

Purpose & Scope:

To prepare an Issues and Options report that investigates a framework of objectives, policies, rules and assessment criteria for an increase to the maximum height for a limited number of sites in the Queenstown High Density Residential Zone at the base of Ben Lomond (see attached "Queenstown Subzone Map with Height Study Area-January 2009).

Goals:

- Achieve a high quality of built form outcomes by facilitating buildings of varying height and footprint, meaningful landscape/open space areas whilst mitigating any effects within the site.
- Evaluate whether and how much extra height could be enabled in this area without impinging negatively on overall townscape amenity including views towards Ben Lomond from the Towncentre, Queenstown Hill, Gardens etc.
- Explore options of whether the project:
 - Enables a defined quantum of density to be built in the different form, by exceeding the current height limit in an appropriately regulated way that ensures certainty of outcomes
 - Enables an increase in the overall density of the site, subject to a high quality of built form, whilst ensuring certainty of the maximum outcome.
- Consider a 'Density Bonus' programme that can assess whether a community benefit can be achieved if additional density is approved for a site.
- Support actions of the relevant strategies adopted by Council, eg Transport Strategy, Town Centre Strategy, Growth Management Strategy, HOPE Strategy.
- Establish an absolute maximum height that cannot be exceeded, to ensure certainty.

Study Area:

The base map for the Study Area is from the "Existing Urban Character Appraisal" June 2008, and where appropriate, utilises character areas as defined in that report. The subject sites, grouped in three areas, have been selected for study in accordance with the following criteria:

- a) Adjacent to the base of Ben Lomond, which functions as a 'shielding landform', of a scale that is not affected by development that directly abuts it;
- b) The shielding landform creates effects (such as shading) that are greater than the same effect created by buildings in the proposed development;
- c) The areas contain sites which are large enough to mitigate any negative effects of the additional height (via views, solar access, reflection) within the subject site;
- d) The sites currently contain buildings which may be subject to redevelopment in the future, which can be reasonably combined with adjacent sites to mitigate any negative effects within the site;
- e) The sites form contiguous areas where the effects can be modelled and studied for their potential to achieve the project goals in a coordinated manner;
- f) The more distant views towards Ben Lomond will not be overly impinged on as complying foreground development will (or has the capacity to) screen the taller development behind it at the toe of the hill;
- g) Reserves, schools, and the cemetery have been removed from the study area.

Tools: Investigation of a Floor Area Ratio/ Plot Ratio (FAR)

A FAR tool is used internationally to regulate the density allowed on a site, and was suggested for further study through the Residential Issues Study in 2004.

Currently, the District Plan does not have such a tool. If implemented, it would enable buildings to be arranged in ways that would breach the height limit, perhaps as a discretionary activity (rather than non-complying). An absolute maximum height should be considered and recommended.

One use of a plot ratio tool would require reduced site coverage in exchange for greater height, such that the total square meters of development remain the same. In this manner, the tool would limit only a reconfiguration of existing density to enable more open space to be achieved on the site, or to achieve a more efficient development of the site.

Other considerations

The tool would also be useful in providing an understanding of the density allowed on a site, such that a companion “density bonus” tool could be developed to enable a ___% of increase in density, in exchange for the extra density being used for a community benefit (eg affordable housing).

The new Affordable Housing: Enabling Territorial Authorities Act does authorise density bonuses; this project can explore their fit within the RMA effects-based framework. Consideration to include calculating the amount of bonus necessary to enable an affordable housing component to occur on-site, (including all parking & other requirements associated with the additional units). Some quantum of GFA from the bonus could then be used for residential/ VA as appropriate to the subzone and project, to make the AH component cost neutral. Analysis would set out a cost/benefit review: how does the community benefit measure against any environmental issues?

A companion project of practice notes/guidelines for Amenity Standards would assist in ensuring all units throughout the HDR, including density bonus units would meet the amenity standards.

Project Stages:

1. Issues and Options report: January – June, 2009
 - a. Review of other similar projects in other communities (Oriental Bay, et al)
 - b. 3-d modelling of height on selected sites
 - i. use existing heights to create picture of existing
 - ii. establish what is ‘anticipated by the plan’ using PC10 rules
 - iii. establish criteria to set an appropriate max height
 - iv. outline ideas to ensure height is varied and maintains view shafts
 - v. GIS modelling from assumptions above
 - c. Study of the effects of height (outline of S32-type analysis)
 - d. Outline of method for establishing absolute maximum height
 - e. Outline of density bonus mechanisms
 - f. Options for decisions
 - g. Consultation
2. Draft Plan Change Provisions: Progress dependent on outcomes from Step 1 and budget availability.
 - a. Drafting of objectives, policies, rules and assessment matters
 - b. Consideration of what uses are appropriate for use of the extra density/height
 - c. Selection of a working party
 - d. Recommended way forward
3. Section 32 & Proposed Plan Change: Progress dependent on outcomes from Step 2 and budget availability
 - a. Working party review of proposed provisions
 - b. Notification (statutory consultation)