



Appendix

07

Powerhouse Fast-track Application

Preliminary Landscape Assessment Report



Prepared by Patch Landscape

Steve Skelton
Registered Landscape Architect

15 December 2025

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. This assessment has been prepared by Patch Ltd on behalf of Bowen Peak Limited in response to a request from the Minister for the Environment (**Attachment A**) for further landscape information to support the referral of the Restoring the Reserve – Powerhouse to Peak Cable Car and Fernhill Heights Development under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024.

1.2. The purpose of this assessment is to provide a preliminary and high-level expert opinion on the likely nature and scale of landscape and visual effects associated with the proposal, with specific regard to its location within the Outstanding Natural Landscape (ONL) of the Te Taumata-o-Hakitekura (Ben Lomond) Reserve and to identify where potential effects may be avoided, remedied, or mitigated through design and management.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1. The project proposes a sequence of aerial ropeways and terminal stations linking the One Mile Powerhouse Reserve to the summit of Bowen Peak, a 175 alpine chalet village at 'Fernhill Heights', and a large-scale programme of ecological restoration, native revegetation, and predator control. The assessment considers effects on the biophysical, associative, and perceptual dimensions of the landscape.

2.2. The assessment finds that the proposal will deliver measurable indigenous biodiversity and public recreation benefits, but it will also result in a substantial degree of change to a landscape of very high value. The upper mountain components, including the saddle station, ropeway infrastructure, and summit buildings, generate the most pronounced effects due to their elevation, exposure, and contrast with the natural skyline. The ropeway, towers, cabins, upper stations and buildings, and alpine village will introduce prominent built form and new activity into a sensitive mountain landscape, leading to, in parts, **moderate-high** adverse effects on landscape character and visual amenity values. Design integration and long-term landscape management strategies will help reduce adverse effects over time, but the proposal will nonetheless change the attributes and values of the landscape

2.3. This assessment highlights the need for strong landscape management, including design refinement, cultural engagement, and effective visual integration. These elements will be critical

in determining whether the project's positive landscape outcomes can meaningfully reduce or balance its adverse landscape and visual effects.

3. QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

- 3.1. My name is Stephen Russell Skelton, Director of Patch Limited (Patch), a landscape architecture and planning consultancy based in Queenstown. I hold a Bachelor of Arts in Communication from Northern Arizona University and a Master of Landscape Architecture (First Class Hons) from Lincoln University. I have been a Registered Member of the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects (NZILA) since 2015.
- 3.2. I have over 15 years of combined experience in landscape and planning work within the Queenstown Lakes and Central Otago districts in both public and private sector roles. Before founding Patch in 2016, I held positions of senior landscape architect with Baxter Design Group, and prior to that I worked at Lakes Environmental working extensively with the Queenstown Lakes District Council.
- 3.3. Through Patch, I lead projects ranging from urban and rural master planning, ecological restoration, and residential and commercial landscape design to the preparation of Landscape and Visual Assessments and Landscape Management Plans for resource consent and plan change processes. My work frequently involves sites within or adjoining ONLs, including large-scale tourism, residential, and infrastructure proposals.
- 3.4. Of particular relevance to this project, I have prepared LVAs and design frameworks for developments within the Ben Lomond, Closeburn, and Arthurs Point areas, as well as ONL-adjacent projects at Moke Lake, Mt Dewar, Cardrona, and West Wanaka. I have worked for NZSki Limited providing landscape support for the implementation of their Sugar Basin lift and Coronet Express lift. This experience has required detailed assessment of landscape character, naturalness, and perceptual values under the Queenstown Lakes District Plan.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1. This assessment has been undertaken in accordance with the principles and methodology set out in Te Tangi a te Manu – Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines (NZILA, 2022), which establish a values-based framework for understanding and evaluating landscapes. The assessment considers effects on the biophysical, associative, and perceptual dimensions of the landscape, including visual effects as part of perceptual values. It draws on field observation,

site analysis, review of proposal documentation and plans. The site and surrounding landscape have been visited and experienced by the author, and the extent of potential visibility has been informed through the use of digital viewshed analysis tools, 3D modelling and photographic field surveys. The conclusions presented in this report are based on professional judgement informed by direct field study, desktop studies, and experience gained through the assessment of other projects within the same landscape context. The findings are expressed in qualitative terms using the effects scale endorsed in Te Tangi a te Manu (NZILA, 2022, p.140). Effects are described using the following categories:

- Very Low – a barely perceptible change within a localised area, with no material influence on landscape values.
- Low – a small-scale change affecting limited aspects of the landscape, with key characteristics remaining intact.
- Low–Moderate – a discernible change within a defined area, with some influence on character or amenity while the overall landscape remains generally intact.
- Moderate – a clearly noticeable change influencing several aspects of landscape character or amenity, while the broader landscape pattern and values remain recognisable.
- Moderate–High – a pronounced change over a wider area, reducing the coherence or integrity of landscape values.
- High – a substantial and evident change that alters key landscape characteristics or experiential qualities.
- Very High – a major or transformative change that fundamentally alters the landscape and its values.

5. DESCRIPTION OF THE LANDSCAPE

5.1. The site forms part of the wider Western Whakatipu Basin¹ Outstanding Natural Landscape, which includes the steep south-eastern slopes of Te Taumata-o-Hakitekura / Ben Lomond and Bowen Peak rising above Queenstown. This mountain massif defines the dramatic northern

¹QLDC PDP Landscape Schedules - Priority Area 21.22.12

backdrop to the town, separating the Whakatipu Basin and Lake Whakatipu from the Moke Creek Valley, Moonlight Creek Valley, and the Shotover River Gorge. The landscape is characterised by schist mountain slopes and steep, incised gullies, clad in exotic conifer forest, areas of regenerating shrubland, and remnants of beech forest, with One Mile Creek and its tributaries forming the main drainage network flowing to Lake Whakatipu. Much of the area is visible from Queenstown, Fernhill, Sunshine Bay, and Kelvin Heights, contributing to the town's identity, natural setting, and sense of place. Within this broader landscape, the One Mile Catchment extends from the One Mile Powerhouse Reserve at the lake edge through the beech-clad gullies and regenerating slopes of Ben Lomond to the Ben Lomond Saddle and Bowen Peak ridgelines.

- 5.2. The landscape for this assessment's purposes will be referred to as the One Mile Catchment (**Attachment B**), which takes in the whole of the One Mile Creek catchment and includes the summits of Ben Lomond and Bowen Peak, recognising that the upper and eastern margins overlap with the Moonlight and Horn Creek catchments.
- 5.3. The landscape's biophysical values are high, reflecting the expressive glacial landforms, intact hydrological patterns, remnant beech forest, native shrubland, and subalpine vegetation. Although the mid-slopes are affected by wilding conifers, bike trails, the Skyline Gondola and past forestry activities, the underlying landform and ecological systems remain clearly legible.
- 5.4. Associative values are also high. The area forms part of the wāhi tūpuna Te Taumata-o-Hakitekura Reserve, named for the ancestor Hakitekura, whose story is deeply embedded in Kāi Tahu whakapapa and identity. The catchment also holds strong historical and recreational associations, including the original Queenstown Powerhouse, early water races and gold workings, the long-established Ben Lomond and One Mile walking tracks, paragliding and zipline activities and the growing network of mountain bike trails that connect people with the alpine landscape.
- 5.5. Perceptual values are very high, arising from the landscape's visibility, naturalness, and sense of elevation, and accessibility due to its proximity to the urban edge. The contrast between the town and the steep undeveloped mountain slopes creates one of Queenstown's defining scenic compositions. The area retains a high level of natural character despite weed invasion and recreational use and the presence of the Skyline gondola. The landscape's open, rugged form

panoramic views and role in providing the iconic backdrop to Queenstown give it enduring memorability and aesthetic appeal.

6. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL

6.1. The proposal is a large-scale tourism, residential, and conservation project led by Bowen Peak Limited. It encompasses a sequence of linked aerial ropeways, an alpine village development, and an extensive ecological restoration programme extending from the One Mile Powerhouse Reserve near the lakefront to the summit of Bowen Peak. A graphic interpretation of the proposal is set out in **Attachment C**.

6.2. The project includes:

- **Powerhouse Precinct Development** – Base-area works within the One Mile Reserve including wilding pine removal, native replanting, and establishment of a small visitor node with retail, hospitality, and tourism services adjacent to the Powerhouse Gondola terminal.
- **Powerhouse Gondola and Fernhill Heights Station** – A 10-passenger aerial ropeway linking the One Mile Powerhouse Reserve near the lakefront to the mid-slopes of the reserve. Provides access to a proposed Fernhill Heights Station, access to the proposed predator free reserve and recreation areas while enabling ecological restoration and native replanting at the base station.
- **Fernhill Heights Alpine Village** – A 52-hectare residential and visitor precinct comprising approximately 175 chalets (around 1,333 units total) in a clustered in repeating typologies with supporting infrastructure, public open space, transport connections, and access to the ropeway network.
- **Saddle Funifor** – A higher-capacity (110-passenger) dual-cable ropeway connecting Fernhill Heights to the Ben Lomond Saddle. Includes a two-storey saddle station with café, retail, visitor facilities, bunk accommodation, public toilets, and shelter.
- **Bowen Peak Gondola** – A 10-passenger gondola extending from the Saddle to a summit station and viewing platform discreetly located on the western face of Bowen Peak. Provides access for sightseeing, walking, mountain biking, and limited seasonal skiing.
- **Predator-free Sanctuaries** – Two sanctuaries comprising a 3-hectare lower sanctuary within the One Mile Reserve and a larger 290-hectare sanctuary across the upper One

Mile and Two Mile catchments. Enclosed by predator-proof fencing to support reintroduction and breeding of native species.

- **Ecological Restoration and Wilding Pine Removal** – Progressive removal of wilding conifers across roughly 400 hectares of Reserve and adjoining land, with replanting of indigenous forest and shrubland species to restore pre-European vegetation patterns.
- **One Mile Boardwalk and Trail Network** – Construction of a new elevated fibreglass boardwalk and track linking the Powerhouse Reserve to Fernhill Heights and the sanctuary entrance, reopening the historic One Mile Creek walkway and improving public access and safety.

6.3. Across this application’s supporting documents, the project is described as delivering positive effects including:

- major ecological restoration through extensive wilding pine removal, indigenous replanting, and the establishment of a large predator-free sanctuary network that restores habitat and enables native species recovery.
- significant public access and recreational benefits, including reopening the One Mile Creek walkway, expanding the mountain bike trail network, and providing a year-round viewing platform.
- contributing to housing supply and creating a well-connected, public-transport-oriented new alpine village.
- establishing a ropeway system described as regionally and nationally significant transport infrastructure that reduces road pressure and supports mode shift.
- supporting tourism and economic demand for sightseeing, mountain biking, and skiing, with associated regional economic benefits and job creation.
- delivering long-term improvements to natural character, indigenous biodiversity, and ecological function through native revegetation, with the ecologist noting that the sanctuary area provides a rare opportunity to re-establish a continuous corridor of native forest and habitat across the One Mile catchment.

6.4. The project is proposed to occur progressively from 2026 through to approximately 2053. Early project years are focused on Fast-track approvals, access agreements, geotechnical investigations, and wilding pine removal within the One Mile Powerhouse Reserve. Construction

of the Powerhouse Gondola is anticipated to commence around 2030 and open by 2032. The Saddle Funifor is intended to follow in 2033, with the Bowen Peak Gondola and summit viewing platform completed in 2034. Development of the Fernhill Heights alpine village is planned to occur across three major stages between 2029 and 2053, with chalets constructed and divested incrementally. Establishment of the predator-free sanctuary between 2034 and 2038 and the One Mile Creek walkway is expected between 2040 and 2043, with ecological restoration and reserve improvements overlapping all stages and continuing in parallel across the full duration of the project.

7. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS ASSESSMENT

7.1. This report provides an assessment of the potential landscape and visual effects arising from the proposed Restoring the Reserve – Powerhouse to Peak Cable Car and Fernhill Heights Development. The assessment considers both the physical and perceptual changes to the receiving environment, with reference to the biophysical, associative, and perceptual dimensions of landscape. For clarity, the assessment is divided into two parts:

- i. **effects on landscape character**, which relate to the physical form, pattern, and naturalness of the landscape and its associative values; and
- ii. **visual effects**, which relate to changes in what is seen, the viewing audiences, and the degree to which the proposal alters the visual composition and amenity of the wider landscape.

7.2. A summary of effects is provided in table format attached to this report as **Attachment D**.

7.3. It is important to recognise that the project's effects will not occur all at once but will unfold progressively over a multi-decade timeframe. This extended construction and implementation period means that biophysical, associative, and perceptual effects will arise, change, and potentially lessen at different points as various components are completed, revegetation establishes, and sanctuary works mature. The staging of the ropeways, alpine village, and ecological restoration creates a dynamic receiving environment in which both adverse and positive effects will evolve over time. Accordingly, the following assessment considers both the immediate and longer-term effects anticipated at each key stage of development.

7.4. This preliminary assessment provides a high-level overview and is a condensed version of a more detailed landscape and visual assessment that will be required at the time of the substantive

application phase to examine each component of the proposal along a project timeline. That future assessment would evaluate how detailed mitigation, offsets, and other design and management processes can avoid, remedy, or reduce effects as they arise. Accordingly, this preliminary assessment makes broad judgements based on the proposal as it currently stands, assuming the successful implementation of the sanctuary, low-impact construction techniques for towers and terminal stations, and the effective screening of the predator-proof fence within the restored landscape.

Visual Effects Assessment

7.5. Visual effects have been assessed from key public and private viewpoints, representative of the range of visibility across Queenstown, Fernhill, Frankton, Kelvin Heights, Jacks Point and the surface of Lake Whakatipu. The assessment is informed by field studies, viewshed tools (**Attachment E**) and 3D modelling exercises.²

7.6. The visual effect of the proposal varies across the different components of the proposal due to their location, scale, staging and visibility. The bulk of the proposal sits within the mid to lower reaches of the One Mile Catchment, where landform provides a degree of visual containment. Parts of the proposal, including Saddle buildings, ropeway structures, and the Bowen Peak viewing platform extend into the upper Ben Lomond–Bowen Peak massif, which forms a highly legible and expressive Outstanding Natural Landscape. Given the scale of the proposal and the number of its components, there will be a wide range of visibility across the receiving environment.

7.7. The Fernhill Heights Alpine Village will be visible from:

- parts of the Ben Lomond Reserve, including sections of the walking and biking tracks outside the forested canopy,
- the urban areas of Fernhill and Sunshine Bay (**Attachment F, Image 1**),
- parts of Queenstown and Queenstown Bay (**Image 2 and 3**),
- the surface of Lake Whakatipu south of the chalet site (**Image 4**),

² The 3D models viewshed analysis set out in the **Attachment C** and attached to the application as **Appendix 17** are baseline, indicative tools intended to provide a general understanding of the proposal's visibility and its context within the wider receiving landscape. While preliminary in nature, they offer a useful reference for interpreting the scale and spatial relationship of key elements.

- parts of Kelvin Heights (**Image 5**),
- Parts of the Jack’s Point area (**Image 6**), and
- sections of the Kingston–Queenstown Road and Glenorchy–Queenstown Road.

7.8. The more elevated components of the proposal, including the Saddle buildings, ropeway structures, and the Bowen Peak viewing platform, are less visible or not visible from many locations including most of Queenstown (**Images, 2 and 3**), Fernhill and Sunshine Bay (**Image 1**) due to intervening landform. These elements will be visible from sections of the Ben Lomond Reserve, particularly along walking and biking routes outside the forest canopy, they will also be experienced from a wider and more distant viewing audience, including the surface of Lake Whakatipu (**Image 4**), parts of the Jack’s Point area (**Image 6**), and some locations within Kelvin Heights (**Image 5**).

7.9. The final design resolution, particularly the treatment of colour, lighting, glazing reflectivity, and glare across the elevated buildings, viewing platform, saddle structure, poles, ropeway cars, and chalets, will be fundamental to managing visual effects.

7.10. No part of the proposal will be visible from the Whakatipu Basin.

7.11. Overall, the proposal introduces new linear, vertical infrastructure and urban elements into an exposed mountain setting, where the degree of visibility and contrast depends largely on elevation, topography, and design integration.

7.12. The text below provides an overview of the proposal’s visual effects; these are demonstrated and in table format attached as (**Attachment C**).

Powerhouse Precinct and Gondola

7.13. The Powerhouse Gondola and associated station development are located within the lower One Mile Catchment, largely contained by topography and surrounding vegetation and within the context of existing urban elements. These elements will be read in the context of the existing urban fringe and recreation activity, resulting in **low-moderate** visual effects, mainly attributed to the effects of the gondola, ropeway and pylons. Native revegetation and restoration planting in the surrounding area will assist visual containment and integration over time.

Fernhill Heights Alpine Village and Ropeway Station

7.14. The Fernhill Heights Alpine Village and ropeway station will occupy a mid-slope terrace visible from parts of Fernhill, the surface of Lake Whakatipu, portions of Kelvin Heights, western areas of Queenstown, and more distant viewpoints including the Jack's Point area. While generally well-contained by landform, the built form will appear as a compact, terraced cluster within a natural setting, resulting in a noticeable shift in character. It is noted that development will occur progressively over an extended timeframe, being constructed generally from east to west and up the slopes, so visual effects will vary over time. The western parts of the proposal are the most visible from a wider field of view.

7.15. The visual effects of the alpine village will be most apparent in views from Fernhill, Sunshine Bay, and sections of the lake where the mid-slopes of Ben Lomond are visible above the forested canopy. Although the development footprint is contained by localised landform, its elevation and terraced arrangement will create a compact cluster of built form that contrasts with the predominantly natural patterns of the ONL. The repetition of chalet typologies, combined with the cumulative built mass, will form a clearly legible new element that modifies the natural landform and vegetation patterns currently expressed along these slopes.

7.16. From more distant viewpoints, including Kelvin Heights and the Jack's Point area, the village will present as a noticeable band of urban development set against a large and visually dominant mountain backdrop. While colour treatment, recessive materials, and the eventual establishment of indigenous vegetation within the area will assist in softening these edges, the change remains distinct. The resulting visual effects are assessed as **moderate**, reflecting a localised but clearly perceptible shift in the natural appearance and experiential qualities of this part of the ONL.

Saddle Funifor and Bowen Saddle Station

7.17. The Saddle Funifor and upper station will be prominent features on the exposed upper slopes of the Ben Lomond Reserve and widely visible from within the reserve itself. These components will extend above the main vegetation line and are likely to be perceived from distant viewpoints such as Kelvin Heights, Jack's Point and the surface of Lake Whakatipu. It is noted that the Saddle building is proposed more to the north of the saddle to reduce visual effect on southern locations. While careful design, colour treatment, and low-reflectivity materials can reduce contrast, the large-scale infrastructure with particular regard to the ropeway towers and the

two-storey Saddle Station will remain visible, sometimes against the skyline, resulting in **moderate-high** adverse visual effects, especially when experience from within the reserve.

Bowen Peak Gondola, Summit Station and Viewing Platform

- 7.18. The Bowen Peak Gondola and summit structures will occupy a sensitive position on the upper ridgeline. These features will be discernible from a wide area, particularly from southern lake viewpoints and elevated locations around Queenstown. Even with subdued materials and sensitive design, these elements will alter the perception of naturalness and skyline coherence, resulting in **moderate-high** adverse visual effects.

Predator-Free Sanctuary and Fencing

- 7.19. The predator-free fencing will in part, follow natural contours and be screened by native planting in most locations. Once established, the fence will recede visually within the landscape, with only temporary visibility during construction. The resulting effects are considered **low**.

Wilding Pine Removal and Native Restoration

- 7.20. Wilding conifer removal will create short-term visual disturbance and colour contrast; however, replanting and natural regeneration will quickly re-establish vegetative cover. Over time, this component will produce a **positive** visual outcome, with initial **moderate** effects reducing to **very low** as native planting matures.

Boardwalk and Walking Track

- 7.21. The elevated boardwalk and associated track improvements will be largely screened by vegetation and will visually reinforce existing recreational character. These elements are small in scale and consistent with public access infrastructure, resulting in **very low** visual effects.

Summary of Visual Effects

- 7.22. Across the project, visual effects range from very low to **moderate-high**, depending on the component, elevation, and viewing distance. The most noticeable visual change will be experienced from within the One Mile Catchment itself, where viewers are closest to the chalets, ropeways, pylons, saddle and summit buildings. Beyond this area, visual effects associated with the Fernhill Heights Alpine Village, the ropeway systems, the saddle buildings, and the summit lookout will extend into the wider landscape, particularly in views from the

south across Lake Whakatipu, from Fernhill and Sunshine Bay, and from more distant locations such as Kelvin Heights and the Jack's Point area. While containment by landform, colour treatment, and the establishment of native vegetation will assist in reducing contrast over time, these elevated and exposed components will remain visible elements in a highly valued, open and natural ONL. Overall, the project introduces a gradient of visual change, with the upper and mid elevation structures generating the most prominent effects and the lower components being more readily absorbed into their immediate landscape context.

Landscape Effects

7.23. The proposed development will introduce a large-scale built and infrastructural presence into the One Mile Catchment, resulting in a range of effects on the biophysical, associative, and perceptual dimensions of the landscape. While these changes will be significant, the proposal also incorporates a substantial package of restorative and public-access initiatives intended to enhance natural character, indigenous biodiversity, and public amenity. The ecological reporting identifies extensive wilding pine removal, reinstatement of indigenous forest communities, and the establishment of a predator-free sanctuary that, over time, has the potential to re-establish continuous habitat and significantly improve ecological integrity across the catchment. Public accessibility, and subsequent human experience of landscape is also improved through the reopening of the One Mile Creek walkway, expanded mountain bike trail connections, new ski area, and the provision of year-round access to elevated viewing areas. While these positive outcomes do not avoid or fully offset the adverse effects associated with new built form in an ONL, they provide meaningful contributions to the long-term enhancement of natural character, biodiversity, and experience of the landscape.

7.24. In **biophysical** terms, the gondola alignments, towers, terminal buildings, and associated access tracks will result in localised disturbance to landform, vegetation, and wider landscape patterns, noting the assumption that low-impact construction methods will be employed. Earthworks and access formation will modify small but visually exposed sections of the schist mountain slopes and gully systems. These works, with particular regard to the buildings on Bowen Saddle and Bowen Peak, will generate **moderate-high** adverse effects on the biophysical values of the saddle and Bowen Peak areas.

7.25. The Fernhill Heights Alpine village will replace areas currently occupied by wilding exotic conifers with built form and associated infrastructure. The development will be contained within a defined footprint and visual catchment. While it will replace a wilding weed species and will be constructed progressively over an extended timeframe, it nonetheless represents a permanent shift from natural to urban land cover. The urbanisation of the mid to upper slopes above Fernhill will represent a significant change to the biophysical attributes and values of the landscape. Overall, the magnitude of biophysical change associated with this component is assessed as **moderate-high**, with potential for partial offset through successful implementation of the sanctuary and restoration works. Over time, native revegetation and ecological restoration within the adjacent sanctuary area will help reinstate natural patterns and improve landscape integrity and legibility across the lower and mid-slopes of the catchment. These positive indigenous biodiversity outcomes and natural character improvements will contribute meaningfully to biophysical values.

7.26. The Powerhouse Precinct and Gondola component of the proposal is located low in the landscape, within or immediately adjacent to areas already influenced by urban activity. While it will result in some modification to the landscape's biophysical attributes and values, including the clearance of some significant indigenous vegetation, the effects in this area are considered to be **moderate-low** in magnitude.

7.27. In **associative** terms, the proposal intersects with landscapes of high cultural, historical, and recreational significance. The One Mile Catchment forms part of the wāhi tūpuna Te Taumata-o-Hakitekura, a landscape that holds deep ancestral meaning for Kāi Tahu and contributes to the cultural identity and sense of place of Queenstown. It is understood that the applicant remains committed to consultation with the seven papatipu Rūnaka to ensure appropriate Kāi Tahu involvement and to support cultural identity outcomes as the long-term project evolves. The catchment also holds strong associative values for the many people who use the reserve and access the upper summits through the established network of walking and biking tracks, as well as for other recreational users. While this is not a pristine or remote wilderness area, it forms a valued part of the 'front-country' landscape near the urban edge of Queenstown. For some users, the proposal may enhance associative values by improving access, enabling year-round experiences, and broadening opportunities to engage with the landscape. For others, the openness, natural character, and relative quiet that they currently associate with these slopes

and summits may be significantly diminished, and places they consider special may be permanently altered.

7.28. The introduction of substantial new development within this setting has the potential to diminish perceived cultural integrity and weaken the sense of connection between land, water, and story that underpins the wāhi tūpuna. The elevated components of the proposal, particularly the saddle buildings, ropeway structures, and the Bowen Peak summit elements, will alter the experiential qualities of long-established recreational routes such as the Ben Lomond Track and One Mile Creek Track, where naturalness, openness, and a degree of seclusion are integral to public appreciation. While the project includes positive associative contributions, including improved public access, cultural interpretation opportunities, and long-term ecological restoration within the sanctuary area, these do not avoid or fully counterbalance the adverse effects associated with permanent built form within a valued ONL. Overall, the associative adverse effects are assessed as **moderate-high**.

7.29. In **perceptual** terms, including effects on naturalness, coherence, and sense of place, the proposal will introduce substantial new elements into a landscape widely recognised for its dramatic scale, legibility, and apparent wildness. The Ben Lomond and Bowen Peak slopes currently form a continuous, visually dominant, open and natural mountain backdrop that contrasts sharply with the compact urban basin below. The construction of gondolas, towers, and an alpine village will interrupt this coherence, reducing the perception of remoteness and increasing the presence of built form within a landscape valued for its openness and expressive natural character. Although restoration initiatives will help reinstate natural patterns and soften visual transitions, the upper ropeway stations and chalets will remain evident within key public views, resulting in a notable reduction in the perceived naturalness and aesthetic coherence of the ONL. The overall landscape character effects are therefore assessed as **moderate-high**, with potential for partial reduction over time where restoration and design integration are fully realized.

7.30. Collectively, the proposal represents a transformative change within a landscape of high sensitivity and limited capacity for built development. While it provides opportunities for long-term enhancement of ecological and recreational values, it also introduces enduring changes to the landscape's character, legibility, and associative values of the ONL.

8. CONCLUSION

8.1. The Restoring the Reserve – Powerhouse to Peak Cable Car and Fernhill Heights Development represents an ambitious and integrated proposal that seeks to combine tourism, housing, and conservation outcomes within one of Queenstown’s valued mountain landscapes. While the project offers genuine potential for ecological restoration, improved public access, and long-term stewardship of the Ben Lomond Reserve, it will also introduce a substantial degree of built form and infrastructure into an area of high landscape sensitivity. The resulting landscape and visual effects, particularly on the mid to upper slopes above Fernhill, the saddle, and summit areas, are assessed as **moderate-high**, reflecting both the scale of change and the prominence of the open and natural mountain setting. With careful design refinement, colour treatment, ecological rehabilitation, and ongoing management, the proposal may achieve a more balanced outcome over time, though residual effects on the natural character, coherence, and scenic values of the Ben Lomond ONL are likely to remain evident, regardless of mitigation.

Prepared by:
Steve Skelton

15



Registered Landscape Architect



PO BOX 1634, Queenstown, 9348 • s 9(2)(a) s 9(2)(a)
s 9(2)(a) • www.patchlandscape.co.nz

Restoring the Reserve

Powerhouse to Peak Cable Car and

Fernhill Heights Development

Bowen Peak Limited

Graphic Attachments

27 November 2025



Hon Penny Simmonds

Minister for the Environment
Minister for Vocational Education
Associate Minister for Social Development and Employment

ATTACHMENT A



22 April 2025

PS-COR1122

Hon Chris Bishop
Minister for Infrastructure
By email: c.bishop@parliament.govt.nz

Dear Minister Bishop,

Thank you for the invitation to provide comments on the application for referral of the Powerhouse Funicular Railways Queenstown Regional Development project to an expert panel under section 17 of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024.

From an initial review of the referral application, I have some concerns about the level of information provided to determine the significance of potential adverse environmental effects on the Outstanding Natural Landscape (ONL) where the project is proposed. I note in particular the very high-profile location on the slopes around Lake Wakatipu. The proposal areas would likely be visible from lakeside areas of Queenstown and to recreational users of the lake and surrounding outdoor areas.

Previous referral applications I have been invited to comment on have generally provided at least a short memorandum containing high-level initial conclusions from relevant identified and suitably qualified experts. In this instance, the applicant has offered potentially their own assessment that the effects will be “moderate” and has not attributed those views. They have also noted that they prefer to hold off on the detailed design and expert assessments until they have more certainty that the project will be referred.

My view is that without a more detailed landscape assessment from a suitably qualified expert, it is unclear how the potential for significant adverse effects on the ONL can be ruled out.

The applicant will be required to provide more detailed assessments at the substantive stage. However, in my view, it would be more efficient to identify as soon as possible if there are likely to be significant adverse effects on the ONL. This would enable appropriate strategies to avoid, remedy or mitigate them to be considered throughout the detailed design process for the proposal prior to lodging the substantive application.

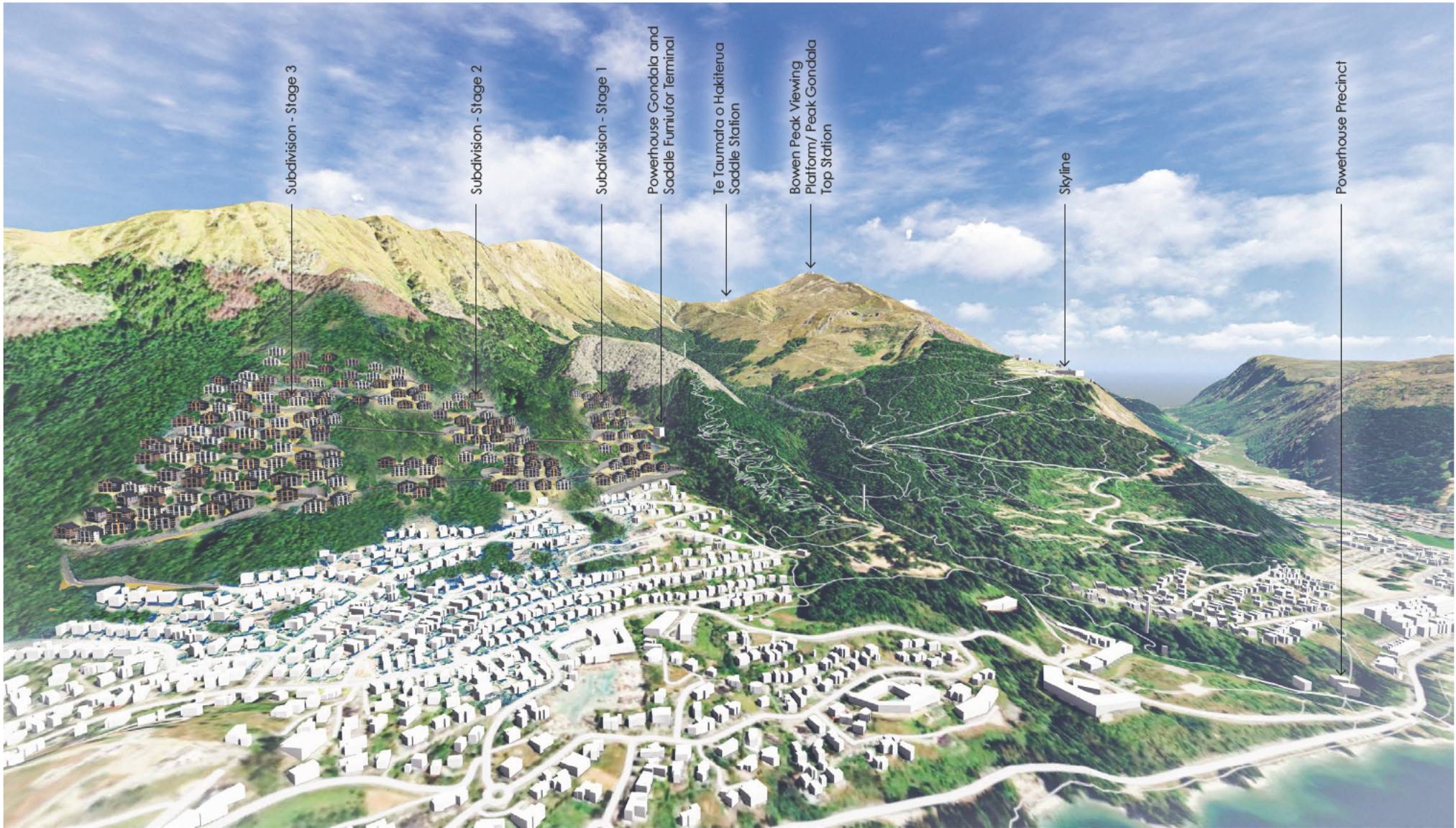
This would then likely simplify the matters which the expert panel would ultimately need to consider and allow that stage of the process to run more smoothly.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide comments on this referral application.

Your sincerely,

Hon Penny Simmonds
Minister for the Environment





Adverse Effects Table

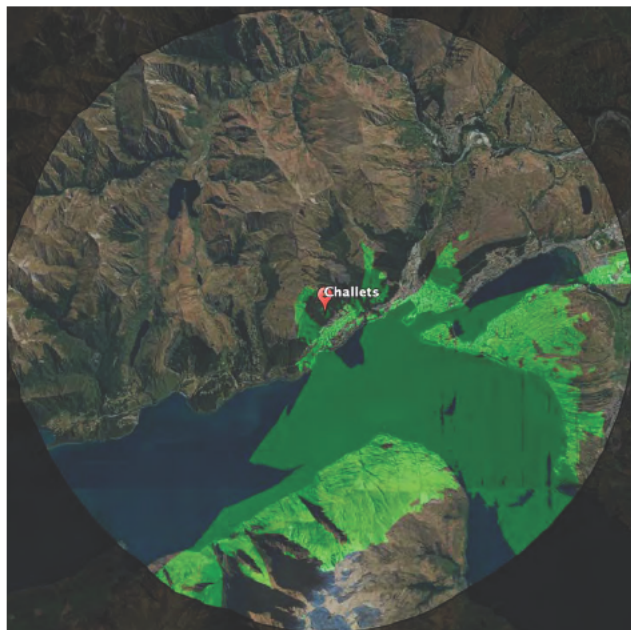
The table below provides an indicative assessment of anticipated and known adverse effects associated with the Fernhill Heights and Bowen Peak proposal, including its various components. The assessment identifies the level of potential effect, using the effects rating scale set out in *Te Tangi a te Manu: Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines (NZILA, 2022)* (very high, high, moderate-high, moderate, moderate-low, low, very low) and assumes appropriate design integration and mitigation over time. It provides a high-level summary consistent with the approach and terminology of those guidelines.

Landscape is understood as the relationship between people and place, encompassing all the physical, sensory, and associative dimensions that give meaning and character to an area. Landscape effects are considered across three interrelated dimensions: biophysical, associative, and perceptual values. For this assessment table, effects have been grouped under these three categories:

- *Biophysical values – the physical and ecological attributes of the landscape, including landform, hydrology, vegetation, and the degree of naturalness or modification.*
- *Associative values – the cultural, historic, and community meanings and relationships connected to the landscape, including Ngāi Tahu and mana whenua associations, recreation, and public access.*
- *Perceptual values – the experiential and aesthetic qualities of the landscape, such as naturalness, coherence, openness, and sense of place; this category also encompasses visual effects as perceived from public and private viewpoints.*

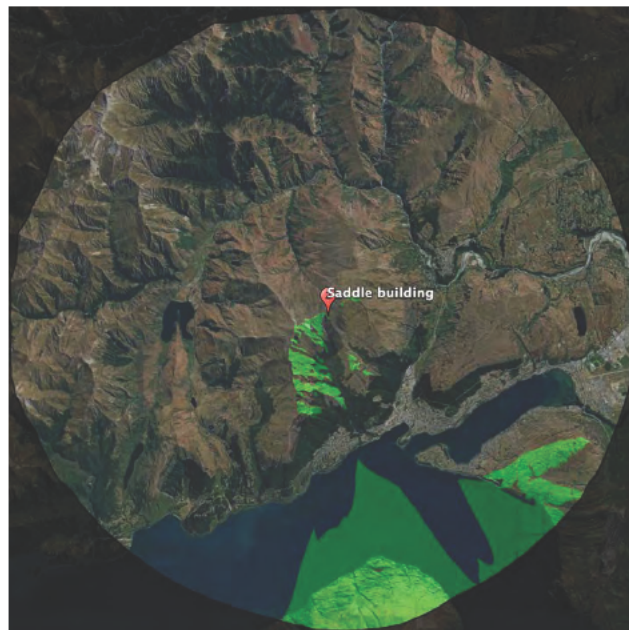
Landscape Value / Effect	Powerhouse Precinct Development	Powerhouse Gondola	Fernhill Heights Alpine Village	Saddle Funifor	Bowen Saddle Station	Bowen Peak Gondola	Bowen Peak Station & Platform	Predator-Free Fencing & Sanctuary	Wilding Pine Removal & Ecological Restoration	One Mile Boardwalk
Adverse effects on biophysical values	Low	Moderate - Low	Moderate - High	Moderate - Low	Moderate - High	Moderate - Low	Moderate - High	Moderate	Very Low	Low
Adverse effects on associative values	Moderate - Low	Moderate - Low	Moderate	Moderate - High	Moderate - High	Moderate - High	Moderate - High	Very Low	Very Low	Very Low
Adverse effects on perceptual values	Low	Moderate - Low	Moderate - High	Moderate	Moderate - High	Moderate - High	Moderate - High	Low	Very Low	Very Low
Overall visual effects	Low	Moderate - Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate - High	Moderate - High	Moderate - High	Low	Moderate at time of clearing reducing to Very Low	Very Low
Overall landscape effects	Moderate - Low	Low	Moderate - High	Moderate - High	High	Moderate - High	High	Low	Very Low	Low

Viewshed 1 - Fernhill Heights Alpine Village



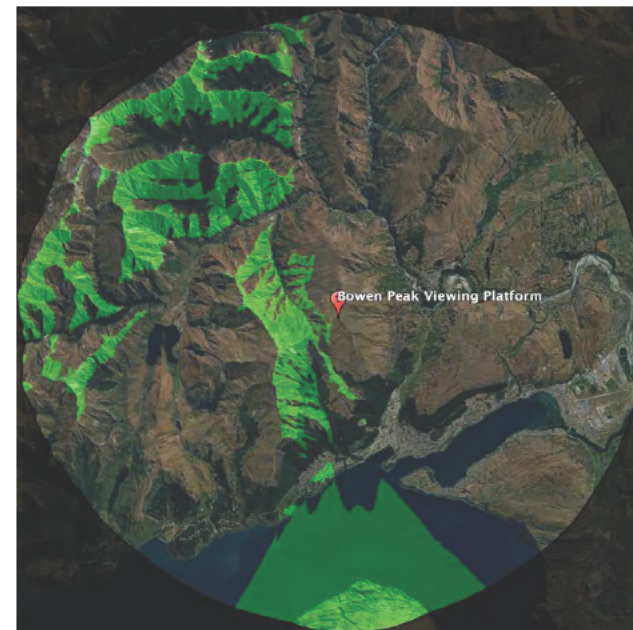
Viewshed 1 - Indicative 10km viewshed radius of Fernhill Heights Alpine Village

Viewshed 2 - Saddle Building



Viewshed 2 - Indicative 10km viewshed radius of the Saddle Building

Viewshed 3 - Bowen Peak Viewing Platform



Viewshed 3 - Indicative 10km viewshed radius of Bowen Peak Viewing Platform







25mm photo - 27 November 2025 at 4:24pm



25mm photo - 17 February 2025 at 12:05pm



50mm photo - 27 November 2025 at 3:35pm



50mm photo - 27 November 2025 at 3:43pm



25mm photo - 26 November 2025 at 10:59am



50mm photo - 26 November 2025 at 10:43am