

**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 RICHARD ALEXANDER BAIN ON BEHALF OF
OAKURA FARM PARK LIMITED**

LACHLAN MULDOWNY
BARRISTER

P +64 7 834 4336 **M** +64 21 471 490

Office Panama House, 15 Grantham Street, Hamilton

Postal PO Box 9169, Waikato Mail Centre, Hamilton 3240

www.lachlanmuldowney.co.nz

Instructing Solicitor: Ellice Tanner Hart

INTRODUCTION

1. My name is Richard Alexander Bain.
2. I am principal of Bluemarble landscape architects, a practice based in New Plymouth, specialising in site design and visual assessment.
3. My relevant qualifications comprise an honours degree in Landscape Architecture from Lincoln University (1992), and I am a registered member of the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects (NZILA).
4. I have over 27 years of experience across a range of landscape and urban project types including diverse settings from coastal to rural landscapes, and urban environments.

CODE OF CONDUCT

5. I have read the Environment Court Code of Conduct for expert witnesses and agree to comply with it. I confirm that the opinions expressed in this statement are within my area of expertise except where I state that I have relied on the evidence of other persons. I have not omitted to consider materials or facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions I have expressed.

SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

6. This evidence covers the following:
 - a) Summary of Evidence;
 - b) Site Context, Character and Amenity;
 - c) Assessment of Effects – Character and Amenity;

- d) Mitigation;
- e) Comments on issues raised in Submissions and Planning Officer's Report;
- f) Conclusion.

SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

7. The defining aspects of the site are its gently sloping northern orientation, the presence of waterways, its State Highway frontage, and close proximity to urban Oakura as well as the Kaitake Ranges - an Outstanding Landscape (OL) in the Operative New Plymouth District Plan.
8. Landscape character effects from the development are reduced by the connection to Oakura Township, the Future Urban Development (FUD) overlay that anticipates landscape change, the protection and enhancement of waterways, and the use of an 'equestrian zone' that provides a 'soft' urban/rural interface. The construction of the bund along SH45 creates a potential loss of character by reducing views of the OL, but provides a landscape benefit by reducing views of the urban development.
9. The proposal is not located within an OL. Characteristics and qualities that contribute to the Kaitake Ranges as an OL are not adversely impacted by the development. The scale of the ranges is such that they will not be subsumed by the development.
10. The site is overlooked by The Paddocks subdivision, as it is elevated above the site, and it is this group that I consider are most affected by the proposal. Design controls are proposed to reduce visual impacts for residents of The Paddocks.

11. The proposed Wairau Estate Structure Plan (Structure Plan) is intended as a guiding document to drive future subdivision design. It is not a site Masterplan, and is similar in detail to other Structure Plans in the Draft New Plymouth District Plan.
12. The landscape and visual effects of the proposal are self evidently significant as rural land changes to urban. However, with the proposed layout's focus on varying landuse intensity based on context, the character effects are contextually appropriate, and visual effects are able to be mitigated.

ANALYSIS

13. I was engaged by the Applicant to prepare a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), 17.9.2017, as part of the Assessment of Environment Effects (AEE) for the project. I also prepared a LVIA addendum (24.2.18) in response to the council s92 request regarding an existing Consent Notice registered on the site. In May 2019 I prepared a response to a council review of my two aforementioned reports.
14. I have visited the site and surrounding area a number of times, and was the landscape architect for the applicant for the adjacent Paddocks subdivision. Therefore, I have a good understanding of the site and the receiving environment.

Site Context, Character, and Visual Amenity

15. The site is rural in zoning and character, with its defining contextual characteristics being proximity to the Kaitake Ranges (an Outstanding Landscape in the Operative New Plymouth District Plan), relationship with Oakura Township, location next to The Paddocks subdivision, and State Highway 45 frontage.

16. The site's defining landscape elements are its gently sloping open pastoral landscape with several incised waterways (most of which are planted), and current operation as a dairy farm. A portion of the site contains a Future Urban Development (FUD) overlay, and the whole site is subject to Consent Notice preventing further subdivision while it is zoned rural.
17. The Kaitake Ranges (OL) are located 2km south of the site. Because of their scale they provide a dominant backdrop to the area, particularly when viewed from the State Highway as the land rises towards the ranges. However, the extent and quality of the views are limited by the speed of road users along this stretch of highway (100km/hour), their orientation to the view, and that the view is not continuous because it is interrupted by patches of roadside trees and buildings. The view of the OL from the highway consists of four sections of open view, which together consist of a total of approximately 10 seconds of potential viewing time by vehicle. Cyclists have longer view duration, but given the busy nature of the highway and narrow shoulder, it is doubtful that cyclists would have eyes for anything but the road.
18. The Paddocks development consists of twenty-eight lifestyle lots, generally in the order of 4000m² located south of the site and elevated above it. Dwellings are separated from the site by a QEII bush area. These properties are mostly oriented north towards the site and broadly overlook it, albeit individual outlook and extent of openness vary.
19. Residential Oakura extends from the main township up Wairau Road and forms the eastern edge of the site. This residential area comprises of approximately forty developed urban properties, separated from the site by the Wairau stream, which includes a 20m wide esplanade strip on the site.

20. The landscape and visual qualities of the site do not have characteristics that are unique to the area or have qualities that suggest it ought not be subject to change. The site is a small dairy farm on the edge of a town fronting a busy state highway. Its proximity to urban Oakura and the presence of a FUD overlay over a portion of the site provides contextual rationale for the proposal.

Assessment of Effects - Character and Amenity

Landscape Effects

21. Implicit landscape change associated with a plan change is articulated through the proposal's Structure Plan. With regard to landscape and visual effects, the Structure Plan has been prepared to ameliorate a number of anticipated potential effects.
22. Landscape effects are largely self-evident. Open paddocks will become residential development, a pattern typical of urban fringe New Zealand. While the overall landscape change is significant, the effect of this change is contextually appropriate, given the site's proximity to Oakura. The Structure Plan provides a holistic framework for this urban expansion by way of an indicative road circulation pattern and land use types. The important biophysical aspects of the site, in particular the stream network, are acknowledged and integrated into the framework. The Structure Plan recognises the importance of the rural/urban interface, provided by the 'equestrian zone' that provides a gradual transition from urban to rural.
23. Of particular importance in reducing landscape character effects is the proposal's extension beyond the FUD boundary. The FUD's southern boundary is an arbitrary (in terms of landscape) straight line connecting land west of the State Highway (that has FUD overlay) to the existing urban area on Wairau Road. This line does not follow any landscape rationale - it

cuts across streams and takes no account of topography or how a future urban/rural interface may occur. The Structure Plan seeks to work with topography (the indicative road pattern has been developed to potentially minimise earthworks), and the site's boundaries consider their context. The State Highway boundary uses a bund to avoid a reverse sensitivity setback of 80m that would be required by NZTA. This would potentially become a no man's land.

24. Effects on the OL are limited to perceptual aspects, as the site is not located within an OL. Any potential effects of the proposal on the characteristics and qualities that contribute to the Kaitake Ranges value as an Outstanding Landscape (OL) will be subsumed by the scale of the ranges, as well as the other buildings in the area (such as the houses in The Paddocks). In the Oakura area the ranges act as a backdrop to land that falls towards the west and the sea. Properties on the flanks of the ranges, and within the site's receiving environment, are also oriented towards the west and sea. There are no nearby public viewing places designed for views of the OL, and there are no District Plan viewshafts or view protections.
25. The Kaitake Ranges are the dominant landscape in the area, which include views from the State Highway across the site. Some properties within the Wairau Road urban area also have views of the ranges, with the site forming part of the foreground for some properties. The main view of the ranges from this urban area is due south, not directly across the site.
26. The natural character values of the OL will remain unchanged by the proposal, although there will be reduced views from the highway from the bund and associated vegetation. I do not consider that this represents an adverse affect on the OL's natural character values. I also note that in the 2006 Oakura Structure Plan (attached as Appendix A) includes an 'Inland Area' with a key noting building controls on height scale and form. This indicates that houses built on the upper slopes were of concern with regard to effects on the OL. The urban part of the proposal is outside this area.

Visual Effects

27. Visual effects of the proposal impact on four receptor groups:
- a) Residents of The Paddocks subdivision;
 - b) Rural landowners south and west of the site;
 - c) Urban residents northeast of the site; and
 - d) Users of SH45.
28. The receptors most likely to experience change in visual amenity are the properties that look over the site from The Paddocks subdivision. This is because their present view consists of a green pastoral middle ground with trees and the sea beyond. For most properties within The Paddocks, their foreground includes views of other houses within the same development, as well as the QEII bush areas that act as an ever-growing interface between The Paddocks and the site. Notwithstanding the potential screening effect of the QEII bush areas, for many in The Paddocks, the present pastoral view that they currently overlook will change to become urban. This outlook is likely to be similar with either the proposed Structure Plan or the FUD area only, as The Paddocks predominantly overlooks the FUD area. The western part of the development is more peripheral to The Paddocks and the intervening QEII bush area is larger and therefore provides greater screening.
29. Effects from night lighting are considered low, given the proximity to Oakura, which contributes overspill lighting into site from dwellings and streetlights. However, for residents of The Paddocks, the development will potentially create night-time effects by way of reduced night-sky from more urban lighting.

30. From the urban residents located to the east, the proposal will have an effect on visual amenity for residential properties that overlook the site, assuming they rely on the rural aspect of site for amenity. However, this rural amenity is tempered by the presence of esplanade strips long the Wairau Stream (which includes vegetation) and the presence of the FUD overlay.
31. Rural landowners east and south of the site will experience low visual effects from amenity areas (such as dwellings and outdoor living areas), as there are no dwellings oriented towards the site and/or at close distance.
32. The extent and duration of the view from SH45 in relation to landscape effects and impact on the OL is discussed earlier in my evidence. In terms of visual impact, State Highway users will notice a loss of openness via the roadside paddocks. Instead, users will experience a 600m long earth bund, 2-3 metres high and planted with native vegetation. Primarily created to mitigate reverse sensitivity noise effects, the bund will also prevent views of the urban development. The visual experience of this stretch of highway will change from partly open (approximately 350m of the 900m road frontage has open views) to enclosed.
33. As an urban entranceway device, bunds are not uncommon in places where urban development extends into the countryside. These bunds, while introducing a new landscape type, particularly where land is flat, are effective in screening urban development from rural roads.
34. This proposal also includes a bridal trail behind the bund, which provides good separation for equestrians from SH traffic. There will also be amenity planting between the toe of the bund and inland boundary of residential properties. The bund also provides an opportunity for a continuous strip of entrance/exit planting into Oakura. The southern entrance into New Plymouth has a similarly planted bund and now provides an attractive city entrance.

Character areas & mitigation

35. The Wairau Estate Structure Plan drawing provides an overall framework to the site and indicates a number of character types. These are;
- a) Residential A, Residential A Medium Density & Residential C;
 - b) Rural Lifestyle;
 - c) Business C; and
 - d) Open Space B & C.
36. Although these areas are explained in the application and supporting documents, for clarity and emphasis I reiterate the main points of each here, as these areas and their mitigative intention form the basis of the proposal and are parts of a larger 'sum'.
37. Residential A: This area is in the centre of the development forming a residential 'core' and is anticipated to have the same character as Residential A areas in the Operative District Plan (ODP). Given that the settlement pattern and density of Oakura (Residential C) is more spacious than ODP Res A areas, the Structure Plan includes the following mitigation measures to maintain some of Oakura's more spacious character, albeit sewerage reticulation in the town can now accommodate greater density.
- a) In order to maintain spaciousness akin to Oakura's existing residential character, habitable buildings will be restricted to one per lot. This should ensure more openness and less visual clutter.
 - b) The ODP allows dwellings to be 9m tall in Residential Environment Areas. Given the density of Oakura and the rural setting in which the Structure Plan area is proposed, as well as the proximity to the OL, it

is proposed that dwellings will have a maximum permitted height of 6m. This is intended to reduce the dominance of buildings, as well as to protect views from residents of The Paddocks.

- c) In order to reduce visual dominance of roofs, it is proposed that colour controls be put in place. A maximum light reflectivity value (LRV) of 25% for all roofs is recommended. This measure is primarily targeted at reducing character and visual effects for residents within The Paddocks who overlook the site from the south. However, Paddock's residents are higher than the proposal area and generally look 'above and beyond'. In addition, vegetation with the QEII areas within The Paddocks' site will screen views of the Structure Plan area in the longer term.
- d) In order to reduce the effects of glare, it is recommended that colour controls be placed on exterior cladding for dwellings. A maximum light reflectivity value (LRV) of 40% for all exterior-cladding materials is proposed. This mitigation measure will assist in reducing effects for Paddock's residents as well as from SH45 looking south into the site from the portion of road frontage that has no bund, as well as from the existing residential area of Oakura.
- e) The ODP has permissive fencing rules, with 1.8m high closed board fences a common urban element in the district's Residential areas. In order to maintain Oakura's spacious character, and to generally enhance visual amenity, it is proposed that solid fencing taller than 1.2m not be permitted on any properties. In addition, no fencing will be permitted on any property street frontage. This will provide an open streetscape and reduce urban clutter.
- f) It is not uncommon for greenfield developments in areas with views to have restrictions on vegetation type. In the context of Oakura and

the receiving environment, such restrictions would create an environment out of character with the high degree of vegetation in the Oakura residential area. Therefore, in order to reduce a dominance of built form over the wider receiving environment, it is important that there be no restrictions on amenity planting (type or height) within lots. Amenity vegetation is encouraged and a design guide could be developed to assist landowners with appropriate landscape guidelines.

- g) The Structure Plan shows that within the proposed Residential A area there are several vegetated gullies with associated walkways and vegetation. These extend into the heart of the Residential A area, thereby maintaining and enhancing natural biophysical patterns and processes, as well as providing a passive recreation resource. These areas break up the potential dominance of urban form and assist in integrating urban development into the landscape setting.
38. Residential C: This character area occupies 4.53 hectares of the site, and is anticipated to have similar character as Residential C areas in the Operative District Plan (ODP). That is, areas that are larger than Residential A, and are currently found in areas such as Oakura. While character is a consideration, the primary reason these areas have larger lot sizes is because of the need to accommodate on-site sewage treatment. Within the Structure Plan, the proposed Residential C area wraps around the northern and western sides of the Residential A area, thereby forming a less dense 'buffer' around the core. This lessening of density (moving west from town to country) is developed in order to provide a rational and legible transition from urban to rural. A primary driver for the design of the Structure Plan is to avoid a harsh urban rural divide. Mitigation measures are the same as for the Residential A area described above, except for an increased minimum lot size of 700m² (Residential C in the ODP has a Controlled minimum lot size of 700m²).

39. In addition to the mitigation measures common to the Residential A area, the south-western part of this buffer includes a vegetated waterway. The buffer is intended to create a 'soft' transition to the wider Rural Lifestyle Area to the south, and to provide ecological and amenity connectivity with the QEII area to the east (within The Paddocks). This buffer forms the southern frame of a continuous vegetated buffer that surrounds the site (excluding the Rural Lifestyle Area, which is rural in character).
40. Residential A Medium Density: This character area is located along the western part of the property adjacent to SH45 and is split into two parts, separated by a vegetated gully. This area is anticipated to have the same character as Residential A areas in the Operative District Plan (ODP), but with 50% site coverage, a minimum lot size of 300m², a front yard requirement of 1.5m, and maximum height of 5m. It is intended that this area is suited to older age group residents looking for a smaller home. Consideration was given to 'pepper potting' this type of development through the site to encourage an integrated community, but it was considered advantageous to aggregate these smaller homes together to create a sense of security and commonality. The reduced height limit also assists in reducing visibility from the highway over and above the bund, and to minimise visual impact of roofs from residents at a higher elevation. While the density of this area is greater than typically found in Oakura, sewerage has been the main limiting factor for lot sizes. Given reticulated sewerage and an ageing population, the existing character of Oakura is likely to change and is therefore is not necessarily a baseline on which to assess local character effects.
41. Mitigation measures for this Residential A Medium Density are the same as for Residential A and C described above, and the bund will screen views of this area from the highway. I discuss more about this area later in my evidence.

42. Rural Lifestyle Area : This character area occupies the southern part of the site and intended to have similar rules to the Rural Environment Area in the ODP, except that the minimum lot size is in the order of 1-2 hectares, and a maximum building height of 6m. One of the purposes of this area is to act as a buffer or transition zone to avoid a harsh urban/rural interface. This character area is targeted at the equestrian community who have expressed the need for land such as this, whereby lot sizes are suited to equestrian enthusiasts with holistic consideration given to an integrated bridle trail. This 'equestrian zone' extends from the highway to the north-eastern end (Upper Wairau Road) of the site and thereby creates a spacious buffer along the eastern edge of the whole site and occupies 44% of the Structure Plan area.
43. Business C: This character area occupies a small area of 0.45 hectares tucked at the inland end of two ponds and associated vegetation. It is intended that the rules for this area be as per the ODP, and is intended to enable a cafe and/or other similar such commercial activities for the benefit of the surrounding community. Given the small area involved, the landscape and visual impacts are likely to be low. However, it is proposed that within the Business C character area should be a high-quality landscape treatment along the main road frontage to integrate business activity with street amenity. Traffic should enter/exit Business C sites from a side road, and any off-street carparking areas should be screened with planting from adjoining residential views.
44. Open Space B: This is a small area of 0.24 hectares located within the Residential A area near the middle of the site, and is intended as 'kick a ball space'. This provides a useful community green near the centre of the site and affords an appropriate level of recreation space for a development of this size. This area has been specifically located with two road frontages for passive surveillance and safety. It is also located to link into the walkway gully system that links the site ultimately to the beach.

45. Open Space C: This area consists of the majority of the gullies that occur on the site. Most of these streams are currently vegetated, and additional planting will be undertaken. Walkways will also be included to provide additional pedestrian connectivity in addition to street footpaths. These open space areas also provide ecological linkages to the QEII areas within The Paddocks subdivision. A key feature of this Structure Plan is the integration of the gullies with residential development. This is consistent with how Oakura has developed, whereby Matekai Park and its walkway is a defining element within the township. The open space gully areas maintain and enhance the casual walking linkages to the sea that are an important part of local character.
46. In addition to recreational and ecological benefit, the Open Space C areas help mitigate the potential effects of urban development and therefore planting of trees and shrubs will be established along all streams and gullies using predominantly native species representative of the local area.
47. By way of summary, the Structure Plan provides a spatial framework for development that recognises the sites' constraints and characteristics and is appropriate to the adjacent Oakura urban area.

RESPONSE TO SUBMISSIONS AND NPDC SECTION 42A REPORT

Submissions

48. I have read the submissions and note those related to landscape and visual values. These are mostly general in nature, referring to such issues as the potential change in village character, visual impact of the bund, views of the Kaitake Ranges, privacy and outlook, loss of rural outlook, light pollution, and loss of residential amenity.
49. My evidence herein responds to these matters.

Section 42A Report

50. I have reviewed the NPDC Section 42A Report.
51. My following comments on the 42A report relate primarily to clauses 13.61 to 13.71 which pertain to Landscape and Visual Impact.
52. On page 40, clause 13.64 refers to matters raised by submitters including “The Kaitake Ranges viewshaft will be affected by housing”. In response, I note that there is no Kaitake Ranges viewshaft in the District Plan. The District Plan does include ‘Urban Viewshafts’ that are defined and used as a statutory mechanism. There are urban viewshafts in Oakura but they relate to preserving coastal views and do not occur near or within the proposal site. The matter of views of the Kaitake Ranges is dealt with earlier in my evidence, however, in my opinion the impacts on Kaitake Ranges raised by submitters and within the 42a report are overstated.
53. Views of the Kaitake Ranges are ever-present in and around Oakura because of their height and proximity. Within the vicinity of the site, there are short duration views from SH45 - views that comprise three short sections interspersed with buildings and planting. Given that shelter planting could be placed along this road boundary as permitted activity, these views have no protection from total loss. If these views are reduced or lost due to vegetation, bunding, or buildings, the loss is small given the quality of the view (transient and peripheral by vehicle or bicycle), and the availability of other views of the ranges along the highway. These views are not unique.
54. There are also views of the OL from houses located on the eastern side of Wairau Stream. The foreground view (of farmland) could potentially be lost by the development, but views of the ranges above houses will likely remain, particularly given that the main views are due south and only peripherally across the site. The loss of foreground openness does not in

my opinion affect the character and qualities that contribute to the ranges value as an Outstanding Landscape. Further, between the site and the ranges is land owned by others. Permitted activity on these properties (such as rural buildings, forestry) could have a far greater impact on perceptions of the ranges than housing on the subject site.

55. I note that in clause 13.70 of the 42A report council considers that “the landscape and visual impacts would be significant, to some degree, these impacts are anticipated by the Operative Distress Plan by identifying part of the plan change area a FUD. However the extent of the proposed development is much larger than the FUD area and will change the local character in the immediate area.” I agree that the landscape and visual impacts would be potentially significant (converting rural land to urban is self evidently significant) and agree that they are partly anticipated. I don’t agree that it’s the scale of the development that tips it from being acceptable to unacceptable, by way of adverse character effects in the immediate area.
56. As I have described earlier in my evidence, the boundary of the FUD area is arbitrary. The landscape character outcome of a ‘FUD only’ development would at the very least create an observable tension at the urban/rural interface. The proposal, in my opinion, deals with the site in a more considered manner than implicit with the FUD extents. While the scale of the proposal is greater in area than the FUD, it also contains varying character types, significant areas of native vegetation and transitions to the rural landscape with the innovative ‘equestrian zone’ that includes the common bridle trail. In my view, the proposal is not a case of bigger is worse. By utilising a greater area of land, the opportunity for mixed-use development increases, and the landscape can be managed as a more holistic entity, and not arbitrarily constrained.
57. With regard to matter raised in clause 13.71 of the 42A report, I respond to each of five bullet points as follows.

58. An assessment of existing site's landscape character was undertaken at the start of the project and drove the proposal layout. By way of summary, the aspects of the site' character included the following:
- a) The presence of the FUD area, thereby signalling the area as potentially appropriate for urban development.
 - b) The "mixed" use character of the receiving environment, as described by the independent hearings commissioner for The Paddocks¹.
 - c) The presence of The Paddocks subdivision which is located between the proposal site and the Kaitake Ranges.
 - d) The presence of waterways within the site that have high natural character values.
 - e) Open relatively flat land along the southern boundary, bounding rural neighbours that offer potential for a transitional landscape from urban to rural.
 - f) Notwithstanding the equestrian area, the southern edge of any urban area would need to be screened from the south and linked to the QEII bush area within The Paddocks subdivision.
 - g) The northern corner of the site's proximity to Oakura offering potential pedestrian access via the esplanade strip, potential underpass and walkway along the bund. This area is also on the lowest portion of the site and is furthest from The Paddocks, therefore potentially able to absorb higher density development.

¹ Hearing Decision for Oakura Farm Park Ltd, page48, paragraph 4

- h) The presence of existing ponds near the highway offered an amenity opportunity for a small commercial area such as a café.
- i) Views over the site from The Paddocks considered important, particularly in the short term, therefore design controls required on building heights and roof colour.
- j) The sloping nature of the site forms a legible transitioning from urban landscape to the Kaitake Ranges. Therefore, the more intensive development should occur at the 'bottom' of the slope and gradually reduce in intensity up the slope. The Paddocks is considered part of this legible transition. As articulated in the proposed Structure Plan, the dwelling density decreases up the slope with each character area.
- k) The coherence of Oakura as an urban area is intensified by the proposal. Presently, Oakura is a township mostly located west of SH45, with properties oriented north and west to the sun and sea. While there is relatively little development inland of the highway, residential development has spread up Wairau Road. This enclave of housing could be described as an anomaly in the context of greater Oakura. It's a relatively small discrete area that appears tacked onto the back of the township. The FUD area over the site, and the FUD area seaward of the highway creates a way of expanding Oakura in a manner than reconnects the township that is split by the highway. The FUD over the site quite overtly (by its straight line) connects these two areas, albeit with little consideration of the underlying landscape. The proposal also creates this connection and gives form to the FUDs' intentions. So long as development is staged, starting at the urban edge, the development will logically intensify urban Oakura.
- l) With regard to the OL, the decreasing density up the slope as previously described provides rationale to the existing landscape pattern along Wairau Road. For those living within the development

the ranges can still be visible from roadways and properties, depending on configuration, bearing in mind that the majority of residents will orient their dwellings to the north, away from the ranges. For properties outside the site, the views of the ranges are not protected if this development does not occur, as described earlier with regard to permitted activity on intervening properties.

59. A 'detailed landscape structure plan' has not been prepared for this development because it is considered that the Structure Plan is sufficiently detailed for its purpose. I note that there are several structure plan areas in the Draft District Plan, which have similar levels of detail to the proposal. As guiding documents, structure plans show an indicative landuse framework, subject to specific subdivision design once rezoned. The Structure Plan for the proposal provides a guiding spatial framework for the site character considerations listed in the preceding paragraph. The plan shows indicative road patterns, the position of character areas relative to each other and the overall gently sloping topography, the extent of waterways and associated vegetation, indicative walkways, commercial area relative to the existing ponds, and buffer vegetation between the urban areas and equestrian zone.
60. The road approach to Oakura does present a design conundrum. Given the constraints for noise attenuation from the highway, the options are essentially a bund, which screens urban development from the highway but reduces openness, or an 80m housing setback that maintains spaciousness but has the urban development visible from the road. If the 80m setback is planted so that housing is not visible, openness could be significantly reduced. For this proposal the bund offers the benefit of certainty about screening the development with immediate effect upon construction. The loss of openness and views to the ranges is in my opinion outweighed by the benefit of screening urban development that has no relationship with the highway.

61. The range of densities within the development is described earlier in my evidence. For all of the character areas except for the medium density area, the potential layouts are essentially the same as urban New Plymouth (Res A) or Oakura (Res C) but with building controls. Detail design at the time of subdivision would determine precise layout. In principle, the medium density area is to provide for an ageing population who wish to live in Oakura on smaller properties. Please refer to Appendix B: Plan & Photograph of Medium Density Housing New Plymouth, which shows a local example. While Oakura is predominantly large residential lots (Residential C in the ODP), the inclusion of a medium density housing area does not therefore necessarily mean it is out of character with Oakura. The medium density area is bound to the west by the highway, to the north by an esplanade strip and the south by ponds and equestrian areas. It is also located at the low point of the site, and with a 5m height limit will not create effects beyond the site.
62. The staging of the project as shown on the staging plan in the application, logically starts adjacent to the existing urban area and then expands southwest, which limits character effects to a gradual change. Mitigation of each stage (to ensure that mitigation does not rely on a subsequent stage) is achieved by the stages being relatively small, thereby limiting the scale of potential effects. Also, all of the stages bound 'green' areas, mostly the vegetated gullies. It is assumed that the gullies will be fully planted prior to development, thereby providing a well establish green framework in which each stage would occur.
63. Visualisations have not been provided primarily due to the indicative nature of the Structure Plan, which is not a site Masterplan. However, with regard to the SH45 road frontage, little would be gained by visualisations assuming that a bund is used. Without a bund the housing would be set back 80m and issues about how the setback area are treated would need to be assessed. Visualisation may assist with such an assessment. With

regard to the appearance of development creeping up the slope, visualisations would likely confirm that the slope up towards The Paddocks is sufficiently flat, few houses (the only view would be through gaps between houses) beyond the first row would be visible when viewed from SH45. I have walked along the road frontage several times to assess this aspect of the proposal. My assessment is that views past the first few houses to houses beyond will not occur, as the land is only gently sloping. The land increases in elevation at approximately 1 vertical to 25 horizontal (4%) from the highway to the area marked as Proposed Open Space B on the Structure Plan. However, this does also indicate that partial views of the OL would remain if an 80m setback with no planting (or distant planting only) were applied. Please refer to my earlier comments around the value of the existing views from the highway.

CONCLUSION

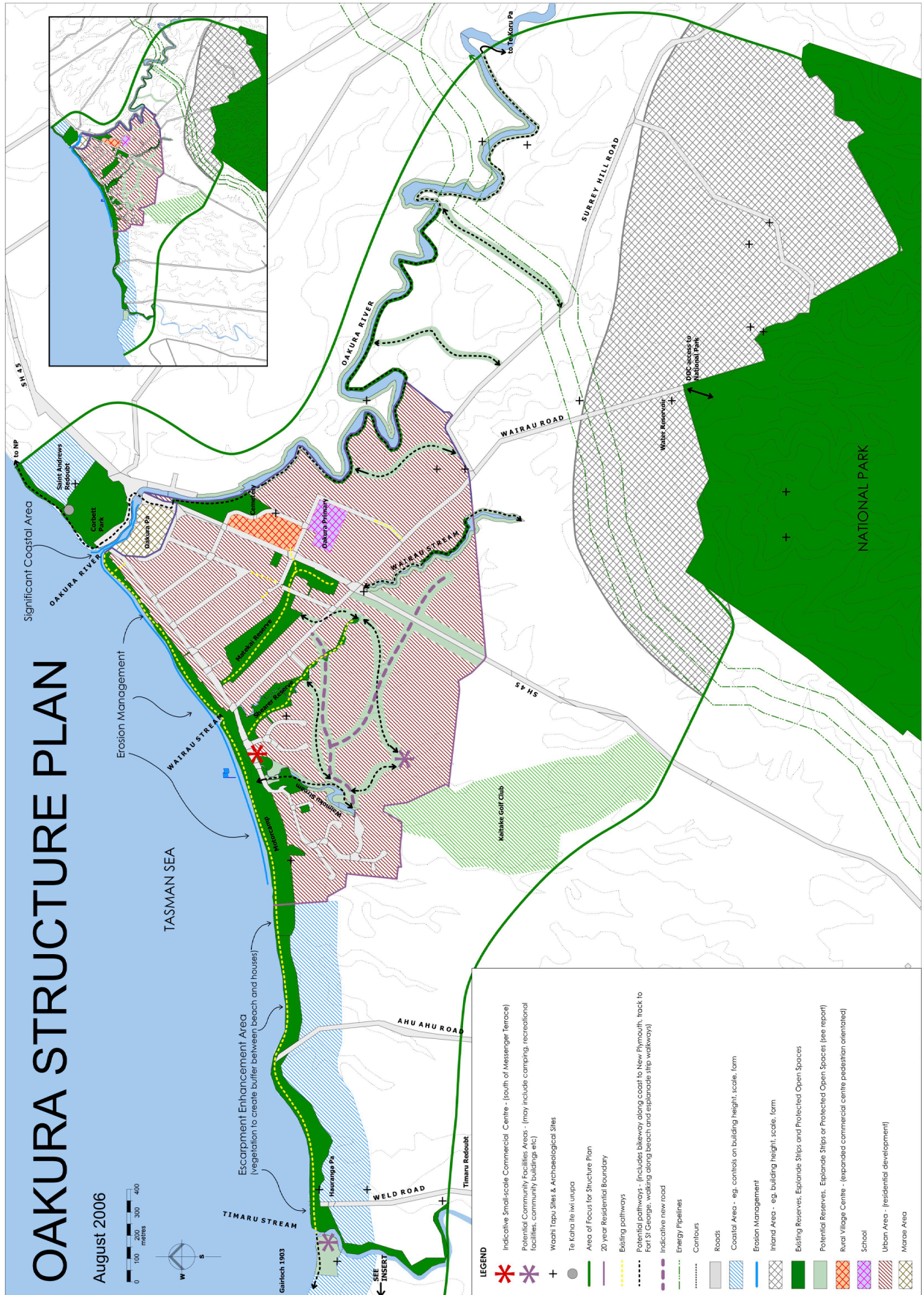
64. Given the change from a pastoral landscape to an urban development, it is self evident that the proposal will create landscape and visual effects. These effects are identified, and notwithstanding the change from rural to urban, are able to be mitigated. This will result in an urban area that maintains and enhances water-ways and topography, connects directly to existing urban areas, and has spatial qualities and amenity that maintain the character of Oakura.
65. The Structure Plan provides a spatial framework to development that takes an overall considered approach to urban development. Urban design detail within the framework can be undertaken through the subdivision process.
66. I consider that the proposal can be absorbed into the landscape with acceptable character and amenity effects on neighbours, users of SH45, and the broader landscape.

Dated 17 June 2019

Richard Alexander Bain

Appendix A

Oakura Structure Plan 2006 (Original plan is formatted for A3 reproduction)



Appendix B: Plan & Photograph of Medium Density Housing New Plymouth



Jean Sandel – Barrett Street, New Plymouth