

Noise in Central Queenstown How Much Noise Is Too Noisy? Issues and Options

The Council is seeking your feedback on issues and options to improve how we manage noise in Queenstown town centre.

This paper follows on from previous community consultation and identifies key issues raised and a number of options to deal with them.

Town centre noise limits can affect our ability to enjoy outdoor spaces to the maximum, and also the ability of people to enjoy peace to sleep.

Queenstown currently has some of the lowest town centre noise limits in New Zealand and these are frequently breached. Even a moderate conversation between two people can breach the current night time noise limit.

The town centre is recognised as the appropriate place for bars, restaurants and other activities that create social vibrancy, but it is also used for residential and visitor accommodation.

We need to find a balance between the desires of bars and restaurants to create a more vibrant atmosphere and those seeking to achieve a higher level of residential amenity. Compromise will be necessary.

We are seeking your feedback on the appropriate balance.

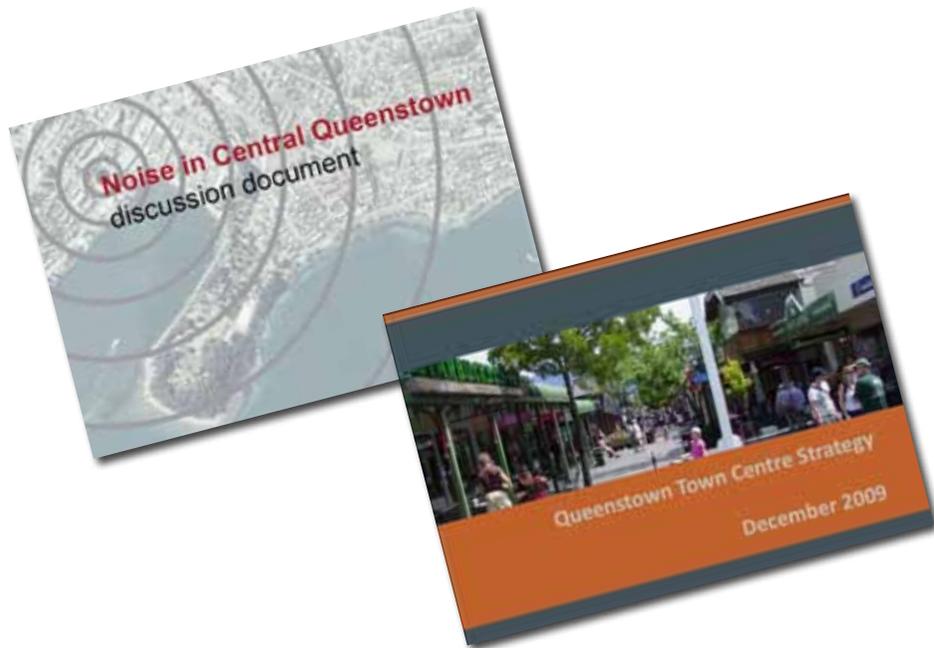


Your feedback will help us identify the most appropriate options that could be implemented either as part of the District Plan review currently underway or as a standalone plan change.

HOW HAVE WE IDENTIFIED ISSUES AND OPTIONS?

Council identified issues with how the District Plan relates to noise in our town centres through:

- Consultation on the Queenstown Town Centre Strategy.
- Feedback on Plan Change 27A, which updated the noise standards used in the District Plan.
- Community consultation on a discussion document 'Noise in Central Queenstown' 2010/ 2011.
- On-going examination of relevant decisions by Commissioners and the Environment Court and monitoring of noise complaints.



WHAT ARE THE KEY THEMES THAT HAVE BEEN RAISED IN CONSULTATION?

- Enhancing the vibrancy of the town centre.



- Providing for a diverse mix of activities, including both noise generating and noise sensitive activities, that recognises the nature of the town centre.



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Enabling greater use of outdoor spaces.



Increasing noise limits in the town centre.



Requiring activities to reduce their sensitivity to town centre noise.



The town centre is the appropriate place for bars, restaurants and other activities that create social vibrancy to be located.



WHAT ISSUES HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED?

The town centre is a complex environment that adds to the difficulty in dealing with noise issues. This is not intended to be a comprehensive list, but reflects the important issues and options identified to date.



The existing rules are inadequate to address the use and mixture of activities that occur in the town centre.



The noise environment in the town centre has changed a lot since the rules were written.



Changes to noise controls could impact on residents, visitors and businesses both positively and negatively.

WHAT OPTIONS HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED?

The options described below can be used individually or together to address different noise issues. The Council is not ruling out any options at this point, but has identified possible options for Queenstown based on feedback and research to date. Your feedback will help determine the most appropriate options.

1 Town Centre Noise Limits

The existing noise environment frequently exceeds existing noise limits in the town centre. A significant component of this, the noise created by people and vehicles on the street, cannot be controlled by the District Plan.

Options

1. Status quo – no increase in existing noise limit of 60 dB daytime (8am-10pm) and 50 dB (10 pm-8 am).
2. Allow an increase in maximum noise limit.
3. Extend the more permissive day time noise limit from 10pm to 11pm, midnight, or even up to 24 hours a day.
4. Place additional limits on noise produced at frequencies that cause greater disturbance – e.g. bass.
5. Differentiate noise limits to address specific issues e.g. voices/music.



Differential noise limits would be more complicated than a single noise limit. They could involve different noise levels for people talking, music and general noise. However the advantage is that this reflects a balance between how the community would like the town centre to be used and how noise is managed. For example:

- For people to be able to speak outside without breaching the noise limit, it needs to be set at about 65 dB. This would enable greater use of outdoor areas for cafes and bars and would reflect the activity that already occurs on our streets.
- The effects of music can be more difficult to mitigate than voices, so a limit of 65 dB might be too high. A limit of 60 dB would be in line with limits of many other town centres.
- The existing limit could be retained for other noise sources, such as heat pumps etc.
- As identified in Option 3, these limits could be applied for part of the day, or all of it.

2 Noise Controls in Specific Areas of the Town Centre

This could provide limits focused where higher noise levels are more or less appropriate.

Options

1. Identify areas for higher noise limits – e.g. an entertainment precinct.
2. Identify areas for lower noise limits near sensitive activities such as hotels, e.g. the Novotel or near residential areas etc.



The Town Centre Transitional zone between Man and Shotover streets is an example where noise limits are lower than the rest of the town centre. The Council is interested in considering options to avoid future conflict with established noise sensitive activities where possible.

3 External Speakers

There are currently no specific rules for outdoor speakers and enforcement of existing noise limits on outdoor speakers is difficult. A specific rule that enabled quick monitoring of compliance would help ensure that noise limits are maintained.

Options

1. Adopt a rule enabling practical monitoring and enforcement of outdoor speakers.
2. Prohibit or restrict outdoor speakers.



It is difficult to mitigate noise generated by outdoor speakers, consequently, if outdoor speakers are to be allowed, a rule that enables quick monitoring is appropriate.



See the back page for a feedback form or email us at services@qldc.govt.nz with your thoughts.

4 Noise Insulation and Mechanical Ventilation

Currently there is no requirement to insulate buildings against town centre noise. We could introduce rules to require noise insulation in particular areas, such as bedrooms, so they are less affected by outside noise. This might be combined with a requirement to provide mechanical ventilation where meeting noise standards would require windows to be closed.

Options

1. Status quo – no requirement for greater noise insulation.
2. Requirement for new residential or visitor accommodation to be designed to achieve a specific internal noise level.
3. Define acceptable building standards for new residential or visitor accommodation to achieve noise insulation.
4. Require mechanical ventilation of new residential or visitor accommodation.



Council considers it desirable that, just as noisy activities have to take steps to reduce the noise they generate, new noise sensitive activities should take steps to reduce their sensitivity to noise.

5 Public Events

The town centre hosts a number of community events such as Winterfest, New Year's Eve celebrations and other events that breach the noise limits. Providing specific rules around these events would provide greater certainty to the community as to what is acceptable and to ensure that they can continue.

Options

1. Status quo – this creates cost and uncertainty as events require consents to breach noise limit.
2. Exemption from noise controls for a limited number of events.



Council would like to provide greater certainty to the community regarding the nature of events occurring in the town centre, how they can operate, and to ensure their continued success.

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WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS?

We're interested in your feedback on these issues and options.

1

Do you have preference for any of the options, or mix of options, identified in terms of town centre noise limits?

2

If we do increase noise limits - how late should they go? 11pm, 12pm, later, 24 hours?

3

If you agree with the idea of different noise limits for different parts of the town centre, can you think of appropriate areas where this should occur?

4

What are your views on outdoor speakers?

5

What are your views on the options for noise insulation?

6

Should our noise rules reflect the public events that occur in the town centre?

7

Are there any other town centre noise issues you think should be considered?

8

Do you think changes should be made as part of a holistic review of the district plan or as a standalone plan change?

Please email feedback to services@qldc.govt.nz

Or send your comments to: Policy & Planning, Queenstown Lakes District Council, Private Bag 50072, Queenstown 9348

Feedback should be received by Friday 23 March 2012.

[click here to comment online](#)

