

BEFORE THE HEARINGS PANEL ON BEHALF OF THE OTAGO DISTRICT COUNCIL

IN THE MATTER OF

Of a hearing of the Resource Management Act
1991 (**RMA** or **the Act**) of Plan Change 19
Residential Chapter Provisions

ON BEHALF OF

SUGARLOAF VINEYARDS LTD
Submitter

AND

CENTRAL OTAGO DISTRICT COUNCIL

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF BRUCE WEIR

DATED 16 MAY 2023

Presented for filing by: Jo Skuze
The Property Group
Level 3 / Five Mile Centre, 36 Grant Road, Frankton
PO Box 2130,
Queenstown 9371

INTRODUCTION

- 1 My name is Bruce Weir.
- 2 I am a Planner and Urban Designer. I am a Principal at Saddleback Planning Limited, statutory planning, master planning and urban design consultants.
- 3 I hold the qualifications of a Master of Urban Design (Honours) and a Bachelor of Planning from the University of Auckland.
- 4 I have approximately 30 years of experience as an urban planner and urban designer.
- 5 Although this is a Council hearing, I confirm I have read the Environment Court's Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses and agree to comply with it. My qualifications as an expert are set out above.

SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

- 6 My evidence is confined to support for a submission by SugarLoaf Vineyards Ltd to Plan Change 19 (Residential Chapter Provisions) of the Central Otago District Plan (CODP). It covers:
 - (i) The Lowburn context
 - (ii) Delivering quality urban outcomes
 - (iii) Site considerations
 - (iv) Consideration of development options

Larger versions of all plan provided at included the attached appendix.

INTRODUCTION – LOWBURN CONTEXT

- 7 Development is always a partnership between the community and the landowner – but there's always a natural tension between the two. While the community is focussed on safeguarding existing values, the land owner is typically challenging the status quo and seeking innovation.
- 8 In this context, as the physical and perceived separation between Lowburn and Cromwell town has decreased, the Lowburn neighbourhood has transitioned from a rural settlement to rural residential lifestyle subdivision. PC19 is seeking to formalise this as Large Lot Residential.

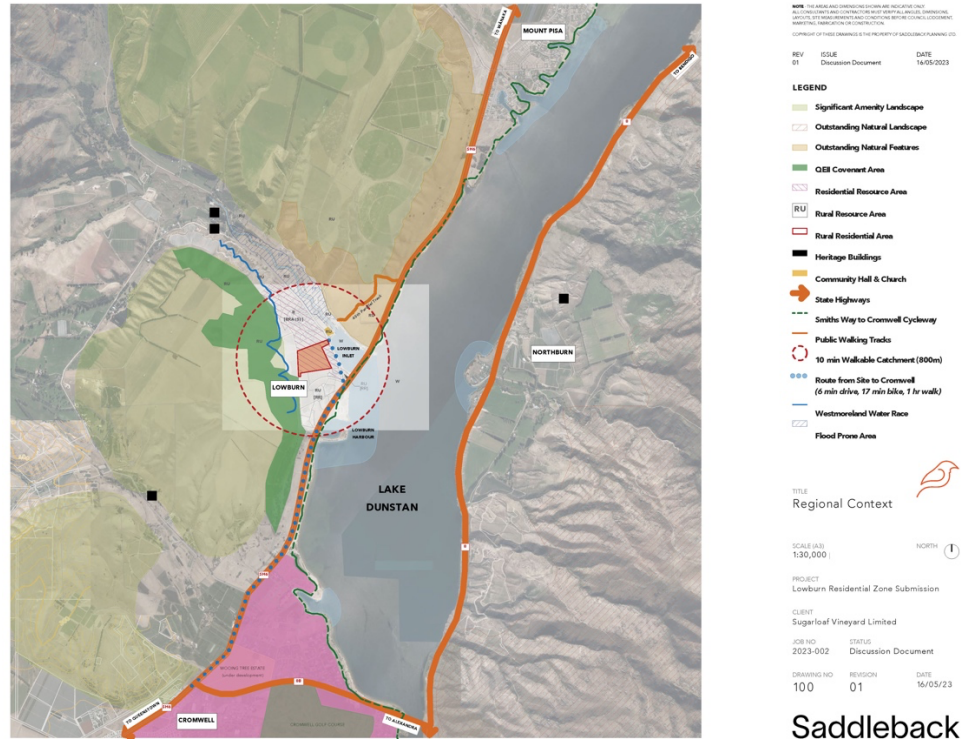


Figure 1. Context

9 From an urban design perspective, this is an odd zone as it is neither rural or urban – and is effectively a precursor to further urban development.

10 While Lowburn is the same relative distance as Bannockburn from Cromwell Town Centre, the focus of new residential environments has been to the north along the lake edge –such as the Wooing Tree, River Rock Estate and Pisa Moorings.

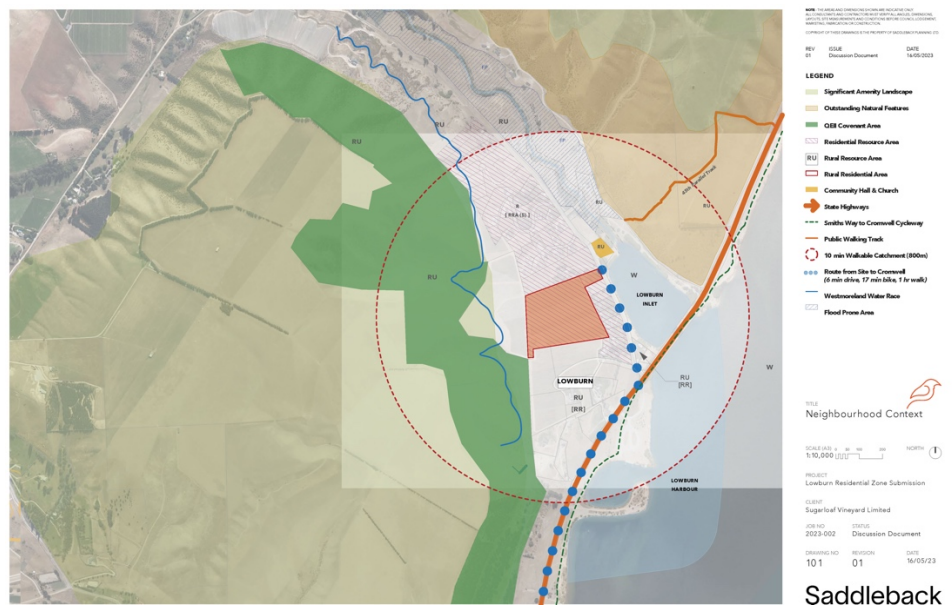


Figure 2. Site Context

- 11 Lowburn itself, in addition to being in relatively close proximity to the town centre, features many attractions which support more urban-focussed living:
- (a) Lowburn Inlet - safe harbour and beach
 - (b) Community Hall
 - (c) Entry to the 45 Parallel track
 - (d) Lowburn Boat Ramp and safe harbour to Lake Dunstan

These are features that developers traditionally seek to create to help shape large scale urban development.

- 12 Consequently, while Council may seek to retain a Large Lot residential density character in Lowburn, it is ultimately an untenable aspiration as development pressure will incremental change – and as a result, undermining of the areas intrinsic character.

DELIVERING QUALITY URBAN OUTCOMES

- 13 Change is often uncomfortable and scary, but this is not sufficient reason to shy away from it. In terms of land use, there are two quite distinct forms of development – subdivision or planned development.
- 14 Ideally larger development areas are shaped by a Structure (or Spatial) Plan. A Structure Plan signals areas where future growth can be accommodated, what it might look like in terms of density as well as identify key long term linkages and connections (beyond site boundaries). More importantly it helps prioritize investments in infrastructure, services, and amenities.
- 15 Subdivision is the 'bottom' line scenario featuring minimum lot sizes which provides for great flexibility for purchasers but little certainty of built form outcomes. Because (a) standard needs to apply to smaller infill lots and (b) the effects of new dwellings have to be anticipated, a much more conservative approach is required to mitigate any undesirable outcomes.
- 16 Simply put subdivision standards are set for the lowest common denominator that the community is willing to accept.
- 17 Comprehensively designed development on the other hand, typically work on larger sites and feature higher densities because effects can be quantified and assessed at the design stage. They also have the ability provide attributes and

amenities that subdivisions can't or won't implement because there's little incentive to do so.

- 18 Comparing the two, Comprehensive Development is about creating "somewhere" while subdivision can be "anywhere".
- 19 Perhaps more significant is how the two forms differ in terms of infrastructure and the likelihood of development proceeding. Even though subdivision developers install site infrastructure and pay contributions, these are actually at the end of a process. The provision of bulk infrastructure to enable development places an increased burden on Council finances and rating demands.
- 20 Comprehensive development provides the commercial impetus (additional revenue) and rationale (marketability of resilient networks, environmental enhancement) to implement and manage alternate systems¹.
- 21 However this capital outlay and risk is its 'Achilles heal' – while desirable at multiple levels, there are few developers of scale or vision capable of undertaking such projects. For this reason planning needs to incentivise comprehensive development, and this principally achieved through higher residential yields and structured consenting pathways.

SITE CONSIDERATIONS

- 22 The 'urban' area of Lowburn (in which the site sits) has some particular attributes which impact urban development, including:
- (a) Relatively steep escarpments which extend from high plateaus to the valley floor;
 - (b) A valley floor which is largely undevelopable due to:
 - (i) The stream and flooding concerns, and;
 - (ii) The need to locate roads along the valley edges
 - (c) Significant areas of north-facing areas being already subdivided as large lot residential – and as a result are now increasingly challenging to further develop.

¹ This include Low Pressure Sewer (LPS) systems, at-source nitrogen stripping plants and additional potable water attenuation

(d) A defined limit to urban growth up western slopes from the historic Westmoreland Water Race.

23 As such, the extent of developable land in Lowburn is in fact quite constrained – and this site, being one of the only sites of any scale, is therefore of significant value for future growth.

24 I will defer to the Landscape Evidence provided by Landscape Architect Philip Blakely for a more detailed description of the site and context, however it is clear the subject site is somewhat unique because it:

- (a) Is of scale (7.76ha);
- (b) Sits gently elevated above the valley floor with a (relatively low and gentle) embankment down to Lowburn Valley Road – preserving both views and privacy;
- (c) Is north-facing, with good topography and outlook;
- (d) Is directly connected to the inlet waterfront and community hall

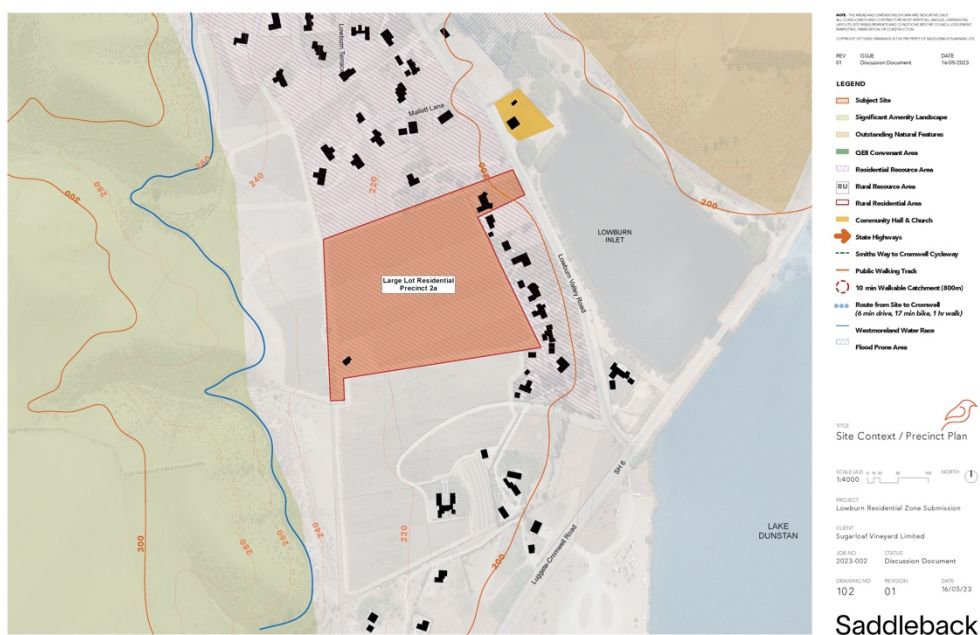


Figure 3. Existing Urban Pattern

25 These attributes and considerations indicate the site has greater development potential than simply the Large Lot provided for under the proposed zoning.

26 Of particular note are the existing dwellings on the sites eastern boundary. While they sit on larger (>3,000m²) lot, they are concentrated at the top of the embankment that runs down to Lowburn Valley Road and the inlet below. As

a consequence the urban character of the area is perceived as much more intensive.

CONSIDERATION OF DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS

- 27 As detailed above, the baseline subdivision option for the site is large lot subdivision with minimum 3,000m². This approach, like that experienced elsewhere in Lowburn, will seek to minimise costly infrastructure (roads) and public realm in favour of optimising individual lot sizes.
- 28 The concept plan below (Figure 4) illustrates the potential outcome. It is clear that, although existing dwellings on the eastern boundary have the same minimum lot size, the patterning of the dwellings makes them appear much denser. Consequently there is some rationale for pursuing a reduced minimum lot size in this location.



Figure 4. Large Lot Subdivision: 20 lots >3,000m²

- 29 However, given the shortage of suitable land for future urban development in what is a 'high demand' area – progressing the large lot approach would be imprudent as it would effectively stall further development for a considerable period of time.
- 30 As highlighted previously, long-term development should ideally be guided by a Structure (or Spatial) Plan. In the absence of such a plan for the area currently, the key considerations which would comprise a plan include:

- (a) Allowing for future urban growth to the south of the site towards the Luggate-Cromwell Road (SH6) – most suitable land (slope, aspect) with outlook to the lake;
- (b) Providing a second vehicle entry route – to provide a resilient road network and reduce loading on a single intersection;
- (c) Aligning this route to intersect with Lowburn Valley-Road about the Community Hall and 'beach'

31 At the same time the guidance provided in the National Policy Statement on Urban Development 2020 (NPS-UD) are worthy of assimilation – specifically the desire to create walkable communities, encourage modal shift and support the development of local amenities and services.

Following this a Structure Plan could look like the plan below.



Figure 5. A high-level Structure Plan outlining future growth-enabling components

- 32 To help shape this structure however would require commercial motivation of the land owners – specifically increased yield. Based on the attributes of the site (detailed above) there is some rationale for pursuing a reduced minimum lot size down to 1,500m² – subject to the future routes and connections sought, being protected.
- 33 However, as illustrated below, applying this with conventional subdivision would result in a suburban outcome. Furthermore, dwellings will tend to remain larger in size even though sections are reduced, as owners seek to optimise their buildable areas (own little slice of paradise'). As a result, the

outcomes of a subdivision-led approach would likely undermine to the lifestyle / rural living aesthetic sought for Lowburn.



Figure 6. >1,500m² Subdivision: 38 lots

34 Therefore the challenge is to deliver greater density while reinforcing the sense of place and creating amenity that benefits the wider community.

35 This is in fact quite simply achieved once the objectives are listed out:

35.1 Achieving a density across the site of >1,500m²;

- Ensuring a range of housing types which can support diversity of residents;
- Providing a form and structure which reduces the need for motor vehicle use for basic living needs (robustness)
- Enabling infrastructure provision which delivers more from less and reduces demand pressures on council systems (sustainability and resilience)

36 The concept plan below (Figure 7) demonstrates a 'rural hamlet' approach to delivering these outcomes.



Figure 7. Rural hamlet with community focal point and diversity of housing. 52 dwellings with a 3,500m² community green

37 In addition to delivering the main elements detailed in the (concept) Structure Plan, adopting this approach:

- (a) Leverages the visual ambience of, and connects to, the rural hinterland to shape the overall character;
- (b) Demands a higher percentage of public realm (circa 40% versus 20–25% for conventional subdivision) to ensure landscape attributes dominate;
- (c) Employs a diverse and irregular subdivision pattern to enforce a more 'organic' build form and landscaping approach on individual lots.

38 The outcomes of this approach can be elevated through a coordinated architectural and landscape response.



Figure 8. Massing model of a 'hamlet'-style development within a landscape

- 39 The hamlet approach is not new – far from it. It is in fact simply mimicking traditional rural settlement development that are widely known and loved.



Figure 9. Arrowtown – exemplifies many of the elements sought.

- 40 As demonstrated in Figures 8 and 9 above, achieving a level of residential density is not reliant on larger or inappropriate buildings forms. As such fairly standard provisions (site coverage, permeable surface and building height) can be employed.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 41 The subject site is already zoned for residential development, however pursuing the proposed Large Lot subdivision (a) represents poor use of a limited resource and (b) is not reflective of the adjacent urban form.
- 42 Pursuing a Comprehensive Development approach based around the sites ability to absorb development (density) while focusing on the built form outcomes leads to much better outcomes for all stakeholders. By comparison:
- (a) Large Lot (>3,000m²) Subdivision = 20 private lots, no community amenity
 - (b) 1,500m² Subdivision = 38 Lots, no community amenity
 - (c) Rural Hamlet = 52 dwellings, 3,500m² community green



Figure 10. Concept detail

- 43 The comprehensive 'hamlet' is not an approach that can be employed on any site as it is highly-dependent on context and amenity attributes for success – but when utilised can deliver 'added value' outcomes for both community and developer.
- 44 Incorporating the balance rural environment with the proposed Comprehensive Development approach on this particular site, provides a range of potential wider opportunities / benefits:
- (a) Extension of the QEII landscape,
 - (b) Conversion of the Westmoreland water race as part of a wider recreational pathway;
 - (c) Provision of community potable water tanks;
 - (d) Ability to employ low impact infrastructure solutions;
 - (e) Ability to provide a commercial showcase (ie vineyard complex) for the productive landscape (both within the site and beyond);
 - (f) Opportunity (by way of increased residential density) for local amenity and services in support of the Community Hall.
- 45 Furthermore, providing smaller lots and compact dwellings:

- Creates a wider range of house types and lifestyle choices which are not currently available in the neighbourhood – suitable for singles and couples, retirees/empty nesters, first home buyers.
- Creates housing which is inherently 'affordable by design'².
- Provide the opportunity for short-stay accommodation in support of a community hub / or future commercial activity.

46 These are not only outcomes sought in the NPS-UD, but enable a richer and more diverse community capable of supporting other social and business initiatives in the neighbourhood.

47 Consequently the relief sought for Comprehensive Development is:

- a) A residential density of 1,500m² applied to the entire site.
- b) A minimum lot size of 300m² .
- c) A Discretionary activity status.

Thank you for the opportunity to present my evidence.

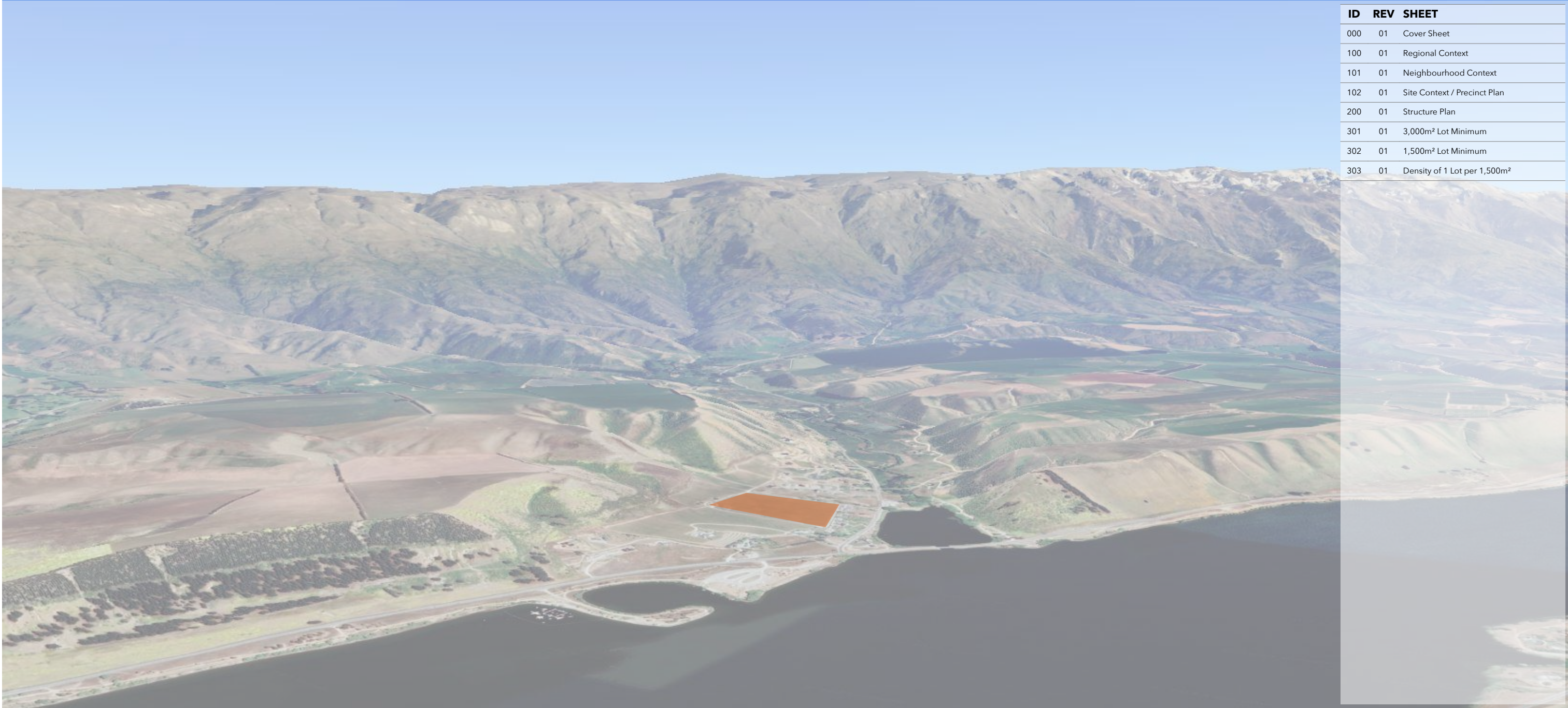


Bruce Weir
16 May 2023

² Smaller houses are cheaper to construct, and smaller land parcels are likewise inherently less-expensive.

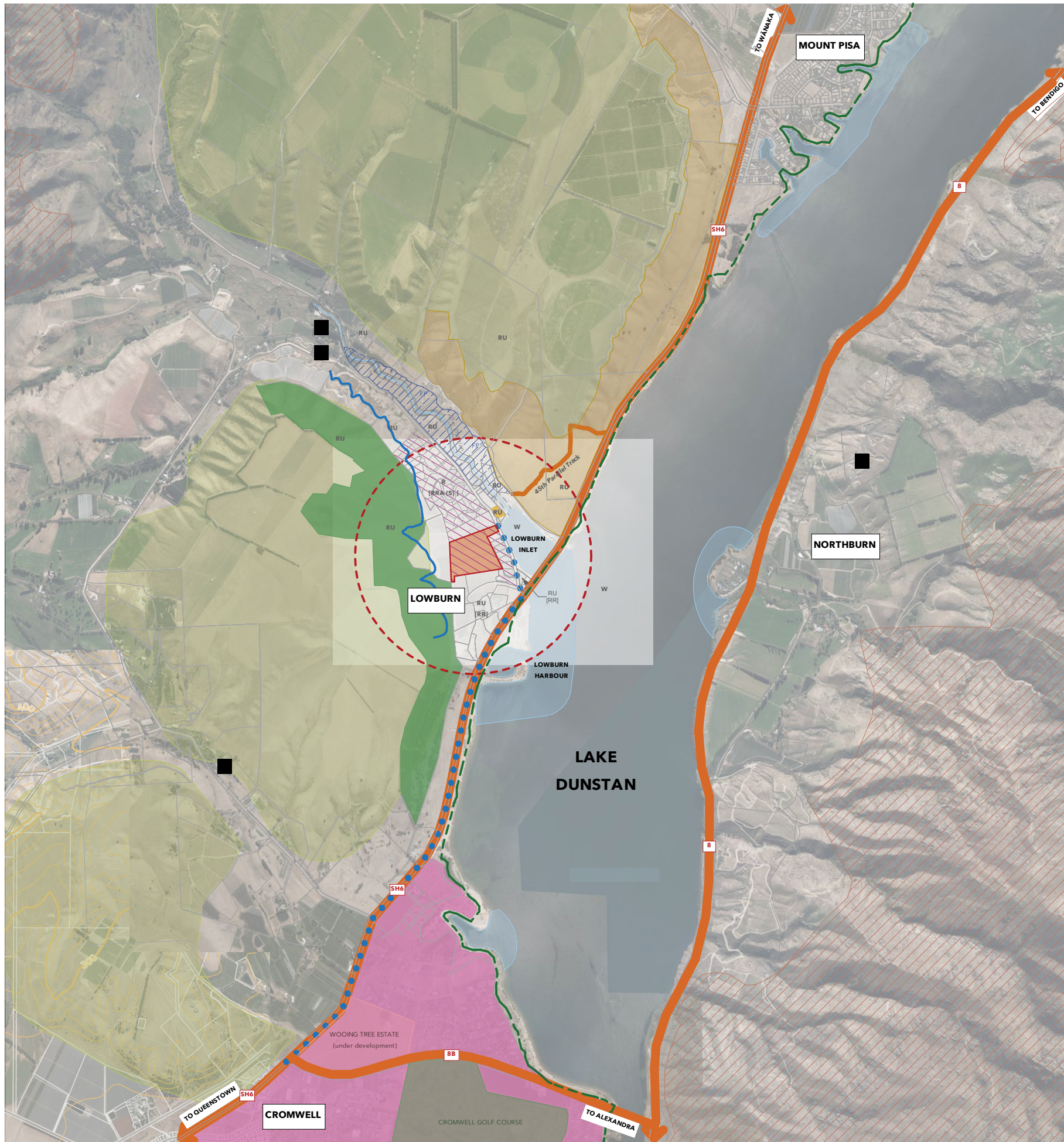
Lowburn, Central Otago Residential Zone Submission

For Sugarloaf Vineyard Limited



ID	REV	SHEET
000	01	Cover Sheet
100	01	Regional Context
101	01	Neighbourhood Context
102	01	Site Context / Precinct Plan
200	01	Structure Plan
301	01	3,000m ² Lot Minimum
302	01	1,500m ² Lot Minimum
303	01	Density of 1 Lot per 1,500m ²

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REV	ISSUE	DATE
01	Discussion Document	16/05/2023

LEGEND

- Significant Amenity Landscape
- Outstanding Natural Landscape
- Outstanding Natural Features
- QEII Covenant Area
- Residential Resource Area
- Rural Resource Area
- Rural Residential Area
- Heritage Buildings
- Community Hall & Church
- State Highways
- Smiths Way to Cromwell Cycleway
- Public Walking Tracks
- 10 min Walkable Catchment (800m)
- Route from Site to Cromwell (6 min drive, 17 min bike, 1 hr walk)
- Westmoreland Water Race
- Flood Prone Area

TITLE
 Regional Context



SCALE (A3)
 1:30,000 |



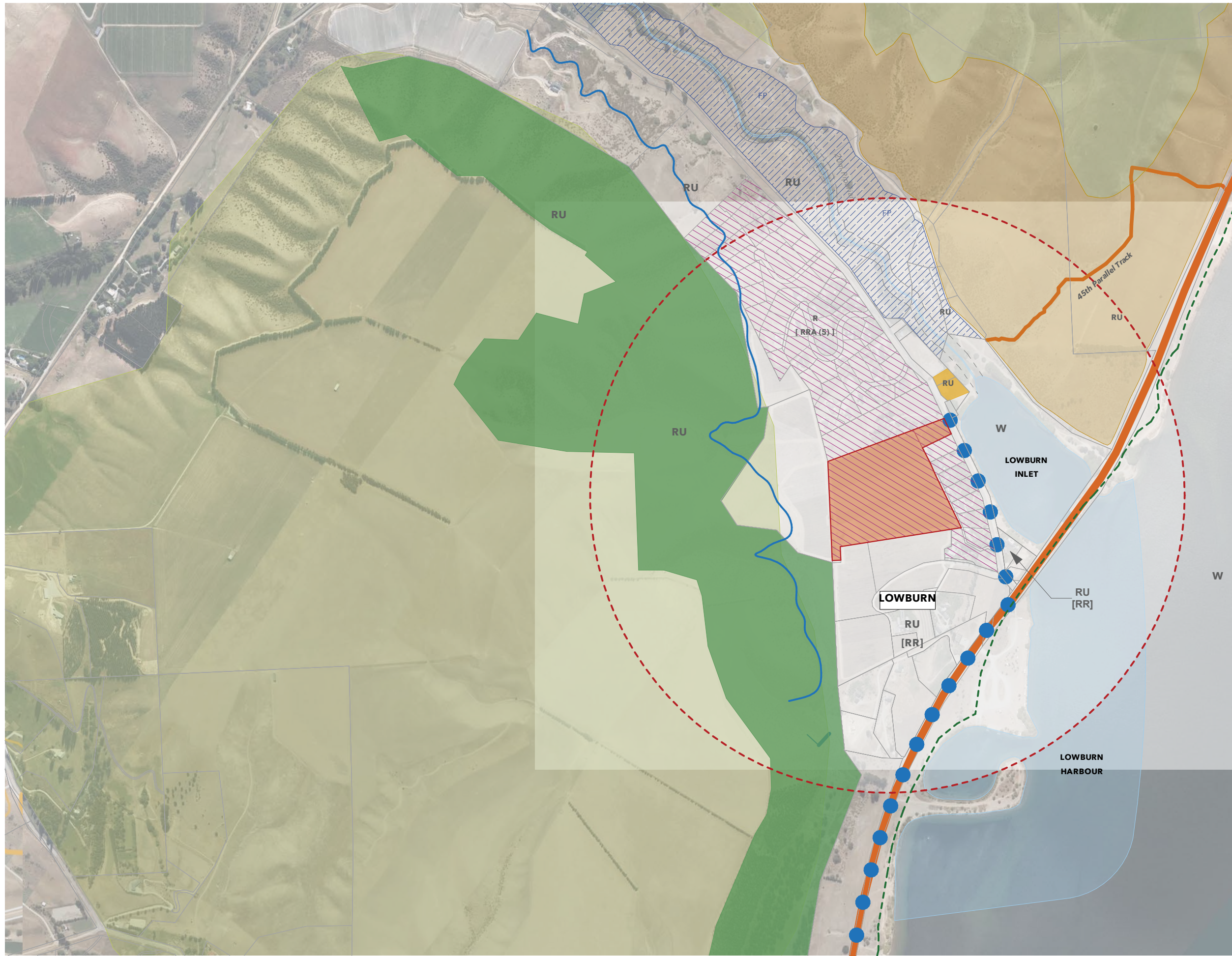
PROJECT
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CLIENT
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LEGEND

- Significant Amenity Landscape
- Outstanding Natural Features
- QEII Covenant Area
- Residential Resource Area
- Rural Resource Area
- Rural Residential Area
- Community Hall & Church
- State Highways
- Smiths Way to Cromwell Cycleway
- Public Walking Track
- 10 min Walkable Catchment (800m)
- Route from Site to Cromwell (6 min drive, 17 min bike, 1 hr walk)
- Westmoreland Water Race
- Flood Prone Area

TITLE
 Neighbourhood Context

SCALE (A3) 0 50 100 200 NORTH

1:10,000

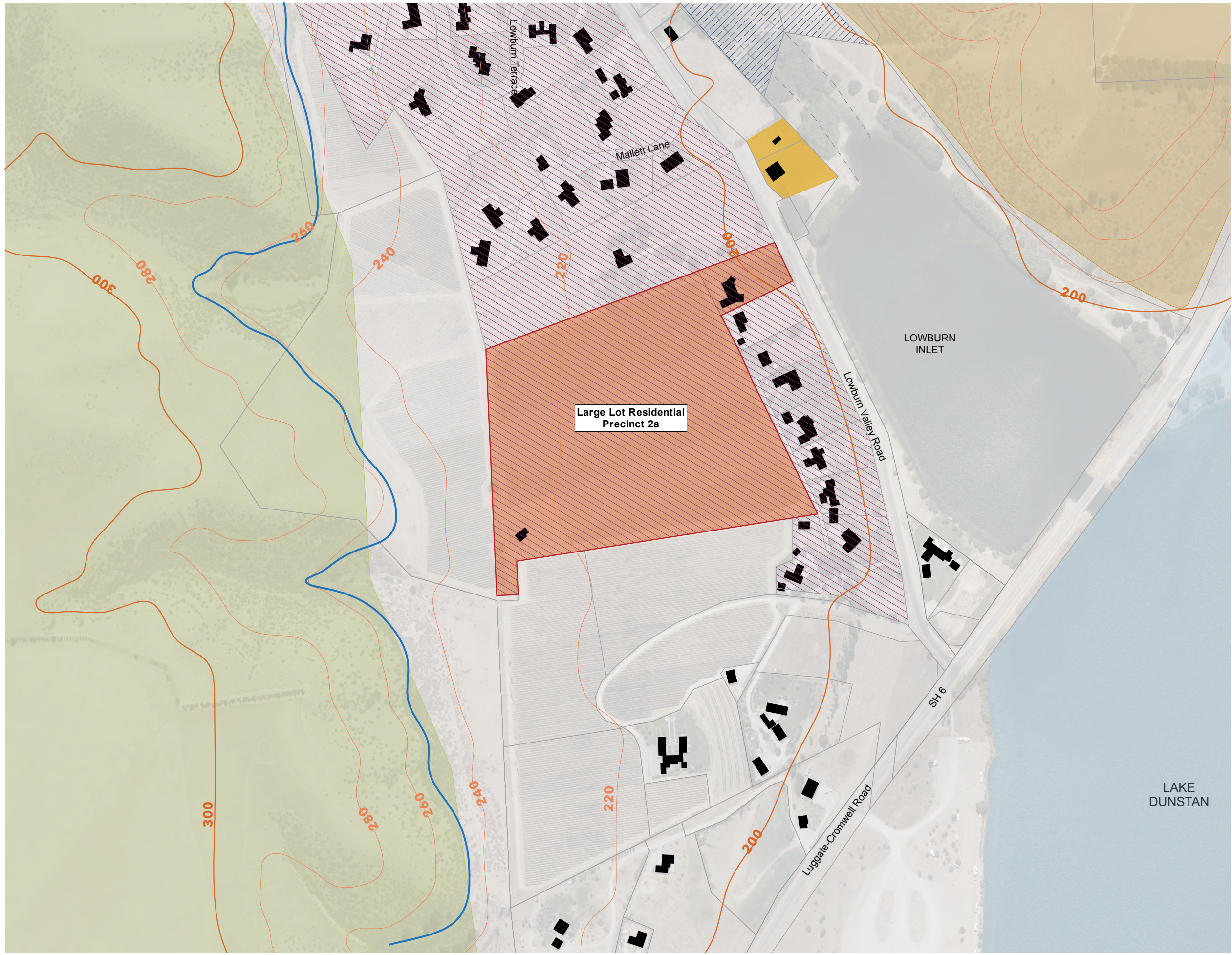
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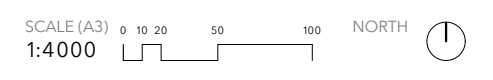
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REV	ISSUE	DATE
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LEGEND

-  **Subject Site**
-  **Significant Amenity Landscape**
-  **Outstanding Natural Features**
-  **QEII Covenant Area**
-  **Residential Resource Area**
-  **Rural Resource Area**
-  **Rural Residential Area**
-  **Community Hall & Church**
-  **State Highways**
-  **Smiths Way to Cromwell Cycleway**
-  **Public Walking Track**
-  **10 min Walkable Catchment (800m)**
-  **Route from Site to Cromwell (6 min drive, 17 min bike, 1 hr walk)**
-  **Westmoreland Water Race**
-  **Flood Prone Area**

TITLE
 Site Context / Precinct Plan



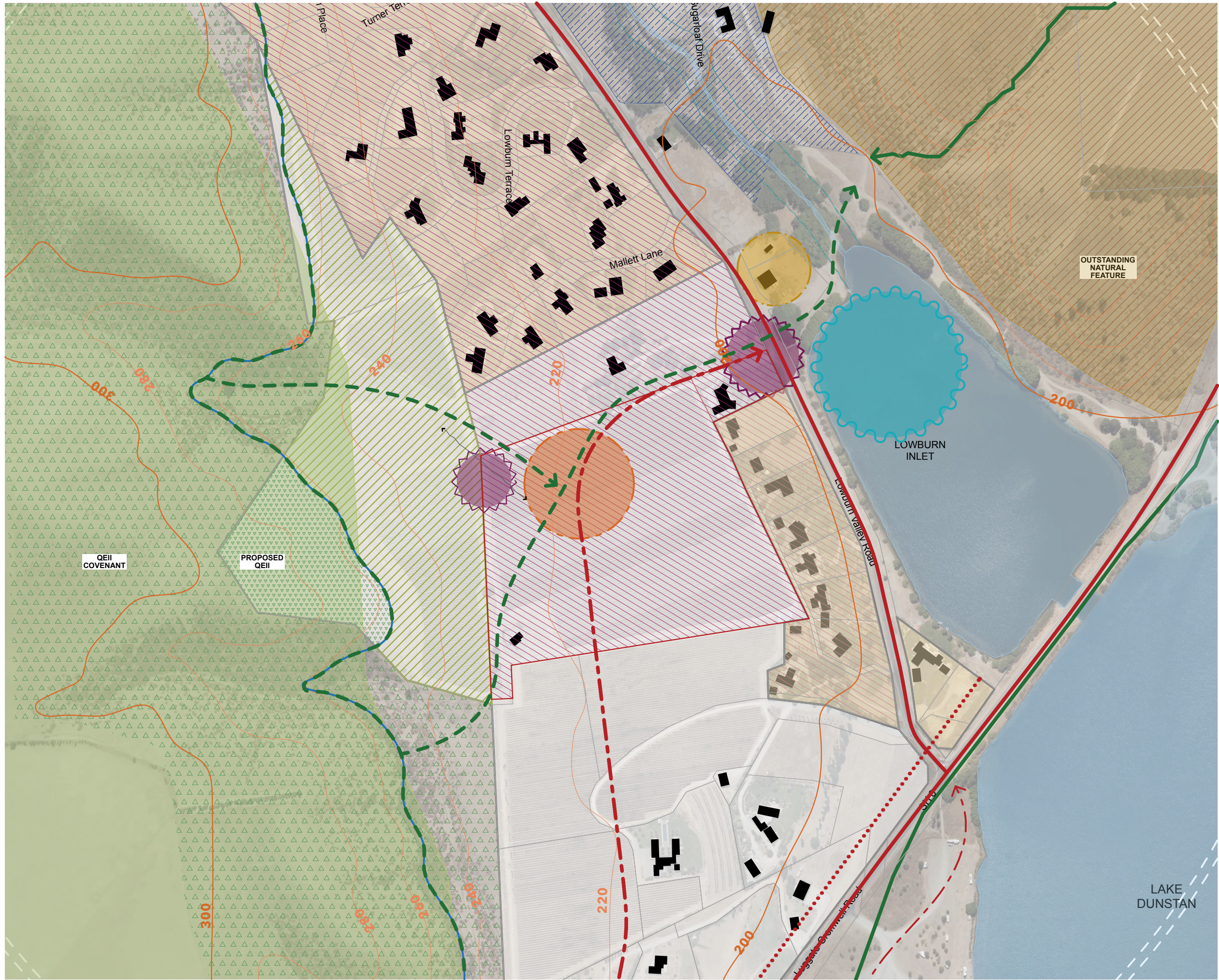
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LEGEND

- Significant Amenity Landscape (Rural)
- Outstanding Natural Feature
- QEI Covenant
- QEI Covenant (Proposed)
- Flood Plain
- Existing Rural Zone
- Existing Residential Lots
- Structure Plan Area
- Main Roads
- 20m State Highway Setback
- Future Connection
- Existing Tracks
- Proposed Tracks (Incl. Existing Water Race)
- Lowburn Community Hall and Playground
- Lake Dunstan Access and Amenity
- Proposed Mixed Use
- Proposed Neighbourhood Centre
- 800m Indicative Walking Radius

TITLE
 Structure Plan



SCALE (A3) 0 10 20 50 100 NORTH

PROJECT
 Lowburn Residential Zone Submission

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REV	ISSUE	DATE
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TITLE
3,000m² Lot Minimum



SCALE (A3) 0 10 20 50
1:2500 NORTH

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TITLE
1,500m² Lot Minimum



SCALE (A3) 0 10 20 50
1:2500

NORTH

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TITLE
 Density of 1 Lot per 1,500m²



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