

BEFORE THE MACKENZIE DISTRICT COUNCIL

IN THE MATTER OF THE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ACT 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER OF PLAN CHANGE 13 TO THE OPERATIVE
MACKENZIE DISTRICT PLAN TO ESTABLISH
A NEW MACKENZIE BASIN SUBZONE
WITHIN THE EXISTING RURAL ZONE.

**EVIDENCE OF DR MICHAEL LAWRENCE STEVEN (LANDSCAPE PLANNER) PART B
FOR:
FOUNTAINBLUE LIMITED, SOUTHERN SERENITY LIMITED
AND PUKAKI TOURISM HOLDINGS PARTNERSHIP**

INTRODUCTION

- 1 My name is Michael Lawrence Steven. I am a practising landscape architect and landscape planner employed in the Queenstown office of Vivian and Espie Ltd.

Qualifications as an Expert

- 2 I hold a Doctor of Philosophy in Architecture (Environment-Behaviour Studies) from the Faculty of Architecture, University of Sydney (Australia), a Master of Landscape Architecture by research from the Faculty of the Built Environment, UNSW (Sydney, Australia), a postgraduate Diploma in Landscape Architecture from Lincoln College (University of Canterbury), and a Diploma in Horticulture (Distinction) from Lincoln College. I am an Honorary Associate of the Faculty of Architecture, University of Sydney, and an Associate of the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects. My expertise is in the trans-disciplinary field of environment-behaviour studies, particularly landscape perception, and human factors in landscape design, planning and management.
- 3 From January 2006 until March 2008 I was employed as a landscape architect in the Wellington office of MWH New Zealand Ltd. Prior to December 2004 I was employed as an academic by the University of Western Sydney, Australia, where I taught in the field of landscape studies. I have some 25 years of experience in the landscape architecture profession, both in New Zealand and Australia. My professional practice experience includes a period spent with the (then) Ministry of Works and Development in the Auckland office, and in the Christchurch and Hamilton offices of the (then) Department of Lands and Survey. My work with MWH and more recently Vivian and Espie Ltd has involved landscapes assessments and the preparation of expert evidence on landscape issues for a wide range of sites and projects around New Zealand.

Ambit of my Evidence and Conclusions

- 4 My evidence is presented in two parts:
 - 4.1 Part A is general evidence on the validity and reliability of the landscape assessment that forms the basis for Proposed Plan Change 13. This evidence is presented on behalf of the Mackenzie Branch of Federated Farmers; Fountainblue Limited, Southern Serenity Limited and Pukaki Tourism Holdings

Partnership; and Rhoborough Downs Ltd. Part A evidence is the subject of a separate brief, already presented.

4.2 Evidence in support of property-specific relief sought by Fountainblue Limited, Southern Serenity Limited and Pukaki Tourism Holdings Partnership (referred to in this evidence as Pukaki Downs), and which is the subject of this brief.

5 With regard to the Pukaki Downs property, my evidence addresses my clients' submission seeking the establishment of a Pukaki Downs Tourist Zone. I comment upon:

5.1 The landscape implications of tourism development in the western Lake Pukaki area

5.2 The objectives and policies of the proposed Pukaki Tourist Zone

5.3 the requirement for a comprehensive outline development plan

6 Submission 83 Issue 3 regarding the establishment of the Pukaki Downs Rural Residential zone has its basis in an application for resource consent that pre-dates the Proposed Plan Change. I understand the justification for this zone rests largely on planning arguments, to which I defer to the evidence of Mr Vivian.

TOURIST-RELATED DEVELOPMENT, WESTERN LAKE PUKAKI

7 On the issue of the use of nodes for tourist-related developments, I note Mr Densem's recommendation at para, 6.2 of his *Mackenzie Basin Landscape: Character and Capacities* report regarding the possibility of tourist development in the western Lake Pukaki area:

...the potential exists for a differing approach to land use futures in this area. Economically there is a passing tourist trade, scenically there are spectacular settings, and in my observation there is scope to site new facilities within the landscape without destroying its character or quality. My suggestion is that the Council should allow for development of low-level commercial tourist accommodation in the western Pukaki area.

- 8 While I am uncertain of what Mr Densem means by “low level” commercial tourist accommodation, I generally endorse Mr Densem's opinion. I consider the Lake Pukaki-Tasman Valley to be among the grandest landscapes in NZ in terms of scale, and with sensitive planning and design, I consider this landscape has a high capacity to absorb development.
- 9 While not advocating the development of anything of the size of Mt Cook Village, some consideration of the place of developments such as The Hermitage and related village developments within the truly outstanding landscape of the Hooker Valley in Aoraki-Mt Cook National Park is instructive. The Hermitage demonstrates conclusively that significant tourist developments can exist within the highest echelons of outstanding natural landscape with no loss of landscape values or any appreciable reduction in natural character. The juxtaposition of the Hermitage and Mt Cook Village against the domineering background of the Sealy Range is a scale relationship that is repeated in many suitable development locations throughout the Tasman Valley-western Lake Pukaki area.
- 10 It is also instructive to note that the Hermitage (and other significant tourist buildings, such as the Chateau Tongariro) is not hidden from view. What renders them aesthetically acceptable is a combination of location, design, and scale relationships. Despite the size of these structures, they are clearly subordinate to their landscape context. There are many circumstances where design and scale relationships are more important than invisibility, in integrating a building into the landscape.
- 11 The Tekapo B Power Station and penstocks on the eastern shores of Lake Pukaki also demonstrate the manner in which scale relationships can render a structure relatively insignificant in such grand landscapes. It is likely that the majority of travellers on State Highway 80 are oblivious to this development.
- 12 That said, the landscape and landforms of the Western Lake Pukaki area provide many opportunities for rendering developments largely invisible. Many of these landscapes are within Pukaki Downs Station, where the forested landforms of old lateral moraines of the Tasman Glacier, and small valleys between the moraines and the Rhoboro and Little Rhoboro Hills provide many locations that are well screened from State Highway 80 and Lake Pukaki.

THE PUKAKI DOWNS TOURIST ZONE

13 It is important to distinguish the purpose of the Pukaki Tourist Zone from the prevailing assumption that development within the Mackenzie Basin necessarily means rural residential development. In another brief of evidence before this hearing I comment on Mr Densem's apparent perception that all development within nodes will necessarily be of the "4 hectare' approach". This is an unjustified assumption, and one that precludes the possibility many other forms of development, particularly recreational or tourist development with an ecotourism or nature-based recreation focus. Mr Densem's assumptions are revealed later in his report, where at para 110, in response to submissions from Roberta Preston, he states:

'development' is taken to mean the subdivision of land and its sale for residential development.

- 14 The purpose of the Pukaki Tourist Zone is not to provide for the sub-division and sale of land for rural residential purposes, but rather to provide for alternative land-use futures that build on and contribute towards the acknowledged tourist potential of the locality.
- 15 As stated in Part 1 of my evidence, my criticisms of the landscape assessment basis of the proposed plan change notwithstanding, I regard the proposed policy on 'nodal' (or cluster) development as having some merit. However, I do not accept that it is necessarily the only form of development suited to the Mackenzie Basin. The purpose of the Pukaki Downs Tourist Zone is to provide a more flexible alternative to the proposed nodal development concept, yet an alternative that has better landscape and resource management outcomes.
- 16 I do not accept that historical patterns of development, determined as they were by the particular social, economic and technological circumstances of the time, should dictate the patterns of future development, as Mr Densem's report appears to be suggesting. The proposed plan change should provide for contemporary responses to development that are unfettered by historic considerations and resulting settlement patterns. The proposed Pukaki Downs Tourist Zone is a response to an evolving tourist market that in social terms is fundamentally different from the factors that shaped the early settlement of the basin. However, the need for tourist facilities has ample historic precedent within

the locality, with the earliest Hermitage Hotel at White Horse Hill dating to 1884-86. The current Hermitage was operational in 1958 and has since been extended several times.

17 While acknowledging the past development of accommodation and tourist facilities within the Mt Cook National Park, there is a trend in some park management jurisdictions to move away from in-park development of facilities. For example, current policies of the US National Park System encourage the development of facilities outside of park boundaries, on the basis that this will; "...encourage the private sector to meet facility needs in gateway communities and thus contribute to local economic development, encourage competition, increase choices for visitors, and minimize the need for in-park construction."¹ In my opinion such a philosophy is clearly relevant in the Mt Cook locality.

18 The Aoraki-Mt Cook Management Plan contains the following policies on village development that reflect the philosophy introduced above:

6.1.1(d) - To require potential occupiers of Village sites and those seeking new concessions, to demonstrate why it is a necessity for them to be present in the Village and the benefits their presence will bring to the safe use and enjoyment of the Park by visitors.

19 The explanation for this policy is given as:

6.1.1(d) - In all zones only a few sites (as at 2004) remain unoccupied. It is vital that applications for the remaining limited number of sites are scrutinised carefully to ensure that any use proposed is appropriate for the zone and for the Village.

20 The methods by which this policy is to be actioned include:

1. In considering a proposal for the allocation of a site in the Village, ... in addition to other statutory requirements, particular regard should be had for the following:
 - can/should the proposal be carried on outside the Park?
 - will there be a detrimental impact on other Park users and Village residents or on other activities already taking place in the Park and the Village?

¹ Management Policies 2006: The Guide to Managing the National Park System. National Park Service, US Department of the Interior. August 31 2006. See policy 9.1.1.2, Integration of Facilities into the Park Environment. Available at; http://www.nps.gov/policy/mp/policies.html#_Toc157232996 Accessed 4 September 2008.

- will the proposed activity detract from the Park's unique natural and cultural values or distract visitors from enjoying those values?
 - ...
2. Any proposal for residential use of less than permanent occupancy, where that use can realistically occur outside the Park or use existing accommodation within the Village, should not be approved.
- 21 The popularity of the Mt Cook locality and the Mackenzie Basin generally for recreation and tourism, and evolving patterns of tourism demand, when considered in light of the limited opportunities available in Mt Cook Village, reinforce the need for a wider range of accommodation and tourist facilities outside the Aoraki-Mt Cook park boundary. A range of accommodation and tourist facilities is provided for at Glentanner Station, and Pukaki Downs is well placed to provide for some of these needs, also, but within a different market segment.

Nodes v Tourist zone

- 22 At para. 84, of Mr Densem's Technical Report L1, *Landscape Assessment of Issues Arising from Public Submissions & Further Submissions*, dated August 2008, Mr Densem states:
- The area envisaged is extensive, would have its own separate rules, would straddle a critical part of State Highway 80, and would introduce commercial uses where they currently don't exist. In size and potential impacts it is quite different from the development approach envisaged under Plan Change 13. I would have major concerns at the potential to significantly alter and detract from the natural character surrounding this important piece of tourist highway, and to significantly impact on the highway and tourist experience.
- 23 These opinions do not stand up to critical scrutiny, and references to "a proposal of this magnitude and gravity" and the "potential for major landscape change" is either a misunderstanding or misrepresentation of what is intended through the establishment of the Pukaki Downs Tourist Zone.
- 23.1 The proposed tourist zone is no more extensive than the landscape sub-areas (6 & 7) that currently span 3 properties, including much of Pukaki Downs (see Figure 1). Taken together with LSA 9 (which spans Ferintosh and Glentanner
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Stations), the landscape sub-zones identified by Mr Densem cover a considerably greater area of the western Lake Pukaki landscape than the proposed zone.

- 23.2 Mr Densem cannot judge the “magnitude and gravity” of what might be developed simply on the basis of a zoning – the proposed zone is no more indicative of the development that may ensue than Mr Densem’s own landscape sub-zones. The proposed zoning itself has neither magnitude nor gravity. It is an alternative to Mr Densem’s approach to development of LSAs and nodes.
- 23.3 Similarly, the proposed zoning does not of itself change the landscape, whether in a major way or otherwise. It provides a planning and design framework for integrated landscape change – a benefit Mr Densem’s nodes do not provide for.
- 23.4 There is nothing in the proposed zoning that can lead to an assumption that its creation would “significantly alter and detract from the natural character surrounding this important piece of tourist highway, and to significantly impact on the highway and tourist experience”. The objectives and policies of the proposed zone, together with the outline development planning process and the assessment matters proposed for resource consent purposes will ensure that negative impacts on natural character, the highway and tourist experience are avoided.
- 24 Pukaki Downs is largely within two separate landscape sub-zones (6 and 7) that currently provide for a total of 8 nodes. While spread over three separate properties, these 8 nodes provide for a maximum of 80 separate building platforms, assuming a maximum of 10 building platforms per node. There is no provision for the integrated planning and development of any of these nodes, other than to the extent that might be possible if say, two or more nodes are allocated to the same property. It is important to note that what the proposed tourist zone provides for is not more development than might otherwise occur within a node or nodes, but rather the comprehensive, integrated planning, design and development of all the development that might occur on Pukaki Downs. It is my opinion that better landscape and resource management outcomes are more likely to be assured as a result of comprehensive and integrated development across an entire property, than if addressed on a piecemeal, node-by-node basis, within and across property boundaries.

Policies and objectives of the proposed zone

- 25 The proposed policies and objectives of the zone provide for the protection of the landscape characteristics and qualities identified by Mr Densem. These characteristics and qualities are valued as much by my client as by Mr Densem, as they are the foundations of tourism and recreation activities in the locality.
- 26 Objective 1 provides for sustainable visitor activities and recognises the need to avoid, remedy or mitigate adverse effects on landscapes, water quality and natural values. Policy (b) of Objective 1 requires:
- ...the layout of development within the zone to be determined by an outline development plan prior to any development being undertaken to ensure the compatibility of any activities within the zone and to minimise the impact on neighbouring activities, the state highway, and the landscape amenity of the area.
- This requirement avoids the potential for piecemeal, uncoordinated development such as might occur within nodes on the property.
- 27 Objective 2 provides for the maintenance of visual amenity. All of the policies addressing Objective 2 are directed towards achieving the protection of the same characteristics and qualities of landscape amenity that Mr Densem has identified and seeks to protect.
- 28 General amenity values are addressed separately in Objective 5. Policies supporting Objective 5 provide for the protection and enhancement of open space, and the location and design of buildings to reduce negative visual effects.
- 29 Objective 3 addresses adverse effects on the natural character of the area, and again provides for the recognition and protection of the same characteristics and qualities that Mr Densem has identified and seeks to protect.
- 30 Objective 4 addresses the wider issue of on-going land management, including practices that mitigate against soil degradation and erosion and exotic vegetation management.

Outline development plan

- 31 As a discretionary activity with the potential for public notification, the outline development plan provides for a high degree of control over development proposals, including:
 - 31.1 The identification of building platforms
 - 31.2 Design guidelines for buildings
 - 31.3 Site layout
 - 31.4 Land management zones and management strategies
 - 31.5 Servicing
 - 31.6 Access and circulation
- 32 Appropriate status is accorded all other likely activities to ensure a high level of resource management outcomes and landscape protection.
- 33 Comprehensive assessment matters are offered as a means of ensuring the achievement of objectives and policies. Assessment matters for the consideration of the outline development plan address specific aspects of landscape values, natural character and visual amenity. The assessment matters also provide for the sustainable design of built structures, the control of wilding species, and the ecological restoration of the property. All of these factors provide for greater net resource management benefits and more acceptable landscape outcomes than might otherwise accrue through the nodal development proposed by Mr Densem.
- 34 In my opinion the objectives, policies and assessment matters proposed offer a higher level of control than that provided for through PC 13. This is achieved through the requirement for a comprehensive, whole of property outline development plan that addresses not only built development, but also land management issues.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 35 Limited opportunities for further tourism development within Aoraki-Mount Cook National Park, together with increasing demands for a wider range of tourism opportunities indicate the need for further tourist-related development beyond the National Park boundary. Many locations within the western Lake Pukaki area, along State Highway 80, are well suited for such development. This point is acknowledged by Mr Densem in his recommendations for the provision for tourist development in this area. Mr Densem has allocated 3 Landscape Sub-Zones with the capacity for 12 nodes (potentially 120 building platforms) within the landscapes of western Lake Pukaki.
- 36 Pukaki Downs Station is well placed in landscape terms to provide for some of the potential for tourist related development – a point also conceded by Mr Densem as LSAs 6 and 7 are substantially within the Pukaki Downs property.
- 37 Through objectives, policies and assessment matters, the proposed Pukaki Downs Tourist Zone provides for a high level of control over built development, but also over the wider issues of whole farm development and management generally.
- 38 Contrary to Mr Densem's concerns, I consider the proposed tourist zone acknowledges and provides for the protection and enhancement of the landscape values, naturalness and amenities of the area, as identified by Mr Densem.
- 39 I support the creation of the proposed Pukaki Downs Tourist Zone. In my opinion the level of integrated planning, design and management that can be made possible through the outline development planning process and assessment matters will provide for a higher level of resource management and landscape outcomes than is possible through the proposed nodal development concept.

Michael L Steven

Landscape planner

Monday, 8 September 2008



Figure 1: Pukaki Downs boundary in relation to Map 8, Capacity for New Nodes

Landscape sub-zones 6 & 7 identified by Mr Densem, extend from the southern to the northern boundaries of the property. Mr Densem is critical of the extensive nature of the area proposed as a tourist zone, and describes the concept of a tourist zone as "a proposal of this magnitude and gravity". The reality is that the areas intended for development within the Pukaki Downs Tourist Zone are already identified as landscape sub-zones, suitable for nodal development.

(Map provided by Pukaki Tourism Holdings Ltd)