

## Submission of I S Frame against NPDC Proposed Private Plan Change 48

### Background

1. My wife and I are residents of Oakura having relocated here from Wellington in 2016 following my retirement from full time employment. I knew Oakura well having spent my teenage years living in New Plymouth. We built a new home in The Paddocks subdivision undertaken by Mr McKie. Since taking residence, both my wife and I have become actively involved in community activities in Oakura and the wider Taranaki Region.
2. During my working career as a senior executive in the civil engineering and finance sectors, we lived throughout New Zealand and in parts of Australia, UK, SE Asia and the Pacific Islands. The reason we chose to spend our senior years in Oakura was because of its unique recreational attributes, its proximity to a progressive provincial city, its interesting people and particularly its strong sense of community in a traditional Kiwi style.
3. By "strong sense of community" I mean the way people support one another in their daily lives, provide care for each other, share their vegetables, share the fish they catch, maintain their local recreational clubs & facilities, maintain a safe & secure living environment and share ideas about how to be healthy and self-sufficient in many ways. These are the core values that bind the close-knit community of Oakura.
4. Also, we were attracted to purchasing a lot in The Paddocks subdivision because it was a small lifestyle block that suited our purposes and we were assured by the Resource Consent and Mr McKie himself that Lot 29 would remain as productive farmland. The rural aspect of The Paddocks and the surrounding land-use was a critical factor in our decision to purchase a property and subsequently spent over \$1 million developing it. Also, my wife is a Naturopath and she was particularly attracted by Mr McKie's assurances that Lot 29 would soon become and remain an organic dairy farm.

### Character of Oakura

5. The essence of Oakura is that it is a meeting place and has been since Maori, and later Pakeha, first arrived. Today it is where surfies meet surf life savers, who meet fishermen, who meet equestrians, who meet motor bike riders, who meet mountain bikers, who meet trampers, who meet golfers, who meet lawn bowlers, who meet world-famous sports people, who meet artists, who meet gardeners, who meet farmers, who meet brewers, who meet fire-fighters, who meet global oil & gas engineers, who meet adventure tourists, etc, etc. Many of the people involved share several of these interests and for that reason Oakura attracts people, both as visitors and residents, from across Taranaki, New Zealand and the World.

6. People who know Oakura understand its unique character and recognise it as the gem, the jewel, the treasure, the taonga that it undoubtedly is. Its success as a community has been its ability to maintain this special character without succumbing to overwhelming commercially driven development.
7. Sadly, in other parts of New Zealand and elsewhere globally there are many examples where communities have been effectively destroyed by commercially driven development that has undermined the traditional values and character of the community. Personally, I believe Queenstown is in that category. Forty years ago it was a treasure; today it is just another commercially driven mecca devoid of its traditional values. I have several friends who live there and they barely know their neighbours, let alone care for them.
8. To be clear, I'm not anti-development nor anti-growth and I believe the vast majority of Oakura residents are the same. In many ways Oakura would be stronger with more people to support its various community and business activities. However, any such growth and development needs to happen in a way, and at a rate, that doesn't destroy the community's inherent character or over-stress its infrastructure.

### **Demand for Future Growth**

9. With reference to Boffa Miskell's report prepared for the NPDC, there were 549 dwellings in Oakura in 2018 and there will be demand for a further 247 new dwellings by 2048, ie, in 30 years time. That is growth of about eight dwellings per annum.
10. Boffa Miskell's report also states that there is existing land already zoned for Residential development that can provide 157 sections with a further 127 available as infill sections. This means that there are **284** sections available on land already zoned for Residential use. Those sections more than cater for NPDC's forecast demand of **247** sections for the next 30 years without the requirement for any rezoning of Rural/FUD land.
11. Furthermore, if in future there is proven demand for growth at a rate faster than NPDC is currently forecasting then the rezoning can be reviewed at that stage on an adaptive basis.

### **Location of Expansion**

12. In essence, Oakura is a seaside community. From a resident's perspective, its shore line is the dominant geological feature and the centre of the much of its activity. In many ways it is Oakura's raison d'être. There are other important geological features such as the Kaitake Range and the Oakura River, but they aren't the fundamental reason why Oakura exists – it exists because of its beach and an estimated 90% of the residents live within easy walking distance (ie, 400 metres) of the beach. For that reason alone, any

further residential development should be focussed on the seaward side of SH45.

13. Many small towns in NZ are suffering from the conflicts that arise between community activities and the ever-increasing traffic on State Highways that run through the town, particularly where the residential properties straddle both sides of the highway. Fortunately for Oakura that is not currently a major issue because the current residential zone is primarily on the seaward side of the highway. However, it could increasingly become a problem if further residential development takes place to the south of SH45. It is not just a traffic problem, it is a significant community safety problem.
14. Furthermore, it has now become obvious that the Oakura Primary school is becoming increasingly constrained by the land on which it is located. Before long it will make sense to relocate the school to a more suitable place. The obvious location in terms of child safety & convenience for the majority of the Oakura families is to the seaward side of SH 45, within the boundaries outlined in my Section 15 below. There is plenty of suitable land available, especially towards the western end of the existing Residential zone. Other suitable recreational facilities could be located there as well.

#### **Natural Boundaries/Barriers**

15. Oakura is surrounded by highly productive dairy farmland and any further expansion of the Residential zone needs to be done by recognising existing natural barriers. These natural barriers are the Oakura River to the east, SH45 to the south and Ahu Ahu Road to the west. Residential development beyond these boundaries should be only those areas already zoned Residential that are adjacent to the current 50km/hr speed limit zone on SH45 and rural lifestyle lots.
16. It appears the Applicant is arguing that The Paddocks subdivision has been a success therefore they should be entitled to continue converting their dairy farmland to Residential use. I strongly disagree with that. Firstly, The Paddocks subdivision is rural in nature, comprising what are essentially lifestyle lots. Secondly, there is a sizeable natural barrier between The Paddocks subdivision and the adjoining dairy farmland created by the QE2 Open Reserve that was established as part of The Paddocks development itself. Conversely, what is proposed under Plan Change 48 is completely different. It is a much larger-scale, higher-density, residential subdivision with no natural barrier between the residential housing and the productive farmland. If, as it appears, the Applicant party purchased the subject dairy farmland eight years ago with the intention of converting it to suburban residential properties, I would have to conclude that they bought the wrong farm. They should have bought on the other side of SH45, or somewhere adjacent to New Plymouth city.

## Conclusions

17. The Proposed Private Plan Change 48 **should not be approved in any form** for the following reasons:

- a) There is a very high risk that it will generate population growth at a rate that will undermine the special character of Oakura and completely over-load existing infrastructure.
- b) It is not needed to meet the NPDC's forecast demand for housing in the Oakura township over at least the next 30 years. If future demand turns out to be higher than the NPDC is currently forecasting then the future land-use planning should be done on an as required and adaptive basis once it becomes obvious there is insufficient land already zoned Residential. I expect any such review will be at least ten years away and probably much longer.
- c) In any event, future expansion of the Oakura Residential zone should be on the seaward side of SH45 between the Oakura River to the east and Ahu Ahu Road to the west. There is plenty of suitable land within those boundaries, the location of which is consistent with Oakura's character as a seaside community. If there is need for a larger primary school and additional recreational facilities in future years, there would be plenty of suitable land within these boundaries and well away from the dangers of SH45.
- d) The Commissioner should not be swayed by the Applicant's enthusiasm and apparent readiness to proceed. Oakura needs sound land-use planning in order to protect it from the downside of opportunistic and commercially driven development for development's sake. The special and unique character of the Oakura community needs to be recognised for what it is, and protected. I believe the residents of Oakura recognise and accept the inevitability of growth and fully embrace it. What they don't accept is the irrationality of this poorly conceived Application for a large Residential rezoning of productive farmland in an unsuitable location.
- e) There are many other valid social, visual and infrastructural issues that I haven't commented on as I am aware these issues are being raised by in other submissions.
- f) Finally, being a very positive-minded person and also being thankful to have had the opportunity to buy and live in The Paddocks subdivision, I have tried very hard to find the positives in this Application. Unfortunately, I can't find a single one. In my opinion, the Application simply doesn't make sense from a community perspective.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

