

Before the Independent Hearing Commissioner
At Ashburton District Council

under: the Resource Management Act 1991

in the matter of: application LUC23/0109 to the Ashburton District Council relating to the proposed equestrian centre located on 279 Stranges Road, Ashburton

between: **Southern Parallel Equine Centre Limited**
Applicant

and: **Ashburton District Council**
Consent Authority

Statement of evidence of David Compton-Moen

Dated: 20 March 2024

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STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF DAVID COMPTON-MOEN

INTRODUCTION

- 1 My full name is David John Compton-Moen.
- 2 I am a Director at DCM Urban Design Limited, which is a private independent consultancy that provides Landscape and Urban Design services related advice to local authorities and private clients, established in 2016.
- 3 I hold the qualifications of a Master of Urban Design (Hons) from the University of Auckland, a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture (Hons) and a Bachelor of Resource Studies (Planning and Economics), both obtained from Lincoln University. I am a Registered Landscape Architect of the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects (NZILA), since 2001, a Full member of the New Zealand Planning Institute, since 2007, and a member of the Urban Design Forum since 2012.
- 4 I have worked in the landscape assessment and design, urban design, and planning fields for approximately 25 years, here in New Zealand and in Hong Kong. During this time, I have worked for both local authorities and private consultancies, providing expert evidence for urban design, landscape and visual impact assessments on a wide range of major infrastructure and development proposals, including the following relevant projects:
 - 4.1 2021 – Working for Waimakariri District Council, I prepared Urban Design evidence to assist with Private Plan Change 30 – Ravenswood Key Activity Centre which sought to rezone parts of an existing Outline Development Plan to increase the amount of Business 1 land and remove a portion of Residential 6A land;
 - 4.2 2020-21 – Working for Mike Greer Homes, I have worked on the master planning, urban design and landscape design for the following Medium Density Residential and Mixed-Use Developments;
 - (a) Madras Square – a mixed use development on the previously known 'Breathe' site (90+ homes);
 - (b) 476 Madras Street – a 98-unit residential development on the old Orion Site;
 - (c) 258 Armagh Street – a 33-unit residential development in the inner city;
 - (d) 33 Harewood Road – a 31-unit development adjacent to St James Park in Papanui;

- 4.3 2020-21 – Working with Waimakariri District Council, I have assisted with the development of four structure plans for future urban growth in Rangiora and Kaiapoi;
 - 4.4 2020-21 – Working for several different consortiums, I have provided urban design and landscape advice for the following recent private plan changes in the Selwyn District:
 - (a) Wilfield, West Melton (PC59 and PC67);
 - (b) Lincoln South, Lincoln (PC69);
 - (c) Trents Road, Prebbleton (PC68);
 - (d) Birchs Village, Prebbleton (PC79);
 - (e) Extension to Falcons Landing, Rolleston (PC75); and
 - (f) Rolleston Southeast (PC78).
 - 4.5 Acland Park Subdivision, Rolleston – master planning and landscape design for a 1,000-lot development in Rolleston (2017-current). I am currently working with the owner to establish a new neighbourhood centre in the development. The HAASHA development was originally 888 households before we redesigned the development to increase its density to ~14.5hh/ha;
 - 4.6 Graphic material for the Selwyn Area Maps (2016);
 - 4.7 Stage 3 Proposed District Plan Design Guides – Residential (High, Medium and Lower Density and Business Mixed Use Zones) for Queenstown Lakes District Council (2018-2020); and
 - 4.8 Hutt City Council – providing urban design evidence for Plan Change 43. The Plan Change proposed two new zones including a Suburban Mixed-use and Medium Density Residential as well as providing the ability for Comprehensive Residential Developments on lots larger than 2,000m² (2017-2019). The Medium Density Design Guide was a New Zealand Planning Institute Award winner in 2020.
- 5 I have been engaged by Southern Parallel Equine Centre Limited (*SPEC*) to provide expert evidence on landscape and visual effects matters in relation to its application for a resource consent () to establish an equine centre in Lake Hood (the *Proposed Equine Centre*).
 - 6 I prepared the “Master Plan”, “Concept Planting Plan”, and “Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment” dated 31 October 2023

attached at Appendices 2, 6, and 9 of the Assessment of Environmental Effects of the Application.

CODE OF CONDUCT

- 7 Although this is not an Environment Court hearing, I note that in preparing my evidence I have reviewed the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses contained in Part 9 of the Environment Court Practice Note 2023. I have complied with it in preparing my evidence. I confirm that the issues addressed in this statement of evidence are within my area of expertise, except where relying on the opinion or evidence of other witnesses. I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions expressed.

SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

- 8 My evidence will deal with the following effects of the Proposed Equine Centre:

8.1 Rural character and values;

8.2 Natural character; and

8.3 Visual amenity.

- 9 In preparing my evidence, I have reviewed:

9.1 The Application;

9.2 Submissions on the Application; and

9.3 The section 42A report.

SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

- 10 In terms of landscape character (including natural character) and values of the area, subject to the mitigation measures proposed, the Proposed Equine Centre will result in a very low magnitude of change (less than minor effects) on the existing rural landscape character and values. The existing character of the site is already highly modified and with the proposed mitigation measures both protecting and enhancing existing waterways, the proposal will retain existing natural features.
- 11 In terms of visual amenity, the adjacent rural properties will experience a very low magnitude of change (less than minor effects) in the openness of views across the space. Nearby residential properties, current and future, overlooking the site have a mix of open, partial, and screened views of future development. The changes in the landscape experienced by these residents are considered low to very low (less than minor effects) given the

nature of the proposal is rural, albeit with a larger scale of rural building than is found in the immediate area at present.

RURAL CHARACTER AND VALUES

- 12 Overall, the receiving environment has a rural, semi-open character on the outskirts of a small suburban development with some areas exhibiting a high level of compartmentalisation. The existing environment has various structures including dwellings, auxiliary structures, power lines and exotic vegetation clustered throughout the landscape, typical of rural landscapes within Canterbury.
- 13 Vegetation types in the receiving environment are predominantly exotic species, with a very small number of native species located near drains, Lake Hood and paddock boundaries. Vegetation is used predominantly for shelter belts running along the paddock boundaries and includes species such as *Pinus radiata*, *Cupressus macrocarpa*, poplar, and *Eucalyptus*. The shelter belts are primarily located to delineate property boundaries, and along small parts of the roads noting that the road frontage along both sides of Stranges Road is clear of any vegetation. The site is open grass fields and has two drains running across the site.
- 14 In terms of built form, dwellings and farm structures are common throughout the area. There is an existing farmhouse on the site which will be retained. The scale, character, form, and materiality of these structures vary throughout the receiving environment. There are a number of existing dwellings adjacent to the proposal site along Huntingdon Road. Dwellings are of typical rural residential character, having irregular bulk and location which are often supported by additional infrastructure and are separated by large fields and exotic vegetation. The proposal site is directly adjacent to the existing Lake Hood settlement which is a mix of residential development (suburban) and a small commercial area.
- 15 With the Proposed Equine Centre the character of the area will become more enclosed due to landscape planting but will still retain a rural character. The proposed buildings are of a scale and form which is consistent with rural developments on a large scale. The potential for 12m high buildings is not considered to have an effect on the character of the wider area as they are largely internalised, and their form is consistent with farm and utility sheds in rural areas, albeit somewhat larger in accumulated scale.
- 16 A single vehicle access way is proposed onto Stranges Road, designed have a 'rural' feel and is consistent with typical entranceways into rural properties. Any proposed signage would be designed to meet District Plan standards for the Rural B zone. Extensive planting is proposed along the northern, southern and western boundaries of the site while the existing poplar shelter belts on the boundary bordering Lake Hood are to be retained. The planting on the road boundary is designed to soften views of the

proposed buildings and carpark areas while retaining a high level of amenity. The design is considered consistent with the surrounding area in that a high level of stewardship and visual coherence is anticipated.

- 17 The Master Plan has carefully considered the importance of the existing rural character in the receiving environment, retaining the character and amenity values of the receiving rural environment, and retaining a clear distinction between urban and rural areas with a standard of amenity that is consistent with what would be anticipated in a rural level, noting that a high level of stewardship is proposed. The proposal is considered a rural activity. The building coverage proposed is low in the context of the overall site, though higher than permitted in the District Plan. The provision of open space is high, retaining an open, rural character with a degree of compartmentalisation occurring due to landscape planting.
- 18 Overall, the character of the area will shift from open to a more compartmentalised character, retaining a strong rural character resulting in a low to very low magnitude of change (less than minor effects).

Natural Character

- 19 The natural character of the site is highly modified, having been cleared for agricultural use but retains some natural features being the two drains. It is understood SPEC intends to enhance and restore these waterways, though detailed plans for their restoration are not yet available. Riparian planting strips will be created along the waterway corridors (native planting and weed management) to create ecological corridors through the site. Where crossing points are proposed, care will be taken to ensure any earthworks within the riparian margin are minimised. The waterways current conditions reflect the existing agricultural practices with the lack of native riparian vegetation present, an aspect which will be improved with the proposed Master Plan. Existing amenity of the natural landscape is to be enhanced and retained through the planting, resulting in positive effects.

Visual Amenity

- 20 The visual context of the receiving environment is considered to have a maximum 1.5km visual catchment offset from the edge of the proposed development, noting that the visual catchment is as small as 100m in some directions. The larger distance has been used for the purposes of my assessment of visual effects on the wider receiving environment due to the receiving environment's flat topography. The results are that views of the proposed development from this distance are either not being possible or are indiscernible.
- 21 For nearby residential visually sensitive receivers on Stranges Road and Huntingdon Avenue, the bulk and density of the proposal is consistent with the character of a rural activity, albeit with an

equine focus. With the inclusion of the proposed mitigation measures outlined below a high level of amenity can be retained, noting there will be a change but the effects are not considered adverse. Given the scale, form and design of the proposal, most residents will, due to their separation from the proposed development by distance, existing roads and fields, experience a very low level of change (less than minor).

- 22 For road users, views of the proposal are generally semi-open or open from the surrounding roads. Given the scale and character of the proposed development when compared with the existing rural character, and combined with the lower sensitivity to change (due to the transient nature of road users), adverse effects for road users are likely to be less than minor. For the sections along either Stranges Road or Huntingdon Avenue, where potential adverse effects could result, vehicle access is proposed to be limited, and building placement has been designed to be well setback from roads and positioned behind planting to retain a rural, visually coherent, character.
- 23 For recreational users on and around Lake Hood, the proposal would result in very little change in character, maintaining a rural character and amenity. Visual amenity is retained by the placement of fields along the eastern edge of the site and the placement of the main buildings internally within the site. The poplars along this eastern boundary are to be retained, noting however that the majority of these trees appear to be outside of the property boundary.

Mitigation measures

- 24 While acknowledging that the proposal is a rural activity, the proposed mitigation measures will ensure a high level of visual amenity is achieved. The following mitigation measures, which have been implemented in the proposed Master Plan, are:
- 24.1 MM1 - The landscape treatment is designed to retain a rural character along Huntingdon Avenue and Stranges Road as shown on the Master Plan. The landscape treatment is proposed as a 10m wide strip of native species.
- 24.2 MM2 - Planting of the waterway banks with appropriate native riparian species. Restoration of the waterway will be guided by an ecologist.

RESPONSE TO SUBMISSIONS

- 25 Both the submissions¹ raise concerns about the effect of the Proposed Equine Centre on rural amenity and character, as well as privacy. I have read both submissions and note the following:

¹ Submissions of: Craig, Annabelle, and Tim Read; John Skevington and Jo Ruane.

- 25.1 The proposal will retain a sense of spaciousness and plantings characteristic of rural areas in the district with the proposed buildings being internalised within the site and the property boundaries being defined by landscape planting. From the adjoining roads, as plantings establish, it will not be possible to see into the site. This will change the openness of views across site from adjoining properties but this could occur if, like many rural properties, shelter belts are planted along road and internal boundaries. The proposed plantings will ensure no privacy issues occur.
- 25.2 I consider that the scale and siting of buildings are appropriate for a rural setting and do not detract from the rural character of the site. With a maximum height of 12m it is possible for any buildings to be completely screened from adjoining properties once planting establishes, particularly with the large building setbacks proposed.

RESPONSE TO SECTION 42A REPORT

- 26 I have read the Section 42A Report prepared by Mr Nick Boyes. I am in agreement with his report, noting that there will be a change to the degree of 'openness' across the site, but the site will retain a rural character with large green spaces and large amounts of landscape planting. The proposed riparian planting will have positive benefits for natural character values.

CONCLUSIONS

- 27 The effects of the Proposed Equine Centre on landscape character and visual amenity will be less than minor.

Dated: 20 March 2024

David Compton-Moen