



**Media release
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Ashburton bridge protest goes legal

Ashburton ratepayers unhappy with the prospect of a busy, noisy traffic bridge on their doorsteps are taking their concerns to one of the country's top legal minds.

The newly named 'Bridge Action Group', comprising Tinwald residents and other concerned parties, is taking advice from Nick Davidson QC on how best to safeguard their pleasant residential neighbourhood.

In March the Ashburton District Council publicly signaled its intention to use Grove Street as part of the traffic bypass onto a second bridge across the Ashburton River.

The council has indicated traffic flows down Grove St and surrounding streets could increase from a maximum of 500 vehicles per day to more than 9000 per day.

Since then, residents have made their feelings clear through vigorous public meetings, letters to the editor and appeals to council staff and elected members.

Bridge Action Group spokeswoman Diane Rawlinson said it appeared elected council members had been rushed into making a decision without all the facts, and more importantly, without the community consultation promised last year.

"We are struggling to see the rationale for Grove St suddenly becoming the preferred route. It wasn't on the table in November and then it was voted on behind closed doors at the end of February. Despite many conversations, the council isn't disclosing its motive so we have had to take the matter higher."

The group met with Mr Davidson in Ashburton this week.

Bridge Action Group member Ann Craig said the Tinwald residential area was unsuitable for a road connecting to a heavy traffic permitted bridge.

"Grove Street won't handle the traffic. My husband helped build this road in the 1970s and there are problems with its underlying foundation under a much smaller traffic volume than what the council wants to push down here.

"It's not a matter of 'not in my backyard' as some rural people further east are agreeable to having a new wide bridge access road near their properties. It's nonsense to try and fit that amount of traffic on standard-width residential streets like Grove, Wilkin, Agnes, Manchester Streets etc.

"Let alone the noise and pollution, it is not safe to have that number of vehicles including trucks, whipping past our primary school and kindergarten which would essentially be trapped between two arterial routes.

"It's great that the council is now consulting, but we know a "preferred site" decision is hard to shift. Any consultation now is after the event, and too little too late as far as the group is concerned."