – the arch bridge would not break the skyline but its form would be more prominent than the proposed bridge.
- From viewpoint 3 – the arch bridge is lower but distributes the visual effects horizontally across the field of view resulting in a more solid structure in the foreground. Both structures are similar as regards deck structures.
- From viewpoint 4 – the differences will be least notable but the arch bridge is assessed as having a smaller visual effect.

My assessment

The Align report includes useful images allowing for comparison of the two bridge designs based on viewpoints 2 and 3. In my assessment, both designs will result in visually light, permeable structures with elegant form. I consider the proposed asymmetric design to be more visually striking and less bulky generally than the alternative arch design, but use of the alternative bridge design would not alter my 'positive' visual effect ratings where given above.

Given my assessment that there will be adverse effects of significance associated with the proposed bridge on the near proximity residential viewpoints in East Gore, a key issue is whether the alternative design would lessen these. As discussed in the Align report the advantage of the alternative arch bridge design is that it is less than half the height of the proposed bridge, but the disadvantage is that it has more superstructure bulk which is spread across the length of the bridge rather than concentrated at the western end. In my assessment there would be less effect of visual dominance associated with the arch bridge but a greater effect of view disruption. Overall, I conclude that the visual effects will be similarly adverse.

Whilst the Align report addresses alternatives to the proposed development in terms of the design of the structure, it is silent on alternatives to its location. Given it finds that there are high adverse effects on residential viewers in the River Terrace / Huron Street area, and that my assessment concurs, consideration of the comparative effects of alternative locations further from sensitive viewing audiences would appear to be an

important matter to address. I note that alternative locations are discussed in Appendix F of the AEE, but landscape and visual amenity effects are not addressed in any detail.

Design and mitigation

The Align report

This section of the Align report discusses mitigation options and recommends:

- Planting of exotic trees to screen the mast from specific properties (not identified) on Richmond Street.
- Any lighting to be focused away from residential areas.
- Possible paint treatment to lessen the visual effect of the mast.

My assessment

My assessment does not support the need for any mitigation planting in the Richmond Street area. This is an industrial area and the bridge will be approx. 300m distant or more.

I agree that any lighting treatment should be carefully designed to minimize impact on the adjacent residential properties.

As regards colour treatment, it is my recommendation that a simple non-fussy treatment is adopted. From many viewpoints the mast will be seen at least partially, against the sky and the best colour to minimize contrast with this and therefore visual impact, is an off-white / light grey as shown in the photo-montages. A feature of the bridge design is its 'visual lightness'. This is best supported by a light and unified colour treatment.

In a previous section, the Align report mentions landscape plantings around proposed earthworks as an enhancement opportunity. In my assessment plantings to help integrate the proposed western embankment structure should be given consideration as a mitigation measure. Clearly, these will need to be compatible with flood protection objectives, but other objectives should be:

- To assist the visual integration of the proposed embankment landform with the existing river bank and flood plain landforms.
- To enhance the natural character of the river margins.
- To enhance river bank stability.

I have assessed the proposal as having significant adverse effects on close proximity residential viewpoints in the East Gore area. From lower elevation properties from which the stop bank already obscures views of the river, existing trees already provide for some general screening (particular in summer months when the trees are in leaf) in the direction of the mast. It would be possible to undertake further plantings to enhance this screening effect in the long term from some viewpoints. Given the height of the mast, the time taken for trees to mature, and the need avoid shading nuisance however, the effectiveness of such mitigation planting would be limited. Planting mitigation within affected properties (both lower and higher elevation) could be offered to help screen the bridge and mast but this would also potentially adversely affect outlook, qualities of spaciousness and sun access. Overall, planting mitigation in this area will be of limited utility – but may be worth exploring for specific properties.

Conclusion

The key points in the conclusion of the Align report are:

- The landscape and visual effects of the proposed bridge structure range from moderate-low to high.
- It is acknowledged that the bridge will be a ‘landmark’ structure and a feature many would value.
- The mast is significantly taller than any immediate element in the landscape and its height makes visual screening difficult.

In response, I concur that the bridge will be a landmark feature, but conclude that its landscape and visual effects will be generally positive. I am in agreement however, that there will be significant adverse visual amenity effects on the nearby residential properties in East Gore due to the scale of the mast and its visual dominance at close proximity, and that screening mitigation in this area will be of limited utility.

Comment on issues raised in submissions

The appropriateness of the design in this location

With its asymmetric design incorporating a tall mast, the proposed bridge design is visually striking and the submissions reflect starkly divergent responses to it aesthetically. Whilst some submitters find it ‘beautiful’, ‘spectacular’ or ‘stunning’, a common theme emerging from many of the submitters in opposition, is that it does not ‘fit’ with the rural character of its site, the character of other bridges nearby, or the character of Gore generally.

As discussed above, it is my assessment that the proposed bridge design will be a generally positive addition to the Gore landscape, but that in this particular location, will give rise to adverse visual amenity effects related to visual dominance, from nearby residential properties. In terms of its design style however, I do not consider it inappropriate for the following reasons:

- The natural character of the Mataura River and its margins where it runs through the Gore urban area is highly modified. This is not a setting in which minimizing the visual impact of structures is imperative.
- The form of the structure clearly relates to its function – i.e. the tall mast is required to support the needed span of the bridge and provides for minimal bulk generally. This gives the design an evident logic.
- The Mataura River is arguably, the prime natural feature of Gore (which markets itself on its brown trout fishery, amongst other things). A bridge structure which celebrates the river is not inappropriate in my assessment.
- Whilst I accept that the design style will be novel in the context of Gore, I consider that the design is elegant and that this will be positive. In my assessment, the character of the existing built environment is not so strongly defined or significant, as to make this inappropriate.

Lighting effects

Many submitters have raised the visual effects of the night time lighting of the bridge as an issue of concern. The applicant has responded to Council's S92 request and provided further detail via a report by ELC Ltd, as to the lighting proposed which includes:

- Handrail lighting for safety (located within the bridge handrail).
- Feature lighting of the mast, cables, and bridge (directed downward and switched off between 11.00pm and 6.00am).

The images attached to the ELC report have been provided to give 'an indication of the intention of this lighting design'. No aviation lighting at the top of the mast is shown.

In my assessment, the lighting proposed will accentuate both the positive and adverse visual effects already discussed. From distant viewpoints, and seen in the context of existing street and building lights, and of the proposed shared path lighting, the proposed bridge lighting will add an interesting focal point to the Gore night-time environment.

From the nearby residences however, which I have assessed as adversely impacted by visual dominance effects associated with the large bridge structure close-by, the proposed lighting will further exacerbate these effects. I do not consider that the proposed 11.00pm – 6.00am curfew period will acceptably mitigate the adverse lighting effects on neighbours, as visual dominance effects will still be experienced outside this window. I consider that a more appropriate response, given the proximity of residential properties, would be to minimise lighting to the extent possible and avoid feature lighting altogether.

Visual amenity effects from residential properties on the eastern side of the river

A key theme in the submissions is concern expressed by residents on the eastern side of the river (Huron Street area) about significant adverse visual amenity effects from properties that currently enjoy spacious rural views across the Mataura River. Particular

issues raised include obstruction of views, effect on the character and quality of views, privacy, shading by the mast, and the impact of the height and bulk of the bridge.

The actual visual effects will vary between properties, and whilst I have only viewed the site from public land in this area, it is my assessment that there will be adverse effects of significance due to the proximity and scale of the proposed structure and its visual presence and dominance. From some properties, e.g. 36 Huron Street, the location and relative height of the bridge is such that it will significantly obstruct views. As outlined in my assessment above, I consider that the effects of the bridge from this area will have significant adverse effects on visual amenity values.

Effects of the proposed western embankment

The submission of D John and L Gray raises the proposed western embankment landform as an additional adverse landscape effect that has not been given due consideration.

As discussed above, it is my assessment that the proposed embankment will give rise to adverse natural character effects, in that it will be an obviously artificial landform related to the bridge, within the river floodplain. Unlike the existing bridges across the river downstream, the proposed bridge will not span the entire river flood plain and will need this artificial landform to be created at its western end within the floodplain. This will have modest adverse effects on the legibility of the river landscape. In my assessment these adverse natural character and legibility effects will not be of great significance because:

- The embankment will be relatively small scale in the context of the river floodplain landscape and will read as an integral component of the bridge. Its form will obviously reflect the potential for flood events, thereby referencing the natural floodplain processes.
- There are similar artificial landforms in the form of stop-banks, at the eastern end of the bridge and along the western side of the river floodplain in this area.

Whilst it may be possible (possibly at greater cost) to avoid a western end embankment by utilizing a different foundation design and a different built ramp access design, it is my

assessment that visually, the bridge requires the landform embankment proposed as this provides a horizontal counterbalance to the mast. As noted above, it is my recommendation that riparian plantings appropriate to the natural character of the site and the flood protection constraints, are included to maximize the integration of the embankment, as well as to enhance the natural character of the river margins and the stability of the river bank. Clearly, the spatial scale of these would need to be appropriate to the significant scale of the bridge (i.e. more than the token plantings indicated on the photo-simulations currently).

Assessment against the relevant statutory provisions

The Align report provides an outline of the relevant statutory provisions (section 1.2) but makes no explicit assessment in relation to these. In my assessment this would have been helpful. Below, I provide my own assessment in this regard.

Gore District Plan (GDP)

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 Mataura River is identified as an ONF in Section 2.2 of the GDP. It is described in the Plan as '<i>a significant waterway, of cultural and recreational importance</i>' and as providing the habitat for the brown trout fishery for which the District is well known.</p> <p>The river is a major natural element in the landscape and its waters and floodplain landforms are expressive of its powerful natural processes. Whilst it retains natural character values, the floodplain in the vicinity of the proposed bridge site and indeed of the Gore urban area generally, is also significantly modified by stop banks, rural land</p>

	<p>uses and existing bridges.</p> <p>It is my assessment that the proposed bridge will have minor adverse effects on the natural character values (bio-physical and experiential) in this setting, and that as an aesthetically elegant structure, it will integrate well, with mainly positive effects on sensory and associative landscape values.</p> <p>Overall, it is my assessment that the proposed bridge does not represent inappropriate development in relation to the ONF values of the river.</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 Mataura River.</p>	<p>The natural character of the Mataura River margins in the vicinity of the site and urban Gore more generally, is already significantly modified. In introducing a major new structure, including embankment earthworks on the western side of the river channel, the proposed bridge will further modify the natural character of the river landscape. It is my assessment however, that given the existing level of modification, the adverse effects associated with this will be low in significance. It is my recommendation that locally appropriate indigenous planting is included as a mitigation measure to assist in integrating the new embankment landform.</p>
<p>Objective 3.3(1)</p> <p>Maintain and enhance the amenity values of the various localities within the District whilst respecting the different values and characteristics that exist within each area.</p>	<p>The locality impacted by the proposed bridge is the urban area of Gore. An important contributor to the amenity values in this area is the natural / rural character of the river and its floodplain. The naturalness of the river landscape is already</p>

<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>significantly modified, and it is my assessment that generally speaking, the proposed bridge with its visually striking design will integrate well in this peri-urban setting, and have generally positive effects. Notwithstanding this however, the residential environment closest to the proposed bridge on the eastern side of the river will be subject to significantly adverse visual amenity effects, due to the proximity, scale and visual dominance of the structure and from some viewpoints, its impact on blocking expansive rural views up the river floodplain. It is my conclusion then, that the proposed development is not entirely consistent with Objectives 3.3(1) and 3.3(2).</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>The key earthworks effect on the landscape associated with the bridge relate to the creation of the new western embankment. This will be another artificial landform within the river flood plain. It is my recommendation that locally appropriate indigenous plantings are established (as compatible with flood protection requirements) to assist in visually integrating the landform to the extent possible.</p>
<p>Objective 7.3(2)</p> <p>To ensure that 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>See comments in relation to Objectives 2.2.3(1) and 2.4.3(1) above.</p>

<p>To protect:</p> <p>(a) The natural character of wetlands, and lakes and rivers and their margins.</p> <p>(b) Outstanding natural features and landscapes.</p>	
<p>Objective 7.3(3)</p> <p>Subject to Objective 2, to avoid where practical, remedy or mitigate the adverse effects of the provision of utilities.</p> <p>Policy 7.4(5)</p> <p>To encourage a design and location of utilities that minimises adverse visual effects, where this can be achieved without compromising operation or efficiency.</p>	<p>In general, it is my assessment that the proposed bridge has only minor adverse or positive effects, on landscape and visual amenity values.</p> <p>In relation to the residential area closest to the bridge on the eastern bank of the river however, I consider that the bridge will result in significant adverse visual amenity effects due to the combination of its scale and proximity to the properties in the area. It is my assessment that the design and / or location of the bridge does not appropriately avoid, remedy or mitigate these.</p>

Southland Regional Policy Statement 2017

Provision	Assessment
<p>Objective BRL.1 – Lake and river bed values</p> <p>All significant values of lakes and rivers are maintained and enhanced.</p>	<p>As discussed above, it is my assessment that the proposed bridge is compatible with the maintenance or enhancement of the landscape values of the Mataura River in this locality.</p>
<p>Objective LNF.1 – Identification and protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes</p>	<p>See comments in relation to Objective 2.2.3(1) above.</p>

<p>Southland's 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 of inappropriate activities 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; (e) opportunities to remedy or mitigate previous adverse effects on the outstanding natural feature or landscape; (f) whether the activity will lead to cumulative adverse effects on the outstanding natural feature or landscape; (g) the relationship of the landscape to the surrounding environment. 	<p>It is assessment that given the existing level of modification to the natural character of the river landscape, and the peri-urban context in this area, that the proposed bridge structure will generally integrate well with the landscape character, and should not be considered an inappropriate activity. I consider that adverse effects associated with the activity on natural character values will be minor and that effects on sensory and associative values will be positive or neutral.</p> <p>The proposed bridge will introduce a permanent new built element of significant scale and will result in some modification to floodplain landforms. In the context of the existing modifications to and urban setting of, the ONF in this locality however, and considering the aesthetic qualities of the design, I consider that the effects on the ONF values would be adverse / low - positive.</p> <p>The bridge is intended to be a permanent structure but its footprint in terms of earthworks or impacts on the river flow is relatively modest. Given both the power of the natural river processes and the modified character of the setting, I rate the resilience of the ONF to change in this area as high.</p> <p>No opportunities to remedy or mitigate previous adverse landscape effects on the ONF are identified particularly, except that indigenous plantings to help integrate the proposed western</p>

	<p>embankment (as proposed by me) would assist to remedy the loss of natural vegetation character to a minor extent.</p> <p>As another large structure within the already modified river landscape, the proposed bridge will result in adverse cumulative effects on the natural character of the ONF. It is my assessment however, that the landscape is able to absorb these without major change to the ONF values. Considering factors such as memorability, I assess that the bridge will have positive effects on the Gore landscape more generally.</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>As discussed above, it is my assessment that given the already significantly modified natural character in this urban section of the Mataura River, the proposed bridge will have no more than minor adverse effects on natural character values.</p>
<p>Section 6(b)</p> <p>The protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes from inappropriate subdivision, use, and development.</p>	<p>As discussed above, it is my assessment that given the already significantly modified natural character in this urban section of the Mataura River and the visually striking design, the proposed bridge will have no more than minor adverse effects on natural character (bio-physical and experiential) values, and generally positive or neutral effects on sensory and associative landscape values. I note that given the absence of a cultural effects</p>

	assessment at this stage, my conclusions regarding associative landscape values are provisional.
Section 7(c) The maintenance and enhancement of amenity values.	It is my assessment that in general, the proposed bridge will maintain or enhance amenity values. The exception to this is in relation to the close-by residential properties in East Gore. Here, significant adverse visual amenity effects associated with visual dominance and the blocking of valued rural views have been identified.
Section 7(f) Maintenance and enhancement of the quality of the environment	As discussed above, it is my assessment that insofar as the landscape values are concerned, the proposed bridge is compatible overall, with maintenance and enhancement of the quality of the environment.

Conclusion and recommendations

The key conclusions arising from my peer review of the Align report are as follows:

With regard to landscape effects, I consider that the Align report overemphasises the adverse effects of the proposed bridge to a degree. Whilst it rates effects across the attribute categories as adverse / moderate-low – adverse / moderate, I have assessed landscape effects overall as positive. Neither the Align report nor my assessment has arrived at a final assessment of the cultural / heritage / associative effects, given the lack of a cultural impact assessment on the tangata whenua cultural landscape values.

As regards visual effects, the Align report assesses four representative viewpoints and rates the visual effects of the bridge as within the range of adverse / moderate-low – adverse / high. I have also assessed these viewpoints, along with two others, and find that in general, the proposed bridge will be an element that will have positive visual amenity effects in the Gore landscape. Notwithstanding my positive assessment in general, I am in agreement with the Align report that the proposed structure will have significant adverse visual amenity effects associated with its visual dominance, where it is in close proximity to residential dwellings.

The Align report includes a comparative assessment of an alternative bridge design but comes to no specific conclusion as to which is preferable as regards landscape and visual effects. My review finds that the alternative design would not alter my assessment ratings. The Align report does not address alternative bridge locations. In my assessment, given the finding of significant adverse visual effects from close proximity residential viewpoints associated with the proposed location, this is an important matter that needs addressing.

The Align report discusses mitigation options including tree planting in some areas for screening, and care with lighting and colour. I am in general agreement (with some reservations), and outline my mitigation recommendations below.

I have assessed the proposed development against the relevant statutory provisions and conclude that the proposed development:

- Will have no more than minor adverse effects on natural character values.
- Does not represent inappropriate development in relation to the ONF values of the river (noting that given the absence of a cultural effects assessment at this stage, my conclusions regarding associative landscape values are provisional).
- Will not entirely maintain or enhance amenity values and will result in significant adverse amenity effects on close-by residential properties in East Gore.
- Is largely compatible with maintenance and enhancement of the quality of the environment, insofar as the landscape values are concerned.

My recommendations are as follows:

1. Explore alternative bridge locations and the associated landscape and visual effects, given the finding that the current proposal will result in significant adverse visual amenity effects on nearby residential properties.
2. Seek further advice on the effects of the proposed development on tangata whenua cultural landscape values and take this into account in judging the landscape and visual effects overall.
3. Should the proposed development be approved:
 - (a) Require a lighting design that minimizes visual impact on nearby residential properties.
 - (b) Require a unified colour scheme that enhances the visual 'lightness' of the bridge and which minimizes the colour contrast of the mast with the sky.
 - (c) Require a mitigation planting scheme appropriate to the scale of the bridge, the natural character of the area, and the flood protection requirements, that assists in integrating the western embankment landform with its floodplain setting, enhancing natural character, and protecting the river banks.
 - (d) Explore mitigation planting possibilities on affected close proximity residential properties to minimize adverse visual effects.

Mike Moore

Registered NZILA Landscape Architect

Estimated location
and height of bridge



Figure 1: View toward the proposed bridge site from Church Street, near its intersection with Huron Street

Estimated location
and height of bridge



Figure 2: View toward the proposed bridge site from the picnic area adjacent to Woolwich Street, approx. 260m to the north of the bridge site.