

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Queenstown Lakes District Council (the Council) is contemplating a plan change in relation to the area of Rural Lifestyle Zone around Makarora. The purpose of this report is to provide background information regarding landscape issues in relation to the potential plan change. This report (along with other documents) will provide the basis for an “Issues and Options Paper” that will highlight all issues that any proposed plan change should address and outline a number of options regarding a way forward.

1.2 This report will discuss the qualities of the existing landscape in terms of the Partially Operative District Plan (the Plan) and in terms of the Resource Management Act 1991 (the Act). It will also discuss the qualities that the landscape would display if it was modified in accordance with the current provisions of the Plan.

1.3 This report is structured under the following headings:

1. INTRODUCTION
2. THE LANDSCAPE THAT CONTAINS AND INCLUDES THE MAKARORA VALLEY
3. THE LANDSCAPE QUALITIES OF THE MAKARORA VALLEY ITSELF
4. HOW CAN WE EXPECT THE MAKARORA VALLEY TO DEVELOP UNDER THE CURRENT PROVISIONS OF THE PLAN?
5. THE MAKARORA COMMUNITY PLAN
6. CONCLUSION

2. THE LANDSCAPE THAT CONTAINS AND INCLUDES THE MAKARORA VALLEY

2.1 When discussing the qualities of a particular landscape, we must have some conception of scale. How big is the landscape that we are discussing? Past case law from the Environment Court tells us that landscapes are, by definition, very large. They are much larger than individual valleys, “landscape units” or “landscape features”, which are constituent parts of landscapes¹. The landscape that contains and includes the Makarora Valley is a vast landscape that also includes the northern part of Lake Wanaka and huge tracts of the Southern Alps.

2.2 The qualities that are apparent to an observer in a landscape stem from a number of factors. The Plan describes these factors as:

*natural science factors (the geological, topographical, ecological and dynamic components of the landscape), aesthetic values (including memorability and naturalness), expressiveness and legibility (how obviously the landscape demonstrates the formative processes leading to it), transient values (such as the occasional presence of wildlife; or its values at certain times of the day or of the year), the value of the landscape to Tangata Whenua and its historical associations.*²

(a) Natural Science Factors

2.3 The geology of the landscape containing the Makarora Valley is largely comprised of psammitic schist and greywacke in the form of up-thrust mountain ranges. The floor of the Makarora Valley as it runs north from Lake Wanaka is comprised of gravels and alluvium³. This sort of geological make-up is typical of the Queenstown Lakes District; eroding up-thrust mountains surrounding valley floor areas of various sizes that are comprised of deposited material.

2.4 The topography of the area is dramatic and includes starkly contrasting landforms. Above approximately the 450 metre contour line the mountain slopes are generally steep, rugged and unkempt. Glaciation has left sharp, jagged forms. The lower rock slopes of these mountains often have a more rounded or hummocky form as they have been overrun by

¹ Environment Court decision C3/2002, Wakatipu Environmental Society Incorporated vs. Q.L.D.C. paragraphs 33 and 36; and Environment Court decision C73/2002, Wakatipu Environmental Society Incorporated vs. Q.L.D.C. paragraphs 7 to 22.

² Queenstown Lakes Partially Operative District Plan, Part 5.4.2.1.

³ . M. Turnbull, Geology of the Wakatipu Area, Institute of Geological and Nuclear Sciences, Lower Hutt, New Zealand, 2000.

the most recent glaciations. The valley floors and fans (which, spatially, are both relatively minor components of this landscape) are flat by contrast. The Makarora Valley floor houses the wide gravel bed of the Makarora River.

- 2.5 The ecology of the landscape surrounding and including the Makarora Valley is, in part, reflective of general patterns that can be found throughout the less tamed parts of the Queenstown Lakes District. The Makarora Valley floor is improved pasture. The surrounding lower slopes are grasslands with extensive kanuka. The higher mountain slopes consist of snow tussock grasslands and areas of sub-alpine scrub⁴. This landscape is unusual in terms of the district however, in that there are large tracts of very mature, relatively unmodified beech forest on the mountain sides and broad valleys that are contained within the Mount Aspiring National Park. This is remarkable in terms of the Queenstown Lakes District, particularly since this vegetation is bisected by a well-used highway. Also unusual in terms of the district's ecology are the large tracts of mature kanuka that line part of the northern reaches of Lake Wanaka and the Makarora Valley.



PHOTOGRAPH 1: THE VIEW SOUTH ALONG THE HIGHWAY TOWARDS MAKARORA FROM NEAR TEMPLETON CREEK.

- 2.6 Dynamic components are an important part of this landscape. The constantly variable actions of rainfall and water are immediately apparent.

⁴ Indigenous Ecosystems, a report to the Q.L.D.C. Lucas Associates, 1995.

(b) Aesthetics

- 2.7 Obviously, the subject landscape is of very high aesthetic value. The mountains of the Main Divide surrounding the vast surfaces of Lake Hawea and Lake Wanaka make up an iconic, very memorable landscape that is easily accessible (visually and otherwise) from State Highway 6. The journey from Hawea to Haast via the Haast Pass is one of the most memorable, dramatic landscape experiences in New Zealand.
- 2.8 Even within the context of the Queenstown Lakes District (a district that is renowned for its dramatic landscapes) the landscape that surrounds the Makarora Valley is unusual and remarkable. The journey north on State Highway 6 from Hawea is characterised by vast open views of very natural mountainous landscapes. There is a feeling of remoteness and of leaving behind the relatively tamed and populated landscapes of the Upper Clutha basin. When a traveller arrives at the floor of the Makarora Valley; it currently has the feel of a relatively discrete and isolated pocket of human occupation in an otherwise wild context.
- 2.9 The journey north from Makarora towards the Haast Pass is of a different aesthetic character again. The long open views of mountains and lakes give way to a lush vegetated enclosure. Mature beech forest lines the road and the road itself becomes a winding alpine route. The character of this area is different to that of the much of the Queenstown Lakes District (but no less wild); it has more in common with that of the southern Westland District. In this respect, the Makarora area is an area of landscape aesthetic transition.
- 2.10 The aesthetics of this landscape are, of course, not only appreciated from roads. Observers may be on the surface of the lakes on walking tracks or on private land.

(c) Legibility

- 2.12 Legibility is the ability to read the formative processes of the landform. It is the dominance of the natural science factors such as the geological, topographical and ecological composition of a landscape.
- 2.13 The formative processes in this landscape are legible to a relatively high degree. The jagged forms of the various mountain ranges are visible evidence of the weathering of up-thrust bedrock by the action of ice. Many alluvial fans stem from gullies and valleys within

the mountains. These fans are generally uninterrupted by high vegetation and are readily visible as depositions from the mountain slopes.

- 2.14 I am unsure how legible these processes are to an average observer in the landscape, although they are certainly legible to one with some knowledge of geomorphology.

(d) Transience

- 2.15 Changing weather and light create dramatic transient effects in this area that are appreciated from a very wide visual catchment. In winter (and often at other times of the year as well) snow caps the mountain ranges. This can take the form of a blanket of white colour which catches sunlight in a varying way, or it can be a delicate white rime on the otherwise dark rock and vegetation. Changing light conditions also play on the texture of the mountain slopes.

- 2.16 Rainfall can also create transient changes in the aesthetics of this landscape. At times rivers swell and become forceful torrents. Particularly towards the northern boundary of the district, the landscape can at times become alive with flowing water.

- 2.17 The surface of lakes also display transient values. Depending upon weather and sunlight conditions the lakes can appear a brilliant sparkling blue or a dull unwelcoming grey. The flatter valley floor lands demonstrate some transient values associated with seasonal changes in agriculture.

(e) Shared and Recognised Values

- 2.18 I consider that observers (whether local residents or visitors) would recognise the impact of natural science factors to a certain degree. The mountain slopes are obviously formed of jagged rock. The fans that stem from the mountain watercourses are relatively easily recognisable as deposits of weathered material. Beyond this, I consider that the average observer would not notice or contemplate the formation of this area.

- 2.19 Regarding aesthetics, I believe that most people who observe or experience this landscape would share the opinion that it is majestic, dramatic and memorable to a very high degree. The vast lakes, mountain slopes and beech forest contribute to creating an iconic New Zealand landscape, the likes of which are widely celebrated in art and literature.

2.20 The transient visual effects demonstrated by the landscape are readily apparent to all observers.

(f) Value to Takata Whenua

2.21 Landscapes may hold cultural significance to the Takata Whenua as result of past interaction with the environment or as a result of a mythological association.

2.22 The region of Makarora and the Haast Pass was known to early Maori as Kaika Paekai, meaning the place of abundant food. It was used as a stop-off point on journeys to and from the West Coast, generally for the purposes of gathering greenstone.

2.23 The Haast Pass was famously crossed by Ngatitama chief Te Puoho in 1836 with 300 warriors during a campaign against Ngai Tahu invaders. Beyond this general history, I have no knowledge of the value of the subject area to Takata Whenua. It is my understanding that Ngai Tahu are preparing a report regarding the value of the Makarora area to Takata Whenua.

(g) Historical Associations

2.24 European colonial settlers centred on the more forgiving lands around the Hawea Flats, Albert Town and Wanaka. The first European to traverse the Haast Pass was Charles Cameron, a prospector, who crossed it in January 1863, a few weeks before Julius von Haast made his transalpine journey to the West Coast. The journey from Hawea to Haast has traditionally been a wild and arduous one. Something of this character remains to this day.

2.25 As colonial settlement of the district began to take hold, the Makarora area became an important supplier of timber. Timber was floated south to Wanaka and also further south down the Clutha. The vast high country stations managed the flats and mountain slopes for extensive grazing.

2.26 In more recent years tourism has become an important focus in the area. The Haast Pass is a popular tourist route and the Mount Aspiring National Park manages vast tracts of the mountain landscape for conservation and recreation purposes.

(h) Overall discussion in terms of the Act

- 2.27 When examined as a whole, the mountainous landscape that surrounds and includes the Makarora Valley displays a high degree of natural character. The vast mountain slopes and lakes are dramatic and overwhelmingly natural. The actions of humans have only minimally influenced the overall character of the landscape. The landscape is also highly remarkable and memorable. I consider that observers who travel through this landscape and experience its qualities would generally rank it as among the more dramatic and eminent in New Zealand.
- 2.28 I find that, in terms of the Act, this landscape is an outstanding natural landscape. This means that Section 6 of Part 2 of the Act provides for the protection of this landscape from inappropriate subdivision, use, and development in relation to managing the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources.
- 2.29 It should be noted that the protection referred to in the above paragraph does not equate to a prohibition on subdivision or development. In terms of the Plan, the vast majority of this landscape is zoned as Rural General Zone. This zoning generally provides for limited subdivision and development, provided that openness is maintained, development is confined to areas with an ability to absorb change and views from public places and roads are maintained⁵.

3. THE LANDSCAPE QUALITIES OF THE MAKARORA VALLEY ITSELF

- 3.1 While the floor of the Makarora Valley (that currently accommodates the area of Rural Lifestyle Zone) is part of the previously described broad mountainous landscape, it also has its own particular qualities.
- 3.2 From the confluence of Lake Wanaka and the Makarora River northwards to Boiler Flat, State Highway 6 bisects a flat valley floor area that consists of verdant grazed paddocks. This strip of paddock-land is some 14km long and up to 1.3km wide. To the immediate west of this paddock-land is the gravel bed of the Makarora River. The past glaciations

⁵ Queenstown Lakes Partially Operative District Plan, Part 4.2.5 (2).

have retreated to leave the current shape of the valley. Centuries of fluvial action have followed which have left the valley floor area as it is now. A number of small terrace forms can be identified as one moves from the river to the toe of the mountain slopes to the east.

- 3.3 These flats have obviously been used for farming purposes for many decades. They are covered in lush exotic pasture bisected by post-and-wire fencing. Many mature exotic shelterbelts also bisect the site, generally perpendicular to highway. The valley floor area currently reads as an isolated pocket of human occupation and husbandry, surrounded by a wilder landscape.



PHOTOGRAPH 2: THE VIEW TOWARDS THE SOUTHERN END OF SCHOOL ROAD FROM THE STATE HIGHWAY

- 3.4 The various landscape characteristics that make up this valley floor are identified in a report produced by CivicCorp in 2005. Figure 1 of this report is a diagram that I have taken from that report.
- 3.5 As can be seen from figure 1, the floor of the Makarora Valley currently contains a number of small clusters of buildings; the three small Township Zones and clusters of buildings associated with farming. Outside of these clusters, the valley floor lands are generally

grazed pasture. There are views from the valley floor to the containing mountains and up the Young and Wilkin valleys. Overall, a clearly rural, farming type of landscape character is evident.

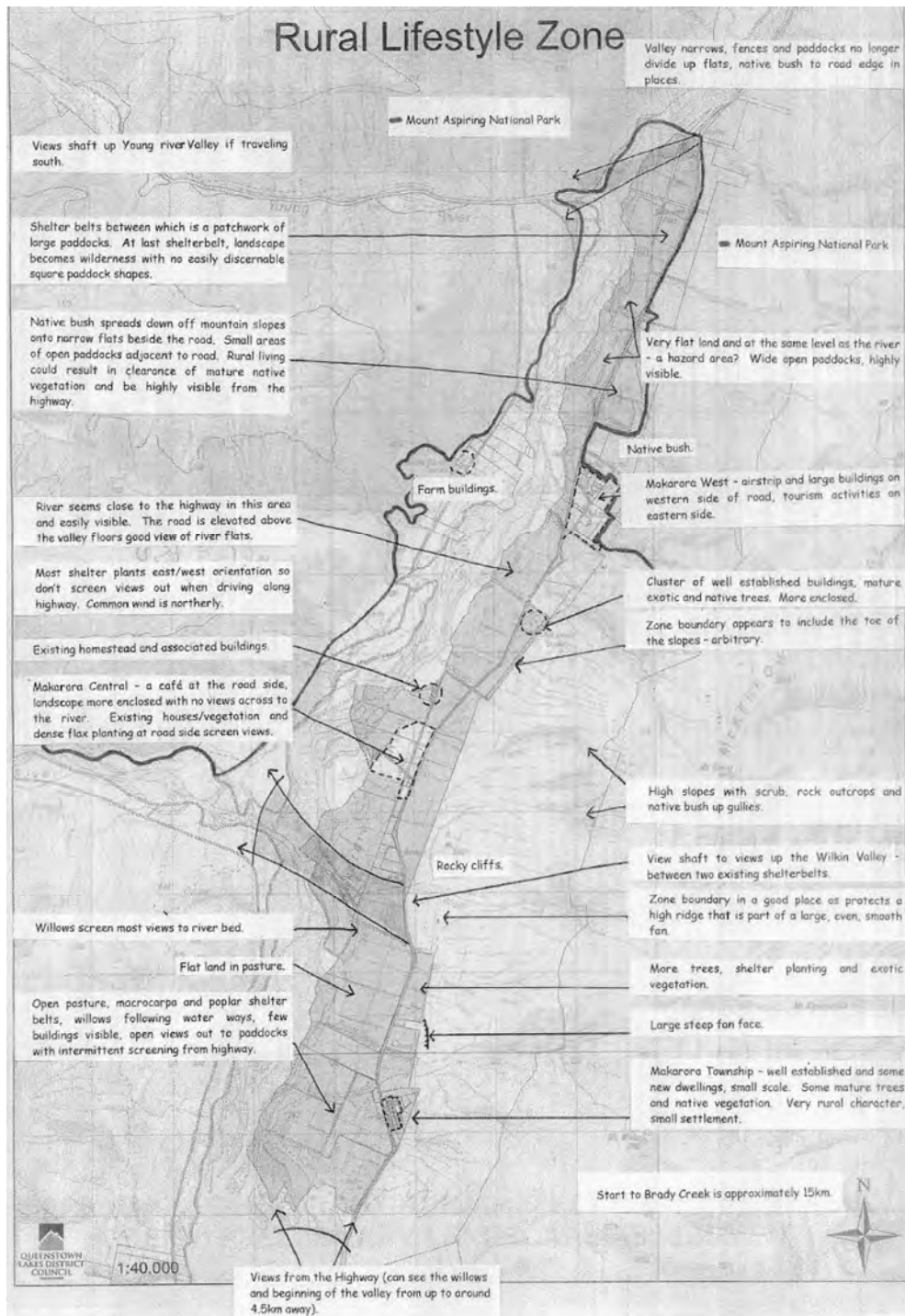


FIGURE 1: AN ANALYSIS OF THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FLOOR OF THE MAKARORA VALLEY. TAKEN FROM A REPORT PRODUCED BY CIVICORP ENTITLED "LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT – MAKARORA, WEST WANAKA AND GLENORCHY" AND DATED 12/04/2005.

4. HOW CAN WE EXPECT THE MAKARORA VALLEY TO DEVELOP UNDER THE CURRENT PROVISIONS OF THE PLAN?

4.1 The entirety of the flat valley floor of the Makarora Valley that can be seen on figure 1 is zoned Rural Lifestyle Zone by the Plan. Within this zone are three small pockets of Township Zone located at Makarora Township, Makarora Central and Makarora West.

4.2 The purpose of the Township Zones is to provide for consolidated centres of township activities, including residential and commercial activities. A minimum lot size of 1000m² is expected for subdivision. Of the three townships in the Makarora Valley, only Makarora Township has been developed to anything approaching capacity. Other areas of Township Zone within the district include Hawea, Luggate, Albert Town, Glenorchy and Kingston.



**PHOTOGRAPH 3:
LETTERBOXES ON
THE STATE HIGHWAY
ADJACENT TO
MAKARORA
TOWNSHIP**

4.3 The provisions of the Plan anticipate that these three areas of Township Zone will develop to create three small, dense clusters of residential and commercial use, roughly comparable in character to the current township of Hawea.

4.4 The purpose of the Rural Lifestyle Zone, that occupies the valley floor outside of the townships, is to provide for low density rural living. A diversity of residential and lifestyle farming operations are expected. Subdivision is expected to result in an average lot size of 2ha. Queenstown Lakes District Council records show that there has been very little subdivision of the Rural Lifestyle Zone thus far. Other areas of Rural Lifestyle Zone within

the district that have been developed to some degree include Riverbank Road and Mount Barker Road near Wanaka and the Dalefield area of the Wakatipu basin.

- 4.5 The provisions of the Plan anticipate that the floor of the Makarora Valley that is currently paddock-land will be subdivided and developed to an average lot size of 2ha. This would allow approximately 440 new lots, each with a dwelling. Rural Lifestyle zones of this sort tend to develop a relatively enclosed treed type of character, as can currently be seen in Dalefield. Under these provisions, the character of the valley floor would become much more fragmented and visually enclosed. Obviously traffic movements, the number of driveways running off the state highway and the presence of people in the valley would consequently increase significantly. The open agricultural character would be altered and it would be clear to observers in the landscape that the main purpose of the valley floor area was for living rather than farming.
- 4.6 In an overall sense the current provisions of the Plan anticipate that the Makarora Valley floor will become a relatively large area of rural lifestyle block type development. Within this will be three compact, dense townships that accommodate small-lot living as well as commercial activities.
- 4.7 It is important to note that the land on the slopes that surround the floor of the Makarora Valley floor is not of the same zone as the floor itself. All land surrounding the valley floor is zoned Rural General in the Plan. This zoning does not provide for any development or subdivision as of right. In general it provides for a truly rural type of landscape with any buildings or structures being secondary to an overall rural type of appearance. Openness and naturalness are also protected by the provisions of the Plan. In effect, it is fair to assume that the sloping lands that surround the valley floor will change very little.
- 4.8 This is particularly true of the lands contained within the Mount Aspiring National Park, the boundary of which can be seen on figure 1. This park is managed by D.O.C. and it is preserved in a particularly natural state. It immediately surrounds the northern part of the Rural Lifestyle Zone. If the valley floor lands are developed to their capacity under the existing Plan provisions, a sharp contrast with the densely vegetated natural slopes of this park would be evident.

4.9 It must be noted that flooding and associated instability cause considerable hazards in the Makarora Valley. I understand these hazards are likely to preclude development in some parts of the valley regardless of zoning.

5. THE MAKARORA COMMUNITY PLAN

5.1 In 2004 the Makarora community in conjunction with the Queenstown Lakes District Council produced the Makarora Community Plan to provide a community vision, strategic goals and priorities for the next 10 to 20 years.

5.2 The community plan states a number of key outcomes, one of which is *“to retain the general character of the landscapes surrounding Makarora and to avoid sprawl through the valley”*⁶.

5.3 In terms of the Rural Lifestyle Zone, the community plan states that:

- *“there is sufficient rural lifestyle zoning within the valley. The residents consider that rural lifestyle zoning may result in inappropriate development close to the road and would result in the valley losing some of its rural feel.*
- *The community would rather have bigger townships or introduce clustering in order to avoid ribbon development along the State Highway.”*⁷

5.4 In terms of rural character, the community plan states that:

- *“The protection of the rural areas surrounding the valley should be promoted. It is recognised that the existing Rural Lifestyle zoning may not be the most appropriate way of achieving this.*
- *Clustering of housing should be promoted as opposed to subdivision into minimum size of 1 hectare blocks, as allowed by the Rural Lifestyle Zone”.*

⁶ Makarora Community Plan, CivicCorp and Q.L.D.C, page 8.

⁷ Ibid, page 9.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The Makarora Valley is part of a dramatic, eminent, overwhelmingly natural landscape that is dominated by mountains and lakes. In terms of the Act, I consider that this landscape is an outstanding natural landscape.
- 6.2 Despite being contained within this very natural landscape, the floor of the Makarora Valley has its own particular characteristics that are not necessarily natural in themselves; to a large degree they have been brought about by human modification. The valley floor currently reads as an enclave of agricultural land use in the form of verdant grazed paddocks.
- 6.3 The current provisions of the Plan provide for dramatic change to the current character of the Makarora Valley floor. If developed in accordance with these provisions, the valley floor will become a strip of lifestyle-block type development that surrounds three small, dense centres of residential and commercial activity. In general terms, lifestyle-block type development brings about a much more fragmented, enclosed and treed character than is currently evident. Traffic, the presence of people, noise, etc will also consequently increase. An example of a mature Rural Lifestyle Zone is the Dalefield area of the Wakatipu basin.
- 6.4 The Makarora Community Plan gives a good indication of the Makarora community's aspirations regarding the future of the Makarora Valley. It suggests that the type of landscape character that is envisaged by the provisions of the Rural Lifestyle Zone is not the most desirable character from the community's perspective.
- 6.5 Regarding the proposed "Issues and Options Paper", we are left with a number of questions relating to the landscape character of the Makarora Valley floor that need to be explored:
- Is the landscape character provided for by the Rural Lifestyle Zone desirable or undesirable?

- What sort of landscape character is desirable for the valley floor area?
 - Roughly the same type of character that currently exists – agricultural with some rural dwellings?
 - The same type of character that currently exists but with larger townships?
 - A less dense, more open spread of development than is anticipated by the Rural Lifestyle Zone?
 - A clustered type of character with groupings of dwellings in some areas and open agricultural space in other areas?
 - Some other type of character?
- What are the best types of mechanisms that can be used to bring about a desirable type of character?
- Once hazards caused by flooding etc are properly taken into account, how much of the valley floor has the potential to be developed? What sort of character would this bring about?

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