

Before an Independent Hearings Panel
Appointed by Waimakariri District Council

under: the Resource Management Act 1991

in the matter of: Submissions and further submissions on the Proposed
Waimakariri District Plan

and: Hearing Stream 12D: Ōhoka rezoning request

and: **Carter Group Property Limited**
(Submitter 237)

and: **Rolleston Industrial Developments Limited**
(Submitter 160)

Supplementary statement of evidence of Garth Falconer (Urban
design)

Dated: 13 June 2024

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SUPPLEMENTARY STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF GARTH FALCONER

INTRODUCTION

- 1 My full name is Garth James Falconer.
- 2 My area of expertise, experience, and qualifications are set out in my statement of evidence dated 5 March 2024 for this hearing stream.
- 3 The purpose of this supplementary evidence is to respond to matters raised in the Officer's Report dated 31 May 2024 relevant to my evidence.

CODE OF CONDUCT

- 4 Although this is not an Environment Court hearing, I note that in preparing my evidence I have reviewed the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses contained in Part 9 of the Environment Court Practice Note 2023. I have complied with it in preparing my evidence. I confirm that the issues addressed in this statement of evidence are within my area of expertise, except where relying on the opinion or evidence of other witnesses. I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions expressed.

RESPONSE TO OFFICER'S REPORT

- 5 I have read Mr Hugh Nicholson's evidence and the Section 42A report by Mr Andrew Willis.
- 6 My opinions and conclusions largely differ from Mr Nicholson and I consider that this stems from Mr Nicholson's view that existing planning documents on residential growth are still strongly relevant in providing guidance, and that existing character is somehow intrinsic and static. Mr Willis in his Section 42A report has wholly and uncritically embraced Mr Nicholson's position. In the following, I respond to various aspects of Mr Nicholson's evidence and explain why it is at odds with best practise urban design assessment.
- 7 Mr Nicholson's summary of Ōhoka as a centre for settlement over the last 150 plus years (his section 5) is partially useful in its initial historic description. However, he does not provide any analysis of its current limitations or recognise its dynamic growth since inception and the possibility that it will continue to change in form, function and size.
- 8 In my opinion, the proliferation of large lot 'lifestyle blocks' since the 1990's represents a discrete and recent phenomena, one that should not statically lock in Ōhoka's character. Recent establishment of large "lifestyle" properties, which have limited primary productive value, contribute little to local jobs and services

or social assets. As a consequence, over the last 30 years there has been little added provision of footpaths, public amenities or convenience stores apart from a small playground in the Domain which locals sponsored. Currently, the Ōhoka population is car dependent, and in terms of housing, there are few affordable options and little diversity – which retains a narrow cross section of the population living in Greater Christchurch. The success of the vibrant and populous Ōhoka Market, which was originally opposed by many current residents, is now accepted as an integral part of the urban fabric and weekly life and character of the Ōhoka.

- 9 Mr Nicholson’s description of the surrounding area to the site is selectively limited to “rural to semi rural in character” (his paragraph 5.6) whereas the site adjoins many existing residential activities which do not have a rural function.
- 10 Mr Nicholson’s evidence is broken into core categories Consolidated Urban Form, Connectivity, Accessibility and Well-functioning Urban Environment, Mandeville/Ōhoka, and Village Character, and I respond to each of these in more detail below.

Consolidated Urban Form

- 11 I find Mr Nicholson’s attempt to quantify the urban form impact of the proposal through the use of definitions and devices to be narrow and of limited usefulness. His 400/800m pedestrian sheds, measured from the intersection of Mill Road and Whites Road, do not credibly define the scale of a village, which he acknowledges can be as large as Lincoln. Other devices include the diagrams in his figures 1 and 2, where Mr Nicholson uses boundary interfaces in an attempt to quantify urban form. This approach is novel and misleading. It does not accurately reflect the actual extent of the Ōhoka settlement which extends along Mill Road and Whites Rd. No other measure of urban form is presented (e.g. lot size, building layout, amenities etc). Of relevance to urban form is the fact that Ōhoka School is about 1.6km from the intersection of Mill and Whites Roads.
- 12 Mr Nicholson chooses not to look at the wider radial pattern of development that has been occurring over the last 30 plus years, and the anticipated environment as development of more large lot residential occurs over time. Nor does he entertain that new development most often starts incrementally from a sector before later consolidating with adjoining properties that are subsequently developed.
- #### **Connectivity**
- 13 Addressing connectivity, Mr Nicholson recognises that the proposed development “*provides an appropriate level of internal connectivity (within the site)*” (paragraph 7.3) but that the internal connectivity is “*undermined by the site’s isolated location and lack of pedestrian, cycle and public transport connections on the rural roads connecting the site to existing town centres and wider district*” (paragraph 7.6).

This ignores planned external provisions including an off-road cycle network and the proposed park and ride provision within the site with the associated fully funded frequent bus service.

Accessibility

- 14 In terms of accessibility, most small settlements do not have public transport and are largely reliant on private vehicles (including for example Oxford). Given the proposed bus service, and the cyclable distances to nearby centre, Ōhoka will be an exception to this should the proposed rezoning be approved.

Ōhoka/Mandeville

- 15 Mr Nicholson describes the potential issue of the urban form of Ōhoka joining with Mandeville and, in my opinion, employs questionable metrics about the separation of the settlements and a rather novel term "*sprawling semi rural conurbation*" (paragraph 9.2) which, given conurbation relates to dense urban areas, I consider is an oxymoron. Mr Nicholson also considers the conurbation "*would likely to function as a dormitory or lifestyle settlement*" (para 9.8) which is the what the two settlements are currently.

Village Character

- 16 Mr Nicholson repeatedly underlines the word 'existing' when referring to 'existing character'. Whilst recognising the difficulties defining what a 'village' is, Mr Nicholson agrees the proposal could create a village character. However, the imperative he gleans from the WDP is that existing character be retained (paragraph 10.6). Whilst he considers that the proposal can be regarded as "sympathetic", given its scale he considers it will be "intrinsically different" than the current settlement. To me, this is not logical given the Mr Nicholson's prior admission that numbers alone nor size of a settlement can define the term 'village', and his agreement that village character can be created and retained in larger settlements (para 10.6).

General Comments

- 17 The fact that Mr Nicholson then agrees that the "*illustrative masterplan is well considered and if rezoning request is approved I would support the proposed design approach*" (para 10.11) begs the question why from an urban design perspective he opposes the proposed rezoning that:

- 17.1 provides a diversity of homes that cater for a wider range of needs in a traditional settlement centre;
- 17.2 is on the periphery of Christchurch, the principal urban centre within the Greater Christchurch urban environment;
- 17.3 on relatively safe and unconstrained land; and

17.4 is well designed with generous facilities and ecological enhancements to a highly modified environment.

- 18 My understanding is the opposition comes from Mr Nicholson's concern that the proposal does not align well with planning documents that were prepared a number of years ago, and that urban growth has subsequently outstripped. The Christchurch Urban Development Strategy that was adopted in 2007 prior to the earthquakes envisaged a circular network of satellite centres around Christchurch city. Subsequent growth has spread Christchurch outwards in all directions to within 10km of Ōhoka and largely into Selwyn District which is currently the fastest growing district in the country.
- 19 The CRPS and WDP have been developed prior to the Covid-19 pandemic and the world has changed dramatically since then. Climate resilience concerns have driven investigations into the redrawing of hazard zones. The WDP designated centres of growth Kaiapoi, Rangiora and Woodend are now regarded as occupying areas that are respectively subject to hazardous floods and the latter to coastal inundation. The boundaries of Christchurch have extended rapidly now to within a short drive of Ōhoka.

Conclusions

- 20 In my view, Mr Nicholson's platforms for not supporting the proposal to rezone the site to residential are based on narrow outdated sources, selective aspects and static conceptions.
- 21 Fundamentally, Mr Nicholson does not consider the need for the provision of a diversity of housing to meet the demands of the growing population of Greater Christchurch. Presently, the Waimakiriri District is not responding to and meeting these needs for housing, of different types and in different locations, in quality designed environments.

- 22 I remain supportive of this well considered proposal which is the result of the work of a highly qualified and experienced multi disciplinary expert team and developer. The historic village of Ōhoka should not be locked in time to be a refuge for a small number of individual large lot landowners. As demonstrated through the success of the Ōhoka Market, it is a natural growth centre and gathering place for a much wider catchment and demographic.

Dated: 13 June 2024



Garth Falconer