Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

1. Location on public conservation land

The Southland Ski club lodge is located at 829B Coronet Peak Road, off Carpark 3 of the Coronet Peak Skifield.
GPS Co-ordinates: E1263329 N5016189 44.9279°S 168.7336°E
Legal Description: Part Section 20 Block XV1 Shotover Survey District
This site is within the Coronet Peak Recreation Reserve on DOC Public Conservation land.
Please also refer to maps supplied, which show the Coronet Peak Recreation Reserve (Topo map), Satelite of Coronet Peak and the Southland Ski Club location (satellite).

Please also refer to the yellow, hatched highlighted building on site plan Schedule 4 of the DOC lease agreement provided with the application.

2. Site details

The building site has been flattened, but the natural contour slopes down-hill towards the South. A creek runs down on the Eastern side of the building site, from which water is taken for lodge supply. A drive-through off and onto carpark 3 access is provided and maintained by NZSki. There is no dedicated permanent parking area for the lodge. Natural vegetation is native tussock.

3. Background information

The Southland Ski club is a not for profit organisation run by volunteers, which owns and operates a lodge in a unique environment alongside the commercial ski field on DOC land at Coronet Peak. The lodge sleeps 38, accommodating club members/families (mainly in the weekends) and non-members including school and community groups, most of whom book a year in advance. (Bookings are not accepted beyond that). The club also runs ski weeks for school children during the winter school holidays, where meals, accommodation, supervision, ski passes and lessons are provided by our volunteers as an affordable package in conjunction with NZSki.

The club also acknowledges that the lodge will be made available for use in an emergency, such as a base for Search and Rescue or Civil Defence/Red Cross.

4. Detail of proposed activity

The lodge is becoming increasingly popular and more commonly booked out. The kitchen-dining-lounge area has not been designed for full-capacity in bunkrooms, which is a particular concern from a health and safety perspective.

To alleviate the problem, it is proposed to build an external storage facility to the NE side of the building in the short-term to provide storage for coal and personal equipment; which will free up 3m2 of valuable internal space.

In the longer term (3-5 years), it is proposed to extend the kitchen area so that the lounge and kitchen form a basic rectangle shape. A building consent will subsequently be applied for the kitchen extensions IF a Resource Consent is obtained from QLDC and DOC grants an enlarged building footprint and lease renewal. (Note that the bed symbols in the builder's lodge plans are continuous bunks).

Under the DOC lease agreement, the existing building footprint is "250 m2 more or less". But the building is currently 254.2 m2 plus a 13.5 m2 covered porch and a 2.1 m2 uncovered porch, totalling 269.8 m2; clearly outside of the consented footprint. The Southland Ski Club has been run by various voluntary committee members over the years, but the current committee is eager to bring the lodge building into compliance in terms of the consented footprint, while at the same time taking the opportunity to expand the kitchen-dining-living room areas to cater better for the number accommodated.

The proposed storage facility will add 6.8 m2 and the kitchen extensions will be an additional 11.05 m2 bringing the total including covered and uncovered porches to 287.65. To provide a little leeway, we wish to take the consented footprint to 290 m2.

Section 5 of the RMA addresses the promotion of sustainable management of natural and physical resources, including structures, to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations. The adverse effects of the proposed activity on the environment will be minor as described in the EIA.

5. Consultation

Consultation has been undertaken with the Otago Ski Club only. Although there are other lodges at Coronet Peak, Otago has the only lodge which will view the proposed addition from their building. The visual effect will be minimal, as the Otago lodge looks out downhill; directly away from the Southland Ski Club lodge. The Otago Ski Club have approved these alterations.

6. Identification of potential effects of the alterations and measures to avoid, remedy or mitigate adverse effects.

a) Temporary effects

Construction noise

This effect will be minor due to construction being undertaken during the summer months (off season), when the other lodges are less likely to be occupied during working hours.

Dust from construction

This effect will also be minor, as the gravel access roads are likely to contribute significantly more dust than the proposed construction. (Other recreational activities take place in this locality over the summer, such as mountain-biking and paragliding, etc).

Land contamination from construction

Hazardous substances will not be used during construction and all surplus building materials and off-cuts will be removed from the site on completion; therefore land contamination is not anticipated.

b) Possible permanent effects

Loss in parking

There will be no effect on parking as the building sites do not impinge on any parking area.

The predominant vegetation in the area is the beautiful alpine snow tussock. Indigenous grassland ecosystems in NZ provide an incredibly wide range in benefits including "pollination, biological control, indigenous biodiversity and genetic diversity, soil conservation, carbon storage and sequestration, education, recreation and ecotourism opportunities" and are in need of protection. *(Ref: Ecosystem services in New Zealand's Indigenous Tussock Grasslands: Conditions and Trends – A. Mark et.al).*

Any changes to vegetation will be minimal because the storage facility site has been used as a walkway previously (for reading the electricity meter and emptying the fire ashes into the can for disposal). The couple of small tussocks in the site of the kitchen extensions will be relocated to a better site to enhance landscaping. Once the construction is complete there will be a reduced need to walk around that side of the building, which will be more conducive to natural regeneration. (The club has also had a smart electricity meter installed).

Because "insect fauna of tussock grassland is diverse and extensive" *(Ref: White EG 1970. A perspective for high country entomology. Tussock Grassland and Mountain Lands Institute Review 20: 94–98*), there is likely to be some ecosystem effects in the disturbance of physical habitats in the vicinity. Construction staff will be briefed, and any sensitive areas will be clearly fenced off during the construction period.

Landscape effects will be restricted to the installation of foundation posts and will therefore be minor.

Visual effects are expected to be minor because the proposed additions will be around 40 m from the nearest building (Otago lodge), which does not have a view out towards the Southland Ski Lodge.

Any negative visual effect of the additions to passers-by, or change in building character will be mitigated by using the same colours and materials as used on the rest of the building so that they blend in. It is proposed to use a section of Clearlite on the storage facility to allow light into the Southland lodge; but this is not expected to have a significant negative visual impact. The lodge will continue to be consistent with other users in the area, also lodges.

Privacy won't be compromised because the Otago amenity block faces the Southland Ski Club and has small, elevated windows designed to let light in rather than for looking through.

Stormwater will continue to flow off the roof uninterrupted and there is no envisaged impact on water quality/quantity as a result of the construction.

The actual area concerned is not used for recreation purposes, so there will be no effect.

Effect on the wider community These projects are not expected to have any social, cultural or economic effects on the wider community overall, other than the actual users of the lodge.

Possible cumulative effects

In terms of changes over time, it is proposed that the storage facility be built first; and there will be a 3-5-year lapse before the kitchen area is extended.

No other cumulative effects are envisaged.

7. Programme to monitor any ongoing effects.

The Southland Ski Club operates at least one working bee prior to the start of the following season. An assessment of the environmental effects can be added to the "To do" list, so that any unforeseen issues can be remedied, mitigated and avoided in future.

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