

Memorandum



Date: 2/04/26

Job No: 2024

No of Pages: 7

To: Rosie Hill, Todd Walker (Rosie.hill@toddwalker.com)

From: Bruce Harland, Director Harland Urban Design & Planning

Re: Urban Design Memo in Support of amended PDP provisions and rezoning to HDR A Zone for One Mile Holdings Limited, 100-102 Fernhill Hill Road, Queenstown

1.0 Background

100-102 Fernhill Road (the Site) is zoned High Density Residential (HDR) under the PDP and is subject to the Urban Intensification Variation (UIV). When initially notified, the UIV proposed to increase height limits on the Site from 7m (on sloping sites) and 12m (on flat sites) to 16.5m high, amongst other changes. This was by virtue of it being identified to remain as HDR zoning, but being subject to a UIV-wide approach to revised PDP provisions for that zoning. A Director of One Mile Holdings Limited (Mr Cruikshank) lodged submissions in support of the UIV which included the increased permitted height limit. The UIV decision however resulted in lowering these initially proposed changes back to the existing PDP status, and retaining zoning of the Site as HDR rather than HDR A.

As part of the decision of the QLDC on the UIV the High Density Residential (HDR) zone was split into two zones, with a new High Density Residential A (HDR A) zone being created in relatively close proximity to the Queenstown town centre, with a commensurate increase in height limits. Under the UIV decision the Site and the adjoining Platinum Villas and Rendezvous Hotel retained the HDR zoning rather than the HDR A zoning and therefore did not result in any additional permitted height increase over what was originally proposed in the UIV.

The Site was originally part of QLDC landholdings but was sold off in the 1990's, for the purpose of establishing the development of a resort hotel condominium complex for commercial visitors and travellers' accommodation and is subject to a covenant requiring as such. This special treatment reflects the key locational attributes of the Site that include elevated views across Lake Whakatipu, the Remarkables, and its relative proximity to the town centre. It also reflects a planning history for the Site which recognises site-specific factors as compared to surrounding site and land use.

Over the years, a number of resource consent applications have been applied for (and approved) which include proposals considerably in excess of the 7m height limit (for sloping sites) and 12m height limit now proposed as part of the UIV decision.

This memo discusses a number of factors that are highly relevant from a principled urban design perspective to demonstrate the provisions of the HDR A Zone would be appropriate to apply to the Site.

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2.0 Site Context

The site is relatively large and consists of 9107m² in two titles (Lot 3 and Lot 4 DP 355069) and is essentially vacant although there is an approved resource consent (RM 250225) for two temporary relocatable houses on the property, one of which has been built. The existing house operates as a short term visitor accommodation (e.g. Airbnb). Figure 1 shows the location of the site and its immediate context. Directly opposite the site is the Rendezvous Heritage Hotel and Two Mile Creek, while immediately to the southeast and north-east of the site are the Platinum Villa apartments. These villas have all been separated into unit titles, while the Rendezvous Hotel is held in one title.



Figure 1 – Location of One Mile Holdings Limited landholding at 100-102 Fernhill Road (marked as red)

The Site itself consists of a relatively flat area on the south-eastern third of the Site, with the remaining part of the Site sloping quite steeply to the boundary with the Council's water reservoir. The land behind the Site rises steeply and is zoned informal recreation and will therefore not be impacted by loss of views to any existing or future residential properties.

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Large development sites in close proximity to the town centre are relatively rare and it makes good sense to ensure that efficient use of the Site is not foreclosed by provisions that are not otherwise necessary or effective from an urban design or other planning perspective. In the wider context, the Site is located in relatively close proximity to the Queenstown town centre, with Steamer Wharf being approximately 1300m from the Site (refer Figure 2). There is a bus stop located circa 60m from the Site on Fernhill Road with frequent services to Queenstown town centre, Frankton and the airport.



Figure 2 – Location of Site in relation to Town Centre

The Site and its immediate urban neighbours are a relatively discrete area that is separated from adjoining urban development by the steep gullies and heavily vegetated One Mile and Two Mile Creeks, in addition to the elevation that is circa 30m above Lake Whakatipu. Also contributing to this discrete and separate urban pocket, is the Council reserve land behind the site that includes a water reservoir and the Wynyard mountain bike jump park. At the same time, this discrete locality is only circa 1.3km to Steamer Wharf in the Queenstown town centre. To this end, applying different PDP zoning or provisions to the Site as compared to surrounding neighbouring sites or areas would not result in an incongruous urban design outcome in reality, or having future development of the Site reading as a form of inappropriate ‘spot zoning’.

3.0 Rational for HDR A Zoning

As discussed above, the Site is in a relatively discrete area which has a number of special circumstances that warrant consideration as a HDR A zoning even though it is not part of a contiguous

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built up area from the town centre. Locational attributes such as proximity to the town centre and frequent bus route are discussed in further detail below.

In this broader context, I note that the Site has equal if not better accessibility to the town centre as the western end of Thompson Street, which was upzoned to HDR A zone through the UIV decisions. The distance of 100 Fernhill Road to the town centre is only an extra 200m compared to walking from the end of Thompson Street and given the high quality of the walking experience (discussed below) the additional distance will not be considered a deterrent to walking. Furthermore, unlike Thompson Street the subject Site is located on a high frequency bus route, with a stop within a 1 minute walk from the Site, significantly enhancing the overall accessibility of the subject land. In addition, the western Thompson Street area is made up of small fragmented lots (circa 500-800m²) which will be difficult to consolidate and develop unlike the large landholding of the subject Site.

Similarly, I note (refer to Figure 3) that the UIV decision has extended the High Density Residential A zone to the east of the town centre, some 1300m from the edge of the town centre zoning, with even further distances required to walk to the lakefront heart of the town centre.

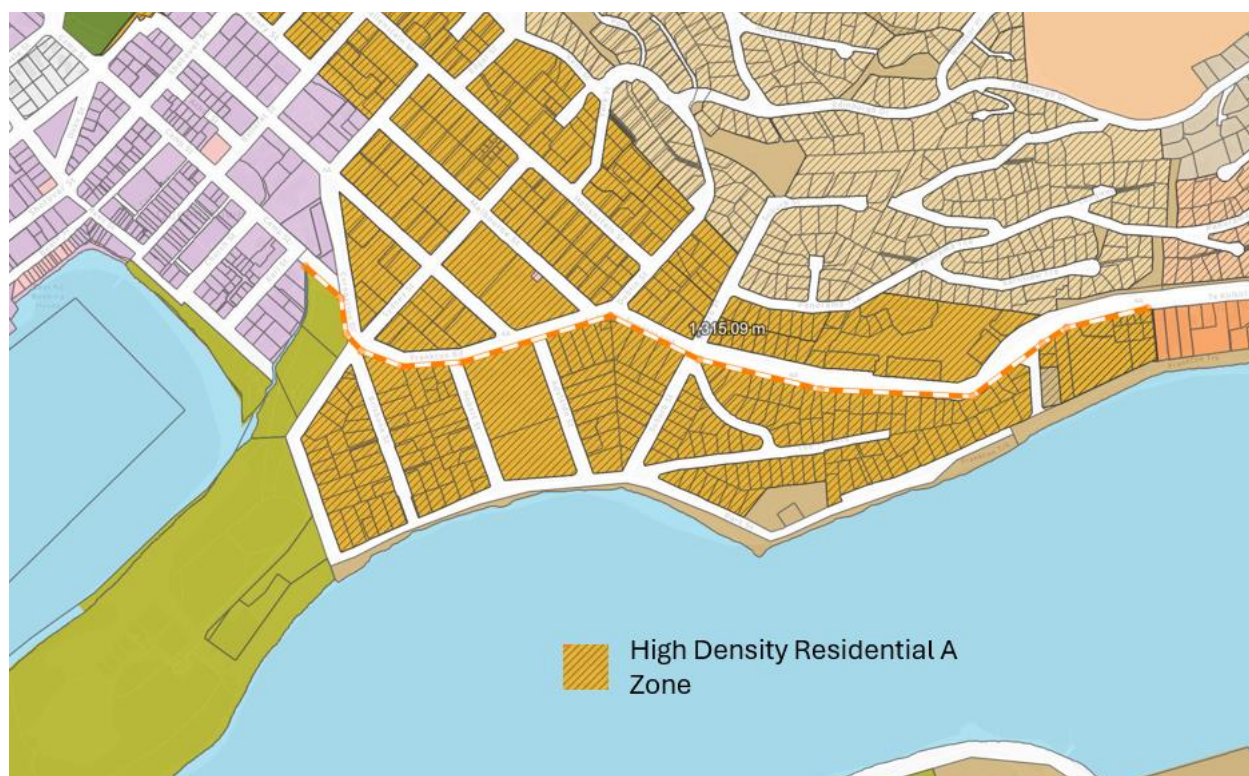


Figure 3 – UIV Decision - Extent of HDR A Zone to the east of the town centre

High Frequency Bus Route

The Site is on a high frequency bus route¹ with services approximately every 15 minutes from 6am to 8pm and every half hour from 8pm to 12.30am seven days a week. A "high frequency" bus route is generally defined by the "turn-up-and-go" principle, where the service operates often enough that passengers do not need to consult a timetable.

¹ Auckland transport define this as every 15minutes 7am to 7pm, 7 days a week. [Frequent buses on key routes](#)

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Bus route 1 runs from Sunshine Bay and passes past the Site, through the Queenstown town centre, along Frankton Road connecting with the Airport and ultimately terminating at Remarkables Park. There is a bus stop including an all-weather shelter for town centre bound trips located approximately 60m (1 minute walk) from the subject Site on Fernhill Road. Travel time from this bus stop is a short 4-minute ride to Steamer Wharf/ Crown Plaza, while the central bus interchange on Stanley Street is only 10 minutes by bus.

The return bus stop is also in very close proximity to the Site, located outside the Rendezvous Heritage Hotel which includes a safe refuge island to cross Fernhill Road. Although the Site is considered walkable to the town centre, it is acknowledged that due to factors such as gradient or extreme weather (e.g. ice/snowy conditions) there may be occasions where taking the bus is an easy, convenient and accessible option for some users.

Given the high frequency of bus services, the proximity to the town centre and bus stops within 1 minute walk of the Site, it is considered that the location is highly accessible by public transport.

Walkable Town Centre Access

The Queenstown town centre is identified as a Metropolitan centre in the QLDC Spatial Plan and is a major draw for visitors and residents and encompasses a wide range of retail, food and beverage, cultural, recreation, employment, visitor accommodation and learning opportunities. The town centre is a powerful destination and is arguably the most compact walkable town centre in the country, which has seen pedestrian numbers increase since Covid and the significant pedestrian improvements to central pedestrian areas including Rees and Beach Streets.

The Site is located circa 1.3km from Steamer Wharf which would equate to approximately a 17 minute walk at an average speed of 1.3m/second², This is a well recognised average walking speed which allows for minor delays of which there are few on the walk to Steamer Wharf.

Although a 17 minute walk is just outside the well accepted practice for walkable distances to a town centre or metro centre³ there are many factors that contribute to the walkability of a location. Pedestrians perceive the walking environment through a range of factors, including accessibility, aesthetics, comfort, convenience, attractiveness, familiarity, connectivity, safety (traffic safety), and security (personal safety, fear of crime)⁴

The walk itself is a direct, safe and legible route along Fernhill Road to the Lake Esplanade walkway that leads directly to Steamer Wharf and the town centre. Steamer Wharf sits alongside Earnslaw Park an important civic place and the waterfront promenade, one of the most highly visited parts of the Queenstown town centre where virtually every visitor to Queenstown traverses the path around the town centre waterfront during their visit.⁵

Key factors that contribute to the walkable access to the town centre are further discussed below.

² Munro The Problem of Catchment in Centres-based Residential Growth Planning

³ Auckland Council- PC 120 – Proposes a 1200m walkable catchment from the City Centre Zone

⁴ Nandita Basu, Oscar Oviedo-Trespalacios, Mark King, Md. Kamruzzaman, Md. Mazharul Haque, The influence of the built environment on pedestrians' perceptions of attractiveness, safety and security, Transportation Research Part F: Traffic Psychology and Behaviour, Volume 87, 2022,

⁵ [Queenstown Lakes District Council | NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi](#)

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Quality of the experience/aesthetics

Research in urban psychology and design consistently shows that people will walk further in environments they find stimulating⁶. This phenomenon is often referred to as psychological walking distance, the idea that the perception of distance is shortened when a route is engaging. The walk from the Site to the town centre is without doubt one of the most spectacular town centre walking experiences in the country (refer to images 1-5 below).

The walk encompasses stunning elevated views across Lake Whakatipu to surrounding mountains as well as the beautiful lakeside esplanade before arriving at the vibrant steamer wharf / Earnslaw Park location. There is also an attractive alternative short bush walk experience from the Fernhill Roundabout which comes out close to the bus stop on Fernhill Round near the Site. Walking this route not only reveals world class landscapes but there is also a good opportunity for people watching (a favourite human pastime), particularly along the busy lake esplanade area. These factors all combine to connect with a sense of place and enhance the walking experience while also contributing to the perception that distance is shortened through such an engaging route.



Image 1: Views across Queenstown Bay to the Remarkables from Lake Esplanade
(Source: Alex Dunn, The Property Group)



Image 2: -Views of Cecil & Walter Peak from Lake Esplanade
(Source: Alex Dunn, The Property Group)

⁶ Hillnhütter, H. (2022). Stimulating urban walking environments – Can we measure the effect? Environment and Planning B: Urban Analytics and City Science, 49(1), 275-289.

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Image 3: – Elevated Lake and Remarkables Views from Fernhill Road near bus stop
(Source: Alex Dunn, The Property Group)



Image 4: Entrance to Alternative off road walking track from near the bus stop on Fernhill Road.
(Source: Alex Dunn, The Property Group)



Image 5: Alternative Walking Track near Fernhill Roundabout
(Source: Alex Dunn, The Property Group)

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Gradient (comfort)

Approximately one third of the walk from the Site to the town centre is on Fernhill Road, with an average gradient of 9.8%, while the remaining two thirds of the walk being on flat land along the Lake Esplanade. Although the average gradient on the hill section of the walk will inevitably be slower for return walking speeds, the gradient is still less than 10% after which research suggests that walking speeds could slow by at least 15 percent.⁷⁸

For those people that are less able or simply cannot be bothered with the walk back from the town centre – having already walked extensively throughout the town centre, there is the option of a high frequency bus service that stops almost outside 100 Fernhill Road and is only a 4 minute trip from Steamer Wharf. Overall the gradient is not considered to be major barrier to accessibility in this instance.

People walk further on holiday

As discussed in the background section, the Site is subject to a covenant that requires it to be developed for visitor accommodation/hotel and it is the clients intention to ultimately develop this significant Site for that purpose.

Although the Site is on the edge of normal walkable catchments to town centres, research consistently shows that tourists on holiday exhibit significantly different walking behaviours, often covering much greater distances to reach amenities and town centres⁹. Because tourists primarily walk for recreation and exploration, they are more likely to exceed the distance thresholds that would normally cause a resident to switch to a car or public transport.

Convenience

Another factor impacting on walking verses car based travel is the fact that car parking is becoming increasing scare/and expensive in central Queenstown along with congestion at peak times. Walking or taking public transport to the town centre also allows for the opportunity to enjoy the world class bar and restaurant scene without having to worry about drink driving.

Safety

The walking route has well defined footpaths that have relatively high pedestrian numbers along the Lake Esplanade and good informal surveillance from passing cars on Fernhill Road which contributes a sense of safety and security while walking. Speed limits are relatively slow urban speeds of 40kph on the key arterials of Lake Esplanade and Fernhill Road and do not undermine the walking experience.

Conclusion

Given the Site's unique attributes including its large size, elevated yet relatively discrete position, and accessible location to the Town Centre by both walking and frequent public transport, the Site warrants consideration for higher density and design flexibility afforded through the increased height limit from 12m to 16.5m as provided in the High Density Residential A zone.

⁷ Ladetto, et. Al. Human Walking Analysis Assisted by DGPS, research paper, Geodetic Laboratory, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Lausanne, Switzerland

⁸ File:Tobler's hiking function.svg - Wikimedia Commons

⁹ Swarnali Dihingia; Morten Gjerde; and Brenda Vale Walking Tourist: Review of Research to date. J. Urban Plann. Dev., 2022, 148(2): 04022017