



Landscape Assessment Report

Ayrburn Farm Developments Limited

February 2015

INTRODUCTION

1. This landscape assessment report was prepared by the Baxter Design Group (BDG) to assess the potential effects of a proposed development on the landscape and visual amenity. The following report includes:
 - A description of the site and wider landscape,
 - A description of the proposal,
 - Landscape assessment,
 - Conclusion.
2. The proposal involves two sites legally described as PT LOT 3 DP 5737 LOT 4 DP 319854 LOTS 3- 5 DP 343305 and LOT 1 DP 18109 BLK VII SHOTOVER SD L. Combined these sites cover an area of 45.3 ha.
3. In brief the proposal seeks to subdivide the combined sites into up to 151 lots. Most of these lots will be small (400m²) residential lots while the remaining land will remain as productive pastoral lands. The existing heritage buildings will be restored and repurposed to create a 'historic core' that service the needs of the community. Landscaping and design controls are also proposed to ensure the retention of the existing character and visual amenity.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE AND WIDER LANDSCAPE

4. The subject site exists near the intersection of Hogans Gully Road, the Arrowtown - Lake Hayes Road and the Speargrass Flat Road. It is within the Speargrass Flats landscape which occupies the flatter lands between Ayrburn Ridge to the north and Slope Hill and Lake Hayes to the south.
5. The Speargrass Flat is a corridor landscape composed of floodplains, river terraces and escarpments. The vegetation of the Speargrass Flats is predominantly pasture grass broken by occasional shelterbelts and patches of mixed exotic amenity trees. Pockets of scrubland exist in parts of the landscape. Land use within the Speargrass Flat is mixed. Most of the landscape is

zoned Rural General while a portion of land north of Lake Hayes is zoned Rural Residential. This Rural Lifestyle zoning provides contrast to the otherwise predominantly pastoral landscape.

6. The subject site exists immediately north of the Rural Residential - North Lake Hayes Zone, south of the Waterfall Park area east of the Queenstown Trail and west of the Arrowtown – Lake Hayes Road. It is noted that the Waterfall Park Structure Plan immediately north of the subject site allows for significant residential development.
7. The eastern portion of the subject site is a flat pastoral landscape. This pastureland is bisected by a mature avenue of east-west running trees which lead to a set of historic farm buildings. These flat pastoral lands are continued to the east towards Hogans Gully.
8. Mill Creek passes through the center of the site flowing in a north-south direction. This creek cascades down from Ayrburn Ridge into Waterfall Park before meandering through the subject site and continuing through the North Lake Hayes area, terminating in Lake Hayes.
9. River terraces exist within the site running adjacent to Mill Creek. These terraces create a sunken basin adjacent to Mill Creek. Sloped faces and more elevated plateaus enclose this sunken basin.
10. A large portion of flat, pastoral land extends to the west of Mill Creek. This flat land meets the steeper slopes of Ayrburn Ridge which ascend to the north.
11. Mature vegetation exists on the site, resulting from over a century of farming activity. This mature vegetation is most pronounced in the vicinity of the heritage buildings and includes specimen trees and amenity planting. Other significant patches of vegetation include willows along the riparian areas of Mill Creek, avenue trees along existing roads and dense evergreen planting on a portion of the southern boundary.
12. At present, the land of the subject site is predominantly used for agricultural purposes. Two dwellings exist in the cluster of buildings near the center of the site. These buildings are occupied by the current farm manager.
13. Overall the site maintains a strong pastoral character set hard against the rural lifestyle developments of North Lake Hayes and the permitted residential activities of Waterfall Park. The riparian corridor of Mill Creek and its associated terraces which run through the center of the site separate two large pastures atop eastern and western terraces. The riparian corridor and its associated sunken basin between terrace faces visually contains much of the existing built form. Existing vegetation also visually contains much of the site.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL

14. The proposal seeks to subdivide the combined sites into up to 151 lots. Most of these lots will be approximately 400m² residential lots while the remaining, surrounding land will be held in one title and managed as a productive farm. Part of this larger farm lot will contain a 'historic core' which repurposes the existing heritage buildings.
15. A proposed new accessway will enter the site off the Arrowtown - Lake Hayes Road. Landscaping is proposed throughout the site to both mitigate potential adverse visual effects and to perpetuate the site's proposed vernacular. Taking clues from nearby Arrowtown, design controls are proposed

which will ensure dwellings and landscaping are in keeping with the surrounding landscape and architectural character.

16. The historic core will be restored, enhanced and repurposed as a community commercial zone where weekly farmers markets can occur, historic farm artifacts can be displayed and the unique sense of place can be expressed. This repurposing is intended to unearth the distinct historical character of the place and make it more accessible to the general public and create a 'historic core' for the community.
17. Planting is proposed throughout the development. This planting will take the form of avenue trees and groups of evergreen and deciduous exotics. Most of the existing trees, some of which have heritage value will be retained.
18. Of particular note in terms of visual mitigation planting, a stand of trees that exists on the upper terrace edge to the east of Mill Creek will be retained and densified. This eastern block of trees will be thickened to a point where it is no longer visual permeable.
19. A stand of trees to the north and west of the westernmost residential development is proposed which is intended to break the built form as viewed from the Queenstown Trail and completely screen the proposed development from Speargrass Flat Road.
20. A large stand of mixed evergreens which covers a portion of the site's southern boundary will be cleared and new trees are proposed, closer to the proposed lots. This clearing of the existing evergreen will not occur until the bulk of the proposed vegetating meets a height and density to provide a reasonable level of visual screening.

LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

21. This assessment examines the proposal against its potential effects on the visual amenity and landscape character. The effects of the proposal as experienced from within the site are not considered. Effects on public places, most notably the Arrowtown – Lake Hayes Road, Speargrass Flat Road and the Queenstown Trail are considered. Private places, most notably the residential lots to the south of the subject site in the Rural Residential - North Lake Hayes Zone and the residential developments to the north of the site atop Ayrburn Ridge are assessed.
22. This assessment considers potential effects on the visual amenity and landscape character.
23. The subject site is considered to be within a pocket of land which is mostly visually contained. This containment is attributed to the terraces, existing vegetation, density of development to the south and steep slopes to the north.

Arrowtown – Lake Hayes Road

24. The open lands within the eastern portions of the site adjacent to the Arrowtown – Lake Hayes Road significantly contribute to the existing pastoral character. This pastoral character is repeated on the lands farther east towards Hogans Gully. The combined openness provides a break between the residential developments of North Lake Hayes and those atop McIntyres Hill leading to Arrowtown.

25. The only development proposed within the subject site's easterly pastoral lands is a new accessway lined with avenue trees and a laurel hedge. The bulk of this land will remain in its pastoral character and the break in residential development as experienced from the Arrowtown – Lake Hayes Road will be continued. While the proposed accessway will further segment the open lands, there will still be a significant area of pasturelands between the Arrowtown – Lake Hayes Road and the proposed development. It is considered that the proposed accessway, will have a low adverse effect on the landscape character and visual amenity.
26. A terrace west of the aforementioned pasturelands drops down approximately 8m before meeting the floodplains of Mill Creek. Approximately 35 - 40 lots are proposed within this sunken basin. It is considered that this portion of the development will not be visible from the Arrowtown – Lake Hayes Road, the Queenstown Trail or Speargrass Flat Road. Therefore this portion of development is considered to have a negligible effect on the visual amenity and landscape character as experienced from public places.
27. Up to 15 – 20 lots are proposed north of the 'historic core.' These lots will be set atop a terrace west of Mill Creek and against the southeast facing slopes of Ayrburn Ridge.
28. From most of the Arrowtown – Lake Hayes Road, existing and proposed avenues of evergreen trees which run across the easterly pasturelands will significantly screen views into the northerly portion of the development. A stand of mixed exotics that runs along the top of the easterly terrace edge will be thickened with evergreens. This thick swathe of trees will completely screen the proposed development as viewed from the Arrowtown – Lake Hayes Road.
29. The distance of the proposed development and retention of the easterly pasturelands will ensure the existing pastoral character is maintained. While the proposed residential development will be behind a screen of trees the existing visual amenity will be maintained. The retention of the easterly pasturelands will ensure the existing landscape character is also not adversely affected.
30. Overall the retention of the easterly pasturelands contribute significantly to the existing pastoral character as experienced from the Arrowtown – Lake Hayes Road. The proposed residential development will not be visible from the road. The distance between this development and the road, combined with the retention of open space and screening effects of the trees will ensure that the proposal will have a negligible adverse effect on the landscape character and visual amenity as experienced from the Arrowtown – Lake Hayes Road.

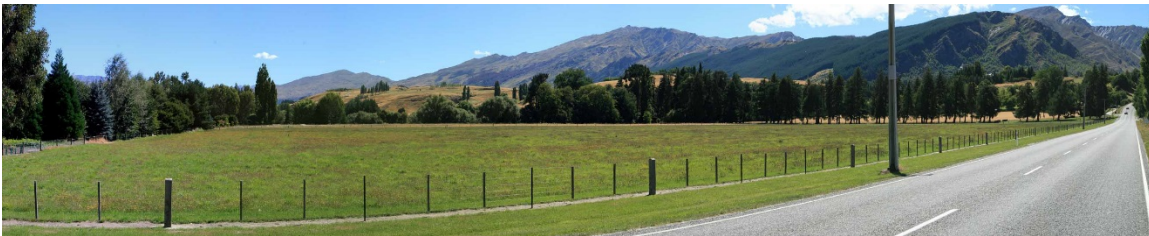


Figure 1: View across the site from the Arrowtown – Lake Hayes Road looking northwest.

Speargrass Flat Road

31. The Rural Residential - North Lake Hayes Zone exists between the subject site and the Speargrass Flat Road. The residential development that has occurred in this zone is significantly denser than is experienced from other parts of the surrounding landscape. This rural residential area is borderline suburban in character. However the residential activity still maintains a high degree of ruralness, mainly associated to the elements in the landscape such as post and wire / post and rail fences, rural character trees, pasture grasses and accessway surface.
32. The proposed development will be heavily screened by existing buildings, trees and landforms within the Rural Residential - North Lake Hayes Zone. At the western edge of the Rural Residential - North Lake Hayes Zone the residential development gives way to pasturelands. A thick swathe of evergreen trees is proposed to be planted in this narrow view corridor. These plantings will ensure the proposed development is not visible from Speargrass Flat Road.
33. It is considered that the dense screen planting of evergreens will completely screen the proposed development from Speargrass Flat Road. The foreground of pasturelands will be maintained. Overall it is considered that the proposal will have a negligible effect on the landscape character and visual amenity as experienced from Speargrass Flat Road.



Figure 2: View from Speargrass Flat Road looking northeast towards the subject site.

Queenstown Trail

34. The Queenstown Trail network passes through many of the landscapes and varying characters that compose the Wakatipu Basin. Part of this trail network, the 'Countryside Ride' links Lake Hayes with Millbrook and Arrowtown and passes immediately west of the subject site. This part of the trail ascends Ayrburn Ridge from the Speargrass Flats to Millbrook.
35. Much of the proposed development will be visible from the upper portions of this part of the trail. As the trail exists on the slopes between Millbrook and the Speargrass Flats it offers elevated views to the south across the Speargrass Flats and on to Lake Hayes. Much of the Speargrass Flat valley and the wider Wakatipu Basin is visible from the more elevated portions of the trail.
36. Large portions of pasturelands are to be retained between the Queenstown Trail and the proposed development. On the flatter lands of Speargrass Flats the proposed development will be set back from the Queenstown Trail by at least 200m. As the trail ascend Ayrburn Ridge this setback widens to 350m.
37. Trees are proposed on the northern and western edges of the proposed residential areas. These trees will provide a high level of screening but the elevated nature of the Queenstown Trail will allow views over the trees into the development. This elevated nature of the trail also allows views across a wide portion of the flats and across to the dramatic mountains that contains the basin.

38. While much of the development will be visible from the Queenstown Trail, the retention of pasturelands between the trail and the proposed development will continue the existing pastoral character.
39. It is considered that the pasturelands that will be occupied by the proposed development make a relatively low contribution to the landscape character as experienced from the Queenstown Trail. While these pasturelands will be heavily modified, the most critical open spaces adjacent to the Queenstown Trail will be retained.
40. The existing residential pattern of development perpetuated by the Rural Residential - North Lake Hayes Zone sets an existing residential context in which the proposed development will be experienced. This existing context allows the development to appear as an extension of the existing development patterns. As this extension will be setback from the Queenstown Trail by an increasing distance as one travels from south to north, its effects will decrease in severity.
41. Overall it is considered that the proposal will affect the visual amenity as experienced from the Queenstown Trail to a moderate degree, but that these effects are localized and will not impinge on the wider visual amenity. Only a narrow portion of the views from this trail will be affected and that effect will be moderate.
42. The existing character of the landscape too will be affected. The extension of the residential pattern from the Rural Residential - North Lake Hayes Zone to the north will change the existing pastoral character of the lands of the proposed development. However the critical portion of pasturelands which exist immediately adjacent to the Queenstown Trail will be retained. This will ensure that the pastoral character is only affected to a moderate to low degree.



Figure 3: View from the upper portion of the Queenstown Trail along Ayrburn Ridge looking south. The subject site is in the center left pasture with the juvenile avenue of trees.

Private Places

43. Residential development exists to the south and north of the site while the eastern and western lands are pastoral in character. To the south are 7 residential lots within the Rural Residential - North Lake Hayes Zone. These lots exist on the same flatlands on which the development is proposed. To the north the land ascends grassed slopes to Ayrburn Ridge. Three residential developments exist atop this ridge.
44. Development will be in excess of 50m from any of the North Lake Hayes Rural Lifestyle properties. Existing and proposed trees within this setback will provide a high level of screening of the proposed development. A large patch of mixed evergreens exists near the center of the southern

boundary. This will be retained until proposed trees to the north are of a height and density to provide a reasonable level of screening.

45. While the pastoral lands to the north of the Rural Residential - North Lake Hayes Zone will be transformed from pastoral to residential, a large portion of land will buffer this residential development from the existing properties to the south. Views of the surrounding, dramatic mountains will not be obscured, however the context of the pastoral lands will be altered.
46. It is considered that the proposal will have a low to moderate adverse effect on the visual amenity as experienced from the dwellings south of the site. Most of these 7 dwellings are setback from the boundary and amenity trees within them are mature, providing a high level of screening. The loss of the pastoral lands north of these properties will have a moderate to high adverse effect on the landscape character as experienced for the properties immediately south of the site. However from within the existing dwelling much of this change in character will not be experienced.
47. To the north the slopes of Ayrburn Ridge lead up to properties set on the elevated flatter lands. These properties are set back from the edge of the ridge which screens views into the valley floor. It is considered that from the southern edge of these properties it may be possible to view the more southerly portions of the proposed development. However from the existing and consented dwellings themselves the whole of the proposed development will be screened by the edge of Ayrburn Ridge. Therefore the proposal is considered to have a low adverse effect on the northerly neighbours.

CONCLUSION

48. The site is located within a discreet pocket of land between the Rural Residential - North Lake Hayes Zone, Arrowtown – Lake Hayes Road, the steep topography of Ayrburn Ridge and Waterfall Park and the Queenstown Trail. The site currently displays a high degree of rural character, mainly experienced from the Arrowtown – Lake Hayes Road and Queenstown Trail.
49. The proposal seeks to establish up to 150 residential lots within the site. These lots will be set with surrounding pastoral lands to the east, north and west. A 50m vegetated setback will separate the proposed development from the existing residential development to the south. Most of the existing trees are proposed to be retained. A new accessway is proposed accessing the site off the Arrowtown – Lake Hayes Road. Most of the existing farm buildings are proposed to be retained, enhanced and repurposed to form a 'historic core' to the development.
50. The highest effects on the visual amenity and landscape character will be experienced from the private properties immediate south of the site in the Rural Residential - North Lake Hayes Zone. From these seven lots it is considered that the development will have a low to moderate adverse effect on the visual amenity and a moderate to high adverse effect on the landscape character.
51. Effect on the properties to the north atop Ayrburn Ridge are considered to be low. This is attributed to the screening effect of the Ayrburn Ridge.
52. From public places it is considered that users of the Queenstown Trail may experience a moderate adverse effect in terms of landscape character. This is attributed to the loss of open pastoral lands to the east of the trail. A critical portion of open land is to be retained immediately adjacent to the

Queenstown trail. It is considered that the retention of this open land will ensure the landscape character is not significantly diminished.

53. Public roads, especially Speargrass Flat Road and the Arrowtown – Lake Hayes Road will experience a negligible adverse effect resulting from this development. Dense swathes of evergreen trees are proposed which will provide a high level of screening. These trees will ensure the visual amenity is not adversely affected. Pastures that form the context of the landscape character, specifically those existing between the roads and the proposed development will be maintained. It is considered that the visual amenity and landscape character as experienced from public roads will be adversely effected to a low to negligible degree.