

BEFORE COMMISSIONER WASLEY APPOINTED BY NEW PLYMOUTH DISTRICT COUNCIL

UNDER

the Resource Management Act 1991 ("RMA")

IN THE MATTER

of an application under section 88 of the Act by **GREGORY AND DEBORAH HOW** to the **NEW PLYMOUTH DISTRICT COUNCIL** for land use consent application to establish and operate commercial accommodation at 1844 Egmont Road, Kaimiro.

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF ERIN NATALIE GRIFFITH ON BEHALF OF GREGORY AND DEBORAH HOW

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 My full name is Erin Natalie Griffith. I am a Landscape & Urban Designer and hold a Masters of Urban Design with First Class Honours from the University of Auckland (2015), and a Bachelor of Applied Science – Landscape Management from Massey University (2004). I am Principal of Natural Capital, a Landscape consultancy in New Plymouth, and have operated this business since 2015. I am an Associate of the New Zealand Planning Institute, member of the NZ Urban Design Forum, and a member of the New Zealand Association of Impact Assessment.
- 1.2 I have 17 years of experience in the landscape industry within New Zealand and the United Kingdom. For the past 12 years, this work has been based largely within the Taranaki, Manawatu & Whanganui Region. I work in both the private sector and for public authorities, with the breadth of projects spanning from design based landscape commissions (streetscapes, commercial, residential, schools, public spaces, and industrial complexes), through to Assessment based work to assist in the production of Resource Consent documentation for development, whether this be subdivision or land-use related. I have also been involved with the physical establishment of a large number of planting projects, including monitoring native revegetation installations, which provides on-the-ground experience of plant

establishment. I also co-own and operate a boutique honey business, Autawa Apiaries, with hives based in both the eastern and southern hill country of Taranaki, and on the foothills of the Kaitake Range.

- 1.3 This evidence is given in support of the land use consent application ("the application") lodged by Gregory and Deborah How ("the applicant"), to construct and operate commercial accommodation at 1844 Egmont Road, Kaimiro including 10 chalets, 24 powered sites for motorhomes and a utilities building with dwelling.
- 1.4 I am authorised to give this evidence on behalf of Gregory and Deborah How.

2. INVOLVEMENT IN THE PROJECT

- 2.1 My involvement in the Application has included:
 - (a) To provide expert advice from conception on landscape matters associated with the application. I was formally engaged by the applicant's in mid 2018 to provide a series of landscape recommendations (not an assessment of effects), as advised would be necessary by NPDC's Planner at that time (2018-2019). Post application lodgement and processing, the processing planner(s) and their view changed. As a result, my role transitioned to one that covered broader site design considerations (eg: lighting, road, and motorhome layouts, effects, and mitigation) and a full Assessment of Landscape & Visual Effects (**ALVE**) was completed in September 2020 – included in **Annexure 1.0** of this evidence.
- 2.2 I have reviewed the material produced with the Application, including the AEE dated 12 March 2019, the section 92 RMA response dated 20 September 2019, the amended application details submitted to New Plymouth District Council ("NPDC") on 31 July 2020 (including those parts I authored). I have also read submissions received by Council from parties notified. I have read the Peer Review authored by Richard Bain dated 14th of August 2020 of my Landscape & Visual Effects report dated 30th July 2020 as requested by NPDC's Consultant Planner, Cate Southworth. I authored the ALVE submitted as part of the applicant's further information response on the 25th of September 2020.

3. CODE OF CONDUCT

- 3.1 I confirm that I have read the Code of Conduct for expert witnesses contained in the 2014 Environment Court Practice Note and that I agree to

comply with it. I confirm I have considered all the material facts that I am aware of that might alter or detract from the opinions I express. In particular, unless I state otherwise, this evidence is within my sphere of expertise and I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions I express.

4. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

4.1 In this matter, I have been asked by the applicant to address Landscape & Visual Effects matters.

4.2 I confirm that I have also read the Council Officer's Report dated 15th October 2020.

4.3 The assumptions, assessment and conclusions set out in the ALVE included in Annexure 1.0 of this evidence remain valid.

4.4 My evidence is structured as follows:

- (a) Brief Description of the Proposal (Section 5);
- (b) Site Context, Character, and Amenity (Section 6);
- (c) Assessment of Effects – Character & Amenity (Section 7);
- (d) Proposed Mitigation (Section 8);
- (e) Summary (Section 9);
- (f) Matters raised in submissions (Section 10);
- (g) Council Officer's Report & Peer Review (Section 11);
- (h) Conditions of Consent (Section 12);
- (i) Conclusion (Section 13).

5. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL

5.1 The North Egmont Retreat, **(The Retreat)** is located 18 minutes' drive south of New Plymouth (approx. 18km), and 5 minutes' drive south of Egmont Village. The site is located approximately 3.4km from the closest boundary with Egmont National Park, and 9.3km from the viewing platform at North Egmont Visitor Centre; it is approximately 12.8km from the summit of Maunga Taranaki. Egmont National Park is classified as an "Outstanding Landscape" within the Operative New Plymouth District Plan **(ODP)**.

- 5.2 The subject site covers 47.46ha between Egmont Road (east), Peters Road (north), and Alfred Road (west). The Retreat will diversify approximately 2ha of the property into a dual-purpose retreat, catering for motorhomes and guest occupants wishing to stay in purpose-built log chalets. The site is nestled into land currently managed as an organic farm that borders the Peters / Egmont Road Junction; an area identified as Kaimiro.
- 5.3 With respect to the proposed activities that have the potential to create landscape and visual effects, these include
- (a) 1 x 2 storied Log (and potentially weatherboard) amenities complex with dwelling above and a dark roof set back in excess of 80m from Egmont Road, and in excess of 137m from the closest neighbouring dwelling (on the opposite side of Egmont Road). This will not breach the 8m high limit as per Rur 9 of the ODP.
 - (b) 10 x single storied Log chalets with dark roofs set back in excess of 125m from Egmont Road, and in excess of 105m from the closest neighbouring dwelling.
 - (c) 24 x Motorhome parks set back at least 58m from Egmont Road to the closest bay, and in excess of 111m from the closest neighbouring dwelling.
 - (d) 7930m² of planted areas are proposed across The Retreat. This includes boundary planting, internal amenity planting around motorhome bays, the native vegetation buffer, entrance mitigation planting, and hedgerows as shown on the Landscape Mitigation Plan within the ALVE. In addition, 31 specimen amenity trees are proposed along the entrance drive and to the head of each motorhome bay; low level landscaping around the amenities block will be installed to assist with softening the junctions between built form and landscape areas.

6. SITE CONTEXT, CHARACTER, AND AMENITY;

- 6.1 The site is wholly within the 'Rural Environment Area' as defined by the ODP.
- 6.2 The site is to be accessed from Egmont Road, a collector Road, and main access route to Maunga Taranaki and the North Egmont Visitor Centre.
- 6.3 Specific commentary pertaining to landform, land cover, features and waterbodies is covered in Section 5 of the ALVE. The surrounding area is described in detail in the application AEE and attached ALVE. Section 4.0 of

the ALVE provides context to Kaimiro as a 'township' or historical collection of dwellings, hall and school house, and Section 8.1 provides photographic references via a series of images of the site and the roads/areas surrounding it.

- 6.4 ALVE Section 6.1 – Planning Context provides specific commentary around Rural Character & Amenity with respect to the ODP's Relevant Policies, Objectives and Rules (in respect of Landscape Matters).
- 6.5 ALVE Section 6.2 directly assesses the proposal against the ODP's non-regulatory Rural Subdivision and Development Design Guidelines – May 2012.
- 6.6 The analysis concludes that the proposal has adopted a large majority of the design principles expressed and promoted by the ODP's Objectives and Policies around use and development in the Rural Environment.
- 6.7 To this end, the proposal is consistent with the intent of the ODP's relevant Objectives and Policies and the Rural Design and Development Design Guidelines 2012.
- 6.8 The ALVE references relevant Objectives and Policies of the Proposed New Plymouth District Plan (**PDP**), as notified on 23 September 2019 in Section 6.3. Rules with legal effect are not triggered by the proposal.
- 6.9 The Retreat will not undermine the role, function and predominant character of the proposed 'Rural Production Zone', and will not constrain use of high value soils appropriate for versatile land uses such as arable cropping. Being approximately 2ha and annexed to a cluster of development near a road junction that is historically known as Kaimiro, the development will predominantly be of a low profile and a recessively coloured construction using natural materials; effects will be internalised, and set within a comprehensive landscape framework annexed to the applicant's farming infrastructure and activities.
- 6.10 In my view, the PDP places a higher emphasis on protecting high value soils. It is my understanding from the applicant that they are striking a balance between ensuring sufficient grazing/productive land for the ongoing success of the broader organic farm, while diversifying their interests and investments to remove only a relatively small area overall from the production oriented part of the farm. To this end, the proposal is consistent with the intent of the PDP's relevant Objectives and Policies.

7. ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS – CHARACTER & AMENITY;

7.1 A detailed assessment of landscape effects is included in Section 7.1 of the ALVE. It includes consideration of changes to the site's physical resource, and how this gives rise to changes in character and its perceived amenity.

7.2 A comprehensive assessment of visual effects is included in Section 8 of the ALVE. This includes consideration of effects on neighbouring residents, both those included as 'affected' parties by NPDC and notified through the consent process, and a wider catchment. It also assesses visual effects on Peters and Egmont Road, and the Unformed Legal Road (Paper Road).

8. PROPOSED MITIGATION

8.1 The proposed mitigation recommendations relating to landscape and visual effects are included in Section 11.0 of the ALVE and include:

- (a) **SITE LAYOUT:** Shall be IN GENERAL ACCORDANCE WITH the Landscape Framework - Masterplan as included in Appendix 1.0.
- (b) **CHALET HEIGHT:** Shall be limited in height to 5m above ground level at the time of consent. Where a pitch of a gable exceeds 5m, this shall be acceptable up to a maximum of 6m.
- (c) **ROOFING:** Roofing on all buildings (chalet, and amenity complex) shall have a reflectively value less than 35%.
- (d) **CLADDING:** Building design (all buildings) shall use natural materials and claddings with low reflectance values less than 35%. This applies to downpipes and window joinery.
- (e) **WATER TANKS:** Any water tanks above ground shall be a recessive shade less than 35% LRV, be clustered together and set within a densely vegetated grove so that views of the tanks are obscured. Where individual water tanks are located with the chalet's themselves, their locations shall be set inconspicuously, partially buried, potentially of a slimline design, and vegetated. Colour controls as above apply.
- (f) **DRIVEWAY:** Shall be finished in appropriate rural materials without kerbing. The use of swales and green infrastructure is recommended over urban treatments. Driveway materials shall be mid to dark grey in colour and/or match that already present on the site.

- (g) EXTERNAL LIGHTING: Lighting design shall be consistent with J. Cudby's plan. External lighting shall be hooded and cast down. Lighting shall be kept to minimum levels. If used along paths or driveways, it should seek to provide way finding levels of light only. No floodlights or point sources of light shall be permitted.
- (h) FENCING: No solid or urban style fences shall be erected. Shelter and privacy shall be obtained by the establishment of vegetation, or using fencing materials such as wire mesh, or post and wire with espaliered plants.
- (i) The LANDSCAPE MITIGATION PLAN and the LANDSCAPE MITIGATION ZONES plan in Appendix 4.0 and 4.1 of the ALVE shall be used as the basis for all landscape mitigation planting on the site in terms of areas, timing/phasing of planting, and the intended species type, depth, and height. It was the intention of the plan that the Mitigation Zones Plan would assist in understanding which specific areas are being referred to, given the size, purpose, and types of planting proposed across the site.
- (j) All landscaping shall be in GENERAL ACCORDANCE with the above plans and the plant list included in Appendix 4.2 of the ALVE.

9. SUMMARY

9.1 The key landscape and visual effects related issues in my opinion are:

- (a) Landscape change from grazed pastures defined by tall barberry hedgerows (2.5-3m) – not necessarily (or recently) open to views from travellers on the road corridor.
- (b) Managing light and noise associated with the proposed activity in terms of general amenity, and pleasantness.
- (c) Managing the density, height, and perceived scale of The Retreat through a strategic landscape framework and set of design and development controls.

9.2 By way of a summary, my analyses and assessments enable me to confidently conclude that:

- (a) With the landscape framework proposed, views into the site from neighbouring dwellings toward motorhomes and chalets will be completely screened on planting maturity.

- (b) With the landscape framework proposed, views into the site from public locations such as Peters Road, will be effectively screened and mitigated.
- (c) With the design controls (including a large setback) and landscape framework proposed, the potential adverse visual effect of the two storied amenities building with dwelling above, will be effectivity avoided and mitigated. There will be no dominance effect of the building on Egmont Road, or neighbours, and no adverse reflectivity effects.
- (d) With the design controls proposed, the potential adverse visual effect of the density of chalets will be very low given their location and context, nestled into a native vegetation framework. Roofs will be dark, and the external claddings of natural logs will be naturally textured and have low reflectivity values. The colours incorporated to the buildings will complement those naturally found in the surrounding environment.

10. SUBMISSIONS

10.1 I have reviewed the submissions received from Karl & Andrew Mischeski (1835 Egmont Road), and Michaela Stevenson & Zane Oneill (1870 Egmont Road). Both parties provided additional written comments to the generic form. The following matters were raised within my field of expertise:

- (a) Lighting – maintaining the ambience and expected low light levels at night in the rural environment requires a sensitive and effective response within The Retreat grounds. I assisted the applicant with their discussions with Mr Cudby regarding desired lighting levels, and conclude that with the measures taken, the resulting light levels, as outlined by Mr Cudby of ZG Lighting Ltd. will result in a very low effect on rural character and amenity as experienced by the above parties.
- (b) Noise, although commented on within the ALVE in Section 7.1 under the heading Amenity Effects has been responded to specifically by Mr Ellerton of Marshall Day Acoustics.
- (c) General statement from K & A Mischeski that "*the proposed development clearly contravenes the current rural environment, adversely affecting its current character and amenities*"; and from Ms

Stevenson & Mr Oneill that *"The proposal would adversely impact the quality and characteristics of the current rural feel"*.

- 10.2 The ALVE provides an assessment of Landscape and Visual effects on both private and public receptors. It has assessed the application against the relevant Objectives and Policies of the ODP and PDP, and the Rural Design and Development Design Guidelines 2012. Tangata Whenua Environmental Management Plans and their Objectives and/or Policies have been noted where they are exercised by, and/or their values are shared by, the proposal in Section 6.4 of the ALVE. Where adverse visual or landscape character effects have been identified, or have the potential to occur, these matters are targeted through a significant landscape framework and mitigation strategy including design and development controls.
- 10.3 The Council's Peer Reviewer, Mr Bain, states on page 4 of his 5th October 2020 review that *"The assessment of private receptors is thorough and complete. The narrative matches my own understanding of impacts on these properties, and I agree with the significance effects ratings"*. Mr Bain agrees on page 5 of his review that the mitigation measures proposed *"are appropriate"*.

11. COUNCIL OFFICER REPORT/S

- 11.1 I have reviewed the Section 42A Report for the Application as well as the Peer Review relating to my area of expertise. I will comment on these reports separately as follows.

Specialist Report from Mr Richard Bain of Bluemarble.

- 11.2 Mr Richard Bain of Bluemarble Landscape Architects prepared a Peer Review of the Landscape and Visual Effects report on 14th August 2020 of the Landscape and Visual Effects Assessment I authored on 30th July 2020.
- 11.3 The review generally agreed with my conclusions on the level of effects on both private and public receptors. However, Mr Bain considered a fuller assessment of effects was necessary, in particular, with respect to relevant District Plan assessment criteria. He also recommended that mitigation measures be collated and presented in a comprehensive format, and that an assessment of amenity effects should be made with reference to amenity in the RMA. These have been provided within the ALVE.
- 11.4 Mr Bain has subsequently reviewed the ALVE dated 25th September 2020 and provided Ms Southworth with an updated review dated 5th October 2020.

11.5 In relation to the original review, I wish to highlight the following matters:

- (a) A full ALVE was prepared in response to Mr Bain's comments and his reviewer recommendations. I considered it the most efficient way to pull together a number of complex elements.
- (b) Where specific matters raised by Mr Bain are responded to in the ALVE, these are noted. For clarity the following points relate to the original review:
 - (i) Mr Bain is correct in his summation that an assessment of the ODP was not provided within the peer reviewed report as it was specifically noted by the original processing planner that this was not required.
 - (ii) The ALVE responds to assessment criteria of Rur 12 in Section 6.1, Rur 16 in Section 9.7, and in Mr Twigley's response to the request for further information. With respect to Rur 101, this has been responded to by others in the context of traffic movements in the network.
 - (iii) Effects on Egmont National Park are negligible – see Section 7.1 and photos contained in Appendix 5.0 of the ALVE.
 - (iv) Colours and details of claddings, including commentary as to why log buildings were chosen by the applicant is included in the applicant's evidence and ALVE; I have included commentary around the effect of the material chosen, a precedent board, and a 3D artistic impression of the log chalets on a backdrop of native vegetation within Appendix 3.0 of the ALVE to provide visual context to the proposal in this regard. Colours will all be in the natural browns, greens and grey groupings with a LRV less than 35%. The surfaces of the logs will also be naturally textured, which, along with natural colourings, will assist in scattering light as opposed to smooth surfaces, such as corrugated iron or polished concrete, which can create glare effects. The proposal as it stands seeks to complement materials and tones found in the natural environment.
 - (v) An assessment of landscape effects, landscape change, amenity effects, cumulative effects, and effects on character

generally is included in Section 7.1 and concluded on in Section 10.0 of the ALVE.

- (vi) Further discussion around effects on Egmont Road and public views of the site is provided in Section 9.6 of the ALVE. However, I note that Mr Bain agrees that, with the proposed mitigation, the level of visual effect from Egmont Road will be low.
 - (vii) Mr Bain agrees that Peters Road has a low sensitivity to change, and with planting as proposed, effects will be very low.
 - (viii) Further discussion and analysis of effects on the Paper Road (Unformed Legal Road) is provided in Section 9.7 of the ALVE.
 - (ix) A revised landscape mitigation zones plan is included in Appendix 4.1 of the ALVE that includes all the planting between the road and the internal barberry hedge as being established in the first year of operation post granting of consent.
 - (x) I note in Mr Bain's conclusion that he states the "*landscape framework is well considered and will be effective if implemented in its entirety. To achieve this, a more detailed planting plan should be required as a condition of consent.*"¹ I have no issue with a planting plan being required.
 - (xi) Mitigation measures are collated and listed in Section 11.0 of the ALVE.
- (c) Post receipt of the ALVE and Mr Bain's updated review, he concludes on page 6 that "*...the proposal is unlikely to create adverse landscape and visual effects on rural character and amenity.*"

S42A Report

- 11.6 Based on the specialist report, the Council's section 42A report does not raise any matters I wish to address further except for two proposed conditions of consent – see Section 12.

¹ Bain, R. (2020). *North Egmont Retreat Peer Review of LVIA* (dated p. 7). New Plymouth: Bluemarble.

11.7 I note and agree with Ms Southworth where she concludes in para. 195 *"...that (with the mitigation measures proposed) any actual and potential effects of the proposal will be minor in terms of rural character and amenity."* And in para. 196 *"The proposed mitigation planting will assist in screening the proposed development from the adjacent public roads and both of the submitters properties, and the proposed building designs (including the use of recessive colours and materials, log cabin designs and restrictions regarding building height and colour) will similarly limit the visual effects associated with the addition of a number of habitable buildings within the existing rural environment. The proposed mitigation will, in my opinion provide appropriate mitigation with respect to rural character and amenity values."*

12. PROPOSED CONDITIONS OF CONSENT

12.1 I have reviewed the proposed conditions of consent and I consider the conditions to be appropriate. However, I consider the following amendments need to be made:

- (a) Condition 13.5 refers to "Plan L1.01 dated 20th July 2020" with respect to where parking provisions shall be delineated. For consistency, all vehicle bays are now shown on an updated set of Landscape Plans attached as **Annexure 2.0** to this evidence.
- (b) Condition 14.3(b) is not a true reflection of the intent of the phasing outlined in the Mitigation Zones Plan dated 24th September 2020. In my view, there is sufficient planting within the pink hatched area (to be carried out in the first planting season) to adequately screen the chalet zone without requiring plants around the chalets themselves to reach 2m prior to operation. See the heavy dashed black line around areas of planting between the motorhomes and chalet area on the updated L1.03 Landscape Mitigation Zones Plan in Annexure 2.0.
- (c) The chalet's will require access from large vehicles to the site's on which they will be built. Establishing plants prior to their construction (to 2m high) will a) remove this paddock from the grazing rotation immediately, and b) create conflicts with the large vehicles required to deliver, unload, store and handle the logs prior and during construction. The nature of the planting proposal means there is very little set down area.

- (d) There is also uncertainty by the applicants of how many chalets they will construct at any one time, meaning flexibility toward the expanse of the mitigation planting proposed around them would be most effective if tied to the building consents of the chalets themselves. I note also that there will be infrastructure needed for the chalets, such as water and wastewater, which will require ground disturbance; the extent of which is subject to detailed design. It is common practice to establish plants after these services are installed.

13. CONCLUSION

13.1 My evidence has assessed the Landscape and Visual effects matters that I am aware of in relation to the Application and I can safely conclude that:

- (a) In natural feature and landscape terms, the effects on the perceptual values of the Outstanding Landscape of Egmont National Park, and views from the park to the coast, will be negligible, or neutral in nature; adverse effects from brightly coloured, highly reflective buildings will be avoided, and landscape mitigation will ensure the proposal beds into the landscape, receding from view.
- (b) Concerning visual amenity and rural character from public vantage points and in particular Egmont Road, effects will be mitigated to Very Low - Low levels of adverse visual effects. The majority of visual effects, post mitigation, will be consistent with what is expected in the rural environment along a highly popular access route to Maunga Taranaki. The location of the site together with mixed native and exotic boundary planting, internal amenity planting and considerable setbacks from the road, will ensure views are limited in duration, depth, and intensity. The setback of buildings from neighbouring dwellings and/or Egmont Road is considerable and consistent with distances between dwellings in the broader surrounding environment. The scale of the proposal, although different to lifestyle subdivision and pastoral farming activities, is well mitigated through height, material choice, location/setback, vegetation mitigation and colour controls. The site does not form a focal point to views as one ascends toward Maunga Taranaki, and is seen for only a fleeting moment when descending Egmont Road.
- (c) Concerning visual amenity and rural character from the submitters at 1870 and 1835 Egmont Road, the proposal, post mitigation, will create an overall significance of change of Very Low – Low and Very Low respectively. The proposal is separated from the dwellings in

both instances in excess of at least 111m. Neither dwelling is oriented toward the site, nor makes use of the vista across the site as a primary means of amenity to the dwelling. Both dwellings also maintain vegetation on their own properties that block, filter, or obscure views toward the site, an indication also that the site is not valued, in and of itself, as part of their direct amenity experience.

- (d) With respect to Amenity effects, elements such as noise, light, and traffic generation are covered by other experts; taking their findings into consideration, along with my holistic view of the proposal and its fit within the context of the Kaimiro area, together with letters of support as included in the applicant's evidence, I conclude there will be Very Low adverse amenity effects. Positive biodiversity effects, and those that maintain and enhance amenity values, and thus the quality of the environment, are also proposed via the approximate 7930m² of planting proposed.
- (e) Based on this, I conclude that the natural character, rural character and visual effects of the proposed activity are managed in a way that avoids significant adverse effects. In my opinion, with mitigation measures outlined, they may proceed in a way that enables the development to naturalise with the surrounding environment with very low adverse effects while simultaneously maintaining and enhancing the environment.

Erin Natalie Griffith

Natural Capital



27 October 2020