



## STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF HAMISH GEORGE WHEELANS

### INTRODUCTION

- 1 My full name is Hamish George Wheelans.
- 2 I am a Director at GW Wilfield Ltd, which is a residential land development company that has undertaken the development of Wilfield development in West Melton.
- 3 I have been General Manager and/or Director of residential development companies that have created in excess of 2500 residential sections in the Greater Christchurch area, including Woodend, Christchurch City, Lincoln, Tai Tapu, Rolleston and West Melton (Preston Downs and Wilfield). My qualifications include B.Com VPM (Valuation and Property Management).
- 4 I am familiar with the application by GW Wilfield Ltd (the *Application*) for a plan change to rezone existing Living 2 and Living 2A land at West Melton to Living (West Melton South) Zone (the *Application*), south of State Highway 73 at West Melton (the *Site*).

### SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

- 5 My evidence will provide a summary of the evolution and growth of the West Melton township with supporting information to assist the decision maker to make an informed decision. I will respond to matters raised by submitters and provide responses to matters raised in the section 42A report (the *Officer's Report*).
- 6 In preparing this evidence I have reviewed:
  - 6.1 The Application;
  - 6.2 Submissions lodged in relation to the Application; and
  - 6.3 The Officer's Report;
  - 6.4 And I am aware of the key stakeholder and community consultation undertaken by NZTA in November 2020 in regards to the upgrade of the State Highway 73/Weedons Ross Road/West Melton Road intersection<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nzta.govt.nz/assets/projects/west-melton-improvements/nzup-west-melton-improvements-brochure.pdf>

## BACKGROUND

- 7 In 2009 a development company I was a Director of purchased the land which is now known as Preston Downs. This land was partially zoned for residential development at 800m<sup>2</sup> average lot area, 1,000m<sup>2</sup> average and 5,000m<sup>2</sup> average. Some of the zoned area had a deferral pending an Outline Development Plan being incorporated into the District Plan and infrastructure upgrades.
- 8 The development company, Gillman Wheelans Ltd (later GW West Melton Ltd) undertook a Plan Change (PC3) to the Operative District Plan. PC3 sought to replace the existing zones with a new zone Living WM North which provided for a maximum number of lots of 260, it required lower density lots on the north, west and south boundaries and adjacent to existing housing of West Melton township (Westview Crescent and Laird Place). It also sought to lift the deferral by committing to an infrastructure upgrade program.
- 9 Preston Downs was developed in stages, mainly post September 2010 Canterbury Earthquakes. The February 2011 Earthquakes lead to influx of buyers to West Melton, relocating from the eastern suburbs.
- 10 Preston Downs sales data is shown below indicating the effect of the Canterbury Earthquakes on sales.

Year	Sales	Avg Lot Size Sold (m <sup>2</sup> )
2010	2	2,186
2011	96	1,570
2012	141	1,803
2013	127	1,685

- 11 The majority of the buyers sought section sizes reasonably consistent with that which they had previously, being 700-900m<sup>2</sup>. As West Melton and Preston Downs was predominantly lots greater than 1,000m<sup>2</sup>, those potential purchasers adopted the increase in area. In 2011 the average section sold in Preston Downs was 1,570m<sup>2</sup>.
- 12 During 2012 and 2013 it was apparent that as each stage in the development was released to the public, the lots with the greatest

demand were the smaller ones, being less than 1,200m<sup>2</sup>, followed by those between 1,200m<sup>2</sup> and 2,000m<sup>2</sup>, as supply availability was reduced.

- 13 There was limited demand for the 3,000m<sup>2</sup>-5,000m<sup>2</sup> allotments and these were the slowest to sell on each new stage release.
- 14 In 2017 we obtained consent (RC175065) to subdivide lot number 296 from the 4 'permitted' lots into 14 lots with an average area of 1,000m<sup>2</sup>. These sold readily.
- 15 Close to completion of Preston Downs, another Development Company I am a Director of purchased circa 90Ha of land held by one owner, south of State Highway 73, now known as Wilfield. The land was already zoned at the time Wilfield was purchased, being Living 2, Living 2A and Rural Inner Plains.

### **SALES AND DEMAND**

- 16 Since 2015 GW Wilfield Ltd has lodged multiple subdivision consent applications since the initial consent seeking 158 lots (RC145470). Those further applications have been lodged and consented during the development of Wilfield to intensify existing consented areas, resulting in an increase in overall lots to 180 lots. The primary reason for those consent applications was that the market evolved from the demand profile that was experienced at Preston Downs. The larger lots of 3,000m<sup>2</sup>-5,000m<sup>2</sup> were out of favour and difficult to sell. Our buyers informed us that lots between 3,000m<sup>2</sup> and 5,000m<sup>2</sup> were too big to maintain and too costly to landscape. The cost to fence the three sides of those lots on average is approximately \$5,000 per large lot.
- 17 The average section sold in 2015 and 2016 had an area of 1,700m<sup>2</sup>-1,800m<sup>2</sup>. This compares to the overall minimum average required under the Living 2 Zone rules of 3,000m<sup>2</sup>. This indicates that the larger lots that complied with the District Plan average lot size rules did not sell at anywhere near the rate of the smaller allotments.
- 18 One particular intensification consent granted (RC175091 – August 2017) resulted in 16 residential lots of 650m<sup>2</sup> to 1,200m<sup>2</sup>. These all sold off the plan, prior to title issuing.
- 19 To enable the previous mentioned applications to intensify to be successfully granted, we have offset the reduction in the overall average lot size across Wilfield by amalgamating other parcels of land. The outcome of this is a small number of larger holdings totalling approximately 38ha, which have Consent Notices restricting further residential development. These areas are serviced to their respective boundaries with essential infrastructure (sewer, water, power phone).

- 20 The primary purpose of the PC59 application from my perspective is to remove the planning barriers that currently prevent utilisation of existing infrastructure referred to above, within the PC area, and to provide land supply to meet continued demand for new residential allotments in West Melton.
- 21 From a supply perspective, Wilfield now has only 2 residential lots available for sale. These lots are greater than 3,000m<sup>2</sup> in area. I am not aware of any lots available to sell in either Preston Downs or Gainsborough. Therefore, once the remaining sections in Wilfield have sold, no residential land, either developed or undeveloped in West Melton, is available for residential growth.
- 22 There is a small holding of 2.79Ha in the middle of Gainsborough owned by the Butt family which is zoned residential, however this land is not currently available for sale as it is the family home and surrounding outbuildings/improvements.

#### **STATE HIGHWAY 73/WEEDONS ROSS ROAD INTERSECTION**

- 23 The further impediment to development of West Melton has been the capacity of the intersection of State Highway 73/Weedons Ross Road and West Melton Road. Many of the submitters raised this as an issue for this Plan Change.
- 24 During the development of Preston Downs and Wilfield we have consulted with Council and Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency over residential development adjacent to the State Highway Corridor, intersections off the Highway, pedestrian crossing over the highway and the upgrade of the Weedons Ross Road, West Melton Road and State Highway. To advance the early Wilfield applications, GW Wilfield Ltd provided a 'Corridor Management Plan' that was accepted by Council and Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency. That Plan provided for works to take place progressively to enable development of the residential area to proceed. Those works included:
- 24.1 The installation of a walkway/crossing across the State Highway for pedestrian purposes to connect Wilfield with Gainsborough;
  - 24.2 The widening of the State Highway and construction of a walkway between the northwest corner of Wilfield and the intersection;
  - 24.3 Removal of shelterbelts to open up the frontage to the State Highway;
  - 24.4 Mounding with sporadic trees to maintain the open feel;

24.5 Upgrade of lighting on the State Highway;

24.6 A change in the speed limit from 80kph to 70kph and the moving of the speed threshold east from its original position.

25 Following these works being completed, Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency has had pressure placed on them by the Community<sup>2</sup>, Local Government and Central Government to improve the intersection for safety purposes, particularly with the growth of the West Melton Domain on the south side of State Highway.

26 Recently Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency undertook consultation with key stakeholders and the Community about its planned intersection improvements<sup>3</sup>. I understand that Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency were looking to have a business case signed off for the improvement works prior to Christmas 2020.

27 In October 2020 Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency permanently reduced the speed limit through West Melton from 70kph to 60kph<sup>4</sup>.

28 I also understand this work is scheduled to start in early 2021 and be complete before the end of 2021. The intersection improvements will therefore remove the intersection as an impediment for growth south of the State Highway.

### **RESPONSE TO ISSUES RAISED BY SUBMITTERS**

29 My reading of the submissions is that the key matters of concern are the State Highway, the densification of the subdivision as a whole and resulting change in character of Wilfield, and capacity of the existing infrastructure. I summarise those matters as follows:

29.1 Intersection – as stated earlier, the existing intersection is to have a major upgrade, which I understand will occur in 2021. GW Wilfield and Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency have agreed that no new s224 certificates can be issued following the adoption of the PC59 until the intersection upgrade is complete, as a means of mitigating potential adverse traffic effects associated with the intersection. This issue is addressed by Mr Metherall for GW Wilfield in his evidence.

29.2 Densification – Maintaining low-density developments in my view is not sustainable for the land resource and the cost of long-term infrastructure maintenance. Over the 20 years of

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/petitions/document/PET\\_89533/petition-of-pru-bowman-for-west-melton-district-residents](https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/petitions/document/PET_89533/petition-of-pru-bowman-for-west-melton-district-residents)

<sup>3</sup> Making it Safer and Easier to get around West Melton, November 2020

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nzta.govt.nz/media-releases/safer-speed-limit-for-sh73-west-melton-west-of-christchurch/>

my development experience, our average yield is 9.1 households per hectare. Preston Downs is 4.1HH/Ha and Wilfield is 2.0HH/Ha.

29.3 Infrastructure - as Mr England has stated in his Section 42a report, the current infrastructure in West Melton is nearing capacity. However, as Mr England states, long term plans are already in place to upgrade the water network throughout the District, linking townships and supplies. With regards to sewer, Mr England also states downstream works such as upgrading of gravity pipes to pressure mains will add capacity to cater for growth of the District. Mr Hall, in his evidence for GW Wilfield, has agreed with Mr England's conclusions.

30 In regard specific submitters, I further comment as follows:

30.1 Laurel Linton (690 Weedons Ross Road) – I have no objection to the inclusion of the submitter's land in the Plan Change area.

30.2 Michael Harvey – Mr Harvey submitted that there was little evidence of large lots being available for purchase. The larger lots (greater than 3,000m<sup>2</sup>) were offered for sale and have been listed on our website the same time as the smaller lots (1,000m<sup>2</sup> – 2,000m<sup>2</sup>). Only recently have these sold, mainly due to lack of alternative supply.

30.3 Melanie Cotter and Helen Conaghan – Ms Cotter and Ms Conaghan separately submitted that there are other options in Selwyn for more compact residences. In my experience there is demand in West Melton for smaller sites and I consider individuals should have a choice where they live, for example older persons that have spent many years living in West Melton who need or want to downsize their homes, should not have to leave the West Melton community to do that. I note that when the GW West Melton application to create 14 lots with an average area of 1,000m<sup>2</sup> was publicly notified (RC175065), three submissions were received in support of the proposal on the basis of smaller section sizes being needed as an option for aging West Melton residents as well as those on lower incomes.

30.4 Andrew Dyson – Mr Dyson comments that Wilfield has little green community space compared with Preston Downs and Gainsborough sites. This is correct, however I note that the provision of green space is largely determined by the Council at the subdivision consent phase. In earlier subdivision consent applications for Wilfield concern was expressed by Council regarding the extent of reserves and ongoing maintenance costs to be met by council. I also note that while

Wilfield has less green space than Preston Downs for example, (1.8% compared to 6.2% of gross area), Wilfield has a 50% less housing density than Preston Downs. In my view, the effect of this is that the increased greenspace between houses/properties offers a feeling of open space and the ability to create 'play spaces' within individual lots. .

- 30.5 Hamish & Amy Osborne submit that the minimum lot area of 1,100m<sup>2</sup> should be a minimum average. While I see merit in this submission, I consider having a minimum average could lead to ad-hoc subdivision of significantly smaller lots than those surrounding such subdivision within the existing developed area. I note that Mr Compton-Moen, in his evidence for GW Wilfield, does not support a minimum average allotment size and I accept his expert opinion on this issue.

### **RESPONSE TO OFFICER'S REPORT**

- 31 I have read the Officers S42a report and agree with the overall findings, however comment as follows.
- 32 Paragraph 126 recommends the ODP layer plans as applied be consolidated into one plan, including the shared pedestrian cycle lane. I accept this recommendation. An updated ODP Plan is attached to both Mr Metherall and Ms Seaton's evidence.
- 33 In Appendix 7 of the report, Rule 4.17 causes some potential confusion and could be clarified for future interpretation. On further reflection, as written, it could be interpreted that the fence may only have 1 post and 1 rail, which would not be structurally sound. I suggest this be reworded to a single fence of standard post and rail construction. Ms Seaton addresses this matter in her evidence.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

- 34 Demand for residential land in West Melton is clear by the uptake in sections since the development of Preston Downs and Gainsborough from 2009. West Melton has grown from a township of ~42 houses to a town of in excess of 700 residential properties and a retail precinct in 11-12 years, a 1600% growth, or 135% per annum.
- 35 Whilst the Canterbury Earthquakes injected a great deal of activity, that activity continued beyond the period where displaced families needs were met. Demand to live in West Melton has continued.
- 36 In 2016 we sold 35 sections in Wilfield. This increased to 50 in 2017. In 2019 and 2020, these sales decreased to 25 & 22 respectively due to a lack of supply. Currently we have two sections left, both in excess of 3,000m<sup>2</sup>.
- 37 This Plan Change affords the opportunity to provide approximately 72 new residential sections to cater for demand from within West



Melton, the greater Selwyn District or from those who wish to move to the District. Currently there are few, if any, options available.

Dated: 21 January 2020



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Hamish George Wheelans