

Before the Hearings Panel

For the Proposed Queenstown Lakes District Plan

Under the Resource Management Act 1991

In the matter of of a variation to Chapter 21 Rural Zone of the Proposed Queenstown Lakes District Plan, to introduce Priority Area Landscape Schedules 21.22 and 21.23

Summary Statement James Bentley

8 November 2023

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Introduction

- 1 My name is James Arthur Bentley and I am a landscape architect at Boffa Miskell. I provided Landscape Evidence in Chief (EIC) dated 11 September 2023 as part of these proceedings.
- 2 Specifically, my evidence relates to the following PAs:
 - Whakatipu Area: 21.22.1 PA ONF Peninsula Hill (relating to submitter **Coneburn Preserve Holdings Limited and Henley Downs Farm Holdings Limited**).
 - Whakatipu Area: 21.22.16 ONL Eastern Whakatipu Basin (relating to submitter **Glencoe Station Limited and Glencoe Land Development Company Limited**).
 - Whakatipu Area: 21.22.18 PA ONL Cardrona Valley (relating to submitter **Soho Ski Area Limited and Blackmans Creek Holdings No. 1 LP**); and
 - Upper Clutha Area: 21.22.21 PA ONL West Wānaka (relating to submitter **Glendu Bay Trustees Limited**).
- 3 I also provided opinion on the approach and method used.
- 4 This summary statement outlines the key changes and updates that have occurred since I wrote my EIC.

Expert conferencing and Joint Witness Statements

- 5 I participated in expert landscape (and a joint planning) sessions during week commencing 2 October 2023.
- 6 Throughout the week, and following relatively detailed discussions, I along with my fellow experts, agreed on the following:
 - Amendments made (and appropriately reflected) within the Preamble to the Schedules.
 - Replacement of the 'no capacity' with 'extremely limited or no capacity'.
 - Amendments to the descriptor in the 'extremely limited or no capacity'.
- 7 There is also broad agreement to all of the individual PA Schedules, with the only point of disagreement concerning the wording '*barely discernible*' within the Landscape Capacity for the 21.22.21 West Wanaka PA ONL.

Landscape Capacity rating system

- 8 Within my EIC, I outlined a suggested remodelling of the Landscape Capacity Table. My capacity table endeavoured to use a consistency of language already used within the PDP for the Wakatipu Basin for rural living (i.e., very high to very low). It also introduced different wording in the descriptors of each rating. Through discussions with my fellow landscape experts within the landscape conferencing sessions, agreement was sought around removal of the absolute term '*no capacity*' as used within the Rebuttal Version¹ in favour of '*extremely limited to no capacity*'. Part of my descriptor used in my 'very low' rating was used in the '*extremely limited to no*' rating in the JWS.
- 9 Whilst this is a departure in language used elsewhere in the PDP, I am comfortable with this amended rating system.
- 10 Allied to this, I have become aware that within the Council's opening submissions, the Council is proposing a proposed change to the description of the '*extremely limited to no capacity*':

~~Extremely limited or no landscape capacity: there are extremely limited or no opportunities for development of this type. Typically this corresponds to a situation where, other than rare exceptions, development of this type is likely to materially compromise the identified landscape values. However, there may be exceptions where occasional, unique or discrete development protects identified landscape values.~~

~~No landscape capacity: typically this corresponds to a situation where development of this type is likely to materially compromise the identified landscape values.~~

- 11 In my view, I prefer the wording used in the JWS. This wording was heavily debated amongst the landscape architects and planners during expert conferencing. I consider that the now-proposed council description removes to a degree, the high-level status of the Schedules, where carefully located development may still be able to be identified whilst protecting landscape values. I favour the retention of the last sentence specifically. This signals that there could be exceptions, within the very broad PA's, where there is potential for unique, discrete and carefully designed buildings and structures to be integrated into the landscape. In my view, the proposed wording now implies a far narrower window of opportunity of assessment. For these reasons, I support the working within the JWS.

¹ Rebuttal Evidence (or Rebuttal Version) of Bridget Gilbert, dated 29 September 2023.

21.22.21 West Wanaka PA ONL

- 12 I will now focus on the only area of disagreement between Ms Gilbert and myself. This focusses on the landscape capacity description for rural living².
- 13 The JWS³ highlights this at points 10-13, and this outlined within Ms Gilberts Landscape Summary Statement⁴ at points 11-13.
- 14 Ms Gilbert prefers to use the words *'barely discernible'*, and I preferred to use the words *'reasonably difficult to see'*. The full text is outlined below:

xi. ~~Rural living | very limited~~ landscape capacity for rural living development located on lower-lying terrain and sited so that it is contained by landforms and vegetation – with the location, scale, and design of any proposal ensuring that it is **barely discernible** from external viewpoints. The exception to this is views from ~~Roy's~~ Peak, where rural living development should be extremely visually recessive. Developments should be of a modest scale; have a low key 'rural' character; integrate landscape restoration and enhancement; ~~and enhance public access; and protects the area's ONL values;~~

- 15 Within my EIC and within the JWS, I was supportive of using *'reasonably difficult to see from beyond the boundary of the site in question'* as a test for visibility of subdivision and development within ONFs and ONLs of a proposal as it is already used within the PDP under Chapter 6 (Chapter 6.3.3.1(b)).
- 16 However, on reflection, and having the opportunity to review other PA Schedules, I am now of the opinion that it appears odd that a further visibility 'test' is applied to the rural living landscape capacity for this PA, and not others. This PA is no more 'important' than other PAs, or more sensitive, therefore in my view, does not warrant a separate 'visual test'.
- 17 In my view, the landscape test of whether rural living can successfully be accommodated into any landscape, will depend upon how the identified values and attributes will continue to be protected and that no additional 'visibility' test, which may have policy persuasions, be appropriate. I therefore support the approach taken by colleague, Mr. Ferguson.
- 18 Concerning the landscape character of both Parkins Bay and Glendhu Bay, notably close to the lake, I consider that this appears to be a more domesticated and modified landscape, with a pattern of land use not reflective of the surrounding mountain and roche moutonnée landscape that is also contained within the same PA. It also differs from the ONF of

² Listed as xi. Within the Capacity rating.

³ Joint Witness Statement of Landscape Experts on 21.22.21 PA ONL West Wanaka.

⁴ Bridget Gilbert Landscape Summary Statement and Response to new evidence and expert conferencing, dated 13 October 2023.

Roys Peninsula. The character is more reflective of a visual amenity landscape; however, the scale of this area was considered too small to identify it as such, and the Environment Court therefore classified this area as within / part of, the surrounding ONL⁵. With this in mind, I consider that the capacity for future rural living opportunities may be similar to the already consented visitor accommodation within parts of this PA (such as within Fern Burn Valley or Parkins Bay). Any additional rural living would need to be carefully scaled, located and designed to ensure that the identified landscape values are not adversely affected.

- 19 So, whilst I support a *'very limited'* rating, I consider that further rural living could be co-located within existing consented development if this can be achieved in a manner that is sympathetically designed and visually recessive from external viewpoints, and of a modest scale and protecting of identified landscape values. In my view, the wording *'barely discernible'*, which introduces a specific visibility test envisages future development to be almost invisible. Consented development in Glendhu involves an 18 hole-championship golf course, a series of lakeside buildings including a club house, restaurant and café, a jetty and visitor accommodation units and 42 residences which will be visually recessive set within a planted landscape.
- 20 I therefore disagree with Ms Gilbert where Ms Gilbert states in her Summary Evidence that *'This is because of the level of built development and other modification (for example, golf course and jetty activity) that is anticipated as part of the consented environment at Glendhu Bay. In my opinion, the consented environment is extremely close to the limit that the landscape can successfully absorb, meaning a more stringent visibility test for future rural living development is appropriate to manage cumulative adverse landscape effects'*.
- 21 In my view, this PA is no different from other modified PAs where some further development could be appropriately and carefully sited and designed to continue to protect landscape values.
- 22 Based on this, I consider that the descriptive wording within 'rural living' of this PA be amended to be more consistent with other PAs:
- *landscape capacity for rural living development located on lower-lying terrain and sited so that it is contained by landforms and vegetation. The location, scale, and design of any proposal ensuring that it is barely discernible from external viewpoints. The exception to this is views from*

⁵ Upper Clutha Tracks Trust v Queenstown Lakes District Council (first Parkins Bay decision)

~~Roys Peak, where rural living development should be extremely visually recessive.~~ development should be of a modest scale; have a low key 'rural' character; integrate landscape restoration or enhancement; or enhance public access.

Date: 8 November 2023

James Bentley