

**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 CSL TRUST AND TOP END PROPERTIES  
LTD**

**(Landscape and Visual)**

**11 May 2021**

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## 1. SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

- 1.1 The proposed urbanisation of the CSL Trust and Top End Properties land (“the **Site**”) would significantly change its current open rural landscape character. Although the Site is largely in open pasture, its ‘rural’ character is lessened to a degree by the existing land uses, relatively degraded pasture, and adjacent proximity to the Pokeno urban residential area. While the Site includes some productive land, it is a modified degraded site with relatively low landscape values, other than the Significant Natural Areas (“**SNAs**”). In light of these considerations the Site is well suited to the type of urban development proposed.
- 1.2 The proposed urbanisation of the land would inevitably result in the transformation of the site from a fringe rural area to a mixed density urban residential area. This would have implications on the surrounding rural land to the west and north, with the urban development impacting on the rural qualities of these areas. Nevertheless, this is a landscape in transition and is an area designated for urban expansion in the foreseeable future.
- 1.3 Development enabled by the proposed rezoning and urbanisation of the Site could be visually accommodated within the Pokeno landscape without adversely affecting the character, aesthetic value and integrity of the surrounding urban and wider rural environment. I consider that the Site topography and indicative concept plan for the Site allows for a suitable retention of the visual and landscape components identified through previous plan change processes, namely the rural backdrop and the ridgeline as visual containment to Pokeno. I consider that the Country Living zone on the higher north and western slopes will form an appropriate buffer to the adjoining rural land to the north and west.
- 1.4 I also concur that the alternative Environmental Protection Area (“**EPA**”) approach outlined in the evidence of Sir William Birch and Mr James Oakley to be applied surrounding the residential cluster development is an approach that could successfully be applied to the CLZ section of the CSL Block. I consider that the EPA approach would have merits given the presence of ecological features in this area that would benefit from planting. Revegetation of the slopes would also assist any future low density development to further visually integrate into the landscape. The evidence of Ms Shanks also outlines the ecological benefits of revegetating and enhancement on the CLZ area which contains SNAs among other natural features.

- 1.5 The evidence of Sir William Birch attaches a plan indicating the proposed EPA overlay. The plan indicates potential areas where EPAs could be applied based on the topography of the CLZ area and the location of SNAs. Future rural-residential development would be subject to the EPA rules in the CLZ. Such an approach would also be supported by the proposed objectives and policies in the CLZ chapter of the PWDP which relate to landscape, character and amenity.
- 1.6 I consider the approach of revegetating the steeper slopes and riparian areas in the gullies would appropriately mitigate the potential adverse visual and landscape effects of development enabled within the CLZ and significantly enhance the ecological values of the Site.
- 1.7 The change from the existing semi-rural character of this landscape to one dominated by the built form of an urban area would also introduce a range of beneficial effects, including:
- a) Enhancement of the stream corridors including physical and ecological connections to the Tanetiwhiora Stream; and
  - b) Extensive framework of planting including riparian stream planting and specimen trees in streets, and open space areas which would 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.
- 1.8 In terms of the CSL Trust and Top End Properties land that extends above RL100, I consider that the Country Living zone is appropriate in this location on the higher north and western slopes and will form an appropriate buffer to the adjoining rural land to the north and west. I do not agree with the Section 42A Hearing Report that recommends retaining the Country Living area as Rural will help retain the significant landscape backdrop to the north and west of Pokeno.
- 1.9 In conclusion, the proposed development would fulfil the need for residential intensification and provide an opportunity for an innovative and environmentally sustainable urban development. The proposal would result in a high-quality urban development with a range of positive landscape and environmental outcomes.
- 1.10 Any potential adverse landscape and visual effects on the environment will be acceptable within the surrounding landscape context.

**Robert James Pryor**

11 May 2021