

**BEFORE THE HEARINGS PANEL
FOR THE QUEENSTOWN LAKES PROPOSED DISTRICT PLAN**

IN THE MATTER of the Resource
Management Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER of Hearing Stream 13
– Queenstown Mapping
Annotations and
Rezoning Requests

**REPLY OF HELEN JULIET MELSOP
ON BEHALF OF QUEENSTOWN LAKES DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**LANDSCAPE - QUEENSTOWN PARK LIMITED AND REMARKABLES PARK
LIMITED (806)**

11 October 2017

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 My name is Helen Juliet Mellsop. I prepared a statement of evidence in chief and rebuttal on landscape issues, for the Queenstown Mapping Hearing Stream 13. My qualifications and experience are listed in my evidence in chief dated 24 May 2017. I also participated in expert conferencing on 22 August 2017 and have signed a joint conferencing statement setting out matters of agreement and disagreement.¹ I also prepared a summary of my evidence.

1.2 The purpose of this reply evidence is to specifically respond to matters raised by submitters during the course of the hearing. In particular, I provide responses to the following matters raised by Queenstown Park Limited (806):

- (a) changes to building coverage and building height rules in proposed Rural Visitor Activity Area 3 (**RV3**); and
- (b) evidence of Mr Stephen Brown and Ms Rebecca Skidmore.

2. RURAL VISITOR ACTIVITY AREA 3 (RV3)

2.1 In closing legal submissions, Counsel for the submitters stated that the relief sought had been amended to reduce the building coverage on the upper and lower terraces of RV3 and to clarify building height within this activity area.²

2.2 The reduction in building coverage would allow for a greater extent of open space within any future development, and potentially for a greater extent of indigenous planting to integrate a tourist village with its wider setting. However, using a coarse measure (ie. building coverage standards) based on the RV3 areas, the amended building coverages would still allow for up to 31 x 600m² or 46 x 400m² buildings on the upper terrace and up to 63 x 600m² buildings or 94 x 400m² buildings on the lower terrace. In my view, very careful design and significant planting (predominantly indigenous) would still be

1 The joint conferencing statement is attached to a Memorandum of Counsel for Queenstown Park Limited, Remarkables Park Limited and Queenstown Lakes District Council dated 30 August 2017.

2 Closing submissions of Counsel for Remarkables Park Limited and Queenstown Park Limited, Hearing Stream 13 – Queenstown Mapping, 13 September 2017, paragraphs 2.2 to 2.4.

required to ensure that development to the amended building coverage and height limits appeared as a large rural village rather than an urban node.

2.3 Even if the development did not appear urban, this still leaves the question of whether a rural village of the scale and extent envisaged would be appropriate in this particular location within an outstanding natural landscape (**ONL**). My view remains that this landscape is not able to absorb development of the scale and nature enabled by the proposed Queenstown Park Special Zone (**QPSZ**) without significant impacts on the landscape characteristics and values that make it an ONL.

3. EVIDENCE OF MR STEPHEN BROWN AND MS REBECCA SKIDMORE

3.1 At the hearing Mr Stephen Brown (the landscape expert for the submitters) described the Kawarau River valley and adjacent mountain slopes as a modified cultural landscape that is not highly natural, citing the removal of the original pre-European vegetation, and long term farming use. He considered that the cultural influence meant that additional human modification could be absorbed. However, I would note that within the Queenstown Lakes District, almost all ONL outside the conservation estate are modified high country farming environments with little or no indigenous forest. This does not mean that these are not outstanding and natural landscapes, or that they should not be protected from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.

3.2 In his evidence and in answer to the Panel's questions at the hearing, Mr Brown referred to existing development at Walter Peak Station as an example of appropriate development within an ONL. The scale and extent of existing 'homestead' development at Walter Peak (6-8 clustered low rise buildings) are significantly smaller than those that would be enabled by the QPSZ.

3.3 Mr Brown also emphasised the vital importance of buildings being set back from escarpment edges, and of planting within and around development, in achieving an acceptable landscape outcome for the

zone. In my view the planning provisions currently proposed would not ensure these outcomes, although they are encouraged for proposed RV3 and the Rural Residential 3 development area (**RR3**). The level of certainty relied on by Mr Brown could, in my opinion, only be achieved through a discretionary resource consent application under Rural zoning. Ms Rebecca Skidmore (the urban design and landscape architecture expert for the submitters) also highlighted the uncertainty about the nature of future development within RV3 in her oral evidence. In the case of the proposed zone, I consider it is appropriate to assess the 'worst case' outcome possible under the proposed planning provisions.

3.4 Both Mr Brown and Ms Skidmore stated at the hearing that they considered that the presence of a gondola would make other development appropriate and logical in RV3. I agree that if a gondola was consented, some additional visitor accommodation or commercial development co-located with the gondola station could be appropriate. In my view, a single visitor lodge and/or food and beverage outlet, in addition to a gondola station, would not have significant cumulative adverse effects on the landscape character and landscape values if it was appropriately sited, designed and landscaped. However, I consider that further spread of development across the Rastus Burn fan, as enabled by the QPSZ, would be inappropriate within the ONL.

3.5 Finally, Mr Brown stated at the hearing that the increased access to the ONL facilitated by a gondola would be a positive landscape effect. While a gondola would allow people to view and enjoy the landscape from a different perspective and at closer range, I consider this is a recreational benefit rather than a positive effect on the character and values of the ONL. Increased access would not enhance any of the core values of the ONL described by Mr Brown, Ms Skidmore or myself.



Helen Juliet Mellisop

11 October 2017