

Before the Queenstown Lakes District Council Hearing Panel

Under the Resource Management Act 1991

In the matter of the renotification of two submissions on Stage 1 of the Queenstown Lakes Proposed District Plan concerning the zoning of land at Arthur's Point by Gertrude's Saddlery Limited and Larchmont Enterprises Limited

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**Summary of Evidence of Yvonne Pflüger on behalf of Gertrude's Saddlery Limited and Larchmont Enterprises Limited**

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## Summary of Evidence

Yvonne Pflüger on behalf of Gertrude's Saddlery Limited and Larchmont Enterprises Limited

### Master Planning Approach

1. Following the previous Council decision, Gertrude Saddlery, chose to take a design-led approach on their Site at Arthurs Point and engaged Boffa Miskell Limited (BML) to assist with the preparation of a masterplan that takes the sensitivities of the underlying terrain and surrounding landscape into account, while exploring opportunities to better enhance associated community benefits such as through trail access, open space, and native revegetation opportunities. BML has prepared a 'masterplan' that was the basis for the proposed 'structure plan' proposed to fit within Chapter 27 of the PDP, to facilitate and guide development of the Site, while ensuring that landscape character and amenity values are maintained or enhanced, and landscape values of the adjacent ONF and ONLs are protected.
2. While Low Density Suburban Residential Zone (LDSRZ) is proposed in the central part of the Site, Large Lot Residential B (LLR) zoning with larger lots and lower development density is proposed along the periphery. For these LLR lots, controls are proposed on future development, as a design-led response to the character and values of the Site, and the adjacent Shotover River Gorge ONF. This includes identified building platforms with an individually set relative level (RL), native planting areas around the outer edge of the Site to provide visual mitigation and a buffer to the adjacent ONF, and planting between lots as identified on the structure plan.
3. The proposed LDSRZ extension is located within an inward facing part of the Site where the visual effects are largely confined to a visual catchment that would already experience effects once the operative LDSRZ is implemented. The identified LDSRZ extension area is in a central part of the Site that is relatively flat, rather than sloping towards its perimeter. This area is visually less sensitive than the existing LDSRZ which extends across a relatively high-lying, north-facing part of the Site with rocky outcrops. The LDSRZ extension in this part of the site could easily absorb landscape and visual effects of development.
4. As part of the structure plan, building platforms (BPs) are identified on the LLR zoned lots. In formulating the structure plan for the Site, BML have taken into account the need for buildings to be designed and located so that they do not compromise the character or values of the adjacent Shotover River ONF, or impact adversely on the outlook from existing residences.
5. The built form and associated domestication would be confined in specified areas which are 500m<sup>2</sup> in size on each lot with substantial areas of open space / revegetation in between buildings and nodes of domestication, since lots range in size from 2000-4000m<sup>2</sup>. The locations of the identified 17 BPs in the LLR are all located in flatter areas that have a higher ability to absorb residential dwellings. The combination of locations for BPs that are set back on the flat part of the terraced landform, and the identification of a maximum relative building height that relates to the existing surrounding terrain, along with required structural planting, ensures that future buildings would not be visually prominent from the western side of the Shotover River<sup>1</sup>, from the true right bank of Shotover River, from the river corridor / margin itself, or from other viewing points such as Gorge Road. I also note that the Submitter has accepted some of the recommendations provided in the Council evidence, including the requirement for 2m maturity of taller plant species prior to building, and revised Structural Planting areas, in particular along the interface of the Gorge / ONF escarpment. These measures will further reduce visual effects of proposed buildings. The RLs for the BPs were chosen based on the existing contours, ensuring that the buildings are either cut into the terrain or could be followed in a stepped built form to reach an overall height of no more than 7m above the identified RL for each lot.
6. The design ensures that buildings would be subservient to the surrounding natural landscape elements, with a sense of spaciousness maintained across the more visible parts of the Site due to the low density and the provision of extensive native planting areas that contribute to the landscape

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<sup>1</sup> I have also considered the photos from Mr Semple's summary (26.01.22) in particular views from his house at 13 Watties Track. These correspond with VP10 provided in visual simulations and modelling prepared by the Submitter. These photos reinforce my view that the proposed outcome for the LDSRZ extension is almost identical to the existing situation with very low additional effect.

character and visual amenity values. It is important to note that the most sensitive part of the landform, which is the high-lying knob (or summit of the "knoll") as referred to in Ms Mellsop's evidence, located to the south-west of the existing LDRSZ, is proposed to be kept free of development to maintain the legibility of the landform and to avoid any buildings breaking the skyline.

7. The planting proposed for the LLRZ consists of a mix of native plants consisting of species of varying height. As part of the planting, trees, shrubs, and grasses will provide some ecological and visual diversity, while the aim is to achieve an overall homogenous appearance of the structural planting that settles the development into the landform and frames the built development. As vertical landscape elements, the large-scale mass planting will create a context to soften the built form on the currently cleared Site.
8. In the Submitters' revised planning provisions for the LLRZ, it is proposed that a more detailed landscape plan would be prepared by a registered landscape architect which would have to be submitted to council for approval at the stage of subdivision of the Site. The comprehensive planting plan would be implemented prior to titles being issued (correction to my para 31 EIC), in accordance with registered consent conditions and the tall species would be required to reach a height of 2m prior to building. This means that a high level of consistency in appearance of planting will be achieved across lots, as it is implemented according to a comprehensive structural planting plan of homogenous layout and species distribution.

### **Peer Review of Mr Espie's evidence**

9. Mr Espie and Ms Mellsop concur that the Shotover River and its gorge are an Outstanding Natural Feature (ONF) and that the site is adjacent to this ONF but is not part of it (apart from two very small gully areas). I agree with this assessment. In my view, the Site falls outside the ONF as there is a distinctive visual and geomorphological demarcation.
10. Ms Mellsop considers that the remainder of the Site (outside the existing LDRSZ) is part of the wider ONL that surrounds Arthurs Point settlement. However, she also supports rezoning a portion of the Rural Zoned land to LDRSZ, as proposed in the Submitter masterplan. In my view, the ONL boundary proposed by Ms Mellsop appears somewhat arbitrary, given that she agrees that LDRSZ is an appropriate zoning outcome in part of the Site. She considers the Kimiākau Shotover River ONF to be nested within the wider ONL, while Mr Espie assesses the Site not to be part of any Outstanding Natural Landscape (ONL), as it is disconnected and separate from both the Central Whakatipu Basin Coronet ONL and the Western Whakatipu Basin ONL. Given the limited size of the land between the Shotover Gorge and the notified Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) / LDRSZ boundary, which is approximately 150 m wide, I consider that this area is too small to be considered as a continuation of the surrounding mountainous ONLs. I consider that for the Site to be 'nested' within a broader ONL and therefore part of that landscape it would need to be geographically linked or coherent to that broader landscape and share the same values and features as that landscape. I do not consider this to be the case in this instance, and rather, that the Site is visually and geographically associated with the flatter terraced land of the urban areas of Arthurs Point settlement.
11. The Site also does not display a high level of naturalness or the same notable values as the continuous landscapes north and south of Arthurs Point settlement, identified in the Priority Area Schedules. The operative LDRSZ on the Site extends to the visually most sensitive part of the elevated landform which will further reduce any currently perceived naturalness of the Site. In respect of the structure plan overlay, while the UGB would extend along the outer property boundary, any built form within the site is well set back from the escarpment edge of the Shotover Gorge ONF and provides 'breathing space' in the form of structural planting. I agree with Mr Espie that it is appropriate for the proposed LLR Zone to abut an ONF, as is the case in many areas around the district. The landform boundary of the gorge is obvious and easily defensible, while the current ONL boundary cutting across Site is not, nor is a slight amendment to that to include the LDRSZ extension, as supported by Ms Mellsop. I note that Ms Mellsop disagrees that the proposed setbacks of the LLRZ are sufficient to protect ONF values of the Gorge (para 3.10), I disagree on the following basis:
  - a. the setbacks internally within the site follow logical contours of the Site, the ONF gorge boundary is actually some further distance from the proposed buildings themselves and includes intervening steeper topography.

- b. additional setback is provided between the outer proposed buildings and the gorge by the DOC Reserve, which although potentially to be cleared of wilding trees, will continue to provide space between urban Arthurs Point and the river. Additional mitigation planting has been proposed in the revised version of the structural planting plan to ensure the 5m buffer of planting is provided between building platforms and the proposed zone / property boundary.
- c. while visual simulations show the entire 500m<sup>2</sup> bulk of built form at 7m high, in reality, houses will not be built to this maximum extent and are likely to provide more varied and stepped design solutions than demonstrated by the modelling.

12. Views from within the Gorge itself would only be fleeting and already in an urban context with views limited to Big Beach in an upstream direction where other existing dwellings are already visible. Mr Semple's photos depicting the Site from Big Beach and other locations along the Shotover River banks are helpful, but I maintain that Big Beach is difficult to access by the public and recreational water users travelling downstream would be unlikely to look back upstream towards the site. Additional visibility of the rezoning from the Shotover River corridor between the gorge sections will be low.

13. Mr Espie highlights that he does not consider the presence of Douglas fir / larch forest on the Site as positive in terms of natural character. Given the potential for wilding spread of these exotic species I agree that their removal enhances the natural character rather than detract. The proposal does not rely on the presence of these trees within the DOC reserve for screening purposes, as the proposed planting will achieve initially visual integration of built form and eventually partial screening. In relation to views and visibility the existing (albeit currently undeveloped) LDRSZ on the high-lying parts of the knob also have to be taken into account, as buildings could be constructed as of right near or on the ridgeline and break the skyline when viewed from locations to the south of the Site. In some of the views, these buildings within the proposed zone may appear as if they are on the skyline. However, as Mr Espie points out in his summary of evidence, the 3D model view had a limited spatial extent and in most instances more distant landform appears in the backdrop as shown in the accompanying photographs. Therefore, there would be minimal additional skyline breaches through the proposed LLRZ extension when compared to the allowable development under the operative LDRSZ and Ms Mellsop's proposed LDRSZ extension.