

TO: CRAIG BARR, QUEENSTOWN LAKES DISTRICT COUNCIL

SUBJECT: QLDC LANDSCAPE CATEGORISATION LINES

REPORT PREPARED BY: PAUL SMITH (LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT)

REPORT REVIEWED BY: BEN ESPIE (LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT)

DATE: 20TH JULY 2015

INTRODUCTION

1. The purpose of this memo is to identify the landscape categorisation line that separates the Outstanding Natural Landscape (District Wide) (ONL(DW)) from the Visual Amenity Landscape (VAL) situated within and in the vicinity of Criffel Station, and why three escarpment faces located in south Hawea, in the vicinity of McKay Road and SH8 are incorrectly categorised as an ONF.

CRIFFEL RANGE

Brief description of the Criffel Range and its surrounds

2. I produced a landscape and visual effects assessment report regarding subdivision in the eastern part of Criffel Station in February 2014¹ (my 2014 report). My 2014 report describes the landscape character of the northern slopes of the Criffel Range as follows:

*"The mountainous slopes of the Criffel Range meet a number of terraces that rise up from the basin floor. These terraces and their associated escarpment faces are visually distinguishable from the rugged mountain slopes and they are of different geomorphology and geology to the mountain slopes. They have deeper, more fertile soils and therefore have been modified by farming much more than the mountain slopes. It is visually apparent that they are utilised for agricultural crop production and other farming purposes that are similar to those that occur on the floor of the Upper Clutha Basin."*²

*"The lower terrace is at a similar elevation to Mt Barker Road. The upper terrace comprises of a large area of verdant paddocks and is separated from the lower terrace by a steep escarpment face that is up to 40 metres in height."*³

¹ Vivian+Espie Ltd; Paul Smith; 13th February 2014; Criffel Station – Land Use and Subdivision Proposal – Mt Barker Road, Wanaka – Landscape and Visual Effects Assessment Report.

² Ibid. Paragraph 7

³ Ibid. Paragraph 11

3. The upper terrace extends from approximately Knob A3KV to the ridgeline that the Criffel Diggings Track is located on. The lower terrace is practically part of the floor of the Upper Clutha Basin as it is at a similar elevation to Mt Barker Road. However the western end of this terrace, near the southern toe of Mt Barker, it is separated from Mt Barker Road by an escarpment face.
4. South and east of the upper terrace is Knob A3KV that stands approximately 562 masl, similar in height to Mt Barker, and is separated from the Criffel Range by Luggate Creek. It is visually apparent that this hill has been managed in a similar manner to the upper slopes of the Criffel Range. When viewed from the surrounding areas it is difficult to distinguish this hill from the Criffel Range.

*"The overall character of the northern slopes of the Criffel Range landscape, the values associated with it and their significance are that of a relatively dry and tussock dominated open landscape that is for the most part only utilised by high country farming. Appreciation of these slopes can be gained from the wider reaches of the Upper Clutha Basin and the surrounding elevated areas"*⁴

5. In summary, the terraces located at the toe of the Criffel Range have been modified over a number of decades for farming purposes. These terraces and the values associated with them evidently differ from the slopes of Criffel Range and have much in common with the floor of the Upper Clutha Basin.

The landscape categorisation line

6. Categorising the landscapes of a district into outstanding natural landscapes and landscapes that are not both outstanding and natural is an exercise that must obviously be done at a very large scale.
7. A report produced by Dr Marion Read⁵ outlines her opinion of the location of the landscape categorisation line along the northern toe of the Criffel Range. Dr Read's assessment of this landscape categorisation line was reviewed by Ms Anne Steven⁶. Ms Steven opined the landscape categorisation line to be located differently to Dr Read. Dr Read produced a

⁴ Ibid. Paragraph 8.

⁵ Read Landscapes; Dr Marion Read; 1st April 2014; Report to Queenstown Lakes District Council on appropriate landscape classification boundaries within the District, with particular reference to Outstanding Natural Landscapes and Features.

⁶ Anne Steven Landscape Architect; Anne Steven; June 2014; Peer Review of Landscape Assessment - Outstanding Natural Landscape of the Upper Clutha Part of the Queenstown Lakes District - For the Queenstown Lakes District Council.

"Post Review Amendments Report"⁷ which took into consideration Ms Steven's assessment. In this report Dr Read concluded that she did not accept Ms Steven's position on the location of this line.

8. Dr Read's report describes the landscape categorisation line from the District boundary east of Luggate township to west of Mount Barker as stated below and as shown on Appendix 1 and 2 of this memo.

*"In my opinion the boundary of this ONL should follow the base of the Pisa Range from the District boundary skirting around behind Luggate along the boundary of the residential zoning and then follow the true right bank of Luggate Creek. It should cross the creek to the south of the knob 'A3KV' to incorporate the bluff system beyond its left bank within the ONL. The line should then follow the southern and western edge of the north facing terrace until the vicinity of Mount Barker is reached. This incorporates the farmed terraces within the ONL(DW) and is consistent with the Environment Court's decision in the Bald Developments case."*⁸

9. My 2014 report assessed the landscape categorisation of Criffel Station and briefly describes the distinguishable characteristics that define the location of the landscape categorisation line as stated below.

*"This boundary line shown on Appendix 8B – Map 1 of the District Plan does not extend east to the immediate vicinity of Criffel Station since this vicinity has not been examined in detail by any past Environment Court proceedings."*⁹

*"I consider that there are significant distinguishable characteristics between the Criffel Range mountainsides and the terraces that are immediately adjacent to the floor of the Upper Clutha Basin. These terraces share many characteristics with the basin floor. Overall, I consider the landscape category boundary extends east along the toe of the mountain range and along the upper edge of the terraces as is shown on Appendix 2 of this report."*¹⁰

10. The landscape categorisation line as shown on Appendix 2 of my 2014 report is shown on Appendix 1 and 2 of this memo. I disagree with Dr Read's landscape categorisation line for the following reasons:

- The northern slopes of the Criffel Range are of a relatively dry, tussock-dominated, extensively managed, open landscape. This landscape character differs to that of

⁷ Read Landscapes; Dr Marion Read; 16th October 2014; Report to Queenstown Lakes District Council on appropriate landscape classification boundaries within the District, with particular reference to Outstanding Natural Landscapes and Features: Post review amendments.

⁸ Ibid. Paragraph 3.7.5.1.

⁹ Ibid. Paragraph 10.

¹⁰ Ibid. Paragraph 12.

the terraces that have been utilised for more intensive agricultural purposes for many decades. The landscape character and the activities that occur on these terraces are identical to those of the floor of the Upper Clutha Basin.

- The location of Dr Read's landscape categorisation line is somewhat contradictory in relation to the justification set out in her report for the following reasons:
 - Dr Read's line ascends/descends the escarpment face immediately east of Smith Road in a way that does not relate to landform. Dr Read's line does not consistently follow the toe or the top of the escarpment.
 - The terrace that Dr Read considers to be part of the ONL(DW) is a relatively small part of the overall terrace system located at the toe of the Criffel Range. Dr Read considers the remainder of this relatively large terrace not to be categorised as part of the ONL.
 - Dr Read's line bisects a flat paddock area of the terrace, in a way that is unrelated to landform, so as to include a bluff system immediately west of Knob A3KV.
 - The bluff system has similar landscape characteristics to much of Knob A3KV, however Dr Read does not include Knob A3KV in the identified ONL.

11. Taking into account all of the above, I consider that the landscape categorisation boundary line should be drawn as shown by the red line on Appendix 1 and 2 of this memo.
12. In summary, the vast, open, rugged, steep, extensively farmed mountain slopes of the Criffel Range have a landscape character that is consistent with an ONL categorisation. The flat, verdant, intensively farmed terraces and valley floor have a landscape character that is consistent with a RLC categorisation.

THE THREE ESCARPMENTS FACES

13. Part of an escarpment face located within the vicinity of the McKay and Luggate-Tarras Road intersection has been categorised as being an ONF, as can be seen on Appendix 3. The two escarpment faces that separate the large terrace system located south-west of the

Grandview Mountain Range have been categorised as being ONFs, as can be seen on Appendix 3.

14. I produced a landscape and visual effects assessment report regarding a land use proposal within the Lagoon Valley Dairies Ltd, a farming property situated north of this terrace system, in January 2015¹¹ (my 2015 report). My 2015 report briefly describes the landscape character of the terrace system as follows:

*"The western side of the Grandview Mountain Range abruptly ends as it adjoins the eastern edge of the Upper Clutha Basin. In the vicinity of the Clutha River and the Crook Burn, the Grandview Mountain Range forms a number of terraces that descend down to the basin floor. These terraces and their associated escarpment faces are visually disguisable from the rugged mountain slopes and they are of different geomorphology and geology, being of deposited rather than up-thrust material. They have deeper, more fertile soils and therefore have been modified by farming much more than the mountain slopes. It is visually apparent that they are utilised for agricultural crop production and other farming purposes that are similar to those that occur on the floor of the Upper Clutha Basin. In many cases these terrace lands have deeper soils than the valley floor and hence are more useful for production."*¹²

15. Dr Read's "Post Review Amendments Report"¹³ took into consideration Ms Steven's assessment. In this report Dr Read concluded that she accepts Ms Steven's position on the terrace scarp's being an ONF. *"Ms Steven, while excluding the mountains from the ONL wishes to include the Glenfoyle Terrace Scarps as ONF. I consider that her reasoning for this is sound and I have amended the maps accordingly."*¹⁴

16. I disagree with Dr Read adopting these escarpment faces as being ONFs for the following reasons:

- ONFs identified within the Queenstown Lakes District include hills, river corridors, islands, lakes and other natural features that are distinct from their surroundings. Examples include the Shotover Gorges, Roys Peninsula, Mt Iron, Mt Barker and Slope Hill. The escarpment faces in question are part of the terrace system that extends south-west of the Grandview Mountains. They are inextricably linked to the terrace tread and to the greater landscape. I do not consider that they are

¹¹ Vivian+Espie Ltd; Paul Smith; 27th January 2015; C Wing & L Rickman – Land Use Proposal – Kane Road, Wanaka – Landscape and Visual Effects Assessment Report.

¹² Ibid. Paragraph 10.

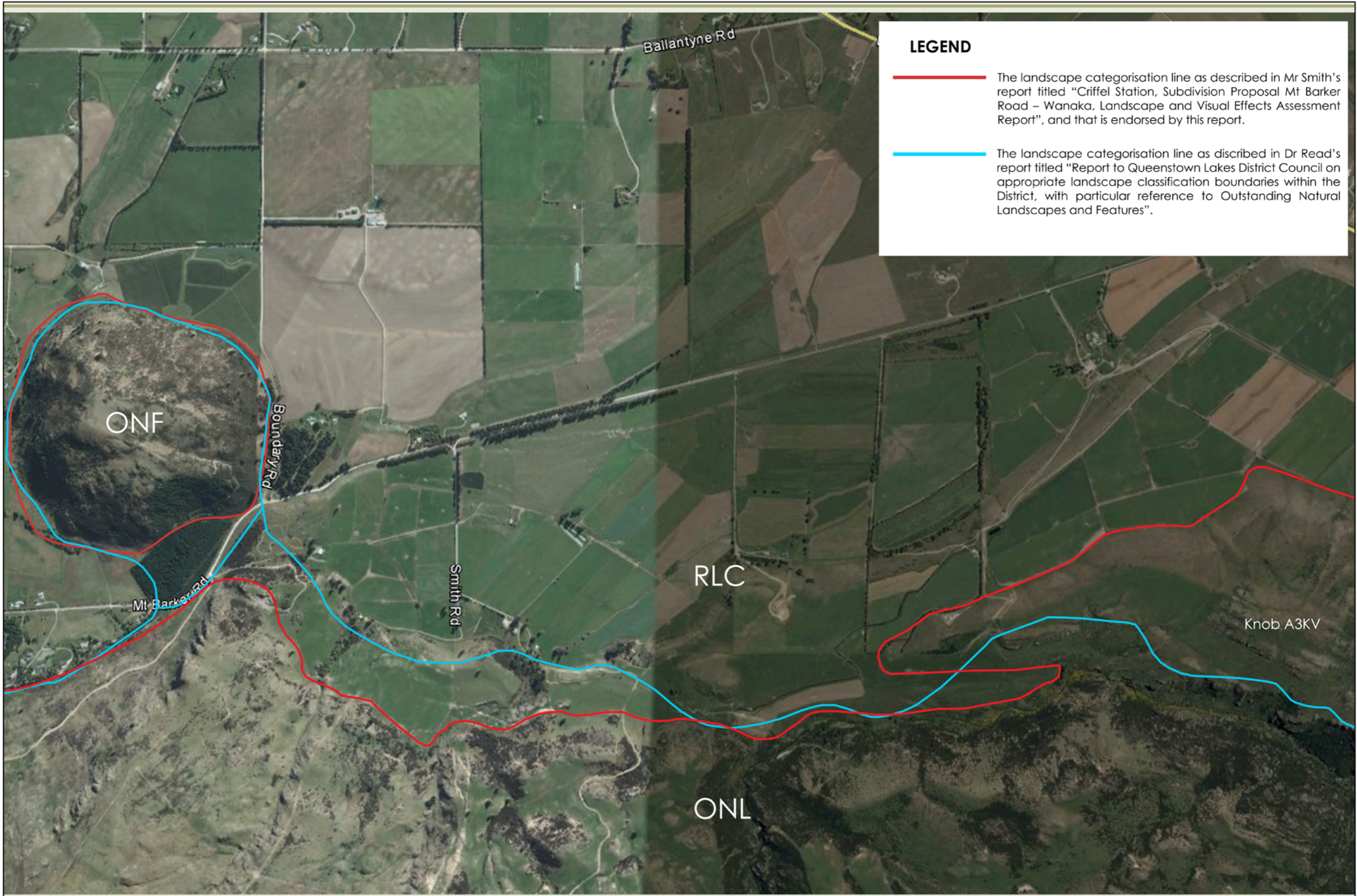
¹³ Read Landscapes; Dr Marion Read; 16th October 2014; Report to Queenstown Lakes District Council on appropriate landscape classification boundaries within the District, with particular reference to Outstanding Natural Landscapes and Features: Post review amendments.

¹⁴ Ibid. Paragraph 3.6.4.

sufficiently distinct from their context to be considered as features. They are not independent from their surroundings.

- The relevant escarpment faces are geomorphologically legible and are visually interesting. However, I do not consider that they can be said to stand out from the rural landscapes and features of the district in terms of landscape merit. They are simply not remarkable or valuable enough to be termed outstanding. To do so would be to devalue the term outstanding within our district; to set the bar to low which may have significant consequences. Obviously it is the case that there are many visually prominent and geomorphologically interesting parts of our rural landscapes that are valued in their current state. This does not mean that we need to stretch the definition of the term outstanding to include them. They can sit comfortably within our non ONL landscapes and still gain appropriate protection by the District Plan's provisions.
- The escarpment face separating the elevated terrace at the toe of the Criffel Range from the Upper Clutha Basin that lies further to the north has not been categorised by Dr Read or Ms Steven as ONL or ONF. This seems inconsistent and weakens the case for the identified escarpments to be included.
- The vegetation cover on these escarpment faces varies. There is some native grey shrub cover but there is also considerable pasture grass cover. Again I consider this weakens the case that the escarpment faces are distinct features or are outstanding.

17. In summary, the escarpment faces that have been identified by Dr Read are simply parts of the greater landscape in the way that many escarpments or other pieces of landform throughout the district are. They are not significantly distinct from their surroundings to be features in their own right. Similarly they are not remarkable enough in terms of natural, physical, perceptual or associative factors to be termed outstanding. I consider they should be categorised as the surrounding landscape.



LEGEND

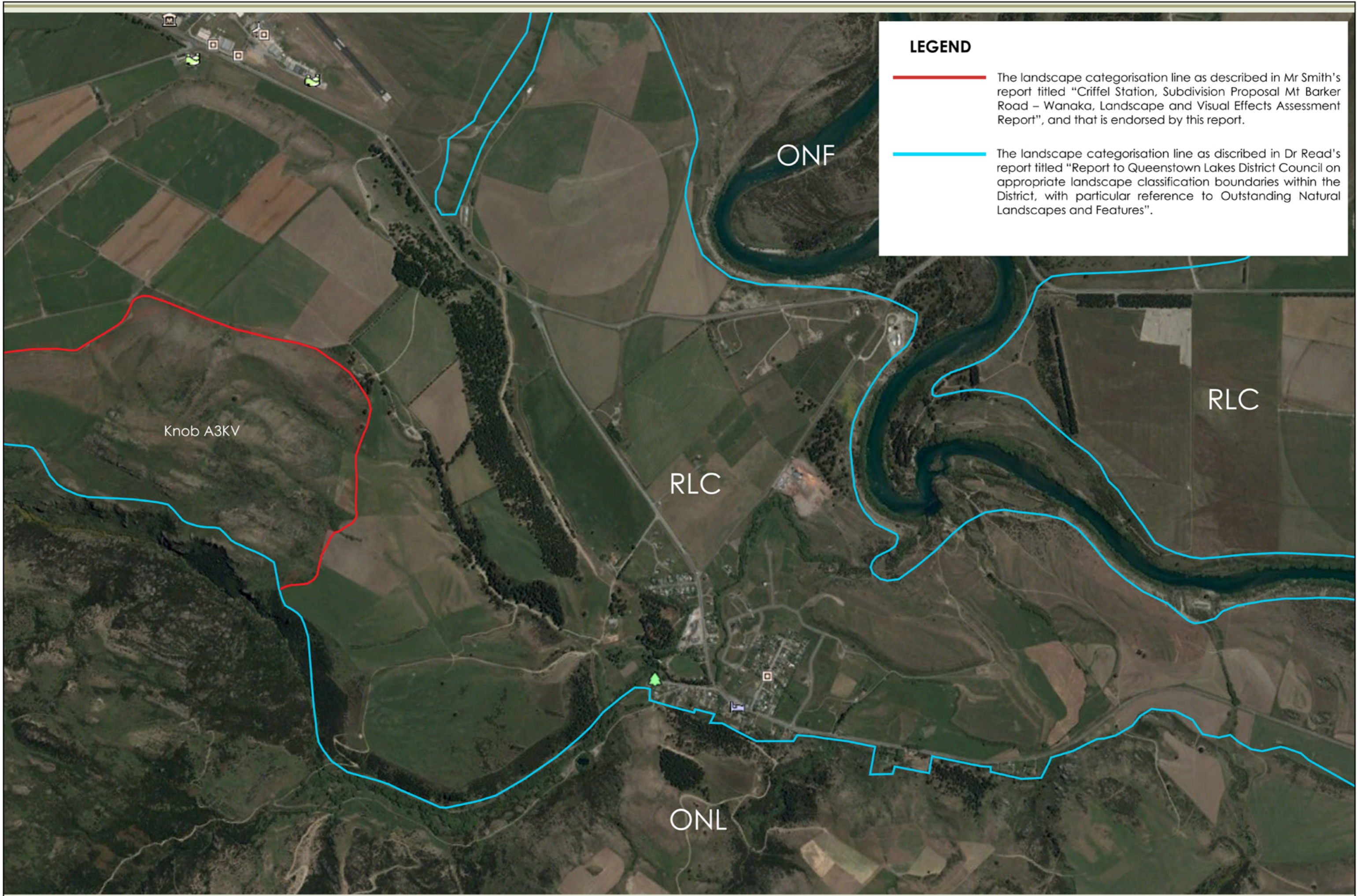
— The landscape categorisation line as described in Mr Smith's report titled "Criffel Station, Subdivision Proposal Mt Barker Road – Wanaka, Landscape and Visual Effects Assessment Report", and that is endorsed by this report.

— The landscape categorisation line as described in Dr Read's report titled "Report to Queenstown Lakes District Council on appropriate landscape classification boundaries within the District, with particular reference to Outstanding Natural Landscapes and Features".



REF: 0975 - App1
 DATE: 20.07.2015
 SCALE: NOT TO SCALE

Appendix 1: Landscape Categorisation Lines



LEGEND

- The landscape categorisation line as described in Mr Smith's report titled "Criffel Station, Subdivision Proposal Mt Barker Road – Wanaka, Landscape and Visual Effects Assessment Report", and that is endorsed by this report.
- The landscape categorisation line as described in Dr Read's report titled "Report to Queenstown Lakes District Council on appropriate landscape classification boundaries within the District, with particular reference to Outstanding Natural Landscapes and Features".

Knob A3KV

ONF

RLC

RLC

ONL




REF: 0975 - App2
 DATE: 20.07.2015
 SCALE: NOT TO SCALE


Appendix 2: Landscape Categorisation Lines

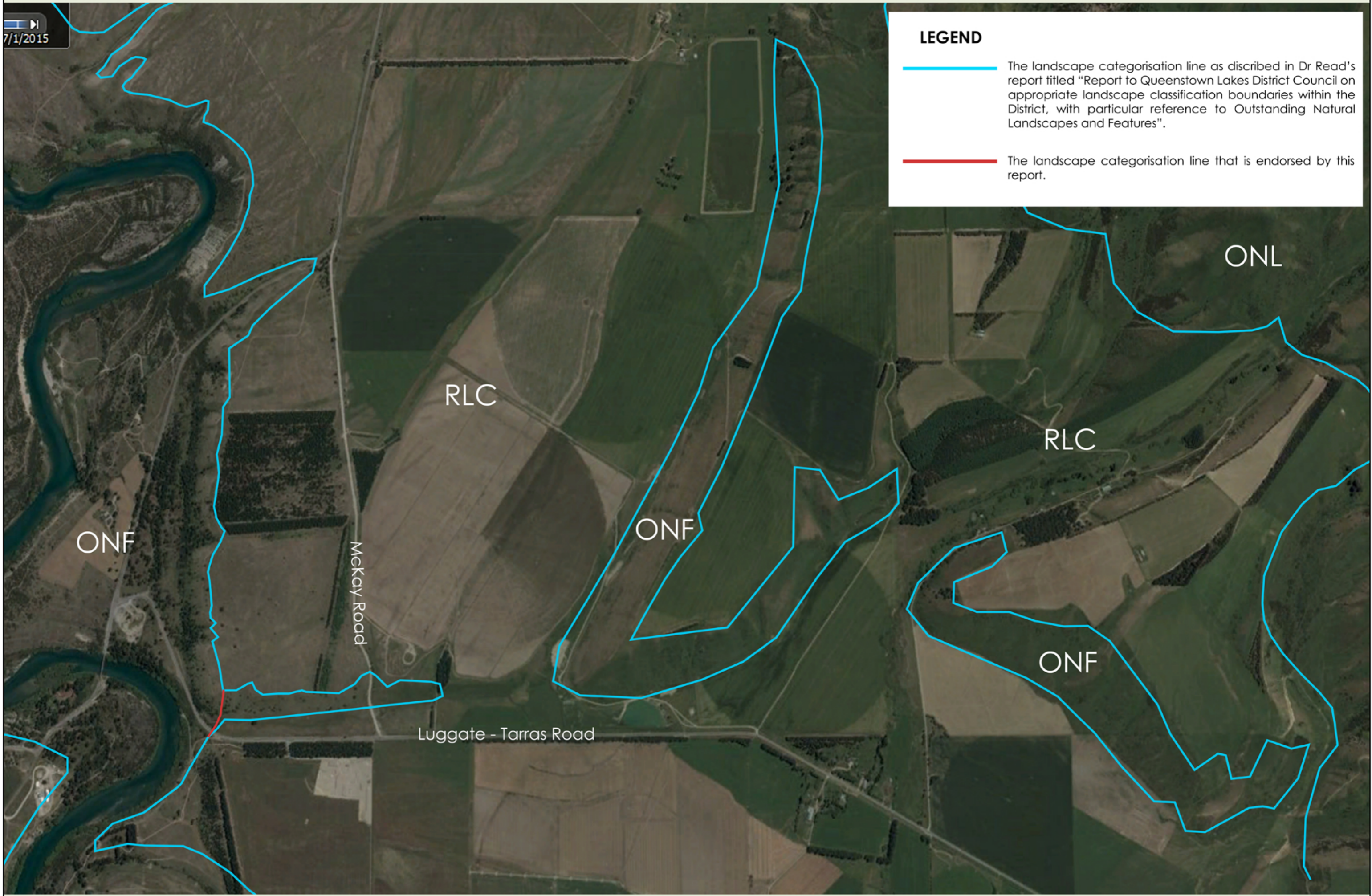
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LEGEND

 The landscape categorisation line as described in Dr Read's report titled "Report to Queenstown Lakes District Council on appropriate landscape classification boundaries within the District, with particular reference to Outstanding Natural Landscapes and Features".

 The landscape categorisation line that is endorsed by this report.



Appendix 3: Landscape Categorisation Lines