

Technical Memo

To:	Onur Oktem – FTAA Programme Manager QLDC
From:	Corinne Frischknecht, Senior Policy Planner, Planning and Development
Date:	Friday, 19 June 2026
Subject:	Fast-Track Approvals Act 2024 –Mt Iron Junction Housing Scheme: Substantive Application (FTSA2601-1173) Technical Memorandum – Urban Design

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This technical memorandum provides an urban design peer review of the Mt Iron Junction Housing Scheme Project to inform Queenstown Lakes District Council's (**QLDC or Council**) s 53 comments on the Project. The Project is a mixed-use development comprising approximately 250 residential units, a childcare centre, neighbourhood-scale commercial activities, open space, and landscaping ('Project').
- 1.2. Overall, the project demonstrates a quality design outcome, including a diversity of housing typologies, good levels of onsite amenity and passive surveillance, and integration with the Mount Iron landscape through view retention and internal pedestrian connections.
- 1.3. Notwithstanding these positive attributes, further refinement is required to ensure the project responds appropriately to its prominent gateway location and achieves a high-quality interface with its surroundings. Key matters that need to be addressed are:
 - strengthening the architectural articulation of visually prominent building elevations (particularly when viewed from State Highways 6 and 84);
 - improving landscape treatment and screening to reduce visual impacts of built form and carparking
 - enhancing integration with the wider active transport network through provision of continuous all-weather connections;
 - the design and function of the commercial carpark to better prioritise pedestrian movement and cycle parking.
- 1.4. Subject to addressing these matters through detailed design development and appropriate consent conditions, the project is considered capable of achieving an acceptable urban design outcome for this prominent gateway site.

2. Peer Review Approach

- 2.1. This technical memorandum adopts a peer review approach to consideration on the findings of the DCM Urban Design assessment. I have undertaken a desktop review of the following documents within the application:
 - Urban Design Assessment prepared by DCM Urban Design Limited (Appendix B) (**Urban Design Assessment**);

- Urban Design and Landscape Masterplan prepared by DCM Urban Design Limited (Appendix B1) (**Masterplan**);
- Architectural Plans and Renders prepared by Figure and Ground (Appendix C2) (**architectural plans and renders**);
- Landscape Visual Assessment and Graphic attachment prepared by Rough Milne Mitchell Landscape Architects (Appendix D1-D4) (**Landscape Assessment**);
- Building Setback Plans prepared by Patersons Land Professionals (Appendix E1);
- Integrated Transport Assessments prepared by Carriageway Consulting (Appendix K-K1);
- Mt Iron Junction Fast Track – Request for further information – RFI response prepared by Paterson Land Professionals and all attachments (7 May 2026) (**RFI response**).

2.2. I have also reviewed the following reports prepared for QLDC: Mt Iron Junction Fast Track Application –Landscape Peer Review prepared by Boffa Miskell, which addresses landscape and visual amenity effects, and the Stantec Report which reviews the transport related aspects of the application.

3. Qualifications and Experience

- 3.1. I (Corinne Frischknecht) am an Urban Planner / Designer and have practised for over 17 years. I hold the qualifications of Bachelor of Environmental Management from Lincoln University and a Master of Urban Design from Auckland University. I am a Full member of the New Zealand Planning Institute.
- 3.2. I hold the position of Senior Policy Planner at Queenstown Lakes District Council (the Council or QLDC). I have been in this position since February 2024. As part of this role, I was involved in preparing planning evidence for the residential and commercial zones, including attendance at the hearing, for the Urban Intensification Variation (UIV), which is a variation to the Proposed District Plan to implement the National Policy Statement on Urban Development (NPS-UD) and particularly give effect to Policy 5. As part of this role I also assist with undertaking urban design peer review for resource consent applications.
- 3.3. 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.

4. Summary of Proposal

- 4.1. The project seeks to obtain approvals under the FTAA to authorise a mixture of housing and commercial development on the site at which will include the following five key components:
1. Medium to high density residential housing with 250 housing units proposed in six different typologies;
 2. Childcare Centre;
 3. Café and Market;
 4. Two main reserve areas; and
 5. Extensive landscaping throughout the Site.
- 4.2. The proposed project is to construct 250 residential units in six different building typologies. The housing typologies have been designed to provide a range of reasonably dense, smaller (20 x 1 bedroom units, 160 x 2 bedroom units and 70 x 3

bedroom units) residential accommodation options; designed primarily to be occupied by the owner or used for long term rental.

- 4.3. As part of the project the QLCHT and the applicant have entered into a Heads of Agreement, committing Mount Iron Junction Limited to deliver land that is capable of being developed to a density of 5% of the total number of dwellings created under the Project. This equates to 13 dwellings on the site that will assist with providing affordable housing for the Wānaka area.
- 4.4. The project is described in Section 3 of the Application for Fast Track Approval and includes further information on applications for Land-Use, Subdivision, Earthworks and Vary Conditions of RM181471.

5. Site Context Description

- 5.1. A description of the site is provided in the Application, as well as the Urban Design and Landscape Assessments.
- 5.2. The site is approximately 5.9ha and located at 237 Wanaka-Luggate Highway, 10 Mountain Road, Albert Town and 37 Albert Town-Lake Hawea Road. State Highway 84 (Wanaka-Luggate Highway) is located immediately south of the site, with State Highway 6 (Albert Town-Lake Hawea Road) directly to the east. Vehicle access to the site is provided through Junction Road.
- 5.3. The site is relatively flat with a gradual elevation rise of 4-meters from the western corner of the site to the eastern corner. The Site appears elevated by approximately 1.5m above the SH roundabout and sits at grade with the SHs towards it's northeast and southwest corners.
- 5.4. The predominant zoning in the Proposed District Plan (PDP) of the surrounding land is Rural, Rural Lifestyle, Rural Residential and Large Lot Residential A.

6. Assessment

- 6.1. The Urban Design Assessment includes an assessment of the following components:
 - a) Identification of the receiving environment and a description of the existing urban/landscape character;
 - b) Assessment against Best Practice Urban Design Principles; and
 - c) Assessment against the QLDC Residential Design Guide.

Identification of Receiving Environment

- 6.2. I agree that overall, the site is well-connected to its local and wider surroundings via the existing roading network. The site is well situated regarding Wanaka's commercial areas, such as the Three Parks development and Wanaka town centre. These commercial areas provide a range of retail and hospitality options, as well as supermarkets, schools and recreational reserves. The Urban Design assessment provides distances to key locations from the project site.

Urban Design Principles

- 6.3. I generally agree with DCM's assessment against the NZ Urban Design Protocol.
- 6.4. In terms of context, the site is located adjoining Mount Iron which the landscape assessment acknowledges as a unique, highly visible, publicly accessible, reserve and landmark within Wānaka's urban environment. As described in PDP 21.22.11 – Mount Iron PA: Schedules of Landscape Values "*A prominent and distinctive*

component of views from surrounding areas of the Upper Clutha Basin, including Wānaka township, Albert Town and the southern parts of Lake Wānaka. Natural landmark at the entry to Wānaka from the east, where it dominates the entry experience.”

QLDC Residential Design Guide

- 6.5. The Urban Design Assessment provides an assessment against the Queenstown Lakes District Council Residential Zone Design Guide (**design guidelines**). I generally agree with the assessment although I note that this design guide is targeted at residential zoned land, and the subject site is located within the Rural Zone, and it is therefore not directly relevant under the Rural Zone planning regime.

Housing diversity and adaptability legibility, entrances and character

- 6.6. I agree that the townhouse and apartment typologies will contribute to the overall supply of more varied housing types in the Wanaka region. In addition, the project is providing land to the QLCHT which equates to 13 dwellings on the site which will assist with providing affordable housing in Wānaka.

Well-defined entrances and detailing to improve legibility

- 6.7. In regard to entrances and detailing, I agree in principle that entrances are generally well defined and variety in appearance has been provided through alternating building form, recessing various parts of building bulk, varying materials, changes in colour and varying building heights as viewed within the site.
- 6.8. However, I do not agree that the southern end of the building typologies C and E as shown on the masterplan west, provide visual interest, or positively address the street, particularly when viewed from the adjoining state highway network as shown in Visualisation 8.2 below. The first image shows an indicative visualisation of development from entrance to the parking bay on SH84 - Vegetation height after approximately 5 years.



Visualisation 8.2: Indicative visualisation of the project from entrance to the parking bay on SH84 - Vegetation height after approximately 5 years. Prepared by DCM Urban.

- 6.9. The southern façade of these three blocks is still clearly visible with vegetation height after approximately 10 years as shown in the image below.



Visualisation 8.3: Indicative visualisation of the project from entrance to the parking bay on SH84 - Vegetation height after approximately 10 years. Prepared by DCM Urban.

- 6.10. The Design Guidelines note that the design and treatment of 'end walls' should avoid large blank walls which give the appearance that a development is unfinished or does not take account of its setting¹. Additionally, terrace and apartment buildings located on corner sites should demonstrate the same level of architectural detailing on secondary elevations as on primary street-facing façades. The inclusion of balconies and windows on the ends of building rows is strongly encouraged to enhance amenity and visual interest as well as allowing more natural light into a dwelling.
- 6.11. These units appear visually monotone in their materiality, and the flat roof design further contributes to a box-like appearance. Therefore, I don't agree with the DCM Statement that *"end walls within the development have been designed to avoid blank facades. These walls incorporate glazing to maintain visual interest and support passive surveillance, as well as architectural details such as variations of cladding and form."*²
- 6.12. This matter was raised through the request for information by QLDC to the applicant dated 30 April 2026. The applicant, in the response that is before the Panel, has advised that consideration is currently being given to the treatment of end walls facing the public realm, and that these elements could be incorporated in the next stage of design development. While it is preferable that this information is provided upfront for assessment, an alternative approach would be to include a condition of consent requiring this to be addressed in the subsequent design phase for Council approval.
- 6.13. Therefore, further design refinement should be required by a condition, including the incorporation of additional windows, and/or a combination of vertical and horizontal articulation, along with varied materials to achieve a high level of visual interest and avoid blank or inactive elevations.
- 6.14. This requirement should also be applied to the end units for the apartment blocks in the eastern part of the site as shown in the red squares in the visualisation below as provided through additional information as well as *South Elevation apartment Drawing Sheet A1-62 Revision F*. I also discuss this in more detail later in this report, and the significance of this view particularly for vehicles travelling from the east, coming into Wānaka.

¹ Page 13 of the design guidelines.

² Page 11 of the Urban Design Assessment.



Both apartment blocks as shown on Masterplan East.



Visualisation (Viewpoint 5) of the project from entrance of 38 Albert Town – Lake Hawea Road

Connections to open space to create safe, high amenity spaces

- 6.15. I agree that the proposed open spaces within the project are well connected to the site's pedestrian circulation and also well overlooked by surrounding blocks. Additional passive surveillance is also provided from the directly adjoining road network.
- 6.16. I support that that South facing outdoor living spaces have been avoided in the design where possible, with the majority of private outdoor living spaces having a northern, eastern or western aspect, in order to have access to either morning, afternoon, or all-day sun. I also support that an appropriate balance has been achieved between providing private outdoor living areas to the rear of the site to support privacy whilst also considering passive surveillance and maximising solar access along the street frontage. I also support the combination of fencing/hedging that has been applied to maintain a visual connection over the street, supporting passive surveillance, while still creating a useable and clearly defined private outdoor living space.
- 6.17. The Urban Design Assessment acknowledges that the carparking areas of the apartment buildings are positioned along the boundary shared with Albert Town- Lake Hawea Road (SH 6) and that a combination of post and rail style fencing, hedging, planting and trees are proposed to restrict views of cars/ hardstand from the neighbouring State Highway, and to maintain a high-quality development edge.



Elevated perspective 1B. elevated perspective looking west across towards Mount Iron. Prepared by DCM Urban Design limited.

- 6.18. It appears in the render above that the landscaping along the more eastern carpark adjoining SH6 provides less screening when compared to the western carpark, to mitigate adverse effects of the carparking when viewed from the state highway. There doesn't appear to be any discussion or assessment in the Urban Design Assessment on this matter.
- 6.19. This matter was raised through the QLDC request for further information to the applicant. The applicant's further information response provided the following additional render which provided indicative visualisation of the project from entrance of 38 Albert Town-Lake Hawea Road (SH6).



- 6.20. Given that Mt Iron is a significant contributor to the amenity and character values of this area of Wānaka, I consider this view to be particularly important as it provides some of the first views of Mt Iron across the Site (when approaching from the east on SH6) and contribute to the "sense of place" on arrival to Wānaka. I consider that a combination of the facades and landscaping as currently proposed would significantly detract from this experience.
- 6.21. The proposed landscaping is not considered sufficient to effectively mitigate or enhance the visual character and perceived built form of the project when viewed from State Highway 6, particularly in the context of the Mount Iron backdrop. This is also noted in the Landscape Peer Review, "*many of the taller exotic, deciduous species proposed will not integrate with, and may contrast with, the existing vegetation cover on the slopes of Mount Iron.*" In this respect, the current planting strategy risks undermining the coherence of the landscape setting and the legibility of the natural backdrop.
- 6.22. Further landscaping along this boundary is necessary to mitigate potential adverse amenity effects of the built form, as well as reducing the perceived visual dominance of large hardstand areas and parked vehicles. The incorporation of larger-scale,

contextually appropriate tree species along the interface would assist in reinforcing a strong and cohesive 'gateway' experience when entering Wānaka from the east, as well as lower landscaping to mitigate visual effects of the carpark. This requirement can be incorporated into the consent conditions requiring the final landscape plan to be certified to provide better screening of the built form and carpark when viewed from the state highway when arriving from the north east.

How to integrate waste and service areas so as not to affect amenity

- 6.23. I agree that the location of the communal bins are generally well located at the end of the apartment buildings or integrated within the project. Provided that these will be well screened by a gated enclosure with corrugated roofing as detailed in the application then these will be appropriate. Screening of communal bins will contain these service areas and maintain amenity. The proposed communal bin enclosures are well distributed across the site to maximise functionality and convenience.
- 6.24. In terms of creating high levels of accessibility for all transport needs, the Urban Design Assessment notes that: *"Transport choice is supported through the design of an internal footpath network, a shared path and roading. The shared path supports walking, biking and scootering and connects Albert Town-Lake Hawea Road (SH6) to the wider network of trails available in Mount Iron Reserve. The footpath network is considered to be extensive, supporting pedestrian access to all parts of the site. The shared path and footpath network ensures that residents and visitors are not limited to car use but have the choice to move around by a variety of transport modes."*
- 6.25. The project generally supports a pedestrian and cycle friendly environment through the design of the footpaths, shared path and road design within the project, as well as pedestrian/cycling connections to the Mount Iron Track. However, I do not agree with the statement in the Urban Design Assessment on Page 6 which notes that: *"While the option of commuting to the nearby centres of Three Parks, Albert Town, or Wanaka town centre for additional facilities, services and resources as needed/desired will also be retained, with the site being well-connected to these localities."*
- 6.26. There does not appear to be an external all-weather (sealed) Active Travel shared path connection to Wānaka to provide a true connection with the town as well as Three Parks. This becomes extremely important in providing future residents with greater choice regarding how they move particularly given the absence of public transportation available in this area. For these reasons, I do not agree with the Urban Design assessment that *"the proposed development is well connected and promotes a high-level of connectivity to, from and within the site, as well as in the context of the wider Wanaka region."*
- 6.27. This has also been raised in the technical advice provided by Stantec and also by Robert Galvin, Property & Infrastructure Team at QLDC, which state that to make cycling more attractive as a transport mode, it is recommended that a shared path network be provided through the whole site, as well as a continuous connection to the existing Active Travel network near the underpass at Three Parks and a new all-weather (sealed) Active Travel shared path link from the site to Aubrey Road to provide a true connection with the town.

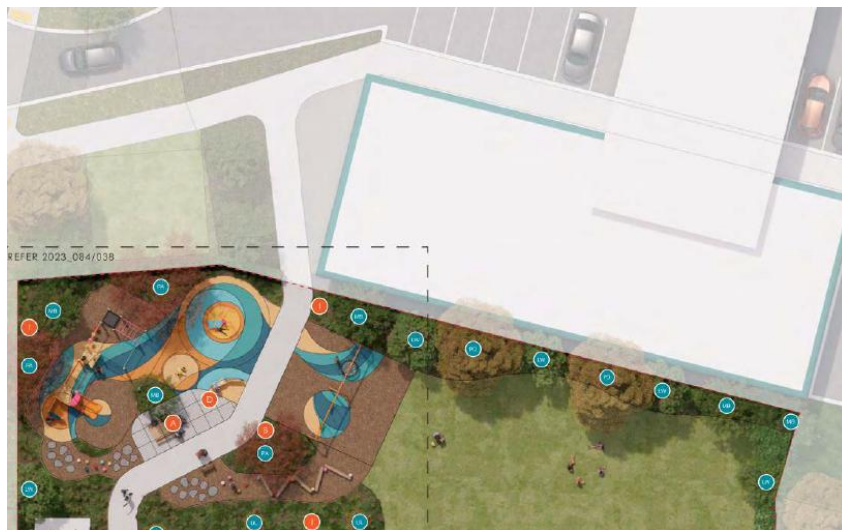
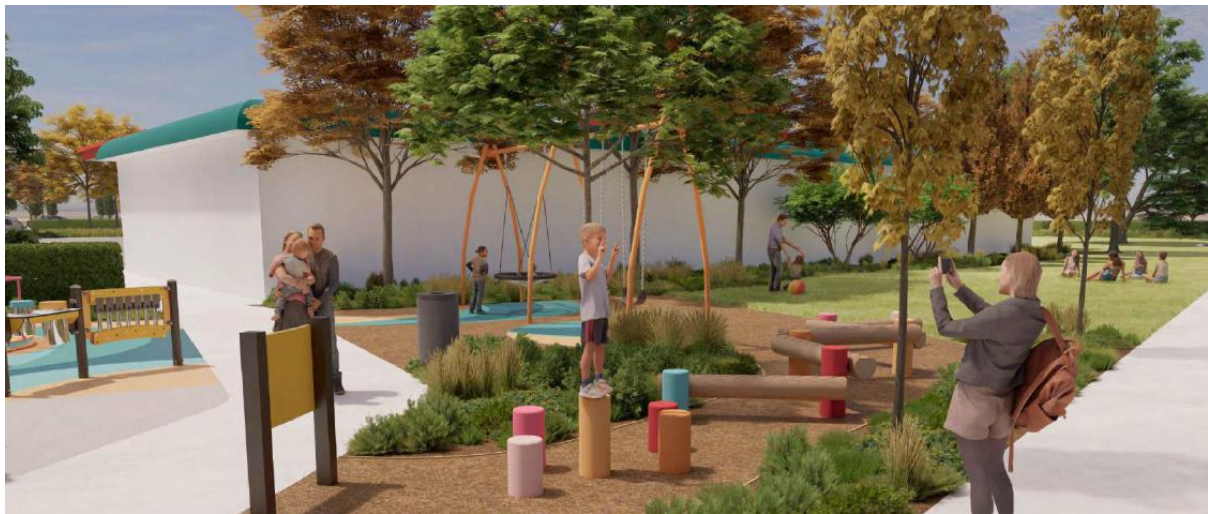
Building materials and environmental sustainability

- 6.28. The application notes that the indicative lighting provided as part of the landscape plans will be subject to final design by a qualified lighting designer to ensure light levels meet the required lux requirements to support a safe nighttime environment.

This should be included as a condition of consent subject to Council approval to ensure that appropriate lighting consistently provides illumination of public and semi-public spaces, to improve visibility for users, and reducing opportunities for offending in line with Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles.

Other Matters

- 6.29. I note that the previously consented service station sits outside of Application Scope, however the interface between the service station and this development is relevant on the application site. Renders are shown in both Page 15 of the document titled *B. Elevated Perspective looking North towards Albert town* as well as playground/open space perspective shown below. There is no further detail or discussion on this interface provided in the application.



- 6.30. There does not appear to be any landscaping along the western façade of the service adjoining the footpath. The application also doesn't provide any detail on the length of time it takes for the planting to get to the size shown on the renders or whether consideration has been given to what this interface will look like until planting reaches maturity.
- 6.31. This issue was raised through the QLDC request for Information and in response the applicant has noted that some of the planting as proposed along the interface with

the consented service station are expected to reach mature heights of approximately 1.5 to 2 metres, which is higher than what the renders showing the service station currently depict.

- 6.32. Additional planting should also be included within the application site to further soften the interface with the western façade of the service station (where no landscaping is proposed) which will be clearly visible from the playground as shown in the renders below.



- 6.33. A Café and Market is proposed as part of this project and I note that the Urban Design Assessment does not assess the commercial component of the project, or how this interface is managed with the residential use of the site.
- 6.34. Of particular interest, the carparks for both the childcare centre and commercial buildings are located in front of the buildings and therefore the buildings don't have a strong presence on the street. Particularly the commercial building has carparking wrapping around the western and southern side of the building. Benefits of moving this building closer to the street and putting carparking at rear would create a stronger and more positive street edge and reduce potential visual impacts when viewed from the street. This would also activate the street edges and address the public realm whilst maximising back-to-back distances with residential buildings at the rear.





- 6.35. This matter was raised through the QLDC request for information and in response the applicant noted that the building is positioned on the intersection between Junction Road and Mountain Road and addresses both of its associated street frontages. The commercial building prioritises the street presence towards Mountain Road which is expected to have a higher pedestrian presence than Junction Road and the Mount Iron Junction roundabout. The applicant has also advised that options were considered during the design process with carparking internalised as much as possible, however the layout submitted as part of this application balances the functional requirements of this building, including the need to manage safe vehicle access, legible circulation, and to limit on-site manoeuvring where possible.
- 6.36. Notwithstanding the above, and appreciating the context of the site being on a corner, it is still preferred that the building achieves a stronger presence along Junction Road to better contribute to the street edge and public realm outcomes at this frontage. If this cannot be reasonably achieved within the design constraints, then greater emphasis should instead be placed on ensuring the carparking area is designed to clearly prioritise pedestrian movement. This should include well-defined, direct, and safe pedestrian pathways through and across the parking area, supported by traffic calming measures and design cues that reinforce pedestrian priority and improve the overall legibility and safety of the site for all users. This can be included as a condition of consent to be included as part of the final design and approved by Council.
- 6.37. There also doesn't appear to be any cycle parking in either the childcare centre, the commercial/market, or the public carpark. Cycle parking is not mentioned in the Urban Design Assessment. I recommend that this is incorporated into commercial to improve accessibility for all transport modes. Cycle parking should be located in easily accessible, well-lit locations.
- 6.38. This matter was raised through the QLDC request for information and the applicant has advised in response that consideration is currently being given to the addition of cycle parking in the childcare centre, the commercial/market and the public carpark to further support active travel. The applicant has identified that there is sufficient space within and around these areas to accommodate cycle storage at each location, and these can be incorporated at the next design phase where possible. I note that the applicants proposed conditions of consent include provisions for at least four cycle parking for the childcare and two cycle parking spaces for the market. The location of these should ideally be confirmed prior to final design phase to ensure that the location of these are appropriate and subject to Council approval.

- 6.39. I also agree with the matter raised by the Stantec transport peer review that further consideration should be given in the design plans for the residential component of the development to include provision for cycle storage to contribute to more use of cycles by residents.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1. Overall, the Urban Design Assessment provides a comprehensive and well-structured evaluation of urban design outcomes, demonstrating strong alignment with the QLDC Residential Design Guidelines and recognised best practice principles.
- 7.2. Notwithstanding this, my review of the application and supporting material has identified several areas where further refinement and consideration are warranted to adequately mitigate potential adverse effects and enhance the overall design quality of the project. These are summarised below, and should be secured by consent conditions:
1. Additional landscaping should be incorporated within the application site to soften the interface between the western façade of the service station and the playground.
 2. Further consideration should be given to the treatment of end walls facing the public realm and particularly where visible from the state highway to avoid blank walls and monotonous structures and create more visual interest.
 3. Additional landscaping should be incorporated along the eastern carpark of the site adjoining the state highway that mitigates the carpark as well as softens the built form when entering from the east and does not detract from Mount Iron in the background.
 4. Require confirmation of lighting to support safety and visibility of public and semi public places for users, particularly at night.
 5. Provide detail on the number and location of cycle parking for the café, market and childcare centre.
 6. Incorporate clearly defined pedestrian paths and traffic measures to slow traffic within the café/market carpark to improve safety for pedestrians and cyclist and encourage lower vehicle speeds.
 7. Provide a new all-weather (sealed) Active Travel shared path link from the site to Aubrey Road to provide a true connection with Wānaka town (consistent with the comments provided by Stantec and QLDC Property & Infrastructure Team).