

Urban Intensification Variation

Presentation of Lucy Mortlock, submission numbers 1307 and 744

Good afternoon members of the Panel,

My name is Lucy Mortlock. My husband, John Marris, and I, together with other family, have a property at 6 Pritchard Place in Arrowtown. I have been coming to Arrowtown for the last 40 years. We were lucky to be able to purchase our 1970s, single level, small footprint property in 2019. At present we do not live in Arrowtown full time as John and I have jobs based in Christchurch. However, we spend a lot of time in Arrowtown and plan to retire there. We have two adult daughters, Sophie and Lily Marris, who also spend a lot of time in Arrowtown. At times both our daughters have had jobs in the district and both have the same appreciation that John and I do for the special character of Arrowtown. The appeal of Arrowtown crosses all generations. Sophie and Lily have both made their own individual submissions about why they oppose the variation.

What is different and special about Arrowtown?

Arrowtown has a character that is exceptional. The evident community feeling and pride in what is a special place is different to that seen in a city. People spend time talking to their neighbours and helping each other. If people are out walking, they say hello and it is common for people to stop and chat to people they may not know and make connections. People are passionate about the community they live in as evidenced by the community response to the proposed variation. There is active community interaction through a community facebook page which sees people offering goods and surplus food to others and all manner of other community notices being posted.

There are no pavements in much of the town and there is a country town feeling as it is necessary to walk on the roads to get to the centre of the village. There is minimal street lighting and street marking and no traffic lights. The views of the surrounding hills and mountains are important to people and inspire people to be active and walk the tracks by the river and up into the hills. People generally walk a lot rather than take a car.

The community swimming pool is frequented by local families who can safely bike and walk there, as is the local 4 Square grocery store. The local volunteer fire brigade come around the streets throwing out lollies from a fire truck at Christmas. The annual street parade is like a happy step back in time. The parade is very basic in some ways but incredibly appealing and draws a huge crowd every year – many of whom are from out of town. You only have to witness the cars parked a great distance from the main street at times such as the Autumn Festival to know that Arrowtown holds a huge appeal to many people from out of the area.

There is, in large part, a feeling of space around homes as they are predominantly low scale and detached, with low site coverage. Sunshine is vital to people as it gets so bitterly cold in the winter. Many homes in Arrowtown are simple homes and there are many examples of where they have been renovated, work being done sympathetically and to the same general scale of the original home. Most homes do not dominate others. There is currently a cohesive scale between the historic centre of Arrowtown and the other areas within Arrowtown.

In summary while it is hard to put into words exactly what gives Arrowtown its distinct character, for the reasons I have set out, and many more, Arrowtown is different. That special character is at risk if the proposed changes go ahead whether that be those originally put forward by the Council or the section 42A modified proposals.

Purpose of the Urban Intensification Variation and the objectives of the National Policy Statement on Urban Development will not be achieved

Not only is this special character that I have explained at risk of being ruined forever, but, it is my view, that the intensification as now advocated by the section 42A report, let alone as proposed in the original notified variation, would not be effective and efficient in achieving the purpose of the Urban Intensification Variation and the objectives of the National Policy Statement on Urban Development 2020.

I do not believe that the changes proposed will contribute to a well-functioning urban environment that enables a variety of homes to be built meeting the needs of different households. Nor do I think that the result would be a mix of housing opportunities unless one is talking about a mix of expensive high-end opportunities.

While I understand the goal of increasing affordable and varied housing, I believe that the Urban Intensification Variation, if applied to Arrowtown, will fail to achieve the desired outcomes, and at the same time will ruin what makes Arrowtown different and have negative consequences. This is because the scarcity and high value of land in Arrowtown and high building costs in the district means that any new developments will be an expensive finished product. This will attract developers who are more interested in building high-end tourist accommodation or luxury homes for wealthy individuals, often from outside the area. As a result, the new properties will be priced beyond the reach of the average local resident thereby failing to address the issue of affordable and diverse housing and reducing the amount of housing that could fairly be said to be meeting the needs of different and varied households.

There will also be:-

- The demolition of older, smaller and cheaper houses to enable the redevelopment of sites with expensive units; and
- Greater pressure for footpaths, streetlights, improved infrastructure and traffic lights etc as the population increases.

The new properties built at 4 Pritchard Place, Arrowtown are a good example of this outcome. On that site there has been built two high-end, large, 4- bedroom, 4- bathroom, (plus another guest toilet in each) homes. These have been built under the current rules, and it is alarming to think that there is a proposal to allow even higher height limits under the section 42A recommendations let alone the original notified proposal.

I submit that there is no justification for the section 42A proposal of a height increase in the MDRZ in Arrowtown when the current rule already allows two stories – and two imposing storeys at that as seen in Pritchard Place. Allowing three storeys, which I understand would be possible with the section 42A proposed 8m + 1m for pitched roof forms limit, will not achieve the policy objectives of a well-functioning urban environment that meets the needs of a diverse community. There will be very few that can afford the properties that will be built, and it does not take any imagination to envisage the luxury penthouses that developers would build if increased height limits are allowed.

Public information shows that the developer paid \$1,950,000 for the 713 sqm of land at 4 Pritchard Place in December 2021 with the then existing house being demolished by the developer. We have viewed inside the rear home of the two new

homes that have been built. When I enquired of the agent of the price for the back Pritchard Place property, he told me in the vicinity of \$3.5M.

Examples of this same general situation can be seen in places such as Aspen, Colorado, in the United States. While I have never been to Aspen there is information available about Aspen's council implementing similar policies as those now proposed by the QLDC with the aim to increase housing density in an area where the land was both scarce and expensive. This did not lead to more affordable housing. Instead, it resulted in the construction of more high-end properties that catered to affluent buyers, exacerbating the affordability crisis (by encouraging the demolition of older, cheaper and smaller homes) rather than alleviating it and having an adverse impact on the traditional scale and appealing "vibe" of Aspen.

More short-term accommodation likely to result

Again using the example of the 2 new properties in Pritchard Place, it must be likely that they will be used for short term accommodation given the configuration of the properties. On viewing inside the back property, it was hard to imagine that an average family would ever want to live there. There were inadequately sized practical facilities for a family – for example, the laundry was in a cupboard in the guest toilet with very awkward access to it. The living was upstairs with no access to the small garden. We watched the agent doing a complicated manoeuvre to get his car out of the garage as it was tight even with just one car in the double garage. The access to the property was not at all ideal in terms of what a local family would expect. The main access is up steep steps that I expect would be a recipe for people hurting themselves on in the winter and possibly all year round. The properties appear jammed onto the site with their size out of all proportion to the streetscape. The neighbouring properties have been very adversely affected by the construction and for what and whose gain? Possibly the gain will be for an out-of-town developer, but it certainly not will not be more affordable and varied housing options.

Even with the development seen in Pritchard Place that has been made under the existing rules, it will not be surprising if the buyers for these properties are from out of town and use them as holiday homes contributing to the lack of housing in the area rather than increasing the supply.

I think that the well-publicised example of the Five Mile Villas' developer seeking consent for visitor accommodation could likely happen with these Pritchard Place properties and others that may be built of the same type if the rules are relaxed to allow higher height limits. As that Five Mile Villas' developer was quoted as saying, the reason he was applying for visitor accommodation rights was due to demand from buyers. The developer was quoted as saying that there is a lot of demand from people who want to buy a holiday home but want flexibility to rent it out. Renting properties out allows people to borrow against them and get an income, which for some, makes buying an expensive property achievable. This additional income creates more buyer demand further increasing prices which, in turn, leads to further pressure to relax the visitor accommodation rules. The design of the new Pritchard Place properties with minimal outdoor space and undesirably close to each other and to the neighbours, made even more pronounced because of their height and imposing design, suggests to me that they will not appeal to people as permanent homes (even if they could afford them).

Topography not accounted for

The topography of Arrowtown may lead to even more pronounced adverse effects if the increase in heights is allowed. Our own home is an example of this. The natural contour of our land falls away sharply from our neighbour at number 5 down to our property. Our neighbour's property is approximately 2 m higher than our property. If our neighbour's property could be developed up to 12m (under the original proposal) or even 9m under the section 42A proposal (in each case with roof) the results on our property of being overlooked, loss of light, sun, view and the feeling of being dominated by the built form next door will be even more severe because of the natural topography.

Risk of the ruining of the character of Arrowtown

The risk is that if the UIV is allowed to take place in Arrowtown not only will the outcomes not be as wished, but the effects on the special character of Arrowtown will be disastrous and permanent. There is a real risk that what gives Arrowtown its current appeal will be ruined.

Again, the Panel only has to look at the effects on the neighbours of what was constructed at 4 Pritchard Place. The construction dominates the streetscape and

hopefully the Panel might have already viewed this for themselves or be able to view it. The effects on the health of the affected neighbours and their sense of well-being and happiness about where they live have been severely compromised and eroded.

Vital sunshine and light will be lost from those houses unlucky enough to be beside new higher height developments. Views will be lost forever and replaced by looking at imposing neighbouring homes. There may well be inadequate on street parking for those who live in the new higher density houses due to minimal on-site parking. The section 42A report acknowledges that there may be additional pressure on street parking which the NPS-UD encourages is managed through parking management plans. I suggest that does not work in a street such as Pritchard Place and in many other parts of Arrowtown if you have houses built to increased density as there simply will be no way that all those that could live in the properties will be able to park close by.

Conclusion

I do not believe that the section 42A recommendations will assist in achieving an urban development that promotes a compact, well designed and integrated urban form that builds on historical urban settlement patterns and that achieves a built environment that ensures a mix of housing opportunities as the report states it will.

On the contrary, there seems much more likelihood of it resulting in ad-hoc buildings that are out of keeping with the environment intermittently replacing the small-scale housing that dominates Arrowtown with the results seen in Pritchard Place of buildings totally out of keeping with the surroundings.

In summary, if an aim of the intensification is to provide for permanent residents and long-term rentals and provide a variety of homes that meet the needs in terms of type, price and location of different households, then, based on examples as explained, and, generally the high cost of land in Arrowtown, it is my submission that it will achieve very little and, worse still, decrease the supply for those uses and needs and at the same time ruin forever the character of the village of Arrowtown. The solution is not as proposed by the Council but "master planned" developments that provide higher density properties with any adverse effects mitigated from the outset.

I respectfully request that the Panel agree that maintaining the status quo is the appropriate outcome as far as Arrowtown is concerned, with more weight to be placed on the Arrowtown Design Guidelines. Otherwise, I believe it is very likely that all that will be achieved is ensuring that the average family will largely be shut out of living in Arrowtown. This will also result in tourists and wealthy out of towners having high end holiday houses to stay in, with a loss of the very essence of what makes Arrowtown of special character.

Thank you for your time today.