

PRIVATE PLAN CHANGE 1 – THE HILLS RESORT ZONE – SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE OF YVONNE PFLÜGER ON BEHALF OF THE REQUESTOR

1. My full name is Yvonne Pflüger. I am a registered member of the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects with over 25 years experience in a wide range of landscape assessments on projects of various scales for both applicants and councils. I am a Partner with Boffa Miskell Limited (**BML**), based in our Queenstown office. I hold a Master's degree in Landscape Planning from BOKU University, Vienna (Austria, 2001) and a Master's degree in Natural Resources Management and Ecological Engineering from Lincoln University (NZ, 2005). My experience is set out in detail in my evidence.
2. I have been engaged by the requestor, The Hills Resort Limited (**THRL**), to provide advice and give evidence in relation to THRL's request to change the provisions of The Hills Resort Zone (**HRZ**) and the HRZ Structure Plan to facilitate the rerouting of the existing 18-hole golf course by amending the location and extent of existing Activity Areas, and to establish new Activity Areas and Homesites (the **Plan Change** or **PC**).
3. I have prepared a statement of evidence dated 13th March 2026 on landscape matters arising from the Plan Change request. I participated in expert conferencing with Ms Bridget Gilbert for QLDC, as outlined in the Joint Witness Statement (Landscape) dated 27th March 2026. I prepared the Landscape and Visual Assessment dated 9 May 2025 (**LVA**) that accompanied the notified Plan Change Request documents.
4. I have visited the property and surrounding public viewpoints on numerous occasions over the past ten years, including several times in 2026.
5. In this summary statement I will provide a summary of my evidence and address matters arising since I prepared that evidence, including matters arising from submitters.
6. I confirm that in preparing this summary evidence and my 13th March 2026 evidence I have complied with the Code of Conduct for Expert Witness contains in the Environment Court Practice Notice 2023. In the LVA I provided an Assessment Methodology, based on best practice guidance¹, which I also applied to my evidence.

¹ Te Tangi a te Manu: Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines

Summary of Evidence

7. The amendments proposed to the HRZ through the Plan Change comprise of relatively small changes to the location and layout of approved Activity Areas. The changes are required to enable an enhanced golf course design and also provide for an additional eleven Homesites.
8. The proposed Homesites straddle two visual catchments. HS 6-8 are located to the west of existing HS 5 within the visual catchment facing McDonnell Road, whereas HS 9-16 are located in the south-west of the HRZ facing Hogans Gully Road.
9. While new Homesites are proposed, the building coverage in some of the approved/proposed activity areas will be lowered, leading to only a small overall increase of built form across the HRZ. The majority of the HRZ will remain as open space.
10. Specifically designed planting areas are proposed, including LAMAs for the new Homesites and amended Activity Areas that will largely screen built form, and extensive structural planting areas (SPAs) that will visually integrate the proposed Homesites into the wider development area.
11. In her evidence on the Plan Change Request, QLDC's landscape architect, Ms Gilbert, makes a number of recommendations as to amendments required to ensure that the potential landscape effects of the Plan Change can be minimised. Ms Gilbert states (para 1.9 of her evidence) that if amendments she recommends are incorporated, 'the landscape-related effects of the development enabled by THRZ PC1 change will be minor; and 'the development outcome will maintain the landscape character and amenity values of THRZ and the surrounding environment, making it appropriate from a landscape perspective.' The changes she recommends also address the landscape issues raised in submissions on the Plan Change.
12. In the LVA I concluded (p.28) that 'the new homesites in the south-western part of the HRZ have been located in parts of the terrain where they can be absorbed with low visual effects from public viewpoints. While low-moderate visual effects may be experienced from some elevated private viewpoints on the southern side of Hogans Gully Road, the landscape character would be maintained.' While I continue to hold this view, I agree with Ms Gilbert that the visual effects of some of the homesites can be minimised further through design amendments. These are (in summary):
 - a. Lowering the maximum building heights for most of the new Homesites (HS) in the Hogans Gully catchment (i.e. HS 9-12 and HS 15-16).

- b. Minor repositioning of HS15.
 - c. Expansion of the Structural Planting Areas (SPA) in the Hogans Gully catchment.
13. In my 13 March 2026 evidence I provide an assessment of these changes and respond to the landscape related issues raised in submissions and in the section 42A reports. Other changes (made since notification) that I address are:
- a. Amendments to the provisions (rules) for the Sports Court and Garden Area (SGAA).
 - b. A new mitigation planting requirement adjacent to the vehicle access for HS5-8 and cycle trail, in vicinity to the Dan property (214 McDonnell Road, Submitter #15).
14. Given it is proposed to lower the maximum building height for new HS 9-12 and 15-16, the visual simulations included with the LVA have been updated to reflect the new (lowered) maximum building heights. The updated visual simulations are in Attachment 1 to my evidence. The updates relate to viewpoints within the Hogans Gully catchment (Viewpoint 5-10). Other viewpoints are not affected.

Submitter Evidence

15. Since I prepared my evidence, evidence on behalf of submitters has been lodged. I have reviewed the submitter evidence, in particular, the evidence of Mr Dan and Mr Todd. I make the following comments in response.
- a. S Dan Evidence (Submission #15):
 - i. Mr Dan outlines in his evidence that he supports the proposed mitigation planting (as a matter of control²) for the cycle trail/HS access, and requests that it applies to his northern boundary. I understand that the rule (matter of control) is not limited to Mr Dan's western boundary, and that under the rule, the necessity of mitigation planting on Mr Dan's northern boundary can be considered, meaning no further amendment to address planting on the northern boundary is required.
 - ii. Mr Dan requests that the existing hedge is to be maintained at a height that does not unreasonably block his views to the mountains. Given that this is not a

² THRL has proposed to include a matter of control in Rule 47.4.1 (f) "Planting to ensure maintenance of privacy to Lot 2 DP 518669" that enables the assessment of necessary planting at the time consent is sought to form the trail.

landscape issue, given the hedge is already there, it is assumed that this will be addressed through discussions outside of the PC process.

b. G Todd Evidence (Submission #2):

- i. In paragraphs 10 – 13 Mr Todd raises concerns in relation to Activity Area 4 and its potential visibility if the existing vegetation within LAMA L4 is not retained.
- ii. I note that the RL for Activity Area A4 is 417.3 masl with a maximum building height of 6m. As shown on Figure 1 below, the mounding within L4 is proposed to be to a height of up to 413masl. Given the elevated viewpoint on Advance Terrace, the top 4m of buildings within the proposed activity area may be visible without screening provided by planting.
- iii. The existing planting consists of poplars and other deciduous trees in the foreground on the southern half of L4 and clusters of conifers within the northern part of L4.
- iv. The proposed planting along the majority of L4, in particular the top of the mounding, includes trees that would 2.5m high at the time of planting. In light of the proposed planting, the top 1.5m of buildings within A4 would potentially be visible immediately following construction and implementation of LAMA mitigation planting from the elevated viewpoint on Advance Terrace. Most likely, planting would consist of mountain beech trees which are evergreen and grow around 0.8m a year. It is, therefore, anticipated that visual effects initially would be low, reducing to very low within around 3 years.
- v. I consider this to be acceptable from a landscape perspective and that the existing vegetation within L4 does not need to be retained to address the visual effects of buildings within the adjacent Activity Area, A4.



Figure 1 showing detail of LAMA mounding and planting to the east of L4.

Landscape Joint Witness Statement

16. As outlined in the JWS, council's landscape expert Ms Gilbert and I are in general agreement that the landscape effects of the development enabled by THRZ PC will be minor, and the development outcome will maintain the landscape character and amenity values of THRZ and the surrounding environment, making it appropriate from a landscape perspective.
17. We also agree that the new access from Hogans Gully Road is appropriate from a landscape effects perspective.
18. As signalled in the JWS, in order to provide a clear understanding of the amended provisions and supporting analytical material in comparison with the notified PC documents, the following information was provided in a Memorandum by the Requestor on 2nd April 2026:
 - a. A full Structure Plan on an aerial photograph base with contours (as shown in the notified structure plan package).

- b. A version of the visual simulations with no planting (as shown in the notified structure plan package). These simulations are in addition to the versions of the visual simulations with rendered planting that are attached to my evidence.

Conclusions

19. The existing HRZ Structure Plan provides for built form within parts of the Site where effects can be largely internalised with only limited/partial visibility of Activity Areas and Homesites from outside. The same design principles have been applied to the proposed new Homesites and the amendments to the Activity Areas.
20. Overall, the amendments to the Activity Areas are of a size and nature that they are unlikely to be readily detectable from outside the site and are aimed at a better integration of buildings with the golf course environment.
21. The proposed Homesites provide for future buildings comparable in size to what could be established on the existing Homesites. The existing HRZ provisions (rules) contain design controls to ensure that all buildings are recessive in appearance. These controls will apply to future buildings on the proposed Homesites.
22. When formulating the Plan Change revisions, it was important to achieve a cohesive design which ties the already approved development areas and the proposed development areas together and achieves an overall visual coherence with a similar landscape character and visual amenity across the entirety of the Zone. Even with the addition of the proposed Homesites, the majority of the Zone will continue to be open space with clustered buildings arranged around the new golf course layout.
23. The addition of new Homesites on the south-western side of the HRZ will lead to a change in this part of the Zone as future buildings will be partially visible from some viewpoints in this visual catchment. In the LVA, I assessed the visual effects of the proposed Homesites as low or low-moderate from some private and public viewpoints along Hogans Gully Road. Since I prepared the LVA, reductions have been made to the maximum height of future buildings on most of the proposed Homesites in the Hogans Gully catchment (HS9-12 and 15-16) in response to submitters' concerns and Ms Gilbert's recommendations, and to minimise their visual effects. The height reductions mean that now only very small parts of future buildings on these homesites will be visible from the submitters' properties and public roads. I consider that with the height reductions, the proposed Hogans Gully Homesites will give rise to very low to low visual effects.

- 24.** In addition to the Homesites height reductions, since I prepared the LVA, recommendations by Ms Gilbert in her evidence regarding the extension of the SPAs in the Hogans Gully catchment have been accepted and the SPAs have been enlarged to further improve the visual integration of HS buildings in this area.
- 25.** Furthermore, changes are proposed to the provisions (rules) for the Sports Gardens Activity Area (SGAA) to limit the number and reduce the scale of buildings that could establish in this Activity Area, which means that the visual effects of this Activity Area on private properties on Advance Terrace would be very low.
- 26.** In relation to Activity Area A4 I conclude that the overall visual effects of the amended A4 will be comparable to the currently approved location due to the screening landform and planting extending along the north-eastern side of the Activity Area which will provide visual separation from McDonnell Road and the Arrowtown escarpment. Both Ms Gilbert and I consider the adverse visual effects of A4 and SGAA from these two properties to be low.
- 27.** For A2 the proposed extension is located to the north, further away from the submitter's residence, and visually separated by a LAMA along the property boundary. Since the tops of the activity area may be visible from the Page residence, it is proposed to reduce the building height to 7m for the entire area which means that any adverse visual effects of additional built form arising from the extension of the Activity Area would be outweighed by the height reduction of the approved development in this activity area.
- 28.** I, therefore, maintain the view expressed in my evidence and consider that the proposed amendments to the HRZ will ensure that built development will be visually integrated with the existing environment, while maintaining the high amenity of open space that contributes to the surroundings and the internal quality of the resort.
- 29.** Taking account of the opinions I expressed in the LVA and the revisions to the proposal made since, which further reduce the proposal's landscape and visual effects, I am of the view that the proposal will be in character with the existing environment and create very low adverse effects on the landscape and visual amenity values as experienced from outside the HRZ.

Yvonne Pflüger

14 April 2026

