

**BEFORE THE QUEENSTOWN LAKES DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**IN THE MATTER** of the Resource Management Act 1991

**AND**

**IN THE MATTER** Plan Change 50 (Queenstown Town Centre Zone  
Extension) to the Queenstown Lakes District Plan

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF SUPPLEMENTARY EVIDENCE OF CLINTON BIRD**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF SUPPLEMENTARY EVIDENCE

1. My name is Clinton Bird. My qualifications and experience are set out in paragraphs 2.1 and 2.2 of my primary evidence dated 10 November 2014.
2. This supplementary evidence responds to:
  - i. The urban design evidence of Mr Gibbs with regard to 34 Brecon Street; and
  - ii. The alternative height limit rule for the western Isle Street sub-zone block suggested by Mr Brown during conferencing.

### MR GIBBS' EVIDENCE

3. There are seven key areas of difference in the urban design opinions of Mr Gibbs and myself.

#### 1. The strategic location of the Site

4. I do not agree with Mr Gibbs' view that the strategic location of the Site, relative to the town centre, should be accorded the degree of importance and significance advocated in his evidence. I acknowledge that strategic location is one factor, but in my opinion the location of the site needs to be balanced against other relevant urban design considerations and potentially adverse environmental effects associated with building height. These include natural landform/topography, character and scale of built form, building height and its potential to result in adverse effects such as shading, overlooking, visual dominance, privatisation of public space, loss of public views and outlook from public spaces.

#### 2. Domination of the cemetery

5. Mr Gibbs considers that '*a 24m high building can sit comfortably in the 34 Brecon Street environment and not dominate the cemetery.*'<sup>1</sup> I disagree with this view for the following reasons:

- 5.1 The 24m high building supported by Mr Gibbs (which is twice the height of that permitted by PC 50) takes visually dominant command of the cemetery (see Figure 1), because:

- of the overt and disproportionate visual primacy, supremacy and prominence of the 24m high building, relative to the spatial setting of the cemetery within its local and greater Queenstown landscape;
- the 24m high buildings stand out from the other elements in the overall scene and command the attention of the eye. This is further reinforced by the vertical proportional emphasis of the 24m high buildings.

- 5.2 Mr Gibbs supports the 17m set back from the shared cemetery boundary for all parts of a building higher than 15m, as proposed by BSPL,<sup>2</sup> on the basis that '*this control would ensure that development of 34 Brecon Street would not dominate the cemetery, irrespective of whether or not Cemetery Road is relocated.*'<sup>3</sup> I disagree because, even with the 17m set back above 15m, the building will generally be viewed from the higher ground of the cemetery so its full 24m height will be visible from the cemetery (see Figure 1).

#### 3. Shading

6. Mr Gibbs' evidence on shading is highly selective and limited to one paragraph<sup>4</sup> and Appendix D only. His evidence ignores the shading effects of a 24m high building at 34

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<sup>1</sup> Evidence of Alexander David Gibbs, paragraph 24, page 16.

<sup>2</sup> Evidence of Alexander David Gibbs, Figure 4, page 16

<sup>3</sup> Evidence of Alexander David Gibbs, paragraph 24, page 16

<sup>4</sup> Evidence of Alexander David Gibbs, paragraph 28, page 17.

Brecon Street on the Isle Street and Lakeview subzones to the south and west (see Figures 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6).

#### **4. Views from the cemetery**

- 7 In assessing the effects of a 24m high building on views from the cemetery, Mr Gibbs uses a very limited and narrowly focused technique (see Figure 7). His assessment of the difference in the effects of a 12m (plus the 2m roof bonus) and a 24m high building on views from the cemetery relies solely on the small triangular “*area of mountain view*” (outlined in the blue dotted line) to substantiate his opinion that the loss of views is “*insignificant*”. In this regard, Mr Gibbs concentrates almost exclusively on the quantity of the modified view rather than its quality.
- 8 Mr Gibbs has also overlooked the following visual facts:
  - 8.1 The existing view, and that which would exist under the PC50 12m high building scenario, demonstrates a virtually continuous and unimpeded natural silhouette against the sky comprised of trees and mountain range ridgelines. The 24m high building would interrupt and disrupt the continuity of the natural skyline.
  - 8.2 No 12m high buildings encroach into the backdrop of the sky, whereas the 24m high building penetrates significantly into and eclipses part of the backdrop of the sky;
  - 8.3 The consistency in the heights of the 12m buildings above ground level ensures that they generally follow the slope of the underlying landform and step progressively down the slope from right to left, just as do the graves and headstones. The 24m high buildings, relative to the 12m high buildings to their right (west), run counter to and oppose the underlying natural topography which drops down in height towards Brecon Street; and
  - 8.4 The 12m high buildings enable the large scale and grandeur of the Remarkables mountain range and Cecil Peak to remain fully legible and the predominant natural elements in the overall scene. By appearing to be taller than the Remarkables mountain range and obscuring much of them, the 24m high buildings visually distort and diminish their apparent scale and grandeur.
- 9 Based upon responses to informal and unspecified questioning of visitors to the cemetery BSPL submits that visitors are there primarily to look at the headstones, and that views from the cemetery towards the lake and the mountains are not particularly important.
- 10 Having looked at the ‘TripAdvisor’ website, I disagree with this submission. In my opinion, these unsolicited and voluntarily TripAdvisor postings clearly demonstrate that views from the cemetery are important to and appreciated by visitors to this historic public place.
- 11 The ‘Google Images’ and the ‘Flickr – Photo Sharing’ websites demonstrate that photographs taken by visitors to the cemetery, and voluntarily posted on-line, provide an insight into how people appear to appreciate the quiet, relaxing, calm, serene, and contemplative atmosphere of the cemetery (see Figures 8, 9, 10, and 11).
- 5. Urban definition and containment of the cemetery**
- 12 Mr Gibbs’ evidence contains examples of cemeteries in Europe whose settings have changed over time from being on the fringes of villages and towns to being in more centralised and highly urbanized locations where they are surrounded on all sides by buildings (see Figure 12).
- 13 In my opinion these examples are of little relevance because:
  - 13.1 Mr Gibbs’ examples of cemeteries appear to be on generally flat land, at the same or a similar level to their surroundings, whereas the Queenstown cemetery is on

- sloping land considerably elevated above and generally overlooking its natural and urbanized surroundings to the south and east;
- 13.2 It is not possible to tell whether any views of dramatic natural scenery from these cemeteries have been blocked by the buildings erected around them, although the generally flat land, unlike that in Queenstown, suggests that major landscape views are unlikely to exist;
  - 13.3 The cemeteries appear to be surrounded on all sides by tall buildings whereas the Queenstown example is unlikely to ever be so because of the development constraints applying to the Ben Lomond Scenic Reserve land.

#### **6. Views of the Site from Queenstown Gardens and the Queenstown Bay Town Centre waterfront**

- 14 FearonHay produced three new block form photomontages, similar to those originally produced in support of the building heights promoted by the notified version of PC50, but this time depicting the bulk of a 24m high building occupying the Brecon Street site (see Figures 13, 14 and 15).
- 15 In my opinion, all three photomontages illustrate how doubling the height of a building on the 34 Brecon Street site, creates an abrupt and visually truncated eastern end to the enabled development silhouette/profile of the Lakeview and Isle Street sub-zones against the backdrop of the Ben Lomond Scenic Reserve. The proposed PC50 height Limit Plan would enable the delivery of a synchronicity between the sloping topography of the natural landform underlying the two sub-zones and the built form constructed on top of it. This would help to ensure that the topography of the unique landform would remain legible. In contrast, a 24m building on the Brecon Street site would be contrary to the urban form outcome sought and promoted by PC50.

#### **7. The heritage of the cemetery**

- 16 In my view, the heritage of the Queenstown cemetery draws upon two key urban design characteristics of its setting. One is the view of the man-made town and the other is the view of the natural setting, namely Lake Wakatipu and the mountain ranges, including The Remarkables, Cecil Peak and Ben Lomond.
- 17 Over time, views of the town have been largely lost. All that remains to provide the cemetery with its unique sense of place, and to orientate visitors to their greater landscape setting, are the views of the mountains. If these are lost I consider that a key visual contributor to the cemetery's unique sense of place will also be lost.

#### **THE PROPOSED ALTERNATIVE HEIGHT LIMIT RULE FOR THE WESTERN-MOST BLOCK IN THE ISLE STREET SUB-ZONE**

- 18 During conferencing Mr Brown proposed an alternative building height limit rule for the western-most block in the Isle Street sub-zone (see Figure 16).
- 19 Having considered the likely urban design outcome of this proposed rule, I do not support it for the following reasons:
  - 19.1 Application of this rule would be likely to result in no stepping of building form within a site, and only two (disconnected) stepped forms across the entire north-west/south-east width of the block;
  - 19.2 The rule is likely to result in an entire city block of flat roof buildings, two storeys high on the north-western edge of the block and three storeys high on the south-eastern edge;
  - 19.3 A 7m maximum building height control on the Isle Street frontage would limit the street frontage of the building to a maximum of 2 storeys in height. Excavation could enable a third storey but the lowest of 3 storeys would have very little or no access to light from the street;

- 19.4 A maximum of two storeys on the street frontage is likely to privilege purely residential accommodation;
- 19.5 The rule would be likely to reduce the chances of achieving a mixed-use development outcome, with street edge-activating retail and/or commercial space at street level and two storeys of residential accommodation above;
- 19.6 An entire block of predominantly 2 and 3 storey high residential accommodation in the Isle Street block would result in a pocket of semi-suburban development interrupting the continuity of the desired extension of the existing town centre urban character and ambience through to the western end of the Lakeview sub-zone;
- 19.7 It is difficult to see how the rule would rule apply to the possible amalgamation of sites, especially a scenario where back-to-back sites (one or facing Isle Street and one or more facing Man Street) were amalgamated; and
- 19.8 Having different rules for the two Isle St blocks may result in inconsistent streetscape and an inconsistency in urban form within this sub-zone.

## CONCLUSIONS

- Minimum ground floor 'floor-to-ceiling' height of 3.5m**

20 I support the sentiment of the BSPL submission regarding a District Plan rule seeking a minimum ground floor 'floor-to-ceiling' dimension of 3.5m instead of 4.0m. However, I still favour expressing this in a 'floor-to-floor' height of 4m that, allowing for a 500mm deep ceiling/services space, will result in an approximately 3.5m 'floor-to-ceiling' outcome.
- Maximum permitted building height on the property at 34 Brecon Street**

21 I do not support the BSPL submission in respect of the 24m maximum permitted building height sought for 34 Brecon Street. I remain of the view that the originally notified PC50 height limit for that site should remain at 12m (plus a 2m roof bonus). I am also firmly of the opinion that a 24m high building on the 34 Brecon Street site, as supported by Mr Gibbs, would have more than minor adverse urban design and environmental effects on the character of the Queenstown cemetery, the Lakeview and Isle Street sub-zones and the Queenstown Town Centre environs.
- Proposed alternative height limit rule for the Isle Street sub-zone western block**

22 Having considered the urban design implications of the building height limit rule proposed by Mr Brown, it is my opinion that the height rules for the Isle Street subzones, as outlined in the Plan provisions presented by Mr Kyle in his supplementary evidence, would deliver a more appropriate and superior urban design outcome, given the overriding PC50 objective of extending the town centre into the Isle Street and Lakeview sub-zones.

**Clinton Bird**

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14 January 2015