

WIDGEON PARK RESERVE

CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT PLAN




FEBRUARY 2026



Revision History

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on behalf of Beca Ltd.			

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Twin Rivers Trail at Southern End of Widgeon Park Reserve

1.1 LOCATION

Widgeon Park Reserve is located in the heart of the Queenstown Lakes District and sits on the banks of the Kawarau River, in the Whakatipu Basin.

The Whakatipu Basin is characterised by the surrounding peaks and pristine lakes which were formed by glacial and tectonic activity. Fluvial rivers and streams run throughout the basin floor, which historically deposited gold from the mountains to the lower reaches. More recently schist bedrock and engineering grade aggregate has been taken from the basin waterways to be used in construction. These materials characterise building vernacular today.

The waterways that feed the lake, including the Kawarau and Shotover Rivers, provide significant ecological habitat for fauna. Exotic species such as crack willows, which are considered invasive alongside watercourses, are common on riparian margins.

The basin has experienced significant land cover changes over time with less than 10% indigenous cover left over much of the area (Landcare Research - Threatened Environment Classification Map, 2016). The original vegetation of the site area would have included scrub, shrub land and tussock/grassland with native beech and broadleaf-podocarp forests. Species seen would include Coprosma, Olearia and Hebe species, with Kōwhai being dominant. Species such as these provide a good source of food and habitat for lizards, birds, bats and insects.

1.2 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this development plan is to provide Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC) a spatial layout for the management, enhancement, and development of the Widgeon Park Reserve.

The plan outlines the constraints, qualities and opportunities for the park. It considers community needs, natural habitat restoration, wider connections, recreational opportunities, and cultural heritage to ensure a cohesive experience for users and that the character of the area is retained.

The scope of this development plan will include both Widgeon Park Reserve and the Bridesdale Bush Reserve (formerly referred to as the Bridesdale Farm Wetlands in the Lake Hayes Estate, Shotover Country and Bridesdale (LHESCB) Reserve Management Plan 2021).



Illustration of Whakatipu Basin

1.3 SITE CONTEXT

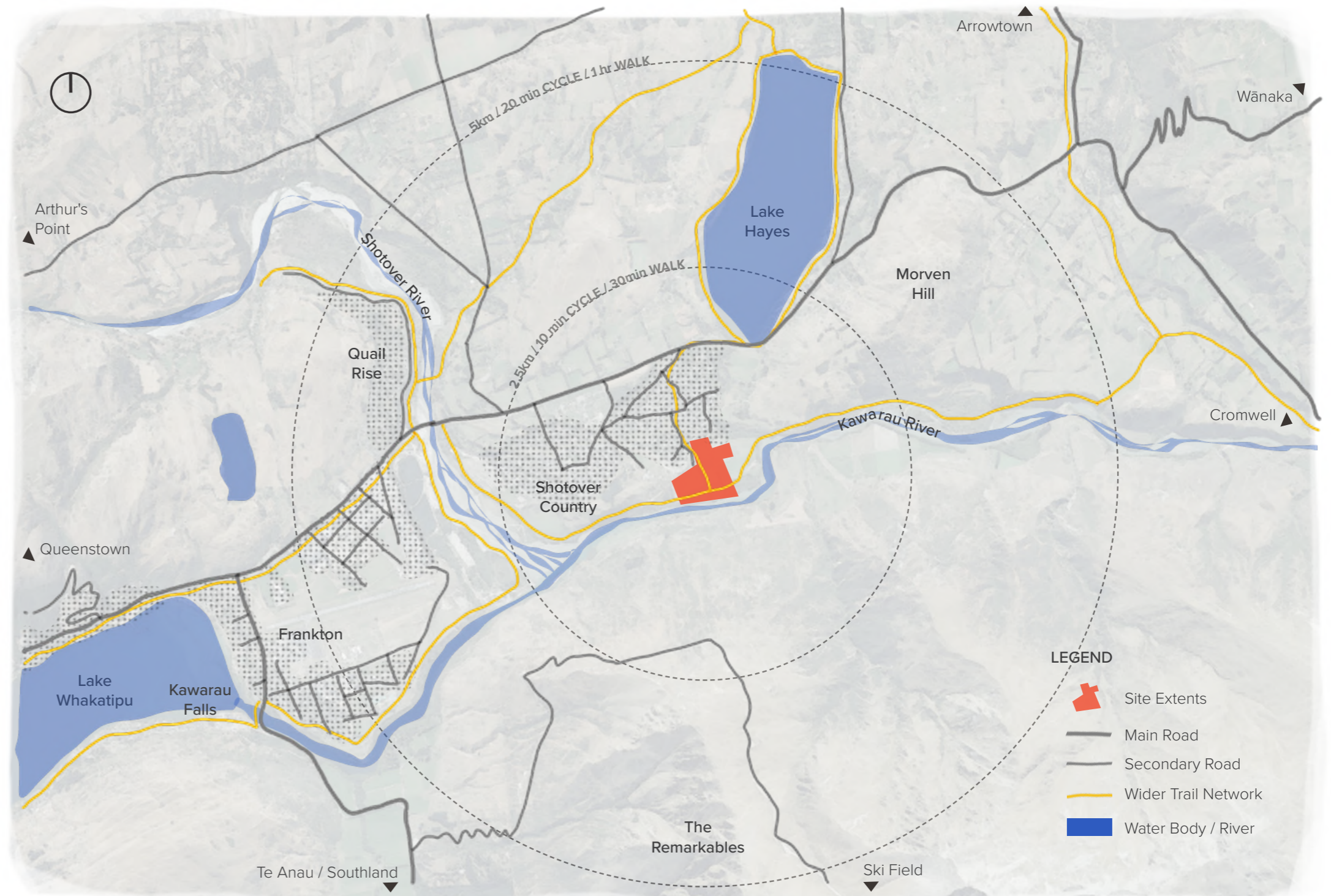
Widgeon Park is located on the lower river terrace of the Kawarau River and sits under the Remarkables mountain range, it is approximately 29.4ha in size, 9.8ha of which is currently leased for grazing.

The Lake Hayes Estate and Shotover Country residential developments which sit on the escarpment behind the park are within walking distance and contain community facilities which include parks and playgrounds, a primary school, hospitality and medical facilities.

The park is connected at the southern end to the popular walking and cycling path, the Twin Rivers Trail. The 18.5km trail which follows the Kawarau River starts in Frankton and finishes at the Arrow Junction. It provides connections to popular swimming spots; Colono and Gurnells Beaches, to nearby Bridesdale Bush walking trails as well as to the wider active travel network.

Vegetation cover within each of these areas varies, but includes mostly open grassland and pockets of low value exotic woodland. Widgeon Park is in particularly poor condition with obvious signs of pest infestation damaging the soil and vegetation cover. The southern end is flood prone and has a natural, riparian character. The Bridesdale Bush Reserve area has had intensive community restoration plantings undertaken in recent years which has added value to the space.

Informal walking and cycling tracks are evident but tend to pass through the park, rather than provide any internal connectivity or recreation use. Vehicle access is provided from two key points; Widgeon Place cul de sac with on street parking and Hayes Creek Road which has unformed open space used for parking to the north and a gravel car park next to the river. The Twin Rivers Trail, Alpine Ave and Mount Rosa Lane provide additional pedestrian access to the park.



1 : 50 000 Context Area Plan

1.4 SITE ANALYSIS

Issues / Constraints:

- Lack of Ngāi Tahu cultural narrative about the area
- Pests - Rabbits
- Limited rabbit proof fencing
- Poor soil condition (dry, hollow)
- Existing vegetation cover is of low ecological value (moderate character value)
- Informal scattered parking
- Lack of connectivity between reserve areas

Qualities:

- Extensive site 29.4 ha.
- Flat and open site
- Open and rural character
- Mature shelter belts and tree stands
- Views and connections to surrounding landscapes (Kawarau River and the Remarkables mountain range)
- Existing community planting projects

Opportunities:

- Arrival points with parking and wayfinding signage
- Connection between Widgeon Park and Bridesdale Bush Trust area
- Toilet block, Bridesdale Bush Trust events space
- Soil remediation and rabbit proof fencing to allow open grassland and native planting
- Successional tree planting to replace seeding exotics and reduce willow creep
- Specimen trees to provide shade
- Natural play elements and street furniture
- Mountain bike jump and skills area
- Incorporation of a dog park to accommodate higher density development within the Ladies Mile corridor (different age ranges)
- Increased educational awareness of Ngāi Tahu cultural narrative through wayfinding and signage



1 : 4000 Site Analysis Plan

1.5 SITE PHOTOS



All Photos by Beca
February and May 2025

1.6 STRATEGY

OVERARCHING STRATEGIES

Widgeon Park Reserve has two QLDC overarching strategies that create a foundation for the development of the reserve, the 'Parks and Open Spaces Strategy' (2021) and the 'Lake Hayes Estate, Shotover Country and Bridesdale Farm (LHESCB) Reserve Management Plan' (2021). Both documents provide a clear vision and objectives for the development of reserves within QLDC management, as well as specific policies for Widgeon park and Bridesdale Bush Reserve.

Parks and Open Spaces Strategy

The relevant objectives from the strategy include:

- Parks and reserves are diverse, multipurpose and provide for communities, mana whenua and visitor
- Open spaces are well designed, accessible and valued
- We are able to plan for and accommodate growth
- Open spaces are treasured and protected
- Open spaces contribute to enhanced biodiversity, improved water quality and reduced Green House Gas emissions.

Within this document Widgeon Park Reserve is classified as a 'Community Park', which remains an accurate classification.

"A community park is an area of open space on flat or undulating land that provides a variety of informal recreation experiences for residents across a neighbourhood/suburb. The park should include:

- Multiple kick around or play spaces
- Socialising areas, including picnic and BBQ facilities
- Perimeter or walking trail
- Small scale recreation infrastructure such as club rooms, public toilets



Image by Beca. May 2025

LHESCB Reserve Management Plan Vision:

"Lake Hayes Estate, Shotover Country and Bridesdale Reserves provide a range of reserves that generate community connection and enable access to open space, recreation, the natural environment and provide for wellbeing."

Relevant objectives:

- To accommodate appropriate activities for all ages and abilities in defined areas that enhance the community's access to, use, and enjoyment of the reserves.
- To provide reserves that positively contribute to the open space character and support balanced positive social, cultural, and environmental outcomes.
- To support the natural ecological systems within the reserves, including native biodiversity habitat and sustainable water quality processes.
- Develop a plan for improvements.

- To recognise the reserve is subject to floodwater and a high water table, and therefore to develop appropriately.

Policies specific to Widgeon Park Reserve:

- Maintain existing mature planting where it provides public benefit such as wind screening and shade.
- Plant and revegetate to provide for ecological enhancement and carbon sequestration.
- Retain the largely passive nature of the reserve.
- Support the development of parking areas that are appropriate for the recreation use of the reserve where they do not conflict with existing uses.
- Allow for small-scale structures associated with recreation activities on the reserve where they provide public benefit.
- Allow for natural water processes, including establishment of wetlands and flood events.



Image by Beca. May 2025

1.6 STRATEGY

KAI TAHU VALUES

The following values have been adopted from the QLDC Blue Green Network Plan, September 2025;

Ki Uta Ki Tai

Ki Uta Ki Tai is a Kāi Tahu natural resource management philosophy recognising that everything is connected and must be managed as such. Ki Uta Ki Tai reflects that mana whenua belong to the environment and are only borrowing the resources from generations that are yet to come.

Ahi Kā Roa

Recognise Kāi Tahu presence and the importance of the area to their associations, practices and cultural ecological systems as a community who shaped, managed, and relied on te taiao across much of these ancestral lands, wāhi tūpuna.

Ira Atua Tangata Atua

Ira Atua and Tangata Atua are cultural constructs that recognise the act of ordering whakapapa and are embedded in how Kāi Tahu engage with their environment. It considers what is held within a landscape and what is appropriate at place. . A landscape holds and exerts many things in different ways, including whakapapa, mana, kawa, tikanga, mātauranga, identity, connections, practices, history, values and guide what is appropriate.

Mauri

Mauri can be defined as the life principle, life supporting capacity, or life force present in all things. Protecting the mauri of a resource is the fundamental management principle for Māori. Mana whenua treasure the mauri of freshwater and other resources, and experience cultural offence and distress when that mauri is degraded.

Wairua

Kāi Tahu whānau use different ways to feel spiritually connected with their takiwā. For example, gathering kai with whānau at a traditional fishing place, they know was named by their tūpuna and utilised by successive generations of their whānau, is one way. Conversely being denied these opportunities through physical constraints

Mahinga Kai

Mahinga kai is about mahi ngā kai – it is about places, ways of doing things, and resources that sustain the people. Mahinga kai is considered by Kāi Tahu to be, in today’s language, the principal ‘environmental indicator’ in natural systems. If mahinga kai is not present, is unsafe or unable to be harvested, then that natural system is under stress and requires remedial action. Mahinga kai practices rely on thriving and abundant biodiversity, safe and aesthetically pleasing places to practice, and the active transfer of knowledge between people. Biodiversity and aesthetics are dependent on the sustainable management of many other natural resources in the takiwā, especially water bodies.

Access

Importance to provide access to mahinga kai, practices, and other associations. The QLDC area includes many Te Ara Tawhito/ ancient trails which traverse and move up and down the district area providing

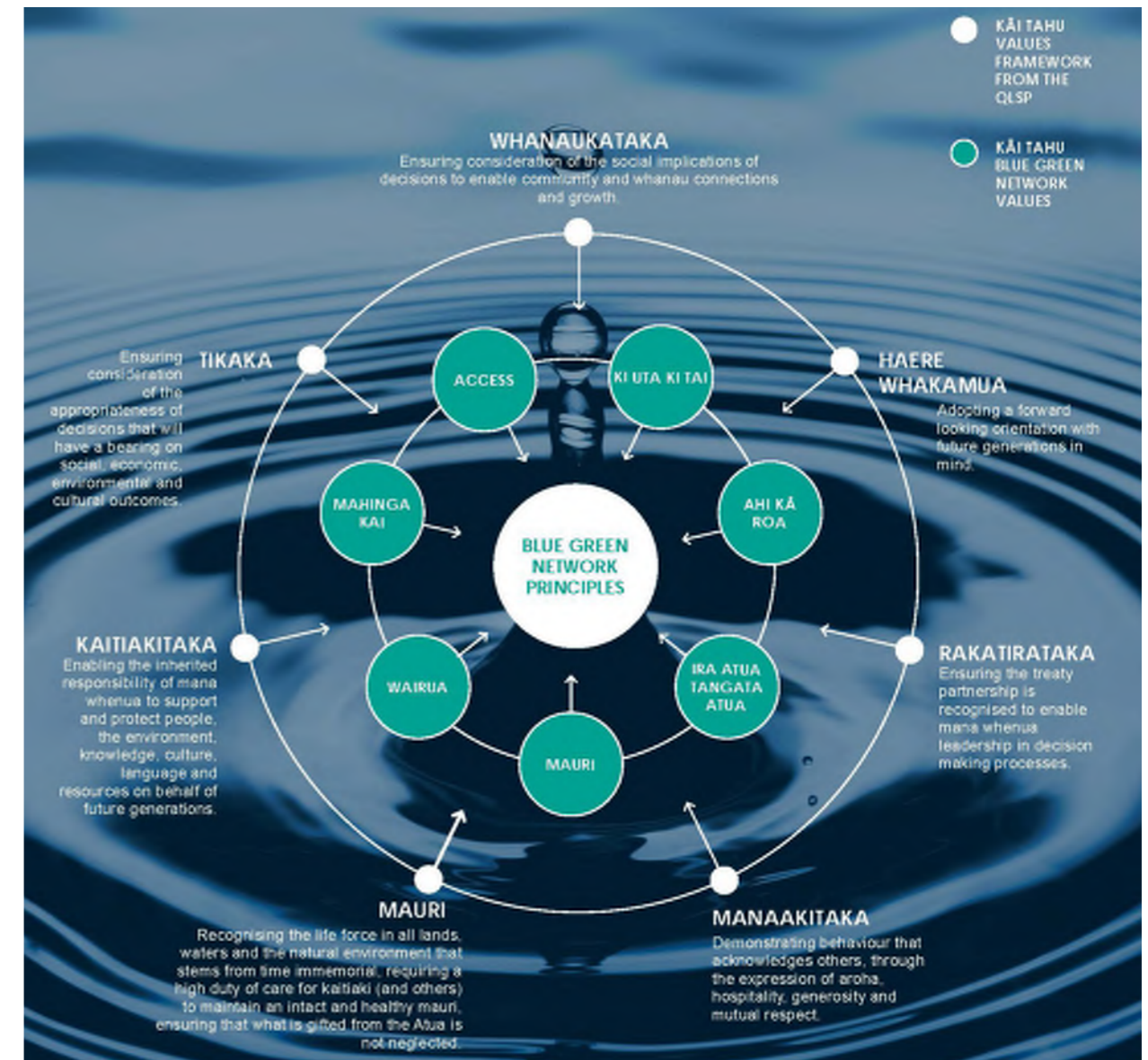


Figure 02: Kai Tahu Values Diagram From 'Draft Blue Green Network (September 2025)'

1.7 PROCESS

ENGAGEMENT FEEDBACK

Who we engaged with

- Lake Hayes Estate Community Association
- Bridesdale Bush Trust
- Aukaha
- Te Ao Mārama Inc. (TAMI)
- Queenstown Trails Trust
- QLDC Arrowtown-Kawarau Ward Councilors
- Community via. Let's Talk page, drop in sessions and online submissions

KEY MOVES

A series of key moves were identified through the engagement process to guide the future development of the park. Together, they provide a cohesive framework for the development, enhancement, and use of the park while preserving its unique character.



Remediate soils



Continue to develop the Bridesdale Bush Reserve area and establish a new toilet block



Link Widgeon Park and Bridesdale Bush Reserve community area



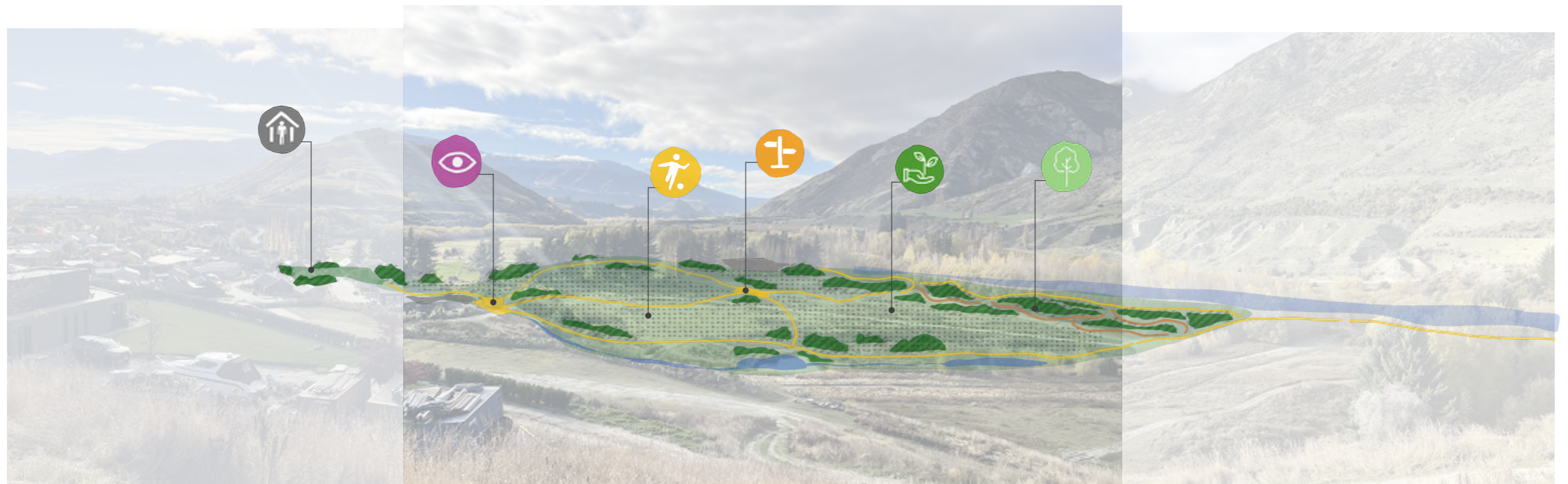
Restore vegetation patterns to encourage biodiversity back into the park



Connect the site with integrated trail network



Utilise park extents for passive and active recreation



2.1 CONCEPT PLAN

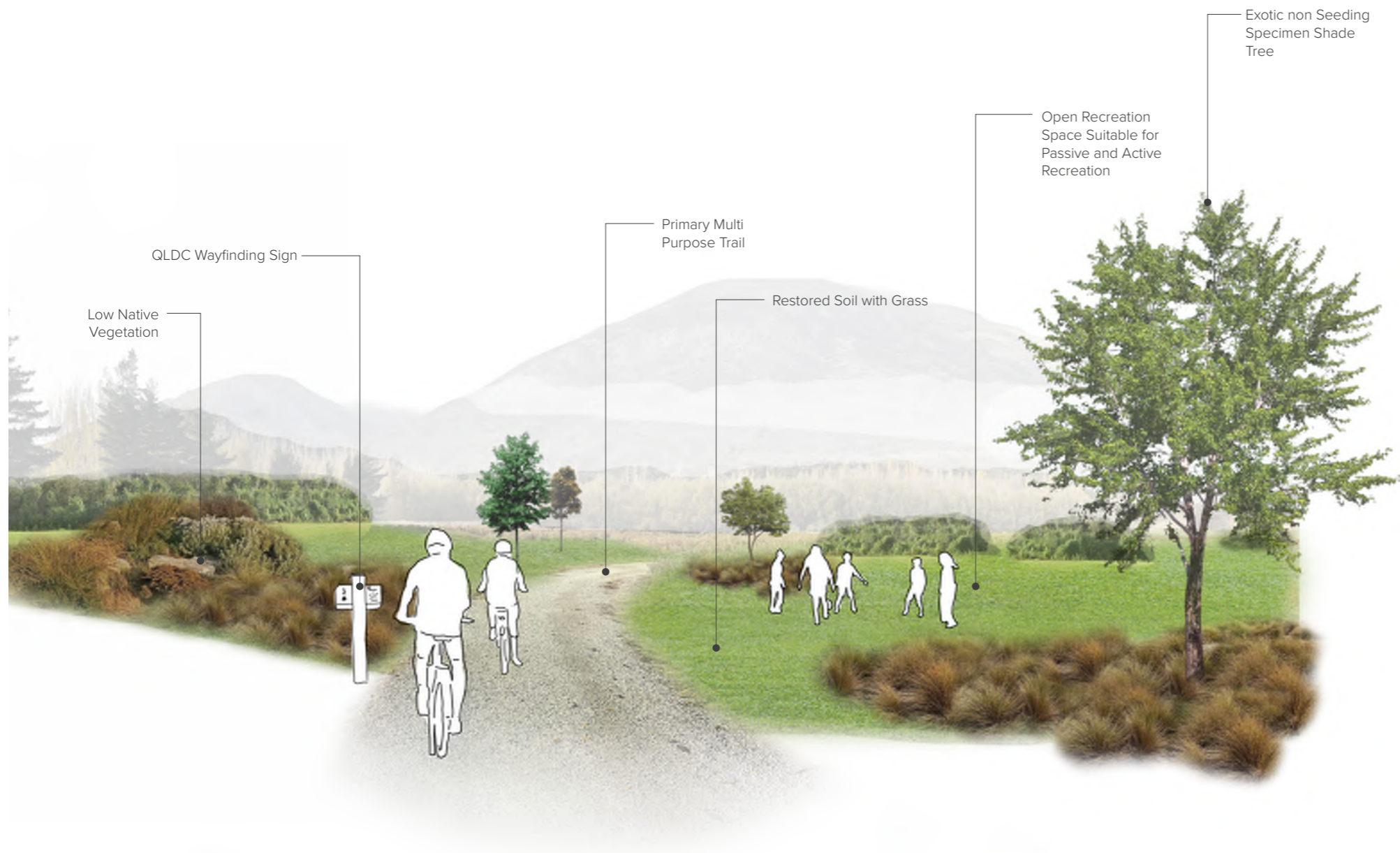
- Provide a vital connection between the community area and Widgeon Park
- Improve pest control measures, increasing rabbit proof fencing and gates at access points
- Restore and regenerate soils within fenced area and introduce pockets of native planting and shade trees
- Clear exotic wilding species and introduce successional planting replacements
- Introduce a native planted buffer between the river trail and the park to reduce crack willow creep
- Develop community area as planned and provide new toilet block
- Provide an arrivals space at 'Widgeon Place' with gravel car park, wayfinding, congregation point
- Improve trail network through and within the park including a loop track
- Provide natural play and mountain biking facilities for a range of age groups
- Provide a range of open spaces within the park for passive and active recreation, which can be used for larger events than those held at Bridesdale Bush Trust community area
- Provide picnic area adjacent to nature play area including BBQ, seating and shade structure
- Consider retaining section for leasing purposes, subject to future review



2.2 SKETCH PERSPECTIVES

Perspective 01

View from primary trail with open recreation spaces, looking south towards the Remarkables and Kawarau River.



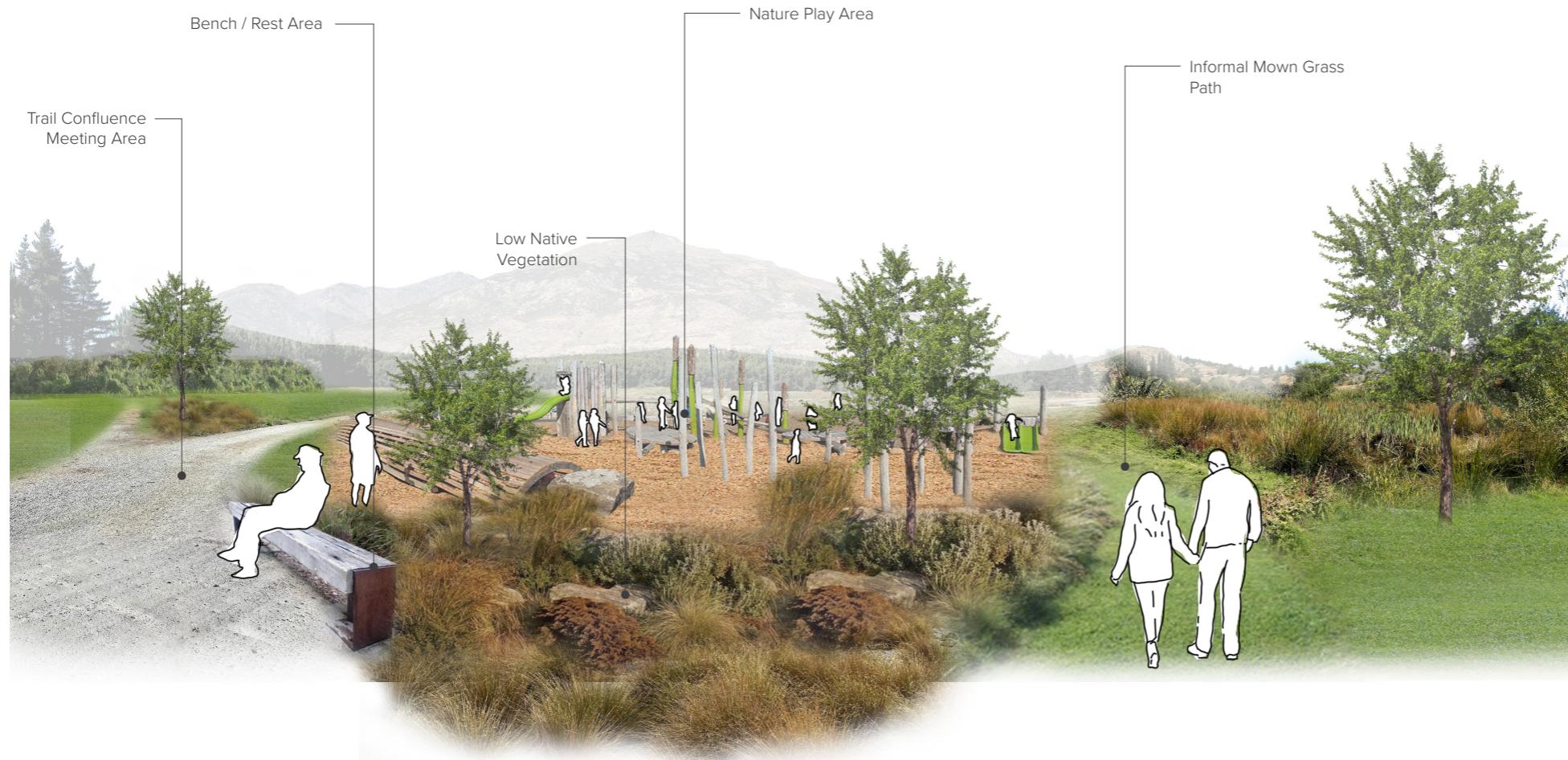
Precedents



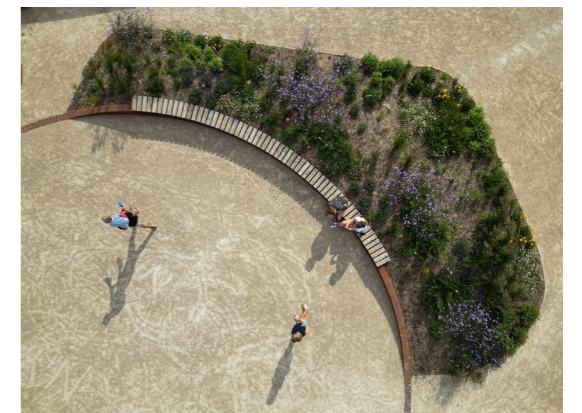
2.2 SKETCH PERSPECTIVES

Perspective 02

View from Widgeon Place street entrance at confluence of trails looking south towards natural play area.



Precedents



3.1 SOIL AND TREE MANAGEMENT

SOIL QUALITY

Soil quality within the park is of moderate to low quality, however due to the rabbit infestation on the park the overall ground condition and soil make up is very poor.

Targeted pest control measures are to be put in place to prevent further damage, following this, improvements in soil quality through aeration, nutrient management, and moisture control are essential for ensuring the vitality of new plantings and fostering a robust ecosystem.

VEGETATION REMOVAL

There are a number of areas of existing vegetation highlighted for removal as part of this development plan. These include areas of poplars and willows to the southern end of the park and the conifer shelter belt that lines the centre of the park.

The development of a long term vegetation management plan is recommended to carry out removals, successional replacements and ongoing maintenance over time. Trials in localised areas should inform the methodology.



Images of current soil condition and willow + poplar trees. May 2025.

3.2 PLANT SPECIES

PLANTING PHILOSOPHY

The overall landscape planting strategy aims to restore and enhance the underlying landscape patterns and processes of the site as well as providing open grassland areas with shade trees for passive and active recreation.

The design aims to provide;

- An arrival experience that provides seasonal interest using a mix of deciduous trees and native understory planting
- Open grassland areas that contain a mix of mown and meadow grasses
- Shade trees that break up the open space network without limiting views to surrounding landscapes or opportunities for passive recreation uses
- Native buffer planting that enhances sense of place and improves recreational user experience by creating areas of interest and changing landscape patterns within the park
- Species that support indigenous biodiversity and ecology and complement existing naturalness of the site
- Enhancement of the wet low lying area to the southern end of the park with native riparian planting that thrives in wet/dry conditions
- A low flammability plant palette that reduces fire risk
- CPTED passive surveillance principles considered in planting design and species selection
- Consideration to be given to fruit tree species in future design phases

TREES

- (— Exotic species)
- (● Shelter Belt species)



Aristotelia serrata
Wineberry



Cordyline australis
Ti Kouka, Cabbage Tree



Coprosma sp.
mix



Fucospora sp.
Mountain & Red Beech



Griselinia littoralis
Kapuka, NZ Broadleaf



Hebe salicifolia
Koromiko



Hoheria sp.
Lacebark



Metrosideros umbellata
Southern rata



Oleria sp.
varies



Pittosporum tenuifolium
Black matipo



Plagianthus regius
Manatu, Ribbonwood



Podocarpus laetus
Totara



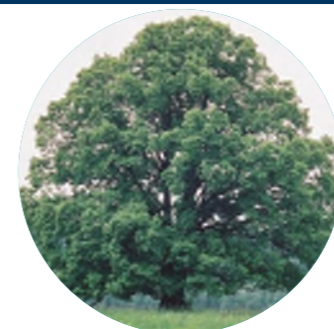
Pseudopanax sp.
Lancewood



Sophora microphylla
South Island Kowhai



Acer sp.
Maple



Tilia sp.
Linden



Ulmus sp.
Maple



Quercus sp.
Oak

GRASSES AND SHRUBS



Austroderia richardii
Toe toe



Hebe sp.
Varies



Tussock sp.
Tussock



Coprosma acerosa 'Hawea'
Groundcover coprosma



Phormium sp.
NZ Flax



Meadow grasses

3.3 MATERIALITY AND WAYFINDING



WAYFINDING AND SIGNAGE

- Wayfinding, signage content and materials to be in accordance with QLDC signage guidance.
- 'Whakatipu Active Travel Network' Signage guideline principles to inform design: Connection, Consistent, Visible, Legible, Language and Continuity.
- Types of signage include: local connections, large plinths, barrier bollards, distance markers and directional bollards.
- Wayfinding / signage elements are found at every entrance to the park as well as at trail junctions.



TRACKS AND TRAILS

- Clear material distinction between connection, park and meandering pathways.
- Materials are indicative of the area and readily available.
- Wayfinding element at key junctions.
- Opportunity for informal mown meadow trails throughout site.



FURNITURE

- Furniture materials to be aligned with materials used in QLDC parks / reserves.
- Furniture to include: picnic tables, bench seating, dog and waste bins, cycle racks, drinking fountains and BBQ shelters.
- QLDC standard furniture to be used for elements such as drinking fountain and waste bins.
- Materials to consider include: reclaimed hardwood timbers, corten steel and schist rock.



PLAY

- Nature play area located close to 'Widgeon Place' street entrance.
- Materials sourced from within the park, such as timbers from felled trees to create none structural play elements. e.g. timber steppers or balance logs.
- Proprietary nature play items such as: swing, seesaw, carousel, climbing net and slide.
- Educational insect / bug hotel created using materials sourced from site
- Softfall surface to be bark mulch.