

Memo



To:	Vicki Jones, Vision Planning
From:	Jeannie Galavazi (Senior Parks and Reserves Planner, QLDC)
Date:	Tuesday, 9 August 2016
Subject:	Plan Change 51, Peninsula Bay – Open Space Supplementary Report in response to the Requestor’s pre-lodged and hearing evidence

This memo is in response to the evidence pre-lodged by the Requestor and the evidence presented at the hearing, as it relates to recreation and open space values. It does not address ecological or landscape matters.

Qualifications

I hold a Bachelor of Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management from Lincoln University (1999). I am a member of the New Zealand Recreation Association and an associate member of the New Zealand Planning Institute. I have worked in the field of parks and planning for 15 years.

I have held the position of Senior Parks and Reserves Planner at Queenstown Lakes District Council since August 2015. Prior to this I was a Parks and Open Space Specialist at Auckland Council (Auckland Regional Council prior to amalgamation) for five years, where I specialised in Regional Parks - a network of large parks with high informal recreation and conservation values. During this time I have prepared Reserve Management, Concept and Development Plans for a wide range of reserve types. I have attended RMA and HASHA hearings and have prepared and reviewed resource consent applications for activities on or affecting reserves. I am currently leading the review of the QLDC Parks Strategy.

Before this I worked for Tonkin and Taylor Ltd and Greater Wellington Regional Council as an Environmental Planner.

I have undertaken three site visits, one of these with Ms Taylor of Mitchell Partnerships and Mr Botting of Paterson Pitts.

Summary

I have reviewed the pre-lodged evidence and updated structure plan and would like to acknowledge the positive changes the applicant has made.

Our department view remains that the full 13.8ha should be retained as Open Space for the following reasons:

- Forecast population growth in Wanaka creating a need to expand and supplement existing open space and recreation opportunities
- The character of the land offers informal recreation opportunities that are not available elsewhere in such close proximity to Wanaka Township/the urban area and where public access is protected
- The inclusion of residential lots within the open space zone will detract from future recreational experiences

Parks Strategy

The existing Parks Strategy 2002 was written as a 10 year strategy. In light of this and the population growth the district is experiencing, a review of this Strategy was commenced late 2015. A draft framework has been prepared and workshops have been held with councillors and key stakeholders. It is intended that the draft will be notified and adopted later this year. The Parks Strategy 2016 is therefore not yet available to the public.

Contrary to Ms Taylor's evidence it was not my intention to suggest that PC51 be placed on hold until the Parks Strategy 2016 is adopted. Our preference is to not consider the area in isolation, but assess the future development of the Open Space Zone in context of the wider network and the needs of the community.

Likewise my earlier comments were not intended to suggest a development proposal for the area known as Sticky Forest or rezoning of this land. Reference was made to Sticky Forest to highlight the popularity of mountain biking, running, and walking in the immediate area and to demonstrate that the Open Space Zone naturally forms an extension to this, and has the potential to enhance the trail network/ entry area. I also wished to draw attention to the fact public access is currently not protected to Sticky Forest and that the future of this is uncertain. I agree with Mr Greenaway's evidence in that the Open Space Zone cannot replicate or replace Sticky Forest as it is too small.

The Open Space Zone is a large informal area with high recreation values in close proximity to the Wanaka Township. Deans Bank (Department of Conservation Reserve) is the only other large reserve in the area that offers similar recreation opportunities – while close to Albertown it is not within easy walking or cycling distance from most of the residential areas. Ms Taylor states in her evidence that there are several areas in the district where mountain biking and walking are incurring informally on private land but that this is unlikely to continue in perpetuity as landowners may discontinue public access. This highlights the need to protect public access to this type of open space rather than reduce it.

Maintenance

Mr Botting and Mr Croft both claim that there will be estimated maintenance cost savings of \$7,500 per year. This amount is unsubstantiated - our estimates of required maintenance when compared with similar Open Space types would not exceed \$1,500 per year. The area would be likely classified under QLDC's Levels of Service programme as M6 – which is weed and fire suppression with no or minimal mowing requirements. Any mowing would be for fire suppression only (once per year) although this method may not be compatible with protection of ecological values.

Weed clearance on reserves is typically undertaken periodically - there is a strategic work programme that gets revisited every three to four years. This identifies the worst affected or priority areas for that period. QLDC would require noxious weeds to be cleared from the land prior to vesting so it's foreseeable that there would be no budget required for weed clearance for the five to seven years from vesting.

Future budget provision could be made for rabbit control (fencing of specific areas to protect vegetation), ecological enhancement, and trail maintenance. This would be achieved via submissions to the annual plan.

The draft Parks Strategy 2016 seeks to provide clearer direction for QLDC to work with community groups to allow for stronger stewardship of reserve land, particularly for ecological areas. Currently a number of community groups and Trusts undertake ecological

enhancement programmes on Whitechapel Reserve (Arrowtown), Earnslaw Slipway (Kelvin Heights), Albertown lagoon and along Lake Wanaka Foreshore.

Memorial Seat

While it was suggested that Lots 4-6 would be a more appropriate site for a seat or a memorial, and it is seen as a positive change that these lots have been deleted from the plan change, the location of this would need to be decided by the relevant Council Committee. An application would be required in accordance with the QLDC Plaques, Memorials and Monuments Policy (included with my original memo).

Tracks

The revised Structure Plan as provided by the applicant more accurately depicts existing trails and the revised proposal will result in less switchbacks. The removal of the intersection between the walking track and mountain biking track is also a good improvement. I concur with the track construction cost estimates provided by Mr Greenaway.

As stated by Mr Greenaway the new walking trails as proposed by the applicant will draw walkers away from bike trails but will also attract buggies, small children on bikes, and novice riders and should therefore cater for this shared use. It is not realistic to assume these types of bikers won't use the walking trails. The existing bike trails are one way single track mountain bike trails which require a degree of technical skill.

In order to provide the greatest accessibility to any new trails the Standards seek that all new trails be designed to a minimum of Grade 1 or 2. This also minimises conflict between walkers and cyclists. However it is recognised that due to topography constraints, vegetation clearance required, and that the trails do not form part of a commuter route, Grade 3 (QLDC design standards and specifications) would be acceptable. Grade 3 requires 1.5m wide trails (with a reduction to 1.2m in short sections to protect environmental or visual amenity) but is still fit for purpose for cyclists and walking – with sufficient room to pass if required. This would also be consistent with recently constructed trails to the east.

Mr Greenaway's evidence recommends walking trails to a width of 1.5m, referencing the NZ walking standards adopted by DoC.

Mr Greenaway's evidence focuses on the location and construction of tracks. While I agree that there may not be much more scope for the creation of additional tracks, the reduced Open Space Zone limits the potential for alternative alignments and does not consider other informal use of the area such as wandering and appreciation of nature.

QLDC has not sought to restrict construction of informal tracks that have appeared over the years, or undertake maintenance on these as the land has remained in private ownership. Assuming the land is eventually vested in QLDC, agreements similar to those held with the Queenstown Mountain Biking Club can be put in place with Bike Wanaka and/ or the Aspiring Tracks Network.

Vesting of land

I understand that whether or not land will be vested as reserve as per condition 11 of RM060929 is not the subject of this hearing. QLDC has naturally assumed that this would be vested, however as the land has remained in private ownership to date there have been no recreation plans prepared, track maintenance or pest control done nor have agreements with trail builders been implemented.

