

Before an Independent Hearings Panel

The Proposed Waikato District Plan (Stage 1)

IN THE MATTER OF the Resource Management Act 1991 (**RMA**)

IN THE MATTER OF hearing submissions and further submissions on the Proposed
Waikato District Plan (Stage 1):

Topic 25 – Zone Extents

**HIGHLIGHTS PACKAGE
ROBERT JAMES PRYOR ON BEHALF OF POKENO WEST LTD**

(Landscape and Visual)

11 May 2021

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1. SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

- 1.1 The proposed urbanisation of the Munro Block (“the **Site**”) would significantly change its current open rural landscape character. The development would however be consistent with the majority of the Site being zoned Residential with urban expansion envisaged in the PWDP.
- 1.2 Although the Site is largely in open pasture, its ‘rural’ character is lessened to a degree by the existing land uses, relatively degraded pasture, and adjacent proximity to the Pokeno urban residential area. While the Site includes some productive land, it is a modified degraded site with relatively low landscape values, other than the SNA’s. In light of these considerations the Site is well suited to the type of urban development proposed.
- 1.3 The proposed urbanisation of the land would inevitably result in the transformation of the site from a fringe rural area to a mixed density urban residential area. This would have implications on the surrounding rural land to the west and south, with the urban development impacting on the rural qualities of these areas. Nevertheless, this is a landscape in transition and is an area designated for urban expansion in the foreseeable future.
- 1.4 Because of the size and nature of the development and the anticipated eventual urbanisation of the area, rather than trying to screen the development or create significant buffers to the adjacent rural areas, the approach has been to accept the change and attempt to develop the Site in accordance with accepted urban design principles to create a quality residential development with a high level of amenity, albeit an urban amenity.
- 1.5 The change from the existing semi-rural character of this landscape to one dominated by the built form of a residential area would also introduce a range of beneficial effects, including:
 - a) Enhancement of the stream corridors including physical and ecological connections to the Tanetiwhiora Stream; and
 - b) Extensive framework of planting including riparian stream planting and specimen trees in streets, and open space areas which would improve the character and amenity as well as enhance habitat values and break up the contiguous urban expanse increasingly with time and contribute to the wider surrounding area.

- 1.6 While the proposed development would result in a significant visual change from the Site's current open semi-rural state to one with urban characteristics, particularly for some of the immediate neighbours, such visual change is generally anticipated and is in accordance with the key planning initiatives for the area.
- 1.7 Despite the relatively low landscape values, the development would initially generate landscape and visual effects of some significance. These however are inevitable with urban development in a predominantly rural area at the start of a process of urbanisation. In addition, the visual effects of the development of the Site apparent from the early stages would decrease over time as proposed landscape initiatives become established.
- 1.8 Development enabled by the proposed urbanisation of the Site could be visually accommodated within the Pokeno landscape without adversely affecting the character, aesthetic value and integrity of the surrounding urban and wider rural environment. I consider that the site topography and indicative concept plan for the Munro Block allows for a suitable retention of the visual and landscape components identified through previous plan change processes, namely the rural backdrop and the ridgeline as visual containment to Pokeno.
- 1.9 Given the small area of land exceeding RL100 in the site, I do not consider that there is any merit from restricting these areas from being rezoned. With the extent of the RL100 contours encroachment being minimal, restricting development in this area (by maintaining the Rural Zone) is not warranted on landscape or visual merits. I concur with the Section 42A Hearing Report that notes that the RL100 principle is not part of the PWDP and concludes that the proposal will appropriately retain the visual and landscape components identified¹.
- 1.10 I consider that the site topography and the indicative concept plan prepared for the Munro Block allows for suitable retention of the visual and landscape components identified through previous plan change processes. Only a very small portion of the Munro Block sits on or above RL100 with the adjacent rural property to the west comprising the majority of land above RL100 as it rises up to Ridge Road extending along the skyline ridge up to approximately RL150.
- 1.11 In conclusion, the proposed Pokeno West development would fulfil the need for residential intensification and provide an opportunity for an innovative and environmentally sustainable urban development. The proposal is largely consistent with

¹ Section 42A Report, paragraph 242

regional growth strategies for the area and would result in a high-quality urban development with a range of positive landscape and environmental outcomes.

Robert James Pryor

11 May 2021