

Before the Independent Hearings Panel
at Waimakariri District Council

under: the Resource Management Act 1991

in the matter of: Proposed private plan change RCP31 to the Operative
Waimakariri District Plan

and: **Rolleston Industrial Developments Limited**
Applicant

Summary of evidence of Gregory Michael Akehurst

Dated: 3 August 2023

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SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE OF GREGORY MICHAEL AKEHURST

- 1 My full name is Gregory Michael Akehurst.
- 2 I am a founding director at Market Economics and have Bachelors Degrees in Geography and Economics from Auckland University. I have more than 25 years' experience in assessing the economic effects of growth and change in the New Zealand economy. I have particular experience in assessing the effects of growth on existing economics and on urban form. I have also carried out significant work in assessing requirements for housing and business land to assist Councils in setting development and growth strategies and to meet their obligations under national direction (NPS-UDC¹ and NPS-UD²). I am a member of the Resource Management Law Association.
- 3 I am also very conversant with the NPS-UDC and NPS-UD process. I was engaged by MBIE in 2017 to write the guidance manual for Councils looking to evaluate business land sufficiently under the NPS-UDC.
- 4 Specific to Waimakariri District, I have prepared reports and presented evidence over the years on a number of development issues, including in relation to supermarket development, Key Activity Centre development and change, as well as reviewing a number of Private Plan Changes to the District Plan.

SUMMARY

- 5 WDC has not identified sufficient commercially feasible and reasonably expected to be realised land to cater for anticipated growth. This is primarily due to issues with both the demand projections under-estimating likely urban environment growth and the capacity estimates including land unsuitable for residential development.
- 6 My evidence shows that proposed PC31 has the potential to address some of these shortfalls that will assist Waimakariri District in meeting its obligations under the NPS-UD, by providing additional residential capacity to meet demand in the short to medium term as well as in the long term.
- 7 PC31 will generate a range of economic benefits in terms of contributions to GDP and wellbeing that are long term and sustainable. In addition, the opportunity costs in terms of lost agricultural production are low and any retail and centre impacts are small and short lived.

¹ National Policy Statement – Urban Development Capacity 2016.

² National Policy Statement – Urban Development 2020.

- 8 I support the rezoning of the PC31 land from an economic perspective.

RESPONSE TO SUBMITTER EVIDENCE

- 9 I have read the evidence of Joanne Maree Mitten, Principal Planner at Environment Canterbury and Mr Nick Boyes, an independent Planner who has presented evidence on behalf of Waimakariri District Council. Both planners believe that PC31 should be declined.
- 10 Ms Mitten focuses her assessment on whether PC31 gives effect to the NPS-UD – specifically Policy 1 and Policy 8 and the CRPS. In her assessment her comments on capacity focus on the findings of the 2021 HBA prepared for Greater Christchurch and not the more up-to-date 2023 version.
- 11 In the 2023 version, notwithstanding the issues I have identified in my EIC, the margin between sufficient capacity and shortfall is very slim. Any slight change in demand could place Waimakariri in shortfall. In my opinion, Ms Mitten has failed to consider the changed circumstances between the 2021 version of the HBA for Greater Christchurch and the 2023 version. The shortfall I have identified means that WDC is failing to meet its obligations under the NPS-UD and PC31 is able to address that – at least in part.
- 12 Mr Boyes does not offer evidence on housing capacity in Waimakariri, nor on the shortfall that I have identified in my assessment. Instead, he focuses on whether the PC31; meets a significant capacity threshold, if it contributes to a 'well-functioning urban environment', if it is able to be adequately and efficiently serviced by infrastructure and if it is well connected along transport routes.
- 13 While in paragraphs 14 and 15, Mr Boyes states that PC31 does not meet the NPS-UD thresholds – including 'significant capacity', by paragraph 68 he finds that PC31 at between 850 and 900 lots does provide significant capacity. I agree with his final position. As I outline in my evidence PC 31 is of a significant scale to meet the NPS-UD threshold. It accounts for 15% of total anticipated growth to 2036. This is especially important, given the identified shortfalls in capacity identified in my evidence.
- 14 I am happy to answer any questions from the panel.

Dated: 3 August 2023

Gregory Michael Akehurst