

**BEFORE THE NEW PLYMOUTH DISTRICT COUNCIL
INDEPENDENT HEARING COMMISSIONERS**

IN THE MATTER the Resource Management Act

AND

IN THE MATTER of a request for Private Plan Change NPDC PLC18/00048
by Oakura Farm Park Limited to rezone land at Oakura
within the New Plymouth District

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF MICHAEL MCKIE ON BEHALF OF OAKURA FARM
PARK LIMITED**

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INTRODUCTION

1. My name is Michael McKie. I, together with my wife, Ingrid, are the directors and shareholders of the applicant company, Oakura Farm Park Limited. Our four adult children have beneficial interests in Oakura Farm Park Limited through family trust arrangements.
2. I was an associate of the Real Estate Institute of New Zealand for over 30 years (1988-2018) and practised as a real estate licensee on my own account with offices in Opunake and Oakura.
3. I was raised on a dairy farm in Coastal Taranaki and have 40 years farming experience, much of this as an owner with sharemilker arrangements in place. We own and operate 3 organic dairy farms in Taranaki, having converted each from conventional farming systems (i.e. inputs of artificial fertiliser, herbicides, antibiotics etc) to organic certified systems.
4. In recent years I have undertaken a number of property developments in North and Coastal Taranaki. These include 'The Paddocks' rural/residential lifestyle subdivision (26 lots) at Oakura, which adjoins the application site. Other projects have been rural lifestyle lots (8 lots) on Carrington Road, New Plymouth, a rural lifestyle development (4 lots) at Bell Block New Plymouth and the 'Beach Farm' subdivision (8 lots) at Opunake.

SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

5. My evidence will cover:
 - a) The reasons for the application of the private plan change
 - b) The Land

- c) Our Relationships
- d) The Environment
- e) The Future

EVIDENCE

The reasons for the private plan change application

6. The Oakura Farm property enjoys a unique location. It's adjoins the Oakura urban area and its conversion to a mix of urban and rural lifestyle development has long been a vision of ours. Being located on the coast and with the National Park as a backdrop have always been attractive reasons for people to live at Oakura, particularly for those who enjoy outdoor recreation.
7. The contour of the land lends itself to development without the need for major earthworks. It lies well to all day sun and the gently rising, even grade provides an attractive setting for people to live in.
8. The New Plymouth District Council rates on the property (currently \$17,360) mean the farm has to deal to an ongoing and annual and costly overhead that does not reflect its agriculture use.
9. Being the one remaining dairy farm upland of the Oakura township, we are very aware of our obligations to be responsible environmental stewards. The obligations around the environment and health and safety compliance and associated costs (and potential costs if we fail to comply), along with community and the wider public expectations have led us to consider a better use to which the land can be put.

10. I believe our recent development adjoining The Paddocks subdivision (which the Commissioners have no doubt viewed) is an excellent example of transitioning the land use from dairy farming to housing and I hope to achieve a similar outcome through this plan change process.

The Land

11. Since I was eighteen years old the location, aspect and potential of what was then the Marsh Farm has appealed to me. Many years later, in 2005, we took a lease on what was then a rundown unkempt under-performing dairy farm still showing the signs of windfall damage resulting from the disastrous Cyclone Bola (1988). We removed various farm buildings in disrepair, we removed 40 tonnes of scrap metal in the form of obsolete vehicles, farm plant and machinery, upgraded the dairy shed, refenced the entire property (including the SH45 frontage) and installed new stock-water infrastructure (pump, piped reticulation and water troughs). We also did some land recontouring and improved the pasture.
12. The vegetation on the property comprised poor pasture, with mature macrocarpa trees (Monterey cypress) as singles, groups and as shelterbelts, and a range of other old pines gums and other non-native trees across the property. The SH 45 frontage presented a view of old broken-down post and wire fencing, macrocarpa trees (some storm damaged) and brambles. The roadside view into the property was limited. We set about removing the majority of the macrocarpa trees, pines, gums, brambles and other noxious plants to optimise the extent of pasture and its growth. We subsequently converted the dairy farm from a traditional dairy farming system. Today the land and dairy unit is certified organic. Working with the Taranaki Regional Council we have planted 12,000 native specimens along the margins of the Wairau Stream on the southern side of the property.

13. The property has natural attributes for development. The north-facing aspect, even grade with gently rising elevation, waterways and gullies lend themselves to creating a beautiful environment to live in. This plan change will complement The Paddocks project where I believe we have achieved good landscape design and concept.
14. The open pastures are man-made, that is, not natural as the area would have been before being converted to agricultural use many decades ago. Flax and low-lying bush all the way to the sea would have existed. An important condition of The Paddocks was that all sections must have a minimum of 10% native planting. The landscape planting plans will continue to show revegetation of the total land area, excluding houses and roads. In the QEII area, which is almost 9ha, we have planted 20,000 native trees.
15. We purchased the property in 2008. Over the years my vision for the property as an extension of the Oakura urban area has developed. In the mid 2000's I decided to get serious about making that a reality. 'The Paddocks' rural residential development is a product of that thinking. More recently, when it was clear to me there was a need for more greenfield residential development at Oakura I decided to explore the possibilities for the FUD South Area on the property. That has evolved into the proposed Wairau Estate and the Private Plan Change that the Commission is now considering.

16. Going forward my vision is a gradual transition of the Oakura Farm Park land from rural to residential and rural lifestyle. I believe the uptake of sections will be gradual and over many years. As the residential stages develop stock numbers of the dairy farm will adjusted to suit the remaining pasture. In time my daughter who runs the dairy farm intends to revert to a boutique dairy operation producing dairy products (e.g. cheese, butter, yoghurt etc.) for sale through the café/farm shop that we have in mind for the Business land located by the ponds.

Our Relationships

17. The McKie Family recognises the importance of good relationships. We have listened to and have a very good understanding of the Oakura community's concerns. I personally, have enjoyed the interaction at the pre-hearing meetings, listening to community feedback and the ongoing discussions. This has allowed us to adapt, renew and re-channel our focus and direction to cater to these concerns. In so doing the concept for Wairau Estate has evolved and been refined.
18. In addition, the Taranaki Regional and New Plymouth District Councils' Iwi, QEII, independent advisors, have all played important roles, these relationships will continue well into the future.
19. We also place importance on our relationship with Ngati Tairi Hapu and its representatives. This commenced back in 2010 when we consulted with the Hapu when we started out with The Paddocks project.
20. I have great respect for Hapu Kaumatua Keith Manukonga and his knowledge.

21. He talks of the respect for the land and how the land chooses the people who care for it. He talks about the protection of the waterways, the links to the sea and the mountain, the spirit of the land, fish migrating up streams and the bird life from the mountain to the sea.
22. The land doesn't have a history of war and has avoided any unsettling battles. I understand that the pa site located within the QEII protected area was home to 200 Maori people who lived together in peace.
23. For anyone living on the Oakura Farm, including The Paddocks development, there is a sense of peace and calmness that cannot be bought, that goes with the land. Anyone who lives in the Oakura Farm area will know how strongly I feel about this.
24. Through working alongside Keith and our archaeologist Ivan Bruce I am aware that the Oakura Farm Park land is part of the traditional lands within the rohe of the Ngati Tairi Hapu. We also have an appreciation of the cultural importance that Mount Taranaki and the Kaitake Range has for the Hapu and Taranaki Iwi. I believe protecting the previously unrecorded pa which is now secured with the QEII Covenant as part of The Paddocks development together with the significant number of native trees we have planted on the property aligns well with the Hapu and Iwi aspirations and expectations. And I am looking forward to undertaking the restoration and enhancement of the gully tributaries through water detention areas and native planting; this I believe also aligns very well with the traditional Maori view of, and care for, the natural environment.
25. As with The Paddocks we are pleased that the Hapu will be able to be further recognised by street naming within Wairau Estate. I appreciate that the opportunity for street naming is especially important to the Hapu. The origins of the survey of the Oakura township as a soldier settlement after the land wars saw many of the streets named after military officers.

26. I am also pleased with the design for the stone carving that has been developed on behalf of the Hapu to be located on Upper Wairau Road and look forward to contributing to it becoming a reality.
27. The street naming together with the stone carvings will provide permanent and readily visible markers of the Hapu and its traditional lands in the locality. I believe in time that the stone carvings will not only be a point of interest for passing cyclists and walkers but will also serve as an educational resource for the students and teachers of the Oakura Primary School.

The Environment

28. The linkage between the National Park and the sea is one of the most exciting aspects of the Oakura land.
29. The nine hectares of QEII protected reserves set aside close to Oakura township is a real asset. This reserve area holds Taranaki Regional Council Key Native Ecosystem (KNE) recognition. It is fenced and includes 20,000 native plants as well as 40 pest traps located in and around the area, it is also an important linkage for the Project Mounga, creating wildlife corridors. Refer **Appendices A and B** attached.
30. The Wairau Estate will only extend and enhance these initiatives. In addition, I am keen for Wairau Estate to be a water conservation area. My vision is for each lot to provide for rainwater harvesting and onsite water storage. In addition to this, we will set aside land for the additional water tanks required by the NPDC to future-proof community water storage. The land to be offered adjoins the Oakura Water Treatment and Reservoir and is shown on the attached plan.

The Future

31. There is a demand for housing at Oakura. Our conversations have led us to the understanding that many parents are unable to have their adult children and grandchildren live nearby in Oakura due to house pricing and limited supply.
32. Along with the consideration of families, we see the aging population as an extremely important social responsibility, hence the requirement for smaller sections. With limited options available and the elderly population seeking a balance of independence and security while living in an attractive setting, this demand for smaller sections will continue to grow. Personal conversations with local retirees indicate a desire to downsize into a new but smaller house and section so they can continue to live at Oakura.
33. We see interaction and movement as an extremely important piece to the lives of the elderly and wish to create this within Wairau Estate with land set aside for a cafe, recreation centre and organic gardens for all to enjoy.
34. The Taranaki Regional Council with the New Plymouth District Council are undertaking a joint project, a combined walkway/cycleway from Pukeiti to Oakura through the National Park. This projects will only add to the vibrancy of Oakura. Local hiking, mountain biking, fishing, surfing, and the natural environment are, as we all know, simply outstanding.
35. Our two daughters along with their families reside in Oakura, including 3 of our grandchildren. Naturally, we only want the very best for them and the future of the community they live in.

Dated 17 June 2019

Michael McKie

Appendix A
QEII/KNE Area Recognition

McKie QEII Covenant



PROTECT – ENHANCE – PROMOTE Biodiversity values

This area has been identified by the national regional council to be a key native ecosystem (KNE) due to its high native biodiversity values. This means that the area bordered in yellow contains regionally significant ecosystems, habitats and species. The Council is working

with the local family and other interested parties to protect and enhance these values. Efforts to date include long-term planning to protect and enhance the native biodiversity; revegetation and enhancement planting; pest control; and help accessing funding to promote conservation goals.



This QEI is an important habitat for a variety of native and indigenous species, such as:



Spideina warble - mainly rare, possible
New Zealand robin
This bird is one of the most common native birds in the McKie area. It is a small, brown and white bird with a distinctive white patch on its breast.



Longfin eel - rare
This eel is a large, slender fish with a long, thin body. It is found in the McKie area and is an important species for the local ecosystem.



Marbled katipo
This katipo is a large, brown and white spider. It is found in the McKie area and is an important species for the local ecosystem.



Tuatara
This reptile is a large, brown and white creature. It is found in the McKie area and is an important species for the local ecosystem.



King fern
This fern is a large, green plant with long, thin fronds. It is found in the McKie area and is an important species for the local ecosystem.



DESCRIPTION

The McKie QEII Covenant is a 100-hectare area of native bush and grassland. It is an important habitat for a variety of native and indigenous species. The area is bordered in yellow on the map. The Council is working with the local family and other interested parties to protect and enhance these values.

HISTORY

The McKie QEII Covenant was established in 2011. It is an important habitat for a variety of native and indigenous species. The area is bordered in yellow on the map. The Council is working with the local family and other interested parties to protect and enhance these values.

ENHANCEMENT

- Revegetation and enhancement planting
- Pest control
- Long-term planning
- Accessing funding

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Plant native plants and trees
- Avoid using pesticides and herbicides
- Report any pest sightings

For more information, contact the Council on 06 765 7100.



- Legend:
 - Native
 - Important
 - Other



FOR MORE INFORMATION
Taranaki Regional Council
06 765 7100
www.region.co.nz



APPENDIX B
QEII/KNE AREA WITH MR Q AMOORE, TEAM LEADER BIODIVERSITY,
TARANAKI REGIONAL COUNCIL



Acknowledgement: Roger Richardson & LIVE Magazine