

Summary of Evidence from Peter & Anna Robinson to the proposed Urban Intensification Plan and its Impact on Arrowtown 30 July 2025

1) The Variation is not in accordance with the requirements of the National Policy Statement on Urban Development.

There seem to be many issues here but the most important that I wish to highlight are:

- A review of the list of Tier 1 and Tier 2 cities in the intensification plan suggests that QLDC is almost unique. All the others are dominated by a single large urban conurbation. Wellington does have the Kapiti Coast. However, Wellington City and the Hutt are major centres. By comparison, QLDC is really a collection of several towns and villages spread over more than 120km north to south and taking close to two hours to drive. It is also highly dependent on Cromwell and to a lesser extent Clyde and Alexandra for worker accommodation, its major transport hub, manufacturing and warehousing. The 2018 population was around 48,000 in total. However, the Arrowtown was just 2,950 at that time.

Part of Arrowtown has been designated Medium Density Residential in the Proposed District Plan, making this the area most severely affected by the proposed variation (a maximum building height of 11m + 1m, for example). This has been amended to 9m + 1m since the 2023 information release. However, page 2 of the Ministry for the Environment's *Medium Density Residential Standards: A guide for territorial authorities* states, "A relevant residential zone does not include...a mainly urban area that the 2018 census recorded as having a resident population of less than 5,000 (unless a local authority intends it to become part of an urban environment

- QLDC have suggested their hands are tied because adoption of the National Policy Statement on Urban Development (NPS-UD) is a legislative requirement.)".
- Christchurch City Council chose to exclude Akaroa, a village that has many similarities to Arrowtown, from their Variation and this is not a unique situation. This decision was enabled by a Government-appointed barrister mediating an agreement between the Ministry for the Environment and Christchurch City Council. Why has QLDC not shown the same discretion in the case of Arrowtown as CCC has shown in the case of Akaroa?

2) The provisions of the Variation are not in accordance with sound resource management planning principles.

- The QLDC aim that is built into the underlying documents and is detailed in the economic report is to add 20,000 dwellings to the QLDC area by 2050, which is more than double the 19,700 dwellings in QLDC in 2021. The economic report suggests that the proposed plan could enable a tripling of residential properties to 59,500 by 2050. All of the planning meetings held with the public in recent years have raised the issue of uncontrolled growth and "peak tourism". When does over development kill the golden goose? Why is QLDC planning to facilitate uncontrolled development probably without the associated plans for the infrastructure to support this level of growth? Who wants this? Simply, assuming that people will not need cars as at Ladies Mile does not constitute a future plan!
- A second issue is the failure to ensure equity in the intensification plan between parts of the QLDC area. The concept seems to be to saddle the older Council controlled

areas, which have not been developed by private developers, with the burden, because Council can force the changes now. In the meantime, large areas developed by private companies with Covenants, which represent close to half the total housing stock of the Whakatipu such as Lake Hayes Estate, Shotover Country, Jacks Point, Hanley's Farm (parts) and some of the developments in the Wanaka area have escaped the impact of these measures. There are no definitive plans at present to intensify development and increase heights in these other areas at present, although there is a suggestion this could come in the future.

Arrowtown is not static and has changed greatly over the years. Our own property had a sign out the front when it was purchased in 1969 saying welcome to Arrowtown population 379! More intensive development in the form of housing around the old camping ground and the Jopp St Tewa Banks "low cost" housing have been welcomed. Other large scale development in Arrowtown includes, Butel Park, Linksgate, South Arrowtown, McDonnell Rd, the retirement village and even Millbrook have had a major impact on Arrowtown and its services. Not satisfied with this, Council wants a third of the area to change to 11m (now 9m) high structures and half the area to an 8m height to allow the town to change from single storey to double storey construction.

The information available from QLDC does not show any examples of the proposed intensive development with individual 11m high buildings and 8m high buildings interspersed with single story buildings. No examples have been cited where this has been done successfully and the planners at the meeting in Arrowtown in 2023 could not advise of any they were aware of. It seems to be one great experiment with Arrowtown residents as guinea pigs. I would comment that the Contents Summary in the Department for the Environment Medium Density Urban Intensification document shows computer generated image of a high level development with wide spaces between buildings. However, this is not the vision proposed for Arrowtown with small plot sizes few green areas and narrow side and back yards on buildings.

In other words, when the experts supporting the plan state, that in their opinion, the increased density and height is needed and the adverse effects are acceptable, how did they form this opinion?

3) The Variation, if approved, would result in development that is totally contrary to the District Plan provisions relating to development in Arrowtown.

QLDC has already made large scale changes that have a detrimental effect. The change in the recession planes to angles up to 55 degrees from 25 degrees in the PDP and also the change in the June 2023 PDP to 6.5m height in Arrowtown was virtually unknown of in the Arrowtown community at the time. The recession plane was needed to facilitate the increased density and reduction to 300m² net plot sizes. Arguably, in reality, this is the single greatest change proposed for Arrowtown and it has been implemented. This change went through at the same time as the initial consultation on the Urban Intensification Proposal. The altered recession planes were not included in the document markups and hence no one seemed to be aware of the change.

This appears to have been processed with extremely limited involvement of the community and one wonders about the inaction of the Arrowtown-Kawerau Ward Councillors in ensuring the community was properly informed in relation to this matter,

4) That the provisions of the Variation are contrary to the Arrowtown Design Guidelines 2016 and the Queenstown Lakes Spatial Plan 2021.

These plans have been developed in consultation with the community over many years. The aim of these documents has been to preserve the unique character of the Arrowtown community in terms of preserving the best from the past, preserving the great natural beauty of the area and its environment and preserving the community centred culture that has developed and been enriched over the last 160 years of the town's existence. The town has always had an independent and unique character. It is not coincidence that major local events such as the Autumn Festival, which relies on local residents to get involved, are focussed there. 95% opposed merger with Queenstown in the 1990s and we did not win best Village in NZ by being average!

5) **That there has been a total lack of/ or insufficient community consultation regarding the proposed Variation and the outcomes proposed for Arrowtown.**

The urban intensification plan being consulted on has the potential to total change the character of Arrowtown. Initially, only a month was allowed for the presentation of submissions with no meetings with the planners behind the plans. **The 2023 changes to the PDP for low density areas are massive and no time has been allowed to see what type of development occurs with rules allowing far greater density of development than previously.** The low density area has been zoned to halve and possibly quarter the minimum size of sections in some cases for building with two storey development being encouraged. The plans proposed for the medium density area is similarly intrusive. However, such a fundamental change affecting the entire community without adequate information and consultation is inexplicable.

6) **That development established by the Variation will have significant adverse impacts on the character of Arrowtown.**

The Barker & Associates report, which is the key expert opinion in support of the changes proposed, ignores the special character of Arrowtown and is in fact quite dismissive. The report divides Arrowtown into the Historic Precinct and the "New Town", which seems to have no special features. It ignores the characterisation of Arrowtown in the Arrowtown Design Guidelines 2016 into a number of areas each with a fairly uniform architectural style. The latest QLDC PDP still marginalises the Guidelines. It ignores that much of "New Town" Arrowtown has relatively flat roofs, which will generally raise roof heights through the 6.5m plane if two storey development is encouraged. Clearly, they have not read the Design Guide in detail.

Finally, the Barker report justifies the changes required to the PDP and removal of protections in the previous plans by comparing it with plans for large cities such as Auckland, Tauranga and Hamilton. These cities are 50 to 500 times larger than Arrowtown! How is the comparison remotely relevant? The report also fails to deal with the issue that the intensification may not apply to communities of less than 5,000 people in 2018.

7) **That the development enabled by the Variation will have adverse effects in terms of potential for domination of built form, shading, loss of access to sunshine and loss of views.**

These issues have been poorly analysed and addressed.

Some information on this issue has been provided in the Barker & Associates Report but its reliability has to be questioned as the section dimensions shown are not clear. They have also chosen a time when the shadows are shorter than for much of the day.

The report shows diagrams of the shadows in the afternoon of the spring equinox 21 September. It does not show the same information for mid-winter. The information is shown below. At 3pm on the shortest day an 9m building will cast a shadow 33m long -enough to cover two adjoining sections for a whole day, assuming the normal Arrowtown section width of around 20m. An 8m high building will cast a shadow 29m long. This would put a whole adjoining section in shadow all day on the shortest day. The Barker report presentation is suspect as the shadows appear to be too short for an 11m building. But the plot dimensions are uncertain.

Date	Ratio Shadow Length versus Building Height		
	11AM	3PM	5PM
21 June	3.2	3.6	26.8
21 September	1.5	1.2	3.1

Further, the sun is a very important part of heating Arrowtown homes. A well-insulated house in Arrowtown will use approximately 30% more energy for heating than the same house in Queenstown. If the sun is severely limited the house could use 20 to 30% more energy just for heating. This is a significant impact. Arrowtown is cold in winter. Prolonged cold spells with no sun will lead to a huge build-up of frost and ice around houses. This could be for almost 3 months of the year! Many will go for days with local temperatures not exceeding zero around the house. This impact has not been considered by the planner advising Council.

8) That there is insufficient/inadequate infrastructure in place in Arrowtown to support the extent of development that is enabled by the provisions of the Variation.

Arrowtown does not have the infrastructure for intensification. Virtually the whole area of Arrowtown covered medium density and low density housing affected by this plan suffers from:

- No storm water system for private properties. With greater building intensity and increased paved areas soak aways are possibly unlikely to cope in some instances. Is there even room for soak aways on some section sizes proposed;
- A virtually non-existent storm water system to deal with roading run off and drains that are only cleaned after storms – never before so the system does not work;
- Arrowtown residents pay for storm water in their rates – they simply do not get any service. In the past I have questioned Council about paying for a service that does not exist and been advised that storm water for Arrowtown was not on the agenda for investigation and the Council had no plans to stop charging for a non-existent service;
- In many areas the sewerage was designed when septic tanks were removed in 1975 with the street pipes designed for a time when the population was less than 1,000. Our own property has a public drain which serviced one additional house. There are now 8 and possibly more houses connected or under construction and the pipe is small.
- No foot paths or curbs in most of the areas;
- The street level power system is already overloading with people converting from log burners to heat pumps and now the load from electric vehicles is being added. How will it cope? The recent upgrade of Arrowtown substation to improve reliability this year increased line charges in the town by 30%;
- There is no parking only grass verges which fill with water when it rains;
- There is a lack of sporting facilities meeting rooms for social and sporting events and even school facilities will be stretched by a large population increase. How is this being planned for?

- Fixing these issues will be a huge issue and the cost burden will fall mainly on existing rate payers who gain no benefit and are being adversely affected by the planned changes.
- Can the business area cope with expansion in demand without destroying the character of the centre of the historic precinct?
- Can the roading system cope with the increase in vehicles inherent in this plan? Public transport will not replace all increases in vehicle movements;

9) There is no guarantee that the provisions of the Variation will result in the types of development being sought or will it be high value developments?

Finally, there is a lack of analysis to demonstrate that the intensification will work with 8m and 9m buildings with reduced lot sizes and steeper recession planes. There are several possible scenarios:

- It would seem that if it is to work it would need large numbers of single storey properties to be bought by a single developer. They would then implement a plan based on well-spaced buildings with spaces between to improve access to sun and views. In the interim that could last years the land could be empty or poorly maintained rentals.
- Alternatively, large buildings will be built on single property sections surrounded by single storey buildings. The single storey properties in between will have a limited market for sale other than to the developer of large buildings. It could leave many people open to exploitation.
- Another possibility is that high priced apartments and houses will be built that are not aimed at families driving changes to the character of Arrowtown. The rule changes in both the density and medium density areas could be used to develop extremely large homes. To date, these developments seems to be the main option.

Presumably, many of these possible outcomes are undesirable.

10) Outcome Requested

In conclusion, I would ask that all elements of the Urban Intensification Plan be withdrawn as an interim measure, especially the proposed changes to the Low Density and Medium Density areas in Arrowtown. However, the entire plan requires a rethink based on an informed understanding of the likely outcomes of permitting higher heights and greater densities. The objective set of tripling the population in 25 years without a plan for infrastructure of all types including sewage treatment and collection, storm water, drinking water, electricity supply from the main electricity grid backbone, electricity distribution system, roads including footpaths, curbs and stormwater collection from roads, amenities for exercise and various clubs, sports fields, public transport and health facilities, sewage, storm water and treated water. We also need a plan that allows an increased population to survive a major disaster, such as large scale flooding, earthquake and also fire. The plans that exist do not address the resilience of the energy and roading infrastructure to the area. The response times with these infrastructure issues are typically years behind the need being identified. In reality is the rate of growth possible not going to be determined by the ability to build and pay for the infrastructure?