

PRIVATE PLAN CHANGE 1 – THE HILLS RESORT ZONE – SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE OF RICHARD BRETT THOMSON ON BEHALF OF THE REQUESTOR

1. My full name is Richard Brett Thomsom. I am a master planner/landscape architect.
2. I have been engaged by the requestor, The Hills Resort Limited (**THRL**), in relation to THRL's request to change the provisions of The Hills Resort Zone (**HRZ**) and the HRZ Structure Plan to facilitate the rerouting of the existing 18-hole golf course by amending the location and extent of existing Activity Areas, and to establish new Activity Areas and Homesites (the **Plan Change Request**).
3. I have prepared a statement of evidence dated 13 March 2026 on master planning matters arising from the Plan Change Request.
4. I have visited the property on many occasions since 2001, when I worked on the original golf course design. I am very familiar with the property and its surrounds.
5. In this summary statement I will provide a summary of my initial reporting, my 13 March 2026 evidence, and address matters arising since I prepared that evidence, including matters arising from submitter evidence.
6. I confirm that in preparing this summary evidence and my earlier evidence I have complied with the Code of Conduct for Expert Witness contains in the Environment Court Practice Notice 2023.

Summary of Evidence

7. I provided advice on and prepared the revised HRZ Structure Plan, including the revised LAMA plans, that form the basis of the Plan Change Request. I also prepared the Master Planning Design Statement (Master Plan Design Statement, May 2025) that accompanied the notified Request documents.
8. In my initial report (Master Plan Design Statement- May 2025), I identified that my review of the Structure Plan was broken into three stages. The first stage was to review the existing Structure Plan to see if it was fit for purpose as an integrated golf and residential/visitor accommodation development. It became apparent that a few anomalies existed in the planning:
 - (a) That no golf ball dispersion corridors had been applied in the structure planning.

- (b) That some of the Activity Areas had been placed in low lying areas, not optimised for drainage, view or aspect.
 - (c) The Structure Plan assumed that there would be no change to the alignment and orientation of the golf course.
- 9. The second part of the process was to overlay the new golf routing and the associated golf ball dispersion corridors to assess the impact on the existing Activity Areas.
- 10. The third part of the process was to investigate the balance of the site to look for other development opportunities as long as they adhered to the principles and objectives of the Zone. This included the southwestern part of the site, due to the planned removal of the 9-hole short course (The Farm).
- 11. The main conclusions I reached were that the re-routing of the golf course required some minor adjustments to the Structure Plan's Activity Areas and associated LAMA, and that with the planned removal of the 9-hole short course, the southwestern part of the property had potential to accommodate a number of additional Homesites.
- 12. In my evidence (13 March 2026) I described the changes made to the Structure Plan since my initial report and notification of the plan change request. These were:
 - (a) The relocation of the Hogans Gully access Road vehicle access to HS9-16 by 35 m to the east, as recommended by Mr Facey, to address a sight line shortfall.
 - (b) The relocation of the Hogans Gully access Road vehicle access to HS9-16 by 35 m to the east, as recommended by Mr Facey, to address a sight line shortfall.
 - (c) The extension of the cycle/pedestrian trail adjacent to Hogan's Gully Road in response to the submission of the Queenstown Trails Trust, and others. The cycle trail extension puts cyclists back on Hogans Gully Road at the HS9-16 vehicle access, being a location to the east of 64 Hogans Gully Rd to address a concern that I understand was conveyed directly to THRL by the owner of that property, Submitter #20, regarding the proximity of the QTT preferred trail location to their home.
 - (d) The expansion of the Structural Planting Areas (**SPA**) in three areas per the recommendation in Ms Gilbert's evidence.

- (b) The repositioning of HS15 to the north as per the recommendation in Ms Gilbert's evidence. The height of this home site is also lowered by 2 metres, from 6.5 metres to 4.5 metres, to minimise visual impacts of future buildings.
- (c) The minor repositioning of the cycle/pedestrian trail where it traverses the eastern part of the Zone near 214 McDonnell Road, along with the identification of existing boundary planting that is to be retained, to address the submission by Simon Dan, (Submitter # 15) regarding privacy.
- (d) Correction of the location of HRZ zone boundary, which was inadvertently incorrectly shown on the notified Structure Plan.
- (e) Repositioning of the main entrance to the HRZ on McDonnell Road, back to its original location.
- (f) The extension of SPA 9-12 westward, to integrate development within this part of the HRZ with possible future development on the adjacent land.
- (g) Extension of the HS16 LAMA to join with existing landform to the east and the addition of specimen trees.
- (h) Reducing the maximum building height for HS9, HS10, HS11, HS 12, HS15 and HS16 in response Ms Gilbert's evidence and submissions (this is not shown on the Structure Plan but is captured in the Zone rules).

13. In my evidence I also discussed the location and function of the proposed Sports Gardens Activity Area. The sports gardens activity area is a place for members to recreate and socialise away from the golf course. Similar areas are provided at the privately owned golf clubs Tara Iti and Te Arai Links which are located north of Auckland. SG AA also provides for a productive garden and glasshouse for the Clubhouse kitchen. The location was chosen because the area is flat and well connected to the internal roading and trail network, so members can access the facility easily via golf cart, bike or by foot. In addition, the location provides quality amenity to the eight sites that will be developed as part of the McDonnell WBLP subdivision which sits on land adjacent to the Sports Courts. Attached to my March evidence were concept plans which provide a sense of the nature and scale of activities that will be established in this activity area.

Submitter Evidence

- 14.** Since I prepared my evidence, evidence on behalf of submitters has been lodged. I have reviewed the submitter evidence, in particular, the evidence of Todd/Galloway. I make the following comments in response.
- 15.** The notion, advanced by Mr Galloway, that siting recreational facilities centrally in activity nodes is very logical and would apply when planning a new school, university campus, other public facilities, or a new town. However, it has little application when planning private facility such as a golf club. As stated in my initial evidence and summarised above, here it is desirable to create a destination for members to recreate and socialise, away from the golf course, as is the case at Tara Iti and Te Arai Links.
- 16.** This location was chosen for a variety of reasons: as per above, it was distant from the golf course, it was close to the internal roading and trail infrastructure, it was easy to connect into the site services, the ground was quite flat and would require minimal earthworks.
- 17.** While it is located near the boundary of the zone, it is still quite some distance (almost 400m) from neighbours, and is designed to be used by club members, not the general public.
- 18.** The other consideration was it was perfectly located as a recreational amenity for the eight lot McDonnell subdivision to the south, the area was the former practice range when the NZ Open was played at the Hills. This area is zoned as WBLP.
- 19.** When undertaking my master planning work for the HRZ this location presented as both the most practical and functional for the Sports Gardens facility.

Conclusion

- 20.** In summary, nothing in the submitter evidence causes me to reconsider the conclusions reached in my 13 March 2026 evidence. I hold the views that:

 - (a) The revisions to the Structure Plan, as a result of the Council's evidence and submissions, have resulted in improvements to the Structure Plan.

- (b) The SG AA is located optimally for the private club. It is positioned on flat land as a separate resort offering for recreation within the property, close to both the internal trail and roading networks, as well as the newly approved, McDonnell WBLP subdivision of eight sites.

Richard Brett Thomson

14 April 2026

