

## QUEENSTOWN URBAN DESIGN PANEL REPORT

***MT SOHO SUBDIVISION***

7 August 2009

- Panel members present:** Lou Alfeld (Chair)  
Mark Gray  
Peter Ritchie  
Preston Stevens  
Duane Te Paa
- QLDC staff:** Nick Karlovsky  
Karen Page  
Mark Rushworth
- Lakes Environmental staff:** Paula Costello
- In attendance:** Roger Monk (Developer)  
Paddy Baxter (Baxter Design)  
John Edmonds (John Edmonds)  
Sonya Heenan (John Edmonds)
- Status:** This is the second appearance before the Panel for this proposed subdivision which had undergone considerable revision since it was first reviewed on 3 July 2009. The Panel's first report identified shortcomings which, for the most part, the Applicant has addressed in this revised proposal. The Applicant pointed out that the design, although considerably refined, is still in a conceptual stage; a subsequent, more complete plan may be brought back before the Panel for a third review.
- Findings:** The Panel appreciates that the Applicant has volunteered to present this design for Panel review again and is impressed by the considerable amount of thought and work that has gone into the proposal since seeing it five weeks ago. The Panel again commends the attentive presence of the planners and developers at the meeting and their participation in a frank discussion of the plans merits and shortcomings. Within the scope of the New Zealand Urban Design Protocol as applied to the Queenstown Lakes District, the Panel notes the following items:
- A. Context
1. *Plan Changes.* QLDC is proposing two public Plan Changes, 29 and 30, that will affect the Arrowtown urban boundaries and impose new rules on future development. This proposed private plan change is intended to complement the two public plan changes. Because the Panel has not yet been asked to review the proposed QLDC plan changes, the Panel is not in a position to evaluate whether or not this private plan change is a preferred use of the land and whether or not the Arrowtown urban boundary proposed in Plan Change 29 should be extended to include this site. At this point in time the Panel can only advise the Applicant as to the strengths and weaknesses of their proposal as an academic exercise in urban design.

2. *Relationship to Arrowtown.* Clearly the Panel cannot ignore the proposal's proximity to Arrowtown and, indeed, the Panel's earlier report included a number of references to the relationship of the proposal to the existing township. In order to avoid any misunderstandings, the Panel repeats its statements regarding the larger Arrowtown context in which this proposal must eventually be evaluated. The proposal must:
- Embrace a vision and a logic that will make the development as special as is the heart of the town it buttresses while projecting an individual identity that complements the Arrowtown self-image,
  - Provide a creative mix of lot sizes, densities, open space and affordability that preserves and enriches the unique village atmosphere so treasured by Arrowtown's residents,
  - Serve a larger purpose than merely to house more people, such purpose to include increasing sustainability, widening housing choices and nurturing community connections, and
  - Stage development to ensure that housing clusters and neighbourhoods are completed before new ones are begun to avoid the appearance of urban sprawl.

#### B. Character

3. *Neighbourhood Clusters.* The Panel likes the idea of creating a series of neighbourhood clusters, each with its own "pocket park". The next step in carrying this concept to its logical conclusion is to incorporate the balance lots into the clusters so that every home feels a part of a local neighbourhood and the larger community. The neighbourhood clusters (referred to as Comprehensive Developments in the proposal) need to be further refined so that the development of each site contributes to a cohesive neighbourhood environment. Design Guidelines along the lines implied by the urban design report submitted to the earlier panel review are one mechanism by which this could be achieved.
4. *Roadfront Lots.* The jumble of homes along McDonnell Road represents a precedent to avoid. The plan to provide private allotments along the two boundary roads could be a mistake as it defeats the intended special image of this community by linking it to the existing suburban sprawl. The Panel strongly encourages this development to preserve a near-continuous strip of open space along the two boundary roads. Leaving the road margins as "no build" green space will preserve the rural feel of the existing roads and turn the focus of the new community inward.
5. *Landscape Design.* The revised landscape analysis and design shows a significant step forward. The housing clusters centred on "pocket parks", the improved internal circulation and the increase in usable open space all commend this design. Further analysis of sun and shade, slope topography and internal access roadways offers additional opportunities for refinement. Landscape designs for the edges of the two existing boundary roads are also needed.
6. *Streetscape Design.* As yet there is no detail of the streetscape treatment of the various street types. Variations to the streetscape within the neighbourhood clusters would contribute to a distinctive character for each cluster. Further analysis could also include relationships between dwellings and streets for different neighbourhoods, varying terrain and differing orientations.

#### C. Choice

7. *Sustainability.* The greater diversity of housing choices improves the sustainability of this proposal. So too does the clustering of housing onto smaller sections help to free up more open space without reducing density. Higher density residential buildings could serve as focus buildings in some neighbourhoods. Strong controls over design and staging of development will be needed to ensure that the intended long-term result is not compromised by fluctuations in short-term market forces.

#### D. Connections

8. *Access.* The internal roads and footpaths appear well integrated into the plan, providing ready connection between all parts of the community.
9. *Central Roadway.* The single sinuous roadway that connects the two sides of the development has been imaginatively used as a common connecting thread across the site. Care should be taken to redesign the entry through the Activity Hub to prevent it becoming used as a quick short-cut between the two boundary roads.
10. *Activity Hub.* The Panel supports the preservation and reuse of the historic cottage along McDonnell Road. Again, the redesign of its layout and increased connections promise to work well in giving this community a central commercial and social focus. Provision should be made for one or two community meeting rooms in this hub area.
11. *Walkways.* The many pedestrian pathways and access points provide for good interconnections within the development. Additional connections through to the Council Reserve and to McDonnell Road would be welcome.

#### E. Creativity

12. *Refining the Vision.* This second plan offers a creative vision embodied in the concept of housing clusters and mini-neighbourhoods tied together within the larger community. This vision of the plan shows considerable promise and the Panel encourages the Applicant to continue to refine it into a more integrated whole.

#### F. Custodianship

13. *Arrowtown Image.* No one expects this proposal to attempt to replicate Arrowtown. Instead it should demonstrate that the Arrowtown experience can be extended into a wholly new village environment.

#### G. Collaboration

14. *Urban and Landscape Planning.* It is vital that consultant planners, landscape architects, architects and urban designers be involved collectively in finalising the many details that will make this proposal a workable plan.
15. *Community Consultation.* The Panel supports the applicant's intention to continue consultation with the Arrowtown community and welcomes the innovative use of a web site to further this two-way communication.

### **Summary**

#### **Key Issues Raised:**

- Direction of conceptual development shows considerable promise,
- Incomplete sun, shade and topographical analysis,
- Incomplete analysis to support the use, location and outcomes of the proposed private allotments along the two existing boundary roads, and

- Refinement of the cluster housing and mini-neighbourhood ideas.

**Desired Outcomes:**

- Prepare a holistic plan for a unique residential village within the context of Arrowtown,
- Achieve greater integration of differing lot sizes, housing types and residential densities along with a rethink of the retention of private allotments along the existing road frontages,
- Seek additional open space areas,
- Refine the various streetscape types and characteristics,
- Consider interior access roads as shared spaces,
- Eliminate driveways opening onto McDonnell Road and Centennial Drive so as to maintain long strips of open space landscaping to complement the landscape on the opposite sides of the roads, and
- Create a workable long-term staging plan to ensure a logical development path.

This refined proposal demonstrates the Applicant's desire to create a superior village development respectful of its Arrowtown heritage. The Panel invites the Applicant to a third review of its proposal at a time when the issues raised in this report have been settled.

Checked and approved by:

Lou Alfeld

Chair: Queenstown Urban Design Panel