

# Clinton Bird Urban Design Limited

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## Highlights of the QLDC PDP Urban Design Evidence of Clinton Bird

1. My name is Clinton Bird. I have the urban design and architectural design qualifications and experience outlined in my evidence in chief.
2. My evidence is based on a review of the goals, objectives and policies of Chapters 3 and 4 of the Queenstown Lakes District Council's Proposed District Plan (**PDP**), together with its supporting Section 42A and Section 32 Reports.
3. Chapter 3 sets out the over-arching strategic direction for managing growth, land use and development in a manner that ensures sustainable management of the Queenstown Lakes Districts' special qualities.
4. Chapter 4 sets out the objectives and policies for managing the spatial location and layout of urban development within the District. The Chapter will guide planning and decision making for the District's major urban settlements and smaller urban townships, including Queenstown, Arrowtown and Wanaka.
5. By way of a definition, 'urban design' is about making connections between people and places, movement and urban form, nature and the built fabric. Urban design draws together the many strands of place-making, environmental stewardship, social equity and economic viability into the creation of places with distinct beauty and identity. Urban design draws these and other strands together creating a vision for an area and then deploying the resources and skills needed to bring that vision to life.<sup>1</sup>
6. The Queenstown Lakes District is facing some of the strongest urban growth pressures in New Zealand.<sup>2</sup> It also contains some of New Zealand's most outstandingly scenic and dramatically beautiful natural landscapes.
7. Without careful management, strong urban growth pressures would most likely result in urban sprawl, which would undermine the beauty and distinctiveness of the District's beautiful natural landscapes.
8. My evidence supports the Council's high level strategic urban design approach to the challenges of managing (not limiting) strong urban growth pressures within landscapes of outstanding natural beauty. The strategic approach involves putting in place Urban Growth Boundaries (**UGBs**) and enabling

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<sup>1</sup> One of many definitions of urban design, extracted from <http://www.urbandesign.org/>

<sup>2</sup> Issue 2: Growth pressures impacting on the functionality and sustainability of (sic) urban areas, and risking detracting from rural landscapes (Goal 2: the Strategic and Integrated management of urban growth), Section 32 Evaluation Report: Strategic Direction, Pages 6, 7 and 8.

increased intensity and population density within these boundaries.<sup>3</sup> This will result in more compact towns which, in my opinion, will achieve good urban design outcomes and is consistent with contemporary urban design theory and best practice.

9. The PDP prioritises and directs development to locations that are less sensitive to landscape impacts i.e. onto available land within UGBs.
10. Without the Council's adopted urban growth management approach, it is my view that the District's outstandingly scenic landscapes, together with the highly attractive and characterful towns of Queenstown, Arrowtown and Wanaka would be vulnerable to the adverse effects typically associated with urban sprawl. Sprawl of this kind would erode and undermine the unique qualities and sense of place of both the towns and their highly scenic landscape settings.
11. In my opinion, it is vital that Council protects and enhances the unique identity or *genius loci*<sup>4</sup> of towns within the District. In the case of Queenstown and Wanaka, the natural landscape, rather than built form, establishes the *genius loci* of these places. The *genius loci* of Arrowtown is somewhat different in that it derives from a more balanced combination of its natural landscape and its built form. Nevertheless, I consider that all three towns are of such regional importance that they need to have urban growth pressures carefully, effectively and efficiently managed.
12. The deployment of UGBs and the up-zoning of intensification areas within the UGBs, will result in more compact towns. Such towns are generally considered to offer the following urban design advantages and positive outcomes:
  - i. a greater and more dramatic distinction in the visual character of 'urban' (town) and 'rural' (landscape), wherein one complements the other and where the blending effects of urban sprawl are better managed;
  - ii. increasing site coverage and building height makes more efficient use of land;
  - iii. taller buildings are likely to result in a greater mix of land uses on any given site (e.g. retail/commercial on the ground floor with offices and/or residential above);
  - iv. less car dependency, thus lower consumption of non-renewable energy resources and lower emissions;
  - v. more efficient and less expensive infrastructure, utilities and public services;
  - vi. more efficient and effective public transport services and increased overall accessibility;
  - vii. more walkable settlements;
  - viii. mixed use neighbourhoods;
  - ix. rejuvenation of existing urban areas;
  - x. the preservation of green space;
  - xi. increased housing choice from a more diverse range of housing types;
  - xii. increased safety as a result of increase passive surveillance (more 'eyes on the street'); and
  - xiii. mixed uses enable enhanced business and trading activities.

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<sup>3</sup> The PDP acknowledges that not all land within UGBs, such as that with ecological, heritage or landscape significance or that subject to natural hazards, will be suited to development.

<sup>4</sup> *Genius loci* is a Latin term used by Christian Norberg-Schulz to refer to the distinctive atmosphere or pervading spirit of a particular place.

13. Having read Revised Chapters 3 and 4 of the PDP together with their respective Section 32 reports, the Queenstown Lakes District Council's Hearing Report and reviewed submissions related to urban design issues/matters, I fully support the high level strategic directions, goals, objectives and policies of Chapters 3 and 4 of the PDP as being appropriate to the Queenstown Lakes District.
14. I am happy to answer any questions.

Clinton Bird