

REPORT TO: Vicki Jones, Vision Planning
FROM: Tim Williams – Urban Designer
REFERENCE: Plan Change 44 – Henley Downs
SUBJECT: Urban Design Assessment
DATE: 22 July 2013

1: INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 My name is Tim Williams. I hold the Qualifications of Bachelor of Resource Studies from Lincoln University and Masters of Urban Design and Development with Distinction from The University of New South Wales. I have practised in the planning and urban design field in the Queenstown Lakes District since 2003 and am currently employed by the Queenstown Lakes District Council. I reside in Queenstown.
- 1.2 I have been asked to provide a report in response to submissions on Plan Change 44 – Henley Downs (PC44) relating to urban design matters. Specifically a letter attached (Appendix 1) prepared by the reporting planner outlines the scope of the assessment requested.
- 1.3 I have visited the site on several occasions and in particular have attended a site visit with the applicant where they outlined the various components of the Plan Change. I was also in attendance when a concept version of the Plan Change was presented to the Queenstown Lakes District Urban Design Panel for comment. A copy of that report was provided in the Plan Change documentation provided by the applicant (Appendix K in the application).
- 1.4 I have also read and considered the report prepared by Lakes Environmental Landscape Architect Dr Marion Read before the drafting of this report.

2: CONTEXT

- 2.1 The particular setting and planning framework are considered important as contextual background to the proposed Plan Change which largely focusses on changes to the Henley Downs component of the Jacks Point Resort Zone.
- 2.2 It is considered the existing objective for the resort zone provides an important summation of what is envisaged for the zone.

Objective 3 - Jacks Point Resort Zone

To enable development of an integrated community, incorporating residential activities, visitor accommodation, small-scale commercial activities and outdoor recreation - with appropriate regard for landscape and visual amenity values, servicing and public access issues.¹

¹ QLDC District Plan pg 12-5

- 2.3 Henley Downs is one of three areas that form part of the Jacks Point Resort zone which, as the objective identifies, seeks to create an integrated community. The resultant environment could be characterised as a resort village where the various components seek to support the day to day needs of residents and visitors. In this respect the resultant urban environment is proposed to be more than a suburban residential environment or golf resort.
- 2.4 This is an important attribute of the resort zone given its location away from the major settlement and commercial activity of Queenstown and a key distinguishing factor of it from traditional suburban settlements where densities and plan zoning have not (in this District) been seen to support local amenities to reduce or provide alternatives to driving for all day to day needs.
- 2.5 The Plan Change proposes a number of key changes to the existing Jacks Point Resort zoning that can be summarised as:
- The separation of the Henley Downs area from the Jacks Point Resort Zone
 - Change in the potential scale and distribution of commercial activity.
 - A new access off Woolshed Road
 - Change to the density and form of residential development anticipated.

3: INTERGRATED COMMUNITY

- 3.1 The first three changes identified above have the greatest potential to impact on the success of the Jacks Point community as a whole. There is a risk that by separating the Henley Downs area from the rest of the resort zone (in a separate planning framework) it no longer ultimately works toward an integrated community.
- 3.2 Proposed Objective 1 of PC44 does suggest this is still a focus but the accompanying policies do little to articulate how this will still occur, other than to rely on the structure plan. The structure plan itself is predominately reliant on an outline development plan framework to determine distribution of commercial activity and whether or not (and where) a connection from Woolshed Road joins and provides a physical connection to the wider Jacks Point.²
- 3.3 It is considered there is a risk with this relaxation particularly around the intensity and location of commercial activity, in that there is no necessity that this part of the development support and relate to the vibrancy and success of the wider community. In the current regime a village area is provided that adjoins the village area in Jacks Point. This (although as identified by the applicant most likely provides an oversupply of commercial activity for a community of the size envisaged) fundamentally locates this like activity in a central area. It is considered the development of one village centre area will be important to the identity and legibility of the community into the future as originally envisaged by the objectives for Jack's Point.
- 3.4 However, there does not appear to be a framework to ensure commercial activity that does develop in Henley Downs does not undermine the Jacks Point Village. I support the flexibility in the location of some commercial activity at a scale associated with corner shopping activity being able to locate within the wider residential areas of Henley Downs. However, there is nothing proposed within PC44 to avoid the inappropriate location and scale of such development given the above concerns, or articulate what scale of commercial activity that is appropriate before careful consideration is

² PC44 Proposed Assessment Matters Rooding (c) & Location of Commercial Precincts (a)

necessary in relation to how it may impact on the development of a village centre and therefore the 'success' of the Jacks Point community.

- 3.5 I support providing more flexibility in and density of residential housing particularly within Activity Area G as this is a logical location for such increased density in terms of its proximity to the village activity area in Jacks Point.
- 3.6 It is considered that developing the Objective and Policy framework to provide a better picture of the overall form and density of development would assist to ensure development within the PC 44 area connects and relates well to the wider Jacks Point. Although a 'structure plan' is provided for, this high level plan does not provide any guidance on the distribution or form of development, and this is left to the ODP process which has the risk of focussing assessment on individual areas without having some understanding of the bigger picture of the zone and overall intended or anticipated pattern of development.
- 3.7 This broader picture is considered important to contribute to the legibility and hierarchy of the wider Jacks Point area where I support the clear development of a village centre which has the potential to be undermined with the extent of the flexibility that is provided for in the currently proposed PC44 rule framework.
- 3.8 For example articulating that the greatest densities of development and concentration of commercial activity should locate within Activity Area G to support the Jacks Point Village and that other nodes of density should be located adjacent to areas of open space and along the spine road would provide a better framework to then assess development within the zone at the stage where assessment is limited to the proposed design of development within a ODP area.
- 3.9 Adding additional assessment matters to require consideration of the location of any proposed commercial precinct and how it will relate, compliment and support the Jacks Point village and development of the wider community would also be appropriate to ensure the development within Henley Downs supports Jack Point.
- 3.10 In terms of the alternative access (Woolshed Road) this provides the opportunity to create a more direct route and alternative access into the Jack's Point area. Given it will represent a more direct route to Queenstown it will inevitably impact on the wider Jacks Point community. However there is no clarity around this road in terms of function and importance. As discussed above it would assist in the assessment of development within the zone if there were specific policies that described the function and importance of this connection and the goals that development should have to contribute to the success of this street.
- 3.11 To further encourage integration with the Jacks Point neighbourhoods requiring softening of the density and form of development on the boundaries of the ODP areas where they adjoin the existing Jacks Point zone would assist to manage the potential edge contrast that would evolve given the differing form and density proposed for Henley Downs. Introducing specific assessment matters to highlight the need to design these edges to be sympathetic to the neighbouring areas of Jack Point will assist to provide a transition to the higher densities and integration of the zone.

4: DENSITY AND FORM

- 4.1 In terms of the density of residential development proposed it is considered that this has the potential to positively contribute to the development of the Jacks Point community. In my experience providing for suburban densities in standalone developments does not create the densities of people to support local convenience activities and therefore the benefits associated with being able to

provide for some of the community needs within the community itself. An example of this is Lake Hayes Estate where even with planning provision for corner shopping type activity it has not yet been realised even though the development is largely built out. This in part can be attributed to the low density of development.

- 4.2 A key component of how the density will be realised is the proposed movement away from the current 'Pod' arrangement where dwellings are clustered together with landscaping. This approach has been successful in the existing residential areas of Jack Point and has provided for development to integrate well with the varied topography characteristic of the existing residential areas. However, as noted by the applicant this approach is less valid when topography is more uniform and also has some disadvantages in terms of the legibility of the street network. In addition, a 'pod' approach is less appropriate as density increases as a more uniform lot and street arrangement provides a better framework to define public and private open space to support increased density. This will create a contrast in the form of development between the existing and proposed, however it is considered this is an appropriate approach to accommodate an increase in density where for the majority of the Henley Downs area the topography lends itself to this alternative. Therefore, I support a more uniform approach to lot and street layout.
- 4.3 It is noted that under the existing zoning a density master plan guides the overall density for the zone and provides for minimum densities. The proposed zoning framework no longer requires a density master plan or minimum densities. Ensuring a minimum density is achieved and providing a mechanism for understanding the distribution of density at a zone level are important tools to understand the form and pattern of development (discussed further below). Removing this ability to understand the distribution of density and not ensuring a minimum density is achieved is considered a less robust approach which is more susceptible to current market demands as opposed to ensuring the long term sustainability of the community. Therefore, it is considered minimum densities should form part of the framework to manage the development of the zone.
- 4.4 However, as was experienced when visiting the site and as identified by Dr Read in her landscape assessment, there are several key landscape features that should in my opinion be identified as open space within the development area. Given the more intensive form of development proposed, ensuring these spaces are identified at the structure plan stage will assist to ensure their legibility and avoid them being fragmented through the subsequent ODP process. As identified by Dr Read these areas are the major gully system and topographic feature near the Jacks Point village and are logical exclusions from the developable areas. The identification of the gully system will also provide the opportunity to ensure integration with the wider Jacks Point area given the upper areas of this system have already been protected as part of the development of adjoining Jacks Point neighbourhoods.
- 4.5 There have been some concerns raised around the proposed densities and potential loss of landscaping by submitters and Dr Read. In this respect a different focus needs to be given when considering increased density in that the focus moves from the provision of private open space to the provision and treatment of public open space. Therefore the quality of the public domain and in particular the street becomes particularly important as the amount of private open space reduces.
- 4.6 As discussed above it would appear logical to provide for an increased density in Area G given its proximity to the future Village which is effectively provided for by the proposed higher number of dwellings within that Area. However the proposed approach utilising total dwelling numbers does not necessarily provide a clear understanding of the potential form of development or housing typology in itself. Although a total number of dwellings has been proposed and an analysis of an indicative 'average' density provided (Appendix N to the application) the actual densities and therefore form or type of development could vary considerably within the 10 metre height limit. It appears that the only

guiding principles to understand whether a particular form of development and density is appropriate within any given area is restricted to the ODP process specific assessment matter stating:

'The extent to which any Medium Density Housing precincts are located so as to benefit from reasonable access to open space and public transport'

- 4.7 Although providing for increased density is supported and could positively contribute to the provision of population density to support the amenities that are desired to support this community, the current framework is considered too weak in its ability to guide and ensure good quality built form outcomes as highlighted by the wording for the (only) assessment matter detailed above which is not in my opinion directive enough.
- 4.8 For example Appendix N to the application illustrates a variety of densities and the potential pattern associated with each. As is illustrated in the Addison and Stonefields aerial images the denser housing typologies directly adjoin an area of open space with access to garaging provided via a rear lane. Such attributes become important when the density of housing is increased.
- 4.9 However, the proposed ODP/Medium Density Precinct (MDP) regime under PC44 does not ensure these qualities are able to be considered particularly given there is no transparency around any particular densities proposed in any area to then understand the potential building typology within a given ODP. Therefore decisions around whether for example a rear lane access should be required or the housing should adjoin an area of open space to offset the level of private open space available are not able to be made.
- 4.10 This could be resolved by providing greater clarity around what and when a MDP would need to be provided. A threshold would be one way to achieve this, requiring densities to be confirmed/allocated as part of the ODP process along with more ability to critically assess and therefore highlight what attributes are necessary to support areas of increased density within the broader policy framework that would have set the scene for how development is intended to contribute to the bigger picture as discussed above. An example of this can be seen in the Three Parks Special Zone³ specifically Objectives 7, 11 and 12 which describe the qualities and characteristics considered important to achieving a quality urban environment, these are then supported by assessment matters⁴.
- 4.11 At the lot level there does appear to be some disconnect between principles adopted at the ODP stage to support good urban form and some of the lot controls in particular relating to site coverage and recession planes. It is also noted that as it is not clear when the MDP is triggered, and therefore at what density the alternative bulk and location controls would apply.
- 4.12 In terms of recession planes, encouraging two storey dwellings on smaller lots provides greater opportunity to decrease the building footprint for a given floor area of building and therefore improves opportunities for open space within a smaller lot. A 25 degree recession plane does not support this approach as it makes achieving two storey dwellings difficult (and creates tension with creating rectangular lots which are desirable for establishing a lot arrangement with a clear public front and private back). A 25 degree recession plane also encourages dwellings to locate centrally within a lot, however as lot sizes decrease a more effective arrangement is achieved when open space is focussed within a rear yard rather than around the entire building, given this space will typically be have less functional use.

³ QLDC District Plan pg 12-164 & 12-165

⁴ QLDC District Plan pg 12 – 211 viii Residential developments (including mixed use buildings) in the MDR subzone and multi-unit developments in the LDR subzone

- 4.13 Given the greenfields nature of the development I would recommend either a 45 degree recession plane or consideration of removing the recession plane control, as it will be more effective to achieve sunlight into dwellings through the street and lot arrangement. Given the importance of the streetscene it is also recommended that no recession plane applies to the road boundary to encourage buildings to engage with the street. Ensuring the dwellings engage with the street and build up to the road setback will assist in the enclosure and definition of the street which a desirable attributes for creating a quality street environment regardless of the density.
- 4.14 It is considered this approach would be desirable regardless of whether or not a MDP is proposed and is reflective of most new residential developments that have reduced or no recession planes such as the existing Jack's Point zone and Shotover Country.
- 4.15 It is noted that a 10 metre height limit is proposed within MDP and where these areas were to adjoin an area with a lesser height limit a recession plane would be an appropriate tool to avoid overlooking issues and to manage the transition between the two typologies - going from three stories to two stories. It is considered adding a control to manage the boundaries between these two areas to address the height difference and overlooking issues would be an improvement to the current provisions.
- 4.16 It is also considered appropriate to provide for a site coverage control as there is a tendency with smaller lots to create tension with the current 'typical' dwelling where the desirability to achieve a certain number of bedrooms and bathrooms effectively results in large houses on small lots. In relation to the discussion above on recession planes it is important on smaller lots to encourage increased floor area through second storey elements rather than at ground level to retain a balance between building and open space on sites. Given the costs associated with building two storey dwellings it is important to utilise building coverage controls on smaller lot arrangements to encourage two storey dwellings. Therefore it is considered a site coverage control should be introduced.
- 4.17 It is noted an alternative rule has been suggested to control garaging within lots, however this wording is considered ineffective in requiring garages to located behind the dwelling given that it only has any relevance once building is proposed within the road setback. Regardless of whether a dwelling or garage is proposed within the road setback it is desirable to ensure the garage is located behind the frontline of the dwelling to reduce the negative impact garaging has on the streetscene. Therefore, I prefer and would recommend the wording as proposed in the notified version of the Plan Change however, it should be amended to be more effective by requiring the garage to be located behind the front line of the dwelling.
- 4.18 There has also been discussion regarding the provision of a service area as part of the zone. It is considered important that clarity is provided over whether or not a dedicated area is important for the general functionality and sustainability of the zone and if it is, it should be specifically provided for preferably through identification in the structure plan. It is considered important to confirm the requirement for such an area as reverse sensitivity issues can make it difficult to establish these types of activities after development has begun. Not planning for such an area can create difficulties in then trying to locate these activities as can be seen in the history surrounding the provision of service activities within the existing Jacks Point zone. Leaving the provision of a service area to an ODP process would be considered a less desirable approach as it provides no overall understanding of where an appropriate location is or clarity over whether or not such an activity is in fact going to be a core component of the zone or not.

5: CONCLUSION

- I Support providing for increased density and some added flexibility in provision of Commercial activity.
- Requiring greater guidance on the overall form of development in the form of policies and direction around the intensity of commercial activity and its location will assist to limit the disassociation that can evolve through the separation of Henley Downs from the overarching framework for Jack's Point.
- The key areas of open space should be identified as open space in the Structure Plan.
- Greater clarity needs to be provided around density through the ODP process with densities allocated at that point and a threshold introduced for the requirement for MDP. Additional policies and assessment matters should be introduced to provide a better understanding of how density should be distributed within the zone to avoid piecemeal assessment at ODP stage and ensure a basic framework is in place to support the particular densities proposed.
- Refinement of the bulk and location controls would assist to ensure good quality built form outcomes.