

**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 THE BUCKLAND LANDOWNERS GROUP**

PLANNING

12 May 2021

1. INTRODUCTION

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

2. SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

2.1 I prepared and submitted a statement of evidence for Hearing 25 on behalf of the Buckland Landowners Group 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 defined area of land around the village of Buckland from Rural to Country Living Zone or as a receiver area for transferable development rights.
- (b) Rebuttal evidence dated 3 May 2021 in response to the Section 42A report prepared on behalf of the Waikato District Council.

2.2 Buckland Village is a small township of approximately 1,173 people which straddles the boarder between the Auckland and Waikato regions. The Pukekohe-Paerata Structure Plan prepared by Auckland Council in 2019 effectively consumes the residential portion of Buckland Village into the Pukekohe Metropolitan Centre – it zones the residential land Single House and Mixed Housing Suburban.

2.3 The submission by Buckland Landowners Group relates to a 450ha area of land which is opposite the urban environment created by the Pukekohe-Paerata Structure Plan area. This land is characterised by the lifestyle block type development that occurred on the outskirts of urban areas in 1980's and onwards. Consequently, there are some productive uses being undertaken but these are interspersed by a range of peri-urban activities such as large houses on large sections, race-tracks, truck storage and hobby farming,

2.4 As a planner, I can often drive or walk around a location and easily determine what the existing zone is (or what I consider it should be). However, it is not so easy with this land as there is a blend of both urban and rural elements. Therefore, to determine if the 'most appropriate' zone is Rural or Country Living, I formulated the following questions (and answers):

Q. Which zone (Rural or Country Living) best reflects the average lot size of 3.6ha and activities that are currently being undertaken on this land?

A. I consider that the Country Living zone best reflects the 3.6ha average lot size and fragmented nature of the land. Given that the largest lot is 14ha it does not reflect the 40ha proposed minimum lot size in the Rural zone. The Country Living zone also best reflects the type of activities being undertaken. Whilst there are some productive activities, these are not large scale and other, more peri-urban activities dominate.

Q. Which zone (Rural or Country Living) best addresses the interface between urban Auckland and the wider rural environment?

A. Policy 4.1 of the Waikato Regional Policy Statement requires an integrated approach to resource management and makes particular reference to aligning decisions across boundaries. I consider that the Country Living zone better achieves this policy as compared to the Rural zone as the Country Living lots will create a transition between the urban development on the Auckland side of the road and the rural environment in the Waikato district. Using rural-residential development to provide a transition between urban and rural areas is a common planning tool. Retaining the proposed Rural zone does not address this issue at all.

Q. Is it better to enable more subdivision of this land (i.e. under the Country Living zone) or should further subdivision be precluded (as a result of applying the Rural zone)?

A. In general terms, I do not support fragmenting rural land or valuable soils into small parcels. However, in this instance fragmentation has already occurred so I do not hold the same concerns. I also consider that it is better to enable further subdivision of this, already compromised land, than it is to enable further subdivision in the wider rural environment – which will inevitably impact on rural productivity and where residents of the rural-residential lots will not have ready access to community facilities, schools and goods and services.

Q. If more subdivision is enabled (i.e. under the Country Living zone) can the additional dwellings be adequately serviced in terms of infrastructure?

A. Water and wastewater will be dealt with on-site, so this is not a concern. There may be a need for transport upgrades or footpaths but this can be achieved through development contributions or targeted rates (if required). Social infrastructure will be provided in nearby Buckland and the metropolitan centre of Pukekohe.

Q. If the Country Living zone is applied will this offend higher order documents or the Council's growth strategy?

A. The Waikato Regional Policy Statement does not preclude rural-residential development occurring. Rather it promotes the "management" of such development. I consider that applying the Country Living zone is an example of "managing" rural-residential development as it is targeting an areas which is entirely suitable for it to occur – particularly as it is on the urban edge of Auckland where demand is high, it provides a transition between the urban and rural environments and the land is already fragmented.

The rebuttal evidence by Ms Trenouth indicates that there is sufficient supply of land which can be used for rural-residential use scattered throughout the Rural zone. Whilst this might address 'supply', in my view it does not address 'demand' as those who want to live in the rural-residential lots prefer them to be located on the edge of urban areas. I consider applying the Country Living zone to the subject land will help to meet both supply and demand.

2.5 The rebuttal evidence by Ms Trenouth highlights that the area to be rezoned is large. This is correct. If the Panel share the same concerns, this issued could be resolved by reducing the area to be rezoned (e.g. removing the area to the south of Buckville Road) or by identifying the land as a receiver area for transferable titles as this inevitably results in a lower number of new lots (as new lots are incumbent on titles being transferred). A further alternative would be to apply Country Living to the sites at the interface between Auckland and Waikato and identify the remainder of the land as a receiver area.

2.6 Overall, I consider that Country Living is a more appropriate zone than Rural as it better reflects the land as a currently stands and as it will create a transition between urban Auckland and the wider rural environment in the Waikato district. It will also serve to meet the demand for rural-residential lots without compromising rural productivity – given that the land is already fragmented.

Sarah Nairn
12 May 2021