

BEFORE THE QUEENSTOWN-LAKES DISTRICT COUCL

IN THE MATTER

of a hearing on submissions to the Requested
Queenstown Lakes District Plan pursuant to clause 8B
of the First Schedule to the Resource Management Act
1991

ON BEHALF OF

JEREMY BELL INVESTMENTS LIMITED (820)

Submitter

**EVIDENCE SUMMARY STATEMENT OF BENJAMIN ESPIE
(LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT)**

13TH JUNE 2017

- 1 My name is Benjamin Espie.
- 2 My evidence in chief dated 4 April 2017 outlines my experience and qualifications relevant to this evidence in respect of the Upper Clutha mapping hearings.
- 3 In summary, I agree with and adopt the findings of Paul Smith's Landscape and Visual Effects Assessment Report, dated 5th June 2015, that accompanied Submission 820. I consider that the location of the requested Rural Lifestyle Zone (**RLZ**) is not as sensitive to change as many locations within the Rural Zone. I also consider that the landscape and visual effects of the requested RLZ will be well mitigated and that there is considerable logic to the proposal in terms of landscape planning. I consider that the requested RLZ sits comfortably in the landscape and in relation to landscape planning principles and the relevant strategic or district wide provisions of the Operative and Requested District Plans (**ODP and PDP**).
- 4 The evidence of Ms Mellsop and the further submission of UCESI (1034) both oppose the requested area of RLZ on the grounds of landscape and visual effects. I consider that neither Ms Mellsop or UCESI have conducted a suitable detailed assessment of the effects of development that would be enabled by the requested zone and have not suitably considered the control (or discretion) that the consent authority will have in relation to the manner in which the zone ultimately develops.
- 5 Subdivision within the requested area of RLZ is discretionary pursuant to the PDP (and controlled pursuant to the ODP). With reference to subdivision consents granted in areas of RLZ over the last decade under the ODP (ie in relation to a controlled activity status), it is common for conditions of subdivision consents to include numerous measures to mitigate potential effects of future buildings and activities. Common measures include specific landscape planting to visually screen or soften building platforms, the preparation of an overall structural landscape plan and a suite of restrictions on the future design of buildings (external roofing and cladding materials, colours, finishes, the requirement for eaves over windows, etc).
- 6 The relief that is sought includes additional measures in order to mitigate potential effects. These additional measures have been added since the time of the original submission, as is detailed in the evidence of Mr Vivian. In short, additional provisions are proposed that will ensure the following:
 - a maximum of 25 dwellings within the requested zone,
 - buildings will be restricted to a maximum of 6 metres in height,
 - activities within the zone will be reasonably inconspicuous when viewed from SH6 through the use of a number of design methods,
 - the Building Restriction Areas will be comprehensively managed so as to maintain and enhance indigenous vegetation and ecosystems in these areas.
- 7 In her rebuttal evidence, Ms Mellsop opines that development that would result from the requested zone would have at least a moderate adverse effect on landscape character and that effects would be cumulative with those of the existing RLZ to the west of Mount Barker.

8 I agree that the requested relief would reduce rural, pastoral character within the site of the requested zone. Areas of RLZ generally develop a more busy and fragmented character than agricultural areas, although they often accommodate some hobby farming activities. This is the case with the various existing areas of RLZ within the District. In terms of landscape planning, I do not see that this is an inherently inappropriate outcome, provided that the areas of RLZ are located appropriately. Obviously, the strategic or district-wide provisions of the PDP (and ODP) contemplate and provide for areas of RLZ in the rural parts of the District. A number of RLZs are located within outstanding natural landscapes (**ONLs**), including newly proposed areas of RLZ that form part of the notified PDP. I consider that the location of the requested RLZ is appropriate because:

- It is not within an ONL;
- It is on relatively flat terrace land and therefore (while it gains excellent solar access and views) it is not as visually displayed or conspicuous as sloping land would be;
- It is located on improved pasture land that is part of a relatively intense farming operation; i.e. the land is not as high in natural character as many rural parts of the District;
- While it has good access to the transport network, it is not located in a part of the Upper Clutha Basin that experiences high use, traffic or tourist use; i.e. it is in a relatively hidden part of the basin away from major transport routes;
- Its location and aspect is very similar (although more hidden in my opinion) to land that is already zoned RLZ to the west of Mount Barker;
- As is set out in Mr Smith's report, future development within the requested zone will have limited visual effects.

9 I do not agree that the effects of development within the requested RLZ would significantly combine with the effects of the existing RLZ to the west of Mount Barker to create a cumulative effect. In my opinion, the two areas of zoning would be well separated by the distinct spur that is followed by the Criffel Diggings Track and by Mount Barker itself. I do not consider that the two areas of zoning will combine in the perception of an observer, albeit that they may be experienced sequentially by a traveller on Mount Barker Road. I consider that the effects of the two areas of zoning will be experienced quite separately.

10 In her rebuttal evidence, Ms Mellsop opines that visual effects as experienced from SH6 will be of a moderate degree. Mr Smith's report describes these effects as being of a slight degree and I agree. These views are at distances of between 2.8 and 4.4 kilometres and the requested zone area appears as a small and relatively inconspicuous horizontal sliver of land at the base of the Criffel Range. Instances of built form are likely to be discernible but will be visually softened by vegetation within the zone. I consider that visual amenity as experienced from this highway will very largely remain as it currently is.

11 In his rebuttal evidence on behalf of the UCESI, Mr Haworth states that the Society supports Ms Mellsop's view but doubts that the relevant area has any capacity to absorb change. Mr Haworth does not explain the Society's position any further. Ms Lucas (the landscape witness called by the UCESI) does not mention the proposed Criffel Station RLZ in her evidence.

Ben Espie

vivian+espie

13th June 2017