

**BEFORE THE WAIMAKARIRI DISTRICT COUNCIL HEARINGS  
PANEL**

**IN THE MATTER** of the Resource Management Act 1991

**AND**

**IN THE MATTER** of a submission by Survus (submission 250)

**SUMMARY STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF STUART JOHN FORD**

**Date: 18 July 2024**

## INTRODUCTION

1. My name is Stuart John Ford. I have previously provided a statement of evidence (**evidence in chief**) dated 5 March 2024, and rebuttal evidence (dated 10 June 2024) regarding the application of the National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land relating to the Submitter's request for the rezoning of its site at 25 Ashley Gorge Road. Part 1 of my evidence in chief sets out my qualifications and experience, and I confirm that these remain unchanged.
2. As per the Hearing Panel's instruction, I have prepared this summary statement of evidence to provide an overview of my position, as outlined in my statements of evidence.
3. I confirm that this summary statement of evidence has been prepared in accordance with the Code of Conduct for expert witnesses contained in the Environment Court of New Zealand Practice Note 2023.

## SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

4. I have prepared an assessment of the land under Clause 3.6.1(c) of the National Policy Statement on Highly Productive Land (NPS-HPL).
5. This requires that the site should be evaluated to provide the full range of benefits of the proposed rezoned land (PRL) that can be weighed up against the full range of costs of the loss of HPL. The range of both tangible and non tangible costs and benefits that have been used in this assessment have been taken from the Cost Benefit Analysis carried out on the NPS-HPL.<sup>1</sup>
6. The site as classified is approximately 35 ha LUC 2, approximately 14 ha is LUC 3 and approximately 1 ha is unclassified / other which means that approximately 49 ha of the site is classified as HPL.
7. I have assessed the site taking into consideration relevant factors such as the surrounding land uses, the nature of the soils that are present, the nature and elements of the proposed subdivision and have incorporated the economic benefits that will accrue from the proposed subdivision for which I have used indicative costs that have

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://environment.govt.nz/assets/publications/National-policy-statement-highly-productive-land-cost-benefit-analysis.pdf>

been taken from the report prepared by Urban Economics<sup>2</sup> using common development costing data. The data in the Costs of the loss of HPL has been provided by myself and the assumptions and workings of that are attached as Appendix A of my evidence in chief.

8. I have identified as part of that exercise that there are a number of significant constraints which have a bearing on the highest and best land use on the site when considering its potential for primary production.
9. These constraints include the scale of the property, which is too small to achieve the economies of scale which are required in the modern farming systems, the drainage in that all of the soil types that have been identified as being on the site are classified as poorly drained which limits the range of land uses that can be carried out on the site, the location of the site which is immediately surrounded by urban and lifestyle development means that it is essentially isolated from being able to be incorporated into a larger farming operation and there is considerable opportunity from both the urban and the lifestyle block neighbours to create reverse sensitivity issues for any higher intensity land uses than those currently farmed on the site.
10. It is my opinion that because of the constraints on land use options on the site that the highest and best rural land use is Dairy Support which includes the making and sale of silage in the summer and the grazing of rising one and two year old heifers but not the winter grazing of dry Dairy cows.
11. I have weighed up the various costs of the loss of HPL land against the benefits of the proposed subdivision, both tangible and intangible and it is my opinion that the environmental, social, cultural and economic benefits of rezoning the site at 25 Ashley Gorge Road Oxford outweigh the long-term environmental, social, cultural and economic costs associated with the loss of highly productive land for land-based primary production and meets the requirements of Clause 3.6 (1) (c) of the NPS-HPL.

## **REBUTTAL**

12. The Waimakariri District Council have had my report peer reviewed by Mr Walton. In the peer review report Mr Walton agrees with my assessment of the property in terms of:

---

<sup>2</sup> Urban Economics (2023): Economic Cost-Benefit Analysis of proposed Plan Change at 7 Munro Road Pokeno.

- a. *The productive capacity of the 49.7 block is severely limited by poorly drained soils, cold winter temperatures including snow. (Paragraph 2).*
- b. *The geophysical size and location of the block also limit the potential of the property to remain as a viable dairy or dairy grazing unit. It is obvious that the old dairy farm was abandoned some years ago, probably due to the lack of scale. It is surrounded by small block properties on two side and roads on the other two. The proximity to the Oxford town boundary is incredibly obvious with over adjoining 20 neighbours. (Paragraph 3).*
- c. *The Environmental considerations in Table 4 are a fair summary of the benefits of the proposed rezoning.... (Paragraph 7)*
- d. *I agree with the social and cultural considerations with the exception of the food security as it is likely that at least 1 out of the 80 properties is likely to produce some form of food i.e. eggs, fresh vegetables at a scale that could make up for the small amount of loss of HPL land. (Paragraph 7)*
- e. *The positive outcome on the economics of the land use intensification in the Waimakariri District have been well documented by Keating, Fairweather and others over the years. (Paragraph 8)*
- f. *The intangible values are not that well defined. However, I agree that this would be of significant value to future generations, and that it would not be easy to the replicate the application just anywhere due to the location specifics i.e. the town boundary. The associated extra dwellings that would be an outcome, could only enhance the current populus and therefore justify amenities such as schools. The land use change could easily see the production of other products through cottage industries that currently are limited in existence. ( Paragraph 9)*

13. He summarises his opinion as:

- a. *It is my opinion that this proposal could meet the rules and objectives of the national policy statement on highly productive land (NPS-HPL) under clause 3.6, sub clause 1(c) in that the benefits outweigh the costs.*
- b. *It is my opinion that this is a sensible and practicable application that whilst on the surface does not meet the NPS-HPL due to its zoning, the location,*

*environmental and social factors more than outweigh the current loss of 49.7 ha of poor performing pasture and tired infrastructure.*

14. It is my opinion that the result of the Walton report is that it fully supports both my methodology and the result that I have come to.

15. I note from reading the S42A report that the author does not refer to Mr Waltons peer review at all and there is no apparent consideration of its findings.

Stuart Ford

18 July 2024