

IN THE MATTER OF

The Resource Management Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER OF

The Hearing Stream 13 -
Queenstown Mapping
Annotations and
Rezoning Requests

AND

IN THE MATTER OF

Submission #790 – Commonage - Queenstown Lakes
District Council

EVIDENCE OF

Stephen Skelton
Landscape Architect
BCom, MLA (Hons), NZILA (Registered)

ON BEHALF OF

Queenstown Lakes District Council

DATE

9 June 2017

INTRODUCTION

1. My name is Stephen Russell Skelton. I have the qualifications of a Bachelor of Arts in Communication from Northern Arizona University and a Masters of Landscape Architecture from Lincoln University. I am the Director of Patch Limited (**Patch**), a landscape architecture and landscape planning consultancy based in Queenstown. I am a registered member of the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects and am the acting chairman of the Southern Branch.
2. I have been involved in landscape consultancy work in the Queenstown Lakes District area for over 4 years, working in both the public and private sector. I held the position of landscape planner with Lakes Environmental before it was absorbed by the Queenstown Lakes District Council (**QLDC**) in 2013. I then held the position of landscape architect at a private practice based in Queenstown before opening my own practice in June 2016. My work includes all facets of landscape architecture and landscape planning through the range of small and large scale projects. Over the last year, my work at Patch has included master planning, commercial and residential design, preparation of native restoration planting plans, preparation of landscape management plans, preparation of landscape assessments for resource consent applications and the preparation and presentation of evidence for Council and District Plan Review Hearings.
3. I am professionally familiar with the values of the rural, rural living and urban landscapes in the Queenstown Lakes District. I understand the Strategic Direction of the Proposed District Plan and the Objectives and Policies, especially those contained with the Rural and Landscape chapters.
4. I have read the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses in the Environment Court Practice Note 2014. This evidence has been prepared in accordance with it and I agree to comply with it. I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions expressed.

SUBMISSION 790

5. The subject site is a portion of land on the southwest facing slopes of Queenstown Hill legally described as Section 1 SOP 483628 (**Attachment A**). It occupies approximately 8.85ha of land which is mostly covered in wilding conifers and other exotic tree species. Some self-seeded, insignificant indigenous vegetation is present under the cover of the much more dominant exotics. The site spreads across a moderately steep transitional ridge which separates Queenstown Hill's western and southern faces.
6. The site was created as part of a subdivision and land exchange consent approved under RM150220. The submitter surrendered a parcel of land at the more westerly extents of Queenstown Hill's urban

areas near Kerry Drive for the subject site (**Attachment B**). As part of that land exchange the Recreation Reserve status of the subject site was removed.

7. Access to the site is provided off the western end of Vancouver Drive. A portion of the Queenstown Hill Track runs near the subject site's northern boundary.
8. The bulk of the site is currently zoned High Density Residential (**HDR**) Sub-zone C, which allows for a residential density of one residential unit per 250m² or a minimum allotment size of 450m² for a vacant site. The proposed Queenstown Urban Growth Boundary (**UGB**) also rests on this zone boundary. The Proposed District Plan (**PDP**) seeks to change the existing HDR zoning to Medium Density Residential (**MDR**) which would allow for a residential density of one residential unit per 250m² or a minimum allotment size of 250m². Parts of the site in its western and eastern extents, as well as a thin tringle of land on the site's northern boundary are proposed to be within the Rural Zone.
9. This submission seeks to extend the MDR zone to the extents of the site's cadastral boundaries (**Attachment C**). This extension of the zone would increase the MDR by approximately 1.5ha. Logically, the UGB would shift with the zone adjustment, as would the Queenstown Hill's Outstanding Natural Landscape (**ONL**) category boundary.
10. Council's consultant landscape architect Dr Marion Read has provided an assessment of the submission. Dr Read considers that the existing and proposed residential zoning of the site will adversely affect the landscape context of Queenstown as residential development may breach the skyline as viewed from Queenstown, will extend development up the hillside and will reduce the natural context of the township¹. Dr Read however considers that the relief sought to extend the MDR to the extent of the site's boundaries will not increase the effects of the existing zoning².

ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS ON LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL AMENITY

Effects on the Urban Environment

11. I have reviewed the PDP Objectives and Policies contained within Chapter 4 – Urban Development. The landscape matters contained within this chapter generally concern the effects of urban development on the natural environment, rural amenity and landscape values. These objectives and policies seek to achieve a sensitive transition to rural areas, to provide for development which enhances public access to reserves and open spaces and to protect valued landscape features.

¹ Statement of Evidence of Marion Read on Behalf of Queenstown Lakes District Council, Landscape, 24 May 2017, Paragraph 7.13.

² Statement of Evidence of Marion Read on Behalf of Queenstown Lakes District Council, Landscape, 24 May 2017, Paragraph 7.14.

12. Queenstown Hill contributes to the natural backdrop of Queenstown's urban areas. It acts as the eastern natural 'bookend' to the township which is also contained by the natural features of Skyline Hill (PT812) and the south ridge of Ben Lomond. Development on Queenstown Hill to date has extended to near the 500m contour with a visually present line of power poles existing near the 600m contour (**Attachment D, Image 1**). The MDR zone which overlays the site will increase the presence of built development as viewed from the township and some development may be visible on the skyline (**Attachment E, Image 2**). Built development is already visible on this skyline as viewed from some parts of the township.

13. I consider that the extension of the MDR into the areas requested will result in an insignificant increase in the visibility of built development and will not increase the potential for development to breach the skyline.

14. I consider that the upper, forested faces of Queenstown Hill, which act as a natural eastern bookend to the township will continue to be dominant and natural in character as viewed from the township. The degree of naturalness this feature portrays is significantly more pronounced to the north as built development is succeeded by the highly legible grass and shrub clad peaks and the steeper craggy faces of the Queenstown Gorge. The lower to mid, more southerly subject portion of Queenstown Hill displays a more urban transitional character which exists between the Queenstown area and the Frankton Arm corridor. I consider the proposed extension of the MDR will not change the transitional character between the urban and rural areas and the urban edge will continue to be clearly defined against the natural character of the forested slopes of Queenstown Hill.

15. While Dr Read considers that development in the existing residential zoning of the subject site has a significant adverse effect on the landscape context of the township, I consider this effect to be lesser in degree. I consider that while the proposed MDR will allow development to extend into the higher elevations of Queenstown Hill, that the context for development, being near the transitional ridge separating the southern and western faces of Queenstown Hill will see a very low change in effect. I consider that the natural landscape context of the township which is provided by Queenstown Hill is higher in natural character on the upper slopes where form of the hill is more legible under the cover of grasses and shrubs. Similar, the Hill holds a higher natural character to the north and the steeping slopes lead to the craggy faces of the Queenstown Gorge.

16. I agree with Dr Read that the extension of the MDR to the cadastral extents of the site will not change the existing effects of the zoning.

Effects on Rural Character and the Outstanding Natural Landscape

17. I have reviewed the PDP Objectives and Policies contained within Chapter 6 – Landscapes and Chapter 21 – Rural. As the extension of the MDR to the edge of the site's cadastral boundaries will occur on an ONL, I have considered the effects of this submission in the frame of the ONL Assessment Matters contained within part 21.7.1 of the PDP.
18. There is insignificant indigenous vegetation on the portions of the site where the zone extension will occur. The vegetation which does exist is predominantly exotic wilding conifers which, while contributing to a forested natural character are a widely recognised ecological problem. While this forested natural character contributes to the naturalness of the Hill I consider that the formative processes of Queenstown Hill are more legible under the cover of grasses and shrubs.
19. In examining the site's cadastral boundaries and comparing them with the existing zone boundaries I conclude that the site boundaries more closely follow the natural line of the landform than the zone boundaries. In granting this relief, the landscape will experience a negligible reduction in the natural character and the physical and visual attributes of the landscape will not be adversely affected.
20. As stated above I consider that the loss of natural character which may result in granting this relief is insignificant in the scale of residual and existing development. The visual amenity provided by Queenstown Hill will continue to be dominant and natural in character. The extension of the zoning will not increase the potential for development to breach the skyline. Overall the zone extension will not result in adverse effect on the visual amenity.
21. I consider that the zone extension will represent a very small increase in urban character. This will not lead to adverse cumulative effects which will further degrade the landscape quality, character or visual amenity values.

CONCLUSION

22. Submission 790 seeks to rezone approximately 1.5ha of Rural General land to MDR. The site occupies approximately 8.85ha of land on the southwest facing slopes of Queenstown Hill at the upper reaches of the Queenstown UGB. The bulk of the site is proposed to be zoned MDR while small peripheral portion of the site are proposed to remain Rural General. This submission seeks to rezone the balance of the site to MDR. This would also effectively change the UGB and ONL lines to follow the site's cadastral boundaries.

23. Urban development on Queenstown Hill is highly visible from the township and the site's existing urban zoning may allow development to occur on and near the skyline ridge which separates Queenstown from the Frankton Arm corridor. This will result in the loss of some of the landscape's natural character. However, the more legible upper slopes of Queenstown Hill will remain unaffected by development and the overall roll Queenstown Hill plays in providing the natural landscape context to the township will not be degraded. The relief sought by this submission will make a negligible contribution to the reduction in natural character and will have no adverse effects on visual amenity.

Stephen Skelton



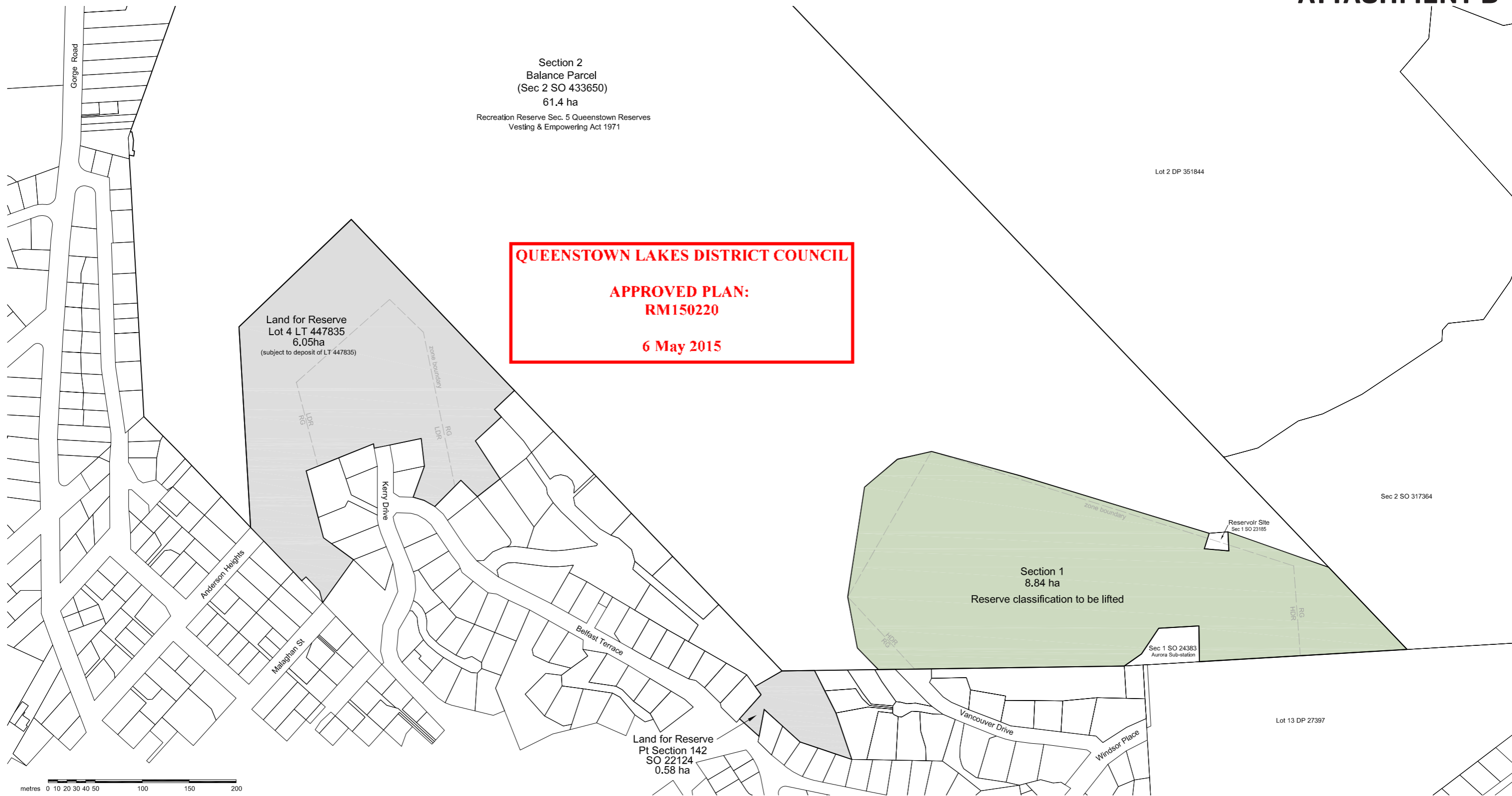
Landscape Architect

June 9, 2017



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NOTES:
- Boundaries imported from LINZ database
- All boundaries, dimensions and areas are subject to survey

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A	21-10-13	Initial release	BAM
REV.	DATE:	REVISION DETAILS:	BY:

**PROPOSED LAND EXCHANGE
AND RESERVE RE-CLASSIFICATION,
COMMONAGE AREA,
QUEENSTOWN.**

DATE: 21 Oct 2013 Scale 1:4000 DRAWING & ISSUE No. 2962-3R-1A
BY: Bruce McLeod Original Plan A3



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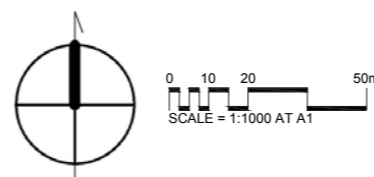
Landscape - Reference : PA17134 IS01
Scale, 1:4000 @ A3



EVIDENCE OF STEPHEN SKELTON
Submission # 790, Queenstown Mapping, Annotations and Rezoning Requests
Rezoning Plan - June 9, 2017



Landscape - Reference : PA17135 IS02
Scale, 1:2000 @ A3
Plan created by Baxter Design



EVIDENCE OF STEPHEN SKELTON
Submission # 790, Queenstown Mapping, Annotations and Rezoning Requests
Site Zone Plan - June 9, 2017

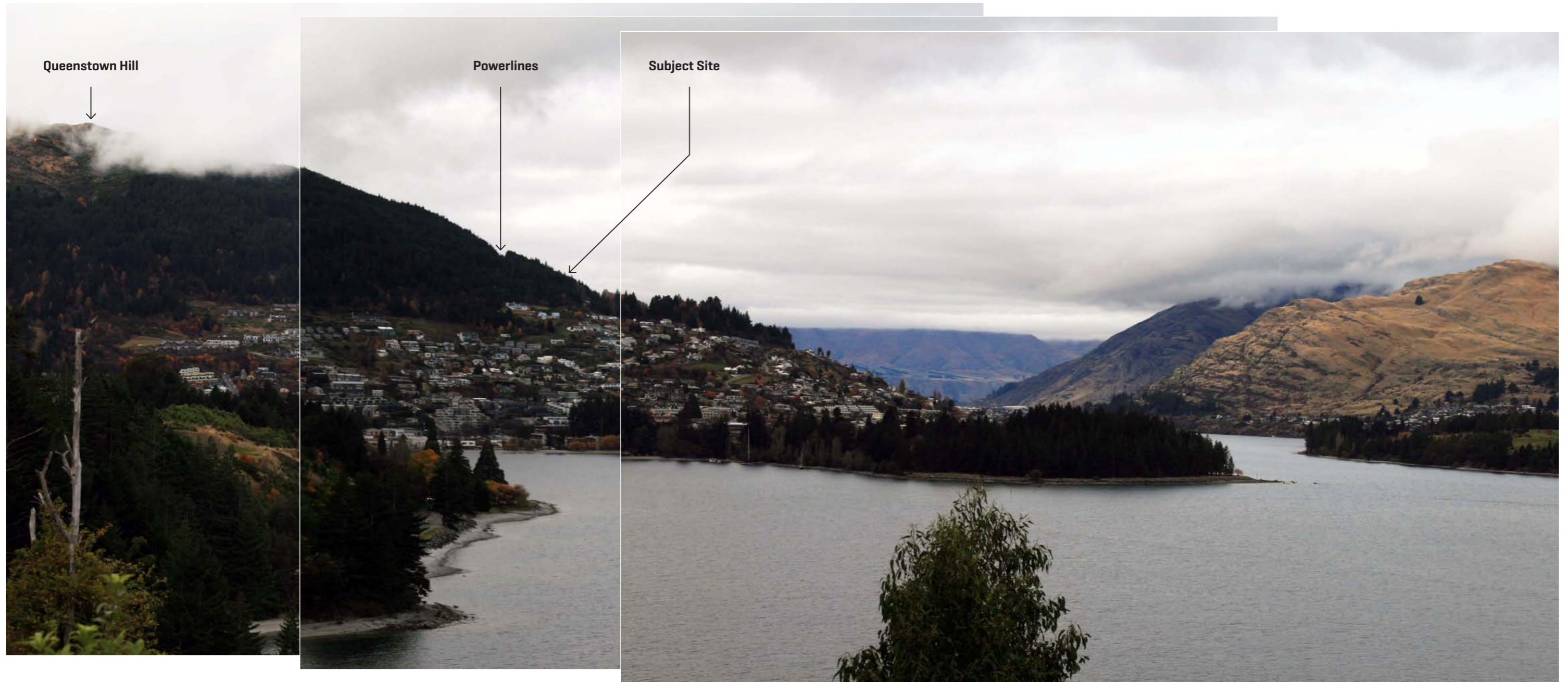


Image 1: A composite of 3 photographs taken with a 50mm lense on June 1 2017 at 2:30pm. Viewing Distance 500mm.



Image 2: A composite of 4 photographs taken with a 50mm lens on June 1 2017 at 2:18pm. Viewing Distance 500mm.