

**BEFORE INDEPENDENT HEARING COMMISSIONERS APPOINTED BY THE  
WAIMAKARIRI DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**IN THE MATTER OF**

The Resource Management Act 1991 (**RMA** or  
**the Act**)

**AND**

**IN THE MATTER OF**

Hearing of Submissions and Further  
Submissions on the Proposed Waimakariri  
District Plan (**PWDP** or **the Proposed Plan**)

**AND**

**IN THE MATTER OF**

Hearing of Submissions and Further  
Submissions on Variations 1 and 2 to the  
Proposed Waimakariri District Plan

**AND**

**IN THE MATTER OF**

Submissions and Further Submissions on the  
Proposed Waimakariri District Plan by  
**Bellgrove Rangiora Limited**

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**SUPPLEMENTARY EVIDENCE OF DELLA GAYE BENNET  
IN RESPONSE TO OFFICER REPORT  
ON BEHALF OF BELLGROVE RANGIORA LIMITED  
REGARDING HEARING STREAM 12E**

DATED: 2 August 2024

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## INTRODUCTION

### Qualifications and experience

- 1 My name is Della Gaye Bennet.
- 2 My supplementary statement of evidence follows the evidence in chief prepared by Dr Morgan Lee Tracy-Mines for Bellgrove Rangiora Limited (**Bellgrove** or **BRL**) on 5 March 2024. Dr Tracy-Mines is on maternity leave for the remainder of 2024, and I have prepared supplementary evidence in her absence. I am an experienced senior ecologist from the same office as Dr Tracy-Mines and am familiar with Dr Tracy-Mines' evidence. I am familiar with the Bellgrove South Rezoning proposal. My qualifications and expertise are set out below.
- 3 I am a Senior Avifauna Ecologist with Wildland Consultants Ltd ('Wildlands'), based in Christchurch where I have worked since 2020. Prior to working with Wildlands, I undertook avifauna work throughout the South Island, including surveys and monitoring, mist-netting and bird banding, and the monitoring of threatened species.
- 4 I hold the qualifications of Bachelor of Science in Biological Science (Ecological Endorsement, 2013), Postgraduate Diploma (Distinction, 2014), and a PhD in Biological Science (2018), all from the University of Canterbury. I am a member of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (OSNZ)/Birds New Zealand and the Royal Society of New Zealand (Royal Society Te Aparangi).
- 5 My role in relation to the Waimakariri Proposed District Plan is as an independent expert witness to Bellgrove or BRL on ecological matters.
- 6 I have read the Environment Court's Code of Conduct and agree to comply with it. My qualifications as an expert are set out above. The matters addressed in my evidence are within my area of expertise, however where I make statements on issues that are not in my area of expertise, I will state whose evidence I have relied upon. I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions expressed in my evidence.

## **BELLSGROVE SOUTH REZONING PROPOSAL**

- 7 Bellgrove seeks to rezone approximately 36 ha of Land south of Kippenberger located largely within the South East Rangiora Development Area (**SER DA**), known as Bellgrove South.
- 8 Bellgrove seek to rezone the land from Rural Lifestyle Zone (**RLZ**) to Medium Density Residential Zone (**MRZ**) subject to an Outline Development Plan (**ODP**) through the Proposed Waimakariri District Plan (**PWDP**).
- 9 On 22 July 2024 the Waimakariri District Council (**Council**) released an Officer Report for Hearing Stream 12E prepared under section 42A of the RMA containing an analysis of submissions seeking residential rezoning and recommendations in response to those submissions (**Officer Report**).
- 10 The Officer Report recommends that the Bellgrove rezoning submission be accepted. My supplementary evidence is filed in response to that Report.

## **SCOPE OF SUPPLEMENTARY EVIDENCE**

- 11 In my supplementary evidence I address the following matters:
- (a) those parts of the Officer Report that address matters within scope of my expertise, with particular emphasis on matters where there is a difference of view between myself and the Officer Report.
- 12 In preparing my supplementary evidence I have:
- (a) Reviewed the Officer Report and the Appendices to that Report relevant to my area of expertise;
  - (b) Reviewed Dr Tracy-Mines ecological evidence in chief filed earlier on behalf of the Submitters; and
  - (c) Reviewed other materials specifically mentioned in my supplementary evidence discussed below.

## **CONTEXT AND APPROACH**

- 13 As mentioned, the Officer Report recommends acceptance of the Bellgrove South rezoning submission. A range of reasons are given for this recommendation, some of which relate to my area of expertise.

- 14 The approach I have adopted in this supplementary statement of evidence is to identify those parts of the Officer Report (including Appendices attached to that Report) where I disagree with the Officer Report and to explain my reasons for disagreement.

#### **RESPONSE TO OFFICER REPORT**

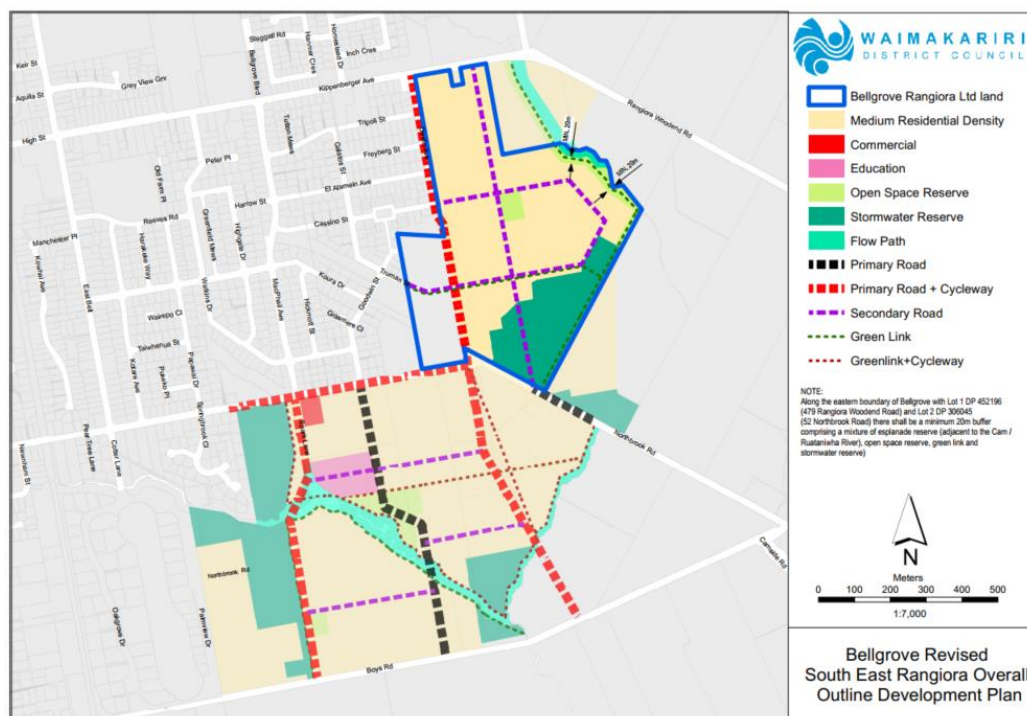
- 15 Mahaanui Kurataiao Limited (**MKL**) has provided cultural advice on the Cam / Ruataniwha River (**Cultural Advice Report**) and identifies that the waterway is significant to Runanga and recommends that the river margins be enhanced within built/urban environments (Officer Report page 530).
- 16 The MKL Iwi Management Plan 2013 referred to in the MKL Cultural Advice Report outlines the following key policies related to the use and enhancement of river margins in the built / urban environment<sup>1</sup>:
- **WM12.4** All waterways in the urban and built environment must have indigenous vegetated healthy, functioning riparian margins.
  - **WM12.5** To require that all waterways in the urban and built environment have buffers or set back areas from residential, commercial or other urban activity that are:
    - (a) At least 10 metres, and up to 30 metres; and
    - (b) Up to 50 metres where there is the space, such as towards river mouths and in greenfield areas’).
- 17 As outlined in the Officer Report (Paragraph 568), the Officer concludes that *‘in the context of the cultural advice I do not consider that the plan provisions alone provide sufficient protection for the Cam / Ruataniwha, and at least a 20 metre buffer should be provided, by a variety of mechanisms preferably enabling up to 40 metre of protection on both sides of the Cam / Ruataniwha.’*
- 18 The Officer Report (Paragraph 605) consequently recommends *‘that at least a 20 meter open space strip between any urban development on Bellgrove South and their property boundary, irrespective of a relationship with the Cam’.*
- 19 I agree that a minimum green buffer of 20 metres should be provided on both sides of the Cam / Ruataniwha River within the South East Rangiora

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<sup>1</sup> Page 4 of the Cultural Advice Report (page 532 of the Officer Report)  
Supplementary evidence of Dr Della Bennet in response to Officer Report on behalf of Bellgrove  
dated 2 August July 2024

Development Area. This will provide a buffer between future urban development and the river, allowing for habitat creation and the protection of avian species that will utilise the area.

- 20 For Bellgrove South this will mean that the 141m length of the eastern boundary of the site directly adjacent to the Cam/Ruataniwha River provides a minimum width of 20 metres for esplanade reserve. The remainder of the Bellgrove South eastern boundary with Lot 1 DP 452196 (479 Rangiora Woodend Road) and Lot 2 DP 306045 (52 Northbrook Road) will also provide a minimum 20 metre wide green buffer comprising a mixture of open space reserve, green link and stormwater reserve as shown on the Bellgrove SER-ODP.



- 21 Whilst a wider corridor than 20m adjacent to the Cam/Ruataniwha River would provide additional benefits for habitat creation and restoration, the proposed 20 metre shown on the proposed Bellgrove SER-ODP will be appropriate for maintaining and enhancing ecological values associated with the Cam/Ruataniwha River. The extension of the green corridor south along this boundary (even where the river deviates north from this boundary), will provide a corridor for habitat creation and restoration and as Dr Tracy-Mines wrote in her EIC (paragraph 14) will '*provide opportunities for riparian planting and connecting through to the stormwater reserve location in the south*'.

**CONCLUSION**

- 22 The cultural and ecological significance of the Cam/Ruataniwha River necessitates robust protective measures for its riparian margins within urban environments. Recommendations from MKL and the Officer Report underscore the importance of establishing indigenous vegetated buffers of at least 20 metres, extending wider where possible. A 20 metre buffer will safeguard the river's ecological integrity, provide habitat for avian species, and create a natural barrier against urban encroachment.
- 23 Thank you for the opportunity to present my evidence.

Dr Della Bennet  
2 August 2024