

**BEFORE HEARING COMMISSIONER
FOR SELWYN DISTRICT COUNCIL**

UNDER

the Resource Management
Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER

Private Plan Change Requests
81 and 82 (PC81 and PC82)

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

URBAN DESIGN AND LANDSCAPE

13 September 2022

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 Changes 81 and 82 to the Selwyn District Plan. My qualifications and experience are set out in that statement.
- 1.2 PCs 81 and 82 sit outside the future growth areas identified in the Rolleston Structure Plan and subsequent planning documents including the Canterbury Regional Policy Statement (CRPS), Selwyn District Plan (SDP) and Our Space 2018-2048. In my opinion PC81 and PC82 do not provide strategic or comprehensive responses to urban growth in Rolleston.
- 1.3 With regard to PC81, in the best case scenario (whereby PC70 is also approved) I consider that the plan change area would have a low level of connectivity with Rolleston and would not contribute to a compact urban form, creating an urban 'peninsula' surrounded on two sides by land zoned for rural land uses and one side by land zoned for rural lifestyle use, with a single urban frontage addressing Dunns Crossing Road. These outcomes would not contribute to Objective B.3.4.4 of the SDP (or various directions relating to promoting a compact urban form and a high level of connectivity).
- 1.4 There is a risk in approving PC81 that PC70 will not be approved resulting in an even lower level of connectivity between the Skellerup South Block and the wider Rolleston township.
- 1.5 In my opinion PC81 would have a low level of accessibility to public services and facilities as a result of poor walkability, difficult cycling conditions and a lack of public transport options. If a comprehensive commercial centre was developed as part of PC70, together with a more connected cycling infrastructure in adjacent areas, I consider that the accessibility of PC81 could be improved to a low-moderate level.
- 1.6 In my view PC82 would also have a low level of connectivity with Rolleston and would not contribute to a compact urban form, creating an urban

‘peninsula’ surrounded on two sides by land zoned for rural land uses and one side by land zoned for rural lifestyle use with a single urban frontage addressing Dunns Crossing Road. These outcomes would not contribute to Objective B.3.4.4 of the SDP (or various directions relating to promoting a compact urban form and a high level of connectivity).

- 1.7 In my opinion PC82 has a moderate level of accessibility to public services and facilities including the town centre, commercial areas, schools and recreation facilities. I note that some of the housing areas within the PC82 plan change area are more than two kilometres from the primary road exit reducing the overall level of accessibility.
- 1.8 In my view there is potential for PC81 and PC82 to have a better urban form and connectivity if adjacent land was rezoned for residential use (as was partly proposed through PC73). While this option may have some merit I do not consider that it is the only option for the growth for Rolleston or that PC82 can rely on rezoning the surrounding areas of land in order to provide compact urban form or good connectivity.
- 1.9 If PC81 is approved I recommend that the following additions are made to the revised ODP:
- The northern east-west road is extended eastwards to connect with Dunns Crossing Road;
 - A second pedestrian / cycle crossing facility across Dunns Crossing Road is shown on the ODP at the northernmost connection;
 - Reinstate the distinction between primary and secondary roads on the ODP.
- 1.10 If PC82 is approved I recommend the following additions are made to the revised ODP:
- Pedestrian / cycling routes are included along the Dunns Crossing Road frontage, and along the primary road adjacent to the proposed neighbourhood centre;

- Rationalise the pedestrian crossing points at the intersections of Lowes and Brookside Roads with Dunns Crossing Road to more clearly identify the intent and location;
- Reinstate the distinction between primary and secondary roads on the ODP.

1.11 In forming this opinion I acknowledge that the Skellerup Block between PC81 and PC82 is currently zoned for residential lifestyle use with up to fifty one houses with generous setbacks to be managed as a ‘countryside areas’ permitted on the land.

1.12 In my opinion the effects on the landscape character and the visual impacts of PCs 81 and 82 would be *moderate-high* and *moderate* respectively. However, I note that Policy 6 of the NPS-UD specifically directs that changes to amenity values such as landscape character and visual amenity need to be balanced against the positive effects of increased housing supply and choice, and are not, of themselves, an adverse effect.

Response to Submissions

1.13 A number of submissions to PCs 81 and 82 have raised concerns about the loss of rural views and changes to the rural character that will arise from the Plan Changes. I consider that the Plan Changes, if approved, will detract from the rural character and visual amenities enjoyed by local residents, however, Policy 6 of the NPS-UD specifically directs that changes to amenity values such as these need to be balanced against the positive effects of increased housing supply and choice, and are not, of themselves, an adverse effect.

Response to Applicant’s Urban Design Evidence

1.14 Ms Lauenstein considers that PCs 81 and 82 are “inevitable”¹ and part of a “natural growth sequence”² to the west of Dunns Crossing Road. In my

¹ Ms Lauenstein’s evidence, paragraph 41

² Ibid, paragraph 14

opinion it is misleading to consider urban growth as a form of inevitable natural process. Urban growth is a consequence of various processes including the current planning process, market demand and the availability of the land for development.

- 1.15 I consider that there are alternative options for urban growth in Rolleston including intensification, and expansion to the south and south-east, and that a more comprehensive and strategic approach would allow the costs and benefits of alternative growth options to be assessed and discussed with the wider community. A 'first-come-first-served' approach through private plan changes does not allow alternative options for growth to be assessed and compared in a comprehensive manner.
- 1.16 Ms Lauenstein suggests that my conclusion that PCs 81 and 82 would not achieve a sufficiently compact urban form and would lack connectivity and accessibility are based on considering the Plan Changes in isolation. She argues that PC81 and PC82 should be considered "in context", including PC73 and the rural/L2 pocket of land to the north of PC82.
- 1.17 My analysis has been based on the evidence in front of me. With regard to PC73 I understand that the application has been declined and is currently under appeal. I am not aware of any changes to the status of the rural/L2 pocket of land. I have not assumed that either of these areas will be rezoned for residential use, and I am uncertain how these matters could be considered as part of this process.
- 1.18 In a hypothetical scenario, if PCs 73, 81, 82 and the rural/L2 pocket of land could be considered together, I do not consider that PC81 and PC82 in their current forms adequately address the urban form issues arising out of urban growth of this scale in this location. In particular I consider that the staging of development and the location of the western boundary of PC82 would need to be addressed.

- 1.19 Ms Lauenstein considers that the odour setback is “technical matter”³ which does not “materially affect the urban form”. Urban design seeks to ensure that the design of buildings, places, spaces and networks that make up our towns, work for all of us, both now and in the future. The provision of an appropriate odour setback is significant, both from the perspective of protecting and future proofing the operation of essential District-wide infrastructure, and from the perspective of providing a healthy and high quality residential environment for future residents.
- 1.20 Because conflict can arise between urban activities and the activities of these types of infrastructure, a precautionary approach to siting new urban development adjacent to wastewater treatment and composting facilities is recommended from an urban design perspective.



Hugh Nicholson

13 September 2022

³ Ms Lauenstein's evidence, paragraph 78