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**To:** Andrew Willis | Development Planning Unit  
**From:** Hugh Nicholson | Urban Designer  
**Date:** 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2024  
**Subject:** Reply Report – Hearing Stream 12D: Ōhoka rezoning request  
Submissions 237 and 160

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## Scope

1. I have been asked by the Waimakariri District Council to carry out an urban design review of the supplementary evidence and the revised package of rules and assessment criteria provided by submitters for Hearing Stream 12D: Ōhoka rezoning request.
2. I have previously provided related urban design and landscape evidence for Private Plan Change 31 and Proposed Waimakariri District Plan (PWDP) Hearing Stream 12D: Ōhoka rezoning request including:
  - a. PC31 Statement of Evidence of Hugh Nicholson – Urban design and landscape – June 2023;
  - b. PC31 Summary of Evidence of Hugh Nicholson – Urban design and landscape – Aug 2023;
  - c. Hearing Stream 12D: Ōhoka rezoning – Statement of Evidence of Hugh Nicholson – Urban design and landscape – May 2024.

## Supplementary Evidence

3. Ms Lauenstein and I have different opinions regarding the weight to be given to various matters and on the appropriateness of the proposed development in this location.
4. In particular Ms Lauenstein takes issue with my use of two indicators, walkability distances and boundary adjacency, to investigate the degree of consolidation of the proposal. Ms Lauenstein considers that this is “overly simplistic”<sup>1</sup> and represents a “reductionist approach”<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Supplementary Statement of evidence of Nicole Lauenstein, paragraph 26

<sup>2</sup> Supplementary Statement of evidence of Nicole Lauenstein, paragraph 33

5. Mr Falconer notes that his opinions and conclusions “largely differ” from mine<sup>3</sup>, and in particular he finds my “attempt to quantify the urban form impact of the proposal through the use of definitions and devices to be narrow and of limited usefulness”<sup>4</sup>.
6. I note that in preparing my evidence I have sought to inform and support my professional opinions using common-sense and measurable indicators that can be easily understood by non-urban designers. I have stressed that these measures are indicators of underlying issues with the proposed urban form rather than issues in themselves. For example, the percentage of boundary adjacency is indicative of an underlying issue which is the lack of a consolidated urban form.
7. I agree with Ms Lauenstein that some development on the southern side of Mill Road between Bradleys and Whites Roads may be appropriate, however, I note that the submitter only controls approximately a quarter of this frontage. Ms Lauenstein considers the proposal would “balance out the existing lopsided (urban) form” of Ōhoka<sup>5</sup>. In my opinion the addition of approximately 850 new houses on one side of a village of approximately 100 existing houses would overshadow the existing urban form.
8. Both Ms Lauenstein and Mr Falconer also consider that my evidence “does not take account of the wider radial pattern of development... over the last 30 plus years”<sup>6</sup> or the location of the existing school, “2km from the centre and not connected to the urban fabric of Ohoka”<sup>7</sup>.
9. I have attached Figure 3 from my original statement of evidence to this hearing. The plan shows community facilities including the garage / shop on Whites Road, Ōhoka Domain, the Ōhoka Hall, the commercial premises at 522 Mill Road, and the Ōhoka Primary School. The walkability catchments are calculated using buffers around all of these community facilities (including the school) using Canterbury Maps<sup>8</sup>.
10. The aerial photo which forms the base layer for the attached Figure 3 also shows the extent of existing Ōhoka village, and the red residential zoning shows the extent of land currently zoned for residential activities (SETZ and LLRZ) around Ōhoka.
11. I note that in preparing my evidence I have considered both the existing and zoned urban form of Ōhoka village, and the location of the school.
12. Ms Lauenstein disagrees with my assessment of accessibility and connectivity and in particular suggests that “commuting cyclists in Christchurch regularly travel 6-10km in 20-30 minutes”<sup>9</sup>,

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<sup>3</sup> Supplementary statement of evidence of Garth Falconer, paragraph 6

<sup>4</sup> Supplementary statement of evidence of Garth Falconer, paragraph 11

<sup>5</sup> Supplementary statement of evidence of Nicole Lauenstein, paragraph 34

<sup>6</sup> Supplementary statement of evidence of Garth Falconer, paragraph 12

<sup>7</sup> Supplementary statement of evidence of Nicole Lauenstein, paragraph 23

<sup>8</sup> <https://mapviewer.canterburymaps.govt.nz/>

<sup>9</sup> Supplementary statement of evidence of Nicole Lauenstein, paragraph 38

and “from my own experience, traffic on Mill Road and roads leading to Rangiora is reasonably light making it reasonable safe to cycle”<sup>10</sup>.

13. The most reliable information available regarding walking and cycling trips in New Zealand is the New Zealand Household Travel Survey (NZHTS)<sup>11</sup> which identifies the national average length for walking and cycling trips (1.0km and 4.0km respectively). While many confident cyclists will ride further than the average trip length, in my opinion these averages provide a useful indication of whether it is likely that a significant proportion of residents in a new development would walk or cycle.
14. I am a confident cyclist and cycling is my primary mode of transport within Christchurch. I have an electric bike, however, I generally choose not to ride on narrow rural roads with higher speed limits. I make this choice because the lack of a shoulder is a significant factor in traffic accidents on rural roads<sup>12</sup>, and because of the high risk of a catastrophic outcome of a collision for cyclists. Research indicates that cyclists involved in a collision with a light vehicle at 80kph have a 55% risk of death and a 95% risk of serious injury<sup>13</sup>. The risk of death rises to more than 85% at 100kph.
15. I note that Ōhoka is flat and cycling friendly, however, this does not change my conclusions about the low accessibility or safety of cycling trips to surrounding towns and areas.
16. Ms Lauenstein is concerned that I have provided no evidence that Ōhoka- Mandeville would function as a dormitory suburb, and considers that there may be people working from home or working locally<sup>14</sup>. The 2018 Census found that in Mandeville-Ōhoka, 77% of workers drove to work, 18% worked at home, and less than 2% walked or cycled to work.
17. Mr Falconer is concerned that I have presented “no other measure of urban form...(eg. lot size, building layout, amenities etc)”<sup>15</sup>. Ms Lauenstein is concerned that “he (Mr Nicholson) has not undertaken his own assessment of the Ōhoka village or settlement character<sup>16</sup>”, and considers that lot sizes are not a determinant of character<sup>17</sup>.
18. In my analysis of character<sup>18</sup>, I noted that the *Waimakariri District Residential Character and Intensification Guidance*<sup>19</sup> identifies density and site size as two of the key factors shaping differences in character between zones. I then compared the minimum lot size of 600m<sup>2</sup> in the

<sup>10</sup> Supplementary statement of evidence of Nicole Lauenstein, paragraph 39

<sup>11</sup> New Zealand Household Travel Survey, Ministry of Transport, 2015-2018, <https://www.transport.govt.nz/statistics-and-insights/household-travel/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.nzta.govt.nz/walking-cycling-and-public-transport/cycling/cycling-standards-and-guidance/cycling-network-guidance/cycle-network-and-route-planning-guide/principles/safety-issues-for-people-who-cycle/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.nzta.govt.nz/walking-cycling-and-public-transport/cycling/cycling-standards-and-guidance/cycling-network-guidance/cycle-network-and-route-planning-guide/principles/safety-issues-for-people-who-cycle/>

<sup>14</sup> Supplementary statement of evidence of Nicole Lauenstein, paragraph 51

<sup>15</sup> Supplementary statement of evidence of Garth Falconer, paragraph 11

<sup>16</sup> Supplementary statement of evidence of Nicole Lauenstein, paragraph 53

<sup>17</sup> Supplementary statement of evidence of Nicole Lauenstein, paragraph 54

<sup>18</sup> Statement of evidence of Hugh Nicholson, May 2024, paragraphs 10.7-8

<sup>19</sup> Residential Character and Intensification Guidance for Waimakariri District Council, Jasmox, August 2018, Section 2.20, p.44

rezoning proposal with the section sizes along the northern side of Mill Road which range from 1,000 – 7,500m<sup>2</sup> with an average of approximately 3,000m<sup>2</sup>. In my opinion good design can ensure that smaller sections are attractive and liveable, however, it cannot 'retain' the character of sites that are generally more than three times the size.

19. I note that Mr Compton-Moen has provided elevated perspectives of the illustrative masterplan after 5-7 years and at maturity. I note that these illustrations do not include building and fences and consider that they do not give an accurate impression of the density of built form and the smaller lot sizes which would be distinctly different from the existing Ōhoka village.
20. Mr Falconer, Ms Lauenstein and I agree that the illustrative masterplan is well considered and would provide good levels of connectivity and accessibility within the site, however, we disagree over fundamental issues including the location of the rezoning request, the lack of active or long-term public transport connections to the wider district, the likely reliance on private vehicles, and the extent to which the 'existing' character of Ōhoka village can be retained.
21. In my opinion the proposed re-zoning does not contribute to a well-functioning urban environment as defined by Policy 1 of the NPS-UD, and in particular does not have good accessibility between housing, jobs and community services, by way of public or active transport.

#### Revised Rules and Assessment Criteria

22. I have reviewed the revised rules and design guides and have the following comments:
23. Two sets of provisions have been provided, one for a SETZ and one for GRZ. The urban design issues overlap and I have reviewed them side by side where possible.
24. The draft provisions propose an extensive list of activity rules in each zone will not apply within the Ōhoka Settlement Zone including:
  - a. GRZ-R15 and SETZ-R15 Health care facilities;
  - b. SETZ-R17 Convenience activity;
  - c. SETZ-R18 Veterinary facility;
  - d. SETZ-R19 Food and beverage outlet;
  - e. SETZ-R20 Supermarket;
  - f. GRZ-R19 Mult-unit residential development;
  - g. SETZ-R20 Supermarket;
  - h. GRZ-R20 and SETZ-R22 Retirement village;
  - i. LCZ-R1 Construction or addition to any building or other structure;
  - j. LCZ-R4 Retail activity;
  - k. LCZ-R21 Trade supplier;
  - l. LCZ-R22 Yard-based activity.

25. The draft provisions also propose a significant number of new activity rules that are specific to the Ōhoka Settlement zone including:
- a. DEV-O-R1 Development within the Ōhoka Development Area;
  - b. DEV-O-R2 Construction or alteration of or addition to any building or other structure within the Local Centre Zone;
  - c. DEV-O-R3 Parking lot within the Local Centre Zone;
  - d. DEV-O-R4 Educational facility within the Education Overlay;
  - e. DEV-O-R5 Polo field and ancillary activities and facilities within the Polo Grounds Overlay;
  - f. DEV-O-6 Retirement village;
  - g. DEV-O-R7 Subdivision.
26. The submitters have a clear vision of the scale and type of development they wish create. If the rezoning is approved, I can support their vision from an urban design perspective, however, I am less certain about the Council's and the District Plan's role in delivering this vision.
27. In particular from the Council's perspective I am unclear why Ōhoka should be treated differently from other SETZ or GRZ, and what adverse effects are specific to Ōhoka that need to be addressed with specific provisions. Many other settlements in Waimakariri could argue that they have a special character which should be addressed in a similar manner.
28. Arguably district plan rules are a clumsy tool to deliver the submitter's vision which could be implemented more effectively through development and covenant mechanisms.
29. I support providing more certainty regarding the subdivision outcomes through provisions referring to the subdivision assessment criteria, however, once the subdivision of the land was complete the rules would no longer be required. I consider that there is potential for an alternative legal mechanism to provide certainty while avoiding unnecessary district plan requirements.
30. I do not support the proposal to give various activities including parking lots in the LCZ, retirement villages, educational facilities and polo fields a controlled activity status, while similar activities in other parts of the district have different activity statuses.
31. The submitter has suggested that these activities are anticipated in the Ōhoka Settlement zone, however, in my opinion these activities are anticipated in other LCZ, GRZ or SETZ also, and the restricted discretionary status reflects the potentially greater adverse effects of the activities if they are not designed appropriately.
32. From an urban design perspective, I can support the intent of restricting commercial and retail activities in the proposed residential zones in order to encourage these activities to locate in the LCZ. There is some justification for this in the SETZ option since other SETZ do not have

associated LCZ or NCZ, however, I suggest that potentially the use of developer covenants on titles could achieve the same outcome more efficiently.

33. From an urban design perspective, I can support the intent of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and in particular providing for electric car generation, solar power generation, and requiring tree and native planting, however, it is difficult to see a justification for the Council to treat the Ōhoka SETZ or GRZ zones differently to SETZ or GRZ zones in other places. I suggest that the use of developer covenants on titles could achieve the same outcome more efficiently.
34. I do not support DEV-O-BFS3 Roof colour in residential zones. Controls on roof colours in district plans may be justified in special circumstances, for example in or adjacent to outstanding natural landscapes or heritage areas, or to mitigate urban heat islands. I am not aware of any special circumstances in Ōhoka which would justify a district plan control over roof colour and consider that this is primarily an aesthetic choice that the submitter could implement through covenants on titles if they wish.
35. I do not support DEV-O-BFS4 Height in Local Centre Zone. While it seems relatively unlikely that this height limit would be built out, I am unclear why a 12m height limit would not be appropriate in a small town of approximately 1,000 houses or why it would be different from equivalent LCZ in other parts of the district. A developer covenant could achieve the same outcome if required.
36. I have reviewed the Ōhoka Assessment Criteria provided. I note that there are two versions, one for SETZ and one for GRZ but I understand that these are the same apart from the residential zoning notations.
37. The assessment criteria document uses a combination of narrative, bullet pointed criteria, diagrams, exemplar photos, plans and cross sections. Some of the text is descriptive and some is prescriptive. It is not entirely clear which parts of the document form the 'criteria' against which an application would be assessed.
38. I consider that the descriptive narrative should be clearly distinguished from the prescriptive criteria in order to aid clarity and the application of the criteria. This confusion is particularly evident in the section B2 Movement Network where a number of prescriptive elements are included in the text and not in the bullet-pointed list of criteria. Similarly in my opinion the plans, photos and diagrams could be more clearly labelled to show their status and function.
39. The diagrams on page B4 of a typical cul-de-sac road and a well-connected road design should be clearly labelled to show which is the desired approach and which is not.
40. I consider that Section C1 Local Centre Development should include criteria requiring building to be built to the street edge, to address the street, and to integrate signage into the building design to complement the village character.

41. Mr Walsh has provided revised versions of the assessment criteria in an email dated 2<sup>nd</sup> December. The revised assessment criteria address the concerns I have raised in paragraphs 37 to 40, and I consider that these criteria would be appropriate if the proposed rezoning is approved.

## Conclusion

42. I have reviewed the supplementary statements of evidence from the submitter, and the revised package of rules and assessment criteria with respect to the requested rezoning at Ōhoka. I remain of the opinion that:

- a. The requested rezoning would not contribute to a compact or consolidated urban form for Ōhoka, and would create a 'peninsula' of urban development extending south from the existing township surrounded on three sides by rural or rural residential land;
- b. The level of connectivity within the ODP is positive, however, there are not sufficient pedestrian, cycle or long-term public transport connections on the rural roads connecting the site to the wider district to provide a well-functioning urban environment;
- c. While some daily shopping needs could be met in the proposed commercial centre, most employment, community services and recreational opportunities would be dependent on car travel given the lack of active or a viable long-term public transport options;
- d. The requested rezoning would add a significant number of households to an extended area of rural-residential lifestyle sections between Ōhoka and Mandeville which would have limited employment, recreational opportunities, or community services, and would not contribute to a well-functioning urban environment or support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions;
- e. The requested rezoning could create a new 'sympathetic' village character, however, it would not retain or recognise the existing Ohoka village character as a result of the significantly increased size and population of the settlement, the smaller sections and gardens, and the potential scale of a retirement home.

43. If the Commissioners are of a mind to approve the requested rezoning, I consider that:

- a. The revised ODP would be appropriate
- b. The illustrative masterplan would create an appropriate vision for the development;
- c. From an urban design perspective the revised package of rules and assessment criteria would be appropriate subject the following bullet points:

- i. I do not support providing land uses in Ōhoka with different activity statuses or built form standards to similar land uses in other parts of the district, particularly with regard to the proposed controlled activity status for a number of activities;
- ii. I consider that in a number of instances the submitter's vision could be delivered more effectively and efficiently through development mechanisms and land covenants;
- iii. I do not consider that there is sufficient evidence to justify the inclusion of controls over roof colour in Ōhoka in the district plan:

Hugh Nicholson

**UrbanShift**