

IN THE MATTER

of the Resource Management Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER

of the Proposed Plan Change 5 ("PC5") to the
Hamilton City Operative District Plan

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF JOHN SOFO ON BEHALF OF
WOOLWORTHS NEW ZEALAND LIMITED**

ARCHITECTURE

16 SEPTEMBER 2022

1. INTRODUCTION

Background and experience

- 1.1 My full name is John Sofo. I am a director of ASC Architects Limited ("**ASC**"). I hold a Bachelor of Architecture (Honours) and Post Graduate Diploma in Business from Deakin University in Melbourne. I also hold a Master of Science in Architecture (Honours) from Howard University in Washington DC.
- 1.2 I have worked at ASC Architects since 1989. I have also taught at both Auckland schools of architecture and represented the practice and the New Zealand Institute of Architects as an awards juror. I am also a member of the Ministry of Education's National Design Review Panel.
- 1.3 I am a registered architect as defined by the New Zealand Registered Architects Board and in accordance with the Registered Architects Act 2005 and the Registered Architects Rules 2006. I have been continually registered since 1992.
- 1.4 I have designed and led a broad range of significant projects in New Zealand including all three Public Private-Partnership projects for Ministry of Education with a combined project value of almost one billion dollars, and a broad range of projects for Woolworths New Zealand Limited ("**Woolworths**") over the past 15 years with a combined value in the hundreds of millions of dollars.
- 1.5 Recent projects I have been responsible for that are relevant to this statement of evidence include:
- (a) Countdown Waiata Shores: This is a new free-standing supermarket with on grade parking and both sleeve retail and standalone retail delivered as part of the same project. This development also acts as a kind of gateway to Fletchers' residential development beyond. It provides a much needed commercial and urban design arrival point which separates the residential development from the busy access road beyond. This project is now built and operational. I was the lead design architect.
 - (b) Countdown Whenuapai: This project is in the early resource consent stage and consists of a supermarket, sleeved and standalone retail and at grade parking. This site is on the corner Brigham Creek Road and will act as a retail anchor in the fast developing medium density residential zone around it. I was the lead architect on this project.

- (c) Countdown Halswell: This project has recently been granted resource consent and consists of an integrated suburban development which includes a supermarket, retail, commercial and residential components. The supermarket is part of a comprehensive development plan and new local centre which balances public space, functionality, on grade parking and good urban design outcomes. I was the design architect for the project.
- (d) Countdown Pinehill: This project is now constructed and consists of a supermarket with an EStore attached and a variety of retail and commercial space. Parking is provided at grade around the development. I was the design architect for the project.

Code of conduct

- 1.6 I confirm that I have read the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses 2014 contained in the Environment Court Practice Note and that I agree to comply with it. I confirm that I have considered all the material facts that I am aware of that might alter or detract from the opinions that I express, and that this evidence is within my area of expertise, except where I state that I am relying on the evidence of another person.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE AND EXISTING ENVIRONMENT

- 2.1 Woolworths' Site (identified in red dashed line at Figure 1 below) ("**Site**"), is located to the west of the proposed Local Centre Zone across Peacockes Road ("**Local Centre**") and to the south of the proposed new public-school site. The Site is approximately 100 meters by 150 meters and reasonably flat. The Site is bounded by Peacockes Road to the east, and a road to the north separating the Site from the school site and a smaller service road to the south. There is no proposed road access from the west at this stage.
- 2.2 The Site is well connected to the proposed Village Centre and to the Village Park.

Figure 1 – Woolworths site



2.3 The enablement of the Local Centre expansion to the west of Peacockes Road will in my view, ensure an effective, vital and vibrant connection from the residential areas, through the proposed expanded Local Centre, across Peacockes Road and to the river. The idea of "connection" is to recognise, support and enable the connection of people from where they live, to where they work, shop, learn and socialise (the Local Centre) and to the natural environment of the river for recreation.

2.4 The idea that these elements might be divided by an impenetrable and non-pedestrianised road seems to me at the heart of what is recognised as poor urban design. I would suggest that an expansion of the Local Centre to the west across Peacockes Road, incorporating a functional, safe and legible pedestrian connection, will be pivotal to enabling the Local Centre to succeed at all. Similarly, the idea that Peacockes Road would be delivered without a strong pedestrianised connection across it, would threaten the viability of the Local Centre altogether.

2.5 Some of the key architectural benefits for the inclusion of Woolworths' Site within the Local Centre Zone include:

- (a) By locating the store to the south of the Site, service vehicle movements can be contained to the southern edge, thereby enabling a safe separation of service vehicles and pedestrians. This provides an opportunity to appropriately reinforce the pedestrian orientation of the Local Centre nature of the Site to the north.
- (b) As the Site directly to the north is now to be designated as a future primary school, there is a more natural collection of town centre appropriate uses (being the school and large format retail on the Site) to the west of Peacockes Road. This will provide for two sites across Peacockes Road to the west that are properly connected to the town centre and support the town centre community but will be of a different character to the main street typology described in the proposed Plan Change.
- (c) Woolworths' Site is ideally sized and located to provide a full service supermarket together with the necessary carparking and with additional space available for the provision of some sleeved retail space.
- (d) The Site can be configured such that all the commercial requirements of a supermarket can be delivered while still maintaining the access through the superblocks as indicated in the structure plan.
- (e) By locating the supermarket on the Site, the balance of the Local Centre to the east can be reserved for fine grained, small scale commercial and retail developments which will enable the street frontage activation rules (as proposed in the Design Guide) to be achieved.
- (f) The combination of the Woolworths and Ministry of Education developments are ideal uses of the western edge of the Local Centre. While being well connected to the Local Centre activity, both sites also provide a well measured transition between the Local Centre and the adjacent residential activity. I expand on this further in 2.6.
- (g) Figure 2 of the Amberfield Urban Design Report illustrates the intended configuration of the neighbourhood centre when Adare first got its consent. These diagrams clearly identify that there is

inadequate spatial provision for a full supermarket to be provided in this zone if the form of development indicated below is to be followed.



Figure 2: Amberfield Urban Design Report

2.6 In my opinion, the effect of expanding the Local Centre across Peacockes Road has the advantage of enabling it to work well. Some of the reasons for this include:

- (a) Any Local Centre is dependent on patronage from the surrounding residential neighbourhood and pedestrian accessibility. The inclusion of the Woolworths' Site in the Local Centre Zone to the western side of Peacockes Road will enable an effective pedestrian connection to be delivered, given a supermarket is just as much a part of Local Centre "life" as small scale retail.
- (b) As the school is already planned in the location across the road from the Woolworths' Site and to the west of Peacockes Road, it is logical that the Woolworths' Site is well connected and integrated to the Local Centre as well, as the fourth quadrant of the Centre.
- (c) Schools and supermarkets are amongst a range of site uses which can be configured to create an effective transition to traditional town centre uses. They can create screening, setback, pedestrian linkages and acoustic barriers where necessary between medium density housing and some of the more intrusive effects of Local Centre activity when located directly adjacent.
- (d) By connecting the Local Centre Zone across Peacockes Road to include the Woolworths' Site, a more visually effective and meaningful sense of pedestrianised road is created. Pedestrianising

roads creates a calmer and more connected space as it makes motorists slow down. The local centre is seen as having a "slower" road pass through it rather than the road being disconnected and passing behind it and therefore disconnecting residents.

3. PLAN DESIGN REQUIREMENTS

3.1 Section 1.4.10 of Hamilton City Council's proposed PC5 amendments set out the design requirements of the Peacocke Local Centre. I set out below my assessment of how a potential Woolworths supermarket located at the Site can comply with, support and reinforce these requirements where relevant.

3.2 Provide for supermarket(s) away from the main street where;

- (a) *"The design of the building provides an active frontage to the street by locating a pedestrian entrance from an identified frontage, or to the use of sleeving of large buildings by smaller retail activities to interface with the street (dependant on location of supermarket)"*

Assessment: This outcome can be achieved by providing some sleeving to the large supermarket building or some street frontage retail to sleeve carparking at the front of the Site. Frontage to the west of the Peacockes Road intersection, where it faces the future school and supermarket is connected to the Local Centre, would ideally extend the pedestrian connectivity across the front of the Site so the benefit of shoppers coming to the supermarket would extend an advantage of convenient cross shopping to the main centre retailers as well.

- (b) *"The architecture design of any supermarket responds to, and is in keeping with, the character and identity of the Peacocke Centre."*

Assessment: This requirement is achievable, recognising that character and identity for a fine-grained local centre will have different requirements than those that might be applied to a supermarket. The same observation would apply to a school. However, there is no reason why both typologies cannot be sympathetically designed to support the Local Centre and provide adequate connection and integration.

- (c) *"Parking and loading is located away from identified primary and secondary frontages."*

Assessment: This requirement can be largely achieved. However, this should be balanced with the requirement to provide visible connections to parking and the main store entry connected to this parking, so that shoppers can orient themselves from Peacockes Road and the east-west arterial, and understand visually, how to access the supermarket.

- (d) *"Areas outside of the main street are to provide for larger commercial activities such as a supermarket...This will allow service and employment opportunities that support the needs of the surrounding community."*

Assessment: This is also easily achievable as we recognise that any frontage on the Site is a different character of space to the Main Street, but immediately adjacent and connected. In that sense, the Site is appropriately located to achieve the secondary objective of this requirement, to support the needs of the surrounding community.

4. ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Operational design requirements

4.1 Operational and functional requirements for Woolworths must be delivered in every project for them to be viable and to succeed commercially. Supermarket site and store layout is strongly driven from an operational perspective and Woolworths has invested heavily in arriving at a format around which the whole business is configured. Some of the key format elements include:

- (a) The carpark must be visible and legible from the access road leading to it. This requirement translates to a need for clear and accessible entry points in conjunction with at grade accessible parking for the elderly or disabled.
- (b) The carpark for a supermarket only, must be of adequate size.
- (c) The body of carparking must be centred around the main entry as far as possible, and not separated by vehicular road which would impede patron access or conveyance of groceries.
- (d) The proportions of the building must be within the known operational tolerances for Woolworths.
- (e) The checkouts must be adjacent to the entry.

- (f) The loading dock is ideally located opposite the customer entry and must be serviced with adequate space, (including a 30 meter turning circle if drive through is not possible) for loading and all other service activities. This must be securable.
- (g) The three other sides of the supermarket cannot be glazed unless an office space can be located to one of these three faces. The key reason for this constraint is that the supermarket retail area in the middle of the plan is serviced by back of house preparation and storage areas such as cool rooms, freezers, food preparation areas and other such spaces which cannot be glazed to the outside.
- (h) Online Pick Up must be accommodated together with supporting parking, canopy and vehicle access. This is usually close to the main entry, internally accessed from the supermarket and clearly visible at arrival to the Site.
- (i) If an E-Store is to be included in the development then it needs to be located directly adjacent to the main store and share the loading dock and drive through access.

4.2 The Site is well proportioned and located and can deliver the design outcomes identified above because:

- (a) By locating the store to the south of the Site, the parking and accessibility requirements can be provided.
- (b) The carpark will be adequately sized and proportioned. (As long as additional sleeving retail does not diminish supermarket parking below an operationally sustainable level).
- (c) Carparking can be largely centred to the main entry door.
- (d) Ideal store proportions can be achieved.
- (e) Checkouts can be located adjacent to the customer entry.
- (f) A secure loading dock can be located to the south of the Site which can meet all of Woolworths operational requirements. This also has the advantage of being able to completely isolate service trucks from customer vehicles thereby providing a safe traffic solution.
- (g) Three "service walls" can be provided.

- (h) Online pick up can be accommodated.
- (i) An E-Store can also fit on site if required.

Connectivity and arterial frontage

4.3 There will be the opportunity to provide integration through strong pedestrian linkages from the residential neighbourhood to the Local Centre, between the Woolworths' Site and the remainder of the Local Centre, including the opportunity for integration between the proposed school and the supermarket. This will:

- (a) integrate the Local Centre to the residential neighbourhood;
- (b) enable successful pedestrian linkages from residential to Local Centre uses; and
- (c) connect all the elements of a vibrant Local Centre, learning, shopping, community and the natural environment.

4.4 There are a variety of possible architectural and urban design measures that could be implemented along the east west arterial route to effectively connect and integrate the supermarket to the Local Centre should it be extended to the west. These could include:

- (a) Provision of some activation along the supermarket frontage to visually integrate the Site with the Local Centre and provide a visually strong link to the Main Road.
- (b) A north south pedestrian connection from the Site to the school site. This will accommodate a natural desire line and complete the circle of connectivity and will link all four quadrants.
- (c) The possible provision of a gateway building on the north eastern edge of the Site which together with a similar urban gesture from the school would reinforce a legible connection node for the Local Centre.
- (d) A sympathetic design language could be utilised for both the school and supermarket which, while responding to different functions could be connected by scale, materiality, site configuration (to the extent practically possible) and orientation.

5. RESPONSE TO ADARE CONCEPT PLAN IN JWS

5.1 I have reviewed Adare concept plan for the proposed Local Centre prepared by Wayne Bredemeijer and was appended to the JWS dated 25 August 2022 (Figure 3 – below).

5.2 I consider this plan suggests a somewhat naïve and unlikely layout for a successful supermarket development. There are several issues with the concept plan:

- (a) It under sizes the carpark. The Adare plan fails to take into account that the carpark is likely to service the other Local Centre stores, (not just the supermarket) therefore leaving inadequate parking space.
- (b) The back of the supermarket is facing the main street which is sub-optimal. Ideally, carparking is visible from the main road.
- (c) The positioning of the loading dock is an issue for several reasons. First, as previously discussed, a loading dock is ideally designed with a turning circle or drive through, allowing for efficient loading and delivery services. Secondly, this design would see heavy vehicles sharing the main road with Peacocke supermarket and other retail customers. Thirdly, the loading dock creates an outlook onto the back of a supermarket from the main road which is undesirable and will not contribute to the landscape of the local centre.
- (d) From a Woolworths perspective, the configuration illustrated would require the pedestrian store entry to be located at the northeast corner. This would result in the pedestrian entry being largely invisible from the carpark.
- (e) This proposal excludes the pedestrian link from east to west south of the intersection as originally anticipated in Figure 1. This creates the undesirable outcome of separating pedestrians from east to west unless they cross a carpark.

Figure 3: Concept plan for the proposed Local Centre appended to the Joint Witness Statement dated 25 August 2022

Peacocke Local Centre Concept – August 2022

Urbanismplus

Principles and Criteria	Score	Comments
1 A well-located centre	Green	Critical mass close to the river
2 A connected centre	Green	Retail all on one side of Peacockes Road; some commercial across
3 A cohesive centre	Yellow	Large majority of retail along main street, but some along spine
4 A viable centre (anchor)	Green	Connected to main street; easy parking; can grow
5 A viable centre (specialty retail)	Green	Retail around anchor and along main street
6 A legible centre	Yellow	Good activation; supermarket servicing along Peacockes Road

Areas	GF provided	1 st floor provided	Total provided	HCC 2048 projected
Supermarket	4,800m ²	-	4,800m ²	4,800m ²
Specialty retail, including grocery	5,300m ²	-	5,300m ²	5,300m ²
Specific hospitality	1,200m ²	-	1,200m ²	-
Commercial	1,300m ²	1,300m ²	2,600m ²	2,600m ²
Potential community facility	1,500m ²	-	1,500m ²	-
Total GFA	14,100m²	1,300m²	15,400m²	12,700m²

Spare capacity in Local Centre Zone	Areas
Above specialty retail	5,300m ² per floor
Above specific hospitality	1,200m ² per floor
Above commercial	1,300m ² per floor
Above potential community facility	1,500m ² per floor
Total (GFA)	9,300m² per floor
Total additional land	13,100m²

Legend	
- - Local Centre Zone boundary (as notified)	Potential community facility
Supermarket	Additional capacity (potential residential, including apartments or terraced housing)
Specific hospitality	Residential (medium density housing)
Specialty retail (shops approx. 9m x 15m)	Potential education facility
Commercial (buildings max. 20m deep)	Parking (4 parking bays)



6. RESPONSE TO SECTION 42A REPORT

6.1 I have read Mr Munro's technical report dated 26 August 2022 and statement of evidence dated 2 September 2022.

6.2 I agree with Mr Munro where he states the Site is a desirable place for a supermarket. However, I disagree that the extension of the Local Centre to include the Site would "very adversely fragment" the proposed centre and that the arterial roads will be a "significant barrier".¹ The proposal by Woolworths is not intended to take away from the vibrance of the local centre, rather provide a more efficient layout for the proposed supermarket on the western side of Peacockes Road. The Site will connect the residential zone to the local centre, seamlessly drawing people to the eastern side of Peacockes Road.

6.3 I consider that the school site which extends the Local Centre to the west needs to be well connected and integrated with the Local Centre. Similarly, a supermarket to the south of the school will complete the Local Centre and connect to the residential community which it serves. Any Local Centre concept which assumes that Peacockes Road is an impenetrable boundary to

¹ Evidence of Ian Munro, 2 September 2022, paragraph 25.

pedestrians, would also risk the connectiveness and viability of the Local Centre as by default it can only be accessed by cars.

- 6.4 Mr Munroe states, "the relief sought (by Woolworths) would very adversely fragment the proposed centre."² I assume he refers to the idea that the Local Centre would straddle Peacockes Road and the road would be the cause of the adverse outcome. It seems to me that the foundation of this assumption is faulty and brings into question the idea that the Local Centre could succeed at all if not serviced solely by cars. This assumption undermines many of the well accepted principles of well connected, pedestrianised local centres which are designed to service their local residential communities.
- 6.5 In my view it is important to lift one's perspective of the Local Centre location question from the discussion of east or west of Peacockes Road and consider whether the Local Centre will be well connected to the community it serves. Mr Munro focuses on the quality of Peacockes Road rather than on how the Local Centre should be effectively connected to the community. In my view this is the fundamental question. That community is the residential neighbourhood to the north, west and south. For the Local Centre to succeed it must feature an effective and safe pedestrian connection to its neighbourhood.
- 6.6 The future school and proposed supermarket will be features which will enable and support effective pedestrian connection to residential community and ensure that it is viable.
- 6.7 I support the relief sought by Woolworths. It has a range of benefits including that it will effectively and positively connect the residential areas to the Local Centre, drawing people to the eastern side of Peacockes Road's finer-grained retail.

John Sofo

16 September 2022

² Evidence of Ian Munro, 2 September 2022, paragraph 25.