

BEFORE THE SELWYN DISTRICT COUNCIL

RC225180

In the matter the Resource Management Act 1991
of

*Sections 88-120, Resource Management Act
1991*

Between **Party** KeaX Limited

Role Applicant

And **Party** Robyn Casey, Clark and Elizabeth
Casey and Dave and Donna Kewish ("Joint
Submitters")

Role Submitter

EVIDENCE OF DONNA JAYNE KEWISH
Date 23 February 2023

J M van der Wal
Barrister
40 Walker Street Chambers
Christchurch
Also at 14 Queen Street
Blenheim

- 1 My full name is Donna Jayne Kewish
- 2 I provide this evidence on behalf of myself Donna Kewish, David Kewish, Robyn Casey and Clark and Elizabeth Casey ("Joint Submitters"), who have made a joint submission and an individual submission in opposition to Application RC225180 ("the application").
- 3 My husband David, my two daughters and I live at 324 Branch Drain Road. We have lived here since March 2000, after purchasing the title from Clark Casey. It is probably the smallest size land area in the whole of Brookside at 5060 square metres, which is roughly one and a quarter acres. The property consists of a 4-bedroom home at the eastern end with a triple garage in the middle and a one bedroom self-contained granny flat at the other end.
- 4 The solar panels will be too close to our property and the measurements stated in the Application for Consent are incorrect. The Application states the site boundary will be 25 metres from the house (resource consent Appendix 13, Page 20). When actually, the closest point from our house to the site boundary is 12 metres and this from our main living room. (Appendix 1 Site Plan 324 Branch Drain Road). As we are on a very small section we don't have the acres of land with a house set away from neighbouring boundaries, at only 50 metres wide and 100 metres deep we couldn't get away from boundary fences which puts the house extremely close to the proposed project.
- 5 By comparison there is a solar farm in the pipeline for Te Aroha, approximately 60 kilometres out of Hamilton. This site is very similar in size at 260 hectares. All panels and equipment will be set back from public roads by at least 120 metres and 150 metres from neighbouring houses (Appendix 2 Waikato Times Article)
- 6 Our property has been identified as being the worst for noise during construction and operation due to the close proximity of panels and equipment to our northern boundary (Appendix 3 Assessment of environmental noise effects, Page 13). We appreciate the peace and quietness of the area and love living in a rural community and accept occasional noise from tractors ploughing etc. as part of the country lifestyle as these are only short term but this general peacefulness is going to be replaced by a constant hum of inverters and cooling systems. I have here a recording of noise from an operational solar farm for you to hear the tonal hum that we will have to listen to everyday. I now wish to play some sound to give an idea (Appendix 4, Sound Recording)

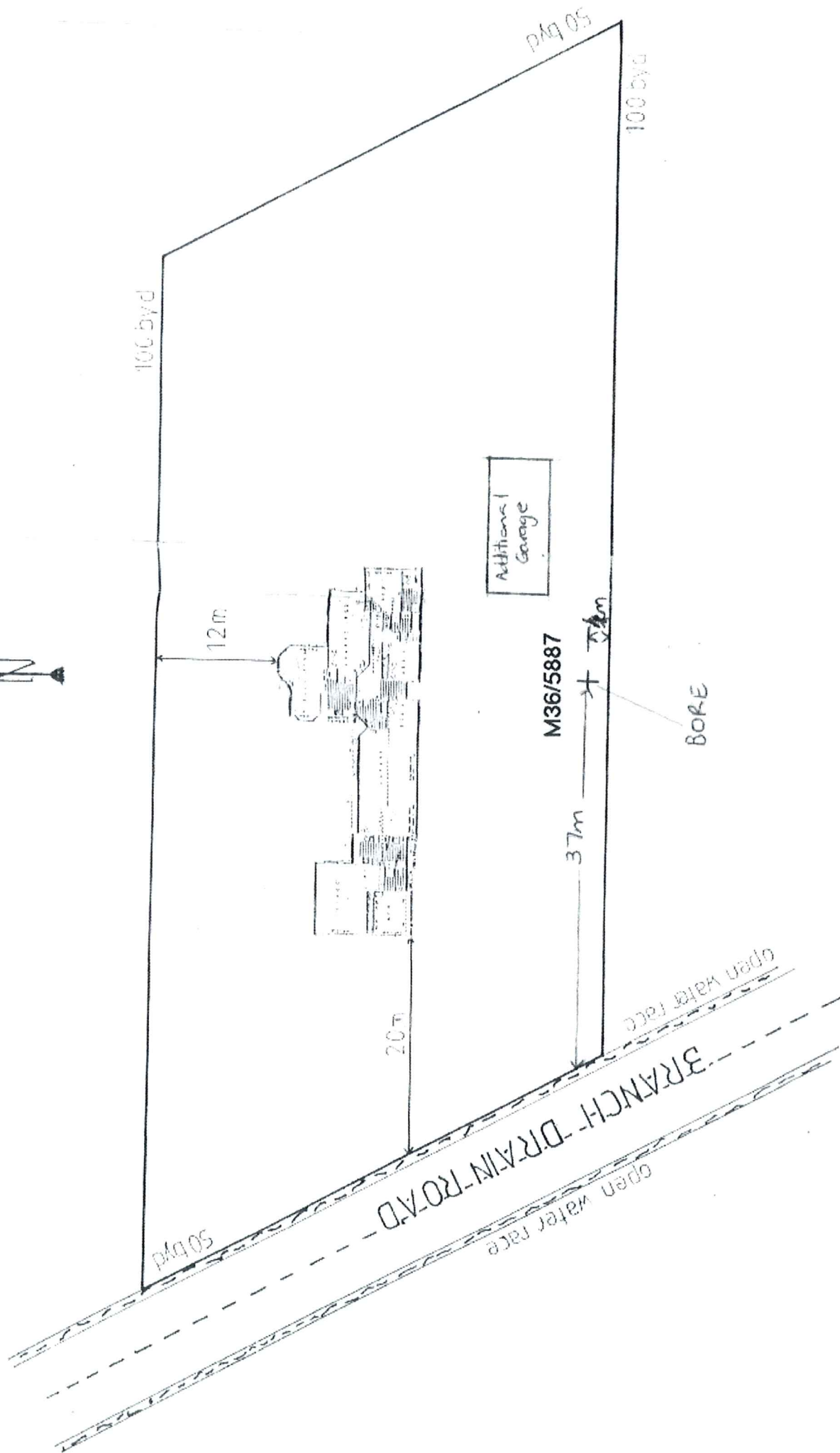
- 7 As keen gardeners we know the challenges involved in getting plants to grow in this area. A prime example of this is the shrubs at the eastern end of Buckleys Road, these are similar plants that are being proposed by the applicant. These were planted as seedlings in 2012 (Appendix 5 Google Maps photo) and 11 years later, the majority of these are still less than 3 metres tall (Appendix 6 Photo of car and hedge).
- 8 In regards to the exotic pine hedge that runs along our northern boundary. Every time this is trimmed it takes a year or so to recover like it is doing now from a trim last autumn. Although we always have some 'gaps' these become larger and more apparent after a trim, see photo taken in September (appendix 7 Photo of hedge after trim). Whilst we appreciate the second row of plantings now going in beyond this hedge to help with this issue until such plantings have matured enough we will see into the site.
- 9 We value the wide open uninterrupted views when walking the dog and travelling along Branch Drain Road and other road corridors in Brookside. Our views to the east towards the port hills when we leave our property (Appendix 8 view eastward from Branch Drain Road) and head north will change from rural in character to that of an industrial landscape with rows upon rows of metal solar panels. The same applies to views from the rear of our property towards the east, we will see views of these panels from our living room every day when I open the curtains, our rural amenity value lost. This view will be far greater in autumn and winter when our deciduous trees and shrubs will lose their leaves, we will then have a 27-metre-wide view (which is more than half of the section width) towards the site.
- 10 In addition until proposed boundary plantings have grown sufficiently this, will cause us problems with glare.
- 11 We disagree with the applicant over community engagement. We feel community engagement should include the whole community not just a select few. In February 2022 we heard about the proposed application in great detail from a neighbour and proceeded to find out more. We did get some answers to our concerns. We were also told to '*keep it quiet and not tell anyone*'. Mr McMath stated early March 2022 that we wouldn't be considered an 'affected party' due to the hedge screening our view to the north into the site.
- 12 KeaX, never sought written approval from us at 324 Branch Drain Road.

- 13 We are concerned about the potential risk for a fire breaking out at the site. In the planning officers report page 20 appendix 117, it stated that this needed to be done. I contacted the council to ask for a copy of this (appendix 9 Email to council) and received the reply also shown on appendix 9. We were so concerned that a neighbour approached F.E.N.Z about any existing plans, but nothing has been submitted (Appendix 10 – Email to FENZ). We feel the Brookside community would need to be aware that they would need to evacuate immediately due to the toxic chemicals that would be released into the air and the associated health risks.
- 14 We have spent more than 22 years building our rural lifestyle which we love. Whilst we won't be here forever it was our hope that at some point, in the not too distant future another family would move in. We are concerned that this proposal would limit the amount of potential buyers; that would be willing to live with a solar farm next door, regardless of plantings eventually screening out the site. The panels would still be close and the tonal hum from equipment would remain. Buyers, if seeking a home in the country, would be wanting a quiet rural amenity, not an industrial power plant in their backyard.
- 15 This solar farm project is having a profound effect on my mental health, I have been visited by a member of the rural support trust and it was suggested that I see a health improvement practitioner, to which I have done and am having weekly sessions with a therapist who is helping me overcome the stress and associated panic attacks I am now experiencing. I have a letter from my therapist should you wish to sight it. I have lost weight and I have trouble sleeping due to concerns about this proposal being constantly on my mind. I wouldn't wish this on anyone.

Donna Kewish



APPENDIX 1 – SITE PLAN OF 324 BRANCH DRAIN ROAD



APPENDIX 2 – WAIKATO TIMES ARTICLE

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/waikato-times/news/127917289/te-aroha-solar-farm-proposal-generates-support-and-questions-from-residents>

APPENDIX 3 – ACCOUSTIC ENGINEERING SERVICES APP18, PAGE 13

241?b? Branch Drain Road, Leeston	42	47	47	40	39
253 Smythes Road, Leeston	37	42	37	30	29
254 Smythes Road, Leeston	37	42	38	31	30
265 Branch Drain Road, Leeston	44	52	47	40	39
277 Branch Drain Road, Leeston	43	48	46	39	38
313 Branch Drain Road, Leeston	45	51	53	46	45
324 Branch Drain Road, Leeston	48	57	74	67	66
337 Brookside and Irwell Road, Leeston	40	40	44	37	36
365 Brookside and Irwell Road, Leeston	42	42	48	41	40
375 Brookside and Irwell Road, Leeston	43	42	50	43	42
381 Brookside and Irwell Road, Leeston	43	42	52	45	44
396 Brookside and Irwell Road, Leeston	42	42	49	42	41
485 Brookside and Irwell Road, Leeston	40	45	41	34	33
870 Hanmer Road, Leeston	47	44	66	59	58
932 Hanmer Road, Leeston	44	45	51	44	43

APPENDIX 4 – SOUND RECORDING

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQzTTxWCRUA>

APPENDIX 5 – GOOGLE MAPS PHOTO



56 Buckleys Rd

Leeston, Canterbury



Google Street View

May 2012

[See more dates](#)

APPENDIX 6 – PHOTO OF CAR AND HEDGE



APPENDIX 7 – PHOTO HEDGE AFTER TRIM



APPENDIX 8 – VIEW EASTWARD FROM BRANCH DRAIN ROAD



APPENDIX 9 – EMAIL TO COUNCIL



Donna Kewish <donnakewish@gmail.com>

Proposed Brookside solar array

2 messages

Donna Kewish <donnakewish@gmail.com>
To: <David.Ward@selwyn.govt.nz>

Tue, 15 Nov 2022 at 9:31 AM

Hi David,

I am a notifiable resident of the proposed solar array at Brookside. The resource consent asks for a Fire report to be done by a local fire brigade. I would like a copy of this report please.

Regards

[Quoted text hidden]

Emma Larsen <Emma.Larsen@selwyn.govt.nz>
To: donnakewish@gmail.com <donnakewish@gmail.com>
Cc: David Ward <David.Ward@selwyn.govt.nz>

Thu, 17 Nov 2022 at 12:51 PM

Kia ora Donna

The Council has not asked for this plan to be done. The applicant, in their application, have noted that they will need to do this to comply with other legislation and offer this as a means of mitigating potential hazards.

The applicant may have produced the plan but have not provided it to the Council. My guess is that they will not progress this plan until they have a decision on the resource consent application. It is possible the development of this plan would be imposed as a condition of the resource consent (although it seems as though it is a requirement under other legislation anyway).

If this aspect is of concern to you, you may wish to include it as a point in your submission and then the reporting planner and the commissioner will consider whether any further information is needed about this matter and/or whether it should be addressed as a condition of consent (if it is granted).

Please let me know if you require anything else – I would be happy to discuss further over the phone.

Ngā mihi

Emma Larsen

027 243 0676

APPENDIX 10 – EMAIL TO FENZ

Hello Mark,

Thanks for sending this through – this is a rather large development.. I have checked both our engineering files and SMS and we have nothing on this development.

From a fire engineering perspective as it's not a building its not our focus however the operation aspects are acknowledged. I have also spoken with our wildfire team who echoed the comments over how important the land management is to manage the overall fire risk of the site. I would also be requesting information on the emergency procedures as to how to isolate portions of the site in the event of a fire within or threatening the site.

I have also copied in Mike Gaskin for any Fire Risk Management advice he can offer.

Kind regards



Paul Richards

Fire Engineering Team Leader

Christchurch

M: 027 661 0118

P: 03 372 8613

Paul.richards@fireandemergency.nz

www.fireandemergency.nz

From: Mark Lowry <marklowry@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, 17 January 2023 12:14 pm
To: Richards, Paul <Paul.Richards@fireandemergency.nz>
Subject: Fwd: solar

Hi Paul

Thanks for your time on the phone yesterday, very much appreciated

Thought i'd send you the link to the consent request for the Solar Farm in question

Some of it may interest you

The site address for this proposal is 150 Buckleys Rd and 821 Hanmer Drain Rd, RD2 Leeston

Refer RC225180 – KeaX Limited documents (23 in total)

[Selwyn District Council - Limited Notified Resource Consents](#)

Happy to receive a phone call from you or an email if you have any correspondence you're happy to share re the Solar Farm

Kind regards

Mark Lowry

027 3734590

Black Ferns will face England in Rugby World Cup final after edging France... Read more

Te Aroha solar farm proposal generates support and questions from residents

Chloe Blommerde
10:27, Mar 06 2022



TOM LEE/STUFF

Jane Anderson said she supports the solar farm proposal at Te Aroha West, but still has some questions.

Residents are split over a solar farm proposal that could see thousands of panels built in a rural Waikato settlement within the next 18 months.

most popular

- 1 Live: RWC semifinal - Black Ferns v France
- 2 'It was too late': Taranaki rider loses her horse after it sustained injuries from being spooked by fireworks
- 3 How a grand new building and swanky restaurant became a financial disaster for the Christchurch RSA
- 4 Live: Canada vs England - Rugby World Cup semifinal
- 5 All Blacks XV thump Ireland A 47-17 as Shaun Stevenson and Damian McKenzie shine in Dublin
- 6 'It feels like your child has died': Mum says she feels powerless to help teen son who continues to offend

UK-based company [Harmony Energy](#) New Zealand wants to build [329,000 solar panels](#) on 182 hectares of a 260-hectare site at Te Aroha West, 61 kilometres north-east of Hamilton.

If the [application under the Covid Recovery Act](#) is successful, the farm could generate enough electricity to power 30,000 homes with the first power output scheduled for October 2023.

Jane Anderson has lived in her Te Aroha home for 15 years and, while she supports the concept, says she asks “Why use good farmland?”

READ MORE:

* [Residents dark on solar 'sea of glass' in north Waikato](#)

* [New solar farm proposed for eastern Waikato could power 30,000 homes](#)

* [\\$100m solar farm pitch for north Waikato](#)

Lodestone expected last year that it would have all its solar farms built by the end of next year, though dates for its first have slipped by a few months. (Video first published in 2021)

- 7 The race with no end: Mud, blood and heartbreak at running's most brutal event
- 8 More people 'disappointed' and 'angry' with Jacinda Ardern, poll shows
- 9 'We didn't live together until two years after we got married'
- 10 'I thought he was going to die': Witness held wire around bleeding man's leg after Auckland shooting

"I have no objections, but I would have like to see more consultation with the neighbouring community.

"I was apprehensive when I received the brochure in the letterbox in December, it looks like a very expensive procedure."

Anderson questioned if the farm would "really benefit the country".

Harmony director Pete Grogan has previously said it would reduce the need to generate from non-renewable sources such as the Huntly power station.

It would also allow dual land use by combining energy generation with continued farming production, Grogan said.



SUPPLIED

Pete Grogan is a New Zealander who co-founded Harmony Energy in the UK. The company is behind the Te Aroha West solar farm proposal.

Once complete, the solar panels could produce up to 147 megawatts of power at peak times – with all electricity flowing directly to the

national grid for use by homes and businesses, Grogan added.

The proposal came as “great news” to Jessie and Shane Hutchins, whose home is powered by solar.

“Solar has reduced our power significantly,” Shane said.

“It just depends on how intrusive the solar farm becomes – if it's in the background and out of the way then it's no problem to me.”



TOM LEE/STUFF

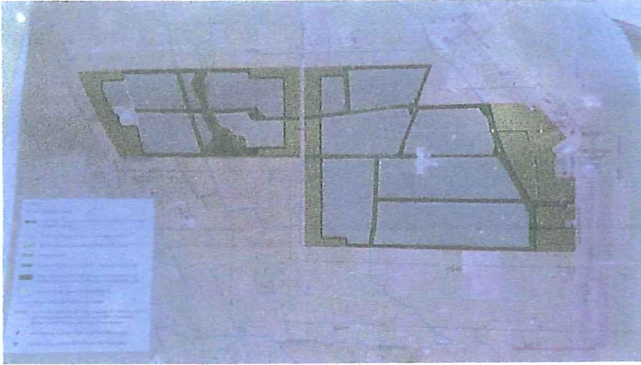
The solar panels will be set back from the road by at least 150 metres and from homes by at least 150m.

According to the project plans, all panels and equipment will be set back from the roads by at least 120 metres and 150m from neighbourhood houses.

Roadside areas will remain available for grazing and residents and the public will not be able to “take in a long view across solar panels through the site”.

One resident, who does not want to be named, believes the project could **devalue his property by seven per cent** – based on overseas reports online.

“If I wanted to put another storey onto my home, I’d be stuffed – all I’d see is solar panels,” they said.



STUFF

The light green indicates ‘rural setback’ area. Dark green is riparian planting and the grey is the potential solar panel area.

“I don’t have any major problems with it, the developer is addressing residents and their concerns, but when does it become an overkill if solar farms keep popping up around New Zealand like they have been.”

The Te Aroha proposal is **one of two enormous solar projects earmarked for Waikato**.

The site was chosen for its existing high voltage electrical infrastructure, flat and open land, and is owned by Tauhei Farms Ltd. The farm would be converted into a sheep farm rather than the current dairy herd if successful.

Construction would likely start in late 2022 and be completed by late 2023. The first power output is scheduled for October 2023.

TOM LEE/STUFF

If approved, construction is likely to start in late 2022 and be complete late 2023.

Resident, Todd Luxton, said he was all for it.

“They're doing heaps of planting for nature, so that's a step in the right direction.”

The design will include the retention of native bat roosting trees, the establishment of riparian corridors and ecological restoration of a 7.2 hectare on-site wetland area.

Boardwalks would also be incorporated for scheduled educational visits from school students and community groups to learn about solar energy and biodiversity.