

Proposed Housing and Business Choice Plan Change (PC14)
Submission from the Papanui Heritage Group to the Independent Hearings Panel,
30 November 2023

1. Membership and area of interest of the Papanui Heritage Group

1.1. The Papanui Heritage Group (PHG) began in 2001 with the following objectives:

‘to acquire, preserve, retain, house and disseminate Papanui heritage information.’

The suburb of Papanui has never been officially defined, but the PHG subscribes to the definition provided in *Timber Town to City Suburb*, by Murray Williams (pp.25-6):

Wairakei Road to the south-west; Greers Road to the north-west; Northcote Road to the north; Cranford Street to the north-east; McFadden, Mays and Normans Roads to the south east.

1.2 The Group currently has ten financial members, but other supporters throughout the community, and a few who live overseas. The membership may be small but the commitment and achievements of the members over the years has been large.

1.3 Submissions made by the group are discussed at monthly meetings and drafts are circulated to the members for comment.

2. The Change sought by the PHG in its original submission

2.1 The PHG is **opposed** to the High Density Residential Zone (HRZ) extending into the residential streets of Papanui. The group requests that the extent of this zone be greatly reduced to the current commercial area, (marked TC2 on planning map 24A.) The PHG was shocked by changes to the proposals in September 2023, which would mean ten storey buildings could now be built in the HRZ around Papanui.

2.2 The group submitted in favour of the trees in Papanui’s Memorial Avenues being protected (PC13) and is delighted that this was approved by Council. It remains very concerned, however, about the inclusion of the total length of four of the Memorial Avenues (St James Avenue, Dormer, Perry and Gambia Streets) in the proposed HRZ; plus part of two memorial avenues, Halton Street, and Tomes Road, and one side of Windermere Road. The group is also very concerned about several other neighbouring tree-lined streets which together with the Memorial Avenue provide so much of the character of Papanui’s residential area.

2.3 The group also has particular concern about the preservation of the historic character centred on St Paul's Church and St James' Park.

3. The impact of high rise buildings on trees

3.1 The group cannot see how the Memorial Trees, which are now protected under PC13, will be preserved if three to ten storey buildings are erected on any of the Memorial Avenues or neighbouring avenues. It argues that the protection of the Memorial trees, and other street-side trees, is simply incompatible with high rise developments.

3.2 Introducing high rise buildings into tree-lined streets, especially during the period of construction, could lead to trees being removed to provide access to sections and declining health of the trees, with damage to roots and diminished access to sunlight. The Council's tree policy which says tree canopy must be replaced within a timeframe of 20 years is totally inadequate.

3.3 Climate change is bringing increased temperatures and greater likelihood of droughts to our city. It has been demonstrated that tree-lined streets provide lower temperatures. In order to fulfil this important role for the health and well-being of citizens, our tree-lined streets must be protected and enhanced.

4 The impact of high-rise buildings on residents

4.1 The PHG argues that high rise buildings would be damaging to the health and well-being of neighbouring residents whose houses will become heavily shaded. Furthermore those residents will suffer a loss of privacy, an increase in noise levels, increased parking issues in their streets, and financial loss on what for many elderly people is their only significant asset.

4.2 The group argues that high rise buildings will be visually jarring and would cause a huge loss of passive enjoyment for residents.

4.3 The PHG also opposes the HRZ extending along Papanui Road where side streets such as Tomes Road, Halton, Perry, Dormer and Paparoa Streets provide attractive view shafts for people travelling along Papanui Road. Papanui Road itself still has many fine old residences which retain some of the historic character of the area. High rise zones on both side of the road will inevitably lead to loss of trees and street facing gardens.

4.4 The group submits that residents have been insufficiently consulted about the proposal to have high rise buildings allowed in their streets. It argues that to impose such radical changes within quiet residential areas is highly undemocratic.

5. Agreement with other submitters: residents' associations

5.1. The PHG is in agreement with arguments put forward by residents' associations in Hornby and Riccarton, which are similarly affected by the proposal to allow high rise buildings in their areas. Like them we see a power imbalance between submitters who can afford to employ expert witnesses, and community groups, who cannot.

5.2 Like them we see the September 2023 alteration to PC14, which allows for ten storey buildings in the high-rise zones (up from six) to be highly undemocratic, with no new submitters allowed to appear before the Hearing Panel.

5.3 Like them we query the imposition of high-rise buildings on a city so badly shaken by earthquakes in 2010 and 2011. When was the post-earthquake agreed limit of five storey buildings changed and by whom?

5.4 Why is the city planning for housing for 150 years into the future?

5.5 We note that the National Government is likely to retain the rules requiring councils to zone for at least six storeys in catchments near rapid transit. (Press 1/09/2023)

6. Agreement with other submitters: local citizens

6.1 Having read submissions made by other Papanui residents we find that most share our concerns. They fear for the future health and safety of the trees in the Memorial Avenues and argue the proposals show no respect for the memorial aspect of the avenues. They raise concerns about properties being shaded by tall buildings and a loss of privacy.

6.2 They argue that the HRZ should be reduced or dismissed entirely, with a retention of the current consenting situation; and that the storm water drainage systems in some streets are not suitable for more intense developments.

6.3 We agree with those submitters who refer to previous decisions which should be upheld: firstly the 2016 Government-appointed independent hearings panel which dismissed a Council proposal for housing intensification in South East and South West Papanui, including the tree-lined streets and avenues; and secondly the 'Living Streets' designation for streets in the Grants Road area.

