Tony Milne - Summary of Evidence

Summary of evidence of Dean Olsen on behalf of Meridian Energy Limited.

Landscape and Visual Assessment

Christchurch Southern Motorway – Stage 2

Board of Inquiry Hearing
Background

My evidence covers:

- Methodology – the Identification of Landscape Character Areas that the Project traverses and the visual envelope.
- Existing landscape setting – natural character, rural character and amenity values.
- Changes to the appearance of the landscape during construction and once the Project is implemented.
- Changes are assessed in relation to degree of effects on natural character, rural character and visual amenity on each Landscape Character Area within a visual envelope.
- Landscape matters raised by submissions.
Key Points

• The degree of effects depends on the existing landscape context described by each LCA - localised screening effect of hedges and established vegetation, the level of acceptance of necessary infrastructure, the expectation of local property owners and road users.

• The Project will form a significant and immediately apparent part of the landscape that affects and changes its overall existing character.

• Landscape and Visual Effects will result from the introduction of infrastructure, engineered landforms, removal of residential and commercial buildings, and removal of vegetation.
Key Points contd.

- The extent of visual effects is largely dependant on distance and the laws of perspective - generally beyond 500m, views of the Project from houses and public roads will not be adversely visually affected.

- Landscape and visual effects from the Project, in the most part, can be adequately remedied and mitigated - mitigation will be provided by way of planting – indigenous vegetation, exotic tree copses and shelterbelts.
The Existing Landscape

- The setting is typical of a rather ordinary peri-urban and rural landscape on the southern fringe of Christchurch.
- The Project traverses the flat topography of the plains from which views to the Port Hills provide both a visual and physical reference. Open space is bisected by hedgerows and shelterbelts, visually coherent and pleasant in places.
- Existing landscape values:
  - Natural character is essentially derived from exotic vegetation - level is generally moderate, low in places
  - Rural character is essentially derived from modified farmland - level varies low – high
  - Visual Amenity is essentially derived from open space, vegetation and views – level varies low - high.
Landscape and Visual Effects

• Natural elements will be removed and landform altered by the Project but this is offset by the introduction of lizard habitat, exotic and indigenous planting and wetland habitat creation. Effects on NC will be neutral increasing to moderately beneficial over time.

• Rural character will diminish essentially because of the removal of pastoral land cover. Effects on rural character will vary between low and significant.

• Visual effects will vary along the Project alignment between low and significant. They will reduce further over time to low or to moderately beneficial.

• It is important to note that effects are limited to a relatively narrow band.
Summary:

- Landscape and visual effects will vary along the Project alignment between negligible and significant but they will not necessarily be adverse because:
  - Effects are not widespread but limited to a narrow corridor either side of the Project @ a nominal 500m wide.
  - Mainly due to context relatively few dwellings will be affected within the corridor.
  - Some effects are inevitable but in time will be largely remedied and mitigated by landscape planting.
  - There will be positive landscape effects on visual amenity and natural character.
  - Views to Port Hills will be maintained and/or improved.