

BEFORE THE QUEENSTOWN LAKES DISTRICT COUNCIL

IN THE MATTER of the Resource Management Act ('Act')

AND

IN THE MATTER of the submission by Arthurs Point Woods Limited Partnership on the QLDC Proposed District Plan (Stream 18) Rural Visitor Zone

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF STEPHEN SKELTON FOR

Arthurs Point Woods Limited Partnership (Submitter #31031)

S31031 – APWLP – Skelton S - Evidence

29th May 2020



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 Master of Landscape Architecture (first class honours) 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.
2. I have been involved in landscape consultancy work in the Queenstown Lakes District for over 7 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 another practice in Queenstown. I founded Patch in May 2016.
3. I have lived in the Queenstown Lakes District for 10 years and have observed the landscape through all seasonal, diurnal and climatic variations. I am an avid skier, alpinist and paraglider and I have walked or cycled most of the publicly accessible trails and driven all the publicly accessible roads in and around Arthurs Point.
4. I have read and understand the Strategic Direction of the Proposed District Plan and the objectives and policies relevant to this submission, especially those contained within the Rural, Landscape, Urban, Medium Density Residential and Rural Visitor chapters.
5. While this matter is not before the Environment Court, 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.

SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

6. My brief is to provide evidence which assesses the landscape and visual amenity effects of the parts of Submission #31031 which relate to the zoning of the site at 155 Arthurs Point Road (legally described as Lot 3 DP 331294) hereafter referred to as the site.
7. The following evidence will provide a description of the site and surrounding landscape, followed by an assessment of the relief sought in Submission #31031. I will also respond to the relevant portions of:
 - Landscape Architect Helen Mellsop's Landscape Assessment dated June 2019;
 - Planner Emma Turner's Section 42A report dated 18 May 2020; and
 - The Arthurs Point Outstanding Natural Landscape Society Incorporated (APONLSI) submission 31041.
8. I note that the submission from QRC Shotover Limited (31032) is almost identical to the submission from APWLP, and the matters raised in my evidence are applicable to both submissions.

LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

The Arthurs Point Basin

9. A steep, craggy escarpment above Littles Road known as the Knob J Ridge defines the eastern edge of the Arthurs Point Basin (**Attachment A**). To the south is the Shotover River and the slopes of Sugar Loaf. To the west is the Shotover River and the slopes of Bowen Peak and to the north is the toe of the Harris Mountains. The Arthurs Point Basin displays a complex topography of terraces, kettle holes, escarpments, moraines, landslides, streams and the Shotover River. The Arthurs Point Basin is clad in a mix of exotic woodlands, with pasture grass and native amenity vegetation. Much of the enclosing mountain slopes are clad in wilding conifers and some parts have recently been cleared or sprayed.
10. The Arthurs Points Basin holds several character areas. These include (**Attachment A**);



- ‘Old’ Arthurs Point - the residential areas west of the Edith Cavell Bridge on the toe slopes of Bowen Peak,
- Morningstar Terrace - the residential lands west of Arthurs Point Road east of the Edith Cavell bridge,
- Morning Star Reserve - the visitor attraction area adjacent to the Shotover River just north of the Edith Cavell Bridge,
- Mathias Terrace - the residential and rural areas west of Arthurs Point Road east of the Edith Cavell bridge,
- Arthurs Point Village - the urban areas between the toe of the Harris Mountains and the Shotover River west of Littles Road (noting a knoll landform marks the eastern edge of the urban areas, and not Littles Road),
- The rural and rural living areas between Knob J Ridge and the Shotover River,
- The Shotover River Corridor.

The Site

11. The site is 3.2513 ha in area and occupies the partially forested slopes north of the Shotover Lodge in the Arthurs Point Village (**Attachment B**). The site has a varying slope and is accessed via a ‘leg in’ off Arthurs Point Road between the residential development of Bullendale and the Shotover Lodge.
12. The site has an extensive resource consent history. Most recently under RM190926 QLDC approved a 34-lot subdivision which will provide for a maximum of 75 residential units on the site.
13. The site is currently contained in the Rural Visitor Zone and sits outside the ODP’s ONL classification. Existing built form exists on the slope below the site which was developed under the ODP’s Rural Visitor Zone regime.

Landscape Category

14. The surrounding landscape was considered an Outstanding Natural Landscape (ONL) by the Environment Court (EnvCrt C3/2002) for its significance in terms of natural science factors, aesthetic values and expressiveness (legibility). I consider that, while

effects associated with the urban and residential areas are ever present in the landscape, these elements are set within a wider, dominant, natural and aesthetic mountain and river ONL.

15. I consider the Arthurs Point settlement area is too small to be a landscape in its own right and is a village within a wider ONL. This wider ONL includes the Shotover River, Sugar Loaf, Bowen Peak and the Harris Mountains including Mt Dewar.

PDP SUBMISSIONS

16. The key landscape considerations before the Panel with respect to the site are:

- Urban Character and Density - Retain Medium Density Residential (MDR) and Visitor Accommodation Subzone (31031.1, 31031.2, 31031.3, 31031.4, 31031.15);
- Building Height (31031.11, 31031.12, 31031.13, 31031.14,),
- Landscape Category.

17. A comprehensive summary of the submission is set out in the Section 42A report with particular regard to Appendix 2.

SUMMARY OF VISIBILITY

18. The site is well screened from easterly views by vegetation and landform and is not visible from Malaghans Road. It is also well screened from distant southerly views including Gorge Road and Queenstown by landform and vegetation on the south edge of Mathias Terrace. It is screened from northerly and westerly views by the slopes of the Harris Mountains.

19. The site is visible from (**Attachment A and Images**):

- an elevated view on Littles Road (**Image 1**) to the south, but not from the lower, northern parts of Littles Road;
- some parts of Arthurs Point Road in the Arthurs Point Village (**Image 2 - 5**) through limited view shafts between existing buildings;

- some parts of Mathias Terrace (**Images 6 and 7**) through limited view shafts between existing buildings and vegetation;
- some parts of 'Old' Arthurs Point (**Image 8**) through limited view shafts between existing buildings and vegetation.

20. In all views of the site, it is seen in the context of and adjacent to the existing urban areas in Arthurs Point Village. In particular the existing built form in the current Rural Visitor Zone land which sits in the foreground of the site when viewed from these public viewpoints.

OUTSTANDING NATURAL LANDSCAPE

21. The site is part of the Arthurs Points Basin at the toe of the Harris Mountains. I consider Arthurs Point is a village within a wider ONL. The ODP and PDP show the site to be part of the Arthurs Point Village and the Decisions Version of the PDP shows the ONL category boundary closely following the site's parcel boundaries. I consider the Decisions Version ONL line is appropriately located. This is consistent with the location of the ONL in the ODP.
22. The site is adjacent to the Harris Mountain's ONL slopes and existing multi-storey urban areas. If the resource consented development on the site were to be developed it would extend the urban form slightly up the slopes adjacent to Arthurs Point Village's existing development. Other existing residential dwellings exist to the west of the site at a similar elevation. Beyond the effects expected of an urban area, the settlement of Arthurs Point has not degraded the values of the wider ONL and the outstanding natural character and of the Shotover River, Sugar Loaf, Bowen Peak and the Harris Mountains remains dominant. The relief sought by the submitter, including the amendments to height and road setbacks, will not act to reduce the ONL characteristics or detract from the open, natural, outstanding qualities of the wider ONL.
23. The site is not part of a highly visible landscape. While it is visible from Littles Road and from parts of Arthurs Point, it is seen in and from the context of an urban settlement that has been developed under the existing Rural Visitor Zone framework. Where the site is visible, it is dominated by the surrounding visible and natural landscape with particular regard to the Shotover River, Bowen Peak and the Harris Mountains. The relief sought by the submitter



will slightly reduce the open character of the landscape, but this small loss of open character will result in a negligible adverse effect on the quality and character of the wider ONL.

URBAN DEVELOPEMENT

24. As discussed above, the site holds an existing consent for a 34-lot subdivision (RM190926) which will provide for a maximum of 75 residential units and is zoned Rural Visitor in the ODP. Submission 31031 supports Council's proposed zoning of the site to MDR, with amendment to the height, density and setback rules.
25. It is anticipated that the site will be developed in an urban form. This future development will be adjacent to other urban form and at the edge of an ONL. I consider a hard edge interface of dense urban areas against natural areas an appropriate and preferred design response, especially in the hills landscapes around Queenstown. This type of hard urban/ONL edge creates a clear, defensible boundary and highlights the natural values of the ONL. This is evidenced in the Queenstown CBD area, especially around the gondola and the areas around Gorge Road. Conversely, in situations where a low density or rural living type development abuts a more natural landscape the transition between characters can be less obvious. This is evidenced in the areas around Mt Iron in Wanaka.
26. In the context of Arthurs Point, with particular regard to the village, the line between ONL and urban is clearly defined. The relief sought by the submitter will increase the spread of the urban area in Arthurs Point Village in a manner which is appropriate and sensitive to the existing urban/natural interface. It is further noted that the ODP zoning for the site (being the Rural Visitor Zone) provides more intensive development than that enabled in the MDRZ. This is the planning regime that the surrounding land has developed pursuant to.

BUILDING HEIGHT AND DENSITY

27. Submission 31031 seeks the following relief in relation to the sites MDR zoning:
 - new restricted discretionary activity status for building height between 8 – 12m with matters of discretion relating to building design, appearance, sunlight and amenity effects. The restricted discretionary height limit regime would only apply on land located 20m or more away from the ONL line.

- Amending the residential density rule to clarify that sites under 250m² are entitled to one residential unit;

28. I consider this relief will appropriately respond the landscape and visual amenity values of the site and surrounding landscape.
29. Building height limits on sloping sights are in my opinion, blunt tools that can result in building designs which give more regard to addressing a statutory matters, than achieving the best design outcomes of the particular site. Strict adherence to building heights can result in significant earthworks, terraced buildings and mono pitch or parapet roofs which are orientated uniformly across a slope. I do not consider the building aesthetic described above is indicative of the vernacular in this part of Arthurs Point.
30. While large buildings can result in a dominant built form, especially when viewed in close proximity, the subject site is able to absorb buildings over 8m in height from existing ground level. The steep slope to the north would allow 12m high buildings to be visually absorbed and the landform and vegetation to the east and west of the site will mitigate against ridge and skyline breaches.
31. The submitter seeks an amendment to Rule 8.5.5 in the MDRZ so as to ensure that allotments created below 250m² net area have the legal right to build on from a density perspective.
32. Other key considerations with respect to building height and density are the effects buildings can have on views from other private places and the affect buildings can have on solar gain on adjoining places. In the case of the site, an existing consented¹ development to the north will see some small, rural living type development constructed in tandem with extensive revegetation. The proposed revegetation associated with that development will see thousands of high stature beech trees planted which will buffer and screen any development on the subject site from the adjoining property to the north. Views from the properties to the east and west are of the mountains and gorge to the south and any development on the subject site will not affect these views.

¹ RM051109

33. With regard to solar gain, I have not undertaken a solar study of the site. However, it is my experience in the Arthurs Point that in the winter months when the sun is the lowest and solar gain is most desirable, the midday and afternoon sun is largely shaded by the northern mountain slopes.
34. I consider the difference in affect between 8m high buildings and 12m high buildings on the site is negligible. A more lenient building height will allow for buildings design which is more in character with the of Arthurs Point vernacular. I consider a 12m building height on the site would not detract from landscape character or visual amenity values, and matters of discretion regarding amenity effects are proposed in any case which will give Council appropriate control at the time of consenting. Further protection on the upper northern boundary would see a height limit of 8m within 20m of the northern boundary and reduce the screening effect future buildings may have on the natural values of the adjacent ONL. I consider these provisions adequately respond to the site and its adjacency to the ONL boundary.
35. This restricted discretionary regime will provide a more targeting outcome than a blanket non complying activity status for buildings over 8 metres.

EVIDENCE OF HELEN MELLSOP

36. Ms Mellsop's evidence dated 18 March 2020 does not specifically address the site or the submission. However, her May 2019 report (also relied on by the Section 42A report and attached to her evidence) does provide some assessment of the site. The below paragraphs assess Ms Mellsop's May 2019 report.
37. Ms Mellsop and I agree the Decisions Version ONL line is appropriately located. She makes the assessment that had the ONL line been considered in isolation without regard to zoning, the site would be part of an ONL². I agree with this in part, noting that it is my assessment, Arthurs Point is a village within a wider ONL. Following Ms Mellsop's logic, had the ONL line been considered in isolation of zoning, all of the undeveloped parts of Arthurs Point would be part of an ONL. I agree however with Ms Mellsop's assessment that the PDP Decisions Version ONL line is appropriately located around the site as this is a real world analysis of the current environment at Arthurs Point.

² Mellsop, May 2019 – Page 16.

38. Ms Mellsoy asserts that the lower slopes of Mt Dewar are widely visible from the Arthurs Point settlement and public roads.³ I do not consider the site is 'widely' visible as it is at the very low part of the mountain where it is often screened by existing development and trees. I provide **Attachment A** and **Images 1- 8** in support of my assessment. The site is only visible through select view shafts and where it is visible it is visually linked to the Arthurs Point village area rather than the more widely visible mountain slopes.
39. In her June 2019 report Ms Mellsoy considers that the lower slopes of Mt Dewar have some limited capacity for sensitively designed low density visitor development and she recommends a low-density type development with an 8m building height⁴. As I have discussed above; I consider dense urban type development adjacent to natural areas better delineates the two characters than a less dense development. Also, I consider a blanket 8m building height would result in architecture which does not appropriately address the Arthurs Point vernacular. The relief sought in the submission includes an 8m height limit within 20m of the upper northern boundary which I consider responds to Ms Mellsoy's position.
40. I agree with Ms Mellsoy's recommendation that development on the site should be composed of recessive materials and colours.

EVIDENCE OF EMMA TURNER

41. Ms Turner's evidence relies on Ms Mellsoy's landscape evidence with particular regard to Ms Mellsoy's sensitivity rating and maps. As stated above, I disagree with Ms Mellsoy's assessment that the site is widely visible and as such I do not agree with her assessment of landscape sensitivity. Regardless, Ms Turner has recommended the site be confirmed as MDR and VASZ and I agree with her recommendation.
42. In part 11.2 of her evidence, Ms Turner disagrees that bespoke provision for the site would be appropriate. As I have described above, I consider the relief sought would see an urban development with height and density provisions which address the distinct character of the site with respect to its landform and adjacency to urban and ONL areas. The 8-metre

³ Above.

⁴ Mellsoy, June 2019 – 3.2.7.

building height within 20m of the northern boundary specifically addresses the landscape's adjacency to an ONL. I consider the relief will best address the site's distinct character and amenity values.

SUBMISSION OF ARTHURS POINT OUTSTANDING NATURAL LANDSCAPE SOCIETY INCORPORATED

43. As discussed above I consider the PDP Decisions Version ONL is appropriately located and disagree with the ONL category boundary suggested by APONLSI. I also disagree with the APONLSI's suggestion that the site is highly visible, as I have discussed above and as is evidenced in my attachments.

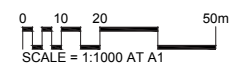
CONCLUSION

44. Overall, I consider the relief sought in Submission 31031 would allow development to occur in a part of the landscape where it can be absorbed. This relief would allow for some targeted flexibility in appropriately scaled and designed development which would appear as a small extension of the Arthurs Point urban area. The relief sought by submitter 31031 will not result in development which would adversely affect the landscape and visual amenity values to a more than very low degree.

Steve Skelton

Landscape Architect







25mm photo - 19 May 2020 at 9:44 am



25mm photo - 25 May 2020 at 11:31 am



Panorama - 25 May 2020 at 11:35 am



25mm photo - 25 May 2020 at 11:37 am



25mm photo - 25 May 2020 at 11:38 am



25mm photo - 25 May 2020 at 11:21 am



25mm photo - 25 May 2020 at 11:25 am



25mm photo - 25 May 2020 at 11:14 am