

Submission which does not support the Masterplan/ Variation

Section 42a Report reference pages 67 -131.

Notes to speak at the hearing 13 December 2023

I am a lay person submitter who has owned a home in central Queenstown for 30 years.

I have witnessed huge change over time but my ongoing concern from the beginning is the QLDC lack of appreciation of aesthetics for this town and its apparent willingness to sell out to the developers.

In the late nineties I attended a council workshop on planning the future development of central Queenstown.

We were given a copy of a mandate, (I'm not sure if it was part of the District Plan,) for the town centre:

- small scale development,
- building design to reflect the historic nature of the town
- the preservation of existing buildings.

This mandate was ignored, the purpose was centred on the Auckland developers, who wished to build the Sofitel hotel to some 6 metres higher than the District Plan allowed.

The effect of allowing this was that the long held houses and businesses in Man Street, above Shotover Street would lose their view along with a major devaluation of their buildings and businesses

Nevermind said the developers and Council, now you will be able to put a another storey on top to get your view back and then those behind you can do the same. Its great for everyone.

The Hamilton building in Shotover Street had already just broken the District Plan height restrictions by some six metres or more. Despite calls for the Council to deal with this they did nothing.

These years saw the apartments being built across Queenstown Hill with no concern for the local home owners who suddenly found they no longer had a view, and whose property value was destroyed by an apartment block.

Rightly or wrongly I have no faith in council to provide guidelines or make it a condition for consent for developments regarding the level of quality and design which they have not for numerous years.

Council have the power to stipulate guidelines by including them in the District Plan.

Lack of quality and aesthetics in recent developments

Take the recent development of units in Gorge Road on the old school land, where the newly built three story apartment block virtually rises up out of the footpath, there is very little set back. To put their key in the lock a tenant is very close to a main arterial footpath with others passing by- its unsafe at night. It appears to have no parking spaces.

The ugliness of the building is increased with the height, orange colour and narrowness of the building which contrasts dramatically with its location in an outstanding mountainous area. It is a portent of what is to come with the rest of the development.

This isn't about not building the units but about the quality, design and appropriateness of how they fit into the landscape.

The development at least makes sense in terms of proximity to workplaces which possibly for many will be within walking distance.

The Ramada Inn build on the corner of Frankton Road and Stanley Street was given consent to build around 7 stories higher than the District Plan allowed, apparently in return for saving the iconic Tree of Justice, the Wellingtonian tree. That section was vacant for many years, why had the Council done nothing to protect the tree?

The height of the building is out of scale with the tree which is struggling and no longer commands the presence it once did.

The recent development of the wider Frankton shopping area. It could have been architecturally stunning, vastly more attractive with all buildings constructed with local materials to a similar consistent design template.

As an example the Cotswold village in England is a major tourist attraction due to their buildings all built in the Cotswold stone to a heritage architecture design.

Instead in the wider Frankton shopping area design is higgledy--piggledy with various angles, materials, heights, colours, signage going in all directions.

Sure some buildings are better than others but where is the consistency.

Where are the design principles of unity, balance and proportion and scale overall?

Such a lost opportunity.

Queentown originally tried to keep buildings to at least a shared colour palette but did not enforce this.

This lack of architectural consideration is of deep concern and is a portent of this development should the variation be allowed.

Argument for Affordable housing--

History has already shown that there will be negative impacts with poor design, low quality, the use of inferior building materials and poor operational management systems.

One example in Queenstown is the Oaks, the consequences which the ratepayers are currently wearing and will continue to wear into the distant future.

Citing affordable housing and building homes for families here is just an empty claim, an excuse to push the plan variation through.

Of course we want to see homes provided- but homes not a ghetto which this will surely be, full of rental properties.

There is no such thing as affordable housing, least of all in Queenstown.

Lake Hayes Estate was meant to be for 'affordable housing' which has not been the outcome.

Building costs are exponentially high, the land and development costs are high. We have high interest rates.

Developers' aim is to make money not to provide 'affordable' housing. It may do so by being of low quality which provides a low level quality of life.

Who can we rely on to protect the community from low quality and poorly designed developments- our council surely, but it certainly does not.

We are vulnerable as a community with this variation to the District Plan so aggressively sought by our own council

Target market

Who actually is the target market for the up to 10,000 people this development is being built for?

One claim is that these units are being built for families, but this ghetto of intensification will not provide quality of life for them.

In fact it could be considered an insult to families that council thinks it is appropriate and desirable to jamb them into six story apartment blocks with one car park, and the Council 'powers that be' can then boast they are for providing homes for families.

Well maybe the families don't want to purchase units or live there.

Queenstown is an expensive place to live, a tourist town, you have to question is it appropriate or fair for low -income families.

The families, who the Council ardently professes to be providing homes for, are for the most part not in this market and who believes that 6 story apartment blocks and lower, squeezed together with one parking space will be good for families.

Medium density housing is a misnomer, it may mean some stand - alone houses but with absolutely minimal space between them.

To cut costs there will be no storage provided. It is happening in Dunedin in new builds, where students complain they have to store their belongings in their car.

With this level of intensification there will be a major issue with rubbish and peoples' belongings.

Who is going to manage the mess this development will create.

Lake Hayes and Shotover Country have a Community Association, the rented properties at this planned development will have no such engagement with the property or community and no vested interest in maintaining it.

Will it again be left to the ratepayers, already burdened with high rates, who are saying please don't do this, it has not been thought through.

The real estate agents will tell you the young couples demographic group is moving to locations such as Cromwell where they can live and grow a family in a stand alone home with some space around them, they don't want an apartment or unit in an extremely densely populated area with all its attendant problems.

The apartment market has slowed – economists saying same thing TV news 9 December 2023, economist from CBRE quoted a 15% drop in apartments sales in Wellington.

The Gibbston Valley development has been halted due to lack of interest and economic viability.

It has been suggested holiday makers may stay here but why would they want to spend their time gridlocked in traffic.

Workers who may have to travel to Queenstown itself for hospitality or the service industry, should they take the bus will still have to travel over the single lane Shotover bridge, again in the slow lane and in the single lane into Queenstown.

The Emperor's new clothes

This situation reminds one of the Emperor's new clothes- There are two realities operating, one the Council and the planner and the other the actual reality- the reality of the community who live and work here.

Drug culture

Research has shown in these types of development the drug industry, which is here in the underbelly of Queenstown, is more likely to flourish in this environment.

Fire Risk

A major issue which has been highlighted recently with this type of medium and high- density housing is the risk of fire with so many houses and not much space between. Fire can spread easily and we do not have the fire fighting resources to stop it in NZ, least of all in the Wakatipu Basin with two bottlenecks – Frankton Road and the Shotover bridge plus the likelihood of gridlocked traffic.

Climate change and landfill issues.

It is well known our infrastructure is highly challenged and in certain areas at breaking point. The smell when crossing the Shotover is unpleasant, the Oxbow landfill area can be smelt from kilometers away.

With the scale of the proposed development there will be a massive amount of rubbish, where is it proposed to be disposed of?

Not even lip service is paid to the effects of such development on landfill and on climate change.

Climate change is mentioned on the QLDC web site as having been one of 16 Councils to have declared a Climate Emergency 2019-2020, this does not marry up with what Council is campaigning for with this development.

The pollution will be significant on the Lake Hayes Frankton Road should this variation be approved.

There could be extremely high emissions with up to 10,000 gridlocked idling cars on a road of a few short kilometres for up to 4 hours a day.

Will those carbon emissions be held for an unacceptably long period in the basin of the mountains ?

Generally it is considered there are 8 vehicle movements per day per household in the Lake Hayes Estate area. There are many rental properties in Shotover Country with most of those people traveling to and from work at peak times, dropping their children off at school on the way to work. There are over 600 children at the school consequently it can take over 45 minutes to drive from the school to the main highway a distance of 800 metres !

The planned development is also likely to be inhabited by rental properties, which gives a telling indication or forewarning of what will come.

Regarding the Report 42a, Analysis of submissions, p67, clause 11.

The planner breaks down the submissions into 14 'themes.' Aside from using a couple of the themes as examples, I wish to simply make the overall observation about the attitudes expressed within.

I am compelled to say I found the whole section so completely disrespectful to the community of submitters, who care so much about this area.

Every submission theme without fail, is counteracted, often in quite derogatory terms.

At the conclusion of each set of submissions is the planner's rebuttal.

It became his mantra—to quote-

'I therefore disagree with the submission that 'I do not consider the submitters concerns valid,' I do not consider this is a valid reason for the council to shift direction.'

Under Sub clause A, submitters are called out as being selfish for wanting to 'slow growth.' They are accused of wanting to restrict others from having the district lifestyle, never-mind the actual reality that with an additional 8-10,000 cars no one will be able to travel anywhere except at snails pace, no water, challenging or no infrastructure, poor polluted low lying Lake Hayes, the Shotover bridge will have collapsed as it was deemed by QLDC to be at capacity by 2023-

'The Shotover bridge has reached capacity – 2018 QLDC stated "the Shotover Bridge would be at capacity within 5 years and that any further density development east of the bridge should not be granted.'

What has changed- personnel at council?

It may be wise for Council to remember history does repeat itself, such as the collapse of the CTV building in the CHCH earthquake where over 100 people were killed due to faulty sign offs and system failures.

Look at the earthquake tragedy in Christchurch, certain areas of land should never have been developed, even the Council of the time said it should not be developed, but the developers pushed ahead and the Environment Court ruled against Council, the consequences of which were death and widespread destruction.

Alternative development sites and questions surrounding Council involvement

Included in the submissions are suggestions by locals of more suitable locations for development, naming areas that are designated for development but all are basically rubbished by this Planner acting for council.

Independent planners in the Wakatipu are waiting to get consent from Council but Council don't want to know, they appear fixated on fighting for this development.

One has to ask the question why. Why is the Council taking this action, it is usual for the developers to be going through this process.

Why are we as ratepayers funding this when the majority are against it.

Why is the council supporting a developer who has purchased this land already and who is the same developer who has left council and consequently us as the ratepayers paying for his leaky apartment development.

I don't understand.

The community is wanting to be involved but some feel they are so tired of facing a brick wall at council.

I note under 11.7 that the relevant Act and its provisions are included by the planner:-

' These provisions all direct the Council to manage growth by (among other things) providing for well functioning urban environments, closely monitoring growth, ensuring a forward supply of housing and ensuring a competitive housing market.'

Isn't this what the community is putting forward-

-The traffic situation will not provide for a well functioning urban development

-Concerns are expressed about the infrastructure

-They are asking for growth to be monitored

-Other subdivisions have been put forward

-They are concerned about the housing situation being properly monitored, for example there is a need for worker accommodation currently however many of the workers are in the construction industry and when those projects are completed those workers will be gone, foresight and monitoring does need to occur. Is this a reactive stance and one due to the previous government?

-to provide a competitive housing market, means do not to provide an oversupply of houses

How much research into the effects of this type of intensive property development and subsequent marketing research has the council actually done.

Are we going to be left with a white elephant ?

The Labour Govt regulations around housing rentals forced many landlords out of the market. Holiday homes were once rented but regulations were such that tenants could not be moved.

The govt has now changed and with it the new regulations will enable those homes to be utilised again

I note in 11.7 it states there is no mechanism for council to slow growth but as I understand it the new govt is allowing councils to manage growth so if the community wants a considered overall plan for the Wakatipu Basin then regionally we will have control.

Behavioural change

The biggest misnomer claimed is that people's behaviour is going to change.

We live in a village yet for four or more hours a day the traffic is already gridlocked from as far away as the Amisfield/ Arrowtown turnoff through to beyond the other side of Queenstown township.

Somehow QLDC wants to allow a further 8000- 10.000 people to reside right where the line of traffic starts.

To make the traffic issue disappear, they- whoever they maybe- will bring about the change in peoples' behaviour.

Which as we all know from experience, this simply does not happen.

It is claimed two tactics will achieve this:

1-- Public transport is going to solve this problem.
The buses will be subjected to the bottlenecks like everyone else.

2- Only one car park will be provided per unit.

Historically the community does not use public transport and it is not actually feasible.

Everyone knows local transport schemes consistently fail no matter how cheap the ride is and the ratepayer pays the bill.

11.13 Policy 5 states—

Public transport to a range of commercial activities and community services.

Many workers are service providers who have to use their vehicles. Families have children to ferry to sports and classes. Small businesses operate out of peoples' homes in a variety of locations.

A fast track bus will **only** work if it is picking up a group to take to one place of work.

The plan to limit car parks to force people to have one car is highly unrealistic.

Cars will inevitably end up parked on the footpath, on open land, in other people's car park, on the children's playground, parked wherever they can be squeezed in.

Queenstown operates 24 hours, people work shift work. Queenstown industry is tourism- many workers are transient and require a vehicle- one car park is a mockery. and a fantasy

My daughter and I have owned a townhouse near Frankton for 20 years, it has 5 bedrooms and always 5 cars are in residence. There is a garage which is never used because the tenants store their belongings in there.

Who is going to monitor the residents one car park, I would hazard a guess absolutely no one of course. How will this contribute to a positive community spirit?

The council will do nothing, the developers, --they will be long gone.

The Community

The traffic situation is debilitating currently, but to increase the traffic with the plan change in this area would increase stress enormously, create noise, frustration and danger on a State Highway arterial route.

Queenstown and the surrounding district relies heavily on the working people who want a quality of life for themselves and their children.

If the people who oppose the Plan change due to the significant direct effect on their everyday lives are not listened to, there will be a downstream effect of frustration and a sense of futility which may cause many of our desperately needed workers, especially trades people, to leave the area creating a disconnected destabilized population lacking the vital life blood so necessary in a well functioning community environment.

Lake Hayes Estate is a good place to live for families but across the road if this planned ghetto is built the negative impact on these families must be considered now.

Listen to this community, we need them, they are our stable workforce, not transients.

The plea for the future

It must be recognized Queenstown is in a realm of it's own compared to the rest of the country, initially for the most obvious reason- our tourist dollar very much depends on it.

The planned development at Ladies Mile is a vast intensive development in a beautiful delicate location, it has no synergy to this environment. Slope Hill, an area designated as of outstanding natural landscape sits behind, all part of very pretty and interesting landscape of flat land rising to undulating highs and lows which draw your eye, then pulls you into the distance to the layers of mountains beyond.

Finally, if this variation is allowed it will be the desecration of this beautiful strip of land and will significantly affect the countryside surrounding it.

Slope Hill will disappear behind 24 metre high rise apartment blocks. A plethora of ugliness will be built and may very well function as such, due to the nature of the planned development.

It is not a healthy development and cannot possibly fit the criteria of a well planned urban environment as the Act requires.

My heart bleeds for this as it does for so many. It is an incredibly beautiful piece of highly productive historic rural land.

This corridor is the entrance and exit to Queenstown, the stage is set for arrivals and departures entering or exiting the district.

The bazaar thing is on their web site QLCD mention the strategic importance of this land, yet they now want to destroy with it.

The plea is keep the right hand side free of development and allow the countryside take centre stage.

Look to our forebears, take heed of what their legacies were for us. Dunedin has a beautiful botanic gardens, an amazing town belt which sweeps across the city, Christchurch has Hagley Park and large Botanic Gardens.

Our Queenstown botanical gardens are relatively small, why not create a beautiful big park on this land with magnificent trees and the hedgerows, with room for families to roam and enjoy.

Many of the large housing developments in this area are located out in this Frankton area, by denying this variation change, the rural land may remain or it may provide the possible opportunity in the future of creating a rural Parkland, something of lasting value and beauty for everyone to enjoy.

What are our grandchildren and great grandchildren going to say about us and the legacies we leave behind.

You, as commissioners have been charged with our future in the heart of this incredible, historic landscape.

I am not alone in begging you to leave this outstandingly beautiful land, as it was designated in the District Plan by those who have gone before us.

