

PPC 18/00048 Private Plan Change

Oral submission – Richard Shearer. (Written submission no. 59)

Thank you, Commissioners.

My name is Richard Shearer. I am the 6th generation of our family to live in Oakura, my children being the 7th generation to occupy the same site continuously since 1870 near Oakura beach.

I have been a Trustee of the Oakura School Board of Trustees for 12 years, (almost a ¼ of my life) and our family have associations with many clubs and organisations including Oakura Board riders, Kaitake Golf Club, Kaitake Rugby, Oakura Cricket, Oakura Junior Sports Club, Oakura Athletics, Oakura Bowling Club, Oakura Tennis Club and I am chairperson of the Oakura Beach Carnival Trust.

I have been a member of the Oakura Focus Group, a sub group of the Kaitake Community Board established by NPDC to explore future development options for Oakura village. I've also been involved in numerous other fundraising or community help groups e.g. skate park, mountain biking, music events and others. All of these involvements are as a volunteer. You could say I'm a passionate local.

As per my written submission (number 59), I reject this plan change in its entirety.

Firstly, I would like to comment on Mr Muldowney's submission for the applicant on Monday when he stated there were 14 submissions supporting the applicants proposed plan change. This is not correct. There were 14 submissions that supported the proposed plan change in part. 13 of these 14 are from a single interest group known as Taranaki equestrian Network which does great work to grow and connect equestrian networks in Taranaki. Their support in part related to Equestrian matters only.

Not a single submission was received in total support for the proposed plan change. Over 300 submissions were received in opposition to the proposed plan change. Surely this is an overwhelming opposition and rare in the volume of its total opposition.

Oakura is a village. It is not viewed as a suburb of New Plymouth, but more of a destination; like Urenui to the North. As such there is a certain balance to how life and the village works. Living in Oakura is a choice people make, and it is usually for active lifestyle reasons. It seems strange to those of us who live in Oakura that New Plymouth residents consider Oakura a long drive away (which many do). While we residents find the 12-minute drive is a reset between our working and family lives.

Like most villages, most residents know most residents. Residents keep an eye on other residents' children and property, and its normal for groups of kids to be seen walking, biking or skating around the village, let alone crashing in the waves together.

Residents love the wide range of activities at their door steps and appreciate the nature and environment around them. Yes, it is a privilege to live here, but you only need to look around the village and talk with residents to know that it is very much valued and respected.

An outsider to the village might call the overwhelming rejection of this private plan change a NIMBY thing. Nimby relates to not in my back yard. I have no issue with my back yard, this is not a Nimby thing because it affects an entire village, not a few individuals.

This private plan change for 399 additional sections is around a 62% increase on the number of dwellings currently making up the village. It is a straightforward conclusion that an increase of this level breaks the village balance I have referred to.

Particularly worrying for residents is the impact on Oakura School. In the 12 years I have been a board trustee holding the property portfolio, the school's roll has increased from 200 to 400 students, and 5 new classrooms have been built. While you will hear from the current BOT and Principal, I'm sure they will carefully word their comments in regard to the Ministry of Educations comment that Oakura School could cater for 1000 students.

Since I'm no longer a trustee on the BOT, I don't have to be so politically correct. The assertion from the MOE that Oakura School could accommodate 1000 students is ridiculous, as is the mention of this assertion by Mr Muldowney in his submissions on Monday for the applicant.

This number comes from a calculation similar to how you would determine how many hens can be placed in a battery hen cage or the size of a pig sow crate. It is a square meter per child calculation and at 1000 students, a prisoner in NZ would have more space than an Oakura School student. This number does not take into account delivery of the curriculum that includes outdoor and physical activity elements and would mean Oakura School could cater for as many students as some of our largest high schools have with a fraction of the land. It is an embarrassing statement from a property administrator within the Moe property team and I respectfully ask commissioners to disregard this number and take advise from Oakura School on how it would cater for future growth.

The proposed plan change has no positive effects for Oakura or New Plymouth district. It is not balance; it is not why we live here. Oakura people and community value active lifestyles and sports, such activities are a reason people send their kids to Oakura school. The existing amenity values such as this we enjoy will be diminished for example views to our Kaitake ranges, night light pollution will occur if the plan change is allowed to proceed.

Let alone traffic congestion and overloading other facilities in the village such as the shopping precinct where parking is already difficult, and parking at the beach, (as residents of the proposed plan change area will need to drive to the beach and so on).

While the almost total opposition to this private plan change is not a NIMBY thing as I've mentioned, it's also not a no to growth thing. Every NPDC plan ever done (NP Coastal Strategy, Oakura Structure Plan, Oakura Community Engagement report 2014 and 2016, Kaitake Community Plan the current and future NPDC District Plans) agrees that residential development in Oakura village should occur on the seaward side of SH 45. As we speak there

is one approx. 35 lot subdivision on residential zoned land already consented on the seaward side of SH45 accessed from Cunningham Lane, and a further approx. 120 sections on adjacent land to this already zoned residential. In recent weeks a letter signed by the owners of this residential and FUD West land has been delivered to NPDC confirming their intention to develop.

Development on the seaward side of SH45 has less negative impact on the balance of Oakura village because it is much closer to the beach and playground which are obviously popular destinations. Also, sections on this side would be linked to existing walking and cycling paths leading to the beach, school and shopping area. Further, it is proposed a link road between Cunningham Lane and Russell Drive which would ease congestion along the beach front Messenger Terrace/ Tasman Parade road, currently the only way the western part of Oakura village can be accessed.

The recent Oakura Focus group report concluded that staged growth was the correct approach for Oakura, that way the balance of school, infrastructure and facilities can be matched.

We are here at a plan change hearing and I have to ask, what is the point of having a district plan if it can be changed on such a scale by one individual, especially in the face of total opposition, and no benefit being apparent apart to the bank account of the developer.

Why have councils produced plans for decades, employed people and resources to explore appropriate development and based future needs on the very plans they create and manage. It seems to me a huge waste of time if a district plan can just be essentially ignored in this way if the plan change is allowed to proceed.

Another factor I want to point out to Commissioners is the huge anxiety and worry caused by this private plan change to many hundreds of residents. While it is the day job of Mr Muldowney and Mr Comber, we submitters are not skilled in responding to such matters.

Yet we are now involved in a highly technical and costly process involving specialists and legal representation. It is difficult to understand what parts of what we say have relevance to you commissioners in this technical environment. We have had to raise at least \$40,000 to fund the experts and legal resources required to defend this unwanted plan change request. We have had to establish an incorporated society, develop statues, open a bank account, hold numerous meetings, answer 100's of emails, operate a Facebook group, and spend time when we should be enjoying our lives here, rather than working out how to defend them.

Not only does this plan change destroy the village balance, but it also destroys the village look and environment. The proposed bund that would be installed adjacent to SH45 would mean the view to the Kaitake ranges would be lost from the road. This bunding is only proposed by the developer so they can avoid the setback distance required and therefore profit even more. The existing rural outlook from SH45 up to our Mouna Taranaki and Kaitake ranges would be replaced by a built-up suburban scene. Currently we can literally see where nature comes from by taking in the view to the Kaitakes.

Should this plan change be approved, it would also alter the dynamic of movement around Oakura by creating a large residential area in a place that generates difficult to mitigate congestion and traffic effects. I'm sure if this plan change was approved, we would look back in future years and wonder why such a stupid idea was allowed to be approved.

As the commissioners will know, a requirement for this same developers Paddocks resource management consent was that the remaining farm land would remain as rural in perpetuity. It now seems like the applicant is double dipping. How can this resource consent condition, the lengthy hearing process, and the process itself be over ruled by this new plan change?

Again, what is the point of the RMA and Environment Court hearings if this is the case? It seems the applicant expects he can simply walk over the previous judgement and I find this incredulous. What does it say to your colleagues Commissioners if you effectively override their carefully considered judgment?

I feel for the owners of Paddocks sections who have had the promise and undertaking of the developer blown apart. It is disturbing the flip flop of Mr McKie and Mr Bain in this private plan change application as compared to their evidence in the paddocks consent hearing. We cannot now trust these people.

Can the commissioners tell me, has any private plan change request of such a scale ever been granted in Taranaki before, i.e. increasing a village by 62% and 400 dwellings? I feel the process permitting a private plan change application should not be able to have such extensive effects. Maybe some work needs to be done to determine if a private plan change is the appropriate mechanism for a change that affects so many people.

I appeal to you to reject this private plan change entirely. There is available land to develop in an area the village does not reject development occurring, and which is already zoned residential reflecting the community's prior input as to where future development in Oakura should go. While I realise there is pressure all around New Zealand to make more land available for residential construction, Oakura has done and will do its bit. No other school for example has doubled in its roll in New Plymouth district in the past 12 years. Oakura School has.

Finally, I am sad to be here defending my village that has been home to my family since 1870. We shouldn't have to be doing this.

Richard Shearer.