

REPORT TO: Karen Page (Senior Policy Analyst)
FROM: Antony Rewcastle (Landscape Architect)
REFERENCE: 400489 – Arrowtown South (Plan Change 39)
SUBJECT: Landscape Assessment
DATE: Thursday, 8 April 2010

INTRODUCTION

1. The following report has been prepared for the Queenstown-Lakes District Council to provide a consideration of relevant landscape issues associated with a private plan change request to re-zone land at the southern edge of Arrowtown from Rural General to the Arrowtown South Special Zone (Part 12).
2. This assessment includes consideration of potential adverse landscape effects resulting from the proposal, any mitigation or recommended changes to the proposed provisions to address these effects, and consistency with relevant Council strategies/ management plans.
3. The proposed development concept provides for up to 215 additional residential units in a series of distinct neighbourhoods, including: 17ha to be used for residential purposes; 1ha as a small commercial/ community village core; and 12ha for open space and roading.
4. I understand that public submissions have closed.



Photo A: Panoramic view of subject site and Arrowtown (McDonnell) escarpment to north from the Monk property (27/10/2009).

SITE DESCRIPTION

5. The subject site comprises an area of approximately 30ha on the southern side of Arrowtown, held in nine separate Rural General land holdings, and defined by McDonnell Road (west), Centennial Avenue (east), the Arrowtown Golf Club (south and east), and land zoned as Low Density Residential (north).
6. The subject site is approximately 400m west of the Arrow River, and the Crown Terrace escarpment rises east of the River. Tobin's Track ascends the escarpment and Mount

Beetham (929masl) is perched near the edge of the Terrace. The site is approximately 2.5kms north-east of Lake Hayes, and approximately 4kms north of Morven Hill (750masl), at an elevation of approximately 400masl.

7. The subject site displays complex topography, typical of remnant glacial moraine with subsequent alluvial deposition. An escarpment feature extends south from Advance Terrace and a small stream flows south between the escarpment and McDonnell Road to form a wetland area adjacent to the Arrowtown Golf Club.
8. Vegetation on the property is predominantly exotic pastoral grasses, with exotic weed species (sweet briar rose, hawthorn, and broom), and some indigenous species on the escarpment and within the wetland area. Willow trees are also associated with the stream and wetland areas.
9. Much of the site is used for pastoral grazing, whilst surrounding land use also includes the Arrowtown Golf Club (south and east) and the Hills Golf Course. Whilst the recent golf course development has modified the landscape character from its traditional form, this part of the Wakatipu Basin continues to display a pastoral and rural character.
10. Existing development includes: a cluster of farm buildings associated with the Muter Farm Homestead (Protected Feature #126¹) on McDonnell Road; dwellings on Centennial Avenue (including the Doctors House (Protected Feature #337²) which was associated with the old hospital ground and a Wellingtonia (Heritage tree #263³) which was planted as a shelter for hospital patients); and two dwellings on the ridge immediately south of Advance Terrace.

BACKGROUND

11. On 23 April 2009 a Landscape Assessment memo⁴ was prepared with regard to a landscape assessment of the potential extensions to the Arrowtown Urban Growth Boundary.
12. On 12 October 2009 a memo⁵ was prepared which stated the following with regard to proposed treatment of the existing watercourses and wetland:

"I note that the recommendations of the report with regard to retention of the open flow of the creek do not appear to have been carried through into the masterplan. Although preservation of the wetland is shown on this plan, the remaining upstream course of the creek does not appear on the plan. In addition, the provisions of the Plan Change in regard to the creek are not particularly strong. Assessment Matter 12.6.2 (iii) (f) requires consideration of the extent to which existing watercourses and wetland in the vicinity are protected and enhanced when assessing neighbourhood development plans. However, my experience with the Jacks Point Special Zone rules is that such provisions rely on the good faith of the developer and do not have sufficient teeth to require retention of watercourses."

LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

13. The Residential Arrowtown Historic Management Zone provides a strong urban centre with unique character based on mature vegetation and the historic character. The centre continues to be supported by the residential area and tourism.

MacDonnell Road

14. I consider that existing development along the south-western town boundary is awkward with new dwellings being constructed along the top of the escarpment in the southern part and dwellings spilling over the escarpment and abutting McDonnell Road in the northern part of the escarpment. I agree with the previous landscape assessment that "...this has resulted in a

¹ District Plan (January 2010). Page A3-9.

² District Plan (January 2010). Page A3-18.

³ District Plan (January 2010). Page A3-23.

⁴ Arrowtown Urban Growth Boundaries - Landscape Assessment (23 April 2009), H. Mellsop (Landscape Architect).

⁵ Arrowtown South Plan Change (12 October 2009), H. Mellsop (Landscape Architect). Page A3-23.

*weakening of the cohesiveness and legibility of the urban form*⁶ and that the proposed extension of development would further exacerbate this weakness.

15. Whilst the existing and approved (but not constructed) activities such as golf course development (Millbrook, Hills, and Arrowtown) separate the Arrowtown residential area from the more typical Rural General development associated with the central Wakatipu Basin, the the proposed plan change (adjacent to MacDonnell Road) does not provide an strong interface with this area. A buffer zone of rural residential type development defined by natural landforms, with isolated features such as the Muter Homestead and the hillock (Page property) and adjacent rock outcrop would provide a more structured zoning pattern. This pattern would provide interest and anticipation which would improve the entrance experience from MacDonnell Road.



Photo B: View of existing Arrowtown boundary from MacDonnell Road (adjacent to the hillock) (30/3/2010).

16. I consider an area of land immediately south of existing development (proposed area 1.1), below Cotter Avenue (but not below Advance Terrace) and defined on its southern edge by the stream, could be rezoned as Rural Residential so that it created a buffer between the Low Density Residential and Rural General zones. I would anticipate that this would encourage large dwellings, with higher architectural quality, and significant areas of vegetation which would act as a green belt. The 'Arrowtown Design Guidelines' could be used as a basis for creating a strong and cohesive character, which is compatible with other parts of Arrowtown. As discussed in the previous landscape assessment⁷, I consider that the stream would form a logical boundary to urban development and would provide an attractive frontage to development when viewed from MacDonnell Road. I concur with the key recommendations of the Urban Design assessment⁸ that the development pattern should create a positive interface (fronts) with the watercourse, and that this is used as a route to provide pedestrian connections.
17. Low density residential development generally degrades and reduces the legibility of natural landscape features. In contrast, the provision of open space can acknowledge the significance of features and create a focus. For this reason I consider it is important to retain the escarpment as open space as a defining edge to this part of Arrowtown when viewed from the Wakatipu Basin.
18. I consider that the Muter Homestead area provides some opportunity for increased level of development however the opportunity should be taken to develop the heritage attributes with design controls to maintain the local vernacular, whilst retaining open space on the terrace. I suggest that the local vernacular would be maintained more effectively through the use of design controls that, for example, incorporate 45° roof pitch and predominant use of stone, rather than lot size and building height restrictions (as proposed).

⁶ Arrowtown Urban Growth Boundaries - Landscape Assessment (23 April 2009), H. Mellsop (Landscape Architect). Page 1.

⁷ Arrowtown Urban Growth Boundaries - Landscape Assessment (23 April 2009), H. Mellsop (Landscape Architect). Page 3.

⁸ Arrowtown South – Proposed Private Plan Change (September 2009). Page 61, part 7.4.2.

19. The maintenance of the open space on the terrace which contains the Muter Homestead is important in order to acknowledge the significance of this cluster of buildings. I consider that the significance of the Muter Homestead cluster would largely be lost amidst the proposed rezoning, and the proposed village area would not provide adequate setback from McDonnell Road to retain a focus on the existing buildings.
20. As this terrace is at a similar level to the entrance to the Hills Golf Course, I consider it would be logical to maintain a consistent appearance on either side of the road in this section. The provision of an open space setback area has been created within Butel Park (between Feehly's Hill and Coronet Peak) and this setback avoids sprawl across Malaghans Road into the Basin. In a similar manner, I consider that the provision of open space in this area would also reduce the likelihood of sprawl occurring.

Centennial Avenue

21. I consider that the terrace area and lower (north-east facing) slopes adjacent to Centennial Avenue (proposed area 1.14 and 1.17) provide some opportunity to absorb development while being contained by the escarpment feature so that it is not visible from areas to the west. The Chartres Green development provides an effective transition to Arrowtown and this approach could be encouraged here.
22. Development of this area would appear as a narrow extension of the township between the escarpment and the Arrowtown Golf Course, and as a result would weaken the town boundary. Despite this, I concur with the previous landscape assessment that *"...development could be absorbed on the terrace ... without detracting from the legibility and cohesiveness of urban form. The southern end of the Arrowtown ridge and of the associated alluvial terrace on its eastern side (which ends just north of the McKay property on Centennial Avenue) would form a legible landscape boundary to the southern extent of the town (see Attachment A)."*⁹ Potential development within proposed area 1.12 would need to be screened from views from MacDonnell Road to ensure that development did not appear to spill south of the escarpment. I consider this viewshaft would coincide with the opportunity for an access reserve area linking the Arrow River with the Muter Homestead area at the southern end of the escarpment.
23. Improved connectivity generally between MacDonnell Road, Centennial Avenue, and Advance Terrace would provide positive recreational benefits for the Arrowtown Community and the wider area.
24. Proposed development on the southern ridgeline of the escarpment (proposed area 1.13) would significantly detract from legibility and appreciation of this feature and appear prominent from large parts of the Wakatipu Basin. It would also extend and exacerbate adverse effects associated with the two existing dwellings south of Advance Terrace.



Photo C: View of wetland area south of Muter Homestead (30/3/2010).

⁹ Arrowtown Urban Growth Boundaries - Landscape Assessment (23 April 2009), H. Mellso (Landscape Architect). Page 2.

25. The low lying, wetland area south of Muter Homestead area does not appear to provide suitable opportunities for residential development due to the modification required to convert this relatively natural area and the lack of access to views and sunlight.
26. I consider that the intensification of the old hospital ground would reduce the level of rural amenity and some of the rural qualities that currently enable this small cluster of dwellings to sit comfortably within its established setting.

CONCLUSION

27. Whilst Arrowtown has a strong central area based on maintaining its historic character, the south-western town boundary is less structured with recent development occurring along the ridgeline and at the base of the Arrowtown escarpment. Although opportunities exist to solidify this boundary (and to improve these entrances to Arrowtown), with the use of buffer areas, the proposed intensification proposes to shift the existing rural buffer further south (so that it is reliant on existing farmland and golf courses), and would exacerbate the lack of structure by sprawling onto the north-western floor of the Wakatipu Basin.
28. The concept behind the plan change “...that the most appropriate area for growth is to the south of the township, where it can be contained by natural and physical constraints, while remaining connected to and integrated with the township”¹⁰ is valid, however I believe the proposed plan change gives priority to existing road and property boundaries rather than enhancing natural and physical constraints, such as the terraced landform and wetland area.

Report prepared by

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SENIOR LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

¹⁰ Arrowtown South – Proposed Private Plan Change (September 2009). Page 7, part 1.1.