

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

IN THE MATTER of the Resource
Management Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER of Hearing Stream 13 –
Queenstown
Annotations and
Rezoning Requests

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF HELEN JULIET MELLSOP
ON BEHALF OF QUEENSTOWN LAKES DISTRICT COUNCIL**

LANDSCAPE

24 May 2017

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Appendix A – Notified PDP ONL Boundary and Assumed ONL Boundary sought by Submitter #806 at Queenstown Park Station

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Appendix C – Queenstown Park Station Special Zone Activity Areas (submitted on 24 March 2017)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 My full name is Helen Juliet Mellsop. I hold the qualifications of Bachelor of Landscape Architecture from UNITEC Institute of Technology, Bachelor of Human Biology from University of Auckland and Diploma of Horticulture (Distinction) from Lincoln University. I am a registered member of the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects and have been practising for over 15 years. I am currently self employed as a consultant landscape architect.
- 1.2 Between January 2008 and March 2010, I was a Senior Landscape Architect at Lakes Environmental Limited, a company contracted to undertake resource management and regulatory functions for the Queenstown Lakes District Council (**QLDC** or **Council**). Since forming my own consultancy in 2010 I have continued to provide landscape architectural services to QLDC. I have appeared regularly as an expert witness at Council Hearings and have also participated in Environment Court mediations and prepared briefs of evidence for several appeal hearings in the Environment Court.
- 1.3 I have been engaged by the QLDC to provide evidence in relation to two rezoning and landscape classification submissions on Stage 1 of the Proposed District Plan (**PDP**), specifically with respect to landscape matters in the Upper Clutha Basin and in the vicinity of the Kawarau River and the northern Remarkables. I have been asked to consider the effects of potential rezonings and/or changes to landscape boundaries requested by two submitters, Queenstown Park Limited (#806) and Remarkables Park Limited (#807).
- 1.4 I am generally familiar with the Queenstown Lakes District (**District**), having undertaken landscape assessments for numerous rural resource consent applications in the District between 2008 and 2015. I have also visited the two sites subject to rural rezoning or landscape classification submissions that I am addressing in my evidence. The Queenstown sites discussed in this evidence were visited in March 2017.

1.5 Although this is a Council hearing, I confirm that I have read the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses contained in the Environment Court Practice Note 2014 and that I 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.

1.6 I refer to documents included in the Council's Bundle (**CB**). The key documents I have used, or referred to, in forming my view while preparing this brief of evidence are:

- (a) the relevant Right of Reply version of the Stage 1 chapters that are included in the Council's Bundle of Documents (**CB**), including in particular Reply Chapter 21, Rural dated 3 June 2016 [**CB15**];
- (b) the relevant landscape assessments supporting the Section 32 Evaluation Report for the Landscape and Rural Zones:
 - (i) Read Landscapes Limited, 'Report to Queenstown Lakes District Council on appropriate landscape classification boundaries within the District, with particular reference to Outstanding Natural Landscapes and Features' 2014 (**landscape boundaries report**) [**CB68**];
 - (ii) peer review of the Wakatipu Basin component by Ben Espie, landscape architect, 1 April 2014;
 - (iii) Read Landscapes Limited, post review amendments to landscape classification report, 16 October 2014 [**CB69**];
- (c) Dr Read's landscape evidence for the Strategic Directions hearing stream [**CB38**], and for the Rural hearing stream [**CB47**];
- (d) The two submissions of Queenstown Park Limited (806) and Remarkables Park Limited (807) seeking rural rezoning or landscape classification changes that are addressed in this evidence; and
- (e) Environment Court cases and resource consent decisions, where relevant to the particular submission.

1.7 When I refer to PDP provisions, I am always referring to the Council's right of reply version of the PDP, as included in the CB (unless otherwise stated).

2. SCOPE

2.1 I have provided my view on each of the site specific zoning and landscape classification requests as to whether I oppose the relief sought, or whether I do not oppose the relief sought in terms of landscape effects.

2.2 In assessing the site specific submissions, I have considered the objectives and policies of the PDP in relation to Strategic Direction, Urban Development, Landscapes and Rural Zones **[CB3, CB4, CB6, and CB15]**.

3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

3.1 In relation to Reavers NZ Ltd (710) and N T MacDonald (409) and the Outstanding Natural Landscape (**ONL**) boundary:

- (a) the boundary of the Remarkables range ONL north of the Remarkables ski field road zigzag should be relocated to follow the fence line that demarcates the change in landscape character between the cultivated valley and the more natural steeper alluvial fan slopes, and to exclude the dwelling and curtilage at 27 Kingston Road; and
- (b) south of the Remarkables ski field road, the ONL boundary is appropriately located as shown on the map attached to a Formal Order from the Environment Court (RM1165/98 dated 20 July 2005).

3.2 In relation to the Queenstown Park Limited (806) submission, a rezoning and ONL boundary change:

- (a) the alluvial fans of the Rastus Burn and Owens Creek, and the adjacent terraces and floodplains within Queenstown

Park Station are correctly classified as part of the ONL of The Remarkables and Ben Cruachan;

- (b) the Kawarau River between Lake Wakatipu and Chard Farm is appropriately classified as an Outstanding Natural Feature (**ONF**) within a wider ONL; and
- (c) the Queenstown Park Station Special Zone in this area would not be consistent with the landscape-related objectives and policies of the PDP. It would not protect the rural surrounds of Lake Wakatipu and the Wakatipu Basin from sporadic development and it is likely to result in significant degradation of the landscape quality, landscape character and visual amenity of the prominent and highly valued ONL of The Remarkables/Ben Cruachan and the Kawarau River.

3.3 In relation to the submission of Remarkables Park Limited (807) seeking a change to the ONL boundary at Kawarau River:

- (a) the enclosing escarpment on the true left bank of the Kawarau River within the (ODP) Remarkables Park Special Zone is appropriately classified as part of the ONF, and as part of the wider ONL.

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 I have not been involved from the outset in the preparation of the PDP and have not undertaken any formal review of the proposed landscape-related objectives, policies, rules and assessment matters. I have however familiarised myself with the PDP provisions that are relevant to my evidence, and with the supporting documentation.

4.2 In assessing the landscape boundary changes sought in submissions, I have used the UK Landscape Institute's Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment¹ to identify broad landscape character areas and their values. I have then applied these guidelines and the 'modified Pigeon Bay criteria' set out in Section 5.4.2.1 of the

¹ Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment. Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition 2013.

Operative District Plan (**ODP**) to assist in determining the quality, values and significance of the landscape character areas. In the case of the rezoning submission, the landscape character and visual amenity effects have primarily been assessed using the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment and in reference to the PDP landscape-related objectives and policies.

- 4.3** All maps included in this evidence are oriented with north upwards on the page. The maps are for illustrative purposes only and are not to scale.

5. REAVERS NZ LIMITED (710) AND N T MACDONALD (409)

- 5.1** These two submissions relate to the boundary of The Remarkables ONL in the northern reaches of the western face of the range. Submission **710** requests that the boundary between the Rural Landscape Classification (**RLC**) and the ONL of the Remarkables mountains on four adjacent properties be relocated further up the mountain slopes (refer **Figure 1** below). The submitter considers that the notified boundary is arbitrary, and does not reflect topographical or landscape features.
- 5.2** Submission **409** requests that the boundary between the Rural Landscape Classification and the ONL on the adjacent site to the south of that covered by submission **710** also be moved upslope. The submitter states that the location of the boundary in the Appendix 8A maps of the ODP is incorrect and provides a Formal Order from the Environment Court (RM1165/98 dated 20 July 2005) requiring the correction that they now request.
- 5.3** The Appendix 8A maps to the ODP do not appear to have been corrected in accordance with the Court order. While the ODP Appendix 8A ONL line north of and within the NZ Ski Ltd land that contains the Remarkables skifield road is consistent with the Court order, the line further to the south (on the N T McDonald land) is in a different location. I understand that when undertaking the landscape boundaries report that informed the notified PDP, Dr Read was unaware of the order. In her report,

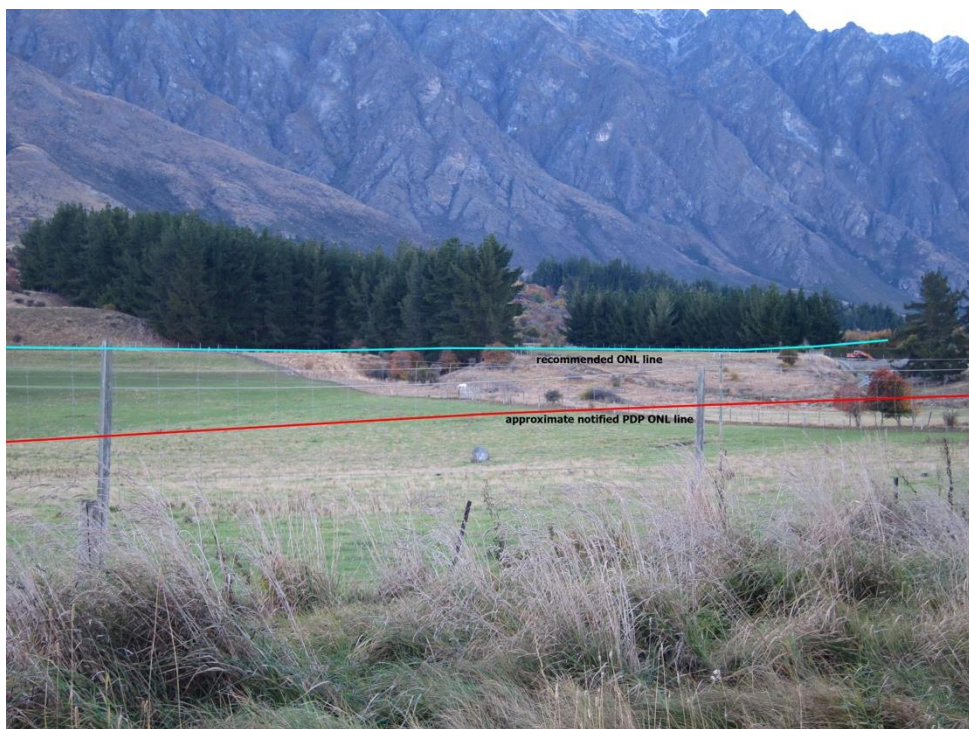
she considered that the boundary in the ODP was appropriately located, delineating the more natural slopes of the Remarkables face from the valley floor landscape, and from the more modified lower slopes where appropriate.

5.4 In response to these submissions I have undertaken a site visit to the vicinity, and have also read the evidence of Mr Stephen Skelton provided for the Ski Area Sub Zone hearing on behalf of NZ Ski Ltd, which addressed the location of the ONL boundary in this vicinity.

5.5 Over most of the more northern portion of the subject area, on the FS Mee Development Company Ltd land, there is a clear distinction between the irrigated and cultivated valley floor and the slopes of the Remarkables to the east. These slopes have higher natural character than the valley floor, with scattered indigenous scrub and indigenous grasses being present (refer **Photograph 1** below). The notified landscape boundary currently follows the edge of the flat valley floor but does not correspond to the change to steeper less intensively farmed land. In my view the boundary of the ONL in this area should be relocated to the fence line that marks this change in slope and in landscape character (refer **Figure 1** below).



Photograph 1: Annotated photograph of north-western Remarkables from intersection of SH6 and Boyd Road showing notified and recommended ONL boundary (panorama stitched from 3 photographs taken at 50mm lens equivalent at 10.10am on 18/05/17)



Photograph 2: Annotated view towards 249 Kingston Road from corner of SH6 and Boyd Road, showing conifer plantations, showing approximate locations of notified PDP and recommended ONL boundaries (photograph taken at 50mm lens equivalent at 10.10am on 18/05/17)

5.6 In the area just to the north of the NZ Ski property (247 and 249 Kingston Road) the terrain, vegetative cover including blocks of conifers (see **Photograph 2** above), and land uses, including the presence of a dwelling, make the determination of the appropriate location of the boundary between the landscape classifications more difficult. The notified PDP ONL boundary follows the toe of a clear escarpment and includes the dwelling and curtilage at 247 Kingston Road within the ONL. In my opinion it is somewhat inconsistent to include this dwelling and curtilage within the ONL at this point, when rural living development to the south of the NZ Ski has specifically been excluded from the ONL. I also consider there is a more appropriate topographical boundary for the ONL in this vicinity, that is continuous with the boundary I have recommended in the paragraph above and that excludes the gentler sloping and more intensively farmed paddocks closer to SH6. This recommended boundary would run along the fence line at the base of the steeper alluvial fans, cross a small stream in the lower part of the conifer plantation and run above the dwelling and curtilage area at No. 247 (refer **Figure 1** below).

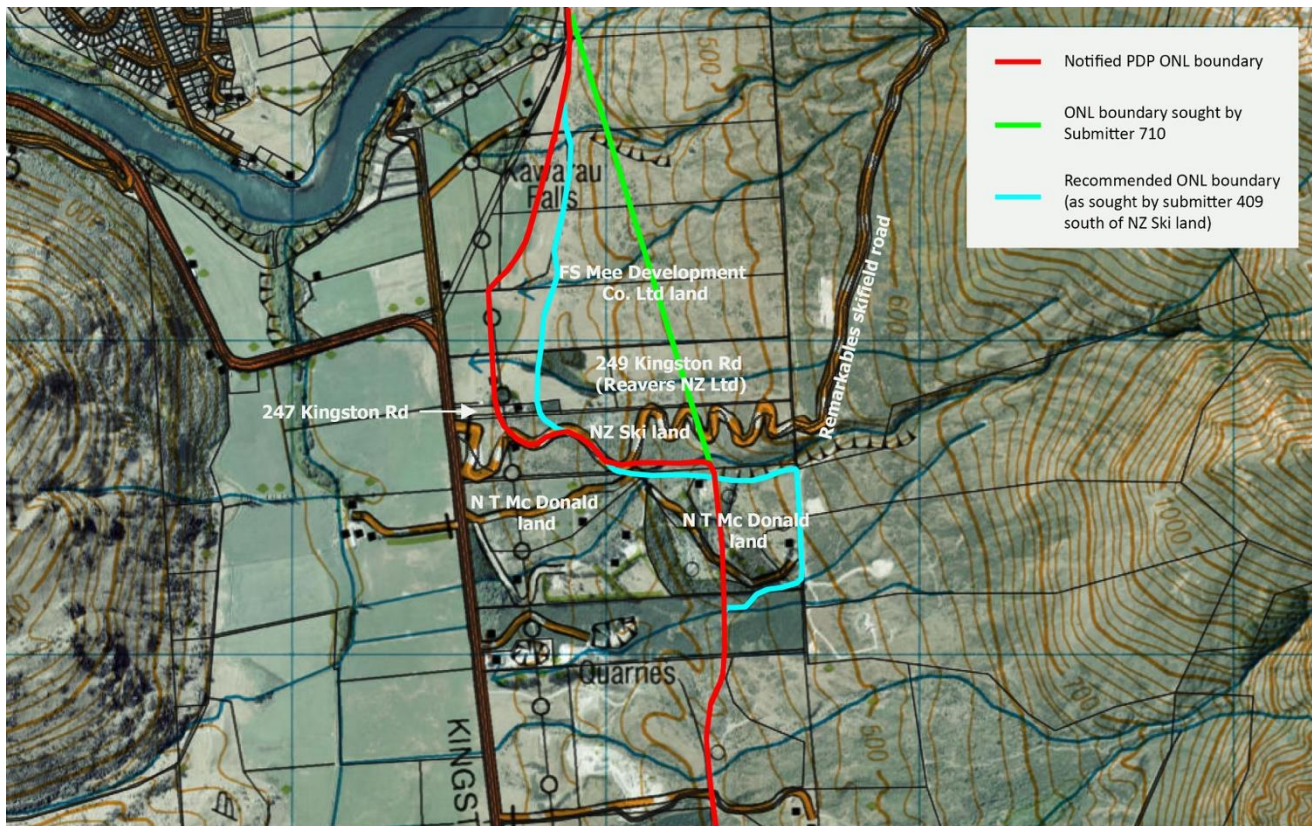


Figure 1: Notified PDP and recommended ONL boundaries on the north-western flanks of The Remarkables (map not to scale, north upwards on page)

5.7 The NZ Ski site is bisected by the winding route of the ski field access road. It has a carpark adjacent to the State Highway, and consent has recently been granted to locate a re-locatable building within this carpark, and to place additional signage (RM170207). Topographically this car park is located within the valley floor, the slope steepening to its east. A service yard with a building is located partway up the site within the notified ONL, approximately 400m from the State Highway.

5.8 The majority of the site is clad with a mix of indigenous and exotic scrub. In its more elevated half, a deep gully follows and is partially contained within its southern boundary. The slope of the site steepens around the 400 metres above sea level (**masl**) contour. This is not readily noticeable on the ground, as the lower, more level (modified) carpark area and the creek gully are the distinctive topographical features on the site. Close views of the site include a post and rail fence and a row of exotic trees along the road boundary, which have a domesticating effect. In more distant views the site is distinguishable from its neighbours

in the main because of the roadway that zigzags up the mountainside within it. To the south more exotic trees, particularly conifers are evident.

- 5.9** The notified ONL boundary enters this site approximately 200 metres from SH6. It follows the northern side of the road alignment up the slope to where the road touches the southern boundary of the site, approximately 500 metres from the highway. From here the notified line follows the boundary of the site to a point approximately 860 metres from SH6 where it turns to the south. In my opinion the ONL boundary within the NZ Ski site does not delineate any particular landscape features. The landscape character, particularly in terms of topography and vegetation is similar above and below the line. However I consider the boundary line is an appropriate and logical way to connect the lines to the north and south of the NZ Ski land.
- 5.10** Submission **409** relates to the properties immediately to the south of the NZ Ski property. These are Lots 1 and 3 DP443946, Lot 2 DP 471143 and Lot 2 DP 375823. The notified ONL line (taken from the Appendix 8A maps) cuts through three of these lots and incorporates all of Lot 3 DP 443946 within the ONL. The line on the map appended to the Court Order follows the easternmost boundaries until it meets a shallow stream gully and then follows this gully down to meet the notified PDP line within Lot 2 DP 375823.
- 5.11** The land encompassed by these lots, and the land adjacent to their west extending down to the State Highway, is clearly a part of the lower face of the Remarkables. It is distinct from its neighbouring sites however, because of the presence of conifer plantations and the spread of wilding conifers in particular. Several contracting yards are present within this area and there are several areas which have been subjected to quarrying. The more northern portion of the area includes four dwellings on rural lifestyle type lots. In the vicinity of these dwellings there are extensive areas of exotic vegetation including a vineyard and an olive orchard.

- 5.12** In the more eastern reaches there are areas of indigenous vegetation, but the dominant vegetation over the area is exotic. At the eastern extent of these sites is a slight terrace which widens towards the south. The land to the east of this then rises steeply towards the summit of the Remarkables. The dominant vegetation to the east of these sites is indigenous. Two undeveloped building platforms are located in this vicinity on lots which extend high up the mountain face. A third has a dwelling constructed on it. These are accessed by a private road which extends off the ski field access road.
- 5.13** The land to the south west of this area is the location of the Scope Resources quarry operation. The landforms within the quarry area have been altered by both excavation and extraction and by deposition, with a large clean fill operating within this area. This area is outside the notified PDP ONL.
- 5.14** The land to the south east within the notified ONL, which is located largely on the slight terrace area, is much more natural, in the sense that its landforms are unmodified, and its vegetation is dominated by indigenous species. This land is also the location of two properties, Lots 2 and 4 DP 392270, which include undeveloped building platforms. I understand extensive weed control and indigenous re-vegetation have been undertaken on this land.
- 5.15** In my opinion the Court order boundary of the Remarkables ONL in the vicinity of these properties, which is sought by submitter **409**, is appropriately located to exclude land that has been significantly modified by quarrying, commercial activities, rural living subdivision and development, and exotic tree planting. While I consider it would be appropriate that the entire conifer plantation on Lot 2 DP 375823 was excluded from the ONL, with the ONL boundary following the eastern and south-eastern boundaries of this lot, I understand that no submission has sought this change. The ONL boundary shown in the Court order and sought by submitter **409** is shown on **Figure 1** above.

6. QUEENSTOWN PARK LIMITED (806)

- 6.1 Queenstown Park Limited (**QPL**) has sought that approximately 2000 hectares of land (referred to as Queenstown Park Station) be rezoned from the notified Rural zone to Queenstown Park Station Special Zone. A plan of the proposed zone was attached to submission #806, although 'development pods' or activity areas for the zone were not clearly identified on this plan. A letter from Brookfields Lawyers setting out revised details of the proposed special zone, and a more detailed plan that clarified the identity of some of the activity areas, were submitted to Council on 24 March 2017. The submitter's recommended objectives, policies and rules for the special zone are set out in Appendix A to the submission.
- 6.2 The Gondola Access Corridor Activity Area sought in the proposed special zone extends onto land not owned by the submitter. This is either Crown land managed by the Department of Conservation (**DOC**), Council reserve land, or private land. Proposed activity areas for jetties, wharves and pedestrian/cycle bridges are also largely within the Kawarau River or on adjacent DOC land rather than on Queenstown Park Station.
- 6.3 QPL has also sought that the boundary of the Remarkables/Hector Mountains ONL be relocated south to exclude the fans, river terraces and floodplains on Queenstown Park Station and the Kawarau River between the control gates bridge and Chard Farm. A map of the ONL boundary sought by the submitter has not been provided. My interpretation of the ONL boundary sought in the submission text is shown in **Appendix A** of this evidence.

ONL boundary

- 6.4 Queenstown Park Station (formerly Cone Peak Station) is located on the true right bank of the Kawarau River and extends up the northern flanks of The Remarkables and Ben Cruachan to approximately 1000 metres above sea level (**masl**). To the south of the property are the upper DOC-managed slopes of the mountains and the Remarkables

ski field. Two major streams (Owens Creek and Rastus Burn) flow through the station and have formed distinctive shingle fans above the Kawarau River. Alluvial terraces and floodplains are also present along the 14 kilometre Kawarau River frontage, but the majority of the site is steeply sloping mountain slope with frequent exposed schist outcrops.

- 6.5** The fans, terraces and floodplains are more intensively farmed than the upper slopes and are characterised by open pasture or crops, farm fencing, shelter trees and farming infrastructure, including sheds, tracks, and a single farm house (at Owens Creek). On the mountain slopes vegetation consists of regenerating indigenous grey shrubland (combined with exotic sweet briar), rough pasture, or tussock land, with some single or grouped pines. More dense indigenous regeneration is present in the Owens Creek and Rastus Burn valleys, which is addressed in Mr Davis' evidence for the Council.
- 6.6** The submitter's property extends around to the western flanks of The Remarkables in two elevated lots that are separated by the Remarkables skifield road (Lots 1 and 2 DP 349682, known as 'the 500 acres'). The lower of these lots contains a quarry that has been used to supply road metal for the skifield road.
- 6.7** The landscape classification of the fans, terraces and floodplains on Queenstown Park Station was the focus of the Environment Court in *Wakatipu Environmental Society Incorporated vs Queenstown Lakes District Council*.² In this decision, the Court described The Remarkables as '*the epitome of an outstanding natural landscape*'.³ I agree with this description.
- 6.8** The craggy precipitous mountain range of The Remarkables and the northern slopes of Ben Cruachan are one of the most memorable and expressive landscapes in the Queenstown area. The landscape has important ecological, scenic and cultural values and a high level of natural character, despite the presence of the skifield and its access

² *Wakatipu Environmental Society Incorporated v Queenstown Lakes District Council* NZEnvC Christchurch C203/2004, 22 December 2004.

³ *Ibid*, paragraph 1.

road. It is prominent in views from Queenstown, Frankton, Lake Hayes Estate and Jacks Point, from the main entry roads to Queenstown and from the airport.

6.9 The fans, terraces and floodplains within Queenstown Park Station have a lower level of natural character than mountain slopes above. Gradients are gentler, vegetation patterns are pastoral and there is a greater level of human modification in the form of fences, tracks and farm buildings. I am in agreement with the Environment Court decision that the strip of land containing the fans, terraces and floodplains is not large enough to form a landscape in its own right.⁴ It is bounded by the steeper mountain slopes to the south and the ONF of the Kawarau River to the north and is well separated from the urbanised alluvial terraces of the Wakatipu Basin. The lower areas are perceived as integral and legible components of the mountains (in the case of the alluvial fans and narrow terraces) or the river (in the case of the floodplains and lower terraces).

6.10 The Kawarau River between Lake Wakatipu and Lake Dunstan is listed as an ONF in Schedule 1A of the Otago Regional Plan: Water. The reasons cited include its wild, scenic characteristics, its natural characteristics (in particular the return flow in the upper section when the Shotover River is in flood), its scientific characteristics and its recreational values. The spectacular and rugged river gorge, schistose landscape, fast flowing white water and rapids and old gold sluicing landscape from the confluence with the Arrow River to Lake Dunstan are also cited as reasons.⁵ The river is also covered by a Water Conservation Order that declares the waters to have outstanding amenity and intrinsic values, and provides for the protection of those values.⁶

6.11 The entire length of the river within the District boundaries is classified as part of a wider ONL in the notified PDP. Although it is not specifically annotated as such in the notified PDP maps, it is my view that the river is appropriately classified as an ONF within the wider ONL of adjacent mountains and roche moutonnée.

4 Ibid, paragraphs 27 to 29.

5 Otago Regional Plan: Water, Schedule 1A, page 20 15.

6 Water Conservation (Kawarau) Order 1997.

- 6.12** In my assessment, the volume, clarity and colour of the river waters, its dynamic characteristics, particularly at the confluence with the Shotover, and the scenic and expressive values of the rocky gorges mean that the river is appropriately classified as an ONF within the District and the region. In my view, the section of the river that QPL seeks to be excluded has the same characteristics and qualities that make the entire feature outstanding. While the wider landscape context of the upstream section has a more urban or suburban character, the river itself has no more or less modification than the downstream section; both have bridges crossing the river, tourist activities, and dwellings set back from the river margins. This stretch of river also includes the confluence with the Shotover and the potential for reverse flow that were important to the regional plan ONF classification.
- 6.13** The boundary of the ONL on the true left of the river, as shown in the notified PDP, generally runs along the crest of the lowest enclosing escarpment or widens to include adjacent roche moutonnée (refer map in **Appendix A**). I concur with this notified boundary.
- 6.14** I therefore oppose the relief sought in relation to the relocation of the ONL boundary on the northern flanks of The Remarkables and Ben Cruachan, and in relation to the landscape classification of the Kawarau River between Lake Wakatipu and Chard Farm.

Queenstown Park Special Zone

- 6.15** The submitter has not provided a comprehensive structure plan for the proposed zone or assessment matters for the proposed activities. While 'rural visitor' and 'rural residential' activity areas and a gondola corridor are identified in the plan submitted on 24 March 2017 (**Appendix C** to this evidence), neither this plan nor the original plan attached to the submission clearly identify the 'High Country' activity area referred to in the proposed special zone provisions. Bridge locations and ferry/jet boat landing locations are labelled on the March 2017 plan but do not directly correspond to the 'W' and 'J' wharf, jetty and bridge activity areas that are mentioned in the

proposed zone provisions. A public trail location is shown on the March 2017 plan only.

6.16 In order to assess potential changes to the landscape if the proposed rezoning were to be implemented, I have made a number of assumptions. These are:

- (a) residential, visitor accommodation and commercial development could take place in the activity areas shown on the March 2017 plan, as controlled activities. While a 'Development Concept Plan' would be required for each activity area, Provision 44.4.2.3 of the proposed zone states that buildings not in accordance with an approved Development Concept Plan are also controlled activities;
- (b) the maximum height of buildings in these activity areas would be 8 and 12 metres for 'rural residential' and 'rural visitor' pods, respectively;
- (c) maximum number of residential dwellings in the 'rural residential' pods would be 90, with three dwellings in 'RR1' on the March 2017 plan;
- (d) maximum building coverage in each 'development pod' (ie 'rural visitor' and 'rural residential') would be 50% (although proposed Rule 44.5.2 means that exceeding 50% is still a controlled activity);
- (e) pedestrian/cycle bridges across the Kawarau River could be constructed as controlled activities in the four locations shown in yellow on the March 2017 plan, and jetties/wharves could be constructed as controlled activities in the four locations shown as blue on this plan;
- (f) a gondola with structures of up to 23 metres in height could be constructed as a controlled activity within the purple outlined area on the March 2017 plan. Buildings associated with the gondola would be controlled activities within this area;
- (g) commercial recreation activities such as golf courses and walking/cycling trails could be developed as restricted discretionary activities within land outside the activity areas identified on the March 2017 plan; and

- (h) farm buildings would be a controlled activity outside the identified activity areas, but other buildings would be non-complying. A retreat or 'glamping' site would be a controlled activity within a defined area in the upper Owens Creek valley.

Landscape effects

6.17 The rezoning proposed by QPL would result in permanent changes to the character and quality of the lower fans and terraces on Queenstown Park Station. Physical changes would include earthworks to widen existing tracks, construct new roads and establish building platforms, and the replacement of open pasture with relatively dense built development of up to 12 metres in height. Using the 'rural residential' activity areas shown on the March 2017 plan, the gross density (not accounting for roads and other infrastructure) of dwellings could be about one dwelling per 5500m² for 'RR2' to 'RR7' (87 dwellings on 47.97 hectares). This is a similar density to that of Operative District Plan (**ODP**) Rural Residential zones on flat or gently sloping land – for example northern Lake Hayes Rural Residential or Rural Residential development immediately east of Mount Iron (refer **Photograph 3** below).



Photograph 3: View south-east from Little Mount Iron, showing established rural residential development in mid ground with low density residential development in background (photograph taken at 50mm lens equivalent at 11.50am on 24/12/16)

6.18 Within the ‘rural visitor’ pods ‘RV2’ to RV4’, buildings of up to 12 metres in height, covering up to 50% of the net land area would be possible. Higher densities are also envisaged as controlled activities. For comparison, the standards for building coverage in the notified PDP are 40% for the Low Density Residential Zone, 45% for the Medium Density Residential Zone and 70% for flat sites in the High Density Residential Zone.

6.19 The proposed objectives and policies for the Special Zone encourage protection of existing vegetation and landform during subdivision and development (Policies 44.2.1.5 and 44.2.4.3) and visual mitigation of development with new landscape planting (Policy 44.2.1.6). It is therefore possible that some existing vegetation on the lower parts of the site may be retained and enhanced. There is however no requirement for new planting to be indigenous and tree and garden planting associated with development, particularly in the ‘rural residential’ activity areas, is likely to add to the domesticating effects of dwellings and roads.

- 6.20** In my assessment the rezoning sought could result in a major loss of the existing openness and natural character of the fans and terraces within the property. The current rural character would be transformed to an urban (in the case of the 'rural visitor' pods) or intense rural living (in the case of the 'rural residential' pods) character. The legibility of the Rastus Burn and Owens Creek fans, which visibly demonstrate the past and ongoing processes of erosion and deposition, would be compromised by the proposed rezoning.
- 6.21** On the upper mountain slopes within the property, built development enabled by the proposed rezoning is limited to 'rural visitor RV1' and 'rural residential RR1', straddling the skifield road, and a small unlabelled activity area in the upper Owens Creek valley. 'RV1' is currently modified by an existing gravel quarry, mounding and gravel roads. This modified area has some ability to visually absorb development without adversely affecting views of The Remarkables from Lake Wakatipu, Frankton and the Coneburn valley. However, buildings and entries would be immediately apparent from the skifield road and would detract from the pleasantness and naturalness of people's views.
- 6.22** Development this high on the slopes of The Remarkables would also, in my view, result in at least moderate adverse effects on the natural character of the ONL and on its scenic and wild characteristics. The adverse effects of built development and visitor accommodation activities would exacerbate those of the existing road and gravel quarry. In my opinion the rural visitor development sought in this location is likely to result in moderate cumulative adverse effects on the natural values of a sensitive and highly valued ONL.
- 6.23** Proposed 'RR1' is located on an elevated and relatively open part of the western face of The Remarkables. The landform consists of undulating glacial till and alluvial fan deposits and is clothed in indigenous grey shrubland with occasional open grass and tussock patches. Development of three 'rural residential' dwellings in this activity area, with associated indigenous vegetation removal, earthworks and lighting, would in my view reduce the natural character of the western mountain slopes to a moderate to high

extent. Adverse landscape effects would be cumulative with those of other existing and consented developments in the vicinity. The dwellings would be the highest built development on these prominent western slopes, apart from the road, and would be 30 to 70 metres higher than the consented building platforms on three lots immediately to the south (Lots 1 to 3 DP 301946). The dwellings in 'RR1' would also be closer to the point where The Remarkables changes from a westerly to a northerly face and in an area of the mountain that is more visible and prominent from urban Frankton. Conditions of subdivision consent for these lots (RM020864) require extensive ecological enhancement and screening of dwellings with earthworks and planting. No such ecological enhancement would be required as part of the proposed special zone.

- 6.24** With regard to commercial recreation activities on the upper mountain slopes, I consider there is potential for walking trails to be established without significant impacts on the quality or character of the landscape. Similarly a small hut or glamping site in the Owens Creek catchment could potentially be absorbed, if appropriately designed. Downhill mountain bike trails, which are likely to involve indigenous vegetation clearance and earthworks, have greater potential to adversely affect the physical and visual integrity of the mountain slopes and to detract from the natural character of the landscape.
- 6.25** The terrain of the mountain slopes is unsuitable for golf courses and it is assumed that any golf course development would need to be located on the lower fans, terraces and floodplains, within or adjacent to the identified 'development pods'. The manicured fairways, greens and bunkers of a golf course would add to the domesticating effects of other potential development in this area but would be relatively consistent with the proposed character of the lower areas under the Special Zone.
- 6.26** The proposed Special Zone provides for farm buildings to be constructed anywhere on the property as a controlled activity. In comparison, the notified PDP Rural zone standards limit farm buildings to one per 25 hectares of a site and to lower than 600 masl. They also restrict the height and floor area of buildings in an ONL.

Farm buildings that do not meet these and other standards are a restricted discretionary activity in the PDP. The special zone sought is therefore more enabling of farm buildings than the proposed Rural zoning and could potentially result in a higher density of larger structures, higher on the slopes. Such buildings could detract from the natural character, openness and visual integrity of the landscape.

- 6.27** Construction of a gondola within the defined access corridor for the Special Zone would involve cables, support pylons, service and transfer buildings and moving gondola cabins. The route of the gondola would be adjacent to the Kawarau River between Remarkables Park and Rastus Burn, potentially crossing the river twice, and would then run up a prominent mountain slope just west of the Rastus Burn valley (refer to annotated **Photograph 4** below), and on up the valley to the Remarkables skifield.



Photograph 4: Annotated photograph from Judge and Jury Drive, Lake Hayes Estate, showing approximate location of Gondola Corridor on northern face of The Remarkables (panorama stitched from two photographs taken at 50mm lens equivalent at 2.08pm on 14-03-17)

- 6.28** The structures and buildings of the gondola would, in my opinion, detract from the natural character and landscape quality of both the Kawarau River and the north face of the Remarkables, introducing prominent linear structures in currently relatively unmodified areas and detracting from the wild and scenic values of the landscape. The adverse effects on natural character and the physical and visual

integrity of the landform would be cumulative with those of the Remarkables skifield road.

- 6.29** Jetties, wharves and bridges on the Kawarau River would also adversely affect the natural character of the ONF. However, I consider that a limited number of appropriately designed and located structures on this stretch of the river would not have significant adverse effects on people's perceptions of the aesthetic and scenic values of the river, particularly if the structures enhanced the recreational values of the landscape. Jetties, wharves and bridges in all the locations shown on the structure plan would, in my assessment, result in cumulative adverse effects on the natural and scenic values of the river. I consider that one jetty/wharf for jet boat landing and one pedestrian/cycle bridge could be absorbed without significant adverse effects.
- 6.30** Overall I consider that the Special Zone sought by QPL would result in a high level of adverse effect on the character and quality of the Remarkables/Ben Cruachan ONL and the Kawarau River.

Effects on views and visual amenity

- 6.31** The changes to the character of the landscape would be widely visible from public and private places. The Rastus Burn fan and terraces are viewed from Lake Hayes Estate, State Highway 6 on Ladies Mile and, at a greater distance, from elevated areas of urban Queenstown above Frankton Road and the Crown Range zig-zag lookout (see **Photograph 5** below). They will also be visible from the new Eastern Access Road on Frankton Flats, once this is completed later in 2017. The Owens Creek fan is less visible from public places but is seen from Lake Hayes Estate and from the end of Morven Ferry Road across the Kawarau. Both fans are also seen within the panoramic view of the Wakatipu Basin available from the popular higher lookout on the Crown Range Road (see **Photograph 6** below).



Photograph 5: View towards The Remarkables from the lookout at the top of the Crown Range Road zig-zag (photograph taken at 50mm lens equivalent at 9.46am on 10-02-16)



Photograph 6: View over Wakatipu Basin from Crown Range Road lookout (source Google Earth)

- 6.32** From the vantage points described above, development within the proposed 'rural visitor' and 'rural residential' activity areas on the fans and terraces would be visible as isolated sporadic areas of urban or dense rural living at the base of the mountains. Development would detract from the visual integrity and perceived naturalness of the mountainous landforms and from closer viewpoints would adversely affect the pleasantness, aesthetic coherence and perceived naturalness of views towards the mountains.
- 6.33** The gondola access corridor has been located so that a gondola would not impinge on the line and form of the western face of The Remarkables. The relatively low elevation of the section of gondola between Remarkables Park and the Rastus Burn would limit the visual prominence of the structures. In my opinion this section of a gondola, if appropriately designed, would have moderate to low adverse effects on the amenity of views from SH6, Shotover Country and Lake Hayes Estate. The gondola pylons would be lower than the existing electricity pylons within the view, but moving gondola cabins would attract the eye and increase the prominence of the development.
- 6.34** Adverse effects on visual amenity would be greater from closer viewpoints in Remarkables Park and on the Eastern Access Road. I consider that a gondola within the proposed corridor is likely to have significant adverse effects on the visual amenities of people on the Kawarau River itself and those using the public walkways on the true left bank. The pylons, cables and gondola cabins would be viewed at close proximity and would be prominent human modifications in the otherwise relatively unmodified environment.
- 6.35** Where the gondola access corridor ascends the mountain, structures would be widely visible from much of the Wakatipu Basin. The cables, pylons, service structures and moving cabins would form an incongruous straight line up the mountain slope and would in my assessment significantly detract from the amenity of views towards The Remarkables. The adverse effects on the aesthetic coherence and perceived naturalness of the mountains would be cumulative with those of the skifield road.

6.36 Overall I consider that the Queenstown Park Station Special Zone in this location would not be consistent with the landscape-related objectives and policies of the PDP. It would not protect the rural surrounds of Lake Wakatipu and the Wakatipu Basin from sporadic development and it is likely to result in significant degradation of the landscape quality, landscape character and visual amenity of the prominent and highly valued ONL of The Remarkables/Ben Cruachan and the Kawarau River.

6.37 As a consequence I oppose the relief sought in relation to rezoning of Queenstown Park Station.

7. REMARKABLES PARK LIMITED (807) – KAWARAU RIVER

7.1 Remarkables Park Limited (**RPL**) has sought that the boundary of the ONL on the true left of the Kawarau River within the Remarkables Park Special Zone (an ODP zone) be relocated from the top of the enclosing escarpment to the water's edge. The notified PDP boundary and that sought by the submitter are shown in the map in **Appendix B**.

7.2 As discussed in paragraphs 5.10 to 5.12 of this evidence, I consider that the stretch of the Kawarau River between Lake Wakatipu and the Shotover River is appropriately classified as an ONF within the wider ONL shown in the notified PDP maps. My reasons are set out in those paragraphs. I also consider that the appropriate boundary of the Kawarau River on the true left bank is the crest of the lowest enclosing escarpment. The steep river escarpment below the crest is an integral part of the river corridor. Apart from the public walkways along the escarpment and river's edge, the landform is unmodified and provides legible evidence of the erosive action of the river. Vegetation on the escarpment and river edge mainly consists of willows, exotic weeds and open grass. This is also the case for much of the remaining stretch of the Kawarau between the lake and Chard Farm. In my assessment, the enclosing river escarpment within the (ODP) Remarkables Park Special Zone is appropriately included in the ONL, and within the ONF of the Kawarau River.

7.3 To my knowledge almost all of the Remarkables Park-zoned land included within the ONL is reserve land that is not owned by Remarkables Park Limited. Development within this land, other than ecological restoration or improvements to public access, is in my assessment unlikely to appropriately preserve the natural character of the river.

7.4 I oppose the relief sought by RPL in relation to the relocation of the ONL boundary on the true left of the Kawarau River.

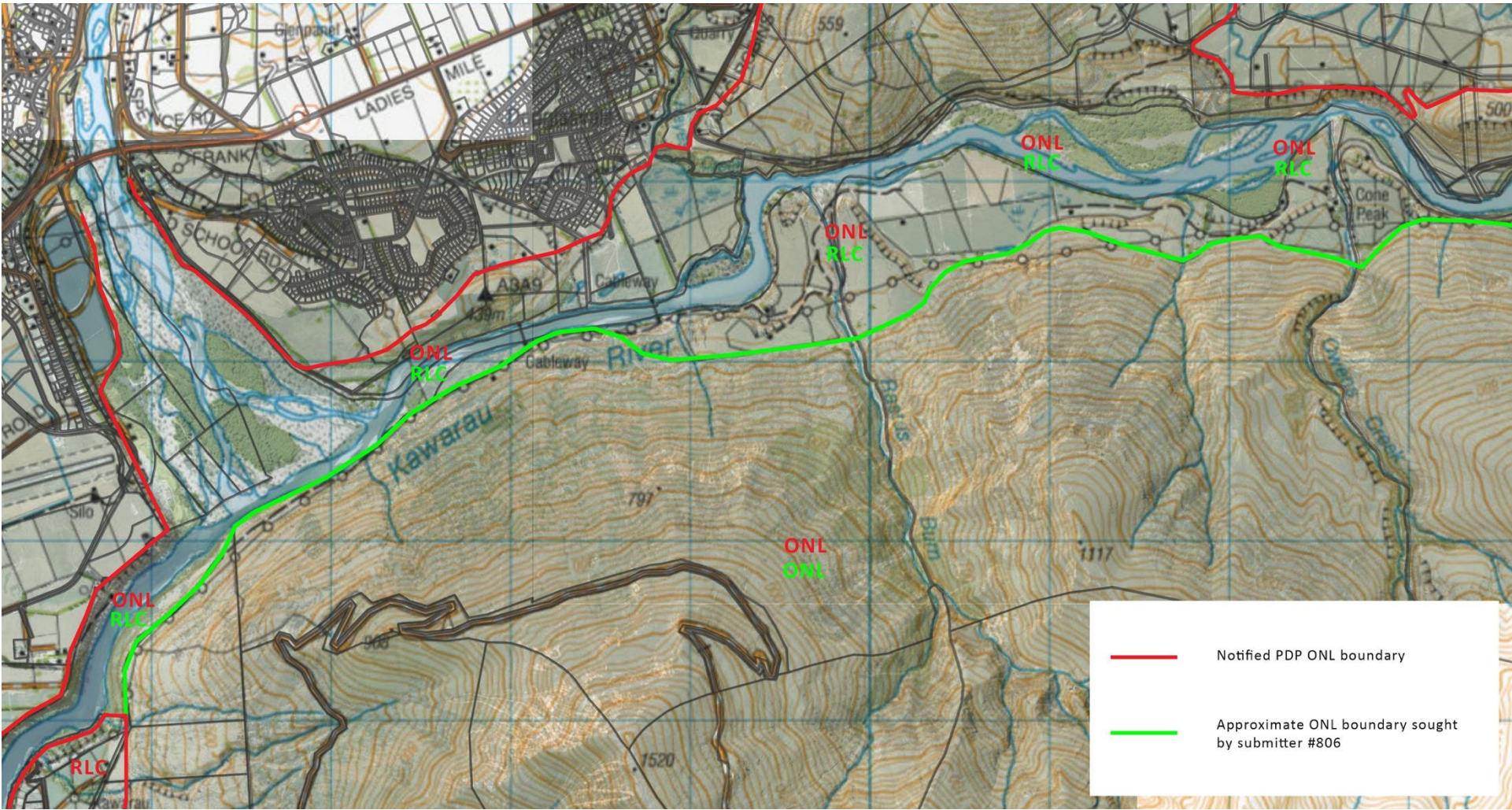
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. Mellsop', written in a cursive style.

Helen Mellsop

24 May 2017

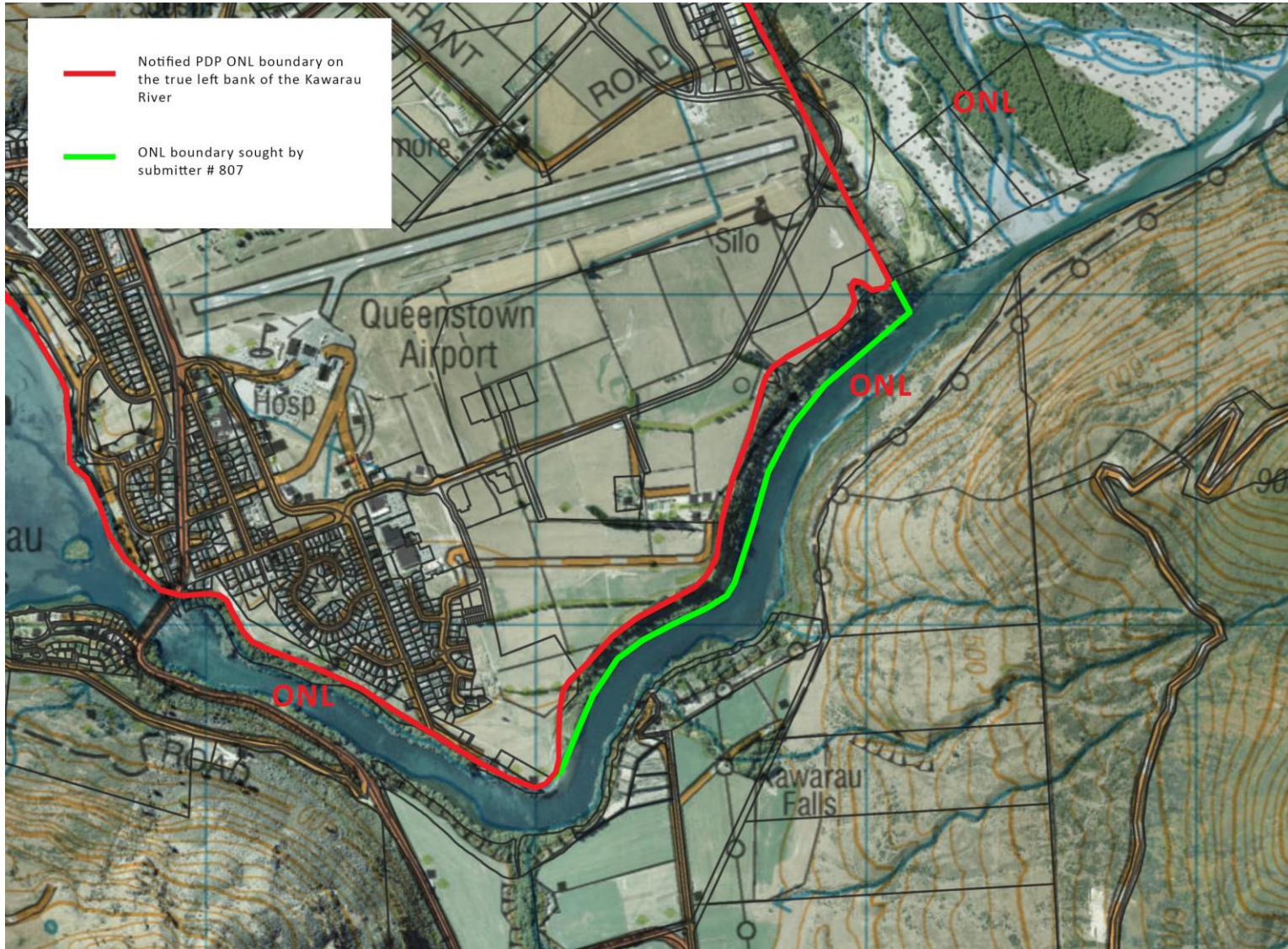
APPENDIX A

NOTIFIED PDP ONL BOUNDARY AND ASSUMED ONL BOUNDARY SOUGHT BY
SUBMITTER #806 AT QUEENSTOWN PARK STATION



APPENDIX B

NOTIFIED PDP ONL BOUNDARY ON THE TRUE LEFT BANK OF THE KAWARAU RIVER AT
REMARKABLES PARK SPECIAL ZONE AND ONL BOUNDARY SOUGHT BY SUBMITTER #807



APPENDIX C

QUEENSTOWN PARK STATION SPECIAL ZONE ACTIVITY AREAS

(SUBMITTED ON 24 MARCH 2017)

