

**BEFORE QUEENSTOWN LAKES DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**IN THE MATTER** of the Resource Management Act 1991

**AND** submission S0581 by L and J Burdon on the  
Queenstown Lakes Proposed District Plan

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**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF MICHELLE SNODGRASS (Landscape Architect)**

**Dated 4 April 2017**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

1. My name is Michelle Snodgrass. I hold the qualification of Bachelor of Landscape Architecture with honours from Lincoln University, and I am a member of the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects and I gained my associateship in 2002. I am the Director of Michelle Snodgrass Landscape Architecture which I have been for the past 37 months. Prior to this I worked For Baxter Design Group for 7 years, Scott Wilson in the U.K for 18 months, the Christchurch City Council for 5 years and the Department of Conservation for 2 years. I have been practicing as a landscape architect since 1995.
2. I have read the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses contained within the Environment Court Practice note of November 2014 and agree to comply with it. This evidence is within my area of expertise, except where I state that I am relying on information I have been given by another person. I can confirm that I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions expressed herein.
3. I have been asked to give evidence in relation to the landscape and visual effects of the submission under the Proposed District Plan ('PDP'), and sections 6 and 7 of the Resource Management Act ('RMA').
4. I prepared the landscape and visual effects assessment report that accompanied the re-zoning submission, hence my evidence will be a summary of the findings of my report, and a discussion of the landscape assessment report prepared by Ms. Mellsoop for the Council's Section 42a report.

## **THE PROPOSAL**

5. The proposal is to rezone the site from its existing Rural General Zone under the Operative District Plan to Rural Lifestyle under the PDP, with proposed Objectives, Policies and Rules which would further define the nature of future development on the site. Mr Greaves will discuss the proposed Policies, Objectives and Rules in his evidence.

6. There are five locations within the site that physically have the potential to contain building platforms, in that they are flat to gently sloping land where a dwelling could be built, and are removed at a distance from the existing house to retain privacy for the homestead . Four of those locations are more able to be absorbed by the landscape as they are less visible from Lake Hawea Township, Lake Hawea- Makarora Road and the surface of Lake Hawea, due to topography. The potential building areas are roughly clustered in a terrace between the northern and southern glacial hummocks, and are separated by the existing creeks and gullies.
7. It is my understanding that the ultimate result of the proposed area of Rural Lifestyle zone will be a development that includes the following aspects:
  - a. Up to 4 dwellings on the terrace between the northern and southern glacial mounds.  
Dwelling location is within defined curtilage areas with the balance of the site protected by a substantial 'no build' area.
  - b. Vehicle access to all dwellings via an alignment between the curtilage areas and Lake Hawea-Makarora Road.
  - c. Future dwellings would be a maximum of 5m in height, be of recessive colours and be inconspicuous from the Lake Hawea- Makarora Road, Hawea Township, the Lake Frontage and views to the east and south east.
  - d. Native vegetation is likely to be used over much of the terrace, including the gullies of the site, to screen views of future dwellings and possibly the access road, from outside of the site.
  - e. The existing northern and southern glacial mounds will likely be maintained in their current landscape cover allowing evidence of their glacial formation to be seen and appreciated.

## **THE LANDSCAPE EFFECTS OF THE PROPOSED ZONE CHANGE**

8. The site is part of an outstanding natural landscape ('ONL') with a natural and pastoral character, which clearly displays its glacial and fluvial formation, and has minor modification. The site is also removed from land zoned Rural Lifestyle, Rural Residential or Township. The elements of the site and wider landscape that are potentially affected by rezoning the land are the landscape character of this part of Makarora Road and the lake edge, and the landscape character of the broader ONL.
9. The location of the 4 proposed new dwelling sites has the potential to change that part of the site by modifying its character from natural and pastoral to rural lifestyle. Mitigation is proposed through the potential locations of dwellings being in confined areas, with the larger balance of the site being protected with a 'no-build' area, and the proposed objectives and policies specifying screening via native planting. In terms of the landscape character, the proposed zone will be a continuation of the broader landscape character with an enhanced level of natural character.
10. Residential development will be a minor component of the character because of both the potential results of native planting for screening and recessive buildings, and because of the comparative scales of the proposed actual area of development, to the broader landscape of mountain and lake which form the immediate landscape context.
11. At a broader scale the proposed zone will create a small cluster of rural living type development in proximity to Hawea Township zone, and the Lake Hawea campground, wholly contained by a larger Rural Zone with a dominant and very large scale natural character. The ability of the site to absorb development would be enhanced by design controls at subdivision such as a low dwelling height, recessive cladding and roofing colours, minimal building footprint, and curtilage controls to retain as much of the location as possible in its current natural character.

12. In my opinion the magnitude of visual impact and level of significance, if the above development was undertaken with sensitive native planting and design controls, would be slight to moderate, and would result in a significantly enhanced natural character. At subdivision stage, I would envisage conditions that require a comprehensive vegetation management plan is prepared and approved for the no build restriction area of the proposed zone.
13. The majority of the proposed Rural Lifestyle zone is within the proposed 'no build' restriction, including the southern and northern glacial hummocks, and the escarpment. The inclusion of the hummocks and the escarpment within the no build restriction will ensure that their appearance will be maintained, and is a positive landscape effect.

#### **THE VISUAL EFFECTS OF THE PROPOSED ZONE CHANGE**

14. Visual effects are the effects that an activity may have on specific views and the visual amenity experienced by viewers. In the case of the proposed zone change it is the effect on views from Lake Hawea-Makarora Road, parts of Lake Hawea, Hawea Township, and the Lake Hawea foreshore as far as Gladstone. The visual amenity effect is on the difference between the landscape character of the proposed zone and the broader landscape character.
15. Visibility and effects on visual amenity, assuming extensive and successful native planting, would diminish over the short to medium term, potentially resulting in an eventual slight to moderate overall effect. The scale of the proposed area of development is small and would not become the dominant element in the broader landscape.

#### **Viewpoints**

16. The potential visual effects brought about by the proposal in relation to the above viewpoints is discussed as follows. To summarise the degree of visibility at the medium term once native vegetation is established and mature is as follows:

### ***Makarora Road***

17. Slight – a dwelling at Location 2 would be partially visible if existing eucalyptus trees are retained

### ***Scotts Beach***

18. Negligible – none of the proposed house sites at Locations 1-4, or the existing house would be visible.

### ***Esplanade Reserve – western end***

19. Slight to moderate – dwellings on Locations 1, 2 and 3 would be partially visible.

### ***Esplanade Reserve – eastern end/start of the Gladstone walking track***

20. Slight to moderate – dwellings on Locations 1, 2 and 3 would be partially visible.

### ***Gladstone Township***

21. Negligible – dwellings on Locations 1-4, would be difficult to discern.

### ***Lake Hawea***

22. Slight effect from close to the western side of Lake Hawea in the vicinity of 'The Dene'.
23. Slight to moderate from the stony beaches on the western side of the lake adjacent to the site.

### **Overall Visual Effects**

24. To achieve the overall described level of slight to moderate visual effects the Council will have the ability to use controls at subdivision and dwelling construction stages to result in built form that is relatively inconspicuous. Curtilage areas and vehicle access are likely to be completely screened. While some aspects of the development will potentially be visible, in the short to medium term the visual effect would not be severe, as the scale of the proposed

area of development is small and would not become the dominant element in the much larger scale of the broader landscape.

25. The overall effect on visual amenity in the short to medium term will also reduce as the Rural Lifestyle zone takes on the dominant natural character of the broader landscape, and any potential views of development decrease.
26. In relation to the broader landscape, the PDP seeks to avoid subdivision that would degrade the important qualities of the landscape character and amenity as detailed in Section 6. Due to the potential outcomes of the proposed objectives, policies and rules discussed in this report, the important qualities of the broader ONL will not be degraded. The quality of naturalness could be enhanced by extensive native planting and management to remove and reduce weed species. The retention of the southern and northern glacial hummocks within the 'no build' areas, and not being affected by screening planting, will maintain the naturalness of the glacial formation.

#### **PDP**

27. The current zoning of the 'The Dene' under the PDP is Rural. The accompanying landscape classification is accepted as ONL (District Wide) as the site is part of the much larger landscape of Mt Maude, the lake edge and the lake itself. The site is too small, at 38ha, to be considered a landscape unit in its own right, despite being separated from the slopes of Mt Maude by the Makarora-Lake Hawea Road. Its predominantly natural character adds to the high natural character of Mt Maude and Lake Hawea.
28. To summarise, the objectives and policies of the PDP emphasise the importance of protecting the characteristics and quality of the ONL's while considering rural living where the landscape can absorb change without degrading those characteristics and qualities. Particular emphasis is placed on visibility from public roads and places. The change in zoning of the site from Rural

to the proposed Rural Lifestyle zone, with the additional proposed objectives and policies, meets the objectives and policies of the PDP and will lead to the protection of the important qualities of the landscape character and amenity of the ONL. An extensive 'no build' area accompanied by extensive native planting would maintain the character and amenity of the site, particularly from public roads and places. A small scale rural lifestyle development could be absorbed by the landscape without degrading those qualities, and the use of native planting on site would maintain and significantly enhance the nature conservation values of the site.

### **Response to Section 42a Report**

29. I have read Ms Mellsop's report, and I will respond to the issues she has raised. I note that Ms Mellsop and I agree on the following:

- my description of the site;
- the site it is part of an ONL;
- the existing Burdon dwelling has been well absorbed by the landscape;
- the general extent of visibility of future dwellings at proposed locations 1-4;
- the site does have some capacity to absorb additional sensitive development at the southern end of the site;
- the proposed zone change includes development at the southern end of the site;  
and
- the proposed objectives and policies will result in a sensitive development.

### ***The effect of the zone change on the natural character and landscape quality of the site***



30. The effect of the zone change on the natural character and landscape quality of the site will be, on balance, a positive effect. There will be an increase in the quality of the natural character from a mixed one of regenerating natives, pastoral grass and undesirable weed species to one of a greater indigenous biodiversity and native natural character. The inclusion of four residential dwellings within this area will have an effect on the natural character and landscape quality by introducing residential activity into a small portion of a much larger natural character. The balance of the site, which is the larger portion, will be managed under the proposed policies to allow for ongoing controls to remove pest and weed species which will aid in further natural regeneration of native species.

31. I do not agree with Ms Mellsop that the effects of the proposed zone will be moderate on the landscapes 'outstandingness', or degrade its current remote and wild qualities. I do not consider that the site is remote or wild as it is part of a farmed station and is not at a significant distance from Lake Hawea Township to be considered remote. Its wild qualities are reduced by being partially grazed on the flatter areas, and the presence of the Burdon dwelling and proximity to Lake Hawea Township.

***The visual effects of the proposal particularly from Makarora-Lake Hawea Road***

32. Ms Mellsop comments on the visual effects of entries, letterboxes, access ways, vehicle movements, smoke from fires and lighting at night.

*Entranceways*

33. I understand that the feedback from NZTA is that only one additional entry onto Makarora-Lake Hawea Road is permitted in addition to the existing entry from the proposed zone. The location of future letterboxes could be at either entry. The first will be at the existing access point used by the Burdons and Glen Dene Station. Additional letterboxes could be added to this access point. The current location of the letterbox is on the western side of the Makarora-

Lake Hawea Road. An additional 1-4 letterboxes will be visible to an observer and will indicate an increased residential use of the site. No aspects of the proposed Rural Lifestyle Zone will be visible from this point.

34. In my opinion the visual effect of the letter boxes will be for a short distance and small timeframe, and while indicating residential use will have a slight effect as they will not be viewed collectively with residential development. The natural character of the road corridor and wider landscape will be maintained.
35. The location of a new entranceway for dwellings, and associated letterboxes at a second point on the Makarora-Lake Hawea Road will be visible as an observer passes the entranceway. An entranceway and letterboxes will introduce a new domestic element into the landscape and the experience of the ONL from Makarora-Lake Hawea Road. The entry and letterboxes, and a dwelling at Location 2 would potentially be partially visible together, and would indicate residential activity on the site. In my opinion the visibility of these elements will be for a short distance, and because of screening planting it is unlikely that the degree of modification to the landscape will be more than slightly visible.

#### *Vehicle movements*

36. Vehicle movements from the northern entry shared by the Burdons and Glen Dene Station will indicate an increase in human activity. As potential dwellings will not be visible from this entry point, it is unlikely to be obvious to an observer that the additional vehicle movements are solely from additional residential development.
37. Vehicle movements from a new entry will indicate residential activity. As the driveway would possibly service 1-4 dwellings the vehicle movements would be small to moderately visible depending on the number of dwellings that use a new driveway entrance, and would only be

experienced at that point on Makarora-Lake Hawea Road. Once past the entranceway it would not be obvious to an observer where the vehicles have come from.

38. I would also note that the driveways and vehicle movements onto Makarora-Lake Hawea Road will not be visible from Lake Hawea Township.

39. The access roads are unlikely to be visible from outside of the site due to the topography of the site and the potential to locate driveways within enclosing topography, and screen them from outside via the proposed screening planting. This would screen vehicle movements within the site.

#### *Smoke from fires*

40. Smoke from fires will possibly be visible from Makarora-Lake Hawea Road, and possibly from more distant viewpoints at Lake Hawea Township. The degree of visibility of this domesticating effect will be slight to negligible in my opinion, and will indicate domestic activity on the site.

#### *Lighting*

41. Lighting at night is likely to be visible from the locations discussed in my report where future dwellings will be visible. This too will be an indication of domestic activity. In my opinion the effect will be none to moderate at night depending on viewpoints and what dwellings are collectively visible. In my assessment a maximum of 4 dwellings would be visible at the same time from Gladstone Township. At other viewpoints the number of dwellings that are partially visible is none to 3 therefore the visual effects of night lighting from dwellings will vary from none to moderate.

42. There is the potential for the visual effects of smoke from fires and lighting at night to be reduced to a lesser effect via the proposed policies to use native vegetation to assist visual

screening of the development. Native vegetation that screens dwellings from outside of the site will also screen night lighting, particularly as native plant species are largely evergreen.

***The sprawl of domestication along the State Highway***

43. The dwelling locations may be perceived as sprawl along Makarora-Lake Hawea Road if all sites were visible collectively from one viewpoint including the existing house belonging to Jerry and Lesley Burdon. The greatest number of potentially visible dwellings would be on locations 1-4 and from Gladstone Township, at an approximate distance of 4.9km. Extensive native planting around locations 1-4 would potentially result in a negligible visual effect, and the perception of sprawl from this viewpoint would therefore also be negligible.
44. I agree with Ms Mellsop that dwellings at proposed locations 1 and 3 are likely to be briefly visible from the Makarora-Lake Hawea Road, and I do not consider that an adverse effect. Dwellings at locations 1 and 3 can be screened with native planting and be inconspicuous as viewed from the road. There is enough distance between the property boundary and the dwelling locations to allow for a significant depth, approximately 41m and 20m of vegetation to ensure visibility of future dwellings it mitigated and reduced to being inconspicuous.
45. I agree with Ms Mellsop that future dwellings may not be visually prominent. I also of the opinion that the proposed zone, the Glen Dene homestead cluster and Burdon dwelling would not be collectively visible or sequentially visible from Makarora-Lake Hawea Road. There would be no clear visible perception of residential sprawl from the road.
46. The Glen Dene homestead cluster and Burdon dwelling are not visible from Lake Hawea Township. The homestead cluster and the Burdon house are visible from Gladstone Township. At this distance the buildings are visible but not highly noticeable and are a very small part of a scene that is dominated by Mt Maude, Mt Gold and Mt Burke, and Lake Hawea. There is potential for dwellings in the proposed zone to be collectively viewed from this point. The

proposed policies however, specific that development is to be inconspicuous from Lake Hawea, and therefore will also be inconspicuous from Gladstone Township, reducing the perception of domestic sprawl alongside the lake to the existing development of the Burdon dwelling and the Glen Dene homestead cluster.

47. There will be a slight cumulative landscape effect of this proposal, Jerry and Lesley Burdon's existing house and the existing Glen Dene Station buildings as it will lead to a small increase in residential development of this side of the ONL.

48. The three locations of built form: the proposal; the Burdon house, and two of the existing Glen Dene Station buildings will be viewed together only from Gladstone Township. At this point parts of future dwellings within the proposed zone, Jerry and Lesley Burdon's existing house, and the roof of a large building and a small shed by the lake edge on Glen Dene Station, will be visible. At the viewing distance of 4.9km, I am of the opinion that dwellings within the proposed zone will be difficult to discern because of the heights, colours and potential revegetation of the Building Restriction Area of the proposed zone. The most visible building at this viewpoint is the small white building on the lake edge at Glen Dene Station. The visual effect from the proposed Rural Lifestyle Zone on the subject site would be negligible from this viewpoint.

49. Submission 384 from Glen Dene Station seeks a small Rural Lifestyle Zone around the existing Glen Dene homestead, to allow for up to 6 dwellings. A no-build area is proposed for the north eastern corner of this area where it fronts Lake Hawea. Ms Mellisop has also assessed submission 384 and believes that the area proposed to be rezoned to Rural Lifestyle zone could absorb a maximum of 3 dwellings if it was appropriately designed, located and landscaped including screening from Makarora-Lake Hawea Road.

50. There will be a cumulative effect resulting from both proposed zones if the submissions are both accepted. As a Rural Lifestyle zone around the existing Glen Dene homestead, if designed appropriately, would not be visible from either Makarora-Lake Hawea Road, the visual cumulative effect would be no greater than the effect from only re-zoning the subject site. The effect would still be negligible from Gladstone Township.
51. The cumulative landscape effects would increase to a slight to moderate degree as it would be a greater increase in residential development if both submissions were accepted.

***The benefit of the ecological enhancement from a landscape perspective***

52. I agree with Ms Mellsop that the potential revegetation of the Building Restriction Area would be small. However, it would be in comparison to the much larger, dominant landscape the site is located in. On the scale of the site, revegetation of the BRA would be significant as the majority of the site would eventually be revegetated and have a more purely native natural character than it currently does which is a natural character made up of native species, exotic shrubs and trees and pastoral grass.
53. The effect of the zone change on the natural character and landscape quality of the site will be a positive and small effect to the natural character at the broader scale of the ONL, and a significant effect at the scale of the site. The increase in natural character and proportion of native species will have a positive effect on the landscape quality of the site.

**Resource Management Act**

54. Sections 6 and 7 of the RMA emphasise the importance of protecting ONLs from inappropriate use and protecting the amenity values and quality of the environment. In my opinion the proposed rezoning of the site can meet the intentions of Sections 6 and 7 because of the specific policies, objectives and rules which will maintain and enhance the amenity values and qualities of the environment.

## Conclusion

55. The site is part of an ONL. The extent of the ONL includes the surface of Lake Hawea, Mt Maude and the lake edge. The site itself has a landscape character that is in harmony with the greater landscape character as it displays the same landscape elements that make up that character – predominantly natural topography and vegetation cover with minor pastoral cover and little built form.
56. The site is proposed to be rezoned Rural Lifestyle with its own specific policies, objectives and rules in addition to those already contained within the PDP.
57. The proposed policies, objectives and rules propose a development of 5 lots, including the existing house of Lesley and Jerry Burdon. The 4 new lots are subject to proposed policies, objectives and rules that seek to create a development which is largely absorbed by the landscape through building design controls, and screening via native planting. The site forms part of a vast ONL. The proposed zone, and in particular the area of development is very small in scale in comparison.
58. The proposal will change the character of the site from natural and pastoral to residential and natural with the natural aspect eventually being the dominant character. The visual effects of the proposed zone change are likely to decrease from moderate to slight overall as screening vegetation matures. Built form of a low height and recessive appearance will assist in reducing the visual effect, but possibly not as effectively as planting.
59. Overall, I consider that the landscape and visual effects of the proposed zone can be mitigated. There is a positive landscape effect in that the naturalness of the site would be enhanced significantly, and a visual effect that can be mitigated.