

Submitter No 78; Bill Hewat

26th August 2025

Spoken submission opposing the proposed Urban Intensification Plan

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to my submission today.

I'd like to start with two Press headlines. The first reads: *"Queenstown risks becoming the next Barcelona, and locals are afraid"* (20/7/25). We were in Barcelona, (mid-June), when locals protested against over-tourism, which they say is 'killing' the city, and they are being driven out. And speaking to the locals, they said most rental accommodation in town, was now Airbnb, and the few available ones were unaffordable.

After a week there, we went to Portugal and we biked from Porto down to Lisbon (a comparison here would be, roughly Christchurch to Dunedin), which took 12 days. Every day we biked through and stayed in tourist towns very similar to Queenstown and Wanaka, (ie catering mainly for tourists). It was brilliant, no high rises blocking views, no infrastructure problems, or traffic issues. Most locals live, and certainly all worker accommodation is, on the outskirts of town. The town centres are geared for visitors.

What they have done is the complete opposite to this proposed plan. Portugal was founded in the year 1143, (New Zealand in 1840), so they have 700 years more experience than us, and larger tourist numbers (Portugal has 34-million visitors per annum and NZ has 3.2-million). Portugal was a poor country before they made changes and tourism is now 11.9% of GDP (Ref; National Statistics Institute 2024), and New Zealand's is 7.5%. Portugal's Urban Planners have ensured the tourist towns are not decimated by high rise buildings, so tourism is booming and the locals have jobs and affordable accommodation. It's a win-win.

Why don't we copy countries who have the formula right? The lesson is clear and simple; Do NOT build high-rise buildings that block views, of the best scenery in the world, and block sun, especially in winter when roads are icy. And don't fall for the fallacy that it will provide affordable worker accommodation. Look at Barcelona.

This brings me to my next Press headline; *"Housing hope for workers"* (14/8/25). Simplicity Living announced a \$500m project to build 600 apartments on the Ladies Mile, for

affordable long term rental accommodation. It's located near Remarkable Park, close to schools, shops and public transport.

Surely, this is the solution to the housing crisis, and it mirrors what they have done in Portugal, ie leave the CBD for tourists and build workers accommodation on the outskirts of town. Prohibiting high-rise intensification will future proof the scenic beauty of Queenstown.

Finally, every day, of our 6-week holiday, we spoke to many people, all of whom asked where we're from. When we said '*New Zealand*', all of them said '*that's my number-one place to go to. I've heard the scenery is beautiful*'.

I'm sure you will agree, that we don't want to lose that reputation. However, it's an accolade we will lose if high-rise buildings block the views of the lake and mountains, which at the proposed 16.5m permitted height, they most definitely will. (please refer to the photo of a red helium balloon at this height, in front of our house on Frankton Road, in my submission).

In summary, the first Press article (about Queenstown becoming the next Barcelona), is the path we will tread if this Plan Change is approved, in any form. This path will be a disaster. The second article (about affordable workers accommodation being built on the outskirts of town), is the path with a clear vision for retaining Queenstown as the famous resort town with stunning scenery, ensuring prosperity for future generations.

Please reject the proposed Urban Intensification Plan, in its entirety.



Queenstown risks becoming the 'next Barcelona', and locals are afraid



Andrea Vance | [SUNDAY STAR TIMES](#)

July 20, 2025

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14/8/25



It's a potential new sale to a local buyer goes ahead.

Read more on page 2

Pictured: McLean's Mansion at 357 Manchester St in central Christchurch is under offer.

Housing hope for workers

\$500m rent-to-own project to deliver 600 units to relieve dire shortage of affordable homes

QUEENSTOWN

Miriam Bell

Queenstown is set to become home to New Zealand's biggest build-to-rent development yet, and it is just what the housing-strapped area needs, the developers say.

Simplicity Living announced yesterday it had bought a 6.1ha site on Ladies Mile in the resort town to build a 600-apartment complex of rental homes.

The development would be its largest build to date, dwarfing the 320-home development it was currently building on Ellerslie Racecourse Road in Auckland, and had an estimated value of up to \$500 million.

It would also be the first foray out of Auckland for the company, which is owned by nonprofit KiwiSaver provider Simplicity.

Managing director Sam Stubbs said there was a critical shortage of affordable homes in Queenstown, and it meant the area was ripe for the type of homes the company built. Build-to-rent developments are large-scale multi-unit residential buildings that offer long-term rental agreements, are pro-

fessionally managed and do not offer apartments for sale to individual owners.

Queenstown had just one large completed build-to-rent development, New Ground Capital's 78-unit Toru Apartments, and there was high demand for high-quality but affordable rental housing, he said. "We've been looking for a location in Queenstown for two years, but it was hard to get the economic feasibility to stack up. Now, we've found the right site and we're racing to go."

They were negotiating with the council about the provision of infrastructure necessary to start building on the land, but the council was happy to help, he said.

"When the build kicks off depends on how the infrastructure planning with council, NZTA and other land owners in the area goes. But when it gets to the point where we can push go we can move quickly."

"Core Simplicity staff will go down to work on it, but we also have well-established contacts in the area, and will be employing lots of locals on the build."

The development would be made up of three-storey, walk-up blocks primarily built

from concrete, brick and Central Otago schist, and would have an expected lifespan of more than 150 years. It was based on the model used for other Simplicity builds that enabled the company to build easily and with significant economies of scale, he said.

The homes would have high thermal and acoustic ratings, solar panels, rainwater harvesting and common use facilities including work-from-home spaces, residents' lounges and outdoor equipment storage.

Extensive landscaping was planned to give the property a residential park atmosphere, and it would include a small retail strip so residents could easily walk to shops.

Located near Remarkables Park, it is close to planned schools, shops and transport links, but the complex would have extensive car and bike parking, and direct access to bike trails and the planned gondola.

The Shotover Bridge was a 10-minute walk away, while Queenstown International Airport was a five-minute drive away.

Stubbs said in a first for Simplicity Living they might consider looking at potential ownership options for some of the homes

further down the track. But, first and foremost, it was a development for local renters who had to commute from out of the town because they could not afford to rent in it. "It will not be ski homes for Aucklanders."

Queenstown mayor Glyn Lewers said it was much-needed in the market. "The addition of up to 600 new build-to-rent homes will be a game changer for our community, offering secure long-term rentals."

Stubbs said that by the end of the year Simplicity would have 2000 people employed, and would be building about 16 homes a day.

The aim was to get to three homes a day, which was about a 1000 a year, and twice what they were doing now.

KiwiSaver was the driver and glue for what Simplicity Living did, he added.

"Our Queenstown development is just another example of the sort of thing our KiwiSaver scheme can help make possible."

"We think it's a good long-term investment for our members and helps provide warm, dry homes for kiwi families in a region that urgently needs them."

HOT!

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BEEFEATER

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\$51.99

FOR MATE

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PREMIUM

LAGER

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