

Before the Hearing Panel

Under the Resource Management Act 1991

In the matter of submissions on variation to introduce landscape schedules 21.22 and 21.23 into Chapter 21 Rural Zone of the Proposed District Plan.

Statement of Evidence of Shelly and Nathan Simon

31 August 2026

Submitter's solicitors:

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May it please the Panel

- 1 Our full names are Nathan James Simon and Shelley Rose Simon.
- 2 We own and intend to reside at 215 Stevenson Road, Wānaka, legally described as Lot 3 DP 325795, as identified in Appendix 1. Our property comprises approximately 20.4 hectares within the Poplar Beach area.
- 3 While we did not lodge a submission on the Upper Clutha Landscape Schedules Variation, we provide this evidence as neighbours of Dirk and Becky Venter,¹ and Mr Vaughn Howard Woodfield & Mrs Kathryn Maree Woodfield.² We support the concerns raised by Dirk and Becky and Vaughn and Kathryn, and the outcomes they seek through their submission. Our evidence is intended to assist the Panel by explaining our experience as neighbouring rural landowners on the Poplar Beach / Stevenson Road terrace, including the productive rural use, land stewardship, pest management and future land use flexibility that we consider should be recognised in this landscape context.
- 4 We provide this evidence based on our knowledge of our property and our plans for its development and ongoing management since purchasing the property in November 2025.
- 5 Although we did not lodge our own submission on the Variation, our property forms part of the same lower terrace as the Venter and Woodfield properties. We support the amendments they seek to the extent that those amendments more accurately recognise the existing rural character, productive use, modification and environmental stewardship occurring across the Poplar Beach terrace.

Current Activities on the Site

- 6 We purchased the property in November 2025 with the intention of establishing our long-term family home and developing a productive lifestyle block. After viewing numerous lifestyle properties throughout the district, we chose this property because of its outstanding location, privacy, open space and easy access to the Mata-au Clutha River. We also appreciated that the planning framework applying to the property at the time gave us confidence that we would be able to establish and manage our property in a way that reflected our long-term vision. As far as we are aware the land had a history of being planted out in crops on a rotating roster for previous owners. We had some of this lucerne baled last summer. Our

¹ Who own the nearby property at 213 Stevenson Road and have lodged a submission (#47) on the variation.

² Who own the nearby property at 216 Stevenson Road and have lodged a submission (#39) on the variation.

family home on the site is currently under construction. Once completed, the property will comprise a farmhouse together with associated landscaping, a tree-lined entrance driveway, a pond, new fencing and a stone entrance feature. We are making a significant financial and personal investment in the property because we see it as our permanent home and a place that will remain in our family for generations.

- 7 We intend to use the land as an active lifestyle property by sowing crops and rearing a small number of beef calves. We also plan to establish a small, hosted Airbnb within the existing house that will allow visitors to experience this unique part of the Upper Clutha. As our farming activities develop, we will also require an implement shed to securely house farm machinery, vehicles, and equipment necessary to manage the property.
- 8 We intend to establish a regular cropping programme and expand the range of animals kept on the property, both for our family's enjoyment and to generate supplementary income. We also plan to keep chickens for fresh eggs, which will require ongoing predator trapping and pest control to protect livestock and encourage native wildlife.
- 9 Looking after the land is extremely important to us. We are committed to retaining and enhancing the existing areas of native kānuka while planting additional native trees to encourage birdlife and improve biodiversity across the property. We also intend to undertake extensive rabbit control with the goal of making the property rabbit-free, remove wilding pines where appropriate, and create a walking track through the existing native vegetation on the escarpment so that our family can better appreciate and care for this special part of the landscape. We see these projects as long-term investments that will improve the environmental health of the property over time.

Background

- 10 Although we have only recently purchased the property, our understanding is that it has historically formed part of a larger working farm and has long been used as productive rural land. That history is still evident today through the established pasture, farming activities and the broader rural landscape that characterises the Poplar Beach area. We were attracted to the unique combination of productive farmland, native vegetation, privacy and access to the river, and our intention has always been to continue that tradition of responsible rural land management while enhancing the property's environmental values. Our plan is to develop the land thoughtfully, balancing productive land use with environmental enhancement and keeping front of mind how privileged we are to own land

within an Outstanding Natural Feature, and the responsibilities associated with that.

- 11 Since purchasing the property, we have observed that the lower Poplar Beach terrace contains a range of rural uses and features. Although the precise use of each property differs, together those activities create an established pattern of rural living and productive land management. Our proposed home, cropping, calf rearing, pest control and planting would continue that pattern rather than introduce an entirely new character to the terrace.

Concerns with the Proposed Variation

- 12 We are concerned that the proposed Schedule does not accurately reflect the existing character of the Poplar Beach area. While the Mata-au Clutha River is undoubtedly an outstanding natural feature that deserves protection, the surrounding Poplar Beach terrace is not an untouched or wild environment. It is an established rural landscape with a long history of farming and land management, and today includes rural living properties, productive farming activities, pasture, established planting and other rural improvements.
- 13 The proposed Schedule mentions that people on the surface of Mata-au Clutha River experience a sense of wildness and remoteness. From personal experience this is true, but in no way does the Poplar Beach terrace impact on this sense of remoteness when one passes by on the river beneath the terrace. In fact, the Poplar Beach terrace has no impact on this feeling whatsoever, as none of the buildings or associated rural activity can be seen from on the river itself.
- 14 In our view, the proposed Schedule places an unbalanced emphasis on naturalness and wildness while not fully recognising the existing pattern of rural living, productive land use and the considerable investment landowners have made in maintaining and improving the landscape. Many property owners have undertaken extensive planting, fencing, pest control and environmental restoration because they value the rural character as much as the naturalness of the area and want to preserve it for future generations.
- 15 We are concerned that, if adopted in its current form, the proposed Schedule could unnecessarily restrict our ability to continue developing and managing our property in the way we intended when we purchased it. We bought the property with the expectation that it could operate as a productive lifestyle block where we could farm, undertake environmental enhancement and generate supplementary income through activities such

as cropping, calf rearing and carefully managed visitor accommodation. Those aspirations formed an important part of our decision to invest in this property.

- 16 We understand Council's position is that the Schedule will provide high-level guidance only and that a future site-specific assessment may identify different values or capacity. If the Schedule does not accurately recognise the rural living, productive use and existing modification of the Poplar Beach terrace, we may be required to engage planners, landscape architects and legal advisers to explain why its broad descriptions should not be applied literally to our property. The cost and uncertainty associated with that process may affect whether relatively modest activities, such as an implement shed or small-scale visitor accommodation, are practical to pursue.
- 17 We fully support protecting the outstanding qualities of the Mata-au Clutha River. However, we believe this can be achieved while also recognising that Poplar Beach is an established rural landscape where farming, conservation and rural living already coexist. In our view, responsible landowners should be encouraged to continue investing in environmental enhancement, productive rural activities and careful stewardship of the land.
- 18 We chose Poplar Beach terrace because it offered a rare opportunity to establish a productive rural lifestyle while becoming part of a landscape that is already valued and cared for by its landowners. We believe it is entirely possible to protect the outstanding qualities of the Mata-au Clutha River while also recognising the existing rural character of the area and allowing responsible, well-designed rural activities to continue. We support Steve Skelton's amendments that better recognise these differences and provide a more balanced approach to the protection and development of the ONF priority area.

31 August 2026

Shelley and Nathan Simon

Appendix 1 – Map of Shelly and Nathan Simon's land in the context of the Upper Clutha Rural Character Landscape Schedules overlay

