# Appendix B: Urban Design Assessment – Response to RFI

# DARFIELD AREA 7 | PLAN CHANGE URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT AND COMMENTS in response to RFI





aplusurban@gmail.com
ohone 64 3339 4466
mobile 021 878934
136 cashmere road
christchurch

# DARFIELD AREA 7 & PLAN CHANGE

# URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT AND COMMENTS

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

My name is Nicole Lauenstein, I am the director of a+urban, a cross-disciplinary practice with a focus on architectural and urban design. I have more than 25 years of experience in both design fields across a variety of urban and architectural projects from urban regeneration and master planning of urban precincts to bespoke architectural solutions for complex and sensitive sites.

I hold the qualification of a Masters in Architecture and a Masters in Urban Design and have been practicing first in Germany, Spain, England and various other European countries followed by 2 years in Australia before settling in New Zealand in 1996. I have lived in Christchurch for nearly 25 years and gained a very good understanding of the unique contextual challenges and opportunities the New Zealand urban environments present.

I have been a member of the Urban Design Panel in Christchurch for more the 8 years (early 2006 to end of 2014) and have been an expert witness for the Environment Court on several occasions. Over the last 10 years have been involved in several urban developments in the south island particularly the Canterbury region and headed the urban design team redesigning the Te Papa o Otacaro/ Avon River North and East Frame post earthquake.

# 2. BACKGROUND

So far I have not had any involvement with the project.

I am familiar with the indicative layout/scheme plan as well as the proposed ODP forming part of the plan change application and have been briefed by Fiona Aston (planner) on the project in general and the related planning framework in particular the applicable residential zoning rules of the area and adjacent areas. I am familiar with the District Plan and other relevant urban design and regulatory planning documents and quidelines.

I have recently visited Darfield to familiarize myself again with the specific as well as wider context and any recent developments in the area.

To be able to make informed comments I have undertaken my own urban design analysis of the proposal and the immediate and wider Darfield urban and rural context.

# 3. SCOPE OF THIS URBAN ASSESSMENT AND REPORT

I have been asked by the applicant to assess the proposed design and its effects on the neighbourhood and community with regard to specific urban design matters raised by the Selwyn District Council as part of the RFI.

- Contextual analysis of the changing urban boundary and the effect of these changes on the visual amenity of the wider community
- Assessment of key destinations and their connectivity with the rest of the site and Darfield as a whole.

I have also been asked to suggest potential design improvements or appropriate mitigation measures where these may be required.

# 4. SUMMARY OF URBAN DESIGN ANALYSIS

# 4.1. General urban form

Darfield is a typical small settlement located in the western area of the Selwyn District. The original settlement is a result of the early rail link connecting the east coast via an alpine pass to the west coast. This history is clearly visible in and celebrated in the township.

Darfield also has a strong connection with surrounding the rural land supporting the farming community which is clearly evident in the many community facilities, schools, police and fire station, medical centres and the commercial supporting the wider rural community.

Resulting in a generally radial road pattern leading from the adjacent areas into the Darfield and a central, grided core that straddles the east-west travelling rail and highway corridors.

The social /community hub of the earlier Darfield is still visible along the rail and key east west road corridors with the older residential areas flanking this commercial centre to the south and east.

Further residential development has occurred over time along the remaining radial routes connecting to the wider rural community



#### 4.2 The centre / settlement core

Although Darfield has grown and developed over time the older and new development pattern within the centre have remained strongly linear along the movement corridor. Initially following the rail and latter following the parallel located SH73.

Within this core area all commercial and most community function are located with clear separation of older community based facilities located to the north on Horndon Street and all commercial activities flanking the state high way which has literally replaced the railway line in transporting good and people.

4.3 Community facilities, educational, cultural, social and recreational destinations
The key community facilities such as schools, church, recreational reserves and important
commercial shops that support the community such as supermarket and dairy and other essential
services are clustered within the NW part of the core. This makes this part of Darfield the most
important destination to which residential areas need to connect and in particular pedestrian/
cyclists need to have easy and safe access to.

#### 4.4 Connectivity

This stereotypical development right from the start has created a disconnect between the northern and southern urban areas of Darfield which has been exacerbated by traffic loads and the ongoing elongation of commercial development along SH73 with larger commercial structures further blocking visual and physical connection across the double corridor.

Within the core there are only two north-south rail way crossing points shared by pedestrian and vehicles on Mc Millan and Mathias Street, linking the entire northern residential areas with the commercial centre.

There is one additional official pedestrian rail crossing further west to facilitate movement from NW residential area to the 2 area schools. However, there is one unformed but well used pedestrian crossing point creating a direct link between the Domain through the recreational reserve to the schools, this is most likely used by children as a shortcut.

Two diagonals stand out within the core grid - remnants of older radial routes leading to the centre - that have been overrun by the growing grid. Both are situated in the west of Darfield and provide important links for pedestrians as they cut through the longer blocks creating shortcuts to the domain and the schools.

A third diagonal is evident connecting the northern residential area with the schools along a strong desire line which has only recently been blocked by the new 4 square supermarket

Darfield is still a comparatively small township where walking can be the main mode of movement for locals. Considering the concentration of commercial and community function in the western part of the core it is important that any additional residential development continues to support and build on the existing connections, and provides future links creating an interconnected network in particular for pedestrian movement through out Darfield.



CYCLE ROUTES

KEY VEHICULAR ROUTES **RAILWAY** 

HIGHWAY

#### 4.5 Existing residential development across Darfield

General residential development has either followed the gridded layout within the centre or followed organically along the radial spokes leading to the centre.

With regard to size/density Residential development can be broken into 3 broad types

- urban residential development located within the grid and the directly adjacent northwest and southwest part of Darfield with lot sizes ranging from 500m2 to 800m2
- rural residential development with larger lifestyle block sized properties located predominantly between the western radial spines
- farms within the rural perimeter in close proximity to Darfield

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All 3 types have similar characteristics with regard to dwelling types, variety in architectural styles, domestic curtilage, private gardens etc. The key differences are the lot sizes, the extent of openness between dwellings, the size of domestic curtilage and the type and extent landscaping as well the property boundary treatment.

This type and variety of residential development is typical for small towns in the rural Canterbury Plains. However, the distribution pattern in Darfield has been influenced by the radial form with the majority of the more recent rural residential development establishing between the north west and southwest spokes. Larger areas in the north-east and south-east in fairly close proximity to the core have so far remained undeveloped resulting in an unbalanced urban form which is not efficient with regard to connectivity and counterproductive to sustainable urban development principles.

#### 4.6 Future residential development

SDC has identified the current urban limit, preferred future development areas as well as deferred development areas to guide future development to achieve a more balanced and consolidated urban form for Darfield.

The plan identifies 8 development areas across 4 different development categories

- business
- intensified residential DAR 5
- standard residential L1 DAR 3,4 and 7
- low density residential L2 / L2a DAR 1 and 2

The Malvern Area Plan has correctly identified several under and undeveloped area to the immediate north of the core as a standard residential zone L1 due to the following parameters:

- proximity to the core
- efficiency and consolidation of urban form
- opportunities to directly connect to existing residential
- ease of access to the site

Some areas have been deferred but it is my understanding that the technical infrastructure hurdles affecting the deferred status can be resolved.

#### 4.7 Immediate development context

The Proposed site, DAR 7, is identified as a preferred future development area for standard to low density residential development.

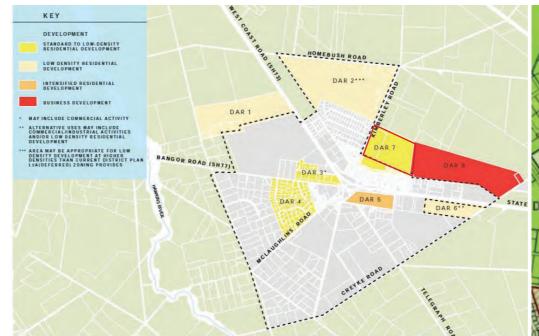
Land to the east, DAR 8, is a preferred future development area for business currently zoned Outer Plains.

Land to the north is and will remain rural. It is currently zoned Outer Plains and is used for low grazing and cropping.

Land to the south is zoned L1 with according lot sizes around 600m2 to 800m2

Land to the west, across Kimberley Road, is zoned L2 with average lot sizes 5000m2 now fully developed.

















a) standard suburban residential street scape



4.8 Kimberly Road interface

Moving out from the centre northwards Kimberly Road transitions through three distinct streetscapes in direct response to the adjacent type of residential development:

- a) standard suburban residential street scape with formed footpath either side, kerb and channel and regular 4m building setbacks, low residential fences and generally small to medium sized, single story dwellings
- b) rural residential street scape with a single footpath, smaller rural residential lots with rural type open style fencing, larger dwellings and larger road setbacks and often generously landscaped gardens
- c) rural street scape with no formed footpath, larger rural residential lots with gated entries, continuous tall hedges dominate the street scene, small glimpses of individual larger dwellings with a generous road setback



4.9 Horndon Street interface

The Horndon street scene and the residential environment surrounding it surrounding it have a distinct suburban village character with wide streets and generous berms planted with intermittent tree cluster, a unique feature of Darfield Although the site has no direct access to Horndon Street there are linking side roads offering links into the site with the opportunity to carry this unique character through into the new development.



Site





Kimberly road shelterbelt





Key views to the Alps



Key views to Cairn Hill



Key views

#### 4.10 The Site

The site is primarily flat pastoral land with no distinctive landscape features apart from the shelterbelt along Kimberly Road.

#### 4.11 Views

Key view shafts from the site are to the north - to the distant Southern Alps and foothills and to the west to Cairn Hill.

Key view shafts into the site are along the access roads off Horndon Street and Kimberly Road and in future, once the shelterbelt is removed, more views from along Kimberly road will be available.

# 4.12 Rural interface and residential edge

The rural interface along the northern and eastern edge of the site are standard rural fences between open pastoral land with no vegetation or shelter belts. Along the southern boundary and part of the eastern boundary residential L1 properties display a variety of individual edge treatment towards the rural land.

- a) 1m open style rural wire fencing or post and rail fencing, mainly along the southern boundary - to create a physical demarcation keeping stock off private property whilst allowing generous open views into the countryside
- b) 1.8m solid timber fencing, primarily along the eastern boundary most likely in response to wind shelter and achieve privacy.

Both boundary treatment options are individual to each property and address specific parameters such as dwelling and lot orientation, proximity of dwellings to boundaries, orientation of outdoor areas etc.

It also shows that the surrounding rural activity does not have any adverse effects on the adjacent standard living environment.



Rural interface and residential edge

#### 5. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT - REVISED ODP AND INTERNAL LAYOUT

The plan change proposes to rezone land at north Darfield from Rural Outer Plains to Living 1. The L1 zone at Darfield provides for average lot sizes not less than 650m2 and the majority of the site will facilitate the development of such standard L1 allotment.

However, the rezoning also includes provisions for a retirement village and some Small Lot Medium Density Housing (SLMDH) in two selected locations. One flanking the edges of the retirement village and one small area at the eastern end adjacent to a small reserve.

There is currently only a limited provision for Medium Density Housing at Darfield and very view opportunities for retirement living. The location of the proposed retirement village allows it to be well integrated into the L1 zone and would offer additional opportunities appropriately scaled for locals to retire within their community. The land is close to the town centre and therefore well suited for retirement village and SLMDH compared to other preferred future development areas.

The District plan has identified the southern core, an already established area as one that could be intensified as infill development. But there is otherwise very few identified scope for purpose designed Small Lot Medium Density Housing.

The retirement village would undergo an independent resource consent where connectivity, amenity and other relevant urban matters can be resolved assessed and resolved at a more detailed scale. With regard to SLMDH, standards will be in line with MDH in other townships in the district. The suit of rules and guideline for SLMDH (average 500m2, minimum lot size 400m2) has proven to adequately guide development of this density.

To support the residential community a variety of medium and smaller sized reserves / green spaces have been included in strategic location.

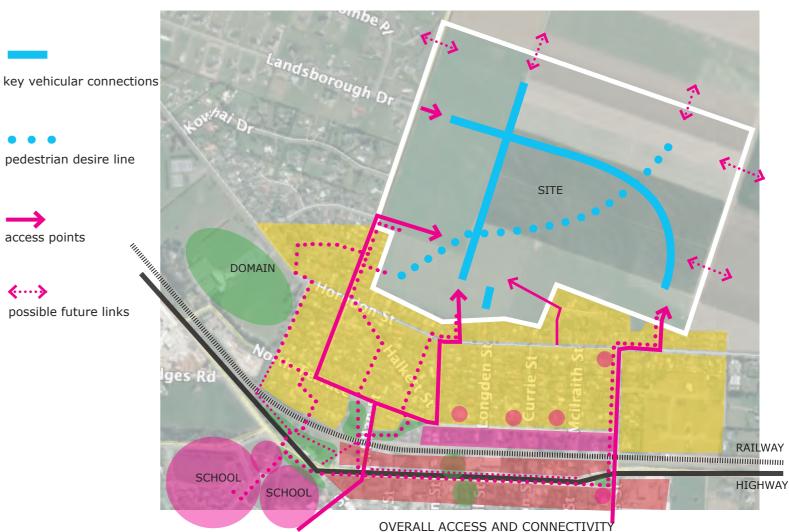
- in proximity to SLMDH and the retirement village to offer open space to the denser environments
- along main pedestrian desire-lines to support amenity and connectivity
- within larger view shafts to break the development pattern and allow views through to the southern alps and the rural landscape
- centrally located to provide recreational space for all residents within walking distance

#### 5.1 Overall layout

The overall layout that underpins the ODP is based around logically interconnecting the available access points on Kimberly Road with those off Horndon street and to create a strong diagonal direction from the north-east corner along a 'desire line' to the south-west corner of the site.

This diagonal desire line has a strong pedestrian focus and enables the development to directly link into key existing pedestrian links along Kimberly Road, Colemen Crescent and Halkett Street leading to the main community and commercial destination in southern part of the core of Darfield.





# 6. ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS IN RESPONSE TO RFI

#### **Character and Amenity Values**

6.1 Contextual analysis of the changing urban boundary and the effect of these changes on the visual amenity of the wider community

The proposed plan change will visually affect part of the existing community along the Kimberly road interface, properties north of Horndon street that share a boundary with the site and to some extent properties in proximity to the new entry points to the development. Beyond these points the wider community will not experience any visual effects unless they are travelling along Kimberly Road. The proposed design offers the opportunity to create new visual connections to the landscape along key roads and green spaces which can be experienced by the wider community.

6.2 Zone interfaces and reverse sensitivity

6.2.1 L2 Kimberly street amenity and expectations

While the proposed L1/ L1 deferred zone for the site is consistent with the development to the south, it is at a significantly higher density than the land zoned L2 deferred to the west.

This potentially creates an adverse amenity effect at the interface between the established land use and the proposed land use. Currently the residents of the L2 deferred area have an expectation of wider open areas and larger allotment sizes surrounding their properties than would be found if they were L1 zoned.

Currently the neighbours across Kimberley street are looking out onto a large well maintained shelterbelt giving the street a strong rural appearance but at the same time preventing views into the rural site.

Proposed changes from rural / OP to L1 will change the current predominantly rural appearance of the street. The shelterbelt will have to be removed as it is not compatible with L1 density of development due to shading effects and its general scale and the visual impact that will be experienced by the L2 residents will twofold -  $\frac{1}{2}$ 

A. This will open up views into the site and expose 6 lots that share a direct boundary with Kimberly road visually to the new L1 zone.

However these L2 dwellings are well set back form the road often behind taller boundary hedges with their outdoor spaces, gardens and private activities mainly oriented towards the North and North West.

B. All residents of the L2 zone will experience a general loss of 'ruralness' of their street address

To address both A and B the following mitigating measures should be included:

- properties in the proposed L1 zone along this street boundary should be on the larger side, no less then 1000m2, this will allow houses to be located with generous road setbacks from Kimberly Road and more generous internal boundary setbacks, creating a more open feel with better visual permeability and larger gaps between buildings.
- fencing controls should apply with any road side fencing or fencing
  within a 4m setback from the road to be of a rural type consistent with
  the Living 3 (rural residential) fencing typologies in Appendix 44 of the
  District Plan i.e. post and rail, post and wire, traditional deer/sheep
  fencing or oen style post and rail.

6.2.2 Properties north of Hordon Street and lower part of Kimberley Road (L1)

The proposed L1/ L1 deferred zone for the site is consistent with the development to the south and the lower part of Kimberly street. Existing L1 planning rules provide adequate controls to manage general effects on the neighbours, as long as property sizes and geometries are carefully considered so that dwellings can be positioned without creating unnecessary negative effects on the existing properties.

Currently, all these properties, but in particular the properties north of Horndon Street, enjoy unobstructed open views across the rural site. Most have responded with low fences and limited vegetation to keep these view open and outdoor spaces are all oriented towards the view.

Although rural outlook cannot reasonably be expected to remain in perpetuity in a L1 zone, the outlook for these properties will change significantly to a completely urban outlook and measures could be considered to soften the impact, such as:

- minimum property size of 800m2
- a southern boundary setback of 5m
- buildings to be single story only

However, as this area is already zoned L1 this are recommendations only that could be included via covenants or design guidelines at a later stage

6.2.3 Rural interface to the north and upper part of the east Towards the north the interface with the rural environment is desirable and is considered a positive aspect. Any mitigation measures will be a result of individual preference of lot owners and as long as lot sizes are large enough (min.1000m2) which will allow sufficient depth for landscaping to be located on the individual properties along the northern boundary if this is the individual future owner's preference.

6.2.4 Interface with the future Business zone to the east

The land to the east is identified as a future business zone and is not expected to be developed for some time. However, as a new business zone this area will undergo its own planning process and at that point depending on type an scale of business activities appropriate mitigation measures such as sound barriers, landscape buffers and development restriction along the boundary need be introduced in direct response to the proposed business activities.

#### Connectivity

6.3 Key destinations and their connectivity with the rest of the site and Darfield as a whole.

Connectivity is a key issue in Darfield with a limited amount of rail crossing points, it is therefore critical that connections between the site and the centre are well integrated into the existing movement patterns and strongly support pedestrian movement.

#### Pedestrian

As the urban analysis shows the site has key connection points with the existing pedestrian network in the south-west and south-east corners of the site linking it with the centre of Darfield. These connections have been carried into and through the site to the provide a good overall connectivity within the site along future desire-lines.

A diagonal link from north-east to south-west with a strong focus on pedestrian amenity creates a 'pedestrian axis' internally connecting green spaces and leading foot traffic in a direct manner to the south-west corner where the development naturally connects to the existing pedestrian network.

Other secondary pedestrian links are available along all vehicular connections to Kimberly Road and Horndon Street

#### Vehicular

Roads are logically interconnecting the available access points on Kimberly Road with those off Horndon street and distributing traffic into and through the site with a clear road hierarchy.

The main access off Kimberly Road has been shifted opposite Torlesse Street to bring it closer to the centre of Darfield and avoid a direct link via Kowhai Street to the main highway to the west. This also enable a direct pedestrian connection to Kimberly Road closer to the existing pedestrian network. As a result the more rural residential streetscape to the north of Torlesse street can be maintained.

# **Green spaces and reserves**

6.4 Reserves are evenly distributed within the site to ensure that a reserve is within a 500m maximum walking distance additional smaller green spaces are added in strategic places to provide further small break out spaces along key pedestrian routes and to assist with the legibility of the road hierarchy.

Two of the three key reserves have been placed in close proximity to the retirement village to provide open space for this denser development typology.

The same principle of co-locating higher density living areas with open space has been applied to the small lot medium density area in the north west.

All green spaces have also been strategically positioned to

- a) maximise viewshaft for the public realm towards the hills and southern alps
- b) to create visual endpoints to internal views along streets
- c) to enable clustered tree planting to support the unique street character of Darfield
- d) to provide open spaces along entry routes and pedestrian routes to create a high amenity

# Retirement Village and medium density

6.5 The retirement village and adjacent SLMD have deliberately been co-located as they share similarities in typologies and are of a higher density and are therefore well suited to each other and to ensure that both areas benefit of the proximity to local reserves.

The retirement village is located as close as possible to the south west corner of the site in close proximity to the pedestrian routes linking it to the centre of Darfield, whilst still providing short and direct connections to key access roads into the site.



INDICATIVE LAYOUT



