

BEFORE THE QUEENSTOWN LAKES DISTRICT COUNCIL

IN THE MATTER of the Resource Management Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER OF Plan Change 50 to the Queenstown Lakes District Plan

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF
DANIEL GARTH WELLS (PLANNING)
FOR MEMORIAL PROPERTY LTD**

Dated 19 November 2014

1. My name is Daniel Garth Wells. I am qualified with a Bachelor of Resource and Environmental Planning (Hons) and a Post Graduate Diploma in Development Studies. I have approximately 11 years' experience in town planning in New Zealand and the United Kingdom. From early 2007 till the end of 2010 I worked for the Queenstown Lakes District Council as a Policy Analyst and during this time I worked primarily on plan change and strategy development matters. This included projects to create new commercial zones and to address housing affordability challenges in the District. From 2011 to 2012 I worked for Auckland Council on the development and implementation of the Auckland Plan, particularly with respect to land use and transport integration and associated models. I am currently a Queenstown resident and since late 2012 I have been employed at John Edmonds and Associates Ltd as a planning consultant. In this role I am engaged in a range of planning and resource management matters including several plan changes within the Queenstown Lakes District.
2. I have read the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses issued as part of the Environment Court Practice Notes. I agree to comply with the Code and am satisfied that the matters which I address in my evidence are within my field of expertise. I am not aware of any material facts that I have omitted which might alter or detract from the opinions I express in my evidence. I understand that I have an overriding duty to assist the hearing in an impartial manner and that I am not an advocate for the party which has engaged me.
3. Plan Change 50 has been framed as a means to enhance the Queenstown Town Centre. I believe the proposal as it stands is instead likely to achieve the opposite. This brief of evidence will raise some concerns about the evidence base behind Plan Change 50 and about potential adverse effects that could arise from the plan change. I will make some suggestions about how my concerns could be addressed.

Context of Plan Change 50

4. Plan Change 50 represents a significant change in policy direction by the Queenstown Lakes District Council. I am unaware of any comparable plan change with the potential to impact upon central Queenstown as significantly.

5. Queenstown Town Centre reflects an historical layout established around 150 years ago. Since the early gold rush days the town's focus moved from servicing the gold industry, to being a small rural service town which over time increasingly became a significant tourist destination. It is my observation that over that time, while the Town Centre has intensified, and buildings have become more substantial, there has actually been little in the way of outward expansion of the Town Centre boundaries. In spite of this, the Town Centre has thrived. I doubt there is a Town Centre as vibrant as Queenstown outside of the metropolitan areas of New Zealand. Streets are normally busy with pedestrians, shoppers and tourists enjoying the amenities the Town Centre offers. My general understanding is that property values are high, reflecting the desirability placed upon this location.
6. The Town Centre also, importantly, serves an important function as the office centre for Wakatipu.
7. Of course, the Queenstown Town Centre is not the only commercial centre in the Wakatipu area. In my opinion, the Wakatipu is developing into an area with multiple commercial nodes that perform different functions. Done well, this is not necessarily a bad outcome, nor one that I consider can or should be resisted. As covered by Dr McDermott, Queenstown has many competitive advantages as a tourism and entertainment and specialty retail location. It benefits from a stunning waterfront location, from an historic 'pedestrian friendly' layout and low rise buildings that contribute to the streetscape and sit appropriately within the landscape context.
8. A key feature of the Queenstown Town Centre, which has been echoed through a wide range of studies and policy documents (including the current District Plan), is that it is, spatially speaking, 'contained'. I suspect that for a large part of Queenstown's history there was limited demand to extend the Town Centre outwards, with plenty of opportunities for infill development. I should note however that there has over recent years been some growth of commercial uses along the 'Business' zoned corridor along Gorge Road, some of which may have been equally or more suitably located within the Town Centre. As the town has grown, I believe planning policy has played a part in containing the Town Centre. Zoning under RMA documents (and their predecessors under the Town and Country Planning Act) have limited the expansion of commercial activities into areas such as the area now being contemplated by Plan Change 50. The current District plan contains clear statements about containing the Town Centre (some of which Plan Change 50 proposes to alter).

9. It appears to be common ground amongst the reports and evidence prepared for Plan Change 50 that Queenstown Town Centre is a successful place and very important to the economic, social and cultural wellbeing of the Queenstown Lakes District community. In my opinion the Town Centre is a physical resource that needs to be carefully managed 'in a way, or at a rate, which enables people and communities to provide for their social, economic, and cultural well-being...'¹

10. The attributes which make Queenstown Town Centre a special place are not in my view invulnerable. The District Plan makes it clear, in my opinion, that the Town Centre needs to be carefully and actively managed, as opposed to a more passive approach led by market forces. For example, consider the following key objectives² from the Town Centre Section of the District Plan:

Objective 1 - Maintenance and Consolidation of the existing Town Centres and activities therein

Viable Town Centres which respond to new challenges and initiatives but which are compatible with the natural and physical environment.

and

Objective 1 - Maintenance and Consolidation of the Town Centre

Maintenance and enhancement of the Queenstown Town Centre as the principal commercial, administration, cultural and visitor focus for the District.

11. It is my opinion that the importance of the Town Centre, reinforced by the policy framework of the District Plan, means Council needs to proceed carefully with significant changes to planning policy that affect it. Given Plan Change 50 proposes an unprecedented change in policy, it is not a decision that would be wise to rush. I believe that the Panel need to have confidence that decisions are based on a robust evidence base. The community and various stakeholders also need time to carefully consider the proposal and its associated evidence.

¹ To quote Section 5 of the Act

² It is noteworthy that Section 32 of the Act places particular importance on objectives, requiring an examination of whether the provisions in the proposal are the most appropriate way to achieve the objectives.

A proposal such as this needs to be underscored by coherent and comprehensive strategies for addressing the various resource management issues that may arise as a result. On a number of important counts, I consider that PC50 is deficient.

Scale of Plan Change 50

12. I think it is useful to put the scale of Plan Change 50 in context. By my estimates, the currently zoned Town Centre is around 18 Hectares in size. Under Plan Change 50 it is proposed approximately another 15 Hectares of Town Centre zoned land will be added.³
13. By my calculations, it is proposed that approximately 170,000 m² of potential floorspace would be added to the Town Centre Zone through the Lake View subzone as a result of Plan Change 50. I have arrived at this assumption by looking at the structure plan, accounting for identified 'reserves', applying the site coverage rules and further reducing the assumed coverage in some areas to account for more access and service lanes. I have then estimated the numbers of floors achievable according to the maximum height limits. I therefore consider this a reasonable estimate.
14. By using a similar method, I estimate that 45,000 m² of floorspace is easily achievable in the Lake View subzone. I believe this is in fact a conservative estimate, especially given the flexibility to enable higher buildings enabled in the proposed rules for that Subzone.
15. So overall I estimate that at least 215,000 m² of potential floorspace⁴ would be added to the Town Centre Zone under proposed Plan Change 50.
16. To put this in perspective, this compares to an estimated 156,000 m² of floorspace at present for all activities in the existing Town Centre⁵. In other words, the total current floorspace in the Queenstown Town Centre, after 150 years of development, would appear to be less than what is being proposed to be added by this plan change. These numbers, I

³ There is comparatively more 'reserve' land proposed in the Lake View Subzone than exists in the Town Centre, but I do not consider that this detracts from my general observation as to the significant scale of change proposed.

⁴ I note that I estimate around 54,000 m² of this space would be at ground floor, where retail is most likely to locate.

⁵ According to page 31 of the McDermott Miller Strategies report that accompanied the Section 32 report

believe, illustrate clearly the importance of the decision before this Panel, and the risk of acting on uncertain or insufficient information.⁶ The scale and scope of this plan change is unprecedented.

Recent policy history

17. For several years the Council has contemplated, consulted upon and resolved preferred directions for the expansion of the Town Centre. There was some commonality between the 2009 Queenstown Town Centre Strategy and the 2012 District Plan consultation, in terms of the scale of Town Centre Zoning contemplated and the preferred directions of that expansion (I return to these later in my evidence). There was logic to what was being considered at that point. Those proposals were almost entirely at odds with what is now proposed.
18. Council has also over recent years contemplated making better use of land at what is known as the Lake View site. I support such work as I can see considerable community benefit in Council making better use of this site. This includes potential public benefits such as paying off Council debt, enabling and paying for projects such as a convention centre which may benefit the community, or providing residential accommodation close to town including some subsidised low cost housing. From my recollection, Council progressed some way toward an agreement with one or more preferred developers for this site in or around 2008. I recall that the proposal was primarily to provide for housing with a proportion of 'community housing'. I presume the economic recession around that time was a factor in those plans not proceeding.
19. Part of Council's work on the Lake View site and its surrounds was to look at what acceptable building height limits may be. The principle of that study (which forms part of the Section 32 analysis of this plan change) was broadly that the Lake View site and its surrounds had particular attributes that enabled it to appropriately accommodate more height than was the case in other parts of the High Density Residential Zone.
20. In 2014 Council began consulting on and very rapidly moved into a formal plan change process for a much larger expansion of the Town Centre than previously contemplated, and

⁶ As is a matter to be considered according to Section 32 of the Act

in a different direction. Through informal consultation the proposed extensions became larger. To me, Plan Change 50 now represents a remarkable, rapid change in policy direction, made all the more remarkable by the speed in which it has progressed through the Schedule 1 process.

21. I am unclear on what basis such a large rezoning can be justified and consider that it may potentially give rise to some very real and profound adverse effects. In short, it is my view that the plan change is fundamentally misconceived.

Resource Management Issues

22. RMA policy development will usually, when well promulgated, begin with the identification of key resource management issues. From there, objectives can be identified, policies rules and other methods can be crafted. I accept that the theory of strategy development can differ from the rather more messy 'real world' of policy making, where sometimes these matters are not identified consecutively. But this does not detract from my view that correctly identifying resource management issues establishes robust foundations for policy development. If such issues are incorrectly identified, this can lead to misdirected policy which does not achieve the purpose of the Act.

23. The Section 32 report for Plan Change 50 does, helpfully, set out the key resource management issues identified. I do not believe Council is wrong in its broader concern that the vitality and function Queenstown Town Centre could be at risk over time. However, it is far from clear that Council has identified correctly the key resource management issues related to this broader concern. I therefore consider that the project has suffered conceptual flaws from the outset.

24. The resource management issues in the Section 32 report are listed as follows:

- *Providing additional commercially zoned land to address the shortage of the Queenstown Town Centre zone to ensure the Queenstown commercial centre remains the dominant tourist centre and the primary commercial centre for the District;*

- *Facilitating opportunities for economic growth in the tourism sector by providing for increased opportunities for commercial tourism development downstream within Queenstown;*
- *Providing opportunities for greater diversity in housing options.*

25. Below, I discuss these resource management issues to consider how valid they are.

The need for commercial space

26. This first issue appears to rely heavily on the McDermott Miller Strategies report which was included as Appendix A to the Section 32 report. I consider that this report can be faulted for many reasons and does not provide a robust evidence base to support the issue of a shortage of commercially zoned land and the implications of such a shortage. I note that the reporting planner and Dr McDermott's evidence appear, to some extent, distance their conclusions from that analysis McDermott Miller Strategies (although Mr Kyle makes much of the pressing need for more commercial space in his evidence). The peer review carried out by McDermott Consultants is a more balanced and realistic assessment (although I would also question some of the conclusions reached in that report and Dr McDermott's evidence).

27. I agree with Dr McDermott and others that Frankton has developed a different role from the Queenstown Town Centre. In my view, the Queenstown Town Centre cannot realistically serve a function of meeting all of the Wakatipu's wider retail needs, especially comparatively 'land hungry' large format –type retail stores. There are some advantages in the Town Centre not accommodating such uses, as they contribute little to and sometimes detract from the amenity of urban areas. Frankton is better suited and has the space to more readily provide these functions. It is a more functional location for day-to-day needs, and is more orientated toward the resident population of the Wakatipu than tourists. In this respect it is actually better located than the Queenstown Town Centre. Due to the availability of residentially zoned land, residential growth has and will continue to gravitate toward the east and south of Queenstown, making Frankton a more natural 'centre' of the wider Wakatipu. In my view Frankton and Queenstown Town Centre are linked in a fairly complementary or symbiotic manner. Frankton allows Queenstown to focus on its main

roles as a tourist, specialty retail and office location based around the special amenity that area offers.

28. Queenstown has an established reputation coupled with generations of investment in buildings and infrastructure. It is difficult to envisage Queenstown's role and function being at serious risk in the near future as a result of retail development in Frankton.
29. Frankton has not been subject to any meaningful planning constraint in terms of the volume of commercially zoned land available at Remarkables Park for many years. The forthcoming rezoning to be approved under Plan Change 19 will not fundamentally change this situation. The need to increase commercial space in the Town Centre to compete with Frankton is therefore, in my opinion, not a particularly credible argument.
30. I believe it is also important to seriously question the extent to which there is a proven shortage of commercial development opportunities in the Queenstown Town Centre.
31. 'Commercial activities' are defined in the District Plan as:

Means the use of land and buildings for the display, offering, provision, sale or hire of goods, equipment or services, and includes, shops, postal services, markets, showrooms, restaurants, takeaway, food bars, professional, commercial and administrative offices, service stations, motor vehicle sales, the sale of liquor and associated parking areas. Excludes recreational, community and service activities, home occupations, visitor accommodation, registered holiday homes and registered homestays.

32. Clearly, this covers more than retail activities. Yet, the focus of the Section 32 and Section 42a reports and the Council evidence appear almost exclusively to be on the *retail* component of this definition. Office space is a key function the Town Centre provides which I believe is being given inadequate consideration in those reports. Nowhere, in my opinion, is this more evident than in the analyses of commercial capacity undertaken by McDermott Miller Strategies. Advice that there is next to no available commercial space in Queenstown Town Centre is inaccurate. There is a large amount of space in Queenstown above ground floor which can be used for offices, or other uses such as visitor accommodation. Many buildings are built nowhere near the maximum height limit allowed under the District Plan.

As far as I am aware, the Panel has not had the benefit of a numerical analysis on this matter. Instead the McDermott Miller Strategies report focuses on the number of 'vacant sites' being, it is assumed, a measure of space available at ground level.

33. But even this measurement is flawed. It is true there are few sites in the existing Town Centre Zone that are entirely vacant of buildings. But there are still quite a few sites that are underdeveloped, with run-down houses or other buildings which can easily be removed in favour of commercial development. Consider, for example, the two areas I show below (outlined in red):





34. Clearly, a considerable amount of commercial development (including retail) could occur in these Town Centre zoned locations. I note that each of these areas are, on their own, bigger than the 0.5 Ha of total vacant land said to be available in the Queenstown and Arrowtown Town Centres in the McDermott Miller Strategies report and Section 32 report.
35. Although I do not agree that shortages of commercial zoned land in the Town Centre are as acute as argued by McDermott Miller Strategies, it is clear that there opportunities for new ground floor retail space in Queenstown are finite. I have doubts that this is an unusual situation, as I suspect that most Town Centres in New Zealand are fairly constrained in a similar manner, usually encircled by non-Town Centre zoned areas. Further, I would question whether when other tourist destinations throughout the world have reached similar constraints, the communities and municipal authorities in those areas have considered it an urgent, pressing matter to dramatically expand their Town Centres. Perhaps, in order to preserve Queenstown's appeal to tourists, it would be quite legitimate to decide that the Town Centre zone had expanded sufficiently, and that future growth could be focussed in other zones in the District that offer outstanding amenity and enable commercial development (e.g. parts of Remarkables Park and Jacks Point).
36. I have considerable reservations about the robustness of the evidence base that has been used in support of Plan Change 50 on this matter. I consider that there is a real risk that the shortage of commercial zoned land has been greatly exaggerated. I therefore do not agree

that the case is made that there is an 'urgent' need to significantly extend the Town Centre Zone, as is argued in the Section 32 Report and the evidence of Mr Kyle.

Need to provide for commercial tourism opportunities

37. I will now turn to the second resource management issue, to consider whether this proves to be a legitimate issue which may justify the expansion proposed by Plan Change 50, or at least part of it.

38. I consider this resource management issue a rather vague one. I am not sure quite what is meant by 'commercial tourism opportunities' and how Town Centre zoning relates to these. To take a narrower interpretation of 'commercial tourism', it is notable that not a great number of tourism activities actually take place in the Town Centre.

39. The Town Centre provides booking and administrative offices for activities such as ski fields, jet boat rides, guided walks, sky diving, bungee jumping etc. Often such activities share the costs of such premises by using agents at information centres to make their bookings. Might the cost of having to pay for Town Centre space be directly or indirectly adding to those businesses costs? Perhaps, but I have not seen a compelling evidence base confirming this to be the case (for example surveys of local tourist businesses, their costs and their perceptions of risks to business growth). I do however accept that some Town Centre expansion to promote competition in ground floor retail space may have some benefit in this respect.

40. From what I can tell, the evidence of Dr McDermott takes a broader view of what the tourism sector is. It refers to certain types of retail, to bars and cafes and to visitor accommodation. The notion that greater competition in this sector may be beneficial I accept. However, how much space is necessary or appropriate to promote such additional competition is difficult to say.

41. There are a multitude of reports with facts, figures and projections produced in support of Plan Change 50. But I have not been able to clearly distil from these analyses a quantification of how much floor space may be necessary to promote such competition and address the resource management issue of concern. In fact, the evidence presented to the Panel on this matter, along with the reports accompanying the Section 32 report, paints a

confusing picture. On the one hand, we are told there is an 'urgent need' to expand the Queenstown Town Centre because of constraints on the availability of commercial land. But then it is assumed in the transport and economic reports that no more than 25% of the gross floor area of the Isle Street and Brecon Street blocks will be developed for commercial purposes, and only 6000m² in the Lake View Subzone is to be developed for that purpose (which I figure to be around 3.5% of the floorspace enabled in that subzone). Further, we are assured by Dr McDermott in his evidence that:

The rezoned area will create an additional further central precinct. It is set up primarily to accommodate larger scale visitor-related developments and housing. The only retail activities likely to be located there will be ancillary or complementary to the visitor facilities and perhaps local housing.

42. I can see nothing in the proposed rules that will ensure such an outcome. I therefore do not know how this conclusion is reached, and it seems risky to rely on such advice. I can foresee a range of other possible outcomes, including scenarios where much more, intensive commercial development may occur.

43. Further, 'ancillary or complimentary' is to me an interesting choice of words. I note that some commercial activities are often achievable as ancillary activities to visitor accommodation in the High Density Residential Zone⁷ (which naturally leads to a question of why Town Centre zoning is necessary or appropriate). It seems that, in having regard to Dr McDermott's evidence, commercial space in the Lake View site may be primarily related to visitor accommodation in that Subzone. The Lake View site begins to look to me like a separate project that is designed to create and satisfy much of its own commercial land requirements. It does not appear to me proven that there is a large amount of unsatisfied demand for commercial floor space in the Town Centre, or that Plan Change 50 would help meet such a demand if it exists.

⁷ Discussions with my planning colleagues drew to my attention that the definition of Visitor Accommodation includes the following 'May include some centralised services or facilities, such as food preparation, dining and sanitary facilities, conference, bar and recreational facilities if such facilities are associated with the visitor accommodation activity' which I understand is often accepted to include internal shops etc. The transport section makes reference to up to 10% of visitor accommodation sites being used for related on site activities before this has an effect on car parking requirements, which is often used as a guide as to the scale of 'centralised services or facilities' which are acceptable.

44. In the absence of Plan Change 50 having articulated how much commercial space is necessary to address this resource management issue, and on the basis of the reports and evidence I have read, I believe that a more accurate description of the situation is that there is 'some' demand for additional tourism orientated commercial ground floor floorspace in or near the Town Centre, of an unspecified amount.

Providing greater housing choice

45. The third of these resource management issues promoted by Council I have no particular issue with, as it would seem broadly beneficial to the community were this to occur. In fact, it would be useful to add capacity for 'visitor accommodation', as I understand that Queenstown is projected to need more visitor accommodation in the not so distant future.
46. I consider that the issue of capacity for visitor accommodation may be more deserving of the label of 'urgency' than that of commercial floorspace. I note from the answers that Dr McDermott gave to the questions from the Panel that he sees considerable demand for new hotel sites. It seems to me more likely that a shortage of visitor accommodation could constrain tourism growth, than commercial floor space (given that, unlike visitor accommodation, shops can fairly easily increase the volume of customers they serve within their existing floorspace area). As a planning consultant I am sometimes involved in discussions around suitable new hotel sites, of which I consider there are a limited number. The Lake View site offers an excellent opportunity for such development given its location and the types of bulk and location controls being considered.
47. On the subject of housing, I noted that Panel's questions to Mr Kyle and Mr Speedy and the evidence from Mr Kyle. When working for Queenstown Lakes District Council I was involved with the development of Plan Change 24 and since being in my current job I assisted Council in seeking to make the negotiated outcome translatable into workable District Plan positions. Because of what had been agreed and the limited scope we had to change that, this was a challenging task. I appreciate that it is not necessarily simple to understand how these provisions are intended to apply, so given I have some background on the matter, I will provide my opinion.
48. As raised in submissions, there are a reasonable number of cabins that provide low cost rental housing which is generally of a poor quality in the Lake View site. I believe it is a legitimate resource management issue to consider how the economic and social wellbeing

those tenants that occupy this housing may be affected by Plan Change 50. From what I can gather, many are immigrants that undertake low pay jobs associated with the tourism industry (e.g. cleaning jobs). While I note that Council is undertaking some proactive work to address housing supply through its commitment with Central Government to a housing accord, I am not convinced that this rather indirect response sufficiently addresses the concern as to how this affordable accommodation may be replaced.

49. As I have noted, unlike earlier proposals for the Lake View site, no community housing⁸ is proposed for the Lake View Site. It is true that the settled objectives and policies do not compel a developer to provide community housing. But they do, I believe, compel an applicant for a plan change to consider the effects of a residential development on housing affordability. Consider the following objectives and policies:

Objective 1: Access to Community Housing or the provision of a range of Residential Activity that contributes to housing affordability in the District

Policies

1.1 To provide opportunities for low and moderate income Households to live in the District in a range of accommodation appropriate for their needs.

1.2 To have regard to the extent to which density, height, or building coverage contributes to Residential Activity affordability.

1.3 To enable the delivery of Community Housing through voluntary Retention Mechanisms.

50. I do not believe it can necessarily be said that the residential activity proposed under Plan Change 50 will enable affordable residential accommodation. The focus appears to be on high amenity apartment living (which is generally not very affordable). The net effect could be the loss of the affordable housing that currently exists on the site. Given that Council has over many years negotiated (and often pressured) developers to commit to providing some community housing as part of new plan changes, I think it may be reasonable for Council to provide some community housing within the Lake View site as a means to address the above objectives and policies.

Other resource management issues

⁸ Community housing is defined in the District Plan and essentially means subsidised low cost housing

51. There are some additional resource management issues that need consideration, to a greater extent than would appear to have been given to date in the preparation of Plan Change 50.

Traffic and parking

52. Being a Queenstown resident, I am aware that traffic congestion is becoming an increasing talking point and concern for Queenstown's community. My understanding is that the geography of Queenstown poses some particular challenges for transport planning, with limited routes available into and out of the Town Centre. The District Plan recognises the effect that traffic congestion can have on amenity values, and sets expectations that these matters be addressed to minimise such effects. This can be seen in the following policy from the Town Centre chapter of the District Plan:

2.6 To implement methods to minimise the adverse effects of vehicles on the amenity of the Town Centres.

53. By my observations, it is not uncommon now to see traffic queues of 2 ½ kilometres coming into Queenstown along Frankton Road during afternoon peak periods. Traffic modelling undertaken for Plan Change 50 indicates that traffic congestion is set to become much worse. I believe that this issue has the potential to seriously detract from the enjoyment Queenstown offers to visitors and residents. This could become a serious economic concern over time, constraining both tourism growth and the role of Queenstown Centre as an office centre (as Frankton may become a comparatively attractive location if commuting times are much shorter).
54. I am therefore concerned on a number of accounts with respect to the traffic evidence base that has supported Plan Change 50. Memorial Property engaged the services of transportation planning consultant Tim Kelly to assist me with this analysis and he will also be appearing before this Panel.
55. A number of submissions to Plan Change 50 raised concerns about traffic effects of the proposal. As I see it, there are two main responses provided by Council representatives on this matter. The first relates to the development of a transport strategy in the future.

56. It is striking to me that Plan Change 50, a proposal that would enable an extension of the Town Centre of unprecedented scale, is not underpinned by a comprehensive, settled transport and parking strategy. It would seem that there is little or no agreed way on how to 'implement methods to minimise the adverse effects on vehicles on the amenity of the Town Centre...' as instructed by the policy I quote above. Nor, in the absence of a transport strategy, would the proposed rezoning be consistent with the following policy from the Town Centre chapter of the District Plan:

4.2 To promote an integrated approach to traffic management, vehicle access and car parking within the Queenstown Town Centre.

57. It appears that Inner Links project (that would have diverted some traffic around the Town Centre) is unlikely to be advanced in the foreseeable future with the first stages delayed till at least the decade of the 2030s (refer to the report in Appendix 2 to this evidence). This is largely due to it being an expensive project in comparison to the benefits that would arise. To me this is significant, as for as long as I have been involved in planning in this District (since 2007) I have understood this project to be a key part of Council's strategy to deal with increasing congestion in and around the Queenstown Town Centre. Indeed, it seems that this was the preferred method of addressing this problem when the District Plan was prepared. Consider the following policy and associated Implementation Method:

5.6 To provide for roading improvements to develop a route around the Town Centre to reduce congestion, environmental effects and improve traffic flows.

Method: (d) To identify, investigate and initiate a requirement to designate a traffic route around the Town Centre.

58. Mr Mander's evidence confirms that Council is still to produce a transport strategy. It seems to me that the evidence produced by Council is asking the Panel to be assured that this forthcoming strategy will solve or alleviate foreseeable congestion issues. Unfortunately, I do not have such confidence because I simply do not know what realistic, effective solutions there are.

59. The key theme of Mr Mander's evidence, as I understood it, was that the forthcoming transport strategy will focus on the promotion of alternatives to car use. While I take no issue with such an objective, I support Mr Kelly's caution about the effectiveness of

measures to reduce reliance on private car use in a Queenstown context.⁹ Perhaps the proposed amendments the reporting planner proposes around traffic demand management plans for resource consents may encourage some small changes to travel behaviour, but I do not consider that such measures can be an effective substitute for getting the 'big picture' of spatial and infrastructure planning in order.

60. I cannot discount the possibility that the only solution available to Queenstown's traffic congestion is constraining the future growth of Queenstown Town Centre and its surrounds. At this stage, I feel it is simply premature to consider Plan Change 50 (at least in its currently proposed scale) without the grounding of a transport strategy.

61. The second main response to traffic concerns provided by Council representatives has been to argue that Plan Change 50 will only make traffic congestion slightly worse. It surprises me that the evidence of Mr McKenzie would suggest that Level of Service F (the worst category of road performance) constitutes an acceptable outcome¹⁰, as I believe traffic delays such as this would detract from much of the amenity of Queenstown, and its appeal as a destination. I do not consider such an outcome would be consistent with Policy 2.6 of the Town Centre Zone which I quoted above, and the associated expectations around minimising adverse effects on amenity. I also note the following policy and question whether 'Level of Service F' constitutes an efficiently functioning network:

4.4 To manage the street network within the Town Centre to ensure the network functions safely and efficiently, while seeking to enhance the pedestrian amenity of the Town Centre.

62. Furthermore, I am not convinced that the traffic effects arising from Plan Change 50 will not be worse than has been assessed and reported.

63. From my first reviews of Plan Change 50 I had concerns about the traffic modelling undertaken. In preparing a submission on Plan Change 50 on behalf of Memorial Property, we deliberately drew attention to concerns about the assumptions of land use that had been

⁹ I question for example whether it is physically possible to create the likes of bus lanes along parts of Frankton Road, which would be one public transport priority measure that immediately comes to mind.

¹⁰ Mr McKenzie states in paragraph 8.9 'that the additional traffic that will potentially be generated as a result of the Plan Change can be readily accommodated on the Queenstown road Network'

used for modelling traffic effects. I hoped that Council's advisors would respond by advising on the modelled effects of other more traffic intensive land use scenarios for the Plan Change 50 area. Mr Kelly reinforces my concerns that such scenarios could result in considerably more congestion.

64. My concern is that the modelling undertaken sets out land use assumptions which foresee very little commercial development occurring, in spite of the proposed Town Centre Zone posing no restriction on such use.¹¹ I do not know for sure how these assumptions were derived, but it seems that they may have been based on a 'visioning' exercise undertaken by Council in its 'master planning'.
65. Given that the evidence presented to the Panel is, in my opinion, ambiguous on the issue of demand for commercial space, it would be prudent to test a broad range of scenarios. The assumptions published to date in support of Plan Change 50 would, in my opinion, best represent a lower end estimate in terms of the amount of commercial development to occur. I believe it would be prudent to test a scenario of a much higher proportion of land being developed for commercial purposes (perhaps more than 50% of floorspace made available by Plan Change 50). This would seem to align more with the conclusions of Mr Colegrave and McDermott Miller Strategies and their concerns (endorsed by Mr Kyle) that there may be a considerable amount of unsatisfied demand for those uses. Perhaps such a scenario should be considered for the year 2026, perhaps sooner or later. In any event, as Mr Kelly advises, such a scenario could give rise to considerably more traffic congestion than has been reported.
66. As it stands, I arrive at what I consider to be an important conclusion. I do not consider that the Panel has before it the evidence on traffic issues to give it sufficient confidence that the scale of Town Centre zoning proposed in Plan Change 50 will not result in significant adverse effects in terms of traffic congestion. I believe that this should limit the range of decisions available to the Panel so as to ensure that no more commercial activity is enabled than has been assumed in the traffic modelling undertaken. This, I note, would mean a significant reduction in the scale of Town Centre zoning from what has been proposed.

¹¹ To recap, it appears to have been assumed that less than 25% of gross floor space is considered likely to be used for commercial floorspace in the Isle Street Subzone (at least by 2026). For the Lake View Subzone, the assumption used is 6000m² by 2026 of potential floorspace being developed for commercial space. That, by my calculations, equates to around 3.5% of total floorspace proposed in that zone.

Appropriate urban form

67. There are other reasons I believe that the scale of Town Centre zoning should be reduced from what is currently proposed. The types of outcomes envisaged by Plan Change 50 are, in my opinion, unusual.
68. Town Centre zones are usually intensive by nature. They typically contain many commercial uses in close proximity to one another over a relatively small area. This is partly due, I believe, to limited land availability, which is turn partly due to the role that land use planning plays. There are benefits to this typical Town Centre layout. It groups similar activities together, with similar effects and similar expectations of amenity. Reverse sensitivity effects can therefore be reduced. And I understand that businesses and the customers that frequent those businesses benefit from sites being close to each other. Shoppers can walk easily between shops to compare goods and services for sale or hire. My understanding is that when businesses (in both offices and shops) are closely located in this manner, it can enhance their collective productivity, through aiding networking of businesses and reducing barriers to commercial transactions taking place (often described as 'agglomeration' benefits).
69. The benefits and desirability of this consolidated pattern of commercial development are recognised and provided for by the policies of the Town Centre Zone. Consider the following policies:
- 1.1 To maintain and enhance patterns of land use, development and character which promote and reinforce close proximity and good accessibility within the business areas and between the business areas and living areas.*
- 1.5 To provide for Town Centres to be densely developed centres of activity with maximum consolidation of space, commensurate with the essential amenity, environmental and image outcomes sought for each centre.*
70. The following policy from the overarching District Wide Section of the Plan (Section 4) is also noteworthy:

4.2 To promote and enhance a network of compact commercial centres which are easily accessible to, and meet the regular needs of, the surrounding residential environments.

71. I do not believe it can be said that Plan Change 50, either in the descriptions of the activity envisaged by the reports and statements and evidence provided, nor the District Plan provisions proposed, would promote or enhance a compact commercial centre.

72. Plan Change 50 seems to promote a *laissez faire* approach, which I do not consider implements these policies. As I have covered, a very large area is proposed to be added to the Town Centre. Yet various reports and statements of evidence suggest that very little of this space will be taken up for commercial uses. Presumably commercial uses will be separated by a mix of residential and visitor accommodation etc.

73. To me, this seems an inefficient layout of activities, particularly for a Town Centre Zone. I question whether this will give rise to an environment that offers high standards of visual amenity. I question how harmoniously different land uses will sit next to each other, and I am concerned that some of the agglomeration benefits of a typical Town Centre environment will be lost. I think it would be preferable to contain the outward expansion of the Town Centre to a more confined area, promoting a more efficient Town Centre layout.

74. One adverse outcome that I believe would flow from Plan Change 50 is the loss of a tangible 'edge' to the Town Centre. The District Plan promotes such an outcome in the following Town Centre Zone policy:

3.5 To promote a built form which exhibits a sense of arrival and departure and to contain the Town Centres within clearly established boundaries.

75. Plan Change 50 promotes a kind of mixed-used zoning. In my experience, such zoning finds theoretical favour amongst many urban designers. But I believe examples of successful implementation of this theory are less common. In Queenstown, the Town Centre Zone provides for housing, but very little of it exists¹² and I suspect the amount has been decreasing over time. I believe this is to a large extent due to reverse sensitivity issues – it is difficult to find a peaceful apartment in the middle of a Town Centre with a reputation as a 'party town'. The model that appears to have worked better in Queenstown is for housing

¹² In 2013 Council's Dwelling Capacity Model recorded 89 residential dwellings in Queenstown Town Centre

to be located in close proximity to the Town Centre, in the residential zones which benefit from better views and where zoning rules better protect amenity values. I consider that many of the provisions proposed in Plan Change 50 and subsequent recommendations focus on mitigating adverse effects associated with the co-location of different activities (e.g. through controlling liquor licensing hours) rather than avoiding them. By applying more precise zoning that seeks to group different activities in different locations, I believe such effects can be better managed.

The quality of buildings and public places in the Queenstown Town Centre

76. Queenstown and its surrounds offer extensive views of and access to outstanding natural landscapes. This is of course very much its appeal as a destination. The Queenstown Town Centre also contributes to the offer of Queenstown to visitors and residents. Its street layout and public places clearly make it a desirable place to be.
77. However, by my assessment, the buildings of the Town Centre are of mixed quality. There are a few well maintained historic buildings, some recent buildings of quite a high standard, and quite a few aging buildings. Most of these older, poorer quality buildings are two storeys in height, well below the height limit imposed by the District Plan. They are often visually unattractive and, to reinforce the appeal of the Town Centre and help attract more or higher spending tourists, it would be desirable to see these redeveloped in the future. This would also improve the functionality of the buildings, providing better retail and office spaces that are warmer and more resilient to the likes of earthquakes.
78. My understanding, however, is that while ground floor retail space in the Queenstown Town Centre can be rented for a considerable amount, the market for renting space above ground floor (primarily for office and 'backpacker' visitor accommodation) is not nearly as strong. Mr Butson and Mr Stevenson have advised me that the values of office space rentals have changed little in the last 10 years, while ground floor retail rents have substantially increased. Mr Buston and Mr Stevenson will cover these matters when they appear before the Panel.
79. On this basis, it appears there may be little incentive to redevelop sites that already have ground floor retail space. Despite the recent upswing in building activity in Queenstown, there is little sign of a rejuvenation in Town Centre building. The one site currently being

developed (in upper Shotover Street) was demolished due to structural concerns and I understand that it is being replaced by a retail only building, with the former offices not replaced.

80. I suspect that Plan Change 50 could further dis-incentivise such redevelopment in the existing Town Centre. I believe the dynamics of the office market have not been well considered.

81. I note that Dr McDermott sees little risk associated with Plan Change 50. Consider the following quote from his statement of evidence:

In considering the likely impact of Plan Change 50, I have also considered the risk that for some reason – including the impact of external events like the 2007-8 Global Financial Crisis– such investments do not go ahead. Under these circumstances I would not expect any significant retail investment within the extension to take place so that there is little likelihood of undermining existing activity elsewhere.

82. Again, I believe this is an example of the discussion being myopically focused on *retail* development. Unlike Dr McDermott, I do foresee a quite immediate risk from Plan Change 50. That risk is of the office market being diverted away from the Town Centre.

83. At present, there are a handful of offices operating out of former houses in what is proposed to be the Isle Street Subzone. I suspect there would be more if it were not for the costs and uncertainty of resource consents, and the costs of Council development contributions which are levied on resource consents for changes of use. Under Plan Change 50 existing houses in the Isle Street subzone could be converted to offices as a permitted activity, and I suspect it would be difficult or impossible for Council to levy development contributions. The relatively small Queenstown Town Centre office market could be subject to a sudden influx of available office space in the Plan Change 50 area, which I suspect could be offered for rent comparatively cheaply and would offer free parking (unlike most sites in the current Town Centre). I believe this could undermine the viability of redeveloping current Town Centre sites for some time.

84. I also have some concerns about diverting public investment in public spaces and streets in the Town Centre toward the new 'Lake View' project, where such infrastructure and investment in amenities will be required to give effect to the vision espoused by Council officers and consultants. Until around 5 years ago there was a period of considerable Council investment in repaving Town Centre streets and in various improvements to parks etc. However, there has noticeably been little such investment recently. There were various projects proposed in the 2009 Queenstown Town Centre Strategy (which I attach to my evidence as Appendix) 1 such as creating a quality public space at Athol Street, which has in my view a lot of merit. Personally, I believe that improving the amenity of the Town Centre should continue to be a Council priority in order to maintain and enhance the Town Centre's competitive advantages as a tourist destination. Indeed, the Town Centre Chapter of the District Plan recognises the importance of such investments in the following policy and associated Implementation Method:

2.4 To continue programmes of street and other public open space enhancement within the Town Centres.

Implementation Method: To provide finance through the annual plan provide and initiate projects for street and open space enhancement, traffic management, heritage protection, and public facilities.

85. I am concerned that attention and investment could be diverted from this priority area to new Town Centre areas if the Town Centre is significantly expanded under Plan Change 50.

The location of the convention centre

86. Putting aside questions of affordability, it seems clear that a convention centre in or near the Town Centre could benefit the Town Centre and the wider District. I accept the argument that the Lake View area is probably the best site available. But I believe that a facility this large can have significant effects on the surrounding sites and neighbourhood. And where exactly such a site is located within the Lake View area could greatly affect the degree of benefit existing Town Centre businesses derive from this investment. To that end, I think it is noteworthy that Council proposes that the convention centre be partially funded by significant increases in Council rates for Town Centre businesses. It seems necessary to consider how much those businesses may actually benefit from the project.

87. Council has clearly had a preferred location for a convention centre since prior to the notification of the plan change, being toward the part of the proposed Lake View Subzone most distant from the existing Town Centre (see the attached Council report in Appendix 2). I am not sure why Council and its advisors have chosen not to be specific as to the proposed location of the convention centre in Plan Change 50. It seems as if debate over what I believe is an important resource management issue for Queenstown is being avoided.
88. Plan Change 50 proposes that the convention centre will be a controlled non-notified activity anywhere in the Lake View Zone. Therefore, this hearing could be the last chance for public input on this matter. I believe the District Plan should be specific as to where this location for a convention centre is to be, and that the Panel should consider what location will derive the greatest benefits to the community.
89. To me, the evidence provided to the Panel and the reports that accompanied the notified plan change have rather exaggerated how close parts of the Lake View Subzone are to the existing Town Centre. It is a considerable uphill walk to make one's way up by foot from the Town Centre to the closest parts of the proposed Lake View Sub Zone. I think this will affect how willing people are to walk further from the existing Town Centre to the far end of that subzone.
90. I believe this extra distance will make a difference as to whether people will choose to head into to the Town Centre - for a meal, drink, to buy clothes or book a tour - when attending a conference. It seems to me that the current proposal is to create an alternative precinct some distance from the existing Town Centre (and my impression is reinforced by much of the evidence, including that of Dr McDermott, which emphasises that they see the Lake View Subzone acting as a separate precinct due to physical separation). This could 'internalise' many of the benefits from conferences. This may add value to the land being up-zoned by Council, but I believe it will come at a cost to existing Town Centre businesses.
91. While Council chose not to include material relating to its preferred option for a convention centre as part of the Section 32 report, I have looked into this matter. I could be mistaken, but I can find little to suggest that Council has undertaken a sufficiently comprehensive review of alternative options for convention centre locations within the Lake View Zone. Consider for example in the attached Council report (in Appendix 3 of this evidence) which

comments that the site I believe to be preferable is inappropriate for what seem to me to be vague and questionable reasons.¹³

92. Later in this hearing, it is intended that the Panel will hear from architect Michael Wyatt who will provide a detailed analysis confirming, in my opinion, why the site proposed in Memorial Property Ltd's submission is the most appropriate location for a convention centre.

Summary of resource management issues

93. In summary, I have framed my own set of key resource management issues that I believe need to be considered by the Panel in its decision on Plan Change 50, which are different and more extensive than those described in Council's Section 32 report. I summarise these as:

- *The limited capacity for commercial activities in the Town Centre at ground floor level may be constraining business growth, particularly for tourism related industries.*
- *It would be beneficial to provide for more housing (including affordable housing) and hotel development opportunities in and around the Queenstown Town Centre.*
- *Traffic congestion and parking shortages are likely to detract from the visitor experience offered by the Queenstown Town Centre without a robust and successfully implemented transport and parking strategy.*
- *Some land uses associated with Town Centre zoning could generate considerable vehicular traffic, and we have limited knowledge of the associated effects.*
- *To promote attractive streetscapes and minimise reverse sensitivity effects between uses, it is desirable to consolidate spatial spread of Town Centre activities, rather than allowing such uses to sprawl over a wide area.*
- *Allowing commercial activities, particularly offices, to disperse over a wider area may disincentivise the gentrification of the existing Town Centre buildings.*
- *The location of the convention centre will affect the extent to which benefits are experienced by businesses in the existing Town Centre.*

Options and Recommendations

¹³ Consider the analysis provided for 'Location 3' on page 26 of the report in Appendix 3 to this evidence.

94. Before I discuss the options I believe are available to the Panel, I should mention that I have read the Section 42a report and noted the reporting planner's view that, legally speaking, it may not be incumbent upon Council to consider a broad range of options for a plan change such as this. I do not have the expertise to advise the Panel on matters of legal interpretation, but I do feel it reasonable for me to note that for a resource management decision as significant as Plan Change 50, it would be responsible for Council, in carrying out its functions under the Act, to have considered a sound range of alternatives. It seems that as a matter of principle the reporting planner may agree with me on this, given that, notwithstanding his view on legal obligations of Council, he felt it appropriate to point out alternatives that have been considered in his report. I believe this matter deserves further discussion.
95. Clearly, I am not of the view that it would be responsible to rezone as much Town Centre zoning as is proposed in Plan Change 50. There is in my view an inadequate evidence base to justify such a rezoning and the risks of significant adverse effects are too great. Rather, I believe a more cautious approach is justified which will enable some more land to be developed for Town Centre purposes, but not at the scale currently proposed. This I believe may strike a reasonable balance between the resource management issues I outline above. I am not ruling out that, over future generations, it may be deemed appropriate to significantly extend the Town Centre. But there will be many opportunities to do so progressively in successive future District Plans, which will benefit from an evolving evidence base. This I believe is a more responsible approach which would allow Council to monitor the effects of incremental policy changes. I therefore support those submitters who have requested that Plan Change 50 be staged, and believe there is some support in this principle from Section 5 of the Act which mentions the need to manage resources 'at a rate...' which provides for communities' wellbeing. The best way to stage the expansion of the Town Centre Zone is, in my view, to limit the Zone to a much smaller area than proposed and Plan Change 50 and consider further expansions as part of future plan changes.
96. There is of course an argument, which may have some validity, that the entire plan change should be declined. This argument could be advanced on the basis that it would be best to start again, with a comprehensive evidence base, after Council has developed sound strategies for matters such as transport. That approach could provide more time for the

public to meaningfully participate in the process, and could run in tandem with the forthcoming District Plan review.

97. But I also recognise that there has been considerable public and private sector investment in this plan change now. And, for better or for worse, as I understand it, an important public project, being the convention centre, needs to have its planning hurdles cleared so as to advance. I would therefore understand if the Panel determined that some form of change to the District Plan would be a reasonable outcome from this process.

98. If the argument I make that the extent of any Town Centre Zone extension needs to be significantly reduced from what has been proposed is accepted, it leads to questions as to how to compare alternative options for re-zonings.

99. I believe there are some logical criteria that can be applied in identifying preferred new Town Centre zoning areas. They ought to:

1. be contiguous with the existing Town Centre zoning;
2. be directly connected via roads;
3. sit comfortably within a walkable catchment, taking account of changes in elevation;
4. ideally be already demonstrating some non-residential character.

100. Before I consider alternative options against these criteria, I will briefly draw attention to elements of the District Plan policy hierarchy which lend support to these criteria.

101. I consider these criteria would assist in an assessment of whether the provisions implement Objective 1 of the Town Centre chapter, which I quoted earlier in my evidence. In my opinion, support can be found in that objective for maintaining and consolidating the *existing* Town Centre, as well as taking account of natural topography such as the elevation changes that encircle and form natural boundaries for the Town Centre.

102. With respect to aligning with natural topography and favouring contiguous areas, the following Town Centre Zone policies are also relevant:

3.1 To ensure a built form for each Town Centre which relates to and is sympathetic to the physical characteristics of the site and neighbourhood including climate, neighbours and topographical features.

3.2 To provide for a building appearance which is responsive to and reflects the essential character and heritage of each Town Centre and the surrounding topography.¹⁴

4.1 To restrict the peripheral spread of the Town Centre to ensure all parts are convenient to pedestrians.

103. I have identified the fourth criterion listed above (regarding extension into areas that already demonstrate some non-residential character) because of my foregoing concerns about large numbers of residential homes converting to offices and my views on the desirability of avoiding fragmented patterns of commercial development interrupted by residential sites (even as a temporary outcome). I further note that the District Plan places a great deal of emphasis on protecting the amenity of existing residential neighbourhoods. Consider for example the following policy from Section 4.9.3 of the District Plan:

2.1 To ensure new growth and development in existing urban areas takes place in a manner, form and location which protects or enhances the built character and amenity of the existing residential areas and small townships.

104. I consider that rezoning into the parts of the proposed of Isle Street subzone which currently present a residential character, would, if carried out in the manner proposed, be inconsistent with this policy. On this point, I do not agree with the evidence of Mr Kyle when he suggests that the Isle Street already has an emerging non-residential character. This is true for parts of that proposed subzone only, while other parts appear to only contain residential housing.

105. Given the reduced scale of Town Centre extension I consider appropriate, I believe the Lake View site can be discounted as the most appropriate location. As I have covered, it is in my view significantly separated from the existing Town Centre by changes in elevation

¹⁴ I note that PC50 proposed to slightly amend this policy to read: 'To provide for a building appearance built form which is responsive to and reflects the essential character and heritage of each Town Centre and the surrounding topography.'

and indirect street connections. It is difficult to imagine many people undertaking comparison shopping between shops in the Lake View site and the existing Town Centre. While I note that Mr Kyle suggests in his evidence that all parts of the Lake View Subzone are within 'easy' or 'suitable' walking distance, I disagree that this is the case for many members of the community and tourists. I agree more with Mr Colegrave in his report that accompanied the section 32 report:

Since a significant proportion of Queenstown CBD shoppers seem to travel on foot, few are likely to undertake a 10 to 15 minute walk to the plan change area for additional shopping opportunities, and instead are more likely to remain in the central CBD area.

106. Furthermore, I question how suitable the topography of parts of the Isle Street are in enabling desirable built forms in keeping with a Town Centre environment. I note for example that there is quite an elevation drop from the more western parts of Isle Street down to the properties on its southern side. In my experience, it is not common for Town Centres to be located on steep slopes. So I question what types of Town Centre buildings would locate on these sites and whether quality built form outcomes are realistically achievable. It would be simpler, and prudent in my view, to discount this option in favour of other more readily suitable locations for expansion of the Town Centre Zone.

107. Of course, the argument by the reporting planner that the extent of the Isle Street Subzone should not be reduced because of the need to maintain a Town Centre zoned connection through to the Town Centre zoned Lake View site would no longer be relevant if the Lake View site does not convert to that zone.

108. Helpfully, it seems that Council may have applied similar criteria to what I have suggested above in the past in its analyses of possible appropriate extensions of the Town Centre. Consider the following from the 2009 Town Centre Strategy¹⁵:

¹⁵ The 2009 Town Centre Strategy map is a little misleading as it encapsulates areas not already zoned 'Town Centre' within what it describes as Town Centre.



Figure 6 – Areas for Possible Expansion of the Town Centre

109. I observe that the McDermott Miller Strategies report, which forms part of the Section 32 analysis, aligned with the areas of extension proposed in the Queenstown Town Centre Strategy.

110. I also draw attention to the following, published by Council very recently, in a 2012 District Plan Review Consultation Paper¹⁶:

¹⁶ At the time of writing this continued to be available on the Council website



111. Evidently, there is some commonality between the two. Extensions follow major walking or vehicle routes (such as the walk from the Town Centre to the Gondola or along Gorge Road). Elevation changes are at most gradual, making for a reasonably comfortable walk. And generally these areas are already zoned for, or have developed a partially non-residential character.

112. I believe the areas set out in the maps above provide a sound guide as to sites suitable for Town Centre zoning (although I would not discount other small extensions broadly consistent with the line of logic I set out above).

113. I will not go into detail on the exact rules and the types of development controls appropriate for this part of the Town Centre Zone, but it seems to me that there is in places a certain built form character (consider for example the Medical Centre complex and the Dairy hotel) which may be worth maintaining and enhancing in the vicinity of those sites.

114. Overall, I make the observation that the Town Centre extensions that I favour would require little if any change to the objectives, policies and introductory text to the Town Centre Zone. This is helpful as, in my experience, the Queenstown Lakes District Plan has

suffered from incremental changes to policies and objectives which have made it a rather less well integrated and coherent document than it was when it was first published. Amending the policy framework in response to individual area-specific proposals can in my opinion lead to the unintended complication and / or weakening of the District Plan.

115. This leaves the question of what I believe should happen to the zoning of Lake View Site. I do see considerable potential for this site, particularly for residential and hotel development, and for tourism facilities such as the proposed hot pools. As covered, I accept that parts of the site may be suitable for the development of a convention centre.

116. The scale of development envisaged by Council's advisors (which would actually consist of predominantly residential and visitor accommodation development), suggests that the most appropriate zoning for this area is High Density Residential zoning. Ironically, this is the current zone, but there is a good case for amending the zoning as it applies to this area.

117. The High Density Residential Zone currently has three subzones ('A', 'B', and 'C') which enable varying degrees of development and have differing bulk and location controls. I see no reason that a 'Sub Zone D' or similar could not be created (and I note that I consider this would be consistent with the relief sought in Memorial Property Ltd's original submission). This subzone could enable greater height than is currently the case (subject to the Panel's comfort that the proposed height limits are appropriate) and a structure plan could be introduced into the rules.

118. I would suggest amendments to that Structure Plan as it is proposed. The most obvious of these would be to identify the location where a convention centre will be enabled as a controlled activity. In accordance with Memorial Property's submission I consider that that location should be similar to the following (within the red box):

Figure 2 Lakeview sub-zone Structure Plan



119. It is possible that a more precise or slightly altered location may be appropriate, subject to the evidence of Mr Wyatt who will speak later in this hearing and has considered this matter in more detail and with the benefit of his architectural expertise. I also note that moving the convention centre may also enable the retention of the Thompson Street cribs if the Panel are minded to accept submissions that they be protected¹⁷.

120. I am aware that some changes to the detail of the structure plan may be necessary as a result of accommodating a revised location for a convention centre, but I very much doubt such issues are insurmountable and I consider them subordinate to the more important issue of ensuring the convention centre is located in the best possible location for Queenstown.

121. There is also the potential for a small commercial and entertainment 'overlay' for land adjoining the proposed square. The high density residential zone already has a Commercial Precinct overlay, so I would have thought that such an outcome could be fairly

¹⁷ A realignment of roads to make a main thoroughfare through the Lake View area other than Thompson Street may also be necessary to protect the Thompson Street cribs, at least in the longer term.

easily crafted. I have considered this tentatively because it may be desirable to have some sort of 'active frontage' for the proposed square, such as outdoor dining in the vicinity of surrounding hotels. I would consider that, given the issues I have raised in the foregoing, it ought to be quite small (perhaps 1000m² or less of commercial floorspace) and enable quite a narrow range of activities.

122. The zoning for the balance of the proposed Isle Street subzone would not need to be changed. I believe it should remain unchanged from its current zoning.

Summary

123. Plan Change 50 requires considerable amendments to be more consistent with the purpose and principles of the Resource Management Act. A plan change of the magnitude and potential implications of Plan Change 50 needs a more robust and logical policy justification. The overall purpose of the Plan Change has not been well articulated and I have not seen a compelling evidence base on the issue of the need to enable a very large addition of commercial space to the Town Centre. The Plan Change also needs to be underscored with a more comprehensive evidence base. Specific issues such as traffic need to be considered in more detail, with alternative scenarios for how the area may be developed given due consideration. A convention centre within the Lake View area may be a good idea, but its final location should be subject to public planning processes so that the important issue of how it integrates with the existing town centre can be given due consideration.

Daniel Wells

18 November 2014

Appendices

1. 2009 Queenstown Town Centre Strategy
2. Report to 2014 Council meeting on the Innerlinks project
3. Attachment to report to 2013 Council meeting on the preferred Convention Centre location