

**Before an Independent Hearings Panel**

**The Proposed Waikato District Plan (Stage 1)**

**IN THE MATTER OF** the Resource Management Act 1991 (**RMA**)

**IN THE MATTER OF** hearing submissions and further submissions on the Proposed  
Waikato District Plan (Stage 1):

**Topic 25 – Zone Extents**

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**HIGHLIGHTS PACKAGE  
ROBERT JAMES PRYOR ON BEHALF OF HAVELOCK VILLAGE LIMITED  
(LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL)**

**12 May 2021**

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**BUDDLE FINDLAY**

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## 1. SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

- 1.1 My full name is Robert James Pryor. I am a registered landscape architect.
- 1.2 I am providing landscape and visual amenity evidence in relation to the proposed rezoning sought by Havelock Village Ltd (“**HVL**”)<sup>1</sup> of the land at 5 Yashili Drive, 88 Bluff Road, 242 (in part) and 278 Bluff Road, Pokeno (“the **Site**”).
- 1.3 Development enabled by the proposed rezoning and urbanisation of the Site will significantly change its current open rural landscape character. The development will result in a significant visual change from the current open and undeveloped state of the land, to one with built characteristics, particularly for some of the Site’s immediate neighbours.
- 1.4 The Site is part of a highly modified rural environment, adjacent to the Pokeno urban settlement and industrial activity area. The Site and surrounding landscape therefore has the capacity to visually absorb the landscape and visual effects of development enabled by the proposed rezoning.
- 1.5 The proposed urbanisation of the land will inevitably result in the transformation of the Site from a fringe rural area to a mixed density urban residential area associated with ‘Transmission Hill’ and a lower density rural lifestyle area associated with the Havelock ‘Rural Lifestyle’ Zone. This will have implications on the surrounding rural land, with the urban development impacting on the rural qualities of these areas.
- 1.6 Development enabled by the rezoning of Transmission Hill will be highly visible from various locations in the surrounding rural environment due to its location straddling the ridge. Development enabled within the Rural Lifestyle Zone will have a restricted visual catchment due to the landform characteristics and limited visibility. The surrounding landscape is of a scale that is capable of accommodating development as enabled by the proposed rezoning. The Site is located within a highly modified semi-rural environment on the periphery of intensive residential expansion and industrial activities.
- 1.7 The Site is appropriate for the proposed rezoning in that it contains a number of natural landscape elements that will assist in integrating and/or screening future development from the surrounding environment. The containing spurs, intervening landforms and on and off-site vegetation patterns mean that views towards the Site are filtered and

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<sup>1</sup> Submitter 862 and further submitter 1291.

screened from a number of public and private viewing locations, particularly to the west.

- 1.8 The Site comprises minimal productive values, and development enabled by the proposed rezoning will not visually compromise any outstanding or significant landscapes and features. The Site and surrounding area, while containing a degree of rural character are not high in landscape quality at a district level. The stands of indigenous vegetation within the Site, including those identified as Significant Natural Areas (“**SNA**”) are to be retained and some are to be enhanced as illustrated on the Havelock Precinct Plan.
- 1.9 The Site and its surrounding rural landscape to the south are not high in natural character. It is a distinctly modified environment through past and present land use including farming, horticulture, market gardening, and rural residential lifestyle activities. Development enabled by the proposed rezoning will not adversely affect the visual amenity values of the Outstanding Natural Feature (“**ONF**”) defined as the ‘Waikato River and Wetlands’ identified in the Proposed Waikato District Plan (“**PWDP**”). The site is also visually and physically separate from the revised Significant Amenity Landscape (“**SAL**”) recommended by the section 42A Report for Topic 21b to be relocated further to the south to align with the Waikato River. The evidence of Dr Bruce Hayward (Geopreservation Society of NZ) for Topic 21b did not identify the Site as an Outstanding Natural Feature or feature of geological significance.
- 1.10 Due of the size and nature of development enabled by the rezoning it is not practical nor considered necessary to screen development or create significant buffers to the adjacent rural areas(I note the proposed buffer provided to the industrial areas which are for non-landscape purposes although as outlined by Mr Munro provide a landscape context to the proposal). Instead, the proposed design approach is to accept the change and develop the Site in accordance with best practice urban design principles to create a quality residential development with a high level of amenity, albeit an urban amenity.
- 1.11 In terms of the landform, while there will be significant future modifications resulting from the construction of roads and the formation of lots, the Precinct Plan (and the supporting Havelock Concept Plan addressed by Mr Munro) has been sensitively designed to maintain the fundamental shape, contour and landscape characteristics of the Site as far as practical. The retention and enhancement of the streams and

watercourses through the Environmental Protection Area provisions of the PWDP<sup>2</sup> and, in relation to the Rural Lifestyle component, the creation of the extensive areas of open space and indigenous plantings<sup>3</sup> would be consistent with the existing rural vegetation patterns and enhance the natural character values of the Site and surrounding area.

1.12 The change from the existing semi-rural character of this landscape to one dominated by the built form of a residential area in the northern part of the Site (Transmission Hill) and rural lifestyle activities in the south will also likely introduce a range of beneficial effects, including:

- (a) Enhancement to the watercourses and streams and riparian margins;
- (b) Enhancement of the steep sloping backdrop to Pokeno (being identified as Environmental Protection Area and the proposed Industry Buffer Area);
- (c) Extensive framework of planting including riparian and specimen trees in streets and open space areas, which will improve the character and amenity as well as enhance habitat values, and break up the contiguous urban expanse increasingly with time and contribute to the wider surrounding area;
- (d) A public hill top park at the top of Transmission Hill; and
- (e) Public access provided for along the green network through pedestrian paths and open space linkages that will create a high amenity interface throughout the area and extending through to Bluff Road and the Waikato River in the south.

1.13 While the Waikato River and adjoining wetlands are high in natural character and landscape values (as recognised in the PWDP as ONF, Significant Natural Area (“SNA”) and SAL) the wider landscape has a good ability to absorb changes within it. Development enabled by the rezoning of the Site will have no direct impact on the natural character of the River. The landscape does not have high aesthetic, heritage or rarity values and is typical of that found within the surrounding rural Waikato environment. In my opinion, the Site does not have high landscape character or rural character values and in my opinion, for the reasons outlined below, development enabled by the proposed rezoning will result in a significant change but not adversely affect the existing amenity values, landscape and visual character of the area.

1.14 The modified rural and pastoral nature of the surrounding environment to the south and adjacent urbanised and industrialised characteristics of the Pokeno environs provides

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<sup>2</sup> Refer Havelock Precinct Plan and maps appended to the evidence of Mr Tollemache and Rules 16.4.16 and 23.4.11 of the PWDP

<sup>3</sup> Rule 23.4.11 of the PWDP

the context for which the development is proposed to be located. Development enabled by the proposed rezoning will not be visually obtrusive and no significant views will be lost or interrupted.

- 1.15 While there will be a change in the localised rural character of the Site from that of the current open pastoral slopes and areas of indigenous vegetation, to one with built development and associated infrastructure, the natural character and open space elements will be addressed through the retention of the large area of indigenous bush within the Site, provision of an open space and reserve network with existing and proposed indigenous tree plantings and enhancement of the existing stream and watercourses throughout the Site with indigenous riparian plantings.
- 1.16 The proposed rezoning will have a minimal impact on views to and from key landscape features in the locality. Views from the Waikato River towards the Site will be largely screened by the extensive stands of kahikatea and exotic trees on the riverbanks. Development enabled by the rezoning will not adversely impact upon any of the key landscape elements and patterns in the surrounding area – the existing indigenous bush stands throughout the Site are to be retained as SNA's.
- 1.17 In conclusion, the rezoning of the Site will fulfil the need for a greenfield housing area and provide an opportunity for well-designed and planned urban development as an expansion of Pokeno. In my opinion, development enabled by the proposed rezoning can be visually accommodated within the landscape without adversely affecting the character, aesthetic value and integrity of the surrounding rural and urban environment. The Precinct Plan proposes a large area of Environmental Protection Area, which with planting will provide a landscape context appropriate to Transmission Hill for this new neighbourhood of Pokeno. Any potential adverse landscape and visual effects on the environment will be acceptable within the surrounding landscape context.

**Robert Pryor**

12 May 2021