

## **Marcus Langman for QLDC – Hearing Stream 14 – Wakatipu Basin rezonings**

The Wakatipu Basin is in a unique location in New Zealand. It is located next to one of the fastest growing towns, and exhibits one of the more scenic amenity landscapes in New Zealand, with transient values such as the snow clad hills and golden autumn deciduous vegetation that add to its beauty. Its proximity to Queenstown, along with the recreational opportunities it has to offer has made it a highly desirable location for living, holiday home development and development of tourist and visitor opportunities. This has led to pressure on infrastructure, and is challenging the ability of the landscape to absorb change while still retaining the important amenity values that it provides for both residents and visitors.

The operative Rural General Zone framework is too uncertain to respond to these challenges. It provides little guidance as to those areas where development can be absorbed, and does not adequately recognise the development pressure the Basin is under, and the gradual change that has taken place from productive uses to a range of more intensive but still rural uses that are taking place throughout the Basin.

The Stage 2 Variation for the Wakatipu Basin does that. Through the Amenity Zone, the variation provides a clear direction to where intensive development is less desirable, either for strategic planning reasons or for landscape reasons. The Precinct subzone then provides a strong guide as to those areas that can absorb change, and where further development is appropriate.

The Amenity Zone should not be seen as a zone that ‘sterilises’ land only for productive use. There are a range of activities in the Amenity Zone that are provided for as permitted and discretionary activities. Further activities might also be considered on a non-complying activity basis. These are supported by a comprehensive suite of objectives and policies that support a range of productive, residential and non-residential activities, and in my view provide clear guidance on appropriateness.

As set out in the evidence of Ms Gilbert, the Amenity Zone does provide some public benefit. It provides open undeveloped vistas that are enjoyed from both public and private spaces. It also provides a function of avoiding the feeling of continuous sprawl, whether that is rural residential or other clustered urban type development that has been occurring in the Basin. And it can also provide an important buffer to the Outstanding Natural Features and Landscapes in the Basin, avoiding the potential for adverse effects on them and protecting them from inappropriate development.

In relation to bespoke zones requested, my key concerns can be summarised as follows:

- A number of the special zones tend to be inward looking; based on a particular site and its cadastral boundaries rather than integrating with the Landscape Character Units they are located in.
- Some special zones do not provide the necessary control of development and defensible boundaries that are important to providing coherent and integrated urban or rural residential developments.
- Most of the requests seeking more intensive development do not recognise the limitations of the current infrastructure to cope with increase demand, such as the impact on the Shotover River Bridge, or if they do, they set the issue aside.
- In relation to the outskirts of Arrowtown, there is a need to make a strategic decision around how land is managed, in order to avoid compromising future development opportunities through the fracturing of land ownership so that if or when the land is released it can be effectively and efficiently designed and developed.

As is the nature with all zones, not all land or all future activities will fit neatly within the zones. Based on certain characteristics of the land, there will be examples in the Amenity Zone where some more intensive activities might be able to occur, but not at the level anticipated in the Precinct Zone. It is my view that that role can be provided by resource consent process. Many of the arguments put forward in evidence supporting alternative zones maintain that the important landscape character and amenity values of the Landscape Character Units will be maintained, which is a fundamental objective for the Wakatipu Basin. It is my view that if this is true, a resource consent process is available, within limits, and will recognise the capacity of the landscape to absorb change.