

**BEFORE AN INDEPENDENT HEARINGS COMMISSIONER AT  
SELWYN**

**IN THE MATTER OF**

Clause 21 of the First Schedule of  
the Resource Management Act 1991  
(Plan Change 67)

**IN THE MATTER OF**

**GW WILFIELD LIMITED**  
(Applicant)

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**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF NICOLE LAUENSTEIN ON BEHALF  
OF GW WILFIELD LIMITED**

**URBAN DESIGN**

Dated: 30 August 2021

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 My name is Nicole Lauenstein. I have the qualifications of Dipl. Ing Arch. and Dipl. R.U.Pl. equivalent to a Master in Architecture and a Master in Urban Design (Spatial and Environmental Planning) from the University of Kaiserslautern / Germany. I was an elected member of the Urban Design Panel in Christchurch from 2008 to 2016 and am a member of the UDF (Urban Design Forum). Before moving to New Zealand I was a member of the BDA (German Institute of Architects) and the AIA (Association Internationale des Architects).
- 1.2 I am director of **a + urban**, a Christchurch based architecture and urban design company established in 1999. I have over 25 years of professional experience in architecture and urban design in particular within the crossover area of urban development, master planning, and comprehensive spatial developments.
- 1.3 I have practised as an Urban Designer and Architect for the first 8 years in Germany, Netherlands, England and Spain and Australia before re-establishing my own architectural and urban design practice in New Zealand. In both practices I have undertaken many projects combining the architectural and urban disciplines. Projects have been varied in scale and complexity from urban revitalisation of city centres, development of growth strategies for smaller communities, architectural buildings in the public realm and private residential projects in sensitive environments.
- 1.4 Prior to my arrival in NZ I worked for several European Architects and Urban Designers. I was involved in a range of urban studies and rural area assessments for the governance of the individual federal states in Germany, investigating urban sprawl of major cities such as Frankfurt, Darmstadt, Rostock, Berlin and the effect on the urban and rural character. This work included developing mechanisms and criteria to facilitate sustainable development. Other work for private clients consisted of the design of sustainable developments in sensitive areas with very stringent development guidelines.
- 1.5 My experience in New Zealand includes working on growth strategies for urban and peri-urban areas including rural and urban residential

developments with a mixture of densities from low, medium to high. I have prepared several urban analysis, development strategies and design concepts for urban and rural residential areas within the Canterbury region (Lincoln, Rolleston, Tai Tapu, Ohoka, Rangiora, Kaiapoi, Lake Hood, Ashburton), Akaroa as well as the wider South Island including developments in Queenstown, Wanaka, Invercargill, Marlborough Region, Hurunui District and Buller District.

1.6 My most recent urban design and architecture work includes:

- (a) Papa Otakaro Avon River and East/North Frame concept design, Christchurch Central City;
- (b) Kirimoko residential development in Wanaka Stages 1 – 6;
- (c) Urban analysis and strategic plans for Selwyn District Council, Hurunui District Council, Christchurch City Council, Queenstown and Lakes District, Nelson and Buller District, Wellington CBD and Auckland City and the greater Auckland urban area, as well as Masterplans for urban development in Lincoln, Rolleston, Taitapu, Amberley, Rangiora, Ohoka, Ashburton, Christchurch, Westport Wanaka and Queenstown, Auckland;
- (d) Mixed Use development Hagley Avenue, Christchurch;
- (e) New Tait Building and Masterplan, north-west Christchurch;
- (f) Several commercial and residential 'rebuild' projects in Christchurch;
- (g) Master Plans for post-earthquake Inner-City block infill and brown field conversions in Christchurch;
- (h) Outline Development Plan's for rebuild projects in the Christchurch CBD;
- (i) Analysis and identification of Character Areas within Christchurch as part of the District Plan Review; and
- (j) Several private plan changes.

- 1.7 I have been involved in tertiary education and lectured in urban design at Lincoln University at both graduate and post graduate level. I am currently a guest lecturer at ARA Institute of Technology, teaching architecture and urban design. I have also delivered professional development workshops for both architects and urban designers.

### **Code of Conduct**

- 1.8 I have read and am familiar with the Environment Court's Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses, contained in the Environment Court Practice Note 2014, and agree to comply with it. My qualifications as an expert are set out above. Other than where I state that I am relying on the advice of another person, I confirm that the issues addressed in this statement of evidence are within my area of expertise. I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions that I express.

## **2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 I have been asked to peer review the Plan Change 67 (*PC67*) application where it relates to urban design matters, and to review the landscape and urban design evidence provided by Mr David Compton-Moen and Mr Hugh Nicholson.
- 2.2 Over the last 3 years I have been involved in urban development in West Melton including in relation to Plan Change 77 (*PC77*). As part of this work I have undertaken an urban analysis of the emerging township and its most appropriate development pattern in the future so as to achieve a well-functioning urban environment in a consolidated urban form.
- 2.3 For the purpose of preparing this evidence I have recently again visited the township (August 2021) to re-familiarise myself with the specific parameters of West Melton.
- 2.4 I have not been involved in the preparation of *PC67* itself and therefore rely on the information provided in the application together with discussions with the applicant represented by Mr Wheelans, discussions with the project planner Ms Seaton, and the evidence of Mr Compton-Moen as well as the urban design report by Mr Nicholson appended to the section 42A report.

- 2.5 I have also read Appendix C to the PC67 application, a report prepared by Mr Compton-Moen, which includes a landscape and visual effects assessment for the site. Although I have considered the landscape and visual effects to the wider receiving environment with regards to the future urban form of West Melton as part of my own analysis for PC77, I have not undertaken a landscape and visual assessment of the PC67 site in such detail. I will therefore refrain from commenting on the more detailed landscape matters specific to the site.
- 2.6 The PC67 application sets out the design intent of the ODP and covers project specific urban design details such as yield, densities, road layout, circulation and access etc. I will therefore not go into any of these details unless this is required for the broader understanding of topics covered in my evidence.
- 2.7 My evidence therefore focuses on providing an analysis of the urban form of West Melton generally, together with expert opinion on the following urban design matters in relation to PC67 specifically:
- (a) Urban Form;
  - (b) Density specific to West Melton;
  - (c) Connectivity; and
  - (d) Amenity and Character.

### **3 URBAN ANALYSIS - WEST MELTON**

- 3.1 Both Mr Compton-Moen and, in particular, Mr Wheelans have set out an in-depth understanding of the existing township of West Melton in their respective evidence and given succinct descriptions and a time line of the history of urban development from a small cluster of houses to the current extent of the small township. I have come to the same conclusion in my own urban analysis with regard to the historic and recent pattern of development.
- 3.2 In his original report (Appendix C to the application) and in his evidence Mr Compton-Moen describes the wider landscape characteristics and landscape values of West Melton as well as the overall development

pattern and character of the township<sup>1</sup> and I generally agree with his description.

- 3.3 As previously stated, I undertook my own analysis of the entire township in late 2020 for PC77, with a focus on the area to the north of West Coast Road, particularly the north western area. My findings related to character and amenity, density, connectivity and urban form are not however specific to a single area but apply to the entire township. I therefore consider them relevant to PC67 and have reproduced excerpts from this analysis below.
- 3.4 I note that because the focus of my analysis was the northern part of West Melton, the exact extent of the urban form (red dashed line) to the south indicated below is indicative only and should not be interpreted as a finite boundary. The diagram was produced to explain the key urban elements and to show the overall urban structure of West Melton rather than to define the extent of growth.

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<sup>1</sup> Evidence of Mr Compton-Moen paragraphs 3 – 3.6.

## West Melton Township

### Urban Context

#### West Melton Township

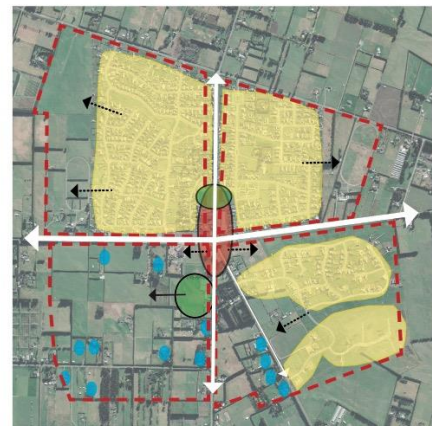
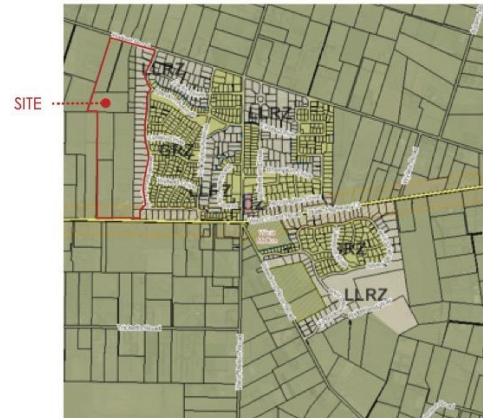
West Melton has over time developed from small rural enclave to a minor rural township with gradually expanding urban infrastructure such as shops, school, community facilities and commercial activities as well as expansion of the original domain and other green spaces

West Melton offers a variety of lifestyle options. It has in the past attracted a range of people from retired farmers to larger families looking for a quieter lifestyle on larger properties with larger outdoor areas and people working in the western parts of Christchurch wanting to live in a smaller rural community. This has resulted in a fairly varied population who have one key element in common – they all appreciate the distinctive character of the small township.

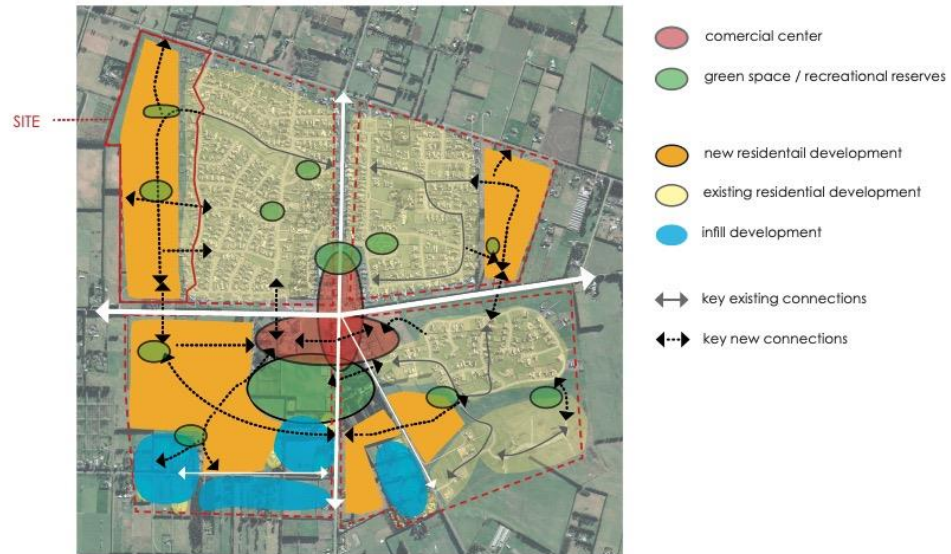
### Urban Form

As a result of piecemeal development, the urban form of West Melton is currently still underdeveloped and lacking cohesion and connectivity. However, a strong structure of 4 clearly identifiable quadrants is emerging around a central commercial / community area. Each quadrant is still 'in development' with the northern quadrants most advanced, the south-eastern quadrant shows some residential development that has the ability to infill and naturally grow to its full size and a south-west quadrant that is lacking development.

- ←..... possible expansion
- commercial / community
- green space / recreational reserves
- existing residential development
- existing lifestyle blocks



## Future urban form – anticipated growth pattern



### Anticipated Growth Pattern

To complete the urban form all quadrants can be expected to develop further will provide residential infill and new residential development.

To support this cohesive urban form the current commercial and community facilities and green spaces will also gradually expand primarily into the south west quadrant around the existing domain and commercial hub.

#### North East quadrant

- West Melton East plan change - refer to appendix A

#### South East Quadrant

- residential infill and some commercial expansion in proximity to the centre

#### South West Quadrant

- primarily expansion of community and commercial areas in proximity to the centre
- extension of the domain and possibility for a second primary school and associated sports fields
- new residential development on rural farm land in particular on larger rural lots along SH 73 as they are in single ownership and will be easiest to develop
- residential infill development of existing lifestyle blocks

#### North West Quadrant

- new residential development on rural farm land with direct linkages to east and south
- selected residential infill development of existing large lots
- open space and recreation areas to support residential development

- 3.5 As can be seen above, the underlying structure of the four quadrants creates a balanced overall urban form and repositions the original centre and the domain at the heart of the township. It creates a better integrated urban fabric where residential areas to the north can connect to the community facilities to the south and the existing and new



residential areas are no longer separated from the new commercial facilities to the north. This more balanced urban form will encourage movement across SH73 through the centre at the intersection and have a positive influence on the amenity and safety within the SH corridor making it a unifying element. Over time with gradual improvements and reduced speed this portion of SH73 will feel more like a town centre 'main road' versus a through road.

- 3.6 I consider that based on this underlying urban structure all four quadrants of West Melton can be expected to develop further into their full capacity over time, contributing to a compact urban form. The centre of town also has good capacity for growth centred around the intersection and the existing facilities such as the domain and community centre.
- 3.7 In preparing this evidence, I have revisited the southern part of West Melton in more detail and it is my opinion that PC67 would support this overall structure of West Melton built on four distinct quadrants.
- 3.8 I say this based on the benefits including the PC67 area into the south-east quadrant would bring to the consolidated urban form and connectivity. In my assessment, it:
  - (a) assists in balancing the urban form of West Melton and encourages development of the underdeveloped SW Quadrant;
  - (b) completes the SE quadrant along existing property boundary lines;
  - (c) combines PC59 and PC67 into a cohesive ODP;
  - (d) facilitates improvements to the wider green and movement network, particularly pedestrian movement;
  - (e) provides clear and appropriate edge treatment at the rural / residential interface;
  - (f) enables the opportunity to create a southern entry gateway along Weedons Ross Road;
  - (g) upgrades Weedons Ross road with a focus on pedestrian amenity leading to the town centre;

- (h) adds variety to the housing choices available; and
- (i) retains the key characteristics of the rural urban interface of the existing West Melton township.

3.9 I provide more detail on these matters below.

#### **4 PC67 IN RELATION TO:**

##### **Urban form**

- 4.1 The urban form diagram included as Appendix 2 in Mr Compton-Moen's evidence (and reproduced as my Appendix 1) shows how the underlying structure of the four quadrants creates a more consolidated urban form, with good connectivity between the SW and SE quadrant, improved connectivity across SH73 with clear entry and exit points into the township created along the main roads.
- 4.2 PC67 assists in strengthening this urban form and clearly completes the SE quadrant, encouraging connections across to the SW Quadrant and creating new connections to the centre. As such, it will assist in creating a well-functioning urban environment within a compact shape. I therefore agree with Mr Compton Moen's assessment that PC67 is consistent with Policy B4.3.6 - *Encourage townships to expand in a compact shape where practical*, for the reasons set out in his evidence.<sup>2</sup>

##### **Density specific to West Melton and residential amenity**

- 4.3 The character of West Melton is different to other towns in the Selwyn District, such as Lincoln or Rolleston, which are larger and well established. They have sizeable commercial, educational and communal facilities to support a larger community. As a result the urbanisation of these towns has seen a rapid growth after the 2010/11 earthquakes with people resettling from Christchurch into these regional centres. The character of Lincoln is dominated by the landscape setting, the meandering Liffey stream and the influence of the Lincoln University. Whilst Rolleston derives its identity from its location as a supply centre along SH1, being the central town in the district and is the main commercial place supporting the surrounding rural farming activities.

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<sup>2</sup> Evidence of Mr Compton-Moen paragraphs 5.8 a-d.

Conversely, West Melton is a small township with historic village characteristics at its centre. The centre is then surrounded by a small concentration of rural residential lifestyle blocks to the southwest and new residential developments of an urban density to the north and to the south east. The larger lots at the perimeter of the town create a gradual transition from the denser urban environment to the more open rural land.

- 4.4 Views into the surrounding rural environment, vacant land within the historic core and the generally lower density of the residential areas create a sense of openness. This is further aided by generous open space, landscaped utility reserves and green linkages breaking up the built form within the residential areas. The combination of all the above creates a specific character for West Melton that sets it apart from other towns like Rolleston or Lincoln and provides an alternative living environment within a reasonably short traveling distance to a major centre, thus making it an attractive place to live.
- 4.5 PC67 continues this development trend, providing a predominantly low residential density of lots from 1,100m<sup>2</sup> to 3,000m<sup>2</sup> (in the West Melton medium density areas) and 3,000 – 5,000 m<sup>2</sup> (in the low density areas on the periphery) which is in keeping with the surrounding development and dwelling typology. This is an important aspect of PC67 as it won't change the residential character of the township. In particular the larger lots located along the rural edge of the township offer a different choice of residential living with rural outlook and ensure the overall appearance of the township, when experienced from the rural surroundings, remains the same. In that sense I agree with Mr Compton-Moen's finding that the proposal will maintain the visual distinction between the rural area and the township.
- 4.6 As Mr Compton-Moen states there are no Medium Density 'Small Lot' or Comprehensive Medium Density developments currently in West Melton. Although the Selwyn District Plan refers to Living WM South Medium Density and Living WM South Low Density areas, the medium density allotments are between 1100m<sup>2</sup> and 3000m<sup>2</sup> in area and are therefore actually low density. The existing residential character is therefore one of predominantly low density.

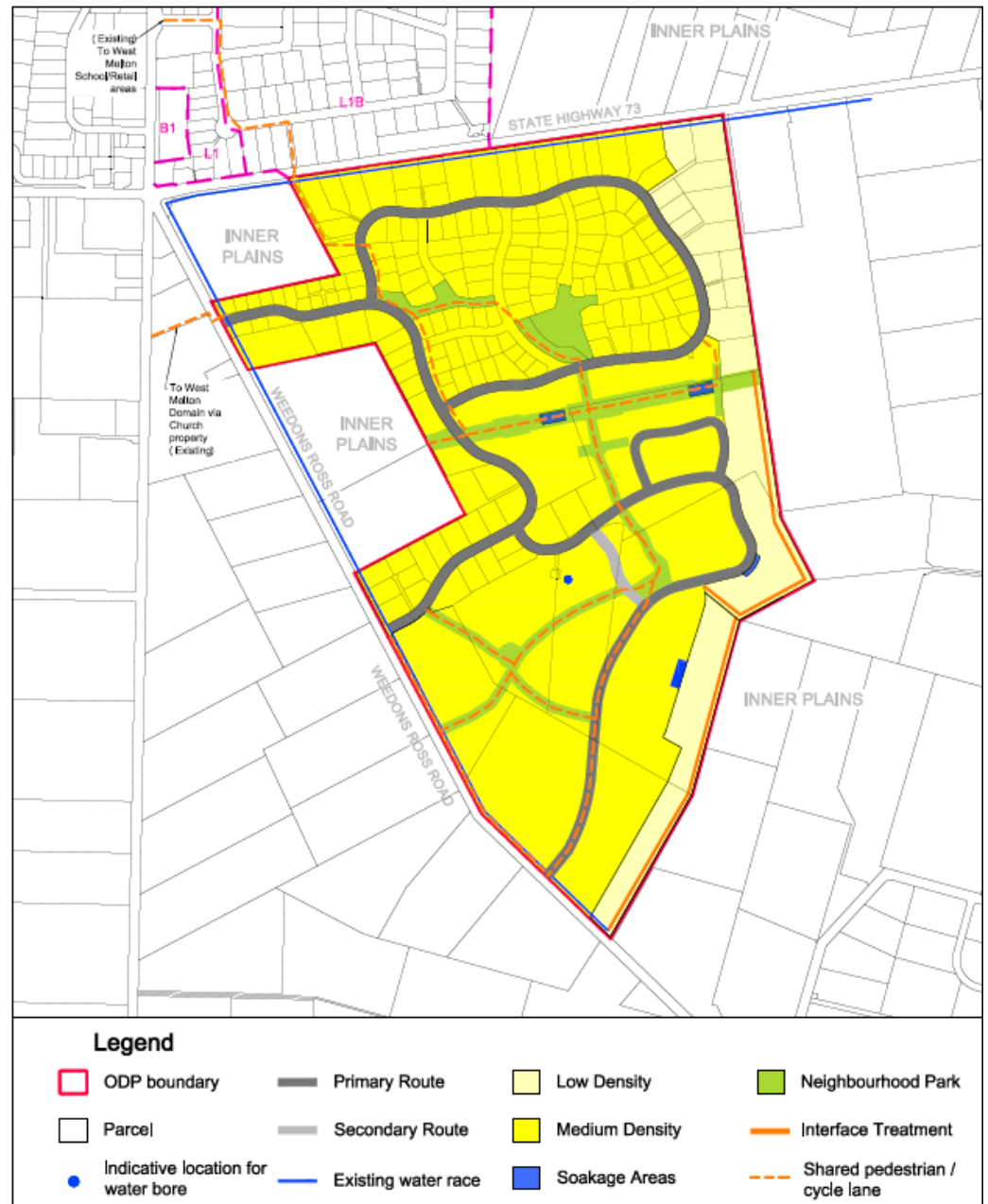
- 4.7 Generally I consider that MD (small lots) could successfully be introduced into small selected pockets of the PC67 area, i.e. overlooking green space, but in my opinion this is not necessary as there are several areas in closer proximity to the town centre that are better suited to this type of density. In particular the areas surrounding the domain would be well suited to accommodate higher densities such as MD comprehensive where they can benefit from the adjacent open space and short walking distance to the town centre.
- 4.8 Centrally located sites sharing a boundary with SH73 are most suited for non-residential development such as community facilities, and small commercial activities whilst the sites adjacent to the domain are most suited to residential activity or greenspace extension. All of these sites will ultimately be required to have a high level of permeability and connectivity to interlink the 4 quadrants through the town centre.
- 4.9 PC67 in contrast will cater for a different residential choice / market and will continue to provide more generous lot sizes creating a low density buffer between the rural area and townships, but maintaining a clear visual distinction.

#### **Connectivity to town centre and other quadrants**

- 4.10 Connectivity, in particular direct pedestrian permeability between and through the quadrants towards the town centre, is important if an interconnected, walkable neighbourhood is to be achieved. This will encourage people to walk and cycle reducing the need for short vehicular trips within West Melton. The wider connectivity to Rolleston and Christchurch via Weedons Ross Road and SH73, either by private vehicle or public transport, remains unchanged in principle by PC67.
- 4.11 The ODP for PC67 shows good direct vehicular and pedestrian / cycle linkages with PC59 linking to the east-west green corridor (pylon utility reserve). As shown in Mr Wheelans evidence at Figures 3 and 4 this reserve plays a quintessential role in the high level of connectivity and amenity in PC59 and provides opportunities to extend along the Pylon corridor into future developments to the west.
- 4.12 A second important pedestrian connection of high amenity will be achieved via the upgrade of Weedons Ross Road leading directly to the

centre of the township. Furthermore, the two proposed road access points on Weedons Ross Road provide future opportunities for direct vehicular connectivity across Weedons Ross Road into potential residential infill developments and further west into the still to be developed SW Quadrant.

- 4.13 As a result of the above mentioned linkages the external connectivity from PC67 to adjacent existing or potential future residential areas, to the centre and to the existing wider movement network is well resolved.
- 4.14 The ODP as lodged does not graphically show many internal linkages within PC67 or dedicated pedestrian / cycle routes. I recommend that the ODP is amended to show additional connections within PC67 to create a high amenity internal pedestrian / green network that can also provide a break in the development pattern and create a more village like character versus a typical suburban subdivision layout. This would require a small pocket park and green linkages wide enough to allow for trees and generous landscaping. This will also offer viewshafts to create a sense of place i.e towards the distant Port Hills and Southern Alps.



4.15 In my view connecting the internal east-west part of this new link to Weedons Ross Road should also be pursued to provide the opportunity in the future to extend this link across Weedons Ross Road towards the SW Quadrant. This could take the form of a road connection, but should include a high amenity pedestrian and cycle route. This east-west west link would encourage future infill and new developments to the west to engage across Weedons Ross Road with the ultimate aim to create strong east-west connectivity of a high amenity between the southern quadrants. In addition, this connection would inform the design of the streetscape of Weedons Ross Road and encourage a residential scale

and finer grain to be introduced from this point onwards to the town centre, creating a threshold or southern gateway into town.

- 4.16 With the amendments recommended to the ODP I consider that the PC67 development will provide good connectivity and walkability and create a higher amenity by extending the green and movement network of West Melton. These linkages should be of a generous scale to allow space for tree planting, generous landscaping and open up viewshafts into the wider landscape creating a sense of 'openness', an important part of the West Melton character.

### **Character and Amenity**

- 4.17 'Village character' and high amenity are not a result of a specific density or lot sizes and are only loosely linked to the actual size of a township. Not every small town has character and not every large town is characterless.

- 4.18 The specific or unique character of a township is a result of:

- (a) the way it has organically grown;
- (b) how it manifests its historic patterns and features;
- (c) how it expresses its underlying urban and landscape structure, defines boundaries and creates connections;
- (d) how it integrates landscape features, topography and views;
- (e) how it presents itself through streetscape, the quality of its public spaces, the appropriate scale of its building; and
- (f) last but not least, how it supports and takes care of the people that live in it by facilitating movement, safety and public engagement at a pedestrian level.

- 4.19 PC67 builds on the existing character of West Melton by naturally extending the residential character of PC59 through into the southern portion of SE Quadrant. Larger lots along the rural interface, internal and external connections, green spaces and high amenity green pedestrian and cycle linkages will break development into smaller components allowing views into the rural land and preserving a sense of

openness. This adds to the small town feel and village type character and will contribute to a well-functioning urban environment.

- 4.20 More importantly, PC67 assists in defining the four quadrants of the township and balances its overall form, strengthening the southern part of the core. It emphasises the importance of the domain, the key public open space of the West Melton community, by positioning it into a more central location. It will provide connections to the SW and should encourage the development of this as yet underdeveloped quadrant.
- 4.21 With regard to the overall understanding of West Melton as a cohesive township PC67 does alter the size of West Melton but gives it a more cohesive form without any loss of character. It will be perceived as a natural extension of PC59 wrapping around to Weedons Ross Road and the SW Quadrant.

## **5 OFFICERS REPORT/SUBMISSIONS**

- 5.1 Instead of directly responding to individual evidence or submissions I will comment on specific urban design themes that have been raised in the submissions and / or Officers Report and those which have been addressed by Mr Compton-Moen in his evidence. I have taken the liberty to combine this as I feel they need to be considered together so I can address them in a more integrated and holistic manner.

### **Urban form, residential, growth and the town centre**

- 5.2 I agree with Mr Compton-Moen and disagree with Mr Nicholson<sup>3</sup> with regard to the location of the centre of West Melton. The centre technically and historically established at the intersection of West Coast Road, West Melton Road and Weedons Ross Road. The community footprint has since extended in all directions from there. The "original" centre is situated predominantly on the southern side due to the location of the domain and the other historic community facilities, i.e. the local tavern, Anglican Church, and cemetery etc. It is important to respect and acknowledge this part of the West Melton centre as it carries the character and history of the original village giving it a sense of place.

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<sup>3</sup> Evidence of Mr Compton-Moen paragraphs 3.1 and 10.3-4.



- 5.3 The new northern commercial extension (strip of shops) along West Melton Road was located to support the residential growth in the NW and NE quadrants. As a result the centre continued to straddle SH73 / West Coast Road, keeping in mind that only in the last four decades with the increased use of the private vehicle has this road gradually become a separating rather than an unifying element.
- 5.4 Unfortunately the northern part of the small core established in 2010 – 2015 has responded to this severance by turning away from SH73 and is now primarily facing Weedons Ross Road where traveling speeds are reduced and pedestrian safety is higher. The southern part of the core has continued to provide the existing community services / facilities, retained the links to the history of West Melton, and is directly engaging with SH73.
- 5.5 Due to the importance and location of the domain and associated community functions, new development on the southern side of the centre has taken a different approach. The newly built community centre is a good example of this response, it openly links the domain through the centre and across SH73 to the NW residential Quadrant.
- 5.6 I agree with Mr Compton Moen that the tide is gradually turning and am aware that several efforts are now being made to reverse this severance and enable better north south connectivity across the road. This is very much a result of the ongoing urbanisation that has occurred in the north, and the desire of these residents to have good connections to their community facilities in the south. The development of the Wilfield subdivision has further accelerated the need for improved north-south connectivity.
- 5.7 Being a small township there are currently few services supporting the residential development in West Melton and it is important to consider future community and commercial growth to support the residents. Only on this southern side is there an opportunity to reconnect the community with the domain, to extend and introduce further commercial activities and community facilities to service the growing township. This will create a stronger and better functioning centre, around which the four quadrants can fully grow into a consolidated form creating a well-connected urban environment. Not allowing the southern quadrants to

grow to an appropriate size will undermine the form of West Melton and further ingrain the separation of north and south allowing the State Highway to dominate the character of the township / centre.

- 5.8 PC67 combined with PC59 and with improved connections will 'strengthen' the position of the centre and in particular the domain, by balancing the urban form. Furthermore, in conjunction with the anticipated future development of the SW Quadrant it will position the Domain in a far more central location strengthening its role as a community hub.
- 5.9 As Mr Compton-Moen mentions *Mr Nicholson places significant importance on Policy B4.3.98 (paragraph 5.10) and B4.3.99 (paragraph 5.11) of the Plan and the centre of West Melton being on the north side of SH73 between the school and local shopping centre (established in ~2012) (paragraph 6.4)* and from that he reaches the conclusion that West Melton's future urban form consolidates to the north of SH73 with the transmission pylon corridor forming the southern boundary of the township.
- 5.10 A pylon corridor is not a discernible boundary in my opinion and PC59 has already incorporated the utility reserve into its proposed development creating a high amenity green corridor for the public with pedestrian / cycle pathways. Instead of creating a boundary this corridor does connect the residential development through a green space and provides opportunities for future direct connectivity to the southern part of the centre.
- 5.11 Improving the connectivity and 'strengthening' the original core of the town centre north and south of SH73 as a diverse commercial and community hub with capacity to grow will clearly aid in achieving Policies B4.3.98 - safety and efficiency and B4.3.99 - compact urban form

#### **The changing role of SH 73 and Weedons Ross road in the West Melton 4 Quadrant context**

- 5.12 The northern developments, Preston Downs and Gainsborough, have already significantly impacted on the nature of SH73 as it runs through West Melton, reducing traveling speeds and incorporating pedestrian crossing points. Allowing the SW and SE quadrants to develop to a

similar extent will continue this trend. From an urban design perspective, lower speeds and more controlled safe connections across SH73 are a benefit to the amenity of the township and will assist in creating a destination. It will elevate the street amenity from a highway to a town centre road with clear entry and exit points and will allow the northern and southern parts of West Melton to reconnect.

- 5.13 Although PC67 does not directly share a boundary with SH73 it will contribute to its overall amenity by creating new connections leading to the southern part of the centre along Weedons Ross Road, and via direct green/pedestrian links to PC59 and to the SW quadrant.
- 5.14 PC67 will require upgrades to Weedons Ross Road and provides a further opportunity to create the appropriate road sequencing when entering West Melton from the south. Achieving a higher street amenity transitioning from a rural character gradually to a township with clearly designed physical and spatial thresholds, and a well-defined southern gateway reducing traveling speeds.

**Extent of growth, natural boundaries and the effect of growth on amenity and character - at what point will West Melton be too big?**

- 5.15 There is no straight and finite answer to this question as there are no well-defined natural boundaries to West Melton. I have studied the relationship between urban form, natural boundaries and growth patterns in several towns in New Zealand and have come to the realisation that there is no one form that fits all. On flat terrain urban form is often concentric as it maximises efficiency and achieves 'proximity' and connectivity but there are many variables that affect the urban form such as natural features, economics, hazards and constraints, planning requirements, ideologies and many more. Albeit slow, urban form is also dynamic and changes in response to events, growth patterns and major planning changes. Although it is to some extent dynamic, urban form should always be legible, discernible and as compact as possible to remain efficient. Cities and townships with a good urban form share many common elements but every place has its own distinct characteristics and its urban form needs to be assessed on its own merit within its context.

- 5.16 The one thing all good urban form has in common is that it needs to be legible and consolidated and for that it requires limits, boundaries or edges. For these boundaries to be legible they need to be defined. This naturally occurs through either strong natural features which in themselves are boundaries (i.e. a mountain, a river, the coastline) or smaller changes in the environment which become thresholds that need to be crossed / passed to go from one to the other (i.e. a stream, a contour change and strong vertical elements such as trees and dense vegetation against uninterrupted open space). Abrupt change and contrast are the two elements that create boundaries and are most successful at defining and containing urban form.
- 5.17 The distinct change in character from a built up urban development to an open rural environment also creates such a contrast. Low density residential developments in particular have the ability to facilitate such a change whilst also providing a necessary buffer to prevent reverse sensitivities between distinctly different environments. The built up form connects visually and physically to the township whilst the larger properties and associated landscaping present a higher amenity towards the rural interface void of tall fences and unpleasant visual barriers.
- 5.18 In the absence of strong defensible natural boundaries in West Melton, the edge treatment to the rural environment of the various quadrants will be critical to establish a visual contrast and at the same time a physical transition or buffer to ensure the characteristic change from open rural landscape to the urban residential environment is retained around the township edges. Planning mechanisms, landscape mitigation, fencing restrictions, and minimum lot size requirements can all play an important role in achieving this. It is my understanding that in addition to the location of larger lots, PC67 also offers mitigating measure along this rural / residential interface.
- 5.19 This leaves the question of size, at what point is West Melton too big to retain its small town character? In my expert opinion it is not a set number of people that determine the character of a small township. 500 people living on large lifestyle blocks separated from each other do not create a cohesive village character and occupy physically the same area as 5000 people living in a small cohesive and interconnected village around a central community hub.

- 5.20 The size of a township can start to affect its character and cohesion when walking distances from the outer areas to the centre start to exceed the 10 - 12 minute walking distance. However, low amenity and bad connectivity have a far greater negative impact on the experience than a slight increase in distance travelled. The ability to walk through a known neighbourhood that provides a sense of place provides a far stronger character than the actual size of the township.
- 5.21 In a similar manner density and lot sizes do not, in themselves, determine character or amenity. To achieve a village character lot sizes can be larger, or smaller, and are often varied. It is often the historic setting, the design and landscaping of streetscapes, green spaces, and public spaces that creates variety and character. Most importantly, it is the sense of community that gives a place its character which can only be achieved through well designed and interconnected neighbourhoods consolidated around a shared communal hub.
- 5.22 I agree with Mr Compton-Moen, in principle that West Melton needs to reach a critical mass to be able to support a larger community footprint that in turn will provide enough local community and commercial infrastructure and services to support the community. For that reason some growth in West Melton is definitely to be encouraged. It will allow the township to grow into a consolidated balanced urban form and ultimately allow it to function better.
- 5.23 However, discussing urban densities and typologies in a place as small as West Melton may not be helpful, as all of the existing and proposed development areas in West Melton are ultimately of a fairly low residential density. Even if medium density is introduced it will always be to a scale befitting this small town, and only in smaller pockets and suitable locations. There is not enough urban infrastructure / services (commercial and community) to support major intensification. There are far more suitable townships for this in the Selwyn District and such development should, be directed there.

### **Definition of Character**

- 5.24 In landscape and urban design terms 'character' has a specific meaning and is used to describe the characteristic of a landscape or a township etc. Described in terms of coastal, flat, vegetated, open, enclosed etc. it

is part of professional terminology and has a defined meaning. The word character in itself is a neutral term.

- 5.25 In public consultation and in submissions the word character needs to be defined in a broader manner. The concern for loss of the 'character' of West Melton extends beyond landscape and built form characteristics.
- 5.26 When describing a place we tend to label places as 'having character and having no character'. But in reality every place has a character. It is important to acknowledge that West Melton has its own character and that for the residents this is the reason why they choose to live there. In that context, the benchmark for a development should be whether it retains, contributes or even enhances that specific character.
- 5.27 In my assessment PC67 does not diminish the character of West Melton, to the contrary it assists to enhance the existing character by working towards a better consolidated form with better communal connections.

### **Sequencing of growth**

- 5.28 Sequencing of development is not an exact science and can rarely be fully controlled as it is a result of many underlying conditions and pressures. This includes, but is not limited to :
- (a) property size;
  - (b) location;
  - (c) ownership structure;
  - (d) land availability and suitability;
  - (e) historic development patterns;
  - (f) surrounding developments and sensitivities;
  - (g) landscape characteristics;
  - (h) ground conditions and terrain;
  - (i) specific events;
  - (j) land use;

- (k) market pressure;
- (l) planning and zoning requirements;
- (m) national and regional policies;
- (n) individual circumstances;
- (o) availability and capacity of infrastructure;
- (p) transport and services;
- (q) connectivity and access;
- (r) competition;
- (s) design trends;
- (t) finances, budgets; and
- (u) timeline.

5.29 Along with these factors there is the desire to develop, or resistance to develop, on both a personal level, and as a community. Some of these parameters are controllable, measurable and visible, while others are less tangible. Some are interconnected, others are isolated issues, but all and many others not listed will influence the sequence of development.

5.30 Anticipating and guiding development in our discipline is called structural spatial and master planning. It combines strategic, spatial and structural design and planning and goes beyond the pure planning with figures and linkages, traffic and services etc. It actually lays down a spatial structure for a town to grow into at its own pace.

5.31 With regards to sequencing of development in West Melton, it would be ideal, with regard to a consolidated urban form, if it was always centric moving outwards. However that is utterly unrealistic, brings with it issues of efficiencies, and is in itself not organic nor sufficiently responsive to most of the issues driving development. Townships often develop in 'chunks' based on market pressure, ownership structures, personal circumstances of owners, landscape features, and availability paired with planning and infrastructure guidance.

- 5.32 Looking back at the history of development there is a very logical sequence of development occurring in West Melton. Initially congregating around a intersecting 'travel' node the township pushed North with urban development first. This is a logical step as the land between SH73 and Haketts Road on either side of Weedons Ross Road offered the best location for urban expansion, with the SH to the South for servicing and access, and large rural properties in single ownership being available. The land was also limited in size by Haketts Road further North making it less suitable to be used for farming as the gradual growth of the township encroached upon it.
- 5.33 This was followed by the Wilfield development to the southeast, again for similar reasons (underlying ownership structure / larger properties etc.). However, it had to contend with the issues presented by the SH to the north, limiting access and exposing sensitive private outdoor residential areas to a less desirable outlook and noise environment. The current plan changes are a direct extension off these three recently urbanised areas, and so, are in a sequence.
- 5.34 The fact that the SW Quadrant has not been developed to an urban density yet is due to the fact that it has always been the most desirable part of West Melton to live in, with connections to the domain, the community footprint, and more established vegetation for shelter and amenity (Southern shelterbelts). As a result, this area has already undergone a slow steady transition from rural to rural residential over the past decades. This can be seen in the higher number of properties that have been subdivided into 4ha lifestyle blocks versus 'real' large farm land.
- 5.35 This area is therefore 'resisting' urbanisation. It is more difficult to develop with multiple ownerships and several established dwellings to be integrated. Such areas are always the last ones to develop into fully urban densities as they are already to some extent "developed", albeit at a very, very low residential density. Rolleston is a good example of this.
- 5.36 The development pattern and sequencing of West Melton is absolutely no surprise to me, as it has grown very organically, and follows an utterly logical sequence of development. It might not be what looks



nicest on paper for us designers and planners, but this is the reality on the ground. So when we discuss sequencing, we need to make space in our thinking for what actually, logically, and organically occurs. Urban design and planning needs to work with this natural sequencing process and ensure that each new development is a step further towards achieving a well-functioning environment within a consolidated urban form. I consider that PC67 does contribute towards this.

## **6 CONCLUSIONS**

- 6.1 West Melton can and should grow into its consolidated form whilst catering to a slightly different residential market than other towns in the Selwyn District. The reason people live in West Melton is not necessarily diversity of residential options and Medium Density lifestyles. It is the more relaxed and low density lifestyle that West Melton already offers that people are attracted to. In my opinion, PC67 has the correct mix of development density, open space and amenity to complement this specific character of West Melton.
- 6.2 But most importantly it builds on existing developments and completes the SE Quadrant. From an urban design perspective this is an important contribution towards achieving the desirable consolidated urban form of the small township and will contribute to a well-functioning urban environment.
- 6.3 It does this by:
  - (a) strengthening the southern part of the community hub and town centre;
  - (b) balancing the urban form;
  - (c) providing an appropriate edge treatment to the township;
  - (d) encouraging development of the SW Quadrant;
  - (e) supporting activation and development within the core;
  - (f) creating new connections;
  - (g) providing the appropriate level of residential density at the edge of town;

- (h) retaining the dominant urban and landscape characteristics of the wider township; and
- (i) developing as a logical sequence from PC59 towards the SE quadrant.

**Nicole Lauenstein**

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## LEGEND

- 1 West Melton Commercial Centre
  - 2 West Melton Primary School
  - 3 West Melton Tavern
  - 4 Community Centre
  - 5 West Melton Domain
  - 6 St Paul's Church
- Indicative Potential Urban Form Growth
  - Education
  - Commercial
  - Recreation / Reserve
  - Proposed Recreation / Reserve Extension
  - Residential
  - Opportunity for Higher Density Residential
  - Proposed Plan Change Areas
  - Potential Area for Further Development
  - ... 60km Speed Zone along SH73
  - ... Pylon Power Lines Corridor
  - ★ West Melton Town Centre with Proposed Intersection Upgrade - including traffic lights and improved pedestrian and cyclist connections across SH73
  - Proposed Intersection Upgrade - roundabout and linking road
  - \* Proposed Cul-de-sac
  - Infill development
  - ◀▶ Pedestrian/ cycle network
  - ◀▶ Key new connections
  - Green network
  - Existing lifestyle blocks

