

Introduction

Background

This urban character appraisal has been prepared as one of several studies and mapping exercises specifically contributing to the Queenstown and Wanaka High Density Residential Zones Review. Other parts of the review include considerations of accessibility, land use and amenity.

The review aims to further delineate the existing High Density Residential Subzones, resulting in a set of proposed District Plan zoning classifications that achieve:

- Visitor Accommodation (VA) neighbourhoods
- Residential neighbourhoods
- Areas where VA or residential use could dominate
- Areas where Community Housing may be encouraged

This review has a geographic scope of the existing High Density Residential (HDR) zones within the towns of Queenstown and Wanaka and the subsequent sub zones as defined by the Decision on Plan Change 10 (Improving the Amenity in the High Density Residential Zones). However, this appraisal could also inform subsequent projects, including:

- The consideration of changes to the existing boundaries of the Queenstown and Wanaka high and medium density subzones
- The application of the subzone classifications to additional areas in the District.
- The consideration of areas where additional height and/or density are appropriate

Purpose

This character appraisal aims to provide a broad overview of the existing character of the HDR zones, following an on-site visual appraisal conducted during August 2007.

The overall purpose of this urban character appraisal is fourfold:

- To define broad character units within the Queenstown and Wanaka HDR zones
- To identify the predominant patterns of each character unit that contribute to their distinctiveness.
- To identify character differences between units to enable comparative appraisal between character units
- To provide sufficient information to make further expert judgments and inform recommendations for future character related development provisions.

Appraisal Methodology

For the purpose of this study, we have utilised a simplified approach based on difference of appearance, identification of predominant features, and a descriptive process that seeks to identify relative qualities based on a set of urban character criteria.

Criteria are applied relative to the spectrum of existing characteristics found in the Queenstown and Wanaka HDR zones. The scope of urban development assessed falls between a continuum of small scale cottages on large single garden lots to substantial hotel complexes established by lot aggregation. However, this methodology is relevant only to those extremes found in Queenstown and Wanaka HDR zones and does not represent the full spectrum of potential urban character found in other parts of these towns or across the wider District.

Queenstown and Wanaka are both places of dynamic growth and existing characteristics may gradually change over the course of the review and subsequent statutory processes. This appraisal identifies the predominant features and the extent to which these combine in a particular area at one 'snap shot' in time.

The methodology is divided into four stages:

1. Identification
2. Classification
3. Urban Characterisation
4. Summary Description and Comments

1 Identification of Character Units

The existing HDR zones were divided into a number of distinct areas, or character units, based on perceived visual character differences within these zones. These were established principally by expert viewer observations from adjacent areas of public access during the on-site visits. Each of these character units contain a number of common elements that contribute to their identification.

The value of a character appraisal is to define predominant characteristics across broad areas. If the grain of a character appraisal is too fine, for example down to individual lots or ownership boundaries, it would lose much of its comparative usefulness. Invariably, parts of each character unit may include some inconsistencies and these are highlighted in the measure of cohesion and comments within the summary descriptions.

The character units were photographically recorded from adjacent roads and subsequently verified by examination of aerial photography and GIS mapping (e.g. cadastral boundaries, contours and plot sizes). Representative ground level and aerial photographs of the character units accompany each description.

In several locations, similar characteristics extend into adjacent development, beyond the boundaries of the existing HDR zones under appraisal. This study only broadly comments on any such occurrence but does not extend to character units in other parts of the Queenstown and Wanaka townships.



An example of a Character Unit

2 Classification of Character Elements

Character arises from a distinctive configuration of natural and man-made elements that establish a set of common or repetitive features, which give rise to a similar overall appearance. Classification is a process of sorting and grouping these quantifiable components of landscape and built elements. We have used this process simply to define what the viewer considered typical or predominant characteristics of each character unit.

Within this part of the methodology, classification is a three-stage process:

- 1) Breaking down of the overall character into component groups
- 2) Division of these into sub-groups of their respective elements
- 3) Selection of attributes typical to each character unit.

A list of those character elements considered is provided in the table below:

Grouping (components)	Sub-grouping (components)
Site Characteristics	Gradient Site Size Site Coverage Boundary Definition
Built Form	Relationship to Ground Form Building Age Building Condition Building Type Building Setback Building Height/Storeys Building Materials
Landscape	Street Edge/ Interface Boundary Treatments Planting Ratio Access Ways Parking Configuration

3 Urban Characterisation

Although the classification process identifies predominant physical features, it does not of itself describe the character that is achieved by the various combinations of these elements. Characterisation, the third step of the process, addresses this and enables all character units to be compared on a like-for-like basis.

This methodology identifies five principle criteria that can be used to provide a simplified description of each character unit. To achieve this, each of these criteria is considered in respect of five graded words representing positions along a continuum of magnitude or quality. In general the third (central) word is reasonably neutral, representing a mid-point to the continuum. In some cases, where there are two equally weighted extremes within the character unit, an average term may be used. The selected word is chosen to best describe the character in respect of each of the criteria. This selection process is relative to the Wanaka / Queenstown HDR zone and should not be compared with other parts of each town or other townships. These criteria and descriptive words are set out below:

Urban Characterisation

Scale	intimate	small	moderate	large	substantial
Balance	verdant	vegetated	uniform	dominant	hard-edged
Cohesion	strong	consistent	mixed	fragmented	weak
Maturity	historic	established	settled	young	undeveloped
Condition	manicured	managed	reasonable	poor	neglected

Although the words are descriptive by nature, they have been selected to avoid emotive or qualitative judgments. This selection is difficult due to constraints of language and we accept that chosen words may not appear equally “spaced” along the continuum. To maintain consistency, we have set out a written definition of each of these criteria and their descriptive words in Appendix A. We have also provided a photograph that best illustrates each of the descriptive words. Although these five criteria may not be exhaustive, a descriptive approach to character appraisal provides a means of more readily summarising character differences, avoiding an overly complex quantitative and analytical approach.

The resultant characterisation words can then be incorporated into a Summary Description for each character unit and compiled into a comparative table.

4 Summary Description and Comments

A broad summary description is provided for each character unit that records the results of each methodology stage and is divided into five parts:

- 1) A record of the location, which is aided by the supporting maps and aerial photo, and a definition of the boundaries or edges that define the **Character Unit**. These boundaries may be set by the limits of the HDR zone and/ or where transition occurs to areas of distinct character change. Generally, cadastral boundaries are used to simplify the task of defining boundaries where character unit transitions may be less distinct.
- 2) The key criteria derived from the **Urban Characterisation** process are then used to summarise the character unit. A brief explanation is provided where further qualification of the criteria deemed necessary to justify the selection.
- 3) Predominant features drawn from the **Classification of Character Elements**, are summarised in this part. In particular, it covers physical attributes such as the built form, section size, topography relationships, vegetation coverage, access ways, parking and boundary treatments or identify those characteristics particularly sensitive to change. Representative photos have also been chosen to illustrate these classifications.
- 4) Final comments are provided where parts of the character unit are not regarded as predominant but identify character inconsistencies, peculiarities, landmarks or particularly noteworthy features within the fabric of the character unit.
- 5) The **Urban Characterisation** table with highlighting the selected descriptive word for each criteria.

Queenstown 03

Summary Description

This character unit is located on the south western edge of central Queenstown, east of One Mile Creek. Two other recreation reserves define the southern and northern boundaries, including Queenstown Commemorative Park (Landed Basic Reserve) to the east and north west, beyond Glasgow and Thompson Streets, small scale cabins (Q04) and large scale hotel developments (Q05) define the remaining edges respectively.

The characterisation identifies the unit to be of a moderate scale as a consequence of many two storey buildings and several recent multi-unit developments. The variety of building styles and set backs generates a mixed balance with a regulated balance arising from established garden planting and lush surroundings. These combine to give a settled maturity. Evidence of a working community alongside private holiday homes conveys a unit in reasonable condition.

Predominant Features

- Detached one or two storey buildings on moderately sized sites
- Buildings set out onto gently undulating land with long areas often placed over garages
- Buildings generally address the street with soft and more informal boundary treatments of lawns, shrubs and small trees.

Comment

- Some sites within the unit are situated on the hilly ground at the base of Ben Lomond
- Recent multi-unit and duplex developments, particularly on corner sites and adjacent to the river reserve, have reduced the sense of cohesion
- Parts of the unit east of Glasgow Street have been largely obscured with the few remaining buildings in a more neglected condition.

Urban Characterisation

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A sample Character Unit Sheet showing the five descriptive parts