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The Evolution of a State-funded Subdivision –

A Case Study: Aranui and Wainoni

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of the requirements for the Degree of
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Felicity Boyd

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by

Felicity Boyd

It is no secret that there is a problem with the suburb of Aranui. Developed in the 1950s, Aranui and neighbouring Wainoni are an example of the large-scale, state-funded subdivisions of the time, yet, unlike similar developments in the North Island, they have received little to no attention from researchers. In light of the recent Canterbury earthquakes, this dissertation aims to trace the evolution of these suburbs until the 1970s and act as the first stage of a more comprehensive review of state housing and the Aranui/Wainoni area. By critically reviewing existing literature on state housing and housing policy in New Zealand, as well as undertaking archival research, this dissertation addresses the international influences on state housing in New Zealand generally and the development of the Aranui and Wainoni area more specifically in order to provide a foundation for answering the question, "What went so wrong?"

Keywords: Aranui, Wainoni, state housing, planning, New Zealand history
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Chapter 1
Introduction

A search of internet-based social media (Appendix 1) highlights what most Christchurch residents already know: there is a problem with the suburb of Aranui. Aranui and the neighbouring suburb of Wainoni, located on the eastern side of Christchurch, were developed simultaneously during the mid-twentieth century by the New Zealand Government as part of a national state housing scheme. Since then, the area has become increasingly deprived, “materially, socially, culturally and spiritually” (Scanlon, 2000, p. 1). In 2000, the situation in Aranui was sufficiently deplorable to merit attention from central government in the form of the Aranui Community Renewal Project, the first scheme of its kind in New Zealand that aimed to address the issues present in Aranui (Ministry for the Environment, 2011). In a national study of well-being entitled Degrees of Deprivation in New Zealand undertaken in 2000, Aranui was one of three suburbs in Christchurch ranked at the bottom of a national scale of deprivation (Crampton, Salmond, Kirkpatrick, Scarborough, & Skelly, 2000).

With Housing New Zealand announcing recently that more than a thousand new state houses would be built in the Auckland region, it is timely to revisit unpopular state housing areas such as Aranui and Wainoni in more depth than has been awarded in the past. This is particularly important in Christchurch following the devastating series of earthquakes, particularly the February 22 earthquake. Although the land in Aranui and Wainoni has been largely zoned ‘green’ (suitable for rebuilding), there has been significant damage to houses and services infrastructure in the area. There will undoubtedly be changes to the physical structure of Aranui and Wainoni. In order to avoid the pitfalls of the past, it is imperative that these areas are critically examined now before the rebuilding process begins.

While answering questions about the state of affairs in Aranui and Wainoni is largely outside the scope of this dissertation, it is hoped that through critical examination of existing literature and a consolidation of fragmented materials on the development
of the area a foundation can be laid for further analysis. While the relatively few previous studies on state housing have tended to focus upon housing forms and styles and sociological factors, this dissertation seeks to address these aspects as well as an environment, but not solely geographic, dimension in understanding why Aranui and Wainoni have fared so poorly as liveable environments. Seen as experiments in town planning, the evolution of state-funded subdivisions such as Aranui and Wainoni can inform future development. To provide a suitable context for the discussion of Aranui and Wainoni area, a discussion of housing policies in the twentieth century in Great Britain and the United States will begin this dissertation. Following this, a more detailed examination of the existing literature surrounding the New Zealand situation in the twentieth century will be provided, addressing housing policy as well as the social and political contexts. As is considered the orthodox approach in such case studies, Naenae, an example of one of the larger, more widely recognised and researched state-funded subdivisions, will be discussed in order to provide a point of comparison. To begin the examination of Aranui and Wainoni, a brief history of the area and the details surrounding the purchase of land for the subdivision will first be provided, followed by the development of the area throughout the 1950s and 1960s as well as a discussion of the various design aspects of the area, including the shopping centre and the construction of multi-units and duplexes. The issues of multi-units and duplexes, and problems with landscaping are outlined to reflect the early dissatisfaction with Aranui and Wainoni. To conclude, I will suggest a number of reasons for the unpopularity of Aranui and Wainoni based on the discussions in chapter five. I will also suggest two areas which require further research: the influence of American thinking on New Zealand planning, and the evolution of Aranui and Wainoni beyond 1970.

1.1 Rationale for the Research

The importance of the twentieth century state housing programme to the development of New Zealand society is well-established in social histories of the country. Social histories, such as Schrader’s (2005) We Call it Home and Ferguson’s (1994) Building the New Zealand Dream, provide accurate and well-written accounts of the development of the state housing programme from the early twentieth
century. While these are informative accounts, there is a distinct lack of discussion regarding the planning of state-housing areas. A number of state housing areas around New Zealand have been studied by academics, including the Sheriff Block in Gisborne (McCallum, 1975) and Naenae (Schrader, 1993b). This dissertation seeks to follow a similar approach to that of McCallum and Schrader by undertaking a preliminary investigation into the evolution of Aranui and Wainoni until 1970, an area which has been largely neglected by academic research.

1.2 Research Aim

At the present time, information regarding the planning and development history of the Aranui and Wainoni area is fragmented and is distributed throughout a range of archives and libraries across the country. This research, first and foremost, aims to bring this information together into one consolidated resource. It is hoped that this consolidation will provide a framework for further analysis in this area in the future. Explanations for the area’s grim reputation cannot begin to be discussed without first understanding how and why the area was planned and developed.

1.3 Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are:

- To critically examine the existing literature on state housing during the twentieth century.
- To describe and explain the development and evolution of the state-funded subdivision of the Aranui and Wainoni area.
- To discuss this evolution in the context of the broader State housing history during the twentieth century.
- To consolidate existing material on Aranui and Wainoni in order to provide a foundation for further analysis.
1.4 Methodology

This research is of an investigative nature and primarily aims to draw together information which is currently fragmented and widely distributed through a range of various sources. As such, and considering the historical nature of the topic, the research methods undertaken will consist of a review of historical and archived material in both Christchurch and Wellington. In order to explore international and New Zealand housing policy as well as the broader social and political context of New Zealand during the twentieth century, a review of existing literature will be undertaken. The development of Naenae during the 1940s and 1950s has been well-researched, particularly by historian Ben Schrader (1993a; 1996). To provide a comparative study, an overview of the Naenae development will be provided.

Undertaking primary research by way of interviews with local and head office planning staff associated was considered as an additional method of gathering information. However, there were a number of reasons for choosing not to pursue this particular method. Primarily, the process of planning and developing of state housing and state subdivisions is largely an “unauthored” function of government, making it difficult to trace key decision-makers or sources for ideas beyond the well-documented first phase of the 1930s and 1940s, before Aranui and Wainoni were developed. Any relevant staff who were able to be identified would be likely well into their retirements, if not deceased. The limitations inherent in the dissertation scale of research meant that this method was not considered practicable.

1.5 Limitations

The most significant limitation faced during this research was the aftermath of the Canterbury earthquakes, particularly the devastating event which occurred on 22 February 2011. As all of my immediate family are located within the Eastern suburbs of Christchurch, and most suffered significant damage to their homes and basic services, the aftermath of the earthquake provided personally trying circumstances within which to conduct research.

The Lincoln campus was closed for the first two weeks of the university year, shortening the timeframe for this research. Additionally, a number of important
resources closed for longer periods following the earthquake. The Christchurch office of Archives New Zealand, where most of the archival material relating to the development of Aranui and Wainoni is held, closed following the February 22 earthquake and only reopened with limited access from August 22. Gaining access to archival material remains a difficult process and, as a result, the financial cost of requesting archival material has risen significantly. I was fortunate that my supervisor, Dr Roy Montgomery, had previously visited and photographed many of the relevant archived files which make up the bulk of this research, however being unable to fully utilise the Christchurch office was a considerable limitation to the depth and breadth of this research.

The closures of and resultant limited access to the libraries at the University of Canterbury restricted my access to relevant literature, requiring reliance on the (sometimes lengthy) interloan process. Additionally, the closure of the Christchurch City Council central library (which, as of 5 November 2011, has still yet to reopen due to its location within the red zone) had similar effects on my research.
Chapter 2
International Housing Policy

2.1 Introduction

Development of urban areas and planning in New Zealand occurred within a wider international context. Particularly in the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, countries around the world were reacting to the effects of industrialisation, the Great Depression and two World Wars. This resulted in a trend in Western states towards provision for public (or social) housing. New Zealand was influenced by ideas from a range of countries, however existing literature suggests that the strongest influences during this period were Great Britain and the United States of America (Miller, 2002; Cameron, 1970; Schrader, 1993). This chapter outlines the development of public housing in the United States and Great Britain during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries until 1950.

2.2 Public Housing in Britain

2.2.1 Slums and Garden Cities

As a result of industrialisation, urban areas in Britain became increasing overcrowded and unsanitary in the nineteenth century. Rural residents moved to cities in search of employment at such rates that the infrastructure of cities could not keep up, leading to squalid living conditions and the development of slum areas. Growing concern about public health issues within urban areas led to the formal beginning of a town planning profession in Britain (Miller, 2002). Additionally, the issues surrounding inner-city slums brought health and housing issues to the centre of social and political thinking at the time (Shapely, 2008).

One notable response to the urban ills of British cities came from Ebenezer Howard in the late nineteenth century. Howard’s publication *Tomorrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* (1898) influenced professionals involved in urban design and management world-wide. Howard’s solution to poor living conditions was to combine the benefits of rural living with the benefits of urban living in Garden Cities.
Collective ownership would ensure that growth of communities was orderly, and profits from rentals would be used to finance the city’s infrastructure and welfare services (Schrader, 1993a). The first Garden City was built at Letchworth in 1903, however the development failed to meet designers’ expectations (Schrader, 1993a). The designers of Letchworth, Raymond Unwin and Barry Parker, were also involved in smaller-scale versions of Garden Cities, known as Garden Suburbs (Schrader, 1993a). While the reality of Garden Cities never matched what the idea proposed in theory, the influence of these ideas was so great that, at the start of the twentieth century, urban planning was largely synonymous with Garden Cities in the Western world and the principles of Howard’s theory contributed to the planning and design of urban areas throughout the world.

2.2.2 World Wars and Local Authorities 1920-1945

From 1890, British local authorities were increasingly granted greater powers to remove slum areas in cities and to refurbish or completely replace existing older homes (Shapely, 2008). Local authorities around the country undertook small housing development projects in the early twentieth century, but a more focused, comprehensive approach was not established until 1919 with the introduction of the Housing and Town Planning Act. With the return of servicemen after World War I, demand for housing increased rapidly throughout Britain. The 1919 Act established the construction of subsidised, low-cost housing as a national responsibility (United Kingdom Parliament, 2011). Through the Act, local authorities were responsible for developing rental housing accommodation for working-class people. The Act contained high targets for new houses to be constructed which ultimately proved too high, prompting review of housing policies in the 1920s (Shapely, 2008).

In response to acute housing shortages in the post-war years, the Housing Act 1924 allowed for substantial grants to local authorities to assist in housing development (United Kingdom Parliament, 2011). The housing responsibilities of local authorities, supported financially by central government, continued to grow throughout the 1920s. While new housing areas outside the traditional boundaries of British towns provided some housing relief for the working classes, slums remained an issue of
concern in the 1920s (Shapely, 2008). In order to address the growing problem of inner-city slums, the Housing Act 1930 was passed which required local authorities to clear slum areas (United Kingdom Parliament, 2011). This Act contributed to more slum clearance than had ever previously occurred, while also providing for construction of more new housing (United Kingdom Parliament, 2011).

During the 1930s, the focus of both central government and local authorities was on clearing slum areas in order to improve the quality of British urban areas, and providing public housing for working class citizens. As a result of the Acts of the 1920s and 1930s, by 1935 an estimated 580,000 houses had been built yet demand continued to grow (Shapely, 2008). By 1939, the Housing Act 1930 had contributed to the clearing of an estimated 245,000 houses around Britain, however predictions suggested a further 472,000 still urgently required demolition (Shapely, 2008). Both the clearance of slums and the building of new houses meant that the physical fabric of Britain’s urban areas underwent significant change in the inter-war years. Social surveys carried out in the inter-war years showed that new houses were far superior in quality to older dwellings and the cottage design adopted by local authorities was popular with tenants (Shapely, 2008). Perhaps most significantly, tenants were no longer at the mercy of private landlords, known for exploitative management practices (Shapely, 2008). Through the construction and tenanting of new houses built by local authorities, tenants gained higher living standards and basic rights (Shapely, 2008).

Housing construction slowed considerably in the early 1940s with the beginning of World War II in 1939. During World War II, housing policy continued to be discussed by central government and came to include provision for a very large building programme which would contribute to the replacement of older dwellings in cities as well as providing employment for returning servicemen (Malpass, 2004). Housing policy in this period outlined that while early stages would rely on construction of houses by local authorities, over time this would return to pre-war patterns of private enterprise constructing the majority of houses (Malpass, 2004). This approach to housing policy was founded on the view that public housing would underpin the housing market rather than compete with it by providing a residual
service (Malpass, 2004). In practice, this resulted in a strong focus on local authorities providing the majority of new houses for a far longer period than was predicted during the war years (Malpass, 2004).

2.2.3 Post-war Redevelopment from 1945

Despite the nationalisation of industries such as rail and road transport and steel production, housing was left largely to the private rental sector and large house construction companies (Malpass, 2004). The post-war housing programme focused on the state nursing the construction industry through the difficult years immediately following the conclusion of the war (Malpass, 2004). One of the most considerable problems facing the government at this time was bomb damage as a result of the war. Additionally, the prevalence of slums in cities remained an issue of concern, but materials and labour were in short supply (Shapely, 2008). One method for moving people out of slums and into higher quality, local authority-built housing came in the form of the New Towns Act 1946. The Act introduced a new form of planned community: New Towns, discussed further below in section 2.3.4.

In 1951 the Conservative Government took office and announced a target of building 300,000 houses per year with a clear emphasis on increasing the capacity of the private construction sector (Shapely, 2008). Figures for local authority-built housing construction reached their peak in 1953 before beginning to decline (Malpass, 2004). Local authorities were advised in 1954 to refocus on slum clearance and subsidies for newly finished houses constructed by local authorities were reduced by 17.4%, despite continuing inflation and rising costs in building materials (Malpass, 2004).

The government’s desire to push housing construction back into the private sector was realised as the 1950s progressed. By 1959 the number of houses built by local authorities had dropped from 78 per cent to 43 per cent of the total number of houses built (Malpass, 2004). The changes to housing policy in 1954 resulted in housing moving from a predominantly state-funded model to a more market-based system. Although at a reduced level in comparison to the post-war years, local authorities continued to construct a significant amount of houses throughout the late 1950s and 1960s. Local authorities directed their efforts into slum clearance, an
approach that was emphasised by central government in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

As Minister for Housing and Local Government in the early 1960s, Keith Joseph amended the existing subsidy scheme to encourage local authorities to implement higher density forms of housing including tower blocks, maisonettes and multi-deck access flats (Shapely, 2008). These were encouraged largely as they were seen to be quick and cost-effective solutions to the decay in inner-city areas, however this change was not welcomed by tenants. While some local authorities such as Liverpool and London had a long history of building higher density dwellings, others were “decidedly cool to the new concrete developments” and continued to prefer traditional cottages (Shapely, 2008). Between 1955 and 1975 an estimated 440,000 higher density flats were built, predominantly in urban areas and tenanted by former residents of slum clearance areas (Shapely, 2008). Poor construction plagued the development of such blocks, with a number of expensive and dangerous faults with buildings emerging in the mid-1960s. The low quality of workmanship and well-publicised faults with such buildings continued to plague local authorities during the rest of the twentieth century.

2.2.4 New Towns

Following World War II, local authorities had difficulty with land availability and the associated high prices of land, particularly within existing urban areas (Shapely, 2008). At the same time, local authorities needed to move large numbers of people out of slum areas in order to clear these. The New Towns Act 1946 proposed a method of undertaking large-scale developments for housing: New Towns. The Act allowed the government to designate large areas of land for housing and set up government-funded bodies to oversee the development of the towns, of which there came to be nearly thirty around Britain (Malpass, 2004). The New Towns were an extension of Howard’s Garden City idea and focused on developing land outside traditional urban borders for large numbers of people relocated out of slums (Shapely, 2008). The developments were intended to be self-contained societies and
to provide an alternative to piecemeal suburban development on the fringes of urban areas.

There are three distinct phases of New Towns. The first phase, between 1946 and 1950 reflected Howard’s garden City principles and split areas of residential development into neighbourhood units to promote community spirit (Cullingworth & Nadin, 2006). The second phase, from the late 1950s to the early 1960s, abandoned the neighbourhood unit concept and focused largely on incorporating vehicles into the planning of the areas (Cullingworth & Nadin, 2006). The final phase occurred in the late 1960s and was focused predominantly on allowing for increased growth as a result of the rapid expansion of suburban areas (Cullingworth & Nadin, 2006). With changes in the political agenda, and the resolution of the housing crises, New Towns, and public housing more generally, received significantly less attention from governments from the 1970s.

2.3 Public Housing in the United States of America

2.3.1 Houses for War Workers

Similarly to Great Britain, poverty and poor standards of living were issues of considerable concern for the government in the United States at the end of the nineteenth century (Schrader, 1993b). Despite the deteriorating conditions of many inner-city areas, it was not until after World War I that these issues began to be addressed by the government. At the conclusion of the war the United States faced a significant housing shortage. The economy of the time posed a significant problem for those wishing to purchase or rent houses, with booms and collapses occurring in the real estate market and high residential mortgage debts (Wright, 1981).

Herbert Hoover, Secretary of Commerce, first began coordinating a programme to address the housing shortage and the weakness of the construction industry in 1920 (Wright, 1981). When he entered office the following year, this programme became government policy and the Division of Building and Housing was established (Wright, 1981). The focus of the government was primarily in stimulating the construction industry by supporting mass production and year-round construction. Additionally, the Department of Labour promoted home ownership through the sale of federally-
funded houses to war workers (Wright, 1981). As a result, the government began to undertake development of subdivisions at low to moderate cost (Wright, 1981). Perhaps due to the availability of land in the United States, the focus of the government was the provision of detached, single unit dwellings for families.

2.3.2 Slum Clearance

By the 1930s, federal government was responsible for a significant portion of housing in the United States. In the process, the government had strengthened the construction industry and endorsed home-financing institutions through their housing policy (Wright, 1981). Upon coming into office in 1933, President Franklin Roosevelt cautiously supported federal programmes to clear slums and build houses in both cities and in the countryside (Wright, 1981). The Public Works Administration (PWA) was established in 1933 and directed to undertake slum clearance and construction of low-rent public housing in cities. The PWA began these activities within the year, and by 1938 was responsible for clearing over 10,000 substandard houses and building an estimated 22,000 new housing units (Wright, 1981).

States and municipalities, in addition to the federal government, also had the right to purchase and clear substandard properties. PWA officials set up local housing authorities that were in charge of deciding where public housing should be located and who should gain access to such housing (Wright, 1981). Although it was intended that construction be of low-rent public housing, PWA housing in practice was aimed towards the so-called ‘deserving poor’ – people with steady, moderate incomes who had been negatively impacted by the Great Depression (Wright, 1981). Despite the focus on clearing slum areas, there was no requirement that people displaced by slum clearance were housed in PWA housing and, in fact, most could not have afforded the PWA rents (Jackson, 1985). This led to large displacement of residents as increasing numbers of slums were cleared. The PWA developments received considerable criticism, largely from groups who viewed the government’s involvement in housing provision as hurting private construction companies. Criticisms were also levelled at the design of PWA housing. Houses were built to a
very high standard, higher than most private housing, which led to claims that public housing was so appealing that the desire of Americans to purchase their own homes was diminishing (Wright, 1981).

2.3.3 The Move to Higher Density

In 1934 the National Housing Act was passed which set up a public housing programme as well as a new agency, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) to stimulate the private market (Jackson, 1985). With the outbreak of World War II, housing construction budgets were redirected towards providing dwellings for defence workers and their families (Wright, 1981). With around ten million Americans discharged from the armed forces following the conclusion of the war in 1945, housing quickly became scarce (Wright, 1981). As a result, the Housing Act 1949 was passed which contained a range of provisions to address the housing shortages including federal financing of slum clearance and increasing federal financing for the purpose of building over 800,000 public housing units (Jackson, 1985). The Act included provision for the construction of higher density apartment blocks, however construction was quickly criticised for being ‘shoddy’ and, in some cases, dangerous (Wright, 1981). At the end of the 1940s, building firm Levitt and Sons began to build planned communities named Levittown in various locations around New York and Illinois, discussed further in section 2.3.2.

Despite regulations stating public housing was intended for the very poor, public housing authorities exercised considerable discretion in tenanting dwellings in the 1940s, favouring traditional nuclear families (Wright, 1981). In the 1950s the quality of public housing began to decline, with room sizes decreased and densities increased (Wright, 1981). Former minimum standards became new maximum standards (Jackson, 1985). With large numbers of poor Americans left in difficult circumstances due to the clearing of slums, public housing in the 1950s began to change from providing high quality suburban housing for families on moderate incomes to providing low-cost urban housing (largely in high density dwellings) to the poor (Schrader, 2006). Standardisation led to the construction of high density, monotonous public housing with an institutional appearance (Wright, 1981). As
black Americans, disproportionately represented in poor communities, began to move into public housing areas, white Americans moved out (Schrader, 2006). The status of public housing fell, particularly among middle and working class Americans, who favoured private construction of houses, and homeownership over rental accommodation (Schrader, 2006). As the stigma of public housing areas grew and the quality of the construction fell in the 1950s, public housing areas began to resemble the slums of earlier years.

2.3.4 Criticisms of Public Housing

Public housing areas were widely criticised in the 1960s for the standards of living apparent in the areas. As a result, the government undertook a number of investigations into urban conditions and housing problems. The National Commission on Urban Problems labelled public housing as inadequate and anti-community, and blamed the development of high density apartment blocks and towers (Wright, 1981). This report, among others from the government, recommended a return to larger units, a decrease in densities and a policy of ‘scattering’ public housing to assist integration between subsidised and non-subsidised residents (Wright, 1981). Political issues such as tenant selection and management were notably absent from such reports. By the conclusion of the 1960s, public housing areas had attracted a negative stigma that seemed insurmountable.

2.3.5 Levittown

Levitt and Sons became the most well-known building company in the post-war years (Wright, 1981). Throughout the 1930s, Abraham Levitt and his sons, William and Alfred, developed their methods of construction so that they were able to build large numbers of houses on far shorter timeframes than traditional construction allowed. In 1941, Levitt and Sons was granted a government contract to construct 2,350 war workers’ homes in Virginia (Jackson, 1985). The contract was a learning curve for the builders who, over the construction period, developed methods for laying dozens of concrete foundations per day and preassembling walls and roofs
(Jackson, 1985). Levitt and Sons received further contracts during the mid-1940s which allowed them to fine tune their construction techniques.

In 1947 the company purchased 4,000 acres (1,618 hectares) of land outside New York which became the site of the first Levittown (Jackson, 1985). The method of construction practiced reflected Fordist principles: the builders developed a 27 step procedure, and crews of workers were trained to do one specific job to increase efficiency and lower the number of highly skilled workers required (Jackson, 1985). At the peak of production, more than thirty houses were constructed per day (Jackson, 1985). Levittown came to accommodate 17,400 houses and 82,000 residents and was the largest housing development to have ever been constructed by one building company (Jackson, 1985). Further Levittowns were built in Philadelphia and New Jersey and were hugely successful with house buyers. These extremely large developments were made possible financially through mortgage insurance from the FHA (Jackson, 1985). Reflecting Garden City principles, Levittowns included curvilinear roading layouts, peripheral thoroughfares for traffic, reserve areas, recreation facilities, and shopping areas (Jackson, 1985). Landscaping included gardens, grassed areas, shrubs and around 40,000 fruit trees (Wright, 1981). Builders around the country adopted the methods of Levitt and Sons, while Americans rushed to purchase houses within Levittown developments.

2.4 Summary

British and American housing policy was influenced by a number of events of international significance, namely World War I, the Great Depression and World War II. Public housing became a concern of both governments as a result of the post-war housing crises and the perceived need for slum clearance due to the deterioration in inner-city living conditions. Early housing policy provided a point of difference between the governments. The British government focused on providing housing for the urban poor, however in the United States early schemes were directed towards moderate-income families affected by the Depression. While British public housing was delegated to local authorities which were guided by national policy, in the United States the federal government became directly involved through the PWA,
FHA and the creation of public housing authorities. In both cases, the demand for public housing led to the development of large areas of land for planning housing communities. In Great Britain, New Towns located outside traditional urban areas provided a solution to the land availability and cost concerns of local authorities. In the United States, firms such as Levitt and Sons took advantage of government financing programmes in order to construct large-scale planned communities. As a result of growing demand, both governments began to move away from construction of traditional single-unit dwellings to higher density buildings such as apartment blocks and towers during the 1950s. By the 1960s, higher density areas had become the subject of widespread criticism and public housing more generally became the subject of negative perceptions which proved difficult to displace in the proceeding decades.
Chapter 3
New Zealand Housing Policies: An Historical Overview

3.1 Introduction

State housing in New Zealand is often considered to have its beginnings in the 1930s with the First Labour Government. While this period was clearly very significant, the origins of state housing and housing policies more generally in New Zealand date back to the late nineteenth century. This chapter seeks to provide a historical overview of housing policy in New Zealand from the late nineteenth century until 1970, including the changing social, political and environmental contexts.

3.2 The Lead-up to State Housing

With the arrival of European settlers in the nineteenth century came plans for New Zealand’s urban areas, many based on existing British towns and cities. Although the extent to which these plans were adhered to varies throughout the country, there is no question that British-based urban planning arrived in New Zealand along with Edward Gibbon Wakefield and the New Zealand Company. Despite these promising beginnings, urban planning was largely overshadowed by a focus on land-use and rural areas. New Zealand was considered a “rually derived and rooted society” which relied heavily on agriculture to support the country’s economy (Miller, 2002b, p. 447). A free market approach to city building, wide-spread urban land speculation and a lack of regulation of building activities meant that the development of urban areas was often undertaken in a laissez-faire manner (Schrader, 2005).

With only roads and railway construction administered by the Immigration and Public Works Department, and little provision for services such as rubbish removal and effluent treatment, urban areas became hot spots for diseases such as typhoid and scarlet fever (Schrader, 2005). Particularly in city centres, these urban areas became home to the ‘urban underclass’ – largely criminals and the poor. Growing concern about these ‘urban ills’ coupled with the perseverance of a small number of
town planning enthusiasts meant that a more comprehensive, urban-focused form of planning began to receive attention at the beginning of the twentieth century.

3.3 The First State Houses 1891-1934

3.3.1 The Workers’ Dwellings Act 1905

The First Liberal Government came into office in 1891. This instigated a change in the state’s approach to the economy away from laissez-faire towards more pragmatic intervention by the state. The First Liberal Government, influenced by the expressed importance of the countryside to New Zealanders, favoured rural resettlement – sending unwanted urban workers back to the country – as a method of dealing with urban problems. However they acknowledged that this would not be possible in every situation and compromised by promoting the suburban allotment (Schrader, 2005). Despite the promotion of the country as an idyllic paradise in comparison to the ills of the city, workers were reluctant to move beyond the boundaries of the city. Additionally, no improvements were being made to inner-city areas. It soon became apparent that simply providing land for workers was not enough – the state must also supply homes.

3.3.2 Housing Design

After visiting local council-built workers’ housing in London and Glasgow in the late 1890s, Prime Minister Richard Seddon returned to New Zealand with a vision of an affordable, freehold house for New Zealand workers (Fill, 1984). The introduction of the Workers’ Dwellings Bill 1905 made the Liberals the first Western government to build houses for citizens, and set the scene for years to come in New Zealand. A competition was held in order to attract the best possible designs for the new workers’ dwellings. One hundred and fifty entries were received from architects, with designs varying according to location (Ashford, 1994). Seddon believed that by providing architecturally designed, high quality housing, urban areas would become more aesthetically pleasing, which would in turn improve the health of workers (Fill, 1984). Most of the submitted designs followed one of the two domestic architecture
trends of the time: the traditional villa or the new bungalow style, the latter very popular with architects, as illustrated in figure 1 below.

![Workers' dwellings on Patrick Street, Petone](source: Fill, 1984, p. 18)

Thirty four designs were selected which all contained five rooms: living room, kitchen/dining room and three bedrooms, as well as a bathroom and generally two outbuildings – an outhouse and coal store (Fill, 1984). All designs included a central hallway, and some provided a small porch or verandah. The dwellings were to be constructed of permanent materials – wood, concrete or brick with concrete foundations – and settlements were laid out in traditional grid patterns (Fill, 1984). Designs by local architects for each area were chosen to allow architects to be directly involved in the planning and construction of their particular design. One such architect was Hurst Seager who, in collaboration with Basil Hooper, produced a plan known as ‘Design No. 3’, a bungalow style house built in the Heretaunga Settlement at Petone in Wellington, site of the first workers’ dwellings (Ashford, 1994). While there is no traceable link between Hurst Seager’s design and the later State houses, Design No. 3 contains a number of features which may have prefigured the later mid-twentieth century state houses, particularly the use of weatherboards and casement windows, and the basic rectangular floor plan.
Despite Seddon’s intentions, the workers’ dwellings were largely unpopular due to their distance from places of employment, high expense and the fixed, long-term nature of the lease agreements (Schrader, 2005). Workers were unimpressed, and the scheme fell flat.

### 3.3.3 State Financing from 1906

The Government Advances to Workers Act 1906 allowed urban workers with land to borrow up to £450 from the government in order to build their own home (Isaac & Olssen, 2000). This was followed by the Workers’ Dwellings Act 1910 which extended the scheme further, with the state offering to build houses for landless urban workers for a deposit of just £10 (Schrader, 2005). This proved to be far more popular with workers than the failed Act of 1905.

In 1912 the Reform Government came into power and began to sell off the public housing stock. Despite the failure of the 1905 scheme, it became the starting point for debates on housing policy and state intervention for at least the next decade. As a further development to the 1910 Act, the Reform Government introduced the State Advances Act 1913 which established the State Advances Office and provided state-funded loans to workers wishing to build homes (State Advances Act 1913). In 1919 the housing Act was introduced, and became the basis for the state housing scheme which defined the mid-twentieth century.
The principles that underpinned the housing policies of the Liberal and Reform Governments were straightforward: the state was to cover costs without subsidising those receiving direct housing assistance, and direct housing assistance was restricted for skilled workers and the middle class (Schrader, 2006). Guiding these policies was the vision of the suburban family home – the compromise between inner-city slums and idyllic country living. Contrary to existing circumstances, the first public housing schemes in New Zealand were aimed at providing good quality homes for workers, not to provide subsidised housing for those on low incomes. State-funded houses represented nearly half the houses being built in New Zealand by the end of the 1920s (Schrader, 2005).

### 3.3.4 Urban Planning: A Fledgling Profession

Urban planning in New Zealand had its legislative beginnings under the Reform Government. In 1926, Prime Minister William Massey was persuaded by a young planner-architect, Reginald Hammond, that New Zealand-specific urban planning legislation was useful and necessary; and so the Town-planning Act 1926 was introduced (Miller, 2007). This Act outlined a framework for planning for urban areas which required all boroughs with over a thousand people to prepare a plan. With only seven Royal Town Planning Institute (the professional body of Britain) members in New Zealand, and only two of these members having any formal training, this was a daunting task (Miller, 2007). Hammond, the first New Zealander to gain a formal qualification in planning, was appointed Director of Town Planning but resigned after only a year. John Mawson, who had considerable experience in planning, took over from Hammond and remained Director of Town Planning until 1933. The Wall Street Crash of 1929 and resultant Great Depression hindered the progress of planning in New Zealand. The Town Planning Institute of New Zealand was launched on 27 February 1930 by the Minister of Internal Affairs, the portfolio responsible for planning (Miller, 2007). Despite this promising beginning, the planning profession remained largely stagnant throughout the Depression years. The Reform Government’s response to the Wall Street Crash was to immediately cut public spending, and so the building sector quickly came to a standstill. With a
sudden decrease in the number of state-funded houses being built, overcrowding quickly became an issue within urban areas.

### 3.4 The Height of Popularity 1936-1949

#### 3.4.1 Housing Crisis

Shortly after coming into power in 1935, the First Labour Government announced its intention to address the housing shortage in New Zealand. After the hardship of the Depression, the First Labour Government was determined to utilise state resources in order to ensure improved standards of living for all New Zealanders. This marked an important ideological shift from that of the earlier Liberal and Reform Governments. The First Labour Government was determined that public housing would comprise an essential part of the overall housing stock in New Zealand and placed a strong emphasis on the importance of the building industry to New Zealand’s economy. A key figure in the development of Labour’s new state housing programme was John A Lee. When Labour came into office in 1935, Lee expected to join Cabinet, however after the pair clashed over various policies Savage did not appoint Lee to Cabinet (Olssen, 2010). Instead, he was appointed Under-Secretary of Finance, a position which did not have any legal status until the following year, signalling Savage’s mistrust of Lee. From 1936 Lee was responsible for housing, answering to Nash, Minister of Finance. Lee was determined to create a socialist housing scheme and oversaw the large-scale programme of construction which came to define the minimum standard for housing throughout New Zealand (Olssen, 2010).

Poor living conditions in inner-city areas topped the political agenda, and Minister of Finance Gordon Coates in particular became very vocal in advocating for the removal of these areas (Schrader, 2005). Coates advocated for the demolition of slum-like dwellings that were unable to be upgraded to an acceptable standard, and for the introduction of planning controls in order to prevent future recurrence of slum-like areas (Schrader, 2005). This shift signalled an end to New Zealand’s laissez-faire approach to urban planning as local and central government began to gradually expand their responsibilities to include planning during the 1930s.
3.4.2 The State Housing Programme

The housing policies of the First Labour Government emphasised state lending, state housing and support of the building industry. A survey on housing conditions was commenced in 1936 and revealed the poor quality of the housing stock in New Zealand and the problem of overcrowding (Ferguson, 1994). It quickly became apparent that the State Advances scheme would not solve the growing housing crisis and so in the 1936 Budget, Labour revealed that 5000 rental homes would be constructed by the state under the Housing Act 1919 (Schrader, 2005). The reasoning behind this decision was that the increase in housing construction would provide employment for those without jobs, while the use of New Zealand materials would stimulate local manufacturing which would, in turn, generate economic growth (Schrader, 2005). The quality of houses would increase and the state, as landlord, would provide tenants with security, similar to the rental agreements in Europe.

The State Advances Corporation was established by the State Advances Corporation Act 1936. The Act created the Housing Construction Department (HCD) within the SAC to administer the construction of new state rental houses – the construction itself was to be undertaken by private contractors through a tendering process (Archives New Zealand, 2004). Arthur Tyndall was appointed Director of the HCD, with Hammond as Town Planner and Gordon Wilson as Chief Architect. The appointment of Hammond helped to legitimate the planning profession, bringing it firmly into the sphere of central government. The Director of the HCD reported to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary to the Minister of Finance, not to the head of the SAC. The HCD was responsible for buying suitable land for housing, and providing architectural plans for buildings. The Public Works Department was then required to prepare these sites for housing construction. After the houses were built, they were turned over to the SAC, which was responsible for administering the rental programme.
3.4.3 Housing Design

According to Schrader (2005), the most widely accepted explanation for how the government originally developed plans for state houses maintains that in June 1936 Prime Minister Michael Savage, Minister of Finance Walter Nash and Under-Secretary to the Minister of Finance John A Lee met with the New Zealand Institute of Architects (NZIA). The NZIA offered the services of its members and the government accepted. NZIA members produced more than 400 different designs within the following months (Ferguson, 1994). These original plans focused solely on single-unit houses in suburbs. Lee had made this focus clear prior to the release of plans and explained that the “suburban-based municipal housing programmes of Sweden were better suited to New Zealand conditions than the tenement schemes of urban Britain” (Schrader, 2005, p. 36). Lee despised the English terraced housing for workers and was adamant that New Zealand’s scheme would be different: the majority of houses would be detached, individual units on sizeable sections and no two houses within a particular area would be of the same design to avoid monotony (Shaw, 2003). Lee also insisted that houses would adhere to a high standard of construction and that they would be built from New Zealand materials.

The HCD required plans for four-, five- and six-roomed houses, with the majority being five-roomed. Within each group of ten houses would be ten different house plans including elevations and materials as well as architectural design (Shaw, 2003). In a shift from the workers’ dwellings designs, the designs produced were largely in the English Cottage style. The Californian bungalow, considered the height of domestic architectural fashion during the 1920s, was beginning to decline in popularity; however its influence on the designs of the 1930s state houses cannot be overlooked.

In 1937, the first state house was built and opened at 12 Fife Lane, Miramar, Wellington by the HCD. Prime Minister Savage was present to officially open the first state house and assisted the new tenants in shifting their furniture into the new home. A photograph of Savage carrying in a bulky wooden table (see Figure 4)
became a New Zealand icon, and was considered the central image of the First Labour Government’s state housing scheme.

Figure 3: Prime Minister Savage carrying furniture into the first state house, Wellington 1937  

The subdivisions designed by the First Labour Government followed a clear vision: garden suburbs dotted with a variety of cottage-like houses (Ferguson, 1994). This can be seen in suburbs such as Naenae and Onehunga, shown in Figure 4 below. Cul-de-sacs and curved streets replaced the traditional grid pattern in the belief that this would keep residential areas free from unwanted noise and danger, and abolish monotony (Firth, 1949). House designs were very popular with women in particular who felt that architects were finally designing houses with the housewife in mind. Labour aimed to create “houses that weren’t modernistic, or period, or quaint, but faced the sun and suited the climate and didn’t pretend to be anything else but good common-sense houses for New Zealanders to live in” (Schrader, 2000, p. 132).
Labour sought to redesign the traditional family home from earlier layouts which included provision for servants’ areas, to a more socially-oriented family home. State houses had two spatial zones: the public and the private (Schrader, 2000). The evolution of the floor plans of state houses from the original workers dwellings to those constructed by the First Labour Government is outlined in greater detail in Figures 5 and 6 below. To promote the image of a community garden, the fronts of sections were left unfenced. Although the government used a series of basic plans for their state houses, officials stressed the diversity of construction and roofing materials as well as colour, and siting of windows and porches (Firth, 1949).

While Labour’s state house visions were clear, plans were constantly being revised in order to reduce costs. With this distinct vision for the family home, it is unsurprising that Labour was known to discriminate in favour of married couples with at least one child (Schrader, 2005). State-funded family suburbs were designed and promoted for a specific type of family. Those not meeting these specifications were single people, single mothers, and those with large families (Ferguson, 1994). It soon became clear that while the state-funded family home in the suburbs may have been widely shared, as a norm it was only so for married couples with no more than five children.
The floor plans for the first state houses of the Labour Government differed in a number of ways to the workers’ dwellings of thirty years earlier. Indoor sewage disposal and electricity eliminated the need for separate outhouses while the traditional sitting room disappeared and the living room became the focal point of the home. The scullery and pantry areas were assimilated into a larger kitchen room and the size of the main passage or hallway was also reduced, likely due to the changing of public and private zones within the home.
3.4.4 Problems with the State Housing Programme

Despite its popularity, Labour’s state housing scheme was not without problems. Most significantly, due to shortages after the Depression, there were not enough materials in New Zealand to keep up with demand. Similarly, there was an apparent lack of skilled craftsmen capable of completing work to the standard required. By February 1939, 57 state houses were being completed per week (Schrader, 2005). While this would normally be considered a high rate of completion, with over 10,000 applicants on the waiting list for state rental houses the rate of completion was not keeping up with demand (Schrader, 2005). Many within government felt that the only company capable of construction on this scale was the Fletcher Construction Company Ltd, founded by James Fletcher in 1919. However, builders disagreed, claiming that the main problem was the material shortage, not a lack of capacity within companies (Ferguson, 1994).

3.4.5 From the State Advances Corporation to the Ministry of Works

By 1943, 14,892 state houses had been constructed in 146 towns around New Zealand, despite building activities being largely suspended 1942-1944 due to World War II (Archives New Zealand, 2004). By this time it had become clear that the HCD needed to purchase and develop very large lots of undeveloped land in order to provide enough land for the construction programme. This would require large-scale engineering construction for services such as sewage and water, and was not an activity previously undertaken by the HCD. As a result of this and other pressures, the Ministry of Works (MoW) was established through the Ministry of Works Act 1943 (Noonan, 1975). The HCD was transferred from the now defunct Public Works Department to the new MoW and renamed the Housing Division (Noonan, 1975). This meant that state housing construction was shifted from its original home within the SAC.

The new division was separated into three sections: administration, architectural (including subsections for community planning and quantity surveying) and land (including subsections for land purchase, land planning, landscape, and engineering) (Archives New Zealand, 2004). It is worth noting the separation of community planning (another term for town, city and regional planning) from land planning within these sections. Despite the development of town planning as a profession, it was clear that town planning and land planning were to be
considered separate sectors. James Fletcher, of the Fletcher Construction Company, was appointed Commissioner of Works (Boyce, 2010). The Housing Division quickly moved into large-scale development. This type of development required a far longer programme timeframe, and put pressure on civil engineers, surveyors and architects, all of whom were in short supply.

3.4.6 Rent Inequality

Cost recovery had long been a strong principle of the housing policies of the First Labour Government. However, during World War II this was undermined when the government refused to increase the rents of state houses despite the rising costs of constructing new state homes, claiming that such a rise in rent would break its promise of security of tenure to tenants (Schrader, 2005). A housing conference held in 1944 estimated that rents on state houses were approximately half that of a private house built to the same standard (Schrader, 2005). By the 1940s this meant that relatively well-off workers were receiving subsidised housing from the state, while the poor were paying market rents on private properties. With housing shortages becoming even more severe in the post-war years, this inequality in the housing market began to anger the public.

3.5 Changing Attitudes Towards State Housing 1949-1960

3.5.1 The Desire for Change

The First Labour Government developed housing policies that captured the attention and imagination of people in a way that has never quite been achieved since. Although the state housing scheme was not immune to problems, there is no question that the actions of the First Labour Government led to a substantial improvement in the quality of the housing stock in New Zealand and provided homes for thousands of New Zealanders. The codification of the suburban family home during this time set the parameters for housing and urban development for most of the twentieth century (Ferguson, 1994). Increasing dissatisfaction with the inequality in the housing market, coupled with anger about the unfair bias in tenant selection and the lack of relief for the poorest citizens meant that by the 1949 elections, New Zealand was ready for change.

The election of the First National Government to power saw a change in direction in housing policy and the state housing scheme. With 45,000 people on waiting lists, National had two
immediate priorities: reduce waiting lists and build more houses (Ferguson, 1994). Unlike Labour, National did not support the ‘state house dream’ – instead, it promoted home ownership, believing that this helped develop “initiative, self-reliance, thrift, and other good qualities which go to make up the moral strength of the nation” (Schrader, 2005, p. 47). Additionally, the abandonment of the principle of cost-recovery by Labour meant that the state housing account was in significant debt (Schrader, 2005). With this in mind, National began an active campaign to sell off state houses. This came to form the distinction between the First Labour Government and the First National Government: while Labour viewed state houses as a form of long-term tenure for certain sectors of society, National saw state houses as providing an opportunity for those locked out of home ownership.

3.5.2 Reducing Demand

National attempted to reduce waiting lists in a number of ways. Firstly, rents were raised for new tenants in order to even out the rental housing market. Secondly, an income limit of £520 a year was established in order to direct state housing towards the poorer sectors of society (Schrader, 2005). This was a significant ideological shift – prior to this decision, state housing had been designed to enable workers to live in affordable, good quality houses. As a background theme to National’s housing policies, existing tenants were encouraged to purchase their state homes and join the “property-owning democracy” (Schrader, 2005, p. 48). National was not supportive of the state housing scheme that had been created by the Labour Government. By selling houses, the government hoped to reduce the state housing stock, increase home ownership, and reduce the state housing account debt.

3.5.3 The Growth of the Planning Profession

The 1950s were a positive growth period for town planning as a discipline. The Town Planning Institute (New Zealand Branch) became the New Zealand Institute of Professional Town and Country Planners (NZIPTCP) in 1949, and strengthened considerably. With the growth of the Housing Division, planning quickly became an activity administered by government departments and was almost solely focused on regulation (Dart, 1973). Traditional blue-print or master plan approaches found favour in New Zealand due to the strong influence of North American and British practitioners – along with economic, social and political behaviour, New Zealand inherited its planning practices from the northern hemisphere. The introduction of the Town and Country Planning Act in 1953 replaced the
Town-planning Act 1926 and required all local authorities to produce a land-use focused District Scheme (Miller, 2007). NZIPTCP membership rose throughout the 1950s, with the MoW the major employer of planners (Miller, 2007). In 1957 the first formal town planning qualification was established at Auckland University College, a course which single-handedly produced most of New Zealand’s professional planners in the following decades (Miller, 2007). At this stage, planning was not a profession solely undertaken by planners – engineers, architects and surveyors were often dually qualified as planners. By the end of the 1950s, planners in New Zealand had not only a professional organisation and recognisable identity but a method of educating future planners.

3.5.4 State Housing: Where to From Here?

A National Housing Conference was held in 1953 to debate state housing and in particular the proposed amount of funding to be authorized for the Government portfolio of housing construction. The conference reinforced National’s desire to promote home ownership, but also addressed a number of other themes, namely the new Group Building Scheme and the move to higher density developments in order to address concerns about land conservation and urban sprawl (Boyce, 2010). Despite moves to slash waiting lists, there were still thousands of urgent applications for state housing and the housing construction finances remained remarkably dismal. The state was struggling to manage the letting programme, causing an uneven flow of contracts which angered building firms.

By 1950, 32,000 state houses had been built in a period of just 14 years (Boyce, 2010). National set about curtailing this scheme in order to stop state housing debt from increasing further. The Housing Division was ordered to operate strictly within its budget or risk the letting of construction contracts being frozen (Boyce, 2010). In 1953 the government introduced the Group Building Scheme in order to encourage housing construction. This was seen as a link between ‘mass housing’ and government housing policy (Ferguson, 1994). Prior to this scheme, builders would often build homes on speculation. This was risky as it relied on homes selling after construction. The Group Building Scheme meant that unsold homes would be bought by the government if the builder was registered with the scheme. House plans had to be approved by the government, which made it easier to secure loan finance. The government hoped that this would be a way to reduce costs while still maintaining a stock of state houses.
3.5.5 Housing Design

The design of state houses and state-funded subdivisions changed significantly under the First National Government in the early 1950s. Prime Minister Sidney Holland immediately abandoned the concept of comprehensively planned suburbs (such as Ernst Plischke’s plans for Naenae) that contained services such as health clinics and shops (Ferguson, 1994). The SAC was still granting loans for home building during this time and had a strong influence on the types of houses built. The SAC made it difficult for potential home-owners to secure a loan for any house that deviated from the standard, conventional brick-and-tile house so popular in the state housing programme (Shaw, 2003). In a move to reduce costs National began to produce its own house plans. Two low-cost designs from Wilson and Hammond (now Director of the Housing Division) were among the first batch of new designs. Wilson’s design removed the entrance hall and employed cheaper materials such as fibreboard ceilings, cheaper wallpaper and a lighter roof. Hammond similarly used cheaper materials, but the defining feature of his design was the ‘open plan’ – merging the living room, dining room and kitchen into one combined space (Schrader, 2005). In 1953 a series of designs were built in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin for the public to examine (Schrader, 2005). Wilson’s design was a hit with housewives, while architects preferred Hammond’s design, which became the basis for future state house designs.

3.5.6 Changes in Political Support

The policy changes of the First National Government undermined the long-standing belief that state housing was a secure form of long-term tenure alternative to the private housing market. The attitude of the government and the increasing focus on reducing construction costs, leant support to a growing opinion amongst New Zealanders that state housing was for the ‘misfits’ and ‘losers’ in society, and was inherently undesirable (Ferguson, 1994). Sales of state houses had looked promising in the early 1950s, but interested quickly waned, leaving the government with a considerable rental housing stock. It was during the 1950s that Māori began to migrate from rural areas into urban locations and achieve increased access to housing. Although by the 1950s, New Zealanders generally believed that every family had the right to decent housing, the nuclear family continued to remain the foundation of the country and the majority of state houses accommodated mum, dad and the children.
3.5.7 The Multi-Unit and Duplexes

Perhaps the most significant development in state housing design during the 1950s was the multi-unit. It was during this decade that concerns about rapid expansion and urban sprawl began to arise, particularly from town planners. In Christchurch, for example, between 1955 and 1961 214 hectares of horticultural land was turned into urban development – 17 per cent of the total horticultural land around Christchurch (Forrest, 1973). In response to these concerns, the National Government announced in 1957 that “the proportion of multi-units and flats would increase from a fifth of new state houses to a third”, in order to make more efficient use of valuable urban land by increasing residential densities (Schrader, 2005, p. 110). Popular new designs with the Housing Division were duplex units (blocks of four flats – two upstairs and two downstairs, all joined together), designed to increase densities while retaining the suburban family home feel of state houses. The increase in density was considerable – while the detached three bedroom family home housed 36 people per acre, multi-storey units could house 75-80 people per acre (Ferguson, 1994). Multi-units and duplexes were originally built for the private housing market, however there was very little interest from buyers and so the houses were transferred to the SAC to be used as rental houses. Despite criticism from designers about the plans for such dwellings, the government began constructing units around the country.
3.5.8 Criticism of Multi-Units and Duplexes

There was immediate criticism of the multi-unit and duplex designs. Local authorities, who had historically opposed higher density dwellings, demonstrated this opposition once again (Boyce, 2010). Officials from the SAC faced difficulties in renting such accommodation and recommended to the Housing Division that high density dwellings should be confined solely to inner-city areas (Ferguson, 1994). The Housing Division’s response was that applicants were simply too choosy and that “multi-unit flats would be allocated in the same way as single- or double-unit flats” (Ferguson, 1994, p. 193). One of the main issues tenants quickly raised was the lack of privacy. Walls were thin, and the private business of individual families became, unwillingly, the business of their neighbours. Tenants also complained about the lack of private outdoor space. Multi-units and duplexes were stigmatised early on as being “shoddy, government, mass-produced housing” (Schrader, 2005, p. 117). Although it is true that these units were built with cheaper materials than earlier state houses, they were generally considerably better quality than similar dwellings in the private market. The average New Zealander’s distaste for the units was largely cultural: after decades of the government espousing the ideal family home as a detached single-unit house on a quarter acre section in the suburbs, the new multi-units and duplexes did not meet the expectations of New Zealanders of what a family home was (Schrader, 2005).

3.5.9 Attitudes to State Housing

The Mazengarb report of 1954 highlighted a lack of community spirit in state housing areas, largely, it argued, due to a lack of community facilities (Ferguson, 1994). The report hit out at state housing areas, claiming there were not enough responsible adults to supervise the large number of children, leading adolescents to develop local gangs and engage in sexual activity (Schrader, 2004). It was not long before the media joined the critics, presenting stories of violence and crime in state housing areas. Schrader (2005) believes that many of the criticisms during this time may be attributed to a disproportional fear of modern developments such as rock and roll and pulp fiction arriving largely from the United States. The National Government’s lack of commitment to the state housing scheme, coupled with constant budget cuts and the opening-up of state housing to less desirable tenants (single parents, the poor and Māori and Polynesian families), influenced the attitudes of the public. As public perceptions changed state housing areas, often unfairly, were written off as slums or ghettos. By the end of the 1950s, this label had stuck in the minds of New Zealanders.
The unpopular multi-unit policies were continued under the direction of the Second Labour Government, which came into office in 1957 and lasted just one term. Minister of Housing, Bill Fox, believed that increasing the completion rate of housing construction meant further reliance on multi-units and so, in 1958, the proportion of multi-units being built increased from a third to half of all state houses built (Boyce, 2010). Multi-units became the defining feature of the large suburbs such as Otara, Porirua and Mangere that were built by the end of the 1960s. In line with earlier Labour policies, the Second Labour Government prohibited the state house sale campaign pursued by the First National Government.

### 3.6 Winding up the Scheme 1960-1970

The Second National Government came into office in 1960 and reversed Labour’s prohibition of the state house sale campaign. National’s housing policies in the 1960s were largely an extension of the policies of the First National Government. Promoting home ownership by selling state houses was a top priority, and the numbers of houses constructed each year continued to decline as the housing crisis abated. With state housing now directed at those on low incomes, the government reluctantly allowed increasing numbers of separated and divorced women access to state housing in the 1960s (Ferguson, 1994). Similarly, Māori were also afforded increased access to state housing during this time as more people continued to move from rural areas into urban cities and towns (Ferguson, 1994).

Throughout the 1960s, negative perceptions and stereotypes of state housing areas became firmly entrenched in the minds of New Zealanders. Predominantly through the media, state housing areas were typecast as areas “riddled with crime, violence and gangs” (Schrader, 2006, p. 159). The Anglican Church produced a report in 1963, focused on state housing in Porirua East, accusing the government of forgetting the social needs of the community when planning the area (Schrader, 2006). Even the Commissioner of Works in 1963 queried the wisdom of continuing to build multi-units and duplexes in the face of such unpopularity with tenants and society more generally (Schrader, 2005). Despite these negative perceptions of state houses, a number of academic social surveys undertaken in the 1960s in a range of locations around New Zealand showed that the majority of state house tenants were happy with both their houses and their communities (Schrader, 2006). This information had little impact on the New Zealand public who, largely due to negative media portrayals, firmly believed that the government had created slums rather than communities (Schrader, 2006).
Schrader (2005) offers a number of explanations for the development of these negative perceptions in New Zealand society. Many of these reflect the findings of McCallum’s (1975) study of the Sheriff Block, a state housing area in Gisborne. These explanations are discussed below.

3.6.1 The Downgrading of the Housing Division

Schrader (2005) argues that part of the reason for the decline in the perceived quality of state housing areas was the downgrading of the Housing Division within the Ministry of Works. This likely reflected the general decline of the status of state housing within the National government in the 1950s. By the early 1960s, the Housing Division was seen as a “ghetto for the mediocre” in terms of the professionals it employed – a far cry from the internationally renowned architects it employed during the 1930s and 1940s (Schrader, 2005). The ‘best’ architects within the Ministry were directed towards power stations and other more contemporary projects from the 1960s. Jebson, Director of Housing, acknowledged in the late 1950s that the lack of recognition awarded to housing architects was a reason for deficiencies in the design of houses (Schrader, 2005). Schrader (2005) also argues that the increasing focus on meeting targets and reducing costs in the 1940s and 1950s meant that governments overlooked spatial and social planning.

3.6.2 Single-class neighbourhoods

A significant influence on the public’s perception of state housing, Schrader (2005) argues, was the decision to restrict state housing to those on low incomes, as single-class neighbourhoods exacerbated social problems. McCallum (1975) similarly found in the Sheriff Block that there was a marked lack of professional, self-employed and ‘white collar’ occupations represented, while the proportions of Māori and single-parent families were higher than in non-state housing areas. In New Zealand, as in Britain, the poor were either ‘deserving’ or ‘undeserving’. The ‘deserving poor’ were “impoverished through misfortune or circumstance, but otherwise respectable” while the ‘undeserving poor’ were “those who had given themselves over to drink, violence and immorality” (Schrader, 2006, pp. 163-164). In New Zealand, those people who are unemployed, receiving a benefit and/or have no intention of buying their own house are often categorised as ‘undeserving’ (Schrader, 2005). Largely due to negative media portrayal, the ‘undeserving poor’ came to be associated with state housing areas, linking them with crime, violence and ‘bludgers’ (Schrader, 2005).
3.6.3 Large-scale Development and Medium Density Housing

In 1971, the Commission of Inquiry into Housing advised against the building of large-scale state housing areas such as Porirua and Otara, recommending that the building of such areas cease (Schrader, 2005). Additionally, McCallum (1975) and Schrader (1993) found that visual uniformity led to monotony in state housing areas, mainly due to the fact that virtually all of the houses were of a similar age. High turn-over rates in multi-units and duplexes led McCallum (1975, p. 57) to conclude that housing becomes “more acceptable to its occupants the closer it approaches, in form and finish, the type of house associated with the more financially secure families.” This may explain why tenants preferred single unit, detached dwellings. McCallum (1975) argues that medium density housing such as multi-units and duplexes is inappropriate in ‘low-cost’ areas as they do not look like conventional, ‘normal’ houses and, due to the high turn-over rates, become linked to the transient, reflecting their unpopularity. Schrader’s (2005) argument follows similar lines, claiming that multi-units and duplexes were seen as inferior housing to detached, single dwellings. It seems clear that the increasing emphasis on multi-units and duplexes in the 1950s and 1960s had some influence on the decline in popularity of state housing more generally across the same period.

3.7 Summary

State-funded housing began in New Zealand with the Workers’ Dwellings Act 1905 as a result of growing concern about the living conditions in urban areas. While the scheme proved unpopular, the Act set the scene for future state housing. In response to a housing crisis, the First Labour Government took office in 1935 and established a comprehensive programme for constructing state houses which provided thousands of New Zealanders with homes and substantially improved the quality of New Zealand’s housing stock. Anger over rent inequality and discriminatory tenant selection processes saw the First National Government take office in 1949. National did not support Labour’s state housing programme and focused instead on selling houses to promote homeownership and directing state houses towards the poor. Concerns about urban sprawl and the costs of state housing led to multi-units and duplexes eventually making up half of all state houses built. Attitudes towards state housing became increasingly more negative during the 1950s, with negative stereotypes becoming firmly entrenched in the minds of New Zealanders by the end of the 1960s. With the housing crisis over and political attention redirected, provision of state housing ceased to be a priority for governments after the 1960s.
Chapter 4
The Naenae Development

4.1 Introduction

During the twentieth century, the majority of state houses were built in the North Island of New Zealand, particularly in the cities of Auckland and Wellington. These developments tended to be far larger than those occurring in the South Island due to the larger population base. While Christchurch, situated on the Canterbury Plains, was virtually unconstrained by its geography, cities such as Wellington were far more constrained in terms of planning for housing construction due to the very hilly topography. Naenae, located in the Hutt Valley of Wellington, has been extensively studied by historian Ben Schrader and provides an interesting comparison with Aranui and Wainoni as a state-funded subdivision developed prior to Aranui and Wainoni. This chapter, based largely on Schrader’s (1993b) thesis entitled Planning happy families: a history of the Naenae idea, will discuss the context within which the development took place as well as the more specific details of the development and design of the subdivision. To conclude, the outcomes of this development are discussed in terms of whether the aims for the area were reflected in reality.

4.2 The Hutt Valley Scheme

Naenae, meaning ‘mosquito’ in Māori, is situated in the north-eastern corner of the Lower Hutt area. Mein Smith, a surveyor for the New Zealand Company, completed a survey of the Lower Hutt area in the early nineteenth century, after which time the land was divided into 100 acre (40 hectare) blocks and allotted to investors of the New Zealand Company (Schrader, 1993b). With the growth of Wellington, the area was increasingly used for market gardening and became the main supplier of fresh produce to Wellington (Schrader, 1993b). The addition of a railway line and the growth of industry near Petone led to an increase in residential development in the Lower Hutt area, from 1500 in 1891 to around 6000 in 1921 (Schrader, 1993b). Nearby Petone became home to some of the first state houses – 33 workers’ dwellings were constructed in 1905 following the passing of the Workers’ Dwellings Act 1905 (Schrader, 1993b). In 1925 the Government held a town planning competition for Moera, a smaller area near Petone, which was won by Reginald Hammond (Schrader, 1993b).
The largest state intervention in the Hutt Valley, however, was not initiated until the 1930s. With land within the Wellington City area at a premium, the Government realised it would need to look beyond the boundaries of the city to the Hutt Valley. Still an important horticultural centre, there was widespread alarm in 1936 when the Government issued a proclamation over 480 hectares of land in the north-east corner of Lower Hutt for housing construction (Schrader, 1993b). John A Lee addressed these concerns by stating that it was far more preferable for produce to travel further to centres of population than people (Schrader, 1993b).

4.3 International Influences

4.3.1 American and British Influences

American influences on the development of Lower Hutt began with the methodology used by John Mawson in his urban and regional plan of Lower Hutt. Based largely on information contained in *Harvard City Planning Studies*, a US-based publication on city planning, this suggests that New Zealand urban planning was influenced by American ideas as early as the 1930s (Schrader, 1993b). Similarly to the United States, land was plentiful in most of New Zealand during this period. This is perhaps part of the reason behind the dominance of the low density, single unit dwelling both in Lower Hutt and in New Zealand generally. The most significant American influence on Naenae came in the form of the Radburn development, discussed further in section 4.3.2.

The development of Lower Hutt also contained elements of British influence. Most significant was the incorporation of ‘garden suburb’ design principles. The garden suburb was an evolution of Ebenezer Howard’s garden city plan in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The evidence of these principles is clear in the use of curvilinear streets as opposed to the traditional grid pattern, the prevalence of reserves and the focus on low density housing. This influence was made clear by Prime Minister Savage in 1936 when he stated that the Hutt Valley scheme was designed to reflect garden suburb principles (Schrader, 1993b). As Rogerson (1976, as cited in Miller, 2004, p. 52) cynically observes, “a subdivision which had both curving roads and “Garden Reserves” was, ipso facto, a “Garden Suburb.”” The inclusion of both British and American ideas in the design of Naenae reflected the broader theme of New Zealand society as a whole.
4.3.2 Radburn

In 1923 a group of professionals involved in urban issues formed the Regional Planning Association of America (RPAA) (Schrader, 1993b). Influenced by the Garden City/suburb ideas of Howard and Unwin, the RPAA aimed to establish garden cities throughout the United States (Schrader, 1993b). The Radburn development became the vehicle for the ideas and aspirations of the RPAA. The aim of the planning of Radburn was “to structure the landscape in such a way as to encourage social interaction and participatory democracy on the lines of Letchworth and Welwyn” (Schrader, 1993b, p. 86). Radburn quickly deviated from Howard’s garden city ideal. The price of land led to the abandonment of the town belt and effectively prevented the inclusion of working class citizens in the development. Similarly, Radburn failed to attract an industry base, making the area a commuter satellite of New York City. Radburn’s focus on private motor vehicles was a distinctive feature. Traffic was directed around the community rather than through it, leaving the centre of the development in a communal reserve (Schrader, 1993b). Pedestrians were separated from vehicular traffic, increasing the safety of residents. Natalist in design, Radburn used primary schools as focal points of various neighbourhood units (Schrader, 1993b). Radburn was considered a success by its creators and influenced the ideas of a number of architects and urban planners, including Ernst Plischke in New Zealand (Schrader, 1993b).

4.4 Plans for Naenae

The Naenae development was intended to accommodate around 10,000 residents (Schrader, 1993a). Although initially intending to take the land for Naenae through proclamation, community outcry at the proposal led the Government to negotiate individual land purchases with owners, with the threat of proclamation still very real should land owners decide to obstruct the Government’s plans (Schrader, 1993b). Due to the large size of the proposed development, the Government was concerned with the planning of the area. Consequently, a regional survey of Lower Hutt was undertaken by John Mawson, Government Town Planner, in order to ascertain the effects of the development on the wider Lower Hutt area and was completed in 1940 (Schrader, 1993b). Mawson’s plan was the first major urban and regional plan developed in New Zealand. Mawson drew a concentric plan for Naenae in 1940 with a town square and railway station at the centre and an area of light industry around the outskirts (Schrader, 1993b).
When Plischke became head of the design team in 1942, he immediately altered Mawson’s original plan by reducing the town square by half and relocating it east of the railway station (Schrader, 1993b). Similar to the principles of Howard’s garden city and the RPAA’s Radburn, Naenae was to consist of 15 per cent parkland and treed corridors through which children could safely walk to school away from vehicular traffic (Schrader, 1993b). Plischke also included provision for a modern community centre at the heart of his design containing a hall, library, meeting rooms, a hotel, a post office and a main shopping precinct (Schrader, 1993b). In contrast to the individualistic and familial focus of the remainder of Naenae, Plischke’s community centre was designed to encourage face-to-face contact and meetings between residents (Schrader, 1993a). This social planning aspect became the personal project of Canadian immigrant William Robertson from 1939.

By 1945 around 200 houses of the predicted 2500 had been built in Naenae (Schrader, 1993b). Robertson canvassed the area to garner support for the establishment of a consumers’ cooperative in the area. When presented with the plan, Prime Minister Peter
Fraser provided Robertson a block of shops in Naenae to accommodate the cooperative (Schrader, 1993a). On the back of this success, Robertson attempted to convince residents that social planning should be extended to include a state-sponsored health clinic and community centre as well as the consumers’ cooperative (Schrader, 1993a). Residents did not share Robertson’s enthusiasm. The health clinic idea was quickly discarded and a poll on the establishment of a community centre was lost (Schrader, 1993a). A second ballot for the community centre was held in 1949 which showed that 65% of voters supported the idea (Schrader, 1993b). Robertson was eventually dismissed from his position after refusing to move on from the community centre idea. Despite this setback, Robertson continued to pursue his aspirations and eventually a community playground was established in Naenae. Poor attendances and a lack of community support led to the failure of the scheme after just a few weeks (Schrader, 1993a).

4.5 The Reality of Naenae

In the early stages of the construction of Naenae, hoards of visitors made the trip to the Hutt Valley to experience the newly built houses and admire the hundreds of flowers which bloomed in the community garden (Schrader, 1993a). It seemed that Labour’s aspirations for Naenae had come to fruition. This optimistic view of Naenae began to be eroded in the late 1940s with the failure of Robertson’s community playground and the demise of the community centre. Plischke’s original plans for an integrated, multi-dimensional community centre were reduced down to a simple community hall, constructed in 1954 after a poll of residents was undertaken (Schrader, 1993b). The hall never lived up to the expectations of the designers. When the evidence of the hall’s failure became obvious, the area was converted into a pedestrian mall and renamed Hillary Court (Schrader, 1993b).

At around the same time, in the mid-1950s, Naenae again became the focus of public attention, this time in a far less favourable fashion. Criticisms were directed at the monotony of the housing design, the ‘endless’ nature of the roading layout and the uniform nature of the population (Schrader, 1993b). Reports of juvenile delinquency and promiscuity surfaced, tainting Naenae’s once wholesome reputation (Schrader, 1993b). As a result of these criticisms and reports, many unfairly labelled Naenae as a state house ghetto (Schrader, 1993a). The failure of the community and social planning aspects of Naenae was largely due to the individualistic attitudes of residents. Residents participated in community activities on their own terms and did not appear interested in supporting Robertson’s
community planning ideal (Schrader, 1993a). Additionally, the time taken for community relationships to develop was not widely acknowledged. Strong community links take time to develop, particularly within a community as large as Naenae. By the 1960s it was clear that the ideals for Naenae as they were espoused by its designers were not in agreement with the way most Naenae residents wanted to live (Schrader, 1993b). Individualism won out over communal aspirations, with residents choosing to conduct their lives independently rather than supporting the kind of close-knit community envisaged by Robertson.

4.6 Summary

Naenae, intended to house 10,000 people, was part of a wider development scheme of the Hutt Valley in the 1940s. While initially planned by Mawson in 1940, Plischke headed the design team from 1942 and quickly changed the plans for Naenae to more closely resemble Radburn, an American development based on Howard’s garden city principles. This reflected a combination of American and British influences in the planning of the area, a reflection of a more general trend found in New Zealand at the time. Plischke’s, and later Robertson’s, plans for a comprehensive community were largely unsupported by the residents of Naenae. Plischke’s community centre ultimately failed and was replaced by a pedestrian mall. Robertson initially found success with a consumers’ cooperative, but later plans for a community recreation centre fell flat, with the area failing to attract the support of residents just weeks after opening. Overall, Naenae residents appeared to prefer individualistic rather than communal living ideals, meaning that the vision for the community shared by Plischke and Robertson was not emulated in reality.
Chapter 5
A Case Study: Aranui and Wainoni

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will begin by providing an history of Aranui and Wainoni, based largely on two general accounts written by local resident Tim Baker (2004; 2007), currently the only author to have published work on Aranui and Wainoni. While Baker’s works are largely social histories, they provide a thorough account of the area prior to the state housing scheme. Following this, the purchase of land by the government for the purpose of housing will be outlined and discussed focusing mainly on landowner Herbert Henry Cook, whose interactions with government officials have been well-documented. The development and design of Aranui and Wainoni following the land purchase is then discussed, with particular attention to multi-units and duplexes, the siting of housing designs, the Group Building Scheme, and the reserve and shopping area. A range of early issues within the subdivision is then discussed, focusing on the concerns with multi-units and duplexes, and the problems with sand denudation.

The area referred to as Aranui and Wainoni is outlined below in figure 9 and has been selected based on existing circumstances and historical scheme plans. It is important to note that during the development of Aranui and Wainoni, the names assigned to these areas were reversed. The area now known as Aranui was labelled the Wainoni Block, whilst the area of Wainoni was labelled the Aranui Block. The Wainoni Block was far larger than the Aranui Block, and consequently received far greater attention from central government.
5.2 History of the Area

5.2.1 The Surrounding Environment

In the late nineteenth century, the land situated between the city centre of Christchurch and the sea-side settlement of New Brighton consisted of low shifting sandhills, “little better than a desert” (Baker, 2004, p. 6). A range of natives were found in the area, including tauhinu, cabbage trees, toitoi, harakeke and native broom (Baker, 2007). As European settlers began to arrive in New Zealand from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, urban populations increased rapidly. Between 1896 and 1926, the urban European population of Christchurch grew from 51,330 to 118,501 (Olssen, 1992). Population growth meant that the urban area of Christchurch city continued to expand outwards from the central city area.

While urban settlement at Aranui and Wainoni was slow prior to government intervention, two nearby suburbs, Bromley and Woolston, demonstrated considerable early development. In 1883, a large wastewater treatment plant was established in Bromley, known to Māori as Ihutai (Deely, 1992). Sewage from the majority of Christchurch suburbs was pumped to the
sandhills at Bromley, treated and discharged into the Avon-Heathcote Estuary. Nearby in Woolston, industry thrived. In the late 1890s, Woolston was home to eleven tanneries and one skinnery, all disposing effluent into the Estuary (Hanson, 2002). By 1900, Woolston was one of the most densely populated suburbs in Christchurch (Morrison, 1948). Once a well-utilised recreation destination, the water in the Avon-Heathcote Estuary became increasingly murkier as effluent from residential suburbs and nearby industries was continually discharged into the water body.

![Figure 10: Map showing Bromley and Woolston in relation to Aranui and Wainoni](source: Google Maps)

The wastewater treatment plant at Bromley, although physically a smaller area of development than the nearby industry at Woolston, became known for its offensive odour and became a point of contention among residents and local authorities for much of the twentieth century.

5.2.2 Urban Development in Aranui and Wainoni

Professor Bickerton, a professor of chemistry at Canterbury College (now Canterbury University), established his home amongst the sandhills of eastern Christchurch during the 1880s and named his eight hectare property Wainoni (‘curve in the river’) Park in reference to the bends and curves of the nearby Avon River (Baker, 2004). The property was located where today’s Bickerton Street runs, between Pages and Wainoni Roads.
The first planned community in the area had its beginnings at Wainoni. Professor Bickerton established the Wainoni Federation, a social experiment focused on developing a cooperative community (Baker, 2004). A number of families moved to Wainoni to live in this form of commune, where residences were separate but facilities such as the kitchen, laundry and dining area were shared (Baker, 2004). Residents were expected to partake in a communal, shared social life in the belief that social unity was “a higher aim than individual success” (Baker, 2004, p. 17). Wainoni Park opened to the public around the turn of the century and became home to a theatre, expansive gardens, a skating rink, merry-go-rounds, sideshows and even a zoo (Baker, 2004). The Park attracted thousands of visitors over the years it was open, however financial losses meant that Wainoni Park closed in 1914 when the property was sold (Baker, 2007).

The name Aranui first appeared in 1911 and is attributed to a house of the same name located on Pages Road (Baker, 2007). In the early twentieth century, Aranui remained largely an expanse of sandhills with little residential development. Potentially as a result of industry at nearby Woolston, Aranui began to attract its own industrial development. By the mid-twentieth century, part of Aranui was zoned for industry, and was home to a mattress factory, a bacon factory, several timber and joinery yards and a large poultry farm as well as a motorcamp and a speedway (Baker, 2007). The former site of Wainoni Park became home to a fireworks factory for a short time, before an explosion closed the business. Together with the offensive odours from the Bromley wastewater treatment plant, the establishment of industry in Aranui and Wainoni may have deterred individuals from purchasing and developing land in the area for residential purposes.

Baker (2007, p. 20) argues that during the period 1947-1952 there was an “extraordinary increase in houses” in the Aranui and Wainoni area, but that “hundreds of acres of ‘back land’ still remained.” Without the relevant statistics, it is difficult to assess just how large the increase was, however the return of servicemen after World War II and the resulting housing crisis around New Zealand suggest that this increase was probably larger than any previous development in the area. Although there was development in small areas, the majority of the Aranui and Wainoni area remained lacking basic infrastructure for water, drainage and fire protection (Baker, 2007). Post-war growth “out-striped the Heathcote County Council’s ability to provide these amenities” (Baker, 2007, p. 20). This was the
situation which presented the government in the early 1950s when the idea of developing a state housing scheme at Aranui and Wainoni began to take shape.

5.3 Land Purchase

“The nature of the country was very undulating, the height of some of the sand ridges being 30ft, with water lying in the hollows between. The land was almost completely covered with gorse and elderberry” (£20,190 compensation, 1958).

In a Press article in 1956, registered valuer Harry Trenowith Penrose argued that subdivision of the Aranui and Wainoni area would result in “an island in the middle of undulating, scrub-covered sandy country, with no transport within half a mile, and shops perhaps three-quarters of a mile distant” and that the area was not “a desirable piece of land for subdivision” (Evidence completed, 1956). Penrose stated that he “would not advise the Crown to buy this block at [his] valuation (£17,374)” (Evidence completed, 1956). In the same article, senior district valuer Alan Patrick Faulds stated that “there [had] always been strong demand for sections in Christchurch … but that [did] not apply for sandy land” (Evidence completed, 1956). These opinions perhaps explain why, in the early 1950s, the area of Aranui and Wainoni remained largely untouched by residential development despite the national housing crisis following the end of World War II. When the government began to proceed with plans to purchase land at Aranui and Wainoni for housing purposes, negotiations included around 40 individual landowners. Of these landowners, one in particular came to define the land purchase process: Herbert Henry Cook.

5.3.1 Cook’s First Offer 1939

Cook first brought Aranui and Wainoni to the attention of central government in 1939. Cook met with Hubert Thomas Armstrong, Minister of Housing, on 30 May 1939 in Christchurch and offered to sell the government approximately 60 acres (24 hectares) of land, made up of his own land and that of his neighbours (Armstrong, 1939). The land offered by Cook covered the former site of Wainoni Park as well as some land on Ottawa and Shortland Streets. But attempting to sell his land was not the only matter Cook raised. Cook informed Armstrong that he had applied for a position as valuer with the Royal Commission and requested that Armstrong have “a little word to Mr Lee Martin” as Cook had no money now that all his sheep runs had gone (Armstrong, 1939). It remains unknown whether Armstrong
conceded to Cook’s request, but future correspondence suggests that Cook was not appointed to the position.

After the meeting, Cook wrote to Armstrong to further advertise the availability of his land in Wainoni and requested that Armstrong organise an inspection of the land (Cook, 1939a). Just nine days later, Cook wrote again, this time including maps and plans of the area. He advised Armstrong that “after paying for roading, levelling, etc., I do not think the sections when subdivided would cost more than £50 each” (Cook, 1939b). Armstrong referred the matter to the Department of Lands and Survey for further investigation.

In July 1939 William Charles Kensington, Commissioner of Crown Lands, wrote to Arthur Tyndall, the Director of Housing Construction, in relation to Cook’s land at Wainoni (Kensington, 1939). Kensington described the land as being “sand dune country” (Kensington, 1939). In order for development to be undertaken, Kensington highlighted three necessary actions: trees would need to be removed and stumped as well as scrub and broom cleared; the ground would need to be levelled either partially or wholly; and finally that the present vegetation would need to be replaced by soil or an alternative sand binding material in order to prevent sand denudation by wind (Kensington, 1939). Kensington advised that there was plenty of available land closer to the city centre which was far more economical to develop and concluded by stating that he did not recommend purchasing the block (Kensington 1939).

In August 1939, in absence of a response to his original letter, Cook wrote again to Armstrong to request an update on the situation, describing the area as being “admirably suited for the Housing Scheme, as the land is high and dry and sunny” and suggesting again that the government could also purchase land off his neighbours (Cook, 1939c). The outlook for development in Wainoni, however, looked bleak with Tyndall stating in a memorandum to the Manager of the State Advances Corporation that there were “several other offerings in Christchurch which … are infinitely to be preferred to Cook’s” (Tyndall, 1939a). This was confirmed by a letter from Tyndall sent to Cook on 27 October 1939, advising that the Department had more suitable areas under investigation and would defer any further consideration of Wainoni (Tyndall, 1939b). The rejection of Cook’s land at Wainoni reflected the principles of the Labour Government at the time. State housing was required to be of high quality, which included the land on which it was placed. Additionally, the government had yet to move into large-scale purchase and development of state housing schemes in the
1930s. This became the standard approach in the 1940s, particularly at the conclusion of World War II.

5.3.2 Cook’s Second Offer 1951

With a change in government from Labour to National and the state showing strong interest in large-scale development of state housing areas, it appears that Cook wrote to the Ministry of Works in 1951 again offering his land for purchase (Sherbrooke, 1951). In response H S Sherbrooke, District Supervisor for the Ministry of Works, requested Cook allow Ministry officials to undertake a topographical survey of the area in order to ascertain whether it was suitable for housing (Sherbrooke, 1951). On 20 June 1952 Cook wrote to Sherbrooke to advise that the land at Wainoni was no longer for sale due to delays with the process (Cook, 1952). Sherbrooke responded within the week to inform Cook that approval had been granted to acquire the land under the Public Works Act 1928, along with other properties, for the purpose of housing (Young, 1952a). Despite his multiple attempts to convince the Government to purchase the land, it appears that Cook was unhappy with this outcome.

5.3.3 Cook’s Resistance

On 20 July 1952, Cook organised a meeting of Wainoni and Aranui landowners to develop a petition to E B Corbett, Minister of Lands, in objection to the price to be paid for land acquired under the Public Works Act (Land for state housing, 1952). The land is described as being in two blocks – 140 acres (56 hectares) at Wainoni (now Aranui) and 28 acres (11 hectares) at Aranui (now Wainoni) (Land for state housing, 1952). Cook wanted the government to pay £500 per acre (0.4 hectares) but the government, after spending nearly 18 months undertaking surveys and negotiations, had indicated they were only willing to pay £70 per acre (0.4 hectares) (Land for state housing, 1952). Cook was not the only landowner unhappy about the prices offered by the government – seven other landowners are quoted in the 1952 Press article as being unhappy with the price they had been offered for their land, although not all objected to the land acquisition.

On 6 August W F Young, District Commissioner of Works, wrote to the Commissioner of Works claiming that Cook had been making “exaggerated statements regarding the price which he paid for the land nearly forty years ago” (Young, 1952b). Young advised that government valuation considered the land to be rough, sandy country and further, that there were no recorded sales of similar back areas at “anything like the price that Mr Cook
has mentioned” (Young, 1952b). To conclude, he states that Cook has “persuaded the owners that a direct approach to the Minister will result in a more favourable price than a formal claim to the Land Valuation Court” (Young, 1952b).

On 23 April 1953 D C Duff, District Land Purchase Officer, wrote to the Chief Land Purchase Officer regarding letters to The Press which had almost certainly been penned by Cook (Duff, 1953a). Duff considered some of the allegations made by Cook to be bordering on libel and argued that the Ministry of Works should publicly respond (Duff, 1953a). Duff did acknowledge that many individuals are “particularly sore” as the land acquisitions occurred at a time when the Government had “practically stated that compulsory acquisition had been abolished” (Duff, 1953a). Duff believed the prices being requested by landowners were unreasonable and that had it not been for Cook’s persistence, many amicable settlements could have occurred (Duff, 1953a). The letter closed by classifying Cook as a “particularly difficult and dangerous type” and suggesting that all future interaction with him be handed through the Crown Solicitor (Duff, 1953a). It is clear from Duff’s letter that by this point Cook had become a considerable impediment to the government’s plans for Aranui and Wainoni.

In 1953 Cook wrote to the Housing Construction Division stating that he had never received an offer in writing for his land and so he had decided to bring three claims before the Land Valuation Court (Duff, 1953b). As the Public Works Act 1928 set out, a landowner who considered the price offered by the government to be unacceptable may enter into negotiations or have the price fixed by the Land Valuation Court. Under this legislation, it is clear that Cook’s proposed plan of action was, in fact, unattainable as this was not what the legislation provided for. Due to the time that had elapsed since the original valuation, the government undertook a new valuation of Cook’s land at Wainoni in early 1954. F E R Noble, District Valuer, prepared a valuation report outlining the main issues with the block of land: the necessary levelling of the sandhills; clearing of vegetation; and the fact that sewerage could not be provided by Christchurch City Council (which had amalgamated with the former Heathcote County Council in 1953) to private subdividors for at least five to ten years (Noble, 1954). Noble advised that “an effort should be made to acquire the property at a figure between £6400 and £7250” but also pointed out that there were virtually no sales of blocks of this nature in Christchurch and that, consequentially, the chances of an immediate sale at the valuation given would not be good (Noble, 1954). Without further research which is not
within the scope of this dissertation it is difficult to assess the fairness of the valuation provided.

Correspondence between Cook and the government continued throughout 1954 with no resolution reached. Another registered valuer, H J Penrose, provided the Government with a valuation of £7400 (Duff, 1954a). Presumably on the basis of this, and the valuation of Noble, Duff wrote to Cook’s solicitor to present an offer of £7500 for the land at Wainoni (Duff, 1954b). Government correspondence in June 1954 suggests that Cook had stated to a number of people that his intention was to cause as much trouble as possible for the Government in order to maximise compensation for his land at Wainoni (Duff, 1954a). It is clear from this correspondence, and others, that the government was growing increasingly frustrated with Cook.

In 1955 updated valuations of Cook’s land were carried out to take into account gross realisation and costs of development. On 9 May F M Hanson, Commissioner of Works, offered Cook’s solicitor a sum of £19,000 for the land at Wainoni (Hanson, 1955). There is no clear explanation in the correspondence available of why the price offered for Cook’s land rose so significantly between 1954 and 1955. Throughout the remainder of 1955, the Government continued to struggle with Cook, who complained to Goosman that government officials had removed his property (trees and a stable) and allowed his mare and foal to escape, despite receiving prior warning two weeks earlier to remove any remaining property before the government began work on the land (Clark, 1955).

Cook initially submitted a claim to the Land Valuation Court for £35,000 in compensation in 1954 before attempting to submit an amended claim of £47,000 in 1955 (£47,000 sought, 1956). Both earlier claims were rejected by the Ministry of Works before Cook was formally offered £19,000 (£47,000 sought, 1956). The North Canterbury Land Valuation Committee heard the claim on 13 April 1956, five years after Cook initiated the sale of his land (£47,000 sought, 1956). The hearing was delayed for eight months due to a Court of Appeal hearing on a similar matter and finally concluded on 12 April 1957 with an offer of £19,230 to Cook (Land taken at Wainoni, 1957). The Crown cross-appealed this decision to the Land Valuation Court on that basis that “the committee had failed to deduct interest in fixing compensation, and that it did not make proper deduction for contingencies on the estimated development costs of £33,500” (£20,190 compensation, 1958). The Court awarded Cook a total of £20,190 on 4 December 1959 (£20,190 compensation, 1958).
5.4 Development and Design

Within the archival material relating to Aranui and Wainoni, there are dozens of plans of the area drawn at different times in the development. Unfortunately, there is very little accompanying explanation for these designs. As a result, I am limited in this section to offering reasoned suggestions for the details of the development and design of Aranui and Wainoni. While these suggestions are based on existing state housing literature, they remain suggestions and should not be considered absolute.

Correspondence originating from Hammond indicates that the original plans for the Aranui and Wainoni area were prepared at the Housing Division’s head office in Wellington and then provided to the Christchurch district office (Hammond, 1954). Minor changes such as amendments to road layouts were then negotiated primarily through discussions with the Council. As a result of this central-led planning process, it is likely that those responsible for drafting the plans had not experienced the area ‘on the ground’ prior to the beginning of development. Lack of such knowledge suggests that the early plans for Aranui and Wainoni were largely based on pre-existing plans for prior developments, rather than knowledge about the existing surrounding environment. This may explain why the area of Aranui and Wainoni, even at the present time, appears particularly self-contained and lacks integration with surrounding suburbs.

Despite the lengthy delay in the negotiations between Cook and the government, other Aranui and Wainoni landowners were not so resistant to the government’s acquisition of their land. A letter from Young to the Acting Manager of the SAC suggested that work would begin in the Aranui Block at the start of winter 1953 (Young, 1953). Towards the end of 1954, a tentative scheme plan of the Wainoni Block (shown below in Figure 11) was submitted to Christchurch City Council’s Housing and Town Planning Committee for comment (City Engineer, 1954). While this plan came to be amended numerous times over the development period, the suburbs of Aranui and Wainoni today are remarkably similar to this early plan drawn in 1954. The development was not without difficulties, and the most significant of these was perhaps the issue of multi-units and duplexes.
5.4.1 Medium Density Housing: Multi-units and Duplexes

In a letter dated 12 October 1954 from Hammond to Sherbrooke, Hammond advised that “provision has been made for sites for terrace houses” in Aranui and Wainoni and that agreement to this type of dwelling should be sought from the Christchurch City Council when the final subdivision plans were submitted for approval (Hammond, 1954). It is clear from this letter that medium density housing was included in the design of the area from an early date. The approval of terraced housing in a suburban development is a stark contrast to the views of John A Lee in the 1930s. Lee considered the English-style terraced housing abhorrent and worked to ensure that New Zealand’s state housing scheme consisted largely of detached, individual units on sizeable sections (Shaw, 2003). The proposal for terraced housing in Aranui and Wainoni was likely a result of the government’s housing policy at the time which stated that one fifth of all state houses were to be multi-units.

The multi-units and duplexes built in Aranui and Wainoni were designed by government architect Fred Newman, an internationally recognised Austrian immigrant (New type of flats, c.1956). Formerly Friedrich Neumann, Newman arrived in New Zealand in 1939 as a Jewish
refugee (along with other notable government architects such as Ernst Plischke) and anglicised his name in order to ease his transition into a cautious, wartime society (Leach, 2003). In a *Press* article, Newman claimed the ‘no-lift flats’ were considerably cheaper than taller structures and appeared more suitable for the New Zealand way of life (New type of flats, c.1956). The article advertises the units as making “full use of the section width”, requiring thirty per cent less road frontage than traditional row houses and raising densities to approximately 80 people per acre (New type of flats, c.1956). In retrospect, these apparent benefits appear to be some of the most common complaints of the dwellings.

In December of 1954 the Housing Construction Division received a letter from the Council’s City Engineer advising that approval had not been granted by the Housing and Town Planning Committee for residential buildings containing more than two units (City Engineer, 1954). This is perhaps the beginning of the tense relationship between central government, supporters of medium density housing, and the Christchurch City Council, largely unsupportive of medium density housing in suburban areas.

In a letter from Sherbrooke advising Hammond of the Council’s decision, Sherbrooke proposed “to endeavour to change the City Council’s views [on four-unit dwellings] by further discussions on the matter” (Sherbrooke, 1955). The way in which the issue of multi-unit housing is addressed by Sherbrooke suggests that, in early 1955, he did not consider the Council’s views a significant impediment to the government’s plans. The next available correspondence regarding multi-units and duplexes occurred on 29 June 1956 when Sherbrooke wrote to the Council’s City Engineer. Enclosed was a plan (shown below in Figure 12) detailing the proposed siting of multi-unit houses near the shopping centre on the corner of Portsmouth and Hampshire Streets (Sherbrooke, 1956a). Sherbrooke explained to the City Engineer that it was felt that “a certain proportion of multi-units in a large Housing subdivision is needed to satisfy a demand for this type of accommodation”, suggesting that such units had been or would be popular with tenants (Sherbrooke, 1956a). The units, Sherbrooke argued, “would create a focal point in the centre of the block which would encourage people to use the shops and community centre” (Sherbrooke, 1956a). The remainder of Sherbrooke’s argument focused on explaining that multi-units made more effective use of serviced land than traditional detached family homes and helped to control urban sprawl, an issue of particular concern in Christchurch (Sherbrooke, 1956a). At a time when the National Government was struggling to balance the state housing budget and cost
reductions were occurring frequently, it is perhaps this section of Sherbrooke’s letter which is the most revealing of the motivations of central government to include provision for medium density housing.

The Housing Construction Division’s frustrations with the Council began to creep into the tone of correspondence during 1956. On 11 July Hammond wrote to Sherbrooke asking whether the Council’s attitude to four-house units had been defined (Hammond, 1956). Sherbrooke, perhaps feeling the pressure from his superior, responded on 18 July that a tentative site plan showing four-units near the shopping centre had been submitted to the Council for approval and that he felt confident that the proposals would be approved (Sherbrooke, 1956b). Sherbrooke’s confidence was not misplaced. The siting plan in Figure 12 was provisionally approved by the Council on 17 July 1956, on the understanding that the Council would not permit sale of individual units (City Engineer, 1956). Without evidence, it is difficult to assess the Government’s reaction to such a restriction. However, taking into consideration the campaign to sell state houses which ran concurrently to the development of Aranui and Wainoni, it seems likely that the Government was not particularly appeased by the Council’s restriction of sale.

Although the provisional approval was a step forward for central government, debate continued with the Council. On 30 July 1957 Sherbrooke provided the City Engineer with three final scheme plans showing the proposed siting of multi-units and duplexes for the whole Wainoni Block, schemed in compliance with the Council’s bylaws (Sherbrooke, 1957).
A magnified section of one of these plans showing proposed multi-units on Hampshire Street can be found below in Figure 13.

The City Engineer advised Sherbrooke of the approval of these plans but, again, this approval was contingent on further restrictions (City Engineer, 1957). In order to gain full approval, the Council required that each block of duplex units would consist of no more than six units (an extension of the objection to four-unit dwellings in 1954) and that each block would have a five foot (1.5 metre) side court provided at each end (City Engineer, 1957). The final point of contention between the government and the Council was the zoning of land as ‘Residential B’. While it is unclear from the correspondence what the specifications of this zone were, it appears that there was only provision for multi-units and duplexes within ‘Residential B’ zones. Consequently, after the Council zoned a number of sections ‘Residential B’ based on the government’s original request, in October 1958 Sherbrooke requested further areas be included in this zone (Sherbrooke, 1958). This was in response to another increase by the government in the proportion of multi-units to be built as part of the state housing programme from a fifth to a third of all state houses built in 1957 and from a third to half in 1958 (Jebson, 1958). Additionally, there were concerns over issues of urban sprawl in the Christchurch area which it was felt by central government could begin to be addressed by building ‘up’ rather than ‘out’ in the future (Build upwards, 1956). In the plan shown below in Figure 14, the areas outlined in green were already zoned ‘Residential B’.
while the areas outlined in red represented areas requiring zoning ‘Residential B’. Orange lines indicate the areas owned by the government at that time.

Figure 14: Areas zoned and to be zoned ‘Residential B’ 1958

The first duplex unit, constructed by the Fletcher Construction Company and located on Hampshire Street, was opened at 2.30pm on 4 October 1958 by Fox, Minister of Housing ([Letter to Director of Housing Construction: Re visit of Hon Mr W A Fox to Christchurch], 1958). The event seems to have been a quiet affair, far removed from the fanfare of Savage’s opening of the first state house in 1932.

5.4.2 The Siting of Housing Designs

Throughout the state housing programme, central government employed both internal and external architects to produce designs for houses. Approved designs were assigned a code and added to a central plan book held by the government. While the details of this process remain unclear, it seems that when drawing up detailed plans for subdivisions government officials selected designs from the plan book and arranged them on scheme plans. Schrader
(2005) suggests that the siting of housing design was to ensure houses faced the sun and to avoid monotony in streetscape. In the case of the Wainoni Block, detailed plans laid out which type of house would be placed on each individual section for large areas of the subdivision. Each individual house plan reflected and was accompanied by the design code for that particular house type.

Promoting diverse neighbourhoods and avoiding monotony were key components of the state housing programme of the 1930s. Lee in particular was determined that no two houses within a particular area would be of the same design in order to avoid monotony (Shaw, 2003). As is evidenced by the plan shown below in Figure 15 there is a clear pattern of ‘pairs’ in the plans for the Wainoni Block. For example, the house designs on sections 61 and 62 are the same. In the case of sections 99 to 101, the house design is repeated three times in a row. It appears that sometime between Labour’s state housing programme in the 1930s and National’s state housing programme in the 1950s and 1960s, Lee’s guideline for having no two houses the same in an area ceased to be implemented. While there are certainly a range of housing designs at use within the plan in Figure 15, the frequency of pairs or even trios of houses of the same design suggests a certain monotony.

![Figure 15: Section of Mattingley Street showing proposed housing designs](Image)

**Source:** Block Aranui. (1957). [Plan]. Archives New Zealand (Record code R22246719), Christchurch.
While there is no explanation in the accompanying correspondence for the placing of these housing designs, it is unlikely to have occurred by chance. With housing shortages and extraordinary levels of demand facing the National Government, it is possible that this approach to the planning of subdivisions was a result of short timeframes. As the planning profession was only just beginning to find its feet during the 1950s, there may also have been a lack of appropriately trained professionals to undertake such work. Whatever the reasoning behind the use of such a pattern, the tendency to repeat housing designs on adjacent sections occurs throughout Aranui and Wainoni. As shown in Figure 16 below, this pattern appears again with a set of three duplexes on Portsmouth Street, near Hampshire Street and the shopping centre. The design occurring on these sections is C17/41.

![Figure 16: Plan for duplexes on Portsmouth Street](image)

**Source:** Wainoni Block Christchurch. (1967). [Plan]. Archives New Zealand (Record code R22246719), Christchurch.

While it is often unclear to what extent these plans were implemented in reality, in the case of the three duplexes on Portsmouth Street it appears that reality mirrored what had been laid down in the plans. In 1960 a photo was taken of the newly constructed duplexes, shown below in Figure 17. It seems undeniable that the choice to repeat this particular housing design has resulted in monotony, from the housing design itself to the colour schemes and landscaping. Although efforts have been made to increase the aesthetic appeal of these duplexes through gardens and variation in external paint colours, the end result is three identical units which, by the lack of fences and standard issue letterboxes, are instantly recognisable as state houses.
While many of these examples, such as the Portsmouth Street duplexes, have been removed and replaced with newer, more modern state houses and private dwellings, there are still areas within which the original houses remain, just as they were planned in the 1950s and 1960s. It is difficult to know with certainty whether the rather clumsy siting of housing designs in Aranui and Wainoni impacted on the reputation of the area, but it seems unlikely to have had a positive effect.

5.4.3 The Group Building Scheme

Large areas of Aranui and Wainoni were transferred from the Ministry of Works to the Lands and Survey Department for the Group Building Scheme. The scheme, which was not more than a few years old when incorporated into plans for Aranui and Wainoni, was seen by the government as a way of encouraging the construction of affordable houses as well as supporting the building industry by providing employment. Additionally, the scheme meant that the government was not solely responsible for the costs of housing construction, assisting the government to reduce its significant debt in this area. By shifting the construction of houses back into the private sector the government remained committed to slowly withdrawing from the state housing programme throughout the 1950s and 1960s. It is difficult to ascertain exactly how many sections resulted in houses constructed by the Group Building Scheme, however as is clear from the plan below in Figure 18, Group Building was an integral component of the development of Aranui and Wainoni.
5.4.4 The Reserve and Shopping Centre

The reserve area (now known as Wainoni Park) and shopping centre were components of the design of Aranui and Wainoni that appear in the earliest plans. Although the design of this area was amended a number of times over the course of the development, the main aspects (such as the shop sites, rugby fields and community centre) appear in Aranui today as they were represented in the plans. Correspondence during the 1950s between Sherbrooke and Hammond suggests that the broad vision for the subdivision was to have the reserve and shopping centre as a centre point surrounded by medium density housing to encourage use of the facilities, while the areas outlying this immediate ring (namely Hampshire, Portsmouth and Aldershot Streets) would be developed into traditional detached, single unit dwellings (Sherbrooke, 1956a).
While most of the Aranui and Wainoni development appears to have been in line with the government policy of the time, the reserve and shopping centre were not. Upon entering office in 1949, Prime Minister Holland immediately discarded the concept of comprehensively planned suburbs such as Naenae in favour of focusing solely on residential development – building houses for New Zealanders (Ferguson, 1994). Despite this opposition to the inclusion of services such as shops within planned subdivisions, Aranui became home to not only 18 planned shop sites, but a community centre, kindergarten and a Plunket centre. The reason for this may lie in the comments of valuers at the time of development. In 1956, registered valuer Penrose told the North Canterbury Land Valuation Committee that there was no transport available within half a mile (0.8 kilometres) of the Wainoni Block and the closest shops were three quarters of a mile (1.2 kilometres) away (Evidence completed, 1956). This distance may have convinced the government to include provision for a shopping centre. The natalist approach of the government to planning subdivisions in the post-war era may explain the inclusion of a kindergarten and Plunket centre but no general health clinic. Although the aspects of community planning in Aranui were not nearly as extensive as those included in the development of Naenae, there are similarities in that both developments, despite their considerable difference in size, were provided with shops and a community centre.

Figure 19: Church sites in Aranui c.1958

Figure 19 shows a portion of a scheme plan for the Wainoni Block around 1958. A notable part of this plan is the four possible church sites shown within the immediate vicinity of the shopping centre. In a later plan, the church sites in the bottom half of the plan were
replaced with housing, while the church opposite the shopping centre was identified as a site for the Salvation Army, and the church near the bowling green was identified as a site for the Church of England (Miniature Wainoni Block HDC 31238, 1956). In the present day, the only church in this area is the Salvation Army, but it is located on the proposed Church of England site. There appears to have been a considerable amount of time spent on the planning of this area of Aranui, and it is consistently referred to throughout government correspondence as the focal point of the development. As the inclusion of such an area appears to have been contradictory to government belief at the time, it would be useful in the future to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the planning of this area.

5.5 Early Issues

Issues within Aranui and Wainoni appeared even before the subdivision was complete. Some were reported through official channels, through property supervisors, while others appear in the media, particularly in newspaper articles. The most significant issues which appear in the archival material referenced fall largely into two categories: multi-units and duplexes, and landscaping.

5.5.1 Multi-Units and Duplexes

Concerns about multi-units and duplexes in Aranui were raised as early as 1959, partway through the development of the area. M Connelly, a Member of Parliament for Riccarton, Christchurch, wrote to Prime Minister Nash in 1959 criticising multi-units and duplexes constructed on Hampshire Street in 1958, the first duplexes built in Aranui and Wainoni (Connelly, 1959). Connelly’s criticisms, a result of discussions with the tenants of these dwellings, fell into four categories: tenure of flats; architectural defects; layout of grounds; and defects in workmanship (Connelly, 1959). Tenants believed that multi-units and duplexes were unsuitable as permanent family homes and so should be regarded as “transit housing” wherein a tenant who had occupied such a unit for a set period should be eligible for transferring into “the more usual type of State accommodation” (Connelly, 1959). The architectural defects related mainly to two issues of concern. Firstly, the lack of fences in these units meant outdoor areas were treated as communal areas where children played regardless of where their families resided, sometimes removing toys which did not belong to them and other times disturbing tenants (Connelly, 1959). Secondly, the lack of soundproofing between units meant that tenants were able to hear noise such as
conversations and radios from adjoining units (Connelly, 1959). The layout of the grounds was regarded as an issue due to the difficulty in cultivating lawns and gardens in such sandy soil, particularly for inexperienced gardeners (Connelly, 1959). In relation to defects in workmanship, Connelly states that “every imaginable defect was pointed out, from cracks in woodwork to uneven paintwork” (Connelly, 1959). Several tenants held the opinion that the workmanship was “shoddy” and that units were draughty, cold, lacked privacy and had bedrooms far too small in size (Connelly, 1959). It is clear from Connelly’s findings that a number of tenants were unimpressed with Newman’s multi-units and duplexes, and that the traditional single unit, detached dwelling was considered the most favourable housing type.

Connelly’s criticisms received attention from central government. In a letter from Hanson, Commissioner of Works, to the Minister of Housing, Hanson claimed that tenants allocated units over detached houses had a “sharper eye for faults and less tolerance towards imperfections” due to their disappointment in housing allocation (Hanson, 1959). Hanson admitted that the first duplexes erected some time ago were unpopular, but that duplexes in 1959 were “accepted as part and parcel of the State housing programme” (Hanson, 1959). Somewhat contradictorily, Hanson then acknowledged that the initial occupancy of nearly every new block of duplexes resulted in a “spate of complaints” which were sometimes given press publicity (Hanson, 1959). Hanson stated that many of the design and layout defects noted by Connelly “could only be remedied by additional expenditure which would take the flats into a costlier bracket than can be justified in view of the comparatively low rents charged” (Hanson, 1959). This line in particularly seems to show Hanson acknowledging that there were, in fact, defects with the design and layout of duplexes but that these were considered unimportant to the government due to the low rents charged for the dwellings. On a more positive note, Hanson concluded by advising that some of the defects in workmanship noted by Connelly were receiving attention (Hanson, 1959).

Another duplex unit in Hampshire Street was cause for concern in 1967. The Assistant District Valuer wrote to the Manager (presumably of the State Advances Corporation) regarding the difficulty in reletting three blocks of duplex units (12 units) located on Hampshire Street (Assistant District Valuer, 1967). The Assistant District Valuer outlined a number of reasons for this: lessening demand for housing in Christchurch; the fact that Wainoni was not a favoured area; the problem of sand; communal entrances and stairways in duplexes; and the lack of privacy of these units (Assistant District Valuer, 1967).
5.5.2 Landscaping

As early as 1939, it was clear that the issue of Aranui and Wainoni’s traditionally sandy landscape would pose some concerns for residential development, particularly in terms of sand denudation (Kensington, 1939). These concerns were justified, with a significant issue arising in the early 1960s regarding the effect of erosion on properties, namely duplexes. In 1963, a report by H E Leeburn, Assistant District Property Supervisor, was sent to the Manager (presumably of the Housing Division’s branch office in Christchurch, although this is unclear) outlining issues with state rental houses relating to wind damage and sand erosion (Leeburn, 1963). The reports included a number of photos, shown below in Figure 20.

Leeburn stated that while “the great majority of tenants” had purchased clay and soil in order to establish lawns and gardens, one property in particular, unit number 36 of Hampshire Street, had not and the effects of wind erosion were significant (Leeburn, 1963). The severity of the damage was attributed to the fact that the unit housed a single mother with four children who was physically and financially unable to develop the land in the manner that many other tenants had (Leeburn, 1963). Leeburn recommended the Housing Division undertake land development to prevent such damage to state rental properties (Leeburn, 1963).

![Figure 20: Wind damage and sand erosion in Hampshire Street 1963](Image)

Source: Leeburn, 1963

Leeburn’s report and accompanying photographs instigated a survey of the rest of the Wainoni Block to assess ground conditions at state rental houses. The survey revealed that
while the Hampshire Street unit was the worst affected, there were concerns with other properties on Hampshire Street, Lyndhurst Crescent, Gosport Street and Aldershot Street (State rental housing – Wainoni Block, 1963). As a result of this survey, Leeburn wrote to the Manager and raised an important point:

“If the State moves in to single unit properties and develops the ground in cases where tenants have refused to do anything we must expect claims from the tenants who have spent their own money on buying clay and/or soil as the majority have done and with excellent results in most cases” (State rental housing – Wainoni Block, 1963).

The Manager wrote to the Ministry of Works to discuss this issue further (Manager, c.1963). In this letter, it was highlighted that the branch solicitor did not think that the ‘cultivation’ clause in the State’s standard tenancy agreement was able to be extended to require tenants to undertake the necessary ground development (Manager, c.1963). This refers to earlier correspondence wherein the government attempted to ascertain whether tenants could be required to develop the sections of their state rental houses by laying down clay and top soil through provisions in the tenancy agreements (Cullen, 1963). Despite this advice, the Manager stated that “as a first approach we have been endeavoursing to actuate tenants as if the cultivation clause did so extend” (Manager, c.1963). In regard to multi-units, the Manager advised that the Ministry of Works should “include ground development as a matter of course in any future multi unit contracts in the Wainoni block”, but was quick to request that no further multi-units be considered at that time (Manager, c.1963).
5.6 Earthquake Implications

Four significant earthquakes hit Canterbury in 2010 and 2011. The most destructive of these was the 22 February earthquake of magnitude 6.3, which caused extensive damage to the central city and the eastern suburbs, and resulted in the loss of 181 lives. This series of earthquakes brought Aranui and Wainoni to the attention of the media. The area has received considerable damage from the earthquakes, particularly to services infrastructure such as sewerage, water pipes and electricity connections. Immediately following the 22 February earthquake, Aranui and Wainoni residents were without power for over a week and many are still struggling with inconsistent water and sewage provision.
Media reports concerning Aranui and Wainoni since the 22 February earthquake have covered a range of topics. In the months following the earthquake, residents voiced their discontent with being “forgotten” by central government and requested more help in terms of access to water and sewage facilities (Locals step up, 2011). An article from early March 2011 described Aranui as “a suburb in limbo – a relatively poor area that is feeling the pinch without power, water or sewerage” (Locals step up, 2011). More recently, potentially suspicious house fires have occurred in Aranui, raising concerns that areas where there are high numbers of abandoned houses after the earthquakes are becoming the target of arson (Overnight house fires, 2011).

![Row of abandoned houses on the damaged Aldershot Street](image)

**Figure 23:** Row of abandoned houses on the damaged Aldershot Street  
**Source:** Taken by author

While nearly all the land within the general Aranui and Wainoni area has been zoned green by the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority, houses within the area have suffered significant damage. This damage, alongside the pre-existing social problems and stigma, has raised concerns over the suitability of the area for future residential development, largely in the areas close to the Avon River. Although there are no statistics available, there appears to be a considerable rate of abandonment within Aranui and Wainoni. Walking or driving around the area reveals that, while the land itself may be suitable for rebuilding, the damage to houses and streets and the loss of community that has occurred may not be easily or quickly fixed. Although Bexley has become perhaps the most well-known eastern suburb in Christchurch, neighbouring Aranui and Wainoni have been dealt a significant blow.
As state houses continue to make up a large proportion of the houses in Aranui and Wainoni, decisions will have to be made by central Government. Will state houses be rebuilt? If so, what will they look like? Although the circumstances are anything but positive, the Canterbury earthquakes have provided a unique opportunity to address the issues present in Aranui and Wainoni. Further research on the area will be required in order to understand how the area came to be so stigmatised and how this may be avoided in the future.

5.7 Summary

Prior to development, the Aranui and Wainoni area was largely sandhills with some industry and little residential development. Although originally offered the land in 1939 by landowner Cook, it was not until 1952 that the government used the Public Works Act 1928 to acquire large blocks of land in the area. Despite the attempts of Cook to delay the process in hopes of increasing the price paid by the government for the land, construction began in the area in 1954. Although there is little explanation in the archival material available of the specific planning of the area, it is clear that medium density housing, the reserve and the shopping centre were included in the design from the outset. The design and development of Aranui and Wainoni reflected the change in the government’s housing policies from the 1930s and 1940s, with lack of regard to the siting of houses and increasing multi-units and duplexes constructed. Issues arose within the area before construction was even complete, predominantly regarding multi-units and duplexes, and lack of landscaping. As a result of the Canterbury earthquakes, there is an opportunity for Aranui and Wainoni to learn from the mistakes of the past and move into a new, more positive era.
Chapter 6
Conclusion

6.1 State Housing in New Zealand

In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, a number of events with international significance impacted upon the societies and political agendas of the Western world. As a result of industrialisation, cities in Great Britain and the United States suffered increasingly poor living conditions as a result of overcrowding and lack of sanitation. By the turn of the century, concerns over the state of urban areas had become a priority for governments, and New Zealand was no different. Although the first state houses built in 1905 and known as workers’ dwellings proved unpopular with workers, the initiation of this state-funded housing scheme set the scene for years to come. The First Labour Government’s extensive state housing programme was initiated in 1935 when the party took office and began constructing state rental houses for skilled workers in order to address a housing crisis. These original houses were considered to be of high quality and were scattered throughout existing urban areas. Labour’s state housing programme housed thousands of New Zealanders and substantially improved the existing housing stock in the country. In the 1940s due to demand for housing the government began to purchase and develop large tracts of land, moving from state-funded houses into state-funded subdivisions. As time went by, rent inequalities between state houses and private accommodation distorted the housing market, and discriminatory tenant selection processes angered the New Zealand public, leading to a change in government.

From 1949 the First National Government promoted homeownership through the sale of state houses to tenants. Additionally, an income limit was established so state housing was redirected towards the poorer members of society rather than skilled workers, an important ideological shift. With Labour leaving the state housing account in significant debt, National worked to reduce costs by producing new, low-cost housing designs and making efficient use of land by building higher density housing than was seen under Labour. By 1958 the proportion of multi-units and duplexes built increased to half of all state houses built. Attitudes to state housing, which had been predominantly positive during the 1930s and 1940s, began to change in the 1950s. During the 1950s, the government demonstrated
through its policies and decision-making that it was not invested in the ideology which surrounded the state houses of the 1930s. By the end of the 1960s, state housing areas were regarded as ghettos or slums by many New Zealanders. Schrader (2005) believes this change in perception was due to the downgrading of the scheme within the Ministry of Works and wider government; the creation of large, low-income, single-class suburbs; and the construction of thousands of multi-units and duplexes which were seen as inferior to single unit detached dwellings.

The development of Naenae provides an interesting point of comparison for the discussion of Aranui and Wainoni. Extensively studied by historian Ben Schrader, the development of Naenae came as part of a larger development programme for the Hutt Valley. Ernst Plischke’s plans for Naenae were modelled off an American development, Radburn, that contained a number of principles derived from Ebenezer Howard’s garden city theory. Plischke and later Robertson both attempted to instil a form of community planning in the development of the area, however residents proved uninterested in such plans. As a result, the reality of Naenae was not the close-knit community desired by Plischke and Robertson but a fairly typical New Zealand suburb in which residents favoured individual ideals over communal aspirations. Initial attitudes towards Naenae were positive, but during the 1950s this began to change, perhaps reflecting the more general shift to negative perceptions of state housing within New Zealand society.

6.2 Aranui and Wainoni

The discussion of the evolution of Aranui and Wainoni in the previous chapter suggests that the area was predominantly planned in line with the housing policies of the government of the time. This research has suggested that there were a number of factors present in the early years of the development which contributed to the unpopularity of Aranui and Wainoni. The land purchased for development was considered by valuers to be low quality, consisting of sandhills and sand dunes. The location of the residential development was close to the Bromley wastewater treatment plant, a source of highly unpleasant odours, and Woolston, a well-developed industrial area. The lack of residential development in the area prior to the government’s land purchase suggested that the area was not particularly desirable to private residential developers. The houses built at Aranui and Wainoni were of newer, cheaper design than the popular state houses of the 1930s and early 1940s and consisted of a number of highly unpopular multi-units and duplexes which, as shown by
Schrader (1993b) and McCallum (1975), were considered to be inferior to traditional single unit, detached dwellings. By the 1950s and 1960s private homeowners were moving away from the traditional brick-and-tile houses of Labour’s state housing scheme, which may have led to perception of Aranui and Wainoni as being out of date or unfashionable.

More broadly, the planning of Aranui and Wainoni reflected the lack of political will of the First National Government. This lack of support was demonstrated clearly through comments by Hanson, Commissioner of Works, in response to criticisms of multi-unit and duplex housing in Aranui’s Hampshire Street. Hanson’s comments (discussed in section 5.5.1) suggested that the government was unwilling to spend any more than was necessary on low-rent state housing areas. Furthermore, Hanson’s comments imply that the government was aware that there were housing and layout defects in the design of the subdivision, but that there was a lack of support and willingness to address these defects as the houses would only be returning low rents. It is unclear whether the government’s stance reflected public feeling regarding the ‘undeserving poor’ or whether public feeling about the ‘undeserving poor’ originated as a result of the government’s approach to housing the poor. Either way it seems clear that by the end of the 1960s the government was disinterested in providing high quality housing for New Zealand’s low income earners, and the public was firmly attached to their perception of state housing areas as the home of misfits, losers and bludgers.

6.3 Future Research

Throughout the process of this research, a number of areas of future study have been revealed. Particularly notable are the influence of American ideas and culture on planning in New Zealand, and the evolution of Aranui and Wainoni.

6.3.1 American Influences

During the 1950s, American culture came to have a strong influence on New Zealand culture, from new forms of music to clothing and language. Despite the acceptance of this influence in social histories of New Zealand, there has been little recognition of the American influence on planning in New Zealand. Cameron (1947, cited in Schrader, 1993b) stated in 1947 in regard to the town planning Acts of the 1920s that New Zealand’s statutory position at that time was a combination of English and American influences modified to suit the conditions of New Zealand. This suggests that the legislation which formed the foundation of the
planning profession in New Zealand was influenced by American thinking, yet this is a concept which has received little academic attention. Schrader (1993b) addresses this issue briefly in his thesis when he discusses the influence of the Radburn development on the plans for Naenae, however it seems that such a topic requires a more focused, in depth study.

6.3.2 Aranui and Wainoni

It is hoped that the research undertaken for this dissertation has provided a useful starting point for future study. Due to the limitations outlined in section 1.5, this dissertation was unable to go further than building an appropriate foundation for studying Aranui and Wainoni more extensively. The archival material relied on in this document is not a comprehensive body – there are likely many additional sources which would shed light on the development of Aranui and Wainoni that were not discovered in the course of this research. In order to begin to understand how the area came to be so stigmatised, further study into the development of the area beyond 1970 is necessary.
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Appendix A
Excerpts from posts made on public internet forums regarding the Eastern Christchurch suburb of Aranui

Only a hurricane could make Aranui any better

Avoid Aranui, Linwood, anything on the eastern side of town really unless you are in a gang

its gang central

Aranui... typically known in Christchurch as “the bronx”

Stay away from Aranui I wouldn’t live in Aranui

i wouldn’t even get out of my car [in Aranui] let alone live there

Don’t do Aranui! (scary) unless you like graffiti and broken

Property statistics show Aranui to be a very rundown, low-socio-economic area with a high rate of dysfunctional behaviour

Would I live in Aranui...ummm... nope... it’s a very depressing area, all those WW2 state houses, yuk

DON’T EVEN GO THERE!!! STAY AWAY!!!! you are asking for trouble

We drove round the back streets of Hampshire Street... It was like driving through the Once Were Warriors set

its been the asshole of christchurch since 1950

Cars and crap in peoples yards, little kids walking around with no supervision, vicious dogs wandering, patched gang members staring at us, etc

couldn’t pay me to live down [Hampshire Street]

[Christchurch] still is safe outside the slum areas Philipstown, Linwood and Aranui... you put all the low life in one area you are going to get trouble

Don’t live in Aranui
## Appendix B

### Notable People

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Armstrong, Hubert Thomas</td>
<td>Minister of Housing</td>
<td>1938-1942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook, Herbert Henry</td>
<td>Wainoni landowner</td>
<td>1930s-1950s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corbett, Ernest Bowyer</td>
<td>Minister of Lands</td>
<td>1949-1957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duff, D C</td>
<td>District Land Purchase Officer (Chch)</td>
<td>1950s</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fletcher, James</td>
<td>Fletcher Construction Company Commissioner of Works</td>
<td>1919-1942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fox, Bill</td>
<td>Minister of Housing</td>
<td>1957-1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goosman, W S</td>
<td>Minister of Works</td>
<td>1948-1957</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hammond, Reginald Bedford</td>
<td>Town Planner, HCD, Director of Housing Division</td>
<td>1939-40s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanson, Frederick Melrose</td>
<td>Commissioner of Works</td>
<td>1955-1961</td>
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<tr>
<td>Holland, Sidney</td>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
<td>1949-1957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holyoake, Keith</td>
<td>Prime Minster</td>
<td>1960-1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jebson, J V</td>
<td>Director of Housing</td>
<td>Late 1950s</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kensington, William Charles</td>
<td>Commissioner of Crown Land</td>
<td>Late 1930s</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lee, John A</td>
<td>Under-Secretary to the Minister of Finance</td>
<td>1935-1939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leeburn, H E</td>
<td>Assistant Director of Property Services Ministry of Works – Christchurch Office</td>
<td>1960s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynch, Mr</td>
<td>Ministry of Works – Christchurch Office</td>
<td>Mid 1950s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massey, William</td>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
<td>1912-1925</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mawson, John</td>
<td>Town Planning Officer</td>
<td>1937-1947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nash, Walter</td>
<td>Minister of Finance</td>
<td>1935-1940</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Position</td>
<td>Period</td>
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<tr>
<td>Noble, F E R</td>
<td>District Valuer</td>
<td>Mid 1950s</td>
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<tr>
<td>Orange, Mr</td>
<td>Wainoni/Aranui landowner</td>
<td>1950s</td>
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<tr>
<td>Penrose, Harry Trenowith</td>
<td>Registered Valuer</td>
<td>Mid 1950s</td>
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<td>Plischke, Ernst</td>
<td>Architect</td>
<td>1939-1963</td>
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<td>Savage, Michael</td>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
<td>1935-1940</td>
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<td>Seddon, Richard</td>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
<td>1893-1906</td>
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<td>Sherbrooke, H S</td>
<td>District Supervisor (Chch) Ministry of Works</td>
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<td>Tyndall, Arthur</td>
<td>Director of Housing Construction Division</td>
<td>1936-1940</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ward, Joseph</td>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
<td>1906-1912</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wilson, Gordon</td>
<td>Chief Architect, HCD</td>
<td>1936-1959</td>
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<tr>
<td>Young, W F</td>
<td>District Commissioner of Works</td>
<td>1950s</td>
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