

**BEFORE THE HEARING PANEL APPOINTED BY THE QUEENSTOWN LAKES
DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Under of the Resource Management Act
1991

In the Matter of a request under clause 21 of the
First Schedule to the Act for a
Change to the Queenstown Lakes
Proposed District Plan (Private Plan
Change 1)

By **THE HILLS RESORT LIMITED**

**Evidence of Richard Brett Thomson for The
Hills Resort Limited**

Dated: 13 March 2026

INTRODUCTION

1. My name is Richard Brett Thomson. I am Design Manager and Director of design consultancy, RBT Design Limited, established in 2012.
2. I hold the qualifications of Bachelor of Science from the University of Canterbury and a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture from Lincoln University (1993). I undertook professional development in 2002 at Harvard University's Executive Education programme, focusing on Golf and Residential Site Planning, Golf Clubhouse Programming and Golf Course Development.
3. I have practiced as a Landscape Architect for over thirty years, working for Boffa Miskell in Queenstown from 1995-1999, Darby Partners Limited from 1999-2010 as Design Manager, also in Queenstown. Since 2010, I have been running my own design consultancy.
4. Early on in my career I started specializing in master planning and golf course architecture. Over the past 25 years I have worked on a number of completed golf course developments in New Zealand:
 - (a) Clearwater Resort - Christchurch (1999-2001)
 - (b) The Hills - Arrowtown (2001-2004)
 - (c) Jacks Point - Queenstown (2000-2009)
 - (d) Windross Farm - Manukau (2010-2016)
 - (e) Tieke Golf Estate - Hamilton (2017-2021)
 - (f) Te Arai Links - Auckland (2019-Current).
5. I lived and worked in the Queenstown from 1995-2020 and lived along Arrowtown Lake Hayes Road from 2010-2020, so I am very familiar with this part of the Whakatipu Basin.
6. Whilst working in Queenstown I worked as either landscape architect, master planner and golf course architect, or a combination thereof. During that time I had exposure to a wide range of land development projects in the District, ranging from:

- (a) Wentworth Winery, which became Peregrine Wines in the Gibbston Valley.
 - (b) Blanket Bay.
 - (c) The Hills (2001-2004).
 - (d) Amisfield Winery.
 - (e) Amisfield Vineyard- Cromwell.
 - (f) Jacks Point.
 - (g) Inaugural member of the Queenstown Urban Design Panel (2005).
 - (h) Parkins Bay - Wanaka.
 - (i) Highlands Motorsport Park and Golf Course (although the golf course did not proceed).
 - (j) The Hills (2024- ongoing).
 - (k) Golf course advisor to Arrowtown Golf Club and Queenstown Golf Club.
7. Given my previous involvement with Jacks Point and The Hills I am very familiar with the Queenstown Lakes District and the landscape drivers and sensitivities for development within the District.
8. My company is currently engaged by the Hills to undertake its master planning.

CODE OF CONDUCT

9. I have read the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses contained in the Environment Court Practice Note 2023 and agree to comply with it. I confirm that I have considered all the material facts that I am aware of that might alter or detract from the opinions that I express, and that this evidence is within my area of expertise, except where I state that I am relying on the evidence of another person.

PREVIOUS REPORTING ON PLAN CHANGE REQUEST

10. The Hills Resort Limited (**THRL**) requests to change parts of the Hills Resort Zone (**HRZ**) and the HRZ Structure Plan, and to make consequential changes to other provisions of the Queenstown Lakes Proposed District Plan (**PDP**) to facilitate the rerouting of the existing 18-hole golf course to optimise the golfing experience and to improve the overall resort offering. (**Plan Change Request** or **Request**).
11. The particular changes requested are to amend the location and extent of existing Activity Areas, establish eleven additional homesites in the southwestern part of the HRZ, and provide for three new Activity Area associated with the Resort.
12. I provided advice on and prepared the revised HRZ Structure Plan, including the revised LAMA plans, that form the basis of the Plan Change Request. I also prepared the Master Planning Design Statement (Master Plan Design Statement- May 2025) that accompanied the notified Request documents.
13. In my initial report (Master Plan Design Statement- May 2025), I identified that my review of the Structure Plan was broken into three stages. The first stage was to review the existing Structure Plan to see if it was fit for purpose as an integrated golf and residential/ visitor accommodation development. It became apparent that a few anomalies existed in the planning:
 - (a) That no golf ball dispersion corridors had been applied in the structure planning.
 - (b) That some of the Activity Areas had been placed in low lying areas, not optimised for drainage, view or aspect (eg A7, A10 and A11).
 - (c) The Structure Plan assumed that there would be no change to the alignment and orientation of the golf course.
14. The second part of the process was to overlay the new golf routing and the associated golf ball dispersion corridors to assess the impact on the existing Activity Areas.
15. The third part of the process was to investigate the balance of the site to look for other development opportunities as long as they adhered to the principles and

objectives of the Zone. This included the southwestern part of the site, due to the planned removal of the 9-hole short course (The Farm).

16. The main conclusions were that the re-routing of the golf course required some minor adjustments to the Structure Plan's Activity Areas and associated LAMA, and that with the planned removal of the 9-hole short course, the south western part of the property had potential to accommodate a number of additional Homesites.
17. My Master Plan Design Statement-May 2025 remains relevant and should be read alongside this evidence.

SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

18. In this evidence I describe changes proposed to the notified Structure Plan and LAMA plans in response to issues raised in submissions on the Request and in QLDC's section 42A reports and evidence.

DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

19. In preparing this evidence I have reviewed the following documents:
 - (a) The notified Plan Change Request documents, the Structure Plan and LAMA plans in particular.
 - (b) the following submissions:
 - (i) Submission #2- Todd
 - (ii) Submission # 4 - Brown
 - (iii) Submission #13 – James and Janene Draper
 - (iv) Submission #15 – Simon Dan
 - (v) Submission #16 – Mark Williams for Queenstown Trails Trust
 - (vi) Submission #20 – Iris Weber and Dave Gibson
 - (c) The evidence of Antoni Facey on Transport, for QLDC.
 - (d) The evidence of Bridget Gilbert on Landscape matters, for QLDC.

EVIDENCE

20. **Attachment 1** of this evidence contains the notified Structure Plan, revised to incorporate changes made in response to matters raised in submissions and the Council's section 42A report.
21. In broad terms, these changes relate to:
 - (a) Landscape matters associated with the proposed Hogans Gully Homesites.
 - (b) The location of the proposed access off Hogan Gully Road.
 - (c) The positioning of and extension to the public pedestrian/cycle trail through the HRZ.
22. The proposed revisions are shown in red in Attachment 1, with revision 'clouds' linking (via a numerical reference) to an explanation of the change.
23. Attachment 2 is the Structure Plan, with the changes in red and Attachment 3 is the final Structure Plan, incorporating all the changes in black linework.
24. The revisions are as follows:
 - (a) **Revision 1:** The relocation of the Hogans Gully Road vehicle access to HS9-16 by 35 metres to the east, as recommended by Antoni Facey's evidence. This change does not alter the general routing of the access to the Homesites or impact the planting areas. I understand that Mr Carr's and Ms Pfluger's evidence covers this in more detail.
 - (b) **Revision 2 :** The extension of the cycle/pedestrian trail adjacent to Hogan Gully Road in response to Submitter #16, Mark Williams for the Queenstown Trails Trust. Cyclist safety was also commented on by Submitter #17 the AW Brinsley Family Trust as well as Submitter # 20 Iris Webber and Dave Gibson. The cycle trail extension puts cyclists back on Hogans Gully Road, at the HS9-16 vehicle access, being a location to the east of the 64 Hogans Gully Road vehicle access to address a concern that I understand has been conveyed directly to THRL by Submitter #20 regarding the proximity of the trail to their home. I understand that Mr Carr covers this change in more detail in his evidence.

- (c) **Revision 3** : The expansion of the Structural Planting Areas (**SPA**) in three areas, as per the recommendation in Bridget Gilbert's evidence.
 - (d) **Revision 4** : The repositioning of HS15, to the north as per recommendations in Bridget Gilbert's evidence. It is also proposed to lower the maximum building height for this Homesite by two meters, from 6.5 metres to 4.5 metres, to minimise visual impacts of future built form.
 - (e) **Revision 5** : The minor repositioning of the cycle/pedestrian trail where it traverses the eastern part of the Zone, near 214 McDonnell Road, along with the identification of existing boundary planting that is to be retained in this location, to address matters raised by Submitter #15, Simon Dan, in relation to amenity and privacy.
 - (f) **Revision 6** : Correction of the location of the HRZ zone boundary, which was inadvertently incorrectly shown on the notified Structure Plan. (This change is shown in blue).
 - (g) **Revision 7** : The main entrance to the Resort on McDonnell has been repositioned back to its original (status quo) location, as the repositioning shown in the notified Plan Change Request documents is no longer necessary. The repositioning was to accommodate a planned water storage reservoir, which is no longer required.
 - (h) **Revision 8**: The extension of Structural Planting Area 9-12 to the west, to integrate development within this part of the Zone with future development on the adjacent BHT land.
 - (i) **Revision 9**: Extension of the HS16 LAMA to join with existing landform to the east, and the addition of specimen trees (see detailed LAMA Sheet 03).
25. There are also a number of changes made to specific Homesites, namely maximum building heights in HS9, HS10, HS11, HS12, HS15 and HS16, in response to recommendations in Bridget Gilbert's evidence and submissions. Yvonne Pfluger covers these in her evidence. These are not shown on the Structure Plan, but dealt with in the Zone rules.

SPORTS GARDENS ACTIVITY AREA

26. Submitters 2# and #4 have raised issue with the location of the proposed Sports Garden Activity Area. They query the location of this Activity Area.
27. The sports courts and garden amenity Activity Area is an amenity that is included at Tara Iti, with a similar area at Te Aria Links (although there is no productive garden there) and provides extra curricular activity, outside of golf. It is a place for members to recreate and socialise, away from the golf course. It also provides for a productive garden/glasshouse, for the Clubhouse kitchen.
28. The location was chosen because the area is flat and well connected to both the roading network and the internal trail network, so members can access the facility easily via golf car, cart, bike or by foot.
29. This location was seen as doubly suitable as it provides quality amenity to the ten sites that are will be developed as part of the McDonnell WBLP subdivision, which sits on land adjacent to the sports courts.
30. I have prepared initial site plans and 3D renders which provide a sense of the nature and scale of activities that will be established in this area. These are attached to my Master Plan Design Statement-May 2025. For clarity, these are concept plans and do not represent a final design.

CONCLUSION

31. From a master planning perspective, my role is to ensure overall cohesion and integration within the HRZ. The changes proposed in response to Ms Gilbert's recommendations and submissions do not cause any internal site planning issues and can be easily accommodated. I view them as refinements, ultimately leading to a better outcome.

Brett Thomson
13 March 2026

ATTACHMENT : Site Plan – Overlay with Structure Plan (Revision Clouds).

ATTACHMENT 2 : Site Plan – Overlay with Structure Plan.

ATTACHMENT 3 : Structure Plan and Detailed Sheets.

ATTACHMENT 1:

Site Plan – Overlay with Structure Plan (Revision Clouds)

KEY

- G Golf course, open space and farming
- C Clubhouse
- A Visitor Accommodation / Residential
- HS Homesite (3000m² max.)
- S Resort Service & Staff Accommodation
- GF Golf Training Facility
- SG Sports Courts and Gardens
- H Helicopter Landing Area

Note: all activity areas include G: Golf course, open space and farming

- Activity Areas
- Road Access
- Access Point
- Walking / Bike Trail (Location Indicative)

OVERLAYS

- Landscape Amenity Management Area (LAMA)
- Existing Vegetation to be retained for Landscape Amenity Management
- Structural Planting Area (SPA)



REVISIONS

Note:

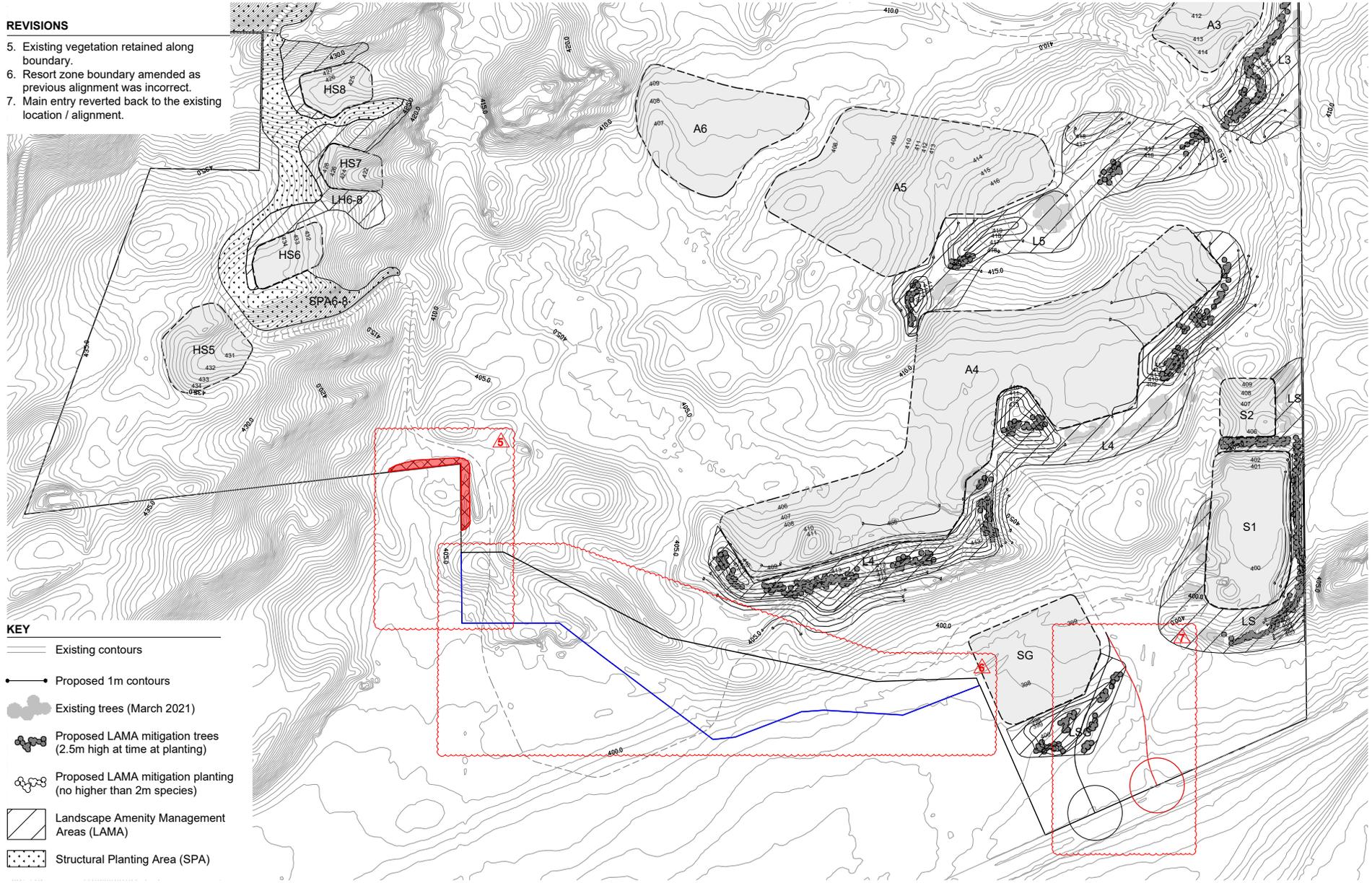
- The changes made since notification are shown in red
 - The corrected zone boundary is shown in blue
1. Hogans Gully Road access point for Homesites shifted to align with the recommended location.
 2. Additional trail aligned parallel to Hogans Gully Road shown.
 3. SPA extended to infill 'opening' as recommended.
 4. HS15 Homesite shifted as recommended.
 5. Trail alignment shifted away from the neighboring boundary. Existing vegetation retained along boundary.
 6. Resort zone boundary amended as previous align was incorrect.
 7. Main entry reverted back to the existing location / alignment.
 8. SPA extended to integrate future BHT land development.
 9. LAMA extent and contour amended to tie in to adjacent escarpment (refer to detail sheet).

SCALE 1:12500 @ A4 13th March 2026



REVISIONS

5. Existing vegetation retained along boundary.
6. Resort zone boundary amended as previous alignment was incorrect.
7. Main entry reverted back to the existing location / alignment.



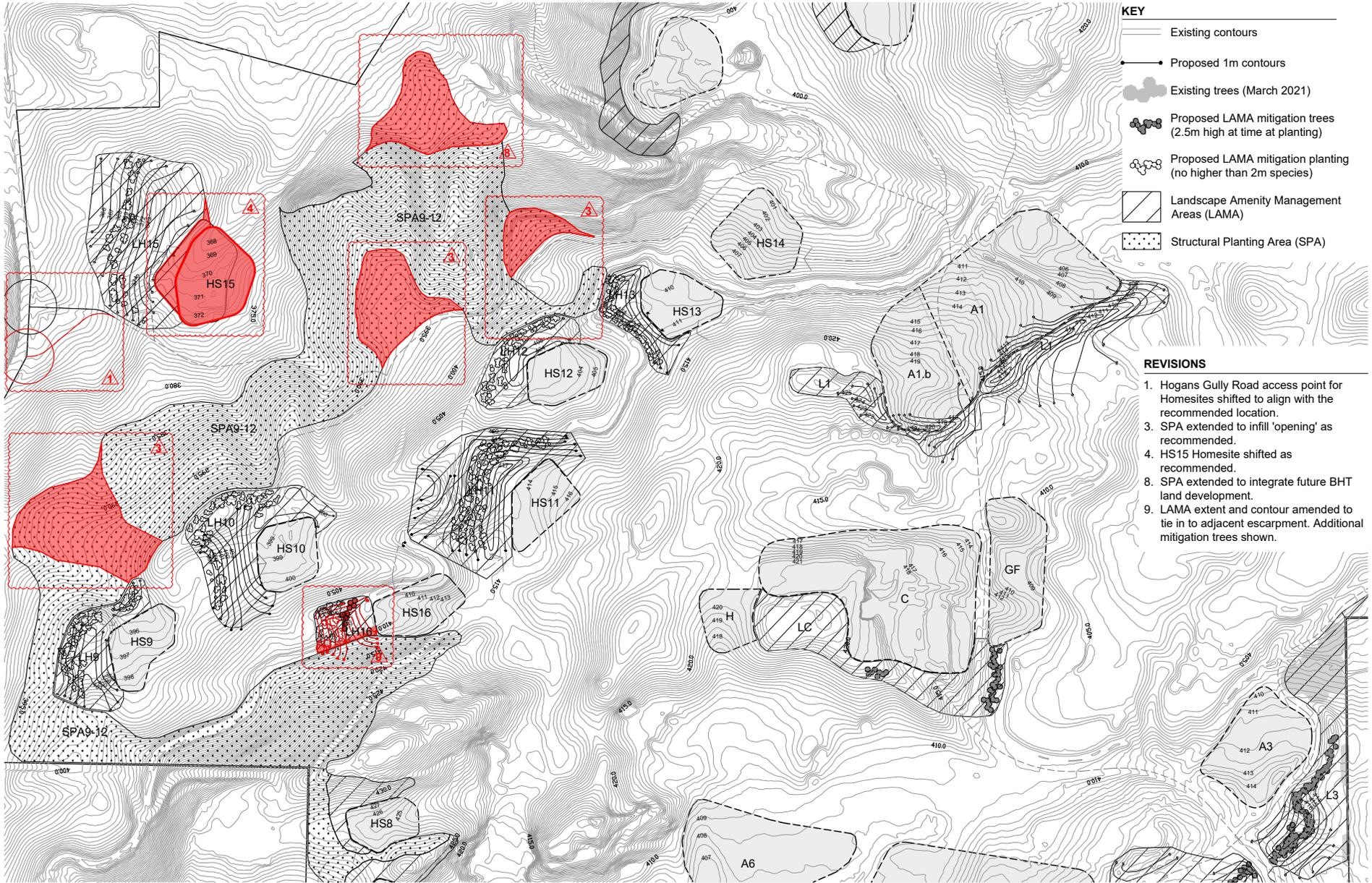
- KEY**
- Existing contours
 - Proposed 1m contours
 - Existing trees (March 2021)
 - Proposed LAMA mitigation trees (2.5m high at time at planting)
 - Proposed LAMA mitigation planting (no higher than 2m species)
 - Landscape Amenity Management Areas (LAMA)
 - Structural Planting Area (SPA)

SCALE 1:4000 @ A4 13 March 2026
 0 25m 50m 75m 100m 125m 150m



The Hills Resort Zone

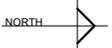
Indicative LAMA Mounding / Planting: Sheet 01 -
 Proposed and Existing LAMA Tree Planting Shown



- KEY**
- Existing contours
 - Proposed 1m contours
 - Existing trees (March 2021)
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- REVISIONS**
1. Hogans Gully Road access point for Homesites shifted to align with the recommended location.
 3. SPA extended to infill 'opening' as recommended.
 4. HS15 Homesite shifted as recommended.
 8. SPA extended to integrate future BHT land development.
 9. LAMA extent and contour amended to tie in to adjacent escarpment. Additional mitigation trees shown.

SCALE 1:4000 @ A4 13 March 2026
 0 25m 50m 75m 100m 125m 150m



The Hills Resort Zone
 Indicative LAMA Mounding / Planting: Sheet 03 -
 Proposed and Existing LAMA Tree Planting Shown

ATTACHMENT 2:

Site Plan – Overlay with Structure Plan

KEY

- G Golf course, open space and farming
- C Clubhouse
- A Visitor Accommodation / Residential
- HS Homesite (3000m² max.)
- S Resort Service & Staff Accommodation
- GF Golf Training Facility
- SG Sports Courts and Gardens
- H Helicopter Landing Area

Note: all activity areas include G: Golf course, open space and farming

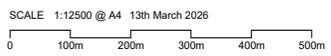
-  Activity Areas
-  Road Access
-  Access Point
-  Walking / Bike Trail (Location Indicative)

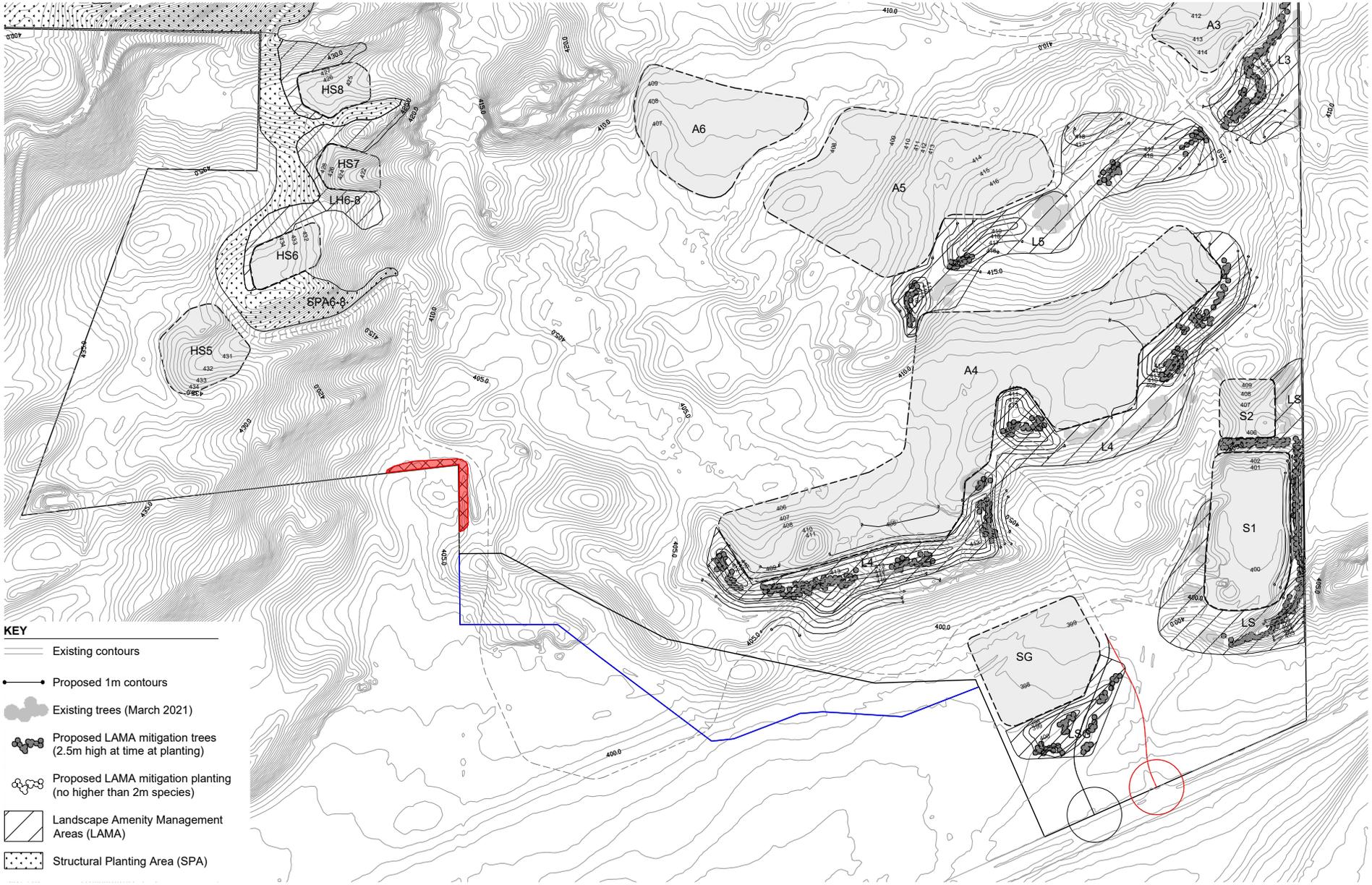
OVERLAYS

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-  Structural Planting Area (SPA)

Revisions highlighted

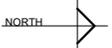
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 - Proposed LAMA mitigation planting (no higher than 2m species)
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The Hills Resort Zone
 Indicative LAMA Mounding / Planting: Sheet 01 -
 Proposed and Existing LAMA Tree Planting Shown

ATTACHMENT 3:

Site Plan – Structure Plan and Detailed Sheets (Clean)

KEY

- G Golf course, open space and farming
- C Clubhouse
- A Visitor Accommodation / Residential
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Note: all activity areas include G: Golf course, open space and farming

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OVERLAYS

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-  Existing Vegetation to be retained for Landscape Amenity Management
-  Structural Planting Area (SPA)



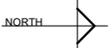
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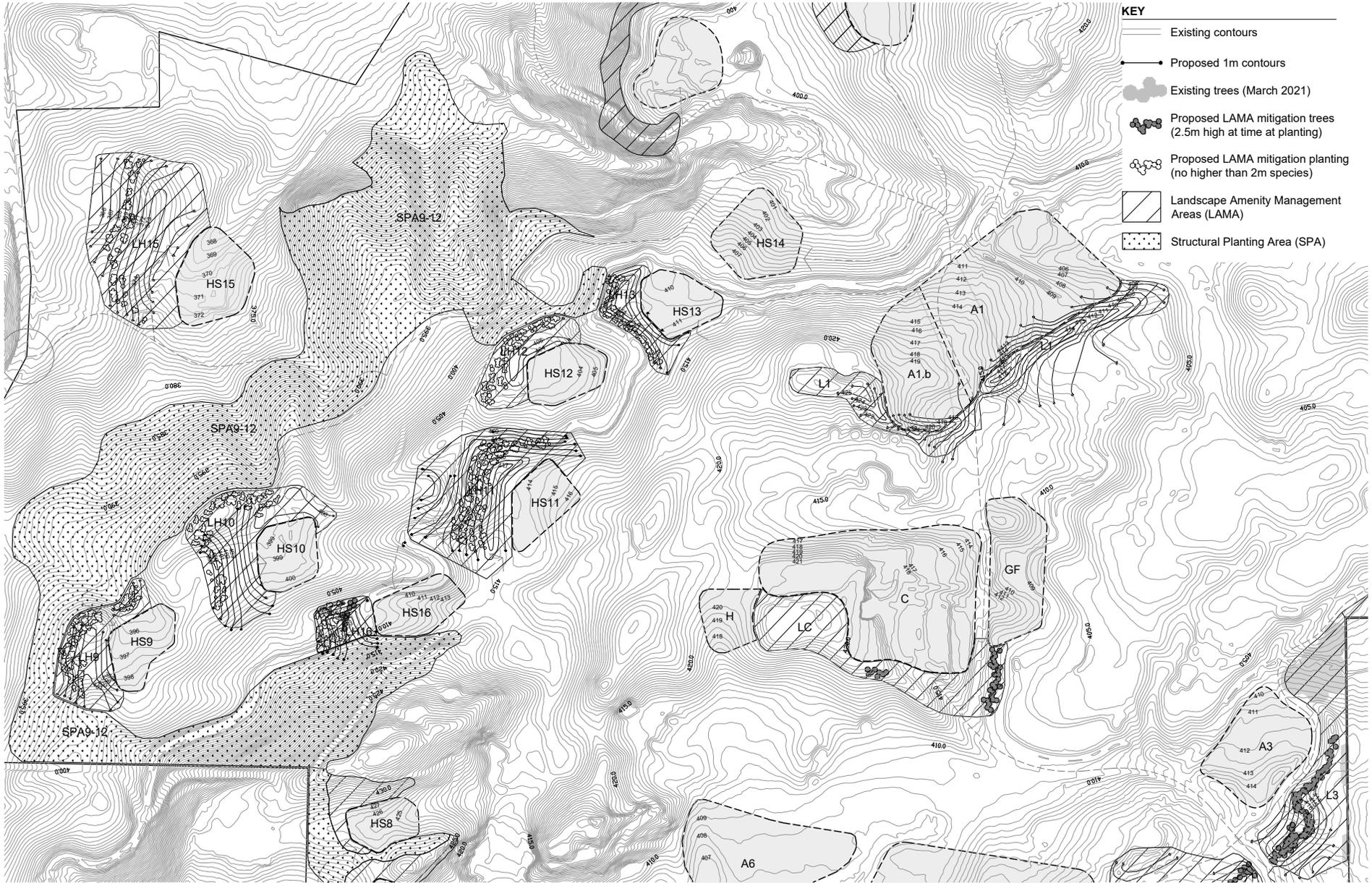


- KEY**
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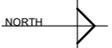
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The Hills Resort Zone
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 Proposed and Existing LAMA Tree Planting Shown



SCALE 1:4000 @ A4 13 March 2026
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The Hills Resort Zone
 Indicative LAMA Mounding / Planting: Sheet 03 -
 Proposed and Existing LAMA Tree Planting Shown

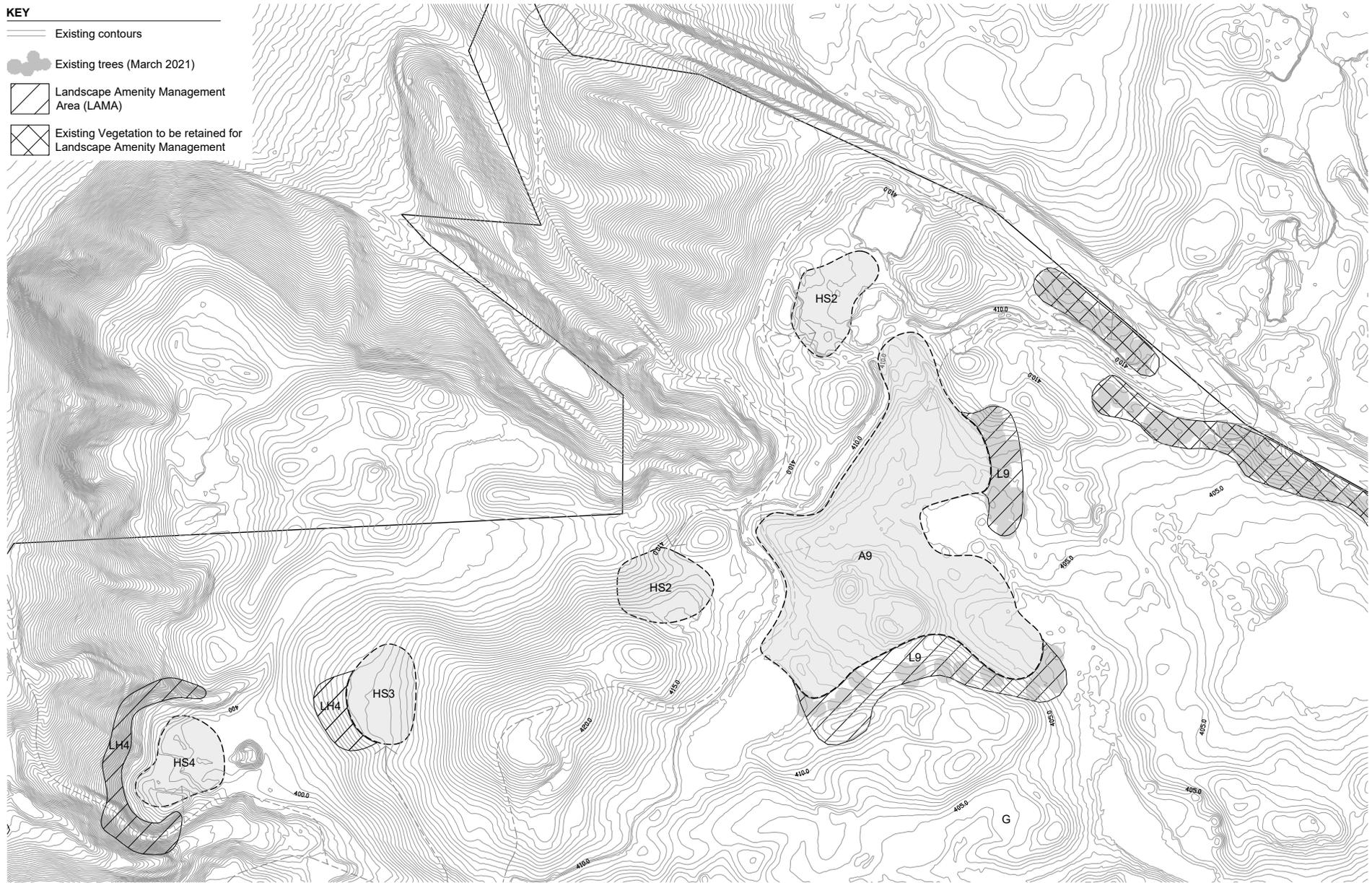
KEY

Existing contours

Existing trees (March 2021)

Landscape Amenity Management Area (LAMA)

Existing Vegetation to be retained for Landscape Amenity Management



SCALE 1:4000 @ A4 13 March 2026
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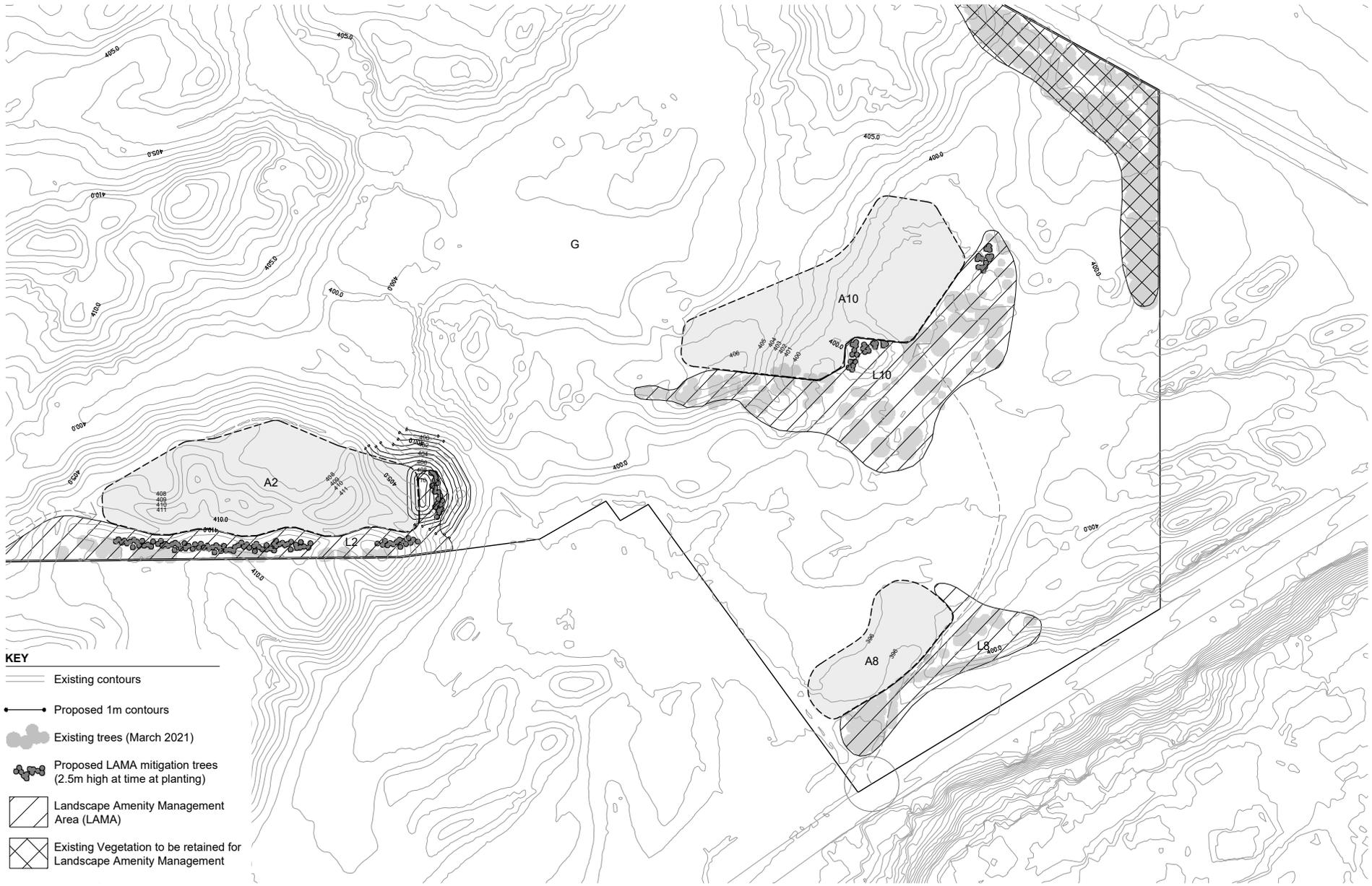


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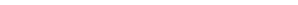
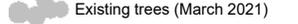
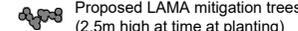
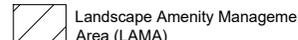


The Hills Resort Zone

Indicative LAMA Mounding / Planting: Sheet 05 -
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KEY

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