

IN THE MATTER

of the Resource Management Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER

of hearings regarding submissions to the proposed Waikato District Plan relating to **Hearing 25: Zone Extents.**

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF PIRIE BROWN

97 BUCKVILLE ROAD, BUCKLAND

LOCAL RESIDENT

17 FEBRUARY 2020

Good afternoon Commissioners,

I appreciate the opportunity to share some of my thinking today.

I don't come as an expert on rural zoning and town planning matters, but I do come as a passionate land owner with the capability to add to our community.

Firstly, allow me to introduce myself. I am Pirie Brown, I live at 97 Buckville Rd, Buckland. I live there with my wife Lynne. We have raised our 4 children here; it is our family home. Our combined submissions represent land on the North Western reaches of the district.

Some would say we were the unwanted few by Auckland Council, others would say we are the thorn in the flesh of WDC because we represent a more urbanised lifestyle than the average Waikato District resident. This makes us quite different and certainly a little unique.

Lynne & I have 18 Acres or 7+ Hectares. We have done the hard graft, if there is a right to be earned, then surely it is us, we have shed blood on our piece of paradise. I mean that literally because I have lost the use of my right thumb from a tractor incident while working our land, I tore it off, ouch.

Our land was covered with ragwort, dock, barberry and blackberry, hardly an example of highly productive land. Our water-table was so high at first spade depth it began to ooze water in parts. We have laboured since 1990.

We built our family home in the winter of "90". That's 30 years' commitment to our place. I would leave work at 5pm and set up lights till 9pm to work under, then go home and do book work to keep our business going. All weekend I pounded nails, fixed cladding and roofing. Now, 30

years later our 6-bedroom house is too large for the two of us, but our options are too limited under present rules.

Let me paint you a picture of our location. The Auckland Boundary is 500-600 meters towards Buckland settlement from our house. Within this distance there are 5 houses on our side of the road (including our home). The other side is the same.

This averages out approx. 1 house every 100 to 125 meters. Quite a high density already. Not quite the rural picture that is represented by our zoning, actually it's far from it.

Let's look further. The distance by road around my block is 6.5 km's. This makes up a good percentage of our submission area. Now around this distance there are 81 houses on our side of the road. Dozens more if the other side is considered. **This represents 1 house every 80 meters** by averaging the road distance, on one side only. Again, this is not your average rural zoning density. It's already quite high isn't it?

I suspect no Council report has briefed you on the extend our Buckland area is already subdivided. We can't be blamed for this urbanisation. Nor can the WDC. Even laying the blame at the feet of the former Franklin District Council is not appropriate entirely. Our urbanisation goes back to the Franklin County Council days. Therefore, we have had 3 layers of questionable planning and zoning, 3 different Councils since 1989, 42 years ago when Franklin County Council was canned. Hardly a situation for consistency and good planning.

With each council we have experienced confusion and a lack of understanding of our inherent qualities. In our letter box we constantly get requests for us to list and sell our property. Last week I received two. The type of properties in our location are in very high demand. Whether the WDC acknowledges this I don't know? I doubt it, because they want

Pokeno as the trending area. But the reality is that there is massive demand for lifestyle properties close to towns, especially with Covid and more people choosing to work from home.

We do not require sewage, storm water or water reticulation. Allowing us to further subdivide, in this already compromised area (in terms of primary production) is an inexpensive way to help meet housing demands and pressures.

I have experienced the confusion over transferable titles with WDC in the past when I tried to make an application. However, transferable titles are a very good tool to help maintain the good soils approach to sustainability and achieve environmental and community benefits. Let's facilitate growers to maintain their ability to grow efficiently elsewhere in the district on better land. It's a no-brainer and logical.

Auckland models of Countryside Living Zone show us how this can work. WDC shouldn't be afraid of transferable titles, there are good models to follow.

Our uniqueness is what has driven our submission because we are different from the average Waikato resident and we are asking to be given an opportunity that will improve the northern border with greenery, riparian planting and managed development.

As our nation moves to adopt the new Climate Change Commission's recommendations of Jan 2021, we find our submission can assist these initiatives by native plantings in association with riparian waterways. Both these areas are suggested within the report.

Our submission also plays directly into the suggested reduction of livestock numbers (recent Climate Change Commission Draft Report). We have a part to play in this. Surely by facilitating "lifestyle" hobby farmers to reduce their herd numbers through enhancement subdivision, it

maintains the ability of real Waikato farmers to maximise good practice, and meet the Nation's emission targets, without compromising their land and operational viability.

There are Governmental directives in terms of good soil use and in my view, an idealistic view on no subdivision in these locations. My land was ravished and overwhelmed by neglect. I have worked hard but no matter how hard I work it will never produce anything like the revenue required to qualify it as good productive land. I gross around \$300 per acre on my land per year and the only downstream beneficiaries as my money goes around are a handful of suppliers and that's about it, a small group of people. I suggest the community benefit economically from my property, is minimal.

Allowing me to subdivide, say 8 new titles, creates an economic boom for the area in comparison to benefits now. This would give an economic boost of around \$13 million into our community. At \$1.6m per title with each title developed with a new home. These numbers are high enough to discount the notion my land is better off as it is, producing a gross of \$5,000 – 6,000 per year. This type of development provides the capital resources that are required to undertake the necessary restoration works to manage the land more sustainably.

I am no Economist, however I see huge public benefit by allowing me to change the use of my land and the whole submission area. Our submission is made up of dozens of owners of small blocks like mine. Some larger and many smaller. All these will multiply out over the next 20 years to bring huge and significant benefit to our community. I believe the economic benefit for our entire submission area to be hundreds of millions of dollars.

These numbers are a measure of how much value that new residents place on this living opportunity, to provide for their overall wellbeing. It

has been a wonderful location to raise a family, in a wholesome rural environment, and to make this opportunity available to more families, I see as a worthy planning outcome.

I wonder if our WDC planners have any sense of economic value within our location and the flow on effect to the Waikato farmers and growing communities.

To achieve economic use of our soils and to bring them back into reasonable production will require capital investment in the 100's of millions of dollars through our submission area. Repatriation of titles into cropping land alone would be a massive figure.

Principles of good soil use and management ideologies need to be balanced with economic analysis before decisions are made to insist these soils must be protected at any cost. Economic development gains shouldn't mean protection of average soils in areas already highly fragmented by past subdivision.

Our area has been fragmented already. It's relatively non-productive now. There are very few intensive activities within our catchment of owners. Any new intensity has the possibility of creating town planning issues around desired use in compatibility with existing neighbours at our present density. Intensifying rural production land-use in our area isn't a logical option because of the significant number of houses in a relatively small area.

Such views of our land having reasonable soil and therefore should be protected is idealistic in the least.

The land associated to our submission is beyond repatriation back into good soil that would create sustainable production. The horse bolted 30 to 40 years ago. Let us recreate our land to an urban buffer zone or

Country Living Zone between Auckland Council's permissible small sites and the Rural Zoned Waikato land.

Our location is too divided already but we could create plantings of natives and riparian waterways.

Dear Commissioners,

Please grant us the opportunity to settle transferable titles on our land in an effort to help save better soils within the Waikato that are economically viable already.

Please grant us an opportunity to further urbanise our land to provide a Country Living Zone between incompatible urban and rural practices.

I appreciate this opportunity, thank you.

Pirie