

**BEFORE THE COMMISSIONERS 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 at Lakeside Drive, Takapō/Lake Tekapo

BETWEEN

**QUEENSTOWN COMMERCIAL
PARAPENTERS LIMITED**

Applicant

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF ANDREW CRAIG (LANDSCAPE)

Dated: 13 August 2025

Statement of evidence of Andrew Craig

Introduction

- [1] My name is Andrew William Craig.
- [2] I hold the position of Director of *Andrew Craig Landscape Architecture*. I have been in this position since 2009.
- [3] I hold a Bachelors of Arts degree (Canterbury University) and a post graduate diploma in landscape architecture (Lincoln University).
- [4] I have been practising landscape architecture since 1987. For 5 years until mid-2009 I was employed by Peter Rough Landscape Architects Ltd. Before that I was employed by the Christchurch City Council for 13 years, working in the area of environmental policy and planning. Prior to that I worked for a short time with the Department of Conservation. Most of my work since graduation and to date has involved landscape assessment and the development of landscape policy.
- [5] I have been instructed by the Applicant, Queenstown Commercial Parapenters Limited, to give expert landscape evidence in respect of RM230149, an application for land use consent to establish and operate a commercial tree-climb ropes course which will also include, in accordance with proposed consent condition 19, 5 picnic tables at Lakeside Drive, Takapō/Lake Tekapo (**Proposal**).
- [6] I have reviewed the following documents for the preparation of my evidence:
- (a) The landscape AEE prepared by DWG Landscape Architecture
 - (b) The submissions
 - (c) The operative and proposed Mackenzie District Plan provisions where relevant to landscape matters
 - (d) The landscape '*Peer Review – Landscape Assessment*' prepared by Ms Bron Faulkner on behalf of the Mackenzie District Council

- (e) The RMA s42A report.

Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses

- [7] While this is not an Environment Court hearing I have read and agree to comply with the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses in the Environment Court Practice Note 2023. This evidence is within my area of expertise, except where I state that I am relying on material produced by another person. I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions that I express.

Scope of evidence

- [8] My evidence will deal with the following:
 - (a) a landscape description of the site and its wider setting;
 - (b) the current application RM230149;
 - (c) landscape values;
 - (d) the landscape, amenity and visual effects of the proposal;
 - (e) statutory landscape matters;
 - (f) avoidance, remediation and mitigation of potential adverse effects;
 - (g) the landscape-related issues raised in submissions;
 - (h) my response to the landscape matters raised in the Mackenzie District Council planner's s 42A report;

The methodology adopted in the preparation of my evidence is informed by the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects Landscape Assessment Guidelines (Te Tangi a te Manu).

Executive summary

- [9] The receiving environment including the proposed activity area is clearly dedicated to tourist, residential and recreational activity and as a result is quite diverse and this informs overall landscape character and amenity.

- [10] Parties whose amenity is potentially affected by the proposal include residents, accommodated tourists, recreationalists and daily visitors.
- [11] The receiving existing environment incorporating the proposed activity area in what might be described as an enclave on the township's northwestern fringe, is essentially urban in character and will become increasingly so as further development occurs – namely within the Station Bay subdivision.
- [12] Prominent natural features within and adjoining the receiving environment setting are Takapō / Lake Tekapo and Mt John.
- [13] The natural character of the Open Space / Passive Recreation Zone in which the proposed activity is located, is assessed to be moderately high.
- [14] Existing physical structures within the Passive Recreation / Open Space Zone contributing to landscape character are the power boat club building, associated boat ramps, carparking, playground and canal water intake structure.
- [15] The existing environment, including District Plan policy direction, informs landscape character and amenity and so in this regard it is my opinion arising from consideration of potential effects that the proposal is in keeping with its setting.
- [16] The site is not located in an Outstanding Natural Landscape (ONL), Lake Side Protection Area or Site of Significance under both the Operative and Proposed District Plans, but is however located in an area of high visual vulnerability, which does not have any consequence in terms of applicable planning provisions. Consequently, regarding landscape outcomes, the site is subject to RMA s7 (c) matters.
- [17] Apart from the zone[s] in which the proposed activity is located, there are no District Plan provisions specifically setting out to provide a buffer benefitting the Lake ONL.

- [18] The type of amenity expected of the proposed Open Space Zone in which the Site is located will be maintained, subject to implementation of the proposed avoidance, remediation and mitigation measures.
- [19] The proposal accords with the *Takapō / Lake Tekapo Character Design Guide*.¹
- [20] The proposal overall is consistent with the Passive Recreation Zone, and more particularly with regard to the recently adopted PC29 provisions concerning the aforementioned proposed Open Space Zone².
- [21] Landscape, amenity and visual effects arising from the proposal are not, in my opinion, contrary to both the ODP and PDP objectives and policies where they concern landscape outcomes for the Zone[s]³ in which the Site is located.
- [22] Apart from the proposed base station building, the ropes course has very little visual bulk most of which is visually absorbed into the supporting trees and so it is my opinion that the visual effects on the various parties identified in my evidence will be less than minor.
- [23] Based on first hand observation of an existing ropes course similar to that proposed, it is concluded that the activity is largely sedate, albeit punctuated by the relatively more active use of zip lines.
- [24] Apropos the above point, it is noted that the visual effects are not uniform throughout the activity area due to variation in the setting where trees are quite dense in some areas with open gaps between them in others.
- [25] Trees and buildings occur throughout the receiving environment, many of which have, or will have, the effect of obscuring views of potentially affected parties to the lake.
- [26] The proposed activity is fundamentally temporary in nature as the apparatus and base building are all removable and so the underlying

¹ District Plan APP2

² Within the appeal period at the time of writing

³ Proposed Open Space Zone and operative Passive Recreation Zone

landscape character of the activity area harbours the potential to be fully restored.

- [27] The main contributing landscape elements – namely the trees, albeit limbed up in places, and underlying landform – will essentially remain unaltered by the proposed activity.
- [28] Regarding associative landscape effects, the proposal aligns with what can reasonably be expected to occur in its setting.
- [29] None of the matters raised in the s42A report cause me to reconsider the observations and conclusions I reach in my evidence.
- [30] Overall and in summary, adverse effects assessment (see **Appendix 1** for effects scale) is as follows:
- | | | |
|-----|------------------|------------------------|
| (a) | Visual intrusion | Less than minor |
| (b) | View quality | Less than minor |
| (c) | Landscape | Minor – at the low end |
| (d) | Amenity | Less than minor |
| (e) | Associative | Less than minor |

Site description

- [31] In this section consideration is given to the landscape character of the application site and the surrounding receiving environment. It is noted that the application site is located on public land.⁴ For the purposes of my evidence I refer to the site as ‘the activity area’ as shown on my **Graphic Attachment Figure 1** aerial photograph. The receiving environment I consider to be that area potentially affected by the proposal in both landscape and visual amenity terms - see **Graphic Attachment Figures 2 & 3** aerial photographs.
- [32] It is important to note that the site description considers the ‘activity area’ and ‘receiving environment’ separately, they are in fact experienced

⁴ Comprising mainly Lot 5 DP 455053 and to a lesser extent Lot 2 DP 562455

inseparably. The reason for considering them separately here is to determine the extent the proposed activity derogates from the character and amenity of the site it occupies.

- [33] As is always the case, the landscape character of the application site is less complex than that of the receiving environment. The simple reason is that the latter involves a much larger area harbouring a wider variety of landscape elements, patterns and processes.

The activity area

- [34] The proposed activity will comprise a base station building, suspended ropes course and five publicly accessible picnic tables. Some tussock planting will also be undertaken in the vicinity of the base station linking it to the carpark and footpath.
- [35] The proposed activity area is relatively small, occupying an area of just over 0.8 of a hectare. It is an elongated feature which more or less runs parallel to the lake shore. For anyone visiting the site, there is no doubt they would see that it is embedded in the lake foreshore environment.
- [36] The landscape character of the area occupied by the proposal is fundamentally simple. It essentially comprises two macro elements: land gently sloping from Lakeshore Drive to the lake edge and the mature conifers on which the applicant relies to support the proposed activity – see **Graphic Attachment Figures 4 & 5** photographs.
- [37] Apart from the presence of the conifers, the land surface comprises a mix of grass and herbaceous weeds, pine needles and gravel. Lakeside of the conifers the surface is entirely gravel and sand. There are no anomalous features such as large rocks / boulders, sub-canopy woody vegetation and water courses. There is no indigenous vegetation within the activity area.
- [38] The activity area is currently devoid of physical features, including earthworks and overhead services. It is however, bookended by the playground south of the site and the powerboat clubrooms to the north.

- [39] There exists a reasonably high level of transparency through the site thereby affording views to the lake from Lakeside Drive, the footpath and adjoining car park. These views are attained because the lower branches of the existing conifers have been removed up to around 3m above ground level.
- [40] Because the activity area is largely free of physical structures it exhibits a reasonably high level of natural character, if considered in isolation from the more urban character of the wider setting inland and west of the site. Equally, the natural character of the adjoining lake is high and so the activity area is located at the interface between the two contrasting environments. This is described in Ms Strong's evidence as a transitional space between the urban and rural which she refers to as 'urban fringe.' Nevertheless, natural character of the actual area occupied by the proposed activity is not however pristinely high, due to the presence of exotic rather than indigenous vegetation in addition to the aforementioned concrete footpath. Nor is it evident that naturally occurring processes are occurring within the activity area itself, although the nearby lake does contribute in this way. There does not appear to be any obvious ecological elements or processes within the site occupied by the proposed activity. The lake shore including the activity area would have once been subject to glacial processes, but remnants of these (kettle holes, eskers, erratics, moraines, outwash plains and such like) are not immediately appreciable today, particularly from the point of view of lay public. Nevertheless, lakeshore processes do occur in the form of wave action and lake level variation. There is no sign however, that this has any effect on the activity area such as evident erosion or aggradation.
- [41] There are no apparent or identified (in the District Plan) historic or cultural sites of significance within the proposed activity area. The site lies outside the District Plan overlay identifying sites of significance to Mana Whenua. This will be discussed in more detail later.

- [42] In terms of natural character within the activity area therefore, I assess it to be moderately high.⁵

The Receiving Environment

- [43] As mentioned, the extent of the receiving environment is determined by the area subject to potential landscape and visual effects, particularly where they might be more than minor.
- [44] In addition to determining the extent of potentially more than minor adverse effects it is also necessary to determine whether the proposed activity is in keeping with the character of its wider setting – that is, the issue of congruity. In large part this comes down to how people experience the landscape of the setting that in turn inform their expectations. In landscape terms this is what is referred to as ‘associative effects.’
- [45] As previously indicated, the location and extent of the receiving environment is shown in **Graphic Attachment Figure 2** aerial photograph. On the west / east axis it encompasses the area between the lake surface approximately 150m beyond the upper shore margin to State Highway 8 (SH8). It then extends northward to the ice-skating rink and southward to the ‘T’ intersection of Lakeside Drive with SH8.
- [46] Essentially the receiving environment is located within what might be described as a cove or geomorphological cul de sac. It is strongly contained by the steep slopes of Mt John to the north and those rising to SH8 westward. Takapō / Lake Tekapo to the east contains it in that direction. Southward the receiving environment opens out providing vehicle and pedestrian access to the setting, and linking it to Takapō / Lake Tekapo township. As a result, the environment is highly discernible and well defined in its extent. Further, those features abutting and including the receiving environment bestow specific landscape character – this being the combination of elements that make this particular setting distinctive.

⁵ In accordance with the 7 point spectrum of natural character: very low / low / low - moderate / moderate / moderate high / high / very high (source: Te Tangi a te Manu – NZ Landscape Assessment Guidelines)

- [47] Currently the receiving environment borders rural land to the north (Mt John) and west. Takapō / Lake Tekapo can also be considered rural as it is free of built form. To the south is the urban environment of Takapō / Lake Tekapo township. So essentially the receiving environment protrudes into a largely rural one but is nonetheless linked to, and fundamentally is an extension of, the township.
- [48] Activity within the receiving environment is quite diverse where most is devoted to various kinds of recreation and tourist accommodation. In summary this comprises:
- (a) Ice skating rink
 - (b) Hot pools – including star gazing
 - (c) Snow tube
 - (d) Mini golf
 - (e) Café
 - (f) Kayak hire
 - (g) Camping, cabins, motel and a lodge (tourist accommodation)
 - (h) Walking tracks – Mt John and lakeside
 - (i) Picnicking
 - (j) Children’s playground
 - (k) Residential
 - (l) Power boat club
 - (m) Lakeside activities – swimming, fishing, water skiing, boating
 - (n) Sight seeing
- [49] In her recreation evidence, Ms Strong describes the extent and location of these activities in more detail.

- [50] Traffic movement or volumes is, as described in Mr Leckie's traffic evidence, modest⁶ providing access to the above listed activities. Also, as Mr Leckie observes, it is evident that traffic is slow moving (30km/h speed limit applies) and so its presence does not significantly detract from amenity. It does, however, in addition to pedestrian activity, contribute to the dynamic nature of the area. Traffic volumes will very likely increase following further residential development within the Station Bay subdivision.
- [51] Due to the relatively high level of built form to open space, and along with supporting infrastructure, it is my opinion that the receiving existing environment⁷ is, generically at least, urban rather than rural in character. It is evident too, that further residential subdivision will occur sometime in the future thereby increasing built density. Currently 48 residential lots are within the Station Bay subdivision with more to come.
- [52] The transition between the urban receiving environment and largely surrounding rural area is quite abrupt. Or to put it another way, there exists a reasonably clear-cut demarcation between the two environments. Consequently, the contrasting landscape character of both is appreciable, and this will increase as residential development is implemented.
- [53] Further, regarding boundaries, there exists a distinct demarcation between the lakeshore environment east of Lakeside Drive and the more built-up environment to the west. Lakeside Drive therefore denotes this boundary in a physical way separating the two environments.
- [54] While activity within the receiving environment is quite diverse, there is nonetheless, a reasonably high degree of consistency in built form. All buildings are generally no more than two storeyed, although some in the Station Bay subdivision are three where steeper sites enable this. Regarding site coverage, buildings do however range in size from small tourist cabins to the larger lodges and Tekapo Springs complex. It is also evident that most buildings exhibit good quality design and appearance.

⁶ At around 2,500vpd

⁷ Existing environment – comprising the environment of the moment, that with consented but as yet implemented activity and what is permitted by the District Plan

Perhaps the least aesthetically appealing building is the somewhat utilitarian looking power boat club located on the foreshore directly north of the proposed activity area.

- [55] Vegetation varies in its extent and location. Larger mature trees are generally located lakeside, more or less following the shoreline – see again **Graphic Attachment Figures 1, 2 & 3** aerial photographs. Largely mature coniferous vegetation has been removed on the slopes above the Takapō / Lake Tekapo Holiday Park and Tekapo Springs complex to make way for the Station Bay subdivision. It is apparent that replacement amenity planting has been implemented within the subdivision.
- [56] There does not appear to be any naturally occurring indigenous vegetation within the receiving environment. But it is evident that extensive amenity planting using indigenous plants are present within the Tekapo Springs complex especially. Once the subdivision is fully realised, it is clear that larger vegetation will become increasingly dominant following amenity planting undertaken by residents and by the developers in the public realm (streets and pedestrian paths).
- [57] Apart from the lake itself and neighbouring Mt John, there are no obviously significant natural features within the receiving environment. Although it is understood that the landform is entirely derived from prehistoric glaciation, it has been irreparably altered by development since European settlement of the area. Consequently, the formative natural processes are no longer readily discernible or appreciable. The exception is the lakeshore environment, but even this is somewhat shaped by the artificial control of lake levels – serving the utilitarian canal intake located within the receiving environment – see again **Graphic Attachment Figure 2** aerial photograph.
- [58] Despite being a reasonably active environment, amenity within the receiving environment is moderately high due to the combination of the aforementioned characteristics. Once vegetation has matured, particularly within the Station Bay subdivision, it follows that amenity will significantly improve over time. Recreational activity also contributes

amenity where it results in positive or pleasing outcomes for those involved.

[59] A further factor contributing character and the amenity derived from it are ephemeral seasonal / climate attributes. These are very strongly present in Takapō / Lake Tekapo generally where in the winter it can be very cold with snow while in the summer the climate can be dry and hot.

[60] It is also evident that amenity generally increases as one moves toward the lake – particularly from Lakeside Drive to the shoreline. This is due to the following factors:

- (a) the absence of traffic,
- (b) unimpeded views of the lake and surrounding mountains,
- (c) open space,
- (d) predominant naturalness where the lakeshore environment is largely free of structures, but not entirely so – the boat club, boat ramp and canal intake,
- (e) a reasonably high degree of visual cohesiveness where lakeshore elements – vegetation, landform, water – are more or less similar throughout its extent within the receiving environment,
- (f) a reasonable degree of serenity, albeit variable depending on the presence of such activity as power boating, numbers of people using the lakeside and weather conditions (in a nor-west gale serenity would not be experienced).

[61] Overall, the landscape character and amenity of the receiving environment is clearly dedicated to the pursuit of recreational and tourist activity. This in addition to the more recent occurrence of residential activity. Anybody experiencing this landscape will appreciate its evident purpose. Further they will understand that it is reasonably active environment due to the various activities occurring within. The values derived from both the receiving (existing) environment including the proposed activity area which it is inextricably a part, is described next.

Landscape Values

[62] Values are derived from the attributes existing in the landscape of the setting that people hold in particular regard. The attributes of the proposed activity area and receiving environment have been described in the preceding discussion. The regard people have for these is discernible from the following indicators:

- (a) On site observation of activity,
- (b) District Plan provisions relevant to the zoning,
- (c) Submissions in response to the application,
- (d) Promotional material – for Takapō / Lake Tekapo as a whole and various discrete activities such as Tekapo Springs, Holiday Park and Station Bay subdivision,
- (e) Mana whenua,
- (f) Other authoritative sources such as the NZ Geo-preservation Inventory.

On site observation

[63] As mentioned, it is clearly evident the receiving environment, including the proposed activity area, is devoted to recreational, tourist and residential activity. Indicators are attributable to the presence of physical structures supporting such activity and people pursuing it. These have all been identified in the preceding discussion. I understand that Mr Mark Geddes (planner for the Applicant) includes in his evidence a map showing the location of these activities, whose values are described in more detail by Ms Strong in her evidence.

[64] On site observation also indicates that types and levels of activity vary throughout the receiving environment. Residential activity at Station Bay subdivision is akin to what one might typically expect in a relatively quiet suburban setting, albeit a modest one. In contrast the Tekapo Springs activity centre is much more evidently active. It is also evident that people in the area seek a certain level of quietude and serenity –

particularly on the lake shore – see **Graphic Attachment Figure 7** photograph. Such activity however is occasionally punctuated by the presence of power boats and generally higher levels of activity in the peak holiday season (Christmas / New Year) – see **Graphic Attachment Figure 8** photograph. Ms Strong, in her recreation evidence, comments more fully on this.

- [65] Vehicles arriving, parking and leaving also contribute dynamism to the site. This activity occurs every day for much of the day – see again **Graphic Attachment Figure 4** photograph.
- [66] Within the context of the whole of Takapō / Lake Tekapo, this area is very much a focal point of such activity where the greatest concentration of it occurs. No where else does this level, range and type of activity evidently occur anywhere on the lake shore environment. So, it is clearly valued for the activity just described where it is dependent on the various combined landscape attributes peculiar to the setting.

District Plan Values

- [67] Both the Operative and Proposed District Plan provisions describe the kind of outcomes expected to occur within the proposed activity area and the receiving environment. Where they concern landscape outcomes the provisions will be addressed in much more detail later on in my evidence. So here I will simply summarise what is contemplated for the zone in which the activity area is located and zoning applicable to the receiving environment.
- [68] It is understood that the activity area is located within the Recreation Passive zone under the operative Plan and Open Space zone in proposed PC29 (as part of the District Plan review). The site is also located within an Area of Visual Vulnerability (high), but is not otherwise subject to ONL, Lake Side Protection Area or Site of Significance overlays under the operative District Plan.
- [69] Nor do I consider it to be within the lake margin environment subject to RMA s6(a). The reasons for this is that, firstly, there is no evident sign that the area directly beneath the ropes course is subject to ongoing lakeside processes – namely effects generated by wave action and lake

level fluctuation. Secondly, the presence of indigenous riparian vegetation and allied ecology is clearly not apparent. For its entirety the area beneath the ropes course solely comprises gravels and pine litter – that is, needles, twigs and cones. And thirdly, there are no natural processes occurring within the ropes course umbrella that contribute lake shore processes such as indigenous vegetation, water courses, springs, ponds or ephemeral inundation features such as the sand flats on the shore line opposite the Tekapo Springs complex.

[70] Nevertheless, the ropes course envelope does adjoin the shoreline environment. But because it is elevated, does not involve disturbance to the land surface (apart from initial implementation of the base station) and visual continuity is maintained it is my opinion that the interface relationship largely remains intact. That is to say, existing natural processes within the lakeshore environment will remain unaffected in any way.

[71] In summary, PC29 contemplates the following outcomes for the Open Space Zone:⁸

- (a) open space,
- (b) green space,
- (c) views to lake,
- (d) lake access,
- (e) activities: walking, cycling, picnicking, bbq, seating, play,
- (f) informal in character,
- (g) limited facilities and structures,
- (h) facilities: toilets, shelters, play grounds, sports equipment,
- (i) compatible activities: community and commercial that compliment and do not detract from the passive quality of the zone,

⁸ PC29 Objectives and Policies

- (j) other activities:
 - (i) functional need to be located in Open Space compatible with zone
 - (ii) Must not preclude open space development
 - (iii) Avoid conflict with recreational uses,
- (k) built form:
 - (i) to maintain uninterrupted views of lakes from urban areas
 - (ii) results in predominance of open space.

[72] While it is understood that PC29 is not yet operative, we can glean from the above listed attributes, its aspirational direction. Essentially what is valued landscape character and amenity wise is the predominance of open space, greenery, views, informality while accommodating a range of 'passive' recreational activities. It is noted that the term 'passive' is not defined in either the operative District Plan or PC29. This will be discussed in more detail by Ms Samantha Strong in her evidence addressing recreational matters.

[73] In the operative District Plan the activity area is located in the Recreation P zone which is to accommodate passive recreation as it is for the proposed Open Space zone. As described in the Operative Plan, *'...the purpose of this zone [is] to maintain their open space or planted character and avoid cluttering with facilities, while maintaining their important role as recreational areas and visual open space for local neighbourhoods and for all residents and visitors.'*

[74] The proposed Plan also identifies the site as being within an area of visual vulnerability ranked 'high'. The planning map overlay extends to cover the entire area within the receiving environment and beyond – see again **Graphic Attachment Figure 2** aerial photograph.

[75] The activity area is not subject to any RMAs6(a) or (b) overlays such as Outstanding Natural Landscape, although the lake water body is. Nor does it lie within the Lake Side Protection Area and Site of Significance.

This indicates that the review District Plan recognises the site (Open Space Zone) as being of lesser landscape importance and is therefore less sensitive to development.

- [76] The values outcome is therefore similar to that for proposed Open Space zone – namely the provision of green or vegetation open space enabling recreational activity.

Submitter Values

- [77] Here I summarise those landscape values arising from submissions as I will address these in more detail later on. Values arising from submissions are:

- (a) Existing recreational activity is appropriate for the landscape setting,
- (b) Open space and visual amenity,
- (c) View quality and visual access to the lake and mountains,
- (d) Natural character,
- (e) Tranquillity,
- (f) Access to lake shore,
- (g) Availability of lakeside shade and shelter.

Promotional Material

- [78] Promotional material is numerous sourced from various public and private entities. *Tekapo Tourism* provides an overview of the area where it chiefly promotes activities, access and accommodation. An online 'guest book' where visitors record their impressions indicates that scenery and peacefulness are salient attractions.

- [79] Private providers such as Tekapo Springs promote a wide range of activities – ten are listed -within their complex. Other providers do much the same where activities are largely founded on what the landscape enables – ski field, walking, cycling, boating, star gazing and so on.

- [80] Overall, it is the combination of scenery, recreational activities and tranquillity that are evidently the prevailing values derived from the landscape of the wider Tekapo environs.

Mana Whenua

- [81] In the District Plan review regarding matters of concern to Mana whenua it is noted⁹ that 'The lakes are of great significance to mana whenua due to long relationship with the area, presence of wahi tapu and wahi toaka and particularly the important mahika kai values and are also shown by the nohoanga sites found in the Mackenzie district. There is concern that past activity arising from agricultural, quarrying, industrial and economic activity in the vicinity of lakes and waterways have resulted in degradation which is to be avoided in the future. Restoration of lake and waterway environments are also promoted.
- [82] It is noted that mana whenua has not made a submission in response to the proposal, although this does not in any way diminish consideration of their values. Additionally, the District Plan planning maps identify sites and areas of significance to Māori and it appears the overlay does not involve the proposed activity area.

Landscape, amenity and visual effects

- [83] Essentially landscape effects are those arising from changes to the landscape and its values irrespective of whether they are visible. Fundamentally they are a measure of the extent the changes brought about by a proposal derogate from the existing environment (comprising the environment of the moment, consented but not as of yet implemented activity and what is permitted by the District Plan).
- [84] Amenity is derived from landscape attributes that induce a sense of pleasantness. These are very much informed by context. For example, a busy urban environment can be pleasant due to its vibrancy, well designed built form, design coherence and the combination of

⁹ MW2.2.2 Inland Waterbodies and Areas of Indigenous Vegetation

contrasting natural and physical features. Whereas a rural environment amenity is typically derived from abundant open space, vegetation, serenity and the predominance of natural features such as lakes and mountains.

- [85] Visual effects – a subset of landscape effects – are generally those changes to the landscape arising from the activity which can be seen from public and private vantage points beyond the application site.
- [86] Associative landscape effects which are fundamentally predicated on the question of what is acceptably expected to occur in the landscape will be addressed when the District Plan matters are discussed. The reason for this is that the provisions describe certain expected outcomes for the zone in which the proposed activity is located.

Potentially affected parties

- [87] Potentially affected parties will be those people whose appreciation of landscape character and the amenity derived from it is altered, either positively or negatively.

1 Those potentially affected in this case will be:

- a. tourists – both visiting and accommodated,
- b. recreationalists,
- c. residents,
- d. business owners and operators.

- [88] A demarcation exists between those residing or working in the area and those visiting. For the former, any effects will be enduring, and for the latter essentially transitory.

- [89] The extent of potentially affected parties in my opinion will be for those within the receiving environment – see again **Graphic Attachment Figure 2** aerial photograph. I have nonetheless assessed that the extent of potentially adverse visual effects will be much less as shown in **Graphic Attachment Figure 3** aerial photograph.

Landscape effects

- [90] As described by others, essentially the proposal involves the installation of an elevated ropes and zip line course supported by existing mature conifers – see **Graphic Attachment Figure 9** photo-montage illustrating the appearance of the activity, while **Graphic Attachment Figures 10a, 10b and 10c** photographs are of existing examples. All parts of the course attached to the trees will be greater than 3 metres above existing ground level. It is understood that branches on some of the trees will be removed to accommodate the activity.
- [91] The course apparatus will include a mix of ropes and cables linked to tree based wooden platforms similar to those shown in the **Graphic Attachment Figures 10a, 10b and 10c** photographs. Also as shown in the photographs, there will be small timber platforms and in some areas rope bridge planking. The scale of these is very small in proportion to the trees supporting them.
- [92] As shown on the **Graphic Attachment Figure 11** Concept Plan, two distinct tree clusters closest to the lake shore will be free of apparatus. This will enable people to sit beneath the trees free from the ropes course above.
- [93] Also provided as part of the proposed activity will be five timber picnic tables. They will be freely accessible to the public thereby enhancing opportunity to enjoy and landscape amenity of the setting. In her evidence, Ms Strong further details the advantages of the picnic tables. Their presence will have negligible effect on landscape character due to their small size and diminutive scale. They will be located within the activity area as indicated on the site plan.
- [94] Supporting the activity will be a 12.1m x 4.8m x 2.6m high base station building whose purpose is to accommodate equipment and an office / reception area. It is noted that the proposed activity lies within Precinct 1¹⁰ of which the proposed Open Space Zone is subject to. It is understood the Precinct 1 standards override the equivalent zone

¹⁰ Takapō / Lake Tekapo Precinct

standards.¹¹ I have been advised however, by the Council's consultant planner¹² that the Precinct standards do not yet have legal effect, although the objectives and policies are applicable. Nonetheless, in the following discussion I cite the proposed Precinct 1 standards as they inform the Council's aspirations for landscape outcomes within the Open Space Zone.

- [95] While the proposed Open Space Zone (PC29) height standard permits a maximum building height of 5m above ground level,¹³ the Precinct 1 standard allows 7.5m.¹⁴ The proposed base station building height will therefore be 2.4m below the OS standard and 4.9m below the Precinct Standard. Consequently, the effects arising from height are considered entirely acceptable in the context of that proposed policy direction.
- [96] While the base station will be clad and finished in a combination of corten steel, cedar and glazing – see **Graphic Attachment Figure 17** photo-montage. This aligns with PREC1 – S1.1 (a) and (d) whose purpose is to control materials and colours. As shown in the photo – montage colours will be muted, of a natural hue and low reflectivity, thereby meeting the LRV¹⁵ standard for PREC1 which ranges between 5% and 35% while the standard for the Open Space Zone is no less than 40%.¹⁶ The LRV for the proposed base station will fall well within the more stringent OSZ standard. Additionally, it will be in accordance with the *Takapō / Lake Tekapo Character Design Guide*.¹⁷
- [97] The base station will also comply with the PREC1 standard (S2) for roofs. Of relevance the standard states: *1 Primary roof forms shall have:*
a. a flat or monopitch roof angle up to 20 degrees. The base station will essentially have a flat roof thereby meeting the standard.

¹¹ Op. cit – Introduction:
For activities within this Precinct, the provisions of both the underlying zone and this Precinct apply.
If the zone chapter and precinct chapter contain a rule or standard managing the same thing (e.g. buildings and structures rule or a height standard), the applicable rule or standard in this Precinct applies and the equivalent rule in the underlying zone does not apply.

¹² Ms Liz White in an email dated 13/02/2025

¹³ PC29 OSZ – S1 Height

¹⁴ PREC1 Height 1

¹⁵ LRV – Light Reflectance Value

¹⁶ OSZ – S4 Reflectivity

¹⁷ District Plan APP2

- [98] Regarding building scale within the OSZ, PREC1 requires the walls of buildings to not exceed 20m in length.¹⁸ The proposed base station longest wall is 12.1m long and so falls well within the standard.
- [99] There is no PREC1 standard for setbacks and so Open Space Zone standards apply. The minimum setback distance from all boundaries is 6m.¹⁹ The building, located in Lot 5, will be setback from the road boundary at 15m but intrudes the northwest boundary 1.3m where the setback is 4.7m. The only relevant discretionary matter arising from the setback intrusion seeks to consider *'the location, design, scale and appearance of the building or structure.'* As the setback intrusion is lakeside, it will not in any way result in loss of privacy, sunlight access and open space. Nor will it increase building dominance.
- [100] The remaining bulk and location consideration concerns site coverage. The OSZ standard sets this at 5% or 100m², whichever is the lesser. Within the 1.48ha Lot 5 in which the 58m² base station is located, the percentage site coverage is 0.039%. Consequently, site coverage of the proposed building is well within the standard.
- [101] Also as shown on the montage and **Graphic Attachment Figure 11** Concept Plan is the location of the base station set among the trees. This will have the effect of helping to blend the building in with its setting. Further, the relatively small size of the building in proportion to the much larger trees will have the effect of reducing its apparent size. Additionally, the long axis of the building is aligned with the shoreline which is more sympathetic to the contour compared to one set perpendicular to it.
- [102] Because the building is essentially structurally portable, it harbours the possibility of being easily removed from the site. This may occur sometime in the future depending on the longevity of the trees supporting the ropes course. What this means is that the proposed activity is potentially rescindable with little to no enduring impact on the site thereafter should it be removed.

¹⁸ PREC1 – S3.1(a)

¹⁹

- [103] Installation of the building will involve some relatively minor excavation for footings, otherwise very little in the way of earthworks will occur. And as the ropes course apparatus is aerially located there will be no effect on landform arising from this. Consequently, the native landform will essentially remain intact.
- [104] Carparking will utilise what currently exists and so no further disturbance of land will occur as a result. This is notwithstanding the possibility the council will upgrade the carparking in the area at some time in the future. Abutting the existing car park will be a bike stand.
- [105] Between the carpark and base station will be an area of native tussock²⁰ planting. The exact location and extent of that is shown in the **Graphic Attachment Figure 11** Concept Plan. Its purpose is to enhance amenity in the vicinity of the base station either side of the existing concrete footpath. The planting will also help to 'settle' the base station building into the setting, thereby softening its appearance.
- [106] Overall, the physical structure of the ropes course and base station sits lightly on the landscape of its setting in as much that existing elements will not be subject to significant change. The existing conifers will remain so apart from some trimming, little change will occur regarding these. They will fundamentally still appear as they do now – see **Graphic Attachment Figures 12a** and **12b** before and after photographs / photo – montage. And as mentioned, the landform within the ropes course envelope will fundamentally remain intact.
- [107] Nevertheless, the proposed activity will introduce physical structures into what is otherwise a moderately high natural environment. Consequently, a degree of natural character will be diminished. Further there will occur a cumulative effect in this regard arising from the presence of existing physical structures within the shoreline Open Space Zone – namely the power boat club building, its dual boat ramps and further afield the canal water intake. The playground adjoining the proposed activity area is another contributing structure.

²⁰

Festuca novae - zealandiae

[108] As a result, the diminished natural character will constitute an adverse landscape effect. It is my opinion that this will sit at the low end of minor adverse effects (see **Appendix 1** attached to my evidence). The reasons are:

- (a) while there will be some effect on existing natural elements, patterns and processes, the magnitude of this relatively small,
- (b) the environment of the activity area is somewhat removed from the high end of the naturalness spectrum,
- (c) the setting is not subject to any special landscape overlays seeking to maintain natural character specifically,
- (d) the two main landscape elements, being the conifer trees and underlying landform will essentially remain intact,
- (e) the existing environment within the Open Space Zone accommodates one other building and other physical structures whose presence informs and to a certain extent diminishes existing natural character.

[109] Regarding cumulative effects arising from the two buildings – the existing power boat club and proposed base station, it is my opinion that such effects are a long way from breaching an unacceptable threshold. This is due to the fact that the open space character of the foreshore environment will continue to predominate. Additionally, both buildings are located with a bias toward Lakeside Drive and so are effectively stepped back from the lake shore. Further they are set among the existing mature conifers whose presence diminishes their apparent scale.

Amenity effects

[110] As described, the proposed activity area is located in an environment that sits at the interface of the urban and rural. Consequently, its amenity is drawn from neighbouring natural features – predominantly Takapō / Lake Tekapo and Mt John. Attendant open space also contributes significantly to amenity.

- [111] At a more specific level, the proposed activity area sits at a transition point between the urban and natural existing environments in what might be described in landscape terms a typological overlap. The question is whether the proposed activity will derogate from the quality of amenity derived from this particular context?
- [112] There will be, on the one hand, potential adverse effects on landscape amenity, and on the other hand some positive effects. Adverse amenity effects will arise from a degree of diminished quietude²¹ due to the presence of dynamic activity, for the most part arising from zip line, within the ropes course. This is notwithstanding the observations made in Ms Strong's evidence that existing activity in the area is in any case quite variable. That is to say, the quality of quietude is occasional rather than persistent. Other amenity effects will potentially result from the loss of naturalness – already discussed – and open space. Visual amenity effects will be discussed in more detail later.
- [113] To get a sense of what effects on amenity might occur and the magnitude of them, I visited an active ropes course²² so as to experience firsthand what these might be – see again **Graphic Attachment Figure 10c** photograph. This particular ropes course appears to be somewhat larger and more complex than that proposed by the applicant. There were approximately 40 people using the course while I was there on a sunny Saturday afternoon. I was there for 20 minutes. People could move freely among the ropes course as there is no restriction to public access. Picnic tables were located beneath the ropes course. Regarding noise, I heard people talking at normal volumes with no shouting or screaming. I did hear one girl squeal once. The only other salient noise was from the occasional whirl of zip lines, which was not loud to the extent it could be heard much beyond the site. Apart from the dynamic nature of the zip lines, activity was surprisingly subdued and slow – no doubt due to the combination of induced peril and determined concentration for participants. I also found the experience quite

²¹ Also refer to the noise evidence prepared by Mr Hay
²² *Adrenalin Forest*, Spencer Park, Christchurch

entertaining, and I therefore assume others will too. Overall, I concluded that the ambient amenity is quite high and to me was not at all offensive.

- [114] Nevertheless, there will be some effect on people using the foreshore for picnicking, swimming and just sitting admiring the view - **Graphic Attachment Figure 7** photograph. From on site observation, it was evident that people took advantage of tree shade while enjoying the view across the lake in addition to foreshore activity such as boating and swimming. These people all sat more or less on the lake side of the trees. Ms Strong, in her recreation evidence, discusses this in more detail. Nevertheless, for them there may be some diminished amenity, particularly where absolute quietude might be sought, but is by no means assured. As Ms Strong records, activity in the vicinity can be quite varied and so the expectation of quietude is by no means guaranteed. Mr Hay also addresses this matter in his noise evidence. Also, from what I observed of like for like activity at *Adrenalin Forest*, I am of the view that the degree of diminished amenity will not be particularly great – to the extent I would consider the adverse effect on lakeshore experience will be less than minor.
- [115] It is also apparent that there will be little effect on open space apart from that occupied by the base building. Because the ropes course is suspended, open space will continue to flow beneath the apparatus. The entire ropes course covers an area of 8,210m² which equates to 1.132%²³ of the total Passive Recreation Zone.
- [116] The base building will occupy and therefore diminish some open space, but within the context of the foreshore setting this will not be very great. Indeed, the building will occupy some 22 metres of foreshore frontage which will have negligible impact on lake access. At 58.2m² the base building will occupy 0.008%²⁴ of the Passive Recreation Zone and as such will have a negligible effect on open space availability.
- [117] Further, it is my opinion that consideration has to be also given to other activity occurring within the foreshore environment which I have listed earlier. The foreshore is not always quiet though, particularly during the

²³ Source: DWG Landscape Architecture

²⁴ Source: op. cit

summer when power boats are present whose owners use the shore to beach their craft – see again **Graphic Attachment Figure 8** photograph. Additionally greater numbers of people use the lake edge particularly during the peak summer holiday period, thereby contributing to a variety of ambient activity levels that the proposed activity will not be out of keeping with. Nonetheless, it is an environment that is conducive to appreciation of the landscape irrespective of use. But it is also evident given the diversity of activity on the foreshore that such appreciation will be subject to variability.

[118] Regarding effects on open space amenity, it is my opinion that they are negligible and therefore less than minor.

[119] Positive amenity effects can also be derived from recreational activity, which is a contributing factor acknowledged in the RMA definition of amenity.²⁵ Ms Strong will describe this aspect in more detail in her recreation evidence. Suffice to say that the proposed ropes course will also enhance peoples' (as paying customers) appreciation of its landscape setting where elevated views of the lake and its mountain backdrop will be attained.

Visual effects

[120] When assessing visual effects, there are essentially two aspects to consider. One concerns effects on view quality – that is, whether a proposed activity exhibits aesthetic appeal while taking into account context of the setting. For example, the acceptable aesthetic threshold for activity in an urban industrial setting will be much lower than that for activity in an Outstanding Natural Landscape.²⁶

[121] The other aspect is view obstruction. This is where an activity intrudes views and is particularly of concern if vantage points are important in this regard – such as from the District's scenic viewing areas located alongside some parts of SH8. Apart from this, I am also aware that there

²⁵ RMA interpretation: **amenity values** means those natural or physical qualities and characteristics of an area that contribute to people's appreciation of its pleasantness, aesthetic coherence, and cultural and recreational attributes. (my underline)

²⁶ Subject to RMA s6(b)

are very few instances where view protection is guaranteed via any statutory means.

- [122] As mentioned, the activity area is also located within an Area of Visual Vulnerability (high). I will address this matter more fully later.
- [123] On **Graphic Attachment Figure 3** map I have identified those who will experience potentially enduring visual effects – namely residents, accommodated tourists and business owners and operators. The anticipated extent of potential visual effects is also indicated on the map. Only those in proximity to the ropes course site are identified as those further afield within the receiving environment I consider will be little affected. This is because the visual effects on lake views will mostly affect those whose views are more or less perpendicular to the site. Beyond that envelope, views become increasingly oblique with distance due to the apparent compounding effect of the trees seen collectively from ‘end on’. And resulting from this will be greater visual absorption of the ropes course. Further, the backdrop views of the lake will transition to that of landform.
- [124] As a matter of principle, if the vantage point is below the 3 metre above ground minimum height of the ropes course, then views of the lake will not be intruded. Vantage points above the 3-metre height will result in view intrusion of the lake, depending on the elevation of the viewer. This principle is illustrated in the **Graphic Attachment Figure 13** diagram and **Figures 14a, 14b & 14c** photographs. What this means is that for people residing directly alongside Lakeshore Drive will not experience interrupted views of the lake, where this effect is illustrated in the **Graphic Attachment Figure 9** photo-montage.

View obstruction

- [125] The proposed ropes course is by its very nature inherently transparent. That is, the cables, ropes, relatively small tree borne platforms and planking exhibit very little visual bulk. This effect can be seen in the **Graphic Attachment Figures 10a, 10b, 10c** photographs and **Figure 9** photo-montage. There will however, be some view obstruction, but not to the extent that views are significantly obscured by the ropes course

itself. This obstruction will largely occur from those vantage points above the 3m height of the ropes course - for the most part Station Bay subdivision. The **Graphic Attachment Figure 13** diagram illustrates this effect where the higher the vantage point the more likely it will intrude views of the lake. This effect is also shown in the **Graphic Attachment Figures 14a, 14b and 14c**.

- [126] As the **Graphic Attachment Figure 12b** photo-montage and **Figure 14c** shows, views from these more elevated vantage points will not be significantly obscured at all. I do acknowledge however, that the cable will on some occasions be more visible than on others depending on lake, light and weather conditions. Compared to close up vantage points, the greater distance of elevated ones from the activity area will also lessen potential visual effects. I will further address visual effects on them in more detail when considering submissions.
- [127] I also note that parked vehicles in the foreshore carpark obscure views to the lake edge – see again **Graphic Attachment Figure 6 & 14c** photographs. While this is transitory, it is evident that parked vehicles, including camper vans, are a common occurrence and feature of the foreshore environment. Camping is not permitted on the foreshore.
- [128] As a result, views to and through the treed setting and lake background will remain attainable. Additionally, because installation of the ropes course will involve in some limbing up of trees, views to the lake will be improved, especially for those parties viewing it from higher elevations such as from Station Bay subdivision. Otherwise, the vantage point for pedestrians and motorists is essentially below the 3m minimum height ropes course, and so views to the lake for them will remain unobstructed – see again **Graphic Attachment Figure 13** diagram which illustrates the effects of views from various vantage point elevations. The same would apply to those within the Lake Edge Lodge and the future residence on Station Bay Lot 1 located on the corner of Lakeside Drive and Station Bay Rise – see **Graphic Attachment Figure 15** subdivision site plan. It is my opinion therefore, that view obstruction attributable to the ropes course will be less than minor for these lower elevation vantage points.

- [129] The proposed base station, being a solid structure will however obscure views to the lake to the extent shown in the **Graphic Attachment Figure 17** photo – montage. Those potentially affected in this regard will be pedestrians using the footpath running alongside the building and motorists driving along Lakeside Drive. As these parties are essentially transitory, the effects are expected to be ephemeral.
- [130] Finally, with regard to visual effects from the Lakes Edge Holiday Park it is determined that these will be negligible for those accommodated in the cabins. The reason is that for the cabins immediately west of the activity area views are obscured by existing trees and landform. And for the cabins to the north-west of the site there will be no view intrusion of the lake, as these will remain attainable via the gap north of the Power Boat Club building.
- [131] Regarding the latter, there will be no visual effects for those within the Power Boat Club building. Although adjoining the activity area, views are oriented toward the lake with no window openings facing the site.
- [132] As shown in **Graphic Attachment Figure 1** aerial photograph and **Figure 16** photograph, there are no permanent buildings of any kind directly opposite the base station site and so no view obstruction will occur in that regard.
- [133] Overall, I conclude that any potential adverse effects arising from view intrusion will be less than minor.

View quality

- [134] Currently views to the lake and beyond are predominately natural, but not entirely due to the presence of existing structures such as the power boat club building, boat ramps, footpath and playground. The presence of the proposed ropes course and base station building will lessen natural character and the visual amenity derived from it. Consequently, view quality will potentially be adversely affected.
- [135] Effects on view quality will arise from the structural nature of the ropes course and base station building. Both will reflect their respective functions. In volumetric terms the ropes course is not particularly bulky

and as such does not occupy very much visual space. As described, it is suspended above ground and is essentially incorporated into the tree trunks and canopy. This has the effect of visually absorbing most of the ropes course, thereby lessening adverse effects on view quality.

- [136] There are however, some parts of the activity area where gaps between the trees exist that the ropes course traverses. Currently views to the lake between these gaps is unimpeded – see again **Graphic Attachment Figure 12a** photograph. The ropes course will therefore intrude these views and consequently diminish view quality. That part of the ropes course that does cross the tree gap will comprise just the zipline cables of which there will be three. I understand the cable diameter will be 12mm. Due to their very low visual bulk, their presence will not have an especially significant effect on view quality – see again **Graphic Attachment Figure 12b** photograph - montage. Further, visual effects arising from the zipline will likely vary depending on the time of day and prevailing weather conditions. This is notwithstanding the fact that people using the zipline will cross the gap, where it is expected their presence will be briefly transient given the relatively high speed involved.
- [137] The various wooden platforms will also potentially affect view quality where they will appear as artificial structures attached to naturally looking tree trunks. The platforms have greater visual bulk than the cables and ropes and therefore will exhibit comparatively higher visibility – see again **Graphic Attachment Figures 10a, 10b, 10c** and **12b** photographs. They are nonetheless visually simple planar or disc like structures of approximately 3m in diameter. whose dimensions therefore are not particularly great, particularly on the vertical axis. Being constructed of macrocarpa timber, the platforms will become increasingly grey in appearance due to weathering – see **Graphic Attachment Figure 10d**. Note that in the **Graphic Attachment Figure 12b** photomontage the platforms are portrayed as new, in their pre-weathered state. As a result, therefore, the platforms will increasingly blend in with the grey tones of their setting over time.
- [138] As for the ropes and cables, views of them will vary depending on where they are located among the trees. In some places they will be more

visible where they are not otherwise visually absorbed in the tree canopy. The vantage point elevation and location will also inform view quality effects which will therefore be variable.

[139] It might be expected that view quality potentially affected from elevated vantage points will be the most affected, especially where the lake forms the backdrop. But as **Graphic Attachment Figures 12b** and **14c** photographs demonstrate, such effects, while present, are not going to be particularly adverse. To a certain extent these effects will be countered positive effects resulting from the limbed up trees. Compared to the current situation, this will have the effect of enhancing views of the lake surface. So, from these more elevated vantage points it is my opinion that the potential adverse effects will be less than minor.

[140] Turning to the base station, as discussed it will have the effect of obscuring views altogether to the extent shown in the **Graphic Attachment Figure 17** photo-montage. Its presence will also detract from current view quality informed by the largely, but not entirely, natural character of the site and lake backdrop setting. This is because the building whose form and character will be artificial in appearance. Nonetheless, it is not without aesthetic appeal due to its simple form, configuration and proportions of generous openings and recessive cladding. The adjoining tussock planting will also contribute aesthetic appeal. So, in my opinion the base station building is not by any means an ugly or unsightly structure. And as mentioned, its presence in visual terms will only affect passersby as no buildings exist opposite the base station site. I therefore conclude that while there will be an adverse effect on view quality, it will not be more than minor.

Visual effects summary

[141] While there will clearly be adverse visual effects arising from the proposed ropes course and attendant base station building, it is evident that these will not be uniform throughout the site. Variables include whether the ropes course is set among the trees or crosses gaps between them. And another depends on vantage point location where it is evident that where they are low views to the lake remain unimpeded – see again **Graphic Attachment Figure 9** photo-montage and **Figure**

14a & 14b photographs - whereas at elevation views to the lake are interrupted – see **Graphic Attachment Figure 12b** photo-montage. The position within the tree canopy is another variable as this has the effect of visually absorbing the activity – again depending on the view point location.

- [142] Apart from the base station building, the low visual bulk of the proposed activity will inherently contribute to the lessening of view intrusion and apparent view quality. While these visual effects are not entirely absent, they will nonetheless enable the ongoing attainment of views, albeit not without some degree of adversity depending on the aforementioned variables.

Statutory Landscape Matters

- [143] In the discussion to follow, I address those statutory matters relevant to landscape outcomes. The focus is on the Mackenzie District Plan both operative and proposed, where regarding the latter PC29 concerning the Open Space Zone is addressed. Consideration is also given to Section 9 of the current operative Plan as that is still relevant where I understand that PC29 is not yet operative.
- [144] Based on the advice provided by the Council's consultant planner,²⁷ I have considered both the operative planning policy direction, as well given some weighting to the proposed.
- [145] It is further assumed that the District Plan gives effect to the RMA and CRPS.²⁸ Consequently I do not directly address these in my evidence. Nevertheless, I acknowledge that as the site is not subject to an ONL/F overlay, the proposal's effects are, via the relevant District Plan provisions, considered in terms of RMA s7(c) concerning maintenance and enhancement of amenity values. As noted, values ascribed to the lake margin potentially subject to RMA s6(a) matters are not considered affected as the proposal will not impinge on riparian processes.

²⁷

Ms Liz White

²⁸

CRPS – Canterbury Regional Policy Statement

[146] As mentioned, the proposal does not lie within the Lake Tekapo ONL overlay.

PC29 – Open Space Zone Provisions

[147] Of the PC29 objectives and policies of relevance to landscape outcomes the most relevant states:

OSZ – 02 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.

[148] From this it is clear in terms of landscape character and amenity that the pre-eminent outcome is the provision of open space. The policies in support then paint a picture of what is expected to occur within the Open Space Zone. The introduction to the provisions also describes certain outcomes. In summary these are:

- (a) open space predominates,
- (b) greenery is prevalent,
- (c) views to lake are attainable,
- (d) lake access is provided,
- (e) activities include walking, cycling, picnicking, bbq, seating, play,
- (f) activities are compatible which include community and commercial that compliment and do not detract from the passive quality of the zone,
- (g) character is informal,
- (h) facilities and structures are limited, which include toilets, shelters, play grounds and sports equipment,
- (i) there is a functional need to be located in OSZ,
- (j) activity must not preclude open space development,

- (k) conflict with recreational uses is avoided,
- (l) built form maintains uninterrupted views of the lake from urban areas,

[149] These outcomes therefore inform landscape character and amenity. They further establish what are described in landscape terms as – ‘associative effects.’ Or to put it another way – the kind of activity which might reasonably be expected to occur in the landscape. As a result, people would not be surprised to encounter such activity within the context of a particular landscape setting. For the activity area and indeed the receiving environment, the kinds of activity listed above will inform peoples’ expectations.

[150] It is my opinion that the proposed will accord with these expectations. As shown in the **Graphic Attachment Figures 12a** and **12b** photographs, open space will continue to prevail, albeit diminished to a very minor degree by the presence of the base station within the expansive context of the lakeshore setting.

[151] The prevalence of greenery – that is, vegetation – will be maintained, even though some of the existing pines will be limbed up. No trees will be removed, however. The proposed tussock plantings in the vicinity of the base station will add greenery.

[152] Views to the lake will be maintained and indeed enhanced due to the limbing up of trees. As described, the only feature of the proposal to obstruct views will be the base station. Its location however will not obstruct views from urban areas as the land opposite is open space. Additionally, views from Station Bay dwellings are high enough above the base station building not to be affected by it.

[153] Lake access will not be lost as the aerial ropes course at a minimum height above ground level will ensure people can get to and from the lake. Ms Strong addresses this matter in more detail in her recreation evidence. This in addition to access being available elsewhere along the lake shore. The aforementioned activities could also continue, which Ms

Strong in her recreation evidence will address this matter and others identified in the foregoing list more detail.

- [154] Finally, an informal character is sought for the OSZ. The proposed layout is entirely informal as its aerial route is dictated by the organic layout of the existing pines which support it. It is also devoid of any symmetry or regularity in its layout. As a result, its informal character is in keeping with what is expected to occur within the zone

Visual Vulnerability (high) Overlay

- [155] The District Plan identifies the area in which the activity area is located as one subject to 'visual vulnerability- high.' I have been advised by one of the Council's planners²⁹ that there are no provisions in the District Plan that specifically set out to implement this overlay. I therefore assume that the standards in both the operative and proposed Plans are the means by which design and appearance outcomes are achieved.

Operative District Plan – Section 9 – Recreation P Zone

- [156] As PC29 is not yet fully operative, it is necessary to consider the current Section 9 Recreation P Zone provisions. Because the activity status is non-complying the following assessment matters are considered. It is noted that there are no objectives or policies specific to the Recreation P Zone.

- [157] Nevertheless, the purpose for the zone is described where it states:

This zone is intended to protect areas considered by Council to be appropriate for passive recreation. Recreational use of these areas is mostly informal in nature involving activities such as walking and playing. These areas therefore often require seating, playground equipment or other small structures. It is the purpose of this zone to maintain their open space or planted character and avoid cluttering with facilities, while maintaining their important role as recreational areas and visual open space for local neighbourhoods and for all residents and visitors.

- [158] Regarding landscape outcomes, it is evident open space 'or' planted character while maintaining visually apparent open space is, in effect,

²⁹ Ms Suzanne Blyth - 13/02/2025

the objective. That is to say, the preference is for space to predominate over physical features. This aligns with PC29 Objective [OSZ-02] which states: *The Open Space Zone contains limited facilities and structures which support the purpose of the zone and maintain the predominance of open space.*

- [159] As assessed, that while the proposal introduces physical structures that will affect visual quality of the open space, it has, in my opinion, minor impact on its provision. The exception being the base station building that in the context of the wider setting represents very little site coverage. Indeed, in one sense, visual open space will be enhanced following the limbing up of the conifers supporting the ropes course. Or to put it another way, open space will appear to be greater than what it is now.

Assessment Matters

- [160] Listed and addressed below are the assessment matters that are relevant to landscape outcomes.

- [161] *4.8.1 The extent to which the proposal will achieve the Anticipated Environmental Results listed in Part 4.2.*

Of landscape relevance the chief environmental result³⁰ states: *In the Lake Tekapo township, the exclusion or mitigation of activities, buildings and structures that unduly interrupt views from the township to the north, or adversely affect the open space and visual amenity of the township, particularly along the lakefront of Lake Tekapo.*

- [162] For the reasons given in the foregoing discussion, it is my opinion that the proposed activity will not unduly interrupt views from the township to the north or adversely affect in more than a minor way open space and visual amenity within the Takapō / Lake Tekapo lakefront.

- [163] *4.8.2 The effect of the Proposed Building, Structure or Facility on the open space and visual amenity of the Recreation P zone, and in particular the Zone on the lakefront at Lake Tekapo township.*

³⁰ Section 9 - 4.2

Also addressed in the preceding discussion, where I conclude that the proposed ropes course and base station building will have less than a minor effect on the open space amenity of zone in which they are located.

- [164] *4.8.3 The effect on the amenities of adjoining properties, and in the case of Lake Tekapo Township, Lake Tekapo frontage. Consideration should be given to matters of nuisance from noise, dust, glare, hours of operation, obstruction of views, car parking, and visual amenity.*

Of particular landscape relevance here are the potential effects on view obstruction and visual amenity. As discussed, the ropes course will have very little effect on the maintenance of views, and to reiterate, those to the lake will actually be improved due to the limbing up of some of the pines supporting the activity – see again – see again the **Graphic Attachment Figures 12b and 14c** photographs.

- [165] It is acknowledged however, that the proposed base station, being a solid building, will obstruct views to the lake, albeit to a minor extent given its relatively small size. Further its position is such that views from key vantage points such as the Station Bay residential area and holiday park accommodation will not be obstructed – see **Graphic Attachment Figure 1** aerial photograph and **Figure 16** photograph.

- [166] *4.8.4 Whether the proposed development will adversely affect the visual coherence and integrity of open space of the zone and the wider landscape.*

Another matter which has been traversed in the preceding discussion. To reiterate however, it is acknowledged there will be an adverse effect, as the proposal will introduce a degree of visual complexity which is not currently present. This will have the effect of lessening visual coherence and open space integrity, but not to such an extent that in my opinion this will be result in more than minor adverse effects.

- [167] *4.8.5 The cumulative effect of the development in the context of existing and confirmed future development on the integrity and maintenance of the open space and visual amenity of the zone.*

As noted, existing activity includes the power boat club and attendant boat ramps north of the activity area, and to the south the children's playground. And then further south toward the township there is the canal water intake structure. While the proposed activity will add to the sum of physical features within the zone, I nonetheless conclude that the cumulative adverse effects from this combination will be no more than minor. In part this is due to the reasonable degree of separation between each activity while that proposed will enable maintenance of open space and visual amenity in keeping with the prevailing character and amenity of the existing environment.

- [168] *4.8.6 In respect of the Recreation P zone along the lake shore of Lake Tekapo, the effect of the development on the natural character, visual amenity, retention of views and open space values.*

This matter has been addressed in the preceding discussion, where it was concluded that the effects on natural character, visual amenity, retention of views and open space values will be less than minor.

- [169] *4.8.7 Whether and to what extent the proposed development is likely to adversely affect the open space values with respect to the site and surrounding landscape.*

See preceding discussion.

- [170] *4.8.8 Whether the site is defined by natural elements such as topography and / or vegetation that may contain and mitigate any adverse effects associated with the development.*

The key natural element contributing to the mitigation of potential adverse effects are the pines which support the ropes course. They do this for a number of reasons.

- [171] One is that they are dense evergreen trees which will substantially help to visually absorb the course apparatus. This effect can be seen in the **Graphic Attachment Figures 10c** and **12b** photographs.

- [172] The second reason is that the trees are visually bulky compared to the almost transparent nature and extremely low visual bulk of the ropes course.
- [173] The third reason is that the trees enable the ropes course to be elevated thereby avoiding potential adverse effects at ground level such as lake access obstruction and view interruption.
- [174] Finally in this regard, the base building will take advantage of a natural dip in the slope profile effectively lowering it approximately 800mm into the ground plane relative to the adjacent concrete footpath. Consequently, its visual bulk will be apparently lessened while visually anchoring the building into the site. The actual occluding effect are shown in the **Graphic Attachment Figure 17** photograph in which an image of the building is inserted at scale.
- [175] *4.8.9 The proposed development shall not be visually prominent such that it detracts from public or private views otherwise characterised by natural landscapes.*

Visual prominence occurs when an object or feature is in contrast with its setting. As discussed, and concluded, the proposal will not be visually prominent due to the inherent character of the activity – namely its largely transparent nature and the fact that it is set among evergreen trees. As the **Graphic Attachment Figure 12b** photograph shows, there is very little visual contrast arising from the presence of the proposed activity located within what I have assessed as being a moderately high, but by no means pristine, natural environment.

- [176] *4.8.10 The choice of surfacing of vehicle accesses and car parks such that dust nuisance is avoided. The degree to which vehicle access and car parking is necessary, and is located to avoid visual intrusion into the open space and visual amenity of the zone, and to which this is mitigated by earthworks, planting or the like.*

No additional car parking is being proposed. As a result, there will be no adverse effects over what currently exists.

- [177] 4.8.11 *Whether the location of any new vehicle access or car park is such that access is to a local or collector road and whether direct access to an arterial road is avoided.*

Not relevant.

- [178] 4.8.12 *The extent to which the design and appearance of new buildings complies with the standards set out in the Lake Tekapo Design Guide contained in Appendix P.*

It appears that the Appendix P *Lake Tekapo Design Guide* has been superseded by the Appendix 2 *Takapō Lake Tekapo Character Design Guide and Medium Density Design Guide*³¹. The proposed base station building accords with the design principles listed in the Guide, which are summarised as follows:

- [179] a. *Building scale*

Scale is the proportion of a feature in relation to another. In this regard with respect to its landscape setting and compared to other nearby buildings, the proposed building is small, simple in form, and low in height. Consequently, it is in keeping with the scale of built forms in its vicinity.

- [180] b. *Roof forms*

The roof form is simple, low so as to minimise visual bulk and view intrusion and mono-pitch. Regarding the latter, the Design Guide states:

Monopitch roof forms are most suited to sloping sites where their flatter profile better complements the layering of buildings across the moraine landscape and reduces the disruption of lake and mountain views for neighbours.

- [181] The roof line of the proposed building will achieve this outcome.

- [182] c. *Architectural features*

³¹ Prepared for Mackenzie District Council by Boffa Miskel Ltd, 2023

These are elements that make up a building's visual composition such as porches, balconies and various other architectural projections and recesses. They have the effect of modulating facades thereby adding interest and reducing apparent size. The proposed base station building incorporates such elements as shown in the **Graphic Attachment Figures 9 and 17** photo-montages.

[183] d. *Windows and openings*

The design preference is for window and door openings to maintain a more or less even ratio between solid walls, be axially vertical rather than horizontal, avoid large expanses of glazing and be recessed. The base station will include all of these elements.

[184] e. *Cladding, materials and colour*

The guide recommends using a mix of materials so as to modulate building facades thereby reducing visual bulk and monotony. The proposed building expresses this via entry and window openings punctuating the timber and corten steel / cedar clad façade. Also recommended are low reflectivity and natural colour finishes. The base station façade will achieve these outcomes. The LRV³² for the proposed building sits at around 30% - 5% below the Design Guide recommended maximum.

[185] f. *Retaining walls and level changes*

None will apply in this case.

[186] g. *Fencing and screening*

No fencing or screening is proposed.

[187] h. *Planting*

The Design Guide preference is for native vegetation. It is proposed that native tussock be used and so accords with this recommendation.

³² LRV – Light Reflectance Value

Further, the Design Guide maintains that such planting will contribute design consistency throughout the township.

[188] i. *Hard landscape*

No hard landscaping is proposed.

[189] j. *Signage*

As shown in the **Graphic Attachment Figures 9** and **Figure 17** photo-montages, signage is incorporated onto the building, as recommended by the Design Guide. Illumination is also avoided as is any kinetic or moving element. Nor will the sign obstruct openings such as windows and doors. The sign will therefore fully align with the Design Guide recommendations.

Takapō / Lake Tekapo Precinct³³

[190] In the introduction to the Precinct provisions, it states that:

The controls applicable within the precinct are intended to ensure that development within this area is sympathetic to the character of the town and the surrounding landscape.

[191] From this it is evident that development needs to be cognisant of the landscape character of its setting. Or to put it another way, context is the key consideration. Even though the introduction does not mention amenity, it is assumed that amenity will be derived from desired character. Otherwise, character is informed via the application of landscape relevant zone and overlay standards. And as already considered, the *Appendix 2 Takapō Lake Tekapo Character Design Guide and Medium Density Design Guide* also contributes to the implementation of desired aesthetic outcomes.

[192] Objective PREC1-01 states:

³³ Mackenzie District Plan: Part 3 Area Specific Matters – PREC – Takapō Lake Tekapo Precinct

Development within Takapō / Lake Tekapo maintains the distinctive character and identity of the Township and is complementary to the surrounding landscape.

[193] It is important to note that not all existing character is good or desirable and so implicit in the objective is the need to maintain what is good and improve what is not. For example, the power boat club building is not one I would recommend emulating in an effort to maintain existing character. The proposed base station building represents a significant improvement on that, the merits of which I have traversed in the preceding discussion.

[194] In my description of the activity area and receiving environment, I note that it is an enclave dedicated to a mix of recreational, residential and tourist activity. Essentially it is what the township is as a whole, except within the receiving environment recreational activity is somewhat more concentrated than elsewhere. This is what makes the receiving environment distinctive thereby underpinning its identity. So, in this regard the proposal is not out of keeping with this.

[195] Specifically, Policy PREC1 – P1 sets out the means by which the PREC1-01 objective is achieved. This is addressed as follows.

[196] *Control the scale, appearance and location of buildings to ensure that:*

1. the built form character of the Township is maintained and enhanced;

As concluded following consideration of the relevant Plan standards and Assessment Matters, the proposal is in keeping with the built form character of the township in terms of its size, scale and general appearance.

[197] *2. development is integrated with the landscape setting, including the topography, landform, and views to and from the area;*

As discussed, apart from some very minor earthworks required for the base station foundation, the proposal will have no effect on the topography and landform of its setting. There will however be adverse effects on views to and from the area which will, in my opinion, range

from minor to less than minor. These have been addressed in more detail in the foregoing discussion.

- [198] 3. *key viewshafts within and through land on the south side of State Highway 8 are protected, and accessibility to the Domain and lake are maintained; and*
- [199] 4. *views to the lake from properties on the north side of State Highway 8 are maintained.*

It does not appear that 'key viewshafts' are identified on the Planning Maps and so it is not explicitly clear where these are. In my opinion the proposed activity area does not appear to be located in any obvious key view shaft such as that from a designated scenic viewing area or one that is self evidently iconic such as the Church of the Good Shepherd.

- [200] I also note that clause 4 seeks to maintain views from '*...properties on the north side of State Highway 8...*' which therefore includes the Station Bay subdivision and tourist accommodation within the receiving environment. The proposal will have no effect on views from properties south of the highway. I have assessed the effects on views in the foregoing discussion, and will elaborate when addressing the submissions.

Avoidance, Remediation and Mitigation Measures

- [201] The design, relatively low key and limited footprint of built form, materials and colours, and placement, together lessen the visual impact of the proposed base station building and platforms, thereby contributing to the significant reduction of potentially adverse visual effects. Further assisting in this regard is the 'organic' or informal layout of the course. As described, the ropes course will exhibit very little visual bulk and while visible from certain vantage points it will not significantly impinge on views of the lake. Indeed, there will be some remedial effect resulting from the limbing up of trees thereby increasing views of the lake.
- [202] As discussed, effects on landform are largely avoided, while existing trees remain. That is to say, the fundamental landscape elements potentially affected by the proposal will essentially remain intact.

[203] The proposed tussock planting in the vicinity of the base station will result in some degree of enhancement or remediation, but this will be very localised. Nonetheless, it will be consistent with an evident increase in native vegetation plantings elsewhere in the receiving environment and township generally. Over time there appears to be a transition from what is predominantly northern hemisphere vegetation regime to one that is indigenous. In so doing the character and identity of the township is enhanced and reinforced.

Submissions

[204] Most submissions to the application express concern arising from potential landscape and visual effects. Fundamentally, certain themes emerge which are listed as follows:

- (a) view intrusion and loss of view quality,
- (b) reduced natural character,
- (c) loss of tranquillity,
- (d) diminished lake access,
- (e) loss of shade and shelter,

[205] Most of the above listed concerns have been addressed in my evidence thus far, and so will not be re-visited here. There are some matters however that merit further consideration. I also note that one submission (**Tekapo Landco Limited and Godwit Leisure Ltd**) includes commentary by a landscape architect.³⁴ I understand that these submitters are the developers and vendors of Station Bay subdivision. A number of points raised in that submission will be addressed also.

[206] The first matter arises from some specific submissions from Station Bay subdivision residents – specifically the owners of Lots 9 (**Bede Ward / James Houghton**), 11 (**Caroline Groundwater**) and 14 (**Peter Hobbs**

³⁴ Mr Tony Milne

and Diane Johnston). It is the views from these Lots, identified in **Graphic Attachment Figure 15** map, that I wish to address.

- [207] These Lots are elevated relative to the proposed activity. As **Graphic Attachment Figure 12a** shows (from Lot 9), partial views to the lake are attained between two gaps in the tree group and beneath the trees. As discussed, the views are not lost, but are nonetheless intruded to a very minor degree.
- [208] On the other hand, views to the lake are increased due to proposed limbing up of the trees. I note that the Station Bay website promotes this effect where shown in an artist's impression is a dwelling overlooking the lake. In the image, the lower limbs of the trees supporting the ropes course have been photo-shopped out – see **Graphic Attachment Figures 18 and 19** photographs. So clearly the opening of views via the limbing up of trees is a desired and therefore positive effect which will occur when the ropes course is installed.
- [209] I note however, that there exist trees which will screen these views from Lot 9. These are native beech trees that have been planted alongside a public walkway linking Petes Place with Lakeside Drive – see **Graphic Attachment Figure 15** map and **Graphic Attachment Figure 20** photograph. These evergreen trees are capable of reaching up to 20 metres tall at maturity – a height that will obscure views of the lake and proposed ropes course from both lots 9 and 10.
- [210] Two willows on the lake side of Lakeside Drive will also eventually screen views of the ropes course and lake beyond – see **Graphic Attachment Figure 21** photograph and **Figure 15** map. Other foreground trees capable of screening views to the lake relative to the Station Bay subdivision are located alongside and west of the Lake Edge Lodge – see again **Graphic Attachment Figure 15** map. These include a copse of silver birch trees which in particular will screen views from Lots 13 to 16. These trees can also be seen in the **Graphic Attachment Figure 16** photograph.
- [211] It would appear that Lots 11 and 12 have unobstructed views of the activity area through gaps in the trees and to the lake beyond. Even then,

an unidentified tree between the Lake Edge Lodge and Lot 12 will eventually obscure views to the activity area and the lake.

[212] Further, I am not aware that tree planting on private property within Station Bay is in any way restricted with the aim of maximising views and sunlight admission. If not, then the possibility exists that private property owners could plant trees that ultimately obscure views toward the lake. Similarly, the presence of foreground buildings also has the potential to obscure views toward the lake.

[213] Overall, while not relied on for mitigation purposes, there exist features in the receiving environment that contribute, to varying degrees, visual absorption and screening of the proposed activity either wholly or in part. This effect will likely change over time as trees mature and buildings are erected.

[214] A further point raised in submissions concerns effects on the ONL environment of the lake surface which adjoins but does not include the proposed Open Space Zone. I am not aware of any specific provision in either the operational or proposed District Plan whose sole purpose is to provide a buffer between the ONL and adjoining or nearby activity. I do acknowledge however, that the OSZ does, by default, adopt this function where a matter of concern is the maintenance of views to the lake. But as assessed, these views will not be lost as a consequence of the proposed ropes course, although adverse effects will arise from a relatively low level of view intrusion and diminished view quality.

[215] Another matter of concern centres on commercialisation of the site³⁵. While more of a social issue rather than a landscape one and therefore outside my area of expertise, I will nonetheless make the following observations.

[216] Firstly, commercial activity already occurs within the zone, namely a kayak hire business operates on the lake foreshore.

³⁵

A matter also raised in the Council's landscape assessment prepared by Ms Bron Faulkner

- [217] Secondly, commercial activity on public land is very common in New Zealand generally – such as numerous Department of Conservation concessions, ski fields, water borne (charter boats and alike), eateries, accommodation, none of which precludes use or access by the public.
- [218] And finally, the proposed OSZ provisions contemplate the possibility of commercial activity occurring where, under OSZ-P2, it states: *Provide for community facilities and **commercial**³⁶ recreation activities which are of a nature and scale that is complimentary to, and does not detract from, the passive focus of the zone.*
- [219] It has also been suggested in Mr Milne’s landscape advice prepared on behalf of the **Landco** et al submission that the proposed activity will effectively result in privatisation of the activity area. The inference is that the presence of the activity will preclude public access and enjoyment of setting, which it will not. Ms Strong elaborates on this matter in her recreation evidence.

Section 42A report - landscape

- [220] The s42A report incorporates landscape advice prepared by the Council’s consultant landscape architect, Ms Bronwyn Faulkner. Here I respond to this and the conclusions reached by the Council’s consultant planner³⁷, concerning landscape matters.
- [221] It appears to me that Ms Faulkner’s chief concern is potential effects caused by the ephemeral nature of the activity – namely the presence of people enjoying the proposed ropes course. The adverse effects, will arise from, in her words, *‘Understanding the nature of the noise and general busyness is particularly relevant when considering effects on visual amenity and open space values of the public area zoned for passive recreation.’*³⁸
- [222] I accept that ‘busyness’ and noise can diminish peoples’ appreciation of the landscape where there is an expectation that enduring serenity is to prevail, I do not believe that this is the case here with regard to the

³⁶ My emphasis

³⁷ Mr Nick Boyes

³⁸ S42A Faulkner,B. Peer Review Landscape Assessment. 2 August 2025. Section 3

particular setting of the proposed activity. It appears that this conclusion is predicated on what is understood to constitute a 'passive recreation zone'. As noted, this is not explicitly defined in the operative Plan. I do note however, that adopted PC29 now includes in its Objective concerning the zone purpose (OSZ-01) that '*The Open Space Zone provides areas of open space which predominantly provide for a range of passive and active recreational activities.*'

- [223] As discussed, it is evident that a diverse range of activity occurs in the vicinity of the site as it does in the wider setting of the receiving environment. Given this, and with regard to associative landscape effects, the public would not therefore be surprised to encounter such activity as that proposed within the context of its setting. In this regard, I understand that Ms Strong in her recreation evidence elaborates on this matter.
- [224] In any event, and as addressed in my evidence I reiterate that from my first-hand observation of a similar ropes course in Christchurch, (Adrenalin Forest at Spencer Park) I noted that there was very little in the way of apparent 'busyness' and noise. As a result, I formed the view that the proposed activity would not detract from appreciation of the landscape and amenity derived from it to a minor, or for that matter, more than minor, degree when taking into account the landscape context of the application site and the receiving environment.
- [225] Effects arising from the proposed activity in proximity to the lake shore subject to RMA s6(a) matters also appear to be an issue of concern. This matter is flagged via the Natural Character (NATC) provisions of the District Plan Review subject to PC23 (Decision version 24 July 2024). At issue is activity within the water body setbacks (for the OSZ) that for Takapō /Lake Tekapo is 25m.³⁹ Figure NATC-1 (in PC23) shows that the setback is to be measured from the 'bank edge' where the waterbody is at 'full flow level'.
- [226] Of relevance also, is recognition in the New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines⁴⁰ which references RMA s6(a) where it notes

³⁹ Table NATC-1: Surface Waterbody Setbacks
⁴⁰ Te Tangi a te Manu page 205

that the term 'natural character' is used instead of 'naturalness'. It then goes on to state; '*Natural character is an area's distinctive combination of characteristics and qualities, including degree of naturalness.*' Regarding this, reference is made to the NZ Coastal Policy Statement where it states that natural character may include, among other listed factors, '*a range of natural character from pristine to modified.*'⁴¹ As I have concluded, natural character of the site is moderately high, but not at all pristine. As noted, the shoreline environment – that is, between Lakeside Drive and the Lake surface – incorporates a footpath, playground, power boat club building, boat ramps, and informal car parks. All vegetation, including the trees supporting the proposed activity, are exotic.

[227] In the vicinity of the application site the bank edge is not immediately obvious as the shoreline gently slopes toward the lake surface. Consequently, the 'bank edge' is not clearly discernible. It is however possible to approximate the uppermost lake level more or less at the point where the shoreline shingle meets vegetation – this is apparent in the **Graphic Attachment Figure 1** aerial photograph. Otherwise, Genesis Energy⁴² who control lake levels, state that the absolute maximum level is 710.9masl. The minimum operating level is 701.8masl, where the overall operating range is close to 10 metres. It is evident from this that part of the proposed ropes course and a little over half the base station building will intrude the setback. Given this, the activity is therefore subject to matters of discretion (subject to NATC-S1 - Restricted Discretionary activity status). These I will now address, notwithstanding that I discussed earlier the natural character of the shoreline environment.

[228] *a. The extent to which the proposed activity will affect the natural character of the surface water body and its riparian margins.*

As described, all parts of the proposed activity lie outside the range of any apparent or obvious riparian processes arising from interaction between the lake surface and shore environment. And also as noted,

⁴¹ NZCPS Policy13 (2)(g)

⁴² See online: Genesis 'Tekapo Power Scheme flow and level data'.

apart from the generally natural landform of the OSZ environment, there is no evidence of natural riparian conditions, such as indigenous flora and fauna, within the envelope of the proposed activity. Consequently, it is concluded that there will be no effect on the natural character of the surface water body and its riparian margins.

- [229] *b. The effects of the proposed activity on any indigenous vegetation, habitat or ecosystem.*

As just mentioned, and to reiterate, there is no evident indigenous vegetation or ecosystem present within the area potentially affected by the proposed activity.

- [230] *c. Those matters in SASM-MD1 Activities in a SASM.*

I understand this concerns sites or areas of significance to Māori. Regarding this matter, Arowhenua and Aoraki Environmental Consultancy Limited (AECL) have given their written approval and as noted in the s42A report, these parties ‘...do not have any cultural concerns with the proposed commercial activity taking place....’ This is subject to confirmation by the applicant that the trees supporting the ropes course are safe and secure.

- [231] *d. The nature of any proposed mitigation measures that contribute to the preservation, maintenance or enhancement of the natural character values of the surface waterbody.*

No mitigation measures are proposed that would contribute to the above listed outcomes. This is because the proposal will have no effect on the surface waterbody in as much that it will not introduce structures into the lake.

- [232] *e. The extent to which any restoration or rehabilitation of the natural character of the area is proposed.*

As shown on the concept plan – see **Graphic Attachment Figure 11**, part of the area in the vicinity of the proposal will be landscaped using native vegetation. This vegetation will exclusively comprise native tussock species – *Festuca novae-zelandiae* (hard tussock). While not

extensive enough to be regarded restoration or rehabilitation, it will in effect re-introduce indigenous plant species on that part of the foreshore that are currently absent.

- [233] *f. The extent to which alternative practicable options have been considered and their feasibility, including the functional need and operational need for the activity to locate in a riparian margin.*

This matter has been addressed by the applicant where it is my understanding that the activity is reliant on sufficient stable trees of a size and distribution able to support its operation. I also understand that alternative sites have been considered and ruled out for the reasons given by the applicant.

- [234] *g. Whether the activity maintains and enhances public access along the surface waterbody.*

While it cannot be said that the proposed activity will enhance public access along the surface waterbody, it will certainly maintain it. I understand this matter will be discussed in more detail in the recreation evidence of Ms Samantha Strong.

- [235] *h. The type and extent of planting proposed and the impact of this on natural character values.*

See the foregoing discussion concerning landscaping.

- [236] *i. The effectiveness of any erosion and sediment control measures proposed.*

None are proposed as it is not expected that any such effect will arise from installation and operation of the proposed activity.

- [237] Overall, it is my opinion that consideration of the above assessment matters indicates that despite the setback intrusion, the proposal will have negligible effect on the surface water body and its riparian margin.

[238] Ms Faulkner also concludes⁴³ that the *'...scale of the proposed built elements in the existing trees is relatively small in the context of the lake and its margin and this modification would have an adverse Low-Moderate magnitude of effect on the natural character of the area. However, I do not consider that the establishing a commercial activity park is an appropriate use of the lake shore as a ropes course has no functional or operation need to be located so close to the lake.'*

[239] While I consider the matter of commercialisation to be a marginal consideration within the realm of landscape expertise, being perhaps a social science matter, it may nonetheless be a factor that informs landscape character and amenity. I understand that Ms Strong will consider this in more detail in her recreation evidence. Nonetheless, I do note that commercial recreation activity on public land is very common in New Zealand. For example, there are numerous commercial concessionaires operating in National Parks and reserves such as guiding, accommodation, food outlets, tours and ski fields. And along our shorelines there are many commercially based boating and water sports operations. So, such commercial activity is a relatively common feature within public land. This has some bearing on associative landscape effects, where the question is, to put it simply, - would such activity be contrary to peoples' expectations regarding the location of the proposal? In my opinion, it would not be, given that recreational activity is concentrated in the receiving environment and wider urban setting already and that the public would understand this to be a common feature of the Site and its surrounds.

Conclusion

[240] When considering effects of proposed activity on the landscape, context is key. Informing this is the existing environment comprising that which exists of the moment, consented but not yet implemented activity and what is permitted by the District Plan.

[241] For anyone visiting the site and its setting, it will be clear that the area is devoted to a wide range of recreational, tourist accommodation and

⁴³ S42A Landscape report paragraph 7

residential activity. In this regard the proposed activity is entirely congruous. It will also be clear that collectively all of this is located within a distinct enclave whose extent is determined by the lake, Mt John and SH8, but is nonetheless linked to the township of which it is part.

[242] It is also clear that most, but not all, of this activity is located west of Lakeside Drive. While physical activity in the form of permanent structures is comparatively scarce between Lakeside Drive and the lake shore, it is not entirely absent. This area also accommodates a reasonably wide range of ephemeral recreational activity. Some of this is very active such as power boating while others are quieter. In this context, the proposed activity would be in keeping with what people might expect in the area given that it is recognisably within an enclave of recreational and tourist oriented activity. So, in this regard, and based on first hand observation, it is my opinion that the proposed activity is appropriate to the setting and therefore any potential adverse associative effects are low and therefore less than minor.

[243] Nonetheless, the ropes course and base station building will result in adverse landscape and visual amenity effects. But as concluded, these will in my opinion range from minor to less than minor, largely predicated on the context and circumstances of the setting. As discussed however, the effects will vary throughout the site depending on whether it is absorbed among the trees or spans gaps between them.

[244] Measures taken to minimise adverse effects are essentially listed in the recommended conditions of consent. These in turn, along with the inherent nature of the proposal, will largely address the landscape relevant operative and proposed District Plan provisions. It is my opinion that the proposed is capable of achieving the landscape and amenity outcomes flagged in these provisions.

[245] Further in this regard, it is noted that the activity area is not subject to any particular overlays such as ONL and lakeside protection. I take it from that the site is not regarded as being located at the top end of the naturalness spectrum, and indeed reflects the reality of the existing environment.

- [246] A further contextual or circumstantial factor arises from the fact that the ropes course will have very little visual bulk. So, while visible from certain quarters, it will not appear visually dominant to the extent that it overwhelms appreciation of its landscape setting. Further in this regard, its presence will not preclude public access or enjoyment of the lake shore environment. As noted from first hand experience of an existing operating ropes course, activity within is evidently quite sedate apart from the occasional zip line use. The latter is essentially ephemeral where the effects will be transitory.
- [247] A further contextual consideration is how any weather and generally diurnal conditions affect appreciation of the ropes course. Being of very low visual bulk and natural in colour it is expected visibility of the course will vary considerably depending on these factors. In certain conditions the course will appear more visible compared to others, such as adverse weather, where it is expected the activity will be barely discernible.
- [248] As noted, the effects arising from the proposed activity will not be uniform over the course of time and depending on the localised site conditions.
- [249] Within the statutory context, the proposed activity will, in my opinion, align with the outcomes expected of the zone(s) in which it is located. Open space will remain dominant as will the maintenance of views, even though the latter will be affected to a minor or less than minor degree depending on the site's variable circumstances. In this regard however, a positive effect will emerge where views will in fact be opened up due to the limbing up of trees so as to accommodate the proposed activity.
- [250] Overall, I conclude that the proposal's potential landscape and visual amenity effects are acceptable given the context of the setting and what is statutorily expected of it.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Craig', is positioned above a horizontal line.

Andrew Craig *Landscape Architect*

13 August 2025

Appendix 1

The seven point effects table extracted from the Te Tangi a te Manu NZ Institute of Landscape Architects landscape assessment guidelines. The table indicates the correlation between the spectrum of effects – bottom line - and their degree in RMA terms – top two lines.

			SIGNIFICANT			
LESS THAN MINOR	MINOR		MORE THAN MINOR			
VERY LOW	LOW	LOW-MOD	MODERATE	MOD-HIGH	HIGH	VERY HIGH