

District Plan Review



RESIDENTIAL ZONES

What does it mean for you?

In this, the fourth of our series on the Queenstown-Lakes District Council's review of its proposed district plan ("PDP") we will take a look at the proposed residential zones. There are five:

- High Density Residential Zone;
- Medium Density Residential Zone;
- Low Density Residential Zone;
- Large Lot Residential Zone; and
- Arrowtown Historic Management Zone.

The first three apply district wide. The Large Lot Residential Zone is primarily but not exclusively confined to parts of Wanaka and the fifth is obviously specific to Arrowtown.



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The Zones

HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL ZONE

As the name suggests the purpose of this zone is to provide for intensive residential development, either within or close to the Queenstown and Wanaka town centres. Both this and the Medium Density Residential Zone are designed to allow for greater intensification of residential use within the urban growth boundaries proposed for Queenstown, Wanaka, and Arrowtown, which the Council considers necessary to avoid sprawl, consequent adverse effects on the environment, and to make better use of infrastructure.

The Council envisages that within the high density residential zone multi-unit development and visitor accommodation is to be encouraged with "a reasonable degree of protection of amenity values". Other than small scale, commercial development will be discouraged. Building height will be "incentivised" where development "is designed to achieve a high environmental performance".

Turning to the specifics, up to three residential dwellings, units, or flats per site will be permitted activities and four or more will be restricted discretionary activities, provided they meet specified building standards which includes a maximum of three storeys and a maximum height of 12 metres (or four storeys and under 15 metres in some cases) on flat sites in Queenstown and eight metres in Wanaka. Lower limits are set for sloping sites. Site coverage ranges between 65% and 70%. Boundary setbacks range between two and five metres. Where these requirements are not complied with, the application will default to a more restrictive consent category. An interesting feature is the availability of increased development potential when a building meets a particular rating using the New Zealand Green Building Council Homestar system. This is a "bonus" which is also used in the Medium Density Residential Zone.

MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL ZONE

The introduction of a specific district wide "Medium Density Residential Zone" in the PDP is new. There is not one in the Operative District Plan ("ODP"). Special zones exist, for example at Remarkables Park Shopping Centre in Queenstown and Three Parks in Wanaka, which make provision for "medium density" residential development but it is not widespread throughout the district.

The Council has recognised that the availability of housing and its affordability is a significant issue facing Queenstown-Lakes, given that it is one of the fastest growing areas in the country. The inclusion of a medium density residential zone is being promoted by the Council as a response to address the district's housing issues (availability and affordability) while maintaining compact urban forms via "containment and a managed approach to the mix and location of urban land uses enabled within defined boundaries". This concept includes "infill housing" and it will be very interesting to see how it is received by the public. In parts of Auckland for example, there has been considerable

resistance to the concept, with people opting to maintain the status quo rather than embrace the additional development rights more intense residential zoning offers.

The Council is proposing that areas in Queenstown, Frankton, Arrowtown, and Wanaka, located within the respective urban growth boundaries and in reasonable proximity to the existing centres, will be rezoned. It is envisaged that medium density development will be limited to two storeys with a variety of building forms including terrace, semi-detached, duplex, townhouse and small lot detached housing. Emphasis is to be placed on the relationship buildings have with their principal street frontage. The Council says it is not looking to encourage "unarticulated blank walls or facades to the street" and will be expecting "some form of visual connection with the street such as through the inclusion of windows, outdoor living areas, low profile fencing, or landscaping".

"Bonus" provisions are also included, offering higher

density and the opportunity for developments to be processed on a "non-notified" basis where they meet a specified level using the New Zealand Green Building Council rating system – this bonus will be available only if an application is made for the particular development within five years after the date the Medium Density Residential Zone is made operative. Given that land use consents generally have a life span of five years unless implemented, this means developers will likely have a 10 year window within which to complete the development before the benefits of the "sunset clause" are lost.

Within the Medium Density Residential Zone detached dwellings, units, and flats will be permitted, one per site in Arrowtown and three per site elsewhere. Two will be allowed per site as restricted discretionary activities in Arrowtown and four or more elsewhere. Home occupations with limits of one non-resident employee, together with floor area and vehicle restrictions will also be permitted, subject in all areas to compliance with the prescribed standards. As mentioned earlier in relation to other zones, failure to comply with the standards will result in an application defaulting to a more restrictive land use category.

LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL ZONE

The largest residential zone in the District is the Low Density Residential Zone, again it relates to land located within the urban growth boundaries. The Council says that it is designed to provide for "traditional suburban densities and housing forms. There will be predominantly detached dwellings on sections between 400m² and 1000m², but some smaller scale and low rise infill development will be allowed to provide various other housing options. Here the Council is introducing what it refers to as its "gentle density" approach designed to "support discrete infill development within the zone, whilst protecting residential amenity". Generally Council sees infill development being "low rise and therefore able to maintain the low density character of the zone".

Residential dwelling and flats will be a permitted activity provided they are located outside the Airport

The standards for the zone include maximum building coverage of 45% and a density requirement of a minimum of 250m² per unit or dwelling unless the "Homestar" bonus applies. For example, if a "six star" rating is achieved no minimum is required. Another standard requires dwellings built within an "Airport Noise Control Boundary" to achieve specified indoor sound levels. Some of the land proposed for the Medium Density Residential Zone is located within the Queenstown Airport Outer Control Boundary. It is very likely that Queenstown Airport Corporation and perhaps some of the airlines will be concerned about this, if they perceive it as likely to have an effect on their operations in future. This could impact on the proposal to rezone a relatively large "greenfield" site north of SH6 between Hansen Road and Glenda Drive.

In addition to the standards mentioned above, minimum boundary setbacks, recession planes, and maximum continuous building length are also specified to ensure "a reasonable standard of amenity". There is even a minimum window sill height specified for second storeys, presumably to afford privacy in the more densely developed areas permitted and encouraged by the zone provisions.

Outer Control Boundary, at the rate of 1 unit per site in Arrowtown and two units per site elsewhere. Minimum land area of each unit will be 300m² with a maximum building coverage of 40%. There are usual height controls, boundary setbacks, and so forth. As with the other zones, failure to comply with a standard will see the application default to a more restrictive land use category. There is some similar opportunity for home occupations as in the Medium Density Residential Zone but commercial activities will be "non-complying" unlike in the Medium Density Residential Zone where some small scale commercial activity is "discretionary". One would expect the Low Density Residential Zone to enjoy a greater level of amenity than the Medium Density Residential Zone, based upon the standards applying to each.

LARGE LOT RESIDENTIAL ZONE

As previously stated the Large Lot Residential Zone is not particularly extensive and is located principally at Meadowstone and along the lakeside at Peninsula Bay in Wanaka. It is designed, the Council says, to serve as a buffer between higher density residential areas and rural areas located outside of Urban Growth Boundaries. In a sense its function is not very different to the Rural Residential Zone which provides similar opportunities for residential development outside of the Urban Growth Boundaries (UGBs).

The focus in the zone is on higher levels of residential amenity with provision for some community and recreational activities where appropriate. Residential lot sizes range between 3,000m² and 4,000m² as a minimum depending upon location. Home occupations are permitted, but except for commercial recreation (which is a discretionary activity) and limited visitor accommodation (controlled), there is no provision for commercial activities. As with the other zones, the activity status depends upon compliance with the zone standards.

ARROWTOWN HISTORIC MANAGEMENT ZONE

As the title suggests, the Arrowtown Historic Management Zone specifically applies to the older part of the residential settlement of Arrowtown. The purpose of the zone is described as allowing for “the continued sensitive development of the historic area of residential Arrowtown in a way that will protect and enhance these characteristics that make it a valuable part of the town for local residents and for visitors attracted to the town by its historic associations and unique character”.

In order to achieve its desired result the Council is looking to retain larger section sizes, low scale single storey buildings, and the tree lined roadsides with limited paving. Single dwellings and residential flats as a means of providing affordable housing will be permitted together with home occupations and limited visitor accommodation. Community activities are proposed as discretionary activities. There is no provision for commercial activities. Standards including density, building coverage, site area, and height limits are designed to promote the stated purpose of the zone described above.

DISTRICT WIDE RULES

As is the case with the ODP, in addition to complying with the individual zone requirements it will also be necessary to comply with the District Wide Rules which include requirements relating to subdivision, earthworks, utilities, transport, and so on.

Concluding comments

While it is likely that the PDP as notified will contain changes to the draft provisions that have been approved by the Council to date, we anticipate they will not be extensive. Nevertheless it will be important for land owners to take the time to check out the zone requirements which will apply to their land and to the land in the immediate vicinity.

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