
**BEFORE THE HEARINGS PANEL ON BEHALF OF CENTRAL OTAGO
DISTRICT COUNCIL**

IN THE MATTER

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

ON BEHALF OF

SUGAR LOAF VINEYARDS LTD

Submitter

AND

CENTRAL OTAGO DISTRICT COUNCIL

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF PHILIP BLAKELY
DATED 16 MAY 2023**



INTRODUCTION

1. My name is Philip Blakely. I have resided and worked in Central Otago for over 35 years. I am a partner and director of Blakely Wallace Associates. The consultancy was established in 1997 and undertakes a diverse range of landscape architecture including landscape design, management, assessment and planning for private clients, Government, and local authorities. I hold the qualification of Bachelor of Applied Science (Landscape Architecture) with Distinction from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. I am a Registered Member of the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects (NZILA).

2. I have extensive experience in the assessment of landscapes and landscape character and the impacts of development on the landscape and in the integration of development into sensitive environments. Recent and current work includes peer reviewing the Waitaki District Councils Outstanding Natural Landscapes areas. I am currently a member of a National Panel assessing and making recommendations to the Minister of Conservation on Stewardship Lands on the West Coast.

3. Although this is a Council hearing, I confirm I have read the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses contained within the Environment Court Practice Note 2014 and that I agree to comply with it. My qualifications as an expert are set out above.

SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

4. 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:
 - The Submission by Sugarloaf Vineyards Ltd

 - Location and landscape context

 - Effects on landscape character and visibility

 - Relief sought

- Summary

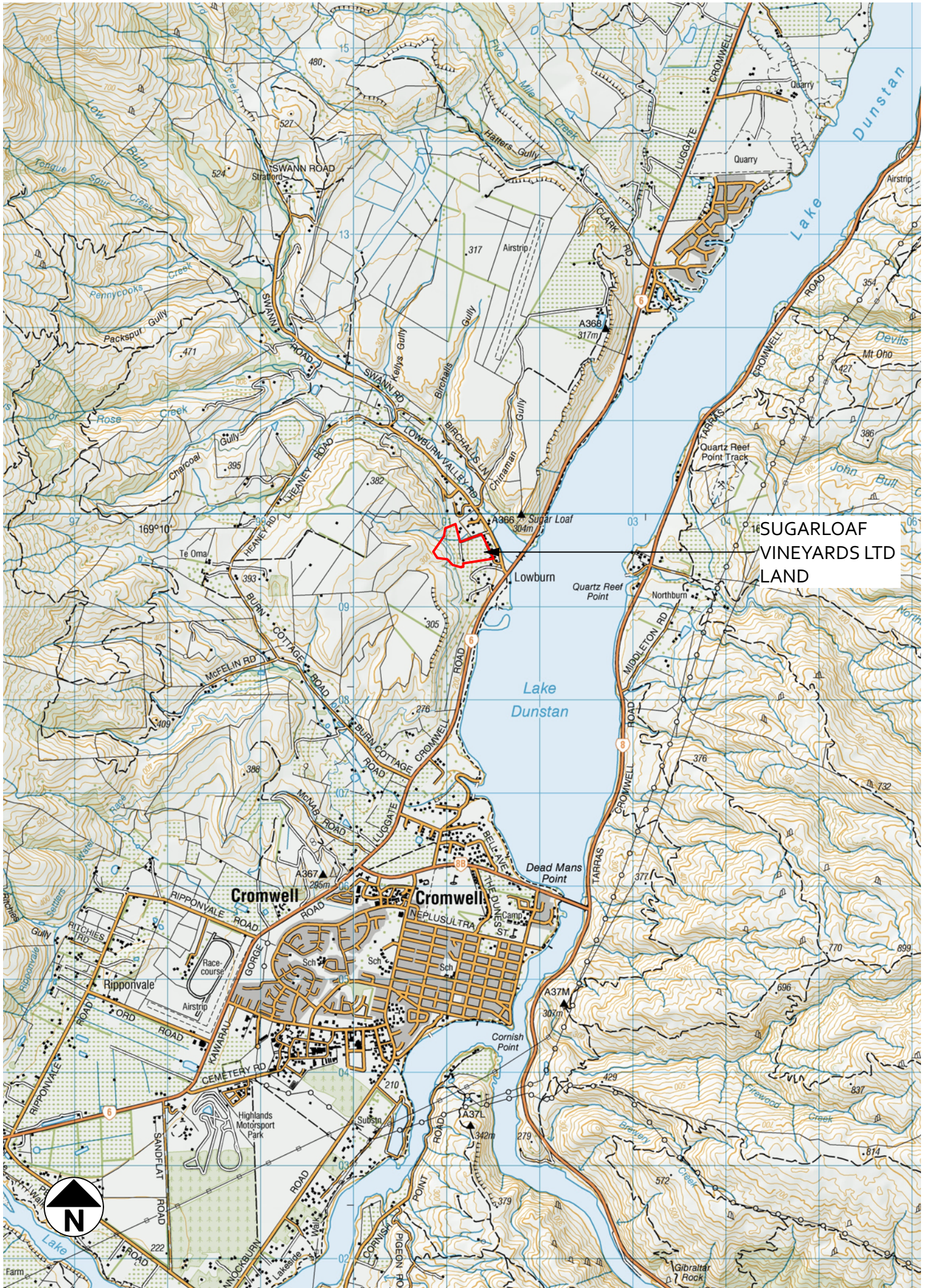
SUBMISSION BY SUGARLOAF INVESTMENTS LTD

5. Sugar Loaf Vineyards Ltd own Lot 5 DP 300132 and Lot 2 DP 300132 (refer map) within the settlement of Lowburn. Plan Change 19 rezones Lot 5 as Large Lot Residential - Precinct 2. My evidence focuses on the reduction in the minimum lot size for the land owned by Sugarloaf Vineyards Ltd (and other similarly zoned land in Lowburn). The submitter was seeking a density of one unit per 250m² (which was previously provided for) and for Comprehensive Residential Development approach to their site. They are now focussing on enabled comprehensive residential development on their site with a density of 1 residential dwelling per 1,500m² of gross site area.
6. My evidence discusses the merits/effects of this for the landscape and for the urban environment of Lowburn.

LOCATION & LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

(Refer Location Map & Landscape Context Map)

7. Lowburn is approximately 3.5km from Cromwell township and is a small urban settlement or satellite of Cromwell. Pre Lake Dunstan it was a tiny settlement and its origins were from early gold mining, orcharding, market gardening and farming. The historic Lowburn pub was an important landmark lost by the creation of Lake Dunstan. Lake Dunstan and Lowburn inlet are new features. Lowburn has grown as Cromwell has grown and especially in recent years.
8. The settlement is tucked into the lower end of Lowburn Valley. High and very prominent ancient terraces flank both sides (north and south). The natural landform feature known locally as Sugarloaf is located immediately north which has an Outstanding Natural Feature (ONF) overlay in the Central Otago District Plan. To the west is the impressive backdrop of the Pisa Mountains escarpment face.
9. The current settlement is predominantly confined to the valley floor and on the edge of a low secondary alluvial terrace on the south side. Recent residential dwellings however have encroached further up the southern terrace face (west end). In my opinion this has been detrimental to the landscape values of Lowburn.



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LAND

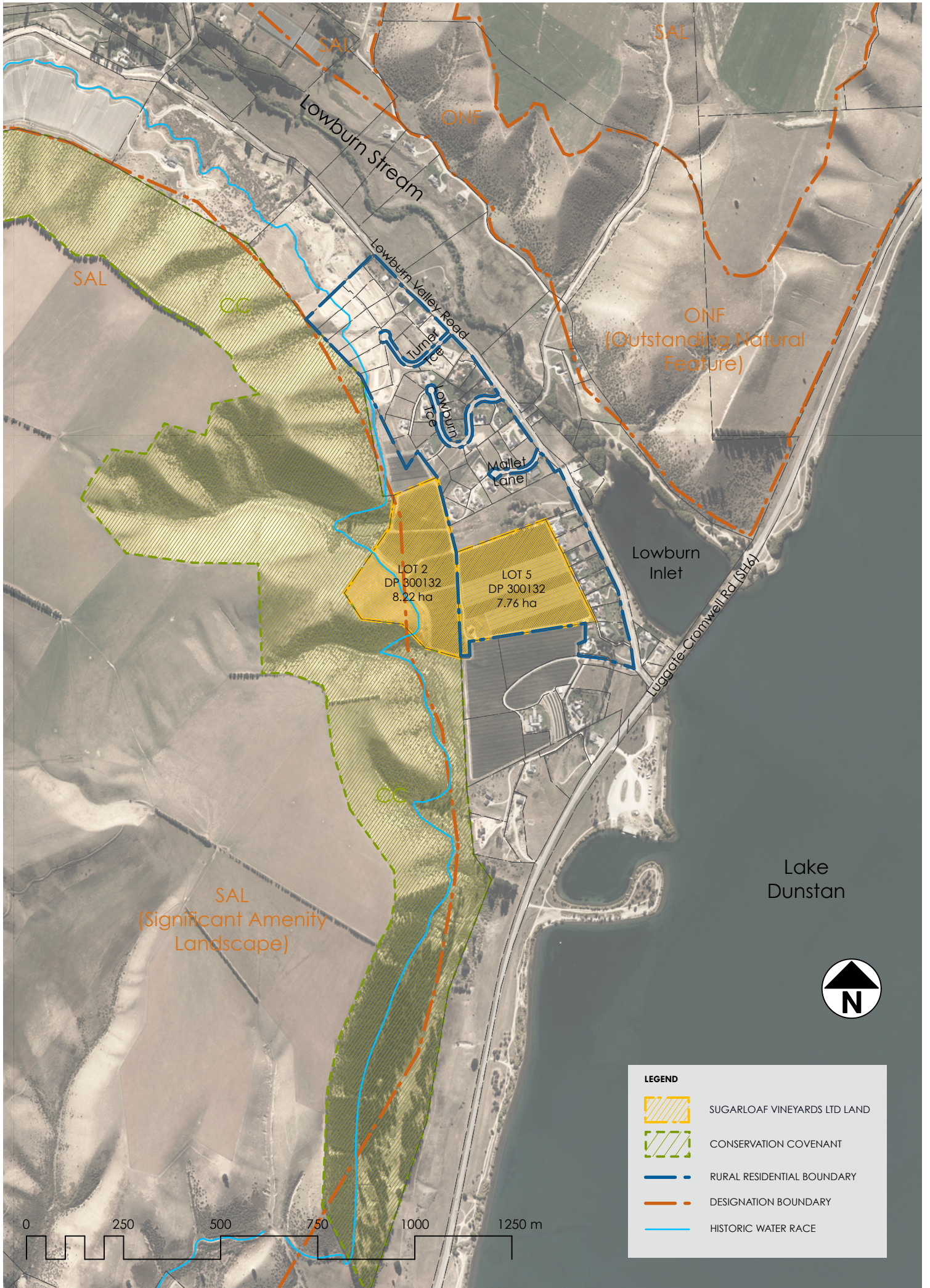




Photo1. Residential housing extending too high up the terrace face at the west end of Lowburn with adverse effects on landscape values.

10. Grape growing now occupies the sloping terrace behind the residential area and contributes to the existing landscape character. Behind and above the grapes the undeveloped slopes of the upper high terrace frame and encloses the settlement. Three gully's are incised into the high terrace which contain intermittent watercourses. The largest gully extends into Lot 2.

11. The settlement is tightly contained within the valley and constrained by the natural limit of landform terraces. The eastern end broadens out but is still confined to a narrow band extending just north of the Luggate Inlet to the Marina (approximately 1km north to south).



Lowburn Stream

Lowburn Valley Road

Turner

Lowburn

Mallet Lane

LOT 2
DP 800132
8.22 ha

LOT 5
DP 300132
7.76 ha

Lowburn Inlet

Luggate-Cromwell Rd (S16)

Lake Dunstan

SAL
(Significant Amenity Landscape)

ONF
(Outstanding Natural Feature)

CC

CC



LEGEND






	SUGARLOAF VINEYARDS LTD LAND
	CONSERVATION COVENANT
	RURAL RESIDENTIAL BOUNDARY
	DESIGNATION BOUNDARY
	HISTORIC WATER RACE





Photo2. Panoramic view across Lots 2 & 5. Lot 5 is in the centre of the photo. Lowburn Inlet and Lake Dunstan beyond.

12. SH6 Luggate to Cromwell defines the eastern limit of residential zoning. Lake Dunstan lake shore and the lake define the eastern extent of the settlement. The lake shore is popular for recreation including boating and includes marina and boat launching facilities. The Cromwell Water Park is a recent commercial activity on the edge of the lake.
13. Lowburn forms a contained node of settlement close to Cromwell.
14. The residential character of Lowburn is predominantly large dwellings on large sections with generous open space with expanses of mown lawns, trees and garden confined to the flats and edge of the lower (secondary) river terrace on the southern side of Lowburn Valley. Vegetation of poplar, willow, are prominent on the eastern edge and foreshore of Lake Dunstan. Large Wellingtonian trees (and poplars) are prominent between the highway and the residential area.
15. Lot 5 of Sugarloaf Vineyards land forms a gently sloping terrace behind the line of existing residential properties and is currently planted in grapes with one residential dwelling on the SE corner. Lot 2 is steeper terrain up to the lot boundary and/or the now disused and historic Westmorland water race. Above the water-race is undeveloped terrace face comprised of a mix of weeds and some remnant native plants.

EFFECTS ON LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND VISIBILITY

16. The effects of Sugarloaf Vineyards Ltd submission on landscape values, i.e. from large lot residential at 3000m² lot sizes to a comprehensive development approach where it is density based and design lead for the land owned by the submitter and are discussed below.
17. The landscape effects encompass the effects on the landscape character of Lowburn and the secondly visibility and visual effects from public places of the change sought by the submission.

EFFECTS ON LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

18. The effects on landscape character will be a more compact settlement with a greater density of mixed housing on Lot 5 (refer indicative plan provided on behalf of the submitter). Lot 2 will remain as vineyard with a QE II Covenant (offered by Sugar Loaf Vineyards Ltd) on the upper slopes to protect and complement the existing QE II National Trust Covenant. The old water race through Lot 2 is proposed as a public walking and cycling trail to connect to wider trail network. On the upper slopes native revegetation to enhance biodiversity is proposed.
19. Compared to large lot residential there will be some reduction in open space and trees and lawn but this will be replaced with a more interesting, compact and diverse village landscape, including open space with controls on building design and materials which can easily be absorbed on this land with positive benefits for the landscape character (and community) of Lowburn.

VISIBILITY AND VISUAL EFFECTS

20. The public places Lowburn and Sugarloaf Vineyards Ltd land are visible from include from immediately alongside on SH6, the adjacent public lake shore, Lowburn Valley Road, from out on Lake Dunstan and the eastern shoreline, and from parts of a section of SH8 Tarras-Cromwell from the Cromwell bridge to the pull off at John Bull Creek.



Photo 3. View from John Bull Creek towards Lowburn (Distance 2.8km). A very marginal change can be expected from proposed large lot residential (PC19) compared to the submitters higher density and comprehensive plan approach. Importantly the steeper terrace land behind remains as vineyard or undeveloped.

21. Lowburn is visible from all these locations nestled into the entrance of the Lowburn Valley. Sugarloaf Vineyards Ltd land is low on gently sloping land at the base of the terrace and is partially screened by the houses and vegetation in front. From all these locations it is my opinion that the proposal by Sugarloaf Investments Ltd will have marginal visual effects. From distance views on Lake Dunstan and from SH8 and the eastern shoreline there would be little of no visual effects. It will appear as a small urban node nestled into landscape as it would with large lot residential zoning.



Photo 4. View from just north of Cromwell bridge on SH8 Cromwell -Tarras (Distance 3.5km). A change to a denser zone will be barely discernible from this distance.

22. At closer locations such as SH6 and the lake shore reserve adjacent to Lowburn there will be slightly less open space and vegetation but a more compact urban environment with a range of building sizes and designs seen behind the existing dwellings and vegetation. The proposed residential zoning (PC19) on the submitters land is very low and does not extend onto the steeper parts of the terrace face. Visual effects from the proposed change as sought by Sugarloaf Vineyards Ltd compared to large lot residential is likely to be marginally different and minor in effects. More than likely a positive effect will result from a comprehensive, well planned, cohesive development which will strengthen and enhance the village character and sense of community.



Photo 5. View from SH6 by Lowburn Inlet to Submitters property. The proposed residential zoning (PC19) on the submitters land is very low (red line denotes upper limit of Lot 5) and does not extend onto the steeper parts of the terrace face. Note: While built form would extend marginally above the red line it would remain low and nestled into the landform.

RELIEF SOUGHT

23. The relief sought at this hearing is a reduction in the minimum density proposed for the Large Lot Residential – Precinct 2a specifically to the submitters land to 1 dwelling per 1,500m² gross site area as part of comprehensive residential development. Subdivision will then follow the comprehensive development land use. Potential outcomes are based on the Indicative Concept prepared on behalf of the submitter and the suite of Objectives, Policies and Amendments proposed in the evidence of Ms Skuse.

SUMMARY

24. Lowburn is a small urban settlement or node close to Cromwell that is nestled into the edge of Lake Dunstan and contained by natural landform.

25. Compared to large lot residential there will be some reduction in open space and trees and lawn but this will be replaced with a more interesting, compact and diverse village landscape and environment with controls on building design and materials which can easily be absorbed on this site with positive benefits for the landscape character (and community) of Lowburn.

26. Visual effects from the proposed change (as sought by Sugarloaf Vineyards Ltd) compared to large lot residential is likely to be only marginally different and minor in effects. More than likely a positive effect will result from a comprehensive, well planned, cohesive development which will strengthen and enhance the village character and sense of community.

Philip Blakely

Registered Landscape Architect

May 16, 2023

