

**BEFORE HEARING COMMISSIONERS  
FOR SELWYN DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**UNDER**

the Resource Management  
Act 1991

**AND**

**IN THE MATTER**

Private Plan Change Request  
67 (PC67)

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**SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE OF HUGH ANTHONY NICHOLSON  
ON BEHALF OF SELWYN DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**URBAN DESIGN AND LANDSCAPE**

**14<sup>th</sup> September 2021**

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## 1. SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

- 1.1 My name is Hugh Anthony Nicholson. I have prepared a Statement of Evidence for the Selwyn District Council with respect to Plan Change 67 to the Selwyn District Plan. My qualifications and experience are set out in that statement.
- 1.2 In my opinion the proposed plan change area does not consolidate West Melton or contribute to a compact urban form for the township anticipated in Policies B4.3.98 and B4.3.99 of the SDP due to:
- (a) The distance of the plan change area from the town centre; and
  - (b) The community severance created by State Highway 73 (SH73) and the high voltage transmission lines.
- I note that there are significant areas of undeveloped rural land that are closer to the town centre which are likely to be suitable for higher densities and would make a greater contribution to a compact urban form if required.
- 1.3 In New Zealand the median walk-to-bus trip length was 200 metres, and 75% of walk-to-bus trips were less than 500 metres, while international research, suggests that people will walk 400-800 metres to reach bus services.<sup>1</sup>
- 1.4 I accept that a bus route and bus stop could be accommodated on Weedons Ross Road adjacent to the plan change area, however, I consider that given the low densities and low number of households proposed in the plan change area that it is unlikely to generate sufficient demand for a new bus route or bus stop and I do not believe this should be relied upon. I note that Environment Canterbury indicates that there are currently no planned upgrades or changes to the Metro route passing through West Melton.
- 1.5 In my opinion the distance of the proposed plan change area exceeds the distance that the average person would regularly walk to the school, shops or the bus stop in West Melton. I consider that the location of the proposed

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<sup>1</sup> NZ Transport Agency research report 537, Improving the cost-benefit analysis of integrated PT, walking and cycling, Sinclair Knight Merz, 2013, p.79

Plan Change does not support the use of walking or public transport as viable alternatives to private vehicle trips, and does not assist in reducing emissions to address climate change as anticipated in Policy 1 of the National Policy Statement on Urban Development (NPSUD).

- 1.6 I broadly agree with Mr Compton-Moen descriptions of the landscape character and visual context, however, in my opinion the change to landscape character resulting from the proposed Plan Change would be greater and would have a *moderate-high* impact reflecting the change from an open rural landscape with long views with a small number of built elements, to a suburban landscape with shorter views, enclosed spaces and a greater number of built elements.
- 1.7 I note that currently there are no walking facilities along Weedons Ross Road between the plan change area and SH73 or across the intersection of SH73 and Weedons Ross Road. If the PC67 is approved I recommend that it should be conditional upon a shared path for pedestrians and cyclists being installed between Kingsdowne Drive and SH73, and the SH73 / Weedons Ross intersection being upgraded with traffic lights.

## **2. APPLICANT'S EVIDENCE**

- 2.1 I have reviewed the urban design and landscape evidence provided by Ms Lauenstein and Mr Compton-Moen and can provide the following points of clarification.
- 2.2 In paragraph 3.4 of Ms Lauenstein's evidence she presents a diagram entitled "Future urban form – anticipated growth pattern". While the diagram is not without merit I note that it has no standing in the Selwyn District Plan (SDP) or associated documents and has not been consulted on with the community. I note that the diagram does not include a significant proportion of the plan change area within the anticipated urban form.

- 2.3 Policy B4.3.99 of the SDP suggests that while a substantial amount of urban growth is anticipated north of SH73, development south of SH73 will be limited in both extent and density.
- 2.4 There is some disagreement between Ms Lauenstein, Mr Compton-Moen and myself regarding the location of the 'centre' of West Melton. This is not surprising given there is some difficulty in defining the location and extent of town centres generally<sup>2</sup>. Traditionally the centre is often considered as the main concentration of retail and commercial activity, but people might also understand it as the focal point where main roads converge or people congregate.
- 2.5 There is no right and wrong answer to this question and the answer depends on the criteria used to identify the centre. I have identified what I regard as the 'centre' of West Melton based on the primary commercial and educational areas, the highest concentration of people and activities, and the location of the central public transport stop.
- 2.6 Ms Lauenstein and Mr Compton-Moen regard the centre of the West Melton as the intersection of SH73 and Weedons Ross Road basing this on the distribution of historic facilities. I have attached a series of historic aerial photographs between 1940 and today which provide an interesting perspective on the changing urban form of West Melton.
- 2.7 Until 1984 the urban form of West Melton was largely unchanged and centred along Weedons Ross Road with the school (established in 1871) at the northern end and St Pauls Anglican Church (established in 1873) at the southern end<sup>3</sup>. An accommodation house (established in 1881), a general store (established in 1872) and a Wesleyan chapel (established in 1868) were sited at the intersection of SH73 and Weedons Ross Road. The current domain was established in 1909. There was almost no residential development prior to 1985.

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<sup>2</sup> Paul Cheshire, Christian Hilber, Piero Monteburno, Rosa Sanchis-Guarner, Take Me to the Centre of Your Town! Using Micro-geographical Data to Identify Town Centres, CESifo Economic Studies, Volume 64, Issue 2, June 2018, Pages 255–291, <https://doi.org/10.1093/cesifo/ify002>

<sup>3</sup> <https://westmelton.org.nz/150-years-of-history/>



- 2.8 The first significant residential development around the school on Westview Crescent occurred in the late 1980s. The Gainsborough subdivision started in 2007 opposite the school and east of Weedons Ross Road, and the Preston Downs subdivision started four years later west of Weedons Ross Road and between SH73 and Halkett Road<sup>4</sup>.
- 2.9 I agree with Ms Lauenstein and Mr Compton-Moen that the historic centre of West Melton would probably have been considered to be the intersection of Weedons Ross Road and the Bealey Road (now SH73), although I consider that Weedons Ross Road would have been the main street, particularly prior to the establishment of SH73 when the Old West Coast Road was the primary route to the West Coast from Christchurch.
- 2.10 This does not change my opinion that the 'destinations that most residents might reasonably expect to walk or cycle to on a daily basis are the primary school, the bus stop on the Christchurch to Darfield route, and the shopping centre.
- 2.11 Mr Compton-Moen has compared the distances from existing residential areas and from PC67 to parts of the town centre in Table 1<sup>5</sup> of his evidence. The table is misleading in that the measurement for PC73 is from the nearest or northern edge and every section within the plan change area except one will be further away. In contrast the distance to Point A on Prescott Avenue is to the furthest edge of the existing residential development and almost all of the sections will be closer than this.
- 2.12 The distances in Table 1 of Mr Compton-Moen's evidence appear to have been measured along the roads rather than as the crow flies. It is not possible to provide a similar measurement for PC67 because the subdivision layout has not been completed, but the actual distances from most sections in PC67 would be greater than indicated.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://westmelton.org.nz/150-years-of-history/>

<sup>5</sup> Statement of Evidence of David Compton-Moen, paragraph 6.4

- 2.13 Mr Compton-Moen discusses the increased use of e-bikes and scooters<sup>6</sup> (micro-mobility) and the potential for greater distances to be covered in the same timeframe with less effort. I agree that this is a positive trend but note that my advice is based on the New Zealand Household Travel Survey (NZHTS).
- 2.14 The NZHTS<sup>7</sup> surveys the distance that New Zealanders travel including the length of the various travel legs that make up each journey. The average walk leg was 1.0km, and the average cycle leg was 4.0km in the data from 2015 to 2018. Bearing in mind that only 12% of the total number of travel legs in the survey were pedestrian and 1.3% were cyclists then the percentage of the total number of trips legs that involved walking more than 1.0km and cycling more than 4.0km was closer to 6% and 0.65% respectively.
- 2.15 Based on this data, even with the increasing use of 'micro-mobility, less than 10% of people in the PC67 plan change area could be expected to walk or cycle to the West Melton town centre regularly. In my opinion making walking and public transport viable alternatives to private vehicle trips includes ensuring that the urban form of towns provides amenities, services and bus stops within a distance that the average person would be prepared to walk on a daily basis.
- 2.16 I support the revised Outline Development Plan (ODP) that Ms Lauenstein has recommended which includes additional internal connections within PC67 to create a stronger pedestrian / green network. The more direct routes proposed address my concern that the internal layout of the ODP did not support the use of walking or cycling as viable alternatives.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid, paragraph 6.3

<sup>7</sup> New Zealand Household Travel Survey, Ministry of Transport, 2015-2018, <https://www.transport.govt.nz/statistics-and-insights/household-travel/>

- 2.17 I agree with Ms Lauenstein that the sequencing of growth is not an exact science and is the result of a number of factors<sup>8</sup>, however, I would qualify this with noting that simply because land is available for development does not necessarily make it appropriate from an urban form perspective.
- 2.18 Figure 6 shows the notional extent of concentric growth centred on the intersection of SH73 and Weedons Ross Road and based on the extent of PC67. If West Melton grew in all directions to a similar extent as proposed in PC67 the size of the township would be significantly extended. I note also the proximity of rural residential enclave at Johnsons Road and consider it likely that this would become absorbed into the extended township.
- 2.19 In my opinion supporting extensive residential development around West Melton through PC67 would not support a compact urban form or promote high levels of walking or public transport use.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of the letters 'H' and 'N' intertwined within a square border.

**Hugh Anthony Nicholson**

14<sup>th</sup> September 2021

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<sup>8</sup> Statement of evidence, Nicole Lauenstein, paragraph 5.28













Figure 4: West Melton 2004-2010

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0 0.1 0.2 0.3 0.4 Kilometres  
Scale: 1:10,000 @A4  
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Figure 6: Notional extent of concentric growth based on extent of PC67 and centred on intersection of SH73 and Weedons Ross Road (green circle)

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