

Submitter No.78 for the proposed Urban Intensification Variation

30th May 2025

Introduction:

My name is Bill Hewat and my submission is against the proposed Intensification Variation.

We've had a family property at 225 Frankton Rd in Queenstown all my life, which my grandfather bought, over 100 years ago. So, I've seen a lot of changes, but the one constant is "the scenery". If you ask anyone, "what is your lasting impression of Queenstown?", the majority will say "the scenery". We operated a short-term accommodation business, called Tahuna House, on Frankton Rd for 12-years and over 90% of the comments in the guest books rave about the 'spectacular scenery'. The scenery in Queenstown is like the 'goose that lays the golden eggs. This proposal, which will increase the height limit from 7m up to 16.5m blocking many views, will effectively kill the golden goose. Figure 1 below, shows helium balloons 16.5m above the level building site adjacent to Tahuna House.



Figure 1; Red balloons 16.5m above existing ground level, (ie. the new proposed permitted height). The photo is taken from Frankton Rd, at the entrance to our property

Views:

The height of buildings under this proposal is indicated by the height of the red balloons. Everything below the balloon can potentially be blocked from view by a concrete wall.

The Māori name for Queenstown is 'Tahuna', which means a shallow bay and is used to refer to the location of Queenstown. We named our place "Tahuna House" because of this, as we have views and direct access to a 'shallow bay', with a small jetty, along the lakefront of Frankton Arm.

However, if a 16.5m block wall is built in front of us, this will be lost. The same applies to all the properties along Frankton Rd and the name 'Tahuna' will become redundant, because views of the lake and the 'Tahuna' will be blocked.

This 'view blockage' will affect everyone. Those with lake views can have them blocked by 4-storey high walls built in front of them. And those, who are on the lakefront, and can't have views blocked, will have the sun blocked by the high rises behind them. The visual impact will affect everyone.

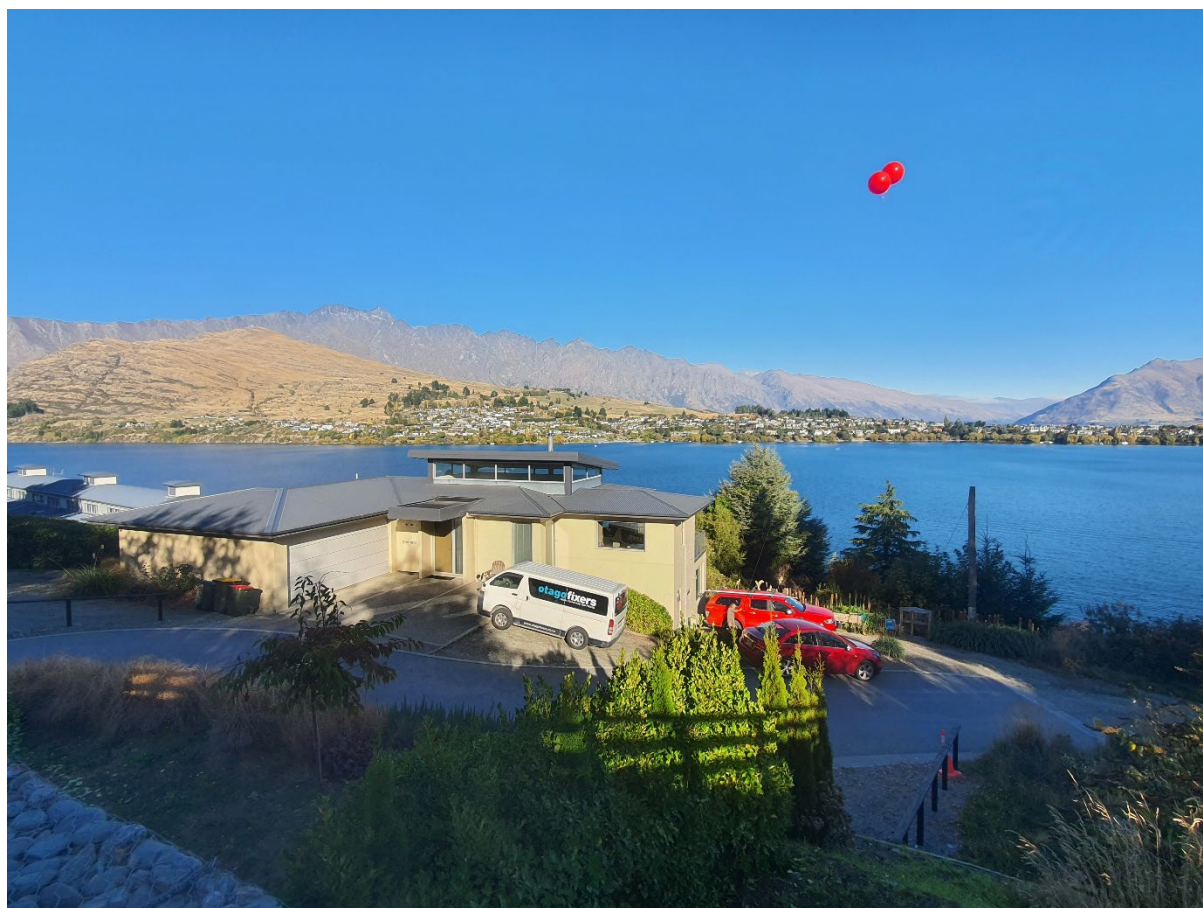


Figure 2 shows the balloons at 16.5m above the level building site directly in front of my house

During my builders apprenticeship in Queenstown, in the 1970's, we talked about places with 'Million-dollar views'. 50-years on those places are now 'multi-million-dollar views. It is the unique

topography of the Wakatipu Basin that makes the scenery available to so many, and therefore so special. It's the uninterrupted views that account for this massive increase in real estate values. It's the breath-taking views that has made Queenstown the highest valued real estate, and tourist capital of New Zealand. That jewel in the crown, will be lost if this proposal proceeds in any way, shape or form.

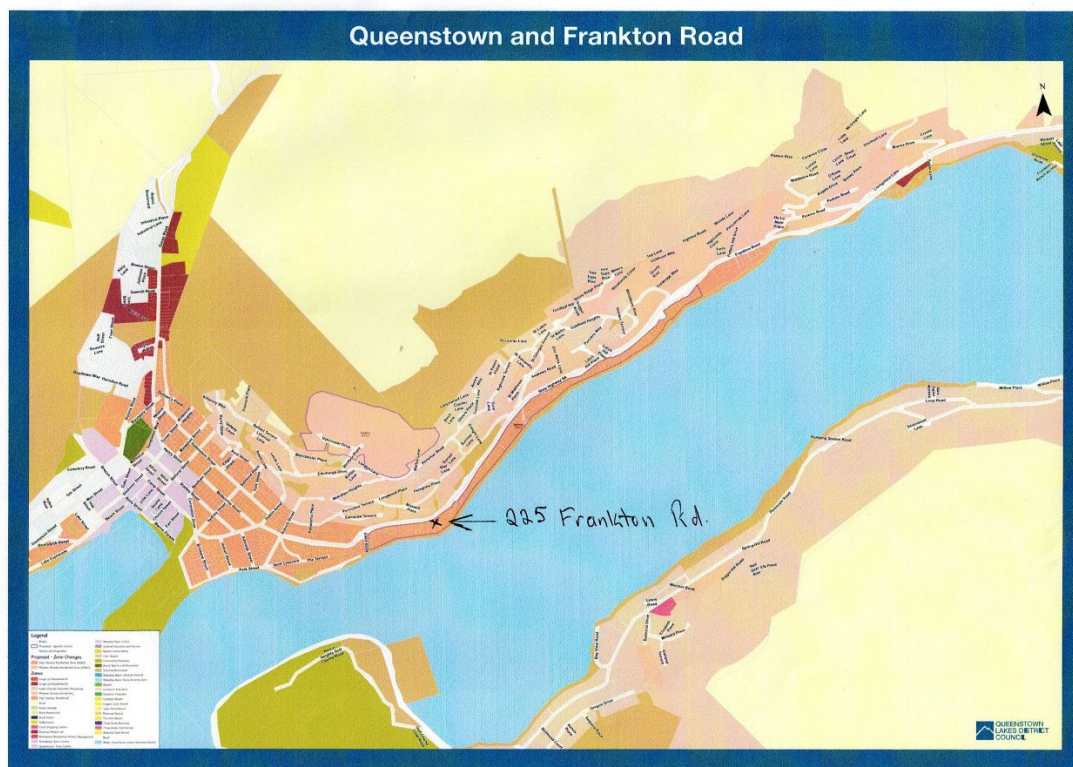


Figure 3 shows the location of Tahuna House (225 Frankton Rd)

Counter arguments:

The counter arguments the proponents advocate are as follows;

- 1 They claim; 'More accommodation will become available', (they claim 'building up' will provide more rental properties)
 - a. A high-rise building requires a large footprint (and therefore foundation), which will reduce the amount of 'green space'. They also overload existing infrastructure, ie power, gas, data, water, sewerage, and roading. They also increase Council services like rubbish collection, parking and maintenance of public spaces and amenities, all of which are at 'maximum capacity now'.
 - b. The land value is higher in the CBD, so the rental costs will be unaffordable for low wage earners. Housing affordability will be beyond the reach of those who need it

most. The reason Queenstown is a world leading tourist destination is because we “don’t” have high-density, high-rise buildings.

c. Shadow Cast

The properties along Frankton Road, within the high-density zone, are south facing and get very little sun in the winter time, due to the adjacent Queenstown Hill and Ben Lomond Mountain to the northwest. If the height limit is more than doubled, as proposed, the shadows cast will increase the area of ice and snow, during the winter months.

2 They claim; ‘No cars are required’, (They claim it encourages walking and reduces the need to drive)

- a. The shopping in Queenstown is for the tourists, not the locals. Therefore, if you increase the population in the Queenstown town centre, you will increase the number of people driving to Frankton for shopping and doing the daily things locals do, thus increasing the very thing they are trying to decrease.

3 They claim; ‘Rents will drop’ (by 30% according to research of intensification in Auckland)

- a. This is Queenstown, not Auckland and they are very different, ie:
 - i. Queenstown has one road in and out (Frankton Rd), unless you go via Arrowtown and Arthurs Point. Auckland has multiple access routes.
 - ii. The resident population of the Queenstown is 28,600 (June 2024). Auckland has 1.7m
 - iii. In peak season, tourists in Queenstown outnumber locals by 34:1 (19 Mar 2023). In Auckland it’s 1:1. Given the huge disparity between QT and AK, this argument is flawed from the start, because it does not compare, like with like.
 - iv. Increased housing supply doesn’t always lead to lower rents, especially in Queenstown, where the cost of land and build costs are so high the developers/investors get a better return from short-term accommodation (Airbnb). Alternatively, they are bought by individuals who don’t live in Queenstown and they remain empty for much of the year.
 - v. A recent Press headline read; “Airbnb-type consent sought by ‘affordable homes’ creator (Ref; pg 7, The Press 12/6/24). A direct quote read; “*Less than 2-weeks after securing RC for a large Queenstown apartment block, the*

owner wants to turn half of it (113 units) into visitor accommodation. There was no mention of visitor accommodation in the original RC application, nor in any marketing material. Many people consider short term visitor accommodation to be a key contributor to Queenstown's critical housing shortage"

- b. More houses generally create greater environmental impacts, including economic impacts from lost land to production. Furthermore, the provision of high amenity and living standards generally comes at a financial cost to the rate payers, which is passed onto the tenants.
- 4 They claim; 'There will be greater social interaction and close proximity to local amenities. They say it allows for more people to connect, work and play within the CBD and not even own a car.
 - a. Urban Intensification is not 'fit for purpose' in Queenstown, due to its tourist focused retail sector. Tourists don't come to Queenstown to buy their groceries. And that is why there are no supermarkets in town. They are all out at Frankton, along with the petrol stations, gymnasiums, schools, libraries and all the other amenities locals use on a daily basis.
 - b. A car is essential if you live in Queenstown. There are no bus lanes or transit lanes (for car sharing), so more traffic jams will occur.
 - i. There is only one service station in Queenstown now and it's out on Gorge Rd. The others are all in Frankton.
 - ii. The high school has moved to Frankton.
 - iii. All the supermarkets are in Frankton, (although there is a smaller Fresh Choice in Gorge Rd).
 - iv. Most of the shops in Queenstown cater for the tourists. The locals shop in Frankton.
- 5 Waka Kotahi (NZTA)

Waka Kotahi is supportive in principle, with some caveats around access and public transport. Their submission states; *"Waka Kotahi (WK) has a role in delivery of Emission Reduction"*. It is a given that increased population will lead to increased vehicles, resulting in more emissions (not a reduction). *"The NPS-UD has a strong focus on ensuring increased*

densities are provided in the most accessible parts of urban areas, where communities can access opportunities such as services, education, employment and recreation by active and public transport modes”.

The HD zone proposed is in the least accessible part, namely the south side of Frankton Road, which is extremely steep, (down to the lake) and totally in-accessible in parts. And extremely icy in winter.

The opportunities mentioned are all out at Frankton, although there are tourist shops and eateries in the CBD of Queenstown ie; Frankton has; the high school, service stations, large shopping centres, the recreation centre, the airport, rental cars, the hospital, hotels, yoga studios, Salvation Army, English college, Playcentre, Early learning, nursery, marina, laundromat, gymnasium, restaurants etc

- a. Their submission correctly identifies; *“Frankton as a Metropolitan Centre and location of future growth”*

This (ie Frankton) is where the high-rise buildings, if deemed essential, should be located, and not along Frankton Arm.

- 6 They claim; ‘It will increase housing supply and create new jobs’
 - a. The submission from NZ Infrastructure Commission (5/10/23) states; “Our evaluation suggests that the policy will NOT achieve its intent to increase housing supply” And “We estimate the policy will result in an additional 31-149 houses over 10-years, which will have NO impact on housing availability or affordability.”
 - b. We can’t fill the vacant jobs as it is. Hospitality, in particular, are short staffed and some have to close due to staff shortages. A Stuff headline (19/6/24) read; *“Short staffing in Queenstown is costing \$-millions, as visitors leave with money unspent”* More job opportunities will only exacerbate the staffing shortage problem.

- 7 They claim; There will be lower infrastructure costs (They claim these costs will be reduced due to greater capacity usage.)

The infrastructure can’t cope now.

- a) The towns sewerage system is at capacity.

Council discharged 18,000cm per day of treated sewerage into the (iconic, pristine) Shotover river, because the current filtering cannot cope with current volumes.

(27/3/25). This is a direct result of successive Councils charging ahead with rampant development, without the requisite infrastructure upgrade.

- b) The sewer pipe from Queenstown to Frankton is in urgent need of upgrade.
- c) Potable water supply is unreliable. We were having to 'boil drinking water' recently.
- d) Traffic congestion and parking are at a maximum.

There are alternative locations, which are relatively flat and don't have lake views; eg Dalefield, the Five mile, parts of Frankton and along the base of the Remarkables, Jacks Point, even Kingston and Cromwell, all of which are better long-term options.

Urban intensification drains local environmental resources, shifts the economic burden of development to longtime residents, increases transportation and energy costs, and diminishes overall community character.

My voice today is for the future of Queenstown and the wider Wakatipu Basin, which is one of the most beautiful and popular tourist destinations in the world.

If this proposal is allowed to proceed, it will ruin the long-term sustainability of Queenstown.

Site Specific:

I don't know the specific issues other properties along Frankton Road have regarding intensification, but our property has been in the family for 3-generations and I have a life time of memories and information about numbers 225 (Lot 1), 217 (Lot 2) & 221 (Lot 3) Frankton Rd, (the site).

The site should not be part of the proposed plan and must retain the existing height restrictions (of 7.0m), for the following reasons;

- 1) Covenant (to future-proof lake views)
 - a. The three properties; #'s 225 (Lot 1), 217 (Lot 2) & 221 (Lot 3) Frankton Rd, have a covenant '*for themselves and their successors in title*', which restricts; "*building height and setbacks from internal boundaries*", to the rules in the Operative District Plan. The proposed plan, if successful, may make this covenant obsolete. If so, it completely defies the wishes of the original owners, all of whom agreed, that maintaining the uninterrupted views for all parties was paramount.



Aerial photo showing the specific site, comprising 225, 217 and 221 Frankton Road, Queenstown.

2) Sewer line

- b. The concrete pipes that carry all the sewerage from Queenstown to Frankton, (wastewater treatment plant) runs through the lower part of the section (217 & 221). In 2020, the owner's, applied to build 45 Units, 4 stories high there, which was not approved. However, if the height and density limits change in accordance with the proposal, problems will arise with construction over and around the sewer pipe, including access for maintenance when the development is completed.

3) Traffic

- a. It is already a nightmare exiting the site onto Frankton Road, especially turning right, towards Frankton, with a stream of vehicles coming in both directions, with the view, both ways, blocked by a bend in the road.
- b. A vehicle crashed through the fence at the top of our driveway. The Police report (No.220219/7391) stated the vehicle was estimated to be travelling at 70km/hr and the driver was hospitalised. Our turn-off State Highway 6A (Frankton Rd) is only 200 metres past the 50km/hr sign. Most vehicles have not reduced speed by the time they reach the turn off into our property, creating a hazard for vehicles exiting (and entering) the site. Increasing the housing density in this location, will significantly increase the traffic hazard, which already exists.

Refer photos below.

 <p>The only vehicle access for all three properties is on a blind bend of SH 6A, which also crosses the access to and from Morries Lane. Increasing housing density at this extreme hazardous location, will only exacerbate the problem.</p>	 <p>A vehicle crashed over the bank just past the 50Km sign.</p>	 <p>The blind bend, at the entrance to the site, is often congested with vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians.</p>
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4) Water run-off from Queenstown Hill

- a. QLDC engaged Beca to investigate stormwater run-off and flooding hazards in the region, including Queenstown Hill. This large area of water catchment naturally funnels water to an area opposite the site, which historically made it extremely wet, all year round. The solution was to culvert the site and discharge into the lake. Whilst this made an improvement, the site continues to suffer from subterranean water seams. The adjacent property has consequently suffered from underfloor dampness and mildew issues.

These reasons alone, make the site inherently unsuitable for any form of urban intensification.



Water run-off from Queenstown Hill, discharges into a deep culvert on the eastern boundary of the site, and down into the lake, (refer arrow above). There is also a culvert on the western side, making this steep sloping site very wet and therefore unsatisfactory for high-rise intensified construction.

Conclusion:

All the arguments in favour to urban intensification, apply to the large cities where permanent residents have most amenities nearby and have roads and topography conducive to increased housing density.

However, you cannot apply the same arguments to Queenstown, where comparatively few permanent residents live, has only one arterial road access and caters mainly for tourists.

Queenstown is not a city and is considered a Resort Town and an expensive place to live, (Stats NZ 29/10/24). It is not fit for purpose.

Advocates for Urban Intensification say it will place more people within walking distances of a range of services and amenities, and therefore, reduce car dependency. Unfortunately, (for the reasons outlined above), the opposite will happen. We must prioritise long-term sustainability, over short-term personal financial gain.

People don't visit Queenstown for the casino, the restaurants or bars etc, because they can be found in any tourist town. Although many do use these facilities, the natural beauty (and adventure tourism) is the major drawcard. Queenstown offers the convenience of a small town while still having the amenities of a larger city, (at Frankton).

So please, don't build huge (over 16m high) walls blocking views and spoiling it for everyone else and

generations to come. We therefore ask the Panel to reject, the Proposed Urban Intensification Variation, in its entirety.

Photo Gallery:

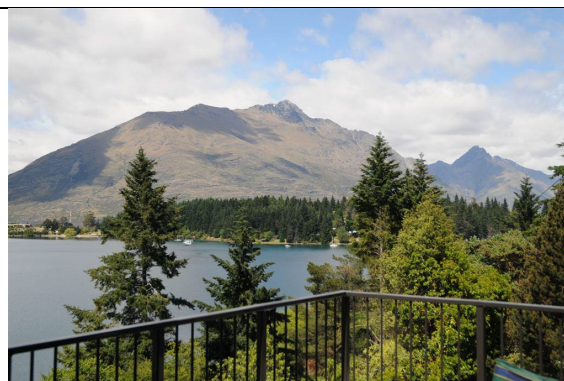
The following photos show the views that will be lost from various parts of Tahuna House;



Tahuna House, 225 Frankton Road. The view that will be blocked by a 16.5m high building(s) in front of us.



Partial view from upper floor balcony. This will be totally blocked



Balcony view of Kelvin Heights Peninsula. This view will be totally blocked.



View from lower floor kitchen. This will be blocked



View from one of the lower floor bedrooms, which will be blocked.



View from upper floor bedroom, which will be blocked.



View from upper-level living room. This view will be blocked