

BEFORE THE QUEENSTOWN LAKES DISTRICT COUNCIL INDEPENDENT HEARINGS PANEL

IN THE MATTER of the Resource Management Act

AND

IN THE MATTER The Queenstown Lakes District Proposed Plan  
Topic 13 Queenstown Mapping Group 1B (Queenstown, Frankton and South)

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SUMMARY STATEMENT OF LANDSCAPE EVIDENCE OF PADDY BAXTER ON BEHALF OF  
FS MEE DEVELOPMENTS CO LTD (#425 AND #429)  
21<sup>st</sup> August 2107

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## INTRODUCTION

1. My full name is Patrick John Baxter. I am a Director of Baxter Design Group Ltd (BDG), a Queenstown based consultancy specialising in Landscape Architecture, Urban Design, Master-planning, Landscape Planning and Landscape Assessment. I hold the qualifications of Bachelor of Science and Diploma of Landscape Architecture. I am a registered member of the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects. Details of my prior experience and work have previously been supplied to this Hearing Panel.
2. 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.
3. I prepared the short statements about landscape considerations which accompanied Submissions 425 and 429 as originally lodged. Mr Goldsmith has described the different rezoning requests detailed in those two submissions. I adopt and confirm those short statements as evidence for this hearing. With the exception of the LDR rezoning I have not prepared any additional evidence. I am prepared to answer questions from the Panel in respect of those other rezonings.
4. My evidence today relates only to landscape matters in regards to the proposed amendments to the existing Low Density Residential Zone above Jardine Park. My evidence recommends amendments to the existing LDR zone boundaries to better reflect landscape considerations. The case being presented today differs from that requested in Submission 425 as I address and detail below.
5. I have attached to my evidence Attachments being:
  - **Attachment A:** The plan originally submitted: (Baxter Design SK – 05 Mees Kelvin Heights – Extension to Low Density Residential Zone)
  - **Attachment B:** A plan showing the submitted LDR rezoning and proposed amendments to that LDR rezoning (Baxter Design SK –13 Mees Kelvin Heights – Proposed Amendments to the Low Density Residential Zone Boundary).
  - **Attachment C:** A photograph taken from Queenstown towards the site.
6. The proposed amendments being requested reflect a more considered approach to the existing landform, contours and other landscape considerations and have also taken into account the matters raised by Dr Read and the proposed LDR boundaries drawn by Dr Read.

## THE EXISTING LANDSCAPE AND LDR ZONE BOUNDARY

7. At present the existing LDR boundary includes straight lines, aligned on cadastral boundaries, with no relevance to the contour line of the existing landform. This particularly relates to the straight LDR zone boundary which runs from a low point (where there is a sharp corner) up in a southeast direction to a high point on Peninsula Hill. In general that existing LDR zone boundary cuts across a valley, rising approximately 90 metres to the highest point on the southern boundary of the Mee property.

8. The land is presently farmed and grazed, with occasional groups of trees, minor rock outcrops and small bluffs. All the land currently LDR zoned is well suited to low density residential development, with exceptional views across the site, Jardine Park and beyond across Lake Wakatipu to the enclosing mountain ranges. I have considerable experience in master planning and designing developments on land throughout the District and I have no doubt that this land is almost unique. There are very few blocks of LDR zoned land of this quality in the Basin.
9. Above the LDR zone boundary the land is zoned Rural and is shown in the District Plan as being as an Outstanding Natural Feature. There is agreement that the upper areas of Deer Park Heights and Peninsula Hill display classic ONF characteristics.
10. When fully developed at some point in the future, the land currently zoned LDR will significantly alter the character of the upper western flanks of Peninsula Hill.
11. **Attachment B** shows the now proposed LDR zone amendments. The following is noted:
  - **Attachment B** shows minor changes to the area shown on that plan as Area 'A'. The amendments to that area show an extension to the southern edge of that area, A small area of land at the north eastern portion of 'A' is removed. The central portion of the proposed extension to the LDR zone, being that area shown as 'B on **Attachment B**, has been amended to better suit the valley form that exists on that area of land. This area has been reduced from 12 ha to 6.4 ha. A small portion of that land shown as Area 'C' is retained as LDR.
  - The area shown on 'D' on Attachment B, in the southeast corner of the land zoned LDR, indicates a 3.6 ha area of land that the landowner is willing to remove from the land currently zoned LDR.
12. In summary, the original submission proposed an additional 18.07 ha of land to be added to the existing LDR Zone. The amended plan, before the Panel today, (illustrated on **Attachment B**) shows the proposed addition to the LDR land reduced from 18.07 ha to 14.01 ha. The removal of 3.6 ha of land reduces the net addition to the LDR zone from 14.01 ha to 10.41 ha.

#### **DISCUSSION** (*refer to Attachment B*)

13. I discuss each area below from a wider landscape perspective:
14. **Area A** occupies a small plateau above the existing woolshed area. To the south east of Area A the landform rises to a ridge which separates Area A from Area B. To the north of Area A the land drops steeply across a small cliff down to the woolshed area. Future residential development on Area A will be at a similar elevation as LDR zoned land to the east on this title.
15. Area A includes a strip along its southern boundary which was not included in the original submission. That was a simple mapping error. The intention was always to include all of the small plateau which comprises Area A. The southern part of that plateau was accidentally omitted. The original southern boundary (as originally submitted) lacks any landscape logic as it runs through the plateau leaving part of the plateau outside the LDR zone. The amended Area A LDR zone boundary contains all of the plateau within the LDR zone.

16. In my opinion Area A does not exhibit the ONL characteristics of the rest of Peninsula Hill above and to the south. It is a small plateau containing a pond (which I understand was excavated in the 1970's and is therefore not natural) and a considerable variety of exotic vegetation. Those characteristics are more akin to the characteristics of the LDR land below than they are to the characteristics of the glacially carved grassland slopes of Peninsula Hill above. In my opinion the southern boundary of Area A as shown on **Attachment B** is the appropriate ONL boundary in this area.
17. The minor extension to Area A will not be discernible from wider views given that extension is at a similar elevation to that submitted to be included in the LDR zone.
18. The ridge referred to above is elevated above Area A, well above any future residential development. Maintaining this land in the Rural zone will protect the ridge line, which is visible from Frankton Arm, some Queenstown suburbs and further afield.
19. On **Area 'B'** the proposed LDR boundary follows and encloses an existing valley that is visually coherent and defined. Residential development in this area will be visually contained within a clearly defined valley. I consider this to be a more appropriate landscape response than the current arbitrary LDR zone boundary.
20. I acknowledge that part of the land originally sought to be rezoned in this area should be retained as Rural with ONF protection. In further discussions with the landowner, that original requested LDR zoned boundary went higher up Peninsula Hill than the landowner intended. That higher land, containing 5.92 ha, is now excluded.
21. I have considered Dr Read's recommendation carefully but I do not see much landscape logic in the boundary she recommends. I have examined the LDR Zone drawn by Dr Read carefully on site. Whilst there is agreement between myself and Dr Read on the inappropriateness of the existing LDR boundary in regards to landform, I found that the line drawn by Dr Read did not follow the existing valley and contour line. I consider that the line prepared and shown in my evidence better expresses landform by (a) giving coherence to landform and (b) protecting the major ridgelines from residential development.
22. The area of difference forms part of a secluded valley where, in my opinion, LDR development can occur with minimal adverse effects on the wider landscape.
23. The proposed extension to the LDR zone avoids and protects the existing prominent ridgeline that separates the two Areas A and B proposed for inclusion in the LDR zone.
24. **Area 'C'** is a small area occupying a minor semi-enclosed plateau, flanked on 3 sides by rising land. This area of land was included in the original submission and is partially included in Dr Read's recommended LDR zone extension.
25. **Area 'D'** occupies 3.6 ha of land, split over two minor plateaus. These plateaus run towards the southwest, with minor escarpments between the plateaus. Without doubt, these are prime residential blocks of land, as I have previously acknowledged in this evidence. Those two existing zoned LDR plateaus could contain spectacular house sites, with magnificent views to the north across Queenstown Bay, to the west along the central part of Lake Wakatipu, and to the south across the

southern part of Lake Wakatipu towards Kingston. They would be at least million dollar sites, if not multi-million dollar sites.

26. However, development on this area of land would result in dwellings visible on the skyline from the lower elevations of Kelvin Heights and many parts of Frankton Arm. Houses would also be clearly visible on Peninsula Hill, from points on Lake Wakatipu to the south from which houses would not otherwise be visible if this area of land is removed from the LDR zone. The landowner is willing to protect that land from development.
27. I acknowledge that both the proposed LDR Areas B and C, and the proposed 'removal of LDR' Area D, comprise land which forms part of the ONF of Queenstown Hill. However the starting point here is an existing LDR zoning which is arguably inappropriate. In my opinion, the proposed removal of Area D from the LDR zone, and the inclusion of Areas B and C in the LDR zone, will result in a consistent landscape approach to this boundary to the LDR zone. In my opinion the 'exchange' of Areas B and C for Area D will result in a net reduction of potential adverse effects on the values of Peninsula Hill.