

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

IN THE MATTER of the Resource Management Act ('Act')

AND

IN THE MATTER of the submission by Banco Trustees Limited, McCulloch Trustees 2004 Limited and other on the QLDC Proposed District Plan (Stream 14) Wakatipu Basin

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF STEPHEN SKELTON
FOR**

Banco Trustees Limited, McCulloch Trustees 2004 Limited, and others (#2400)

15th June 2018



INTRODUCTION

1. My name is Stephen Russell Skelton. I have the qualifications of a Bachelor of Arts in Communication from Northern Arizona University and a Master of Landscape Architecture (first class honours) from Lincoln University. I am the Director of Patch Limited (**Patch**), a landscape architecture and landscape planning consultancy based in Queenstown. I am a registered member of the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects and the acting chairman of the Southern Branch.
2. I have been involved in landscape consultancy work in the Queenstown Lakes District for over 5 years, working in both the public and private sector. I held the position of landscape planner with Lakes Environmental before it was absorbed by the Queenstown Lakes District Council (**QLDC**) in 2013. I then held the position of landscape architect at Baxter Design in Queenstown.
3. I founded Patch in June 2016 and my work has included all facets of landscape architecture and landscape planning through the range of small and large-scale projects. My work includes master planning, commercial and residential landscape design, preparation of native restoration planting plans, preparation of landscape management plans and preparation of landscape assessments for resource consent applications.
4. Notable works I have undertaken in the last five years include:
 - I was the project landscape architect on the Camp Glenorchy development which employs progressive sustainability initiatives in the frame of a visitor accommodation activity;
 - I prepared the design controls document for Three Parks in Wanaka;
 - Master planning and urban design of a 32-lot, low density residential subdivision at Lot 6, Kirimoko in Wanaka;
 - Landscape design and restoration planting plans for a 12-lot, rural residential development at Homestead Bay, Jacks Point;
 - Master planning and landscape design of a 14-lot rural residential subdivision near Arrowtown.



5. I am professionally familiar with the values of the Wakatipu Basin. I have lived in the District for 8 years and have witnessed the Wakatipu Basin through all seasonal, diurnal and climatic variations. I am an avid mountain climber and paraglider and I have viewed the Wakatipu Basin from almost all the surrounding mountain summits and slopes and from the air. I have walked or cycled most of the Queenstown Trail. I have driven all the publicly accessible roads within the Wakatipu Basin. I have a professional and intimate understanding of the Basin's landscape and visual amenity values.
6. Over the course of my work, I have visited the site and the surrounding public and many of the private places. I have experienced the site over the course of several years working professionally in the Basin I am aware of the pressures and sensitivities of the land and I have a detailed understanding of its landscape and visual amenity values.
7. I have read and understand the Strategic Direction of the Proposed District Plan and the objectives and policies relevant to this submission, especially those contained with the Rural, Landscape and Wakatipu Basin chapters.
8. While this matter is not before the Environment Court, I have read the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses in the Environment Court Practice Note 2014. This evidence has been prepared in accordance with it and I agree to comply with it. I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions expressed.

SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

9. Patch has been asked to provide evidence which assesses the landscape and visual amenity effects of the parts of Submission #2400 which seeks to rezone the land at 112 – 116 McDonnell Road, Arrowtown (the site) (**Attachment A**) for rural living purposes. The following evidence contains:
 - An executive summary
 - A description of the site and surrounding landscape,
 - A summary of the visibility of the site;
 - An assessment of the landscape and visual amenity effects of the submission;



10. In the preparation of this evidence I have reviewed the following:

- Stage 1 Section 32 Evaluation Reports, Council s.42A Reports and QLDC right-of-reply for the following PDP Chapters; Strategic Chapters 3-6, Rural Residential and Rural Lifestyle, Rural, Residential, Subdivision and Wakatipu Basin;
- Stage 2 s.42A reports prepared on behalf of QLDC by Mr Marcus Langman, Mr Craig Barr and Ms Anita Vanstone;
- Stage 1 associated evidence submitted on behalf of QLDC prepared by Ms Helen Mellsop, Mr Glenn Davis and Ms Bridget Gilbert,
- The Wakatipu Basin Land Use Planning Study (**WBLUPS**),
- The relevant submissions and further submissions of other submitters.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

11. The site is at the edge of Arrowtown's urban areas and was recommended in the WBLUPS to be zoned for rural living activities as the Arrowtown South Precinct. Council has instead zoned the site as Rural Amenity and the submission seeks that the site should be zoned for rural living activities similar to that recommended in the WBLUPS.

12. The site is well contained by vegetation and topography. I consider the zoning of the site for rural living type activities would result in the perception of a dissipating edge to Arrowtown's urban areas, transitioning from an urban character to the north and east to the a rural character to the south and west. A rural living type zoning would maintain a level of open, rural character and not significantly reduce the visual amenity of private and public places.

13. I consider a rural living type zoning of the site would not result in adverse effects on landscape character or visual amenity that would be more than minor.

EVIDENCE OF MARCUS LANGMAN

14. Council has not called landscape evidence on the submission and Planner, Mr Langman's evidence has not been informed by expert landscape advice specific to the site and submission. His evidence has however been informed by the advice and analysis provided in the WBLUPS. The WBLUPS has found that the site was part of



the Arrowtown South Landscape Character Unit 24 (**LCU**). The WBLUPS found that the site has a high capability to absorb development and recommended that the site and all of LCU 24 be zoned for rural living type development as part of an Arrowtown South Precinct. Mr Langman has not accepted the expert landscape advice and has instead recommended that the site be part of the Amenity Zone.

15. I understand Mr Lanman's reasoning for recommending that the site be zone Rural Amenity is that rural living type development would 'lock up' the land such that it would not be available for future urban development. I consider this position is uninformed as the spaciousness of rural living type development allows for a 'space between' where future, development could occur if desired. This is evidence in the Bridesdale development where a medium density residential housing area has occurred within what was previously a rural living area.
16. Furthermore, I do not consider urban development to be the best solution for the site. In this location and context, I consider a dissipation of the urban edge by way of rural living type development, flowing into the landscape's more rural areas would better support rural amenity, visual amenity and landscape values. I will provide more detail on this point below.

LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

17. The following portion of my evidence will describe the physical features and landscape character values of the site and surrounding landscape, beginning at the fine grain site scale, working out to the coarser landscape scale.
18. The site is a rural sit, near it's centre containing one residential dwelling and associated ancillary structures, a mature garden of mostly exotic trees and an apple orchard. A spring surfaces near the site's northern corner, flows to the boundary then continues to the south in the road reserve. The more easterly portions of the site are moderately flat and covered in pasture grass. A hummock feature appears near the centre of the site and most of the existing residential development and planting is on the upper portions of this feature. The more westerly (rear) portion of the site is covered in pasture grass which extends up a slope towards a ridge which visibly separates the Hill's Golf Club from the subject site. The site is characterised by shelterbelt, amenity, and agrarian planting's set within a wider pastoral context which displays a varied and mildly rolling underlying landform.

19. The Hills Golf Club shares the site's western boundary and the more rural values of the Hills site is not readily perceivable from the site. The northern site boundary is shared with another rural property with similar characteristics (the Hanan site) and a small square parcel of land containing an electrical substation. To the south of the site is another rural property (the Page site) with similar characteristics to the subject site. The site's eastern boundary abuts McDonnell Road.

20. On the opposite side of the McDonnell Road the land is held in two separate uses. The more southerly land is currently open but is part of the recently consented Arrowfields development (RM161093) which allows for 20 residential lots and will soon display an urban character. A recent Environment Court Decision¹ has approved the Arrowtown South Special Zone (including Arrowfields) on land south and east of the site which allows for further rural living type development on the lands south of Arrowfields and east of McDonnell Road. The northern lands on the opposite side of McDonnell Road are part of the Low Density Residential (LDR) zone of Arrowtown. These urban areas are set on and near the base of an escarpment, between the escarpment and McDonnell Road.

21. The site is part of the McDonnell Road corridor which passes through a series of landscape characters with variable and changing values between Arrow Junction and Arrowtown. McDonnell Road once formed a distinct edge to the more urban and rural living areas of Arrowtown. This edge has been eroded with the approval of the Arrowtown Lifestyle Retirement Village (SH160141) which will allow for approximately 100 villas, 50 apartments, a 100-bed aged care facility and a community facility. This area of urban development will occur in what is currently a rural area on the southwestern side (same side as the subject site) of McDonnell Road, approximately 650m south of the subject site.

22. Other elements which characterise the McDonnell Road corridor are areas of strong rural character to the south, terrace scarps and hummocky landforms, rural living type development, the urban areas of Arrowtown, rural character vegetation, views of the Crown Terrace Outstanding Natural Feature (ONF) and of the wider Outstanding Natural Landscape (ONLs) and ONFs. The vegetation of McDonnell Road corridor is predominantly pasture grass with mature exotic trees arranged in lineal patterns and groups between larger areas of pasture. Rural living type activities such as dwellings,

¹ Environment Court Decision C25/2015

fences, gates, etc. are widely visible throughout the road corridor. The Arrowtown Golf Course is on the edge of the McDonnell Road corridor and adds a recreational layer to the landscape which is more parkland in character.

23. At present the road corridor and its wider rural landscape character ends abruptly at the Arrowtown LDR. The anticipated effects of the Arrowtown Lifestyle Retirement Village and the Arrowfields development will extend Arrowtown's urban character to the south. I consider this approved development has and will continue to erode the rural and the values of the McDonnell Road corridor and will supplant them with a more rural living and urban character.

24. The WBLUPS studied the coarser scale of the Wakatipu Basin and broke the whole of the Basin down into LCUs, not landscapes in their own right as defined by the Environment Court². In doing so the WBLUPS often used settlement patterns and cadastral boundaries liberally to define landscape unit boundaries. The WBLUPS has placed the site in the Arrowtown South LCU 24. The LCU Character Worksheets (Appendix H in the WSLUPS) also provide a useful tool in identifying the character values of LCU 24. For the purpose of this evidence I concur with the LCU 24 boundaries as shown in Schedule 24.8.

SUMMARY OF VISIBILITY

25. The following portion of my evidence will summarise the locations and degree to which the proposal may be visible from public places.

McDonnell Road

26. The site is well contained visually by vegetation and topography. The existing shelter belt on the site's southern boundary and the topography to the south provide a high degree of visual screening such that no part of the proposal will be visible from McDonnell Road south of the site (**Image 1**).

² Environment Court Decisions C73/2002 paragraph 20 and C203/2004 paragraph 29. Which states that the minimum characteristics of a landscape are that:

- *It must contain at least one (preferably more) rectangle with at least 1.5 x 2 km sides;*
- *No part of the landscape may be more than 1 km from such a rectangle;*
- *It must contain a minimum area of 600 ha and*
- *Internal corners should be rounded.*

27. Existing vegetation along the site's road boundary and within the site itself provides a moderate degree of screening and any development in the eastern parts of the site would be seen through a filter of mature trees and low-level vegetation. Any development in the rear, western part of the site would be screened by topography and vegetation and will not be visible from McDonnell Road (**Images 2 - 5**).
28. North of the site on McDonnell Road, the site is well screened by the power substation on the site's north-western boundary (**Image 6**). Mature trees exist on the site's north-western boundary. This planting provides a high degree of screening such that any development on the interior of the site would be difficult to see from north of the power substation on McDonnell Road. Also, significant stands of rural character trees exist to the north of the site on other private properties, screening the site from McDonnell Road views.

Public Walking Tracks

29. To the north of the site are two pedestrian paths which link McDonnell Road and Cotter Avenue. These walking paths ascend the residential terrace between McDonnell Road and Cotter Avenue. The more northerly pedestrian path is in excess of 350m from the site (**Image 7**) and the more southerly path is in excess of 105m from the site (**Image 8**). Both of these paths offer occasional views towards the site through breaks in the built form within the LDR zone (existing houses, sheds, fences, etc). The more elevated portions of these paths offer views from above the site's existing high stature boundary planting to the internal portions of the site. From the elevated parts of these tracks, parts of the site is visible.

Cotter Avenue and Advance Terrace

30. Cotter Avenue and Advance Terrace are two public roads which traverse the upper edge of the Cotter Terrace. Extensive residential development exists adjacent to these roads, most notably to the west on the edge of the Cotter Terrace. Views are occasionally available from these roads through gaps in the built form and domestic landscaping (**Image 9**). A well-regarded view is available from a vacant lot west of Cotter Avenue between Kircher Place and Hood Cr. This undeveloped private land offers views from Cotter Avenue directly into the site (**Image 10**).

Distant Views

31. It may be possible to view the site from more distant views including from Feehly's Hill Track to the north (1.13km away), parts of Tobbins Track to the east (1.21km



away) and part of the zig zag portion of the Crown Range Road to the south east (3.46km away). The site forms a small part of the wider panoramas available from these more distant views and it does not form an important part of the visual amenity experienced from these distant places.

ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS ON VISUAL AMENITY

32. As discussed above, the site is highly visible from the portions of McDonnell Road which immediately adjoin the site, from some views along the walking tracks between McDonnell Road and Cotter Avenue and from some views west of Cotter Avenue. The site is also visible from many of the private lots between Cotter Avenue and McDonnell Road. The following portions of my evidence will describe the effects a rural living type development would have on the visual amenity of public and private places

Public Places

33. It is considered that from long range views such as parts of the Crown Terrace and Feehly Hill, rural living type development on the site would result in negligible³ adverse effects on visual amenity as it will be well absorbed by settlement and vegetation patterns.

34. From more short range public views, the site will be seen in the context of urban type development. If the site were developed for rural living purposes, views from the more elevated public places would still be available across the wider panorama of the Wakatipu Basin and these desirable views would not be adversely affected by rural living type development on the site. While development on the site could be visible from some elevated public places, such as part of Cotter Ave and the walking tracks which ascend the escarpment between Cotter Ave and McDonnell Road, the rural character and spaciousness of a 4000m² allotment size on the site would not be visually prominent or detract from views of the wider landscape.

35. The site is visually contained to the south by an existing shelter belt and landform, and regardless of the future of this shelterbelt, the landform will contain the spill of visual effects to the south. Similarly, landform will contain any visual effects from

³ Based on the 7-point scale recommended in the *NZILA 6.0 Practice Support Documentation, Best Practice Note, Landscape Assessment and Sustainable Management 10.1*, (02/11/10). The scale is: Extreme, very high, high, moderate, low, very low, negligible.



spilling to the west. To the north, the site is visually contained by a shelterbelt and off-site vegetation and visual effects will be well contained. The only visual effects of the rural living type development on the site would be experienced from immediately adjacent to the site along McDonnell Rd.

36. From the McDonnell Road, immediately adjacent to the site, some visual access to open space would be reduced as a result of rural living type development. The site does not act as the frontispiece to more distant views of any of the Basin's ONLs or ONF. There is no opportunity for any future structures within the site to break the line and form of any skyline, ridge of prominent slope.
37. Rural living type development is often accompanied with rural character trees and other amenity vegetation which will aid in softening and screening built form and domestic effects. Development of the site for rural living purposes would result in a very low adverse effects on the visual amenity as experienced from McDonnell Road.

Private Places

As described above the site is contained visually to the north, west and south while the escarpment between Cotter Ave and McDonnell Road contains the spill of visual effect to the east. The private places in the immediate vicinity of the site, from Arrowfields, to those on the western side of Cotter Road and Advance Terrace and working down to McDonnell Road are able to see the site. From lower private places adjacent to McDonnell Road the loss of visual access to the site's existing open space would result in an adverse visual effect. As this loss in access to open space is held from within an urban environment and does not act as the frontispiece to more outstanding views, I consider the degree of this adverse effect will be low.

38. From more elevated private places, the Arrowfields development will often form the foreground of views. From the upper properties visual access to open space will still be widely available and if the site were developed for rural living purposes. The elevated views would be adversely affected by rural living development on the site to a very low degree as views will continue to be available across the much wider Wakatipu Basin and its surrounding mountains.



ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS ON LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

39. The site is currently confined by boundary planting vegetation to the north, east and south and topography to west. The boundary planting is characteristic of the rural landscape and is part of the rural landscape patterning which extends across much of the Wakatipu Basin. This topography and vegetation confines the site and creates a defensible edge such that a rural living character can be contained.
40. The front (eastern) portion of the site is relatively flat while there is more undulating, hummocky land in the middle, western third of the site. The site does not hold significant natural values and the type of development anticipated within a rural living area would be consistent with rural elements and result in a negligible adverse effect the naturalness of the landscape.
41. The patterns of subdivision which would be enabled by a rural living type zoning would extend the residential character of the adjacent Arrowtown and Arrowfields residential areas. Rural living type zoning however would present a level of spaciousness maintain a level of ruralness to a settled landscape. The level of development anticipated by a rural living zone would not introduce an arbitrary urban edge and would instead present dissipating edge between the urban/rural interface. I consider a rural living edge to Arrowtown in this location would best protect and maintain the more rural values of the wider landscape.
42. In terms of sprawl, I consider the Arrowtown Lifestyle Retirement Village has broken the urban growth boundaries of Arrowtown and already extended the more residential areas of Arrowtown to the southeast along McDonnell Road. Similarly, the Arrowfields development has extended the urban areas of Arrowtown. Rural living type development on the site would not appear as urban sprawl as it would be a less dense extension of residential land, maintaining a level of rural character providing a more open character buffer.
43. I agree with the finding of the WBLUPS and consider the proposed zoning would concentrate residential development in a part of the McDonnell Road corridor which has a high potential to absorb development.
44. While rural living rezoning would supplant the site's existing pastoral character, it will be contained within an area already strongly effected by residential uses. Any residential effects will be well contained within the McDonnell Road corridor and LCU



24. The defensible edges of LCU 24 will check the spread of development and contain it within this discrete, low lying landscape unit.

CONCLUSION

45. Overall, I agree with the recommendation of the WBLUPS and consider a rural living type zoning would best maintain and protect the visual amenity and landscape values of the site and surrounding landscape.

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