

Tēnā koutou katoa and thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Amanda Viana, and I live in Arrowtown, at 7 Douglas Ave. This place has been somewhere my grandparents started coming to in the 1950s and it has been a part of my life since I was born so I know the area intimately and the community intimately. I am speaking in opposition to the proposed changes in the Urban Intensification Variation as it applies to Arrowtown—I am in opposition to the proposed changes to low-and medium-density zoning, which includes increased building heights, reduced lot sizes, and recession plane reductions. Even a 1-metre uplift will have significant impacts on the special character of Arrowtown. So, the best outcome for the community is to retain the status quo.

I will go into more detail about what gives Arrowtown its special character. However, first, let me begin by saying I fully understand the need for responsible urban planning. Growth is inevitable. But it must be done with great care, especially in a place as unique and historically significant as Arrowtown. Greenfield or brownfield development is a much better place for well-thought-out housing development such as we are seeing at Frankton Flats. Arrowtown is not a blank canvas. It is not just another suburb of Queenstown or a vacant zone awaiting development. It is a tightly woven community with a strong heritage, and a scale and rhythm that has been shaped by generations.

I want to talk today about what makes Arrowtown special—and how these proposed changes would fundamentally damage the very things that make our town worth protecting.

1. The Special Character of Arrowtown

Arrowtown is unlike anywhere else in the Queenstown Lakes District or in fact you could say anywhere else in New Zealand. It is a historic goldmining town with a distinctly human scale. The buildings are low rise—mostly single-storey homes which are generally modest in footprint. Fences are low or even non-existent and are for aesthetic purposes not security. Open space, greenery and trees abound. The town is nestled into the land, not imposed upon it. From anywhere you walk, you can see uninterrupted views of the surrounding hills and mountains. The organic shape of the town, its preserved heritage, and the respectful way buildings sit within the environment all contribute to a unique identity that residents and visitors alike treasure. The Historic Management Zone is actually just a line on a planner's map, and Arrowtown's special character doesn't just end there. It includes both the Old and New Town.

The Arrowtown Design Guidelines from 2016 clearly articulate this character—and the proposed changes of the Urban Intensification Variation directly contradict that vision. I don't have to tell you that being in a Tier 2 Council means that intensification is not an obligation, you don't have to destroy the character of Arrowtown. According to expert data, there is enough housing stock and planned development in the district to meet population growth until 2051 so the council have the chance to not only listen to the Arrowtown community who are resoundingly against intensification but to also preserve a place which is unique in New Zealand. Because if you let intensification happen there is no going back and Arrowtown's special character will be lost forever.

2. My Personal Concerns

As a resident, I am deeply concerned about the impact these changes would have on daily life.

First, building heights. Increasing heights to 8, 8 +1 or even 12 metres is not just a technical change—it would dramatically alter the feel of our town. I am an educator, and I take 17–18-year-old history and geography students from all around New Zealand on tours of our town and not just the historic area. When I talk to them about what the council is planning to allow development-wise here, they are truly shocked. They say “*how can they do that, looking up at three- or four-storey buildings will ruin the views and the feel of the town*”. And this comes from young people visiting just for the day. If you truly look and walk around Arrowtown, it doesn’t take long to understand the special character of the place.

The majority of homes in Arrowtown are single-storey, and the idea of apartment blocks or townhouses looming over our back fences is deeply unsettling. It’s not just about aesthetics—tall buildings create shadow. In winter, many of our homes rely on every precious bit of sun. Take that away, and you get frost that doesn’t thaw, damp homes, and safety issues on icy streets. If any of you have spent time here at subzero temperatures overnight that last for weeks, you would understand that.

I along with many in the community are lucky to be able to have the space to grow fruit and vegetables in my garden. It’s not just a hobby though—it’s part of how I contribute to our family’s resilience and connection to the land. Losing sunlight and reducing lot sizes by intensification would mean the disappearance of the fruit trees and vegetable gardens that so many of us value and it would lessen the community’s resilience.

Second, the loss of privacy and views. In Arrowtown, we know our neighbours. We greet them over the fence, keep an eye out for each other’s kids, and lend a hand when needed. This is not the anonymous lifestyle of an urban centre. Having multi-storey buildings looking directly into your backyard changes that. It breaks down the trust and openness that comes with living at a human scale. We don’t just live *in* Arrowtown, we live *with* it—and with each other. This is why there has been so much pushback from the community towards intensification. We truly value the community we live in and do not want to become a faceless, soulless community.

Third, the reduced lot sizes. Cramming more houses into smaller sections may meet a numerical target, but it comes at the cost of liveability. Arrowtown is green and open. We have trees, birdsong – tui and piwakwaka - fantails are all around, space for kids to play, and paths that are shared by runners, walkers, cyclists, and dogs. More houses means the loss of private green spaces. More houses means more cars on the roads, more cars parked on the paths, congestion, dangerous roads and a loss of safety.

Intensification is done under the guise that housing will become more affordable. But there is no evidence that this will be the case at all. What we are more likely to see is mega mansions that dominate the landscape being built by the wealthy because let’s be honest who can afford to buy land here. A couple of recent new builds are going for around \$3 million. I don’t think that is affordable. Or else developers will get rich by building apartments. These will become short term lets, Airbnb or holidays apartments owned those living elsewhere who will fly in for a few weeks skiing in winter. Again, this will destroy the sense of community we are so

desperate not to lose. We live here because we love the outdoors, the space, gardens for our children and pets to play in.

3. Heritage and Precedent

It is not the first time we've faced this challenge in Arrowtown. In the 1970s, 80s, 90s and again in more recent years, residents have stood up to protect the integrity of our town. If those battles hadn't been fought, Arrowtown would look very different today—and it wouldn't be for the better. We wouldn't even have the historic zone which is on the must-visit list of so many tourists and visitors if past developers had had their way. Let's not be so short-sighted like all the would-be developers of the past, let's do the right thing and protect what we have for generations of locals and visitors.

The proposed changes to urban intensification in Arrowtown show no sign of learning from that history. They push forward a city-style model of development into a town or as us locals call it a village where that model simply doesn't fit. Arrowtown is recognised around the world for its heritage values. It has been voted New Zealand's Most Beautiful Small town twice. Why would you want to destroy that now?

4. The Process and the Principles

One of the most frustrating things is that the council does not listen to the community. The changes proposed have not been meaningfully discussed with those who live here. It has been very clear how the community has felt right from the beginning, and in fact we did not even have to reach this point. We did not have to have a hearing. The council could easily have not included Arrowtown in the intensification variations. It feels like decisions are made at a desk by people who do not walk these streets, who have not stood in the shade of our trees, or watched the sun set over the hills from their back garden.

And yet, we are the ones who will live with the consequences—long after the councillors, the planners and developers have moved on.

5. What I Am Asking For

I ask that the proposed changes to low-and mid-density zones in Arrowtown be removed. In particular, I do not support increasing height limits to 8, 8 +1 or 12 metres, reducing lot sizes, or changing recession planes. Keep the status quo. In fact, the council could go further and put in place more protection, so we don't lose what we have.

Growth must be guided by the values we hold, not imposed at the cost of them. Arrowtown is not resistant to change—it is resistant to inappropriate change. We need growth that fits our scale, respects our history, and enhances our community—not erodes it.

My 16-year-old daughter asked me what I was working on the other night when I was preparing this and I told her it was about the intensification of Arrowtown. She said to me *“Mum, please stop it, do what you can to stop it, it will ruin Arrowtown”*. I love how she believes I have the power to such a thing. Unfortunately, I don’t but on behalf of her and all the others who aren’t able to speak here I ask you in her words to please stop it.

I will finish with a whakatauki – a Māori proverb. Ka mua, ka muri – which means we have to look to the past to inform future decisions and actions.

Let us not be the generation that undid the careful protection of Arrowtown’s character. Let us be the generation that upheld it.

Thank you for your time.