

Draft Queenstown Lakes Spatial Plan – Grow Well/Whaiora

Report of Hearings Panel

8 June 2021

1. Introduction

Queenstown Lakes District Council, Central Government and Kāi Tahu have jointly prepared a draft Spatial Plan for the Queenstown Lakes District. The draft Spatial Plan has been open to public submissions, with the opportunity for submitters to present their views to a panel.

This report has been prepared by the hearings panel. It outlines the issues raised by submitters and the views of the panel as to possible amendments to the draft Plan, for consideration by the Spatial Plan partners (but without going to the detail of changes to the text or maps).

2. Background

The Spatial Plan has been prepared under the Local Government Act. It is described as a vision and framework for how and where the communities of the wider Wakatipu and Upper Clutha areas can 'Grow Well' and develop to ensure the district's social, environmental and economic prosperity.

In summary, the Spatial Plan promotes a consolidated approach to accommodating future growth. This means most of the change needed to accommodate the additional houses, jobs and visitors expected over the next 30 years will occur within the Wakatipu and Upper Clutha areas, primarily by growing within and around the existing urban areas of Queenstown and Wānaka.

The Plan explains that a consolidated approach will support committed and future investment in improved public transport and active travel infrastructure. This will provide a far more sustainable transport system by reducing emissions, improving resilience and promoting safety and choice for all users.

3. Consultation and Hearing Process

Community consultation on the draft Spatial Plan occurred over 19 March 2021 to 19 April 2021 with the publication of the draft Plan and supporting documents along with a request for written submissions and an invitation to present those submissions to a hearings panel.

To hear submitters, the partners convened a hearings panel made up of representatives of the Spatial Plan partners, and an independent chair. The hearings form part of the Special Consultative Procedure of the Local Government Act.

The role of the hearings panel was to consider submissions and make recommendations to the partners (QLDC, Government and Kāi Tahu) on any changes or updates to the draft Spatial Plan.

The hearings panel representatives were:

David Mead, Independent Chair

Cllr Glyn Lewers, Queenstown Lakes District Council

Cllr Quentin Smith, Queenstown Lakes District Council

David Taylor, Ministry of Housing and Urban Development

Nick Gibbons, Waka Kotahi New Zealand Transport Agency

Dr Lyn Carter, Kāti Huirapa Rūnaka ki Puketeraki

Dean Whaanga, Kaupapa Taiao Manager.

Hearings took place over 3 and 4 May 2021 as follows:

- Monday 3 May: Council Chambers, Queenstown Lakes District Council, 10 Gorge Road, Queenstown
- Tuesday 4 May: Armstrong Room, Lake Wānaka Centre 89 Ardmore Street, Wānaka.

We heard submissions from 35 people or organisations. The list of attendees is attached. Overall, 147 written submissions were received. Council classified them as follows:

- Neutral – 22
- Oppose – 69
- Support – 39
- Not Stated – 17.

We note that some submitters raised concerns with the consultation process citing the extent of information that needed to be reviewed and the short time frame within which to provide responses. They also expressed concerns that the hearings process did not provide sufficient time for them to put forward their point of view. We understand that the consultation process followed accords with the Special Consultative Procedure under the Local Government Act. Nevertheless, in response to the concerns raised, we suggest that once the Plan has been adopted, that the partners review the consultation process followed to see what lessons can be learnt.

4. Major Themes

Major themes that emerged from the submissions covered:

- Population and visitor projections
- Future of the airports in the region
- Extent of urban expansion
- Degree of reliance on public and active transport
- Mix of development.

In general, the submitters were supportive of preparing a long term plan and were appreciative of the effort put into compiling the draft Plan. We were impressed with the extent to which the submitters had engaged with the Plan and provided considered and well thought out assessments.

4.2. Population and visitor numbers

The Spatial Plan is built upon estimates of future population and economic growth rates. A number of submitters in Wānaka questioned what growth assumptions had been applied to the assessment of spatial options in the Upper Clutha. They were concerned that growth was underestimated. This meant that the Spatial Plan may not have put in place the right framework to manage growth. If growth pressures are stronger than anticipated, it was more likely that the townships growth would be dictated by ad hoc developments, for example. In contrast, other submitters were concerned that the growth projections assumed that tourism numbers would return to pre Covid levels, when this was far from certain. In other words, there may be an over estimation of growth pressures.

4.3. Future of the airports

We heard various views about the future of the Queenstown Airport at Frankton. Some submitters sought that the Plan should state that the airport should not be able to expand beyond the current level of activity, others saw the Spatial Plan as the opportunity to signal a shift of the airport out of Frankton, in the longer term. Submitters were concerned that the airport had been taken as a 'given' when preparing the Plan, when the Plan should have explored what opportunities could be realised if the airport shifted.

A number of the submitters asked that the spatial plan be amended to include the alternative of the Tarras airport scenario. This would allow the whole of Frankton Flats to be developed. Without the airport in Frankton, there would be the ability to develop a great town centre, and possibly delay or not require other growth options, like Ladies Mile.

A number of submitters in Upper Clutha queried the future of the Wānaka airport and whether it may take on a bigger roll, and as a result see resident and visitor numbers in the area increase.

4.4. Urban expansion areas

The Spatial Plan identifies a number of greenfield development areas, including the southern and eastern corridors in Queenstown and Southern Wānaka and Lake Hāwea in Upper Clutha. Proposals to expand Lake Hāwea and Ladies Mile (in Queenstown) drew specific comment. Representatives of Lakes Hayes Estate Residents Committee noted the transport issues in the area, and the constriction caused by the Shotover Bridge. They were concerned that further

development in the area would add to traffic congestion, while not being of a scale or form that can support public transport. Similarly, residents of Lake Hāwea felt that the expansion identified in the draft Plan for the township would see the loss of character, while causing traffic and related infrastructure effects.

A number of possible additional urban expansion areas were identified, including land west of Sunshine Bay / Fernhill and the slopes overlooking the Shotover River at the Shotover Bridge end of Ladies Mile.

4.5. Public and active transport

The extent to which travel patterns could shift away from cars to public transport, walking and cycling drew considerable comment. Some submitters were very supportive of the shift, extending to ferry services and the like. Others pointed out that the geography of the area concentrated trips into a few key corridors. This meant that public transport would have to compete for road space, unless significant moves were made to secure dedicated space for transit. Others questioned whether older adults would travel by bus, bike or walk, and that there needed to be more allowances made for the elderly.

4.6. Mix of Development

The need for more space for light industrial activities was noted, with concern that if not protected, then industrial land will quickly be taken up by retail and residential activities. A greater range of housing types was mentioned, for example housing suitable for older adults to 'age in place'.

5. Considerations for the Draft Spatial Plan

Having read the draft Plan, the submissions and heard from the submitters who attended the hearings, we have identified the following points that we consider the partners to the Spatial Plan should take into account in its finalisation.

5.2. Population and Employment Projections

- We do not consider that the estimates of growth used in the preparation of the Plan are fundamentally flawed. We understand that forecasting the future is not a precise exercise, it is more an issue of communication of assumptions and caveats.
- Greater clarity over the expected population growth of Upper Clutha versus Queenstown/Wakatipu Basin would assist in understanding the respective drivers of the Spatial Plan for these areas, along with key demographic shifts (such as towards an older age profile).
- An appendix or similar explaining the assumptions would be helpful, along with a discussion of uncertainties and implications for the Spatial Plan if growth was faster or slower than that anticipated.
- It would also be helpful to explain that the Plan can be scaled 'up or down' according to the rate of growth, and there would be trigger points for growth related infrastructure.
- The review and monitoring process should be more fully outlined.
- The requirement to plan for growth under the National Policy Statement on Urban Development (NPS-UD) should be explained. That is, the need to take a 30 year look at likely growth.

- It would also be helpful to have more information on expected growth in employment, in Upper Clutha and Queenstown/ Wakatipu, and the resulting demands for floorspace and land.

5.3. Climate Change

- At a strategy level, we suggest that climate change needs more visibility in the plan. Adaptation to, and mitigation of, climate change and associated implications for urban growth needs its own section that highlights how climate change is addressed in the plan, such as drawing the linkages to mode shifts to public transport and more compact growth.
- While many of the submitters we heard from did not directly address climate change, we consider that the issue influences many of their views about the future. This included changing living and working practices as the economy ‘decarbonises’, including for example, the implications for long haul tourism.

5.4. Wakatipu Growth Pattern

- Having discussed the submissions raising the linkages between growth and airports, we note that the Spatial Plan cannot and should not direct how the airports in the district are to be operated. However, we consider that the Plan should be clearer about the strategic importance of Frankton, the Five Mile corridor and the Queenstown to Frankton corridor for accommodating future growth in the Wakatipu Basin. The plan should be more explicit about the key trade-offs between growth in these locations and airport operations. That is, the Spatial Plan should set out the longer term urban context that QAC would need to work within. While the Spatial Plan for Wakatipu Basin proposes extensions to the south and east, these corridors meet at Frankton where substantial intensification on land not currently encumbered by airport noise controls is clearly beneficial to long term aspirations for a compact, connected urban form.
- We do not see the need at this stage to develop a ‘without airport’ scenario. An airport icon could be added to the maps to reflect the current use, while noting that any moves to decrease use of the airport (or to shift it in the long term) can be addressed in reviews of the Plan, but this is not an outcome that the Plan advocates for in the short to medium term.
- In contrast, Wānaka Airport has much less of an impact on the Spatial Plan’s layout for the Upper Clutha.

5.5. Wānaka and Lake Hāwea Growth Patterns

- Upper Clutha has a different spatial pattern to Wakatipu. Wānaka is to be contained within the boundaries of the two rivers. Rather than expand the settlement across the river, long term, growth was more likely to occur in the surrounding settlements like Lake Hāwea and Luggate.
- Consolidation of Wānaka should occur first (such as expansion to the south and through infill and redevelopment), but at some point growth pressures will unlikely to be able to be contained within the two rivers unless alternative options are in place, such as measured expansion of Lake Hāwea.

- The Plan should be more explicit as to the dependency on public transport provision ahead of further growth of Lake Hāwea (beyond that provided for by the Proposed District Plan and Special Housing Area). The draft plan indicates that public transport services may not be viable. It would be helpful to establish what quantum of population is needed to support feasibility of public transport services in the Upper Clutha? We understand from staff, that under traditional models, public transport is unlikely to be commercially feasible in the short to medium term.
- Having said that, we recognise Lake Hāwea does provide more affordable housing options in the Upper Clutha Basin.
- We would suggest that the maps be amended to reflect these two issues: that the area to the immediate west of the Special Housing Area in Lake Hāwea be identified as an expansion area, providing for incremental growth; but otherwise further expansion of the settlement be noted as being dependent upon resolution of transport and infrastructure issues, as well staging with regard to the on-going growth of Wānaka.

5.6. Types of growth

- The Plan could communicate / illustrate the intensification options more clearly – the vertical dimension. We suggest additional content to illustrate the anticipated height and built form when the Plan refers to low, medium or high density. This could be linked to the centres definitions further to the front of the document, and cross referenced to the requirements of the National Policy Statement on Urban Development.
- Greater clarity on future industrial and commercial areas would assist in retaining opportunities for such activities.
- The Plan is fairly silent on the rural areas. While the focus is on urban growth and development, it would be useful to acknowledge the demand/popularity of rural lifestyle sections in the district, including resort activities (such as Millbrook and Gibbston), and hence the role that these areas play in accommodating growth pressures including activities such as commercial tourism.

5.7. Specific Areas

- Sunshine Bay extension – the constraints map should be updated to reflect the new. ONL line, but otherwise the area west of Sunshine Bay should be retained as rural, given the focus on Frankton.
- Eastern Corridor - Lower Shotover. We do not see any advantages from including the area in the Eastern corridor and are concerned about the potential landscape issues.
- Southern corridor – no adjustments are necessary.
- South West Wānaka area – we suggest that Riverbank Road defines the edge of the urban area, rather than the ONL. This reflects the entry experience into the township from the south.
- The revision to the maps for Lake Hāwea have been referred to in the previous section.

6. General Points

The submissions raised a number of general points that are worthy for consideration in the first review of the Plan:

- Consider adding the future of air transportation/airport planning to the Challenges section.
- Provide more detail on the priority sectors identified in the QLDC economic diversification strategy (which includes film), and link to spatial implications.
- Consider timing of future spatial plans so that they are prepared in time to inform the next LTP, ideally 9-12 months ahead of the LTP process.
- Consider the benefits and costs of signalling the staging of the priority development areas. Develop criteria that could guide decisions about the staging of expansion and redevelopment areas.
- Consider another map notation of future/priority development/further investigation areas.
- Combine employment and population projections. Graphs need to be clearer and show detail between Queenstown/Wānaka,
- Highlight the ongoing process of keeping the plan up to date, and the planned review to feed into the 2024 LTP (meaning updates to the spatial plan will be considered in 2023).
- Show how alignment with other planning documents is to be achieved – in particular highlight the relationship with the District Plan and Council's Long Term Plan and Climate Action Plan.
- Consider how housing affordability could be brought more fully into the Plan. It is a key topic in the community. The focus of this version of the Plan is the overall supply response, when next iterations could provide more analysis of how to deliver a range of housing types and price points within this context.



David Mead
For the hearings panel

**Attachment One
Spatial Plan Hearings
List of Attendees**

Queenstown

Shaun Kelly – Director, Kawarau Jet Services Holdings Ltd

David Jerram

Erin Taylor – Frankton Community Association

Miranda Spary

Kirsty Sharpe

Kirsty Sharpe – Queenstown Grey Power Inc

Leslie Van Gelder – Glenorchy Heritage and Museum Group

Ewan and Heather Rendel

Simon Spark – SJ Allen Holdings Ltd

Victoria Ludemann – The Optimise Health & Wellness Trust

Werner Murray – The Property Group

John Hilhorst – FlightPlan 2050

Blair Devlin – Spika Holdings Ltd

Rebecca Eng – Transpower New Zealand Ltd (letter tabled)

Bruce Farmer – Sustainable Glenorchy

Brian Fitzpatrick – Remarkables Park Ltd

Mark Tawnden

Todd Graham – Darby Partners

Cath Gilmour – We Love Wakatipu Incorporated Society

Cath Gilmour

Gavin Flynn – Lake Hayes Estate and Shotover Community Association

Alan Townsend – Kelvin Peninsula Community Association

Joshua Leckie – on behalf of the University of Otago

Joshua Leckie –on behalf of HGW Trustees Limited and Remarkables Station Limited

Gillian Macleod

Wānaka

Rod Macleod

Cherilyn Walthew – Lake Hāwea Community Association

Terry Drayton

Trevor Tattersfield

Tim Williams – Universal Developments Ltd

Mark Sinclair – Wānaka Stakeholders Group Inc.

Nick Page

Zella Downing

Peter Marshall

Florence Micoud

Rachael Moore

Scott Edgar & Michael Wallis – Silverlight Studios