



**MOUNT CARDRONA STATION PROPOSED PLAN CHANGE**  
LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS ASSESSMENT REPORT  
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## INTRODUCTION

1. A Private Plan Change is proposed in relation to the Mount Cardrona Station Special Zone (MCSSZ) within the Queenstown Lakes Operative District Plan (the ODP). Section 12.21 and 12.22 of the ODP set out the provisions for the MCSSZ. These provisions include a structure plan (the existing structure plan). The existing structure plan is attached to this report as Appendix 1.
2. The Private Plan Change (PPC) essentially seeks to reconfigure the existing structure plan in order to incorporate a 12 hole golf course into the lower part of the zone, to replace the Village Centre Activity Areas with smaller scale visitor accommodation and retail activities, and to rearrange residential activities such that they extend up to 80 metres further west than the existing structure plan provides for. In essence, the PPC will replace the existing structure plan with the proposed structure plan (which is attached to this report as Appendix 2) and amend some of the provisions of the MCSSZ in order to provide for the amended development configuration.
3. This report describes and quantifies the landscape character and visual amenity related effects that will result from the PPC and focusses on effects as experienced from outside the site. This report does not discuss matters that relate to internal urban design, internal amenity and internal functionality. I have been informed that an urban design assessment report will also form part of the application.
4. The methodology for this assessment has been guided by the Resource Management Act (the Act), the relevant landscape related Objectives and Policies of the ODP, the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment produced by the UK's Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment<sup>1</sup>, and the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects "Landscape Assessment and Sustainable Management" Practice Note<sup>2</sup>.
5. This report is set out under the following headings:

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<sup>1</sup> Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment; 2013; 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition'; Routledge, Oxford.

<sup>2</sup> New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects Education Foundation; 2010; Best Practice Note 10.1 'Landscape Assessment and Sustainable Management'.

- Introduction
- The existing Mount Cardrona Station Special Zone
- The private plan change
- The relevant statutory documents
- The site and its landscape context
- The effects of the private plan change on landscape character
- The effects of the private plan change on visual amenity and views
- Conclusions
- Appendices

## THE EXISTING MOUNT CARDRONA STATION SPECIAL ZONE

6. The MCSSZ provides for an integrated community within a village environment that provides for a range of activities including visitor accommodation, commercial and residential, educational and community activities<sup>3</sup>. While providing for a village, the MCSSZ provisions place emphasis on providing for a sustainable community and recognising and responding to the landscape values and character of the site and its surrounds<sup>4</sup>. Other provisions ensure a high degree of internal amenity within the zone itself.
7. As can be seen on Appendix 1, the existing structure plan for the MCSSZ breaks the zone into a number of Activity Areas (AAs). Much of the area of the zone is dedicated to open space. The Village Centre, Living Areas A-E and the Woolshed and Homestead Sites (AAs 1 to 5) provide for residential and village activities generally confined to the flatter terrace landform, above the escarpment face adjacent to Cardrona Valley Road (AA 7a – Eastern Escarpment). The higher parts of the zone and the Homestead Gully remain as open space (AA7 – Heritage Area).
8. The existing AAs that allow for built development and subdivision (AAs 1 to 5) take the form of three pods or fingers that run in a roughly east-west direction (as can be seen on Appendix 1). These fingers extend downslope to the lip of the Eastern Escarpment (AA7a). The existing MCSSZ directs that AA7a is to be treated in a specific way that involves native revegetation and some earth mounding. This revegetation is shown as part of the

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<sup>3</sup> Queenstown Lakes District Plan (Operative), Section 12.22.1.

<sup>4</sup> Queenstown Lakes District Plan, Section 12.21.1, Objective 1, Policies 1.1 – 1.7 and Objective 2, Policies 2.1 – 2.6.

Mitigation Planting areas on Existing Structure Plan D (attached to this evidence as Appendix 3).

## DESCRIPTION OF THE PRIVATE PLAN CHANGE

9. Full details of the PPC are given in the plan change request. I will not describe the PPC in detail in this report. However, I set out the following summary points that are of particular relevance to the assessment of landscape and visual amenity issues:

- It is proposed to reconfigure the consented structure plan of the MCSSZ. The proposed changes include the following:
  - The AAs that provide for built development will extend further northwest by up to 80 metres. The northwestern edge of residential sections will roughly coincide with the lower of the two water races that run north-south across the zone (these can be seen on Appendices 1 and 2). No residential sections will extend upslope of this water race.
  - AAs 1a – 5b and 6a of the existing MCSSZ will be entirely reconfigured, however the AAs that provide for built development and subdivision will generally remain in three fingers or pods.
  - The bulk of built development and subdivision activity will be confined to an area that takes up the western two thirds of the existing AAs that provide for built development and subdivision.
  - A 12 hole golf course will occupy the lowest part of the terrace landform adjacent to the Eastern Escarpment. This is where the existing structure plan locates the densest built development.
  - The native revegetation of the Eastern Escarpment will be reduced in area slightly in order to accommodate the golf course and since no built development will now be provided for close to the lip of the Eastern Escarpment.

10. In short, if we compare the proposed situation to the existing situation, the proposed situation will condense built development and residential sections into the western part of the terrace landform (although it will extend up to 80 metres further to the west), and will remove built development from the lower part of the terrace landform, replacing it with a golf course.

## THE RELEVANT STATUTORY DOCUMENTS

11. The MCSSZ will continue to sit in the ODP in the Special Zones Section (Section 12). Any area of zoning should be consistent with the District Wide provisions of the ODP and with the relevant parts of the Resource Management Act 1991 (the Act).
12. The ODP is currently subject to review. A Proposed District Plan has been notified and hearings are ongoing. While there is no certainty regarding the final form that the PDP will take once it becomes operative, I understand that some consideration should be given to the relevant District Wide provisions of the PDP.
13. The parts of the Act that are relevant to the consideration of the landscape and amenity related effects of the PPC are primarily Section 6(b) and 7(c):

**6 Matters of national importance**

*In achieving the purpose of this Act, all persons exercising functions and powers under it, in relation to managing the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources, shall recognise and provide for the following matters of national importance:*

- (b) *The protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes from inappropriate subdivision, use, and development:*

**7 Other Matters**

*In achieving the purpose of this Act, all persons exercising functions and powers under it, in relation to managing the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources, shall have particular regard to—*

- (c) *The maintenance and enhancement of amenity values:*

14. The ODP and the PDP identify the Cardrona Valley as an outstanding natural landscape (ONL). The existing MCSSZ (as well as the Cardrona Rural Visitor Zone (RVZ)) sit as instances of built development within this ONL. The Cardrona Valley also provides considerable amenity to occupants and travellers within it. This report will examine the effects of the PPC in relation to landscape character and visual amenity and will draw conclusions regarding the degree of effects and overall appropriateness from a landscape planning perspective.

15. Section 4 of the ODP deals with matters that are relevant to the district as a whole. Section 4.2 of the Plan provides district wide guidance regarding landscape and amenity issues. The most relevant provisions in relation to the assessment of the potential landscape and amenity effects of the PPC are:

**Objective:**

*Subdivision, use and development being undertaken in the District in a manner which avoids, remedies or mitigates adverse effects on landscape and visual amenity values.*

**Policies:**

**1 Future Development**

- (a) *To avoid, remedy or mitigate the adverse effects of development and/or subdivision in those areas of the District where the landscape and visual amenity values are vulnerable to degradation.*
- (b) *To encourage development and/or subdivision to occur in those areas of the District with greater potential to absorb change without detracting from landscape and visual amenity values.*
- (c) *To ensure subdivision and/or development harmonises with local topography and ecological systems and other nature conservation values as far as possible.*

**2 Outstanding Natural Landscapes (District-Wide/Greater Wakatipu)**

- (a) *To maintain the openness of those outstanding natural landscapes and features which have an open character at present.*
- (b) *To avoid subdivision and development in those parts of the outstanding natural landscapes with little or no capacity to absorb change.*
- (c) *To allow limited subdivision and development in those areas with higher potential to absorb change.*
- (d) *To recognise and provide for the importance of protecting the naturalness and enhancing amenity values of views from public roads.*

**6. Urban Development**

- (a) *To avoid new urban development in the outstanding natural landscapes of Wakatipu basin.*
- (b) *To discourage urban subdivision and development in the other outstanding natural landscapes (and features) and in the visual amenity landscapes of the district.*
- (c) *To avoid remedy and mitigate the adverse effects of urban subdivision and development where it does occur in the other outstanding natural landscapes of the district by:*
  - *maintaining the open character of those outstanding natural landscapes which are open at the date this plan becomes operative;*
  - *ensuring that the subdivision and development does not sprawl along roads.*
- (d) *To avoid remedy and mitigate the adverse effects of urban subdivision and development in visual amenity landscapes by avoiding sprawling subdivision and development along roads.*

**7. Urban Edges**

*To identify clearly the edges of:*

- (a) *Existing urban areas;*
- (b) *Any extensions to them; and*
- (c) *Any new urban areas*

- *by design solutions and to avoid sprawling development along the roads of the district.*

#### **8. Avoiding Cumulative Degradation**

*In applying the policies above the Council's policy is:*

- (a) *to ensure that the density of subdivision and development does not increase to a point where the benefits of further planting and building are outweighed by the adverse effect on landscape values of over domestication of the landscape.*
- (b) *to encourage comprehensive and sympathetic development of rural areas.*

#### **9. Structures**

*To preserve the visual coherence of:*

- (a) *outstanding natural landscapes and features and visual amenity landscapes by:*
  - *encouraging structures which are in harmony with the line and form of the landscape;*
  - *avoiding, remedying or mitigating any adverse effects of structures on the skyline, ridges and prominent slopes and hilltops;*
  - *encouraging the colour of buildings and structures to complement the dominant colours in the landscape;*
  - *encouraging placement of structures in locations where they are in harmony with the landscape;*
  - *promoting the use of local, natural materials in construction.*
- (c) *All rural landscapes by*
  - *limiting the size of signs, corporate images and logos*
  - *providing for greater development setbacks from public roads to maintain and enhance amenity values associated with the views from public roads.*

#### **17. Land Use**

*To encourage land use in a manner which minimises adverse effects on the open character and visual coherence of the landscape.*

16. As discussed, the PDP is at the stage of going through Council hearings. The PDP reconfigures and simplifies the district wide provisions set out above but does not significantly alter their intent as they apply to ONLs. As mentioned, certainty cannot be placed on the current form of the PDP provisions. This report will not specifically relate the effects of the PPC to each of the provisions listed above. (I understand that the planning assessment that accompanies the PPC application will do that). However, the provisions above have been borne in mind while assessing the effects of the PPC and the commentary in this report will refer to these provisions where appropriate.

## THE SITE AND ITS LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

17. The Cardrona Valley is a well-defined valley that follows the Cardrona River from the saddle between Mount Scott and Mount Hocken down to the open, relatively flat landscape that surrounds Wanaka (the floor of the Wanaka/upper Clutha basin). The valley is also followed by the Crown Range Road that runs from the Wanaka area up the valley and over the Crown Range to meet the Crown Terrace and the Wakatipu Basin.
18. The valley is deep-cut and has a flat floor associated with the path of the Cardrona River and its flood plain. This flat floor is up to 700 metres in width in the northern half of the valley but narrows to have no discernible floor in the southern half (approximately south of Cardrona township). The eastern side of the valley is defined by the Criffel/Pisa Ranges that have a large undulating plateau at their top. The western side of the Cardrona Valley is defined by the eastern extreme of the Harris Mountains, being the Crown/Cardrona range of mountains. The peaks of these mountains have a more jagged form. These mountain slopes descend towards the Cardrona Valley in a more variable way than those to the east, and are made up of many interlocking catchments.
19. In terms of ecology; the flat floor of the Cardrona Valley as far south as approximately Cardrona township is dominated by exotic species associated with a farming land use, being mainly pasture grasses and willows. Pasture grasses continue up the walls of the valley to a significant altitude (very approximately 600masl). From here upwards the exotic grasses increasingly give way to native alpine grasses and intermittent grey shrub species. The upper walls of the valley are dominated by these native species. To the south of Cardrona township the valley is increasingly (as one moves south) dominated by the native species mentioned above.
20. To an observer travelling up the Cardrona Valley from the north, the aesthetic pattern on the floor of the valley is similar to that of the farming landscape of the Wanaka/upper Clutha basin floor, although it also features the obvious willow-lined watercourse of the Clutha River. To the south of Cardrona township the floor of the valley disappears. An observer in this higher part of the valley landscape feels they are in a more remote and more natural part of the valley.

21. The Cardrona Valley has historically been a route between the Wanaka/upper Clutha basin and the Wakatipu basin. It was the first route by which sheep were driven into the Wakatipu by A. H. Duncan in 1860<sup>5</sup>. The journey has historically been an arduous one, hampered by adverse road and weather conditions. The Cardrona Valley Road remains winding, weather-affected and often steep but it is now a well-formed sealed road.
22. Settled colonial population coincided with gold mining and a Cardrona community thrived between approximately 1867 and 1876<sup>6</sup>. Today many archaeological sites reflect the gold rush era. The results of large-scale sluicing of the sandstone-rich gravels of the terraces of the Cardrona Valley as well as areas of colonial tree planting are visible in the landscape today. Following the gold mining years, pastoral farming significantly altered the vegetation of the valley, particularly its northern half, through seasonal burning and other agricultural practices.
23. The MCSSZ lies approximately 1 kilometre north of Cardrona township. The landscape character of the immediate context of the MCSSZ was analysed and described in detail at the time the MCSSZ was created, particularly in a report by Kidson Landscape Consulting (the Kidson report)<sup>7</sup>. When the Kidson report was prepared, the MCSSZ was not part of the receiving environment. However, a zone that has now been deleted (an area of RVZ surrounding the base of the Cardrona Alpine Resort access road) was part of the receiving environment and provided for a dense node of development.
24. The Kidson Report was essentially investigating the potential to replace the then-existing area of RVZ with the then-proposed MCSSZ. The Kidson report found that the area that has the most capacity to absorb development is the lower terrace area<sup>8</sup>. This is the area on which the MCSSZ now exists. More specifically, the Kidson report suggested:

*"I suggest the zone established by the Plan Change be located within the lower and mid terrace areas of the Mount Cardrona Station Village Terrace (the MCS Village Terrace), with the development boundary set back from the terrace edge in areas that were proven to have low absorption capacity. The majority of built development should be located between 556masl and 580masl, with a diminished absorption capacity between 580 and 605 masl. I consider that the Zone should sit largely at the bottom of the fan with the front of the terrace kept development free to ensure there are no skyline issues when viewed from the Cardrona Valley Road, and to reduce the visual*

<sup>5</sup> J. H. Angus, Aspiring Settlers, John McIndoe, Dunedin, 1981.

<sup>6</sup> I. Roxburgh, Wanaka Story, Otago Centennial Historical Publications, Dunedin. 1957, Chapter 8.

<sup>7</sup> Kidson Landscape Consulting, Mount Cardrona Station Landscape Report, 25 June 2007.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, page 33.

*effect from the paper road that runs to the east of Cardrona Valley Road. A significant buffer of 100 metres should be enforced along the North West boundary with Pringles Creek. This land area can be utilised for open space and planting that will provide wind protection from the southerlies. Such planting would also mitigate views gained from the Cardrona Valley floor to the south (including views from the existing Village)<sup>9</sup>.*

25. Ultimately, the MCSSZ was approved in the form described above and shown on Appendix 1 and this zone forms part of the receiving environment. Development is configured in the three east-west running fingers that run between 553masl and 607masl. The development provided for by this zone is discussed above. In short, the existing MCSSZ provides for a relatively dense village-like settlement consisting of residential, commercial and visitor accommodation activities, situated on the terrace landform above Cardrona Valley Road and adjacent to the access road to Cardrona Alpine Resort.

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

26. Landscape character effects are the effects that an activity may have on the landscape as a resource in its own right; on the characteristics and qualities that make up the landscape rather than on views or visual amenity.
27. When describing effects, I will use the following hierarchy of adjectives:
- Nil or negligible;
  - Slight;
  - Moderate;
  - Substantial;
  - Severe.

### Existing landscape character

28. The site and its context are discussed above. In terms of landscape character, natural patterns and processes are prominent within the Cardrona Valley, particularly its southern half. Rugged, ice-weathered slopes and ridgelines dominate the landform and a tawny grass vegetation cover, which includes relatively intact tussock ecosystems at higher altitudes, dominate the ecology. Cultural patterns are subservient in the upper valley, with scattered fence lines, gates and tracks meaning that a farming use of the land has

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid, page 41.

modified it only slightly. In the lower valley, approximately north of Cardrona township, farming has modified the valley floor more heavily and here cultural patterns in the form of improved pasture and considerably more exotic trees compete with nature, with the result that landscape character is less wild and remote. The landform of the valley is easily legible, being relatively straight with long views up and down it, and close, steep walls. This brings a sense of enclosure to all parts of the valley. The upper valley in particular is very representative of the wild, relatively remote, high-country landscape character for which the district is renowned.

29. The MCSSZ, the existing Cardrona Township (and its RVZ), The Cardrona Alpine Resort Ski Area Sub Zone and the Snowfarm Ski Area Sub Zone sit as individual instances of development within the Cardrona Valley. These affect landscape character in that they read as nodes of human influence and occupation within a landscape dominated by natural patterns and farming land use. As set out previously, the MCSSZ provides for a dense village of residential, commercial and visitor accommodation activities. The ODP provisions relating to the MCSSZ are such that the nature of development that eventuates within the zone will be in accordance with the Mount Cardrona Station Design Guidelines document. This guidelines document sets out a particular building and development style for the zone that could perhaps be termed an alpine village style. Consequently, in terms of landscape character, I consider that the existing MCSSZ provisions would bring about a situation where a relatively dense, spatially confined, busy, rustic alpine village would appear on the lower terrace area that serves residential, tourism, commercial and holiday functions. The village would be broken by fingers of greenspace and would be surrounded by a relatively unmodified alpine landscape setting, albeit that it is adjacent to Cardrona Valley road and the Cardrona Alpine Resort access road.

### Effects on Landscape Character

30. The proposed Structure Plan is attached to this report as Appendix 2. The proposed zone provisions are set out and discussed in the PPC documents. Appendix 4 is a plan that shows a realistic development concept that would be provided for by the amended zone. Appendices 5 and 6 are overlay plans that show the development concept in relation to the existing MCSSZ Structure Plan to allow comparison.

31. In relation to the consideration of landscape character, I consider that the principal differences between the existing situation and the proposed situation are that the proposed situation:
- Will very largely remove built development from the lowest part of the terrace and use this area as open space in the form of a golf course.
  - Will relocate the dense Village Precinct by moving it to the west. It is envisaged that this precinct will develop in the form of a hotel, visitor accommodation villas, and small-scale commercial activity.
  - Will extend low density residential sections (750m<sup>2</sup> and more) to the west of the existing development Activity Areas by approximately 80 metres.
  - Will reconfigure the density of allowable residential lots such that the centre of density moves to the west.
  - Will provide for the formalisation of a car-park area on the Cardrona Alpine Resort access road, including the erection of up to 400m<sup>2</sup> of built form for shuttle/bus/ticketing/ablution. Naturalistic screening (mounding and vegetation) will mean that these activities cannot be seen from the south.
  - Overall will increase the density (i.e. decrease lot sizes) of residential activity within the western two-thirds of the existing MCSSZ footprint since the eastern third will become open space (golf course). The overall number of lots provided for will not increase.
32. In fundamental terms, the PPC will not change the environment in terms of landscape character. In both the existing and proposed situations, a compact, relatively dense, alpine village will be provided for in the same location within the Cardrona Valley landscape. At a finer scale, the exact nature of the village will be slightly different if the PPC proceeds. The village will incorporate a golf course, will not have such a dense commercial core and its centre of density will move slightly to the west.
33. Golf courses typically present a particularly stylised version of a countryside landscape, featuring manicured, irrigated grass swards (fairways) surrounded by rougher, less

maintained ground (rough). The rough generally includes sweeps of shrub vegetation and stands of trees. The provisions proposed by the PPC require a specific vegetative treatment of the golf course and the other parts of the zone in accordance with the Mount Cardrona Station Design Guidelines. Notwithstanding this, the green manicured fairways will be the spatially dominant elements within the golf course AA. The presence of the golf course will give a more strongly recreational aspect to the character of the village.

34. The car-parking activities that will be provided for on the Cardrona Alpine Resort access road are in a location that is already used for car-parking but is only roughly formed. The PPC will intensify and extend car-parking in this area but this will not amount to a fundamental change in character.
35. The relocation of the Village Centre AAs (AAs 1a and 1b) that the PPC proposes will mean that the dense, busy, commercial-dominated aspect of the village will be more centrally located within the zone, rather than at its eastern edge. While these AAs provide for hospitality and commercial activities, the zone will be dominated by recreational and residential (or at least holiday-home-dominated) character.
36. Overall, I consider that the effects of the PPC in relation to landscape character will be of a slight degree at most. In both the proposed and existing situations a compact alpine village development will sit within the ONL of the Cardrona Valley. At a fine scale, the character of the village that develops under the proposed situation will be slightly different to that of the existing situation, the village being more characterised by recreation and residential (or holiday home) activity.

## **VIEWS AND VISUAL AMENITY**

37. Visual effects are the effects that an activity may have on specific views and on the general visual amenity experienced by people.
38. Essentially, an assessment of the visual effects of the PPC involves a comparison of the proposed situation and the existing situation.

### **Existing views and visual amenity**

39. In broad terms, an observer within the Cardrona Valley experiences views and visual amenity of a high quality. The upper valley features tawney coloured, tussock covered valley walls reaching up to rocky outcrops and jagged mountain ridges, with the Cardrona River taking the form of a rugged mountain burn. Snow cover and often clear, piecing blue skies also contribute to spectacular views, dominated by dramatic natural elements. The lower valley features a verdant, farmed valley floor that contrasts with steep, unkempt mountainous valley walls. Here the Cardrona River takes the form of a meandering, willow-lined, more substantial river. Again views are often majestic and remarkable. Within this broad visual setting, the existing MCSSZ and the Cardrona township (and its RVZ) sit.
40. The existing MCSSZ was created by Plan Change 18, which was ultimately confirmed by the Environment Court. At the time of the Plan Change 18 process, the degree to which development enabled by the MCSSZ would be visible was analysed in detail. The MCSSZ is now part of the existing environment. In summary, development enabled by the existing MCSSZ would be visible as follows (reference to Appendix 7 will assist):
- A relatively low degree of visibility would be available from Cardrona Valley Road. The Eastern Escarpment and the native revegetation areas on this escarpment would be displayed to the road but built form would only be visible in more distant views; from the Boundary Creek area to the north and from the southern part of Cardrona Township to the south (including parts of Soho Street and Rivergold Way).
  - Easy and plain visibility would be available from the numerous parts of the lower half of the Cardrona Alpine Resort access road. These views sometimes look horizontally at the development enabled by the MCSSZ and sometimes look down on it. From the higher viewpoints the entire village development would be seen in its context. This road is a private road but is used by many paying customers of the resort.
  - Easy visibility would be available from the upper three quarters of the Snowfarm access road. These views look across the valley and down on the MCSSZ at distances of between 1 and 5 kilometres. Again, from higher viewpoints the entire village development would be seen. These views also take in Cardrona township. This access road is open to the public.

- A low degree of visibility would be available from a stretch of public road that runs south from the Snowfarm Access Road for approximately 600 metres. This stretch of road is opposite and parallel to the Eastern Escarpment. Three private residences use this road for access. While the Eastern Escarpment and its associated vegetation would be visible from this area, built form would be practically entirely screened. The same can be said for the adjacent stretch of the Cardrona River marginal strip.
  - Relatively easy visibility would be available from the upper rural living properties that gain access from Pringles Creek Road. These properties will look horizontally at development enabled by the MCSSZ from the south and hence generally see the southern edge of the zone. The mitigation vegetation shown on Structure Plan D of the MCSSZ Structure Plan will mitigate adverse effects on these views.
  - Relatively easy visibility would be available from the western 4.5 kilometres of the Roaring Meg Pack Track at distances between 500 metres and 5 kilometres. These views generally look down on the MCSSZ and the entire village development could be seen on the terrace landform.
41. The reconfigured version of the zone that is proposed by way of the PPC would be visible from the same places as the existing MCSSZ (i.e. the places listed above). Broadly speaking, the footprint of the zone would change in a relatively minor way (as can be seen on Appendices 5 and 6). Therefore the development enabled by the PPC would not be visible from any viewpoints from which the existing zone is not visible. Notwithstanding this, the exact form of development that is visible from each of the relevant viewpoints will change if the PPC proceeds. I will discuss this below in relation to each of the relevant viewing areas.

## Effects on views and visual amenity

### Cardrona Valley Road

42. As mentioned, a traveller on Cardona Valley Road experiences a high degree of visual amenity and scenic beauty as they travel up or down the valley. The aesthetics are rugged, wild dramatic and rural. On the journey through the valley, the stretch of road between the

stables at the southern end of Cardrona township<sup>10</sup> and approximately Boundary Creek is the stretch from which most human occupation can be seen (refer to Appendix 7). This stretch of Cardrona Valley Road is approximately 4.9 kilometres long. Travelling south, at approximately Boundary Creek a viewer gains views to the buildings and activity of the “Experience the Cardrona” horse trekking and quad-bike operation. As a traveller continues south towards the entrance to the Cardrona Alpine Resort access road, the signage and car-parking at the base of that access road are seen, as are the Cardrona Distillery buildings and activity. Slightly further south the Snowfarm signage is apparent, and shortly after, the Gallows Stay Lodge, Pringle Creek Road and Cardrona township are seen at close quarters. Once a traveller leaves Cardrona township at its southern end (the Backcountry Saddles Stables), a more wild and remote visual experience begins.

43. Visibility to the PPC area itself is available intermittently from the northern and southern parts of the stretch of road described above; i.e. from the stretch of road near Boundary Creek and the Experience the Cardrona operation, and from the stretch of road that runs through Cardrona township itself. The images in Appendix 8 from Viewpoints 1 and 2 show this graphically. These images include photographs from the relevant viewpoints and also include rough digital model images from the same viewpoints. In the digital model images the existing development AAs of the MCSSZ are shown, as are new areas of development outside of these existing AAs that the PPC will enable.
44. From the relevant northern stretch of Cardrona Valley Road (i.e. in the vicinity of Viewpoint 1), the existing development AAs can be seen at a distance of 2 kilometres and in a relatively horizontal way. The lower part of the existing AAs provide for the village centre that would be particularly dense. The Viewpoint 1 images show that the new additional areas of development that would be provided for by the PC (i.e. the upper areas) will be very minimally visible. Built development in the lower development AAs (that is enabled by the existing MCSSZ) would entirely screen any potentially visible built development in the proposed new development areas. In the lower parts of the zone, some areas of built development will be replaced by open space in the form of golf fairways. From the stretch of Cardrona Valley Road in the vicinity of Viewpoint 1 I consider that the difference between the proposed situation and the existing situation will be difficult to discern. When it

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<sup>10</sup> Backcountry Saddles Expeditions, 2416 Cardrona Valley Road.

is detectable, it will have a slightly positive effect in that more open space will be visually evident.

45. From the relevant southern stretch of Cardrona Valley Road (i.e. in the vicinity of Viewpoint 2), the existing development AAs can be seen at a distance of 1.3 kilometres and again, in a relatively horizontal way. The lower parts of the existing AAs in this view (i.e. the parts to the right) take the form of AAs 2b, 3 and 3a, which provide for relatively dense built form. The Viewpoint 2 images show that these lower parts of the existing AAs will be replaced (if the PPC proceeds) with open space in the form of golf fairways. In views such as those represented by Viewpoint 2 (and similar views from parts of Rivergold Way and Soho Street) I consider that this will amount to a positive visual effect of the PPC; the MCSSZ will appear greener and softer than under the existing situation, and therefore more in keeping with its setting. In these views the new areas of development enabled by the PPC will be either entirely hidden or very difficult to discern. Overall in relation to these views I consider that the PPC will have a slight to moderate positive effect. The node of built development that the zoning produces will be less visually prominent than the existing situation and therefore the overall perceived naturalness of the vicinity will remain more intact.
46. From this relevant southern stretch of Cardrona Valley Road, there is some potential visibility to the proposed AA8c car-parking area, however, the proposed provisions seek that car-parking and associated activity is visually screened from the south including from Cardrona Valley Road specifically.

*Cardrona Alpine Resort access road*

47. From the lower half of this private road the development AAs of the existing MCSSZ can be seen as is depicted on the Appendix 8 images from Viewpoints 3 and 4. For road users that are between these two viewpoints, visibility is intermittent due to the winding nature of the road.
48. From the lower viewpoints (such as Viewpoint 3), views are across the zone in a relatively horizontal way. The northern area of the zone, in which the PPC will replace built form with open space is seen in the left foreground. The areas of new built development that the PPC will enable (shown in red on the images of Appendices 7 and 8) will be plainly visible at distances of 260 metres and more. Compared to the existing situation, the development

pattern enabled by the PPC will spread further upslope. The new upslope area will take the form of residential development; individual dwellings on sections of around 800m<sup>2</sup>, each subject to the relevant design guidelines. The density of development within the zone will visually decrease as it moves upslope. This will appear as a logical feathering, with the highest lots being large sections with detached dwellings. The relevant design guidelines dictate that vegetation in this upper area will be of native species only.

49. If the PPC proceeds, I consider that the development area that is visible from these lower viewpoints will appear slightly larger than under the existing situation. Development will spread slightly further uphill but will not move onto any new landform or geomorphology; it will remain downslope of the nearby water race and will continue to be confined to the even graded terrace slope. I consider that the composition of views will not fundamentally change; a village-like development will appear in an open mountain setting. I consider that the change that the PPC will bring to these views can be considered to be adverse in that a bigger development area in these views will reduce the overall apparent naturalness. However, given the scale of the increase in relation to the scale of the landscape I consider that the degree of this effect will not be more than slight.
50. Additionally, users of the lower part of the Cardrona Alpine Resort access road will pass the car-parking activities enabled by proposed AA8c. This area is currently used for car-parking in an informal way. As mentioned, this is a private road used by paying customers of the ski area. Given the nature of this road and its users and given the existing carpark activity, I do not consider that the extension/intensification of car-parking that the PPC will bring will result in any reduction in the visual amenity of road users.
51. From higher parts of the Cardrona Alpine Resort access road (such as Viewpoint 4), the entire zone can be looked down on in an oblique way. In relation to the PPC, both the increase in open space at the lower end of the zone and the additional development at the upper end of the zone are visually evident. Views are reasonably distant and the MCSSZ development will sit on the terrace landform with broad and long views of the valley. In these views I consider that the PPC will have the effect of slightly increasing the footprint of the development area, albeit that a considerable part of this footprint will now be taken up by golf fairways. I consider that this increase will be relatively difficult to detect visually and that any effect on the quality of views will be slight at most.

Snowfarm access road

52. From the upper three quarters of the Snowfarm access road views are gained across to the MCSSZ as shown on the Appendix 8 images from Viewpoint 5. These views are at distances of between 1 and 5 kilometres and in them the entire zone can be seen. If the PPC proceeds, the lower area of the MCSSZ in these views will take the form of green golf fairways rather than buildings and also built form will extend slightly further upslope at the rear of the zone. This can be seen in the Viewpoint 5 images.
53. In views from the Snowfarm access road the entire MCSSZ is displayed at a distance. The replacement of some built form with the golf fairways will result in a slight softening of the visual nature of the finished zone in this context. The uphill extension of built form will be difficult to discern from these distances. Much of the newly enabled built form would be significantly screened by already-enabled built form in front of it. Overall, in relation to views from the Snowfarm access road, I consider that the PPC will result in slight positive effects in relation to views and visual amenity.

The public road that runs south from the Snowfarm access road

54. This approximately 600 metre long stretch of road is represented by the Appendix 8 images from Viewpoint 6. A viewer in the vicinity of this road is approximately 300 metres from the development AAs of the existing MCSSZ and is approximately 30 metres lower in elevation than the zone. Therefore AA7a (the Eastern Escarpment) is primarily the part of the zone that is visible, and this is visible in a filtered way through the willows that line the course of the Cardrona River. The upper parts of some buildings in AA1b (the Village Centre) of the existing MCSSZ are visible from this road and its immediate vicinity, however visibility is relatively slight. The parts of buildings would be visible above the native vegetation on the Eastern Escarpment that is required by existing Structure Plan D.
55. Under the proposed situation much of the built form within existing AA1b would not eventuate. Less and smaller built form would appear in the form of the golf course villas (AA1a). The revegetation of the upper Eastern Escarpment would continue to be required. I consider that the PPC will have a slight positive effect on views from this vicinity in that the small amount of built form that would be visible under the existing MCSSZ would be

reduced further. In any event, the zone will have a minimal visual effect when seen from this vicinity.

### Pringles Creek Road

56. The existing dwellings that gain access via Pringles Creek Road are largely visually separated from the MCSSZ by topography; specifically by an area of high topography that runs down the north-eastern edge of the Pringles Creek lots that prevents views between the two relevant areas. The exception to this visual separation is the uppermost lot accessed from Pringles Creek Road, being the C and J Roberts lot.
57. This higher area gains an elevated view that overlooks the existing MCSSZ. These views are represented by the Appendix 8 images from Viewpoint 7. The existing zone runs roughly horizontally in the relevant views (as can be seen on the Viewpoint 7 images). Under the existing situation, built form would read as a rough line of development running across the terrace landform. This built form would be visually softened by vegetation in the M4 Mitigation Planting Areas. Under the proposed situation, the visual impression of development would be very similar. Identical vegetation would visually soften the built form. The golf course fairways would not be particularly evident. Built form at a relatively low density (as provided for by proposed AA4) would extend further up the hillslope than development enabled by the existing MCSSZ. However, as can be seen by the Viewpoint 7 images, this extension is relatively minor in terms of the composition of views. In terms of the quality of views and visual amenity, I cannot see that the proposed situation is inferior to the existing in any significant way.
58. The proposed provisions relating to AA8c seek that car-parking activity is screened from the C and J Roberts lot. Mature, tall conifer trees exist in the AA8c location currently. I consider that an area of naturalistic mounding and vegetation in this location, when seen from the Pringles Creek Road area, will appear inconspicuous and will not reduce the visual amenity that is currently experienced.

### The Roaring Meg Pack Track

59. The Roaring Meg Pack Track ascends from the bottom of Tuohys Gully to the Meg Saddle and then follows the Roaring Meg south to State Highway 6. The section of this track

between the bottom of Tuohys Gully and Meg Saddle (the northern 4.5 kilometres of the track) allows frequent views to the MCSSZ. These views are at distances between 500 metres and 5 kilometres and are represented by the Viewpoint 8 images of Appendix 8. These views generally look down on the MCSSZ and the entire development area could be seen on the terrace landform.

60. Views from the Roaring Meg Pack Track are somewhat similar to those gained from the Snowfarm access road. Again, the replacement of some built form with the golf fairways will result in a slight softening of the visual nature of the finished zone in this visual context. The uphill extension of built form will be relatively difficult to discern from these distances. Much of the newly enabled built form would be significantly screened by already-enabled built form in front of it. Overall, in relation to views from the Snowfarm access road, I consider that the PPC will result in slight positive effects in relation to views and visual amenity.

*Summary regarding effects on views and visual amenity*

61. In the various views that are available to the MCSSZ, the PPC will alter the composition of the village development itself. In these various views, the village development is an element that sits in a broad, dramatic mountain setting. The PPC will change the village in that the lower area (often the front part of the village in the views) will become less built and more open and green; while the upper edge of built development will extend slightly uphill.
62. In views from lower locations, such as those adjacent to Cardrona Valley Road, the increased open space that the PPC will bring will sometimes be evident. The extension to built form upslope will not. In any event, the visual change between the proposed situation and the existing will be minor and effects on amenity will be slightly positive.
63. In views from elevated locations on the opposite (eastern) side of the valley, the increase in openness in the lower part of the zone will be perhaps noticeable while the increase in built form in the upper part of the zone will generally not. Again this will result in a positive visual effect of a negligible to slight degree.
64. In elevated views from the western side of the valley, both the increase in openness in the lower part of the zone and the increase in built form in the upper part of the zone will be

noticeable. The increase in built form will visually enlarge the zone in its setting but given the distances, context and composition of views, I consider that any adverse effect on the quality or amenity associated with these views will be of a slight degree at most.

65. Overall, I consider that the visual effects of the proposed zone reconfiguration are slight. The MCSSZ will continue to provide for a compact village development within an ONL setting.

## CONCLUSIONS

66. The existing MCSSZ provides for a specific form of village development on a terrace landform close to the floor of the Cardrona Valley. The zone is located adjacent to the Cardrona Alpine Resort access road. The landscape character and visual amenity that the Cardona Valley provides are of high quality and are valued by the community; the valley is categorised as an ONL.
67. The PPC seeks to reconfigure activities within the enabled village development. Most relevantly, the lower part of the zone will provide for a 12 hole golf course, while there will also be a slight uphill extension to residential activities.
68. In relation to landscape character, I consider that at a broad scale, the PPC will have a negligible effect on the landscape character of the Cardrona Valley. At a fine scale, there will be some effect in that the exact nature of the village development that eventuates will be more characterised by recreation (i.e. golf) than under the existing situation. While this is a change, it does not amount to an adverse effect on landscape character.
69. In relation to views and visual amenity, I consider that the replacement of an area of built development with golf course activity will have some potential positive effects in that the zone will ultimately appear softer and greener and therefore less incongruous with its setting. Similarly, the replacement of some open space with extended built development will have some potential adverse effects. The analysis provided in this report shows that the proposed new open space area is more visually discernible than the proposed area of extended built development. Therefore, I consider that visual effects will generally be positive but of a slight degree.

Ben Espie

**vivian+espie**

30<sup>th</sup> November 2016

## **ATTACHED APPENDICES:**

APPENDIX 1: Existing Mount Cardrona Station Special Zone Structure Plan A

APPENDIX 2: Proposed Mount Cardrona Station Special Zone Structure Plan A

APPENDIX 3: Existing Mount Cardrona Station Special Zone Structure Plan D

APPENDIX 4: Proposed Concept Masterplan

APPENDIX 5: Existing Mount Cardrona Station Special Zone Zones Plan

APPENDIX 6: Open Space with Existing Zones Plan

APPENDIX 7: Site Context and Viewpoint Location Plan

APPENDIX 8: Images from the identified Viewpoints