

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 Oakura 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 Oakura Farm Park Limited for the proposed rezoning of land at Wairau Road, Oākura

Statement of Toby Dixon

24th July 2019

1. Kia ora koutou

My name is Toby Dixon.

Taranaki is my mounnga, Oakura is my awa, and Kaitake is my papakainga.

2. I have lived on the foothills of the Kaitake range on the edge of Oakura for my whole life, for 30 years. I am a cadastral surveyor with a degree in surveying from Otago University. Three years ago I chose to start Kaitake Farm to provide locally grown organic produce to local people. Our approach is sustainable and consistent with a low-carbon and ecologically restorative economy. The same economy that we all must transition to for a climate and biosphere that is safe for humanity to flourish. Oakura has a strong history of such market gardening and Kaitake Farm seeks to reinvigorate this and help the village ensure a sustainable food future.

3. Our whenua and the soil that sustains us is at risk. I'd like to remind us all what the definition of the word "Kaitake" means:

*"The source or abundance of food able to be grown on its slopes."*¹

The slopes between the Kaitakes and the ocean have always been important to mana whenua. Koru Pa is nearby at the end of Surrey Hill Road and is recognised as the first Maori settlement in Taranaki. For over a thousand years it remained a critical hub for Mana Whenua because of its strategic location and abundance of secure food sources. These soils and productive slopes are just as important today.

4. However, this plan change will directly degrade them and with it our food security and our identity in Oakura.

5. Sprawling residences across quality soil is not sustainable. Kaitake's soils are incredible. Removing productive soils from the food cycle at a time when global soil health and replenishment rates indicate only 60 years of conventional farming remain is ludicrous. Add to this the booming global population, more mouths to feed, and changing climate disrupting food production and supply: our agricultural systems are up for revolution. Our productive land is extremely precious and will become even more so as the effects of these changes increase. We have to change our approach to landuse at the rural/urban boundary. This plan change is a classic example of bad practice.

6. The location, character and scale of the proposed development is not consistent with the values or future vision of Oakura. There are more suitable locations and scales for growth in Oakura and through to New Plymouth. This development will significantly change the character of Oakura. It's landscape between the ocean and the mountain will be cut and replaced with urban sprawl. This rural hinterland is an important part of Oakura's character and identity. It is a small village perched on the coast. The horizon is either ocean, forest or farms, it's not houses.

¹ Taranaki Mounnga Project: <http://taranakimounnga.nz/the-project/about-taranaki-mounnga/pouakai-and-kaitake/>

7. This sprawl and changed identity will reverberate through the village community shattering its character. Oakura is popular and it's not uncommon for the village to feel it's over capacity, particularly during summer. The seasonality of this blooming is part of the village's character, but a greater and permanent swelling will shift the community into an urban culture that it does not currently inhabit or want.
8. Such a massive, lopsided development will knock the community off its axis and the wayfinding and social relations that have emerged over many decades will be thrown and lost to significant increases in vehicle movements, expanded traffic corridors and management systems. This infrastructure and volume will sever the translucent and shared spaces that define small coastal village communities. The scale of this development secures the loss of Oakura's character, exacerbated significantly by the proposal's asymmetric location. Like the collision of two celestial bodies, neither are recognisable once the dust settles. A satellite 1/3 of the size of the village will cause a wobble in Oakura's cultural orbit, losing its balance, its core, and re-positioning its centre of gravity in a paddock on the side of State Highway 45.
9. I regularly deliver vegetables in our electric van about Oakura. I meet all sorts of people on the way that want to know more about what we're doing at Kaitake Farm. They are hugely supportive of our local-food-supplier role in the sustainable and just transition the region is pushing for. They buy our veggies and recommend other people and businesses do too. We're all doing our best for Oakura.
10. From these journeys I can confidently say that the people of Oakura do not want this plan change. I also see this in the number and character of opposing submissions, the feedback from peers I grew up with in Oakura and the engagement and visioning work facilitated by the Kaitake Community Board. The message from the Oakura community is a very clear no.
11. The people I've met that haven't opposed the plan change don't live in Oakura, don't know about the already identified growth areas for Oakura, and tend to be New Plymouth trades-people that see it as a source of short-term income.
12. I believe this land would be better used for food production. Not only to fill growing demand for local products, but to retain the visual green buffer and rural feeling between the village and the Kaitake ranges. Primarily I am opposed to the development as it will fill the slopes from the ocean to the base of the ranges with houses.
13. For these reasons I fully support the submission from the Kaitake Community Board and I oppose the plan change in its entirety.

Thank you.

Toby Dixon
24th July 2019

