

**BEFORE THE HEARING PANEL**

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

**AND**

**IN THE MATTER** of Proposed Plan Change 37 - Nukuhau (private) by AN Rajasingham LPT Trustees No 124 Limited anors to the Taupo District Council to rezone c.78ha of land in the Nukuhau area from Rural Environment to a mix of General Residential and Mixed Density Residential with a Neighbourhood Shopping Centre overlay.

---

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF NICHOLAS JW AIKEN**

**Dated 20 OCTOBER 2021**

---

---

**LACHLAN MULDOWNY**  
BARRISTER

**P** +64 7 834 4336 **M** +64 21 471 490  
**Office** Panama Square, 14 Garden Place, Hamilton  
**Postal** PO Box 9169, Waikato Mail Centre, Hamilton 3240  
**www.lachlanmuldowney.co.nz**

**Instructing solicitor:**  
Graeme Halse  
Graeme@foyhalse.co.nz

## INTRODUCTION

1. My full name is Nicholas John William Aiken.
2. I am the Director of VisionUrban Environmental, a specialist urban design and urban planning consultancy. I have over 14 years experience as an Urban Designer in New Zealand, and over 27 years experience as an Environmental Planner in New Zealand and the United Kingdom. My urban design experience also extends to CPTED. From 2015 to 2018 I was National Technical Director for Urban Design and Planning for WSP (formerly Opus).
3. My urban design and CPTED project experience includes, among other things, residential structure/master/precinct plans, town centre masterplans, open space masterplans, multi-unit residential developments, walkway-cycleway and major transport infrastructure. I have considerable experience in the development and consideration of greenfield and brownfield residential subdivision of low to very high density taking into account urban design principles.
4. I hold a Bachelor of Regional Planning, from Massey University, 1992 and a post-graduate Master of Planning with a specialisation in urban design from the University of Auckland, 2005. I completed advanced CPTED training in 2005. I am a full member of the New Zealand Planning Institute. I have completed the requirements of the RMA 'Making Good Decisions' Commissioner Certification program, hold a 'Chair' endorsement and have acted in that capacity. I am a former elected member of the National Committee for the New Zealand Urban Design Forum and have been Chair of the Central North Island Branch of the New Zealand Planning Institute since 2017.
5. I have been engaged by the applicant to provide evidence in relation to urban design in respect of Private Plan Change 37: Nukuhau Private Plan

Change (**PC37**). I am the author of the urban design assessment that informed and forms part of PC37.

### **CODE OF CONDUCT**

6. I have read the Environment Court Code of Conduct for expert witnesses contained in the Environment Court Practice Note 2014 and agree to comply with it. I confirm that the opinions expressed in this statement are within my area of expertise except where I state that I have relied on the evidence of other persons. I have not omitted to consider materials or facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions I have expressed.

### **SCOPE OF EVIDENCE**

7. My evidence will address the urban design assessment (**UDA**) undertaken, urban design context, the potential impacts on urban form and various mitigations of those effects.

### **SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE**

8. Located on land adjacent to the existing north-west urban edge of Taupō, The PC37 area lies approximately 1.5 km north of the Central Business District. Immediately to the south of the structure plan area is the existing Nukuhau residential area, while to the east is the wide Wairakei Drive corridor with the residential areas of Rangatira Park and Huka Heights beyond. To the north and west are rural landscapes and rural landuses.
9. The PC37 area is severed into two halves by Poihipi Road; resulting in a smaller south-east facing area between Poihipi Drive and the Wairakei Drive corridor, and a larger south-west facing area between Poihipi Drive and Docherty Drive. Of these two areas, the south-eastern will be the more

prominent from public open space, adjacent to the entrance to Taupo, while that in the south-west will be larger.

10. Both areas, and in particular the south-western area abut existing urban residential development. With similar densities of development and logical extensions to street and open space networks, they will be read as logical extensions to the urban form of those areas.
11. The UDA was prepared in collaboration with the Landscape and Visual assessment (**LVA**) and was cognisant of the finding of that assessment that the development of the PC37 area will have a Moderate - Low effect on the existing landscape.
12. Referencing accepted principles of good urban design, extensive analysis was undertaken in respect of existing context in relation to landscape, landform, open space, land use, connectivity and movement, street layout, and visual amenity as recorded in the UDA report. This analysis led to the development of an Urban Design Philosophy and Outcomes; and ultimately the development of urban design responses to either enhance environmental outcomes or mitigate potential effects.
13. In terms of mitigation, urban design mitigation responses were developed concurrently and in in collaboration with landscape mitigation. These responses were incorporated into the Layout Plan and Street typologies. These urban design measures will help to minimise or alleviate potential effects on urban form and amenity that the PC37 area may have, by better integrating the development with the existing urban and wider environment. This includes adding logical extensions to and significantly improving street and open space networks already in place, enhancing entrance-points, and respecting landform.
14. Overall, PC37, if developed as proposed with the suggested mitigation, into a residential subdivision with a majority mix of general to medium density

properties and smaller areas of reserves and commercial activity, will result in urban design related effects that can be considered to be no more than minor. Notably the UDA sought not only to mitigate potential adverse effects, but also to promote positive effects for urban form.

## **ANALYSIS**

15. As part of the preparation of the structure planning for the PC37 area, I was commissioned to assist with an urban design assessment (**UDA**) of the proposed plan change area and its surrounds.
16. Importantly, the UDA was prepared at the same time as and in collaboration with the Landscape and Visual Assessment (**LVA**). This enabled the UDA to draw upon the valuable assessment provided by the LVA. It also enabled the LVA and UDA to present a collaborative approach to the spatial arrangement of features and mitigation, particularly in relation to response to landform, streetscape and open space.
17. In February 2019 I attended a site visit of the PC37 area and the general surroundings with the author of the LVA. In November 2020 I presented a written report of that assessment, amended to reflect an altered staging plan. That report is appended to the LVA assessment at Appendix G to the Plan Change Application documents (**Report**).
18. The broad landscape context has been well defined by the LVA and does not need to be repeated. The UDA examined and adopted the findings of the LVA, and then also considered existing arrangements in relation to landform and urban form, in particular open space, land use, connectivity, movement and street layout.
19. In understanding a landscape context, the UDA assessment considered the Taupō Volcanic Zone, stretching from White Island in the north to Mt Ruapehu in the south. On a local scale the landscape it considered Lake

Taupō and gentle sloping to steep hills of the caldera the provide residents with a sense of enclosure within the wider landscape.

20. It also considered the network and pattern of gully and drainage systems extending through the PC37 area, and adjacent developed urban areas. Strong elements of existing urban form are associated with these features. Most notable were fingers of open space in and around the gully networks, and the sloping views towards Lake Taupō, the caldera rim, and volcanic peaks.
21. Often these views were along gullies and/or street corridors, and at other times were above lower lying houses. Less evident, but also significant in the context of PC37 was the presence of Mount Punatekahi.
22. A further existing feature of note, particular in the south-western area, was the winding characteristic of the street and movement network, together with interruptions in its connectivity and at times a lack of legibility. These were identified as features to be both expanded on and enhanced with benefits to urban form and coherence.
23. Considering these elements as part of a wider context, the UDA relying on accepted principles of good urban design developed an urban design philosophy and specific associated urban design outcomes that took advantage of existing landscape and landform, in particular the gully network and longer views.
24. Specific urban design outcomes looked to enhance the relationships between urban form and landscape, enhance open space and its relationship with connectivity, improve modal choice, and use these elements to integrate with existing adjacent development while also delivering an enhanced sense of place.
25. In considering landform, the UDA deliberately looked emphasise the gully network as a connecting open space feature fronted by development.

Added opportunity to benefit from a connected walk-cycle network, opportunities for local amenity and longer views, and environmental custodianship through improved stormwater management, and opportunity for gateways were identified and promoted by the UDA into the spatial arrangement for the PC37 area. The ability for this gully network to connect with existing reserves such as Brentwood Gully, was identified as a further opportunity to enhance connectivity and integrate with existing urban form.

26. Emphasising connectivity, the UDA promoted with the LVA the use of the gully network and a network hierarchy of street typologies. These involved a coherent arrangement of streets for vehicles and of pathways that fronted and optimised open space. These spaces included the gully network, stormwater reserves, buffer strips, and off-road walk-cycle corridors. In particular it promoted a concept of streets or pathways with a strong visual or physical relationship with the gully network.
27. The rural farmland to the north and west of the PC37 area has an open rural character that includes pastoral farming, small scale forestry woodlots and rural lifestyle activities with rectilinear shelterbelts. Apart from a small number of lifestyle properties this rural area is characterised by minimal built development.
28. While the UDA looked to a spatial arrangement that would see the PC37 area as a natural extension to the existing urban area, it was also cognisant that it would form a new urban-rural interface. In a number of locations the existing interface is a hard edge with tall residential style fences, and in other places it is a road or the abrupt end of a road or a part of the gully network. The UDA saw an opportunity to improve the existing urban rural interface through a narrow open space buffer associated with either a pathway, the gully network or a road.
29. Specific urban design responses, or mitigation measures to achieve these outcomes are identified in section 5 of the Report. These include responses

common to all parts of the PC37 area, and others specific to the eastern or western areas. In particular they relate to the gully network, optimising views, stormwater and drainage, open space amenity, logical and coherent multi-modal connectivity, cultural heritage, 'fronting' of open space, and enhanced gateways.

30. The Report recommends and relies on not just the spatial arrangement set out in PC37, but also the requirement that appropriate design detail is incorporated at the time of subdivision.
31. Considered in context, it is my view that the urban form and character of the adjacent urban area is not highly vulnerable to change of the scale envisaged by PC37. Furthermore, it is anticipated that the proposed extension of the urban area will take place gradually or in stages over a number of years, and each stage will blend into the existing form of surrounding residential developments.
32. Similar to past extension to the urban areas, once new new housing development, open space and street connections are established, the former urban edge will be difficult to discern and the PC37 area will appear as a natural extension of the urban residential area.
33. For these reasons, in my opinion the development of the PC37 area as proposed will have a less than minor effect on urban form, and is likely to have positive effects on connectivity and access to open space.
34. In terms of mitigation, urban design principles were incorporated into the Layout Plan. These measures will help to minimise or alleviate potential change, and any anticipated negative effects that the PC37 area may have on existing urban form and will assist to integrate the development into the wider urban environment.



## CONCLUSION

35. Residential development and associated urban-residential activities dominate the land to the east and south of the PC37 area. The zone change will permit residential development of the PC37 area to expand and enhance existing urban development patterns by shifting the residential edge 500 m to 700 m further north into the rural environment, providing an improved urban-rural interface, and providing enhanced connectivity.
36. The PC37 area is not considered to have any adverse effects on urban form and is considered to be consistent with the wider urban context. Overall, the proposed PC37, if developed as proposed with the suggested mitigation, into a residential subdivision with a majority mix of general to medium density properties and smaller areas of reserves and commercial activity, will result in adverse effects that can be considered to be less than minor, and are likely to also result in positive effects.
37. In terms of the s 42A report I have reviewed the Landscape and CPTED assessment of Rebecca Ryder, urban design assessment of Morné Hugo, and provide the following comments.
38. With regard to the landscape assessment evidence of Ms Ryder, which also addresses CPTED. In paragraph 44 of her evidence Ms Ryder references street typology 2a, with reference to 'entrapment' and 'predictive movement patterns'. Typology 2a and other typologies specifically considered CPTED guidelines and desired outcomes. It proposes a generous 10m width a wide shared pathway, abutted by low visually permeable fencing. It was anticipated that this reserve would encounter wider open spaces, whether in the form of streets or more substantial areas of open space. Notwithstanding that, in my opinion the proposed inclusion of a reference to CPTED principles in 4a2.7.2 as suggested in paragraph 45 of Ms Ryders evidence can only be of additional benefit.

39. Turning to Ms Ryders suggestion for the inclusion of 'large framework tree planting and retention'. I concur there is merit in the provision for large framework trees in the PC37 area. However, the provision of such additional trees has the potential to cause adverse effects particularly in more confined spaces. In my opinion it is important that sufficient flexibility is retained to ensure that the positioning of such trees is able to be carefully considered. These trees should not be located in the spaces identified in street typologies 2, 2a, 3, 4, 5, or 6 unless in association with a larger open space such as a pocket park. Further such planting should take into consideration the potential for disruption of longer views, and the amenity of adjacent residential properties. In my view, if incorporated, the proposed wording should be adjusted to read as follows:

***'including specific provision for large framework tree planting and retention where these will not have an adverse effect on safety, or be likely to cause nuisance such as shading of residential properties, or the significant interruption of longer views along open space to Lake Taupo, the peaks of Mount Ruapehu, Mount Tongariro or Mount Ngauruhoe.'***

40. With regard to the urban design assessment evidence prepared by Mr Hugo, I note the evidence is generally supportive of the UDA and its conclusions. I have noted the reference to the Low Volume road typology in paragraph 34. These street typologies make use of road width, pathways and street trees to reinforce their legible place and function in a connected movement hierarchy. The use of street trees in this particular typology was considered. If included, street trees should be limited to only one side of the street, reflecting the lower position of this street typology in the movement hierarchy.
41. In paragraph 32 a rule requiring 30% of the total length of stormwater reserve edges have active road frontage is proposed. The evidence accurately notes that the UDA report promotes streets and pathways

fronting open space, including stormwater reserves. However, recognising the need to retain design flexibility it stopped short of requiring a minimum proportion of such frontage, relying instead on a clear design outcome. In my opinion this would be better included as an assessment matter, enabling appropriate design flexibility but also the ability for the adequacy of such provision to be assessed at the time of subdivision design and consenting.

**Nicholas Aiken**

**20 October 2021**