

1. Contact Details	
First name	Robyn & Nick
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Email	

2. We will email you draft conditions of consent for your comment	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I can receive emails and my email address is correct

## Submission in opposition to the Ayrburn Screen Hub Application (FTAA-2508-1093)

### Summary

Thank you for the opportunity to give feedback on this application. We strongly oppose this application.

- For over 10 years, applications for high-density development on Ayrburn Farm (which proposed overturning its rural zoning) have been analysed and litigated by experts (QLDC, Commissioners and the Environment Court). Each time rulings have been that it is not suitable for high-density development, and ruining the beautiful rural character and open space of the area is unacceptable.
- This 5th proposal for intensive development at Ayrburn Farm pushes the boundaries even more with industrial film activity (said to be “like a busy shipyard”) and commercial accommodation which does not belong in the middle of rural residential areas. It will have many adverse effects on the neighbourhood and does not align with QLDC long-term plans for what is best for residents and visitors in Queenstown.
- From Winton’s proposal: the visitor accommodation is to *“de-risk the investment for the developer”*. Why should the residents and visitors of Queenstown endure significant adverse effects for a developer de-risking his investment? His investment is not essential infrastructure – It is simply a plan to *“maximise the value from the entire masterplan for shareholders”*. This proposal should not be able to ignore the zoning and overturn the evidence-based plans that have already been established at enormous cost to the residents of Queenstown.



An alternative aerial view (which doesn't fade out the surrounding neighbourhood)





Looking towards Ayrburn Farm, taken prior to 2018.

## 1. Introduction

Our family have lived here 13 years. We chose the location for its peaceful and magnificent rural outlook. We feel very lucky call this place home and want to do everything we can to preserve the area's special character for future generations. We work from home as Graphic Designers, so are living in this neighbourhood 24-7.

Soon after we purchased the property we randomly met the landscape architect for the initial Ayrburn Farm subdivision (into 4 rural lots - prior to Winton's ownership). They assured us that it was *"one of the most protected rural areas in the basin. It is tied up so tight that no one will ever be able to sub-divide it."* This was fantastic to hear! Sadly, since 2015, we have invested 100s of hours submitting to QLDC to oppose high-intensity development in this beautiful rural area.

We have also spoken about this proposal with many neighbours in the area. Many are not adjacent so they haven't received an invitation to comment – they are all unanimous in their very strong opposition to this proposal and feel very frustrated that they are unable to give official feedback.

## 2. The impacts on us

Over the past decade of submitting on Ayrburn development proposals (3 SHAs and the District Plan Review – [Appendix 1 page 9](#)) we have focussed on planning policies and environmental reasoning. This time we feel it's important to also highlight the loss of amenity for this quiet, beautiful rural neighbourhood – a huge issue for the people that live here. We are hoping this will be the last submission we have to make on Ayrburn, so we feel timely to detail the loss of amenity we have experienced already...

### 2.1 Loss of privacy

Winton's consent (RM190857) required planting on our north boundary. Their first planting of Portuguese Laurels died as they didn't water them (we notified Winton when we noticed they needed water). After 2 years, they replaced them all with new trees. These seem to be surviving a bit better, but many are dead and all are swamped by weeds. We'd estimate at least half of native planting on their built mounds also died due to lack of water. The mounds are now dominated by 2m high weeds (that are swamping their original native planting) – these 2m high weeds are our current outlook.

We had no notification of the cycle/walking track which now passes along our north boundary. The day the diggers started was the day we found out about it. We now often have 50-100 people per day walking/riding past us and 90% of them stare into our living space. Many don't realise we can hear them talking and lots comment "that house doesn't have much privacy". Our bedroom blinds are now permanently closed as people on the track can see in.

We have recently spent a lot of money on native plants, mulch, compost and rabbit fencing to achieve our own screening, but this will take many years to regain the privacy we used to enjoy.



## 2.2 Noise over the last 5 years

For over 5 years we have heard the beeping and whirring of heavy earth-moving machinery. In the paddock to the north-east, they created a small mountain of soil (aerial image on the right) which a bulldozer worked over constantly (the beeping from this bulldozer started at 7am most mornings). We work from home so this beeping became the annoying soundtrack to our daily lives.

More recently we have had the same noise of diggers, and trucks while they build the new 'spur' in their film hub plan. We find it odd that they have been allowed to start this spur already, before the development has been consented.



We had a long period of earth-moving machinery (and associated noise) while the mounds were being built, directly in front of our property.

More recently the area in front of us (immediately beyond the mounds) has a firewood processing area with chainsaws and woodsplitters operating.







### 2.3. Noise from Ayrburn currently

The proposed site is in a landscape “bowl”. We live to the south of the site.

In still weather, we can hear people talking as they walk across the track at the top of the hill (to the north of the studio site ~500m away). We also hear people talking in the carpark at the Ayrburn entertainment area (also ~575m away). When Ayrburn hold their annual Winter Wonderland festival we can hear kids having fun on the ice rink.

**We are not against the noise of kids having fun or people talking – we raise this point to demonstrate how easily sound travels around the Ayrburn Farm hills.**

On November 22, we could hear the bass from music from the fashion show event at the Ayrburn Bakehouse for most of the evening. It was still going at 11.45pm (575m away with our double-glazed windows closed). We have queried this with Ayrburn management. They replied ([Appendix 2 – page 10](#)) stating they were “comfortable that we were within our consent levels” and that their venue doors were closed. If Ayrburn really insist that this is true, then this demonstrates **even more clearly**, how easily sound travels in this bowl.

Does this mean that on any normal night at Ayrburn (i.e not special permitted noise events), we can expect to hear the bass from music at any time of night, 575m away (as they state it is within their consent levels?) – so it follows that commercial activity that is only 150m away will be even louder.

### 3. How can noise from the visitor accommodation be controlled?

A large portion of filming for productions based in Queenstown would be on location, capturing our beautiful vistas. Film crews often need to arrive at locations pre-dawn (4am), so that they can set up and begin filming as soon as there is enough natural light or the golden glow of sunrise. This has been witnessed recently with a film crew at Lake Hayes – we noticed a large number of film trucks and cars on site at 5am.

If the crew were staying at the Ayrburn Screen Hub accommodation and, for example, had a location shoot at Glenorchy, trucks, buses and cars departing (with doors slamming) would need to depart at 3am to allow for travel time. This would wake us up and would potentially happen every morning if the film hub had consecutive productions using it.

Also if the visitor accommodation guests were returning to their rooms to 'kick-on' after attending a wedding at one of Ayrburn's venues, this would keep us awake at night... particularly if we can hear music 575m away at the Bakehouse "with doors closed" (Ayrburn's words).

Having experienced excessive noise from the site over the last 5 years we struggle to understand how this proposal for industrial activity and commercial visitor accommodation will be able to adhere to the normal noise levels of a rural residential neighbourhood.

### 4. Does the applicant's own personal loss-of-amenity disputes provide a precedent?

We predict Winton's response to our loss-of-amenity arguments will be that we are just NIMBYs. The applicant (who also lives on our road) has had a near-decade-long legal battle with a neighbour over loss of views<sup>1</sup> and has submitted against their neighbours in opposition to an application to host events<sup>2</sup>.

An excerpt from the applicant's submission to QLDC opposing RM201050:

*"The noise and disturbance from the many un-consented events the applicants have previously held on the site is significant and **not appropriate for the surrounding rural environment when considering the close proximity of the site to neighbours.**"*

Comments from the commissioners on RM201050:

*"the cumulative effects of the events, including the increase in activity, traffic and noise, would be immediately discernible, resulting in a "permanent, inevitable and substantial" change to the character and amenity of the location; the effects on the environment were more than minor; and the proposal was contrary to relevant objectives and policies in the proposed district plan."*<sup>2</sup>

This is exactly how we feel about the Ayrburn Screen Hub, although we believe "change to the character and amenity of the location and the effects on the environment" will be much worse.

The impacts of establishing a commercial operation in a quiet rural environment was considered by the Environment Court in a case involving QLDC and Speargrass Flat Road: Decision No. [2025] NZEnvC 343.

### 5. Industrial and commercial activities compromised by being next to a rural residential zone

Film industry friends have told us film studios operate "like a busy shipyard" with noise, truck movements, set-construction mess and activity going 24/7. [\[Appendix 3 - images of film studios on page 11\]](#).

This activity is the opposite of the Environment Court's final ruling on what is appropriate use for this land.

A Queenstown film studio needs to attract international film producers with **a site that can function fully without restrictions**. It needs to be located on appropriately zoned, fit-for-purpose land, that fits with the Key Objectives and Policies of the District Plan for all who live, work and visit here.

<sup>1</sup> [www.odt.co.nz/regions/queenstown/battle-over-earth-mound-labours](http://www.odt.co.nz/regions/queenstown/battle-over-earth-mound-labours)

<sup>2</sup> [www.odt.co.nz/regions/queenstown/historic-property-refused-event-consent](http://www.odt.co.nz/regions/queenstown/historic-property-refused-event-consent)



## 6. Will Queenstown continue to be the “crown jewel” for tourism, if industrial and commercial developments fill up our pristine rural open spaces?

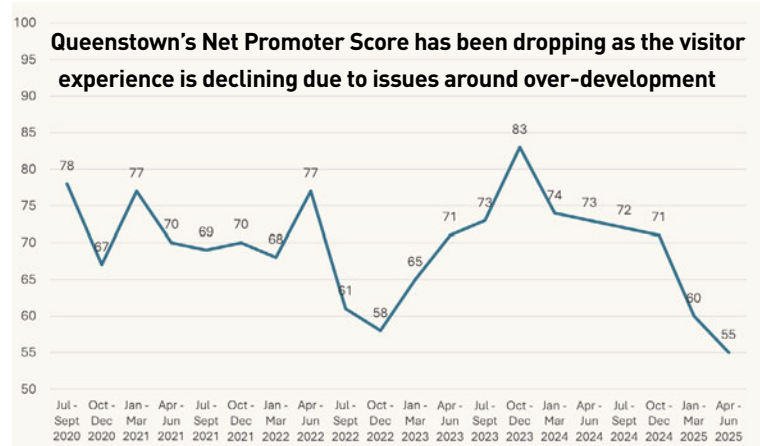
**The #1 reason** people choose to visit and live here is our stunning natural environment, which includes our beautiful rural open spaces. We must not create precedents that start ruining what makes this place so unique and special.

### What the reports say...

“Queenstown’s stunning natural scenery is the primary attraction for international visitors and ranks among the top three motivators for domestic visitors”

“Queenstown’s stunning natural scenery continues to be the number one drawcard attracting visitors to the region”

[Queenstown Lakes’ Visitor Experience Survey](#)



“Many comments indicate respondents’ concerns about the environmental impact of rapid development in the district.”

“There is also concern about the loss of rural landscapes due to large construction projects. Some respondents call for stricter regulations on development to prevent or reduce the environmental effects, e.g., land erosion, and stronger environmental protections for lakes, wetlands, and green spaces. There is a strong sense that more needs to be done to protect the district’s natural environment and that sustainability should be a core focus of future planning efforts.”

“Non-resident respondents also appear concerned about the district’s increasing development and its impact on the area’s natural character and charm. The perceived “urban sprawl” and increased high-density housing are of concern to non-resident respondents, particularly those who have property in the smaller communities outside of the central area and come to the district to escape larger cities.”

[Queenstown Lakes District Council – 2024 Quality of Life Survey](#)

“If Queenstown isn’t able to maintain its international visitor experience and sustain tourism growth, these **regional and national economic benefits could be lost**. Queenstown’s position as New Zealand’s most popular tourist destination (after Auckland), and the strong association between the Queenstown and New Zealand brands also means that New Zealand’s tourism brand could be damaged from a diminished Queenstown experience.”

“Tourism in Queenstown has a strong social licence from the QLDC, private industry and the local community, which all depend on it. However, as Queenstown continues its transition from a town to a growing city, it must ensure that tourism growth is sustainable and has buy-in from the local community. Queenstown needs to continue to attract high-quality visitors, to protect its pristine natural environment, and to address its creaking infrastructure.”

[Sustaining tourism growth in Queenstown – Martin Jenkins](#)

“We are rightly proud of Queenstown. It’s the jewel in New Zealand’s tourism crown, the reason millions of visitors fall in love with our country and the image that so often defines our nation to the world.

“Queenstown isn’t just another town. It’s a national icon, the postcard image of who we are and how we present ourselves to the world. But without action, that image is at risk of being tarnished by congestion, water restrictions, or a frustrated local community.”

[Chief Executive, Infrastructure New Zealand, 7 November 2025](#)

## 7. Viability of the proposal

Film studios in NZ are struggling with numbers of domestic and international productions declining.

*"There is data that proves the decline across our international, domestic and commercial screen markets."*<sup>3</sup>

THE POST 11/10/2025

Lane Street Studio has recently been put up for sale...

*"Film, TV and media sector in NZ was having a "tough time of it, with a big economic downturn impacting so many."*<sup>4</sup>

RNZ - LANE STREET STUDIOS, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, 20/10/2025

Also important to consider – on the horizon is the rapid development of **'Virtual'** film production with many studios in NZ already offering this service. Virtual production can reduce the need for location shoots, set builds, and travel and result in faster production workflows requiring less crew, less space, less health & safety requirements and consequently, less cost (or revenue if you own a film studio). In 10 years time, will there be the demand for a large industrial-sized studio with large accommodation space? Will this development then just be a hotel with a mostly unused industrial-sized building?

Choosing Queenstown for a film destination will be predominantly about the stunning vistas outdoors. For undercover shoots there is already a film studio in Frankton – with many new hotels within 5 mins walking distance (Ramada, Holiday Inn, Wyndham Garden, Quest, La Quinta) for crew accommodation.

The Queenstown Lakes have had many proposals for film studios recently which have not proceeded due to the "figures not adding up" and they are considered high-risk investments – Silverlight<sup>5</sup>, Target3D<sup>6</sup>, Frame and Victoria Flats. The developer admits that the economic viability of this proposal depends on the accommodation units – which means this is simply another attempt at high-density development and creating a supply of visitors for the existing Ayrburn hospitality venues.

Winton state in their application that they need the visitor accommodation to de-risk their investment. The Fast-Track legislation is a great initiative for essential infrastructure like power generation – it should not be a tool to de-risk developer's investments to maximise profit, which applies a massive burden to the surrounding area, and on a higher level, negatively affects the entire region.

## 8. Final comment

We hope the Expert Panel will reinforce rulings of the Environment Court, QLDC and advice from infrastructure and planning experts:

*"Court decisions have reinforced the need to maintain open space, rural character, and ecological values, particularly in relation to Landscape Character Unit 8 - Speargrass Flat. The Modified WBRAZ zoning and associated structure plan emerged from extensive Court deliberations to ensure that development is carefully managed, balancing limited rural living with landscape protection, ecological enhancement, and water quality improvements. The proposed development is at odds with the evidence of QLDC through the appeals, in relation to the landscape absorption capability of the site that was presented in evidence and confirmed by the Court, and in relation to provision of urban-type development."*

We respectfully request that the Panel **decline** the application.

Yours sincerely,

N & R Hart

<sup>3</sup> [www.thepost.co.nz/culture/360843622/hardest-ive-ever-known-it-nzs-screen-sector-faces-its-toughest-test-years](http://www.thepost.co.nz/culture/360843622/hardest-ive-ever-known-it-nzs-screen-sector-faces-its-toughest-test-years)

<sup>4</sup> [www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/576458/upper-hutt-film-studio-goes-up-for-sale](http://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/576458/upper-hutt-film-studio-goes-up-for-sale)

<sup>5</sup> [crux.org.nz/crux-news/silver-light-studios-dead](http://crux.org.nz/crux-news/silver-light-studios-dead)

<sup>6</sup> [www.odt.co.nz/regions/queenstown/government-backed-frankton-film-studio-fizzles-out](http://www.odt.co.nz/regions/queenstown/government-backed-frankton-film-studio-fizzles-out)



## APPENDIX 1:

### Past proposals for this site

This rural-zoned land has had many development iterations proposed (through Special Housing Applications and the zoning changes sought by Winton under QLDC District Plan review), involving thousands of hours, millions of dollars, and hundreds of people submitting and reviewing expert evidence on what is appropriate development for the land. **Each time the ruling of QLDC, Commissioners and the Environment Court has been that this area is not suitable for high-intensity development.**

The strategies and objectives in the District Plan provides best long-term outcomes for all residents, visitors and ratepayers. This plan designates areas appropriate for intensive/industrial activity and areas that are not – preserving what makes this basin special – **protecting our rural open spaces is a key part of this.**

***“The district’s outstanding natural environment which includes lakes, rivers, mountains and basins... are internationally recognised as the basis for the District’s importance as a visitor destination, are crucial to the tourism industry and economy, as well as encouraging residents to settle within the District”.***

If industrial-style buildings and commercial visitor accommodation are allowed to proceed in this zone, it will have significant impacts on the neighbourhood and will set a precedent for other industrial and commercial developments in quiet character rural zones.



**Proposal #4 was a proposed zone change under the District Plan review.**

## APPENDIX 2: Emails with Ayrburn management re noise from The Bakehouse (575m away)

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From: Robyn [REDACTED]  
 Date: **Monday, 15 December 2025** at 11:17 AM  
 To: Kieran [REDACTED]  
 Subject: Re: Ayrburn noise 22 November 2025

Hi Kieran

Thanks for your reply.

I'm the first to admit that I don't really understand noise 'science'. I'm a graphic designer, so appreciated your graphs.

We could hear the bass all night as we had friends around for a BBQ. It was a beautiful still night. We remember it well as 10 of us all had a detailed discussion about the noise coming from Ayrburn.

The friends left about 11.15pm. We then tidied up and went to bed and could still hear the bass, in bed with the windows closed, at 11.45pm.

So if you are confident that the noise was within your permitted levels, and had doors closed, are you saying that this is the norm and we could potentially hear it like that on any normal night of the week?

Regards  
 Robyn

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From: Kieran [REDACTED]  
 Date: **Monday, 15 December 2025** at 10:09 AM  
 To: Robyn [REDACTED]  
 Subject: RE: Ayrburn noise 22 November 2025

Hi Robyn

Compliments of the season to you.

Sorry for delay, I'm not able to release any information, however I'm comfortable that we were within our consent levels. I was at the event, and we ensured doors remained closed and we had no other issues on the evening.

Kind regards,  
 Kieran Turnbull  
 General Manager

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From: Robyn [REDACTED]  
 Date: **Saturday, 29 November 2025** at 3:56 PM  
 To: Kieran [REDACTED]  
 Subject: Re: Ayrburn noise 22 November 2025

Hi Kieran

Last Saturday night we could hear the bass from Kathryn Wilson function from about 9pm onwards. It was still going at 11.45pm and I could hear it in bed with double-glazed windows closed. We are at the western end of Ayrburn.

Are you able to check this out and send us your pretty coloured graphs again please.

Thank you  
 Robyn



### APPENDIX 3: What film studios look like in New Zealand and Australia...

This is what film producers need to produce their films without compromise – industrial spaces with industrial zoning, with plenty of space for parking, containers, trucks, set construction waste and no limits on noise from pyrotechnics, loudhailers, and machinery (wind/smoke/rain machines).

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