

Q&A: Queenstown Lakes Housing Accord

1. What is a Housing Accord?

A Housing Accord is an agreement between the Minister for Building and Housing and a council to work together to address housing supply and affordability issues in a city or district.

The Housing Accords and Special Housing Areas Act 2013 states that a Housing Accord must be in writing, set out agreed targets, set out how the parties will work together to achieve the purposes of the Act, and provide for either party to terminate the agreement with no less than three months' notice.

2. What role did the Council have in considering and agreeing the Accord?

The Queenstown Lakes Housing Accord was considered and ratified by Queenstown Lakes District councillors on 28 August 2014.

3. How long will the Accord be in place?

It is expected the Accord will remain in place until the repeal provisions in the Housing Accords and Special Housing Areas Act 2013 take effect. The Act is repealed on September 2016, and any consent applications underway at that time can continue to be progressed under the Act's provisions until September 2018.

4. What has been the process for developing the Queenstown Lakes Housing Accord?

The Mayor of Queenstown-Lakes and the Minister for Building and Housing discussed the potential for a housing accord to improve supply of affordable housing in the district earlier last year. Cabinet then agreed to add the Queenstown Lakes District Council to the Housing Accords and Special Housing Areas Act 2013 in May 2014. Council and Government officials have met regularly since to work out the details of the Accord.

5. What are Special Housing Areas?

The Housing Accords and Special Housing Areas Act gives Queenstown Lakes District Council the ability to recommend Special Housing Areas to the Minister for Building and Housing. Special Housing Areas are discrete geographic areas within which the more permissive resource consenting powers of the Act can be used. Special Housing Areas will be formally declared by Order in Council on the recommendation of the Minister for Building and Housing.

When recommending special housing areas, Queenstown Lakes District Council may include criteria for "qualifying developments" within the Special Housing Areas (i.e. developments that can use the fast-tracked and more permissive planning and consenting processes outlined below). These criteria can include height limitations, a minimum number of dwellings and a percentage of affordable dwellings.

6. How will Special Housing Areas be determined?

The preferred areas will be identified by the Queenstown Lakes District Council. These are areas where there is clear demand for housing, and where there is already suitable infrastructure or there are plans for it to be built. The Council has developed a document – *QLDC Lead Policy: Housing Accord and Special Housing Areas* – which guides its approach to assessing and identifying Special Housing Areas.

Council's preferred areas are then recommended to the Minister for Building and Housing.

7. How would a resource consent for a qualifying development be processed?

Applications to Council for qualifying developments can be made once Special Housing Area status has been conferred. Qualifying developments must be predominantly residential and must meet any height or affordability criteria that the Council specifies for the Special Housing Area they are in. Applications for resource consents for qualifying developments can only be made for developments in Special Housing Areas. The application would be considered by the Queenstown Lakes District Council and the consents would need to be processed within 60 working days, except for excluded time periods as defined in section 88C of the Resource Management Act 1991.

If the resource consent application is combined with a plan change (or variation) request, the application must be processed within 130 working days.

The legislation presumes no form of notification occurs with regard to applications. However, the Council *may* notify owners of the land adjacent to the land subject to the application. This is a discretionary judgement that needs to be made on a case by case basis.

If adjacent land owners are notified, they then have the opportunity to make submissions and be heard at a hearing.

8. What else is the Government doing to improve housing supply and affordability?

The Accord is just part of the Government's wider programme to support housing supply and affordability.

The Government also has work underway on the cost of building materials, development contributions, building productivity and compliance costs to improve affordability nationwide.

The Government is also taking a hard look at the Resource Management Act to eliminate unnecessary complexity that adds to building and housing costs.