

**BEFORE HEARING COMMISSIONERS
IN TAUPŌ**

UNDER THE Resource Management Act 1991 (“**Act**”)

IN THE MATTER OF Proposed Plan Change 42 Rural Chapter - General Rural Environment and Rural Lifestyle Environment

AND IN THE MATTER OF a submission seeking the rezoning of the site located at 387 Whakaroa Road to Rural Lifestyle Zone and other relief

BETWEEN **STEVE HAWKINS**
Submitter

AND **TAUPŌ DISTRICT COUNCIL**
Planning authority

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF STEVE HAWKINS

Before a Hearing Panel: Chairperson David McMahon, Commissioner Liz Burge, and Councillors Yvonne Westerman and Kevin Taylor.

INTRODUCTION

Background

1. My name is Steven Hawkins.
2. I have a long history of property development (as well as other business endeavours). At present, my property development interests are largely across Auckland, Wellington, Porirua, Taupo and Whangārei. I am always dealing with Resource Consents, Subdivision Consents, Regional Council Consents, Building Consents, and, although perhaps less frequently, Plan Changes. I use good consultants and have constructive working relationships with the Councils we work with.
3. I am the submitter in these proceedings (Submitter #74). I made the submission in in my own name, and wrote it myself. At the time, I did not

know for sure what entity would be taking the development forward, and also did not have a team of consultants mobilised. I was careful however to keep the submission as broad as possible. I wanted to make sure that we had room to move. Not being an expert, I also needed to keep it simple. I knew that the site needed to be rezoned Rural Lifestyle, but that the vision I had for the site would also require cluster development with rural residential lots needing to be below 10ha – so I sought for subdivision below 10ha to be a discretionary activity (with no minimum lot size, to allow flexibility within that discretionary status). I also knew that the NPS-HPL was causing issues for developers, and that the Site was not classified as HPL so its rezoning wasn't going to cut across any NPS-HPL constraints. I mentioned the need to take into account the NPS-HPL in zoning decisions in the submission as well.

Te Tuhi Estate Limited

4. Since making the submission, it has been confirmed that Te Tuhi Estate Limited would be the vehicle for taking the project forward. I am a Director of that company and am authorised to speak on its behalf.

Scope

5. I understand that there may be a question as to scope or jurisdiction to grant the preferred relief that I am now seeking. If it helps to answer that question, as a developer, if I read the submission I made, I would have immediately thought “that submitter wants a lot of flexibility to develop their site”. As it turns out, with the preferred relief I am now asking for, the flexibility is actually tightly constrained. But I am happy with that, as I trust that the project team has developed a precinct plan package based on significant work and assessment, and that we will be able to deliver in line with the precinct plan now proposes.

Resource consent

6. I can confirm that Te Tuhi Estate Limited intends (most likely prior to the hearing) to lodge a resource consent that meets the requirements of precinct plan now being proposed through this plan change process. This demonstrates the extent of work done, and our commitment to the project.

7. While we are confident as to the merits of the proposal, my advice has been that without changes to the plan framework, that there is a risk of a consent application being declined – no matter how good it is. It is fortunate that we are able to run the resource consent process in parallel with the Plan Change.

Purpose and scope of evidence

8. The purpose of this evidence, in addition to addressing the background matters above, is to provide the Panel with some sense of what I am trying to achieve with the site, and why.

EVIDENCE

My approach to development

9. This is a very exceptional piece of land that warrants something quite special be developed to enhance the value and experience this property can offer.
10. The first time I saw it, I fell in love with the land and the possibilities. The site has spectacular views of the lake and mountains which lends itself perfectly to a commercial lodge, as the anchor for the property. We recognised immediately that it would have to be a landscape led project and that it would also be a culturally sensitive site to Tuwharetoa and the local hapū , and we have approached the proposed enhancing of this property from those two angles. With the commercial facilities onsite and onsite management of the property, the well positioned residential lots power the commercial viability of the site and given this, we offer a combination of factors (views, remoteness, connection to the rural land, a sense of community, access to equestrian and lodge facilities and more) that give purchasers a unique opportunity to buy into something quite special, that is backed by a great landscape restoration and cultural story.

The Vision

11. We are committed to developing the land in a way that recognises the cultural history of the property and, hopefully with the local hapu's input, the further refinement of design details for the lodge and other elements to create a development that has Mana, that everyone can be proud of.

12. We plan to protect the land and enhance it ecologically, by landscaping the property significantly and then managing that properly into the future. We want people to experience everything this property has to offer via the lodge and facilities while building a high value offering to the purchases of the lots. We will have covenants on the individual lots that ensures purchasers buy into the same vision heading into the future.

The Market

13. The offering on this property is twofold.
14. In terms of the lodge, we want people to use the lodge. This will be pitched slightly below the luxury lodge market but offer all the services a luxury lodge would offer, the idea being its appealing to a much wider market as we want it to be used and enjoyed by everyone from round the lake mountain bikers to international visitors.
15. The rural lifestyle residential offering is quite unique – its not your stock standard rural lifestyle living. We have carefully thought about where residential lots can be situated, while offering a variety of options for purchasers around lots sizes and locations. There will be covenants that ensure that building design and landscaping commitments are met by purchasers to achieve the vision of the property and this translates to a unique opportunity to be part of something that has a limited amount of Lots. This wont be for everyone, but for those looking for this type of unique location with these type of facilities it will have significant lifestyle value.
16. The rural lifestyle and lodge offering is further to be complemented and enhanced with the equestrian centre. These facilities are highly sought after, and will make the rural lifestyle living even more attractive for those who have, or wish to train with, horses at the equestrian centre. The centre will also support the lodge, as visiting riders will be able to stay close to the centre, with all the facilities of the lodge available to them for their stay.

The Alternatives

17. Going through this process and developing these plans we have looked at various alternatives or mixes of commercial activities.

18. To be honest the very well-considered proposal we have developed has a solid commercial outcome to both complete all the different parts of this project and then maintain our commitments to the land, the cultural significance of the property, the landscape and the environmental benefits we achieve.
19. The other options we have considered wouldn't result in a positive short- or long-term commercial outcome. So I don't see other types of development as realistic.
20. Even the site's current use as a dry stock farm is not particularly productive – although if the proposal we are putting forward does not succeed, I expect it will be maintained for the foreseeable future. It might be that 10 ha lots are slowly carved off over time, to cover the costs of farming. This would be a tragic outcome, as such piecemeal development wouldn't be able to deliver the significant ecological and landscape benefits of the planting proposed as part of our proposal.

CONCLUSION

21. I hope that our vision for this property and the huge amount of work that has been done by our consultants, resonates with the panel, like it has with everybody associated with this property. This property is a Taonga and deserves to be one of the jewels around the lake.

11 August 2023
Steve Hawkins