

Before Queenstown Lakes District Council

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In the matter of            The Resource Management Act 1991

And                            The Queenstown Lakes District proposed District Plan Topic 13  
Queenstown Mapping

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**EVIDENCE OF STEPHEN SKELTON FOR**

Oasis in the Basin Association (1289)

Dated 09 June 2017

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**Solicitor:**  
Rosie Hill  
Anderson Lloyd  
Level 2, 13 Camp Street, Queenstown 9300  
PO Box 201, Queenstown 9348  
DX Box ZP95010 Queenstown  
p + 64 3 450 0700 | f + 64 3 450 0799  
rosie.hill@al.nz

**Counsel:**  
Warwick Goldsmith  
Barrister  
PO Box 213, Queenstown 9365  
m + 64 021 220 8824  
warwickgoldsmith@gmail.com



## INTRODUCTION

1. My name is Stephen Russell Skelton. I have the qualifications of a Bachelor of Arts in Communication from Northern Arizona University and a Masters of Landscape Architecture from Lincoln University. I am the Director of Patch Limited (**Patch**), a landscape architecture and landscape planning consultancy based in Queenstown. I am a registered member of the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects and am the acting chairman of the Southern Branch.
2. I have been involved in landscape consultancy work in the Queenstown Lakes District area for over 4 years, working in both the public and private sector. I held the position of landscape planner with Lakes Environmental before it was absorbed by the Queenstown Lakes District Council (**QLDC**) in 2013. I then held the position of landscape architect at a private practice based in Queenstown before opening my own practice in June 2016. My work includes all facets of landscape architecture and landscape planning through the range of small and large scale projects. Over the last year, my work at Patch has included master planning, commercial and residential design, preparation of native restoration planting plans, preparation of landscape management plans, preparation of landscape assessments for resource consent applications and the preparation and presentation of evidence for Council and District Plan Review hearings.
3. I am professionally familiar with the values of the rural, rural living and urban landscapes in the Queenstown Lakes District. I understand the Strategic Direction of the Proposed District Plan and the Objectives and Policies, especially those contained with the Rural and Landscape chapters.
4. I have read the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses in the Environment Court Practice Note 2014. This evidence has been prepared in accordance with it and I agree to comply with it. I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions expressed.

## SUBMISSION # 338

5. This submission concerns a portion of land on the undulating, glacier overridden land between Frankton and Tucker Beach. For my evidence, I will consider the submission in three parts:
  - a. Whether the notified Outstanding Natural Landscape (**ONL**) landscape classification is correct.
  - b. the rezoning of a portion of land within the ONL to Low Density Residential (**LDR**);
  - c. the establishment of a road between the Frankton Road – Hawthorne Road roundabout and the subject site;



6. My brief is limited to the part of the proposed LDR zone located within the ONL as notified in the PDP (**site**).
7. The site is part of a glacier overridden - alluvial terrace landscape which holds a strong rural character. The proposed activities would take place over a series of land parcels which are understood to be held in two separate ownerships. The rezoning part of the submission seeks to change the zoning of land zoned Rural to LDR (**Attachment A**). The proposed LDR zone would occur on the north facing slopes immediately north, northeast and northwest of Lake Johnson. The proposed road would be cut into the south facing slopes near the foot of Ferry Hill and cross the undulating topography south, east and north of Lake Johnson.
8. Landscape Architect Dr Marion Read has provided evidence in relation to this proposal. Her conclusions are as follows:
  - a. The ONL boundary as shown in the PDP to the east of Hansen Road accurately reflects the Environment Court Decisions C169/2000 and NZEnvC 177. The ONL boundary as shown in the PDP to the west of Hansen Road carefully follows landscape features and zone boundaries and is appropriately located in the PDP.
  - b. The LDR portion of the proposed rezoning would have significant adverse effects on the character and quality of the landscape and on visual amenity.
  - c. The proposed road would have significant adverse effects on the ONL of both the Wakatipu Basin and Frankton landscapes.

## LANDSCAPE CLASSIFICATION

9. The following portion of my evidence will assess the landscape category of the site using the Amended Pigeon Bay Criteria. Rather than work through each criterion, I will address the landscape under the following headings.

### *Biophysical Factors*

10. Situated between the *rôche moutonnée* of Ferry Hill and Queenstown Hill, the site is composed of glacier overridden schist stone with a dominate cover of pasture grass. Poplars and clumps of evergreen trees form the structural vegetation while sweeps and irregular patches indigenous scrubland and grasses provide texture. The dominant cover of pasture grass reveals variations in landform, displaying rolling topography cut by deeply incised gorges leading to the flatter lands of Frankton and the Shotover River terraces. The underlying schist is present on some parts of the site. When viewed from afar, the landform legibly expresses deep striations and clean slopes of rock stripped clean by the glacier overridden geologic history.

11. The primary feature of this landscape is Lake Johnson, which rests in an elevated position between the two larger mountain forms. This steep sided glacial lake has no distinct inlet or outlet and is only visible from more elevated positions.
12. Seasonal changes provide variance in the landscape's colour and, when in play with diurnal process such as low sun angles, the landform casts shadows providing a highly legible landform as viewed from many parts of the Wakatipu Basin, Frankton and farther afield. This highly legible glacier overridden landform distinctly meets the flatlands of Frankton and, less distinctly, the alluvial terraces of the Shotover River.

#### *Sensory Qualities*

13. Located between the Wakatipu Basin and Frankton Flats and Frankton Arm of Lake Wakatipu, the subject landscape straddles areas with rural and urban values respectfully. To the north in the Wakatipu Basin the site is viewed from within a rural, rural living or natural context. The open character of the upper portions of the site and the dominant pastoral cover provide an open, rural context often framing or acting as the frontispiece to views towards the highly valued western face of the Remarkables Mountains. From the south, the site provides a natural and rural setting for the Frankton township, giving a sense of an open, rural character which frames the urban areas. This provides a context which maintains an awareness of the naturalness of the surrounding lake and mountain landscapes which gives the District much of its aesthetic values.
14. Lake Johnson is 'hidden' from views as experienced from the greater part of wider landscape. Its values are generally experienced by users that venture into the steep basin which cradles the lake. Its isolated qualities give it a sense of remoteness that, while near an urban environment, can be experienced without the visual interference of built form. This natural feature is part of, but distinct from the otherwise pastoral landscape and holds a sense of place which is unique in its proximity to more urban environments.

#### *Associative Values*

15. Pastoral activities have certainly changed the pre-settlement land cover of the site. The pasture grasses and structural, rural character vegetation offers cues to the historic pastoral land uses. This, combined with other rural elements such as fences and water races offers an appreciation of the site's historical and present day land use as a working pastoral farm. These pastoral cues are recognised as being strongly associated with cultural understandings of place. Patches of indigenous scrubland which pepper parts of the landscape also deliver an understanding of the site's ecological context.



16. The site holds significant recreation values embodied in the walking track which links north and south Hansen Road as well as the uses of Lake Johnson. An informal track on both public and private land circumnavigates the lake. The recreation values of the lake and the formed walking tracks are shared and widely recognised.
17. Submission #338 seeks to realign the PDP ONL boundary to a minor extent. It is not disputed that almost all the site is part of an ONL. The PDP ONL boundary is sited along zone boundaries and natural features. I consider that the ONL boundary, east of Hansen Road, generally follows the topographic transition between the glacier overridden schist landform and the alluvial fans and terraces bordering the Shotover River. Vegetation and incised gorges are other factors to consider when determining the ONL line. The PDP ONL line more closely follows these land features than the ODP ONL boundary. For reference, I have overlaid an interpretation of the PDP ONL boundary location on an image in **Attachment B**.
18. I consider that the PDP ONL boundary east of Hansen Road is a more robust interpretation of the landscape category boundary than the ODP landscape boundary and I do not support the relief sought by the submitter.

#### **ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSED LDR ZONE WITHIN THE ONL**

19. The submission seeks to establish a LDR zone within the ONL and RLC slopes and terraces north of Tucker Beach. The bulk of this proposed zone would occur within the ONL above and to the east of Lake Johnson as well as on the lower slopes to the north and northwest of the lake.
20. Dr Read considers that the proposed LDR zoning would have significant adverse effects on the character and quality of the landscape and on visual amenity of public and private views.
21. The upper slopes of the proposed zoning form part of the elevated, rural and natural slopes which enclose the Wakatipu Basin. These slopes frame and act as the frontispiece to more distant views of the dramatic mountains (**Attachment C and Attachment D**). The lack of visible development which has occurred on these upper and mid slopes provides a sense of openness. The undulating, folded landform and the glacial lake is a highly legible expression of the landscape's natural processes. The slopes between Tucker Beach and Frankton are inextricably linked to the features of Ferry Hill, Lake Johnson and the Sugarloaf.

22. I consider that development of the scale proposed would have very high<sup>1</sup> adverse effects on the character and quality of the ONL as it would enable built development to cloak and modify the legible landform, would result in a significant loss of the rural character of the landscape and would impinge on the natural, open character of Lake Johnson.
23. The visual amenity as experienced from public and private places north and northeast of the site would be adversely effected to a moderate to high degree as the rural context and open, natural character of the slopes which hold the Basin would be greatly degraded and the type of development proposed would detract from the distant views of the dramatic mountains.

### ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSED ACCESS ROAD

24. The submission seeks to establish an access road from the Frankton Road – Hawthorne Drive roundabout, crossing the south facing slopes between Ferry Hill and Lake Johnson, then crossing Hansen Road near the site's highpoint and entering the LDR. This road would be visible from public and private places to the south.
25. It is likely that the proposed access road would need to be a minimum of 7.5m wide with a bitumen surface and a grassed shoulder. Drainage would be required either by kerb and channel or swales. Fencing would also likely be required on either side of the proposed road to contain stock. Cuts into the steeper parts of the landscape would certainly be required and cuts of over 2m in height would likely need to be undertaken.
26. The proposed access road would introduce infrastructure which is urban in character across a prominent rural slope. The alignment of the road would alter the existing landform and land use patterns, running through land parcels and fencing. Cuts to form the road would detract from the natural patterns of the landform and decrease the legibility of the landscape.
27. The south facing lower slopes of Ferry Hill and its associated relief provide an open, rural context to the rapidly urbanising areas of Frankton. While not holding particularly memorable qualities, the land where the access road is proposed contributes significantly to the open, rural character which holds the Frankton Flats. The proposed road would be highly visible as viewed from many parts of the Frankton area (**Attachment E**) and its presence would reduce the rural character of the landscape and modify the natural character of the landform.

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<sup>1</sup> Scale based on NZILA 6.0 Practice Support Documentation, Best Practice Note, Landscape Assessment and Sustainable Management 10.1, 02/11/10. The scale is: *Extreme/very high/high/moderate/low/very low/negligible*.



28. I understand there are plans for a road to join the Hawthorne – Frankton Road roundabout in the same location as the proposed access road. This other road would contour across the lower slopes of Ferry Hill to link up with Quail Rise. I also understand there are several other submissions to the PDP which are seeking to allow for a range of uses on the flatlands between Frankton Road and Ferry Hill. These potential future developments will alter the openness of the valley floor. I consider the open rural character of the upper slopes will increase in value as the valley floor urbanises and the open, rural character of the flats is greatly reduced.
29. I consider that the proposed access road would have moderate to high adverse effects on the landscape's quality and character and visual amenity as experienced from public and private places to the south.
30. The southern reaches of Hansen Road are of a gravel surface and generally set within depressions in the landscape. This road offers a rural experience which at present ends at a locked gate near the Lake Johnson access. A public walking track links Hansen Road south with Hansen Road north and on to Tucker Beach Road. The proposed access road would run above and parallel to Hansen Road and would run near to and then across the existing walking track. The proposed access road would have moderate to high adverse effects on the landscape quality character and visual amenity as experienced from the formed parts of Hansen Road and from the walking track which links north and south Hansen Road.
31. While there is opportunity to introduce more amenity and regeneration planting as part of the construction of the access road, I consider that any such strategies would be unlikely to remedy or mitigate the adverse effects of the access road.
32. I consider that the effects of the access road as experienced from public places would be amalgamated with very high adverse effects of the LDR zone in a cumulative manner.

## **CONCLUSION**

33. This submission is for the rezoning of a portion of Rural land to Low Density Residential and the establishment of a road between the Frankton Road – Hawthorne Road roundabout and the site.
34. The landscape is part of a glacier overridden ONL landscape which holds a strong rural character and contributes significantly to the visual amenity as experienced from the Wakatipu Basin and Frankton



area. The submission seeks to change the zoning of approximately 75.97ha of Rural land and a large part of this rezoning would occur within an ONL.

35. Overall I consider that the proposal would have a very high adverse effect on the quality and character of the ONL and on the visual amenity of the surrounding landscape.

Stephen Skelton

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Skelton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

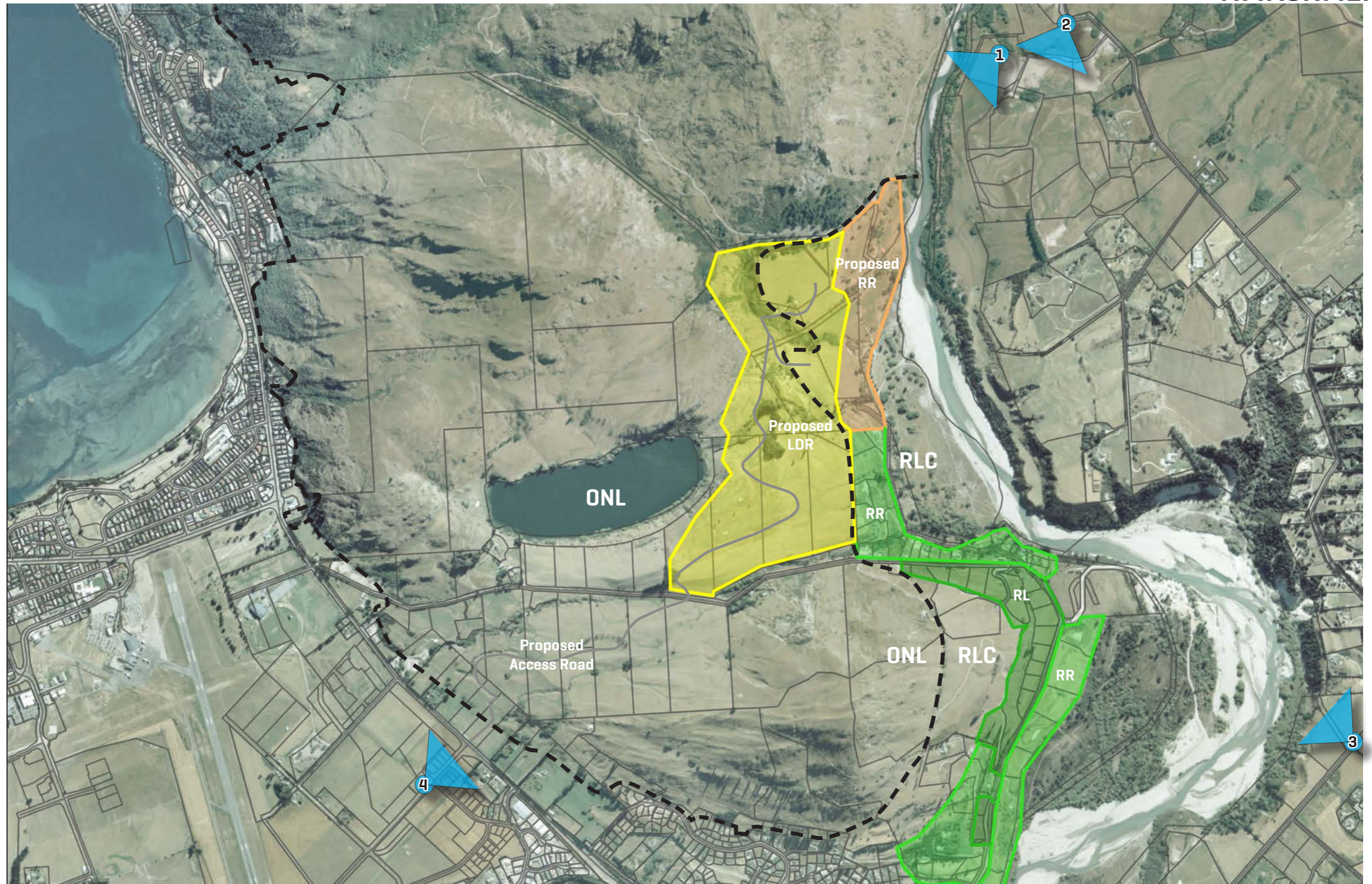
Landscape Architect

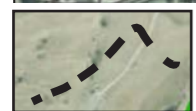

June 9, 2017



PO BOX 1634, Queenstown, 9348 · +64 (0)3 409 2878 · +64 (0)21 020 99933  
steve@patchlandscape.co.nz · www.patchlandscape.co.nz





 Approximate location of the notified PDP ONL boundary  Image locations



Landscape - Reference : PA17130 IS03



**EVIDENCE OF STEPHEN SKELTON**

Submission # 338, Queenstown Mapping, Annotations and Rezoning Requests  
Site Context, Landscape Line, Operative Zoning and Image Locations - June 9, 2017



Interpretation of the ONL boundary

Image 1: Image extracted from a video taken from a helicopter on May 31 2017 at 11:37 am. For reference only.





Image 2: A composite of 5 photographs taken with a 50mm lense on June 6 2017 at 11:37am. Viewing Distance 500mm.





Image 3: A composite of 5 photographs taken with a 50mm lense on June 6 2017 at 11:32am. Viewing Distance 500mm.





Image 4: A composite of 5 photographs taken with a 50mm lense on June 6 2017 at 11:52am. Viewing Distance 500mm.

