

**Helen Mellsop for QLDC – Summary of Evidence, 4 September 2017  
Queenstown Mapping – Hearing Stream 13**

1. My evidence for Queenstown Lakes District Council (**QLDC**) in this hearing stream relates to landscape matters in relation to the location of the Outstanding Natural Landscape (**ONL**) boundary on the north-west side of The Remarkables Range, and the landscape effects of a rezoning request on the northern side of The Remarkables/Ben Cruachan ranges.

**The Remarkables ONL (710 and 409)**

2. Submitters 710 and 409 seek relocation of the boundary of The Remarkables ONL between the Kawarau River and the quarries on the eastern side of the Kingston Road (State Highway 6) to further up the mountain slopes. In the case of Submission 409 a boundary consistent with a Formal Order from the Environment Court (RM1165/98 dated 20 July 2005) is sought.
3. North of the Remarkables ski field road I support the relief sought in part and have recommended relocation of the ONL boundary to follow a fence line that demarcates the change in landscape character between the cultivated valley and the more natural steeper alluvial fan slopes, and to exclude a dwelling and curtilage at 27 Kingston Road.
4. South of the Remarkables ski field road I support the relief sought in full and consider that the ONL boundary is appropriately located as shown on the map attached to the Court order.

**Queenstown Park Special Zone (806)**

5. On the northern slopes of The Remarkables and Ben Cruachan and along the Kawarau River, Queenstown Park Limited seeks rezoning of approximately 2000 hectares of land from notified Rural zone to Queenstown Park Special Zone (**QPSZ**). This zone would facilitate development of a gondola between Remarkables Park and the Remarkables ski field, as well as tourism and residential development on the fans and terraces adjacent to the Kawarau River, and associated access, bridges and jetties.
6. Changes to the ONL boundaries in this area are no longer sought and it is therefore now agreed that the rezoning sought is within The Remarkables ONL. This landscape is one of the most memorable and expressive landscapes in the Queenstown area and has important ecological, scenic and cultural values, and a high level of natural character. While the fans, terraces and flood plains within

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Queenstown Park Station have a lower level of natural character than the mountain slopes above, I consider that they are perceived as integral and legible components of the mountains or of the Kawarau River.

7. Subsequent to filing my rebuttal evidence, I participated in expert witness caucusing with Mr Stephen Brown and Ms Rebecca Skidmore on 22 August 2017. Mr Robert Buxton also attended this meeting but the joint witness statement submitted to the Panel only includes matters discussed by the three landscape witnesses.

8. I have read supplementary evidence (submitted by Remarkables Park Limited and Queenstown Park Limited on 29 August) from the following witnesses:

- (a) Ms Rebecca Skidmore;
- (b) Mr Stephen Brown;
- (c) Mr Tim Johnson; and
- (d) Mr David Serjeant.

9. I would like to make one amendment to my rebuttal evidence. The second and third sentences of Paragraph 4.21 should read (additions underlined):

*These are effects related to physical modifications of the landscape and changes to the landscape elements and attributes that make up its character, as well as to human perceptions. They are not only dependent on whether or not the changes are visible.*

10. The proposed provisions for the QPSZ have been amended as shown in the track changes version in Appendix A to Mr Serjeant's supplementary evidence. Among the amendments are changes to the matters of control for glamping and for buildings in the Rural Residential (**RR**) Activity Areas, and to the matters of discretion for Comprehensive Development Plans and subdivision in the QPSZ RR and Rural Visitor (**RV**) Activity Areas. In my view, these changes would allow Objective 44.2.1B and associated policies to be more effectively implemented. In paragraph 3.2 of her supplementary evidence, Ms Skidmore recommends that a note be added to the matters of discretion for subdivision, directly referencing the zone objectives and policies. I agree that including specific reference to Objectives 44.2.1A and B and related policies would better ensure that the outcomes envisaged for the zone were implemented in any subdivision activities. I note however that Mr Buxton in his amended summary considers that the

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wording of the objectives and policies are too broad to be simply inserted as matters of discretion.

11. At the expert caucusing, it was agreed between the landscape witnesses that the matters of discretion for Commercial Recreation Activity Buildings at Rule 44.4.16 should include location.<sup>1</sup> The amended provisions in Mr Serjeant's evidence do not include location as a matter of discretion for Rule 44.4.16.
12. I remain of the view that the activity status for glamping should allow for a consent application to be declined, in the event that there are no remaining appropriate locations for glamping development within the zone.
13. The amended visual simulations attached to Mr Johnson's supplementary evidence show that the use of an accurate size for the gondola cabins slightly increases the visibility of a potential gondola from some viewpoints, as compared with the visual simulations appended to Mr Johnson's evidence in chief. These include viewpoints where the gondola is viewed above the ridgeline of the near mountain slope (for example VP04 Lake Hayes Estate playground and VP05 Judge and Jury Drive, Lake Hayes) or is visible as a vertical rather than diagonal line across the mountain slope (for example VP09 Lake Hayes walkway). My comments in paragraph 4.13 of my rebuttal evidence about the limitations of the visual simulations still apply to the updated simulations. I understand that Mr Brown has taken these factors into account when assessing the gondola system's visibility.<sup>2</sup>
14. The amended visual simulations have not changed my assessment of the overall visibility of the gondola system (refer paragraphs 4.5 and 4.6 of the joint witness statement) except in relation to distant viewpoints like the Lake Hayes walkway, where a vertical line of closely spaced gondola cabins could be clearly perceived in some light conditions. In these conditions, the overall level of visibility could be 'moderate' rather than 'low'. As set out in the joint witness statement, I consider the overall visibility of the gondola would be 'high' from parts of the Twin Rivers trail on Morven Hill. Although cabins moving on the slope could be visually absorbed to some extent by the complex background vegetation patterns, both the lower and upper gondola bend stations would be clearly visible, with the upper station breaking the skyline.

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1 Record of conferencing of expert landscape witnesses in relation to Queenstown Park Limited and Remarkables Park Limited Submission 806, paragraph 2.6.

2 Supplementary evidence of Stephen Kenneth Brown, dated 28 August 2017, paragraphs 3-4.

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15. I remain of the opinion that there is capacity for the gondola corridor to have a low level of adverse effect on the perceived naturalness, aesthetic coherence and scenic values of the ONL from many distant viewpoints within the Wakatipu Basin. Where the system is potentially visible from distant viewpoints as a vertical line up the mountain slope, I consider it would have moderate adverse effects on visual amenity and, in combination with the existing ski field road, would result in cumulative adverse effects on the perceived naturalness of the ONL. I am unsure whether this effect would be confined to people at the northern end of Lake Hayes or whether it would also be experienced from other public and private places. I am therefore unable to determine the magnitude of cumulative adverse effects.
  16. In my opinion, the visible gondola system would significantly detract from the perceived naturalness and aesthetic coherence of the landscape when viewed by closer observers in Lake Hayes Estate and along the Kawarau River.
  17. In relation to the visibility of residential and visitor accommodation development enabled by the zone, the agreed areas of visibility are set out in paragraph 4.8 of the joint witness statement. In addition to these, development within RV3 and RR2 would be visible from the Crown Range Road zigzag lookout, at a distance of between about 5.5 to 6 kilometres.
  18. The visible development would constitute only a small part of an expansive view. However, in my opinion development areas would still be perceived as nodes of dense development from this lookout and the higher one on Crown Range Road and would appear as sporadic nodes of development within the Kawarau River corridor.
  19. In paragraphs 3.4, 3.15 and 3.24 of my rebuttal evidence I discuss the potential visibility of development within the QPSZ from closer public places, including the Twin Rivers trail below and east of Lake Hayes Estate, and State Highway 6 on Ladies Mile. In **Appendix A** I have included additional photographs taken from these locations, which show the extent of visibility of the Rastus Burn fan and the proposed gondola route above the fan.<sup>3</sup> The photographs confirm that the RV3 area and the gondola route would be highly visible from the Twin Rivers trail, at a distance of 250 to 1000 metres. These proposed development areas would also be clearly visible to pedestrians and cyclists using the trail connection to Lake Hayes alongside Ladies Mile.

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3 I was not able to take these photographs prior to filing my rebuttal due to a family bereavement and then weather constraints.

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20. While some of the recent amendments to the proposed QPSZ planning provisions increase the likelihood that the objectives and policies of the zone might be implemented, I remain of the view that the ONL is not able to absorb development of the scale and nature proposed.
21. The alluvial fans and terraces of Owens Creek and Rastus Burn are integral and legible elements in the landscape sequence from mountain peak to river and are prominent in public views. They form important components of the landscape character and amenity. Despite the changes to the planning provisions and the corrections to the development pod physical areas, I still consider that development within the activity areas would obscure the legibility of the fans and terraces and would result in a high level of adverse effect on the natural character of the ONL and on rural character. If the building coverage and building height limits proposed for RV3 were implemented in full, I am still of the view that development would appear as an urban node within the landscape.
22. Aspects of potential development are located within the Kawarau River margin limits that were agreed at expert caucusing.<sup>4</sup> These include the gondola route as it crosses the river, the potential gondola station on the true left bank below Lake Hayes Estate (and any associated car park areas), rural visitor development within RV4, and any bridges, jetties or wharves. Taken together with existing built modifications within the margins, these aspects of the zone would in my view result in moderate to high cumulative adverse effects on the natural character of the river margins.
23. In conclusion I consider that development enabled by the updated QPSZ is likely to significantly degrade the landscape quality, landscape character and visual amenity of the ONL. The cumulative adverse effects of anticipated development, when combined with the existing ski field, the ski field access road and modifications along the Kawarau River, would in my opinion exceed the capacity of the landscape to absorb change. This is not to say that a lesser scale and extent, or a different type of development, might not be appropriate. I have noted in my evidence that I consider the following elements could be absorbed without degradation of the landscape character and values:
- (a) walking trails;
  - (b) appropriately located and designed mountain bike tracks;
  - (c) one additional pedestrian bridge and one jetty/landing on the Kawarau River; and

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4 Joint Witness Statement , paragraph 4.4.

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(d) a glamping site in the upper Owens Creek catchment.

24. I also consider that a limited amount of additional development could be appropriate where topography and vegetation facilitate absorption of buildings and associated activities. The landscape and visual effects of any such development would depend on the specific details of each proposal.
25. Given the outstanding natural values of The Remarkables and Kawarau River ONL, and the extent of visibility of the development that is enabled by the zone, it is my view that the QPSZ would not be consistent with the landscape-related objectives and policies in Chapters 3 and 6 of the PDP. In particular, the sub zone would not protect a highly valued ONL from inappropriate subdivision, use and development. While I consider the landscape has some capacity to absorb change, the scale of development proposed exceeds that capacity. I also consider that development within RV3 would not be consistent with Objective 3.2.2.1 of the PDP, as it is not likely to protect the District's rural landscapes from sporadic urban development.

APPENDIX A



**Photograph 1:** View from Hayes Creek Road adjacent to reserve vested with QLDC as part of the Bridesdale Farm development. Upper and lower terraces of the Rastus Burn fan and lower section of QPSZ gondola corridor above the fan visible (panorama stitched from two photographs taken at 50mm lens equivalent at 1.50pm on 12-07-17)



**Photograph 2:** View from Twin Rivers trail about 300 metres south of Billies Bridge towards escarpment of lower terrace. QPSZ development on lower terrace and potential pedestrian bridge and jetty/landing likely to be visible (panorama stitched from two photographs taken at 50mm lens equivalent at 1.25pm on 12-07-17)



**Photograph 3:** View from Twin Rivers trail at Billies Bridge. Western end of upper terrace on Rastus Burn fan visible (panorama stitched from two photographs taken at 50mm lens equivalent at 1.30pm on 12-07-17)



**Photograph 4:** View from Twin Rivers trail at first switchback corner east of Billies Bridge. Rastus Burn fan and lower part of QPSZ gondola corridor above the fan visible (panorama stitched from three photographs taken at 50mm lens equivalent at 1.32pm on 12-07-17)



**Photograph 5:** View from Twin Rivers trail below high voltage electricity pylon east of Billies Bridge. Rastus Burn fan and lower part of QPSZ gondola corridor above the fan visible (panorama stitched from three photographs taken at 50mm lens equivalent at 1.34pm on 12-07-17)



**Photograph 6:** View towards The Remarkables from walking/cycling trail on northern side of State Highway 6 on Ladies Mile. Upper terrace of Rastus Burn fan and QPSZ gondola corridor above the fan visible (photograph taken at 50mm lens equivalent at 4.45pm on 12-07-17)



**Photograph 7:** View towards The Remarkables from top of trail connection to Lake Hayes Estate on southern side of State Highway 6 on Ladies Mile. Upper and lower terraces of Rastus Burn fan and QPSZ gondola corridor above the fan visible (photograph taken at 50mm lens equivalent at 4.48pm on 12-07-17)