

**BEFORE THE HEARINGS PANEL
FOR THE PROPOSED QUEENSTOWN LAKES DISTRICT PLAN**

IN THE MATTER of the Resource Management Act 1991 (the
“Act”)

AND

IN THE MATTER OF Hearing Stream 12 –
Upper Clutha Mapping Annotations and Rezoning
Requests – Group 3 Rural

Statement of Evidence of

Elizabeth Anne Steven

ASLA Ltd

6 April 2017

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 My name is Elizabeth Anne Steven. I am a Registered Landscape Architect. I reside in Wanaka since moving here in 2001 and have a sole landscape architectural consultancy practice ASLA Ltd in Wanaka.

1.2 I have over 25 years professional experience. I have been carrying out landscape studies and landscape and visual assessments for resource consent applications in the Upper Clutha Basin since 2001. Of relevance, I have carried out the following landscape studies:

- landscape and visual assessment of a subdivision and building platform proposal for the Halliday property on Shortcut Road (RM161080 2016)
- review of outstanding natural landscape of the Upper Clutha basin 2014¹
- Clutha River landscape study 2006²
- design and management of an ecological restoration project on Rekos Point Conservation Area on Shortcut Road (on behalf of and as a member of Forest and Bird)
- landscape enhancement and restoration concept for Red Bridge recreation and heritage areas (all QLDC and some adjacent DOC land) 2016-2017 (on going)

I have also recreated in and travelled through the area of the site a number of times. I am thus familiar with the site and its landscape context.

2 CODE OF CONDUCT

2.1 Even though this is not an Environment Court hearing, I have read and agree to comply with the Code of Conduct for Expert Witness (Environment Court Consolidated Practice Note 2014). This evidence is within my area of expertise. I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions I express.

3 PURPOSE OF EVIDENCE

3.1 I have been engaged by Wakatipu Holdings Ltd (WHL) Submitter # 314 to review the assessment of potential landscape and visual effects associated with a change in land use that could arise from a zone change to a 13.89ha area of land just north of Luggate, between Church Road and the Clutha River and Luggate Creek. This is the area shown in the plan prepared by Clark Fortune and McDonald and Associates Proposed Rural Lifestyle Zone over Lot 1 DP 22247 and Lot 1 DP 300025 Dwg. No 12239_1 in Attachment B to the submission.

¹ Peer Review of Landscape Assessment - Outstanding Natural Landscape of the Upper Clutha Part of the Queenstown Lakes District – for the QLDC, ASLA June 2014. This was a peer review of the report of Dr Marion Read on the ONLs of the QLD dated April 2014

² The River Landscape of the Clutha Mata Au River, Definition and Description – a report for the Clutha Parkway Steering Group May 2007

This parcel is currently zoned Rural General with part of it having a Hydrogeneration overlay. The submission is in part that the parcels of land be re-zoned as Rural Lifestyle.

- 3.2 I have read the evidence of Ms Helen Mellsop and the s42a report prepared by Craig Barr, as well as the submission by WHL.
- 3.3 In this evidence I will briefly describe the relevant features and character of the site and its landscape context, and identify the key aspects of landscape experiences of the site to determine its current significance. I will briefly describe the potential landscape and visual effects and express an opinion as to the appropriateness of changing the zoning in respect of landscape matters.

4 THE SITE

- 4.1 The site is situated on the stepped outwash plain terraces carved by the Clutha River and Luggate Creek in post-glacial times. These have distinctive steep planar to curving scarps separating flat to undulating terrace treads, clearly shown in Attachment B. There is a distinctive remnant of outwash terrace in the southern part closest to Luggate Creek forming a narrow “waisted” peninsula where the creek and river have carved out the terrace from both sides. A broader lower flat terrace tread lies to the northeast of it, with a high steep planar drop into the Clutha River to the northeast. The land steps back up to the northwest, to a broader undulating upper terrace area between Church Road and the river, with two shallow gullies flowing south out of it.
- 4.2 The vegetation cover has been described and assessed in the evidence of Glenn Davis³. My observations concur with Mr Davis’ description. Naturalised and possibly also planted pine trees dominate the area closer to Church Road. Open herb/cushionfield communities dominated by exotic plants largely cover the remaining areas, forming what would commonly be described as weedy or poor unimproved pasture or previously disturbed areas. A small area of native cushion plants is present on the narrow peninsula of outwash (observed species were three *Raoulia* spp including *R. beauverdii*, an At Risk species, as well as Geranium and Woodrush, mosses and lichen). Small patches of regenerating Kanuka occupy an area of around 8000m² close to Luggate Creek, and there is a smaller patch in the narrow middle part of the site. These patches are an integral part of the more natural riparian corridor. I also observed remnant fescue tussock grassland community including native heath and *Pimelea pulvinaris*, another At Risk species, along the north and southeast edges of the southern

³ Statement Of Evidence Of Glenn Alister Davis on Behalf Of Queenstown Lakes District Council – Ecology 17 March 2017

terrace, on or just over the boundary of the land concerned. I consider that vegetation to also be an integral part of the Clutha River and Luggate Creek corridors.

- 4.3 There are no built features on the property apart from a power line along Church Road. The Luggate sawmill has expanded part of its operations on to the site on the southern terrace, in the way of wood piles and associated debris, and there is a pile of rusting machinery and metal debris. The northern terrace area has a closed and remediated landfill site. A building platform exists within the pine tree area. Numerous vehicle tracks cross the area.
- 4.4 The landscape character of the site ranges from spatially enclosed (pine trees, Kanuka patches) to open (landfill site, southern river terrace), with a high level of overall openness (absence of built forms and structures). Natural character ranges from high/moderately high (southeast end of southern terrace, pine tree area) to low (landfill). The landforms and vegetation (both native and exotic) are characteristic of the wider setting. The terraced outwash plain landforms and Kanuka and native cushionfield vegetation are highly characteristic and distinctive of the indigenous character.
- 4.5 Aesthetic quality of the site itself is low (landfill area, area close to sawmill) to moderate (pine tree area) to moderately high (most of southern terrace). The legibility of the landforms of the southern terrace is high and contributes to aesthetic quality. In a broader sense the perimeter areas of the southern area are an integral part of the Luggate Creek and Clutha River corridors which overall have higher levels of aesthetic or visual quality partly due to higher levels of natural character and the presence of water and rock outcrops.

5 LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

- 5.1 The site immediately adjoins and is part of the Clutha River corridor and the Luggate Creek corridor, which is Outstanding Natural Landscape or Outstanding Natural Feature in the proposed district plan. The Nook is a particularly scenic, widely-valued and well-known part of the Clutha River. It is my opinion based on my 2014 assessment that the southern terrace is part of ONL as it is enveloped by the Clutha River and Luggate Creek corridors and is dominated by distinctive natural landform and remains open with high natural character including indigenous vegetation. I attach a copy of my plan in Appendix A. I note that the proposed ONL line in the proposed District Plan omits much of the Luggate Creek corridor in the vicinity of its confluence with the Clutha River and does not coincide with my assessed line, nor does it correlate well with natural features. Dr Read did not specifically cover this

area in her assessment⁴. It appears that the location of the line in the proposed plan is somewhat arbitrary and I maintain that the line I have determined is the correct line. However it must also be remembered that this line is not a precise line but tends to be a transition, between landscape that does not reach ONL standard and ONL. This transition area is therefore along the northeast boundary of the site, and through southern terrace just south east of the sawmill.

- 5.2 The southwest side of the site is also part of the Luggate Creek corridor (relevant to s6a of the RMA 1991).
- 5.3 Essentially the southern terrace is enveloped by and is an integral part of a landscape of high value, the creek and river corridors. The existing industrial activity is a detracting element in this landscape.
- 5.4 The northwest boundary of the site is along Church Road, thus the site is also part of a local road corridor. This sealed but narrow and undulating road connects Luggate and the Luggate-Cromwell highway to the Wanaka-Tarras highway and the alternative access to Hawea and the west coast (Kane Road) via the Red Bridge and is quite a busy road. Two areas of industrial land uses (sawmill, meat processing, timber framing, towing outfit, restoration blasting and a landscaping business) occupy a block of land just north of the town with a road frontage of around 160m and another block of land close to the SH6-Church Road intersection, with a 270m road frontage. These areas include a number of buildings and associated visual clutter of various materials, which is not screened at all from the road. These land uses strongly influence the character of the road corridor.
- 5.5 The adjoining land to the west is currently classified as Visual Amenity Landscape, and as Rural Landscape in the proposed district plan. It is completely modified landscape of small lifestyle blocks, in the way of Lucerne paddocks, tree crops (notably Lombardy Poplar) and presence of a number of dwellings, set well back from the road.
- 5.6 I would not describe this road as a scenic drive and in my observation traffic moves fast along it and there are no commonly used viewpoints or stopping places.
- 5.7 The northern edge of the town of Luggate lies less than 300m away to the southwest. The future Luggate Heights subdivision on the true right of Luggate Creek lies around 200m away to the southeast (currently under development). The northern perimeter of the town is Rural Residential zoned land. A part of this development extends some 300m up Church Road.

⁴ There is no specific reference or study of this particular area in either the April 2014 Read report or her October 2014 Post-Review Amendments

5.8 The land east of the site, across Luggate Creek, is open farmland, which has been completely developed for pivot-irrigated dairy support. To the northeast on the true left of the Clutha River, there is a wide margin of relatively natural river landscape and some undeveloped private land. Beyond that is open farmland and a large operating gravel quarry which will progress closer to the river over time.

5.9 Significance of the Subject Site in the Wider Landscape

5.10 The significance and values of the site need to be considered in two contexts, from Church Road as a road corridor experience and the second, from the Clutha River and Luggate Creek trails and generally the conservation areas and marginal strips of those areas.

Church Road

5.11 The main significance in my view is as open space, permitting a view of the Grandview Range/Glenfoyle hills when travelling north and the north end of the Pisa Range and foothills above Luggate travelling south. The lower outwash terraces of the basin floor are also in this view and currently appear reasonably natural in character, in open grassland. However this will change as Luggate Heights is developed, where rows of housing will be seen above Luggate Creek.



Photo 1. View northeast across the site (closed landfill part) to the Grandview hills in the background (Photo: A Steven 28 March 2017 50mm lens, cropped)



Photo 2. View southeast across the site (closed landfill part) to the hills above Luggate and the north end of the Pisa Range background. Sites for housing are currently being developed across the terraces in the middle of the photo just above the site, to the left of the power pole (Luggate Heights). The pine trees screen the industrial activity beyond to the right. (Photo: A Steven 28 March 2017 50mm lens, cropped)

5.12 The site provides a buffer of open space and screening by trees to the existing industries along the road, limiting the visual impact in one direction at least. However the site does not offer a high level of visual amenity or sense of place in itself, comprising either a weed-covered closed landfill site or pine tree and broom infested land.

Luggate Creek and Clutha River Track

5.13 The southern terrace of the subject site is an integral part of the Luggate Creek and Clutha River corridor. The curving planar scarp on the southwest side of the site forms part of the enclosing landforms to Luggate Creek and is distinctive in itself; and the southeast end with its Kanuka patch encloses the lower part of the creek close to its confluence with the Clutha River. The open table-top form of the narrow peninsula part of the terrace is obvious in views from the southwest, from the public trail as well as from residential areas; and the same landform, as well as the lower terrace to the north of it are obvious in views from the trail and general river corridor in the vicinity of the Nook. The trail between the Red Bridge and Luggate Creek passes immediately adjacent to the site, either below the terrace treads so they form the skyline, or on the same surface. The site is part of the immediate trail experience. The most important positive contribution in a landscape perspective is the open flat southern terrace landform with its higher degree of natural character, distinctive landforms and regenerating Kanuka. The closed landfill site and pine covered area is not so important - it is just immediately adjacent.



Photo 3. View from the Luggate Creek track in a northwest direction across Luggate Creek to the southern terrace of the site



Photo 4. View southwest of the southern terrace of the site from the Clutha River trail above The Nook.



Photo 5. View south along the Clutha River trail to the southern terrace of the site



Photo 6. View north along the Clutha River trail where it is on the same surface as the site, along its northeast boundary.

6 POTENTIAL EFFECTS OF RE-ZONING

- 6.1 The main effect would be the presence of an additional three or four dwellings and associated domestic development. This would exclude the closed landfill area, which cannot be built on although it could be planted on (as it could under a rural zoning). There would most likely be a diversity of vegetation planted for amenity, shelter and privacy, which may be native or exotic species, and could include indigenous restoration activity. Fences are likely to include feature gates (which would practicably be limited to Church Road or internal gateways), and styles other than conventional farm fencing eg, timber post and rail. The simple visual character and high degree of openness would change to a landscape expressing visual diversity, fragmentation of open space and a lower level of openness with several buildings and structures present. Natural character may be reduced, or it could be increased, given the low levels of natural character on part of the site and the likely removal of the wilding pines.
- 6.2 It is possible the remaining native vegetation would be removed, and the existing level of natural character on the southern terrace and its level of integration with the riparian corridors would be reduced. This could also occur under rural general zoning however.
- 6.3 Another effect of the re-zoning would be the loss of ONL classification across the southern terrace.

7 ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 Subdivision and the identification of additional building platforms, and construction of future dwellings, are discretionary activities under the Operative and proposed District Plan (relevant rules from the operative plan are attached in Appendix B). The council thus has two opportunities to influence the location and appearance of dwellings and any earthworks and landscaping, in consideration of potential effects on visual amenity, rural landscape character and particularly natural landscape character, and also nature conservation values. Any adverse effects are required to be avoided or mitigated.
- 7.2 Thus the central issue is whether the subject site has the capacity to absorb another three or four dwellings and associated driveways and curtilage areas without adversely impacting on the natural character and openness of the river/creek corridors, and without detracting in a more than minor way on the current rural landscape experience on Church Road.
- 7.3 It is my opinion that the site could absorb an additional three lots for rural lifestyle, provided the built and domestic development was contained to the land alongside Church Road and the northwest end only of the southern terrace so that the bulk of the terrace remains free of built form. This is to protect the natural and open character of the Luggate Creek corridor and

the ONL/ONF of the Clutha River corridor, and the amenity of Luggate and Clutha track users. This could be controlled at the time of subdivision and identification of building platforms.

- 7.4 Whether the land remains spatially open and in more natural or indigenous vegetation is not so relevant. Development of the land for pasture or crop including tree crops, or the planting of it in exotic or indigenous species for whatever purpose is a permitted activity under either zoning (providing it is not forestry or discretionary species such as pine or Douglas Fir). This also applies to whether the open views from Church Road are maintained.
- 7.5 Ms Mellsop states at para 8.90 that the development would infill an area of rural character between the sawmill and factory and would result in the spread of domestication along the east side of Church Road to the intersection with Shortcut Road. The latter is not possible because another property with an industrial activity lies between the northeast end of the site and the intersection. Domestic development on the site could get no closer than 365m to Shortcut Road. The existing industrial complex of the sawmill and meat processing unit along with the Luggate Creek crown land occupies another 350m of Church Road frontage separating the site from the existing residential development to the south. At least 460m would separate any possible dwelling on the site (assuming adherence to a 15m internal setback) from the northernmost dwelling currently existing on Church Road.
- 7.6 The character of the site itself along Church Road does not make any notable contribution to rural character in my opinion. It does not provide the same level of visual amenity normally associated with VALs. Further, a rural character can be maintained with rural lifestyle development – the purpose of a RL zone being low density rural living, in a rural setting. The obvious and highly proximate presence of industrial activity together with the closed landfill site along the road already precludes an overall rural character on the east side of the road, certainly of a pastoral or natural character.
- 7.7 Ms Mellsop further considers the change to a RL zoning would result in a blurring of the distinction between the compact township and surrounding rural land and would result in sprawl of development into the rural landscape (para. 8.90). I disagree. The presence of the industrial development along the road has extended built form and non-rural landuses along this road for a long time, as has the residential development already present along the south end. The town has already breached the topographical containment that might have allowed it to remain a compact town, through the development of Luggate Heights and the recent rural residential subdivision on open fields to the north of the town. Further the character of the site along Church Road as already described is not typical of pastoral rural landscape, and

the site is a small and narrow area of little use for farming activity. Also, as stated above, rural lifestyle is a landuse that retains rural character and the council can control how any development will appear from the road to ensure a rural character is imparted. The use of the site for rural lifestyle is more likely to result in removal of the wilding pines, replanting of native species and to generally improve the visual amenity of the road corridor than other uses, as the land is too limited for pastoral use. Other industrial uses or possibly forestry are more likely rural zone uses (recognising they are discretionary) and would not be a better opportunity to improve visual amenity or to protect and enhance natural character. I do not agree with Ms. Mellsop's view (para. 8.92) that allowing rural lifestyle development on the site would necessarily degrade the already rather low visual amenity values of the approach into Luggate from the Red Bridge. Rather, there is potential to considerably improve visual amenity through removal of the pines and weed cover and establishment of new vegetation of higher amenity and biodiversity value.

- 7.8 With respect to the Clutha River corridor ONL, I agree with Ms Mellsop (para. 8.91) that there is potential to degrade the natural character and visual amenity. This would possibly occur if built and domestic development was sited close to the east and south boundaries of the site, intruding upon the river landscape. This also applies to the natural character of Luggate Creek. This is particularly so because both the Luggate Creek trail and the Clutha River trail are elevated in places with broader views of the riparian corridor including its enclosing terraces. The southern terrace of the site is particularly important, as a distinctive natural landform and for its Kanuka and cushionfield/short tussock vegetation. I confirm there are views of the site from the Nook area downstream of Luggate Creek. The southern terrace is particularly important as a strong landform feature (refer Photo 4).
- 7.9 The landscape of the west and northern parts of the site and adjoining properties with industrial activity do not contribute to a sense of natural character, in fact they detract from it, as does traffic along Church Road. The pine tree cover contributes to a degree in the sense they are trees in a naturalistic pattern, but they also express a weed problem. Generally it is desirable to remove wilding pines from the river corridor. Rural lifestyle development is more likely to both result in removal of the wilding pines and screening of the industrial uses (for their own privacy and amenity). These factors would be of benefit to the amenity and character of the river corridor.
- 7.10 Ms Mellsop is incorrect where she states that the public trail is located below the escarpment with no views into the WHL land (para. 8.91). The trail is located on the same surface as the site along its northeast boundary, where it passes by the closed landfill site. It drops down to

the bottom of the scarp along the northeast face of the southern terrace. Thus there would be direct and close views into the site for about two thirds of its river boundary. However the trail is also essentially on the edge of the river corridor through this section, tending to look down into it away from the site.

- 7.11 My concluding opinion is that a Rural Lifestyle zoning would not necessarily result in worse landscape outcomes than a Rural General Zoning as long as any built and domestic development is kept away from the mid to southern end of the southern terrace and there is a reasonable buffer of vegetation and open space along the northeastern boundary, next to the river trail. As subdivision and location of building platforms, and the provision of landscaping including planting is a discretionary activity in a RL zone, where the council has control over location and appearance, there is opportunity to ensure that future domestic development is located appropriately and that the rural character, and natural character and the amenity of the riparian corridors, is maintained or even enhanced through restoration of native vegetation.

Anne Steven

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April 4 2017

