

IN THE MATTER OF the Resource Management Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER OF Proposed Plan Change to the Western Bay of Plenty Operative District Plan by Te Puna Springs Estate Limited to rezone approximately 4.75 hectares of land at 23 Te Puna Road, Tauranga, from Rural to Commercial Business Zone, with specific landscaping and building design controls.

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF TIMOTHY JAMES HEATH

TE PUNA EMPLOYMENT ZONE ECONOMIC OVERVIEW

18 June 2022

Introduction

1. My name is Timothy James Heath.
2. I am a property consultant, retail analyst and urban demographer for Property Economics Limited, based in Auckland. I established the consultancy in 2003 to provide property development and land use planning research services to both the private and public sectors throughout New Zealand.
3. I hold a Bachelor of Arts (Geography 1991) and a Bachelor of Planning (1993) both from the University of Auckland. I have undertaken property research and analysis for 25 years, and regularly appear before Council, Environment Court and Board of Inquiry hearings on retail economic matters.
4. I advise government ministries and district and regional councils throughout New Zealand in relation to residential, retail, industrial and business land use issues as well undertaking economic research for forward strategic planning. I also provide consultancy services to a number of private sector clients in respect of a wide range of property issues, including retail impact assessments, commercial and industrial market assessments, development feasibilities, forecasting market growth and land requirements across all property sectors, and economic cost benefit analysis.
5. In October 2019, Property Economics was engaged by Aurecon, on behalf of Te Puna Springs Estate Limited, to undertake a high-level economic overview of the implications of their proposed Plan Change to rezone the subject land at 23 Te Puna Road, Tauranga.
6. I have obtained information from a variety of reliable data sources and publications including Stats NZ and NZTA to inform my evidence.

Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses

7. I am familiar with the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses (Environment Court Consolidated Practice Note 2014) and although I note this is a Council hearing, I agree to comply with this code. The evidence I will present is within my area of expertise, except where I state that I am relying on information provided by another party. I have not knowingly omitted facts or information that might alter or detract from opinions I express.

Summary

8. Te Puna's rural and lifestyle growth has been significant since the existing commercial zone was implemented in the early 1990s. There has been no further commercial land zoned to accommodate the increasing local demand in Te Puna. Some of the land on the southern side of the commercial zone has also been developed in the rural zone on an ad hoc basis as a result. This signals the market demand and additional growth potential for commercial activities within Te Puna Village.
9. The subject land represents, from an economic perspective, a more appropriate location to facilitate commercial, community and light industrial growth than other vacant land in Te Puna, as well as the business park zoning to the north. This is due to the economic efficiencies generated through clustering of commercial activity that the plan change area would enable, e.g., certainty of investment and ease of infrastructure development, and the land being adjacent to the existing commercial zone represents a 'natural' extension of the commercial zone.
10. The proposed plan change is also in line with community aspirations for a consolidated commercial hub in Te Puna and would contribute to the aspiration of Te Puna as a 'village' like commercial area, akin to Matakana to the north of Auckland. The community meeting hall on the site would facilitate social and cultural interaction within the area and help foster a sense of community, while the commercial aspects of any development would provide the opportunity to create a high-quality commercial hub for local businesses to expand.
11. The plan change would enable Te Puna Village to become more competitive as a business location, fostering local business activity and growth and internalising more employment opportunities and economic benefits within the local Te Puna community.
12. The subject land is situated in an efficient location to service both the local community, and to better 'tap into' servicing the SH2 traffic generated by the Tauranga market which benefits the Te Puna local economy. As such, the proposed rezoning of the land at 23 Te Puna Road to be an extension of the existing commercial zone is considered viable for the community of Te Puna from an economic perspective.

13. In my view, the proposed rezoning will foster the development of complementary activities to the existing provision in the Te Puna Village and will positively contribute to creating a consolidated, futureproofed commercial hub for the benefit of the community in Te Puna. In essence, the proposed rezoning has no meaningful potential to adversely affect the role, function vitality and viability of the Te Puna Village (in fact it would support these functions) and is unlikely to generate significant reverse sensitivity effects for neighbouring businesses.

Timothy James Heath

18 June 2022