

THE HILLS RESORT LIMITED

Proposed Plan Change at Hills Resort Zone

Assessment of Effects on the Environment

15 May 2025

BROWN&COMPANY
P L A N N I N G G R O U P



1. Introduction

The Hills Resort Limited (**THRL**) requests a change (the **Change**) to the Queenstown Lakes District Council's (**QLDC**) proposed Queenstown Lakes District Plan (**PDP**), to The Hills Resort Zone (**THRZ**). In requesting this plan change the Requestor is required, pursuant to Clause 22 of the Schedule 1 to the Resource Management Act 1991 (the **Act**), to assess the effects of the activities enabled by the Change on the environment.

The assessment of effects on the environment of the requested plan change is set out in this document. It addresses Clauses 6 (information required in assessment of environmental effects); and 7 (matters that must be addressed by assessment of environmental effects) of Schedule 4 of the First Schedule to the Act.

The following categories of effects on the environment are addressed in this assessment:

- Effects on landscape character and visual amenity values;
- Effects in relation to geotechnical conditions and natural hazards;
- Effects from noise;
- Transport and infrastructure effects;
- Effects from residential activity;
- Effects on neighbouring properties; and
- Positive effects.

The assessment takes into account and summarises the detailed technical reports prepared by experts in the relevant disciplines. The technical reports are an integral part of this Request. The environmental discipline, report author and document number are set out in the following table:

Document No.	Assessment Discipline	Document name, author, company,	Date
DOCUMENT 5	Design Statement	<i>Design Statement</i> RBT Design Limited (Brett Thompson)	7 May 2025
DOCUMENT 6	Landscape Assessment	<i>Landscape Assessment Report</i> Boffa Miskell	9 May 2025
DOCUMENT 7	Geotechnical and Natural Hazard Assessment	<i>Addendum Natural Hazards Assessment</i> Geotago	17 October 2024

Other technical reports prepared for prior District Plan and resource consent processes involving THRZ land are also referenced in this assessment.

2. The Site and existing environment

THRZ is located within the triangle-shaped wedge formed by McDonnell Road to the east, Arrowtown-Lake Hayes Road to the west, and Hogans Gully Road to the south, within the Wakatipu Basin. The existing 18-hole golf course currently occupies the majority of the land and is characterised by varied terrain with clusters of exotic and native trees, areas of tussock grassland, sand bunkers, small ponds and art installations. There is also an existing 9-hole back course, located within the south-west area of THRZ.

Aside from the golf course, the Site is largely undeveloped. Existing buildings are limited to the Clubhouse and carparking located centrally within the Site within current Activity Area C, and residential units within existing Home Sites (**HS**) 1, 2 and 4, and buildings associated with the

golf resort in Activity Areas G, 9 and S1, and farm buildings. All existing buildings are integrated with well-established vegetation, and are difficult to discern from outside of THRZ.

Beyond THRZ, Arrowtown is located to the east of McDonnell Road along the banks of the Arrow River. The town centre is located to the north of the Site, with the southern reaches of the residential area reaching approximately halfway down the McDonnell Rd extent of THRZ, and contained by the Arrowtown Golf Course. On the western side of McDonnell Road, there are three existing rural residential land parcels that are surrounded by THRZ (82 – 148 McDonnell Road), and a further land parcel (owned by the Requestor) bounded on the north and west by THRZ. These are zoned Wakatipu Basin Rural Amenity Zone (**WBRAZ**), or WBRAZ Lifestyle Precinct under the PDP.

On the western side of Arrowtown-Lake Hayes Road is Millbrook Resort and golf course, with the recently developed Ayrburn historic commercial precinct located below that. Nearby Hogans Gully Road is characterised by residential units on larger landholdings, set well back from the road and generally difficult to see due to the topography and vegetation. The northern extent of the Operative Bendemeer Special Zone is at a higher elevation, and to the east of that is the Hogans Gully Resort Zone, which is a golf resort zone with similarities to THRZ, providing for a golf course, residential and visitor accommodation activity and which is undeveloped as yet.

The Site and environs are described in greater detail in the Landscape Assessment ([DOCUMENT 6](#)).

3. Effects on landscape character and visual amenity values

The Landscape Assessment ([DOCUMENT 6](#)) prepared by Boffa Miskell addresses the landscape and visual effects associated with the Plan Change request. The Landscape Assessment sets out in detail the proposed amendments to the Structure Plan. In summary, the total addition in extent of area of Activity Areas (including HS) will be 5.42ha (an increase from 15.88ha under the operative THRZ Structure Plan to 21.3ha under the Change). The building area coverage (as set out in Rules 47.5.8 and 47.5.10) will be increasing by only 0.27ha (from 7.29ha to 7.56ha).

The landscape values of THRZ are set out in Section 47.1.3 of THRZ provisions. In summary it can be characterised as a complex landscape with a variable sense of openness and enclosure arising from landform patterning (hummocky moraine landform with plateau) and vegetation patterns (exotic amenity plantings though the golf course and native plantings adjacent to waterbody features). However a level of coherence is given to the landscape despite these variations due to the golf course and its associated “cloak” of human activity, lending an overall “parkland” landscape character. As parts of THRZ are visible from outside of the Zone, development should be integrated by being well-sited and visually discreet within the undulating landform and varied vegetation.

With regards to visual effects of the Plan Change, the Landscape Assessment identifies and analyses each Activity Area and HS. A summary of the conclusions on the visual effect arising from the Change is set out in **Table 1** below (note that where changes to Activity Areas are so minor that they would not result in any visual effect changes, they have not been included in the table).

Table 1: Overview of visual effects resulting from the changes to the Activity Areas

Activity Area	Location	Description of changes	Visual catchment	Visibility	Visual effect
A1	Central	Moving from north of Clubhouse / Activity Area C (now proposed to be the Golf Training	McDonnell Road	Very low visibility from outside of the site, apart from the elevated viewpoint on Feehly Hill where visual effects would be Low. Potential glimpsed views from the	Very Low-Low – comparable to or lower than the existing Activity Area 1

Activity Area	Location	Description of changes	Visual catchment	Visibility	Visual effect
		Facility (Activity Area) to the west		elevated Arrowtown escarpment (Cotter Avenue/ Advance Terrace) around a kilometre away. No views from low-lying viewpoints.	
A2	Eastern	Expanding to the north	Residential lots to the east Arrowtown escarpment	Screened by landform from residential buildings on neighbouring lots to the east, the planting and landform separating this activity area from the neighbouring property will help to block most of the views, but the tops of the proposed buildings may be visible. Partially screened from the key viewpoints along the Arrowtown escarpment off Shaw Street at a distance of over 500m.	Low at most
A4	Eastern	Southern end shifting eastwards, with new LAMA	Arrowtown escarpment	Filtered views, with roofs of building potentially visible between vegetation, may be gained at a distance of around 700m from the Arrowtown escarpment.	Low – comparable to the current location due with landform screening and planting
A5	Central	Expanding to the north, with a separate LAMA proposed near the north-eastern corner	Arrowtown escarpment	Mostly screened by A4, and the associated LAMA to the east	Low
A10	Northern / Central	Expanding to the south	Slope Hill above Lake Hayes Arrowtown escarpment	Existing landform, rocky outcrops, and vegetation to the east is included in a LAMA which has been extended to the south to ensure that the additional built form is screened from Arrowtown	Very low
A11	Northern / Central	Expanding to the south	Arrowtown escarpment	Views towards the east and west are curtailed by landform. The high-lying area does not allow for views from Hogan Gully Road or McDonnell Road. Visibility is constrained	Very low – if detectable at all

Activity Area	Location	Description of changes	Visual catchment	Visibility	Visual effect
				to glimpses from long-distance viewpoints, such as the southern Arrowtown escarpment (Advance Terrace) at a distance of over 1km and Tobins Track.	
Sports Courts and Gardens	Eastern	New	McDonnell Road	Views extend from McDonnell Road into the wider THRZ. Minor landform shaping and low planting within the LAMA along the eastern boundary of this activity area will assist with the visual integration and framing of the area without curtailing the long-distance views into the elevated part of the site, as will the setback from McDonnell Road (approximately 80m) and the location of McDonnell Road around 1m below the Activity Area.	Low – small-scale buildings will be mitigated through planting and the low level of site coverage enabled.
Golf Training Facility	Central	New / replacing existing AA1 in this general location	Arrowtown escarpment	Limited potential glimpses from elevated viewpoints on the northern Arrowtown escarpment at most. Planting will provide screening of a building from the east.	Very low – when viewed from the east, with other visual effects internalised to the site.
HS6-8	Western, oriented towards McDonnell Road	New	Arrowtown escarpment	Partially visible from Cotter Avenue/ Advance Terrace, at a distance of around 1km, with views towards these homesites from Arrowtown including the existing retirement village and the approved WBRAZ Lifestyle Precinct on the adjacent sites.	Low at most – including through cutting building platforms into the slope, recessive colours and framing vegetation will visually integrate the buildings into the surrounding context.
HS9-14, 16	Southern	New	Hogan Gully/ Arrowtown-Lake Hayes Road Bendemeer escarpment	Barely visible from public viewpoints in the Hogan Gully/ Arrowtown-Lake Hayes Road catchment due to their elevated nature where the intervening terrain curtails views from	Low for HS 9-10. Low-moderate for HS11-14 and HS16 from sections of Hogans Gully Road with partial views to

Activity Area	Location	Description of changes	Visual catchment	Visibility	Visual effect
				below, but there may be glimpsed views of the rooflines of some buildings above the screening landforms and vegetation. Elevated viewpoints along the Bendemeer escarpment would gain views into and across the site with HS 11-14 and HS16 partially visible.	the proposed buildings from viewpoints between the Arrowtown Lake Hayes Road intersection and the proposed turn-off near HS 15, and ranging from very low to low-moderate from the residences at 58-110 Hogans Gully Road, depending on the orientation of their outlook and building location within the terrain/vegetation.
HS15	Southern	New	Hogan Gully/ Arrowtown-Lake Hayes Road Bendemeer escarpment	The rising terrain to the west of HS 15 partially curtails views from the road and the residence at 63 Hogans Gully Road. Some mid to long distance views (around 750m) can be gained from Arrowtown- Lake Hayes Road. Short-distance views from Hogans Gully Road (150-350m) would be mostly blocked by the existing and proposed (by the new LAMA) landform.	Low

The key conclusions from the visual effects assessment are that most Activity Area/HS changes will range from Very Low to Low. Only HS11-14 and HS16 may have visual effects that reach the level of Low-Moderate due to partial views from Hogans Gully Road and from some elevated private viewpoints on the southern side of that road, however effects will be largely internalised to THRZ with only limited/partial visibility from outside.

With regards to landscape and visual amenity effects of the Change, the Landscape Assessment identifies that the site has a low level of naturalness due to the substantial modification that has been undertaken for the existing golf course development, and differs from other rural landscapes as a result of its openness and lack of productive land uses.

The Change continues to utilise the existing approach in THRZ provisions to require LAMAs (and these have been amended on the Structure Plan where the location or extent of the Activity Area has been amended) to ensure largely internalised visual effects with low or very low visibility from beyond the zone. The amended LAMAs have been designed to provide the same level of mitigation as provided by the operative Structure Plan.

The new HS have been located in parts of the terrain where they can be absorbed. Even where low-moderate visual effects may be experienced from some elevated private viewpoints on the southern side of Hogans Gully Road, the landscape character would be maintained as the escarpment in this location already contains a number of private residences both within and outside of the zone. The existing development pattern would be continued with a predominance of open space and only partial visibility of buildings set within the varied topography. In addition, extensive structural planting is proposed to provide a visual context for the individual HS LAMAs and to integrate the development in this area with the wider THRZ. While not providing a screening purpose per se, the structural planting will visually connect the two visual catchments that the new HS are located in. A new standard requiring planting in both the structural planting areas and the new HS LAMAs to be taken from a new specified planting list will ensure a homogenous appearance for vegetation within the hummocky terrain in this part of THRZ. Existing controls on building height, light spill, external appearance of buildings, building coverage and landscaping will continue to apply (with new or amended controls for new or amended Activity Areas / HS) and will ensure effects of these areas will be comparable to the development currently enabled under THRZ provisions.

Given that the golf course is one of the premier courses in the country, the quality of the environment is a key consideration which has influenced the choice of location and design of built form. THRZ will continue to be characterised by open space with clustered buildings arranged around the golf course layout, therefore maintaining the landscape character and visual amenity values of the zone.

Overall, the Change will have low visual effect and very low adverse effects on the visual amenity and landscape character values of the site, due to the existing character of the land.

4. Effects in relation to geotechnical conditions and natural hazards

The site has been subject to two previous geotechnical / natural hazard investigations: Tonkin & Taylor prepared a Geotechnical Report in 2008 for a resource consent application for residential buildings platforms (RM081224), which identified no geological hazards that would prevent future development; and a Natural Hazard Assessment prepared by Hadley Consultants Ltd in 2015 in support of a submission for THRZ rezoning during the District Plan review process, including 10 then proposed house sites.

An update to the 2015 assessment has been prepared by Geotago for the Change, and includes an updated review of the databases for natural hazards in the district for the proposed new Structure Plan and revised geotechnical consideration. The Geotago addendum does not identify any natural hazard issues that would prevent the development of the new house sites or any new issues that would affect the amended / new activity areas. Additionally, no geotechnical constraints (beyond the normal application of building code and development standards at the design stage) exist that require mitigating.

In summary, the land is geotechnically suitable to accommodate the development enabled by the revised Structure Plan and amended provisions as proposed in the Change.

5. Effects from noise

The site has been subject to a previous noise assessment relating to helicopter noise: Marshall Day Acoustics prepared a Helicopter Noise Assessment in 2015 in support of a submission for rezoning during the District Plan review process. The helicopter landing area assessed in that report (and subsequently formalised by way of the provisions in the operative THRZ) was located just to the south of the existing clubhouse. That assessment found that noise emissions from helicopter activity can readily comply with a noise control of 50 dB L_{dn} at all nearby sensitive receivers.

The Change proposes to establish a dedicated Helipad Activity Area (H), located immediately to the south of the Clubhouse Activity Area (C), to replace the existing provision for helicopter take-

off and landings within Activity Area C. As the use of the site for helicopter take-off and landings is unchanged from the original assessment (in terms of likely frequency of flights, approach/departure routes, craft specification, and sensitive receivers) and the location of the helipad not significantly altered, the previous assessment remains relevant and can be relied upon.

In summary, there are no adverse noise effects arising from the proposed relocation of the helicopter landing area from the Activity Area C to the new Activity Area H, as noise levels will comply at all nearby sensitive receivers.

6. Transport and infrastructure effects

A new vehicle access point to THRZ is proposed as part of the Change: an existing farm access on Hogans Gully Road will provide access to HS9-16. Given that this access is located a considerable distance from existing accesses, and also that no increase in the use of the site is proposed as part of the Change, no adverse effects on the transportation network are anticipated to arise. This has been confirmed via a Traffic Assessment prepared by Carriageway Consulting, which concludes that the required sight distances for Residential Activity are easily exceeded. While there is a small shortfall of 3m for Non-residential Activity (being the potential use of the Homesites for Residential Visitor Accommodation), but that this could be achieved if earthworks within the road reserve are undertaken. The Traffic Assessment further notes that no shoulder widening is required for this access, subject to confirming traffic speeds and achieving the sight distances.

It is also proposed to amend the location of the existing main entrance on McDonnell Road to 50m south of its current location as part of the Change. The Traffic Assessment notes that this would result in the access being located further from the slight curve (located north of the main entrance) on McDonnell Road and appropriate sight distances are easily achievable.

The existing Chapter 47 provisions relating to vehicle access, as well the district-wide provisions in Chapter 29 (Transport), will continue to apply and will ensure that any effects arising from any of the proposed changes can be managed via the resource consent process if needed.

Changes to the indicative location of the walkway / cycleway as shown on the Structure Plan (as they relate to its intersection with the transportation network) have also been considered in the Traffic Assessment. It concludes that the proposed amended location of the walkway / cycleway is neutral (when compared with the existing location shown on the Structure Plan) in terms of effects on the transportation network, and that any design-related matters can be dealt with at the time resource consents are sought for the establishment of this trail.

No changes are proposed to the provision for infrastructure in THRZ as a result of the Change. The direction for infrastructure in the zone is currently contained in Policies 47.2.1.16 – 47.2.1.18 (renumbered 47.2.1.18 – 47.2.1.20 in the amended provisions) and require connection to a reticulated wastewater system where available, and where not available, to avoid or mitigate any potential adverse effects on natural water systems and ecological values through comprehensive zone-wide design. Stormwater disposal is to be designed in a comprehensive zone-wide approach, to avoid or mitigate any potential adverse effects on natural water systems and ecological values. As no increase in the overall capacity of THRZ is proposed as part of the Change, no adverse servicing effects are anticipated.

7. Effects from residential activity

The proposed Change includes the provision of an additional eleven Homesites for residential activity, and proposes to enable greater flexibility of the location of residential activity throughout the site by enabling it in Activity Areas A5 and A10. The provision for residential activity in these activity areas is balanced by the removal of provision for residential activity in Activity Areas A3 and A6, and the deletion of A7. No changes are proposed to the provision for visitor accommodation activity, beyond enabling it in Activity Area C. An overview / comparison of the

visitor accommodation and residential activities enabled by both the existing provisions and the proposed Change is set out in **Tables 2** and **3** below.

Table 2: Overview of residential and visitor accommodation activities by Activity Area under the operative THRZ rules

Activity Type	Activity Area												
	C	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	HS1-5
Residential	x	x	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓
Residential Visitor Accommodation	x	x	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓
Visitor Accommodation (VA)	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x
Residential Activity within VA units (max. 180 nights)	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x

Table 3: Overview of residential and visitor accommodation activities by Activity Area under proposed amendments of the Change

Activity Type	Activity Area												
	C	1	2	3	4	5	6	8	9	10	11	HS1	HS2-16
Residential	x	x	✓	x	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Residential Visitor Accommodation	x	x	✓	x	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Visitor Accommodation (VA)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x
Residential Activity within VA units (max. 180 nights)	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x

The Change will continue to ensure that the THRZ meets the PDP definition of “Resort”¹ by retaining the existing cap on overall (both visitor accommodation and residential) unit numbers (set at 150 by Rule 47.5.15) and the existing cap on the number of residential units (set at 66 by Rule 47.5.16), meaning that the ratio of residential units to visitor accommodation units (66/150, or 44%) is retained. While the dispersal of residential units throughout the THRZ as a result of the Change may be slightly different compared to the operative THRZ, the zone will remain as “principally providing temporary visitor accommodation” as required by the definition of “Resort” and will continue to remain a comprehensively designed, planned and integrated development.

8. Effects on neighbouring properties

The potential effects on neighbouring properties are limited to visual effects arising from the change in extent or location of existing Activity Areas, and new proposed Activity Areas and HS.

The visual effects have been comprehensively assessed in the Landscape Assessment (**DOCUMENT 6**) and summarised above at Section 3. Overall, visual effects from the proposed Change are low, however visual effects may extend to low-moderate from sections of Hogans Gully Road, with partial views to the proposed buildings within HS11-14 and HS16 from viewpoints between the Arrowtown-Lake Hayes Road intersection and the proposed turn-off near HS 15. Visual effects from future buildings within HS11-14 and HS16 may range from very low to low-moderate from the residences at 58-110 Hogans Gully Road, depending on the orientation of their outlook and building location within the terrain / vegetation.

The Change will not result in adverse noise effects arising from the proposed relocation of the helicopter landing area from the Activity Area C to the new Activity Area H, as noise levels will continue to comply at all nearby sensitive receivers as discussed at Section 5. There will be no transportation or servicing effects arising from the Change that may impact neighbouring properties or the wider environment as there will be no increase in the use or capacity of the site, as set out in Section 6.

9. Positive effects

The proposed Change will improve biodiversity outcomes for the site arising from the proposed Structural Planting Areas and the requirement in the provisions to provide for this planting from within a set planting list comprised of indigenous grey shrubland species.

The proposed Change will also support increased local, regional and national economic benefits arising from an improved golfing experience at a world-class resort, and the resulting increase in golf tourism spending.

10. Summary and conclusions

The foregoing assessment is summarised as follows:

- (a) The Change will not significantly adversely affect the visual amenity and landscape character values of the site and surrounding landscape;
- (b) There are no geotechnical or natural hazard related adverse effects and the subject area of land is suitable for development;

¹ Means an integrated and planned development involving low average density of residential development (as a proportion of the developed area) principally providing temporary visitor accommodation and forming part of an overall development focused on onsite visitor activities.

- (c) The Change will provide for limited residential activity within THRZ while continuing to provide principally for visitor accommodation in accordance with the definition of *Resort*;
- (c) No adverse effects will arise on the environment in relation to noise, transportation or infrastructural servicing related matters;
- (f) There are no significant indigenous ecological values on the site that will be adversely affected, and the Change will improve indigenous biodiversity values through increase indigenous plantings; and
- (h) The Change will not adversely affect any existing or future surrounding land uses nor adversely impact the amenity of current and future residents or visitors within THRZ.

In summary, the proposed Change will have no significant adverse effects on the environment.