



**REPORT TO:** Karen Page – Senior Policy Analyst - QLDC

**FROM:** Marion Read (Landscape Architect)

**REFERENCE:** Plan Change 41 – Shotover Country Estates

**SUBJECT:** Landscape Assessment

**DATE:** Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> January 2011

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 A private request for a plan change has been made to the Queenstown Lakes District Council for approximately 120 hectares of land located at the confluence of the Kawarau and Shotover Rivers, and to the south of State Highway 6.
- 1.2 The subject site entails the following parcels of land as noted in the application:  
Lot 101 DP 32556`1  
Sections 96 – 99 Block III Shotover SD  
Lot 7 DP 325561  
Lot 1 DP 300109  
Lot 2 DP 300109  
Lot 2 SP 29707  
Section 92 Block III Shotover SD.  
The maps included with the application, however, also include Lot 5 DP 386956 within the proposed plan change area.
- 1.3 The subject site is currently zoned Rural General in terms of the Queenstown Lakes District Council's District Plan (the District Plan). The aim of the plan change is to create a special zone in order to provide for the establishment of 758 residential dwellings and ancillary buildings; provide for education and community facilities; create areas for open space, ecological protection, ecological enhancement, recreation and amenity; provide for the formation of roading, pedestrian and cycleway access; provide a park and ride facility for public transport; protect a historic cottage; and to establish the necessary utility services.
- 1.4 The application includes a comprehensive landscape assessment report and addendum provided by Kidson Landscape Consulting. These reports provide a detailed description of the site; the consented but as yet unimplemented development on the site; and the anticipated visibility of development within the proposed zone from vantage points arrayed around its vicinity. I accept these descriptions and thus, for brevity will not repeat them again.
- 1.5 A plan change, by definition, aims to alter the land uses and development anticipated within a particular area. Consequently it is the effects of that change in land use on the wider landscape which are the primary focus of this report. Internal issues raised by the rules proposed for the subdivision also require consideration and it is not always possible to separate these aspects. Consequently they are discussed together in a comprehensive manner.

## **2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION**

- 2.1 The site is located on the south and western facing river terraces above the confluence of the Shotover and Kawarau Rivers. Until approximately 4000 years ago the Wakatipu drained through the moraine at Kingston. The lake level at this time was approximately 70m higher than it is currently. The alluvial deposits located between the vicinity of Speargrass Flat Road, extending to Frankton in the west and Morven Hill in the east are the remnants of the outwash fan of the Shotover River from this time. When the Kawarau exit was formed the lake level dropped to approximately its current level and the Shotover and Kawarau Rivers and Hayes Creek proceeded to cut through these deposits creating the river terrace system which exists currently<sup>1</sup>.
- 2.2 Adjacent to the south eastern portion of the site a schistose glacial feature, a roche moutonnee which is unnamed, protrudes through the terrace surface and rises to 439m. This river terrace system forms something of a pair of amphitheatres opening to the south west and south east. These terrace features are separated by a narrow neck of land which is a residual part of the outwash fan.
- 2.3 The site is largely clad in improved pasture. Conifer shelter belts are present along some paddock boundaries. The terrace risers are steep and consequently indigenous vegetation is present where the ground has not been cultivated. A number of gullies cut the faces of these risers and these are, in the main, densely vegetated with matagouri and coprosma species.
- 2.4 The north western corner of the site is adjacent to Old School Road which is a pocket of residential development in an area which, I understand, has been a site of dwellings for more than a century. An old cottage, known as Hicks Cottage, is located within the site in this vicinity.
- 2.5 The western margin of the site follows the true left bank of the Shotover River. It is densely vegetated with willows and the occasional group of pines. These trees form a fairly impenetrable visual barrier when the trees are in leaf, but a relatively permeable one during the winter.
- 2.6 The south western margin of the site follows the confluence of the Shotover River with the Kawarau River and it extends about 500m along the true left bank of that river. The south western portion of the site contains a wetland of about 20ha in area. This wetland is variously described in the application as man-made and degraded.

## **3.0 PROPOSAL**

- 3.1 The proposal entails the development of a new special zone primarily for the development of low density residential development (Activity Areas 1 and 1a) but with the inclusion of an area of medium density housing including the potential for visitor accommodation (Activity Areas 2a and 2b) and an area for the development of education and community facilities (Activity Area 3). An historic precinct is to be created around an old cottage at the end of Old School Road, Activity Area 4. Activity Areas 5a – 5e are to be open space. The following table provides key parameters for development in each area and has been taken from 12.25.10 Zone Standards of the proposed plan change.

Activity Area	Maximum height	Building coverage	Mean lot size <sup>2</sup>
1and 1a	8 metres	40%	750 square metres
2a	10 metres	60%	400 square metres
2b	10 metres	70%	500 square metres
3	12 metres	30%	500 square metres
4	4.5 metres	10%	2 500 square metres
5a – 5e	3.5 metres	n/a	n/a

<sup>1</sup> Barrell, D, Riddolls, B, Riddolls, P & Thomson, R. (1994). Surficial geology of the Wakatipu Basin, Central Otago, New Zealand. Institute of Geological and Nuclear Sciences: Lower Hutt.

<sup>2</sup> This is given as 'Target Density' in the Zone Standard. I have interpolated it into lot sizes in order to present it in a more readily interpretable form.

- 3.2 The proposal incorporates areas of open space that encompass five areas or land types. The first consists of two areas of land located on the highest level of the site adjacent to SH 6, Ladies Mile and which are designated 5a Open Space – State Highway. The second is made up of terrace escarpments which are a striking feature of the site and which are too steep and too unstable to allow for development. These are designated 5b Open Space – Escarpment. The third area bisects the lowest part of the site and is required for flood mitigation works. This is designated 5c Open Space – Riverside Protection Areas. The fourth is an extensive wetland located in the south west corner of the site and designated 5d Open Space – Wetland / Recreation. The fifth area is the buffer which must be provided under the electricity lines and this is designated Open Space – Transmission Corridor.

## 4.0 ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 In undertaking this assessment I have applied the relevant parts of the Policies and Objectives of a number of sections of the District Plan to inform my approach. These sections include Section 4.2.5 and Section 15.1.3.

### 4.2 Section 4 Matters

#### 4.2.5 Objective:

***Subdivision, use and development being undertaken in the District in a manner which avoids, remedies or mitigates adverse effects on landscape and visual amenity values.***

#### 4.2.1 1. Future Development

***(a) To avoid, remedy or mitigate the adverse effects of development and/or subdivision in those areas of the District where the landscape and visual amenity values are vulnerable to degradation.***

4.2.1.1 The landscape in which this plan change is proposed is a portion of the archaic Shotover River outwash fan and the river terrace system landscape which has developed subsequent to the drop in level of Lake Wakatipu. This outwash fan landscape already contains a reasonably extensive amount of development including Threepwood, Lake Hayes Estate and the fairly intensive scattering of residential development which has been consented along both sides of State Highway 6.

4.2.1.2 The experience of travelling west along Ladies Mile / State Highway 6 is an important part of the entry experience to Queenstown and currently affords expansive views to Bayonet Peaks, Cecil Peak, Walter Peak, Peninsula Hill, Bowen Peak, Ben Lomond and Ferry Hill. These views currently have a rural character being largely over open pasture interrupted with shelter planting and some amenity trees. The entirety of this upper terrace is zoned Rural General. I consider that this portion of this landscape is vulnerable to degradation because of the level of current and consented development which is already present and because of its importance as a part of the entry experience to Queenstown.

4.2.1.3 The proposed plan change includes two lots, parts of which are located on this upper terrace. These are part of Lot 1 DP 300109, with an area of approximately 6.8ha on the upper terrace, and Lot 5 DP 386955, with an area of approximately 2.5ha on the upper terrace. Currently the first lot is largely open with a shelter belt along the southern portion of its western boundary. The more westerly lot is less open, there being a dwelling screened from the State Highway by mounding and with significant amounts of amenity tree planting immediately to its east. It is my opinion that these portions of these lots should be excluded from the plan change area and remain zoned as Rural General. I will discuss this further below.

4.2.1.4 The outwash fan and river terrace system is enclosed to the south by an unnamed roche moutonnee. This feature has been determined by the Environment Court to be within the Outstanding Natural Landscape (Wakatipu Basin) of the Remarkables Mountains and Kawarau River<sup>3</sup>. I also consider that this landscape feature is vulnerable to degradation.

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<sup>3</sup> C203/2003

- 4.2.1.5 To the southwest a single lot of 7ha in area, (the Wood Property) protrudes into the plan change area. The ONL / VAL boundary bisects this property so that the most northerly portion of the lot, a strip of approximately 100m wide along its most northern boundary, would be isolated from the Visual Amenity Landscape, edged on three sides by the plan change area and on the fourth by the Outstanding Natural Landscape (Wakatipu Basin). The High Court has determined that such isolated pieces must be assessed as Other Rural Landscape<sup>4</sup>. This could result in a higher level of development occurring on this portion of the site than would currently be anticipated (while it is a part of the Visual Amenity Landscape) and this could have an adverse effect on the adjacent ONL. Were it to be included within the plan change area, assuming the same approach was taken to it as the other land within the proposed zone, a large proportion of this area would likely be a part of area 5(b) with a small portion being area 1. This would offer better management from a landscape perspective than can be ensured while its zoning remains Rural General.
- 4.2.1.6 The site is bounded to the south west by the Shotover River which has also, along with its delta, been determined by the Environment Court to be within the Outstanding Natural Landscape (Wakatipu Basin)<sup>5</sup>. The more westerly portion of the delta has been the location of a number of developments including the Runway End Safety Area (RESA). I consider that this area is also vulnerable to degradation.
- 4.2.1.7 The majority of the plan change area is located within the river terrace system which forms something of a natural amphitheatre facing to the south west below the level of the State Highway. Views into this site are limited in extent and location except from the top of the terrace on the western side of the Shotover in the vicinity of Glenda Drive and the Eastern Access Route (which is yet to be constructed), and from the Remarkables Ski Field Road. I consider these river terraces to be less vulnerable to development as a consequence, however, some vulnerability remains.
- 4.2.1.8 A portion of the lowest terrace adjacent to the Shotover River has been excluded from the Plan Change area and it is proposed that this area should remain zoned Rural General. This area, an approximately rectangular block of approximately 18ha in area, would be bounded on three sides by the proposed zone and on the fourth by the Shotover River. This piece of land is not a landscape in its own right, but would remain as an isolated fragment of the broader Visual Amenity Landscape. While this land is too low and vulnerable to the vagaries of the Shotover (and outside of the flood bank intended to protect the lower parts of future development) to provide many development opportunities it, nonetheless, currently provides the location of a gravel extraction operation and could, conceivably, be an appropriate site for similar semi industrial uses such as firewood yards. It is my opinion that the proliferation of this type of activity in this area could not be prevented by the current District Plan provisions and that this would likely have an adverse effect on the appreciation of the Outstanding Natural Landscape of the Shotover Delta. It is my opinion that this area should be included within the plan change area and should form another open space area. Activities within this area should be restricted and could be restricted to pastoral farming, at least in the interim. In the longer term it is possible that other open space uses such as sports fields; horse riding; dog exercise or other uses could be made of the area.
- (b) To encourage development and/or subdivision to occur in those areas of the District with greater potential to absorb change without detraction from landscape and visual amenity values.*
- 4.2.1.9 The proposed Plan Change area is located in an area of the District which does have some potential to absorb change. Urban style development within this location would detract from the landscape and visual amenity of the vicinity but this would be reasonably well limited by the topography. This is not the case for the areas of the plan change area which are located on the upper terrace adjacent to the State Highway / Ladies Mile.

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<sup>4</sup> CIV 2004-485-002426 QLDC v Trident International Limited

<sup>5</sup> C203/2004

**(c) To ensure subdivision and/or development harmonises with local topography and ecological systems and other nature conservation values as far as possible.**

4.2.1.10 The proposed structure plan protects the terrace escarpments restricting development to the flat terrace surfaces. Roads into and within the subdivision would cut through these terraces but this has already occurred in the case of the major access roads which have been constructed as a part of the existing subdivision. The main entrance to the subdivision, and the proposed access which would ascend the terrace escarpment in the north east corner of the site to join Howards Way, are both located on outwash fans. These fans form a natural disruption to the form of the terrace escarpment and their placement in these locations utilises the natural landscape feature to minimise the adverse effects of the roads' construction. The enhancement of the indigenous vegetation on the escarpments is proposed to be encouraged, as is the protection and enhancement of the wetland which would, if successful, enhance ecological and other nature conservation values of the site.

#### 4.2.2 4. Visual Amenity Landscapes

**(a) To avoid, remedy or mitigate the adverse effects of subdivision and development on the visual amenity landscapes which are:**

- **highly visible from public places and other places which are frequented by members of the public generally; and**
- **visible from public roads.**

4.2.2.1 The visibility of the proposed special zone has been extremely well described by Ms Kidson. However, the adverse effects of this visibility have not, in my opinion, been as well elucidated.

4.2.2.2 I concur with the application that the proposed structure plan concentrates development in the areas of the site which have higher overall potential to absorb development.

4.2.2.3 I have discussed above my general concerns about the likely degradation of the Visual Amenity Landscape of the upper terrace should these portions of land be included within the plan change area. It is my opinion that the detail of the proposed plan change is not adequate to 'remedy or mitigate the adverse effects of subdivision and development' in these areas.

4.2.2.4 Only one proposed policy relates to these areas, denoted as Area 5a in the proposal and described as 'Open Space: State Highway'. This is Policy 2.9 "Activity Areas 5a – 5e – To create areas of open space extending through the zone that provide the basis for pedestrian connections, public utilities, and the protection of areas of ecological importance." The District Plan defines 'utilities' as follows<sup>6</sup>:

**Means:**

- a. *transformers, lines and necessary and incidental structures and equipment for the transmissions and distribution of electricity.*
  - b. *pipes and necessary incidental structures and equipment for transmitting and distributing gas;*
  - c. *storage facilities, pipes and necessary incidental structures and equipment for the supply and drainage of water or sewage;*
  - d. *water and irrigation races, drains, channels, pipes and necessary incidental structures and equipment (excluding water tanks);*
  - e. *structures, facilities, plant and equipment for the treatment of water.*
  - f. *structures, facilities, plant, equipment and associated works for receiving and transmitting telecommunications (see definition of telecommunication facilities).*
  - g. *structures, facilities, plant, equipment and associated works for monitoring and observation of meteorological activities and natural hazards;*
  - h. *structures, facilities, plant, equipment and associated works for the protection of the community from natural hazards.*
  - i. *structures, facilities, plant and equipment necessary for navigation by water or air.*
  - j. *waste management facilities.*
- Utility does not include structures or facilities used for electricity generation, the manufacture and storage of gas, or the treatment of sewage.*

I do not consider that it would be appropriate to locate any of these facilities within the areas determined as Open Space – State Highway (5a) within the proposed plan change area.

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<sup>6</sup> Queenstown Lakes District – District Plan, D-11

4.2.2.5 As noted above a portion of Lot 1 DP 300109 is to be set aside for a park-and-ride facility. The Landscape Effects Assessment report included in the application includes the statement that:

*This facility is located in an area identified as having low absorption capacity. The proposed location is appropriate is successfully mitigated. This could be achieved by recessing the car park area in to (sic) the terrace, mounding the perimeter or planting with tussocks or a combination of the above.*

4.2.2.6 Little detail is provided about the proposed park and ride facility. 12.25.7.2(iii) in the proposed rules makes the development of this facility a controlled activity with control reserved over:

- Connectivity with existing and planned road networks;
- Earthworks and landscape planting to mitigate visual impacts from Howards Drive and State Highway 6;
- Security, fencing, signage and lighting.

No assessment matters are provided.

4.2.2.7 This could potentially result in a large, fenced, floodlit car park with mounding and planting around it. It is my opinion that this type of development would have significant adverse effects on the quality of the landscape in the vicinity and on the entrance experience to Queenstown. It is also my opinion that the mitigation proposed in the Landscape Effects Assessment Report would also have significant adverse effects themselves.

4.2.2.8 The proposed Zone Standards restrict buildings within the Activity Area 5a to no more than 3.5m in height and proposed rule 12.25.7.5 makes buildings in Activity Areas 5a – 5e non-complying except for park and ride facilities and buildings of no greater than 200m<sup>2</sup> in area related to recreation activities. It is my understanding that this means that these buildings would be discretionary activities. There are no specific assessment matters proposed relating to either the development of the park and ride facility or to the construction of buildings within the open space activity areas.

**(b) To mitigate loss of or enhance natural character by appropriate planting and landscaping.**

4.2.2.9 The proposed plan change aims to both mitigate the loss of natural character in some areas of the site and to enhance the natural character of others through appropriate planting and landscaping.

4.2.2.10 Terrace Buffer Areas are defined by the structure plan. These are basically 6m wide strips of land along the upper edge of the two main terrace escarpments which divide the site. Site standards 12.25.9.1(viii) states:

- (a) *Landscape planting within the Terrace Buffer Area of any site containing a part of a Terrace Buffer Area identified on the Structure Plan shall:*
- (i) *Be established prior to making application for building consent.*
  - (ii) *Comprise the type of species and density of planting detailed in Part 3 of Appendix 1.*
  - (iii) *When mature achieve a visual vegetation screen which, when separate plantings are calculated together, extends along 50% of the length of the Terrace Buffer Area within that site (as illustrated in Appendix 4).*
  - (iv) *Be maintained by the site owner. If any plant or tree dies, is destroyed or becomes diseased it shall be replaced by the site owner.*

(b) *No buildings shall be constructed within the Terrace Buffer Areas identified on the Structure Plan.*

4.2.2.11 The plant list provided includes, in the main, indigenous trees and shrubs but also includes a few exotic tree species. This mix of species would contribute to screening of development on the terraces from views both within and outside of the zone, mitigating some of the loss of natural character which would result from development in accordance with the proposed zone rules. It would also provide shelter from the southerly winds which are likely to be unpleasant.

4.2.2.12 Problematic is the fact that the plan requires this planting in sites for which no resource consent is required. I doubt that building inspectors would be willing to police this rule and consider that another mechanism needs to be created. For example, the construction

of buildings on sites including the Terrace Buffer Area could be made a controlled activity so that compliance with the planting requirement could be checked before consent was granted.

4.2.2.13 Similarly problematic is the diagram intended to indicate how the 50% planting requirement on each site could be achieved. The 'Birds Eye View' identified as 'A' appears to suggest that a sinuous line of planting approximately 1m wide would suffice to comply with the rule. In my opinion this diagram should be changed to match the form of the birds eye view identified as 'B'. That is, to provide an effective screen the strip of planting should fill the full 6m width of the Terrace Buffer Area.

4.2.2.14 It is my understanding that planting within the Terrace Buffer Areas which complies with the Site Standard quoted above requires no consent. However, reasonably detailed assessment matters are included at 12.25.11.2(ix).

4.2.2.15 The terrace escarpment faces are denoted in the proposal as Activity Area 5b. Policy 3.3 is to 'encourage planting across the terrace escarpment faces that enhances ecological and amenity values'. Zone Standard 12.25.10(x) states:

- (a) *Any land within Activity Area 5b shall be kept free of gorse, broom, briar, tree lupin, hawthorn, crack willow, buddleia, Californian thistle, and any other Pest plant as specified in the Regional Pest Management Strategy for Otago.*
- (b) *Planting on any land within Activity Area 5b shall be in accordance with the plant list contained within Part 1 of Appendix 1.*

4.2.2.16 The plant list in Appendix 1 is basically a schedule of grey shrubland species which I consider would be entirely appropriate in these locations and which would enhance the natural character of these features. The plant schedule is divided into three groups, however, described as 'cluster groups' A, B and C. It is not apparent exactly what these clusters actually represent. Is it intended that those intending to undertake planting should select only one cluster of species? If so it is not at all apparent on what basis this choice should be made. This is further confused by the recommendation that each species should be planted in clusters of like species.

4.2.2.17 An area of open space is proposed along the south western boundary of the proposed zone. This is denoted as Activity Area 5c and as the Riverside Protection Area. This is something of a misnomer given that it is located some 250m from the river. However, it is to be the location of a flood bank deemed necessary to provide development on the lowest terrace from flooding. This area is divided into two sub areas, A to the north west and B adjacent to the wetland area discussed below. Corresponding with these areas is a plant list which provides for a range of large and small trees and shrubs, with wetland species to be included where the ground is too wet for these other species. It is intended that the planting in Area A be dominated by exotic species and the planting in Area B be dominated by indigenous species. I consider that the plant lists are, by and large, appropriate and would enhance the natural character of this area.

4.2.2.18 A Structural Landscape Plan has been provided for this area as Appendix Two of the proposed Plan chapter. It appears from this plan that the purpose of the planting is largely to screen the proposed flood bank from views from inside the zone, although along the margin of the wetland it is located between the flood bank and the wetland as if to protect it from the incursion of future residents. The flood bank itself is intended to be quite low, no more than 1.6m above existing ground level. It is unlikely that this structure would be visible from the surface of the Shotover or from viewpoints across the river as it would be obscured from view by the willows along the riverbank. In more elevated views the vegetation intended along its northern side would be more readily apparent. Consequently I consider that the impact of the flood bank on the natural character of the site would be effectively mitigated by this planting.

4.2.2.19 The large wetland on the site is denoted in the proposal as Activity Area 5d and Zone Standard 12.25.10(xi) states:

- (a) *Any land within Activity Area 5d shall be kept free of gorse, broom, briar, tree lupin, hawthorn, crack willow, buddleia, Californian thistle, and any other Pest plant as specified in the Regional Pest Management Strategy for Otago.*

(b) *Planting on any land within Activity Area 5d shall be in accordance with the plant list contained within Part 2 of Appendix 1.*

4.2.2.20 The plant list in Part 2 of Appendix 1 is a mix of wetland species and wet tolerant indigenous species which would enhance the natural character of this area.

4.2.2.21 Activity Area 5e is located underneath the power lines which also bisect Lake Hayes Estate. I understand that this open space is a requirement to both protect people from the adverse effects of exposure to the power lines and to protect the power lines from interference by people. There do not appear to be any rules, site or zone standards which specifically relate to this Activity Area apart from Zone Standard 12.25.10(ii) which restricts the height of buildings in the Activity Area to 3.5m and Rule 12.25.7.5(vi) which determines that buildings within these Activity Areas not associated with recreation or a park-and-ride facility are non-complying activities. In addition to this it would seem to me prudent to prohibit the planting of trees with a mature height of more than 5m within Activity Area 5e.

4.2.2.22 Problematic with regard to Activity Areas 5a – 5e inclusive is that it is unclear where the responsibility for their management is intended to lie. There is no apparent prohibition of subdivision intended within these areas. In fact, it would appear that it is fully intended within at least some of them, notably Activity Area 5b, that they should be incorporated within areas to be subdivided. The result of this is that responsibility for their ongoing management and the implementation of any planting which might result in the enhancement of natural character discussed above, are to be devolved to private lot owners. I consider that this is inappropriate. In my opinion the open space areas should be held in some sort of common or public ownership to ensure their comprehensive and consistent management. If divided between different owners while there is no mechanism to ensure similar management it would be possible, for example, for two lot owners to thoroughly plant areas of the terrace escarpment (Activity Area 5b) with appropriate plants and for an intervening owner to use a scrub cutter to, effectively, mow the grass. This would have a deleterious effect on the natural character of the area in both internal and external views and would not, in my opinion, be what is actually intended. Further, there is no protection provided to the existing indigenous vegetation which is already present within these areas.

4.2.2.23 Apricot trees are included in the plant lists for the terrace buffer areas and for the riverside protection area. While entirely appropriate on private land these trees would likely prove problematic in public areas being unlikely to receive appropriate management (as this is quite different to standard street trees) and with windfall fruit being likely to attract wasps and other pests. It is my opinion that they should only be planted on private lots.

#### 4.2.3 5. Outstanding Natural Features

***To avoid subdivision and / or development on and in the vicinity of distinctive landforms and landscape features, including:***

***(a) In the Wakatipu; the Kawarau, Arrow and Shotover Gorges; Peninsula, Queenstown, Ferry, Morven and Slope hills; Lake Hayes; Hillocks; Camp Hill; Mt Alfred; Pig, Pigeon and Tree Islands; - unless the subdivision and / or development will not result in adverse effects which will be more than minor on:***

***(i) Landscape values and natural character***

4.2.3.1 While not specifically mentioned in the list of Outstanding Natural Features it is the case that the roche moutonnée to the south east of the site and the Shotover River delta are arguably outstanding natural features as well as being parts of an Outstanding Natural Landscape. I have noted above that I consider that there is a level of threat to these features by the failure to include land directly adjacent to the plan change area and to these features within the plan change. However, in the terms of the proposed development within the proposed zone I do not consider that it would have a detrimental effect on the landscape value or natural character of these features. While built form would become the foreground to most views of the roche moutonnée it would not obscure more than a minor sliver from view and it may be the case that the contrast between the buildings and the green hill might enhance the level of appreciation of the landscape feature. Similarly, the development would not be directly

adjacent to the Shotover River and the open space between the river and the development would provide a buffer.

**(ii) Visual amenity values**

4.2.3.2 For the reasons given above I consider that the visual amenity of these Outstanding Natural Features would be retained.

*-recognising and providing for*

*(iii) The desirability of ensuring that buildings and structures and associated roading plans and boundary developments have a visual impact which will be no more than minor in the context of the outstanding natural feature, that is, the building etc is reasonably difficult to see;*

4.2.3.3 No development is proposed on these Outstanding Natural Features.

**(iv) The need to avoid further cumulative deterioration of the outstanding natural features;**

4.2.3.4 As noted above there is the potential for development on areas excluded from this plan change to contribute to the cumulative degradation of the Outstanding Natural Features. However, I do not consider that development within the proposed plan change area would cause any cumulative degradation of these features.

**(v) The importance of protecting the naturalness and enhancing the amenity values of views from public places and public roads;**

4.2.3.5 The naturalness and amenity value of the Outstanding Natural Features would not be compromised by this plan change.

**(vi) The essential importance in this area of protecting and enhancing the naturalness of the landscape.**

4.2.3.6 The naturalness of the Outstanding Natural Features would not be protected or enhanced by this plan change.

**4.2.4 6. Urban Development**

**(a) To avoid new urban development in the outstanding natural landscapes of the Wakatipu Basin.**

4.2.4.1 This proposed plan change occurs in an area of Visual Amenity Landscape but in a location where it is bordered on two sides by outstanding natural landscapes. I do not consider that development within the proposed plan change area would have a significantly detrimental effect on the quality of those Outstanding Natural Landscapes.

**(b) To discourage urban subdivision and development in the other outstanding natural landscape (and features) and in the visual amenity landscapes of the district.**

4.2.4.2 This proposed plan change would allow the urban subdivision and development of an area of visual amenity landscape immediately adjacent to an outstanding natural landscape.

**(c) To avoid remedy and mitigate the adverse effects of urban subdivision and development where it does occur in the other outstanding natural landscapes of the district by:**

*- maintaining the open character of those outstanding natural landscapes which are open at the date this plan becomes operative;*  
*- ensuring that the subdivision and development does not sprawl along roads.*

4.2.4.3 This proposed plan change does not occur within an Outstanding Natural Landscape.

**(d) To avoid remedy and mitigate the adverse effects of urban subdivision and development in visual amenity landscapes by avoiding sprawling subdivision and development along roads.**

4.2.4.4 This proposed subdivision would, in my opinion, constitute sprawl along Ladies Mile. It is effectively an infill subdivision between Glenda Drive and Lake Hayes Estate. It is my opinion that the Shotover River should be maintained as the urban boundary of Queenstown and that

Lake Hayes Estate should remain an anomalous development in order to protect the remaining integrity of the southern portion of the Wakatipu Basin.

- 4.2.4.5 Of particular concern is the inclusion of land on the upper, Ladies Mile terrace within the plan change area. The proposed park-and-ride facility, located as proposed on the Ladies Mile Terrace would have a significant adverse effect which would constitute sprawl along the State Highway.

#### 4.2.5 7. Urban Edges

*To identify clearly the edges of:*

- (a) *Existing urban areas;*
  - (b) *Any extensions to them; and*
  - (c) *Any new urban areas*
- *by design solutions and to avoid sprawling development along the roads of the district.*

- 4.2.5.1 In December 2009 Lakes Environmental provided Council with a report entitled 'Queenstown Town Boundaries Study: Landscape Assessment'. That report concluded that:

*The landscape surrounding Lake Hayes Estate has reached the limit of its ability to absorb development. This is also true of the area to the north of Ladies Mile. The southern parts of the upper terrace, to the south of Ladies Mile, provide an important part of the Queenstown entrance experience and the maintenance of their open character is desirable.*

- 4.2.5.2 This proposed plan change fails to identify clearly the edges of the new urban areas by design solutions and fails to avoid sprawling development along the roads of the District. The elimination of the Activity Area 5a from the Ladies Mile terrace would assist in remediating this as the edge of the terrace escarpment would provide a clear edge to urban development along the Kawarau River.

#### 4.2.6 8. Avoiding Cumulative Degradation

*In applying the policies above the Council's policy is:*

- (a) *to ensure that the density of subdivision and development does not increase to a point where the benefits of further planting and building are outweighed by the adverse effect on landscape values of over domestication of the landscape.*

- 4.2.6.1 It is difficult to identify whether this policy is intended to refer to the internal density of development or the density of pockets of development in the broader landscape.

- 4.2.6.2 As noted above, it is my opinion that the extension of the proposed zone onto the Ladies Mile terrace would lead to a situation where the adverse effects of the development on the broader landscape would outweigh potential benefits.

- 4.2.6.3 Internally, the proposed density of development within the lower terrace system combined with the extensive network of open space would ensure that the natural land forms of the landscape within the zone could still be appreciated.

*(b) to encourage comprehensive and sympathetic development of rural areas.*

- 4.2.6.2 It is my opinion that the proposed plan change as it relates to the lower terraces, is both comprehensive, within the limitations discussed above, and is sympathetic to the landforms within which it is situated.

#### 4.2.7 9. Structures

*To preserve the visual coherence of:*

- (a) *outstanding natural landscapes and features and visual amenity landscapes by:*
- *encouraging structures which are in harmony with the line and form of the landscape;*
- *avoiding, remedying or mitigating any adverse effects of structures on the skyline, ridges and prominent slopes and hilltops;*
- *encouraging the colour of buildings and structures to complement the dominant colours in the landscape;*

- encouraging placement of structures in locations where they are in harmony with the landscape;
- promoting the use of local, natural materials in construction.

4.2.7.1 There is little in the proposal to reassure that structures which may have an effect on the visual coherence of the surrounding Visual Amenity Landscape or Outstanding Natural Landscape would preserve their visual coherence.

4.2.7.2 Proposed Site Standard 12.25.9.1(iv) prohibits solid fencing anywhere within Activity Areas 5a – 5e. It does, however, exclude rock walls of less than 1.6m in height from that definition. It also prohibits any fencing within Activity Area 5b, except along the boundary of the activity area. This would allow fencing along the top of the terrace escarpments. While rock walls may be constructed from local materials, and are certainly of natural materials, locating them along the edge of the terraces would have an adverse effect on these prominent slopes.

4.2.7.3 Structures which may be associated with the park-and-ride facility which could include fences, lighting, signage, bus shelters and ticketing buildings would be unlikely to be in harmony with the surrounding visual amenity landscape. The location of the proposed park-and-ride facility could not facilitate this.

**b) visual amenity landscapes**

- by screening structures from roads and other public places by vegetation whenever possible to maintain and enhance the naturalness of the environment; and

4.2.7.3 Earthworks and landscape planting to mitigate the effects of the park-and-ride facility is intended to be a controlled activity under rule 12.25.7.2(iii). However, no assessment matters have been included in the proposal.

**(c) All rural landscapes by**

- limiting the size of signs, corporate images and logos
- providing for greater development setbacks from public roads to maintain and enhance amenity values associated with the views from public roads.

4.2.7.4 No specific rules or standards regarding signage have been proposed thus section 18.2.5 applies. As this section also applies to the Rural General zone I consider that it is adequate to prevent signage from degrading the landscape in the vicinity of the park-and-ride facility.

## 4.2.8 12. Transport Infrastructure

**To preserve the open nature of the rural landscape by:**

- encouraging the location of roads, car parks and tracks along the edges of existing landforms and vegetation patterns.
- encouraging shoreline structures, such as jetties, to be located only where they are visually contained by the topography, e.g. coves or bays.
- by encouraging imaginative roading designs including a range of carriageway widths, different surface materials, grass berms and protection of existing mature trees where these can enhance the quality of design and the visual experience.
- discouraging roads and tracks on highly visible slopes.
- requiring that all construction be with minimum cut and fill batters and that all batters be shaped in sympathy with, existing landforms.
- requiring that all disturbed areas be revegetated at the end of construction.
- encouraging where appropriate car parks to be screened from view.
- requiring the adverse effects of large expanses of hard surface car parks be avoided by planting and earthworks

4.2.8.1 The proposed park-and-ride facility is located at the edge of the Ladies Mile terrace landform. However, in this location it would not preserve the open nature of the rural landscape in the vicinity as it would protrude into views to the south west across the terrace.

4.2.8.2 It is proposed that the park-and-ride facility is intended to be screened from view with planting and earthworks. It is my opinion that vegetation and earthworks of a height and density which would screen such a facility from view would in and of themselves detract from the open nature of the rural landscape in the vicinity.

#### 4.2.9 15. Retention of Existing Vegetation

*To maintain the visual coherence of the landscape and to protect the existing levels of natural character by:*

*(a) Encouraging the retention of existing indigenous vegetation in gullies and along watercourses*

- 4.2.9.1 The planting of vegetation in the open space Activity Areas is controlled and there is a requirement that invasive exotic weeds are removed. However, there is no protection offered to the existing indigenous vegetation which is a striking feature of parts of the terrace risers and gullies within the plan change area.

#### 4.3 Section 15 Matters

**15.1.3 Objective 4 - Outstanding Natural Features, Landscape and Nature Conservation Values**  
*The recognition and protection of outstanding natural features, landscapes and nature conservation values.*

*Policies:*

*4.1 To take the opportunity to protect outstanding natural landscapes and features, nature conservation values and ecosystems through the subdivision process.*

- 4.3.1 The proposed plan change provides for the protection of ecosystems and the enhancement of the nature conservation value of the site in its structure plan by identifying areas in which the planting of indigenous species is to be encouraged. However, there are no mechanisms to prevent, or even control, the subdivision of these areas. In my opinion this diminishes the degree on which these proposals can be relied. Further, the enhancement of indigenous systems is voluntary and no protection is afforded the existing indigenous vegetation on the site.

*4.2 To ensure works associated with land subdivision and development avoid or mitigate the adverse effects on the natural character and qualities of the environment and on areas of significant conservation value.*

- 4.3.2 The proposed structure plan locates areas for development on the level terrace surfaces and offers a degree of protection for the terrace risers and for the wetland area which is present on the lowest terrace. This offers some mitigation of the adverse effects of the proposed development on the natural character and conservation value of the vicinity. However, this could be strengthened by prohibiting the subdivision of the open space activity areas; by requiring the revegetation of those areas; and by requiring the protection of the existing indigenous vegetation within those areas.

*4.3 To avoid any adverse effects on the landscape and visual amenity values, as a direct result of land subdivision and development.*

- 4.3.3 The proposed structure plan and rules would assist in minimising the adverse effects of subdivision and development within the majority of the plan change area. However, as discussed above, the inclusion of land on the Ladies Mile terrace surface would have significant adverse effects on the landscape and on the visual amenity value of that landscape.

#### 5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 A request has been made for a private plan change for an area of approximately 120 hectares of land located to the north east of the confluence of the Shotover and Kawarau Rivers. This land is currently zoned Rural General.
- 5.2 The aim of the plan change is to create a special zone which would provide for the establishment of low and medium density residential activities; visitor accommodation; educational facilities; community facilities; and a park and ride facility.
- 5.3 Three areas of particular sensitivity have been identified in the area surrounding the proposed plan change. These are the upper terrace area, referred to as the Ladies Mile terrace, which

encompasses the land either side of State Highway 6 along the extent of Ladies Mile; the unnamed roche moutonnee to the south east of the site; and the margin of the Shotover River to the west of the site.

- 5.3.1 The plan change area extends onto the Ladies Mile terrace in two unconnected strips which extend over the terrace escarpment up to the State Highway. These sites are identified in the proposed Structure Plan as Open Space – State Highway but the more easterly one is proposed to be the location of a park-and-ride facility. These sites should be excluded from the plan change area as the effects of their inclusion would cause significant degradation to the landscape of the Ladies Mile terrace and to the quality of the experience of the entrance to Queenstown.
- 5.3.2 The plan change would result in a small strip of land within Lot 16 DP 384954 becoming isolated from the rest of the Visual Amenity Landscape of which it is currently part. This would result in it becoming vulnerable to re-classification as Other Rural Landscape which would diminish the level of control available to Council over development on that land with potentially adverse effects on the adjacent Outstanding Natural Landscape.
- 5.3.3 The plan change boundaries would create an isolated area of Rural General land some 18 hectares in size adjacent to the Shotover River. This would result in it becoming vulnerable to re-classification from Visual Amenity Landscape to Other Rural Landscape diminishing the level of control available to Council over development on that land with potentially adverse effects on the adjacent Outstanding Natural Landscape.
- 5.4 The majority of the proposed plan change area is located within the amphitheatre like terrace system which is a part of the broader landscape of the Wakatipu Basin which does have some ability to absorb such development.
- 5.5 The proposed structure plan and associated objectives, policies and rules would result in built form being restricted to the areas of the site which are most able to absorb it. The plan change aims to promote the natural character of the site but fails to offer protection to the existing indigenous vegetation on the site and makes the enhancement of the site an optional activity. Some modification of the rules, site and zone standards is necessary to ensure that the purported vision of the proposal is actualised.

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