

**BEFORE THE HEARINGS PANEL
FOR THE QUEENSTOWN LAKES PROPOSED DISTRICT PLAN**

UNDER THE Resource Management Act 1991 ("**Act**")

IN THE MATTER OF Stage 3b Proposed District Plan – Rural Visitor
Zone

BETWEEN **GIBBSTON VALLEY STATION LIMITED**
Submitter #31037

AND **QUEENSTOWN LAKES DISTRICT COUNCIL**
Planning Authority

**EVIDENCE OF GREGORY WILLIAM HUNT IN SUPPORT OF
THE SUBMISSION OF GIBBSTON VALLEY STATION LIMITED**

29 MAY 2020

Counsel instructed:

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INTRODUCTION

Role / position

1. My full name is Gregory William Hunt.
2. I am the CEO and one of two directors of Gibbston Valley Station ("**GVS**").
3. I am authorised to provide this evidence on behalf of GVS in support of GVS' application for rezoning of certain of its land to Rural Visitor Zone ("**RVS**").
4. While I am giving evidence on behalf of GVS in my capacity as CEO and a director I have a background in Landscape Architecture, and development as summarised below.

Landscape Architecture

5. I obtained a Bachelor of Science (BSc), Landscape Architecture and Planning, from the California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. I am a licensed Landscape Architect in California.
6. Prior to relocating to New Zealand, I had I had eight years' experience as a Landscape Architect in the United States.

Development experience

7. My development experience includes:
 - (a) From 1993 to 2000, I was the General Manager of Development, and Landscape Architect for Millbrook Resort, Queenstown.
 - (b) From 2001 to 2006 I was the General Manager at Infinity Investment Group. My role was to oversee the planning, design and development of projects, including:
 - (i) Far Horizon Park - a rural residential subdivision, consisting of 45 4000m² sections, in Wanaka;
 - (ii) Peninsula Bay - a 240 lot subdivision in Wanaka;

- (iii) Riverside Park – a 224 lot subdivision in Wanaka with a range of sections sized from 700m² to 1851m²; and
 - (iv) Pegasus Town - a new town in the Waimakariri District of Canterbury, 25km north of Christchurch.
- (c) In respect of GVS, I have been CEO of GVS since April 2007, and have advanced GVS developments since then, including the recent Lodge, Spa and Villa proposal (recently opened).

GIBBSTON VALLEY STATION

8. Gibbston Valley Station is approximately 404 hectares in size. It has varying topography ranging from the lower terraces where vineyards are planted, the Winery is located and Gibbston Valley Resort will be developed, to some middle terraces which is where the Resort Zone is proposed, and then continuing up to the ridgeline at an elevation of 1079 metres. This varying terrain and topography offers many different experiences for our guests, whether they are riding a mountain bike or walking our trails.
9. Mr Milne provides additional context to the Gibbston Valley Station in his evidence.

PROPOSED RURAL VISITOR ZONE

10. The proposed Rural Visitor Zone has a sense of tranquillity and peacefulness because of visual and sound separation from State Highway 6 and developments along the Highway. To get to this location, you turn off State Highway 6 and drive up an access road that transitions from vineyards to high country farm. By the time you get to the plateau, you have the feeling of being separated from civilisation. It is our intent to protect the tranquillity of this location by keeping the scale and style of the lodge and accommodation units in keeping with the surrounds.
11. The type of development we have in mind for the proposed Rural Visitor Zone at Gibbston would be built around a “retreat lodge” and high country experience. We feel the retreat lodge will offer something unique in the Queenstown/Gibbston area because of its sense of isolation but still being in proximity to the townships of Arrowtown and Queenstown, and the cellar doors and other amenities of Gibbston and the wider region.

12. Gibbston is developing a reputation as a destination for those who have an interest in wine and food. It is also starting to develop different accommodation experiences, from bed & breakfast through to boutique lodges.
13. As an example, Gibbston Valley Winery completed a 24 room Lodge and Spa next to the Winery last December. The guests who stay in the Lodge primarily have an interest in wine and food and enjoy the rural setting of Gibbston.
14. Gibbston Valley Winery has an established management team that has grown over the 30 years the Winery has been in existence. With the inclusion of the Lodge and Spa, we now have a management team that includes significant experience in tourism and hospitality. I think it is important to recognise that we already have this experience in place to ensure that the retreat lodge we want to develop in the Rural Visitor Zone will be successful.

Limited occupation of units by owners

15. With the recent COVID-19 circumstances, we have had to think further about how future visitor lodge and villa developments might be funded. We obviously also want any development to be a successful one, and that good use is made of any facilities that are developed.
16. A likely model of funding is one where investors can own a visitor accommodation unit, but have it managed for visitor accommodation through the Gibbston Valley Management Company. In addition to a return on their investment, it would be attractive to investors if they could, for a reduced fee, stay in their own units for reasonable lengths of time during the year. Many owners are likely to come from Auckland, Australia, and potentially the west coast of the USA. They are likely to want the option, on occasion, to spend extend periods of time in their unit – but not permanently reside there. (If they were looking for semi-permanent accommodation, then other options outside a unit in a Resort Zone would be much more attractive, including financially.) In summary, having such an opportunity, from the owners' perspective, would appeal to them for their requirements for a regular holiday home to enjoy what Gibbston and the Queenstown region has to offer.

17. From a management perspective, owners would not have “free licence” to stay in their unit whenever they wanted. It would be managed in a way that “public” visitors would have priority. However, if there were sufficient empty units available without bookings, the owners of a unit could stay in their unit (for a limited period of time). They would have to prebook the unit if they wanted to use it and the Gibbston Valley Management Company would approve this, if their unit was available. In the situation where their units were available, we would let the owners know so that they could then determine whether they wanted to utilise their units at those times. I also consider it unlikely that every owner will want to stay in their unit for the full allowable period every year. Most owners will only take advantage of the opportunity from time to time.
18. From an economic perspective having such an opportunity would assist in giving certainty for the Rural Visitor Zone from both a cashflow perspective and an investment perspective. It will also have benefits to the wider region, as the guests and owners will most certainly enjoy the activities, restaurants and experiences on offer in the wider Lakes region.
19. For these reasons, GVS has sought a rule to enable this type of ownership and use structure. GVS has also sought a small number of other amendments to the Rural Visitor Zone to better manage the development of the site for rural visitor purposes.

Conclusion

20. Gibbston Valley has a reputation as a quality brand and a quality tourism experience. It is our intent to bring our management team’s experience and our quality brand reputation in developing a retreat lodge and villas in the Rural Visitor Zone. I am sure it will become an asset to be proud of, not only for ourselves but also the wider community.

Greg Hunt
29 May 2020