

# POTENTIAL PLAN CHANGE TO INCREASE RESIDENTIAL CAPACITY AT KINGSTON (Plan Change 25)

Report on Landscape Issues

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

1.1 The Queenstown Lakes District Council (the Council) is contemplating a plan change in order to expand the residential area of Kingston township. The purpose of this report is to discuss the qualities of the existing landscape in terms of the Partially Operative District Plan (the Plan) and in terms of the Resource Management Act 1991 (the Act), the ability of the landscape to absorb development and any potential mitigation measures.

1.2 This report is structured under the following headings:

- 1.0 INTRODUCTION
- 2.0 THE LANDSCAPE CONTEXT OF KINGSTON TOWNSHIP
- 3.0 LANDSCAPE CATEGORISATION
- 4.0 STATUTORY CONTEXT
- 5.0 THE ABILITY OF THE LANDSCAPE TO ABSORB DEVELOPMENT AND SUITABLE LOCATIONS AND METHODS
- 6.0 CONCLUSIONS

## 2.0 THE LANDSCAPE CONTEXT OF KINGSTON TOWNSHIP

- 2.1 Kingston is situated at the southern end of Lake Wakatipu at the northern end of a flat-bottomed valley that extends as far south as Athol, where topography becomes more enclosed. The valley is contained on both sides by high mountain ranges; the Hector Mountains to the east and the Eyre Mountains to the west.



FIGURE 1: THE LOCATION OF KINGSTON AT THE SOUTHERN END OF LAKE WAKATIPU

- 2.2 The qualities that are apparent to an observer in any landscape stem from a number of factors. The Plan describes these factors as:

*natural science factors (the geological, topographical, ecological and dynamic components of the landscape), aesthetic values (including memorability and naturalness), expressiveness and legibility (how obviously the landscape demonstrates the formative processes leading to it), transient values (such as the occasional presence of wildlife; or its values at certain times of the day or of the year), the value of the landscape to Tangata Whenua and its historical associations.<sup>1</sup>*

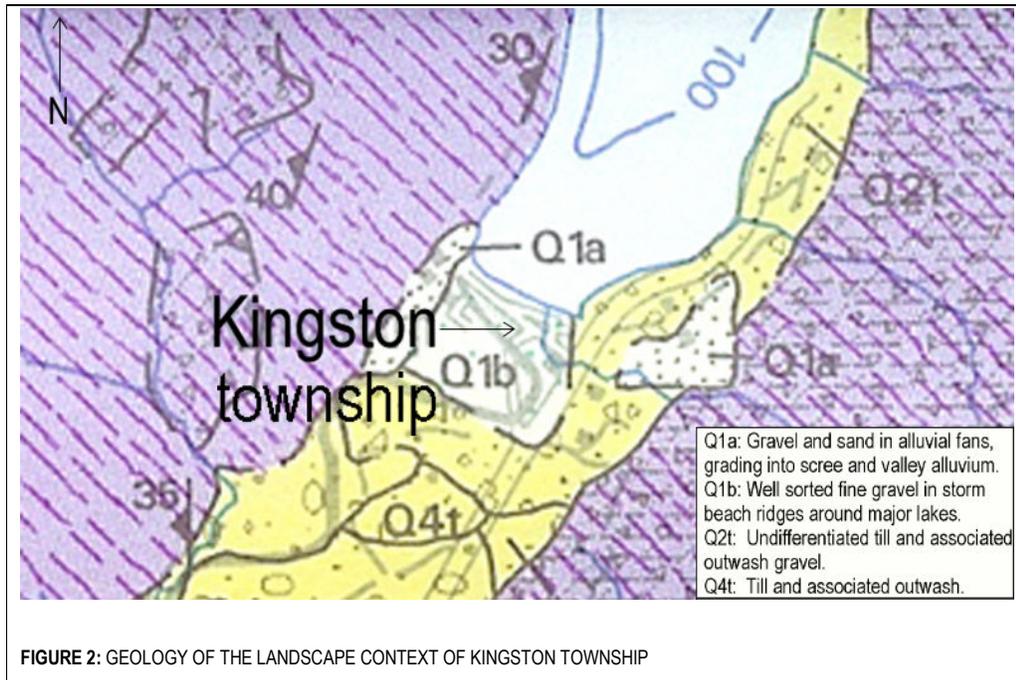
- 2.3 We will use these various factors as headings in order to describe the landscape qualities of Kingston township and its context.

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<sup>1</sup> Queenstown Lakes Partially Operative District Plan, Part 5.4.2.1.

(a) Natural Science Factors

2.4 The geology of the landscape context of Kingston township is shown on Figure 2.



In geological terms, Kingston is comprised of a complex moraine and outwash landscape<sup>2</sup>. Due to prior glaciations part of the valley floor was comprised of an outlet channel and outwash plains for Lake Wakatipu. Deposits left by the last quaternary glaciation left two terminal moraine loops near the Kingston township which effectively “plugged” the lake outlet over these plains. Evidence of this geological activity is clearly visible as sinuous meanders through the valley floor in the area to the south-west of the Kingston township. In simple terms, the flat floor of the valley is comprised of morainic and outwash tills and gravels, while the containing mountain slopes are comprised of upthrust schist bedrock.

2.5 The topography of the area is dramatic and includes starkly contrasting landforms. The valley floor that contains the Kingston township and continues in a south-west direction to Athol is relatively flat. Above approximately the 400 metre contour line the Hector Mountains to the east of the Kingston township rise steeply to form Lorn Peak at 1638 masl and James Peak at 2072 masl further north-east. To the west of the Kingston township and above the 360 – 380 metre contour line the Eyre Mountains rise steeply to form Trig 102 at

2 . M. Turnbull, Geology of the Wakatipu Area, Institute of Geological and Nuclear Sciences, Lower Hutt, New Zealand, 2000.

1596 masl north-west of the township. These mountains rise further to the peak of Mount Dick at 1805 masl north to north-west of the township.

2.6 The ecology of the valley floor containing the Kingston township is predominantly associated with agricultural activity. This landscape therefore comprises exotic pasture grasses and lines of shelter trees. There are also several small plantations of pine trees south-west of the township as well as an area of wilding willow trees and stands of mainly exotic trees planted for the amenity of the golf course and private residences. To the west of the township and on the eastern slopes of the Eyre Mountains is a dense layer of native shrub comprising of species including, among others, kohuhu, lancewood, tutu, manuka, and mingimingi. This vegetation provides the habitat for a diverse range of native wildlife including, among others, kereru, tui, fantail, and bellbird. To the east of the township and on the western slopes of the Hector Mountains is more pastoral, although less intensive than the valley floor. These slopes are largely comprised of exotic pasture grasses mixed with native tussock species. Native species dominate at high altitudes. Lake Wakatipu immediately north of the township contains an important and sensitive ecology including rainbow and brown trout, salmon, and eels.

2.7 Dynamic components are an important part of this landscape. The constantly variable actions of rainfall and water are immediately apparent, as are the effects of snow in winter months.

*(b) Aesthetics*

2.8 Obviously, the subject landscape is of very high aesthetic value. The Hector and Eyre mountains surrounding the vast surface of Lake Wakatipu make up a remarkable, very memorable landscape that is easily visually accessible from State Highway 6 (SH6). The journey from south of Frankton to Kingston on SH6 is a very memorable, dramatic landscape experience.

2.9 The journey south on SH6 from Frankton is characterised by vast open views of natural mountainous landscapes. There is a feeling of remoteness and of leaving behind the relatively tamed and populated landscapes of the Wakatipu basin. When a traveller arrives at the Kingston township; it currently has the feel of a relatively discrete and isolated pocket of human occupation in an otherwise open natural context. However, it is obvious to

observers that the flat valley floor that stretches away to the south of Kingston township has been historically used for intensive agriculture. It also accommodates the townships of Kingston and Garston.

- 2.10 The aesthetics of this landscape are, of course, not only appreciated from roads. Observers may be on the surface of the Lake on walking tracks or on private land.

(c) Legibility

- 2.11 Legibility is the ability to read the formative processes of the landform, and a high degree of legibility is produced where there is a dominance of the natural science factors such as the geological, topographical and ecological composition of a landscape.

- 2.12 The formative processes in this landscape have a relatively high degree of legibility: the sinuous meandering pattern on the valley floor is recognisable as evidence of the previous outlet from Lake Wakatipu. The valley floor is clearly an area of deposition and is obviously distinct from the steep upthrust mountain slopes.

- 2.13 It is unsure how legible these processes are to an average observer in the landscape, although they are certainly legible to one with some knowledge of geomorphology.

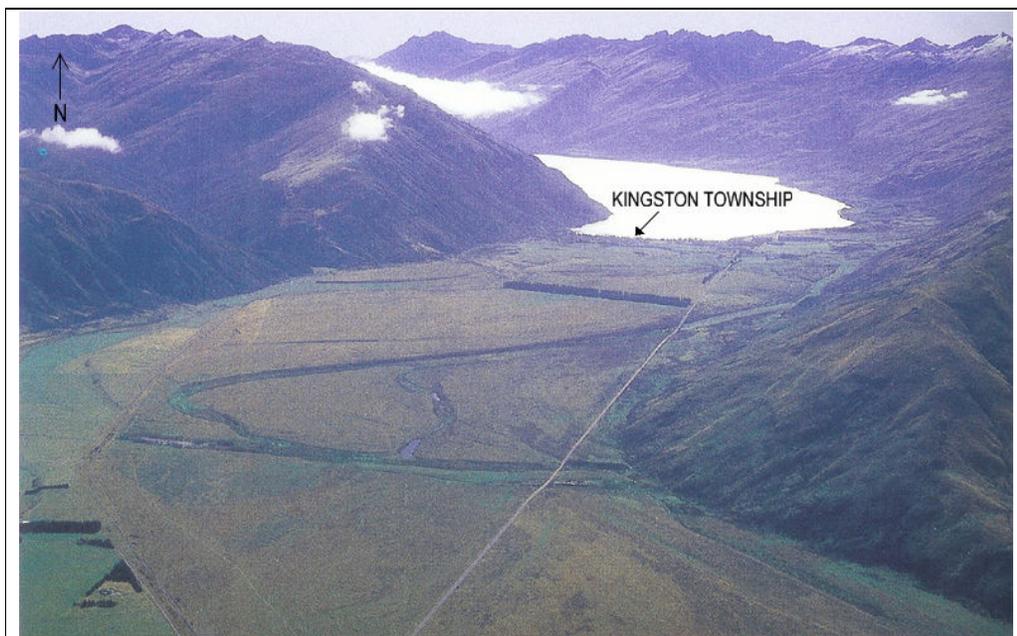


FIGURE 3: AERIAL VIEW OF TOPOGRAPHY SURROUNDING KINGSTON

(d) Transience

- 2.14 Changing weather and light create dramatic transient effects in the area surrounding the Kingston township that are appreciated from a wide visual catchment. In winter (and often at other times of the year as well) snow caps the mountain ranges. This can take the form of a blanket of white colour which catches sunlight in a varying way, or it can be a delicate white rime on the vegetation. Changing light conditions also play on the texture of the mountain slopes.
- 2.15 The surface of Lake Wakatipu also displays transient values. Depending upon weather and sunlight conditions the lake can appear a brilliant sparkling blue or a dull unwelcoming grey. The flatter valley floor lands demonstrate some transient values associated with seasonal changes in agriculture and the appearance of deciduous trees.

(e) Shared and Recognised Values

- 2.16 We consider that observers (whether local residents or visitors) would recognise the impact of natural science factors to a certain degree. The valley floor that contains the Kingston township is obviously formed by glaciations and outwash. The mountain slopes are obviously distinct from the valley floor. Beyond this, we consider that the average observer would not notice or contemplate the formation of this area.
- 2.17 Regarding aesthetics, we believe that most people who observe or experience this landscape would share the opinion that it is dramatic and memorable to a very high degree. The vast lake, mountain slopes and native shrub-land contribute to creating an iconic New Zealand landscape, the likes of which are widely celebrated in art and literature. We believe that observers would generally recognise and appreciate that the valley floor displays agricultural aesthetics, while the mountain slopes are more unkempt and natural.
- 2.18 The transient visual effects demonstrated by the landscape are readily apparent to all observers.

(f) Value to Takata Whenua

- 2.19 Landscapes may hold cultural significance to the Takata Whenua as a result of past interaction with the environment or as a result of tradition.

2.20 Lake Wakatipu once supported campsites and villages which were the seasonal destinations of Otago and Southland whanau and hapu for many generations, exercising ahi ka (rights to land by occupation), providing access to food and providing a route to access the treasured pounamu located beyond the head of the lake. The lake also supported permanent settlements including the Takerehaka near Kingston<sup>3</sup>.

2.21 There are many traditions relating to Lake Wakatipu as well as the Kingston area. For Ngai Tahu, these traditions represent the links between the cosmological world of the gods and present generations. These histories reinforce tribal identity and continuity between generations, and document the events which shaped the environment of the District and Ngai Tahu as an iwi<sup>4</sup>. Beyond these broad findings we have no knowledge of the value of the subject area to Takata Whenua; and understand that a cultural impact assessment is being commissioned which will provide greater detail.

*(g) Historical Associations*

2.22 The original Kingston Flyer was a passenger service that operated between Kingston and the Main South Line at Gore from 1878 through to the mid 1950s. It provided a passageway to Queenstown and the surrounding stations, by meeting up with the Lake steamers at Kingston Wharf. A number of protected historic features associated with the railway and ferry services on Lake Wakatipu exist in Kingston township. All heavy machinery for gold mining and dredging during the gold rush was brought in via the railway to Kingston before being shipped to Queenstown. The road between Kingston and Queenstown has traditionally been a difficult one, particularly in the vicinity of the Devils Staircase.

2.23 In more recent years tourism has become an important focus in the area. Taking the Kingston Flyer to Fairlight is a popular tourist event and the Te Kere Haka Scenic Reserve provides a large area of the mountain landscape for conservation and recreation purposes.

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<sup>3</sup> Queenstown Lakes District Council Web Site, "Historical Associations between Ngai Tahu and the Queenstown Lakes District".

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

## 3.0 LANDSCAPE CATEGORISATION

3.1 The C180/99 Environment Court decision<sup>5</sup> did not categorise the landscapes of the Kingston area, however, in our opinion the landscape comprising of the mountain slopes and the lake surrounding the Kingston township meets the classification of outstanding natural landscape (district wide) due to its composition that is typical of this landscape category as described in Part 4.2.4(2) of the Plan:

*“The outstanding natural landscapes of the district are romantic landscapes – the mountains and lakes.”*

3.2 When examined as a whole, the mountainous landform and the lake that surrounds the Kingston township display a high degree of natural character. Natural science factors dominate human modification significantly. The vast mountain slopes and Lake Wakatipu are dramatic, natural, remarkable and memorable on a district wide basis, as well as, a national basis.

3.3 We find that, in terms of the Act, the landscape surrounding the valley floor containing the Kingston township is an outstanding natural landscape. This means that Section 6 of Part 2 of the Act provides for the protection of these areas from inappropriate subdivision, use, and development in relation to managing the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources.

3.4 It should be noted that the protection referred to in the above paragraph does not equate to a prohibition on subdivision or development. In terms of the Plan, the vast majority of this landscape is zoned as Rural General Zone. This zoning generally provides for limited subdivision and development, provided that openness is maintained, development is confined to areas with an ability to absorb change and views from public places and roads are maintained<sup>6</sup>.

3.5 From the Kingston township southwards to east of Athol where Castle Hill and the Slate Ranges converge, SH6 bisects a flat valley floor area that consists of verdant grazed paddocks, roads, occasional buildings, exotic tree planting and agricultural paraphernalia. This area of paddock-land is some 20km long and up to approximately 6km wide. Running

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<sup>5</sup> Environment Court decision C180/99, Wakatipu Environmental Society Incorporated vs. Q.L.D.C.

<sup>6</sup> Queenstown Lakes Partially Operative District Plan, Part 4.2.5 (2).

east then south through this paddock-land from the vicinity of Fairlight is the braided Mataura River. The past glaciations have retreated to leave the current shape of the valley. Centuries of fluvial action have followed which have left the valley floor area as it is now. A number of small terrace forms can be identified as one moves from the river to the toe of the mountain slopes to the east and west.

3.6 These flats have obviously been used for farming purposes for many decades. They are covered in lush exotic pasture bisected by post-and-wire fencing. Many mature exotic shelterbelts also bisect the valley, generally perpendicular to the highway. The valley floor area currently reads as an area of human occupation and husbandry, surrounded by mountainous landform.

3.7 The floor of the valley currently contains a number of dwellings and other buildings associated with farming. It also contains the Kingston and Garston townships. Outside of these scattered farm buildings and townships, the valley floor lands are generally grazed pasture. There are views from the areas of the valley floor to the containing mountains. Overall, a clearly rural, farming type of landscape character is evident.

3.8 Part 4.2.4(3) of the Plan describes visual amenity landscapes as follows:

*“The visual amenity landscapes are the landscapes to which particular regard is to be had under Section 7 of the Act. They are landscapes which wear a cloak of human activity much more obviously - pastoral (in the poetic and picturesque sense rather than the functional sense) or Arcadian landscapes with more houses and trees, greener (introduced) grasses and tend to be on the District’s downlands, flats and terraces. The extra quality that these landscapes possess which bring them into the category of ‘visual amenity landscape’ is their prominence because they are:*

- *adjacent to outstanding natural features or landscapes; or*
- *on ridges or hills; or*
- *visible from public roads; or*
- *a combination of the above”.*

3.9 We consider the valley floor that contains the Kingston township is a visual amenity landscape as identified by the Plan. We believe that this categorisation is consistent with an analysis of the site and surrounding landscape with reference to the broad description of the three landscape categories in Part 4.2.4 of the Plan because:

- The floor of the valley wears a “cloak of human activity” through the presence of domesticated farmland and farm related dwellings. It has a pleasant rural

agricultural character that could be described as pastoral in the poetic and picturesque sense, rather than truly natural.

- This valley is immediately adjacent to mountainous landform which we consider to be part of an outstanding natural landscape.
- This landscape is bisected by and is prominent from a number of public roads including State Highway 6.

## 4.0 STATUTORY CONTEXT

4.1 In considering matters of zoning and contemplated plan changes, Sections 6 and 7 of Part 2 the Act provide statutory context in relation to the treatment of the landscapes. More locally specific statutory context is given by the Part 4 of the Plan, which relates to district wide considerations.

4.2 Some non-statutory context regarding the treatment of the landscape around Kingston is also provided by the Kingston Community Plan.

4.3 Provisions of Section 6 of Part 2 of the Act that are relevant to the consideration of landscape matters are:

### **6 Matters of national importance**

*In achieving the purpose of this Act, all persons exercising functions and powers under it, in relation to managing the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources, shall recognise and provide for the following matters of national importance:*

- (a) *The preservation of the natural character of the coastal environment (including the coastal marine area), wetlands, and lakes and rivers and their margins, and the protection of them from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.*
- (b) *The protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes from inappropriate subdivision, use, and development.*
- (c) *The protection of areas of significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna.*
- (d) *The maintenance and enhancement of public access to and along the coastal marine area, lakes, and rivers.*

4.4 Relevant provisions in Section 7 of Part 2 that are relevant to the consideration of landscape matters are:

*In achieving the purpose of this Act, all persons exercising functions and powers under it, in relation to managing the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources, shall have particular regard to—*

- [(aa) The ethic of stewardship:]*
- (c) The maintenance and enhancement of amenity values:*
- (d) Intrinsic values of ecosystems:*
- (f) Maintenance and enhancement of the quality of the environment:*
- (h) The protection of the habitat of trout and salmon:*

4.5 Part 4.2 of the Plan contains district wide considerations relating to landscape and visual amenity. Parts 4.2.1 to 4.2.4 comprise a broad discussion of the resources, values, activities and issues relating to landscape in the Queenstown Lakes District. Part 4.2.5 states the objectives and policies relating to the management of landscapes. Those that are relevant to landscape issues relating to zoning and growth around the Kingston area are as follows:

**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.***

**Policies:**

**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.*
- (b) To encourage development and/or subdivision to occur in those areas of the District with greater potential to absorb change without detracting from landscape and visual amenity values.*
- (c) To ensure subdivision and/or development harmonises with local topography and ecological systems and other nature conservation values as far as possible.*

**2 Outstanding Natural Landscapes (District-Wide/Greater Wakatipu)**

- (a) To maintain the openness of those outstanding natural landscapes and features which have an open character at present.*
- (b) To avoid subdivision and development in those parts of the outstanding natural landscapes with little or no capacity to absorb change.*
- (c) To allow limited subdivision and development in those areas with higher potential to absorb change.*
- (d) To recognise and provide for the importance of protecting the naturalness and enhancing amenity values of views from public places and public roads.*

#### **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.*

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

(c) *To discourage linear tree planting along roads as a method of achieving (a) or (b) above.*

#### **6. Urban Development**

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

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

(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.*

(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.*

#### **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.*

#### **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.*

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

#### **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.*
- (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*
- (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.*

4.6 The Kingston Community Plan is a non-statutory document that resulted from community workshops held by the Council in conjunction with the Kingston Community Association. It articulates a vision for the future of Kingston and gives some guidance regarding residential growth. When considering potential residential growth of Kingston Township, the following excerpts of the Kingston Community Plan are helpful:

### **3 KEY COMMUNITY OUTCOMES**

- (a) ***To retain the low-key character of Kingston by ensuring that future development respects the location, character and scale of the township.***
- (b) ***To maintain a strong urban boundary by confining future expansion to the north western side of the highway.***

### **KEY STRATEGIES**

***The following key strategies are identified for achieving the vision.***

### **4 MANAGING GROWTH**

*· Future development should be in keeping with the low-key character of Kingston and is contained on the Western side of the Highway. This would prevent a split in the Town's identity and character, and a void traffic safety issues.*

*· Township kept within strong boundaries - Highway and terrace to the south and hills to the west.*

### **Residential**

*· Any further residential development of the Township Zone should be undertaken in such a way that the existing nature and character of Kingston is preserved. This can be achieved through the retention of section sizes of 800m<sup>2</sup>. The community is happy with the existing scale of smaller "historical tent sites" and should reticulated water and sewage be provided then this is also an option.*

*· The large section of land (approximately 6.3 hectares) on the corner of Oxford and Kent Street is zoned for residential use and is currently used as a deer farm. It is generally accepted among the community that this land will absorb further residential development. Should this land be developed, it should be in keeping with the existing density and character of the township.*

*. There was general acceptance the township needed to expand to accommodate some level of future growth. The community is comfortable with some form of growth toward the Highway, particularly on the land between the existing commercial area and the paper road to the south-west.*

*. The land bound by Wesley Terrace, the foreshore and the Highway was not favoured for future development. However, if development was to occur in this location it should be screened with vegetation from the Highway and be of similar density as the existing township. The community did not favour access for future subdivision through the existing township. However it is understood that access from the Highway might not be practical in terms of Transit NZ requirements.*

## **5.0 THE ABILITY OF THE LANDSCAPE TO ABSORB DEVELOPMENT AND SUITABLE LOCATIONS AND METHODS**

5.1 Consideration has been given to all of the above provisions. However, we will briefly paraphrase what we consider to be the key guidance that these provisions give:

- To generally avoid new urban development within the outstanding natural landscape that is comprised of the mountain slopes;
- On the visual amenity landscape of the valley floor, to avoid development that sprawls along roads and to avoid, remedy or mitigate the effects of development if it is highly visible from public places or visible from roads. To screen structures from roads using vegetation when possible;
- To generally restrict future development to areas where it can be absorbed without detracting from amenity values;
- Any new urban edge should be clearly identified and should avoid sprawl;
- To confine future growth of Kingston to an area bounded by the highway to the east, the terrace to the south and the hill-slopes to the west.

5.2 We reiterate that this report considers broad-scale landscape issues. We will not comment on the urban design details of what type of residential development may be appropriate inside any areas that are identified as being suitable for growth.

5.3 Figure 4 below shows the landscape surrounding Kingston township. For the purposes of examining the potential for residential expansion to be absorbed into the landscape, this area (not including Lake Wakatipu) has been broadly divided into 5 obviously distinct

landscape units in terms of their landform, natural and physical containment (including from SH6), density of existing development and their potential to absorb change. Colour has been used to identify the 5 landscape units: the red shaded area is part of the Eyre Mountains; the orange shaded area is part of the Hector Mountains; the un-shaded area of aerial photograph is part of the valley floor to the west of SH6; the purple shaded area is part of the valley floor between SH6 and the Hector Mountains; and the pale green shaded area is the land bound by Kingston township, Lake Wakatipu, and SH6.



FIGURE 4: PLAN IDENTIFYING LANDSCAPE UNITS SURROUNDING KINGSTON

- 5.4 This report will discuss the ability of the landscape surrounding Kingston township to appropriately absorb change by referring to each of the 5 identified landscape units, having regard to the statutory context and the Kingston Community Plan.

### *Red Shaded Area – the Eyre Mountains*

5.5 Together with the Hector Mountains, the Eyre Mountains visually dominate the landscape surrounding Kingston township due to their prominent topography and scale. They are also visually linked to mountains throughout the Queenstown-Lakes District. Their formative processes are clearly obvious as upthrust bedrock by tectonic movement. The Eyre Mountains contain significant indigenous vegetation and wildlife. The Department of Conservation maintains walking tracks through this landscape that are popular with locals and tourists alike. These mountains as with others in the District are remarkable, dramatic and memorable, and are widely celebrated in art and literature. As outlined previously in Part 3 of this report, we consider the Eyre Mountains to be an outstanding natural landscape as identified by the Plan and should therefore be protected from inappropriate subdivision, use, and development that would threaten their natural character and openness. In general terms, we consider that residential expansion in this landscape unit would not be congruent with the relevant provisions of the Act or the Plan.

### *Orange Shaded Area – the Hector Mountains*

5.6 As with the Eyre Mountains we consider the Hector Mountains to be part of an outstanding natural landscape. These mountain slopes are currently very natural and exhibit virtually no signs of domestication. In terms of landscape effects, and the statutory provisions, these mountainous landscapes have very little ability to absorb residential expansion.

### *Un-Shaded area of Aerial Photograph – the valley floor west of State Highway 6*

5.7 The valley floor that contains Kingston township is bounded to the west by the Eyre Mountains and to the east by the Hector Mountains. It is bisected by SH6 that for a short distance also forms the eastern extent of Kingston township. This landscape unit therefore also contains Kingston township itself. As discussed earlier, we believe that the valley floor that contains Kingston township is a visual amenity landscape. In terms of landscape values this means that this landscape has some ability to absorb development if its effects are appropriately remedied or mitigated and provided development that sprawls along roads is avoided. We consider that due to the degree of fauna in this landscape unit that future development could be appropriately screened using vegetation. Future development

in this landscape unit would be potentially difficult to see from Lake Wakatipu as it could be screened by the existing township. When viewed from SH6 future development in this landscape unit could be designed so as to appear as an extension to the south of Kingston township uninterrupted by natural landform or the highway. However, care should be taken to ensure that future development in this landscape does not sprawl along the highway. A method to prevent this situation from occurring will be discussed in subsequent parts of this report.

### *Purple Shaded Area – the valley floor east of State Highway 6*

5.8 We consider this landscape also to be within the identified visual amenity landscape for the reasons discussed earlier in this report. This means that this area could absorb some development as long as it avoids sprawl along the road and its effects are appropriately remedied or mitigated. However, the Kingston community has expressed their intention to ensure that future development is contained to the west of SH6 in order to “*be in keeping with the low-key character of Kingston*” and to “*prevent a split in the Town’s identity and character, and avoid traffic safety issues*”<sup>7</sup>.

5.9 In terms of landscape effects, we contend that future development of a density similar to the existing township spreading into this landscape unit could significantly reduce the containment of the existing township by breaching the obvious current edge provided by the highway. Also, we expect that to resist development on this side of the valley floor while development occurs to the west of State Highway 8, will also provide some visual relief when travelling on the highway in the vicinity of Kingston, and is likely to have some benefits associated with traffic, safety and other issues not directly relating to landscape.

### *Pale Green Shaded Area – the land bounded by Kingston township, Lake Wakatipu, and State highway 6*

5.10 This area is unique to the wider landscape surrounding Kingston in that it is bound by Kingston township, Lake Wakatipu, and SH6. Due to the proximity of this area to these 3 containing landscape elements it is visually associated with all of them. As such we

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<sup>7</sup> Kingston 2020, November 2003, p 8.

consider this area to be part of the visual amenity landscape. Accordingly, in terms of the Plan this area could be developed so long as it avoids sprawl along the highway and its effects are appropriately remedied or mitigated. The Kingston community has not favoured this area for future development but suggests that if it were developed “it should be screened with vegetation from the Highway and be of similar density as the existing township”<sup>8</sup>. Currently, the view of this landscape unit when approaching Kingston on SH6 from the north is across a verdant paddock area before dropping to Lake Wakatipu and Kingston township, which is nestled by the lake amongst large trees. The Eyre Mountains are in the background and due to their size, dominate this picturesque image. If future development were to extend to this area then this scene on entering Kingston would be lost. Instead, the future development and trees planted to screen it would be prominent when approaching Kingston from the north. Future development in this area would also obviously extend the size of the township when viewed from the lake by way of sprawl. As such, we consider that development in this landscape unit could not be appropriately mitigated using planting; it would be highly visible from the highway and the lake and should be avoided. We believe that the open space values that this landscape affords should be protected, in order to achieve the provisions of the Plan.

### *Summary regarding the potential expansion of Kingston township into surrounding landscape units*

5.11 After identifying 5 distinct landscape units (not including Lake Wakatipu) within the wider landscape surrounding Kingston township and discussing the absorption capacity of the landscape in terms of these units, having regard to the statutory context and the Kingston Community Plan, our findings are as follows:

- The Eyre and Hector Mountains are outstanding natural landscapes and should therefore be protected from inappropriate subdivision, use, and development in accordance with section 6 of Part 2 of the Act. The naturalness and openness of these mountains should be protected and maintained in accordance with the Plan. Any potential future development in these landscapes should be carefully assessed at a finer detail as to whether the landscape has the ability to absorb

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p 9.

the development. When assessing these landscapes from a broad scale we find that they have very little ability to absorb any residential expansion.

- We consider that the valley floor east of SH6 would be reasonably suitable to absorb more development as we consider it to be a visual amenity landscape that could be maintained and enhanced whilst accommodating more development through careful location, design, planting, and landscaping controls. However, we also note that the Kingston community does not want the highway to bisect the township in order to maintain the “*low-key*” character of the town and to prevent a split in the town’s character. In terms of landscape effects we consider that future development in this area could significantly reduce the current clear urban edge of the existing township and detrimentally affect the visual relief one experiences when travelling along the highway.
- We find that the area bound by Kingston township, Lake Wakatipu, and SH6 is also within the identified visual amenity landscape. However, we find that landscape quality could not be maintained and enhanced through planting and landscape controls whilst accommodating future development due to this area’s proximity to, and visibility from, the lake and the highway. We believe that future development in this area would have a negative impact on open space values and landscape character one experiences when approaching Kingston from the north and when on Lake Wakatipu.
- The valley floor west of SH6 is the most suitable of the 5 identified landscape units surrounding Kingston township in terms of its ability to absorb future development. We find that this area is contained within a visual amenity landscape as identified by the Plan and should therefore be maintained and enhanced in accordance with the Plan and also section 7 of Part 2 of the Act. We believe that this landscape can be maintained and enhanced whilst accommodating future development through appropriate planting. We also consider that future development in this landscape will be reasonably difficult to see from Lake Wakatipu due to the screening benefits that the existing township will afford. Future development in this landscape could be visually contained along with the existing township within clear urban edges so as to

avoid sprawl along the highway through a method that will be discussed subsequently.

*Containment of development so as to avoid sprawl and to create a clear urban edge*

5.12 After identifying the valley floor west of SH6 as the most suitable area for future expansion, it is necessary to create a method to contain the future development so as to maintain the township's "strong boundary" as recognised by the Plan and the Kingston Community Plan and to prevent sprawl along the highway. This required assessing the valley floor west of SH6 at a closer scale to identify any natural feature or landform that may help to contain future growth of the township. The escarpment south-west of the township shown on Figure 5 is identified as the most logical and practical south-western boundary to contain potential future growth of the Kingston township.



5.13 Containing future development to the area north-east of the escarpment could, in combination with height controls, potentially screen future buildings from view when approaching Kingston township from the south. As discussed earlier, future development in this area would be reasonably difficult to see from Lake Wakatipu due to the screening that the existing township will afford. Restricting future development to this area will visually contain the township by maintaining strong boundaries; the escarpment, SH6, the Eyre Mountains, and Lake Wakatipu. It will also ensure that future development does not sprawl along the highway in an unchecked way.

## **6.0 SENSITIVE ASPECTS OF THE IDENTIFIED DEVELOPMENT AREA**

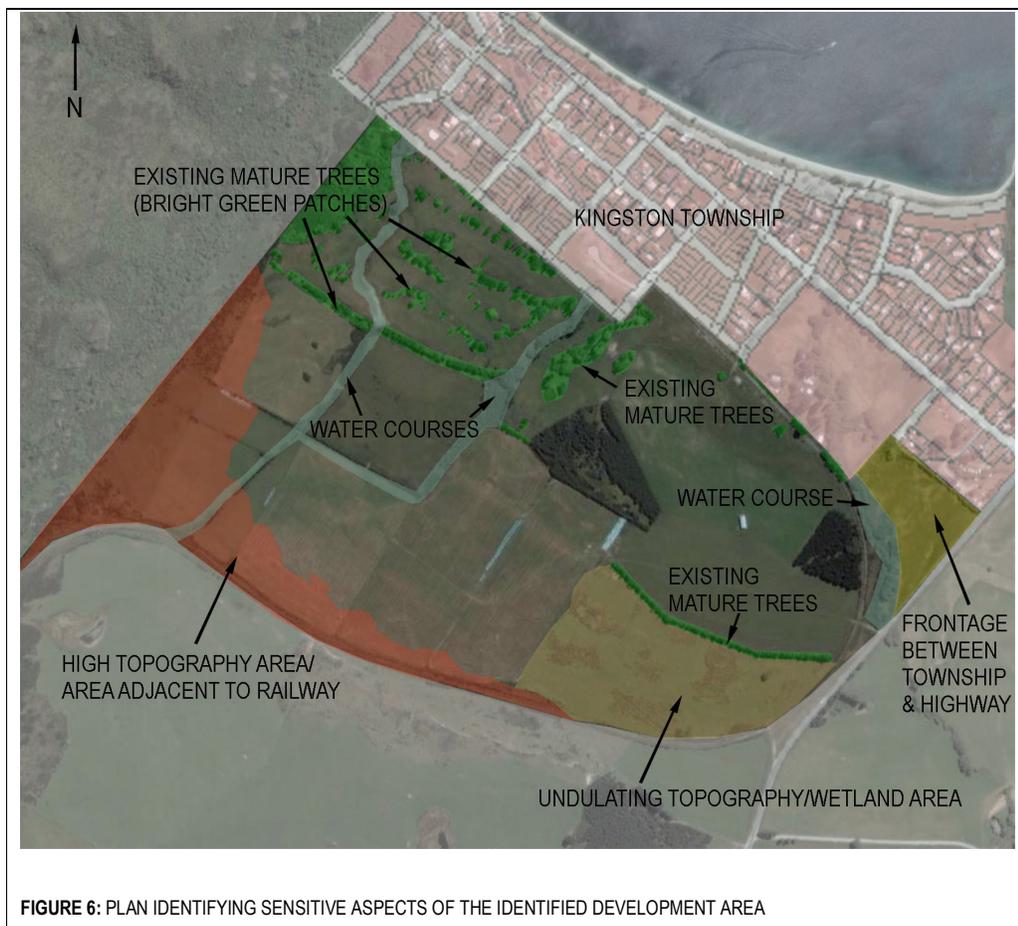
6.1 After identifying a potential area for potential future growth of the Kingston township, this area was then assessed in terms of recognising specific aspects within it that could be particularly sensitive in terms of the potential for future development to create adverse effects on the natural character, patterns or processes. These aspects are recognised as:

- The water courses that run through the area. These include a watercourse that has been modified for farming purposes, which runs from the south-western edge of the potential development area before diverging in two directions that both run through the existing golf course. There is also a less-modified water course that runs from a culvert beneath SH6 on the eastern periphery of the area, following the railway towards the township and the lake.
- The high topography area adjacent to the railway. This area is bounded by the top of the escarpment down to approximately the 340 metre contour line, and by the unformed legal road at the toe of the Eyre Mountains.
- The undulating topography/wetland area. This is an obviously less modified area contained by the south-eastern part of the identified development area. There is a row of gum trees that runs along its entire north-western boundary.

- The frontage between the township and SH6. This area is contained by the north-eastern part of the identified development area. It is bounded by the existing township, SH6 and an existing water course adjacent to the railway.
- The existing mature trees. These are the row of gum trees to the south-east of the area, the trees contained within the golf course, the trees that line the southern boundary of the golf course and an area of willows north west of the golf course.

The locations of these aspects are shown in Figure 6.

6.2 This part of the report discusses why these aspects were recognised as being potentially sensitive in terms of future development and makes suggestions as to how they could be treated in regard to avoiding, remedying and/or mitigating the adverse effects of the township's potential expansion into this area.



- 6.3 While currently in a degraded state, the water courses identified in Figure 6 are potentially sensitive in terms of the impact of rural use and further development on water quality through the site and ultimately in Lake Wakatipu. They could also potentially provide positive amenity and public access through a new suburban area and could provide for natural character and ecological linkages. Possible treatment of the identified water courses includes protecting them from building and treating them in a useful way such as providing pedestrian access and providing appropriate riparian management in order to enhance natural character.
- 6.4 The high topography area adjacent to the railway identified in Figure 6 is sensitive to future development due to its potential visual prominence when seen from the east, including the highway. This area, if developed, could appear as sprawl of the township, particularly when approaching Kingston from the north and from the surface Lake Wakatipu. Development in this area could have a potential adverse effect on the amenity that is currently enjoyed by passengers on the Kingston Flyer. Also, the railway could have potential adverse effects on the amenity of this high topography area if it was used for dwellings. In order to avoid these potential adverse effects, it is possible to protect this area from housing and treat it in some useful way so as to provide amenity, public linkages and open space.
- 6.5 The undulating topography / wetland area in the south eastern part of the potential area for future growth is sensitive to future development in that it displays original natural topography and contains large areas of native wetland species (*Juncus* sp). Dense housing in this area also has the potential to be seen as sprawl along the highway to the south of the existing township. Possible treatment of this area includes lower density living while protecting areas of native vegetation and further revegetation including tree planting. This area also has opportunities for public open space and to create a clear southern edge to future expansion of the township.
- 6.6 The frontage between the existing township and SH6 is sensitive to future development as it is very visible from the highway and will be the most publicly viewed and experienced part of an expanded township. Possible treatment of this area includes careful design of the town's road frontage to create an interesting, interactive interface between Kingston and the highway corridor.

- 6.7 The existing mature trees identified in Figure 6 are sensitive in relation to the possible growth of Kingston in that they could potentially add natural character and amenity to future township development. They could provide some screening and visual softening to future township development when viewed from the north and provide a mature natural element amongst new suburban growth. They could also provide ecological linkages and habitat for native fauna. At the time of design, there should be careful consideration of which trees are beneficial and which are not. Subsequent treatment should include the incorporation of beneficial trees into urban design.
- 6.8 We note that the above design suggestions are purely intended as points for consideration. The important point is that these potentially sensitive aspects are considered at the time of more detailed design of future township expansion within the potential development area.

## **7.0 CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 The valley that contains Kingston township is flanked to the north, west and east by dramatic, eminent, overwhelmingly natural landscapes that are dominated by mountains and lakes. In terms of the Act, we consider that these landscapes are outstanding natural landscapes.
- 7.2 Despite being contained within these very natural landscapes, the floor of the valley that contains Kingston township has its own particular characteristics that are not necessarily natural in themselves; to a large degree they have been brought about by human modification. The valley floor currently reads as an enclave of agricultural land use in the form of verdant grazed paddocks. We consider the valley floor that contains Kingston township to be a visual amenity landscape.
- 7.3 The current provisions of the Plan provide for some degree of change to the current character of the valley floor that contains Kingston township. If developed in accordance with these provisions, the valley floor will essentially maintain its current state.
- 7.4 The Kingston Community Plan's "*Key Community Outcomes*" give a good indication of the Kingston community's aspirations regarding the future of Kingston. While encouraging the

growth of Kingston it advocates to retain the “*low-key*” character of Kingston township and to maintain a “*strong urban boundary*”<sup>9</sup>.

7.5 After broadly assessing the wider landscape surrounding Kingston township we find that the “*Potential area for future growth*” as identified in Figure 5 of this report is the most suitable, practical, and logical area to allow for and to contain residential expansion in terms of landscape issues relating to the statutory context and the outcomes of the Kingston Community Plan. This area is part of the valley floor that stretches to the south of Kingston. It is bounded by SH6, the existing Kingston township, the slopes of the Eyre Mountains and a clear steep escarpment some 800 metres to the south-west of the existing town boundary.

7.6 Within this identified area for the potential growth of Kingston there are particular aspects that are sensitive to future township development. These include the water courses, the high topography area adjacent to the railway, the undulating topography/wetland area, the frontage between the township and SH6, and existing mature trees. When future suburban township expansion is being designed within the identified potential area for future growth, particular consideration should be given to these aspects.

**Vivian+Espie Ltd**  
**15 May 2007**

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p 7.