

LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT REPORT

Northlake Plan Change Request Northlake Investments Limited

20 January 2022



patch

landscape ■ architecture ■ urban

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Patch Ltd has been engaged by Northlake Investments Limited to undertake a landscape and visual effects assessment of a proposed plan change within the Northlake Special Zone (NLSZ / Northlake). This report includes:

- A description of the landscape,
- Assessment Methodology,
- A description of the proposal,
- Landscape assessment,
- Conclusion,
- Attachments.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE AND SURROUNDING LANDSCAPE AND RECEIVING ENVIRONMENT

2.1. Northlake is a rapidly developing urban area near the northern edge of Wanaka (Figure 1). It is becoming an integral part of Wanaka's urban fabric, providing a range of living choices and acting as a northern urban hub between the areas of Albert Town and Wanaka. Aubrey Road provides the main connection to Northlake while a series of pedestrian and cycle trails, with particular regard to the Outlet Track, provides healthy mobility connections to the wider Wanaka area.

2.2. Northlake exists atop a landform of alluvial terraces and hummocky hills. The land to the north of Northlake descends across a series of vegetated terraces to meet the Clutha River Outlet. The land to the east is occupied by the Hikuwai Reserve, which is a flat landform clad in mature kanuka shrubland and managed by the Department of Conservation. The land to the south is zoned Large Lot Residential and is part of an urban character area at and near the foot of Mount Iron and Little Mount Iron. The land to the west is zoned Rural and contains the land holding known as the Sticky Forest, which is currently clad in mature conifers. Northlake itself is part of an urban area where development has occurred largely according to the Northlake Structure Plan, which allows for urban development across much of the land within the NLSZ. The parts of the NLSZ which are not currently urban, or within a Activity Area (AA) designated for residential development, are clad in pasture grass or exotic forest with some remnant patches of kanuka.

- 2.3. The NLSZ comprises a number of Activity Areas as shown in the Northlake Structure Plan (Figure 2). The area subject to this plan change (the site) is in the west, central part of the NLSZ near the NLSZ area's western boundary, where AA E1, C1 and B2 intersect (Figures 1, 2, & 3). Earthworks have been approved and already undertaken in this area (RM200167 and RM200796) and those earthworks have created a modified terrace landform (Figure 4) across the aforementioned Activity Areas. These earthworks and development which has occurred in the existing residential Activity Areas has taken place within the lower, sunken parts of the site's elevated, rolling pastoral hills (Figure 5). The landform integrity and visual amenity which is embodied in the site's hills has remained largely intact.
- 2.4. Development on the land south of the site has recently been approved under RM180502. These mostly south facing slopes are within AAB1 and AA-E4. Those slopes will soon become urban in character. This development was largely enabled with the approval of the NLSZ. The approved outline development plan is included below as Figure 6.
- 2.5. The Northlake area is an intensifying urban environment within a frame of high natural character. There are parts within and adjacent to the site which currently display a more open or natural character, such as Northlake's hills, the Sticky Forest and Kirimoko's Building Restriction Area, west of the site. It is noted the Sticky Forest may not maintain its open character or forest cover in the future and there is an active rezoning appeal seeking development there (ENV-2018-CHC-069). The existing open character of parts of the receiving landscape forms part of an aesthetic amenity, often acting as foreground to views of the much more dominant mountains that enclose the Wanaka area and the Upper Clutha Basin.

The Existing Northlake Structure Plan

- 2.6. I was involved in the planning and design of Northlake when I worked at Baxter Design Group from 2013 to 2017. NLSZ and associated Structure Plan allow for urban development while retaining some areas in their open character. AA-E1 is one of these open areas. AA-E1 includes parts of the terrace riser which runs parallel to the Clutha River. AA-E1 also includes the upper rolling hills which provide amenity to receptors on the valley floor to the north, south and east, maintaining visual access to open space as viewed from the lower lying lands

to the east. At the foot of and in depressions of these hills, Activity Area-C1 allows for a lesser density with a lower building height (5.5m).

- 2.7. The proposal seeks to extend development into a low-lying and visually isolated part of AA-E1. The recent earthworks on the site demonstrate the ability for this part of the site to accept development change while maintaining the design outcome of the NLSZ.



Figure 1: Area location and context



Figure 2: The Northlake Structure Plan.

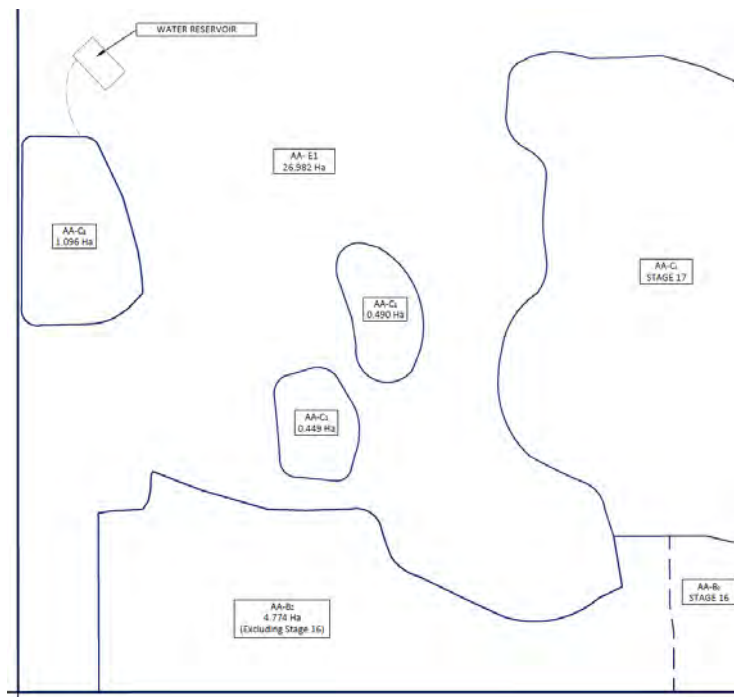


Figure 3: Existing Activity Areas.



Figure 4: The site.



Figure 5: The western Northlake Area and the site.

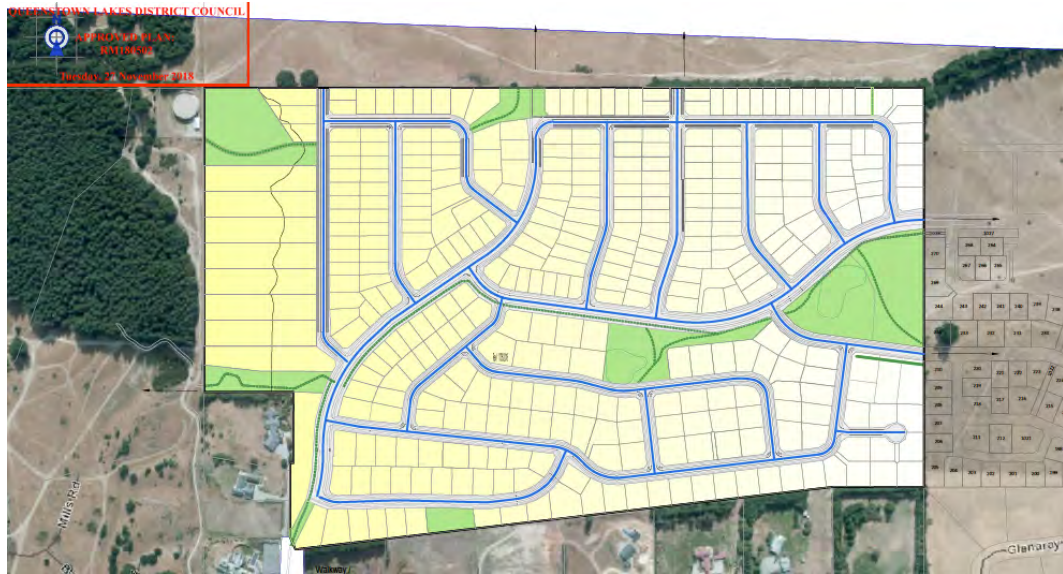


Figure 6: The approved development south of the site.

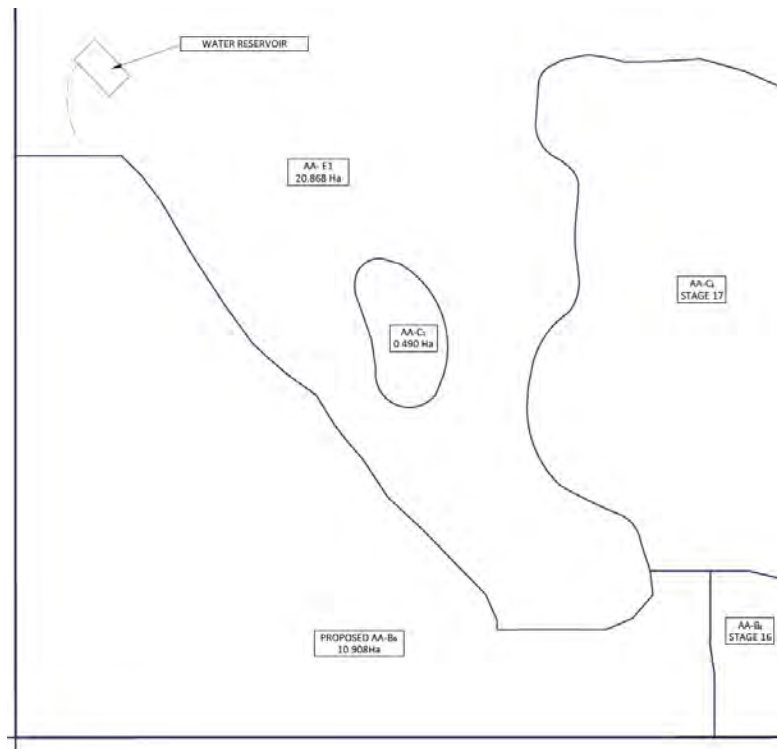


Figure 7: Proposed AA-B6.

3. ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

- 3.1. In undertaking this assessment, Patch visited the site and surrounding environment on several occasions. Patch observed the visual and character values of the site, of Northlake and of the wider Wanaka area.

3.2. The landscape and visual effects assessment assesses the effects of the proposal on landscape character and visual amenity. This assessment follows best practice landscape and visual assessment principles directed by both the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects *Te Tangi a Te Manu Aotearora New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines*.

3.3. This report uses the following definitions:

- Landscape character and value effects – Character (the expression of landscape’s collective attributes) and value (the reasons a landscape is valued embodied in its attributes) effects are the consequences of changes in the physical attributes (character), on a landscape’s values.¹
- Visual effects – Visual effects are the consequences of change on landscape’s values experienced in views.²
- Landscape – “Landscape embodies the relationship between people and place: it is the character of an area, how the area is experienced and perceived, and the meanings associated with it.”³

Extent of Effect

3.4. In assessing the extent of effects, this report uses the following seven-point scale:
very high, high, moderate-high, moderate, moderate-low, low, very low.

3.5. An effects rating of moderate–low corresponds to a ‘minor’ adverse effects rating. An adverse effects rating of “low’ or ‘very low’ corresponds to a ‘less than minor’ adverse effects rating.

4. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL

4.1. The proposal (Figure 7) seeks to extend approved AA-B2 into a part of approved AA-E1 and AA-C1 and rename the extended area AA-B6. The area subject to this proposal has been modified by the earthworks approval (RM200167 and RM200796) and the Plan Change seeks to establish a residential area and roads. This will continue the urban areas of Northlake to

¹ NZILA. *Te Tangi a Te Manu Aotearora New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines*. April 2021.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

the north and west allowing for an additional 63 Dwelling Units with a maximum building height of 7m.

5. ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS ON LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND VISUAL AMENITY

Visual Effects

- 5.1. The site is part of a depression in the natural landform, where the land rises up on all sides and spills to the southeast towards Little Mount Iron (Figure 8). In general the landform provides for a very limited viewshed. The upper hills to the north and east of the site provide screening from those views. The feature known as Peak View Ridge to the west of the site provides screening from those views. The site's rolling hills are visible from some distant locations including parts of the Albert Town – Lake Hawea Road (SH6). Peak View Ridge is visible from much of Wanaka and Lake Wanaka.
- 5.2. A series of images from the locations described below are attached to this report (**Attachment A and Images**). The assessment below assumes houses are built within the new AA-B6.



Figure 8: View from the site to the south.

Visibility from Deans Bank and the Clutha River Outlet, Albert Town, SH6 and other lands to the east

The proposed Activity Area B5 will not be visible from the Deans Bank area, the Clutha River, the Clutha River Outlet, Albert Town, SH6 and other lands to the north and east. The site's

rolling hills will screen the proposal from distant views (**Image 1**). The low-lying terraced landforms of Albert Town restrict any views of Northlake.

Visibility from Aubrey Road,

- 5.3. The land south and east of Northlake separate the area from Little Mount Iron. Undulation in landform between those two places allows for some brief views of the site from Aubrey Road (**Images 2 & 3**). In the instances where the proposal can be seen, it will be seen entirely in the context of the adjoining urban environment. Views will be retained to the distant mountains and visual access to the open character of the site's elevated hills will be maintained. The proposal will result in continued views across urban landscapes towards Northlake's hills and will result in no more than very low adverse visual effects on receptors on and near Aubrey Road.
- 5.4. Development in the proposed Activity Area B6 will not be visible from Aubrey Road west of Outlet Road as landform north of Aubrey Road screens most of Northlake.

Visibility from the Mount Iron area

- 5.5. Development in the proposed Activity Area B6 will be visible from elevated, south and west facing parts of Mount Iron and Little Mount Iron, including the Mount Iron Track (**Images 4-6**) but not from the summit itself (**Image 7**). The proposed Activity Area will be also be visible from some of the properties on and near Little Mount Iron, such as the Hidden Hills area (**Image 8**), noting much of these views are through gaps in vegetation.
- 5.6. Most of the Hidden Hills area is densely vegetated in kanuka shrubland and dwellings are often orientated to the north and west. The proposal will be highly visible from part of the Hidden Hills area. Where development in the proposed Activity Area is visible, it will not appear as a significant deviation from the type of urban development anticipated in this area. The proposal will appear as small extension of the existing urban areas of Northlake and will result in a low adverse visual effect as experienced from some high private places in Hidden Hills.
- 5.7. The Mount Iron Track wraps around Mt Iron and the summit is at the feature's southeastern extents. The popular track ascends the mountains north-western slopes where views are

available towards Northlake (**Images 4-6**). The proposal will be visible from some elevated and northern parts of the track and from some areas north of the summit. At its closest the site is 1.6kms from the Mount Iron Track. Much of the trail is surrounded in mature kanuka vegetation.

- 5.8. From the elevated lands on and near Mount Iron, the wider visual amenity is embodied in views of the lake and mountain landscape. Most of Wanaka's urban areas are visible from parts of Mount Iron Track. Mountains are visible in all directions. The detail of Lake Wanaka's intricate features and form, including the presence of Dublin Bay, Stevensons Arm and Stevensons Island, Roys Bay and Ruby Island are visible from the higher elevations. Northlake does provide some foreground amenity to these views and Northlake's rolling hills provide some open context to the wider visual amenity. However, Northlake's elements are not significant in the context of the wider visible landscape. While the proposal will see the openness of Northlake slightly reduced and visible urban areas increased, the visual amenity from the Mt Iron Track will be adversely affected to a very low degree.

Visibility from southern places

- 5.9. The proposal may be visible from some distant urban areas in Wanaka, including some intermittent views from Anderson Road (**Image 9**). From all urban areas south of the site, the site, Northlake's elevated hills and the Sticky Forest form a small part of the wider view. All views are experienced from dense urban areas, including well established industrial and residential areas with mature trees. From these southern urban places the proposal will result in very low adverse visual effects.

Visibility from land to the west of the Northlake area including Lake Wanaka and the Mt Aspiring Road

- 5.10. There is a landform to the west of the site referred to as Peak View Ridge (**Image 10**). This rise ascends from Aubrey Road, across the top of the Kirimoko area, through the Sticky Forest before falling down to the Clutha River outlet. This rise visually separates Northlake from low lying places to the west. The ridge landform west of the site has a minimum elevation of 395masl. The highpoint for any proposed development on the site is 384masl, with a maximum building height of 7m. The proposal will not allow any development to be seen from western places including the surface of Lake Wanaka or Mt Aspiring Road. It may be

possible to see the proposal from distant, elevated views such as the Mt Roy Track.

- 5.11. The proposed plan change will not result in any adverse visual effects from public or private places to the west of site.

Landscape Character Effects

- 5.12. The NLSZ is an urban zone where urban character activities are largely anticipated. Prior to the approval of the NLSZ, the area was characterised by the open, rolling hills and terraces covered in pasture grass with some small patches of kanuka and mature evergreen trees. Parts of that character remain, within Activity Areas E and Tree Protection Areas. The approval of development on the lands south of the site has allowed for urban development to occur near the NLSZ's western boundary. The proposal seeks to extend urban development northwards into parts of AA-E1 and to connect the approved development in Activity Areas B2, and two C1 'Islands'.

- 5.13. By linking urban development along the NLSZ's western boundary, the proposal will see some reduction in the landscape's open character. However this reduction in open character will form part of a cohesive urban edge to the lower lying western parts of the NLSZ. Urban development will be well contained within the landform of the surrounding area with particular regard to Northlake's elevated hills to the north and east and Peak View Ridge to the west. The natural, open character of the NLSZ's rolling hills will largely be retained and no existing vegetation will be removed. The character of the landscape to the west will remain unchanged. It is considered the proposal will retain the landscape's anticipated open and natural character values and will appear as an insignificant extension of urban character in an area where change is expected.

- 5.14. The Clutha River Outlet portion of the Lake Wanaka Outstanding Natural Landscape (ONL) boundary is approximate 150m to the north of the proposed plan change area. The site is physically separated from the ONL by landform and the proposal will result in no adverse effects on the natural or open character of the nearby ONL.

- 5.15. While the proposal will result in some reduction of open character, the increase in the

presence of urban development will not lead to more than low adverse effects on the character of the landscape beyond what is anticipated by the current Structure Plan. The upper, rolling hills will continue to function as a large open character element within a frame of urban areas. The visual values of the hills will largely be retained and their contribution to the landscape's open and natural character values will remain intact.

5.16. Overall, it is considered the proposal will result in no more than very low adverse effects on landscape character.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1. The proposal seeks to extend urban development into a part of Activity Area E1. This part of the NLSZ is low lying, surrounded by landform on three sides and a level of residential development is already anticipated in this area. It is considered the encroaching of urban character into this part of the landscape will adversely affect the visual amenity and landscape character values of the site and surrounding landscape to a no more than low extent.

Report prepared by:

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50mm photo - 7 October 2021 at 11:31 am



50mm photo - 7 October 2021 at 10:54 am



50mm photo - 7 October 2021 at 10:53 am



25mm photo - 27 June 2021 at 2:55 pm



50mm photo - 27 June 2021 at 2:57 pm



25mm photo - 24 June 2021 at 4:01 pm



25mm photo - 24 June 2021 at 4:06 pm



50mm photo - 23 November 2021 at 1:49 pm



50mm photo - 23 November 2021 at 1:25 pm



50mm photo - 23 November 2021 at 12:14 pm



Clutha
River Outlet

Sticky
Forest

SITE

NORTHLAKE
SPECIAL ZONE

Kirimoko

Albert Town

Mount Iron

Lake Wanaka

SH6