

Response to Urban Design Peer Review by Lisa Mein Prepared by Studio Pacific Architecture Ltd

20th November 2025

1. Introduction

This memo has been prepared by Studio Pacific Architecture Ltd in response to the urban design comments raised by Lisa Mein in her peer review of the Sunfield masterplan. It addresses the matters we consider most relevant to achieving high-quality urban design outcomes for Sunfield and the wider surrounding communities.

2. Response to the Case Studies referenced in the Ms Mein's Peer Review

Ms Mein's memo references only three case studies (Vauban, Merwede, and Culdesac) as the bases for some of her statements. As a more holistic and broader comparison we have provided additional case studies that we consider relevant to the Sunfield context. These are outlined in a separate document in response to the panel's information request.

It is important to recognise that, while it may be tempting to search for a single case study that mirrors Sunfield in its density, scale, proximity to amenity, and overall concept, Sunfield represents a new typology within the New Zealand context. As is often the case with innovative solutions - direct one-to-one comparisons are therefore limited.

2.1 Ms Mein's view that Car-less case studies are not applicable to Greenfields contexts:

We strongly disagree with Ms Mein that case-studies for car-lite developments are "*limited to Brownfield sites, within or very proximate to, existing urban centres..*". This is demonstrated in the supplementary information case studies we have provided.

- Both Oberillwerder Hamburg and Frankfurt Northwest New Urban Quarter are clear examples of contemporary greenfield developments, demonstrating that sustainable car-lite masterplanning is not limited to brownfield contexts.

- In terms of being “proximate to existing urban centres”, Ms Mein’s statement doesn’t acknowledge the creation of the new Town Centres and extensive employment and mix of uses that Sunfield will provide.
- As with our case-studies have demonstrated, Sunfield has very comparable employment and commercial proximity features including:
 - Providing for a new town centre within the site which is the ideal location outcome,
 - Is co-located with a conglomeration of new industrial and Ardmore Airport commercial employment offering, as highlighted by Lisa in section 2.6, paragraph 2 of her peer review.
 - Provides new schools, retirement villages, and aged-care facilities, including being within the active travel catchment for existing schools.
 - Have similar proximities to existing centres. Sunfield is serviced by two centres Takanini and Papakura approximately 2 km away and accessible by a short bicycle or public transport trip (refer *Active Modes Network Drawing rF*).

2.2 Acknowledgement that Sunfield is “medium density”

- We agree with Ms Mein’s view that “*in a New Zealand context 40 dwellings per hectare is considered to be medium density*”. We have been involved in medium density housing for a number of decades, and through extensive research and practical experience, we reiterate that at 40 dwellings per hectare Sunfield is very much a medium density community.
- Sunfield is an efficient development model. We have achieved this by substituting traditionally wide roads (that would normally provide for door-to-door car access) for a far more efficient and finer-grain laneway-based development structure.
- Sunfield’s denser apartment buildings are strategically located above neighbourhood hubs in order to achieve good urban design outcome in terms of mixed-use and proximity to public transport.
- Geotechnical and market conditions do not support taller apartment forms in the current outlook - Lisa acknowledges this in her final paragraph of section 2.3.

2.3 Sunfield is integrated with the rapid transit network

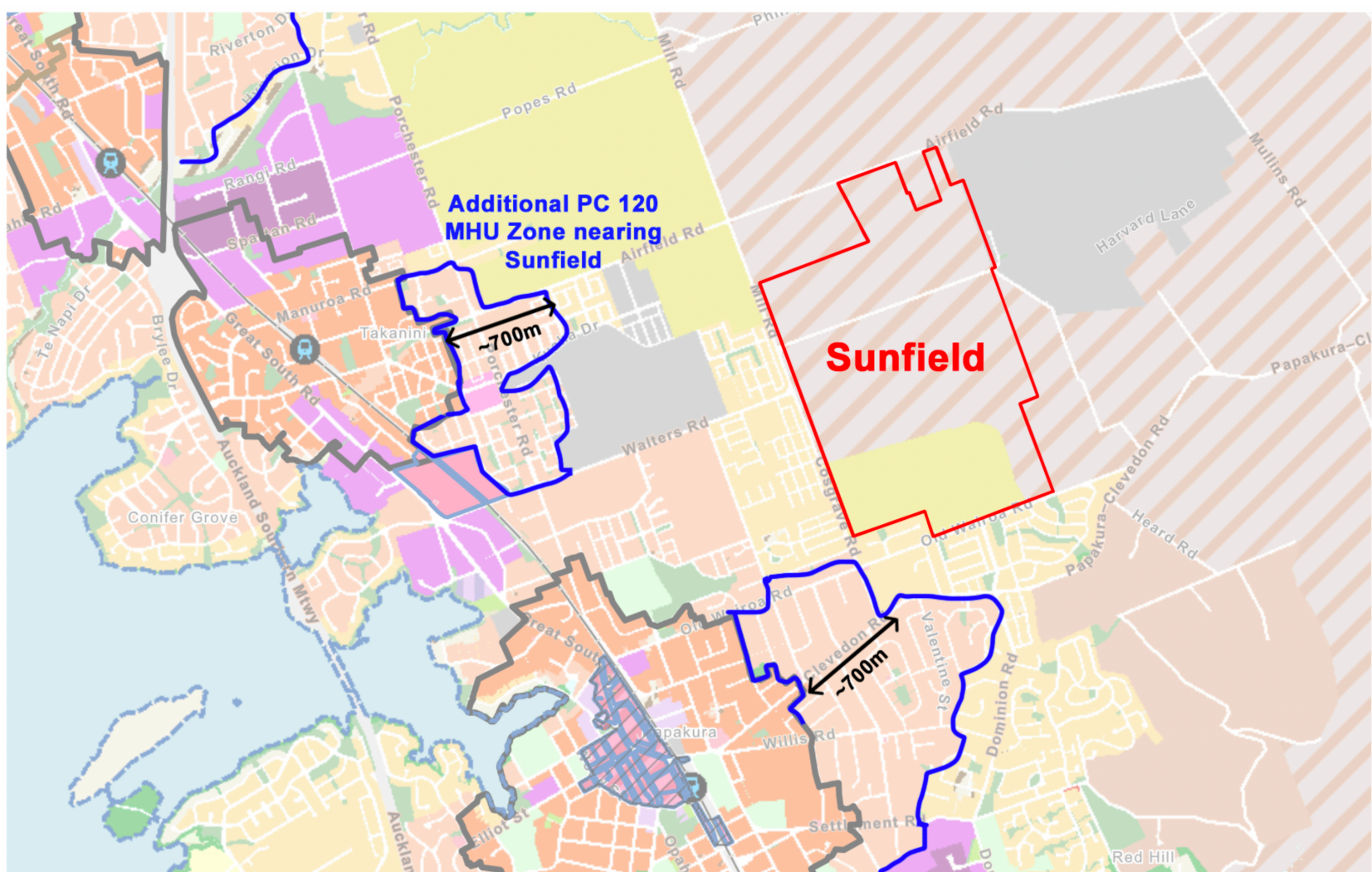
In the conclusion of her peer review Ms Mein notes that Sunfield has “*relatively poor connection to rapid transit*”. This is simply not true, and we fundamentally disagree with this statement:

- Sunfield has excellent public transport access. The Sunfield Loop is designed intentionally to provide a frequent bus service to all residential neighbourhoods.
- As such, and similarly with the case-studies we’ve provided, Sunfield residents will have direct public transport bus connections to the Southern Line rail network.
- Sunfield has cycling connections that would enable 5-10 minute trips by e-bike, e-scooter, or a touch more by bike. Cycling to the rail stations are acknowledged by Ms Mein as a viable transport option for Sunfield.
- A series of upgrades are proposed to provide a greater level of service to local transport hubs.

3. Characterisation of Sunfield as Rural

Ms Mein states that Sunfield is rural. While an *urban–rural transition* may describe the current vacant site condition, we strongly disagree with this characterisation as the long-term trajectory of the wider area is clearly urban:

- The site directly borders existing urban areas, with two boundaries adjoining extensive residential development.
- One-quarter of the site zoned FUZ.
- The site is closer to the RUB than the extensive Ardmore industrial development site.
- **PC120** proposes substantial residential upzoning and MHU zone expansion to within ~500m from the Sunfield boundary (refer image below).
- **Mill Road Stage 2** establishes a major urban edge and strategic connection.
- **Ardmore Airport and adjacent industrial development** already support more than 100 businesses and over 600 employees.
- Sunfield will deliver extensive urban amenities, including:
 - a town centre and anchor tenants,
 - industrial employment precinct
 - medical facilities,
 - aquatic centre,
 - a school
 - aged-care and retirement villages, and
 - residential and work/live typologies



4. Open Space Network

4.1 Usability and distribution

In section 2.7 of her peer review Ms Mein notes that the Council is seeking four flood-free neighbourhood parks, supported by a central suburb park, all integrated with the street network. She then notes that in response to the Council's extensive comments the applicant has offered an updated open space strategy. However, she then goes on to say that *'no additional neighbourhood parks are proposed nor have the locations of the proposed parks been amended, with the exception of one on the eastern side which has been both relocated and reduced in scale.'*

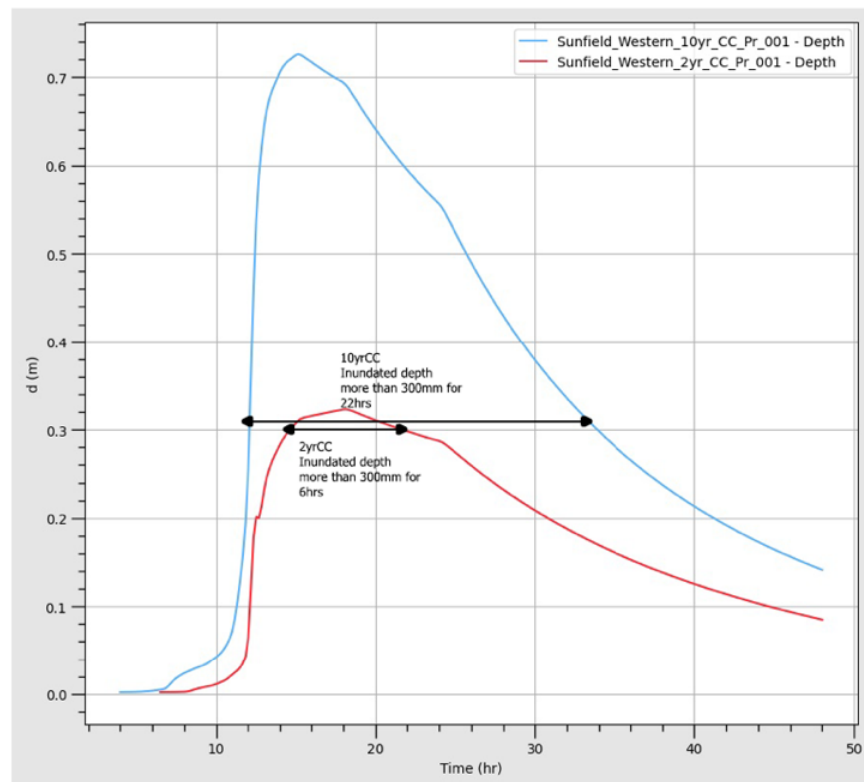
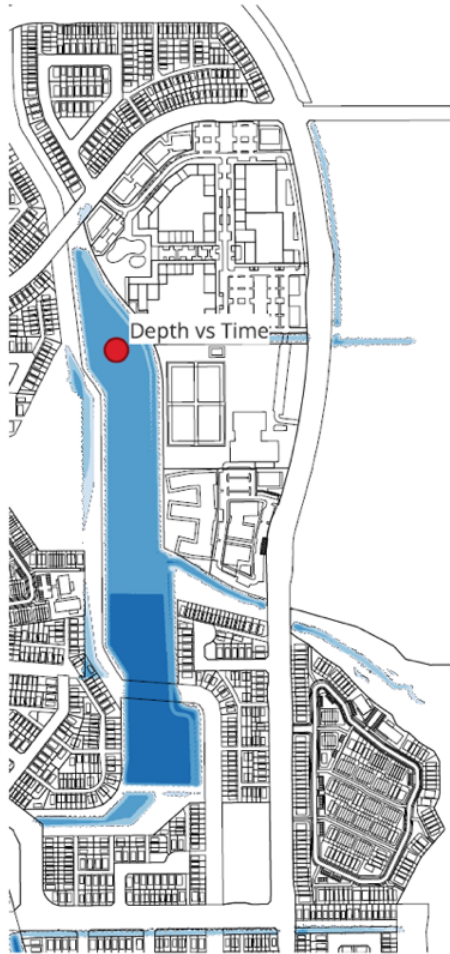
The updated open space strategy provided by the applicant does in fact provide 3 additional 0.1ha neighbourhood parks in line with the proposed distribution plan provided by Council. The updated open space strategy provides 4 neighbourhood parks within the residential neighbourhoods to provide greater accessibility to flood-free play for residents and that comfortably provide for all of the functional amenity required of a neighbourhood park, specifically that they include a level, unobstructed grass space for informal games of at least 20m x 20m in parks less than 0.3ha in size.

The updated open space strategy provided by the applicant included:

- **Open Space Distribution Plan** that responds to Council's suggestions to include additional neighbourhood parks, and improve the park distribution.
- **Open Space Areas Plan** which highlights the 53Ha of blue/green networks totalling ~21% of the Sunfield site area.
- **Open Space Flooding 10 Year Event Plan** which show a revised park layout that responds more resiliently to the 10 year flood event.

Ms Mein states that *'The extent of open space offered by the applicant is approximately what would be required for a development of this quantum of dwellings. However, much of this is within the centralised stormwater park or lands set aside for wetlands. This land will support passive recreation, but is likely to be flood prone and unusable for active recreational requirements for much of the year.'* We strongly disagree with this statement. This central open space will be flood free for the majority of the time providing a range of passive recreation and open space opportunities throughout the year. Refer to the flood modelling snapshot below which shows that the majority of this central open space will have drained to less than 100mm depth within ~32 hours of a 2 year flood event. This demonstrates that for the vast majority of the time the reserve will be unrestricted and fully available for open space activities.

Flood Depth Inundation Time for 2yr and 10yr with Climate Change



There are a number of examples in Auckland of dual-use recreation and stormwater management reserves that operate successfully in a similar way with proven success in recent extreme storm events.

Lisa Mein concludes by saying that *'Given the nature of Auckland Council's commentary and the lack of comprehensive response to it, I consider the proposed open space strategy is not appropriate for the development and not likely to be adequate to meet the formal recreational needs of the proposed resident population at Sunfield.'*

Again, we strongly disagree with this statement. The open space strategy (including the updated provision of additional neighbourhood parks) for Sunfield provides for ~53ha of open space as a comprehensive and connected network that includes both active and passive recreation opportunities and enables positive outcomes for connectivity, resilience, ecology, and biodiversity. Active sports grounds, neighbourhood parks, and play spaces providing neighbourhood park functions are all outside of the 10yr flood events and highly accessible to residents. Those open spaces performing a dual stormwater management function are designed to respond effectively in major storm events but will be available for passive recreation for the vast majority of the year.

4.2 Residential Lot Access to Open Space

We agree with Ms Mein that some open space interfaces may benefit from direct lot access. These edge conditions should be resolved with Council Parks at the EPA stage, ensuring an appropriate mix of:

- good passive surveillance but with no direct access
- direct access
- protected vegetation edges with potentially limited passive surveillance

5. Town Centre Location

5.1 Appropriateness of Location

- The town centre is located at a clear and legible intersection of the realigned Hamlin Road and Sunfield Loop (noting that both roads have been designed to accommodate public transport services).
- Ms Mein acknowledges this location “*makes sense*” within the context of a masterplanned community (refer to section 2.3).
- Relocating the centre further west or south would reduce co-location benefits with:
 - the neighbourhood park
 - the adjacent employment precinct
 - nearby residential neighbourhoods
 - the healthcare hub
- The **Ardmore Airport designation and associated noise contours** prevent residential development in this area, reinforcing the suitability of the selected location (refer *Concept Masterplan Report*, p.69; acknowledged by Ms Mein in section 2.3).

6. JOAL Network: Safety and Function

Ms Mein’s concern about the safety and access of the JOAL network does not specify enough information for us to respond to. However, we believe that the supplementary neighbourhood study drawings for each Neighbourhoods demonstrate how the laneway networks provide for:

- vehicle access and servicing,
- parking and micro pocket parks, and
- doorstep play and landscape amenity.

We note that a CPTED review has been undertaken across all neighbourhoods.

We agree with Ms Mein’s statement regarding the good outcomes being achieved in terms of the edge condition design:

“Edge conditions have been considered within the application material, with edge condition controls included within the design controls for residential precincts. The relationship to streets and laneways appears appropriate from an urban design perspective and will enable a high degree of connectivity and passive surveillance.”

7. Lot Access via Swale Network

Additional clarification from Ms Mein is required to understand the basis for this concern “*that several lots in a number of the neighbourhoods, require crossing swales to access the lots, which could cause*

issues in a development of this intensity.” We do not see this as an issue as the design of these crossing points has been completed as per the Auckland Council Engineering Code of Practice.

8. Town Centre Layout

Ms Mein notes that the town centre could appear “mall like” but also that “the design controls are well-considered and will create human-scaled and attractive streets.”

We reaffirm that the town centre design incorporates good urban design principles, specifically

- highly walkable permeability,
 - large-format retail sleeved with active uses,
 - mixed-use two storey buildings along the northern Road 6 (being the realigned Hamlin Road) frontage,
 - diversity of tenant offerings, and
 - a scale appropriate for Sunfield’s catchment.
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9. Conclusion

The issues raised in Ms Mein’s peer review have been carefully reviewed, and we believe are already addressed within the Sunfield masterplan or within the information submitted as part of the Sunfield Fast-track application. Ms Mein makes several statements which we fundamentally disagree with and/or are incorrect:

- that car-less case-studies are not applicable to greenfield developments,
- that Sunfield is rural,
- that the Centralised Stormwater Park is unusable for active recreation for much of the year,
- that Sunfield has poor connections to rapid transit.