

BEFORE THE QUEENSTOWN LAKES DISTRICT COUNCIL

UNDER the Resource Management Act 1991

IN THE MATTER A variation to the QLDC Proposed
District Plan – Urban intensification

BY **FRIENDS OF ARROWTOWN VILLAGE**
Various submitters

SPEAKING NOTES OF DAVID CLARKE

Dated: 31 July 2025

Introduction

- [1] Thank you for the ability to speak at this hearing today. My name is David Clarke. As you will have seen by my statement of evidence for the Friends of Arrowtown Village (**FOAV**), I have been extensively involved in all areas of Arrowtown Community affairs, especially planning, since 1989. I served two terms on QLDC as the Arrowtown Ward Councillor and was an Independent Planning Commissioner with Chair endorsement for many years.
- [2] I am submitting this as a lay person and not any sort of expert witness. Over the last 36 years I have also been heavily involved in heritage protection, working on fundraising, saving and restoring a number of Queenstown and Arrowtown's heritage buildings, but also helping identify heritage buildings, landscapes, features and trees for the district plan. This was not just part of my role as the Director of the Lakes District, but in my inherent desire to protect, for future generations, our heritage and special character that is continually under threat from unbridled growth.
- [3] Whilst working across the District, my specific area of interest naturally rested with Arrowtown, as this is my home and a place I holidayed in from the early 1960's. I also came under the influence of the last mayor the late Jack Reid, and the Arrowtown Councillors who wanted to ensure their good planning work, undertaken in the 1970s and 80s was not in vain, especially after Arrowtown was amalgamated into the wider QLDC in 1989. So, I offered to help.
- [4] I thought it was worthwhile to lay out the background for the Panel to illustrate how Arrowtown's planning and protection has come about through a number of initiatives that have involved community participation and buy in. This has largely avoided ad hoc laissez-faire development that has resulted in a beautiful town and a very desirable place to live and work.
- [5] The community planning process began with the 1994 Community planning workshops (known as a Charette) which set out a list of the communities' values and aspirations especially as they related to the

Town Centre / river front areas and the protection of low-key infrastructural elements to protect special character. This workshop was facilitated by professionals from throughout New Zealand, including planners, urban designers, engineers and landscape architects. This resulted in a significant amount of landscape work but most importantly established the value the community sought to protect. This was followed by the 2003 Community Workshops which looked at the 'old town' and its specific protection but also the 'new town' and how it could continue to grow in a way that was sympathetic to the old town. Out of this process came the Arrowtown Design Guidelines (**ADG**) 2006, later revised in 2016. These guidelines have become such an important and critical tool for Arrowtown town planning. In 2017, another planning workshop was held with Shaping Our Future (revised in 2022). This continued the community involvement, assessing if we were still on course in terms of both community aspirations and development outcomes whilst still allowing for growth. I note there has been no reference to this year long community process.

- [6] For the benefit of the Panel, I have outlined a potted history of the town's origins from Māori food gathering site, to gold rush town, farming service town, and then on to a 'cribbie' town and then now, a mixture of a working / tourist town. Arrowtown has both a holiday house population as well as an excellent permanent and tightly knit community. I hope this has provided insight into the development of a town that respects its past but has also embraced the future while retaining those elements of the past that give Arrowtown its 'special character'. It has not been an attempt to encapsulate the town in some sort of time warp, but what we have done in a planning sense has worked, especially as an economic driver as visitor come from all over the world to enjoy what Arrowtown has to offer.
- [7] It is accepted that the circumstances of Arrowtown's development, being a little brother / sister to Queenstown and thus not under the same development pressure during the 1970s, enabled heritage buildings and special character to be protected and enhanced. For many years it was also a more affordable place to live. Cribbies retired to their holiday houses and then passed them to their children and then in many cases the children have on sold them as property prices have risen.

- [8] Creating such a desirable environment through good planning and development, but also Millbrook and now Ayrburn on our doorstep, has led to a degree of gentrification, whereby there is a demand by the wealthy to buy in. This has, like the whole district, resulted in an issue of housing affordability. This is a phenomenon that is not just an Arrowtown problem but a District-wide problem. It exists in every desirable area around the world, especially tourist areas.
- [9] Despite the protestations of some, Arrowtown has 'done its bit' to cater for housing demand, increasing its population 300% since 1989 and building a significant number of affordable houses in the Suffolk St and Tewa Banks Queenstown community housing developments. I have outlined where significant development has also occurred on the flanks of the town but at the same time ensuring community has got involved and had its say. This development and community engagement has occurred through the input of groups like the Arrowtown Planning and Advisory Group (**APAG**), the Arrowtown Village Association (**AVA**) and the Arrowtown Promotion and Business Association (**APBA**). The 2016 PDP and the introduction of new MDRZ and LDRZ with rules and design illustration, were accepted with some reservation. It was recognised there is some older housing stock in the 'new town' that could be redeveloped so heights and zone standards were changed to accommodate for this. We had an understanding that any new development would be assessed against the ADG.
- [10] The APAG has been very instrumental in vetting development in the old town and for many years in parts of the new town, especially as it related to infrastructure treatments (materials and design) and the interface between the old and new town. This has always been undertaken using the PDP and especially the ADG as the reference. This has been a very successful collaborative planning process. Since the changes to zoning in 2016, the APAG has not been asked to comment on anything in the new town. This has clearly not been done as reflected in some of new out of character development. This has been disappointing, and it appears any new buildings that are permitted activities do not have to reference the ADG. This is clearly an oversight.

- [11] Since the mid-1970s Arrowtown development has been undertaken in a way that has been supported by the local community via community engagement and input. I have spoken to councils and groups in Akaroa, Greytown and Coromandel town about what we achieved in Arrowtown regarding the use of guidelines and how we have retained special character using them. It seems incongruous that we now find ourselves fighting to protect our special town that other heritage towns have looked up to as a benchmark.
- [12] The Variation flies in the face of good community-led planning. The s42A report suggests changes that are clearly an improvement but will still have serious unacceptable consequences. In my view the Variation is an ideological, one size fits all, solution rather than a practical solution in the case of Arrowtown. It will erode the 'special character' of Arrowtown for ever, further stretch infrastructure and will not in my view result in the desired outcomes of affordability or mixed typography. It would have been far better to have left Arrowtown out of the Variation and undertake further community-led planning that would allow for well-planned redevelopment and growth, as we have done so successfully up until now.

Dated: 31 July 2025

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David Clarke