

**REPORT TO:** M E Skeggs

**FROM:** Marion Read, Principal, Read Landscapes

**REFERENCE:** 13001 – Skeggs Private Plan Change

**SUBJECT:** Landscape and Visual Assessment Report

**DATE:** 18<sup>th</sup> July 2013

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 A private plan change is proposed for a site located at 190/192 Wanaka Luggate Highway (State Highway 84). The site is legally described as Lot 1 DP303207 and encompasses an area of 7.325ha. It is currently zoned Rural General in the terms of the Queenstown Lakes District Plan (the District Plan).
- 1.2 The purpose the private plan change is to enable the development of the site for visitor accommodation. It is proposed to alter the policies and objectives, and the rules of Chapter 5 of the District Plan, the Rural Areas, to enable a Visitor Accommodation overlay to apply to the site. Under these proposed policies and rules such an activity would become a controlled activity on the site.

## **2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION**

- 2.1 The site is located on the State Highway 84 (SH 84) to the west of the intersection with State Highway 6 and Riverbank Road. It is roughly triangular in shape. To the immediate east of the site is located an area of land bounded by the subject site, SH 84 and Riverbank Road which is zoned Rural Lifestyle in the terms of the District Plan. This land is the location of four dwellings sited on relatively large lots. Three of these dwellings are visible from within the subject site. To the immediate south west of the site the, as yet undeveloped, Three Parks zone is located. This land is currently used for agricultural purposes with a service centre located at the old Wanaka Aerodrome buildings some 250m south west of the subject site. To the immediate north west of the subject site is Puzzling World which is a recreational activity on a relatively small site zoned Rural General. To the north of the site is located the Highway and to the north of that Mount Iron rears, almost vertically, above the site.
- 2.2 The site consists of glacial till which has been deposited in hummocky ridges below the Roche Moutonnee of Mount Iron. These ridges drop away to the south west where a paleochannel forms a low plane running parallel to the south western boundary of the subject site. The first ridge is approximately parallel to the highway along the north of the site and it rises in a series of hummocks to the east. The land drops away from the road before rising steeply to form this ridge. The second ridge runs more or less parallel to the south western boundary. Between the two ridges is a hollow, and on the south western slope of the second ridge is a terrace area which steps the landform to the west.
- 2.3 The site has two dwellings located on it, a large dwelling roughly in the south western corner and a small dwelling in the western corner. Each dwelling has a small curtilage area. The majority of the site has been maintained as a nine hole golf course. As a consequence the broader site is kept mown and greens are dotted around the property. The site is bisected by the driveway to the larger house which runs along the top of the more southerly ridge. This is a paved driveway with hard kerbs and shrub planting along either side. Amenity trees are scattered about the broader site.

- 2.4 The site is located in an area which is important as an entranceway to Wanaka. State Highway 6 is located approximately 450m to the east of the site and so visitors to Wanaka from Cromwell and the West Coast pass by the site. Those coming from the West Coast pass Mount Iron before turning right onto SH 84. Those coming from Cromwell cross the Cardrona River before rising to the intersections with the West Coast road and Riverbank Road. The road runs westwards and rises from the intersection with Riverbank Road before curving to the north west adjacent to Puzzling World. Puzzling World appears as a prominent feature in views up the road from this direction. Other than Puzzling World, the road corridor has a rural character until the development at the edge of Wanaka township becomes visible.
- 2.5 Travelling from Wanaka, the road rises and curves to the south east until Puzzling World is reached where the road swings to the east. The character of the road corridor is semi-rural, with protected open space to the north of the road impinged upon by dwellings along the terrace crest. On the right hand side of the road it first passes the northern extent of the Wanaka Golf Course then passes two larger residential sites (zoned Rural General) and then the northern extent of the Three Parks zone. The residential sites are largely screened from the road by exotic amenity and shelter trees, as is the golf course. Open views over the Three Parks zone are possible for a short distance then the road corridor becomes more enclosed by trees to the south and then by Puzzling World. Puzzling World is not so prominent from this perspective. A small glimpse into the subject site is possible through its gateway from this direction. To the north Mount Iron is a prominent feature of this journey, becoming more dominant as one gets closer.

### **3.0 PROPOSAL**

- 3.1 It is proposed to create a visitor accommodation sub zone for the site by amending the objectives, policies and rules of S5 of the District Plan. It is intended that once operative that the plan change would enable visitor accommodation to be established on this site as a controlled activity. It is proposed that Council should retain control over the following matters:
- exterior appearance of buildings including height;
  - setback from internal boundaries;
  - setback from roads;
  - access;
  - landscaping;
  - screening of outdoor storage and parking areas; and
  - the provision of all service connections.
- 3.2 In addition it is proposed that Planning Map 18 be amended to identify the Visitor Accommodation Sub-Zone and that earthworks required for the development of the site would not be subject to the site standards for earthworks in addition to the requirement for controlled activity consent.
- 3.3 It is my understanding that the existing site and zone standards for the Rural General zone would still apply to the site, save those for earthworks.

### **4.0 LANDSCAPE CLASSIFICATION**

- 4.1 The intention of a plan change is clearly to facilitate an activity which is not generally anticipated under the current zoning of the land. Consequently the assessment of the proposed rezoning needs to be made against the objectives and policies of the District Plan. The landscape classification of the subject site is relevant in regard to determining the policies and objectives which are relevant to that assessment.
- 4.2 The site has been previously assessed by QLDC in relation to RM010455, the subdivision consent which created the subject lot, and RM110187, a more recent application to undertake earthworks on the site. In both these resource consent applications the site was assessed as being a part of the Visual Amenity Landscape of the broader Wanaka outwash plane.

4.3 The subject site is located within an area of Rural General zoned land which encompasses Mount Iron, generally accepted to be an Outstanding Natural Feature, and extends to the south encompassing the Wanaka Golf Course. This area of land is located on glacial till and in its more western extent this is on the terminal moraine landform itself. This landscape is reasonably extensively modified being the location of SH 84 which bisects the Rural General land. On the southern side of the road a mix of rural residential type properties, Puzzling World and the golf course are located. I note that the area of land immediately to the west of the Three Parks zone currently shown as Rural General Land on the planning maps is subject to Plan Change 4 (North Three Parks) and that this has just become operative. On this side of the road the cloak of human activity is quite obvious. On the northern side of the highway the landscape is more natural with a more open character and with indigenous scrub being present behind a fringe of exotic trees planted within the road corridor. Despite this level of human intervention the formative processes of this landscape are quite distinct and it is a highly legible and expressive landscape. The transient values of the landscape are found in the season variation of the deciduous exotic trees in the vicinity. Consequently I consider that the landscape within which the site is located is correctly classified as Visual Amenity.

## 5.0 ASSESSMENT

5.1 In undertaking this assessment I have applied the relevant Policies and Objectives of Section 4 and Section 5 of the District Plan to inform my approach.

5.2 Section 4 Matters

### ***4.2.5 Objective:***

***Subdivision, use and development being undertaken in the District in a manner which avoids, remedies or mitigates adverse effects on landscape and visual amenity values.***

5.2.1 ***1. Future Development***

***(a) To avoid, remedy or mitigate the adverse effects of development and/or subdivision in those areas of the District where the landscape and visual amenity values are vulnerable to degradation.***

5.2.1.1 The management of the entrance to, and exit from, Wanaka along SH 84 is important and this has been recognised in a number of ways. Open space is protected on the northern side of SH 84 from the Anderson Heights roundabout to the base of Mount Iron along the margin of the road corridor. This southern side of Mount Iron itself is mainly Crown Land managed by the Department of Conservation. The northern portion of the Three Parks zone adjacent to SH 84 is to be maintained as open space, also in order to protect the entrance to Wanaka<sup>1</sup> In addition the Wanaka Structure Plan Review in 2007 noted that 'The rural character of the key entrances to town should be retained and protected through appropriate zoning and provision for landscaping<sup>2</sup>.

5.2.1.2 The 2km journey between Riverbank Road and the Anderson Heights roundabout has a moderately natural character with exotic trees forming a fairly dense canopy to the south, and with exotic trees in the road corridor and more indigenous vegetation apparent on the slopes of Mount Iron. The dwellings within Anderson Heights on the escarpment ridge to the north of the highway make a significant intrusion into this natural character, but are more noticeable when travelling east. From just west of Riverbank Road the road corridor is enclosed to the south by the hummocky moraine landforms within the subject site and its easterly neighbour. While Puzzling World is a fairly prominent feature approximately in the centre of this journey, it is set into a dense planting of trees which ensure that the degree to which it detracts from the natural character of this stretch of road way is minimised.

5.2.1.3 The importance of managing the entrance to Wanaka along SH 84 and the emphasis placed on maintaining open space (in terms of the absence of buildings) along the margins of the road mean that the subject site is sensitive to development along its northern edge. I

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<sup>1</sup> Plan Change 16, S32 report, P23.

<sup>2</sup> Wanaka Structure Plan Review 2007, P 12.

consequently consider that development on the subject site should be restricted to that area to the south of the more northern ridgeline. The majority of the site, however, is contained within the visual catchment of the Three Parks zone. I consider that it would provide some amenity to that zone, providing an intermediate area between the urban development of that site and the more natural flanks of Mount Iron. I do consider that inappropriate earthworks could degrade this visual amenity but consider that sensitive development would retain this amenity value. Views of the site from outside of the Three Parks zone are extremely limited and I consider that future development on the site would likely be indistinguishable from that within the zone in these views.

5.2.2 ***(b) To encourage development and/or subdivision to occur in those areas of the District with greater potential to absorb change without detracting from landscape and visual amenity values.***

5.2.2.1 The hummocky terrain of the site, in conjunction with its limited visibility from public places and its association with the Three Parks zone mean that it has, in my opinion, a moderately high ability to absorb change without detracting from landscape and visual amenity values.

5.2.3 ***(c) To ensure subdivision and/or development harmonises with local topography and ecological systems and other nature conservation values as far as possible.***

5.2.3.1 The hummocky terrain of the site is an interesting feature of the vicinity and one which contributes to the character of the entrance to Wanaka along SH 84. In my opinion these landforms should be retained and the hummocky terrain of the site in its more southern reaches should be utilised to assist the absorption of future development. This should be managed by the use of appropriate assessment matters in relation to future earthworks on the site. The site is highly modified from an ecological perspective. It is the case that development could harmonise with the remnant ecological systems which are present on Mount Iron.

5.2.4 ***4. Visual Amenity Landscapes***

***(a) To avoid, remedy or mitigate the adverse effects of subdivision and development on the visual amenity landscapes which are:***

- ***highly visible from public places and other places which are frequented by members of the public generally; and***
- ***visible from public roads.***

5.2.4.1 The subject site is visible, in part, from SH 84. The majority of the site is not highly visible from any public place nor from and public road. Brief views into the site are possible from Riverbank Road but these are over land zoned for low density residential development within the Three Parks zone. Distant views to the site are currently possible from Ballantyne Road but, again, these views are over the Three Parks zone which will transform these views and may, in fact, obstruct them.

5.2.4 ***(b) To mitigate loss of or enhance natural character by appropriate planting and landscaping.***

5.2.4.1 It is proposed that landscaping and earthworks be aspects of future development over which Council would retain control. In my opinion these controls should be applied to maintain the character of the road corridor. The predominant threat to the natural character of the balance of the site is in regard to the landforms which I consider should be maintained as much as is feasible. The landscaping controls should be applied to maintain a level of open space within the development area so as to provide a visual transition between Three Parks and Mount Iron to the south.

5.2.5 ***5. Outstanding Natural Features***

***To avoid subdivision and / or development on and in the vicinity of distinctive landforms and landscape features, including:***

***(a) In the Wakatipu; the Kawarau, Arrow and Shotover Gorges; Peninsula, Queenstown, Ferry, Morven and Slope hills; Lake Hayes; Hillocks; Camp Hill; Mt Alfred; Pig, Pigeon and Tree Islands;***  
***- unless the subdivision and / or development will not result in adverse effects which will be more than minor on:***

***(i) Landscape values and natural character***

5.2.5.1 The site is in the vicinity of Mount Iron which is generally accepted to be an Outstanding Natural Feature. Development up to the road margin would create a level of visual distraction and clutter which would detract from the naturalness and significance of Mount Iron. I consider that restricting development to the southern side of the northern ridgeline would ensure that no adverse effect would occur.

***(ii) Visual amenity values***

5.2.5.2 The presence of development within the subject site which was readily visible from SH 84 would detract from the visual amenity of Mount Iron in this vicinity.

5.2.6 ***6. Urban Development***

***b) To discourage urban subdivision and development in the other outstanding natural landscape (and features) and in the visual amenity landscapes of the district.***

5.2.6.1 The subject site is somewhat isolated from the balance of its landscape context by SH 84 to the north and by Puzzling World to the west. Consequently I do not consider that the development of the more southern portions of the site, those visually associated with the Three Parks zone to the south west, would have an adverse effect on the balance of this landscape. This having been said, the site does provide a transition area between the future urban development within the Three Parks zone and the Outstanding Natural Feature of Mount Iron, and the development of the site should reflect this.

5.2.7 ***(d) To avoid remedy and mitigate the adverse effects of urban subdivision and development in visual amenity landscapes by avoiding sprawling subdivision and development along roads.***

5.2.7.1 It has been recommended above that an open space or 'no build' area should be identified along the northern margin of the subject site in order to protect the character of the entrance to Wanaka and the natural character of Mount Iron. This open space area would also ensure that development was not apparent from this road and would thus avoid sprawling development along this road.

5.2.8 ***7. Urban Edges***

***To identify clearly the edges of:***

***(a) Existing urban areas;***

***(b) Any extensions to them; and***

***(c) Any new urban areas***

***• by design solutions and to avoid sprawling development along the roads of the district.***

5.2.8.1 It is the case that the subject site is located outside of the 'inner growth boundary' for Wanaka as determined by the Wanaka Structure Plan but within the 'outer growth boundary' which follows Riverbank Road to the east of the site<sup>3</sup>. At the same time this plan proposes that the subject site and its neighbour, the location of Puzzling World, should remain zoned Rural General. This seems inconsistent. It is my opinion that, notwithstanding the importance of managing the entrance to Wanaka along SH 84, that the subject site can be appropriately contained within the urban boundary and that its visual and physical association with the Three Parks zone means that this should avoid any adverse effects on either the urban form or on Mount Iron as a landscape feature.

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<sup>3</sup> Wanaka Structure Plan Review 2007, P16

## 5.2.9 **8. Avoiding Cumulative Degradation**

*In applying the policies above the Council's policy is:*

### 5.2.9.1 **(a) to ensure that the density of subdivision and development does not increase to a point where the benefits of further planting and building are outweighed by the adverse effect on landscape values of over domestication of the landscape.**

It has been noted both that development in the more southern portions of the subject site would be visually connected with development in the Three Parks zone and that the subject site provides a transition between that zone and Mount Iron behind it. I consider that it would be desirable to retain some open space within the subject site so as to maintain this transitional function for the site. This could be achieved by limiting the site coverage within the subject site.

### 5.2.9.2 **(b) to encourage comprehensive and sympathetic development of rural areas.**

This topographically complex site is readily able to absorb development on its southern slopes while maintaining the rural amenity of the SH 84 corridor to the north. Consequently comprehensive and sympathetic development is possible.

## 5.2.10 **9. Structures**

*To preserve the visual coherence of:*

### 5.2.10.1 **(a) outstanding natural landscapes and features and visual amenity landscapes by:**

- **encouraging structures which are in harmony with the line and form of the landscape;**
- **avoiding, remedying or mitigating any adverse effects of structures on the skyline, ridges and prominent slopes and hilltops;**
- **encouraging the colour of buildings and structures to complement the dominant colours in the landscape;**
- **encouraging placement of structures in locations where they are in harmony with the landscape;**
- **promoting the use of local, natural materials in construction.**

As built form within the subject site will only be readily visible across the Three Parks zone I do not consider that any controls bar the 8m height limit of the Rural General zone are necessary to ensure that structures should be in harmony with the line and form of the landscape. I do consider that a 'no build' zone should be established along the northern margin of the site to ensure that no built form is visible over the natural landforms from SH 84 in order to prevent any adverse effect on this ridge. As the subject site forms a transitional area between the urban form of Three Parks and the Outstanding Natural Feature of Mount Iron applying similar controls over the colour and exterior materials of future buildings which are similar to those usually applied to buildings in the Rural zones would seem appropriate. These are that buildings should be clad with materials coloured in natural shades of browns, greens, or greys which should have a light reflectance value (LRV) of less than 36%. Controls over earthworks combined with the northern 'no build' area should ensure that the placement of buildings should be in harmony with the landscape.

### 5.2.10.2 **(b) visual amenity landscapes**

- **by screening structures from roads and other public places by vegetation whenever possible to maintain and enhance the naturalness of the environment; and**

As has been noted above, a 'no build' area along the northern margin of the site would be sufficient to ensure that structures on the site were adequately screened from public view, maintaining and enhancing the naturalness of the entrance to Wanaka and of Mount Iron. Further screening of structures from within the Three Parks zone or from Riverbank Road would, in my opinion, be unnecessary.

### 5.2.10.3 **(c) All rural landscapes by**

- **limiting the size of signs, corporate images and logos**

- ***providing for greater development setbacks from public roads to maintain and enhance amenity values associated with the views from public roads.***

The proposed 'no build' area along the northern margin of the site would effectively provide a greater setback from SH 84 which would maintain and enhance the amenity value associated with the views from that public road in this vicinity. The entrance to the site from SH 84 is located immediately adjacent to the Puzzling World entrance. Signage in this location would have a cumulative adverse effect. Its co-location with the Puzzling World signage would reduce the extent of this effect. I note that an entrance is also proposed from within the Three Parks zone but I am unclear precisely where this entrance is to be. Signage at that entrance should comply with the Three Parks rules.

### 5.3 Section 5 Matters

#### ***5.3.2 Objective 1 – Character and Landscape Value***

***To protect the character and landscape value of the rural area by promoting sustainable management of its natural and physical resources and the control of adverse effects caused through inappropriate activities.***

#### 5.3.1 ***Policies:***

***1.1 Considering fully the district wide landscape objectives and policies when considering subdivision, use and development in the Rural General Zone.***

With regard to landscape matters this has been undertaken in the previous section of this assessment.

#### 5.3.2 ***1.4 Ensure activities not based on the rural resources of the area occur only where the character of the rural area will not be adversely impacted.***

As noted above, visitor accommodation development in the more southern portions of the site would not have an adverse effect on the character of the rural area. The determination of a 'no build' zone along the northern margin of the site would ensure that the character of the entrance to Wanaka and of Mount Iron would not be adversely impacted.

#### 5.3.3 ***1.6 Avoid, remedy or mitigate adverse effects of development on the landscape values of the District.***

As noted above, appropriate controls on earthworks, landscaping and built form will avoid any adverse effects of development on the landscape value of the vicinity.

#### 5.3.4 ***1.7 Preserve the visual coherence of the landscape by ensuring all structures are to be located in areas with the potential to absorb change.***

The use of appropriate controls on earthworks, landscaping and built form, plus the determination of a 'no build' area along the northern margin of the site will ensure all structures are located within areas with the potential to absorb change.

#### 5.3.7 ***1.8 Avoid remedy or mitigate the adverse effects of the location of structures and water tanks on skylines, ridges, hills and prominent slopes.***

The provision of a 'no build' area along the northern margin of the site will ensure that the location of structures within the site will avoid any adverse effects on skylines or ridgelines.

## **6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.1 That a 'no build' area be established along the northern margin of the site. The southern boundary of this area should be located so as to ensure that no building of 8m in height should be visible over the ridgeline in views from SH 84 to the east and north of the site. The construction of buildings in this area shall remain controlled by the rules of the Rural General zone.

- 6.2 That earthworks proposed for the development of the site should be assessed according to the following assessment matters:

Earthworks:

Effects on landscape and visual amenity values.

- (a) Whether and to what extent the scale and location of any cut and fill will adversely affect:
- the visual quality and amenity values of the landscape;
  - the natural landforms of the visitor accommodation subzone;
  - the visual amenity values of surrounding sites, in particular Mount Iron.
- (b) Whether the earthworks will take into account the sensitivity of the landscape.
- (c) The potential for cumulative effects on the natural form of existing landscapes.
- (d) The proposed rehabilitation of the site and to what extent re-vegetation will mitigate any adverse effects.
- (e) Whether and to what extent the earthworks create an area that is inconsistent with the character of the surrounding landscape, in particular Mount Iron.

- 6.3 That buildings proposed in the development of the site should be assessed according to the following design controls:

Buildings:

Maximum height 8m above natural ground level;

Exterior claddings including roofing are to be coloured in the natural range of browns, greens and greys with a reflectivity value of less than 36% so as to ensure that the buildings appear recessive in their context;

No building shall be visible from SH 84 from a point directly north of the north western corner of the site extending east to the intersection with Riverbank Road;

Site coverage shall be limited to 30%.

- 6.4 That landscaping proposed in the development should be assessed according to the following design controls:

Landscaping:

Shall be used to soften the appearance of built form in views from within and across the Three Parks zone;

Shall provide some screening between development within the visitor accommodation subzone and neighbours to the east;

Shall enhance the ecological integrity of the site.

## **7.0 CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 It is proposed to create a visitor accommodation overlay within the Rural General section of the Queenstown Lakes District Plan to apply to a site located at 190/192 Wanaka Luggate Highway (SH 84). This would enable the development of the site as a controlled activity but the site and zone standards of the Rural General zone, save those for earthworks, would still apply.
- 7.2 Because of its topography the majority of the site is visually connected with the adjacent Three Parks zone to its west. The balance of the site, a ridge within the northern portion of the site, provides some containment to SH 84 and contributes positively to the entrance experience to Wanaka from Cromwell and the West Coast.
- 7.3 The topography of the site and its visual connection with the Three Parks zone mean that the majority of it has a moderately high ability to absorb development of the type which is anticipated. This is not the case of the northern most portion of the site and it is recommended that this part of the site be covered with a 'no-build' area to protect the amenity of the entrance to Wanaka.
- 7.4 The hummocky topography of the site creates its ability to absorb development and contributes to the amenity of the Three Parks zone. Consequently earthworks within the

subject site should be constrained to ensure that the natural landforms are maintained in as much as is possible.

- 7.5 The site forms a transition area between the Three Parks zone and the Outstanding Natural Feature of Mount Iron in views from and across that zone. Consequently it is considered that the treatment of built form within the area should be similar to that of the Rural General zone so as not to detract from the natural character of that feature. In addition, limiting site coverage to 30% should ensure that built form is balanced adequately by open space.
- 7.6 The landscaping treatment of the site should be such that built form is softened in views from and across the Three Parks zone; that the amenity of neighbours is maintained; and that the ecological integrity of the site is enhanced.

Read Landscapes



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Principal