

Before the Selwyn District Council

under: the Resource Management Act 1991

in the matter of: Proposed Private Plan Change 80 to the Operative District Plan

and: **Two Chain Road Limited**
Applicant

Evidence of Ben Turner (real estate)

Dated: 5 October 2022

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EVIDENCE OF BEN TURNER

INTRODUCTION

- 1 My full name is Benjamin James Winstone Turner. I am a rural real estate agent and company director at Bayleys Canterbury and have held this position for around 18 years.
- 2 Over this time, I have sold a large portfolio of properties across all sectors of the rural market – dairy, arable, sheep and beef, and deer, as well as small holdings and lifestyle blocks – from the high country to the coast. My team maintains one of the largest and most comprehensive databases of buyers, categorised by their preferences, to which information on new listings is sent on a regular basis.
- 3 I was awarded the Top Rural Real Estate Agent in New Zealand – Real Estate Institute of NZ Award in 2013/2014, 2014/2015, 2015/2016, 2016/2017, 2017/2018, 2019/2020 and 2020/2021.
- 4 I am familiar with private plan change 80 (*PC80*).

CODE OF CONDUCT

- 5 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 7 of the Environment Court Practice Note 2014. 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

- 6 My evidence considers the potential market for that part of the PC80 land considered highly productive (by virtue of its LUC 3 classification) on the PC80 site (the *LUC Land*). I understand the LUC Land comprises around 18.1 ha of the eastern end of the site.

MY EXPERIENCE IN SELLING RURAL PRODUCTIVE LAND

- 7 During my time as a real estate agent, I have sold substantial amounts of rural property to productive farmers throughout the Canterbury Region.
- 8 There are many factors that go into a purchaser's decision to buy land for productive purposes including (but certainly not limited to):

- 8.1 Size of landholdings, and nature of ownership;
 - 8.2 Resource constraints (including availability of water and nutrient allocation);
 - 8.3 Proximity to urban areas;
 - 8.4 The site specific nature of the soils; and
 - 8.5 The ability to borrow and obtain finances from a bank to fund the purchase.
- 9 On top of this, it will be highly relevant what productive use a particular purchaser is looking to use the land for.

CONSIDERATION OF THE LUC 3 LAND ON PC80

- 10 I have been asked to consider the potential market for the LUC Land.
- 11 If I was to list for sale the LUC Land comprising PC80 (whether on its own, or in combination with any of the other land comprising PC80), I would not foresee any potential market for anyone looking to use the land in a productive way.
- 12 This is due to a number of constraints present for the site, including some significant and long-term constraints. I touch on these briefly, but understand that the evidence of other experts (**Mr Mthamo** and **Mr Everest** in particular) covers these issues from a technical perspective in more detail.
- 13 I consider that productive farming purchasers will be disincentivised from purchasing this land purely from the perspective that it is so close to other urban development (and in particular residential and lifestyle properties). Productive farmers are particularly aware of the potential effects reverse sensitivity might have on their operations, and as such, consider adjoining and surrounding land uses closely when making a decision to purchase.
- 14 As covered in the evidence of **Mr Mthamo**, the most significant long term constraints from my perspective for the productive use of the farm relate to the availability of water for irrigation, and the ability to discharge nutrients to land:
- 14.1 The Selwyn-Waimakariri Groundwater Zone is overallocated under the Canterbury Land and Water Regional Plan (*CLWRP*) and therefore no one is currently able to obtain a new water take consent for the purposes of irrigation. I consider this to be a long term constraint for the site and I would not expect this situation to change over the next 30 years given how

critical water quantity is as an issue to New Zealand, and climate change.

- 14.2 Given the historic use of the site, the nutrient budgets as calculated under the CLWRP will be relatively low. This will mean that amount of nutrients allowed to be used on the site under the CLWRP will be particularly prohibitive for arable, grazing, horticultural, and viticultural uses. I agree with **Mr Mthamo** that this is a permanent constraint for the site that if anything is only going to become stricter over the next 30 years.
- 15 Based on my experience, and for the reasons set out above, I do not consider that the site would be profitable within the next 30 years, even when considering less intensive productive uses for the land such as grazing or cut and carry operations (which are all still highly dependent on adequate water for irrigation being available). I understand the evidence of **Mr Everest** provides a technical analysis of the profitability/viability of the site for potential productive uses.
- 16 I further note that banks will be very reluctant to lend any money against land that is not on particularly good soils, and certainly not on land which currently does not have adequate water or nutrient permissions (particularly when coupled with a restrictive consenting regime such as that in Canterbury).
- 17 From my experience, it is hard enough to establish a profitable operation on good soils without the required nutrients and/or water, let alone on soils which are not typically considered as conducive to rural production.
- 18 If I was to list these properties as they currently are, I can see the potential market being to people who are looking to purchase for lifestyle reasons due to the proximity to the heart of Rolleston. From my experience, people who purchase properties for lifestyle reasons, generally do not do anything productive with the land (often because it would not be economically viable to do so). While lifestyle property owners often have sheep, ponies, and other pets on their properties, this is not for commercial purposes.
- 19 In my experience when we have sold similar blocks in the past, there is no interest from productive farmers to purchase the land.
- 20 For these reasons, I would not advertise the sale of the site as a sale of farm land, because it is not. I am confident that farmers would simply not be interested in the site. Particularly given the pace and direction Rolleston is growing and with the way the future is shaping (particularly around the increased importance of climate change considerations).

CONCLUSION

- 21 From my experience, I am confident that the LUC Land is not able to be economically viable for land based primary production for at least 30 years due to a number of long term (and some permanent) on-site constraints.
- 22 If I were to sell the site, it would most likely be to individuals for lifestyle living purposes.
- 23 As such, I consider that the development of the site as an industrial area as proposed by PC80 is appropriate, despite the fact that the site contains some 18.1 ha of LUC 3 land.
- 24 In fact, I consider that the PC80 development could well result in a positive outcome for other productive uses in the District, as it allows for actually productive farming operations (i.e. that have adequate water and nutrient allocations) to be intensified further through efficiencies in technology and the like to respond to the relatively restrictive planning framework in Canterbury.

Dated: 5 October 2022

Ben Turner