

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

UNDER THE Resource Management Act 1991 ("**Act**")
IN THE MATTER OF Stage 3 Proposed District Plan - Settlement Zone
BETWEEN **CARDRONA VILLAGE LIMITED**
Submitter 31019, and Further Submitter 31066
AND **QUEENSTOWN LAKES DISTRICT COUNCIL**
Planning Authority

**EVIDENCE OF STEPHEN KENNETH BROWN IN SUPPORT OF
THE SUBMISSION OF CARDRONA VILLAGE LIMITED**

29 MAY 2020

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. My evidence addresses CVL's submission requesting that:
 - (a) An area of SETZ be located down the western side of the Cardrona River – between it and Soho Street / Rivergold Way; and
 - (b) The Proposed District Plan's Commercial Precinct be extended beyond Cardrona Valley Road to also run down both sides of Soho Street as far as the intersection with Rivergold Way.
2. Addressing these matters briefly in turn, it is my opinion that the proposed realignment of the Cardrona River's cadastral boundaries reflects the 'on the ground' situation now apparent, and that both the location and extent of the SETZ should, quite logically, reflect this change of alignment. In my opinion, such a change would have no adverse effects on the values of the district-wide ONL that wraps around Cardrona's village area or on the amenity values of the village itself. Instead, it would simply affirm the close connections anticipated between the river and future village, and the reality that, over time, it will become a key feature of, and partly within, the village landscape.
3. In relation to Cardrona's proposed Commercial Precinct, I recognise that it is appropriate to make to most of, and to a certain degree, expand on the current commercial activities and heritage values focused on the historic Cardrona Pub and Hotel. However, the increasing importance of Cardrona Valley Road as a traffic conduit between Queenstown and Wanaka, together with the shift in the village's centre of gravity related to both residential expansion towards the river, and the natural 'draw card' that the river offers, will result in the need for two types of commercial / retail development: one of which is oriented towards the passing trade using Cardrona Valley Road (effectively, the 'Crown Range highway') and another that is much more integrated with new visitor accommodation development offering a safe, attractive, 'mainstreet' experience.
4. In my assessment, Cardrona Valley Road is incapable of catering to both expectations, whereas Soho Street – particularly near Rivergold Way – can offer a high level of amenity, including that derived from connection with the nearby River and a safe, pedestrian focused environment, that is integrated with the internal facilities of new hotels and apartment buildings. As a result, I conclude that the Commercial Precinct should be extended down both asides of Soho Street.

PROFESSIONAL DETAILS

Qualifications and experience

5. My full name is Stephen Kenneth Brown.
6. I hold a Bachelor of Town Planning degree and a post-graduate Diploma of Landscape Architecture. I am a Fellow and past President of the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects, and have practiced as a landscape architect for 38 years.
7. The great majority of my professional practice has focused on landscape assessment and planning. This has included evaluating the landscape, natural character and amenity effects associated with numerous projects and undertaking a large number of strategic assessments to identify areas of high and outstanding landscape and natural character value.
8. Relevant studies and projects are set out in **Appendix A**.

Code of conduct

9. Although this is a Council hearing, I confirm that I have read the Code of Conduct for Expert Witness contained in the Environment Court Practice Note and that I agree to comply with it.
10. 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.

BACKGROUND INVOLVEMENT

11. I have not previously been involved with the submission and further submissions made by Cardrona Village Limited (“**CVL**”) in respect of this hearing topic, #3404, #31019, and Further Submission #31066.
12. However, I have provided landscape advice to CVL in respect of its current consent application for the development of a ‘village’ at Cardrona. In particular, I have provided design input to the proposed village concept, working with Mon Mackenzie Architects – among others. I have also undertaken a landscape / urban design of the village proposal that incorporates a visitor accommodation ‘core’ – focusing on three hotel

sites either side of Soho Street and the northern end of Rivergold Way – together with residential apartments, serviced apartments, individual dwellings, and a visitor hostel on Cardona Valley Road. In evaluating and formally reviewing the village scheme, I have had to carefully consider the relationship of the proposed village to the Cardrona and the way in which this new hub of activity would interact with the historic hotel and other developments on Cardona Valley Road. That assessment has been undertaken taking into account relevant provisions of the Operative District Plan and the *Cardona Village Character Guideline* (2012, final version).

SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

13. I have read the following, in addition to the CVL submission:
 - (a) the s42A Report of Ms Bowbyes, Topic 10;
 - (b) the s42A report of Ms Devlin, Group 2(a);

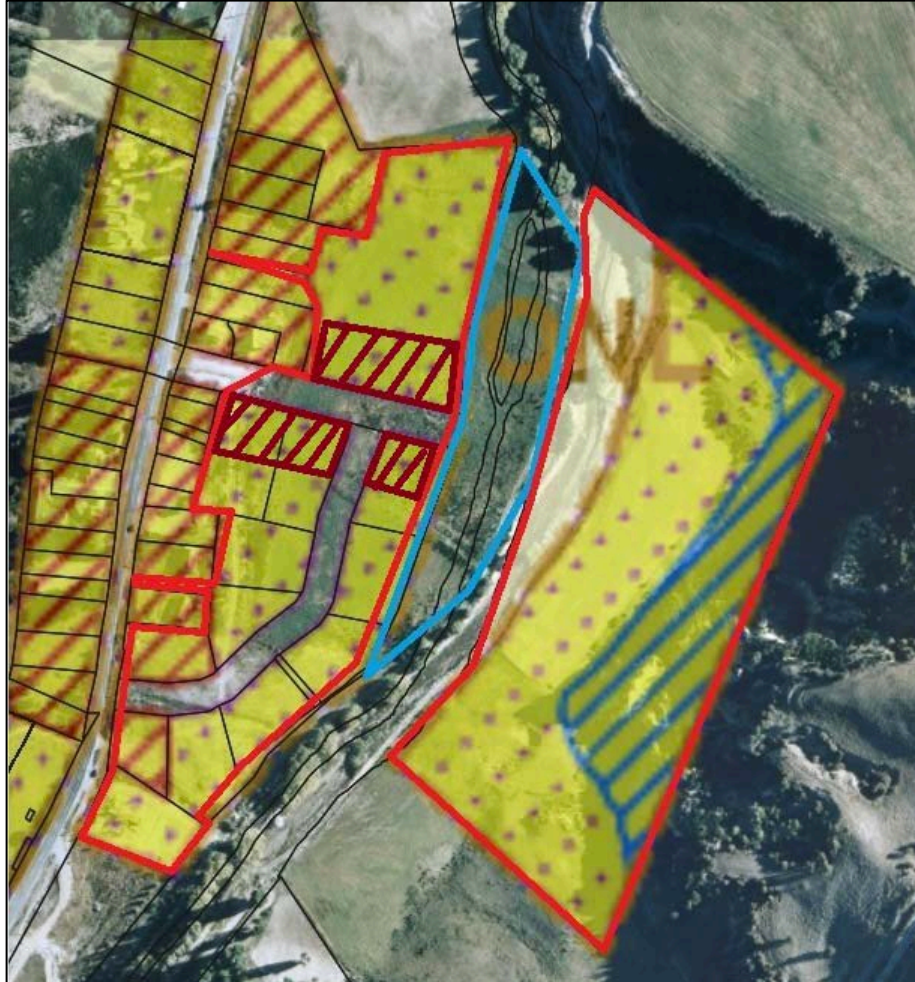
14. In response to these reports, my evidence addresses the following matters:
 - (a) Whether there is any landscape impediment to the rezoning of the “CVL land” subject to a land swap with the Crown (ie. to be transferred to CVL) from Rural Zone (as former river bed) to SETZ. This includes a consequential amendment of the District ONL line to follow the realigned SETZ and its former river bed, so that the land no longer within the realigned river bed is also excluded from the ONL – including roads within the SETZ.
 - (b) The appropriateness of extending the Commercial Precinct overlay along Soho Road on the land already proposed for zoning as SETZ (part of which is also proposed for zoning as VASC).

15. My evidence in relation to these matters supports the submission by CVL seeking amendments to the Proposed Plan so as to ensure that the proposed change to the delineation of the Cardrona River bed is appropriately reflected in the zoning around the river, and that the zoning also accommodates the development of a commercial node away from Cardrona Valley Road.

In addition, I have been asked to briefly comment on Proposed Standard 20.5.7.1, which would require a minimum set-back of 3m within Cardrona’s Commercial Precinct. I understand that CVL would like future development to be permitted up to the road boundary.

REZONING REQUESTED

16. In respect of that rezoning, Ms Devlin's report outlines the changes sought by CVL – as follows (map overleaf):



17. With reference to this map, CVL seeks rezoning of the light blue land immediately west of the river to SETZ, and application of the Commercial Precinct overlay to the maroon hatched area either side of Soho Street.

THE RIVER CORRIDOR – SETZ ZONING & THE DISTRICT ONL BOUNDARY

18. Ms Devlin identifies at paragraph 14.7 that the rezoning of the light blue land could yield seven residential lots above and beyond the PDP enabled development capacity. She further identifies, at her paragraph 14.9, that from a landscape perspective, rezoning of this land to SETZ with a VASZ “appears logical”.
19. I agree that from a landscape perspective, it is “most appropriate” for the light blue land to be rezoned to SETZ. I understand that the rezoning sought is opposed on the

basis of geotechnical/flood risk (paragraph 14.10) and servicing concerns (paragraph 4.12). These are not matters within my area of expertise and I understand that other experts will address the geotechnical and servicing matters.

20. In respect of the requested change in the ONL line, Ms Devlin goes on to state at her paragraph 14.16 that if the SETZ were to be applied to the former river bed, then that land should be excluded from the ONL as:

The inclusion of the ONL boundary line (or indeed RCL boundary line in other parts of the District) is to show that the notified Settlement Zone is excluded from the surrounding ONL / RCL. The Settlement Zone is an urban zone, with its higher order support provided by Chapter 4, Urban Development, of the PDP. ...

21. Ms Devlin also agrees at paragraph 14.18 that the ONL line should be moved to exclude the roads within the SETZ boundaries. This is sensible and should not require further consideration.
22. In my opinion, relocation of both the SETZ and ONL boundary is appropriate from a landscape perspective for a number of reasons that I will now explain.

Context:

23. The current village of Cardrona sits within an elongated valley corridor that is flanked by the Mt Pisa Range to the east and the Mt Cardrona Range to the west. The river corridor runs through a series of river flats down the lower, eastern side of the valley that remain dominated by a mixture of farm paddocks, fencing, and stands of both willows and poplars. Its shallow rock course and waters are largely 'buried' amid an array of coarse grasses, broom and the aforementioned willows. Even at the northern end of the village where the river's course is more exposed amid open pasture, its actual surface and banks remain deeply etched into the surrounding terrace.
24. This river fairway, and the paddocks beyond it, are separated from the current 'village' by a band of open ground and old pasture both east and north of Rivergold Way – which was recently constructed – while the more developed area closer to Cardrona Valley Road comprises a rather loose, patchwork of houses, visitor accommodation and buildings around the historic hotel straddle Cardrona Valley Road. The old school house and church – within The Cardrona Domain – mark its northern extent at present, while Galvins Cottage (an historic, crofters cottage) together with a scattering of much more recent dwellings line the southern entry to Cardrona.

25. Much newer is the straight line of Soho Street, which crosses the 'T' to run at right-angles to Cardona Valley Road and extend eastwards, towards the river fairway, while Rivergold Way runs in an arc from its intersection with Cardona Valley Road near Benbrae Estate to intersect with Soho Street near the river (see photo overleaf). In addition, consent has been granted to CVL for development of a lodge, spa and 48 visitor accommodation / residential units across the river, running down the narrow strip of its eastern flank.



Elevated overview of Cardrona looking from the north across Soho Street, Rivergold Way, Cardrona Valley Road and the river fairway to the left (east)

The River Corridor & The District ONL:

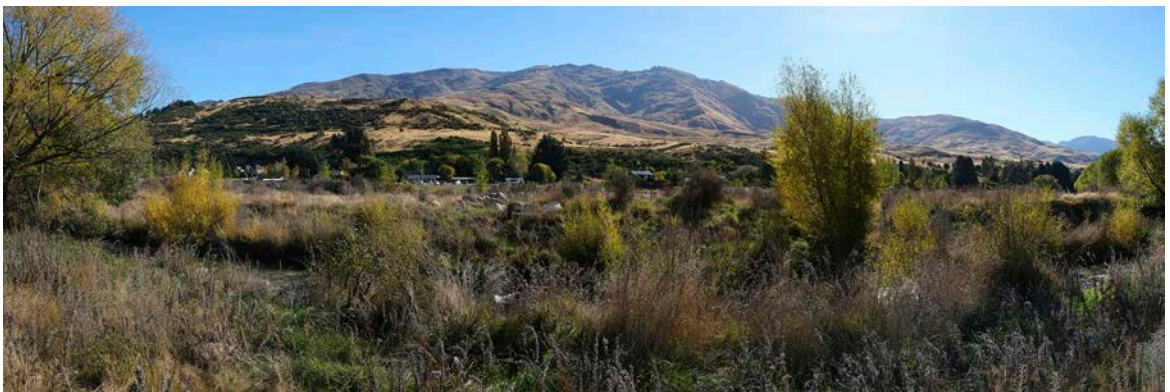
26. The Cardrona River is typically quite modest in terms of both its water volume and channel. Descending quite gently through old paddocks at the foot of a series of historic river terraces, it is largely concealed from most public views by the gently 'stepping down' of the terrain from near Cardrona Valley Road, Soho Street and Rivergold Way to its margins. This screening is exacerbated by the mixture of coarse grasses and weeds, broom, willows – down most of its course – and poplars – near the upper end of the village.
27. The river fairway and its margins are more visually defined and picturesque under and near the canopy of poplars that I have just described. In this area, the river course is more clearly visible, meandering between an area of managed open space that backs

onto residential properties, while the trees attractively frame and, in part, overshadow its gently cascading waters and rock-strewn bed. Below the main stand of poplars, moving closer to both Rivergold Way and Soho Street, this situation changes quite markedly, however, with the river waters and course being largely lost amid a jumble of localised depressions, rocks, willows and weed species. Any sense of order within and around the river is largely lost: it becomes physically less structured and aesthetically much less legible and appealing.

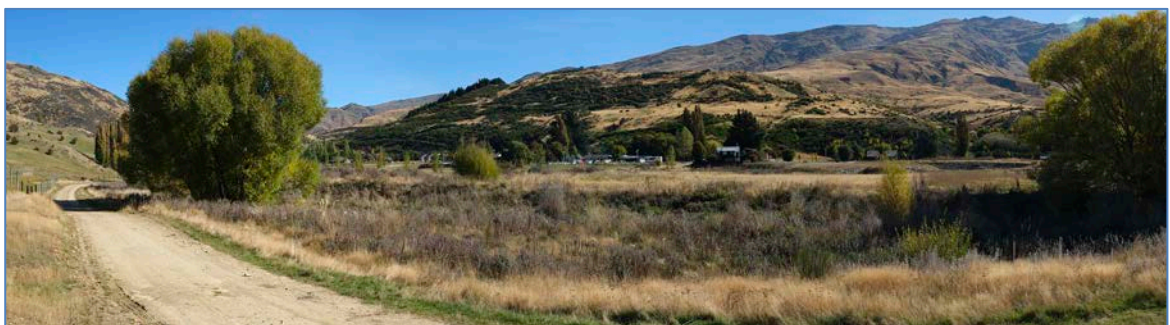
28. The area in which the river course is to be realigned lies within this lower area, in which the river's definition is much more reliant on the vegetation around it than on the actual course and water channel – at least visually. The following photos depict this transition:



The Cardona River roughly parallel with the southern end of Benbrae Estate & The Rabbit Hole



Close-up view of the river corridor east of Soho Street looking back towards Cardrona village



Panoramic view over the river corridor towards Soho Street, Rivergold Way & Cardrona village

29. The broad, district-level ONL that covers all of the Cardrona Valley and village area is, in large part, defined by the two mountain ranges that enclose Cardrona. Their alpine moraine ‘caps’ descend through slopes dominated by tussock and grassland, then pasture, and the (partly) tree-lined margins of the village, before threading through the village via the river corridor. It would be fair to say, however, that the key components of this landscape generally lie outside, around and above the village, while the river’s poplar and willow enclosed fairway is very much a secondary, subsidiary, component of this very large scaled, *montaine* ONL. Certainly, the river retains the feeling of a semi-natural feature that permeates the man-made, cultural confines of the village. Yet, on own, the river and its margins would struggle to meet the accepted criteria for delineation of ONLs, which involve meeting the twin thresholds of ‘sufficient naturalness’ and ‘outstandingness’ as a landscape / feature entity.
30. The river’s course and margins are biophysically degraded, and it is far from being sufficiently legible, expressive, aesthetically appealing (consistently and coherently) that it might be considered to have high perceptual value. Furthermore, while many rivers can readily be readily identified as significant or outstanding features because they are clearly delineated, both physically and visually, that is not the case in relation to the Cardona River within the lower flats where the current boundary exchange is proposed. Consequently, the river is an appendage to the wider ONL draped across the Crown Range, but that part of it associated with the lower flats near Cardona Village is not very significant from a landscape standpoint.

Evaluation:

31. As a result, it is my assessment that the proposed changes to the river boundary and related ONL would not be meaningful in terms of the character and (more importantly) the values of the ONL embracing the Cardona Valley. Moreover, as the proposed relocation of both cadastral and ONL boundaries would simply align them with the physical extent of the river fairway, it is my opinion that this would have no appreciable impact on management and perception of the river – either in its own right or as a component of the much wider ONL encompassing the Crown Range and the Cardona Valley. It would simply reflect the reality of the physical situation ‘on the ground’.
32. Such a change would also be consistent with current management of the ONL, in which those areas zoned SETZ effectively drop out of the ONL, but are managed – via the *Cardrona Village Character Guideline* – to ensure that the village sits comfortably and appropriately within its wider, high value, landscape setting. Indeed, this approach is adopted throughout the District for its Rural Residential zones and

residential sub-precincts. The proposed change to the SETZ boundary would not alter this situation.

33. Future zoning for Cardrona village and the current consent for CVL's resort on the eastern side of the valley already anticipates that the Cardrona River will be significantly enclosed – and visually influenced – by development both sides of it in the future. Indeed, it is likely to become an increasingly important focal point and feature within the bounds of the future village. Inevitably, this will further change the river's landscape context, drawing it more and more into the cultural landscape of the emerging village. Given this situation, it is my view that the river's future character will change very appreciably, irrespective of the exact location and boundary of the SETZ.
34. As a result, I support the proposed changes to the river's cadastral boundary and the SETZ. In my opinion, they quite simply 'make sense' in relation to the river's location, character, its future within the surrounding village and as a relatively minor adjunct to the ONL that is, in effect, wrapped around the village.

THE COMMERCIAL PRECINCT OVERLAY ALONG SOHO STREET

35. Ms Devlin recommends rejection of applying a Commercial Precinct overlay alongside Soho Street, as requested by CVL, on the basis that:
- (a) at her paragraph 14.4, there is already enough Commercial Precinct overall at Cardrona, and the VASZ overlay would still allow sufficient ancillary and small scale commercial activities alongside Soho Street; and
 - (b) at paragraph 14.16, extending the Commercial Precinct along Soho Street would be inconsistent with the Cardrona Village Character Guideline.
36. I don't have the expertise to address the "commercial" capacity issue, but I consider it important for me to address matters arising from the *Cardrona Village Character Guideline*, as well as Ms Devlin's more general comments about the CVL request to apply a Commercial Precinct overlay to Soho Street.

Context:

37. The current village suffers from being a range of different entities, without any coherent theme or rationale, with a scattering of different residential complexes and properties scattered down the southern entryway to Cardrona, either side of Cardrona

Valley Road, in particular. Sizeable areas of residual open space – in various guises – remain between the various developments that follow the road corridor, while the current village also lacks a real centre. Even though the Cardrona Hotel is its symbolic heart, it is devoid of critical population mass needed to sustain both a real community and commercial / retail development of any scale.

38. I agree with Ms Devlin that the *Cardrona Village Character Guideline* emphasises the role of Cardrona Valley Road as the main focus for future commercial / retail development within the village. To a degree, I support this. For example, a range of some retail activities could emerge that affirm the historic values and focus of the hotel and even the nearby Cardrona Domain. For some, this might suggest the long term realisation of a mainstreet not dissimilar to that found in Arrowtown, and the *Village Guideline* clearly hints at that. However, a number of other factors need to be taken into account in considering whether or not it is appropriate to concentrate all commercial and retail activity within the margins of Cardrona Valley Road. Those factors include the following:
- (a) Cardrona Valley Road and the Crown Range Road has become the main transport link between Queenstown and Wanaka. It has, in effect, become a de facto highway, notwithstanding the 50km/hr speed limit within the centre of Cardrona. Cardrona Valley Road is not, and will not become, the sort of mixed use, pedestrian oriented, environment that Buckingham Street is in the centre of Arrowtown. Indeed, Arrowtown thrives from 'being off the beaten track', or at the end of that 'track' – well away from SH6 and other arterial roads.
 - (b) Although the Cardrona Hotel faces and addresses Cardrona Valley Road, it does not open up to it; instead, it is quite closed off from it, with nearly all activity taking place internally or within the courtyard 'out back'. Even the Cardrona Valley Store – the other existing commercial establishment next to Cardrona Valley Road – faces out onto the top of Soho Street, rather than the main road, while the various residential complexes along the road step back from it, in a slightly defensive fashion. This reflects the very issues that I have just described in relation to the character and safety issues associated with Cardrona Valley Road.
 - (c) Both the current zoning and area addressed by the *Cardrona Village Character Guideline* shifts the centre of gravity for future development away from Cardrona Valley Road to the east, towards Rivergold Way, its intersection with Soho Street and the Cardrona River.

- (d) This reorientation is reinforced by the physical stepping of the land next to Cardrona Valley Road down towards the river, while any 'opening up' of its margins to better realise its value as a landscape feature would inevitably compound this focus. In fact, Soho Street already emphasises this orientation and future connection.

39. The following images help to explain some of this analysis.



Commercial activities at the southern entrance to Cardrona



The historic core of Cardrona



The Cardrona Pub courtyard



Buckingham Street, Arrowtown



Looking down Soho Street towards the Cardrona River and Mt Pisa Range



Looking down Rivergold Way towards the Cardrona River and Mt Pisa Range

Evaluation:

40. Visitor accommodation and residential development between Cardrona Valley Road and the river will, in the future, drive most of the commercial / retail development within Cardrona village, together with activities beyond its confines (eg. related to the nearby ski field and the Southern Hemisphere Proving Ground). It will also provide linkages between the area around the existing pub / hotel – which is a natural attraction for many visitors – and the river. It will, in effect, become the driving force for emergence and expansion of a true village centre that also celebrates the village’s connection with the Cardrona River and make the most of it, via public open space and trails. Inevitably, the river will become a logical destination for less active, use that ultimately complements the residential and visitor accommodation activities within the rest of the village, as is promoted by the *Cardrona Village Character Guideline*.
41. By contrast, I anticipate that commercial and, in particular, retail activity will remain quite limited around Cardrona Valley Road because of the difficulty of establishing a high quality, high amenity, pedestrian environment that is not both constrained and divided – from one side of the road to the other – by the increasingly regular passage of motor vehicles between Queenstown and Wanaka.
42. As inferred above, this will mean two things:
 - (a) that passing visitor trade will remain anchored by the historic pub and hotel; and

- (b) that the focus for the provision of other commercial facilities – such as bars, restaurants, cafes, a superette and pharmacy – servicing residents and visitors staying within Cardona, must inevitably shift towards both the centre of the SETZ and the river.

- 43. In all likelihood, future development will incorporate two of more hotels near the intersection of Soho Street and Rivergold Way, driven by:
 - (a) the higher level of amenity that can be realised away from the main road corridor;
 - (b) integration with surrounding visitor accommodation development; and
 - (c) access to the river, both physical and visual.

- 44. Such development, with its own internal facilities – from small scale, conference facilities to restaurants – would provide a platform for related development that expands the range of facilities available for those outside the hotels as well, thus creating a commercial hub that is more aligned with the local residential community than trade captured from the main road.

- 45. Such development could result in creation of a pedestrian focused, mainstreet that is linked to hotels, apartments and permanent accommodation, as well as car parking (away from the car park currently occupying the ‘Cardrona Green’), local walkways and a river esplanade. Soho Street, as the direct axis connecting Cardrona Valley Road with the river area, would logically be central to any such node, but the northern end of Rivergold Way would need to be integrated with it as well. The combination of hotels, apartments and integrated commercial development would create a locale that is strongly focused on:

- 46. Opening up future hotel and apartment development, so that it spills out into a sequence of outdoor courts and terraces, an active mainstreet, and the river corridor would ensure integration of the public and private domains as part of the hotel and village development around Soho Street and Rivergold Way – in a comprehensive and coordinated fashion. It would also cater for needs that are, in many respects, different from those catered to by commercial development on Cardrona Valley Road – though not entirely so. I am certain that those staying in Cardrona would still want to make the most of the historical ambience of the Cardona Pub and the likes of The Rabbit Hole would still be popular with those passing through Cardrona.

- 47. This, however, is the essence of the need for two commercial / retail areas: one on Cardona Valley Road simply cannot provide the range of facilities required for different

commercial customers, and much as the area around the current pub and hotel also offers a 'heritage experience', the main road cannot, in my opinion, support the sort of café and river-focused, pedestrianised environment that will also be needed within the village.

48. As such, it is my opinion that the Commercial Precinct – accommodating much more than the sort of small scale, almost ad-hoc, facilities accommodated by the VASZ overlay – should be extended down both sides of Soho Street. Indeed, I anticipate that, even if this does occur, it will do so over time in a rather more haphazard fashion because of the various pressures for a shift in the village's centre of gravity.

BUILDING SET-BACK

49. The *Cardrona Village Character Guideline* anticipates significant intensity within the future village of Cardrona, married with clear definition of road corridors and laneways, to create a sense of urbanity – albeit at the village scale. These qualities are a clear prerequisite of any pedestrianised mainstreet, in particular, and are addressed at Section 2.2 of the *Guideline*:

2.2 SITE LAYOUT

Main Street Site Design

Development at ground level along the main street strip and around the proposed village green should be retail/ commercial/ tourist related and needs to front onto, and interact with, the main street and village green. To achieve this:

- *build up to, or within 2m of, the street (or village green) boundary, except where creating a pedestrian amenity forecourt, such as an outdoor eating area*
- *create an active edge of shopfronts and entrances facing the street (or village green).....*
- *align the main walls and rooflines parallel to the street boundary*

50. However, the *Guideline* then goes on to address Visitor Accommodation and state that visitor accommodation units should be set back a minimum of 3m from the road frontage, and the proposed standard echoes this.

51. In reading the *Guideline*, but also having regard to the sort of building intensity that is already apparent within central Arrowtown and Queenstown, there is a clear intention to ensure that buildings directly address, define and contain the commercial street or streets within Cardrona's future village. This would be particularly appropriate for a

mainstreet environment that is deliberately designed to cater for high levels of pedestrian use, and engagement between the public and private domains – ie. away from Cardrona Valley Road, which will remain more of a vehicular thoroughfare.

52. In a related vein, most modern mainstreets now rarely comprise discrete blocks of just commercial development and just visitor accommodation development. That historic pattern – aligned with the sort of single-storey development that is, for example, prevalent in Arrowtown – has long been superseded by multi-storey buildings and the related integration of both commercial and residential activities. Indeed, most hotels, within resort villages and elsewhere, typically align their at-grade foyers – often flanked by commercial premises – with the frontages and balconies of their accommodation above. Their integration with other commercial development and visitor accommodation either side is also usually quite seamless, without any ‘stepping in and out’ on the basis of internal activities. This often makes it difficult to easily ascertain where hotels, or indeed other forms of commercial / retail development, begin and end, which is beneficial in the context of most village environments.



Sun Peaks, British Columbia: a purpose built village with retail activity, hotels & visitor accommodation aligned both at ground level and above

53. As a result, I can see no sound rationale for differentiating between visitor accommodation and other commercial activities in terms of building set-backs within the proposed Commercial Precinct – down Soho Street or elsewhere. Such frontages should be as cohesive and integrated as possible, while still accommodating architectural modulation and variation.

CONCLUSIONS

54. For the reasons set above, I support:
- (a) Application of the SETZ to the area adjoining the western side of the Cardrona River as is shown on the map after my paragraph 12;
 - (b) Extension of the Commercial Precinct down both sides of Soho Street to its intersection with Rivergold Way; and
 - (c) Reduction in the building set-back requirement for the proposed Commercial Precinct at Cardrona.

Stephen Brown

29 May 2020