

Submission from Bruce Wilson to PNCC Hearing

Proposed Plan Change G - Aokautere Urban Growth

1. I am Bruce Wilson. I have lived in Palmerston North since 1969, including from 2001 to 2020 on Aokautere Drive. I was one of the two councillors elected for the Ashhurst-Fitzherbert Ward from 2007 to 2013; the Proposed Plan Change land is within that area.
2. I served on the Hearings Committee for the six years I was a Councillor, including as chair for the second term. I completed RMA Commissioner training to Chair level.
3. In my roles on the Hearings Committee and as an RMA Commissioner I was involved with several Hearings arising from some of the landowners connected with the Proposed Plan Change area. In this respect I would suggest that the Hearings Committee decision issued on 22nd July 2013 could have indicative relevance to some of the decisions you will make shortly, particularly with regard to geo-technical matters and land instability, and consequently stormwater, and the transfer of conditions during subdivision.
4. As a citizen I have run, walked, and cycled up and down Summerhill Drive, and most of the other existing roads and walkways in the Plan Change area, many times since 1980, and as recently as last Saturday. At my self-propelled speeds I have had many occasions to reflect on aspects of safety and efficiency of the roading infrastructure, and on both boorish and generous behaviours towards pedestrians and cyclists by members of the motoring community.
5. It is from these perspectives that I now offer you my views on two matters of concern for me.

Stormwater

6. My Hearings Committee and general councillor experience showed me that PNCC and Horizons have not always been able to work closely enough in respect of the geotechnical aspects of gully filling and stormwater management. The Resource Consents I saw in my RMA role were suitable, but in my opinion the follow-up oversight by Councils was not always adequate. The Plan Change should provide for development to ensure compliance with the conditions of the Plan and subsequent Consents.
7. Stormwater management issues arising from a comparatively minor development (Titirangi Drive, which became our residential access road) showed me that moderate rain events falling on extra impermeable surfaces could generate huge amounts of water-

borne soil/silt/clay run-off which could fill a storage dam, and flow through to put a layer across the floor of a gully. This aspect of the plan change area needs both councils to be properly engaged, because the proposed urban growth area will enable much greater volumes of immediate stormwater flow with the consequent risk to property and (perhaps) life. Unfortunately Tai Rawhiti and West Auckland provide recent examples of such situations.

8. You may already have read “Under the Weather”, a book by Professor James Renwick, published this year by HarperCollins. Its sub title is “A Future Forecast for New Zealand”. It can be summarised by recognising that *“a warmer world will change more than just our weather patterns. It will change the look of the land around us, what grows and lives on it – including us.”* If you have not read this book, it is well worth the effort. This message should be paired with (for example) page 7 of the Manawatu Standard of Friday 24th November 2023, where the Board Chair of Tower Insurance is quoted as stating “The unpalatable truth is that not everyone is, or will be, able to insure their home in the way they do now.” Tower Insurance’s Chief Executive is quoted saying they will be “expanding (their risk-based) model to include landslide...” and other perils. Tower’s two larger Australasian rivals (IAG and Suncorp) have both signalled that they intend to do more risk-based pricing. The management of land instability and stormwater thus become critical factors in this proposed plan change if PNCC is to avoid future litigation because the present predictions are later found to be inappropriate.

Transportation

9. I am not aware of any coordination between the submitters who thought about the Mountain View Road/Ruapehu Drive/Summerhill Drive intersection, so I am slightly surprised at how much attention this tiny part of the city has received from submitters. I want to step beyond the nature of their submissions.
10. I have noted that in Appendix 5 (Technical report, July 2022) the suggestion that the intersection of Ruapehu Drive (northern end) with Summerhill Drive be changed to “left in, left out” and that the ‘left out’ traffic could proceed up the hill to a new roundabout at Williams Terrace. The suggestion is wisely discarded
11. I have also noted the Section 42A Updated Recommendations from Ms Fraser (15 September 2023), especially pages 32 and 34 where the Mountain View Road/Ruapehu Drive/Summerhill Drive intersection is covered, with the recommendations that traffic

lights should be installed to operate before the traffic increase occurs. I support this recommendation.

12. Those Section 42A recommendations are, in my view, a significant improvement. However, I do not believe that it is the best approach for the following reasons.
13. Because 80% of forecast exits from Mountain View Road are left turns down Summerhill Drive it would be sensible to separate these vehicles from the other 20% for traffic light activations. This would require two exit lanes, and the space available for this appears insufficient, especially as there has been recent slippage, with scope for more to occur.
14. It might be possible to “nudge” the Ruapehu Drive/Summerhill Drive intersection “towards” Ruapehu Drive so that two lanes of a single vehicle space each could be created for vehicles exiting Mountain View Road. Then separate ‘left turn’ and ‘straight/right turn’ traffic light phases could work efficiently.
15. Otherwise three alternatives should be considered. These are
 - (a) Join Mountain View Road (with its name unchanged) to become an ‘extension’ of Williams Terrace so that all Mountain View Road traffic entered and left via Williams Terrace (with or without the possible roundabout), or
 - (b) Connect Mountain View Road to Heathcote Place to enter/leave Summerhill Drive via Springdale Grove, or
 - (c) Connect both Mountain View Road and Williams Terrace (together or separately) to Heathcote Place as for (b).
16. Both (b) and (c) would remove the need to contemplate a roundabout at Williams Terrace.
17. If any of these alternative choices was made, then the traffic signals at the Ruapehu Drive/Summerhill Drive intersections would be made more efficient, and in the longer term economic benefits would accrue, and safety of pedestrians and cyclists would improve.
18. At times of moderate traffic I have noticed an increased tendency for motorists exiting Springdale Grove onto Summerhill Drive by a left turn to proceed rapidly into a small gap, expecting approaching drivers to slow down to avoid a tail-end impact.
19. Thank you. I am happy to try to answer any questions you might have.

Bruce Wilson
8th December 2023

Supplementary Information

20. Tables 10 and 11 in Appendix 5 show that, per day, Mountain View Road exits are forecast as 17 left turns, 2 straight through, and 2 right turns. Figure 24, Appendix 5, shows a single exit lane for Mountain View Road, when I believe that if two lanes could be provided, for left, and straight/right, it would be much better.
21. With only a single exit lane all Summerhill Drive traffic will be required to stop for each exit (I only recall seeing more than one vehicle seeking to exit Mountain View Road once in my 40 years of observations), so having two exit lanes would allow for left exit turns without needing to stop the uphill Summerhill Drive traffic for 80% of the forecast Mountain View Road exit traffic movements – a potentially significant economic advantage in addition to the safety issues for pedestrians and cyclists.
22. However, the available space for two exit lanes for Mountain View Road probably makes that choice unsuitable, especially as there has been a slippage of the relevant hillside near the intersection in the last couple of years, with the same or greater scope for repeat events. Paragraph 14 allows the possibility that two exit lanes might be created.

Paragraph 15(a) One alternative choice for all Mountain View Road traffic (entry and exit) would be to join Mountain View Road to Williams Terrace, and close/remove the Mountain View Road connection from opposite Ruapehu Drive. As I see it, this would probably involve minor street-boundary changes for a few Mountain View Road properties, so that the necessary engineering work could easily link that carriageway to Williams Terrace.

Paragraph 15 (b) Another alternative choice for Mountain View Road traffic would be to connect Mountain View Road to Heathcote Place. This would involve different property and engineering works.

Paragraph 15 (c) A third alternative choice (probably in the much longer term) would be to join both Mountain View Road and Williams Terrace separately to Heathcote Place when the Summerhill Drive/Springdale Grove intersection is to be 'signalised'.

