

**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

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**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF MICHELLE SNODGRASS**

**Dated this 9th day of June 2017**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

1. My name is Michelle Snodgrass. I hold the qualification of Bachelor of Landscape Architecture with honours from Lincoln University, and I am a member of the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects and I gained my associateship in 2002. I am the Director of Michelle Snodgrass Landscape Architecture, a position I have held since 2013. Prior to this I worked for Baxter Design Group for 7 years, Scott Wilson in the U.K for 18 months, the Christchurch City Council for 5 years and the Department of Conservation for 2 years. I have been practicing as a landscape architect since 1995.
2. I have read the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses contained within the Environment Court Practice note of November 2014 and agree to comply with it. This evidence is within my area of expertise, except where I state that I am relying on information I have been given by another person. I can confirm that I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions expressed herein.
3. I have been asked to give evidence in relation to the landscape and visual effects of the rezoning submission made by Scope Resources and others ('the submission') to the Proposed District Plan ('PDP'), and sections 6 and 7 of the Resource Management Act ('RMA').
4. I prepared the landscape and visual effects assessment report that accompanied the rezoning submission, hence my evidence will be a summary of the findings of my report, and a discussion of the landscape assessment report prepared by Dr. Marion Read for the Council's Section 42a report. My discussion of Dr. Reads comments will be included, where appropriate, in the main body of my evidence.

## **THE SUBMISSION**

5. The submission seeks the rezoning of the site from its notified Rural Zone to a Yard and Industry Based Zone (YIB) under the PDP, with proposed Objectives, Policies and Rules which further define the nature and extent of future development of the site. Ms Hutton discusses the proposed Policies, Objectives and Rules in her evidence.

6. There are four locations within the site that physically have a high to moderate potential to contain the proposed development, in that they are degraded and substantially modified topographically, and have a minor level of visibility from outside of the site. These areas include the existing Scope Industries quarry, Beaver Contracting yard, Wilsons Contracting yard and a courier depot, and the substantial Douglas fir forestry block on the Trojan property.
7. It is my understanding that the ultimate result of the YIB zone will be a development that includes the following aspects:
  - a. Activity Area 1a is proposed to be office, light industrial activities, and motor vehicle repair (including ancillary retail activity).
  - b. Activity Area 2a is proposed to be industrial activities, service activities (including ancillary retail activity) and offices ancillary to any permitted or controlled activity.
  - c. Future buildings will be restricted in height and appearance to ensure they are not highly visible when viewed from the State Highway.
  - d. Open Space areas will be maintained and continue their current function of screening the site from outside views, and to maintain this character, where present. No buildings or structures are permitted within this area. There will also be an improvement in natural character from removal of undesirable wilding species and an increase in native species and plant biodiversity.
  - e. Earthworks, which are consented under RM669/00, are proposed to reduce visibility into the site to a minimal level by lowering the activity areas base ground level.
8. The proposed new policies and rules particularly relevant to landscape considerations are as follows:
  - Policy 27.7.2.5 which seeks to retain and enhance native plant species to minimise visibility of the YIB zone .

- Rule 11.5.5 Activity Table 13a which proposes planting of natives within the Open Space Areas to mitigate development and improve the ecological baseline.
  - Rule 11.5.6, Performance Standard 10a . Set building heights from a registered level to minimise visibility from SH6 and maintain visual amenity from SH6.
  - Rule 11.5.6, Performance Standard 20 proposes to protect the mitigation provided by the grey shrubland within the Open Space Areas and enhance it via restoration of those grey shrubland areas. An Ecological Management Plan is to be submitted to Council detailing the retention and restoration of the grey shrubland areas at subdivision stage.
  - Rule 11.6.2 Matters of discretion iii. The use of native vegetation to assist screening and retention of existing vegetation unless it is a wilding species. This is to ensure that any potential visibility of the development not achieved by existing topography or height control will be achieved.
9. Of particular importance to this site and the natural and pastoral character of the broader landscape is the removal of blocks of existing Douglas fir and other wilding species within the Open Space areas, and their replacement with native species particularly in the north western part of the site adjacent to SH6. The restoration of the grey shrubland remnants within the site and amongst the hummocks on the western side of the Scope Resources Quarry will improve the natural character and visual amenity for users of SH6.

#### **THE LANDSCAPE EFFECTS OF THE PROPOSED YIB ZONE**

10. The site of the submission is embedded in the wider Rural Landscape (RL) of the Coneburn Valley. The potential landscape effects of a new Yard based, Industrial and Business Zone are on the landscape character of the surrounding RL. The landscape context of the site is the Coneburn Valley. It is a glacially formed landscape with a cultural overlay of rural lifestyle development, the Remarkables Ski field access road, Jacks Point Resort Zone, Lakeside

Estates, Remarkables Station and pastoral farming. The elements of the site and wider landscape that are potentially affected by rezoning the land, which contribute to the sites rural character are the natural landforms, particularly those of obvious glacial origin, and vegetation cover, both indigenous and exotic. There is also an effect on the ONL of the Remarkables, particularly as the boundary between the RLC and ONL landscape classification is close to the northern part of the subject site and includes a small area of the site at its southern end.

11. The proposed YIB zone will introduce an urban area in a central, less sensitive part of this rural zone, with the protection of natural landforms and vegetation on the more sensitive parts of the site, around the exterior of the zone to the north and west and particularly adjacent to SH6. The proposed activities will be enclosed by the hummock areas, gullies, sloping terraces and natural water courses all maintained as part of the Open Space areas.
12. The location of the proposed YIB Zone has the potential to be discordant with the wider landscape character by being highly visible and of a different character to that of the embedding landscape. The activity areas of the zone will be a completely different character to that of the embedding landscape – an urban character as opposed to a natural and pastoral character. Between the urban character of the activity areas and the RLC outside of the activity areas is the proposed Open Space Area which functions as a landscape buffer comprising the most sensitive parts of the site – the most visible areas, the most elevated, the areas with a natural topography and exotic and indigenous plant cover.
13. Further mitigation is proposed through undertaking earthworks consented under RM669/00 to lower the base ground level of the activity areas; by specifying building heights for different areas within the zone; and proposed objectives, policies and rules specifying additional screening via native planting and restoration of grey shrubland.
14. The combination of the location of the activity areas, Open Space areas and outcomes of the objectives, policies and rules will mitigate any potential for discord with the broader

landscape character by firstly minimising visibility of the activity areas from outside of the site, and secondly, by protecting and enhancing the natural character of the landscape buffer which will lead to the proposed zone appearing, from outside of the site, to be largely a continuation of the broader RLC character.

15. I agree with Dr. Read that the Jacks Point Resort Zone is a relatively dense, urban development, and the activities associated with Jacks Point and Hanley Downs will result in the rural character of the vicinity being diminished, and peri-urban character evolving.
16. The addition of the YIB zone, located directly east of Jacks Point and Hanley Downs will further diminish the rural character of the broader landscape, and intensify the evolving peri-urban character, solidifying it into an evolving small township in its own right. The northern half of the Coneburn Valley floor will no longer have an entirely rural character. It will still have elements of rural character although these will be under a management regime that creates a different type of rural character to that of a working rural character.
17. There will still be a dominating rural and natural landscape character in the broader setting and enclosing landscape of the ONF of Peninsula Hill and the ONL of the Remarkables.
18. Intensive development as part of a broader change to a peri-urban character as a result of the Jacks Point Resort Zone and the proposed YIB zone will highlight the naturalness of Peninsula Hill and the Remarkables due to the contrast between the modification of the valley floor and the natural landforms and vegetation cover of the ONF/ONL. The effects will be confined to the valley floor due to limits of the zone, and effects of the Open Space buffers of both the Jacks Point Resort Zone and the proposed YIB zone. Built form within the zone will not be highly visible in views of the Remarkables from Kingston Road.
19. I agree that elements such as roads, signage, and lights will clearly indicate that the land use and landscape character within the site has changed to one that is no longer rural or of a low

density 'industrial' nature. This will be seen as an extension of the peri-urban landscape character already created by the Jacks Point Resort Zone.

20. In my opinion the cumulative effect of the YIB and the Jacks Point Resort Zone will be to intensify the domestication and urbanisation of this part of the Coneburn Valley. The nature of the "internal" part of the zone will be urban in character, rather than what might be perceived as current low density industrial, due to the mix of activities such as offices and retail. This urban character will be somewhat like that of the Gorge Road Industrial area due to the mix of activities. Together with Jacks Point Resort Zone it will create an urban community character that is evolving into a small, standalone town character.
21. The cumulative effect of Jacks Point Resort Zone and the proposed zone will be to diminish the rural character in this area as urban development will intensify at this particular point in the landscape. As both of the zones (existing and proposed) have some degree of open space buffering and a low level of visibility, the rural character of the Coneburn Valley, particularly to the south, will be retained and the effect will not spread visually beyond the landscape buffers surrounding all the development. The landscape change will be experienced close to the developments, will be an indication of development, but development itself, and its extent, will not be so clearly visible.
22. The effect of the YIB zone alone on the surrounding RLC and ONL of the site will be to largely maintain the pastoral and natural character of the embedding landscape because of the landscape buffers and minimum visibility of built form. The zone will be clearly indicated by entrance roads, signage and vehicle movements but will not be highly visible. The rural character of the ONL and RLC will still dominate due to scale and preservation of the character within the zone, outside of the activity areas.

## **THE VISUAL EFFECTS OF THE PROPOSED ZONE CHANGE**

23. The visual effects are to views from Kingston Road, Remarkables Ski field Road, Marina Heights, Remarkables Shopping Centre, Frankton Township and Lake Wakatipu, and the effect on visual amenity experienced by observers at these viewpoints.

24. As I have discussed previously in my evidence, the degree of visibility of the YIB zone is mitigated at four levels:

- Location of activity areas in the topographically least visible parts of the site
- An existing resource consent for quarrying activities which will result in a lower base ground level of the activity areas
- Height restrictions in the activity areas to minimise visibility
- Policies and rules to require further mitigation screening in the event it is required using native species.

25. In this section of my evidence I address visibility only from locations where built form is likely to be visible. All other areas will be screened by topography and mitigation planting as an outcome of the policies and rules. I would note that of course the activity areas will not all be entirely screened from outside of the site. The two proposed access roads off SH6 will permit views into some activity areas from SH6.

### **Users and occupiers of Kingston Road – travelling north**

26. Future buildings within Activity area 2a, within the Trojan site, the northern edge of the existing Wilsons Yard, and the current Wilsons Yard site will be visible. Views to these areas will also be gained through two access roads oriented north-south on the northern boundary of the current Scope Resources quarry site where they cut through an existing, man-made mound.

27. Partial views of future buildings in the south western corner of the Activity 2 area within the Scope Resources site will also be visible.

28. The eventual visual effect, with native planting to screen development , is likely to be slight to moderate.

#### **Users and occupiers of Kingston Road – travelling south**

29. Once at the entrance to Wilsons Contracting, views will be obtained for a short distance into the current contracting site, which is proposed to be Activity area 2a. This is the only point within the zone where the activities areas meet SH6. Rule 11.6.2 Matters of Discretion iii reserve control in respect of the use of native vegetation to assist visual screening of the development and will be effective to reduce and minimise the degree of visibility at this viewpoint. The visual effect will be slight.

#### **Users and occupiers of Remarkables Ski Field access Road**

30. At windy Point, views are likely to be gained into the proposed activity areas within the existing Scope Resources Ltd quarry, and on the Trojan Holdings site. This will be at a distance of approximately 2.3km.

31. The visual effect will be negligible to slight to moderate.

#### **Users and occupiers of Marina Heights**

32. Views from Cresta Lane, a no exit street in the Marina Heights subdivision, are likely to be gained of small areas of the activity areas within the southern part of the Trojan Holdings site, and the western end of the Beaver Contracting site. At the viewing distance of greater than 5km, and with the use of recessive colours, it is likely that the activity areas may be missed by a casual observer. The view will remain complex and detailed with the Remarkables and Frankton Arm dominating the view. The visual effect will be negligible to slight.

#### **Users of Remarkables Park**

33. Stoney Creek, which is proposed open space, will continue to screen views into the site. Views of the activity areas within the Trojan Land are likely to be minimal. The visual effect will be negligible to slight.

### **Users and occupiers of Frankton Township**

34. Activity areas within the existing Scope Resources quarry are likely to be partially visible from north-south oriented roads within Frankton Township. The visual effect will be slight.
35. The proposed additional road access from Kingston Road (SH6) across the face of the western hummocks will lead to decreased visual amenity as it indicates the presence of development, as will the significant increased vehicle use of both roads, signs and street lights. This reduces visual amenity as it indicates that the use of the site is not contiguous with that outside of the site, and the perceived natural and pastoral landscape character is not contiguous across the zone. The effect on visual amenity from vehicle movements cannot be mitigated completely, however it can be minimised by reducing the amount of road ways that are visible from outside of the site. In this case, the entrance roads as far as the hummocks on the western side of the zone will be visible. It is unlikely that internal roads and parking areas will be visible from outside of the site.
36. With regard to the degree of visibility of built form within the proposed zone, I have estimated the degree of visibility from site visits, and the visibility map produced by Clarke Fortune McDonald. No height poles were erected on site during my assessment. I have assessed the degree of visibility from the locations discussed in my evidence, and the effects range from none to moderate, with the visibility from parts of SH6 being potentially moderate.
37. The most visible parts of the site from SH6 are the entrances, and at the current Wilsons contracting yard post removal of the existing forestry block, and before the establishment of mitigation planting where required. The majority of the extent of the built form within the zone will not be visible from outside of the site. This results from the lowered ground level (RM669/00) and the policies and rules which will be effective in ensuring built form is not visible from SH6. Simply put, RM669/00 works such that ground level within the site can be lowered until a building of a specified height is not visible.
38. What will be visible and indicate a change in use of the site and landscape character will be the significant increase in vehicles, signage and night lighting. Individually lit buildings will be

minimally visible, except at viewpoints at the entrance roads. The development as a whole may produce a glow of collective night lighting, from street lights and buildings. The source of the light is unlikely to be visible, and the overall effect of night lighting from wider views will be seen in conjunction with the Jacks Point/Hanley downs development. This aspect of the YIB will also have an effect on the visual amenity experienced from Jacks Point and Hanley Downs, however as the full development of Jacks Point and Hanley Downs will also produce a significant level of night lighting, it is unlikely to have more than a slight effect.

39. The effect on visual amenity of Jacks Point and Hanley Downs will be on the current rural character as experienced from the entrance to Jacks Point. The development of the activity areas will not be highly visible from the Jacks Point entrance, and will maintain the natural and rural character of the landforms and vegetation cover as seen from the entrance, and the wider views to the Remarkables and rural land either side of the site.

#### **ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSED ZONE CHANGE AGAINST PROPOSED QLDC PLAN**

40. Under the Proposed district plan, the site becomes part of the Rural Zone and the landscape classification has become Rural Landscapes Classification which has replaced the Visual Amenity Landscape classification. Accordingly the new RLC has varying types of landscape character and amenity values.
41. The visual and landscape effects of the proposed zone change on the RLC as assessed under the Proposed District Plan, meet the majority of those objectives in that the activity areas will be located so as to minimise visibility from public roads and public places, and protect the existing areas of indigenous vegetation and waterways. The location of the proposed zone activity areas within already modified landforms contains the effects to within the activity areas and will prevent sprawl along Kingston Road.
42. There will be a slight to moderate effect on visibility as the activity areas are unlikely to be completely unseen from public roads as detailed elsewhere in this report. Landscape planting in the form of indigenous grey shrubland will mitigate visibility by extending the natural

character within the zone, and provide additional screening to achieve the objective of the activity areas not being visible from Kingston Road/SH6. Augmentation planting of the existing grey shrubland areas and Stoney Creek would also enhance the natural character of the broader landscape and improve the indigenous species diversity.

43. The YIB zone generally meets the Objectives and Policies of Section 6 of the Proposed Plan because of the following:

- the design, consented earthworks and retention of landscape buffers will result in development that is not highly visible from public places and public roads;
- Locating the proposed yard based, industrial and business zone within the modified areas of the site avoids sprawl along district roads.
- The zone will harmonise with local ecological systems through the proposed Open space areas which maintain the natural and ecological systems within the site which are predominantly in the existing gullies and Stoney Creek. Augmentation planting of these areas would provide further screening of the activity areas and add to the natural character of the surrounding landscape.
- The location of the activity areas will not result in buildings breaking skylines, ridges or prominent landforms.
- The proposed activity areas are set back from Kingston Road to maintain the current view of rural amenity from that road. The additional protection of the western faces of the hummocks and pastoral flat, and mature tree groups will maintain the current level of visual amenity. The proposed access roads, vehicle movements, signage and street lights will reduce the visual amenity as the additional road introduces a new urban element into the landscape. The effect of the additional road is likely to be moderate, however the effect is unlikely to degrade the wider landscape character.

### **Resource Management Act**

44. Section 7 of the RMA emphasises the importance of maintaining and enhancing the amenity values and the quality of the environment. In my opinion the proposed rezoning of the site can meet the intention of Section 7 because of the specific policies, objectives and rules which will maintain and enhance the amenity values and qualities of the environment, and because of the location of proposed development within already degraded areas while protecting the sensitive areas of the site and qualities of their natural character.

## **Conclusion**

45. A Yard based, industrial and business zone is proposed for an existing area significantly modified by commercial/quarrying use in the RLC adjacent to Kingston Road (SH6). The details of the proposed zone will result in:

- Activity areas located within an existing quarry, Douglas Fir forestry plantation, and commercial yards, and on a lowered base level which will be negligibly to moderately visible from public roads, with the least visible being Marina Heights and the most visible being three points along Kingston Road/SH6.
- Retention of landscape buffers in the form of Open Space Areas that protect the sensitive areas of the site that also have a natural character and assist in reducing visibility of the activity areas and eventual built form from outside of the site.

46. The broader landscape that the site sits in, is a landscape with a pastoral and natural character and a peri-urban character. The land proposed for rezoning has some natural and pastoral character, together with a modified and light industrial character.

47. There will be a change to existing landscape character. The change will be contained within the existing modified areas with a present low density industrial character. The rezoning will have an effect on the character of the broader landscape in that it will intensify an existing peri-urban character created by the Jacks Point Resort Zone. The effect is unlikely to degrade the broader landscape quality.

48. There will be a cumulative effect on the ONL of the Remarkables by changing the character of a small area at the base of the mountain range. The use of landscape buffers and other methods to minimise visibility will maintain the dominance of the natural character of the ONL. The peri-urban character of this part of the Coneburn Valley will still be subservient to the ONL character of the Remarkables.
49. The consented earthworks to lower the base ground level within the site minimise visibility, combined with the proposed Open Space Areas, and specified heights for different parts of the zone will allow the landscape to absorb the activity areas.
50. Overall, I consider that the landscape and visual effects of the proposed zone can be mitigated and appropriately absorbed by the landscape. There are positive landscape and visual character effects associated with the maintenance and protection of the natural character of the western faces of the hummocks, the gullies and Stoney Creek. There are some residual visual effects as experienced particularly from Kingston Road. There will be a landscape effect of cumulative diminishing of rural character and replacement with urban character, within a broader natural and pastoral character.

M Snodgrass

9 June 2017

