

BEFORE THE WAIKATO DISTRICT COUNCIL

Independent Hearing Commissioner(s)

IN THE MATTER of the Resource Management Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER of a resource consent application by
Gull New Zealand Limited for a 24-hour
unmanned service station located at 68
Great South Road, Pōkeno

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF MORNÉ HUGO

19 April 2021

1.0 QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERTISE

- 1.1 My name is Morné Hugo. I am a Landscape Architect and Urban Designer at Boffa Miskell Limited, a national firm of consulting planners, ecologists, urban designers, and landscape architects. I hold the qualifications of Bachelor of Landscape Architecture with Honours in Urban Design from the University of Pretoria, South Africa.
- 1.2 I am an Associate Partner at Boffa Miskell based in the Tauranga office and have been employed by the company as a senior landscape architect and urban designer for the past twelve (14) years.
- 1.3 I have been involved with landscape architecture and urban design projects of various scales for the past twenty-five (25) years, from large scale structure planning and infrastructure projects through to detail design and implementation management.
- 1.4 I am a Registered Landscape Architect with the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects. I previously held registrations as a professional landscape architect in South Africa.
- 1.5 I have visited the application site and I am familiar with the surrounding environment.
- 1.6 I have read the report prepared by the Council Officer in relation to the application for resource consent by Gull New Zealand Ltd for a proposed 24hr unmanned service station and I am familiar with the issues that have been raised in submissions.

2.0 CODE OF CONDUCT

- 2.1 I have read the Code of Conduct for expert witnesses in the Environment Court Practice Note. I agree to comply with this Code. The evidence in my statement is within my area of expertise, except where I state that I am relying on the evidence

of another person. I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions I express.

3.0 INVOLVEMENT IN THE PROCEEDINGS

3.1 I have been engaged by Gull New Zealand Limited to carry out an independent urban design review of a proposed new 24-hour unmanned service station located at 68 Great South Road, Pōkeno.

3.2 The urban design review was part of a further information request by Waikato District Council (Council), and focused on the urban amenity and character of the applicant's proposal, as considered against the outcomes sought by the Pōkeno Urban Design Guide and the Market Square Development Option Report, which are both non-statutory guidance documents.

3.3 During the urban design review process, I also attended an on-line meeting with Council's planning team and Mr. Sam Coles from Harrison Grierson, and urban design specialist engaged by WDC to review the proposal and my urban design recommendations.

3.4 Following on from the above meeting, I reviewed recommendations made by Mr. Coles and in consultation with the applicant made design recommendations to improve the urban design and visual outcome and provide suitable visual quality and integration with the future Market Square development concept.

4.0 DISTRICT PLAN AND GUIDELINES

4.1 I have considered the relevant District Plan provisions of the Operative District Plan ("ODP"), including the Appendix 29.2 Pokeno Business Centre Assessment Criteria, (further discussed under item 7.10 below) and my primary focus has been on

reviewing the impact of the proposed development in terms of urban amenity and appropriateness in relation to the site's location relative to the proposed future Market Square Development.

- 4.2 The Pōkeno Urban Design Guide 2015 ("Design Guide") provides advice for developers regarding the architectural form, materials and signage that should be used for new business developments within Pōkeno's main street. The Design Guide is a non-statutory document and gives effect to the design principles of Appendix 29.2 Pokeno Business Centre Assessment Criteria of the ODP. Council recommends that the Design Guide is applied to all Business-zoned properties that frame Market Square and those fronting Great South Road between Market Square and Selby Street.

5.0 THE PROPOSAL

- 5.1 The proposed Gull Fuel Facility site is located directly fronting the North West of the future Market Square site. The design intent as conveyed by the design guide document is that the Market Square is framed by commercial buildings with active building frontages facing inwards towards the square.
- 5.2 Due to the nature of the proposed fuel facility design, which is an unmanned facility with no actual service station building, this activated frontage is not able to be realised. By its nature, the proposed facility is for use by vehicles only and will not promote any pedestrian movement between the site and the Market Square.
- 5.3 In my view, if the aspirational vision of the Design Guide and Market Square concept design document are to be fully achieved, suitable visual mitigation, landscaping enhancement and visual integration along the common boundary between the proposed Gull fuel facility and the future Market Square is required.

- 5.4 The proposed service station is an un-manned self-service station. As such the provision of a shop on the street frontage is not practical or possible. In my opinion the provision of a coffee stall or shop would be more desirable within the future Market Square development, rather than on the relatively small service station site, which already has limited space for vehicle manoeuvring/tracking, traffic safety and required landscaping treatments.

6.0 REVIEW PROCESS

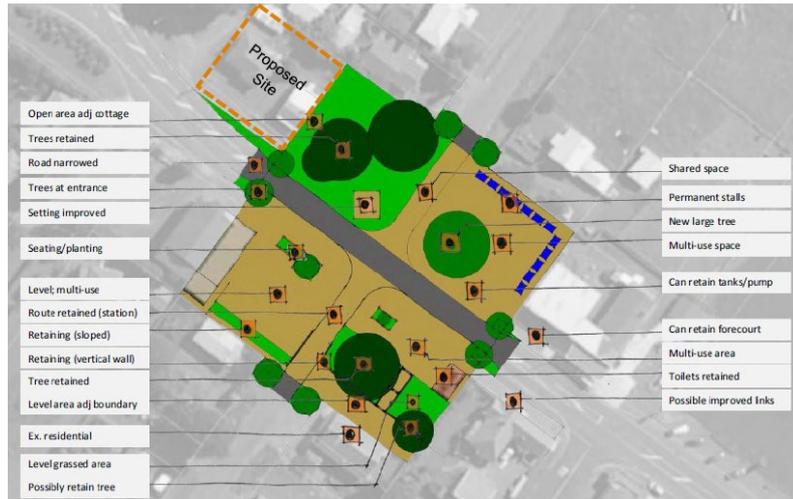
- 6.1 In consultation with the applicant and the Council's urban design specialist we included the following design elements as recommended by Mr. Coles in the development proposal:
- 6.2 To improve the vehicle crossings and general surface treatment of the forecourt with coloured oxide and an exposed aggregate surface finish to add visual interest and support a future footpath around street frontages.
- 6.3 To ensure that vehicle crossing details and associated signage responds to a future footpath around the site's frontages. The proposal will ensure that the entry design does not inhibit the ability for Council to construct a footpath in future past the site.
- 6.4 To design fencing and boundary treatments that visually connect and blend the site's surrounds with the public space surrounding Market Square. To achieve this, we have proposed a traditional style picket fence hedge combination in keeping with the character sought by the Design Guide that is incorporated along all visible site frontages.
- 6.5 To redesign the signage and any other visible structures on the site to be in character with the Pōkeno Town Centre character statement – e.g. timber structure with traditional colours and smaller-scale pylon sign (e.g. 6m tall) which relates to the town centre scale (pedestrian-friendly scale). The applicant has provided a bespoke concept design for the proposed pylon sign

in line with these recommendations. In my opinion the sign will be keeping with the character of the town centre and due to its location relative to the existing trees to be retained on Market square and relatively small size, the sign will have very limited visibility or impact, if any, on the amenity values within the town centre.

- 6.6 Church Street landscaping to offer more screening (through vegetation height and density) to residential land across the street. The applicant agrees with this recommendation and proposes using the same picket fencing detail along this boundary, with a taller 1.5m high hedge behind (planted within the site boundary)

7.0 FURTHER URBAN DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 The proposed development site is located outside the area of the Business Centre in the ODP Design Guide (Appendix 29.2) which incorporates building frontage controls for the purpose of continuity of building edges and providing cover for users along shop frontages.
- 7.2 The preferred design proposal for the proposed Market Square, as identified in the Market Square Options Report (Draft May 2014), now contained within the Design Guide, indicates that the future Market Square would be divided into 4 main quadrants, consisting of a combination of hard paved 'plaza' areas and softer lawn spaces with trees. The 4 quadrants would be divided by Great South Road and Market Street, which is proposed to become a shared space road environment.



- 7.3 It is notable from the concept design that the northern quadrant of the square, which fronts the proposed Gull site, is predominantly a lawn space with the large existing trees proposed to be retained. These existing trees are likely to provide a degree of visual and perceived separation between the proposed fuel facility and the more active plaza areas within the other three quadrants of the Market Square.
- 7.4 It is likely that the green lawn area as indicated on the plan, will likely be used for passive recreation purposes, with groups of users sitting under the trees and around the existing cenotaph which is to be retained.
- 7.5 It should be noted that the proposed development is located on a fringe site and in my opinion, due to the fact that service stations should be located on Business Zone land, it is therefore the best option for the activity within Pōkeno, otherwise it would be on a residential zoned site or on a local road, both of which would have worse outcomes from an amenity and overall urban design perspective.
- 7.6 It should be further noted that under the Proposed District Plan, the activity proposed for the site is a Restricted Discretionary Activity, with the sign, earthworks and traffic being the only items of discretion. Within this context, whilst I acknowledge the future aspirations for the Market Square development, urban design matters as raised by Mr. Coles in his peer review relating to

building frontages are not of relevance, as they relate to the construction of buildings. There is no requirement to construct a building as part of a redevelopment of a site within the town centre under either district plan.

- 7.7 The current receiving environment, Pōkeno in its present urban form, is a heavily traffic dominated environment. The current town centre is dominated by two (2) existing fuel sites (one being a truck stop), a recently constructed supermarket with parking fronting the street, a mechanics business, and several parking areas.
- 7.8 The proposed Gull development on the fringe of the Business Zone is in my opinion not detracting from the existing urban environment. When we consider this in relation to the direction sought by the various urban design guidance documents, I would be of the opinion that the current fuel sites within the town have a limited life span, and should be replaced with retail and related commercial activities with continuous shop frontages. As such the site proposed by the applicant is much more desirable and appropriate as it keeps the activity on the fringe of the business zone.
- 7.9 In my opinion, urban design best practice would be to locate a service station on a main transport route to avoid drawing traffic onto side roads and the resultant negative traffic and amenity outcomes.
- 7.10 When considering the ODP Design Criteria (Appendix 29.2), guidance focuses on the central area of Pōkeno town. Design Element 1 as raised by Mr. Coles in his assessment does not apply as these relate to the Great South Road boundary of any site located between Market Square and Cambridge Street. The subject site is clearly located on the opposite side of the future Market Square, on the fringe of the Business Zone.
- 7.11 Design Element 2 applies to the design of buildings, and as the site will not contain any buildings this design element is not of

direct relevance to the proposal, however the applicant has agreed to include suitable traditional picket fencing, amenity landscaping and a bespoke sign to provide visual quality and integration with urban design outcomes sought for the town centre and Market Square.

- 7.12 Design Element 3 (Open spaces, parking areas and landscaping) is clearly of the most relevance in my opinion. Whilst I agree that as an overall concept open spaces should have active edges, it is neither necessary or practical to expect that all edges to open spaces should need to be fully active, as this would negate the possibility of providing parking, roading or related infrastructure in close proximity to public space.
- 7.13 As noted above, the traditional fencing and signage design, in combination with proposed feature and mitigation landscaping, will suitably integrate the proposed fuel station with any future development plans for the Market Square.
- 7.14 The proposed service station development and associated lower level fencing and landscaped boundary treatments will also allow visibility and visual connectivity to be maintained to the proposed development located directly to the north east of the applicant's site.
- 7.15 As part of the proposed service station development, the existing vehicle access from the site through Market Square will be removed and the site will only be accessed from Great South Road. In my opinion this better aligns with the proposed Market Square design.

8.0 PROPOSED ROAD UPGRADE

- 8.1 Council is proposing an upgrade project to Great South Road in the vicinity of the site. I have reviewed the proposed draft design and note that a 2.0m wide pedestrian footpath is proposed past the site. This footpath will provide pedestrian connectivity past

the service station site and support the outcomes sought by the design guide.

- 8.2 I further note that the proposed roading design plan shows a new roundabout located in the middle of the future Market Square, and a 4-lane road with a solid median. This design seems to be at odds with the design concept plans to the Market Square redevelopment and appears to be fundamentally vehicle focussed with little consideration for pedestrian circulation and user amenity.

9.0 CONCLUSION

- 9.1 In my opinion the proposed unmanned service station activity located at this site, will not fundamentally or significantly detract from the Pōkeno town centre in its current or future form. Service stations of this type are located in very similar locations in and around other town centres, and as long as they are developed with due care and attention to design detail, material quality and appropriate levels of amenity landscaping, they are fully acceptable and supply a valuable commercial function for residents and visitors.

10.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 I recommend that all fencing, landscaping, signage and paving elements as agreed with the applicant are implemented in order to achieve the design quality and visual integration as required to maintain the amenity value of the town centre and future Market Square development.
- 10.2 I recommend that a detailed landscaping plan and associated construction and maintenance specification, be compiled by a suitably qualified NZILA Registered Landscape Architect and be provided to Council at Building Consent stage, prior to commencement of construction works on site.

Morné Hugo

19 April 2021