

Before the New Plymouth District Council Independent Hearings Commissioner

29 March 2019

UNDER

the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA)

IN THE MATTER

of Andrew Gillham and Louise Bain (The Applicants) for
Resource Consent (LUC18/47237) at 828 Dover Road Okato
being Lot 2 DP 413786 (The Site) to:

- i) Restricted Discretionary Activity Resource Consent to erect a farm shed within the 10 metre side yard required by Rural Environment Rule 18 of the Operative New Plymouth District Plan (ODP) AND
- ii) Discretionary Activity Resource Consent to erect 4 Habitable Buildings (cabins) giving a total of 5 habitable buildings on The Site exceeding the 2 habitable building permitted maximum required by Rural Environment Rule Rur12A of the DP and exceeding the 25 metre maximum separation required by Rural Environment Rule Rur12A of the OPD.

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE BY ANDREW GILLHAM AND LOUISE BAIN DATED 15TH MARCH 2019 – APPLICANTS

Introduction

1. We propose to construct four cabins while exceeding the permitted number of habitable buildings within a rural site and to construct a shed 2 metres closer than the permitted 10 metre side boundary setback.
2. The cabins are a Discretionary Activity under Rule Rur12 and the shed is a Restricted Discretionary Activity under Rur18 of the New Plymouth District Plan (2005).

Our connection with the land at 828 Dover Road

3. We have spent more than 8 years living on our property and have transformed it from a gorse covered, neglected piece of farmland and bush into a wonderful place to call home. From living in a bus for 14 months on the shed site to building our own dwelling, growing our own fruit and vegetables, rearing chickens, lambs and cows for our consumption and harvesting fallen trees from within the bush for firewood, our efforts have allowed us to enjoy an enviable, semi sustainable lifestyle which we always hoped we would be able to achieve. Our first harvest of nearly 200 Eucalyptus Nitens trees which were planted to provide us with a further sustainable source of firewood for our property through coppicing is nearly upon us. The trees are in their 6th year of growth which was originally targeted as being the first coppice year.
4. In the beginning it was the bush that enticed us to this property. The first thing we did when we arrived was create a trail through the bush. Over the years, our trails have multiplied and given us a network of paths which has enabled us to enjoy different aspects within the bush environment. We have spent hundreds of hours enjoying the bush on our property over the years. Thanks to our trails we have experienced things we believe we wouldn't have otherwise. From the changing of the seasons and the appearance and fruiting of the trees, the ear piercing sound of the cicadas and the different plant species we come across whilst walking, to the joys of the native birds, Moreporks within 3 metres at dusk, Tomtits at arms reach, Koreru doing what only they do best and the pleasure that fantails bring when hovering around waiting for the next insect to be disturbed.

Our efforts to increase biodiversity

5. When we took on the role as custodians of the land on 828 Dover Road, we noticed and discussed the lack of birdsong. The presence of possum claw and bite markings in the bush were noticeable to the untrained eye. We wanted to make a positive impact. Through contact and advice from Taranaki Regional Council (TRC), we identified 3 main ways we could improve biodiversity and invested considerable sums of money on implementing the following;
 - a. Fencing - The property was largely unfenced when we took ownership. With the exception of the boundary fence which lies between 852 Dover Road and 828 Dover Road and the roadside fence; we have completed all the fencing to date and fenced off the bush from our livestock. We originally bought a battery powered system to electrify the wires prior to having electricity on site but upgraded to a mains supply unit which has helped our bush and land to remain stock proof in all but exceptional circumstances. The bush on 828 Dover Road and 852 Dover Road (submitter's property) was lacking the understorey growth that the forest needs to regenerate when we bought the land in 2010. This was largely due to the lack of fencing along the bush line prior to our arrival. A local farmer grazed his livestock on 828 and 852 Dover Road. After our arrival 852 was still grazed with no fence between the grassland and the bush. There were multiple instances where his cows would

end up in the bush and then onto our property. After discussion we erected an electric string/wire basic fence on the western side of 852 using standards to protect the native bush on 828 and 852 Dover Road. This fence remained effective through our power supply for approximately 6 years before Mr and Mrs Foley took ownership of 852 Dover Road approximately 2 years ago. In addition, the fences we erected on our property have allowed the bush on both 828 and 852 to regenerate considerably in this time. It is fantastic to see that Mr and Mrs Foley have recently had installed a permanent fence to replace the old string /wire. We will be upgrading our fence on the western side in due course, although stock proof, this section was planned to be temporary until we had completed earthworks relating to an additional dwelling we had consent for under the previous district plan rules. (2 dwellings not needing to be within 25 metres of each other)

- b. Pest Control - Currently we are using the following methods to control the numbers of pests on our property;
 - i. Possums; 5 Possum Master traps and 1 Timms trap. TRC informed us how many possum master traps we need for our area of bush and provided us (through payment) with other traps. They also gave us information on the subject. These traps are checked more than once a week at this point in time.
 - ii. Stoats and Rats; 2 Doc 200 stoat/rat traps and 2 bait stations for mice and rats. There are further bait stations on our property outside of the bush environment. These traps are also checked more than once a week at this point in time.
 - iii. Rabbits; We have a bait station which we use occasionally but the bait is not friendly to dogs and we tend to use it only when we are not going to be home. Evening rabbit shooting efforts with an air rifle fail to have had a visible impact and the problem is ongoing.

The bush area on our property constitutes between 20 - 30% of a large pocket of native bush. There are 3 other properties connected to this pocket of bush and at times it has felt that we have been the only ones with any form of pest control in place. We are pleased that the owners of 852 Dover Road are keen to be eco-focussed and are protecting the bush on their property as pest numbers will be reduced and the bush environment will further be enhanced. The objectives of Project Maunga and Taranaki Taku Tūrangā - Towards Predator-Free Taranaki will also undoubtedly reduce pest numbers over the wider area to the benefit of the bush and its ecosystems.

- c. Planting - We applied for a grant from the Taranaki Tree Trust and we chose species that we felt would aid in bringing birds onto the property as well as satisfy us aesthetically and control areas that were in need of riparian planting. The trees and shrubs we chose were from a guide to what suited different types of land and indigenous to the area, i.e wet areas, banks of water courses and drier areas. Over the past 8 years, we have planted thousands of mainly native trees and shrubs in areas that were completely covered in gorse or indeed grassland. We have noticed a significant increase in the amount of bird life on the property.

How this application came about

6. During the early stages of our trail formation we needed to pass through a large fallen tree. We cut through and discovered the view that you see today from the proposed Valley View Cabin site. It was a day in 2012 that holds the most significance to why we are proposing to do what we are; Coby - our dog indicated that he could smell something off to the side of our pathway during our morning routine walk, we decided to investigate. Through the undergrowth only 4 or 5 metres away from the path we looked up to discover a view of Mt Taranaki which sent shivers down our spines. This is the view which can now be appreciated from the proposed Mountain View Cabin site. Andrew's time working on overnight beach hut accommodation in England and our love for walking in our little section of paradise have inspired us to proceed with this application. With our growing family, the desire to spend time together has never been more important. Our proposal will mean that we will continue to be able to maintain our semi sustainable lifestyle and provide us with an income in a way only achievable on such a property. Part of this income will then be invested into the ongoing maintenance, enhancement and protection of the bush environment. This application has been in the pipeline for many years but now with the exciting initiatives taking place in the area there has never been a better time for it to come to light.
7. In England, Andrew worked with a team building luxury overnight beach hut accommodation on Mudeford spit in Dorset close to our original home. These beach huts are accessible to the public by foot, land train and a small ferry and our ideas for the cabins in the rainforest stem from these. There is an element of adventure that we wish to bring to the design of all cabins and where possible we want to achieve an experience for the guest that we long for in the places we have travelled to and seek to find in the future.

Consultation with neighbouring properties

8. As stated in 14.0 of our Resource Consent Application, we have considered it both neighbourly and appropriate to provide thorough details of our intended development and application progress to our three surrounding neighbours. We have written approval from two long term neighbours who we have a fantastic relationship with; George and Hayley Julian at 742 Dover Road and Vanessa and Sohnke Danger at 802 Dover Road. Details of our consultation with all neighbours is available if required.

Dover Road Land Use Changes

9. The submitters describe the land use on Dover Road of *"agricultural business (dairy farming) and lifestyle blocks, with very low traffic volumes, and with no commercial enterprise."* Since purchasing 828 Dover Road in 2010, there has been a substantial increase in land sales and lifestyle blocks, resulting in an increase in traffic numbers which will not be recognised in the last traffic count conducted in 2004 along Dover Road. The increase in road users on Dover Road is a regular topic of conversation for many residents and we question the statement made in section 11.12 of the s42A

Planners Hearing Report where Ms Debbie Taplin, the Council's Development Engineer has considered traffic volumes have not changed since 2004 along this section of Dover Road.

10. In 5 years, between January 2013 and November 2018 there were 22 property sales on Dover Road with many being lifestyle blocks that have been built on or will be built on in the future. These sales show that Dover Road and the surrounding area has and will see further change to the rural character and amenity. An increase in traffic generated due to each property being permitted under Rur12, Rur12A and Rur12B of the Rural Environment Area to build two or perhaps up to three habitable buildings depending on land size will further increase the traffic flow. Just like us, these properties are permitted to have up to a maximum of 50 VEM's a day or an average of 30 VEM's a day over a week's period. Our business is not expected to exceed these numbers. Appendix 1 shows the sales on Dover Road between Jan 2013 and Nov 2018.
11. Appendix 2 shows local properties within 1km of 828 Dover Road. It shows that there are currently 8 other dwellings (1 built in 2018 and 1 under construction) and 8 lifestyle blocks that have either been purchased, are for sale or will be for sale in the future; and are yet to have been built on. The future could be a total of 16 dwellings within close proximity to 828 Dover Road if all pieces of land include one dwelling. However, there is also the potential for this to be 32 dwellings if each land owner chooses to have the permitted 2 dwellings. 5 out of the 6 of these properties sold have been purchased since 2016. This again indicates that the rural amenity, character and traffic volumes within close proximity to 828 Dover Road has and will continue to change.
12. A hairdressing business (The Chop Shop) at 742 Dover Road was established in 2018 and Maxwell Engineering and Mechanical business further down Dover Road has been in operation for many years. These two businesses will also increase the flow of traffic on Dover Road.

Our Proposal - Established Activities and Tourism Initiatives

13. The proposed cabins at 828 Dover Road are located close to areas that the Government and regional agencies are implementing new and exciting tourism developments. The proposed cabins will support the sustainability of these initiatives by providing accommodation in close proximity. The current initiatives/projects that are relevant to our application;
 - a. The Mouna ki Moana Taranaki Crossing Experience proposal, developed by Venture Taranaki through the 'Tapuae Roa – Make Way for Taranaki' Regional Economic Action Plan was lodged with the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment and is identified as a priority conservation and cultural tourism project for the Taranaki region. One of their goals is to improve the lifestyle of the local community by fostering job creation and workforce retention through an increased demand for skilled people, supporting new business opportunities and local events. We'd like to be one of these small businesses that can help support this exciting initiative. Within the project's objectives, it has been stated that additional local employment opportunities associated with complementary activities to the Taranaki

Crossing experience, for example accommodation (e.g. a commercially operated higher end accommodation facility in the vicinity of the current Pouakai Hut). The Department of Conservation have already started upgrading the tracks and amenities for this project. A 2018 Government press release from the Offices of Hon Shane Jones Minister for Regional Economic Development and Hon Eugenie Sage Minister of Conservation supports and provides further details of the wide scope of the “Taranaki Crossing” experience. This can be seen in Appendix 3.

- b. The Tupuae Roa, Make Way For Taranaki project is a collaborative effort between the Taranaki Regional Council, New Plymouth District Council, South Taranaki District Council, Stratford District Council, Venture Taranaki, local business leaders, iwi and central government (MBIE). The initiative’s ‘Future Visitor Sector’ action plan recommends adoption of an aspirational 7.5 per cent growth target in this area with indicators of success including more investment occurring in accommodation and servicing with more focus on higher yielding visitors (p.38). The document also states that the foundation of the industry is built on small enterprises (p.39) and a priority core action for the visitor sector futures is to develop eco-tourism products (p.40). One of the medium term priorities for the visitor sector futures is to develop rural experiences (p.41). The document can be seen in Appendix 4.
 - c. The Taranaki Regional Council’s 2018/2028 Long term Plan (Document 1957953) will continue implementing the Pukeiti asset management plans focusing on completing the upgrade work at Pukeiti Gardens which is located a short distance from 828 Dover Road. This includes walking and cycling trails throughout the rainforest and linking the gardens to the coast. Pukeiti Gardens have seen a huge increase in visitor numbers. An article in the Taranaki Midweek dated 16.01.19 states that *“December (2018) was the busiest month on record since for the Pukeiti heritage property, established in 1951.”* Appendix 5 shows plans for the future of Pukeiti Gardens and Appendix 6 shows the Midweek article. Greg Rine - Regional Gardens Manager informs us that in the years between 2016/2017 and 2017/2018 visitor numbers increased by 160%, from 30000 to 83000 with 2018/2019 set to exceed these numbers again.
14. Limited private accommodation close to these areas of development currently exist. The existing rural accommodation options we are aware of for visitors are Pouakai Cabins on Mangorei Road, Patuha Lodge Bed and Breakfast on Pitone Road and a 1 bedroom studio at Pukeiti Gardens on Carrington Road.
15. There are 8 DOC huts available around Mount Taranaki. Accessing the huts requires guests to tramp a considerable distance;
- a. Pouakai hut = 1hr
 - b. Maketawa hut = 1hr 15mins
 - c. Waingongoro hut = 1.5 hrs
 - d. Kahui hut = 2.5 hrs
 - e. Syme hut = 2.5 - 3hrs
 - f. Lake Dive hut = 3.5 hrs
 - g. Holly hut = 3 - 4 hrs

- h. Maketawa hut = 3hrs
16. An article written by Jeremy Wilkinson in 2016 for Taranaki Daily News (seen in Appendix 7) noted that the Pouakai Hut was the most popular of the 8 Taranaki huts, accounting for 18.5% of DOC's occupancy rates and that the demand for use of the hut was increasing every year. It was estimated by a guest during Anzac weekend in 2016 that 30 people stayed overnight in the 18 bed hut. This information, along with the uncertainty of being able to access a bed in the huts due to no booking options (beds are available on a first come, first serve basis) many trampers including ourselves, see DOC hut accommodation as risky; especially when hiking with a young family in the summer months.
 17. 828 Dover Road is approximately 700m from the start of DOC's Dover Track which links to other popular walks. Our cabins would provide guests with easy access to Egmont National Park.
 18. With the future initiatives and developments planned for Taranaki, detailed in point 13, it is highly likely that the visitor industry for the Taranaki region will see a substantial increase in visitor numbers; diversifying the economy and delivering regional economic growth. The limited number of DOC huts/beds available on Mount Taranaki and the limited number of private accommodation options within a rural area are unlikely to be able to support this growth in visitor numbers. The proposed cabins would provide an alternative to the busy DOC huts in and around Mount Taranaki with the added benefit of being able to book in advance to secure a bed and would provide a private, accessible, serviced bush experience for those who may not be able to tramp such distances, desire a higher standard of accommodation or not be willing to share accommodation with others.
 19. Bruce Bassett, the Industry Strategy Manager of Tourism Industry Aotearoa (TIA), states that our application is well aligned to what the Tourism Sustainability Commitment is seeking to achieve. The TIA have set objectives to foster sustainability practices across the tourism industry so that the actions of many businesses have a positive impact. We plan to consult with the TIA and work with them to build a sustainable and positive business for ourselves, the bush environment and Taranaki. Appendix 8 is a letter from the TIA related to our application.

The Zones and Tracks Identified on the Site Plans

20. The zones and trails identified on the site plans provided by Richard Bain (Bluemarble Landscape Architects) relate to all the existing cleared and maintained zones in the bush environment that will be utilised for our proposal. Extensive surveying by Juffermans Surveyors Ltd (JSL) has taken place to ensure we are able to give accurate information on these. Each of the zones is unique with individual aspects which will be discussed further in this document. A surveyed overall site plan from Juffermans Surveyors Ltd can be seen in Appendix 9.
21. Russell Nagel from Nagel Consultants Ltd (civil engineering company) has visited the site to assess whether the sites are suitable for building. He also considered the wastewater and septic system as well as the bank behind the shed site. A letter from Nagel Consultants Ltd can be seen in Appendix 10.

22. A quad access trail was formed through the centre of the bush on our property in 2012 to help with the removal of fallen trees for firewood. This trail has developed over time and is now what you see as the main access trail. It will be approximately 1800mm wide to accommodate a side by side atv with a built in tray at the rear for our safety when accessing the cabins and sauna site with items in relation to them. E.g gas bottles for heated water and cooking or bedding e.t.c. It will be Timber edged and will be made up of a permeable material to provide an all weather surface for ongoing access and to minimise disturbance to root systems below. This track will have low level hooded lighting to assist with guests accessing their cabins.
23. Walking trails have been in use for many years on the property, They are approximately 900mm wide and are made up of natural, forest leaf litter. Whilst they are all accessible, there are areas where steps and further upgrades will be necessary to sustain more foot traffic. These have always been positioned to avoid unnecessary disturbance to trees and for the most part have a full canopy above them.
24. A service track of natural forest litter exists of approximately 1500mm width to provide access to the northern side of the bush area for purposes such as removal of fallen trees for firewood. I understand that this would be in line with future SNA rules. This links then to a walking trail towards the sauna site.
25. 1200mm wide access tracks exist from the main access tracks to the cabin zones , sauna zone and septic zone. They are wide enough for a small digger if necessary at cabin and sauna construction time. These will be edged and constructed of a permeable material.
26. All tracks have and will continue to be constructed and maintained with minimal disturbance to the bush environment. We will be in contact with DOC and Taranaki Regional Council to ensure that we follow known methods used within their sites to ensure this.
27. The submission raises concerns regarding the access to the cabins being close to a boundary that is unfenced; *“access to the cabins in close proximity to the bush boundary for 852 Dover road, which is unfenced and provides a security risk to the property and occupants of 852 Dover Road”*. We have sought advice from a fencer, Juffermans Surveyors Ltd as well as landscape and ecology professionals related to boundary options within the bush. They have all stated that a fence on the actual boundary would be detrimental to the bush and have suggested other options which may suffice; Signs on tracks where they are shown to be close to the boundary and ribbons on trees where tracks fall close to the boundary. During the surveying where these areas were identified, we asked for boundary line stakes to be positioned by the surveyors to guide us and the Foleys of the legal boundary. We are happy to mark trees with ribbons close to this line and include it in the information we give to guests. Our initial application gives information that relates to the sign aspect. We plan to erect signs informing guests to stay to the walking tracks due to there being a boundary in close proximity and plan to inform guests within the welcome pack and in the information kiosk to remain on tracks for their own safety, out of respect of property boundaries and for the benefit of biodiversity in the area. We are happy to discuss the subject with Mr and Mrs Foley.

20 Metre Diameter circles identified on Likely Significant Natural Area and Discussed within Planner's Report

28. Juffermans Surveyors have been engaged to map the areas of Bush clearance. The survey information defines the cabin sites, tracks and locations of specific purpose areas like the play area.
29. This information shows the 20m diameter cabin site circles sourced from Wildlands data to be inaccurate. The survey information should be used to form consent conditions.
30. The surveyed cleared areas including paths and tracks will be kept clear of vegetation on a floor to sky basis except where the vegetation canopy accommodates the function of the cleared area.
31. We have cleared the stream from debris of fallen trees for many years and will continue to do so.
32. Vegetation neighbouring cleared areas may need to be trimmed where it impinges on the cleared area. Similarly where unstable or dying trees are a potential threat to safety. They may need to be removed.
33. The survey information also defines cabin view corridors. Vegetation beside and below the view shafts remains but will be trimmed as required to maintain the view.

The Cabins and associated activities

Cabin Design

34. The proposed cabins will be nestled in discrete locations that take advantage of stunning outlooks towards the distant views of the expansive coast, Mount Taranaki and/or the native bush.
35. The proposed cabins will be visually and audibly separate to ensure guests experience the tranquility and isolation of the natural environment. Each cabin will be small in size. They will be built to individual designs and constructed of materials that blend into the native bush.
36. The proposed cabins will each have a mezzanine area within them, a partially covered deck and a porch. All structures will be within the zones identified on the site plan.
37. Within 5.2 of the Planner's report it is discussed that *'The cabins will range from 25m² to 48m² in floor area, including outdoor verandahs for two of the cabins, and be 3.6m to 6.4m high including poles for three of the cabins. Suggested condition number 11 states 'The tourist cabins shall be no greater than 25m² in internal floor area.'* This condition does not take into account that there are to be mezzanines in each cabin to assist with sleeping arrangements. Mezzanine space is not expected to exceed 2/3rds of the downstairs floor area.
The cabin dimensions should read in the 4site design plans that the internal dimensions are 3.6m by 6.6m. There has been an error in these and it is shown to be external. Appendix 11 Shows an example internal floor layout for the Mountain view cabin which should have been followed in 4site designs' drawings. This would equate to an approximate 3.8m by 6.8m framing footprint equalling 25.84 sqm however with cladding including batten we seek an overall footprint around exterior cladding and exclusive of decks and porches of 28sqm and find it necessary to achieve what

we are proposing to do. We further emphasize that all structures will be kept within the zones. If conditions are to relate to floor areas then we seek 40 sqm to cover the downstairs floor area and the largest mezzanine floor area from all the cabins (2/3rds of downstairs included).

38. 4site designs' drawings do not show '3.6m to 6.4m high including poles for three of the cabins'. The treehouse cabin is the only one that gives a height including poles. An amended plan of the Treehouse Cabin itself is attached as Appendix 12. as the design in the original 4sight design drawing failed to give enough height for the sleeping arrangements within the mezzanine areas. This cabin will still have an approximate floor height of 3 metres above ground as originally stated and not exceed the 8m height rule in the district plan and also not exceed the height of the canopy surrounding it.
39. The proposed cabins will be aesthetically pleasing and built with sustainability and their environmental impact in mind. We will make careful environmentally friendly choices on these areas of the cabin design they will include but are not restricted to:
 - a. Efficient energy usage
 - b. Efficient water usage
 - c. Construction waste reduction
 - d. Building material selection
40. All cabins and the sauna will be more than 6 metres from waterways.
41. There are view corridors associated with each cabin and the sauna site which are and will need to be maintained in the future. These are clearly shown on Richard Bain's (Bluemarble Landscape Architects) site plans and Juffermans Surveyors Ltd overall site plan (Appendix 9).
42. The cabins will be designed to accommodate a maximum of 4 people, mezzanines are provided to utilise the small footprint and fitted furniture will ensure that the spaces are used in the most efficient way.
43. Sea View Cabin; Externally, the inspiration for this cabin is based on a lifeguard tower design. The structure will look down over the bush towards the Tasman Sea and offer expansive views of both. A mature Rewarewa tree is within this marked zone at the front of the site and the intention is to create a deck from the cabin which can in turn create a sort of crows nest around the tree to encapsulate the feeling of being amongst the bush and an element of quirkiness. A mezzanine will be provided to utilise the small footprint and fitted furniture will ensure that the space is used in the most efficient way. The bush on the 3 sides facing away from the view corridor will not need to be disturbed and this cabin, deck and covered entrance will fit snugly into the area we have identified.
44. Tree House Cabin; This cabin will be situated on a knoll within the bush area. It has a unique feel to it which has always enticed us and oozed out a sense of calm. For a while we struggled with how we could do the site justice but with guidance from friends and architects we came up with the treehouse idea. The important aspect to this cabin being a feeling of really being amongst the trees. At one end, from the mezzanine window a stunning framed view of Mt Taranaki will await. The view corridors are approximately 2.5 metres wide and shown in Richard Bain's site plan and Jufferman's surveyed drawing. At the other end from within the decked area, 2 vistas of the coast will be on offer. The deck will be built around two trees which

have deliberately been left within the zone. The cabin will be surrounded by the deck and guests will experience the bush from a perspective high up towards the canopy surrounded by trees on all four sides. This cabin will have a double bed and two single beds all within the mezzanine spaces (approximately 2/3rds of the downstairs floor area) and it will not protrude the height of the canopy. An amendment to the Treehouse Cabin plan can be seen in Appendix 12 to ensure there is sufficient height for the beds within the mezzanine areas.

45. Mountain View Cabin; This cabin site is remarkable when the rainforest is living up to it's name or when the sky is clear and the Mountain is shown in its full glory. Of all the doubts I have had along the way with regards to whether this venture could be a success or whether the design would suit the site, this area has given me confidence. The cabin will have a pitched roof, mezzanine at the back, partially covered deck and a porch coming from the main accessway. The front will largely be covered in glass to truly engage the guests in this spectacular spot. The guests that are able to see the mountain covered in snow on a fine crisp morning will leave with memories for life. Section 11.6 of the s42A Planners Hearing Report states that the planner considers that *"from their property, the owners of 852 Dover Road may potentially see the 'Valley View' and 'Mountain View' Cabins from grassed areas slightly elevated above the bush within this site as the cabins will be facing the direction of this part of the neighbouring property."* This has been referenced in detail in our response to the Notification Report and Notification Decision dated 06.08.18 where we stated that *"both 'Valley View' and 'Mountain View' Cabins will not be seen from any grassed area on 852 Dover Road."* Photographs in Appendix 13 show the heights of a drone at Mountain View Cabin site facing east towards 852 Dover Road's land. These photographs help to clarify that the Mountain View Cabin would not be visible from the grassed areas of 852 Dover Road.
46. Whilst we do not have similar photos for the Valley View Site, it is positioned at a lower altitude behind the mountain view site if looking from 852 Dover road's grassed areas and faces a different direction.
47. Valley View Cabin; When we stumbled across this cabin site many years ago, we were in awe of its beauty. The view over the valley, the sound of the stream below and the feeling of isolation being predominant. Facing south, we have tried to understand how best to use this space in terms of the design of the cabin. We aim to include a glass area of roof on the northern side to bring in the natural warmth of the sun. The two single beds will be in the mezzanine area on each side and a 'bed box' below will provide a cozy feel to the ambience of the site. As with all of the cabins, the fitted furniture will utilise the small space and be sufficient enough to accommodate the guests. The deck will most likely include a bath to really appreciate what this site has to offer.
48. The porches; These areas are an important aspect in this environment where the cabins will be situated. Somewhere to stand when the heavens open whilst trying to find a key or somewhere to hang up your wet jacket and muddy boots. They will be provided within the zones identified in the site plan and be a small addition on the side of each cabin.
49. The decks; All decks will keep within the zones identified on the site plan. They will be private and not visible to other users within the bush area. Where appropriate,

we aim to provide outdoor experiences which differ from everyday life at home and contribute to the feeling of escapism to the bush. As mentioned within the Valley View site, a bath, shower or something equally as individual to the sites will be what we will be looking to achieve.

Cabin Operation - Parking and Road use

50. Parking; The car parking area is shown in the overall site plan provided by Juffermans Surveyors Ltd (Appendix 9) and the design within it is shown in Richard Bain's, (Bluemarble Landscape Architects) site plans. It is separated in two to allow for maximum screening and aesthetic appeal. A *Griselinia Litoralis* hedge will surround it and further screening consisting of *Phormium Tenax* and *Toetoe* to the east will screen it entirely from the submitter's view in our opinion. This will be achieved in close proximity to the parking area itself particularly because there is a higher aspect that will be planted towards within approximately 10 metres to the east. The areas we have offered to plant extend to approximately 1/3rd of an acre and are intended to increase biodiversity for the sake of us and the submitter's. Beyond the boundary planting and the higher aspect previously mentioned they will have little significance to the screening of the parking area in our opinion. We would like to use species from the main plant list of the restoration guide to Egmont Ecological District and not be restricted to recommended species from within zones discussed within the guide.
51. The driveway at 828 Dover Road is metaled and the entrance is approximately 12m wide and can accommodate two large vehicles alongside each other easily. We query the suggested condition of 'The existing vehicle crossing shall be upgraded to a Type G sealed vehicle crossing and shall be constructed to the standard specified in the Council's 'Land Development & Subdivision Infrastructure Standards'. As described in the planner's report due to the fact that our traffic generation will not exceed the permitted amount for our lifestyle block. The unusually large entranceway that was formed at the time of subdivision would cost substantial amounts of money to upgrade as recommended and we question why it would be necessary when there is good visibility up and down the road and enough width to accommodate a multitude of vehicles when entering or exiting the property.
52. The submission states that "*Dover Road does not have any large open areas for the safe turning of traffic, if the entrance to 828 Dover road is missed, this will have a detrimental effect to the use of other property entrances.* If a guest misses the entrance to 828 Dover Road when traveling up the road towards Mount Taranaki there is a suitable area for turning within 1km along the road where Dover Road meets Carrington Road. This information can be included in the directions given to guests prior to their visit to the cabins. Many people use google directions or similar when travelling to new destinations. These programs automatically provide alternative routes when needed.
53. The submission discusses concerns about safety of their children in relation to tourists being close by. We are a growing young family who also care for the safety of our children, we plan to use a recognised booking platform, such as Canopy Camping for all bookings. This allows for some vetting to take place of the types of

visitors to the cabins. Reviews of guests and how they treat a property are available on most booking platforms and these will be checked. As stated in an email (Appendix 14) from Sonia Minnaar, Canopy Camping's Director; *"Our experience of the type of people who book our glamping sites is that they are interested in and respectful of nature."* Pouakai Cabins owner, Desiree Avey, also makes comment on this area stating that they have never had any trouble with guests over the last ten years since first starting their accommodation business (Appendix 15).

Cabin Operation - Conservation and Education

54. Being amongst the New Zealand native bush will be the main attraction for guests and we endeavour to protect it and continue to restore it so as to attract as much biodiversity as possible.
55. We aim to provide small scale accommodation in a natural environment with the goal of providing a useful platform to help guests make connections to the environment and biodiversity that surrounds.
56. Within the cabins we will be providing information on aspects of the bush environment through leaflets and guides as well encouraging the use of sites like Inaturalist where you can record what you see in nature.
57. Information kiosk; Within our proposal, there is an information kiosk where visitors, aside from being made aware of our code of conduct and trail information, will be able to learn about the ecosystems that exist and the pests that threaten the bush environment. We would also like to include information on what to look out for and what to expect during different times of the year. Aside from what we have learned through living here, we will be relying on the accurate information obtained from organisations such as the Department of Conservation and Taranaki Regional Council's biodiversity team. We hope this can in turn have an effect on the awareness and appreciation of all New Zealand native bush to guests who have stayed with us.
58. Educational Activity Area; This site identified on the site plans provided by Richard Bain from Bluemarble Landscape Architects contains mature trees and regenerating trees. There is a full canopy above and guests will be expected to respect the remaining fauna.
 - a. Education is a subject close to Louise's heart (the applicant). She has been teaching primary school aged children since 2005 and we plan to incorporate educational elements within the cabin experience.
 - b. As noted on The Department of Conservation's website and DOC's National Education Strategy 2010-2030, early contact with nature provides an important role in developing pro environmental values and behaviours. It's a place where kids can develop knowledge, values and skills to become the next generation of conservationists. We plan to utilise the education activity area in two main ways;
 - i. Creative Play. Creative play has many benefits to those learning about the environments that surround us. Materials will be available within this zone for children (maybe some adults too!) to build their own hut, shelter or whatever they choose to build to encourage learning in a creative way. This will promote opportunities to develop maths,

science, art, language and social skills, and provide plenty of opportunities for developing perseverance, teamwork, problem solving and creating 3-dimensional structures.

- ii. Conservation Activities. We have been in contact with Benjamin Moorhouse (PhD), Outreach and Education Coordinator for the Department of Conservation who has given us various ideas on educational activities we could offer in this area. DOC have created a Kiwi Guardians programme, aimed at young families, which exists for children to learn about nature, earn rewards and go on family adventures. We are keen to offer some of the following activities as a starting point which will enable children to claim activity medals once they have completed a certain 'conservation action'. A workbench will be available for the activities to take place.
 1. Pest Tracking Tunnel. People can make their own tunnel using materials provided to identify what creature may have passed through overnight. Animal identification information will be available to guests.
 2. Leaf/Plant/berry Classification Hunt. Resources provided will enable people to follow tracks to identifying different species as they go.
 3. Weta Hotels. People can build their own hotels out of materials provided.

59. The Sauna Site; Once the cabins are established and funding is available, our plan is to build a small sauna to provide a place for adults to relax. The sauna will be a place where guests can truly rejuvenate and soak in the proven health benefits associated with their use. The small site will include a changing area and private deck which will flow around the trees deliberately retained within the identified area on the site plan provided by Richard Bain.

60. A survey of New Zealanders, prepared by Ipsos Researchers for the Department of Conservation in June 2016 states on P.10; *"The majority of people (85%) believe that their connection with New Zealand's nature improves their lives. They claim their lives are improved because New Zealand's nature makes them relaxed and they get satisfaction from walking in New Zealand nature and experiencing the native bush, forests, animals and bird life."* The document then goes on to state on P.19 that people who *"have stayed at a DOC campsite (20%), have stayed in a DOC hut (21%) and have been to a DOC visitor centre (18%) are more likely to spend time helping on a conservation project."* DOC's outcome statement in this document that underpins their work; New Zealanders gain environmental, social and economical benefits from healthy functioning ecosystems, from recreation opportunities, and from living our history. We feel that our cabin accommodation will reflect and support this outcome statement and provide guests with connections with the native bush and encourage a conservation mindset. The report can be found in Appendix 16.

Bush Maintenance for the future

61. The condition of the bush is paramount to the success of our proposal. We intend to adapt the appropriate procedures used by the Department of Conservation, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry as well as Taranaki Regional Council to manage all aspects during the building stage and thereafter to cause as little impact as possible. We are cognisant of the need to protect the bush from pests and pathogens so will be introducing a form of biosecurity protocol at the entrance of the bush at which point we will have greater biosecurity protection than the National Park.
62. The submission raises concerns related to the possible introduction of pest plants, pathogens and pest animals. We contacted Quin Amoores, Taranaki Regional Council's Environment Team Leader of Biodiversity for advice. Included within an email dated 04.02.19 was the following statement. *"The Council will support all landowners, regardless of whether they have a KNE identified on the property or not, with advice and information on biodiversity on their land, threats to biodiversity and management actions that can be taken to address threats.* Quin has advised us that it is best to wait for the outcome of our Resource Consent Application before going any further with the Key Native Ecosystem programme due to being unable to ascertain what conditions may affect any funding we may be eligible for. A biodiversity plan would certainly be what we would hope for but regardless of whether we would qualify for this or indeed what funding we are able to secure, we intend to work with TRC to identify all threats to biodiversity and follow the advice given for management actions to mitigate the effects.
63. We will continue to follow TRC's advice about pest control on our property and the operation of the cabins will mean that traps will be able to be checked daily as part of a routine. We support local large scale efforts for the Predator Free 2050 goal, a portion of income generated can be used to increase our trapping network beyond the bush and across grazing and residential areas on our property.

Landscaping

64. A recommended condition of consent within section 11.19 of s42A Planners Hearing Report related to planting suggests a minimum height of 2.0m at the time of planting. We feel that this is unreasonable in terms of cost as well as the site being planted. Costing for a large number of 2m high trees and shrubs would be a substantial amount. The lower parts of the hill and the majority of the area we have volunteered to plant and are now having recommended conditions put on, will have little bearing on visual impact of the parking area or driveway but benefit the area through attracting birds and other animals and insects. We have had success with the planting we have done through cuttings and separation techniques and we have hundreds of native species consistent with the main plant list within the restoration planting guide for the Egmont District which we have been growing for the purpose of planting these areas. They are known to grow to 2 metres in height in 5 years.
65. One of the suggested conditions of the application is that all planting is to comprise of native species consistent with the Restoration Planting Guide for the Egmont Ecological District. We consider that this wording is subject to misinterpretation. The guide includes zones and recommended plants for these zones as well as a plant list for the whole District. Many of the plants which are in the District's full plant list, but not within the zone our bush would fall under have shown to thrive in our local

conditions; namely Phormium Tenax, Grisellinia Litoralis and Toetoe. These species were discussed with Renee Davies during her site visit and as far as we are aware were deemed suitable and had benefits such as attracting lizards and providing food and shelter for native birds. The species listed as recommended for our zone would grow to a height of at least 6 metres meaning that we would have to sacrifice the view towards the coast from our house to be able to do our cabin project. This was not our intention when we decided we would plant up this area of nearly a 1/3rd of an acre to increase biodiversity. Appendix 17 shows a photo of our current view from our dwelling. We are more than happy to plant these areas in native species found in the overall plant list in the Restoration planting guide for the Egmont Ecological District and note that each of the three landscape professionals have agreed that the screening aspect of the car park from the south will be achieved through species that are 2 metres high. We also consider that this recommended condition could be interpreted as being for our whole property when the district plan allows for exotic species to which we have planted many outside of the bush environment and are not uncommon in the district.

Ecological Impacts

66. Section 9.3 of the s42A Planners Hearing Report states that *'the applicants would not pay for any ecological assessment to (be) done on behalf of Council, nor would the applicant provide any ecological assessment if requested in a further information request under s92 of the RMA.'* We, on many occasions discussed obtaining a written document through an ecological assessment and have discussed our proposal and shown our documentation to more than one ecologist. Whilst we are aware of the extent of ecological matters from within the submission, we have been advised that these sorts of projects have been done before and effects on ecology can be managed in a way to have minor impact. We are also aware that our proposal will have positive effects in various forms including our willingness to educate and enlighten our guests when they are on site and our ongoing bush protection and pest control. We were advised by many that ecological impact is a matter outside the scope of the planning hearing due to the current Operative District Plan and the lack of a s92 further information request being issued confirmed this. We were surprised to receive an email on 23.2.19 (13 days before the s42A Planners Hearing Report was due) stating that the replacement Council's Landscape Architect would also carry out an ecological assessment at our cost and we sought further advice but due to there being insufficient timeframes for a s92 request to be issued it was considered that the council officers email request was unreasonable, unjustified and not in line with request procedures. We are cognisant of the need to protect the bush from pests and pathogens and are keen to manage all aspects, be it from the construction stage of the cabins and the upgrade to an all weather surface of our main access track to the ongoing management of weeds and pests. The condition of the bush is paramount to the success of our proposal. We intend to adapt the appropriate procedures used by the Department of Conservation, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry as well as Taranaki Regional Council to manage all aspects.
67. *Time and methods of removal of all infrastructure and services associated with the cabins, including underground services, cables and paths;* This recommended

condition from within the planners report includes the paths which we regularly walk on and would wish to continue to do so in the event of the the business being unable to continue. We feel that that aspect would be unreasonable.

In the words of Senegalese poet and naturalist Baba Dioum, 'In the end, we will protect only what we love. We will love only what we understand. We will understand only what we are taught.'

Appendices:

1. Land sales on Dover Road between Jan 2013 and Nov 2018.
2. Local properties within 1km of 828 Dover Road.
3. 2018 Government Press Release
4. Tapuae Roa/Make Way for Taranaki Action Plan.
5. Pukeiti Gardens - Into the Future Plan.
6. Midweek Article - Rhodos Draw Records.
7. Taranaki Daily News article - Pouakai Hut.
8. Tourism Industry Aotearoa (TIA) letter from Bruce Bassett.
9. Juffermans Surveyors Ltd Overall Site Plan.
10. Nagel Consultants Ltd Civil Engineer letter.
11. Mountain View internal floor layout.
12. Treehouse Cabin amended plan.
13. Drone Photographs from Mountain View Cabin Site.
14. Canopy Camping email from Director Sonia Minnaar dated 5th March 2019.
15. Pouakai Cabins letter from Desiree Avey.
16. Survey of New Zealanders 2016.
17. Current view from dwelling at 828 Dover Road.



**RAINFOREST
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