

**Before the Hearings Panel in the matter of proposed Plan Change G: Aokautere  
Urban Growth to the Palmerston North City Council District Plan**

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF BRETT GUTHRIE**

Good morning: Councillor Johnson, Ms. McGarry and Mr McMahon

**Introduction:**

My name is Brett Guthrie. I have science and trade qualifications. I have worked in the Public Service, in private enterprise and at Massey University in various roles.

I have lived in Palmerston North since early 1989, and my wife and I have lived in Moonshine Valley for 24 years. I soon joined with a number of residents working throughout the Valley, including the two reserves, as a small passionate community group in whatever capacity we are able. We have made many submissions and a number of presentations to the council on issues which affect Moonshine Valley. We have managed to gain some protection of the Valley, details of which are included in the District Plan.

My written submission and addendum have essentially been superseded however I have some points to consider.

**Moonshine Valley:**

Our property bounds a Woodgate promontory to the south between gullies two and three, so is directly affected by any changes there, hence our particular focus in this area.

If PC-G is accepted in it's present form our main concerns will have been addressed satisfactorily. I will then focus on Moonshine Valley and on the idea of seeking a harmonious interface between our established area, and the close but very contrasting new development, a connectivity considered as good planning practice. The "wider scale" as described by Mr Hudson.

The Moonshine Valley enclave is described in the District Plan and Mrs Copplestone cites parts in her Planning Report. The Valley attributes and distinct features are also well-described in our many submissions with contributions from a variety of experts, as well as from a well-researched Moonshine Valley History book written by a Valley resident.

In 2009 Moonshine Valley was described by Resource and Environmental Planner Rachelle Voice as "*a beautified landscape with natural values found in no other locality in Palmerston North.*" Ms. Voice further stated "*Moonshine Valley is an isolated unique landscape bounded by ridges that effectively enclose it from outside views.*"

At that time landscape architect Richard Mayer considered the valley as having "*park-like grounds*" and characterised as "*having high amenity values.*"

Since these were written these distinct attributes and qualities of a type of semi-*“ruralness”* have been enhanced and are increasingly special with the encroaching suburban sprawl. As much as we would like to retain this isolation, it is now unfortunately disappearing.

Perhaps the term “unique” may be more particularly a landscape one, but we feel it suits the area which has taken many years to establish. Mrs Copplestone describes the gullies natural features as *“a unique characteristic of this environment.”* and the *“unique constraints and characteristics in Aokautere”*, as they are continuous with Moonshine Valley. Mr Hudson uses the term; *“the area’s distinctive character”*.

The amenity of Moonshine Valley informs my expectation of how the new development will integrate with us and what such an interface might look like. We have a right to enjoy our properties as was the intent when we purchased them. This includes enjoyment found within our properties, as much as without from the surrounding area. In turn the residents of the new subdivision will get to enjoy the amenity already existing in Moonshine Valley.

I thank the panel for taking the opportunity to visit our property and to see the area from our perspective.

**Support:**

I reiterate my support for an overarching master plan for Aokautere rather than the *ad hoc* approach by competing developers. Ideally we Valley residents would like the fields to remain undeveloped. This is not possible so the PC-G provides, for the first time, acceptable solutions for almost all parties.

Due to their comprehensiveness and completeness I had thought the District Plan updates of Mrs Copplestone were to be implemented *in toto* but this does not seem to be the case. I therefore seek acceptance and implementation of the amended S42A Planning Report with emphasis on those recommendations relating to Moonshine Valley.

In particular the 15 metre setback, reduced housing height and density to limit the overlooking of the Valley and the visual dominance of rows of houses on the skyline. In addition, the recommendation enabling a greater flexibility of housing types rather than by prescription.

I accept the rationale of Mr Burns that Moonshine Valleys features, the combination of the reduced housing density and height, and the promontory topography constitutes a type of transition zone sympathetic to Moonshine Valley as requested by a number of submitters including myself. This is endorsed by Mr Hudson and Mrs Copplestone.

These factors ameliorate the potential “hard edge” between the development and Moonshine Valley which Mr Murphy once called *“a glaring example of poor urban form.”*

Mr Murphy was recently reported in the Manawatu Standard (9th November) as saying that in Roxburgh Crescent reduced housing height *"will provide a softer transition from existing homes next door to the new residential area."* Thus, providing *"options for the types of homes they want to build, while also ensuring they fit in with existing homes in the neighbourhood."*

We have, on many occasions, asked for this type of consideration for a transition between Moonshine Valley and the new subdivision, and have been frustrated until the Plan Change-G reports. I believe the concept of suburban harmony expressed for that location is the same as that which Valley residents desire in Aokautere.

As the hearing proceeds I see a cognitive dissonance between the desire for a diverse but harmonious subdivision and the push for a preponderance of medium-density housing, such that even terrace housing was mentioned by Mr Cullen.

I share the arguments of Mr Thomas and Mr Farquhar that medium density housing has no place on the promontories. I believe there would be a poor location least serving those who desire these type of houses, yet they remain a possibility.

I have seen a great deal of medium-density housing in Christchurch. It is fair to say the quality of such neighbourhoods is highly variable. Unfortunately some are simply unpleasant and overcrowded yet relatively new. Especially those with limited or no parking. Those areas of lesser quality are the ones thought of first with the negative perception that Mr Murphy has mentioned.

I would hope this is not how Woodgate, especially, might become. An appropriate idea but for which location is important as others have highlighted.

Visits to our property by Mr Miller, accompanied by Mr Duindam (previously Council Principal Planner) and the Panel have allowed them to see how issues within the new subdivision are also those which affect Moonshine Valley. I feel one cannot be considered without the other.

For example, instability, slips and slumping or land creep are shown in Mr Birds report per the Tonkin & Taylor site visit in 2020. These effects are present all along the Moonshine Valley southern hillside, as well as on the side of many within the subdivision. At present these issues are somewhat mitigated by tree planting. However, in my case were I to remove the pines I have this area would be unstable for quite some years until the trees are restored. In the meantime the slipping is likely to return.

It appears to be quite unknown what effect promontory site preparation and modification will have on the Moonshine Valley properties. Mr Bird leaves this aspect of development to existing subdivision rules with the recommendation of geotechnical analysis. The rules

may be robust but Council experience has shown observance of these rules by developers may be lacking. Both Mr Bird and Ms Baugham ("Borm") acknowledge my concerns on this matter.

I wish to thank those experts who have addressed the concerns of submitters, in particular those of Moonshine Valley residents and for providing solutions somewhat acceptable to us.

The precedent effect of the proposed residential zone on the rural-residential areas of Moonshine Valley, Polson Hill and Turitea Valley remains a concern. The Rural Overlay does allow some inappropriate industrial intrusion into a semi-rural area which may now also affect the new residential area with potential for reverse sensitivity.

As you can see from the petition from those who were not able or willing to make presentations that Moonshine Valley means a great deal to quite a community. How the Valley will be affected by the new subdivision is extremely important to us.

Before I finish I have noticed that with all of these documents and associated news items I see increasingly that a sector consider a house as just another commodity, like an appliance. What is forgotten is that a house and the surrounding area constituting the amenity is also a home. Some of us seek to keep our homes as we like them.

Thank you,

Brett Guthrie,  
Moonshine Valley