

UNDER

the Resource Management Act 1991
("RMA")

IN THE MATTER

of the Proposed Waikato District
Plan: Hearing 10 – Residential.

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF CAMERON WALLACE ON BEHALF OF
KĀINGA ORA-HOMES AND COMMUNITIES**

URBAN DESIGN

3 February 2020

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 My full name is Cameron Wallace. I am an Associate Urban Designer at Barker and Associates (“**B&A**”). I am providing urban design evidence on behalf of Kāinga Ora-Homes and Communities (“**Kāinga Ora**”) (formerly Housing New Zealand Corporation) in relation to the submissions it made on the Proposed Waikato District Plan (“**PDP**” or “**Plan**”) insofar as they relate to this hearing. Primarily, this hearing relates to Chapter 16 – Residential Zone and the associated Objectives and Policies in Chapter 4 of the PDP.

1.2 In summary, the key points addressed in my evidence are:

- (a) The benefits of enabling more intensive residential development;
- (b) Practical design issues with the residential zone provisions within the notified PDP; and
- (c) A discussion in relation to Kāinga Ora’s submission point 749.124-125 seeking the inclusion of a new Medium Density Residential Zone.

2. Introduction

2.1 My full name is Cameron Wallace. I am an Associate Urban Designer at B&A, an independent, specialist urban and environmental planning consultancy. A core part of my current role is to provide up-front urban design input into a wide range of development schemes, including mixed-use, multi-unit residential buildings, retirement villages

Experience

2.2 I hold a Master of Urban Design (1st Class Honours) and Bachelor of Planning (1st Class Honours) from the University of Auckland. I have been a Full Member of the New Zealand Planning Institute since 2014 and am a Member of the NZ Urban Design Forum.

- 2.3 I have 11 years' professional experience working in urban design and urban planning, gained in both the public and private sector, in the United Kingdom and New Zealand. Since 2018, I have been employed as an urban designer at B&A. In my current role I regularly assist local authorities and government departments with policy and district plan development in relation to growth management and urban design matters. I also provide up-front urban design input into a wide range of development schemes for private clients and Auckland Council, including multi-unit residential buildings in both greenfield and brownfield environments as well as more traditional greenfield subdivisions across New Zealand.
- 2.4 Prior to my employment at B&A I worked for over 3 years as a City Planner, then Principal City Planner, at Transport for London where I assisted in the development of planning frameworks to support residential and employment growth in "Opportunity Areas" across Greater London. Prior to that I was employed by Opus International Consultants as a planner and urban designer where, amongst other projects, I provided extensive urban design and planning advice as part of Auckland Unitary Plan process on behalf of several Ministers of the Crown, government agencies and private organisations.
- 2.5 Of particular relevance to the matters that will be covered in my evidence, I am or have been a member of design and planning teams for policy planning and development projects including:
- (a) Nelson Resource Management Plan review, specifically provision of urban design advice in relation to of the proposed Medium Density Residential Zone and identified growth areas of Kaka Valley and Saxton.
 - (b) Auckland urban design reviews, specifically acting as a consultant urban designer reviewing resource consent applications for a range of residential, commercial and mixed-use schemes on behalf of the Auckland Design Office.
 - (c) Urban design advice assessment, specifically provision of urban design advice and assessment for numerous

residential, commercial and mixed-use schemes across New Zealand. This included acting as lead urban designer for the project team which successfully obtained consent for the first multi-unit residential development in Palmerston North under the provisions introduced as part of Plan Change 20 to the Palmerston North District Plan.

Involvement in the Plan Change

- 2.6 I have been commissioned by Kāinga Ora to prepare this statement of evidence to address matters raised by the relief sought in Kāinga Ora's primary and further submissions (as successor to Housing New Zealand Corporation) in relation to Hearing 10 of the PDP covering the Residential zones.
- 2.7 I was not involved with the preparation of primary and further submissions, however, I can confirm that I have read the submissions and further submissions by Kāinga Ora in relation to the Proposed District Plan. I am also familiar with the national, regional and district planning documents relevant to the Proposed District Plan.

Code of Conduct

- 2.8 I confirm that I have read the Expert Witness Code of Conduct set out in the Environment Court's Practice Note 2014. I have complied with the Code of Conduct in preparing this evidence and agree to comply with it while giving evidence. Except where I state that I am relying on the evidence of another person, this written evidence is within my area of expertise. I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions expressed in this evidence.

Scope of Evidence

- 2.9 My evidence will address Kāinga Ora's primary and further submission points insofar as they relate to urban design matters, including the following:

- (a) Urban Environments (Chapter 4, covering Objectives and Policies); and
- (b) Residential zones (Chapter 16, covering Rules and Assessment Criteria).

2.10 In addition to the above, Sections 4 – 6 of my written statement of evidence submitted as part of Hearing 9 should be read in conjunction with this evidence. These sections address the appropriateness of provisions relating to:

- (a) Minimum unit sizes;
- (b) Living court requirements; and
- (c) The use of Urban Design Guidelines.

3. Submission Points 749.124-125 (Medium Density Residential Zone)

3.1 The primary submission from Kāinga Ora sought the inclusion of a new Medium Density Residential Zone (“**MDRZ**”) with associated objectives, policies, rules and assessment criteria and located around key centres and urban settlements. Kāinga Ora have also sought changes to the proposed General Residential Zone (“**GRZ**”) with regard to multi-unit development that are aligned with the relief sought in respect of the new MDRZ. I understand that Kāinga Ora’s preference would be for the inclusion of the MDRZ as the most appropriate means of supporting the objectives and policies of the PDP. Less substantial change to the GRZ would then be required. My evidence is focussed on this preferred outcome, which I consider to be the most appropriate in urban design terms.

3.2 The intention of this new zone is to enable a range of apartment, terrace housing and multi-unit developments as envisioned by the strategic objectives and policies of the PDP and the development principles contained within Chapter 6A of the Waikato Regional Policy Statement (“**RPS**”). Related to this are identified deficiencies in the **GRZ** which are inflexible and do not appropriately enable multi-unit development in appropriate locations.

- 3.3 At the outset, I consider the intent of Kāinga Ora's primary submission in relation to the MDRZ to be consistent with good urban design practice in New Zealand. From an urban design perspective there are a number of benefits associated with intensification of residential activities in and around centres, including:
- (a) more efficient use of scarce urban / residential zoned land;
 - (b) infrastructure efficiencies, for example a reduced need to extend reticulated water or transport networks;
 - (c) passenger transport (such as the Hamilton-Auckland commuter rail service) becomes more viable in terms of reduced subsidies and more frequent services through increased patronage;
 - (d) public health benefits in terms of facilitating travel mode changes to active modes by enabling more people to live near key amenities and destinations, making walking or cycling viable modes of transport for everyday living;
 - (e) associated environmental (reduce carbon and particulate emissions) and economic benefits (reduced vehicle running costs) stemming from reduced reliance on cars and fewer car trips per household;
 - (f) increased housing choice to cater for a range of different households due to changing demographics;
 - (g) related to the above, opportunities for people to 'age in place' by changing household types as they transition through life-stages rather than having to move around a district or region based on the limited availability of different house types in any given location; and
 - (h) stronger local economies and business viability associated with increased population densities within particular market catchment areas.

- 3.4 The benefits above, are in part, reflected within the evaluation of objectives contained within the s32 analysis for the Residential Zone accompanying the PDP.¹ I also note the above benefits identified above are also reflected in Section 11.4 of the Future Proof Strategy (2017) of which Waikato District Council is a partner and contributor to.
- 3.5 From an urban design perspective, I concur with the submission points raised by Kāinga Ora with regard to the detailed provisions of the proposed GRZ in that they are restrictive and, in my opinion, do not enable the development of multi-unit housing or seek to implement the objectives of the PDP. Specifically, they will not:
- (a) provide a wide variety of building forms (Strategic Objective 1.12.3(a));
 - (b) encourage or celebrate quality design (Strategic Objective 1.12.3(b));
 - (c) encourage the development of an urban form less reliant on the private motor vehicle (Strategic Objective 1.12.4(a));
 - (d) consolidate settlement in existing towns (Objective 4.1.2(a));
or
 - (e) encourage higher density housing to be located near to commercial centres (Objective 4.1.5(a)).
- 3.6 Sections 4, 5 and 6 of my statement of evidence in respect of Hearing 9 – Business Zones address particular issues with relation to minimum unit sizes and proposed living court dimensions, along with associated resource consent activity status for infringements to these. Those comments are equally applicable to the corresponding standards contained within the Residential Zone. By way of summary:

¹ See, for example, the discussion in Table 6 – Objective 4.2.16 Housing Options, pages 45-48.

- (a) Proposed minimum unit sizes and living court requirements were unnecessarily large to the point where it would be unlikely that a realistic and viable multi-unit development could conform triggering a requirement to obtain resource consent as, at a minimum, a discretionary activity; and
- (b) The Urban Design Guidelines appear to have been developed in isolation from development standards relating to the bulk and location of buildings. This invariably creates a situation where achieving the outcomes sought by these guidelines would require infringements to development standards.

3.7 In addition to the issues associated with minimum unit sizes, the proposed development standards prescribe a maximum building height of 7.5m and a height control plane of 37 degrees from all boundaries. Failure to comply with these standards triggers a requirement for a consent as a full discretionary activity. I note that Council's s42a report has recommended changes to these standards to provide for a permitted building height of up to 8m as well as the adoption of a 45-degree recession plane from all boundaries. From an urban design perspective, I generally concur with the rationale for these changes as stated in paragraphs 477 and 486 of the s42a report. However, these are, in my opinion, still insufficient to adequately enable multi-unit development to support the objectives and policies of the PDP. Despite these changes there are a number of other development standards which trigger resource consent as a discretionary activity.

3.8 Discretionary activity status exposes an applicant to a large range of unanticipated matters for potential assessment along with increased risk associated with potential notification. Further, in my experience, resource consent processing officers and the public generally interpret development standards as representing "bottom lines" which must be complied with, with any infringements generating adverse effects that must be addressed rather than as triggers for further or more detailed assessment. For these reasons, I generally find the majority of applicants seek to conform with key development

standards controlling bulk and location. This poses a problem in light of the impracticality of proposed development standards as they would apply to multi-unit development. In this regard, the detailed provisions provided for within the PDP are restrictive, lack flexibility and are poorly aligned with the policy framework established in other sections of the plan.

- 3.9 A high-level analysis of typical sub-division patterns across the district indicates that lot widths typically vary between 15m and 20m in width. In order to comply with the daylight admission standard, the permitted building envelope for the respective lot widths above, at the permitted height limit of 7.5m, varies in width between 1.6m and 6.8m.² In my opinion, the notified provisions effectively limit 'permitted' multi-unit development to a single storey. Under the s42A proposed changes to height and daylight admission standards, two-storey multi-unit developments such as an apartment building would likely only be enabled on sites 20m in width or greater. Under both scenarios of the notified and amended provisions, site amalgamation or the development of a larger un-subdivided greenfield or brownfield site will likely be required to support multi-unit development
- 3.10 Further, under the provisions as notified, sloping contours on a site will likely have a significant effect on development potential for apartment buildings. In contrast, terraced or duplex style housing is more readily able to follow the contours.
- 3.11 As an example, apartment buildings typically require a large, flat floor plate at each level so that multiple units at each level share a stair landing and potentially a lift lobby. Taking the minimum unit sizes (as notified), it would not be unreasonable to assume a floor plate of approximately 200m² for a complex accommodating three 1-bedroom apartments (roughly 12m wide by 18m deep). Assuming a relatively gentle slope of 1:10, across an 18m deep floorplate this would equate to a reduction in the available permitted height by

² Under the proposed changes to height and daylight admission standards this changes to 4.1m and 9.1m respectively.

1.8m to 6.2m. Assuming minimum floor-to-floor heights of 3m³ and a flat roof profile⁴, a two-storey apartment building would be unable to comply with the proposed permitted height limit of 8m.

- 3.12 Other proposed development standards also further constrain the potential for multi-unit development as a restricted discretionary activity such as the proposed minimum net site area of 300m² required for all units under Rule 16.4.4(a)(iii). Such a site area is unusually large for even terraced or town-house typologies and entirely impractical for an apartment development. I note that paragraph 258 of the Council officers' s42A report states that the 300m² was chosen by Council as this was the standard that applied to a plan change for medium density housing in Pokeno and is therefore appropriate. My reading of the relevant provisions for the medium density housing provisions in Pokeno is that it was intended to facilitate more compact, *detached residential dwellings* rather than multi-unit development in the form of terraces or apartment buildings as envisioned within the policy framework of the PDP. In my opinion, utilising standards designed to apply to detached housing to then inform standards controlling multi-unit development represents poor urban design and planning practice.
- 3.13 Overall, I am of the opinion that the detailed provisions of the GRZ, including the recommended amendments contained within Council's s42a report, promote a residential environment characterised by single-level, detached dwellings on large lots – essentially a maintenance of the status quo.
- 3.14 The situation described above appears, on my reading of the PDP, to be the result of a tension between several conflicting Strategic Objectives of the District and urban environment with the more

³ 3m is generally regarded as the absolute minimum required to ensure sufficient internal floor-to-ceiling heights. Apartment schemes typically feature floor-to-floor heights of 3.1-3.2m while higher end developments can include floor-to-floor heights of up to 3.4m.

⁴ Flat roofs still require a pitch of 3% - across a 12m wide building this equates to additional roof height of 0.75m.

prescriptive policies and rules of the GRZ. This is particularly unhelpful as an urban designer as the objectives and policies provide vital context that helps to inform the development of a design response for any given site. References to a “variety of housing forms”, “compact urban environment”, “higher density housing”, “a variety of housing densities” and “a range of housing types” within various objectives and policies sets a clear expectation that the character of existing urban areas across the District will fundamentally change over time. However, other objectives, policies and rules specifically seek to “maintain [the] open space character of residential areas”, or ensure “development ... reflects the existing character of towns.” I also note that Council’s s42a report raises concerns that relief sought by Kāinga Ora (such as increased building height) will “substantially change the character across the district”⁵.

- 3.15 Invariably, the provisions of the PDP direct growth towards greenfield subdivision at the periphery of existing towns and villages across the district with some limited scope for small scale infill/ subdivision of the backyards of larger residential sites.
- 3.16 I consider the above to be a poor urban design outcome. It is generally recognised that continuing to build only low-density suburban housing on the periphery of existing urban areas will not help solve issues confronting New Zealand’s urban environments. This includes identified issues for the district around the need for efficient and high amenity towns and reducing the costs associated with a dispersed pattern of development.
- 3.17 Low-density housing at the periphery or urban areas reinforces car-dependency and does not provide additional housing choice (in variety of form and typology) over and above that currently offered across the district. Equally, this is unlikely to support or justify the large investments required to provide good quality public transport to support growth in the district over the longer term such as the Hamilton to Auckland commuter rail service or expansions of

⁵ Paragraph 261, Hearing 11 s42a report.

commuter rail services back into towns such as Tuakau. As such, intensive forms of development will be required within the district, particularly in strategic locations around public transport nodes along Hamilton to Auckland rail corridor.

4. Proposed Medium Density Residential Development Standards

4.1 As part of its primary submissions, Kāinga Ora has sought to include a MDRZ. In terms of urban design impacts, future development in this zone would be controlled by 5 key development standards relating to the bulk and scale of buildings:

- (a) Building height – 11m;
- (b) Daylight Admission – 45° recession plane from 3m at the site boundary (reduced to 2.5m adjoining lower intensity residential zones);
- (c) Building coverage – 50%;
- (d) Living courts – 30m² / 4m minimum dimension at ground floor and 5m² or 8m² / 1.5m minimum dimension for balconies at upper floors⁶; and
- (e) Building setbacks – 3m from the road boundary and 1m from all other boundaries.

4.2 Density limits would be removed (although essentially controlled by the above standards) while resource consent as a restricted discretionary activity would still be required for all multi-unit developments.

4.3 Although subject to a later hearing, the Kāinga Ora submission identified the MDRZ as being located within approximately 400m (Euclidean distance) of Business Town Centre / Business zones. As a general principle this approach is supported as it clearly directs more intensive development around centres where it can be better

⁶ These are the standards sought under the proposed Rule 16A.3.7 (P1). The submissions incorrectly sought to include the notified plan standards with a minor revision to minimum dimensions.

supported by existing infrastructure / services as well as promoting a more legible transition in built form between rural landscapes and more intensively used business zones. This is consistent with the strategic objectives of the PDP and there would be benefit in ensuring this is reflected in lower order objectives and policies of the proposed MDRZ.

4.4 With regard to the proposed standards sought by Kāinga Ora, I believe these will better facilitate a greater variety of development types – detached dwellings, multi-unit development, terraces and apartments – supporting house choice to suit a diversity of living situations as sought by the objectives of the plan.

4.5 In terms of a permitted building height of 11m, this is appropriate so that multi-unit development (particularly apartment buildings) as intended by the PDP is at least achievable whilst remaining consistent with the aspirations of maintaining a relatively low-rise urban environment. I also note that Council has recommended an increase in permitted buildings heights to 12m in business zones.⁷ An 11m height, where this is achievable and / or viable, will assist in providing a transition in built form to the 8m proposed for the GRZ. This height will have a negligible impact on amenity of adjoining land owners or across zone boundaries as daylight admission, ground floor living courts and building setback controls will also apply to development.

5. Alternative relief sought in the General Residential Zone

5.1 As set out in Sections 3 and 4 above, I am of the opinion that from an urban design perspective a more nuanced approach to residential zoning is appropriate to support a variety of housing types and a compact urban form through the provision of multi-unit housing. For that reason, I support the inclusion of the MDRZ as sought by Kāinga Ora, with less substantive changes made within the provisions of the GRZ. However, in the event that this hearing panel were not minded to include the MDRZ as sought by Kāinga Ora, it is my opinion that the provisions of the GRZ require

⁷ Paragraph 413, Hearing 9 s42a report.

amendments in line with Kāinga Ora's submission. While in my opinion less appropriate than the more nuanced approach outlined above, that approach would promote more positive urban design outcomes for the district's towns and better support the strategic objectives of the PDP than the provisions as notified.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 In conclusion, the provisions of the PDP as they relate to the proposed Residential Zone are unlikely to enable the development of multi-unit housing or support the relevant objectives and policies set out in Section 1.12 and 4.1 of the PDP as notified. Overall, it is my opinion that the amendments sought by Kāinga Ora (as outlined in this evidence) are appropriate and will assist in delivering the urban design outcomes sought by the strategic objectives for the district set out within the PDP in a manner consistent with good urban design practise.

Cameron Wallace

3 February 2020