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To: Selwyn District Council
From: Hugh Nicholson, Urban Designer
Date: 9th November 2022
Re: DPR-0460 West Melton Rezoning Request for Proposed Selwyn District Plan
Urban Design and Landscape Review

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Submission 0460 to the Proposed Selwyn District Plan (PSDP) seeks to rezone approximately 12.55 ha of land zoned for rural uses (GRUZ) off State Highway 73 to General Residential in accordance with a proposed Outline Development Plan (ODP) to enable the establishment of a retirement village.
- 1.2 I have been asked by the Selwyn District Council to carry out a peer review of the expert evidence relevant to urban design or landscape matters. As part of the peer review, I have assessed the appropriateness of the proposed rezoning against the relevant strategic directions in overarching documents. I have identified any information gaps in the relevant expert evidence, and where appropriate recommended changes to proposed ODPs in order to better achieve the desired strategic directions.
- 1.3 My assessment does not consider the urban form implications for Greater Christchurch.

2.0 STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

- 2.1 In my peer review I have drawn strategic directions on good urban form from three sources, the National Policy Statement on Urban Development (**NPSUD**), the Canterbury Regional Policy Statement (**CRPS**) and the proposed Selwyn District Plan (**proposed SDP**), all of which provide overarching guidance.

- 2.2 The **NPSUD** seeks to provide “*well-functioning urban environments*”¹ that enable more people to live near a centre or employment opportunities, and which are well serviced by public transport².
- 2.3 In particular the **NPSUD** promotes urban environments that provide good accessibility between housing, jobs, community services, and natural and open spaces, support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, and are resilient to the likely effects of climate change³.
- 2.4 The **CRPS** seeks to manage the urban form and settlement pattern of Christchurch through the consolidation and intensification of urban areas.
- 2.5 The objectives of the **CRPS** direct that residential development should be of a high quality and incorporate “good urban design”⁴.
- 2.6 The **CRPS** also seeks housing developments that give effect to the listed principles of good urban design, and to those in the NZ Urban Design Protocol 2005. These principles refer to the need for well-integrated places that have high-quality connections including walking, cycling and public transport, and that are environmentally sustainable⁵.
- 2.7 The strategic directions of the **proposed SDP** seek that “*Urban growth is located only in or around existing townships and in a compact and sustainable form that aligns with its anticipated role*”⁶.
- 2.8 The urban growth policies in the **proposed SDP** seek to establish high-quality urban environments by “*maintaining the amenity values and character anticipated within each township*” and “*preserving the rural outlook... through appropriate landscape mitigation... or development controls at the interface*” with rural environments⁷.
- 2.9 The urban growth policies in the **proposed SDP** also direct that the zoning of land demonstrates how it will integrate with existing urban environments including “*prioritising accessibility and connectivity between the land and adjoining neighbourhoods, commercial centres, ...reserves, and community facilities, including education... and health services*”, and “*requiring safe, attractive and convenient transport infrastructure that promotes walking, cycling,*

¹ National Policy Statement on Urban Development 2020, Objective 1, p.10

² Ibid, Objective 3, p.10

³ Ibid, Policy 1, p.10-11

⁴ Ibid, Objective 6.2.3 Sustainability

⁵ Ibid, Policy 6.3.2 Development form and urban design

⁶ SD-UFD-01 Compact and Sustainable Township Network

⁷ UG-P10 Urban Form

*and access to public transport and public transport facilities to encourage energy efficiency and improve peoples' health and wellbeing*⁸.

- 2.10 The residential objectives in the **proposed SDP** direct that a “*range of housing typologies and densities are provided*”⁹ and that “*increased densities occur in close proximity*” to activity centres, public transport and open spaces¹⁰. They also require that “*residents have access to a range of community, recreation, education, health, and corrections activities and facilities that support... the residential amenity*”¹¹.
- 2.11 The current District Plan (Policy B4.3.98) anticipates new residential or business growth in West Melton on either side of Weedons Ross Road north of SH73 and south of Halkett Road. Only a limited extent of new low density residential development is envisaged south of SH73 in order to maintain a consolidated form for future growth.
- 2.12 Drawing on the strategic directions outlined above I have reviewed the urban form proposed in DPR-0436 in terms of:
- a. the extent to which it creates a consolidated and compact urban form, and the spatial distribution of densities;
 - b. the level of connectivity with the existing urban environment;
 - c. the accessibility to a range of services using a range of travel modes including walking, cycling and public transport;
 - d. The residential amenity values and character, and the treatment of the urban / rural interface;

3.0 EXISTING ENVIRONMENT

- 3.1 The site is a 12.55 ha block of land fronting SH73, West Melton. The site boundaries are defined by SH73 to the south, the existing Preston Downs subdivision to the east, and rural land with lifestyle blocks to the west and north.
- 3.2 There are no pedestrian or cycle facilities along this section of SH73.

⁸ UG-P12 Urban Form

⁹ RESZ-03 Residential Objectives

¹⁰ RESZ-04 Residential Objectives

¹¹ RESZ-07 Residential Objectives



Figure 1: Aerial photo of the site in the context of West Melton

4.0 COMPACT URBAN FORM

- 4.1 West Melton is a small township situated approximately 24 kilometres west of Christchurch on State Highway 73 (SH73). The main part of the township is located between West Coast and Halkett Roads with the local primary school and shopping centre on Weedons Ross Road just north of the intersection with the SH73.
- 4.2 The main part of the township is characterised by single-storey modern dwellings on spacious sections with landscaped curvilinear streets. There is a network of pedestrian paths complementing the street network.
- 4.3 While most of the township is located on the northern side of SH73, the community centre, skatepark and the West Melton Tavern are sited on the southern side. There is also a lower density subdivision (Wilfield subdivision) sited to the south-west of SH73.
- 4.4 I consider that the centre of West Melton is on Weedons Ross Road just north of SH73 between the West Melton Primary School and the local shopping centre. It is also the location of the nearest bus stop on the Christchurch-Darfield bus service.

- 4.5 The ODP appears to be based on the premise that the site will be used as a retirement village although this is implicit rather than specified. I consider that the provisions of the ODP should be appropriate for general residential use if the proposal for a retirement village is not implemented.
- 4.6 The site is approximately 0.8km from Weedons Ross Road along SH73, and comprises a narrow strip of land adjacent to the western boundary of West Melton. In my opinion has the potential to contribute to a compact and consolidated form for West Melton provided that the connectivity and accessibility issues can be resolved.
- 4.7 The ODP narrative refers to higher density housing and sites “in a range between 150m² and 500m²”, however, it does not provide a minimum density for residential development. In my opinion the ODP should specify a minimum density of 15 households per hectare (hh/ha).



Figure 2: Walkable catchments in West Melton (400m, 800m and 1,200m)

5.0 CONNECTIVITY

- 5.1 Connectivity refers to creating streets that are joined together in city-wide networks that provide more choices, and support increased resilience and safer places¹². Well-connected street networks support walking and cycling.

¹² *People Places Spaces: A design guide for urban New Zealand*, Ministry for the Environment, 2002, p.32

- 5.2 With access to the west and north severed by rural land, and existing suburban development to the east, the site would have only one connection via a street and shared pedestrian /cycle path through a residential section opposite Elizabeth Street. No connection is proposed onto SH73. In my opinion this is a *very low* level of connectivity for more than 200 proposed homes.
- 5.3 I consider that if a second street connection could be provided onto SH73, a second future street connection provided to the land to the west, and a safe shared pedestrian / cycle path could be provided from the site to Weedons Ross Road along SH73, the site could have a *moderate* level of connectivity.

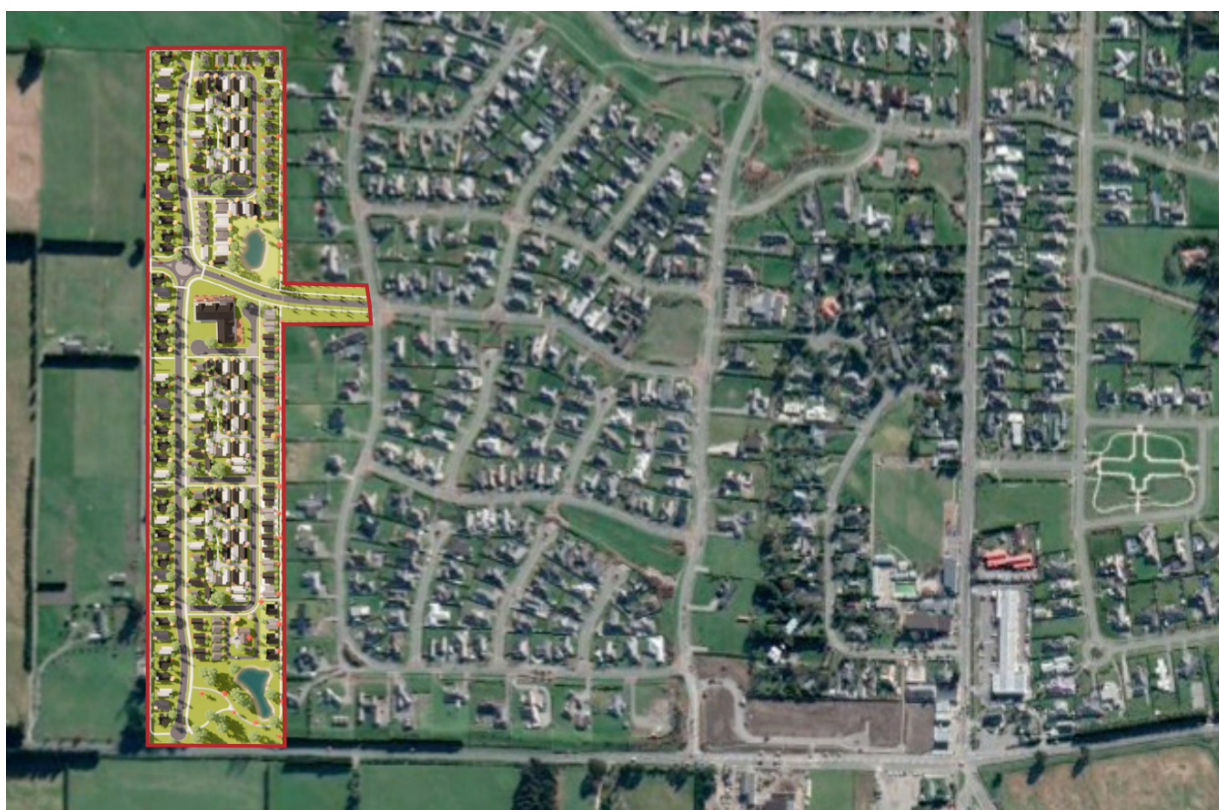


Figure 3: Artist's impression of proposed development showing the single connection to the existing town.

6.0 ACCESSIBILITY

- 6.1 Accessibility relates to providing access to public services and facilities particularly within easily walkable or cyclable distances¹³. The New Zealand Household Travel Survey (NZHTS) found that the average walking trip was 1.0km, and the average cycle trip distance was 4.0km¹⁴.

¹³ New Zealand Urban Design Protocol, Ministry for the Environment, 2005, p.21

¹⁴ New Zealand Household Travel Survey, Ministry of Transport, 2015-2018, <https://www.transport.govt.nz/statistics-and-insights/household-travel/>

- 6.2 Given the single connection point and the relatively convoluted routes, the majority of houses in the proposed site would be more than 1.0km from the shops and the school, and although they would be only 600m from the West Melton Community Centre and Domain, there are no direct pedestrian or cycle facilities to make this a safe trip.
- 6.3 There are limited shopping and employment opportunities in West Melton and most residents would be likely to rely on car travel to access the city for these services. West Melton is serviced by a single return bus trip each day.



Figure 4: Photo from south-east corner of site looking east along SH73 towards town centre

- 6.4 In my opinion the proposed site would have a *low* level of accessibility to public services and facilities as a result of a lack of connections, and walking and cycling facilities, and limited public transport options.

7.0 BROADER CONCEPT PLANS

- 7.1 Ms Lauenstein's evidence is largely reliant on a proposal for a concentric settlement structure in West Melton and an indicative concept plan for the site. While these proposals are not without merit, neither of them have any standing in terms current statutory or Council planning processes. They are one possible outcome of further development on this site and in West Melton generally, but there are a number of other options which may take precedence.

- 7.2 Ms Lauenstein's evidence includes an indicative diagram showing the future urban form of West Melton and indicates four quadrants centred on the intersection of SH73 and Weedons Ross Road. While this diagram may have some merit, I note that it has no standing in the Proposed Selwyn District Plan (PSDP) or associated documents, and has not been consulted on with the community. In my opinion the indicative diagram cannot be relied upon.
- 7.3 Based on the indicative concept plan for the site Ms Lauenstein draws a number of conclusions about the plan change with regard to village character, pedestrian routes, connectivity and landscaping. While the indicative concept plan may be a positive outcome, there is no certainty that this would be the outcome from rezoning this site as GRZ. Beyond the matters covered in the ODP, there are a range of different activities and site layouts that may result from rezoning this land.
- 7.4 The ODP is somewhat ambiguous as to whether the roads and cycleways would be open to the public or vested with the Council. It also discusses the landscaped setbacks being owned and maintained by a body corporate.
- 7.5 In my opinion the primary and secondary roads should be vested with the Council, and the proposed green spaces, walkways and boundary treatments should not be dependent on a particular ownership model.

8.0 RECOMMENDED CHANGES TO THE ODP

- 8.1 If the Commissioners are of a mind to approve the rezoning request I recommend that the following changes are made to the ODP.
- a. That a second street connection is provided onto SH73;
 - b. That a second future street connection is provided to the land to the west;
 - c. A minimum density of 15hh/ha is specified in the ODP narrative;
 - d. That the ODP narrative specifies the movement, green, blue and landscape outcomes to be delivered that is not dependent on a particular ownership model;
 - e. That a second safe pedestrian / cycle connection is required alongside SH73 from the site to Weedons Ross Road.

9.0 CONCLUSION

- 9.1 In my opinion the proposed rezoning in DPR-0460 would have a *very low* level of connectivity and a *low* level of accessibility. I consider that if the recommended changes were made to the ODP the proposal would make a *moderate* contribution to a compact and consolidated urban form, and would have *moderate* levels of connectivity and accessibility.

Hugh Nicholson

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