

Alexandra Thompson
110A Wairau Road
Oakura

RE Plan Change PPC48

My name is Alexandra Thompson and I live at 110A Wairau Road, Oakura with my husband and two children. The rear of our home borders the Wairau Stream with the applicants farm on the other side of the stream.

I am submitting for Plan Change 48 to be declined in its entirety due to the impact I believe that a development of this size and in this location, will incur.

There are many issues with the plan that cause me concern and it is very difficult to not repeat what other submissions may have already highlighted.

The location of our house on Wairau Road was an important factor in buying our home. We wanted our children to be able to walk safely to kindergarten and school as well as the other accessible amenities within the village. These amenities as well as a strong connection with a community that knows each other well has allowed our children to enjoy a freedom in their childhood that has sadly disappeared in other parts of the country and the world. I believe this is worth protecting from intense development that does not have the community at heart.

Oakura School

Both my children have been students at Oakura School for their all their primary years. Within that time we have already seen the roll grow which has resulted in a loss of both indoor and outdoor spaces to make room for new classrooms and storage. Due to the increasing roll my children also experienced class sizes that exceeded 30 students. As a primary school teacher myself, I understand the importance of 'space' so that children can get outside and let off steam especially when 30 + bodies fill a classroom.

I have heard mentioned that the Ministry claims that the school can cater to 1000 students which I can't bear to think what that would look like! This puts even more pressure on space and may also result in pushing out the intermediate facility. I know as parents many of us have valued that our children have the opportunity to remain at intermediate locally and to not have to transition to a large school in town at an age that research shows is fragile for our adolescents. Having intermediate students within a primary school is a win win for the oldest and the youngest. Having witnessed these older students working alongside, guiding and caring for the younger ones, it is clear how it helps develop caring citizens for our future. I am concerned that the school will not be able to accommodate the growth that this development would bring, therefore changing both the physicality and the essence of the school.

Traffic

The traffic entering and exiting Donnelly Street at the start and end of the school day is already a safety concern where it meets the highway. Even though the children have been encouraged to walk, bike or scoot to school, supported by the council's 'Let's Go' initiative, there is still a large number of vehicles either travelling or parked nearby. Parking spaces are hard to find at these peak times and also cause safety issues due to lack of visibility. I believe parking issues around the village including at the beach have already been discussed in other submissions which I also agree with this.

This also brings me to the traffic situation at the intersection of Wairau Road with State Highway 45. This junction has already been highlighted as ineffective for the volume of traffic using it and I have many worries as my children approach this area. Cars, vans, logging trucks etc all approach this area at high speed. A further increase in traffic at this intersection would be inevitable with the size of the proposed development. A roundabout has been suggested as the solution to this problem. Having lived in countries where roundabouts are in abundance, I have seen them used effectively to increase traffic flow ie keep traffic moving in high density areas. The thought of a roundabout at this intersection fills me with dread. The thought of it helping these said trucks, etc to keep moving just highlights the potential danger for anyone walking within the village. I suggest, Commissioners, that you stand at the intersection and try to cross over at peak traffic times bearing in mind it is supposed to be a 50 km zone at that point.

Community

Yesterday, I had the privilege to hear other residents' personal submissions. Unlike some who have had generations of family live here or others who sought after Oakura as a home, my family arrived here with very little knowledge of the village with an intention of probably moving on within a couple of years. We are still here 11 years later. It was soon evident to us that Oakura was a special place to live. We couldn't believe that we were lucky enough to have landed somewhere with so many accessible amenities on our doorstep.

So when we bought our property ten years ago, we believed we were making an investment in our family's lifestyle. You have probably heard many times now how the residents believe that Oakura has this unique special character. To me, this special character means the Community, the people. It is at the heart of everything. Over the years, I have been amazed at how the community operates on a mostly volunteer basis. I have seen many residents use their skills and time to the good of the community, through events, buildings, the school and even the welfare of each other. The community has worked hard alongside the Kaitake Community Board to come together and plan developmental changes that will suit the area and that we believe can be steadily absorbed.

The Oakura Structure Plan has already identified other areas for development on the seaward side of the highway. The Wairau Estate development was not part of those conversations. I am worried that if this plan is approved it would negate all work and conversations that have been undertaken by the council, KCB and the Oakura community. The Wairau Estate therefore appears to me as opportunistic and one-sided.

I understand development is a natural process, as is change and it can be a normal human response to be adverse to change. However my submission against this particular proposal is not about a resistance to change and development, it is about a resistance to a change that is not suitable or empathetic to our landscape or our community.

I am very concerned about the impact that will be caused not only after it is completed but during the long building process that it would entail. The building process in itself would cause distress to many, with the intrusion of noise, the coming and going of contractors vehicles and the traffic congestion over an extremely long period of time.

When we bought our home this is something we didn't think we would have to face. In the time we have been living on Wairau Road there have been numerous properties built on 'infill' sites on the opposite side of the road. These properties along with the Paddocks have caused an increase in traffic up and down Wairau Road, especially during the building process where there seems to be an average of 3-4 trade vans per property. The building period of a development of this size will multiply this and I believe the infrastructure is not adequate to cope.

Assurances

I'm afraid I have little trust in the assurances that have been made to try to counteract the impact of this planned development.

Prior to investing in our home ten years ago, I contacted the council to find out if there were any plans for development on this farmland. I was informed that because this land was zoned rural nothing should ever happen and if it did it would take over 20 years for the land to be rezoned etc. Disappointingly, merely 12 months later, we received the first paperwork from the council regarding the proposal for the Paddocks development. Suddenly we were involved in our first submission process. As with many other residents at that time, our main question and concern about the approval of the paddocks development was that what if further development was to be sought after later? The applicant stated at a meeting at the time that if he was not granted the cluster development, known as the Paddocks, he would go ahead and subdivide the whole area with large scale plots.

The applicant also stated that if he was granted permission for the cluster development, he had no need or desire to further develop his farm.

The KCB submission refers to this in Paragraph 23.

To conclude I would like to stress that my submission is based on a concern to protect the wellbeing of the land, the environment and the communities that will continue to live in this special area, not just for residents today.

Therefore I ask that PPC48 be declined in its entirety.

Thankyou for your time.