Moths and Butterflies of New Zealand Trust
Pūrerehua Aotearoa

SUBMISSION TO

Wellington City Council

ON THE

Proposed District Plan
Hearing Stream 4

May 2023

Prepared by Jacqui Knight
on behalf of the
Moths and Butterflies of New Zealand Trust

This is a submission from the Moths and Butterflies of New Zealand Trust to the Wellington City Council in support of the application from Halfway House about the potential impact of reduced light and airflow on the boundary of their heritage garden.

HISTORY OF OUR ORGANISATION

1. The Moths and Butterflies of New Zealand Trust is a charitable trust established with the vision that NZ's ecosystems support thriving moth and butterfly populations. Our mission is to engage with New Zealanders to ensure our biodiversity promotes a thriving moth and butterfly population. A national organisation, we are based in Auckland.

2. We are the only organisation 'speaking up' for NZ's Lepidoptera. working with entomologists and organisations such as DOC, Forest & Bird, and local government to ensure the latest information is available for New Zealanders. We encourage environmental education with resources for schools/ teachers, public speaking, displays and exhibitions. Our website is recognised as an excellent resource, as is our social media presence.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BUTTERFLIES AND MOTHS

7. Butterflies, especially the monarch, are indicators of the health of our environment. While dragonflies, bees or spiders are overlooked in our gardens, Lepidoptera are much more noticeable with their large, colourful wings – and their absence noted too. When MBNZT engages with the public at exhibitions and displays we frequently hear comments as to how people remember butterflies from their childhood that are not seen today. NZ's red admiral and the blue butterflies.

8. Like everything in the natural world, insects are part of the food chain and a very important source of protein and minerals for our birdlife. By encouraging butterflies into our gardens and habitats we are providing more variety in our wild birds' diets.

9. Lepidoptera and other insects are frequently overlooked in gardening and planning wild spaces today. Butterflies, for example, don't just need host plants but shelter and nectar plants for their survival. The most successful of flowering plants are the older varieties, ones that have not been changed by human intervention. Since the 1950s botanists and plant geneticists have altered plants to delight humans, with a consequent loss of nectar to please our pollinators. The Heritage Gardeners have developed the garden with plants that were in New Zealand before 1900.

10. Butterflies are a part of the great outdoors: butterflies basking in the morning sun, fluttering brightly over a stream in the bush or probing garden flowers for nectar. Butterflies offer a colourful and exciting introduction to the intricacies of nature for children. With their large, bright wings and lazy flight they are easy to see, exhibiting interesting behaviours and activity on warm and sunny days.

11. Butterflies need shelter from the wind, and sunlight (light and warmth) for them to fly. Typically, butterflies only feed in full sun, and when they are cold, they cannot fly. Their nectar plants need full sunshine for their flowers to develop and produce enough nectar. In a shady garden the dynamics of the ecology will change.

12. In New Zealand over 90% of our butterflies and moths are endemic: they are found nowhere else in the world. Our butterflies and moths need old-fashioned, true to type plants which provide food (leaves) for their larvae, or nectar from their flowers.

CERTIFICATION

13. One of the MBNZT's key projects is the certification of gardens or habitats that demonstrate that they are key habitats for NZ's indigenous butterflies and moths. We have to date accredited 21 gardens throughout NZ, with Halfway House at Glenside (2021) being a prime example.

14. Certificated gardens (or habitats) have host plants for at least three different species, nectar plants flowering throughout the year, evergreen shelter, natural controls for butterfly/moth predators, parasites and diseases, and appropriate signage to encourage more planting for pollinators.

15. The Heritage Gardeners began the design and planting of their grounds in 2015 with assistance and much of the funding from the Wellington City Council. The plan was to provide plantings appropriate for the era of the building. The group undertook considerable research into NZ heritage garden plants and styles.

16. With regards to butterflies and moths, the unique microclimate and vegetation has been designed to attract NZ species. For example, when inspecting the habitat, William Brockelsby, DOC entomologist, was particularly impressed with the mix of plants in the riparian and marginal borders which were good hosts for NZ Lepidoptera. Any increase in shade and accordingly loss of nectar and larval food sources will potentially contribute to the loss of our NZ moths and butterflies.

EFFECTS OF DISTRICT PLAN

17. The Draft District Plan proposes 15 m height (three to five storeys) along the boundary of the Halfway House Historic Reserve. With the proposed changes there will be very little afternoon sun. Consequently, the flower gardens will receive too much shade, creating damp and cool conditions, not suited to the plants which have been planted there since 2015.

18. The proposed heights also conflict with the legal protections for heritage. Section 6(f) of the Resources Management Act identifies "the protection of historic heritage from inappropriate subdivision, use and development" as a matter of national importance.

19. Loss of individual trees, particularly along the boundary, will reduce the privacy of existing houses, and the amenity value of character. In a 2006 review written for WCC of the social and environmental effects of infill development, Anna Bray Sharpin commented "Over a broader area, the effects of the loss (of established trees and vegetation) can accumulate, as important parts of the area's ecology are lost, and wildlife corridors dislocated, affecting birdlife and seed distribution."

OUR RECOMMENDATION

20. Development adjoining the Glenside Reserve in the District Plan should comply with the WCC Heritage Design Guide.

21. To protect the butterfly and moth habitat at the Glenside Reserve it is recommended that single-storey dwellings be built on the boundary adjoining the historic property. Any second storey should have a recessed plane so that it is set back from the boundary, and that the maximum height be 6 metres.

22. We thank you for accepting our submission and trust that it is helpful in your deliberations. We would welcome an opportunity to speak to the panel and further explain our submission at the appropriate time. Please keep me informed.

Jacqui Knight, Secretary 1 June 2023