

Fast Track Approvals Act 2024- Individual Elected Member Statement

COUNCIL REFERENCE NUMBER: FTSA2503 – AYRBURN SCREEN HUB

SUMMARY OF APPLICATION

A film studio and associated accommodation on Arrowtown/Lake Hayes road. To summarise the proposal includes a total of 15 buildings including:

- Film Studio – 7,200m² GFA
- Accommodation and Film Office – 185 accommodation units
- Hotel Reception and Office – two storey 282m² GFA
- Spa and Wellness Centre – Two storey 377m² GFA
- Function Venue – 674m² GFA
- Depot and Ayrburn Office – three storey office space 928m²

SUMMARY OF INFO PROVIDED WITH APPLICATION

1. *Planning report and proposal summary*
2. *Master and architectural plans*
3. *Engineering Documents*
4. *Expert Reports – ecological, historical, transport, economic, cultural, film*
5. *Additional Information received 18.11.2025*

IMPORTANT INFORMATION REGARDING THIS ELECTED MEMBER STATEMENT

1. Statements are an elected member's personal views and these do not constitute a collective decision or position of the Council. Discussions with constituents may have assisted to form this view.
2. The statement is an opinion and not put forward as expert evidence.
3. The statement is intended to assist EPA following an invitation for commentary.

ELECTED OFFICIAL NAME – Samuel “Q” Belk

ELECTED OFFICIAL STATEMENT:

My name is Samuel “Q” Belk, I am the QLDC Councillor for Arrowtown Kawarau Ward which includes this proposal.

After liaising with a number of the Speargrass Flat Road community members (including some who are defined as ‘adjacent owners’, and others who are in the affected area but are not adjacent) it is clear there is a high level of concern about the impacts of the Winton’s Screenhub and accommodation Fast Track application. The following are my thoughts based on my conversations with residents and my own views, also informed by my experience with other Fast Track proposals and from thirty years as a Lakes District resident.

First, my concern relates to loss of amenity values, increased noise and lighting (from both construction and operations), traffic and the wider impact on the special area of the basin (such as the altered landscape when viewed from Christines Hill).

I also have concerns that this is a commercial and industrial scale project, and a proposal that would be unlikely to be granted consent under the District Plan or ordinary RMA processes. It is an inappropriate use of legislation (designed to speed up critical national and regional infrastructure) but instead is being used to achieve an intensive property development and accommodation facility to support the Ayrburn Entertainment Precinct.

For the residents who have owned their properties for as long as nineteen years, there is extreme frustration and angst that, again, they are having to contest Winton as it uses a national approval process to intensively develop this land, when prior attempts have been repeatedly denied under RMA processes. It is critical to note that under the District Plan (formed after years of Council and Community consultation) only three or four homes (i.e.: a similar size and scale to the rest of the neighbourhood. 8,000 sq meters each) could be built on this land- but instead a project of industrial and commercial scale is proposed.

The group of 'adjacent owners' that I have been in contact with have lived on Speargrass Flat for up to two decades. They will be making individual submissions, some of which have been shared with me, and I note that they raise concerning issues both in respect of the potential impacts on them and the robustness of the applicant's business case, used to justify the claimed economic benefits. What also really stands out is the personal impact that this and other tried (and failed) proposals has had and continues to have on individuals and their well-being.

Other residents who are on the other side of Speargrass Flat Road, and who are therefore not classified as being 'adjacent' (and have no official say on this proposal) have similar concerns. I received direct feedback from residents who have owned their properties for 5 to 18 years.

The common threads (which I agree with) from those I have engaged with:

1. Independent Review: the need for the Panel to rigorously assess this proposal, including undertaking independent reviews of the core business and economic case for the film studio
2. Noise: lack of confidence in the applicant's noise assessment, given that modelling does not assess all activities involved in the proposal - such as accommodation and parking areas, despite these being very, very close to residential neighbours.
3. Enforcement: if the proposal were to be granted, how the effective conditions could be applied? There is a lack of trust in the Applicant's ability (and willingness even past history) to comply with conditions of consent, and in our Council's ability to enforce compliance.
4. Planning: the call for this proposal to be assessed against the permitted level of development on the site. i.e. 3-4 residential properties. While this is a planning and legal issue, it sounds only fair and logical to me that this is the starting point.
5. Business case: From Winton's proposal: the visitor accommodation is to "de-risk the investment for the developer". In effect the developer is asking the residents of Queenstown to "de-risk" the original investment, an investment which was, at the outset, marginal.
6. Effects on Neighbours: that the rural amenity will be forever spoiled for residents and visitors as this developer continues to challenge and transform the area.
7. "Trojan Horse" for housing development: A number of residents rightly feel (and it is obvious to me) that the "screen hub" (where the applicant demonstrates no prior expertise), is really a first step to a housing development mirroring Ladies Mile, et cetera.

I urge the Panel to obtain independent reviews of the applicant's economic case and noise assessment in the first instance, and, respond fully in its decision-making processes to the issues being raised.

“Q”

Samuel Belk
QLDC Councilor
Arrowtown-Kawarau Ward