

IN THE MATTER

of the Resource Management Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER

an application for Resource Consent by
PROPERTY SEVEN LIMITED

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF BEN TURNER
ON BEHALF OF PROPERTY SEVEN LIMITED**

17 June 2019

Introduction

1. My name is Benjamin Turner. I am the Managing Director of Property Seven Limited and the applicant for the proposed eco-village.
2. Property Seven and its associated companies have been involved in development and general property projects for the last 35 years.
3. Property Seven Limited operates and develops a wide range of property projects.
4. At the heart of Property Seven's business is a *modus operandi* which undertakes development that has a strong environmentally friendly approach and most importantly is sustainable. Property Seven also strongly believes in fair trade practices, recycling, and the employment of contractors who pay their staff the living wage as a minimum. Property Seven believes that by putting the environment and people first, profit from a project will naturally flow.
5. I was born and bred in the Bay of Plenty, and all my family reside here. In early 2017 I purchased a house at Pukehina, and I am a regular visitor to the property and the Pukehina beach. I grew up in the Tauranga area and Pukehina is a place that features in my holiday memories.
6. After purchasing my house at Pukehina and familiarising myself with the neighbourhood, I could see that there was a need for an alternative form of housing in the area; one which fits with the beliefs that I hold in terms of sustainability and putting the environment first.

The Eco-Village Concept within a Nature Reserve

7. The idea of developing an eco-village was one which I had been considering for a number of years but finding a suitable location had been a struggle. The Taft's farm at Pukehina was ideal; not only for Property Seven's eco-village concept, but more importantly for ecological restoration on a large scale in what is a significantly degraded environment.
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8. Property Seven believes there is a new sector in the housing market of younger professional people who believe strongly in sustainability and in the protection and enhancement of their environment. We believe they wish to live and raise their families in an ecologically friendly housing environment which co-exists with nature and incorporates traditional values; but also incorporates the latest technology to expand and enhance our sustainable approach. Property Seven's target market are people who appreciate living in a natural environment and enjoy the values which it offers. Other qualities which Property Seven wants to encourage include a commitment to sustainability and a desire to create a better environment in the place where they live. Property Seven will offer future residents to own a part of the proposed wetland so that they become owners of the wetland concept.
9. In late 2017 Property Seven presented an offer to the Taft family with a view to purchasing their land to develop the eco-village project.
10. It is important for Property Seven in the context of sustainability to have a low carbon footprint. As an example, the evidence of Mr Raynor, outlines earthworks which propose utilising sand from the site to construct house platforms and similar. Property Seven proposes to use onsite sand and pumping and/or conveyor techniques to undertake the earthworks necessary to create the wetland, roads and house sites. This will help us avoid the import of any significant volumes of fill which in turn will minimise the use of trucks and machines thereby reducing the carbon footprint of the development. This aspect is a key driver for me.

Water Quality

11. As will be outlined by our expert witnesses, the water quality in the canals and the Estuary is currently appalling. The situation is so bad that over the summer there has been a ban on swimming and other activities in the estuary. It is my understanding that there is also a permanent rahui or ban in place in respect of kaimoana collection.
12. Property Seven strongly encourages the Commissioners to go to the site and view for themselves the nature of current farming activities in the overall area and the impact on the quality of the discharge entering the Pukehina

Catchment and the Estuary. It is quite clear that much of this is the result of the intensively farmed surroundings.

13. We did not want to substitute the removal of dairy effluent with effluent disposal from septic tanks, Accordingly, at an early stage Property Seven worked with our planners on the idea of using advanced systems that utilised ground disposal. These are the same systems which I understand were put in place in the Rotorua Lakes as part of the clean-up of the Lakes catchment. Importantly such disposal methods fit into the Maori cultural view which I understand favours wastewater discharge to land as a preferred disposal option.
14. Property Seven's vision is for Matuku Moana to be a major agent of change. Firstly, by eliminating dairy effluent and bringing a halt to intensive farming on its property. This wetland will result in a major contribution towards cleaning up the Pukehina catchment through providing treatment for water from not only its own site but also from surrounding properties that pump into this canal and groundwater before that water gets to the Estuary.

Eco-Village Design, Values and Principles

15. When we discussed our ideas about an eco-village with our consultant planners Aurecon, what we made clear was our desire to create something very different incorporating values and ideas to which we added practical and realistic refinements such as on-site water collection, solar power systems and on-site wastewater treatment.
16. While other eco villages offer "extreme" aspirations such as being off grid and with mud and straw brick housing; Property Seven's vision is constrained to offering a housing concept that embraces sustainably but where possible also incorporates relevant contemporary technology.
17. We have worked over the last two years with Richard Hart and Willie Shaw to develop design guidelines which reflect Property Seven's eco-village and nature reserve philosophy. The eco-village concept which Property Seven has is not one involving mudbrick houses and being off the grid, but rather it is a modern version which utilises the principles of sustainability in terms of materials, energy inputs and design where these are practical and feasible.

18. The eco-village principles which Property Seven wants to incorporate in the development include:
- a. The use of sustainable materials;
 - b. Water re-use;
 - c. Low impact roading which will have a low speed dual function for both cars and pedestrians
 - d. Solar power;
 - e. Sensitive landscape design;
 - f. Private wetland areas with rural landscape lots (which encourage landowners to 'buy into' the development);
 - g. Low impact stormwater design; and
 - h. The use of cutting-edge technology
 - i. The employment of local persons to build and maintain the development
 - j. Ensuring that the development does not impact on surrounding land and land uses

Contribution to the community

19. With the existing cycleway / walkway proposed around the fringes of the Estuary, Property Seven wants the ability to provide for an on-going public connection. The restored wetland area in particular provides an ideal basis for this. Property Seven has a vision of enabling full public access to parts of the wetlands so that the whole community can benefit from the proposal. Our vision includes a future connection to the walkway proposed around the Little Waihi Estuary, but we also want a link through to the Pukehina community trails and beach which we can easily achieve via a planned walkway connection to Gardiner Place.

20. Part of our proposal also envisages providing local reserves for kids' playground and for a reserve area to be future-proofed and made available to the Council.

Wetland Management

21. When Property Seven first met with the Regional Council, we explored the idea of how the wetland would be managed in the long-term. Initially we looked at the idea of the Department of Conservation being involved. However, on investigation that proved to not be an option.

22. The idea of forming a Trust to manage this aspect of the project came out of our discussions with the Regional Council and Fish & Game. The latter have significant experience in managing natural areas and their involvement in similar work on the Lower Kaituna River was particularly noted. The involvement of Fish and Game and the Trust establishment was also recommended by Wildland Consultants who also have significant experience in managing wetland areas and have provided valuable advice to the project.

23. Property Seven believes it is important that the Trustees who are appointed to the management Trust will have the appropriate technical skills and knowledge, and we have captured this in the Trust Heads of Agreement which have been signed off by the various including the Regional Council, Fish & Game, local mana whenua Ngati Whakahemo and Property Seven.

24. The Trust will be best placed to manage the wetlands, and there will be a seed fund of \$10,000 per lot (\$1.37m) which Property Seven will assign to the Trust.

Mana Whenua

25. As a resident of Pukehina I have made it a priority to develop a working relationship with local mana whenua iwi Ngati Whakahemo. Following extensive consultation with them I am confident that the eco-village-nature reserve project touches all the appropriate Cultural sections set out in the Resource Management Act (1991) Part 2 including the need to provide for

the recognition of their relationship with their ancestral land. The restorative aspects reflect what they have told me they want for the site and helps meet their kaitiaki obligations while their involvement in the proposed wetland management Trust provides compliance with the Treaty principles of partnership and mutual benefit.

26. As described in other evidence Ngati Whakahemo on their own initiative have also begun wetland restoration project work and there is much scope for co-operation between the iwi and Property Seven in sharing information, materials and planning.

27. I am very proud that Ngati Whakahemo found the Matuku Moana name for the site early on and I feel privileged to have been given an opportunity to work with them in developing the eco-village & nature reserve concept.

Community Consultation

28. We have spoken to many residents at Pukehina, have attended many meetings, and have had an open and honest consultation process which is outlined in the evidence of Luke Balchin. I have been present for many of the meetings and the discussions and think it is safe to say that every resident in Pukehina knows where my local beach property is, as the residences who have had concerns have contacted me and have been welcomed into my Pukehina home for an open discussion. We believe that the community support heavily favours the proposal and we are keen to explore other aspects of future community involvement with Matuku Moana.

Council Planner's report

29. It is disappointing to me that the Council Planner's report has not supported our proposal which runs counter to the position we believed we had reached following a number of meetings with Council Consent staff (Chris Watt and Rochelle Friend). We thought a high level of support for the project had been reached because they could see the significant positive environmental benefits of granting consent. In my opinion at a time when residential growth is increasingly restricted because of the scarcity of available land an

innovative approach to land development such as the Matuku Moana project should be attracting support.

Conclusion

30. In conclusion, Property Seven is committed to doing the right thing by the community and ask sincerely that the proposed wetlands, nature reserve and eco-village be granted consent. In Property Seven's view, the Matuku Moana proposal is a major enhancement to the existing site environment of intensively farmed land reliant upon fertiliser and pumping for productivity.

31. I am not an expert in agriculture or land management, but when I first visited the site, I could see that the farm and land had existing drainage issues, In my opinion the need for feed to be trucked in, fertiliser and the existing water quality issues did not make the existing farming operation efficient, sustainable or ecologically acceptable. I'm told that if we were to move the 500 od cows to the concrete parking lots of the Port of Tauranga and truck in a similar amount of feed that milk production and "waste" would also be similar. So, I think the idea or question that Fertile/Production Land should remain, should be looked at closely when it comes to any farming.

32. Property Seven asks the Commissioners to consider these aspects when considering the District Council's views and recommendations. My understanding is that under the existing rules and policies the proposal can be approved but the approach being taken is, again in my opinion outdated or not in sync with current thinking on land management, water quality and the need for sustainable outcomes.

33. Thank you. I would be happy to answer any questions.

Ben Turner
Director
Property Seven Limited
28 June 2019