Boffa Miskell

Remarkables Ski Area Upgrade & Doolans Basin Ski Expansion

Landscape Effects Assessment
Prepared for NZSki Ltd

7 May 2026

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Release and Reliance

This report has been prepared by Boffa Miskell Limited on the instructions of our Client, in accordance with the agreed scope of work. If it is intended to support an application under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024, it may be relied upon by the Expert Panel and relevant administering agencies for the purposes of assessing the application.

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Executive Summary

This Landscape Effects Assessment (LEA) has been prepared by Boffa Miskell Limited (BML) for NZSki Ltd (NZSki) to assess the landscape, visual amenity and natural character effects of the proposed Remarkables Ski Area Upgrade and Doolans Basin Ski Expansion. The proposal seeks approvals under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 and involves upgrades to existing ski field infrastructure within the Remarkables Ski Area as well as an expansion of the ski field into the adjacent Doolans Basin, including new gondola infrastructure, ski trails, base facilities, access roads, water abstraction and storage, snow making and supporting services.

The Site spans two distinct landscape catchments with markedly different existing character and levels of modification:

- the Rastus Burn catchment, which contains the existing Remarkables Ski Area and is already substantially modified; and
- the Doolans Basin catchment, which is largely unmodified conservation land with very high natural character and landscape values.

The Site lies within Outstanding Natural Landscape (ONL) overlays identified in both the Queenstown Lakes Proposed District Plan (QLPDP) and the Central Otago District Plan (CODP) which provide the policy frameworks for assessment across the two districts. The expansion of the ski field through the proposed development of a gondola that originates from the existing base station into the Doolans Basin extends the ski area activities into a new catchment, located within CODC boundaries. The existing ski related facilities are subject to the specific Ski Area Sub Zone (SASZ) under the QLPDP and fall within the Rastus Burn Recreation Area, while the Doolans Basin is part of the wider Remarkables Conservation Area, both managed by the Department of Conservation.

The Northern Remarkables ONL contains existing modifications within a confined part of the Rastus Burn, but very high physical, associative and perceptual values are associated with the wider mountainous ONL. The ski field modifications have reduced the natural character of affected waterways to a moderate to high level, while unmodified tarns maintain a high natural character. The existing environment within the Doolans Basin is largely devoid of any man-made modifications, with steep scree slopes, rocky outcrops, tarns and alpine vegetation providing very high natural character and landscape values.

Natural Character Effects

Within the Rastus Burn catchment, the proposed works largely occur within the context of modifications relating to the existing ski field development. Natural character effects on freshwater systems, including tributaries of the Rastus Burn and associated tarns, are assessed as low, reflecting the existing level of modification.

In contrast, the Doolans Basin catchment displays currently very high natural character due to intact alpine landforms, unmodified hydrological processes, and indigenous alpine vegetation. The proposal would introduce new structures, earthworks, access roads and increased human activity into a currently unmodified environment. As a result, natural character effects within this catchment, including those on the perceptual aspects of natural character associated with the introduction of built form and infrastructure into a currently unmodified alpine basin, are assessed as moderate to high, with very high adverse effects arising in relation to modification of an existing alpine tarn to form a water storage reservoir.

In the Doolans expansion area moderate to high natural character effects are identified where ski trails, access roads and services intersect hydrologically connected wetlands, seepages and waterways. While these effects cannot be entirely avoided, proposed mitigation—including sediment and erosion controls, maintaining hydrological connectivity through culverts, and long-term weed management—would reduce residual effects to moderate for other freshwater environments within the Doolans Basin.

Landscape Effects on the Outstanding Natural Landscape

Within the Rastus Burn catchment, the existing ski field development has modified landscape character. The proposed upgrades, including the expansion of the gondola base station and lower gondola alignment, would be perceived as consistent with the established ski field context. Landscape effects in this lower part of the Rastus Burn catchment are therefore assessed as low overall.

However, moderate adverse landscape effects are identified where new infrastructure extends into less modified areas, particularly around the gondola midstation on Helicopter Ridge and along the associated ski return trails. In these locations, earthworks and retaining structures would introduce man-made patterns along a currently intact rocky ridgeline, reducing landform legibility and naturalness. These effects are relatively localised and would be experienced in the context of the existing ski field.

In contrast, within the Doolans Basin, the proposal would result in a high level of landscape effects. The introduction of buildings, gondola infrastructure, ski trails and associated activity into a previously undeveloped alpine basin would noticeably reduce landscape naturalness, intactness and sense of remoteness. The effects are assessed as high during construction and likely remaining high in the long term, despite careful siting, consolidation of infrastructure, recessive design and colour treatment, and minimisation of earthworks. However, the area affected by the landscape change is spatially and visually confined within a small part of the wider Remarkables Conservation Area and ONL.

Visual Amenity Effects

Visual effects have been assessed using ZTV modelling, site investigations and assessment from representative public viewpoints. The visual catchments for the proposal are contained by surrounding ridgelines.

Visual effects within the Rastus Burn visual catchment are generally low, with visibility primarily limited to short sections of the ski field access road

and viewpoints within the existing ski field. From the Lake Alta track views would include the proposed ski trail/ access track west of the midstation. From more distant public viewpoints within the Wakatipu Basin, the proposal would be barely discernible and would result in very low visual effects.

Within the Doolans Basin visual catchment, visual effects range from moderate to high from nearby ridgelines and within the upper basin where the proposal would be visible in its immediate context. These effects are limited to surrounding elevated viewpoints that are visited by a limited number of recreational users. There are no adverse visual effects on backcountry tracks or huts within the Remarkables Conservation Area, and no long-distance views into the Site from the Wye Creek catchment or Gibbston Valley.

Cumulative Effects

Cumulative effects have been considered in relation to the existing ski field development and in light of the proposed new infrastructure within the Doolans Basin. In the Rastus Burn catchment, cumulative effects are assessed as low, given the existing modified context and landscape outcomes anticipated under the SASZ.

In the Doolans Basin catchment, cumulative effects associated with multiple project components occurring within a confined area are assessed as moderate within the limited spatial extent of the upper Doolans Basin due to the number of components proposed.

Statutory Assessment Summary

Within the Queenstown Lakes District, the majority of works occur within the Ski Area Sub-Zone, where ski field development is anticipated within the ONL context. Landscape and visual effects in this area are assessed as consistent with policy direction, subject to mitigation. The landscape capacity for the establishment of gondolas has been assessed as limited within the district plan, provided they are positioned in a way that is sympathetic to the landform, located and designed to be recessive in the landscape, and protect the area's ONL values. It is considered that the existing landscape values of the more modified area around the existing Curvey and Sugar Bowl lifts will be maintained, with only low effects on access to the highly natural Lake Alta basin which are limited to views of the proposal from the access track that extends through the ski field.

Within the Central Otago District, the proposal would result in high landscape and natural character effects within an ONL that currently displays very high naturalness, with very high natural character effects on an alpine tarn where a water reservoir is proposed. While the proposed structures have been located to largely avoid freshwater habitats, there will be adverse natural character effects on ephemeral streams intersecting with access tracks, and on a moderately sized tarn and Doolans Creek for snow making purposes. The proposal represents a change in landscape character from a remote setting to a more formalised alpine recreation environment. Overall, while the proposal will result in high adverse landscape effects within the Doolans Basin, it is concluded that these effects are localised within the wider Conservation Area and ONL. These adverse effects are

potentially high but spatially and visually confined, and mitigation measures are proposed to minimise both landscape and natural character effects.

Conclusions

Overall, the landscape, visual amenity and natural character effects associated with the proposed gondola, including structures and stations, and ski trails are assessed to be **very low to low-moderate** and are considered to be of a level that is in keeping with existing development within the ski field, leading to no more than minor additional effects within the Rastus Burn catchment.

The currently largely unmodified Doolans Basin is more sensitive to the proposed changes, which will include a large man-made structure in the form of the base station/ gondola storage, earthworks and the gondola midstation/ towers. The landscape, visual amenity and natural character effects within the Doolans Basin are assessed to be **low-moderate** to **high,** with very high natural character effects on a tarn, and are therefore considered to be up to significant within localised areas. However, within the context of the wider ONL and Remarkables Conservation Area these potentially significant effects would occur within a very confined part of the mountain landscape without impacting on the broader landscape context.

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Appendices

Graphic Supplement (bound separately A3)

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Scope of the report

Boffa Miskell Limited (BML) have been engaged by NZSki Ltd (NZSki) in February 2025 to undertake a Landscape Effects Assessment (LEA) relating to approvals required to upgrade, maintain and operate the existing Remarkables Ski Area including an extension of the ski area into the adjacent Doolans Basin (the "Site"). The Site boundaries cross the territorial authority boundary between Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC) and Central Otago District Council (CODC), with the existing ski field currently contained in the former.

Specifically, the proposal will:

- Increase the capacity and extent of The Remarkables Ski Area, to allow for more snowsports users and sightseers to be able to access and experience the alpine environment of the Remarkables Mountain Range.
- Construct a new ski gondola to provide ski access into the Doolans Basin which will consist of a base drive station at the existing Remarkables Ski Area base building, a new midstation on Helicopter Ridge, a new return drive station at the new Doolans cabin building and associated towers and cables.
- Construct within the Doolans Basin an intermediate ski slope, a cabin building (containing hospitality, staff and gondola facilities), a learners ski slope, a water take in Doolans Creek and a water reservoir.
- Enable upgrades to services and provision of new services infrastructure to support this upgraded capacity (power, water, wastewater, communications, snowmaking, transport and parking).
- Construct permanent and temporary access roads, and temporary laydown areas to construct the new facilities and infrastructure.
- Undertake all earthworks and retaining activities associated with the construction of the new facilities, infrastructure and roading.
- Undertake effects management activities to manage the effects of the proposal including remediation and revegetation following earthworks.
- Provide for all necessary operational and maintenance requirements for the extended ski area and associated infrastructure; and
- Apply for a new concession to operate on Conservation Land within Doolans Basin for 40 years and vary the existing concession held by NZSki to permit the works within the Rastus Burn.

The existing Remarkables Ski Area is zoned Rural - Ski Area Sub-Zone (SASZ) under the Proposed Queenstown Lakes District Plan (QLPDP), with the lower reaches of the Remarkables Ski Field access road being zoned Rural under the plan. The southeastern extent of the privately owned Remarkables Ski Field outside of the SASZ is also zoned Rural, which extends along the ridge that divides the ski field from the Doolans Basin and the Central Otago District. The existing ski field and proposed extension both fall entirely within land managed by the Department of Conservation (DOC), with the existing area located in the Rastus Burn

Recreation Reserve and the proposed Doolans Basin extension in the Kawarau Remarkables Conservation Area.

The area of the proposed Doolans Basin expansion is zoned Rural under the Central Otago District Plan (CODP).

The Remarkables Ski Area and area of the Doolans Basin expansion are both subject to Outstanding Natural Landscape (ONL) overlays, however the SASZ is an exception zone in relation to the landscape classifications used in the QLPDP due to anticipated development within this area[1]. The mid-section of the Remarkables Ski Field Access Road is located in the Northern Remarkables Priority Area (PA) ONL under the QLPDP.

This LEA assesses the landscape, visual amenity and natural character effects of the proposed ski field expansion on the immediate and surrounding environment character.

1.2 Project Background

BML has been assisting NZSki with the design of the proposal since 2022 when initial landscape advice was prepared that assisted in shaping the project. Following acceptance of the proposal as a listed project through the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 legislation, BML has been involved in the preparation of the substantive fast-track application. BML has provided assessment, advice and recommendations on the landscape, visual amenity and natural character effects of the proposal which has informed the design of the substantive proposal and proposed conditions of consent to manage the environmental effects of the proposal.

1.3 Other Technical Relevant Reports

The existing environment descriptions and effects assessments provided by a range of other experts involved in the project have been considered in this assessment. Other technical reports relevant to the assessment include the following:

- Doolans Basin Tarns, Weir, Water take and Reservoir Freshwater Ecological Impact Assessment (e3Scientific Limited, May 2026)
- Remarkables Skifield Doolans Expansion Ecological Impact Assessment (e3Scientific Limited, May 2026)
- Remarkables Upgrade and Doolans Expansion; A Heritage Assessment (Heritage Properties Ltd, March 2026)

1.4 Code of Conduct

The author of this report is Yvonne Pflüger, partner of BML. I (Yvonne Pflüger) am a registered landscape architect and have practiced for over 25 years, based in Queenstown for seven years, as a landscape planner. I have assisted several District/ Regional Councils in the South Island with the review of their plans by preparing territorial landscape studies. I specialise in preparing landscape and visual assessments for development projects within sensitive environments, as well as presentation of evidence for Council and Environment Court hearings, mediation and expert conferencing. I have prepared numerous landscape assessments for a

[1] QLDC ODP section 5.3.1.2

variety of projects, including resort and residential developments through to large-scale infrastructure developments, including airport, port, ski field, renewable energy and roading projects.

I regularly provide peer reviews and advice on consent applications to the EPA and various councils, including for MDC, QLDC and CODC where I am a member of the peer review panels. I am also a Certified Environmental Practitioner under the EIANZ, and a Certified Independent RMA Commissioner.

I confirm that I have read the Code of Conduct for expert witnesses contained in the Environment Court Practice Note 2023. This report has been prepared in compliance with that Code, as if it was expert evidence presented in proceedings before the Environment Court. Unless I state otherwise, this report is within my area of expertise, and I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions expressed in this report.

2.0 Landscape Assessment Methodology

2.1 Landscape Assessment Guidance

This assessment follows the concepts and principles outlined in *Te Tangi a te Manu: Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines*[2]. A full method is outlined in **Appendix 1** of this report. In summary, the effects ratings are based upon a seven-point scale which ranges from very low to very high.

Te Tangi a te Manu recognises the term 'landscape effects' as all-encompassing, and that visual effects and natural character effects are a subset of landscape effects. This assessment provides separate chapters to discuss landscape, visual and natural character effects, but is referred to throughout as Landscape Effects Assessment (LEA) in accordance with the Guidelines.

The significance of this area to manawhenua is acknowledged. NZSki has continued to engage with Ngāi Tahu with regard to the ski field expansion, however, a Cultural Values Assessment has not been prepared by Ngāi Tahu for the proposal. Assessment of effects on cultural landscape values is acknowledged as the domain of mana whenua. Where appropriate, however, recognised values have been identified based on the 2020 Ngāi Tahu Values Report prepared for the Kawarau/Remarkables Conservation Area reclassification process[3].

Given the nature of the Site and the relevance of different weather conditions to the visual effects assessment, the Site and surrounding landscape was visited in both summer and winter. Photographs from these site visits form part of the Graphic Supplement.

[2] 'Te Tangi a te Manu: Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines', Tuia Pito Ora New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects, July 2022.
[3] Remarkables Conservation Area, Summary of Ngāi Tahu Values, Practices and Associations, Kauati, Dec 2020

2.2 Assessment Process

This LEA follows the assessment process outlined below:

- Familiarisation of the project proposal and background documents, including the existing resource consents.
- Desktop review of the existing environment and landscape values. This included a review of the QLPDP and CODP. The Site is identified as forming part of an Outstanding Natural Feature and sitting within an Outstanding Natural Landscape by the Priority Area (PA) Schedules under the QLPDP, and is within the Kawarau Wāhi Tūpuna area. The CODP identifies the Site as sitting within an Outstanding Natural Landscape and area of Significant Natural Value.
- Site visit to understand the Site, its context, and nature of existing views.
- Review of the design and location of the proposed structures and buildings following the Site visit.
- Preparation of the assessment of landscape (natural character and visual) effects of the proposal.
- Provision of recommended mitigation measures to avoid, remedy and mitigate potential adverse effects.
- Provision of landscape visualisations.

To accompany this written assessment is a separately bound Graphic Supplement. The Graphic Supplement illustrates the figures, plans and photographs of the Site as well as a series of visual simulations (VS) of the proposal based on photographs taken from outside the Site.

2.3 Site Visit

Several site visits were undertaken by Yvonne Pfluger and Liz Gavin, Landscape Architects at BML. This included site visits through a variety of seasons (February and April 2023, March and April 2025), including winter site visits with snow on the ground (September 2022 and October 2025). The weather was fine with cloud cover at times.

The purpose of the multiple visits was to assess the landscape character and visual influence of the Site within its landscape context, as well as appraising the Site itself. This survey included a visual appraisal to consider the nature of existing views from publicly accessible viewpoints including roads (including the Remarkables Ski Field Access Road) and public walking tracks (including the Lake Alta Track and Wye Creek Route Track) close to Double Cone. Consideration was also given to public and private views identifying the potential for visual effects that may be experienced by the community within the Wakatipu Basin, however private property was not visited for this assessment.

In terms of places visited in the broader visual catchment, these included visiting the ski field access road and central/ northern Wakatipu Basin, where long distance views of the Site could be obtained.

A separate visit was undertaken to take the necessary photographs for the Visual Simulation work. This included re visiting the area, in particular the Wye Creek and Doolans Basin, as well as Lake Alta during winter with snow cover. The Site visit occurred on 3rd October 2025 during fine, clear and crisp winter weather conditions.

3.0 Proposal

This application seeks approvals under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024. The proposal is to expand existing ski related facilities at Remarkables Ski Field area as well as to expand ski related infrastructure into the adjacent Doolans Basin area. The Remarkables Ski Field area and new Doolans Basin expansion area are associated with separate visual catchments shown in Image 1 below (and different territorial authority areas) being separated by Helicopter Ridge, so the description below outline the relevant parts of the proposal (see Image 2) that required assessment of landscape effects under these two visual catchments.

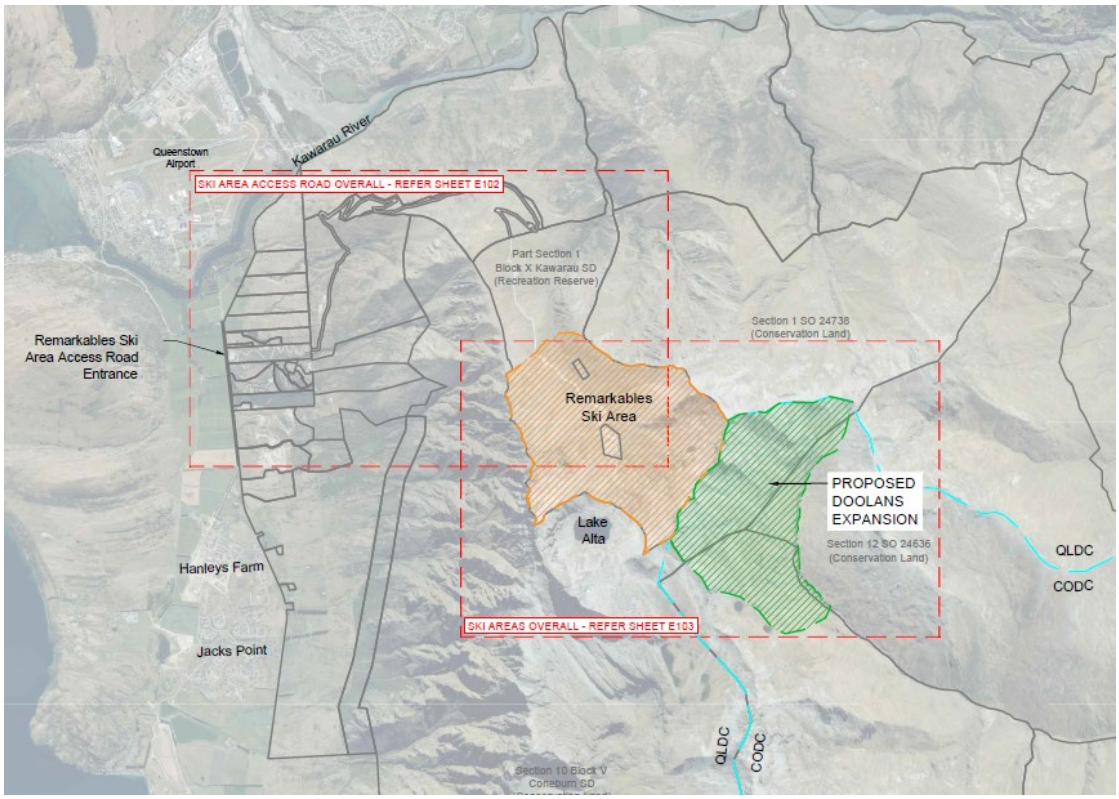


Image 1 Assessment areas/ visual catchments of Remarkables Ski Area and Proposed Doolans Basin Expansion Area, separated by Helicopter Ridge where mid station is situated.

3.1 Remarkables Ski Area Proposal

Within Rastus Burn area, the existing ski area and access road upgrades will encompass the following:

- Upgrade of existing services and associated facilities for the existing ski area including infield power distribution, water, wastewater, communications, and snowmaking to service the expanded ski area capacity and join into the Doolans extension.
- Carparking and transit hub near the Stage Highway 6 intersection with Remarkables Access Road (covered in a separate Landscape Assessment Report)[4].

[4] Remarkables Ski Area Carpark & Bus Hub, Landscape Effects Assessment, prepared for NZSki Ltd (BML, May 2026)

- Upgrade and extension of the existing Remarkables base amenities building and arrival surrounds to cater for an increased number of guests and integration with the new gondola.
- Construction of new gondola – Rastus Burn base station.
- Construction of gondola towers, cables and associated infrastructure between the Rastus Burn base station and Helicopter Ridge midstation for the new gondola;
- Two combined permanent vehicle access and skiing/snowboarding return trails from the gondola midstation at the ridgeline into the existing Sugar Bowl ski terrain and Curvey Basin ski terrain, supported by snowmaking.

3.2 Doolans Basin Expansion Proposal

Within the Doolans Basin, the ski area extension will encompass the following:

- A new gondola for snowsports users and sightseers to access the Doolans area including a midstation (with a viewing platform and patrol hut) at Helicopter Ridge and a base return station at the new Doolans base station along with gondola towers, cables and associated infrastructure.
- A gondola cabin parking building as part of the base building of the Doolans, with integrated maintenance, storage, bathroom, café facilities and emergency shelter space.
- One main intermediate ski trail in the Doolans from the gondola midstation at the ridgeline to the gondola base, supported by snowmaking.
- A learners snowsports area at the base of the Doolans with a covered passenger conveyor belt, supported by snowmaking.
- Establishment of supporting services and facilities in the Doolans – power, water, wastewater, communications, snowmaking.
- A permanent access road connected from the new midstation to the Doolans base area, integrated as part of the new main intermediate ski trail where possible.
- Water intake in Doolans Creek for snow making/ potable/firefighting supply, including access road.
- Water reservoir located in area of existing tarn with pump, pipes and access track.
- Installation of necessary operational controls for safe ski area operations for the existing and extended ski area and carparks, such as wayfinding signage, barriers/gates, permanent safety fencing/netting, snow making, snow fences, avalanche control, boundary markers.

3.3 Earthworks and Retaining Walls

It is understood that the majority of cut and fill batters can be rehabilitated by transplanting snow tussocks when undertaking earthworks. This would reduce the visual effects of earthworks in areas where snow tussocks are currently present, such as the lower part of the Doolans catchment. High-lying, wind-exposed ridgelines currently contain rock or scree with limited cushionfield and herbfield vegetation. It is understood that these cannot be transplanted and

exposed scree or rock will remain in these areas (eg in vicinity of the Helicopter Ridge, with access trails extending to the Sugarbowl and Curvey Basins).

Based on the Construction Management framework, where level changes, space constraints, ground conditions, or construction requirements require additional support, retaining structures and batter slopes are incorporated into the earthworks methodology.

Retaining and slope support solutions are selected to suit:

- Local ground conditions and geotechnical recommendations
- Height and extent of cut-and-fill interfaces
- Constructability within constrained alpine environments
- Long-term performance and integration with permanent works

Where practicable, geogrid-reinforced slopes are preferred in place of structural retaining, as these can reduce reliance on conventional wall systems and support more landform-responsive outcomes. Their suitability will depend on the availability and performance of fill material capable of meeting the required engineering specification.

Where geogrid-reinforced slopes are not suitable, other retaining solutions may be adopted to respond to local conditions and constructability requirements. These may include gabion retaining structures, or timber pole and lagging walls, including where necessary supplementary support such as buried ‘deadman’ anchors / piles.

The final retaining solution adopted in any location will be informed by detailed design and geotechnical assessment. For the purposes of the Fast-track application, indicative wall extents, lengths, and heights have been identified to define the assessed construction methodology and effects envelope.

3.4 Site Wide Landscape Planning Response

Due to the proposal’s location within an ONL, the siting and design of the structures and areas of earthworks have been carefully considered to ensure that the proposal responds to the natural environment and protects the outstanding natural landscape values. Whilst works within the Remarkables Ski Field area will be within an existing modified landscape, development within the Doolans Basin area will be introducing development where there is currently none. Therefore, a carefully considered response, based on landscape objectives, have assisted to shape this project.

Key landscape objectives include:

- **Integration** of the proposal into the outstanding landscape, by carefully considering the location, setting and characteristics and values of the landscape. This will be achieved through sensitively placing the buildings and structures in the landscape to avoid significant modification to the topography and removal of indigenous vegetation. In effect, placing buildings and structures into the local folds and undulations, utilising the existing features, including vegetation, to anchor the development. Use of recessive colours and materials will help to minimise visibility of the buildings.
- **Minimising the presence of human footprint** through consolidation as a design principle. This has focussed on, wherever possible, aligning required temporary and permanent access roads, aligning infrastructure with the permanent access roads,

minimising the number of gondola towers and designing the new Doolans cabin building to be multi-functional.

- **Avoiding significant earthworks**. It is acknowledged that earthworks will be required for construction of the gondola and drive stations, as well as permanent and temporary access roads, ski trails, reservoirs and infrastructure, however, wherever possible earthworks were combined to avoid duplication of works and also located to minimise disturbance of ecologically sensitive areas.

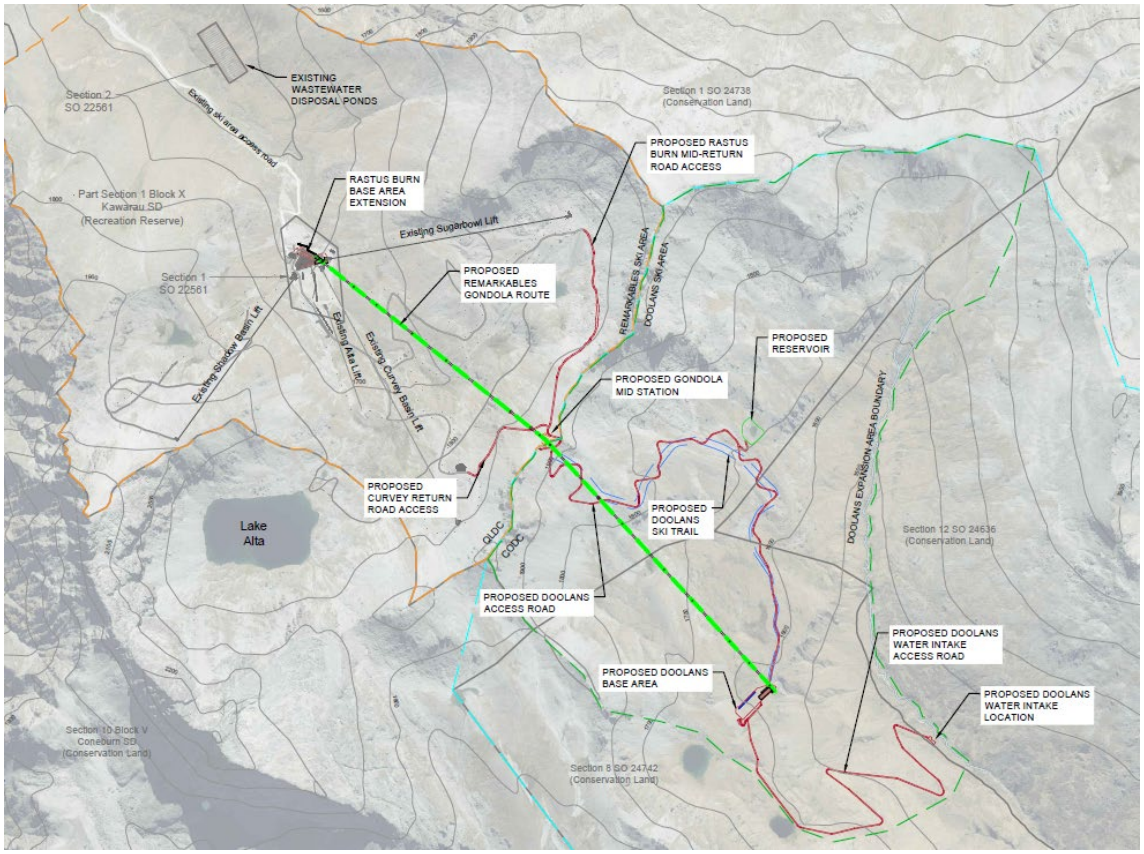


Image 2 Overview Plan of proposal.

4.0 Existing Environment

The Site is located to the east of the main ridgeline of the Remarkables mountain range, within both the upper catchment of the Rastus Burn watercourse and the upper catchment of the adjacent Doolans Creek Right Branch watercourse. The Site is mountainous with elevations above 1,600masl and is located approximately 12-13km east of Queenstown.

4.1 Broad Landscape Context

The Remarkables Mountains to the south of the Wakatipu Basin and the main settlement area of Frankton and to the east of Jacks Point, contain some of the district's most iconic landscapes. The steep mountain slopes, ridges and peaks have formed over time through past glaciation activity, tectonic uplift and ongoing fluvial processes and are highly expressive of their formative processes. As a result of this, the mountains are highly valued for their impressive skyline views from the wider Queenstown area. With the existing Remarkables Ski Field and associated access, the area is also very popular for recreational activities, including skiing and hiking. The Rastus Burn catchment is modified containing the Remarkables Ski Field infrastructure, while the Wye and Doolans Basin catchments to the south are currently undeveloped and natural.

Due to the highly intact nature of the landscape in the southern catchments, much of the landscape is Conservation Land. The area to the south of the existing ski field, which is encompassed in the Rastus Burn Recreation Area, falls within the Kawarau/ Remarkables Conservation Area. This area includes the Kawarau/Remarkables and Tapuae-o-Uenuku/Hector Mountains, which are formed mainly of Palaeozoic Haast Schist. Both mountain ranges, but particularly the Remarkables are steep due to former glaciation, with some subsequent slumping, erosion and alluvial down cutting. Extensive rock faces and outcrops are a distinctive characteristic of the Kawarau/Remarkables which can also be seen within the Doolans catchment, but to a lesser degree compared with the impressive rock faces of Double and Single Cone. While the western faces of the Rastus Burn/ Doolans Basin ridgeline are distinctively steep, the eastern faces are typically gentler, and fall towards the Nevis River catchment.

The Remarkables Ski Field Access Road provides access to the Remarkables Ski Field, which is located within the upper catchment of the Rastus Burn and close to the distinctive large tarn of Lake Alta. Here ski related facilities, including chair lifts, car parking, amenities/ base building and earth-worked ski slopes are located. The wider ski field is contained by the adjacent steep peaks and ridges, extending to over 2000masl.The ski related facilities are subject to the specific SASZ under the QLPDP.

Beyond these ridges and peaks, is the upper catchment of the Doolans Basin valley, which is largely devoid of any anthropogenic modifications. Here, steep scree slopes, rocky outcrops, peaks, ridges, tarns and alpine vegetation dominate, providing a highly natural landscape. A small historic hut, water race and rough track are the only modifications in the Doolans Basin.

The ecology of the landscape is dominated by snow tussock with a greater range of diversity within the alpine zone, including snow tussock grasslands herbfields wetlands, snowbanks fellfields and rock habitat (see below for more detailed description).

4.1.1 Local Landscape Description and Values

The Site is divided into two topographical catchment areas. The descriptions and landscape values outlined below are divided into the two catchments:

- Rastus Burn/ Kawarau catchment description and values (includes the Remarkables Ski Field) and
- Doolans Basin catchment description and values.

Whilst it is necessary to understand the specific values of a landscape, it is important to note that landscape draws on diverse sources (natural sciences, humanities, cultural perspectives), it is perceived and experienced as a unified phenomenon. It is an integrated whole. It is more than a summary of data—the whole is greater than the sum of the parts[5].

4.2 Rastus Burn/ Kawarau Catchment Description & Values

The Rastus Burn/ Kawarau catchment forms the northwest/western watershed of the Site and includes the Lake Alta Basin within the Rastus Burn, extending up to the Doolans Creek West Ridge. The Doolans Creek West Ridge sits behind (to the east of) the iconic western face of the Remarkables Range (the Remarkables West Ridge) which forms the eastern backdrop to Jacks Point, and the eastern backdrop to Lake Whakatipu near Frankton and Queenstown CBD.

The existing Remarkables Ski Field is located within the Rastus Burn geographical catchment. This includes the upper ridgeline and saddle between the existing Curvey and Sugar Bowl Lifts, which is located to the east of the (current) extent of the SASZ, that extends to the Doolans West Ridge. The entire Remarkables Ski Field is currently situated within the Rastus Burn Catchment, behind (east of) the Remarkables West Face, the dominant ridgeline. This catchment falls outside of the Remarkables Conservation Area and is within the Rastus Burn Recreation Reserve.

4.2.1 Rastus Burn/ Kawarau Catchment Landscape Values

Within the QLPDP, the Site is contained within an Outstanding Natural Landscape (refer to Image 3 below). The QLPDP lists the Site as being within Schedule 21.22.14 Priority Area (PA) ONL Northern Remarkables. The Northern Remarkables PA extends from the Kawarau River southwards to include the rugged and steep terrain associated with the northern faces of the Remarkable Range framing the southern side of the Wakatipu Basin. The southern boundary of the PA/ONL corresponds with the district boundary that is formed by mountain ridgelines, and to the east of the Remarkables Ski Area Sub-zone – extending through to near Chard Farm within Gibbston Valley.

The full QLPDP schedule[6] for the PA is appended to this landscape assessment under **Appendix 2** and below, the relevant landscape values are outlined. The Remarkables Kawarau has a Wāhi Tūpuna overlay[7] relating to the Remarkables (which is referenced as the Kawarau). The mana whenua values identified within the Kawarau Wāhi Tūpuna are whakapapa, rakatirataka, kaitiakitaka, mana, mauri, wāhi taoka and mauka.[8]

[5] Te Tangi a te Manu (2022), paragraph 4.21

[6] Contained within the Report and Recommendations of Hearing Commissioners: Dated 9 May 2024.

[7] PDP Part Five: District Wide Matters 39. Wāhi Tūpuna

[8] PDP Part Five: District Wide Matters 39. Wāhi Tūpuna: 39.6 Schedule of Wāhi Tūpuna

Whilst the Site is contained within a large landscape, many of the values are reasonably broad and relate to the composition of the context. Whilst some landscape values are not always specifically relevant to the Site, the following have been determined relevant and pertinent to the Site. For the purposes of this landscape assessment, the landscape encompasses the Remarkables Kawarau catchment encompasses those steep upper mountainous slopes and ridges of the Remarkables and the Rastus Burn catchment (with the existing ski field extending approximately 1600 to 2000m above sea level). The landscape also includes the Remarkables Ski Field Access Road.

Image 3: North Remarkables Outstanding Natural Landscape as shown within the QLDC PDP.

4.2.1.1 Physical Values

There are a range of physical landscape values that are associated with this landscape. They primarily relate to Geology and Geomorphology; Topography and Landforms; Climate and Soils; Hydrology; Vegetation; Ecology; Settlement; Development and Land Use; Archaeology and Heritage and Tāngata whenua.

The landscape is characterised by a highly articulated alpine geomorphology dominated by steep schist slopes, extensive scree fields, and large-scale post-glacial landslide formations. These landforms exhibit a high degree of visual and structural complexity, representing active erosional and depositional processes. The transition from steep upper slopes to alluvial fans and terraces along the Rastus Burn defines a strong geomorphic gradient. Key geological features such as the Remarkables Terrane Boundary, Block Field, and the Lake Alta cirque represent regionally and nationally significant Geopreservation Sites. These elements collectively contribute to the overall legibility and integrity of the landscape system, with each landform type demonstrating distinct process-response relationships and material characteristics.

The Site and surrounding area contains a number of notable geological features resulting from glaciation and erosion which form complex surface and subsurface patterns. This resulted in the

formation of rock tors, areas of shingle, boulder fields exposed ridges, with gentler slopes and subsequently complex hydrological patterns interlinking the terrain. The geology of the area is predominantly metamorphic rocks containing various forms of schist, greenschist and greyschist and Pleistocene to Holocene glacier deposits (till consisting of variably weathered, generally bouldery angular gravel with minor sand in cirque moraines) (GNS, 2022).

Hydrological networks function as critical structuring elements within this landscape system. The Rastus Burn drains to the north into the Kawarau River (approx distance 6km), conveying alpine runoff and sediment through a series of alluvial fans and terraces. Lake Alta, a cirque lake formed by glacial excavation, serves as a closed hydrological basin with high scenic and scientific value and is recognised as a geopreservation site[9]. A network of smaller tarns within the upper Rastus Burn contributes to surface water retention and ecological connectivity.

Vegetation patterns display clear ecological stratification corresponding to altitude, aspect, and soil substrate. Regenerating indigenous grey shrubland and Dracophyllum scrub dominate mid- to lower-slope environments, well below the ski field, providing structural habitat and contributing to slope stability. Higher elevation zones where the existing ski field is located are defined by snow tussock grassland and alpine cushionfields, with alpine cushion bogs forming along moist areas adjacent to tarns and streams. These vegetation communities deliver ecological functions including erosion control, habitat provision, and hydrological regulation, while maintaining the visual coherence of the alpine system.

The lower terraces near the Kawarau River exhibit a mix of short tussock–exotic grassland mosaics interspersed with pasture, while scattered kowhai trees provide localised biodiversity and visual interest.

Four species of lizard are known from the wider Rastus Burn Recreation Reserve: McCann's skink (*Oligosoma maccanni*), short toed gecko (*Woodworthia* "southern mini"), tussock skink (*Oligosoma chionochloescens*), and pallid skink (*Oligosoma* aff. *inconspicuum* "Pallid"). The landscape is subject to ecological pressures from a range of pest species that alter vegetative and faunal composition. Mammalian pests such as deer, goats, and mustelids exert grazing and predation pressures, while invasive plant species — including wilding conifers — disrupt native plant communities and visual integrity.

Human modification is spatially contained and contextually responsive to the underlying landform and ecological framework. Land use on the lower terraces is characterised by pastoral and viticultural activity, while built development maintains of low visual prominence. The Remarkables Ski Field, located within a series of elevated basins, is visually recessive in wider landscape views, but the large-scale base building, a number of chair lifts and earthworks to create the ski trails are clearly detectable when viewed from within the basin. In addition, the access road introduces a linear visual element that contrasts with the natural form of the mountain when viewed from the wider Wakatipu Basin.

Overall, the landscape demonstrates a balanced interface between natural processes and ecological systems in the Doolans catchment with an alpine environment exhibiting high geomorphological, hydrological, and visual integrity and more detectable human intervention within the Rastus Burn catchment.

4.2.1.2 Perceptual Values

The mountain landscape that surrounds the Rastus Burn landscape exhibits a highly legible expression of glacial, fluvial, and alluvial processes, with steep schist slopes, incised valleys,

[9] Geopreservation Site 284: Lake Alta cirque: A classic lake-filled cirque with steep rocky sides and back, and patches of moraine over schist bedrock at the front lip. Importance = C; Vulnerability = 3.

and alluvial fans forming a distinct geomorphic framework. Indigenous vegetation within the Rastus catchment enhances this natural legibility, reinforcing hydrological and topographic structure. Vegetation patterns transition from natural alpine and subalpine communities at higher elevations to more cultural and managed vegetation across the lower terraces, creating a clear ecological and visual gradient that reflects natural process and land-use intensity.

The Remarkables Mountains, which the ski area forms part of, provide a sequence of significant visual experiences from both proximate and distant vantage points. Panoramic views from Queenstown, the Crown Range, and the Whakatipu Basin capture the dramatic ridges and peaks that define the Remarkables' skyline with Double Cone and Single Cone that separate the Rastus Burn basin from the more prominent West Face of the range. These views are unified by the dominance of natural elements and the subservience of built development, contributing to the landscape's high visual quality and sense of openness. The ski field is largely obscured from these viewpoints that capture the wider Remarkables skyline, due to its location within a confined basin that only allows for a narrow viewshaft from part of the Wakatipu Basin.

Levels of naturalness vary spatially across the landscape. The mountain slopes outside the ski field retain a very high degree of perceived naturalness due to their scale, form, and limited modification, while the lower river terraces express a more cultural character, shaped by pastoral and viticultural use, shelterbelts, and exotic species. The ski field has led to modifications through built form and earthworks for the establishment of ski tracks which detract from the naturalness within these modified areas. Despite these modifications, the overall composition maintains coherence through its integration of natural geomorphology with carefully scaled human activity, achieving a sense of landscape fit.

Aesthetic, perceptual, and transient qualities further enhance the area's landscape value. Seasonal snow cover, shifting light, and atmospheric conditions animate the mountains, while the colour changes of pasture and exotic vegetation contribute visual variety throughout the year. The juxtaposition of sublime, wild alpine landforms with the cultivated valley floor produces a dynamic and memorable visual composition. This interplay of natural form, process expression, and restrained human presence defines the wider Remarkables Mountain Range as a landscape of exceptional physical and aesthetic integrity where the ski field modifications are located within a visually confined basin.

4.2.1.3 Associative values

The Remarkables and Kawarau landscape hold deep cultural significance for Ngāi Tahu, whose whakapapa connections to the land and water create a kaitiaki responsibility to protect their mauri. The range's prominence above Whakatipu-wai-māori links it to the Ātua, while the Kawarau River served as an important traditional route between Whakatipu-wai-māori and Mata-au, and a key mahika kai site for gathering native species such as tuna and weka. Mana whenua values, including mauka, wāhi taoka, ara tawhito, mahika kai, and nohoaka, continue to underpin the cultural identity and meaning of the landscape.

The significance of this area to manawhenua is acknowledged. NZSki has continued to engage with Ngāi Tahu with regard to the ski field expansion however a Cultural Values Assessment has not been prepared by Ngāi Tahu for the proposal. Assessment of effects on cultural landscape values is acknowledged as the domain of mana whenua. Where appropriate, however, recognised values have been identified based on the 2020 Ngāi Tahu Values Report prepared for the Kawarau/Remarkables Conservation Area reclassification process[10]. The following outline of values is based this report.

[10] Remarkables Conservation Area, Summary of Ngāi Tahu Values, Practices and Associations, Kauati, Dec 2020

The connections Ngāi Tahu has with Ngā Puna Wai Karikari a Rākaihautū and Kawarau are both historical and contemporary, tangible and intangible. Kawarau is both the name of the mountain range and the adjacent river to the north, thought to have been named after a local rangatira although there is now no direct reference to this tūpuna. This whakapapa connection with the archaeological, written and oral records enables the exchange, expression and recognition of Ngāi Tahu mātauranga tuku iho. It provides an ongoing presence of the mana of Ngāi Tahu in its takiwā.

Historically, the maunga was a significant landmark and is surrounded on all sides by mahinga kai and nohoanga. Historically, the Conservation Area is part of a much larger network of mahinga kai and a highly visible landmark in Te Ara a Tamatea, the Whakatipu route across the lake to the West Coast, and the link to Potiki-whaka-rumaki-nao and the Mata-au Clutha River.

Traditional nohoanga have been identified in the Conservation Area with more suspected to have existed, although there is no physical evidence of this at present. A nohoanga entitlement is active at Wye Creek. Kawarau is recorded as a mahinga kai site where weka, kākāpō, kea and tuna (eel) were gathered. It is also a place of seasonal occupation. While most species traditionally harvested in the Conservation Area can no longer be found in sustainable quantities, it still provides habitat to native fish species and plants. The Conservation Area contains recorded, known, and suspected wāhi tapu and wāhi tūpuna; some in the form of archaeological sites.

European historic layers add depth to this cultural foundation. Gold mining, early pastoralism, and historic routes illustrate the evolution of human interaction with the wider Wakatipu landscape that the Remarkables Range forms part of. As grazing took place on the lower slopes of the mountain range, these remnants, when viewed alongside Ngāi Tahu values, reflect a landscape shaped by both indigenous stewardship and settler enterprise.

Today, the Remarkables Mountains are a defining visual and recreational landmark, with the ridgeline above the prominent West Face particularly notable in views from Queenstown and Lake Wakatipu. While the Rastus Burn basin is visually enclosed as less memorable, the northern side of the range is viewed from the wider Wakatipu Basin. The mountain's dramatic form is widely celebrated through art, tourism, and outdoor recreation, including skiing, walking and climbing activities. Lake Alta is visited by hikers in summer and the wider area is used for ski touring, mountaineering and ice climbing in winter. Scenic routes such as SH 6 and the private Remarkables Ski Field Access Road and nearby trails, enhance public access and appreciation to this highly valued alpine setting. The private ski field access road is utilised by visitors and recreationists to access the conservation land year-round.

4.3 Doolans Basin Catchment Description & Values

The majority of the Site associated with the proposed ski area extension is located within the eastern side of the Kawarau Remarkables, within the upper catchment of the Doolans Creek Right Branch (Doolans Basin). To the south is the Doolans Creek Left Branch. These creeks collectively drain into Doolans Creek which then discharges into the Nevis, a large river catchment which connects with the Kawarau River further north. The Site is also within the Kawarau Remarkables Conservation Area and Landscape unit LU3 Nevis, a subunit (c) Doolans, within the CODP.

The Department of Conservation commissioned a landscape values assessment of this area in 2010 that was undertaken by Blakely Wallace Associates[11]. This assessment describes the

[11] Blakely Wallace Associates; Kawarau Remarkables Conservation Area Landscape and Visual Assessment; 2010

values of the subunit C which includes both Doolans tributary branches (the left and right) as well as the lower reaches of the catchment. The landscape of this upper catchment is described as:

> *"The Nevis side (within the CA) includes the rugged, spectacular glaciated peaks and alpine zone including the many glacial and peri-glacial features common to the whole of the summit area. These characteristics include high alpine cirque basins, small lakes or tarns contained within the high basins, nivation features, large areas of bare rock, scree and long periods of snow lie. (and described more fully elsewhere). Numerous unnamed peaks are above 2000m. Named peaks include Mt Tuwhakaroria (2307m) Te Karearea Peak ((2252m)"*[12]

4.3.1 Doolans Basin Catchment Landscape Values

The Central Otago District Rural Review Landscape Assessment, 2007, identifies the Doolans Basin catchment as being located within Landscape Unit 10 (Hector Mountains, Nevis Valley, Garvie and Old Woman Ranges), and considers the Doolans Basin to have extreme sensitivity[13]. The overall ratings in this study ranged from low to extreme sensitivity, which includes ONLs at a high and extreme sensitivity rating, displaying high natural character and landscape quality (see Table 1 for ratings from Central Otago Landscape Assessment). It is noted that the methodology of this landscape study for the assessment of ONFLs is not in line with the approach outlined in more recent best practice guidance[14]. However, based on the values assessment provided below, this report also concluded that the Doolans Basin and surrounding landscape qualifies as an ONL.

Rating	Sensitivity	Protection under RMA
7	Extreme sensitivity	Outstanding Natural Landscape (ONL) – High natural character values; high landscape quality.
6	High sensitivity	Outstanding Natural Landscape (ONL) – High natural character values; high landscape quality.
5	Significant sensitivity	Landscape of District Significance. Above average quality, some high natural character values.
4	Moderate sensitivity	Average landscape quality.
3	Limited sensitivity	Below average landscape quality.
2	Low sensitivity	Fairly poor landscape quality.

Table 1: Ratings from Central Otago Landscape Assessment (p.9-10)

[12] Ibid pages 10-11

[13] Central Otago Landscape Assessment, prepared by LA4 for CODC, 2007

[14] Te Tangi a te Manu; Landscape Assessment Guidelines, July 2022

4.3.1.1 Physical Values

The Nevis side of the Kawarau/Remarkables range exhibits exceptionally high visual and scenic values, defined by its rugged landforms, steep tussock- and shrubland-covered slopes, and expansive valley sequences. The landscape expresses a complete altitudinal gradient from the Nevis River to the summit ridge, illustrating strong geomorphological coherence and process legibility.

The Doolans Basin catchment forms part of the Tāpuae o Uenuku Hector Mountains which forms the western extent of the Nevis River catchment. Similar to the Rastus Burn part of the Site, the mountain range is characteristic of the glacial geomorphology of the broader context. This includes steep schist slopes, alluvial fans and large-scale post-glacial landslide formations. Key local features within the Doolans Basin include Mount Tūwhakarōria, and Te Kārearea Peak to the south, and Mount Salmond to the north.

The hydrology of the area comprises steep and short catchments fed by small alpine tarns. Notable features include Lake Te Kōhua and several tarns within the Upper Doolans Catchment including the left and right branch. This network of smaller tarns within the Doolans Basin contributes to surface water retention and ecological connectivity. These upper, alpine streams are devoid of any structures and modifications and are flanked by extensive alpine tussockland, or gravel and rock in the upper reaches. In the Doolans Creek Right Branch the historic Glen Roy Raceman's hut is located with the presence of the water race remaining in places downstream of Mt Salmond. The Doolans Creek Right Branch has a gentler angled catchment that drains into the lower Nevis River approximately 17 km to the east, capturing numerous small tributaries along the way. The hydrological system exhibits strong interdependence with geomorphological processes, influencing slope stability, vegetation zonation, and visual legibility. Collectively, these features create a cohesive hydrological framework that reinforces the spatial and ecological structure of the landscape.

As identified in the Central Otago District Rural Review Landscape Assessment, 2007, this landscape is renowned for jagged rocky peaks, rocky outcrops and schist slopes/rock fields and scree. This also includes the associated ecological values such as herb fields, tussock lands, seepage areas, wetlands, tarns and waterfalls which feed into the Doolans right branch. In winter many of these values are covered in snow, with the topography appearing much smoother and more uniform, with rocky outcrops forming chutes and texture in an otherwise white landscape. No larger indigenous forest species are present, although red beech, Hall's totara; and some *Leptospermum* would have once been present at lower altitudes[15].

The main ecosystem types within the Site include high-alpine fellfield on stable substrate, high-alpine snowbank vegetation and seepages with wetlands on hillslopes. The following information is based on the e3Scientific ecological assessment[16]:

Tussock grassland is the dominant vegetation community present throughout the study area and wider Remarkables Ecological District at similar altitudes. Snow Tussock, with *Chionochloa macra* above approximately 1600 m asl is the dominant species, with *Chionochloa rigida* becoming the more prevalent species below this elevation, with lesser amounts of *Poa colensoi* throughout all elevations. Greater than 99 % of the overall vegetation cover within this community consists of indigenous species, with isolated areas of bare ground, rock, exotic herbs and grasses. Below 1400masl Dracophyllum scrub is increasingly prevalent, such as in the Doolans Creek valley.

[15] Department of Conservation (2003). *Ecoregions of New Zealand*. Science & Technical Publishing, Wellington. Retrieved from https://www.doc.govt.nz/documents/science-and-technical/ecoregions4.pdf

[16] Remarkables Skifield Doolans Expansion Ecological Impact Assessment, e3Scientific Ltd, March 2026

Cushionfield communities are scattered across the study area, and are prevalent along exposed ridges and knolls and alpine locations prone to drought or higher snowfall. These communities have developed in response to high wind and sun exposure with relatively stoney substrate, and shallow soil depths.

The lower faces of the Doolans Basin are covered in numerous interconnected cushion bog, riparian and seepage wetlands. Cushion bogs are present on relatively level or gently sloping ground within hill crests, basins, terraces, and adjacent to other wetland types. Enclosed within are small formations of string mire. The soils are predominantly peat and have high water tables, often exhibiting extensive areas of standing water. Riparian wetlands are present along the edges of streams throughout the Doolans Basin catchment and are characterised by being wet or saturated for at least part of the year; often occurring in association with ephemeral or intermittent creeks.

Seepage wetlands are present throughout the lower faces of the Doolans Basin; occurring where groundwater emerges on hillsides or at the edge of slopes as a result of upwelling or subsurface geomorphological patterns. Throughout the study area seepages drain to or from other wetland classes connecting the large freshwater features. Riparian wetlands occur along the edges of streams in the Doolans catchment. Waterways are characterised by a channelised flow path that either permanently, or periodically, channels water; often with a shingle substrate, shallow soils, or subsurface flow overtopped by boulders. The tarn waterbodies are largely composed of medium sized schist shingles forming as a result of recent retreat of a cirque glacier. Very few plants grow within the tarn extent as a result of large fluctuations in the water level and temperatures experienced from extreme frosts to drought.

Rockfield communities are prevalent across the upper elevations of the study area where the ridgeline drops into the Doolans Basin and Rastus Burn catchments. The rockfield areas have steep slopes prone to movement of the rock substrates, within avalanche prone areas, thus lacking suitable conditions for rapid vegetative stabilisation. Therefore, a significant proportion of these areas do not contain any vegetation. Where vegetation is present it is scattered, commonly accounting for less than 25 % of the total cover. Rocky outcrop plant communities are present in small pockets across the landscape where bedrock is exposed at or near the surface. These communities are defined by their harsh conditions including limited soil accumulation, nutrient poor environments, and exposure to the elements. As a result of these conditions, vegetation within rocky outcrop communities tends to be sparse and patchy. Small areas of snowbank community occur in high alpine areas which hold snow cover for up to seven months of the year.

The site includes a variety of suitable habitats potentially utilised by a range of indigenous faunal species. The indigenous avifauna species observed or known to be found within the Remarkables alpine environments include the eastern falcon (*Falco novaeseelandiae* subsp. *novaeseelandiae*), Australasian harrier (*Circus approximans*), paradise shelduck (*Tadorna variegata*), kea (*Nestor notabilis*), southern black-backed gull (*Larus dominicanus* subsp. *dominicanus*) and New Zealand pipit (*Anthus novaeseelandiae* subsp. *novaeseelandiae*). The area also provides habitat for a large number of invertebrate species.

Due to the remoteness of this area of the Hector Mountains there are limited human modifications or structures present. Four-wheel drive tracks can be found at lower elevations associated with high country farming activities, including a rough 4WD track that extends from Coal Pit Saddle to Ben Cruachan via Mt Salmond. Additionally, some low level gold working and

the Race Man's hut and water race was established in the lower elevations of the Doolans Creek Right Branch.[17]

4.3.1.2 Perceptual Values

The open, dry character of the Doolans Basin catchment enhances visual exposure and contributes to the dramatic spatial composition of the wider Nevis Valley, where natural patterns and textures dominate the visual experience. Panoramic views from Nevis Road and Duffers Saddle reveal a striking visual contrast between the open valley floor and the towering, glaciated ranges beyond, culminating in one of Otago's most memorable and distinctive alpine vistas.

The Tāpuae o Uenuku Hector Mountains including the Doolans Basin catchment are an excellent example of a highly intact and legible glacial landscape expressive of the fluvial and alluvial formative processes. This is reinforced through the unmodified hydrology within the catchment and vegetation patterns which remain coherent from the screes within the upper reaches to the more modified pasture within the valley below.

The alpine environment of the Doolans Basin catchment affords several transient and aesthetic characteristics. This includes seasonal snow cover, shifting light and shadows, and atmospheric conditions. The intact and legible transition of the sublime and wild alpine landscape within the upper reaches to the pastoral characteristics of the valley floor is a key characteristic of this landscape. While currently undeveloped, this part of the conservation land is located adjacent to the existing ski field and in a location that is visually relatively contained. Visitors to this area mostly experience it during the winter/ spring for ski touring and no formal tracks or huts are located within this catchment to attract visitors during the summer months.

The relative isolation of the Doolans Basin and the lack of change contribute to a remote, backcountry character– even though the Remarkables Ski Field is reasonably close by. There is a degree of wildness associated with its unique location and landscape. In terms of recreation the main access relates to the 4WD track that extends from Coal Pit Saddle, which is accessed from the Gibbston Valley. Both the track and water race track are used by mountain bikers, walkers and off-road motorbikes. The water race track is also occasionally used as access to the historic DOC Race Man's hut for recreationists wanting to stay overnight. The 4WD track is used as an access route to Mount Salmond and Ben Cruachan, and up the headwaters of the right branch of Doolans Creek.

The legal road from Coal Pit Saddle receives regular use by four wheel drivers, mountain bikers, horse riders, trail bikers and some walkers. This track continues on to the Nevis Valley via Wentworth and Ben Nevis stations.

Overall, the Doolans Basin catchment has a very high level of intactness, expressiveness of formative processes, and coherent vegetation sequence across the wider context.

4.3.1.3 Associative Values

A detailed Heritage Assessment[18] was prepared for this project and the following section summarises the information within landscape-relevant sections.

The project area is part of a wider landscape which Māori traversed, occupied, and utilised for its extensive resources, including mahika kai gathering and transporting pounamu from the

[17] Remarkables Upgrade and Doolans Expansion; A Heritage Assessment, New Zealand Heritage Properties Ltd, March 2026

[18] Remarkables Upgrade and Doolans Expansion; A Heritage Assessment, New Zealand Heritage Properties Ltd, March 2026

Lake Wakatipu area. There are no kāika, nohoanga entitlements or stone sources identified within the proposed expansion zones, but the wider area includes mahika kai and some mahika toi, including freshwater fish lower parts of the Doolans Creek catchment, and bush and trees across the hilly slopes.

Assessment of effects on cultural landscape values is acknowledged as the domain of mana whenua. Therefore, this report does not attempt to assess the effects on cultural values, and no Cultural Values Assessment has been prepared by Ngāi Tahu for the proposal. The Conservation Area contains recorded, known, and suspected wāhi tapu and wāhi tupuna and Nohoanga entitlement in Wye Creek. While the physical effects of the ski field expansion do not occur in areas that have been identified for specific cultural values in the 2020 Ngāi Tahu Values Report prepared for the Kawarau/Remarkables Conservation Area reclassification process[19], it is acknowledged that the Ngāi Tahu connections with the wider Kawarau maunga area are both historical and contemporary, tangible and intangible. The effects would, therefore, likely extend beyond the physical resource.

During the mid nineteenth century explorers made their way through the landscape, although the alpine heights kept all but the hardiest of adventurers away. From the late 1850s pastoralists began to make their way inland, leasing large swathes of land from the Crown to develop extensive Runs, followed by gold mining, and to a lesser extent coal mining. While sheep were seasonally mustered into the high basins, including Wye Creek, Staircase Creek, and the Doolans, buildings and structures also sprang up. Pastoralists were only in the early years of establishing their domains when gold was discovered in Otago.

Gold mining activities took place in 1864 around the head of the right branch of Doolans Creek, and shortly after a coal mine was established. Given the geology of the Wakatipu Basin and Upper Nevis, sluicing was soon found to be the best method of retrieving gold. Sluicing required large amounts of high-pressure water that was not to be found on the flat. The solution was extensive water race construction which channeled high pressure water flow straight to the claims. Owen Doolan established the United Mining Company, which was first mentioned in the newspapers in September 1863. Described as having been at work for seven to eight months, Doolan and his crew were cutting “a splendid” water race to divert the course of the Shotover River for the purpose of gold mining. Given the nomenclature of Owen’s Creek, Doolans Creek and Doolan’s Saddle, the miner left a lasting legacy in the district. Additionally, the Welshmen’s water race, constructed in 1869, also originated from the head of Doolans Creek. A small corrugated iron-clad hut was constructed in the upper reaches of the right branch of the Doolans Creek that was used to accommodate race men while they maintained and repaired the Welshmen’s water race, a recorded archaeological site (F41/241). Today the hut is known as the Glenroy Raceman’s Hut, named for its association with the Glenroy Station which came to occupy the land. Maps do not provide evidence as to whether or not the Welshmen’s water race reached the alpine heights of the proposed expansion area.

Coal was used to supply power to gold mining dredges, as well as for domestic use. Coal was mined on the higher reaches of the mountains above the flat, showing prospectors were not averse to mining at extreme heights. For example, in 1886 Charles Steele applied for a lease to mine coal found on Doolans Saddle. By 1889 Gibson’s Coal mine had been established and was “chiefly remarkable” for mining coal 3,360 feet above sea level on the saddle between Gibbston and Doolans Creek. Like gold mining, coal mining utilised water races. Doolans Creek was as an important source of water for coal miners as for the diggers. Its water was used to sluice the face of the pit which made the coal easier to retrieve.

[19] Remarkables Conservation Area, Summary of Ngāi Tahu Values, Practices and Associations, Kauati, Dec 2020

These findings were limited to areas within the expansion zones, and no record of mining or occupation were found in the current ski area (refer to Heritage Properties Ltd Assessment).

The area proposed for the Doolans expansion is associated within the wider context of nineteenth and twentieth century activity. Within the Doolans area activities included gold mining, coal mining and pastoral run farming. There is documentary evidence of the following activities having taken place within the lower extremities of proposed expansion area:

- the Welshmen's water race, also known as the Cambrian water race, built from the head of the right branch of Doolans Creek; and
- gold mining at the head of the right branch of Doolans Creek.

Activities within proximity of the proposed Doolans expansion include:

- Glenroy Raceman's Hut built to house workers maintain and repairing the Welshmen's water race;
- gold mining at Doolans Creek, including the right branch;
- coal mining at Doolans Creek;
- coal mining on Doolan's Saddle; and
- activities associated with pastoral farming, including huts.

The Nevis Valley, traditionally known as Te Papapuni, holds deep cultural and historical significance. Ngāi Tahu has a long association with Central Otago and its rivers, with Te Rūnanga o Ōtākou recognising values such as kaitiakitanga, mauri, wāhi tapu, wāhi taoka, and traditional trails. Mana whenua used the valley as part of extensive inland routes that linked communities socially and economically, following river corridors through the high country.

Today, remnants of mining infrastructure and water races reflect the layered history. The landscape is still associated with its pastoral history with large stations still present within the valley. This transitions into public conservation land in the upper extent of the Nevis River catchment, including the Doolans Basin catchment.

4.4 Site Appraisal

The extent of the Site Appraisal Areas (as it relates to the Remarkables and Doolans areas) have been determined on **Figure 3 – Site Appraisal Plan**, and shown as Image 4 below. A description of each Appraisal Area is outlined below.

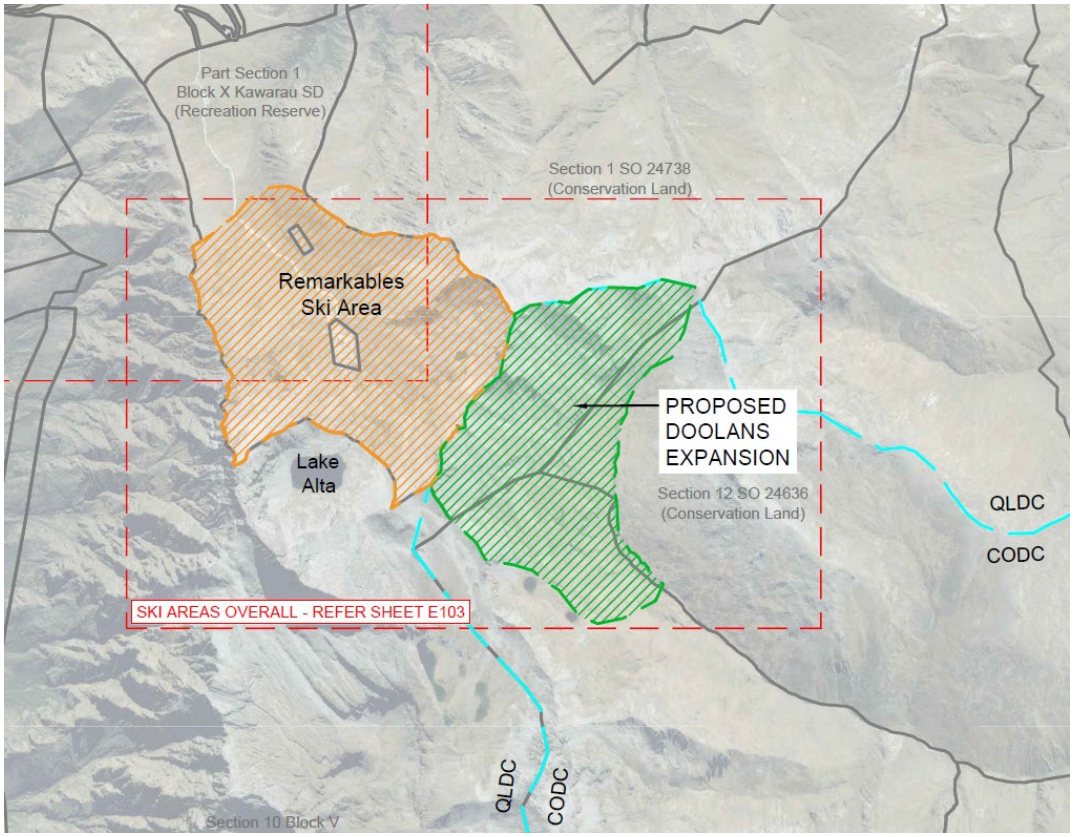


Image 4: Site appraisal catchments (excluding wastewater treatment plant and bus hub at SH6).

4.4.1 Remarkables Appraisal Area

The 'Appraisal Area' with regards to the Remarkables Site, encompasses the majority of the Ski Area Sub Zone (SASZ) and excludes the small catchment associated with Lake Alta. The Site extends to the south-eastern ridge above the Curvey and Sugar Bowl ski lifts, which separates the Remarkables 'Site' and basin from the adjacent Doolans 'Site' and basin. To the south, the Site excludes the small Lake Alta basin and follows the local ridge to an adjacent small basin area with a further small tarn. The Site extends in a northeasterly direction, down the northern spur of this small basin towards the Remarkables Ski Field Road and associated ski-related buildings. The Site then continues in a northerly direction to the west of the Shadow Basin ski lifts to include the existing base buildings, car parks and snow making ponds. The Site is steep, rocky and contains numerous man-made elements of ski-related infrastructure (see **Site Appraisal Photographs A to J)**.

At the base, in the centre and at the lowest part of the Site, is the main Remarkables base building. Accessible by the Remarkables Ski Field Access Road, the Remarkables base building is the main building for skiing operations, containing a restaurant, shop and facilities to hire ski equipment, and a range of associated sheds and ski patrol building. Immediately below the Remarkables hub building is a large car park (Car Park 1). To the south of the hub building are the four ski lifts, that radially extend southwards up slope towards the ridges containing the Site and upper basin (see below of lift map).

To the east is the Sugar Bowl Express; due south of this is the Curvey Basin Express ski lift and the shorter Alta ski lift, and to the west is the Shadow Basin Express ski lift which extends to the

immediate north of Lake Alta and below Double Cone. At the most elevated part of each ski lift is a small return drive building for lift operations.

On the mountainous steep slopes between and underneath the ski lifts are numerous ski slopes, most of which have been earth-worked to enable appropriate contouring for differing skill-levels, including a substantial terrain park within the Sugar Bowl.

An outline of the related existing ski infrastructure is contained on the Image below:

Image 5: Map of existing ski field with trails and lifts.

Due to the seasonality of the ski field, more people are evident during the winter months, however, people also regularly visit the area during other periods of the year. While the ski lifts and base building are not open during these non-skiing periods, the private access road provides paid access to the conservation area, in particular for hikers accessing Lake Alta, Wye Saddle and Wye Creek beyond, as well as rock climbers and mountaineers.

4.4.2 Doolans Site Area

The Doolans Site Area is located within Central Otago District Council (CODC) jurisdiction to the south-east of the existing Remarkables Ski Area. This area of the Site is more natural and remote than the western extent of the Site. This is evident within Site Appraisal Photograph I which reveals the rugged terrain of exposed schist rock, scree slopes, and tussock grassland that dominate the upper catchment. **Site Appraisal Photographs K to N** further illustrate the steep valley sides highlighting the openness and scale of the landscape.

Throughout the Site dominant vegetation is alpine tussock grassland, interspersed with bare rock and occasional patches of alpine herbfield. The vegetation cover at the ridgeline between the Remarkables and Doolans Site Areas is relatively sparse, consistent with the high-altitude, exposed conditions found in this landscape.

The Doolans Site Area is characterised by several alpine tarns and features of glacial origin as illustrated within **Site Appraisal Photographs K and M**. These features are unmodified and form the largely untouched headwaters of the catchment. These features are surrounded by

tussock grassland and rocky schist margins, contributing to the high level of naturalness and sense of remoteness within the Site. The Doolans Creek Right Branch is also a legible feature with its upper western tributaries located within the Site.

The lower extent of the Site is characterised by coherent and unmodified open areas of tussockland. Scree and schist outcrops become less dominant at lower elevations within the Site, nevertheless the sense of naturalness and remoteness remains. From within the catchment, views of the upper reaches are available including the seasonal change of snow cover, and presence of fog and cloud which can hang in the valley. This is illustrated within **Site Appraisal Photograph N**.

4.5 Natural Character

Although the RMA does not define natural character, from a technical perspective, natural character is considered to form part of a landscape and varies within each area. For this assessment, natural character has been considered with specific reference to RMA s6a as applied to lakes, rivers, wetlands and their margins. Such matters primarily relate to biophysical and some sensory landscape attributes in identified areas and reflect the extent to which natural elements, patterns and processes occur and have undergone human modification. As such, the highest degree of natural character occurs where there is the least apparent modification. Conversely, rivers, wetland and their margins that have been highly modified will have a lower (but retain some) level of natural character.

The geographic areas considered under the assessment of natural character encompass the Rastus Burn catchment and the Doolans Basin catchment and its associated tributaries and tarns or wetlands.

4.5.1 Tributaries of Rastus Burn including Lake Alta

Rastus Burn is fed by several alpine tarns within the upper reaches of the catchment. These tarns are glacially carved and highly expressive of their formative processes. The largest, Lake Alta is considered a regionally significant geopreservation site, and is a distinctive, legible, and highly accessible local feature within the Remarkables Ski Field. There are limited modifications within the margins and cirque basin of Lake Alta, however the broader context includes infrastructure, ski access roads, and trails associated with the Remarkables Ski Field.

The catchment is steep and incised and clad in coherent stands of tall tussockland, as well as scree slopes and bare rock. The vegetation patterns surrounding Lake Alta remain largely intact due to the steep topography. Lake Alta and its margins are considered to have **very high** natural character due to their lack of modification. Consequently, the tributary streams have very high-water quality and very high naturalness values.

The Rastus Burn drains Lake Alta and small tarns in the Shadow and Sugar Bowl Basins of the ski field, and earthworks have taken place throughout the catchments. While the tarns and tributary creeks of the Rastus Burn at their outlets have a relatively low level of modification, ski track crossings and rock reinforcement along the Rastus Burn section where they flow in vicinity of the learners' ski are and base buildings are more modified. Currently, the Rastus Burn flows to the east of the existing ski patrol building and Sugar Bowl base station in a north-westerly direction towards the Kawarau River. This section of the Rastus Burn has been modified through earthworks and structures relating to the existing ski field development with more

limited modification below the ski field and carpark. Consented water abstraction for ski field uses have led to modifications in relation to the natural flows.

Overall, the tarn in the Sugar Bowl (referred to as Swan Lake) and its margins within this catchment are considered to have **high** natural character due to their lack of modification in its immediate vicinity. The tributaries of the Rastus Burn (streams draining the tarn and Lake Alta) and the Rastus Burn below the confluence retain **moderate to high** natural character as the ski field modifications are evident in the vicinity, including earthworks and stream crossings, as well as built development in the vicinity of streams and water abstraction for potable water, firefighting and snow making.

4.5.2 Upper Tributaries of Doolans Creek Right Branch

The Doolans Creek Right Branch has a medium elevation source of flow, tussock landcover, high gradient valley landform with an elevation of 1380-1750m a.s.l. across the site. The Doolans Creek Right Branch flows downstream to join the Left Branch and then on to the Nevis River just before it connects to the Kawarau River within the Kawarau Gorge above Lake Dunstan and the Clyde Dam. No water quality testing sites are nearby (within 20 km), but the water is clear and cool and no didymo is currently present.

Tarns are frequently found in the alpine basins in the headwaters of both Doolans Creek branches. Low turf plants frequently form at tarn margins and extend from low water level to vegetation of the surrounding tussock grassland. The number of aquatic species within tarns and their margins typically decreases with increasing altitude. Threats to tarns in the Doolans Basin currently include ungulate browsing and weed infestation. The tarns range from small and shallow to large and deep with riparian margins varying from exposed bare rock to tussock and herb field.

The upper Doolans Creek Right Branch is highly intact and unmodified. Flow regimes remain unmodified, preserving natural seasonal variability and ecological processes. Geomorphologically, the catchment is defined by pristine alpine tarns, streams, and wetlands in the Remarkables Conservation Area. Upland valleys in the two Doolans Branches feature intricate meanders, while small riverine gorges, provide dramatic landforms and unique habitats. Upper catchments and streams are steep and incised, remaining largely free of structures and modifications.

Margins within conservation areas are dominated by native vegetation, with tussockland covering upper and mid slopes and shrublands occurring in wetter zones or around rock tors. The level of naturalness across the catchment is exceptionally high. Streams, wetlands, and tarns within Remarkables Conservation Area retain very high natural character, with only minor human influences such as grazing on lower slopes, occasional 4WD tracks, and small-scale tracks. The broader landscape context is highly natural and open, characterised by typical alpine ecosystems and a strong sense of remoteness.

The hydrologically dependent communities (cushion bog wetland, riparian wetland, seepage, waterway, tarn, and snowbank) are significantly more susceptible to disturbance with many of the wetlands containing moisture rich organic soils with favourable conditions for exotic weed growth. Exotic species that establish within the peat dominated systems are not peat forming species and are capable of fundamentally changing hydrological and ecological function. Wetlands are also more susceptible to tracking by both machinery and foot traffic, with wetland communities susceptible to trampling and pugging of the soil structure.

Overall, the waterbodies within the Doolans catchment, including those within the Site, are considered to have **very high** natural character. This is due to the complete lack of structures and modifications within the upper catchment, intact vegetation sequence from the upper catchment to the lower slopes, and expressiveness of the many alpine tarns and seepages/ wetlands which are a key characteristic of this landscape.

4.6 Visual Catchment

One of the purposes of the site visit was to determine the visual catchment and viewing audience of the proposal, in conjunction with the study of aerial photography and mapping of the Zone of Theoretical Visual Influence (ZTV). The ZTV mapping is included below (Image 6-8) and as A4 exports in the graphic attachment (Pages 22-23). The ZTV modelling is based on NZ Ski survey data and publicly available Lidar data with 1m Digital Elevation Model (DEM) accuracy within areas where this was available (majority of QLDC). A DEM with 8m accuracy was used within CODC (outside of Doolans Basin) and the fringes of the Wakatipu Basin. The ZTV maps included in the graphic attachment (pages 20-22 and below) show the boundary between 1m and 8m DEMs.

A model was prepared that includes the base stations at their proposed height above existing ground (13.5m Remarkables base station and 10m for mid station and Doolans Base station). ZTVs have been prepared based on centrally located points within the proposed built forms that would be most visible from external viewpoints.

The ZTVs were used as a tool for a broad scale, terrain-based visibility analysis. Visual simulations were prepared for more accurate assessment form key representative viewpoints, showing towers as well as built form and earthworks.

Given that ZTVs do not take vegetation into account, they represent a “worst-case scenario” in terms of visibility from the lower-lying viewpoints in the Wakatipu Basin where vegetation may intervene in the foreground. For the higher-lying areas (above the tree line) the extent of visibility is considered representative. However, the ZTV does not differentiate visibility in relation to distance – it shows the theoretical visibility, while the actual visibility of structures would be much lower from distances of over 10km, such as those viewpoints located in the Wakatipu Basin. It is unlikely that structures, even if located on the Helicopter ridge would be discernible at those distances. This has been taken into account and described in the visual assessment.

There is a continuity of degree of visibility, ranging from no view of the Site, through to full, open views. Three categories of view have been determined.

- Truncated views (no view): a view towards the Site that is curtailed by a visual barrier in the intervening landscape.
- Glimpsed view: brief, fleeting, or passing view of a site, often obtained by observers moving through the landscape (e.g. in a car); characterized by only a small portion of the site or proposed development being visible due to intervening elements like vegetation, buildings, or topography;
- Partial view: a view of part of the Site (eg visible between confining landform), or a filtered view of the Site, or a distant view where the Site is perceived as a small part of the view; and
- Open view: a clear view of a significant proportion of the Site within the wider landscape.

As a result, a series of Site Context Photographs **(Site Context Photographs 1-8)** were taken from publicly accessible areas where views (or potential views) towards the Site could be determined. These photographs are contained within the accompanying Graphic Supplement and their locations are outlined on **Figure 1: Landscape Context Plan**.

The Site can be distinguished by the two separate visual catchments, with the Rastus Burn/ Remarkables catchment visible from locations primarily to the north and the Doolans Basin catchment visible primarily from locations to the south. The overall visual catchment of the Site is relatively limited, with open views largely contained to the Remarkables access road and alpine recreational areas in proximity of the Site. A distinctive viewshaft with long distance views is available from the north-western part of the Wakatipu Basin. Generally, both catchments cannot be seen together, apart from the limited number of higher elevated ridges and peaks surrounding the Site.

Rastus Burn/ Remarkables Visual Catchment

On the Rastus Burn/ Remarkables side, views open up into the Rastus Burn as the viewer approaches on the ski field access road (refer to **Site Context Photographs 6 and 7**). The road enters the lower part of the Rastus Burn basin approximately 3km north of the existing base building and from there onwards views into parts of the Rastus Burn are intermittent/ glimpsed. From the access road viewpoints, the existing Sugar Bowl Lift is partially visible in the distance, however adjacent slopes generally curtail views. The catchment here is defined by the road corridor and surrounding landform, offering intermittent views toward the Site and infrastructure through breaks in the terrain.

The Lake Alta Track is accessed from the base building and from the lower part of the track where it traverses the ski field (refer to **Site Appraisal Photographs A, B and D**). Views towards the Rastus Burn/ Doolans Basin ridgeline are open and panoramic from the lower part of the track, where the alignment follows the Curvey Basin lift. However, from Lake Alta itself and on the upper part of the track (refer to **Site Appraisal Photograph J**), views of the ridgeline are effectively blocked by a side spur. Views from this location are orientated towards the existing ski field basin, with the existing Sugar Bowl and Curvey Basin lifts clearly visible within the panorama. The alpine terrain dominates views, and the openness of the view allows for a comprehensive appreciation of the scale and character of the ski field, highlighting the interaction between natural landforms and ski infrastructure.

Distant viewpoints to the north of the Remarkables Range are associated with the north-western Wakatipu Basin and surrounding slopes around Coronet Peak. A representative viewpoint located within this narrow viewshaft is captured from Malaghans Road, approximately 12 kilometres northwest of the Site (refer to **Site Context Photograph 8**). Here glimpsed views of the Remarkables Ski Field are available in the context of the mountain range, and access road. The Remarkables Range, Single Cone, and the basin containing the upper Curvey Basin lifts and tracks are just discernible as distant features. At this distance, the catchment is defined by the overall mountain silhouette, and the existing ski field infrastructure is recessive, with the broader landscape dominating the view.

Doolans Creek Visual Catchment

An open view into the Doolans Basin is afforded from the top ridge that separates the catchment from the Rastus Burn basin (refer to **Site Appraisal Photograph L**). Similarly, from a short section of the upper Wye Creek ridgeline the visual catchment extends across the upper Doolans Creek Right Branch Basin (refer to **Site Context Photograph 2**). The elevated position provides a sweeping perspective towards the broader catchment and local features and peaks.

Views from the mid and lower Doolans Creek Right Branch catchment are largely curtailed by intervening ridges extending from Point 2008masl and 1776masl, as illustrated within **Site Context Photograph 4**. Single Cone peak is a prominent feature, however intervening topography obscure direct sightlines to the Site. This viewpoint conveys a sense of remoteness which is characteristic of the broader Doolans Basin landscape.

Overall, visually, the Doolans Basin catchment is very well defined through the surrounding ridgelines and contained in size, with visibility largely limited to surrounding ridgelines.

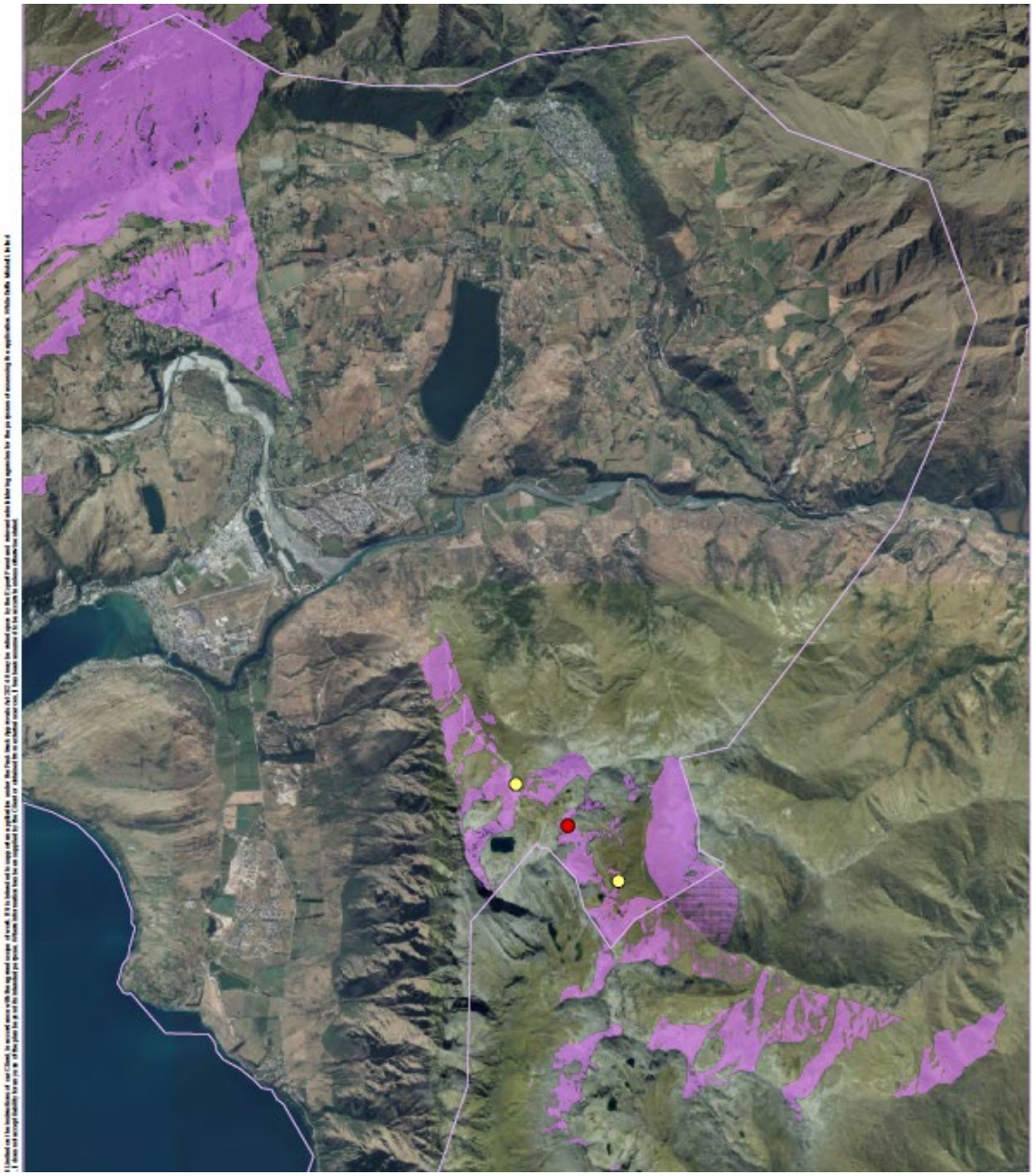


Image 6: ZTV of gondola midstation (red dot), see page 20 graphic attachment.

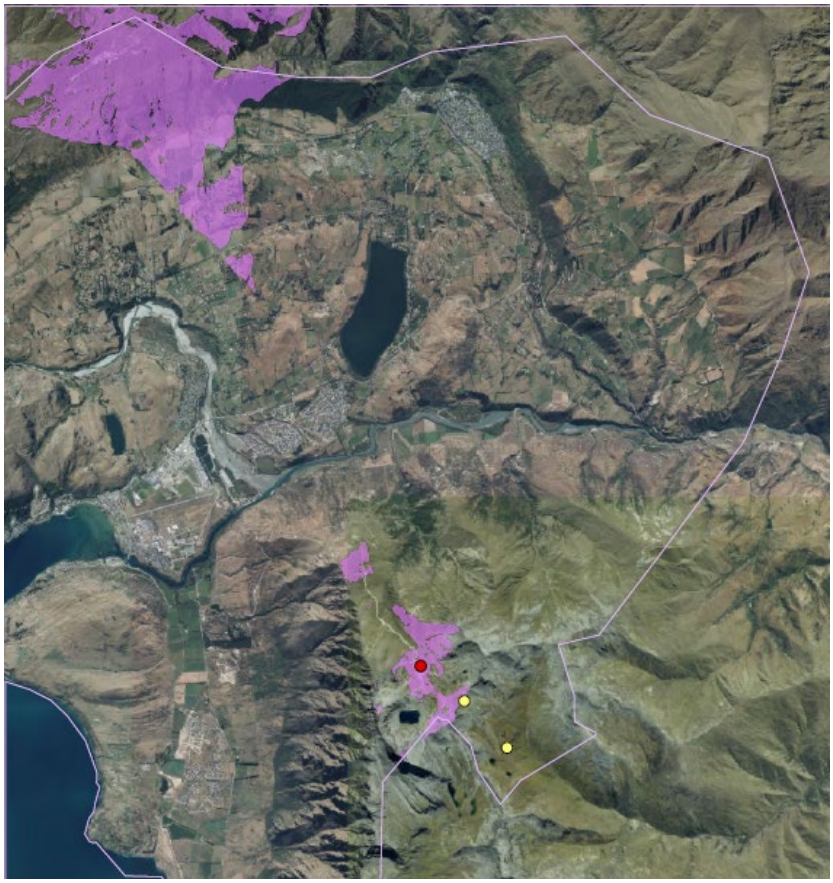


Image 7: ZTV of gondola base station Remarkables ski field (red dot) , see page 21 graphics.

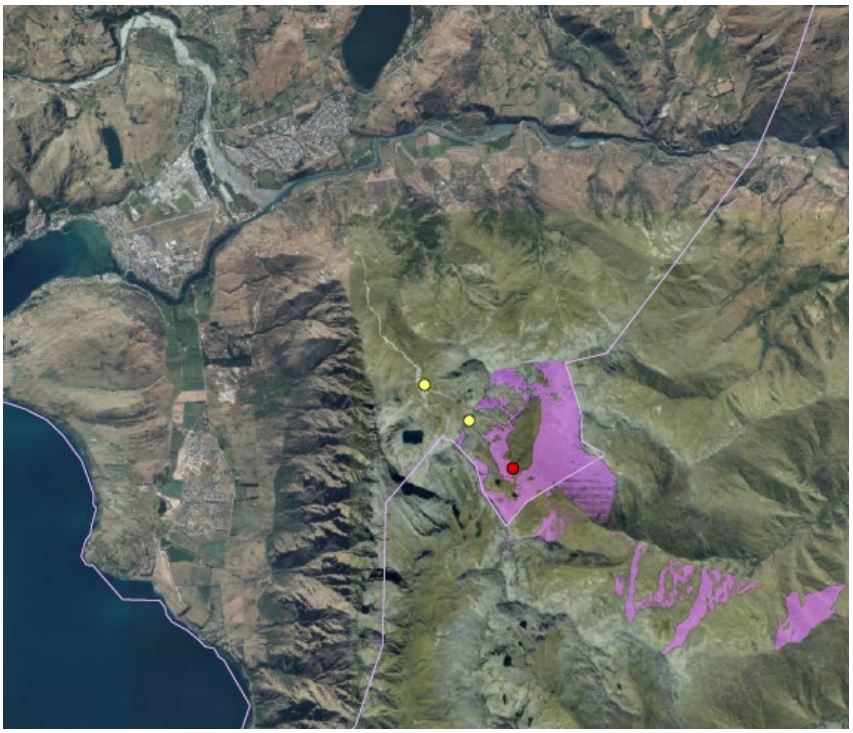


Image 8: ZTV of gondola base station Doolans Basin (red dot) , see page 22 graphics.

5.0 Relevant Statutory Provisions

The following is a review of the statutory provisions relevant to the assessment. The purpose of such a review is to help frame the landscape assessment rather than to undertake a comprehensive appraisal of the provisions or a planning assessment of the proposal against the provisions. There are a number of planning provisions that are relevant to this proposal, and these are discussed below.

5.1 Fast-Track Approvals Act 2024

This project is identified as a listed Project under Schedule 2 of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024. This includes requirements to assess applications under the Resource Management Act under Schedule 5 and the Conservation Act under Schedule 6 as set out below.

5.2 Conservation Act

Part of the project partly falls within the Kawarau Remarkables Conservation Area. Under Section 19 of the Conservation Act, this requires that:

> *Every conservation park shall so be managed –*
>
> *(a) That its natural and historic resources are protected; and*
>
> *(b) Subject to paragraph (a), to facilitate public recreation and enjoyment.*

The emphasis of the Conservation Act is to ensure the preservation and protection of the natural and historic resources for the purpose of maintaining their intrinsic values, providing for their appreciation and recreational enjoyment by the public, and safeguarding the options of future generations. Specifically, The Conservation Act defines *'conservation'* as:

> *'the preservation and protection of natural and historic resources for the purpose of maintaining their intrinsic values, providing for their appreciation and recreational enjoyment by the public, and safeguarding the options of future generations'.*

Natural resources' are defined in the Conservation Act to include a range of elements, including

> *"c) landscape and landform".*

5.2.1 Otago Conservation Management Strategy

The Site is included within the Otago Conservation Management Strategy 2016 (CMS) which incorporates changes made in 2022. The purpose of a conservation management strategy is to implement statements of general policy, and to establish objectives for the integrated management of natural and historic resources, including species managed by the Department of Conservation, and for recreation, tourism and other conservation purposes.

The CMS identifies natural landscapes and their protection from the adverse effects of human use and management as being a key consideration. A relevant objective is listed in 1.5.1.1 where the diversity of New Zealand's natural heritage is maintained and restored, with priority given to:

e) conserving significant geological features, landforms and landscapes, including those listed in Appendix 9[20], where they are on public conservation lands and waters.

Concerning recreation, Objective 1.5.3.1 concerns that recreational outdoor opportunities are consistent with the protection of indigenous natural, historic and cultural resources. Objective 1.5.3.12 encourages recreational opportunities on conservation lands to:

f) have been subjected to thorough environmental impact assessment and landscape design processes, and are likely to have minimal environmental and landscape impacts;

5.3 Resource Management Act 1991

The key sections identified with the RMA regarded as being relevant to this natural character, landscape and visual assessment are:

***Section 6(a)** – the preservation of natural character of… wetlands, and lakes and rivers and their margins, and the protection of them from inappropriate, subdivision use and development*

***Section 6(b)** – the protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes from inappropriate subdivision, use, and development*

***Section 7(c)** – the maintenance and enhancement of amenity values*

***Section 7(f)** – maintenance and enhancement of the quality of the environment*

5.4 Otago Regional Policy Statement 2019

The key relevant objectives and policies of Part B of the Otago Regional Policy Statement 2019 (RPS) to the Project are set out below:

Objective 3.1 – The values (including intrinsic values) of ecosystems and natural resources are recognised and maintained or enhanced where degraded.

Objective 3.2 – Otago's significant and highly-valued natural resources are identified and protected, or enhanced where degraded.

Policy 3.2.4 - Managing outstanding natural features, landscapes and seascapes

Protect, enhance or restore outstanding natural features, landscapes and seascapes, by all of the following:

a) In the coastal environment, avoiding adverse effects on the values (even if those values are not themselves outstanding) that contribute to the natural feature, landscape or seascape being outstanding;

b) Beyond the coastal environment, maintaining the values (even if those values are not themselves outstanding) that contribute to the natural feature, landscape or seascape being outstanding;

c) Avoiding, remedying or mitigating other adverse effects;

d) Encouraging enhancement of those areas and values that contribute to the significance of the natural feature, landscape or seascape.

[20] Which includes the Remarkables Conservation Area (the Nevis River), page 256.

Policy 3.2.6 - Managing highly valued natural features, landscapes and seascapes

Maintain or enhance highly valued natural features, landscapes and seascapes by all of the following:

a) Avoiding significant adverse effects on those values that contribute to the high value of the natural feature, landscape or seascape;

b) Avoiding, remedying or mitigating other adverse effects;

c) Encouraging enhancement of those values that contribute to the high value of the natural feature, landscape or seascape.

5.5 Queenstown Lakes Proposed District Plan

Within the QLPDP, the Site is zoned SASZ and Rural. As outlined, the Site is also subject to an Outstanding Natural Landscape. The Site is also associated with a Wāhi Tūpuna mapped area (#36 Kawarau – The Remarkables) meaning that the Site and surrounding area is culturally significant to mana whenua.

The following chapters (and their related policies) of the QLPDP are considered pertinent for this LEA.

5.5.1 Chapter 6 (Landscapes and Rural Character)

Chapter 6 applies to the area that falls within the Queenstown Lakes District identified as ONL outside of the SASZ boundaries. Policy 6.3.1.2 excludes Ski Area Sub-Zones from the Outstanding Natural Feature, Outstanding Natural Landscape and Rural Character Landscape categories applied to the balance of the Rural Zone and from the policies of Chapter 6 related to those categories.

6.3.3 Managing Activities on Outstanding Natural Features and in Outstanding Natural Landscapes

- 6.3.3.1 *Recognise that subdivision and development is inappropriate on Outstanding Natural Features or in Outstanding Natural Landscapes unless:*

  a. landscape values are protected; and

  b. *in the case of any subdivision or development, all buildings and other structures and all changes to landform or other physical changes to the appearance of land will be reasonably difficult to see from beyond the boundary of the site in question*.

- 6.3.3.2 *Ensure that the protection of Outstanding Natural Features and Outstanding Natural Landscapes includes recognition of any values relating to cultural and historic elements, geological features and matters of cultural and spiritual value to Tangata Whenua, including tōpuni and wāhi tūpuna.*

- 6.3.3.5 *Maintain the open landscape character of Outstanding Natural Features and Outstanding Natural Landscapes where it is open at present.*

5.5.2 Chapter 21 (Rural Zone)

The purpose of the Rural Zone is to enable farming activities and provide for appropriate other activities that rely on rural resources while protecting, maintaining and enhancing landscape values, ecosystem services, nature conservation values, the soil and water resource and rural amenity.

21.2.1 Objective - A range of land uses, including farming are enabled while:

a. *Protecting the landscape values of Outstanding Natural Features and Outstanding Natural Landscapes;*
b. *Maintaining the landscape character of Rural Character Landscapes and maintaining or enhancing their visual amenity values;*
c. *Maintaining or enhancing amenity values within the rural environment; and*
d. *Maintaining or enhancing nature conservation values.*

21.2.12 Objective - The natural character of lakes and rivers and their margins is protected, or enhanced, while also providing for appropriate activities, including recreation, commercial recreation and public transport.

5.5.3 Ski Area Sub Zone (SASZ)

Under Chapter 21 (Rural), the following relate to the SASZ:

- *21.2.6.2: Control the visual impact of roads, buildings and infrastructure associated with Ski Area Activities.*
- *21.2.6.4 Provide for (non-road) forms of access to the Ski Area Sub-Zones, by way of passenger lift systems, terminal buildings and stations for passenger lift systems, and ancillary structures and facilities: in locations where there is landscape capacity for that activity (which could include locations where buildings or structures will not be reasonably difficult to see from beyond the boundary of the site in question, in which case Policy 6.3.3.1.b. does not apply); and*
- *in a manner that protects the landscape values of Outstanding Natural Features and Outstanding Natural Landscapes by:*
  - *i. avoiding adverse effects on landscape values; and*
  - *ii. if avoidance is not practicable due to either the functional or operational needs of the activity, remedying or mitigating any adverse effects.*

5.5.4 Chapter 39 (Wāhi Tūpuna)

Chapter 39 assists in providing for the kaitiakitanga of Kāi Tahu as Manawhenua in the district to protect Manawhenua values. This is through the identification of wāhi tūpuna areas and the management of potential threats to Manawhenua values within those areas. The Wāhi Tūpuna overlay for the Kawarau Maunga includes the entire mountain range within the QLDC boundaries (including the SASZ), but values extend beyond the district across the Remarkables Conservation Area and beyond[21].

The project area is part of a wider landscape which Māori traversed, occupied, and utilised for its extensive resources, including mahika kai gathering and transporting pounamu from the

[21] Remarkables Conservation Area, Summary of Ngāi Tahu Values, Practices and Associations, Kauati, Dec 2020

Lake Wakatipu area. There are no kāika, nohoanga entitlements or stone sources identified within the proposed expansion zones, but the wider area includes mahika kai and mahika toi. The Conservation Area contains recorded, known, and suspected wāhi tapu and wāhi tupuna and Nohoanga entitlement in Wye Creek.

Assessment of effects on cultural landscape values is acknowledged as the domain of mana whenua. It is acknowledged that the Ngāi Tahu connections with the wider Kawarau maunga area are both historical and contemporary, tangible and intangible.

5.6 Central Otago District Plan

Within the CODP, Section 4 Rural Resource Area is of relevance to this assessment.

The Rural Resource Area is characterised by *"…Central Otago's unique, semi-arid landscape of broad basins separated by low mountain ranges with sparse vegetation, covered in tussock grassland and exotic pasture, and broken by schist rock outcrops…"*. The key objectives and policies of relevance to this assessment are outlined within Section 4 of the CODP and include the protection of outstanding natural landscapes from inappropriate subdivision, use, and development, maintaining the open natural character of the hills and ranges, and preserving the natural character of the district's water bodies and their margins. This includes avoiding, remedying, and mitigating adverse effects on the landscape, natural, and amenity values of the rural environment.

4.3.2 Objective – Outstanding Natural Landscapes and Outstanding Natural Features, and Land in the Upper Manorburn / Lake Onslow Landscape Management Area

To protect the District's outstanding natural landscapes and outstanding natural features, and land in the Upper Manorburn/Lake Onslow Landscape Management Area (including landforms) from the adverse effects of inappropriate subdivision, use and development.

4.3.3 Objective - Landscape and Amenity Values

To maintain and where practicable enhance rural amenity values created by the open space, landscape, natural character and built environment values of the District's rural environment, and to maintain the open natural character of the hills and ranges.

6.0 Assessment of Effects

A landscape effect is a consequence of changes in a landscape's physical attributes on that landscape's values. Change is not an effect: landscapes change constantly. It is the implications of change on landscape values that is relevant. While an effect arises from changes to physical attributes, the consequences on landscape values relate to all of a landscape's physical, associative, and perceptual dimensions. Landscape effects can be both adverse and positive.

Effects are considered against the existing and potential landscape values, and the outcomes sought in the statutory provisions. Such provisions often anticipate change while protecting certain landscape values. Whether effects on landscape values are appropriate therefore depends both on the nature and magnitude of effect on the existing landscape values and what the provisions anticipate.

The assessment of potential effects is based on a combination of the landscape's values and visual sensitivity together with the nature and scale of the development proposed. The landscape and visual effects have been determined using a seven-point scale ranging from very low to very high as set out in **Appendix 1** of the assessment methodology.

Due to the Site being within an ONL (identified within both Queenstown Lakes and Central Otago District Plans), and its location close to numerous watercourses and tarns, the following effects considered relate to the following:

- Natural Character effects (RMA S6a)
- Landscape effects in relation to the values of the ONL (RMA S6b)
- Visual amenity effects from public and private locations (RMA S7c)
- Potential cumulative effects; and

Following this an assessment of effects in relation to statutory provisions is provided in Section 7 of this report (Assessment of Statutory Assessment Matters).

6.1 Natural Character Effects

The assessment of natural character considers any changes in levels of modification and associated condition specific to lakes, rivers, wetlands and their margins. This assessment has been undertaken by assessing the abiotic, biotic and experiential attributes which contribute to the existing and post development levels of natural character. This has also been informed by the assessment inputs from hydrologists and aquatic and terrestrial ecologists relating to the active bed and margins of identified waterbodies where relevant. In general terms, effects on natural character consider changes in existing condition, across relevant attributes, such as those derived from changes in physical condition and characteristics of waterbodies encompassing their elements, patterns and process and how these are experienced.

The geographic areas considered under the assessment of natural character encompass the Rastus Burn catchment and the Doolans Basin catchment and its associated tributaries and tarns or wetlands.

6.1.1 Natural Character Effects within Rastus Burn catchment

The majority of built development proposed within the Rastus Burn catchment is associated with the existing ski field. This is particularly the case for the proposed gondola base station which is located in close proximity to the existing base building.

The proposed gondola base station and lower towers of the gondola (towers 1, 2 and 3) are located in proximity to the Rastus Burn, similar to the existing Curvey Basin and Sugar Bowl lifts. It is anticipated that there will be effects associated with earthworks and installation as part of the construction of these structures, however the disturbance will occur within an existing heavily modified area and all earthworks will be undertaken with sediment and erosion controls to manage sedimentation effects. Towers 5, 6 and 7 will require temporary access roads and 8m by 8m laydown areas. These temporary access tracks will be remediated/revegetated once construction is complete and are located to avoid waterways and wetlands. While there will be low temporary effects on natural character, the lower section of the Rastus Burn has already been modified with rock reinforcement of the stream bed and long-term outcomes would be comparable to the existing environment, leading to **very low natural character effects on the Rastus Burn** once access roads to towers are rehabilitated.

The creation of the skiers return trail/ construction access road to the gondola midstation from the Sugar Bowl basin will occur within a previously unmodified part of the Rastus Burn catchment. The road/ trail will commence above the existing terrain park to the north of the small tarn located to east of Sugar Bowl, referred to as Swan Lake. This tarn has not experienced substantial modification in the past and displays native vegetation communities/ wetlands along its edges. Given the distance to the tarn and adjacent wetland, adverse effects on the natural character of the tarn would be of a perceptual, rather than direct nature. The implementation of sediment and erosion controls will manage sedimentation effects on the natural character of the tarn and wetland. Both access roads and ski return trails to Sugar Bowl and Curvey Basins would require substantial earthworks through areas that contain cushionfield and rockfield communities that would be adversely affected to a moderate level, as outlined in the ecological assessment[22]. While adverse construction and long term effects on the natural appearance of the north-facing mountain slopes may arise from the earthworks for these roads/trails, these would only have **low natural character effects on the freshwater environment of Swan Lake tarn and its margins**.

Overall, the **natural character effects on freshwater vegetation communities are assessed as low within the Rastus Burn catchment** given the level of existing landscape alteration already undertaken. The perceptual aspects of natural character will not be substantially impacted within the Rastus Burn catchment where ski infrastructure and trails already form part of the existing environment.

The wastewater treatment facility will be moved to tanks and a plant located within 4.5m high structures on the existing Carpark 3 (below the base station to the west of the access road) where no natural character effects would arise. The existing disposal field on the true right bank of the Rastus Burn below the existing base station will continue to be used for treated wastewater dispersal.

6.1.2 Natural Character Effects within Doolans Basin catchment

In the Doolans Basin catchment several components associated with the Doolans expansion will lead to natural character effects. Since the hydrologically dependent communities (cushion bog wetland, riparian wetland, seepage, waterway, tarn, and snowbank) are more sensitive to disturbance than terrestrial plant communities, the location of earthworks and structures has been designed to avoid these communities where possible. This has been largely achieved for the placement of structures, including the base buildings and learners' area, and for the gondola alignment including the temporary construction access roads. For the projects components within the Doolans Basin where effects on ecologically sensitive freshwater communities and habitats cannot be avoided the following section assesses these components separately. Apart from the wider perceptual aspects outlined below, this natural character effects assessment is limited to the freshwater related habitats, as required under RMS S6(a), and any effects relating to terrestrial ecological values are addressed under biophysical landscape effects.

Earthworks for the proposed temporary access roads, temporary laydown areas, ski trail/permanent access road, installation of the gondola towers, learners area and construction of the gondola cabin building have the potential to have adverse effects on natural patterns and processes. The introduction of man-made structures, in particular the large-scale base building,

[22] Remarkables Skifield Doolans Expansion Ecological Impact Assessment, e3Scientific Ltd, May 2026

gondola and learners' lift will have **an unavoidable high adverse effect on the perceptual aspects of natural character into a currently unmodified landscape**.

Disturbance to freshwater communities

The natural character effects associated with the seepages, waterways and wetlands in the alpine basin are largely confined to short sections of the ski trail and the access road to the water intake in Doolans Creek. While structures, such as the base building and gondola tower have been located to avoid wetlands, waterways and tarns as much as possible, minimising adverse natural character effects, the crossing of these features is unavoidable for these linear earthworks. Where the earthworks for the ski trail and access road cross waterways, these crossings have been designed to retain hydrological connectivity.

Where proposed disturbance occurs within freshwater vegetation communities that are more common and less adapted to localised environmental niches, minimal fragmentation is expected to occur and only slight shifts in localised species abundance and function are expected to occur.

Plant communities associated with waterways in the landscape (cushion bog wetland, riparian wetland, seepage, and waterway) are interconnected and form continuous tracts of vegetative cover and pathways for dispersal for a range of species. The Ecology Assessment (e3Scientific) outlines that the fragmentation of these communities would result in more noticeable alteration to the function of the habitat and assessed the magnitude of effect for these communities and susceptible species as high across both catchments, given their very high ecological importance. The recommendations of e3Scientific are therefore supported where they recommend that hydrological connection between all connecting areas of wetland and waterways is retained to allow for continued hydrological and ecological function both up and downstream of the interference site.

It is understood that existing hydrological connections will be maintained through the proposed culverts/stream crossings for access roads and infrastructure which means that natural processes can be largely retained, while the perceptual aspects of natural character relating to the introduction of structures and modifications to natural patterns through earthworks would be impacted to a moderate to high degree in the currently unmodified Doolans Basin catchment. Changes to the **affected freshwater ecosystems would consequently have moderate to high natural character effects** in terms of changes to the elements, patterns and processes that occur within them.

Freshwater Take from Doolans Creek

A weir would be installed in Doolans Creek to take a maximum of 30 litres per second from the Doolans Creek Right Branch for snow-making purposes. The construction effects of the installation of the weir are considered to be high, based on the ecological assessment[23], unless the earthworks are undertaken during low flow periods and best practice construction methodologies/ management plans are used, as described in the recommendations provided by e3Scientific[24]. Management actions proposed to reduce the potential ecological (and hence natural character) effects of the installation of the weir include measures to be implemented

[23] Doolans Basin Tarns, Weir, Water take and Reservoir Freshwater Ecological Impact Assessment, e3Scientific Ltd, May 2026

[24] Doolans Basin Tarns, Weir, Water take and Reservoir Freshwater Ecological Impact Assessment, e3Scientific Ltd, May 2026

during construction, such as undertaking the works during low flows, dewatering of the construction area and sediment control. Other proposed measures include long-term mitigation, such as replanting any disturbed streambanks with dense native Carex and tussock species and restricting water takes to June-September period. Assuming these mitigation measures recommended by e3Scientific are implemented, it is considered that the **residual natural character effects of the weir structure would be low and localised,** once rehabilitation of tussocks is undertaken.

The flow reduction associated with the water take is considered to have a **low level of effect on the natural character** given the abstraction will only occur between June and September and snow melt will redistribute water taken back into the catchment.

Noticeable impacts associated with the water intake area would be associated with the creation of the access track from the base station to the weir site. This track would traverse several waterways and seepages below an existing tarn. As discussed above, culverts would assist in ensuring connectivity of the waterways but **natural character effects are considered to be moderate to high** in this currently unmodified environment.

Tarn water storage modification

The water storage proposed within the Doolans Basin catchment for snow-making purposes will be located within the area of an existing alpine tarn. The water would be conveyed to the storage reservoir from the Doolans Creek intake via pipes that follow the access road and ski trail alignment. Additional earthworks would, therefore, be minimal, while a small pump shed would be required in vicinity of the storage lake.

The tarn is considered to hold high natural character values as there are no signs of human modification and the tarn provides high ecological values. The proposed storage lake would result in the direct loss of the tarn and associated ecological and natural elements, patterns and processes. The storage lake would also require plastic lining and fencing, leading to an unnatural appearance. It is understood that with respect to the loss of 4450 m2 of tarn habitat, the selected tarn was found to have the lowest ecological values of the three assessed tarns in the area and the modification of this tarn has been considered only after alternative locations and options for water storage in the Doolans were considered and discounted.[25] There are no “like for like” tarn habitats available as mitigation and remediation options onsite to manage this effect. The ecological assessment (E3) outlines that the tarn where water storage is proposed has lower biodiversity values than two other tarns in the area. However, the lower biodiversity is a natural occurrence and man-made modifications are currently absent within and around the tarn. This means that the natural character of the tarn can be considered to be very high (while ecological values are only high). The adverse natural character effects associated with the **creation of a storage lake in this location are therefore considered very high**. The earthworks required to enlarge the tarn into a reservoir would also have high temporary natural character effects, albeit reasonably localised compared to the earthworks required for the ski trail and base area construction.

[25] Doolans Basin Tarns, Weir, Water take and Reservoir Freshwater Ecological Impact Assessment, e3Scientific Ltd, May, 2026

Introduction of exotic species

In the Doolans Basin catchment the majority of the plant communities are dominated by indigenous vegetation with exotic species in extremely low abundance in all vegetation communities. The proposed earthworks and continued operation/increased frequency of use within undisturbed vegetation risks expanding the abundance and distribution of exotic species into directly affected areas as well as adjacent and ecologically connected areas. The vegetation communities are all highly susceptible to competition from exotic species with many being small and prostrate. If invasive weeds are managed successfully, this effect can be mitigated through long-term management, as proposed through conditions.

Sedimentation effects

Sedimentation from the vegetation removal and earthworks could result in the mobilisation of sediment onto neighbouring vegetation habitats, wetlands and watercourses. This effect is most prevalent during and immediately following the earthworks phase. Additionally, ongoing risk is prevalent during future high rainfall events or periods of rapid snow melt (when excess surface flow can cause scouring and deposition both on and off-track surfaces). This is a medium to long term risk and unmitigated, will cause ecological change until surfaces are revegetated.

The magnitude of effects is likely to be higher for communities that are permanently, seasonally or periodically wet (cushion bog, riparian wetland, seepage, waterways, snowbank and tarns) since they are likely to experience higher level of sedimentation due to flow paths and localised surface runoff associated with them. Sedimentation into these habitats creates areas where exotic species can easily colonise without competition. e3scientific recommends a site-specific sediment and erosion control management plan to mitigate the risk of runoff into wetlands, watercourses, and onto neighbouring vegetation is to be implemented. With implementation of sediment and erosion management controls, it is considered residual adverse natural character effects associated with sedimentation in the Doolans Basin will be **moderate,** since even with implementation of erosion and sediment controls, sedimentation cannot be fully avoided.

6.1.3 Summary of Natural Character Effects

The effects of fragmentation of ecosystems are contingent on the level of unnatural alteration of the vegetation and surrounding landscape. Therefore, the Rastus Burn and Doolans Basin catchments are expected to have different natural character effects due to the level of alteration that has occurred in the past.

The natural character effects on freshwater vegetation communities are assessed as **Low** within the Rastus Burn given the level of existing landscape alteration already undertaken.

However, within the Doolans Basin the natural character effects are assessed as **Moderate to Very High** for these values given the high level of naturalness in the currently unmodified basin. The adverse effects on natural elements, patterns and processes relate in particular to the proposed modification to the alpine tarn for water storage (which would be **Very High**), abstraction of water from the Doolans Creek Right Branch, the introduction of infrastructure/ buildings and the earthworks required to create the access roads/ ski trail in vicinity to wetlands are assessed as **Moderate to High**.

Proposed conditions will ensure that hydrologically connected ecosystems will be maintained through crossing streams in the area with culverts, weed control and prevention of sediment

run-off. Through the implementation of these conditions, residual natural character effects on the elements, patterns and processes displayed by these freshwater communities can be reduced to **Moderate**.

The perceptual aspects of natural character will not be substantially impacted within the Rastus Burn catchment where ski infrastructure and trails already form part of the existing environment. In contrast, the perceived naturalness within the confined part of the Doolans Creek Right Branch where the ski field extension, water take and storage will occur will be reduced. This forms a small part of the wider Remarkables Conservation Area, but within the affected area the change to the natural character attributes of the underlying tarns and streams will be clearly detectable, leading to **Moderate to High** effects on the perceived naturalness of the landscape.

6.2 Landscape Effects Concerning the Values on the ONL

Landscape character is derived from the distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occur consistently in a particular landscape. It reflects particular combinations of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use and features of human settlement. It creates the unique sense of place defining different areas of the landscape. The assessment of potential effects on landscape considers effects on landscape character and values. Introducing human modification into an area with limited to no modification will impact on its sense of wilderness and diminish its naturalness.

As outlined, within the QLPDP and CODP, the Site is contained within an Outstanding Natural Landscape. The QLPDP lists the Rastus Burn Catchment as being within Schedule 21.22.14 Priority Area (PA) ONL Northern Remarkables. Within the Central Otago Rural Landscape Study (LA4, 2007) the Doolans Catchment falls within the Hector, Nevis Valley, Garvie and Old Woman Ranges (10) ONL. The landscape effects of the proposed gondola will differ between the two catchments due to the differences in the context of modification present. The effects of the proposal on the specific landscape values are, therefore, outlined separately for each one of the two catchments.

6.2.1 Landscape Effects on the Rastus Burn Catchment

The Rastus Burn catchment currently already contains a substantial level of modification in the form of the existing ski field with its associated infrastructure and earthworks. This means that the perception of values relating to the intactness of the geomorphology and fauna/flora is currently confined to the undeveloped parts of the area, such as Lake Alta and its surrounding peaks. The values outlined in the PA Schedule apply in parts of the ONL – mostly those that do not currently contain ski field infrastructure which includes the upper part of the gondola and the return trail from the top station.

The proposed base station for the gondola is located within the immediate vicinity of the existing base building and the Sugar/ Curvey base stations which form a cluster of high modification at the entrance to the ski area. While larger built form is proposed in this area, the effects on the values of the wider landscape will be **low** due to the existing level of modification already found in this base area. The gondola initially follows (Towers 1-6) existing ski trails within an area where further lift infrastructure would be perceived as entirely in character with the existing ski field landscape.

Where the gondola alignment starts to rise steeply towards the proposed midstation (located on the ridge that separates the catchment from the Doolans Basin catchment (Towers 7-9)), it penetrates into parts of the landscape that currently does not contain any substantial

modifications. In this area the lift alignment traverses several rock outcrops, scree slopes and tussock grassland.

The physical modification will include the foundations for the towers and midstation, and the earthworks for the construction access tracks, ski return trails, retaining walls, as well as the establishment of the large structure of the midstation on Helicopter Ridge.

The northern ski return trail located between the proposed top station and the existing Sugar Bowl ski trails would extend across an extensive scree slope with rock outcrops and around a currently largely unmodified alpine tarn. The screen slope is partially covered in cushionfield communities and currently forms a homogenous landform below the Doolans Basin ridgeline where the proposed earthworks in this high-lying area would be reducing the intactness of the landform and land cover. While the physical effects on the tarn itself would be limited, the earthworks and extensive sections of retaining wall (in particular a 190m long, up to 3.5m high section) would impact on the integrity of the feature and detract from its naturalness and aesthetic values. However, the existing terrain park and half pipe are also located within the vicinity of the tarn (at a distance of 50-100m) which has compromised the integrity of the surrounding landform in the past through substantial earthworks.

The southern ski return trail/access road is proposed to connect from the midstation to Curvey Basin. This high-lying trail is shorter than the eastern trail and will extend through an area above rocky bluffs to connect with the existing trails. To the west of where the trail crosses the descending spur a 180m long and 3.5m high retaining wall will be required which will impact on the cohesiveness of the underlying landform through the introduction of unnatural lines, in particular since this access road/ ski trail would be visible from Lake Alta as it connects to Curvey Basin. While the midstation is out of view form Lake Alta, the road and associated earthworks would be perceived together with the proposed retaining wall below the midstation (70m long and up to 8.5m high) from viewpoints within the existing ski field. The combination of earthworks and retaining walls, as well as the midstation structure would have adverse effects on the legibility of the Helicopter ridge and upper slopes. The visual cohesiveness, naturalness, legibility and intactness of the currently unmodified slopes and ridgeline will be adversely affected to a **moderate** degree on the upper slopes (towers 7-9, returns trails to Sugar Bowl and Curvey Basins) and on Helicopter Ridge (midstation). The proposed change is relatively confined and would be experienced in the context of the existing lifts and ski trails.

While the proposed change within the Rastus Burn catchment would be perceived cumulatively with the existing ski field development of the Curvey and Sugar Bowl basins, the proposed modification would be closely associated with the existing ski field infrastructure. This would include the direct physical effects, as well as additional noise which would be experienced in the context of the current modification. The landscape effects arising from the return trails traversing the scree slope/ tussock grassland would occur in a high-lying and currently intact part of the basin, while the tarn is located in a lower-lying part that already contains extensive earthworks in its vicinity. The upper return trails, three top towers and midstation of the gondola would be perceived together in a largely unmodified area adjacent to the ski field, leading to **moderate** adverse landscape effects, while the remainder of proposed development in the Rastus Burn catchment would only have **low** landscape effects in the context of existing modifications.

Landscape effects associated with the establishment of a wastewater treatment facility on Carpark 3 are considered to be very low, as they would occur in an area that already contains existing modifications. The landscape effects associated with the proposed bus hub and carparks in vicinity of SH6 turn-off are assessed in a separate Landscape Assessment report, lodged with the application. The modifications and associated effects fall within a different part of the landscape, located at considerable distance and at much lower elevation compared to the proposal described in this assessment.

6.2.2 Landscape Effects on the Doolans Basin Catchment

The modification associated with the introduction of the proposed structures, buildings and earthworks would lead to a high level of changes within a confined part of the wider Remarkables Conservation Area.

As described under the existing landscape values, the Doolans Basin catchment contains high physical values, including unmodified and highly legible landforms and rock outcrops, as well as natural ecosystems and habitats, including cushion/herb fields, tussock grasslands and wetlands/ tarns/ streams.

The vegetation communities within the Doolans Basin catchment are susceptible to environmental change due to their high level of intactness. All of the vegetation communities contain plant species adapted to the elevation within the Site and are generally slow growing, cold tolerant, perennial alpine plants with short periods of seasonal growth as a result of the environmental conditions. Given the reduced growing season, species at higher elevations are more susceptible to change than similar species at lower elevations. Similarly, the vegetation and associated habitat require a longer period of time to regenerate, giving fast growing annual plants opportunity to establish and compete for areas.

It is understood that the most notable ecological effects arise from the loss of significant vegetation and associated habitat in the Doolans Basin (around 20ha) which mostly consists of tussocklands and various cushionfield and rockfield communities. This would also present a habitat loss for important invertebrate communities, as assessed in detail in the ecological impact assessment[26]. This would have both perceptual and direct biophysical effects on the naturalness of the landscape within the Doolans Basin. However, snow tussock grassland is so widely dispersed across the basin where the disturbance is proposed, that the small areas of disturbance are unlikely to have an observable reduction of the population and dispersal ability of species within it. This means that the construction of the ski field expansion within the Doolans Basin catchment will have biophysical effects ranging from **low (eg tussocklands) to high (eg cushionfields) depending on the vegetation communities affected**, due to the effects of fragmentation and the currently very high level of naturalness.

In order to maintain the existing ecological values the proposed gondola alignment, buildings and earthworks for ski trails have been designed to largely avoid the most vulnerable habitats. However, the gondola will have localised physical effects where towers are located, as well as around the base station. To minimise the physical disturbance, the permanent access road will also serve as the only formed ski trail in the Doolans Basin, and the gondola storage, café and return drive station will be contained within one building. The temporary access track that is required for the construction of towers 13-16 would be rehabilitated to mitigate these earthworks effects in the long term. However, the presence of the remaining earthworks and built form would still appear incongruous with the highly natural landscape in this upper catchment. The unnatural elements and patterns associated with the proposal would adversely affect the physical and perceptual values relating to the legibility, intactness and integrity of the biotic and biotic attributes occurring in this area.

The proposed development is expected to generate elevated noise levels and presence of machinery/ human activity during both the construction and operational phases. The Doolans catchment is largely free from motorised vehicles and the current ambient noise levels are very low which is enjoyed by recreationists, such as walkers and ski tourers. The Rastus Burn

[26] Remarkables Skifield Doolans Expansion Ecological Impact Assessment, e3Scientific Ltd, May 2026

catchment has received extensive alteration and is more affected by operation noise and activity associated with the existing ski field, however the Doolans Basin currently still retains low ambient noise levels and very limited human activity.

The opening up of Doolans Basin to a larger number of people will reduce the sense of isolation and remoteness currently associated with the catchment. The change in activity, new level of modification in a currently unmodified catchment and the reduction of the sense of remoteness will lead to inevitable landscape character effects.

The potential visual effects of the proposed gondola development will relate to the mid-station located along the ridgeline, the gondola alignment, learners area and the base building, including gondola storage from a wider range of viewpoints within the Doolans catchment. The proposed water take from Doolans Creek will require an access road that traverses the lower slopes, located below the basin where the ski field extension is proposed. While this 4WD access track will be narrower than the ski trail in the basin, it will require cuts into the steep lower slopes. As the remainder of the ski field extension is higher-lying, the earthworks would expand the area of man-made modifications down to the creek bed, while the structures required for the water take would be relatively unobtrusive. In order to enable snow making, a water reservoir will be required. It is proposed to locate this storage reservoir in proximity to the ski trail, where an existing alpine tarn is currently present. This would lead to a high level of modification of this unmodified water body with high landscape effects on this localised feature.

These effects have the potential to affect the ONL values associated with naturalness, legibility, aesthetics, and intactness of the prominent ridge and natural skyline, as well as a section of Doolans Creek Right Branch. There may also be mana whenua values that need to be considered.

Minimising adverse landscape effects and maintenance of the existing landscape character is a strong directive for all construction and permanent activities. BML have provided recommendations throughout the design process, and in collaboration with architects and ecologists to remedy and mitigate adverse landscape effects where possible. These include the location, design and colour of built form, clustering of effects within a limited footprint and minimising earthworks and sprawl of built form. This has resulted in limiting earthworks and larger-scale modifications to underlying topography to areas strictly necessary to form ski tracks, buildings or foundations, avoiding ecologically sensitive locations– including creeks, wetlands, cushion fields and tussocks, where possible and following ecological advice on best practice where disturbance cannot be avoided.Construction activities will involve high-noise machinery, including earthmoving equipment, heavy vehicles, and various construction tools associated with site preparation and building works. These activities are expected to occur during standard working hours. Once operational, the development may generate ongoing noise and obvious human activity from operation of ski lifts, snow groomers, use of explosives for avalanche control, winter/summer vehicular movements and skiers' presence. Increased human presence is likely to be observed due to an increased capacity of facilities as well as increased access to previously remote locations within the study area. Notably, presence of operational staff and infrastructure will be ongoing year-round.

Artificial lighting at night associated with the proposed development is expected to be greater than existing night-time lighting levels. Artificial lighting will consist of snow groomers and other vehicles headlights, as well as spotlights (downlights) for snow making. Internal and potentially some external lights will be mounted at the midstation and cabin building which will all be low lux and downlighting. Conditions of consent are proposed to require lighting to comply with the QLPDP lighting standards for ski area activities, and restricting lighting of the Doolans Gondola, and the Doolan's Base Station and Doolans Mid Station to winter operations between 6.30am to 5.30pm. No lighting is allowed outside of this time period. With respect to the Base Building in

the Doolans operational lighting allows for cleaning staff to undertake their work, but there would be no lighting overnight. Groomers with lighting will operate on the ski trails in the Doolans and Rastus Burn catchments. These usually operate following closure of the ski field in the later afternoon/ early evening. There is no night-skiing with any associated lighting proposed.

Overall, the adverse landscape effects within the confined part of the Doolans Basin catchment and short section of Doolans Creek Right Branch that are affected by the development would be **high** during construction and remain **high** in the longer term, despite the proposed mitigation measures in section 8.0. The proposed modification will reduce the natural values that contribute to the outstanding natural landscape.

6.2.3 Summary of Landscape Effects

The landscape effects of the proposal differ substantially between the two receiving environments of the Rastus Burn and Doolans Basin catchments. This difference in effect is primarily due to the existing modifications (the Remarkables Ski Field) within the Rastus Burn and the general absence of such modifications within the Doolans Basin.

The landscape effects relate primarily to the introduction of unnatural lines and disturbance of vegetation, freshwater features and scree slopes/ rock outcrops as part of the proposed earthworks, and introduction of new man-made structures (gondola and Doolans cabin building). Earthworks have been designed to generally avoid higher value landscape features while also minimising the extent of disturbance through careful design and alignment of roading and infrastructure. The proposed buildings have been designed according to the key principles outlined earlier, such as use of recessive colours that will blend into the tussock clad basin and clustering of modifications by limiting built form[27], to ensure that effects on landscape character and values can be minimised by integrating them as much as possible into their surroundings.

The existing ski field structures, buildings, lifts and ski trails within the Rastus Burn detract from the physical values and clear legibility and naturalness of the environment of the catchment, and the additional ski field infrastructure and works will be perceived largely within the extent of this existing modified catchment reducing the level of effect.

The Doolans Basin, by comparison, has high values relating to fauna, flora and geomorphological processes and the integrity of the landscape in this part of the Site is currently very high, with very high naturalness and aesthetic values.

Overall, the landscape effects within the **Rastus Burn catchment** are considered **low within the Remarkables ski field** (lower gondola towers and base station) as the existing landscape character will be maintained. The modification in the form of the proposed return trails and midstation located near/ on the **currently unmodified ridgeline will lead to moderate landscape effects**, as they occur in a part of the basin that currently displays higher physical and perceptual values, while being perceived as part of the existing ski field.

The landscape effects within the **Doolans Basin** are considered to be **high**. In this part of the project area the sense of naturalness and remoteness/ wildness will be compromised from its current state with **high effects on physical, legibility and aesthetic values within this confined part of the conservation area**.

[27] The proposed colours for structures are consistent within each of the visual catchments. In the Rastus Burn the base station will match the existing base building with colour “Monument”, as it is located in rocky surroundings where grey blend in. In the Doolans Basin lighter coloured Lichen and some Basaltbase (which is a bit lighter and greener than Monument) were selected to match tussock environment.

6.3 Visual Effects

Visual amenity effects are influenced by a number of factors including the nature of the proposal, the landscape absorption capability and the character of the site and the surrounding area. Visual amenity effects are also dependent on distance between the viewer and the proposal, the complexity of the intervening landscape and the nature of the view. Te Tangi a te Manu states:

'Visual effects are effects on landscape values as experienced in views. They contribute to our understanding of landscape effects. They are a subset of landscape effects'.[28]

There are very limited opportunities to view the proposal from the wider landscape. The visual effects assessment has been based on GIS modelling of the Zone of Visual Influence (ZTV) which uses a terrain model of the wider Wakatipu Basin and Remarkables/ Hector Mountains to determine the main areas that the different parts of the proposal are visible from. These desktop findings have informed the site visits to relevant viewpoints where photographs were taken from, to illustrate the visibility from a wide variety of viewpoints. From external viewpoints, photographs were taken from publicly accessible vantage points, such as roads.

As described previously, the location of the different project components falls into the two separate catchments which also form the visual catchments, with the Rastus Burn facing north and Doolans Basin facing south-east. The surrounding mountains visually confine both visual catchments to relatively specific viewshaft and defined areas, as shown on the ZTV modelling.

The Rastus Burn valley is physically and visually confined by the main ridgeline of the Remarkables Mountains on the western side and the ridgelines descending off Pt 2069masl to the east. This means that views on the northern side are limited to viewpoints within the Rastus Burn Valley where the ski field access road extends and long-distance viewpoints in the north-eastern Wakatipu Basin/ Coronet Peak at a distance of over 10km.

In the Doolans Creek Right Branch catchment of the project area the main confining features are the Mount Salmond to Ben Cruachan ridgeline, and the ridgelines separating the project area from Wye Creek and Rastus Burn. As the Doolans Creek Right Branch changes direction from an east-west alignment in its mid and lower section to a north-south alignment in its upper section, the visual catchment within this part of the project area is confined to the headwaters as shown on the ZTVs. The views into the headwaters and any of the proposed ski field structures and buildings do not extend into the Wye Creek catchment to the west or the Wakatipu Basin/Gibbston Valley to the north.

Given that the visual catchments are so clearly defined, visibility of each of the project components is described below for each viewpoint. The midstation, located on the ridgeline separating the two catchments is the only proposed structure that is visible from both catchments.

6.3.1 Views from Remarkables Ski Field Access Road

The existing ski field access road initially extends across the lower, north-facing slopes of the Remarkables Range above the Kawarau River. At an elevation of around 1,200masl the road accesses the Rastus Burn Valley in a north-southerly direction, steadily climbing towards the existing base buildings and associated car parks. The road winds its way along the east-facing slope, curving around a number of spurs that descend from the spine of the Remarkables

[28] Te Tangi a te Manu; Landscape Assessment Guidelines (July 2022); paragraph 6.25.

Mountain Range. The stopping areas are limited to few pull-out bays and a large car park, located about halfway along this stretch of road. The views vary depending on the underlying landform and the existing ski field is intermittently visible.

The existing base building and proposed bottom gondola station are only visible from a short stretch of road above the switchbacks at a distance of around 2-2.5km (see viewpoints for **Site Context Photographs 6 and 7**), and on the final approach to the top car parks.

The proposed gondola midstation and top section of the return ski trails, located on the ridge that forms the skyline above the existing ski field, would be visible in short sections along this part of the access road that are oriented towards this direction. This visibility is intermittent at a distance of 1-2.5km, and along the final approach to the base building. Otherwise, various spurs and ridgelines block views into this direction, including to parts of the existing ski field. The gondola midstation would be cut into the top of the ridge which would reduce the visual prominence of the structure protruding above the Helicopter ridgeline. However, earthworks and retaining walls below the station would be visible in the context of the station.

Given that travellers on this road are aware that it is a ski field access road, the intermittent visibility of ski-related infrastructure would not be unexpected and seen within the context of the existing ski field. While the proposed gondola midstation would partially appear on the skyline of the visual catchment of the Rastus Burn, it would be a very small element. From more distant viewpoints on the road it would be difficult to discern in the context of the wider ridgeline that contains extensive jagged rock outcrops to the south (see **Visual Simulation 3**).

In light of the intermittent nature of the view and the scale of the proposed building in relation to the surrounding landscape features, the midstation would not be visually prominent. The top section of the return trails into Sugar Bowl and Curvey Basins that serve as an access for skiers and construction/ maintenance road would be visible in the same view. The earthworks, substantial retaining walls and unnatural line that they create would initially be clearly detectable. Over time the earthworks would start to blend into the scree slope in terms of colour and re-colonisation with vegetation, reducing the visual prominence of the earthworks/ cut. The earthworks would predominantly be visible during summer, with snow masking the underlying terrain during the winter months. It is likely that the around 180m long retaining walls along both ski return trails and below the midstation (70m long) would remain visible over time and even with snow cover.

The earthworks plans in Map Series 400, 450 and 500 show the proposed cut and fill for the Remarkables, mid station and Doolans ski trails and access roads. These plans also show areas where retaining walls may be required due to the height of the proposed cut or fill. The detail design of earthworks will be required to determine the exact extent and height of retaining walls, but a worst case scenario as shown on the plans has been assumed.

The visual simulations show the earthworks based on the cut/fill plans. In the visual simulations the earthworks are shown as different in colour/texture. In winter it is likely that the snow would cover the cut/fill areas, apart from areas where vertical retaining walls are required. In order to show a worst-case scenario these areas are not shown with snow cover in the visual simulations. In summer visualisations no re-vegetation of earthworks is shown as a worst-case scenario; revegetation of lower gradient areas, including transplanting of snow tussocks will occur where feasible.

As shown on **Site Context Photographs 6 and 7** of the graphic attachment, the existing ski lifts are difficult to detect and adverse visual effects of the proposal in the context of the existing ski field and the intermittent views that extend to the upper part of the gondola/ return trail are considered **low** from the ski field access road.

Upgrades of the wastewater treatment facility require installation of three structures, containing the wastewater tanks and treatment plant, with a height of 4.5m on the existing Carpark 3. This area is located on the western side of the ski field road below the base station at a distance of approximately 250m to the north of the Remarkables base station. The existing gravel area will need to be expanded, requiring a substantial cut into the slope behind the carpark. Visibility is confined to a short section of the access road, as Carpark 3 is located within a sharp bend of the road where landform confines views of travellers. Therefore, visual effects are considered to be **very low**.

The visual effects of the bus transit hub and Carparks near the SH6 turn off are assessed in a separate report, lodged with the fast-track application.

6.3.2 Views from within the Rastus Burn Recreation Area (incl Lake Alta Track)

The Rastus Burn Recreation Area is accessed from the Remarkables Ski Field Access Road. The main attraction for many visitors is Lake Alta that can be accessed on foot on a walking track that commences at the existing base building. However, there are other areas that are accessed within the recreation area during summer for rock climbing/ hiking (Single/ Double Cone, Wye Saddle) and during winter for ski touring (surrounding ski field, incl Doolans Basin).

Within the recreation area the components that make up the proposal on the Rastus Burn side (base building, gondola base station and midstation) will be visible from a variety of viewpoints. Site Appraisal Photographs taken from within the ski field (refer to **Site Appraisal Photographs A to J** for context) illustrate that in views from the base building towards the Doolans ridgeline the midstation would in some instances appear on the skyline. The visual simulations show both the mid station building and the earthworks required to establish the structure. On the northern side of the ridge substantial fill and a up to 8.5m high and up to 70m long retaining wall will be required. In views within the ski field (see **Visual Simulation 2**) this platform and lift tower will appear on the skyline, rather the midstation structure itself. In addition, it can be assumed that for most viewers the presence of a ski lift would be an expected element to be seen within the context of the existing ski field, in particular the existing Sugar Bowl and Curvey lifts in relatively close proximity.

As a recreational viewer moves towards Lake Alta intervening landform starts to screen the mid and bottom stations of the gondola, leaving only a section of the lift visible where it traverses the existing ski field (refer to **Site Context Photograph 1 and Visual Simulation 4**). The proposed access road that connects to Curvey Basin would be clearly visible as a cut with a 3.5m high retaining wall through the ridgeline and spur below Helicopter Ridge in views from Lake Alta (**Site Appraisal Photograph J)**. However, in these views the gondola and towers would be entirely in character with the existing ski infrastructure and trails that appear in the visual context. Only from the top ridgeline of the Remarkables, including Double/ Single Cone, would the proposed midstation be visible from above. Again, within these views the exiting ski field forms the surrounding context and the proposed gondola would blend into the already modified landscape.

Given, the limited visibility of the gondola stations from Lake Alta track and blocked views from the popular lake itself, and the existing context of the ski field infrastructure that is expected by visitors to the area, the adverse visual effects of the proposal from the Rastus Burn Recreation Area are considered to be **low to moderate**, largely relating to the proposed earthworks for the Curvey Basin access trail.

6.3.3 Views from the wider Doolans Basin Catchment

When within the Doolans Basin catchment, there are a range of viewpoints that will provide full or partial views of the proposal within this part of the visual catchment (refer to **Site Context Photographs 2 and 3**). A full overview of the proposal can be gained from the saddle/ ridgeline that connects into the upper Wye Creek (see **Visual Simulation 5**) and from the eastern side of the Doolans Creek Right Branch where elevated viewpoints provide views into the upper basin where the proposal is located (to the north and south of Pt 2008masl). Intervening ridgelines will allow for only partial views from other parts of the upper catchment.

From these selected viewpoints within the Doolans Basin, where the proposal would be visible in its entirety, the adverse visual effects would **moderate to high**, depending on the viewing distance. The proposed infrastructure would introduce a new component in the view that would not be in character with the existing largely natural surroundings. Given that the visual effects within the Doolans Basin catchment are relatively confined and buildings are proposed in recessive colours (grey and lichen), the overall visual effects would range from **moderate** (distant viewpoints in the upper catchment) to **high** (within the vicinity of the proposal), in particular initially following the earthworks required for the ski trail, access road and learners area. Once the access road is rehabilitated and the earthworks start to recede into the surroundings the residual visual effects of earthworks would reduce to **moderate**.

6.3.4 Views from the Wye Creek Route and Remarkables Conservation Area

The Doolans visual catchment is relatively confined due to its distinctive ridgelines and curving shape in its headwaters. As the creek curves around Mt Salmond and changes form a N-S alignment to a W-E alignment, views from the creek become obscured through intervening spurs. This means that no part of the proposal would be visible from the DOC managed backcountry hut located adjacent to the Doolans Creek Right Branch to the south of Mt Salmond (Glen Roy Raceman's Hut).

The refurbished, 2-bunk hut can be accessed via the Glenroy Water Race track or the rough 4WD track that follows the ridgeline from Coal Pit Saddle that connects to the Gibbston Valley. However, access is typically off-track and the hut is not used frequently. The water intake for snow making storage is located approx 3 km upstream of the hut and neither the intake, nor the pipe or access track from the proposed gondola station would be visible from the hut and surrounding area.

The 4WD track that connects from Coal Pit Saddle to Ben Cruachan is used by mountain bikers, walkers, off-road motorbikes and is located along the ridgeline that forms the northern boundary of the Remarkables Conservation Area for part of the way. The track extends along the north-facing slopes from Mt Salmond (1640masl) to Ben Cruachan (1895masl). This means that Points 1972masl and 2008masl intervene in views to the west and south along the upper Doolans Creek Right Branch catchment where the proposal is located, obscuring all views from the track.

A more frequently used, DOC-maintained hiking track is the Wye Creek Route that connects the lower Wye Creek at Kingston Road (SH 6) with the Remarkables ski field via Wye Saddle above Lake Alta. The intervening ridgeline that separates Wye Creek form the Doolans catchment prevents all views from the track to the proposal area, including the mid and bottom stations.

Ski tourers are likely the most common users of the upper Wye Creek and Doolans Basins, as well as Single Cone slopes. While there are no views into the Doolans Basin or towards the

ridgeline where the midstation is located from the Wye Creek catchment, views can be gained from the ridgeline that separates the two basins and from high-lying viewpoint on Single Cone. From the ridgeline immediately above the Doolans Basin, large parts of the proposal will be visible, including the midstation, lift towers, bottom station and associated gondola storage building. The viewpoints where the majority of the proposed structures within the Doolans Basin catchment are visible are limited and the view is illustrated in **Site Context Photograph 2** of the graphic attachment. The visibility of the proposal from these few ridgeline viewpoints would be high in light of the proposed change within the currently undeveloped area, while more distant viewpoints on Single Cone would only allow for partial views of the proposal, leading to **low to moderate adverse** visual effects as the proposal would be viewed in the context of the existing ski field.

In addition, there are viewpoints in the head of the Doolans Right Branch catchment where oblique views can be gained of the proposal, with structures partially obscured by intervening ridgelines (see **Site Context Photograph 3** of the graphic attachment). At a viewing distance of around 2km the visibility would be low from this area and a sense of remoteness can be maintained, despite the proposed change. As a result, the adverse visual effects from this area would be **very low**.

6.3.5 Long Distance Views from Wakatipu Basin

As described earlier, the visual effects of the proposal are largely confined to a small catchment in the Rastus Burn area, given the incised and contained nature of the valley and intervening ridgelines to the north-east. Visibility of the midstation from within the Wakatipu Basin is limited to a narrow viewshaft to west of Lower Shotover Road to Domain Road, a short section of western Malaghans Road and the slopes below and around Coronet Peak (see **Site Context Photograph 8** for representative viewpoint). Viewing distances would be 10-15km and it is unlikely that a change would be detectable, leading to **very low** visual effects.

6.3.6 Summary of Visual Effects

The visual effects relating to the proposal fall into two viewing catchments, with the components in the Rastus Burn catchment in broad terms visible from the north-west and in the Doolans Basin catchment from the south and east. Both of these catchments are very confined through the surrounding ridgelines, limiting visual effects largely to the immediately surrounding area and blocking most long-distance views.

Visual effects relating to the proposal in the Rastus Burn catchment would occur along a few intermittent viewpoints along the upper part of the ski field access road (gravel section) and to viewpoints within the ski field. Adverse visual effects in this area would be **low**, given the context of the existing ski field infrastructure. From Lake Alta no views can be gained of the gondola proposal and any adverse visual effects along the walking track are largely limited to the towers and the earthworks to create the access road from Helicopter Ridge into the Curvey Basin, leading to **low to moderate** effects. Long distance views from small parts of the western Wakatipu Basin to the midstation on Helicopter Ridge would be **very low** at a distance of 10-15km.

Within the Doolans Basin visual catchment the visual effects are confined to the ridgeline that separates Doolans Right Branch from Wye Creek, and the head of the catchment to the south and west of Mount Salmond. Due to the height of intervening ridgeline the visual effects within the Remarkables Conservation Area would be restricted to Doolans Creek for the bottom station of the gondola, and some high-lying ridgelines where glimpses of the midstation could be

gained, such as Single Cone and the ridge west of Mount Salmond. For the nearby viewpoints from the ridgelines to the north, west and east of the proposal visual effects would be **moderate to high** in light of the proposed change in the currently undeveloped basin. However, the extent of visibility is very confined and these areas do not contain formal tracks or huts. Remaining vantage points range from **low-moderate, low to very low** adverse visual effects.

6.4 Potential Cumulative Effects

Cumulative effects are the effects of a proposal in combination with those of previous developments. Cumulative effects come into play in circumstances where an additional effect takes a landscape beyond a 'tipping point' —which would normally require a benchmark against which the effects are to be measured. Such benchmarks might include the character envisaged in the district plan or the 'capacity' of a landscape to accommodate development before compromising its landscape values (its valued attributes)[29].

The cumulative effects that may arise relate to the existing ski field development within the Rastus Burn and the further modification that is proposed in this area, as well as the cumulative effect of the multiple project components proposed within the Doolans Basin catchment. This would include the physical changes proposed to the currently undeveloped ridgeline between the two catchments which provides an undeveloped foil, framing the existing ski field.

Regarding potential cumulative visual effects, these can occur in a range of ways:

- They can appear in combination to one another (seen together in the same view),
- They can occur in succession (where the observer needs to turn their head), or
- They can occur sequentially (where there is a time lapse between instances as people move through the landscape).

As the proposal occurs in two separate catchments the only component that would lead to cumulative effects on both sides is the proposed midstation that is located on the ridgeline that separates the two catchments.

Within the Doolans Basin catchment, the proposal is for two buildings, including the gondola midstation and base cabin building/station. The proposed base cabin building will be multi-purpose, containing the base station, gondola storage and café/hospitality services to avoid proliferation of built form within the currently undeveloped basin. The towers and gondolas would be perceived together with the two stations and the proposed earthworks for the access/ ski trails. While the development will be relatively intense in this contained area, care has been taken to ensure that the effects would only be perceived together from a very limited number of viewpoints in the surrounding area. In terms of cumulative visual effects the proposal is considered to lead to **moderate** adverse effects within the limited spatial extent of the upper Doolans Basin due to the number of components proposed.

The modification to the ridgeline through the proposed earthworks for access/ ski return trail and the gondola top station is considered to lead to low cumulative landscape effects in light of the existing ski field infrastructure and ability to absorb the proposed change. For the Rastus Burn catchment the cumulative effects are considered to be **low** due to the capacity of the area to absorb this additional change that is expected as part of the existing ski field development and zoning of the area.

[29] Te Tangi a te Manu: Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines, Tuia Pito Ora New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects, July 2022., para 6.48

With regard to cumulative effects on the wider ecological district, as described in the Ecological Assessment (e3Scientific), the current extent of vegetation loss associated with the Remarkables ski area is approximately 60.6 ha with an additional area of disturbance associated with the Doolans expansion of approximately 20.69 ha. In terms of effects on the biotic landscape values this would equate to 0.05% of the subalpine and alpine environments of the Ecological District above 1100 metres which is considered a **low to moderate** cumulative landscape effect in light of the values present.

7.0 Assessment of Statutory Assessment Matters

The following commentary concerning natural character, landscape and visual effects considers the following statutory documents:

7.1 Resource Management Act Effects

In relation to Matters of National Importance, effects on Natural Character (RMA S6a) and Outstanding Natural Landscapes (RMA S6b) are assessed in Section 6 of this report.

The findings in relation to Natural Character Effects address the proposed earthworks activities placement of structures and related changes to the natural elements, patterns and processes of the wetlands, streams and their margins. While these modifications will be limited within the existing ski field in the Rastus Burn catchment and natural character effects assessed as **low**, localised **high** natural character effects would arise from the creation of water abstraction/ storage within the Doolans Basin catchment.

Remaining natural character effects in the Doolans Basin catchment are assessed as **moderate-high** and concern the broader freshwater and vegetation communities where effects associated with the ski/ access trail creation and construction of buildings and towers for the gondola proposal are evident. Mitigation measures in the form of culverts, sediment/ construction management and pest/weed control are proposed based on recommendation from the project ecologists (e3Scientific) to minimise changes to the hydrological connectivity of habitats which reduces effects on natural processes in streams, wetlands and seepages to moderate.

The proposal is located within an ONL identified within both the QLPDP and CODP. However, within the QLPDP the ONL falls within a Ski Area Sub Zone which excludes the area from consideration of the QLPDP provisions relating to the ONL, reflecting the existing modifications relating to the Remarkables Ski Field. The existing ski trails, lifts and building/ structures present in the Rastus Burn catchment have substantially modified the physical and sensory landscape values, including legibility of the underlying landform and intactness of biotic values. The main additional landscape effects in this part of the project area would relate to the gondola midstation on the ridgeline and the ski return trails that requires earthworks and substantial retaining walls. Landscape effects of these project components are considered **low** in the context of the existing modifications.

The Doolans Basin catchment is currently highly natural and expressive of its underlying formative processes and physical values. Overall, the adverse landscape effects within the confined part of the Doolans Basin catchment that is affected by the development would be **high** during construction and remain **high** in the longer term.

Potential visual amenity effects (RMA S7c) are addressed further under the broad assessment against the statutory provisions in the QLPDP and CODP.

7.2 Effects in relation to the Proposed Queenstown Lakes District Plan

As outlined above, the existing ski field falls into an exception zone (SASZ) from the ONL within Queenstown Lakes District. Pertinently to the Project, Policy 6.3.1.2 excludes Ski Area Sub Zones from the outstanding natural feature, outstanding natural landscape and / or rural character landscape categories that are applied to the balance of the Rural Zone. The policies of Section 6 of the QLPDP do not apply to activities within Ski Area Sub-Zones.

As outlined within Section 6.2 of this report, due to the size of this large mountainous landscape, many of the values are reasonably broad and relate to the composition of the context. As outlined within Schedule 21.22.14 Northern Remarkables Priority Area, those values have been articulated and assessed in Section 6.2 of this report. So, whilst there is a change, it is considered that the proposal will create **low** adverse effects to the values that underpin the ONL within the Rastus Burn catchment that falls within Queenstown Lakes District. The proposed buildings have been designed according to the key principles outlined earlier, to ensure that key effects to landscape values have been avoided.

As assessed in the visual assessment, and again due primarily to distance, coupled with the suite of mitigation measures applied, the proposal is considered to meet the policy direction of being 'reasonably difficult to see', in the context of the wider Remarkables ONL.

Given that the Rastus Burn catchment is almost fully enclosed by landform, visibility of the proposed gondola and base building/ gondola station is very limited from the north. The main viewpoints for the proposal would be along short sections of the upper ski field access road and in immediate vicinity of the existing ski field infrastructure. From Lake Alta views to the gondola are blocked by landform, and the tower alignment and midstation would only be visible along part of walking track. From long distance viewpoints within the Wakatipu Basin and Coronet Peak slopes views into the existing ski field and towards the ridgeline, where the gondola midstation is located, is limited to a narrow viewshaft and any visual effects would be **very low**. Given that visitors to the ski field, including those using the access road, expect ski field infrastructure like the proposed gondola as part of the existing development, the proposal will not detract from public or private views of and within the ONL. While views of the gondola midstation on the ridgeline cannot be entirely avoided, these would be limited to the ski field and short sections of access road, as the station would be barely detectable from a distance of over 10 km within the Wakatipu Basin.

The proposal consists of built form that would occur in close proximity to the existing base building where it would not cause a change in landscape character or impact on existing openness of the mountainous landscape. The proposed lift alignment extends through the existing ski area development with only the midstation and ski return/ access trail located beyond the existing modification. While this top part of the proposal is within an area that is defined by natural elements, such as the ragged topography of the ridgeline, the structures that will be introduced are not unexpected elements in this landscape that already contains an existing ski field. While there will be low cumulative effects within the existing ski area, the SASZ anticipates this type of development in relation to passenger lift systems in this location. It is understood that any external lighting within the Rastus Burn catchment would be downlighting and within the standards for the SASZ.

It is considered that the earthworks and retaining walls required to create the return ski trails below the midstation would create moderate adverse landscape effects relating to artificial or unnatural lines in the landscape which would reduce the current legibility of the unmodified Helicopter Ridgeline. These effects would be experienced in the context of the existing Sugar Bowl and Curvey Basin earthworks.

The landscape capacity for the establishment of gondolas has been assessed as limited within Schedule 21.22.14, provided they are positioned in a way that is sympathetic to the landform, located and designed to be recessive in the landscape, and protect the area's ONL values. The Rastus Burn base station will be an extension of the existing base building in an area that already contains large-scale buildings. The midstation on Helicopter Ridge will be cut into the terrain to reduce its visual prominence where it appears on the skyline. The schedule anticipates that gondolas would improve public access to focal recreational areas higher in the mountains via a non-vehicular transportation mode. It is considered that the existing landscape values of the more modified area around the existing Curvey and Sugar Bowl lifts will be maintained, with only low effects on access to the highly natural Lake Alta basin which are limited to views of the proposal from the access track that extends through the ski field.

7.3 Effects in relation to the Operative Central Otago District Plan

The Doolans Basin is within the Rural Resource Area of the CODP and within the Hector, Garvie and Old Woman Ranges and Nevis Valley ONL. The Rural Resource Area is identified as retaining a high natural character and significant scenic values, which may be enhanced by human made elements. Whilst skiing activities are not specifically contemplated by the CODP, the plan seeks to maintain and enhance recreation opportunities and public access in the Rural Resource Area, including by promoting access to significant natural and physical features.

The district's outstanding natural landscapes and outstanding natural features are to be protected from the adverse effects of inappropriate subdivision, use and development.[30] Similarly, the rural amenity values created by open space, landscape, natural character and built environment values of the District's rural environment, and the open natural character of the hills and ranges are to be maintained (and where practicable, enhanced).[31] These objectives are supported by a number of policies.

The natural character and landscape effects of the part of the proposal that occurs within the Doolans Basin catchment and on the ridgeline separating it from the Rastus Burn (and hence within CODC) are described in Sections 6.1.2 and 6.2.2.

As described in Section 6.1.2 of the report, the Doolans Basin catchment currently is largely unmodified and displays high levels of natural character for the alpine streams, wetlands, seepages, tarns and their margins due to the intact natural elements, patterns and processes occurring within them. While the proposed structures have been located to largely avoid these freshwater habitats, there will be adverse effects on a moderately sized tarn that will be modified to hold water for snow making and on Doolans Creek where earthworks are proposed to occur.

Mitigation measures in the form of culverts for freshwater crossings and sedimentation control during construction will reduce the **high** effects to **moderate-high** for the freshwater

[30] Central Otago District Plan Objective 4.3.2.

[31] Central Otago District Plan Objective 4.3.3.

environments affected by earthworks by maintaining the hydrological connectivity. The proposed modifications to the currently unmodified alpine tarn to serve as a water storage lake would lead to **very high** natural character effects which would relate to the natural patterns and processes, as well as the perception of a man-made pond due to fencing, earthworks and impermeable lining. While the natural character effects from the introduction of man-made structures would reduce the perceived naturalness in this part of the Doolans Right Branch catchment, these ski field related modifications would be limited to a confined area in the upper basin on the true right of the main stream. Modifications required for the water take in the form of an intake structure, pipes and earthworks for road access would occur in proximity of the Doolans Creek Right Branch main stem and would lead to **moderate to high** localised natural character effects associated with the access track, and **low** effects relating to the weir structure in the creek.

The landscape effects that would occur within the Doolans Basin catchment are described in section 6.2.2. Similar to natural character values, the values relating to the Outstanding Natural Landscape are higher in this part of the project area than within the Rastus Burn catchment, primarily due to the absence of man-made modifications. This means that the physical values of the landscape are very high, with a high level of intactness and legibility due to the highly natural topography and native alpine vegetation. The mountainous landscape also displays very high aesthetic value and provides for informal outdoor recreation opportunities. Historical and mana whenua associations with the wider area exist, while generally not directly related to the project area. It is anticipated that the adverse effects on landscape values within this small part of the Remarkables Conservation Area would be **high**, as the unmodified character and associated values would change through the introduction of structures and earthworks, as well as an increase in activity, noise and light through future ski field users, staff and maintenance. However, the modifications will be contained within a limited area that falls adjacent to already existing ski field infrastructure.

The location for the bottom station and gondola storage building within the Doolans Basin has been located where they can be absorbed in an undulating area. The gondola midstation and ski return trails are functionally required to be located on or near the ridgeline. This midstation is comparatively small in size and will be partially positioned into the terrain which will further reduce its potential visual prominence. The structures and earthworks will be visually contained within the upper part of the basin due to the underlying terrain and direction of the valley landform, with the proposed building design, colour and location further mitigating visual effects to a **moderate** level, unless viewed in immediate vicinity. Within the basin surrounds the openness of the landscape can be largely maintained as few buildings are proposed and towers for the gondola alignment will be located close to each other where they do not impede the open views to the surrounding peaks and ridgelines.

While the project area within CODC has currently a feeling of wildness and remoteness, this will change within this part of the Conservation Area. The recreation opportunities currently provided in the back country setting, such as hiking and ski touring, will be replaced by different recreational activities in a more commercial and formalised setting but with a higher level of accessibility providing for a higher number of people to undertake recreational opportunities within the Doolans catchment. This change of landscape character and recreational use will be perceived as adverse by some and beneficial by others.

Overall, the adverse landscape effects within the confined part of the Doolans catchment that is affected by the development would be **high** during construction and remain **high** in the longer term.

8.0 Conclusions

The existing Remarkables Ski Field is located within the upper catchment of the Rastus Burn, containing ski related facilities, including chair lifts, car parking, amenities/ base building and earth-worked ski slopes. The ski related facilities are subject to the specific SASZ under the QLPDP.

The expansion of the ski field through the proposed development of a gondola and ski trails that originates from the existing base station into the Doolans Basin extends the ski area activities into a new catchment, located within CODC boundaries. Both the existing ski field in the Rastus Burn and the Doolans Basin expansion area have been identified as ONLs within the respective district plans. The relevant landscape schedules for the Northern Remarkables ONL[32] acknowledge the existing modifications within the confined part of the Rastus Burn and the very high physical, associative and perceptual values associated with the wider mountainous ONL. The existing ski field modifications have reduced the natural character of affected waterways to a moderate to high level, while unmodified tarns maintain a high natural character. The existing environment within the Doolans Basin is largely devoid of any man-made modifications, with steep scree slopes, rocky outcrops, tarns and alpine vegetation providing very high natural character and landscape values.

The landscape effects of the proposal differ substantially between the two receiving environments of the Rastus Burn and Doolans Basin catchments due to the different levels of existing modification. The existing ski field structures, buildings, lifts and ski trails within the Rastus Burn detract from the physical values and clear legibility and naturalness of the environment of the catchment, and the additional ski field infrastructure and works will be perceived largely within the extent of this existing modified catchment reducing the level of effect. The Doolans Basin, by comparison, has high values relating to fauna, flora and geomorphological processes and the integrity of the landscape in this part of the Site is currently very high.

The landscape effects relate primarily to the introduction of unnatural lines and disturbance of vegetation, freshwater features and scree slopes/ rock outcrops as part of the proposed earthworks, and introduction of new man-made structures (gondola and Doolans cabin building). Earthworks have been designed to generally avoid higher value landscape features while also minimising the extent of disturbance through careful design and alignment of roading and infrastructure. The proposed buildings have been designed according to the key principles, such as use of recessive colours that will blend into the tussock clad basin and clustering of modifications by limiting built form, to ensure that effects on landscape character and values can be minimised by integrating them as much as possible into their surroundings.

Overall, the landscape effects within the **Rastus Burn catchment** are considered **low within the Remarkables ski field** (lower gondola towers and base station) as the existing landscape character will be maintained. The modification in the form of the proposed return trails and midstation located near/ on the **currently unmodified ridgeline will lead to moderate landscape effects**, as they occur in a part of the basin that currently displays higher physical and perceptual values, while being perceived as part of the existing ski field. In contrast, the landscape effects within the **Doolans Basin** are considered to be **high**. In this part of the project area the sense of naturalness and remoteness/ wildness will be compromised from its

[32] Priority Area 21.22.14 Northern Remarkables ONL in QLDP

current state with high effects on physical, legibility and aesthetic values within this confined part of the conservation area.

The visual effects relating to the proposal fall into two viewing catchments, with the components in the Rastus Burn catchment in broad terms visible from the north-west and in the Doolans Basin catchment from the south and east. Both of these catchments are confined through the surrounding ridgelines, limiting visual effects largely to the immediately surrounding area and blocking most long-distance views. Visual effects relating to the proposal in the Rastus Burn catchment would largely occur along a few intermittent viewpoints along the upper part of the ski field access road (gravel section) and to viewpoints within the ski field. Adverse visual effects in this area would be **low**, given the context of the existing ski field infrastructure. From Lake Alta views and the walking track are largely limited to the towers and Curvey Basin access road, leading to **low to moderate** effects. Within the Doolans Basin visual catchment the visual effects are confined to the ridgeline that separates Doolans Right Branch from Wye Creek, and the head of the catchment to the south and west of Mount Salmond. Due to the height of intervening ridgelines the visual effects within the Remarkables Conservation Area would be restricted to Doolans Creek for the bottom station of the gondola, and some high-lying ridgelines where glimpses of the midstation could be gained, such as Single Cone. For the nearby viewpoints from the ridgelines to the north, west and east of the proposal visual effects would be **moderate to high** in light of the proposed change in the currently undeveloped basin. However, the extent of visibility is very confined and these areas do not contain formal tracks or huts. Remaining vantage points range from **low-moderate, low to very low** adverse visual effects.

The Rastus Burn and Doolans Basin catchments are expected to have different natural character effects due to the level of alteration that has occurred in the past. The natural character effects on freshwater vegetation communities are assessed as **low** within the Rastus Burn given the level of existing landscape alteration already undertaken. However, within the Doolans Basin the natural character effects are assessed as **moderate to high** for these values given the high level of naturalness in the currently unmodified basin. The adverse effects on natural elements, patterns and processes relate in particular to the proposed modification to the alpine tarn for water storage (which would be **very high**), abstraction of water from the Doolans Creek Right Branch, the introduction of infrastructure/ buildings and the earthworks required to create the access roads/ ski trail in vicinity to wetlands are assessed as **moderate to high**. Proposed conditions will ensure that hydrologically connected ecosystems will be maintained through crossing streams in the area with culverts, weed control and prevention of sediment run-off. Through the implementation of these conditions, residual natural character effects on the elements, patterns and processes displayed by these freshwater communities can be reduced to **moderate**. The perceptual aspects of natural character will not be substantially impacted within the Rastus Burn catchment where ski infrastructure and trails already form part of the existing environment. In contrast, the perceived naturalness within the confined part of the Doolans Creek Right Branch where the ski field extension, water take and storage will occur will be reduced. This forms a small part of the wider Remarkables Conservation Area, but within the affected area the change to the natural character attributes of the underlying tarns and streams will be clearly detectable, leading to **moderate to very high** effects on the perceived naturalness of the landscape.

For the Rastus Burn catchment the cumulative effects are considered to be **low** due to the capacity of the area to absorb this additional change that is expected as part of the existing ski field development and zoning of the area. The modification to the ridgeline through the proposed earthworks for access/ ski return trails and the gondola top station is considered to lead to low cumulative landscape effects in light of the existing ski field infrastructure and ability to absorb the proposed change. Within the Doolans Basin catchment, the proposal is for two buildings, including the gondola midstation and base cabin building/station. The proposed base

cabin building will be multi-purpose, containing the base station, gondola storage and café/hospitality services to avoid proliferation of built form within the currently undeveloped basin. The towers and gondolas would be perceived together with the two stations and the proposed earthworks for the access/ ski trails. While the development will be relatively intense in this contained area, care has been taken to ensure that the effects would only be perceived together from a very limited number of viewpoints in the surrounding area. In terms of cumulative visual effects the proposal is considered to lead to **moderate** adverse effects within the limited spatial extent of the upper Doolans Basin due to the number of components proposed.

Overall, the landscape, visual amenity and natural character effects associated with the proposed gondola, including structures and stations, and ski trails are assessed to be **very low** to **moderate** and of a level that is in keeping with existing development within the ski field. Overall, it is considered this would lead to no more than **minor** additional effects within the Rastus Burn catchment. The currently largely unmodified Doolans Basin is more sensitive to the proposed changes, which will include a large man-made structure in the form of the base station/ gondola storage, earthworks and the gondola midstation/ towers. The landscape, visual amenity and natural character effects within the Doolans Basin are assessed to be **low-moderate** to **high,** with very high natural character effects on a tarn, and are therefore considered to be up to significant within localised areas. However, within the context of the wider ONL and Remarkables Conservation Area these potentially significant effects would occur within a very confined part of the mountain landscape without impacting on the broader landscape context.

Appendix 1: Method Statement

22 November 2023

This assessment method statement is consistent with the methodology (high-level system of concepts, principles, and approaches) of 'Te Tangi a te Manu: Aotearoa New Zealand Landscape Assessment Guidelines', Tuia Pito Ora New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects, July 2022. The assessment provides separate chapters to discuss landscape, visual and natural character effects where relevant, but is referred to throughout as a Landscape Effects Assessment in accordance with these Guidelines. Specifically, the assessment of effects has examined the following:

- The existing landscape;
- The nature of effect;
- The level of effect; and
- The significance of effect.

The Existing Landscape

The first step of assessment entails examining the existing landscape in which potential effects may occur. This aspect of the assessment describes and interprets the specific landscape character and values which may be impacted by the proposal alongside its natural character where relevant as set out further below. The existing landscape is assessed at a scale(s) commensurate with the potential nature of effects. It includes an understanding of the visual catchment and viewing audience relating to the proposal including key representative public views. This aspect of the assessment entails both desk-top review (including drawing upon area-based landscape assessments where available) and field work/site surveys to examine and describe the specific factors and interplay of relevant attributes or dimensions, as follows:

- **Physical** –relevant natural and human features and processes;
- **Perceptual** –direct human sensory experience and its broader interpretation; and
- **Associative** – intangible meanings and associations that influence how places are perceived.

Engagement with tāngata whenua

As part of the analysis of the existing landscape, the assessment should seek to identify relevant mana whenua (where possible) and describe the nature and extent of engagement, together with any relevant sources informing an understanding of the existing landscape from a Te Ao Māori perspective.

Statutory and Non-Statutory Provisions

The relevant provisions facilitating change also influence the consequent nature and level of effects. Relevant provisions encompass objectives and policies drawn from a broader analysis of the statutory context and which may anticipate change and certain outcomes for identified landscape values.

The Nature of Effect

The nature of effect assesses the outcome of the proposal within the landscape. The nature of effect is considered in terms of whether effects are positive (beneficial) or negative (adverse) in the context within which they occur. Neutral effects may also occur where landscape or visual change is benign.

It should be emphasised that a change in a landscape (or view of a landscape) does not, of itself, necessarily constitute an adverse landscape effect. Landscapes are dynamic and are constantly changing in both subtle and more dramatic transformational ways; these changes are both natural and human induced. What is important when assessing and managing landscape change is that adverse effects are avoided or sufficiently mitigated to ameliorate adverse effects. The aim is to maintain or enhance the environment through appropriate design outcomes, recognising that both the nature and level of effects may change over time.

The Level of Effect

Where the nature of effect is assessed as 'adverse', the assessment quantifies the level (degree or magnitude) of adverse effect. The level of effect has not been quantified where the nature of effect is neutral or beneficial. Assessing the level of effect entails professional judgement based on expertise and experience provided with explanations and reasons. The identified level of adverse natural character, landscape and visual effects adopts a universal seven-point scale from very low to very high consistent with Te Tangi a te Manu Guidelines and reproduced below.

Landscape Effects

A landscape effect relates to the change on a landscape's character and its inherent values and in the context of what change can be anticipated in that landscape in relation to relevant zoning and policy. The level of effect is influenced by the size or spatial scale, geographical extent, duration and reversibility of landscape change on the characteristics and values within the specific context in which they occur.

Visual Effects

Visual effects are a subset of landscape effects. They are consequence of changes to landscape values as experienced in views. To assess where visual effects of the proposal may occur requires an identification of the area from where the proposal may be visible from, and the specific viewing audience(s) affected. Visual effects are assessed with respect to landscape character and values. This can be influenced by several factors such as distance, orientation of the view, duration, extent of view occupied, screening and backdrop, as well as the potential change that could be anticipated in the view as a result of zone / policy provisions of relevant statutory plans.

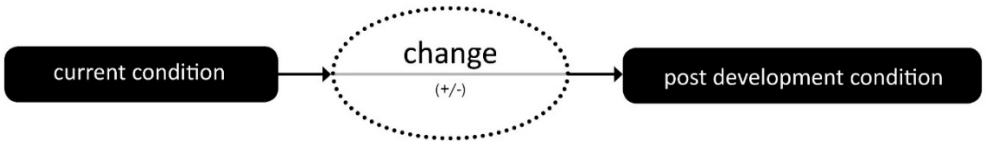
Natural Character Effects

Natural Character, under the RMA, specifically relates to 'the preservation of the natural character of the coastal environment (including the coastal marine area), wetlands, and lakes and rivers and their margins, and the protection of them from inappropriate subdivision, use, and development'. Therefore, the assessment of natural character effects only involves examining the proposed changes to natural elements, patterns and process which may occur in relevant landscape / seascape contexts.

As with assessing landscape effects, the first step when assessing natural character effects involves identifying the relevant physical and experiential characteristics and qualities which occur and may be affected by a proposal at a commensurate scale. This can be supported through the input of technical disciplines such as geomorphology, hydrology, marine, freshwater, and terrestrial ecology as well as input from tāngata whenua. An understanding of natural character considers the level of naturalness and essentially reflects the current condition of the environment assessed in relation to the seven-point scale. A higher level of natural character means the waterbody and/or margin is less modified and vice versa.

A natural character effect is a change to the current condition of parts of the environment where natural character occurs. Change can be negative or positive. The resultant natural character effect is influenced by the existing level of naturalness within which change is proposed; a greater level of effect will generally occur when the proposal reduces the naturalness of a less modified environment. In short, the process of assessing natural character effects can be summarised as follows:

- Identify the characteristics and qualities which contribute to natural character within a relevant context and defined spatial scale(s), including the existing level of naturalness;
- Describe the changes to identified characteristics and qualities and the consequent level of natural character anticipated (post proposal); and
- Determine the overall level of effect based on the consequence of change.



The Significance of Effects

Decision makers assessing resource consent applications must evaluate if the effect on individuals or the environment is less than minor[33] or if an adverse effect on the environment is no more than minor[34]. For non-complying activities, consent can only be granted if the s104D 'gateway test' is satisfied, ensuring adverse effects are minor or align with planning objectives. In these situations, the assessment may be required to translate the level of effect in terms of RMA terminology.

This assessment has adopted the following scale applied to relevant RMA circumstances[35] (refer to diagram below), acknowledging low and very low adverse effects generally equate to 'less than minor' and high / very high effects generally equate to significant[36].

[33] RMA, Section 95E

[34] RMA, Section 95E

[35] Seven-point level of effect scale. Source: Te tangi a te Manu, Pg. 151

[36] The term 'significant adverse effects' applies to specific RMA situations, including the consideration of alternatives for Notices of Requirement and AEEs, as well as assessing natural character effects under the NZ Coastal Policy Statement.

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