

**SUBMISSION OF GRAEME JOHN DUFF
FOR PLAN CHANGE 48**

**On behalf of
Graeme John Duff & Marion Anne Duff
3 Ekuarangi Place, Oakura**

25th July 2019

1. My name is Graeme John Duff and I live, with my wife Marion, at 3 Ekuarangi Place in Oakura. Ekuarangi Place is part of The Paddocks subdivision completed by the applicant. We purchased Lot 6 in June 2016 and have built a new home which we occupied in June 2018. I was born in and spent my first 19 years in New Plymouth.

2. My association with Oakura dates back to 1953 when in the summer of that year I spent 6 weeks in the family bach at Linda Street one of the original holiday home streets in Oakura. This was a holiday pattern that was to continue with my parents and siblings annually for the next 15 years. I remember when there were few baches on Messenger Tce and when lower Wairau Road was farmland. I also remember the wonderful views that we enjoyed from our bach, of the beach, and on from there to Parititu and the Sugar Loaf Islands.

3. While having lived out of Taranaki for approximately 40 years until 2018, I have always remained closely connected through family, commercial interests and close and life-long friends. Rarely would I visit Taranaki, which I did about four times a year, without taking the time to visit Oakura. I have watched its development since 1953 and this culminated in us buying our section in The Paddocks which we view as our retirement home and our retirement location.

4. Oakura has always been very special to me and it has been a never-ending pleasure to witness Oakura's natural development over the last 65 years to what it is today – a beachside village providing a high-quality lifestyle for all ages. It has a busy and appropriately sized commercial centre on State Highway 45, a quality primary school, and a diverse and participating population which all go to providing a high quality and rewarding community.

This is a true community with its spirit and fibre built by the qualities of the inhabitants, but this community is seriously under threat from this application. The proposal is inappropriate, it is unwelcome, and not required and is useful by no-one other than the applicant company and the McKie family, and shortly I will outline the reasons why. This community is seriously under threat and that is clearly recognized by the 400+ submitters opposed to this Private Plan Change application.

5. Before moving onto the specifics, I should mention that my professional career has been in the finance industry and since the early 1980's I have been self-employed and specialized in commercial property finance. Over the years many of these projects have included the financing of residential subdivisions and I am presently involved in a financier role of a large 550 lot subdivision in Auckland. I mention this only to indicate that I have some knowledge of the social, cultural, and economic considerations to be considered for a successful resident development.

Let me now address the negative aspects of this application –

Landscape and Visual Impact

6. The proposed plan of 400+ sections is entirely inappropriate for a town which has developed naturally over time with its citizens recognizing and capitalizing on the rural hinterland and the pleasures provided by a quality beach. It was these commanding attributes which attracted us back to Oakura after all these years. I first viewed The Paddocks subdivision when on vacation in Oakura in about 2013 and was impressed by the achieved combination of a rural residential community affording the owners and occupiers outstanding views both of the ocean and the surrounding rural landscape. From our home our views to the east feature established farmland and to the north views encompassing the village and the Tasman Sea, both which are outstanding. They do not compare however to the views to the west which includes Lot 29 which is proposed to be subdivided by the applicant. On from there to the views of the golf course, Ahu Ahu Road and beyond, and to the south from our home we have the priceless and non-negotiable vista of the Kaitake Ranges.

7. It is for all these reasons that we bought our section and built our home. As cautious people, we sought the comfort that these views would be protected and in deciding to buy relied on the verbal undertakings given by the applicant in the Hearings for The Paddocks consent in 2010 and contained within the consent that was granted.

8. I quote from Page 75 of the Paddocks consent –

“The condition with regard to future subdivision of the Lot 29, relating to the no further subdivision of the property as long as it remains in the Rural Environment Area, has been retained as originally proposed. This condition will ensure that open space is retained over the balance allotment. It is also noted that the applicant expressed the intention during the hearing of retaining this lot with a ‘Protected Farm’ status in the longer term, regardless of the zoning.”

9. Further, I was comforted by the advertising that accompanied The Paddocks where there was much emphasis placed on the rural outlook, an outlook that the granting of this application would destroy.

Let me quote from The Paddocks website –

“The Paddocks offers the best of both worlds, a stunning rural outlook positioned on the edge of a beautiful seaside village

The granting of this application would have a dramatic negative impact on all, but particularly those living in The Paddocks, upper Wairau Road (south of State Highway 45) and would simply ruin the attractive views of the Kaitake Ranges from State Highway 45.

10. Let me quote from the applicants Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment as prepared by Blue Marble in September 2017 – on Page 12 of that report I quote –
“Significant effects are more likely to occur from the proposal on the neighbouring rural environment including the lifestyle area named The Paddocks.”

And on Page 16 the report confirms that the effect on the change to those in The Paddocks would be “high adverse”.

Richard Bain of Blue Marble makes numerous attempts in his assessment to mitigate this “high adverse” impact. Let me assure you as one who enjoys these views on a daily basis, no amount of mitigation or rationalisation will justify the destruction of these views which is what the approval of this application would give the opportunity to do.

Social Impact

11. As mentioned earlier I have had links to Oakura since 1953 and have watched as it has developed from a small seaside holiday location to the quality and energetic community that it is today. Oakura has developed naturally over those 65 years, small subdivisions have been done as and when the demand justified and the expansion has resulted in the present Oakura population of 1,380. This application, if granted, would enable the developer to immediately increase the population by 1,065 people. Assurances that the 411 new sections would be staged gives no

comfort. If this application is granted the land will have the consent attached with no limitations regarding the programme. As I have mentioned Oakura has developed naturally over the last 80 or 90 years. What this application does is give licence to one land owner to totally control the development process with the option to immediately increase the population by 80%. This would only provide the platform for a social disaster.

12. The social impact on the community services, education, retail facilities, infrastructure etc would be unacceptable and socially artificial. An example of the consequences of forced and accelerated development is the town of Turangi on the southern shores of Lake Taupo. I have owned a holiday home there since 1982 so am well informed on that community. It was essentially developed to accommodate the construction of the Tongariro Power Scheme with hundreds of workers arriving for that project. With that project long completed the consequences of the exploded community remain today with its well reported serious social, economic and community problems. Please don't create an opportunity for this to happen in Oakura.

Intensity of the Development

13. Quite apart from my comments to date regarding the irreparable damage that this application would cause, the intensity of 399 sections over 19 hectares would give an intolerably small average section size of 476 square metres. Further, the application seeks a 55% usage ratio. This is a ridiculous proposal for density compared to the 35% presently part of the District Plan. If allowed the result will only be seen as it will turn out, that being an appearance of a big city residential suburb, and as I say inappropriate for a quality semi-rural and beach location. I remind you no amount of mitigation will rationalize this proposal, there will be nothing but a sea of rooves. There is no justification for this application to have special treatment or favoured status.

Egmont National Park

14. The granting of this application will result in 411 new residences (sections plus equestrian). Some of these will be within 400 metres of the Kaitake Ranges, part of the Egmont National Park. The ranges are a great beauty viewed from any angle but particularly from State Highway 45 and the residential areas north of State Highway 45 including our home. The present farmland is an important buffer between the residences north of State Highway 45 and the Kaitake Ranges. This must remain and to replace this buffer with what I have earlier described as a sea of rooves would be a tragedy and impossible to justify on any grounds.

15. There is ample provision via the already identified FUD's for the expansion of Oakura, and any residential development proposal should be on the already identified areas north of State Highway 45. The visual joys and beauty of the Kaitake Ranges must be protected at all cost – they are irreplaceable, they can't be rebuilt, they can't be substituted and they surely can't be mitigated.

Stormwater Risks

16. I have already covered a number of important negative effects if this application was granted. The most important matter I will raise however is that of the abnormally high stormwater risk and the associated flooding risk. Because of the sloping nature of the land from the Kaitake Ranges to State Highway 45 surface water from natural climate events create serious flooding risk to existing homes, let alone the accompanying risk of another 411 homes.
17. The engineers for the applicant both in 2010 and now in 2019 rabbit on at length about how the stormwater can be handled and seem to justify all ills by a cute engineering phrase "hydraulic neutrality". This would indicate in my limited knowledge that there would be no adverse or multiplying effects. As I say this was argued and presumably believed in 2010 and apparently is also the saviour in 2019.

18. Let me tell you the facts, and show you the facts. We moved into our new home on 7th June 2018 and 11 days later our home was flooded from excess water, some from the adjacent Wairau Road, but particularly from the applicant's land to the south of Lot 6 including the unsold Lots from Stage 1 of The Paddocks, the land containing the water reservoir and the land subject to this application. I have repeatedly tried to engage with the applicant as the developer of The Paddocks to solve the problem. Mike McKie has refused to engage to resolve the problems. The District Council have been involved spasmodically and are presently re-engaged. Let me assure you that the stormwater problems are not caused by any shortcomings as us as the owners. Our home was architecturally designed, our grounds developed by a landscape architect and our drainage provided by us installing no less than 23 soak holes.

19. I supply here, and leave with you, photos of the flooding of our home and property in 2018. Be assured as this event was happening we desperately wanted to know about hydraulic neutrality. Based on my experience of the developer's work in The Paddocks the possibility of over 400 more homes pose significant flooding risks. Worse still, in my opinion, if this application is consented it will create an unacceptably large liability risk for the District Council. The potential liability would rank with the millions of dollars being paid out by local authorities around NZ in the leaky homes saga.

20. I really do need to repeat and emphasise that from our experience this land, from the ranges to SH45 cannot handle the existing stormwater. The applicant and their engineers have failed miserably. Today there continues to be excess uncontrolled stormwater in even moderate rainfall.

In closing I want to say;

21. If granted, this application would be a disaster for Oakura and has the real ability to totally destroy this wonderful community. My assessment of the submissions indicates that some 97% of the submitters were strongly against the application and asked for it to be declined. While understanding that submitters are not limited to residents, to receive 400+ submissions from a population of 1,320 carries a very strong message and a message that should be heeded by the Commissioners. The application is unwelcome, the proposals contained within it inappropriate for a small community and the future development of Oakura should not be placed in the hands of one man or one family. Let us enjoy what we have, protect it and continue to develop it in a natural way as has worked well for 90 years – that is the Oakura way. It has been successful for those 90 years, has not precluded sensible and planned development and there is no reason why this natural development can't continue. The message you should receive from me today is that I strongly oppose this application and strongly support the views of the other 400+ submitters who are against this application. The response from the community with an overwhelming "NO" vote must be the final consideration.



