

**BEFORE AN INDEPENDENT HEARINGS PANEL
OF THE WAIKATO DISTRICT COUNCIL**

IN THE MATTER of the Resource
Management Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER of the proposed
Waikato District Plan
(Stage 1) Hearing 25

**EVIDENCE SUMMARY OF SARAH NAIRN OF THE SURVEYING COMPANY ON
BEHALF OF TKDM FARMS LIMITED**

PLANNING

12 May 2021

1. SUMMARY

1.1 My name is Sarah Nairn. I am a Senior Planner at The Surveying Company (TSC) in Pukekohe.

1.2 I prepared and submitted a statement of evidence for Hearing 25 on behalf of the TKDM Farms Limited in relation to their submission on the Proposed Waikato District Plan (**Proposed Plan**). This included:

- (a) Evidence in chief dated 17 February 2021 in support of rezoning a 10ha area of land fronting Koheroa Road from Rural to Village.
- (b) Rebuttal evidence dated 3 May 2021 in response to the Section 42A report prepared on behalf of the Waikato District Council.

1.3 Since lodging the submission, the extent of the Village zone within the Subject Site has been revised so that it only applies to a 10ha area fronting Koheroa Road. This modified extent recognizes that the upper slopes of the Subject Site are not well suited to residential development. The revised extent also ensures that future development on the land to be zoned Village is of a size and scale appropriate to the Mercer settlement. The land to be rezoned is shown on the plan below:



1.4 Approximately 20 new sites could be developed on the land to be zoned Village when allowance is made for topography, access and the transmission

lines/pylons traversing the site. 20 sites would equate to approximately 52¹ residents and result in an expansion of the existing population of Mercer by approximately one third.

- 1.5 I consider that the proposed Village zone will have a range of positive planning outcomes for Mercer including connecting the existing Village zoned lots with the school (refer plan below) and increasing the number of people living in close proximity to the Waikato Expressway and employers such as Springhall Correctional Facility. The increased population will also assist in enhancing the viability of the school and business activity in the Mercer settlement.



- 1.6 The benefits listed above were not supported in the S42A report prepared on behalf of the Waikato District Council. The S42A report also recommended rejecting the submission on the basis that it is contrary to the relevant objectives and policies of the Proposed Plan and the Waikato Regional Policy Statement (**WRPS**), primarily because the proposal provides growth in a location which is not identified for growth.
- 1.7 I disagree with this assessment. In my view, the provisions of the relevant statutory documents relating to growth are actively seeking this outcome – they explicitly state that they want to consolidate development around existing settlements rather than compromising the wider rural environment. This matter was addressed on pages 20 and 21 of my evidence in chief:

“Policy 6.3.3 (of the WRPS) specifically provides for growth outside growth strategy areas. Policy 6.3.3 states:

¹ Average of 2.6 per household in 2018 Census

“6.3.3 Urban Growth outside of growth strategy areas

District plans shall ensure that in areas not subject to a growth strategy, urban development is predominantly directed to existing urban areas and is contiguous with, and well connected to them”.

The explanation to policy 6.14 further confirms this approach as it states that “new urban development can occur in centres which do not have urban limits as long as it is consistent with Table 6-1 and 6-2”. Table 6-2 is not relevant to this application but Table 6-1 is relevant and indicates that 5% of the population of the Waikato region is expected to live in Rural Villages such as Mercer by 2041. This again confirms that growth is expected to occur in an around villages such as Mercer”

- 1.8** The rebuttal evidence on behalf of the Waikato District Council also opposes the TKDM proposal on the basis that growth within Mercer could occur through infill development. I agree that growth could occur this way. It may also not occur at all or very slowly given that the rate of infill development is generally slower than the take up of greenfields sites. If this was the case, Mercer will be left in the doldrums while adjoining townships such as Pokeno thrive as a result of the growth that has been enabled through this process.
- 1.9** Furthermore, I don't consider it to be a problem if growth did occur through infill development AND as a result of rezoning the TKDM land. In fact, I think that this would be an even better outcome for Mercer.

2. CONCLUSION

- 2.1** I consider that this district plan process is about enabling the Waikato to grow and develop over the coming decade. If Mercer is not taken on this journey (by enabling growth and development), it will fade (or continue to fade) and people will move to places like Pokeno where there is growth and development. This is not a good outcome as it places more pressure on Pokeno and does not make the most of existing school, shops, businesses and infrastructure at Mercer. Conversely, if growth is enabled, Mercer may thrive.

Sarah Nairn
12 May 2021

