

**Before the New Plymouth District Council**

**Independent Hearing Commissioners**

**PPC18/00048**

**Under** the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA)

**In the matter of** an application by Oākura Farm Park Limited to vary or cancel Condition 4 of Consent Notice Instrument No. 9696907.4 on Lot 29 DP 497629

**And**

**In the matter of** Proposed Private Plan Change 48 to the New Plymouth District Plan requested by Oākura Farm Park Limited for the proposed rezoning of land at Wairau Road, Oākura

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1. Kia ora. Tena kotou katoa.
2. My name is Jason Peacock
3. I grew up in New Plymouth, before traveling and working overseas for many years. I returned with my family in 2008 and have lived in Oākura for the past 6-years. I am married and have two young children who both attend Oākura Primary School. My parents and two of my brothers live in Oākura.
4. I am the Country Manager for an upstream Oil and Gas company who own and operate assets in Taranaki. I have tertiary qualifications in engineering and in geology.
5. My initial and overarching statement would be that the applicant refers in his evidence to, and I quote, "For anyone living on the Oākura Farm, including The Paddocks development, there is a sense of peace and calmness that cannot be bought". I make particular reference to the applicant's use of the term "peace and calmness". Given the magnitude of the additional number of properties this development may result in, the intensive nature of the development and little real consideration for integration into the existing environment I would question how the applicant's proposed development will ever meet these expectations of peace and calmness.
6. I also observe that this application may be at odds with the existing consent granted by the Council for The Paddocks, in which consent was granted on the basis that no further subdivision would occur while the land remains in the Rural Development Area of the

District Plan. From a layman's perspective approving this subsequent rezoning application appears to set a precedent that may undermine planning and consenting processes. What confidence can the public place on Council consultation and long-term planning if developers and Council are able to ignore the obligations of prior consents and in particular to then rezone an area and ignore the desire of the residents for the community for growth in a much more organic and methodical manner.

7. Further it also appears that if this application to vary the land use consent were to be granted, I would imagine it would be at odds with the expectations of the current residents of The Paddocks who purchased these properties, from the applicant, with the understanding that they were moving to a semi-rural environment that has a sense of "peace and calmness". Given the magnitude of the development it is difficult to foresee these owners properties as being anything close to "peaceful and calm".
8. Over a 36 month period, culminating in 2017, the Kaitake Community Board developed the Kaitake Community Board Plan. As you have no doubt heard already, this plan was developed with the input of over 300 people and involved over 70 meetings. The Kaitake Community Board put a huge amount of effort into this process, and the ultimate plan, to ensure that the desires of the community were heard and documented. Consultative and democratic are two terms that can be used to describe this process.
9. It is not my intention to repeat the conclusions from this study, but in the context of my submission I do wish to paraphrase the executive summary of this report, which states "The central message to the Council is that the village requires managed, staged and targeted growth. Rapid and widespread expansion would negatively affect the special character of Oākura and adversely impact on the education services, traffic and parking and access to affordable homes, recreation and environmental assets." I feel that this is a very clear and very powerful message from the community and one that has been developed through a very robust consultation process. If the council were to largely ignore this message it could have significant detrimental effects on the confidence of the community in the Council and the planning processes.
10. I note that I am not a planner nor am I an expert in storm water or water management, but the potential increases in the water levels in the Wairau Stream due to storm water run-off from the proposed development should concern the Council and the residents along this catchment area.

- 10.1. There are several existing houses located on sections that are low lying and close to this stream. The Wairau Stream also has a culvert that allows the Telford Terrace walkway to cross the stream. As the number of properties upstream increase, in the Paddocks in particular, I have witnessed this stream overflow on several occasions in the past 3 to 4 years. In this context I do wonder what effect more housing and further storm water loading on the stream will have on this issue.
- 10.2. I have read much of the evidence presented by the applicant and his experts but am unable to note any consideration of the impact on Oākura beach front properties if the volume of water in the Wairau Stream increases. I note that with the large volumes of sand that there are on the beach at present that the stream has a strong tendency to migrate northward along the high tide zone towards the beachfront properties and form what is sometimes called the Wairau Lagoon. The impact of greater volumes of water in the stream and subsequent effects on beachfront properties and the surf lifesaving club appear not to have been discussed in any evidence.
- 10.3. I note, as have other submitters, that the Shearer Reserve Sewage Pump Station is a critical piece of infrastructure and that this may be compromised if the area were to become more prone to flooding. The possible cost and impact of this on the Oākura community does not appear to have been considered by the applicant or his experts.
- 10.4. Further to the issues described above, there appears to have been no consideration for the possible impact of climate change and potential associated sea level increase on flooding created by this development throughout low lying areas in and around Shearer Reserve, the Wairau Stream and beachfront properties.
11. The applicant appears to have made little attempt to mitigate some of the social impacts of the development, such as;
- 11.1. Road safety – Oākura is unusual in that most of the amenities are located along either side of SH45, where there is limited parking and only one pedestrian crossing available through the length of the central part of the village. No consideration has been made for the additional traffic through the heart of the village and the impact that this will have on parking and pedestrian safety as both young and old try to cross what will become a very busy road.

- 11.2. The applicant has made no attempt to mitigate the effects that the additional population will have on infrastructure such as retail parking, beach front amenities and community facilities such as playgrounds and walkways.
- 11.3. There is little consideration for the impact that additional traffic will have on the population's ability to safely use the road network for cycling around the village. Connected cycleways appear to not have been considered in the application nor has the issue of crossing SH45 in the centre of the village, which will undoubtedly be more fraught – especially for younger children.
- 11.4. The applicant's consideration of the effects of additional traffic on the school is simplistic. To suggest that there will be less than minor effects on the school and the safety of students attending the school suggests that the applicant has not taken the time to review the data adequately and/or collect enough data. Donnelly Street is already relatively congested on a typical school day and the school's attempts to encourage walking and cycling to school are proving to be challenging. Adding further traffic load to the area will only make this issue more of a challenge as parents become more concerned with pedestrian and cyclist safety. I am currently a resident of Donnelly Street and can attest to the problematic traffic volume on this road already.
- 11.5. The applicant's submission does not appear to consider the potential for further traffic volumes on Wairau Road associated with the upcoming Pukeiti to Kaitake crossing, which is forecasted to add up to 30,000 additional vehicle movements on this road network. It does not take into consideration the further detrimental effects that the additional traffic volumes associate with this application combined with the tourism related traffic will have on the ability for walkers, cyclists and horse riders to utilise the network. The stretch of road to the top of Wairau Road and the top of Surrey Hill Road is very popular with these types of users and I would expect that there will be a very negative response and a decline in use as the volume of vehicle traffic on the road increases. This outcome would appear to be at odds with the Council's aim to increase walking and cycling across the district.
12. The applicant's proposals to attempt to remedy some of the possible traffic issues would result in significant effects on the aesthetic values of the area. For example, suggesting that a through road from Hussey Street to Butlers Lane may help alleviate possible school

traffic is overly simplistic and would significantly degrade the sense of “peace and calmness” in this area also.

13. The development is at odds with the Taranaki Regional Council’s Predator Free Taranaki and Restore Kaitake projects. Substantial progress has been made in and around the Kaitake Ranges with the ongoing eradication of pests. Possum and rat numbers have been reduced significantly in and around Oākura and the benefits of this are being seen in the amount of bird life in the village. However domestic cats still present a serious risk to native wildlife. An Otago University study undertaken in 2010 found that domestic cats killed large numbers of native birds, and that native species existed in urban areas because populations restocked themselves with birds from outlying areas. In this scenario, the Kaitake Ranges and the surrounding native bush provides the ability to restock urban areas with native wildlife. Placing further stress on this resource will undoubtedly impact wildlife populations. A recent Forest and Bird study showed that in urban areas, there are 220 domestic cats per square kilometre and that the estimated 1.4 million domestic cats in NZ kill at least 1.2 million native birds per year. This study also showed that cats have a typical range of 2.2 hectares. With consideration of all of this, the placement of up to 395 additional dwellings right on the edge of the National Park and in an area where there is currently a concerted effort by the community to reduce predators, seems to be very counterproductive and in direct conflict with the aims of the Regional Council program.
14. I would like to conclude by stating that I am not averse to organic growth that is in line with the NPDC Long Term Plan and recognises the desire of the community. This being growth that allows opportunity for all the population, that is controlled and does not result in a rapid, intensive and material changes to the lifestyle that exists in Oākura presently. Oākura is a special community and in some ways represents much that is good about living in New Zealand, much that is good about the wonderful province that we are fortunate enough to live and work in. Oākura provides our children with a safe environment to grow in, for them to develop an understanding of the importance of the environment and to appreciate space. Oākura is a place that is presently “peaceful and calm”.
15. The applicant’s proposal is manifestly different from this. It is intensive, it soaks up all the growth opportunity for the area and has little or no consideration for the current lifestyle of the residents of the area. It takes no responsibility for the determinantal effects that

395 high density properties will have on the people and the Mouri, or life-giving principal, of this region of Taranaki. For these reasons I believe that the application should be declined.