

## Plan Change 56 - verbal submission - Merran Bakker, 14 April 2023

My name is Merran Bakker, and I have lived in Petone for over 40 years, in a council heritage listed house. Recently my husband and I have been able to move the house forward on its large site to enable the build of a new house and attached accessible flat on the land at the rear. This both preserves the villa which is being renovated and creates further accommodation.

I have submitted on several previous plan changes, notably PC 25 which created the Tertiary Precinct and PC 29 which created the Petone Mixed Use Area. As a lay person I have attempted to understand the intent of these changes and provide feedback based on my knowledge of the local area and discussion with others who advocate for the best planning results we can achieve.

With Plan Change 56 I understand it is required by law with a purpose of enabling more housing supply and that as a Tier 1 city, Lower Hutt must change its District Plan to comply. I agree with the intent of providing more housing but have some concerns regarding intensification in Petone.

Firstly, Petone has been described as a Metropolitan Centre, which I believe is unnecessary. Petone's background is as a Borough with its own council and village feel. The "centre" described is a heritage shopping strip linked to what has become a big box retail area. Over the time I've lived in Petone, the heritage area has changed from a multi-purpose commercial area with banks, a variety of retail stores including small supermarkets, some clothing stores etc to a street largely made up of cafes and restaurants and a few more useful shops such as pharmacies. Meanwhile, the commercial area to the west has not fulfilled the intention of Plan Change 29 to allow residential development but instead has seen big box retail move in from other areas - for example Bunnings into the former NZ Post site from Naenae and Rebel Sport from the city centre. These bigger stores, including Countdown and Kmart, are focused on shoppers travelling by car and have concentrated traffic along Petone's streets to an uncomfortable extent.

Petone railway station is at one edge of the big box retail area, but there is very little housing nearby and little prospect of that changing. Ava station is at the northern edge of Petone, serving both Alicetown and eastern Petone customers, along with others who park and commute from there. These stations are not an easy 'walkable distance' from all parts of Petone. For example, they are both over a kilometre away from my home in Britannia Street.

Raising Petone's heritage shopping street to the level of metropolitan centre puts pressure on what is a valued heritage area rather than an "Area used predominantly for a broad range of commercial, community, recreational and residential activities. The zone is a focal point for sub-regional urban catchments." I believe Petone is better described as a town centre so that high rise buildings are not considered appropriate around the commercial area.

Even more compelling for limiting intensification are the various hazard risks throughout Petone. When the coastal, flood and tsunami overlays are added to the maps for Plan Change 56, Petone shows multiple risks from these hazards – and it is also in a liquefaction zone. Climate change is already showing its effects. In recent years we have had more surface flooding in our neighbourhood as rainfall events are more severe. The damaging cyclones in Hawkes Bay and Tairāwhiti this year have focused our attention on the devastation that can occur overnight to coastal areas. Experts have questioned why we are intensifying on flood plains and advising avoiding intensification altogether in areas like Petone and that more weight should be given to the long term risks to people and property, over the need for more housing in these areas.

Petone is already densely populated with a growing number of infill houses, townhouses, and some apartments often in narrow streets. In a natural disaster there would be greater risk if there are even more people who need to evacuate from the many narrow streets near the town centre. Rather than having a series of qualifying matters that will have to be examined with every resource consent, wouldn't it be safer to focus on areas of less risk for intensification? I acknowledge that the council officers have sought limit intensification in Petone by describing some new heritage areas but this seems rather piecemeal. Rather I'd like to see Petone commercial area downgraded from a metropolitan centre to a town centre and the whole suburb to be medium density only because of its hazard risks.

I think there may be areas of the Hutt Valley that are more suitable for higher buildings, where the hazard risks are lower and perhaps there is more space for dwellings to be built with maximum sunlight and outlook. Some of Lower Hutt's northern suburbs have lost rather than gained useful shops and services over recent decades, which forces residents out of their suburbs for work, shopping and access to services. If a goal of the National Policy statement is to reduce carbon emissions, maybe the Hutt City should be looking to both build housing and encourage relocation of shops back to these areas. The city centre zone also needs to draw back business as well as build attractive housing, where hopefully building higher rise is safe and does not detract from the amenity of existing housing.

In summary, I ask that you take Petone out the high density zone, to preserve its heritage village and avoid more building in this multiple hazard area. Rather, consider how housing needs can be met in the city centre or northern suburbs.