

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

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF DAVID CLARKE

Dated: 9 July 2025

Statement of Evidence of David Clarke

Introduction

- [1] My name is David Clarke. I have lived in and around Arrowtown since 1987. I have been heavily involved in Arrowtown's community affairs since 1989 when I became the Director of the Lakes District Museum. Since then, I have served two terms as the Arrowtown Ward Councillor on the Queenstown Lakes District Council (**QLDC**) and was an Independent Planning Commissioner for 12 years, with a chair endorsement.
- [2] I have been involved in all community planning workshops for Arrowtown in 1994, 2003, 2017 and 2022 and sit on the executive of the Arrowtown Promotions and Business Association and am a member the Arrowtown Planning Advisory Group (**APAG**). This involvement has led me to become acutely aware of Arrowtown's heritage, its special character, its attraction as a great place to live and visit, and the pressures placed on the town by visitor and development pressure. I, along with others, have dedicated thousands of hours over the last 35 years to help steer Arrowtown's development in a sympathetic manner. This has been based on continual community consultation and involvement.
- [3] The results are evident. Arrowtown has come under considerable pressure, especially over the last 15 years, but this pressure has been managed. Arrowtown has been named the most beautiful town in New Zealand twice over the last five years and is a must visit destination for visitors to the Whakatipu. This makes it a powerful economic driver of significant benefit to the local and national economy. Arrowtown's special character in terms of heritage, built form, landscape, low key infrastructure and river margins is delicate and has come under considerable attack over the years by both central and local government decisions and directives.

Arrowtown's Town Planning History

- [4] The following outlines a background to town planning since the 1970s when Arrowtown was essentially a small rural service town, to the present day where the town struggles to cater for both an expanding population and increased visitor numbers. It should be noted that

Arrowtown is also the 'hometown' to residents of Gibbston, Crown Terrace, Morven Ferry, Lake Hayes/Speargrass Flat and Malaghans Road (the primary school catchment area). Proposed additional subdivision in some of these areas will further exacerbate this pressure.

- [5] Ka Murawai Arrowtown was a seasonal food gathering area for southern Māori and formed part of the pounamu/greenstone trails to the West Coast. In 1859, it became part of William Rees' pastoral sheep run, but the discovery of gold in the Arrow River in 1862 led to the formation of the town of Foxes Rush, later known as Arrowtown. The gold rush was short lived, with many miners heading to the West Coast in 1865 when gold was discovered there. By that time, the formation of an established town had already started with more permanent buildings being erected. The influx of Chinese miners, the Quartz mines at Macetown, and the continuation of profitable farming ensured the towns economic survival. In fact, most of the towns more permanent and enduring buildings were built in the 1870s.
- [6] After the economic depressions at the end of the 19th century, the closing down of the Macetown Quartz mines and population decline, Arrowtown almost went the way of other Central Otago ghost towns, but it managed to limp on with its population getting down to about 200 in the late 1940s. In hindsight, this was beneficial for what happened later, as there was no development pressure to demolish heritage buildings. These buildings now provide the special character that Arrowtown is famous for.
- [7] In the late 1940s, central government decided to sell parcels of land that were surplus to their requirements and the Arrowtown Borough Council (**ABC**) also leased sections they owned, to people under long term leases. Many of these sections and leases were taken up by what are termed 'cribbies'. These people were mainly from Dunedin and Invercargill and enjoyed summer camping holidays and relished the idea of cheap sections on which they could build an affordable holiday home. This period from 1948 to 1975 led to a large increase in the rateable population, something the locals initially resented but accepted. The 'cribbies' contributed significantly to the town's fortunes in terms of rates.

It is important to note that in that period of history there was ample land to cater for this growth.

- [8] As the population grew, new businesses started to set up in the often-abandoned heritage buildings in Buckingham Street. Some catered for the increased population but other catered for increasing numbers of tourists. By the late 1960s, bus tours, mainly from Australia, started to stop off in Arrowtown and development pressure started to impact on the town's heritage character and infrastructure. The ABC showed an enlightened response for the day, and set about seeking consultation on how best to manage this pressure. They commissioned what is known as the 'Synaxon report' (a Wellington-based architecture and town planning company) in the early 1970s. This report identified the heritage buildings, important trees, important viewshafts, potential development areas and design guidelines and controls. A Bachelor Architecture thesis written by Sally Lusk (**the Lusk Report**) followed soon after, and this identified a series of design guidelines for Buckingham Street that focussed both on the original buildings but also was adopted as a guideline for new development. This was used until the ABC amalgamated with QLDC in 1989.
- [9] In the meantime, pressure for new permanent and 'cribbie' houses meant the farmland bounding Arrowtown was rezoned for residential development. This is known as the 'Adamson subdivision' and work on this began circa 1973. It was a comprehensive and well-thought-out subdivision, with pocket parks linking through to the camping ground/recreation ground. Low key infrastructure in the form of roadside swales reflected the character of the Old Town. Single storey development, to protect sunlight and viewshafts was encouraged and section sizes enabled good urban living outcomes. This has led to a very desirable subdivision that has developed its own special character as opposed to the 'cookie cutter' subdivisions of today. It is accepted that some buildings were relocatable and of lower quality and they have been replaced over time.
- [10] In the 1990's and early 2000's, further subdivision extended into Devon Street and then around Jopp Street in what is known as the 'Dennison subdivision'. There has also been considerable development on the

town's fringes, in Butel Park, Linksgate, McDonnell Road, and 3 Mayors Ridge. This has allowed for progressive, controlled town development. In addition, Arrowtown residents have supported the Queenstown Housing Trust's development in Suffolk Street that has provided new affordable houses and also the Tewa Banks development that has provided 68 new 'affordable' houses. Arrowtown also has the only council supported pensioner housing in the QLDC. Arrowtown has certainly contributed in a meaningful way to the district's growth and social housing stock over the last 30 years.

- [11] The amalgamation of the ABC by the QLDC in 1989 was strongly fought by the residents of Arrowtown who wanted to retain their own autonomy. A delegation was sent to the Local Government Commission to oppose it, but to no avail. The amalgamation occurred, but one important concession was made. Arrowtown could retain a town planning committee for a council term and then a planning advisory group could be set up to advise QLDC planners on new development in the 'Old Town' (now encompassing the Town Centre and ARHMZ). This is how the APAG was eventually founded.
- [12] By 1994, residents and Arrowtown Ward councillors (at that time, there were three ward councillors with Arrowtown losing its dedicated ward councillor in 2022) started to be concerned about increasing development pressure impacting on heritage and landscape values and a group of residents was formed to lead a community workshop known as a 'charette'. This was successful in outlining a blueprint for how Arrowtown might continue to progress under considerable pressure, with an emphasis on the Old Town and river margins (**the Charette Report**). A series of actions were identified including the remodelling and landscaping of the Town Centre which won national awards. The Charette Report was adopted by QLDC, but not as a statutory document. The Report was very useful in highlighting the communities' aspirations. In 2003, another charette was held, and out of this the Arrowtown Design Guidelines 2006 (**ADG**) were born. This extremely comprehensive document has been upgraded over the years, most notably in 2016 and is now a statutory document that is incorporated by reference into the

QLDC Proposed District Plan and must be referred to when assessing Arrowtown development across both the 'new' and 'old' towns.

- [13] The population of Arrowtown has grown from 850 in 1989 to almost 3,000 in 2025. A 300% increase in 36 years. Arrowtown has been asked to do its bit in terms of allowing for growth and it has done that. But it has tried to do that using community consensus. The ADG have proved to be an excellent tool over the last 20 years, to assess applications for development in the Arrowtown Residential Historic Management Zone (**ARHMZ**) and the Arrowtown Town Centre.
- [14] The APAG, which is essentially a de facto Urban Design Panel, has engaged in the process of vetting development applications based on the provisions of the ADG. It has nearly always been a collaborative and successful process. The only disappointing developments have occurred when QLDC planners have overruled the recommendations of the APAG. The ADG (2006) later the ADG (2016) sought that development in the 'new' town took a lead from them. This was in terms of things like design, materials, landscaping and street manners. In other words, take on the Arrowtown vernacular when considering design. This simply did not happen.
- [15] In 2015, QLDC began reviewing the Operative District Plan. As part of this process the ADG (2016) were also reviewed. The District Plan review implemented a Medium Density Zoning (**MDZ**) for parts of the new town despite considerable local concerns. This allowed for additional height and site coverage. Concerns were allayed to some degree by tying this zone into the upgraded ADG (2016) and having indicative drawings done by Mr Richard Knott to illustrate how this could be achieved in alignment with the ADG. The ADG (2016) had to be a consideration in any assessment of development in the MDZ. Like the ADG (2006) that identified various neighbourhoods with their different characteristics and threats, the same was done with the neighbourhoods of the new town.
- [16] In the ADG (2016) Neighbourhood 8 and 9 - Devon Street and Adamson Drive are identified. These are the neighbourhoods that contain a lot of

the MDZ now proposed for intensification. Under 2.6.3.1 and 2.6.4.2 in the ADG, threats to these neighbourhood were identified as:

- (a) Further inappropriate redevelopment and/or upgrading of the streets.
- (b) Increased traffic flow.
- (c) Loss of trees and vegetation.
- (d) Loss of narrow carriageways and grass verges and swales in those streets that share these old Arrowtown characteristics.
- (e) Replacement of the small-scale crib residences with buildings of designs that bear no relationship to the scale of the crib form.
- (f) Frontages dominated by paving, garages and or/tall walls.

- [17] As already stated, the residents of Arrowtown were given some surety about the MDZ and how development would be controlled. Section 8.4.10 in the Proposed District Plan relating to the MDZ, referring to the Arrowtown MDZ states:

In Arrowtown, consistency with Arrowtown's character, utilising the Arrowtown Design Guidelines 2016 as a guide.

- [18] Policy 8.2.4.1 states that development should “be compatible with the existing character of Arrowtown guided by the [ADG (2016)] with particular regard given to” building design, scale, materials, and landscaping.
- [19] Since 2016, a number of new buildings have been constructed in the MDZ and the across the new town that do not reflect the intent of the ADG (2016) and have not been assessed against them. The MDZ provisions have not greatly increased the housing stock nor created more affordable housing but have just allowed for bigger houses many of which are out of character.
- [20] Since the 1970s, Arrowtown development and planning has been undertaken in a way that has been supported by local community engagement to get the best possible results, and this is evident by its

success. The community accept growth will, and can, occur and there is a plan to achieve this but the ADG (2016) provisions that were carefully considered for Arrowtown, have not even been given a chance to bed in, nor has any development been monitored by QLDC in the way intended. Arrowtown is a national treasure and should be respected as such along the lines of Akaroa, Greytown, and Coromandel Town for example, towns which have not been identified for intensification. There is no way, in my view, the intensification proposed can be supported by the District Plan, especially as it relates to the ADG (2016) and the town's 'special character.'

Conclusion

- [21] Arrowtown has had a special history, and this combined with its preserved built heritage and careful controlled planning has made it a nationally significant visitor destination and a desirable place to live.
- [22] As early as the 1970's, the then ABC recognised insensitive growth could erode the 'special character' that existed and began the careful planning regime that has always involved the community.
- [23] Community input and workshops, and the development of the ADG, has guided new development, but not at any cost. The 'special characteristics' have been to the forefront both in the 'new' and 'old' town.
- [24] Arrowtown has certainly done its bit to contribute to the rapid growth that the district has experienced. This is seen in a number of new subdivisions and the Tewa Banks affordable housing development.
- [25] The Urban Intensification Variation (and changes outlined in the S42 report) flies in the face of this community-led approach to planning. It will erode the 'special character', further stretch the already stretched infrastructure, put pressure on the 'Old Town' which is already under pressure and will not in my view result in the desired outcomes of affordability.

[26] There was almost no community consultation regarding the variation, and the community were led to believe the QLDC had to include Arrowtown in its assessments when other heritage towns were removed.

[27] Arrowtown continues to need a tailored, community-involved, approach to its planning and growth. This has worked well over the past 50 years.

Dated 9 July 2025

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David Clarke