

Plan Change 38 Hearing Statement

Kia Ora,

My name is John Lenihan, I am a Registered Architect with a second degree in Economics and Director of RCG , who are Architects and Property Professionals.

I have assisted a number of Iwi clients to develop Maori land in strategic urban areas over the last 30 years. I have been working with the Rangatira E trust for more than 10 years, and more recently with the combined group of 6 other Maori Land Trusts – Hiruharama Ponui, Rangatira Point, Rangatira 8A14A, 8A16, 8A17 & Paenoa Te Akau, who together have over 8000 owners with land of some 1500 hectares on the Western side of Taupo in Acacia Bay to Nukuhau, forming what we describe as the Rangatira Blocks.

1. The Rangatira blocks are strategically located between the growing settlement at Acacia Bay and surrounding rural lifestyle areas, and Nukuhau and the Taupo CBD.
2. Between Wharewaka Point in the east, and Acacia Bay in the west, it is the only undeveloped land within the Taupo Bay area; in effect, all other landowners in Taupo Bay have developed into high value residential and commercial land use, while the Rangatira blocks largely remain in low-value farmland and forestry. This land stands as a stark and poignant reminder of the development constraints faced by Māori Land.
3. The 7 Trusts who have made a joint submission, have aspirations for high quality development on the Rangatira Blocks that allows the owners to realise benefits from their land while contributing to and complementing the urban fabric of Taupo .
4. In the past developing Māori land has been challenging , getting land re-zoned and having infrastructure provided to their land has been pushed to the bottom of Council's priority list . We believe that a key tool in keeping development at bay has been the TD2050 Growth Strategy. The Rangatira blocks continue to be mapped for future development but TD2050 has been a low growth strategy and at odds with actual growth in population.

3. PC 38 is premised and relies on TD 2050 (2018), which is a continuation of this flawed low growth strategy.
4. This is despite Population and household projections being reassessed for Council in 2021 by Property Economics for these plan changes, and in 2023 by Infometrics for Council's draft Housing Strategy, showing that actual and projected growth has been high not low.
5. Both these more recent projections indicate that 2023 population has already reached the peak population projected for 2038 in the 2050(2018) Strategy Document. The new projections show 8000 more people and 2000 more households in the next 15 years to 2038 than the projections in TD2050.
6. The Council's new expert projections show that the TD 2050(2018) projections are very significantly outdated and are unreliable as a basis for this Plan Change. The projections in the 2018 version of TD 2050 have significantly and materially under projected growth .
7. Those matters are not identified or evaluated in the section 32 and section 42A reports- rather, those reports and the supporting expert reports rely on TD2050(2018).
8. In consequence, options other than those relying on TD 2050 (2018) have not been considered, assessed or evaluated, and need to be, including growth areas additional to those identified in TD2050(2018), and in particular, this has impacted on the Rangatira Blocks not being considered (or parts of them) for rural lifestyle and industrial in the current tranche of plan changes , despite their close proximity to existing urban and commercial areas and existing public transport routes.

The Council experts continue to reference the constraints of infrastructure, ensuring the Rangatira Blocks remain trapped in a catch 22 cycle.

For example Rangatira E provided land for the Acacia Bay Waste Treatment plant 10 years ago, with the promise that capacity would be available to support future development on Rangatira E lands. Today, due to growth not planned for, that capacity has gone.

9. As a result, if PC 38 has failed to sufficiently address growth in the Taupo district, especially in the Taupo Bay Area, it has not achieved the purpose of the RMA Act.
10. This is why the Rangatira blocks challenged the adequacy of the section 32 report in their original Submission in those respects.
11. We do however acknowledge that constructive discussions and other steps are being undertaken by Council to remedy those flaws for the future, in particular, so far as they affect the Rangatira Blocks and we commend Council on its constructive approach outside of the hearing, But at the moment the only tangible outcome Rangatira Blocks have to work with are these plan changes – and these plan changes do not deliver the outcomes promised or sought.

Requested Changes to be made .

We seek an acknowledgement in your Decision that:

1. The PC 38 Strategy is a low growth strategy based on significantly outdated growth projections contained in TD 2050 (2018);
2. Current growth projections have been updated by Council outside of these plan change documents and are for high growth;
3. In consequence, given the strategic importance of the Rangatira Block lands as future growth areas for Taupo, rezoning of the Rangatira Block lands to provide for projected future growth should be prioritised and provided for in the next tranche of Plan Changes. “

John Lenihan
Director
RCG