

Plan Change 55 – presentation to the panel.

Background

Good morning – I appreciate the opportunity to present my thoughts to you regarding PC55.

My name is Bob Anker and I live in Katherine Mansfield Drive, Whitemans Valley.

I purchased my Rural Residential block there in 1985, built our house and moved into our house in December 1986 some 37 years ago.

My wife Delia and myself have raised 2 daughters there, we subdivided our land and currently we have my 12-year-old granddaughter and her mum and dad living with us while they wait for their house to be built next door.

We extended our home to accommodate Delia's elderly mother who lived with us for over 10 years. While she was alive, we had 4 generations living here.

I am invested in the valley and am part of an active and integrated community.

Let me be very clear at the outset – I do not object to provision being made for people to live in the valley, to buy a plot of land and to build their homes. How can I object – 40 odd years ago I was a newcomer to the valley and did just that.

I may be many things, but a hypocrite I am not.

Population growth

Much has been made of the fact that Upper Hutt population has grown at a greater rate than originally projected. There are a number of reasons for this including a considerable price differential compared to Wellington, Lower Hutt and Porirua. Additionally, UHCC has shown a forward-thinking attitude in working with the developers of the Wallaceville Estate. This has resulted in houses being built much more quickly than was originally anticipated, so the shape of the growth curve has changed.

Plan Change 50.

A couple of years back I responded to a notice in the Leader advising that UHCC was looking for people, with a Rural interest, to be part of the Focus Group examining the Rural Chapters of proposed Plan Change 50.

The Focus Group spent some 2 years working with the UHCC planners, meeting regularly to review progress, hear in detail aspects of the plan and question the planners as to the thinking behind it.

As a result, I have a reasonable working knowledge of PC 50.

Having seen the public notification of Plan Change 55, I downloaded and read the documentation. All of the documentation. It appeared to me that the documentation was portraying an alternate reality.

The claim was made that PC55 generally reflected PC50 – I was not able to reconcile that claim with my understanding of both the word and the intent of PC50.

As part of my working life, I had the job of reading documentation and ensuring that the work that the computer programmers had done accurately reflected the documented specifications. As a result, I am well accustomed with the task of comparing sets of documents with each other and identifying anomalies.

The Focus Group was familiar with the earlier Maymorn Structure Plan which had proposed some 1800 dwellings and that plan had met with strong community opposition. The Group was concerned that the proposal for a Settlement Zone encompassing the Gabites block should not attempt to bring in the shelved structure plan by stealth.

The Focus Group was assured that the intention of a Settlement Zone was to effect transition from an Urban area to a larger block Rural area. PC50 not only proposes a Settlement Zone around the Gabites block

but also on Wallaceville Road, at the brow of the ridge on Wallaceville Hill Road and additionally on Mangaroa Valley Road adjacent to the late 1800's era church.

The planners were questioned as to why a lot size of 2,000m² was being used and we were advised that engineers had confirmed that this size was the smallest that could accommodate a sewage disposal field plus water storage tanks of sufficient capacity to service both a primary and a secondary dwelling.

In response to our questioning we were assured that modern sewage systems were more compact than the older types and able to effectively function over a wide range of soil types and conditions.

My own property has a relatively high water table and we constructed an artificial mound of graded sands and gravels to form the dispersal field – 36 years later it continues to function as designed so I speak from practical knowledge and experience.

Minimum Lot size

It seems rather surprising to me, an unqualified layman, that the developers and a range of experts have persisted in playing a game of let's pretend.

Let's pretend there is access to a reticulated water supply.

Let's pretend that there is available capacity in the existing sewerage system and that we can connect to it.

There is no capacity in the water supply network and there are no plans on the table, nor available budget to increase capacity in the medium term.

There is no capacity in the sewerage network other than in dry weather. Pending dry weather turning up there is a proposal to store effluent on site waiting for capacity to become available.

This last winter period should have been a wakeup call to the proponents of that concept. We have had week after week of rain, then heavy rain, then torrential rain followed by yet more rain. None of the experts appear to have addressed the elephant in the room as to what happens when the storage capacity is exceeded.

So – the question needs to be asked as to why we are spending large amounts of time and money playing with ideas that are just not going to work.

The start point should be that there is no water supply, no reticulated sewerage – given those two factors then what is the minimum lot size for the development?

This information was available to the developers at the outset which poses the question as to why they took no account of it.

Settlement Zone

At the time that PC50 was being prepared the Focus Group was using the definition of Settlement Zone which can be found in the National Planning Standards. Those Standards clearly state that it is a Rural Zone.

NPS—Highly Productive Land has been Gazetted and that makes the statement that Settlement Zone is an Urban zone. This NPS was gazetted after the work on PC50 had concluded pending formal notification.

I raised this with UHCC Planning – Emily Thomson – and she was aware of the potential for confusion and this confusion has been shown in the evidence of some submitters.

I would suggest that for the sake of clarity we should be referring to it as a **Rural Settlement Zone**.

Village Precinct

It is again clear from some submissions and GWRC in particular, that not only have they lost the plot, but they never had a grasp of it to start with.

I grew up in town of 25,000 in the United Kingdom East Midlands. We would go out for a ride on our bikes

exploring. How did we know that we had reached a village? – there was a group of houses. If there was also a church and a pub and a shop that doubled up as a post office, then it was a village. A loose knit community which may have a blacksmith, a baker, a butcher and a saddler. These enterprises would be scattered through the group of houses, not all clustered together.

PC50 envisaged the same sort of set up. As part of a Rural Settlement Zone with the same lot sizes but able to go down to 1,000m² provided that the average came up to 2,000m². Commercial activities that reflected the Rural community would be enabled.

GWRC submission that because there are no reticulated water and waste services then you cannot have commercial activity, demonstrates a clear lack of understanding. Commercial activity in a Village precinct is not compulsory – it is permitted.

Public Transport – Bus services

There is only one bus stop in the Maymorn area and that is at the junction of SH2 and Plateau Road. A submitter has made mention of a “Bus Stop” along Maymorn Road. That sign signals a gathering point for the School Bus service and was placed there some 35

years ago, is no longer relevant and has never been removed.

The single active Metlink bus stop is 2 km distance from Maymorn railway station. GWRC have stated that there is no intention to bring bus services to the Gabites block.

Mention has been made that when the rail service is not available there are replacement bus services. That may well be the case but the bus does not come up to the station – commuters are obliged to get themselves to the only bus stop some 2 km distant.

A member of the panel raised the question as to where will the school bus services stop. There is no definitive answer to that as the driver will stop to collect children where they gather. This can result in the stopping place moving along the road over the years as one lot of families grow up and another group takes their place. It is the epitome of a demand responsive system.

Maymorn Station rail station services

This is a demand stop station – you have to flag down the driver for him to stop so that you can get on. If you catch the train and you are wanting to get off at Maymorn you have to let the train staff know when you board.

In the morning there are 3 services to Upper Hutt and on to Wellington. These leave within a single hour. The first at 6.49am and the last at 7.49am. There are then 3 more services during the day, at a 4-hour interval, then a 5 hour interval and finally another 4 hour interval.

The PC55 proponents suggest that service levels will increase, and that question was raised by the panel yesterday.

The only way that services will increase at Maymorn is if the transport demand from the Wairarapa increases and then that will only be within the constraints of a single-track operation.

The line is a single track and likely to remain so. The investment needed to increase it to double track would be cost prohibitive as would any move toward electrification.

The platform at Maymorn is short and only the first 3 carriages can be brought alongside. Enhanced services to date have consisted of improved carriages, but the length constraints have remained constant.

Service frequencies during the day are unlikely to increase. Train movements are timed to get passengers to Wellington within the time window for commencing work and the return journeys are tailored

to meet the demands of workers returning home to the Wairarapa. Movements also need to dovetail in to the main Metlink commuter services to and from Wellington.

The original documentation notes that the proponents contacted Kiwi Rail but got no response. Maymorn station services are operated by Metlink not Kiwi Rail. It took me less than one minute to make phone contact with Metlink who were able to confirm that any increase in the frequency of passenger train movements through Maymorn will be demand driven from Masterton. Track and signalling improvements will make 15 minute intervals possible but there are no plans for any increase in intraday services unless demand ex Masterton dictates.

Metlink also advised that the existing rolling stock had a remaining life expectancy of less than 5 years and at this stage there is no allocated budget for replacement. Replacement rolling stock is expected to cost well in excess of \$300 million.

Landscape

There is a tendency for planners to want to micromanage this aspect. The reality of the world is that nobody pays an arm and a leg for a lot of rural land and then deliberately and intentionally junks it.

The first thing that every towny does on their rural land is plant trees – they want to make their surroundings beautiful.

They do not need regulation but will welcome knowledgeable guidance – what plants, what spacings, where is best to plant.

GWRC – Proposed Plan Change 1 - RPS

I am concerned to see GWRC promulgating this Proposed Plan Change as if it is done and dusted.

The submissions period of 40 working days for this closed at 5pm last Friday 14th October. There are many comprehensive submissions waiting to be heard, initially as part of the Freshwater Planning process and then in a second hearing for the other segments.

I consider it rather disrespectful towards the Freshwater Commissioners to presume that the draft will stand unchanged and equally dismissive towards all submitters.

Conclusion

The current PC55 documentation has drastically changed when compared to the original.

I consider that the development should proceed in conformity with the PC50 proposals utilising a minimum lot size of 2,000 m².

