

**BEFORE THE INDEPENDENT HEARING PANEL
APPOINTED BY THE MACKENZIE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

UNDER The Resource Management Act 1991

IN THE MATTER OF RM230149 – An application for land use consent to establish and operate a commercial tree-climb ropes course and picnic facilities on a site at Lakeside Drive, Takapō / Lake Tekapo.

BY **QUEENSTOWN COMMERCIAL
PARAPENTERS LIMITED**

Applicant

Statement of Evidence of Paul Andrew Smith

On behalf of Tekapo Landco & Godwit Leisure Ltd

Submitter

20 August 2025

Introduction

1. My name is Paul Andrew Smith. I am a Senior Landscape Architect employed by Rough Milne Mitchell Landscape Architects (**RMM**), based out of our Christchurch and Ashburton offices.
2. RMM have been engaged by the owners of the Tekapo Holiday Park at Lakeside Drive, and the adjacent Station Bay Development to provide landscape planning expertise in their submission in opposition to the proposed Tree Climb Activity Park (RM230149).

Qualifications and Experience

3. I hold a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture (Hons) degree from Lincoln University and am a Registered Member of Tuia Pita Ora New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects.
4. I have been practising as a Landscape Architect, primarily in the field of Landscape Planning, since 2012. I was employed by Vivian+Espie, a specialist resource management and landscape planning consultancy based in Queenstown from 2012 – 2017, and then by Beca as a landscape architect, specialising as a landscape planner from 2017 – 2019. Since 2019, I have been employed by RMM in the same role.
5. The majority of my work involves advising clients regarding the protection and maintenance of landscape and amenity values that the Resource Management Act 1991 (**RMA**) and District Plans require. I also prepare Landscape Assessment Reports for Resource Consent Applications, Plan Changes and Submissions on District Plan Reviews, and provide evidence for local Council Hearings and Environment Court Hearings.
6. I have worked on the following projects that are relevant to the proposed tree climb activity park:
 - a) A variation to the design and layout of the Apartments at 3 Lakeside Drive, Tekapo.
 - b) The Kawarau Zipride, at the AJ Hackett Kawarau Bungy Centre.
 - c) The recently approved Te Arawai Wharf within Queenstown Bay.
 - d) Skyscape Visitor Accommodation, Ben Ōhau Road.
 - e) Alps to Ocean Trail, Sailors Cutting to Lake Benmore Dam.

- f) The Cardrona Distillery, Cardrona.
- g) Twizel East Special Purpose Zone.
- h) Identifying the Farm Base Area at Guide Hill Station, Lake Pukaki.

Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses

7. While this is a Council hearing, I confirm I have read the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses contained in the Environment Court Practice Note 2023. This evidence has been prepared in accordance with it and agree to comply with it. I confirm that this evidence is within my area of expertise, except where I state that I have relied on material produced by others, and that I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions expressed.

Background

8. Mr Tony Milne prepared a Landscape Memo dated 10 December 2024, that identified:
 - a) The key landscape matters that we (Mr Milne and I) do not believe were sufficiently addressed within the Landscape Assessment Report, dated October 2023 and RFI Response dated April 2024;
 - b) Found in favour of Ms Bron Faulkner's Peer Review dated 3 May 2024; and
 - c) Concluded that the proposed tree climb activity park will have more than minor adverse landscape effects and that the proposal is inappropriate within this location.
9. I internally reviewed the Landscape Memo and have prepared the following Brief of Evidence (**BoE**) on the proposed tree climb activity park.
10. A Graphic Attachment forms **Appendix 1** to my BoE, that I refer to throughout my evidence.
11. In preparing my BoE I have read the Applicant's and Council's Reports and Evidence as listed below, undertook a site visit on 15 August 2025, read the recently approved Open Space Zone (**OSZ**) Chapter in the PC29 Decision, refamiliarised myself with the Takapō / Lake Tekapo Character Design Guide, Tekapo – Parking and Landscape

Concept Plan Report, dated 11 November 2014¹ and the Mackenzie Spatial Plan, dated September 2021.²

Applicant's and Council's Reports and Evidence

12. In preparing my BoE I have reviewed the following:

- a) The Assessment of Landscape and Visual Effects, prepared by Design Works Group (**DWG**) Landscape Architecture, dated October 2023.
- b) The Assessment of Landscape and Visual Effects – RFI, prepared by DWG Landscape Architecture, dated April 2024.
- c) The Peer Review of the Landscape Assessment, prepared by Ms Faulkner, dated 3 May 2024.
- d) The second Peer Review – Landscape Assessment prepared by Ms Faulkner dated 2 August 2025.
- e) Pertinent sections of the Section 42A Report, including the draft conditions of consent prepared by Mr Nick Boyes, dated 6 August 2025.
- f) The Landscape Evidence including the Graphic Attachment, prepared by Mr Andrew Craig, dated 13 August 2025.
- g) Pertinent sections of the Recreation and Open Space Evidence, prepared by Ms Samanta Strong, dated 10 August 2025.
- h) Pertinent sections of the Acoustic Evidence, prepared by Mr Rob Hay, dated 13 August 2025.
- i) Pertinent sections of the Planning Evidence, prepared by Mr Mark Geddes, dated 12 August 2025.

Scope of Evidence

13. I have now read the Landscape Evidence prepared by Mr Craig and Ms Faulkner's second peer review. Whilst Mr Craig has provided a more robust Landscape

¹ https://www.mackenzie.govt.nz/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/520716/Tekapo-Community-Board-Agendas-17-11-14-Draft-Tekapo-Parking-and-Landscape-Concept-Plan-web-version.pdf

² <https://letstalk.mackenzie.govt.nz/mackenzie-spatial-plans>

Assessment of the proposal, and some further changes to the proposal have been made, my overall conclusions have not altered.

14. Due to this and to reduce repetition, my BoE focuses on gaps in and points of disagreement with Mr Craig’s evidence and Ms Faulkner’s peer reviews.

Methodology

15. My BoE has been prepared in accordance with the Te Tangi a te Manu: Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines (**TTatM Guidelines**)³.

16. The Landscape Memo concluded that the adverse landscape effects would be ‘more than minor’, to use terminology that aligned with the DWG Reports. From here on, I will refer to the TTatM Guidelines 7-point scale when describing natural character, landscape values and the degree of adverse effects⁴.



Figure 1: TTatM Guidelines 7-point scale.

Proposal

17. The proposal is outlined in Appendix 1 and 2 of Mr Geddes Evidence. The high-level description of the proposal has been adequately captured in Ms Faulkner’s second peer review, noting that some updates have occurred. Below are additional aspects of the proposal that are important to highlight:

- a) The Concept Masterplan and the conditions of consent provide for a large range of obstacles such as climbing nets, vertically hanging ropes, netting, ladders, timber stepping platforms, and wooden and netted tunnels between each set of

³ ‘Te Tangi a te Manu: Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines’. Tuia Pita Ora New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects, July 2022.

⁴ Ibid. Para 6.39.

trees. Photos of obstacles sourced from the website⁵ the Application refers to are illustrated on **App 1, Sheet 4**.

- b) There are approximately 56 sets of obstacles between the trees. Four of these are ziplines, refer to **App 1, Sheet 3**.
- c) Three platforms can be constructed on the approximately 46 trees included in the proposal (138 total), including ladders and the like to ascend / descend the trees. Up to five wires and associated obstacles can span each set of trees. Therefore, whilst the Concept Masterplan illustrates a total of 56 spans, there may be instances where two spans are situated between one set of trees.
- d) If one person undertakes an obstacle at a time, more than 56 people can be suspended in the trees at any given time. Noting that groups are limited to 60.⁶
- e) Seven sets of ropes cross overhead of the pathway. Width wise, at a minimum there are three sets of ropes (being the ziplines) between Lakeside Drive and Takapō / Lake Tekapo. East of the three ziplines, the minimum is four sets of ropes, and west is three, with a maximum of six. There is no information on the height of each obstacle, therefore they can be vertically staggered.
- f) There is no information regarding the limbing of trees, i.e. how many and to what extent. Noting that there are no restrictions on limbing trees and no maximum height to the course.
- g) There is a lack of information on the landscape treatment of the Site, including a lack of certainty on the tussock planting because the provision for a deck interferes with this vegetation. Due to the harsh climate and pine trees impairing the growth of understory vegetation, there is no certainty that vegetation will establish, let alone thrive.
- h) The proposal is situated within a cluster of wilding pines that contribute to the wilding pine problem within the Mackenzie district.⁷

⁵ <https://www.treeclimb.com.au>

⁶ Regarding Points a) to d) and f) the photo-montages illustrate one of 1000 or more design iterations that the proposal provides for.

⁷ Aoraki Environmental Consultancy Ltd. 12 April 2023. AEE – Appendix 8 – Pre-Application Feedback.

- i) The lighting condition prevents lighting from being incorporated into the ropes course. The operation can occur to 7pm every night, with the sun setting at 5:05pm⁸ on the shortest day of the year. There is no limit on the location and extent of exterior lighting attached to the base building, including its viewing platform, apart from those in the Mackenzie District Plan (MDP)⁹.

Policy Provisions

- 18. The OSZ, that the Site is situated has recently been approved through PC29, demonstrating the district's policy direction of this area. Due to this, my evidence focus' on the OSZ policy provisions.
- 19. I agree with Ms Faulkner that the OSZ objectives and policies are largely consistent with the Passive Recreation Zone.¹⁰ The primary difference is the enabling of 'active' recreational activities within this area.
- 20. The OSZ extends east to west between Lilybank Road and Mt John's southern toe, and includes all Tekapo township's foreshore, including the reserve immediately north of the town centre, refer **App 1, Sheet 5**. The zone purpose is described below.

The Open Space Zone encompasses areas of open space which provide for passive and active recreation opportunities, including walking and cycling connections in urban areas. Use of these areas is generally informal in nature. The Open Space Zone is located within, or adjoining the District's town and settlements.

Limited built form is anticipated in this zone to support the recreational focus, such as seating, picnic and barbeque facilities, toilets, shelters and playground or sporting or other recreation equipment, reflecting the dominance of open space.

In lakeside areas, the maintenance of lake views and accessibility to the lake is also important.

- 21. The MDP illustrates the Site and receiving environment being within a high visual vulnerability area. Mr Graham Densem, in the Mackenzie Basin Landscape Study¹¹ mapped the areas of low, moderate and high visual vulnerability, refer **App 1, Sheet**

⁸ <https://www.timeanddate.com/sun/@2188526?month=6>

⁹ MDP Light-R1 does not prevent lighting the building during operational hours.

¹⁰ Ms Faulkner, 2nd Peer Review – Para 13.

¹¹ The Mackenzie Basin Landscape: character and capacities. Graham Densem Landscape Architects. November 2007.

6. He identified the receiving environment as having low visual vulnerability, and the surrounding Mt John and Takapō / Lake Tekapo having high visual vulnerability. Due to this discrepancy, and the receiving environment being urban in character, I place little weight on this overlay.

22. As described in Mr Boyes' S42A Report¹², the proposed tree climb activity park is a **non-complying activity** within the Recreation P Zone. Under the recently yet, but not yet operative PC29, the proposal is a **discretionary activity**.

23. An assessment against the OSZ objectives and policies is in Paragraphs 68 – 78.

Landscape Description

24. Mr Craig has provided a more thorough landscape description compared with the DWG Report, including its landscapes attributes, character and values. It does not include a high-level description of the wider environment, which I consider important because the amenity and values are mostly derived from its broad scale setting. Below is the Mackenzie Basin landscape description from the Canterbury Regional Policy Statement.

“The Waitaki and Mackenzie basins are vast, open landscapes surrounded by mountain ranges which include Aoraki/Mount Cook, Mt Sefton, Mt Tasman and the Southern Alps/Ranges Kā Tiritiri o te Moana. The braided Tekapo, Pukaki, Ohau and Ahuriri Rivers and their associated river terraces pass through these basins.

The lakes are dominant features of the open grassland landscape of the basin. These lakes and their basin setting are highly expressive of their formative processes. Many legible landscape features including moraines, roches moutonnees, hanging valleys and terraces are found in the basin. The openness of the vast basin landscape and expansive views of the encompassing mountains ranges are spectacular and are widely celebrated. Landscape qualities vary across an area of this size, which contains land use modification and manmade features. The Waitaki Hydro Electric Power Scheme with its long standing history and distinctive features, including lakes, dams and canals, forms part of this large-scale landscape. The hydro lakes including Lake Tekapo and Pukaki are subject to active management to facilitate hydroelectricity Generation as part of the Waitaki Hydro Electric Power Scheme.”¹³

25. I concur with the landscape attributes that are described in both the Site and the receiving environment. However, I consider that is important to recognise the

¹² S42A Report – Para 75.

¹³ Canterbury Regional Policy Statement 2013, July 2021. Page 310 – 311.

development patterns / the arrangement of the attributes within the receiving environment at both a broad and localised scale. Otherwise, an assessment of landscape effects would result in a homogenous outcome, which this landscape is not.

26. At a broad scale, the residential, visitor accommodation and commercial recreation activities form an urban area abruptly surrounded by a rural environment and Takapō / Lake Tekapo. Regarding this, Lakeside Drive and the pathway form a hard edge between the urban area and the lake environment.
27. At a localised scale, the hot pools, ice skating snow tube, mini golf and café are situated within the northern enclave. The clustering of these commercial activities aligns with the vision outlined in the Tekapo Parking and Landscape Concept Plan, refer to **App 1, Sheet 10 and 12**. The Visitor accommodation, being Lake Edge Lodge and the campground are located immediately west and upslope of Lakeside Drive. And the Station Bay residential development is situated upslope of both the visitor accommodation and commercial activities.
28. Built form beyond Lakeside Drive and the pathway consists of the Takapō / Lake Tekapo Intake, the Lake Tekapo Powerboat & Water Ski Club, the boat ramp and playground. These structures are directly associated with the lake and its use, therefore cannot be located south of the road. The publicly accessible children's playground is not fundamentally associated with the lake. However, playgrounds are commonly located along the foreshore of lakes. This is similar to the playground in Takapō / Lake Tekapo township, the dinosaur park in Wānaka, the playground beside the Wānaka Watersports Facility and the playground in the Queenstown Botanic Gardens.
29. The pathway provides a key connection between the town centre and the area along the western shoreline, achieving one of the key goals of "*Provide greater connections between the town centre and the wider landscape and recreational routes*"¹⁴, refer **App 1, Sheet 10, 12 and 13**.

¹⁴ Tekapo Parking and Landscape Concept Plan Report. Prepared for The Mackenzie District Council by Aurecon Group and Boffa Miskell Ltd. 11 November 2014. Page 2.

Natural Character

30. I agree with Mr Craig that the foreshore and the Site are not pristine, rather they display a moderate-high¹⁵ degree of natural character. This is due to the damming and subsequent control of the lake level, the urban environment that borders the lake, including the structures within the foreshore environment, the disturbance to the foreshore by vehicles and boat trailers, the establishment of exotic conifers and no signs of natural undergrowth.

Landscape Character

31. At a broad scale, I concur that *“the landscape character and amenity of the receiving environment is clearly dedicated to the pursuit of recreational and tourist activity”*¹⁶ and residential activity.
32. At a localised scale, these activities form their own commercial, visitor accommodation, residential and lake foreshore character areas, in which the lines between them are clearly defined.

Landscape Values

33. I find Mr Craigs description of landscape values difficult to follow, as it has a strong focus on landscape attributes and outcomes provided by the MDP. Therefore, I have included the below description of landscape values of the receiving environment that in my opinion are relevant when assessing the landscape and visual effects of the proposed tree climb activity park.
- a) At a wider scale, Takapō / Lake Tekapo has a moderate-high degree of natural character and a high degree of open space, visual amenity, cultural, historical, and recreational values that overall contribute it to forming part of the Mackenzie Basin ONL.
 - b) At a wider scale, the Mackenzie Basin *“backdrop is an important element of the aesthetic values of these basin landscapes and to views beyond to the icecapped mountains of Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park.”*¹⁷

¹⁵ Mr Craig – Para 42.

¹⁶ Mr Craig – Para 61.

¹⁷ Canterbury Regional Policy Statement 2013, July 2021. Page 310 – 311.

- c) Views to Takapō / Lake Tekapo and the surrounding mountains, from within the receiving environment are highly valued.
- d) There is a high degree of recreational associative values within the receiving environment. Individual activities, being specific to their character areas.
- e) There is moderate to moderate-high degree of quietude located along the foreshore, specifically when boating activities and the boat ramp are not being used.
- f) There is a high degree of transient associative values that stem from seasonal changes.

Visual Effects Assessment

- 34. I agree with Mr Craig's visual catchment and agree that the potentially affected parties are residents within Station Bay Development and operators and guests within the campground and lodge.
- 35. In addition, I consider it important to assess the actual and potential adverse effects on users' of the foreshore pathway, Lakeside Drive and the surface of Takapō / Lake Tekapo. This is because there is a lack of information regarding what the proposal will entail.

Station Bay Development

- 36. The Station Bay Development comprises a series of terraces, and subsequent dwellings that step up the hillside to gain views of Takapō / Lake Tekapo, Mt John and the surrounding mountains, refer to **App 1, Sheets 14 - 17**. During quiet periods of the day, the simple view consisting of a pine tree foreground, a crisp blue lake midground and alpine mountain backdrop is quintessential of the area. This outlook provides a high degree of amenity to these residents and guests at the campground and lodge.
- 37. The proposal will result in the commercialisation of the Pine Trees within the foreground of their view, consisting of a base building, up to 138 wooden platforms, approximately 56 obstacles comprised of horizontal wires, climbing nets, vertically hanging ropes, netting, ladders, timber stepping platforms, wooden and netted tunnels, five ziplines between each set of trees and up to 60 people suspended in mid-air throughout this enclave of unnaturally limbed up trees.

38. The built form and resulting busyness within these trees will result in a reduction in the views through the trees to Takapō / Lake Tekapo and the surrounding mountains. This view is highly valued¹⁸ and subsequently is less able to absorb change / have the view reduced. i.e. a small reduction to a view can have a moderate-high degree of affect.
39. I appreciate that the limbing of the trees may open up some view shafts for certain residents. However, there is no information nor certainty on the limbing of trees, or placement of structures. Therefore, I place little weight on any positive outcomes that may occur. Noting, the potential unnatural limbing of these trees that could occur.
40. In addition to reducing views, the proposal will result in a very busy activity in the foreground of these residents' primary and highly valued view. Consequently, it will detract from their outlook to a **moderate** to **moderate-high** degree. These adverse effects will vary as the busyness of the view varies at certain times of the day / year, which may slightly assist with absorbing the proposal into the receiving environment.
41. However, unlike boating, the proposal has very limited associative values with Takapō / Lake Tekapo or its foreshore. Therefore, perceptually, it will appear out of place¹⁹ along this stretch of the foreshore, and due to its elevation will detract from the overall outlook gained.
42. Overall, the proposal will have a **moderate** to **moderate-high** degree of adverse effects on the amenity currently experienced from the Station Bay Development.

Takapō / Lake Tekapo Foreshore Pathway

43. The pathway is highly used by locals and tourists alike as it provides a key connection between the town centre and the western area along Takapō / Lake Tekapo's shoreline. People, walking, running and cycling along this path gain a high degree of amenity that is strongly influenced by the Takapō / Lake Tekapo setting.

¹⁸ **OSZ-P4** - maintain uninterrupted views from urban areas to any lake and maintain the amenity of lakeside areas.

¹⁹ TTatM Guideline 6.27 - Conversely, a proposal that is completely out of place with landscape values may have adverse effects even if only occupying a small portion of the view.

44. When travelling through the receiving environment and the Site, I agree²⁰ that there is sense of quietude located along this stretch of foreshore, specifically when boating activities and the boat ramp are not being used.
45. The proposal will result in a 230m long tree climb activity park, being situated overhead of people using the pathway. Specifically, seven obstacles will cross overhead of the pathway, the base building front door is situated 5m from the pathway where guests will congregate and up to 60 people on approximately 56 different obstacles will be situated within the trees.
46. The majority of the physical structures and occupants are above eye height, and do not interfere with views to the lake, as seen from within the Site itself. However, the structures themselves, the movement of people and noise associated with the activity will draw the attention of people using the pathway so much so that it will be prominent, to the point that it dominates the experience when travelling along this 250m stretch of pathway. Subsequently, during operational hours²¹ the proposal will diminish any semblance of quietude that is currently experienced.
47. As mentioned, the lakeshore pathway is relatively unimpeded along its length, which contributes to a user's overall experience. I am not a safety expert, but based on my public realm design experience the seven obstacles crossing overhead of the pathway poses a potential safety risk being a source of falling objects, that may deter the public from entering this space. Also, the congregation of guests on the pathway between the proposed carpark and base building will obstruct people using this key connection, reducing the amenity they experience.
48. Overall, the proposal will have a **moderate** degree of adverse effects on the amenity currently experienced by people walking, running and cycling along the foreshore pathway.

Lakeside Drive

49. People driving and cycling along Lakeside Drive gain a moderate-high degree of amenity that is strongly influenced by the Takapō / Lake Tekapo setting, albeit slightly reduced by the development that has occurred.

²⁰ Mr Craig – Para 64.

²¹ 10 hours every day of the year.

50. Unlike a pathway user, their experience of the proposal will be relatively short lived as they drive past the Site enjoying views out over the lake, albeit most likely focused on their destination. Due to this, and the user experience from a car being different to a pathway user, the resulting adverse effects on amenity will be less. Noting that the primary detractor of the proposal will be the base building resulting in a slight obstruction of the views to the lake, refer to **App 1, Sheet 17**.
51. Overall, the proposal will have a **very low** to **low** degree of adverse effects on the amenity currently experienced by people travelling along Lakeside Drive.

Takapō / Lake Tekapo Foreshore

52. People spending time on the nearby area of Takapō / Lake Tekapo and its foreshore gain a high degree of amenity strongly influenced by the Takapō / Lake Tekapo setting. Importantly, the stand of conifers provides an immediate, vegetated backdrop to this setting separating lake users from the nearby urban development. Subsequently, these trees enhance the sense of seclusions, removing the sense of being overlooked by development contributing to the amenity gained. Refer Mr Craig's **GA Figure 5**.
53. The proposed tree climb activity park will result in the creep of non-lake related development beyond Lakeside Drive and open up views to the urban development within Station Bay. This encroachment on the pleasantness of the lake foreshore and reduction to the backdrop / increased presence of built form will adversely affect the amenity gained on the foreshore.
54. The treed canopy provides refuge from the heat on a summer's day. As I have discussed above, the proposal may deter people from sitting under these trees, in turn reducing the current degree of amenity that is currently provided. The Concept Masterplan illustrates three trees on the foreshore that will not form part of the climbing course. I consider that these three trees will not provide ample space for shade on a busy day. Also, I question the amount of shade that will be provided once trees have been limbed, albeit there is no quantifiable information to understand this potential reduction.
55. Overall, the proposal will have a **low-moderate** to **moderate** degree of adverse effects on the amenity currently experienced by people on Takapō / Lake Tekapo foreshore. These adverse effects will reduce the further from Site a viewer is situated.

Landscape Effects Assessment

56. The proposed tree climb activity park will introduce an adrenaline-based activity onto Takapō / Lake Tekapo's foreshore, just beyond the urban area, where no other commercial recreational activities occur. Whilst at a broad scale, the proposal will be in keeping with other commercial recreational activities within the receiving environment, approximately 350m away. However, it will not be consistent with the current use, character and values associated with this part of the foreshore.
57. I recognise that the Takapō / Lake Tekapo Intake, the Lake Tekapo Powerboat & Water Ski Club, the boat ramp and playground have crossed the urban / foreshore threshold. However, these structures are directly associated with the lake and its use, therefore cannot be located south of the road. Also, it is common to see children's playgrounds along the foreshore of lakes. Therefore, unlike the above, the proposal does not need to be directly associated with the lake.
58. I recognise that spatially, the land under the high-ropes course will remain open and publicly accessible. However, perceptually, the Site will appear privatised due to the Site being used by paying customers, who will by nature congregate and dominate the central part of the Site. Also, the inherent safety risks of being underneath a source of falling objects may deter the public from entering this space. Subsequently, these resulting aspects of the proposal will deter the general public from spending time under these trees, being the primary area for shade along this part of the foreshore.
59. I agree with Mr Craig that people can freely walk under the high ropes course at Adrenaline Forest, 25-minute drive north of Christchurch CBD. However, I do not consider that the Adrenaline Forest environment is comparable to the Site in question. This is because it is a destination, the people entering this space are therefore aware of the environment, and the general public are highly unlikely to frequent. Therefore, comparable conclusions cannot be drawn between the two.
60. I, like Mr Craig and Ms Faulkner am not an acoustic expert, but agree that noise can adversely affect the perceptual experience of a landscape.
61. The proposal will result in groups of up to 60 people undertaking an adrenaline activity, within a passive area of the foreshore. The volume at which people congregate prior to and after, and while undertaking this activity is very much based on the individual.²²

²² I consider a more general approach to an assessment is appropriate, rather than placing weight on brief personal experiences.

Due to the quantity of people and adrenaline based activity at hand, the proposal will introduce daily groups of people talking, potentially louder than normal being in an outdoor environment, including occasional squalling, sobbing, yelling, and laughing.

62. I agree with Mr Craig that this part of the foreshore is quieter than other parts, apart from the busier summer months. Therefore, the introduction of this noise will be apparent, most noticeably by people on the pathway and nearby parts of the foreshore, subsequently detracting from the quietness and amenity within this environment.
63. The pathway running east to west around the foreshore is a key element in the recent development with Tekapo, to provide a direct walking / cycling connection between the town centre, the campground and hot pools, refer to **App 1, Sheets 10, 12 and 13**. The proposal will result in seven obstacles crossing overhead of this accessway, and placing the base building front door, being the primary area for 60 people to congregate 5m from the pathway. Both of these aspects of the proposal will physically and perceptually hinder the ease of access along this primary accessway. This does not align with the anticipated outcomes of the Tekapo – Parking and Landscape Concept Plan Report and will reduce the amenity experienced along this pathway.
64. No proposed conditions limit the life span of the proposal. Therefore, I do not consider that it is a temporary activity. I concur that the reversibility of removing the base building and decking, post the proposal lifespan can assist with remedying its adverse effects. However, the limbing of these pine trees is not reversible. Rather, if and once the proposal ceases, the pine trees will no longer show their current specimen form, rather they will appear peculiar and inconsistent with the other stands of pine trees along the foreshore. This will adversely affect the overall outlook gained from the Station Bay Development and lodge to a **moderate to moderate-high** degree. Additionally, pine trees limbed to 10m / half their height will not appear the same as they currently do, nor will they provide the same amount of shade.
65. The prevailing southerly down the lake can be quite fierce, which these trees provide some shelter to the Station Bay Development. Limbing these trees will reduce this shelter. Therefore, a balance is to be achieved between the extent of the view and shelter. When considering the overall outlook, that the trees form a part, I opine that picture framed views, between mature specimen trees, that provide some shelter is the optimal outcome.

66. The proposal lacks detail regarding the proposal landscaping. In many instances this is not a concern. However, the harsh growing conditions for plants are apparent when walking around the Station Bay Development and Lake Edge Lodge. Notably, 4-year-old *Griselinia littoralis* (broadleaf) that have never been trimmed struggle to stand more than 1.2m tall where they are protected by a post-and-rail fence and tussock plants appear scraggly and relatively thin. Due this, there is no certainty that the proposed landscaping will establish, let alone thrive, and therefore, I do not consider that it will positively contribute to the amenity of the area.
67. Overall, I am of the opinion that the proposal will have a **moderate to moderate-high** degree of adverse effects on the landscape character and values of the receiving environment.

Statutory Assessment

68. Below is an assessment of the proposal against the OSZ objectives and policies.

OSZ-O1 - Zone Purpose

The Open Space Zone provides areas of open space which predominately provide for a range of passive and active recreational activities.

OSZ-P1 - Recreational Activities

Enable informal recreation opportunities, and facilities that support these, including walking and cycling connections, toilets, playgrounds, sporting equipment and picnic and barbeque areas.

69. The proposed Tree Climb Activity Park is a recreational activity, therefore is provided for. Noting it is a **discretionary activity** under the OSZ.

OSZ-O2 - Zone Character and Amenity Values

The Open Space Zone contains limited facilities and structures which support the purpose of the zone and maintain the predominance of open space.

70. As assessed, perceptually, the Site will appear privatised due to the Site being used by paying customers, who will by nature congregate and dominate central parts of the Site. Also, the inherent safety risks of being underneath a source of falling objects, may deter the public from entering this space. Therefore, while the proposal will physically maintain a predominance of open space, the proposal will deter the general public from spending time under these trees reducing its perception of openness.

OSZ-P2 - Compatible Activities

Provide for community facilities and commercial recreation activities which are of a nature and scale that is complementary to the recreational focus of the zone.

71. As described, character areas within the receiving environment can be clearly defined, consisting of commercial, visitor accommodation, residential and lake foreshore areas. Notably, the character of the foreshore within the OSZ varies along its 4km length. Therefore, community facilities or commercial recreation activities are unlikely to always be complementary with the varied character within the zone.
72. Regarding this, whilst at a broad scale, the proposal will be in keeping with other commercial recreational activities within the receiving environment, it will not complement the current use, character and values associated with this part of the foreshore.

OSZ-P3 - Other Activities

Only allow other activities where they:

- 1. have a functional need or operational need to locate within the zone; or*
- 2. are compatible with the purpose of the zone and do not conflict with recreational uses; and*
- 3. are of a location, nature and scale that does not preclude development of new open space and recreational activities.*

73. This policy is focused on non-passive and non-active recreational activities. Therefore, is not relevant to this assessment, being a proposal for an active recreational activity.

OSZ-P4

Built Form - Limit the scale of built form within the Open Space Zone to:

- 1. retain a clear predominance of open space; and*
- 2. maintain uninterrupted views from urban areas to any lake and maintain the amenity of lakeside areas.*

74. The open space beyond the treeline will be maintained, because the proposal is contained within the trees. Therefore, at the broader receiving environment scale a predominance of open space will be retained.
75. At the character area scale, the proposal will not retain the predominance of open space. This is because of its size and extent, being situated throughout the majority of this cluster of trees, and the way in which it will perceptually deter the public from entering this space, due to the commercial nature of the activity and inherent safety risks.

76. As assessed, the built form and resulting busyness within these trees will interrupt and detract from the current views gained to Takapō / Lake Tekapo from the Station Bay Development. Also, it will reduce the current degree of amenity that is experienced along the pathway and foreshore. Therefore, the proposal will interrupt views to the lake and the amenity of the lakeside area will not be maintained.

Summary

77. In summary, I am of the opinion that the proposed activity itself aligns with what the OSZ anticipates. However, in this location it will not maintain a predominance of open space, it will not complement the current use, character and values associated with this part of the foreshore, it will interrupt and detract from the current views gained to Takapō / Lake Tekapo from the Station Bay Development and reduce the current degree of amenity that is experienced along the pathway and foreshore.

78. Overall, I consider that the proposed Tree Climb Activity Park, in its current location does not align with intended development within OSZ and the level of amenity that the MDP seeks to maintain.

Conclusion

79. A proposed Tree Climb Activity Park is proposed to be located within the mature cluster of pine trees located on the Takapō / Lake Tekapo's foreshore.

80. As assessed, the proposal will result in the following adverse effect on visual amenity:

- a) Station Bay Development – moderate to moderate-high.
- b) Takapō / Lake Tekapo Foreshore Pathway – moderate.
- c) Lakeside Drive - very low to low degree.
- d) Takapō / Lake Tekapo Foreshore - low-moderate to moderate degree.

81. Regarding landscape effects, the proposal will have a **moderate to moderate-high** degree of adverse effects on the landscape character and values of the receiving environment.

82. Overall, I consider that the proposed Tree Climb Activity Park, in its current location does not align with intended development within OSZ and the level of amenity that the MDC seeks to maintain.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Smith'.

Signature of Paul Smith

20 August 2025

Appendix 1 – Graphic Attachment
