

QLDC Council
16 December 2021

Report for Agenda Item | Rīpoata moto e Rāraki take : 4

Department: Property & Infrastructure

Title | Taitara Hotops Rise Cycle Path Route

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT | TE TAKE MŌ TE PŪRONGO

The purpose of this report is to consider options for the delivery of the Hotops Rise Cycle Path.

RECOMMENDATION | NGĀ TŪTOHUNGA

That Council:

1. **Note** the contents of this report;
2. **Approve** Option 1 to proceed with the construction of the Proposed Route as defined within the Queenstown Town Centre Street Upgrades Detailed Design.

Prepared by:



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3/12/2021

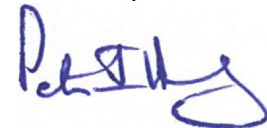
Reviewed by:



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2/12/2021

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CONTEXT | HOROPAKI

- 1 Vision Beyond 2050 states that active travel is an integral part of an accessible and safe network for all of our people to achieve the vision of “Zero-carbon communities”.
- 2 The Queenstown Town Centre Master Plan, adopted in 2017, identified a cycle way link to connect the Frankton track to Camp Street (via Park Street and Hotops Rise) as a commuter route into the town centre and out to the Primary School and High School (prior to its relocation). This was also incorporated into the Wakatipu Active Travel Network in 2019 (refer Attachment A).
- 3 The objective of the active travel/cycle paths both within the master plan and active travel network is to provide integrated, legible, attractive and safe walking and cycling to support communities and encourage the use of active modes as an alternative to private vehicle trips. This aligns with the government’s strategic priorities to provide people with better transport options, developing a low carbon transport system while improving safety and inclusive access.
- 4 The scope of the Queenstown Town Centre Street Upgrades project which commenced in 2019 included the public realm upgrade of Park Street as well as the cycle way link to Camp Street. During the design phase various alignment options were considered, with the final option chosen being a dedicated cycle path from Park Street and along Camp Street to Man Street connecting Lakeview, Fernhill and Arthurs Point active travel routes. The path from Park Street was located adjacent to the existing Hotops Rise path, within the Queenstown Gardens Recreation Reserve, due to the gradient being too steep on the existing path. This proposed design was supported by stakeholders.
- 5 The final design of the dedicated cycle path was completed in early 2020 and all consents obtained prior to funding for the construction of the full Street Upgrades project being approved, with the assistance of ‘shovel ready’ funding from the government in August 2020. During pre-construction activities it was identified that several trees (in addition to those identified during design) were required to be removed, which led to objections from some stakeholders and the construction of the Hotops cycle path was put on hold.
- 6 Following public consultation on the removal of the trees, two alternative route options were proposed for consideration by stakeholders. These options were presented as they were thought to have a potential lessor impact on trees.
- 7 A high-level assessment of the alternative route options was undertaken alongside the original design, as well as a “do-nothing option” for the proposed cycle path.
- 8 The assessment of route options considers the objectives of the Queenstown Gardens Reserve Management Plan and the Te Kararo Development Plan. The Development Plan proposes the Horne Creek area continues to develop native plantings and could provide views. Through Developed Design, there is an opportunity to add further recreation value amenity such as a native reference walk, informal walking loops, seating areas and improved connection to Horne Creek.

- 9 Notably, Stage 1 of the Gardens Development Plan is under construction and due for completion by the end of December 2021. The objective of Stage 1 was to improve path surfacing and accessibility to accommodate increasing volumes of pedestrian access over Horne Creek, past the Gardens playground, towards the Rotunda. The design brief did not require the path improvement to accommodate active travel.
- 10 This report summarises the various points of engagement with stakeholders and the community, route options analysis, concerns raised, actions undertaken to respond to those concerns and options for the design/construction of the cycle path.

ANALYSIS AND ADVICE | TATĀRITANGA ME NGĀ TOHUTOHU

- 11 In early March 2021 trees that would be affected by the construction of the Hotops cycle path were identified and marked for removal. Council officers from both Property and Infrastructure and Parks and Reserves reviewed these trees on site and a risk assessment was undertaken. The Tree Risk Assessment report recommended further trees for removal, due to their exposure to increased wind load and associated safety risk (refer Attachment B).
- 12 14 x trees (incl. 6 x Douglas Firs) were initially identified as being impacted by the construction works and an additional 28 x trees (incl. 14 x Douglas Firs) as a result of the increased wind load, resulting in a total of 42 x trees.
- 13 A meeting was held with the Friends of the Gardens representatives in late March 2021 and it was subsequently agreed that:
- an alternative alignment would be investigated to try to reduce the number of trees requiring removal;
 - Re-planting would be investigated to mitigate the loss of trees; and
 - Community Engagement would be undertaken on the proposed removal of trees.
- 14 Community Engagement was undertaken in June and July 2021. The focus of the engagement was on the removal of native trees to make way for the cycle path on the basis that community engagement through the Queenstown Gardens Development Plan had previously been carried out which identified the removal of the Douglas Firs (refer <https://letstalk.gldc.govt.nz/hotops-rise-tree-removal>).
- 15 A re-planting plan to mitigate the tree removals was included within the engagement material. The planting plan proposes native species replanted on a minimum two for one basis using mature specimens where possible to align with the Queenstown Gardens Development Plan.
- 16 The key themes from the community engagement, and feedback proposing alternative path routes, were presented to the Community & Services Committee in August 2021 which led to a detailed multi-criteria assessment of the alternative route options alongside the original design, including a “do-nothing option”. The options are summarised in the table below:

Table 1: Summary of Cycle Path Options

Cycle Path Options	Details
Proposed Route (PR)	QLDC approved Issue for Construction (IFC) design
Alternative Route 1 (AR1)	Alternative route proposed by Brian Fitzpatrick and supported by Queenstown Trails Trust (QTT) and Friends of the Garden
Alternative Route 2 (AR2)	Alternative route proposed by QTT CEO Mark Williams
Do Nothing (DN)	No cycle path improvements undertaken

- 18 The draft assessment was reviewed in an online meeting with stakeholders in October 2021. Feedback was taken on board, including a request for an independent Road Safety Audit of the Proposed Route, due to concerns raised about the gradient of the path. The gradients for all options fall outside of the “Desirable uphill gradients for ease of cycling” (Austroads 2017) and are not ideal under any scenario. The gradients are reflective of the sudden change in topography from Park Street to Camp Street and are very similar in steepness but over varying lengths.
- 19 A peer review of the options assessment was also undertaken, and recommendations incorporated. The final Hotops Cycle Path Alignment Options Assessment report, Peer Review and Road Safety Audit documents have been included in Attachment C (circulated separately). Together these reports, along with the community engagement have informed the recommended option discussed below.
- 20 Environmental effects have been weighted highly, which primarily means effects on established trees. In determining effects on trees there are a number of considerations:
- Existing accepted arboricultural methodologies (such as STEM, CTLA, Helliwell, Burnley, CAVAT) are likely to value the existing established *Pseudotsuga menziesii* (Douglas Fir) more highly than a much larger number of juvenile trees. The maturity of the Douglas Fir means they score highly for carbon sequestration, air filtration and visual impact. These scoring systems do not account for pest species, planting objectives or long-term outcomes.
 - The Queenstown Gardens Reserve Management Plan (RMP) requires planned succession in the Gardens. A Succession Plan for the entire Queenstown Gardens has not been completed.
 - In lieu of a Succession Plan, the Hotops Cycle Path proposed a Replanting Plan (refer Attachment D) to mitigate tree removals. The Planting Plan proposes native species replanted on a minimum two for one basis using developed specimens

where possible. A budget has been allocated to cover the costs of planting and establishing the Planting Plan.

- d. A planting palette of native and large specimen species meets the planting objectives of the Te Kararo Queenstown Gardens Development Plan 2020 for the Horne Creek area.
 - e. The Douglas Fir proposed for removal, as a result of the Proposed Route construction, represent approximately 5% of the Douglas Fir on the whole Queenstown Gardens peninsula. To meet the 20-year time frame for succession planning proposed in the RMP, the same number of Douglas Fir would need to be replaced with other species annually for the next 20 years.
- 21 The 'Do Nothing' approach has not been proposed as an option as it does not deliver on the outcomes of Vision Beyond 2050 to provide an active travel network that is accessible and safe for all of our people which in turn will assist in achieving the vision of "Zero-carbon communities".
- 22 The reason the Alternative Route 2 has not been proposed as an option is primarily due to land use. The Horne Creek area of the Gardens is currently underused and to many may not be associated with 'The Gardens'. It is very shaded and primarily used for pedestrian connections. However, it is indeed part of the Queenstown Gardens and there is an opportunity to enhance its passive recreation value.
- 23 Providing a dedicated transport route on the Alternative Route 2 alignment will inhibit the ability to maximise the recreation values of the recreation reserve. Queenstown Gardens is a high-profile reserve within a densifying urban setting, adding pressure to recreation levels of service.
- 24 Option 1: Proceed with the construction of the Proposed Route

Advantages:

- 25 Provides a dedicated cycle commuter path from Park Street to Camp Street.
- 26 Is the best option in terms of delivering the outcomes of Vision Beyond 2050 to provide an active travel network that is accessible and safe, which in turn will assist in achieving the vision of "Zero-carbon communities".
- 27 Uses the least amount of recreation reserve area to serve primarily a transport purpose.
- 28 Long term, the native planting replacing Douglas Fir would improve the quality of tree species in the Queenstown Gardens.
- 29 Provides an improved cycle path at that end of the Gardens, where cyclists currently use the pedestrian path.

- 30 Detailed design and For Construction drawings are complete and align with the scope of works approved for funding by government. These works are also included within the scope and budget for construction by Kā Huanui a Tāhuna.

Disadvantages:

- 31 Removes 42 x established trees and re-planted trees will take a number of years to establish.
- 32 The gradient of the path is of similar steepness to the current shared path through the Gardens (Alternative Route 2), however for over twice the length.

33 Option 2: Proceed with the design and construction of the Alternative Route 2

Advantages:

- 34 Short-term, uses existing pathways through the Gardens reducing the overall capital expenditure.
- 35 A smaller number of established trees is likely to be affected and removed.

Disadvantages:

- 36 The route does not provide a dedicated commuter cycle path and will increase the potential for conflicts between commuters and recreational users of the Gardens due to using the existing pathways, particularly at the playground, rotunda and Gardens vehicle entrance. Commuting through Marine Parade would provide more conflicts not accounted for in the MCA table.
- 37 Commuting cyclists along Horne Creek may inhibit the ability to enhance connection with Horne Creek for passive recreation.
- 38 Long term, the existing Hotops path may need to be improved to accommodate more pedestrians. With no dedicated cycle path, commuting cyclists might have to be also accommodated within this path upgrade. This would add to the design complexity and costs of the path upgrade.
- 39 Cyclists may deviate to commute through Marine Parade, which is another high profile and high use passive recreation reserve.
- 40 This report recommends **Option 1** for addressing the matter because it provides an integrated active travel link and maintains the intended future use of the Hotops garden area in line with the Te Kararo Queenstown Gardens Reserve Management Plan .

CONSULTATION PROCESS | HĀTEPE MATAPAKI:

> SIGNIFICANCE AND ENGAGEMENT | TE WHAKAMAHI I KĀ WHAKAARO HIRAKA

- 41 This matter is of medium significance, as determined by reference to the Council's Significance and Engagement Policy because the Queenstown Gardens is listed as a

strategic asset. This matter affects alignment with Council's existing policy, strategy and community interest.

- 42 The persons who are affected by or interested in this matter are the residents and rate payers of Queenstown Lakes district community, particularly those in Park Street, as well as visitors and users of the Queenstown Gardens and commuters on the Active Travel Network.
- 43 Key Stakeholder groups include the Friends of the Gardens (FoG) and Queenstown Trails Trust (QTT). FoG view the proposed route as uninvitingly steep and straight, that too many established trees would be removed and that overall, the process of path developed design missed a key milestone of engaging with the community, particularly due to the high-profile nature of the reserve. Queenstown Trails Trust viewpoint is primarily that the path alignment does not take the most direct route to priority destinations in the town centre.
- 44 The Council has undertaken community engagement via several streams; the Let's Talk page providing more detailed information and an online survey and feedback form, two stakeholder workshops and two on site drop-in sessions. 96 responses were received via the online survey. Based on these responses and the stakeholder workshops two additional routes have been analysed, and additional engineering reviews completed.

> MĀORI CONSULTATION | IWI RŪNANGA

- 45 Iwi representatives from Aukaha and Te Ao Marama have worked in partnership with the design team on the cultural values and narrative for the Queenstown Town Centre Street Upgrades design and planting palette.
- 46 Iwi were also consulted on the consents for the Horne Creek Bridge works incorporating the cycle path.

RISK AND MITIGATIONS | NGĀ RARU TŪPONO ME NGĀ WHAKAMAURUTANGA

- 47 This matter relates to the Community & Wellbeing risk category. It is associated with RISK000056 Ineffective provision for the future planning and development needs of the district within the QLDC Risk Register. This risk has been assessed as having a moderate inherent risk rating.
- 48 The approval of the recommended option will support the Council by allowing us to avoid the risk. This shall be achieved by providing an integrated active travel link and maintaining the intended future use of the Hotops garden area in line with the Te Kararo Queenstown Gardens Reserve Management Plan.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS | NGĀ RITENGA Ā-PŪTEA

- 49 The operational and capital expenditure requirements are provisioned for within the Annual and Ten Year Plans.

COUNCIL EFFECTS AND VIEWS | NGĀ WHAKAAWEAWE ME NGĀ TIROHANGA A TE KAUNIHERA

50 The following Council policies, strategies and bylaws were considered:

- Vision Beyond 2050: <https://www.qldc.govt.nz/vision-beyond-2050/>
- The Queenstown Gardens Reserve Management Plan – relevant to the management of planting and activities in the Gardens.
- Te Kararo Queenstown Gardens Development Plan – relevant to the development of the Queenstown Gardens
- QLDC Tree Policy – relevant to requiring mitigation planting.
- Queenstown Town Centre Master Plan
- Wakatipu Active Travel Network Single Stage Business Case

51 The recommended option is consistent with the principles set out in the named policy/policies.

52 This matter is included in the Ten Year Plan/Annual Plan.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS AND STATUTORY RESPONSIBILITIES | KA TURE WHAIWHAKAARO, ME KĀ TAKOHAKA WAETURE

53 Legal advice was sought on the public consultation process for the removal of trees and this informed the consultation strategy.

54 Legal advice was also sought in response to stakeholder feedback, in particular two stakeholder concerns that:

- the historical significance of Hotops Rise was not considered; and
- not all necessary consents were obtained for the removal of some beech trees.

55 Legal advice confirmed that the historical and archaeological impacts of the cycle path through Hotops Rise had been fully considered by the project team and all relevant consents and authorisations have been obtained. Specifically, resource consent from Council has been obtained for the cycle path development within the setting of Horne Creek and Hotops Rise (both listed category 2 heritage features under District Plan). Resource consent has also been obtained for replacement of Hotops Rise Footbridge (as it will necessitate partial demolition of foundation stonework that could date back to the first bridge constructed over Horne Creek c. 1889). Archaeological authority has been obtained from Heritage New Zealand to replace the Hotops Rise footbridge.

56 Legal advice also confirmed that there is no legal impediment to remove trees (whether they are native to New Zealand or otherwise) other than the scheduled tree provisions under a District Plan and compliance with Council's own policies. None of the beech trees on Hotops Rise are scheduled trees under the District Plan and therefore resource consent is not required to remove them.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2002 PURPOSE PROVISIONS | TE WHAKATURETURE 2002 O TE KĀWANATAKA Ā-KĀIKA

57 The recommended option:

- Section 10 of the Local Government Act 2002 states the purpose of local government is (a) to enable democratic local decision-making and action by, and on behalf of, communities; and (b) to promote the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of communities in the present and for the future by providing an integrated active travel link while maintaining the intended future use of the Hotops garden area in line with the Te Kararo Queenstown Gardens Reserve Management Plan. As such, the recommendation in this report is appropriate and within the ambit of Section 10 of the Act;
- Can be implemented through current funding under the Ten Year Plan and Annual Plan;
- Is consistent with the Council's plans and policies; and
- Would not alter significantly the intended level of service provision for any significant activity undertaken by or on behalf of the Council, or transfer the ownership or control of a strategic asset to or from the Council.

ATTACHMENTS | NGĀ TĀPIRIHANGA

A	Queenstown Town Centre Master Plan & Wakatipu Active Travel Network Plan
B	Hotops Quantified Tree Risk Assessment
C	Hotops Cycleway Options Assessment – Circulated separately
D	Hotops Cycle Path Proposed Route Tree Removals and Replanting Plans