

In the Matter of the Resource Management  
Act 1991  
And  
In the Matter of Variation 2 to the Proposed  
Kapiti Coast District Plan

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Evidence of Sarah Poff

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brief of sarah

## Evidence of Sarah Poff

1. My full name is Sarah Louise Poff. I am a qualified landscape architect and a director of SPK Landscape Architecture Ltd – a Waikanae based landscape architecture practice, established in 2010.
2. My qualifications include a BLA with 1st class honours gained from Lincoln University in 2001. In 2011 I carried out post graduate study at Victoria University's School of Art History, Classics & Religious Studies in the faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences. I completed a paper in Historic Heritage Conservation within the Museum and Heritage Studies post graduate programme.
3. I have practised as a landscape architect for 19 years. I have been involved in a wide range of public and private development proposals from concept through to implementation. In addition, I have been involved in preparing landscape and visual assessments, and evidence for Council hearings and Environment Court.
4. My experience most relevant to this project includes:

**NZTA Basin Bridge Proposal, Wellington, (2013 - 2014):** Expert witness before the Board of Inquiry, Environmental Protection Agency for the resource consent of the Basin Bridge Proposal. Working with Mt Victoria Historical Society and Save the Basin community groups to provide landscape and heritage expertise on the Basin Reserve and its surrounding environment.

**Mt Victoria Tunnel to Taranaki Street, NZTA urban Roads of National Significance (RoNs)** – preliminary assessment of historic heritage and landscape values of the Basin Reserve and its wider setting for New Zealand Historic Places.

**Te Motukairangi, Miramar Peninsula, Wellington**-a preliminary landscape and visual assessment for New Zealand Historic Places Trust to understand the wider landscape and heritage values associated with northern end of Miramar Peninsula. The work was carried out as part of an assessment of the land for disposal by the Crown.

**Pipitea Precinct, Thorndon, Wellington** - urban landscape and visual assessment within the Thorndon Heritage Precinct as part of the Resource Consent application. Assessment landscape and visual effects of a large scale office block on the character of the heritage precinct and in particular Old St Paul's.

**Old St Paul's** - working with the Historic Places Trust to develop the Old St Paul's Interpretation and Enhancement Plan. The plan was submitted as part of the funding package to the Ministry of Tourism and potential stakeholders.

## Basis of My Evidence

5. I was first instructed by Andrew Hazelton concerning the zoning of an area at Waikanae Beach when the proposed district plan was notified.
6. In early 2012 I carried out several site visits to the area and prepared a “high level” landscape study of the area.
7. This study formed the basis of a submission that Andrew and others made on the Proposed Plan dated 26 February 2012. That submission requested, in summary, that an area of the Old Beach in Waikanae be rezoned beach residential.
8. I was responsible for drawing the overlay map that accompanied Andrew’s submission on the Proposed Plan, and in my professional opinion the change of zone to Beach Residential was, and remains, justified.
9. In preparing this evidence I have read and had regard to relevant parts of the following:
  - (a) Mr Muspratt’s s42A Report
  - (b) Waikanae Beach Character Study by Urban Perspectives October 2017;
  - (c) The section 32 Report
  - (d) KCDC Local Character Review Raumati/Character Assessment by Urban Perspectives & MWH January 2011.
  - (e) KCDC Character Review Paekakariki/Character Assessment by Urban Perspectives & MWH January 2011.
  - (f) KCDC Character Review Otaki/Character Assessment by Urban Perspectives & MWH January 2011.
10. Although familiar with the area, I have made several visits to the Old Beach area prior to finalising this evidence.

11. Although not a Court hearing, I recognise the need for me to give evidence for the benefit of the Commissioners, and I acknowledge that I have read and agree to be bound by the 4<sup>th</sup> Schedule of the High Court rules “Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses”.

**Time Since Submission in 2012.**

12. The high level character study that I did in 2012 was obviously some time ago now, and matters have progressed. The new expressway has opened, the Ngarara Residential development is proceeding to the north of the golf course, and in my view further development pressure will be felt on the area in the future.
13. Also, since 2012 I have relocated from central Wellington to live in Waikanae, which has allowed me more time and greater access to the Waikanae Beach Area.
14. I note that Mr Hazelton’s submission was in support of the Variation as notified.
15. It was my professional opinion in 2012 that an area of Waikanae Beach should be zoned Beach Residential to recognise its significant character.
16. I agree with the key findings of the Urban Perspective’s Report of October 2017 that the area has<sup>1</sup>

*a memorable natural setting with a strong sense of place derived from:*

- *undulating landform that has been largely maintained and enhanced by existing vegetation*
- *strong association with the beach*
- *sense of openness and expansive views to the surrounding landscape, Waikanae River, the wider coastal setting and more distant features such as Kāpiti Island, Akatarawa Ranges and the Tararua Ranges*

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<sup>1</sup> Executive Summary, Section 2, page 5

- *open, green character enhanced by a range of public open spaces and frequent links to the beach*

17. In particular, I also agree with the Report's summary of the characteristics of the Old Beach area<sup>2</sup>.
18. I remain of that view and support Mr Hazelton's submission in support of the site coverage in the Variation as notified. However, I do not support the floor area ratio under Rule 5A.1.6.9 where any lot in the Beach Residential Zone shall have a maximum floor area ratio of 0.6 :1.0.

### **Coverage, Floor Area Ratio**

19. Mr Muspratt's section 42A is in support of the Variation. However, there is only one aspect of the s42A report that I have been asked to provide my professional opinion on, and that is the issue of Coverage.
20. Mr Muspratt recommends that coverage be limited to 30% of a lot<sup>3</sup> as opposed to 35% as notified and that a floor area ratio of a lot should be 0.5:1.0<sup>4</sup> as opposed to 0.6:1.0 as notified
21. I have considered the inter-relation of these two standards and conclude that:
- (a) A Coverage rule of 35% as notified should be maintained; and
  - (b) There is too much scope for unsustainable development in a floor area ratio of 0.6 or 0.5:1.0. I would like to see a ratio of 0.4:1.0 adopted, while leaving the Coverage rule at 35%.

### **Reasons for My Opinion**

22. It is well acknowledged that Waikanae Olde Beach is a special character area where the original development pattern of historic settlement has been largely

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<sup>2</sup> Page 6

<sup>3</sup> Paragraph 254

<sup>4</sup> Paragraph 267

retained. It is this distinctive historic character that provides the strong sense of place and is the most sensitive to inappropriate subdivision and development.

23. The urban form, or three-dimensional shape of old beach is the result of the shape of the land, plus the shape of the built environment on it. In this context, the built environment comprises the buildings themselves and the spaces between them, which are both of equal design importance.
24. The urban form within the old beach area maintains key criteria of good built and urban form. These are
  - identity (landscape, heritage, character),
  - diversity (mix of activities, urban form and architecture),
  - well integrated (development supports uses, movement and resource networks).
25. The historic built form within the Old Beach *“area in general has a consistent pattern of generous lot sizes with small scale, incrementally developed dwellings, and a high number of older Bach-like dwellings.”*<sup>5</sup> This low rise, low density urban form allows the landscape (topography and vegetation) to play a significant role in the establishment of the special character and sense of place.
26. The topography of the old beach area of Waikanae is relatively flat with a couple of small area of dunes. This underlying topography of the area has influenced site layout, block structure, connectivity, roading and respectively the vegetation patterns to deliver a consistent and effective urban form.
27. Turning to floor area ratio (FAR).
28. Floor Area Ratio (FAR) is a planning tool for restricting a buildings height and bulk rather than intensity or density. In the case of old beach we should be looking to

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<sup>5</sup> KCDC Waikanae Beach Character Study, Urban Perspectives. Page 6

keep the built form relatively low and consistent with the existing predominant character of the area.

29. Often used in urban density discussions, the up or out debate should be considered when assessing the effects of development on the built form for Waikanae Old Beach. Site coverage and FAR together will significantly influence the outcome on the future urban form of the Old Beach area.

30. Mr Muspratt provides the following example of the floor area ratio<sup>6</sup>:

*“on a 1000m<sup>2</sup> site with a 300m<sup>2</sup> dwelling at ground level, this amounts to 30% site coverage (the floor area ratio would be 0.3: 1.0). A second level on the dwelling could add up to an additional 200m<sup>2</sup> before reaching the maximum 0.5 : 1.0 floor area ratio which is recommended.”* This example demonstrates the very type of development that may have a negative impact on the special character of the area.

31. The majority of lot sizes are between 600 – 900m<sup>2</sup>. Again, taking a 750m<sup>2</sup> section with site coverage of 30% – this allows the footprint (including accessory buildings) of 225m<sup>2</sup>. A second level could add up to an additional 150m<sup>2</sup> of floor area before reaching 0.5:1.0. I consider this scale (bulk and elevation) of built form to be incongruous with the Old Beach area. This example also demonstrates the sheer volume that has the potential to be elevated.

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<sup>6</sup> Paragraph 262



32. The table below shows the floor area ratio over two levels and how this plays out across the differing site coverage areas from 30 – 40%.

750m2 section		Site coverage 30% = 225m2 footprint		Site coverage 35% = 262.5m2 footprint		Site coverage 40% = 300m2 footprint	
FAR 0.6:1.0  = 450m2	UP	225m2		225m2	187.5m2	225m2	150m2
	GL	225m2		225m2	262.5m2	225m2	300m2
FAR 0.5:1.0  = 375m2	UP	187m2	150m2	187.5m2	112.5m2	187.5m2	75m2
	GL	187m2	225m2	187.5m2	262.5m2	187.5m2	300m2
FAR 0.4:1.0  = 300m2	UP	150m2	75m2	150m2	37.5m2	150m2	0m2
	GL	150m2	225m2	150m2	262.5m2	150m2	300m2

36. The table clearly shows how site coverage and FAR work together having a major influence on the 3-dimensional built form. Careful consideration needs to be given to how these two would work together and the outcomes for a new built form that will be allowed to develop within the old beach area.
37. Site coverage at 30% or less could have a big influence on the resulting built form. If less floor area is available at ground level, there could be an increase in the scale (height and bulk) of the built form at the higher level.
38. In reference to the table above the greater the floor area ratio, the greater the risk to existing character from new development at the upper / second level. The first column of the table shows the potential scenario where development is anticipated at the upper level. These figures show the upper limit of the second floor area.
39. Offering more generous site coverage of 35% to incentivise low-rise built form could significantly reduce the scale of impacts from multi story dwellings.

## Evaluation

40. It is worth trying to understand where the 30% lot size referred to in The Urban Perspectives Report of October 2017 recommends<sup>7</sup>

*“reduce the site coverage in the Old Beach Area from 40% to 30%. The use of a plot ratio to reduce the bulky appearance of buildings (as proposed for the Beach Residential Zone areas under the PDP) could also be considered;”*

41. This recommendation would appear to be drawn from the section of the Report on Site Coverage<sup>8</sup> where it states:

*The predominant site coverage pattern for the study area as whole is below 30%, with more than half of those having site coverage of below 20%.*

42. However, this finding is not really an evaluation of the effects that future development might have on the area, it is simply a statement of the status quo.

43. As noted in the Proposed Plan<sup>9</sup>:

*Given the distinctive qualities of these areas, it is important to ensure that new development is sensitive to its landscape setting and enhances the collective character, amenity value and public significance of each area.*

44. To maintain and enhance the local setting, landscape character and amenity values of the beach residential areas, consideration needs to be given to both site coverage and floor area ratio. The two are interrelated and deliver the built and urban form.

45. The character of these local settings consist of the buildings themselves and the spaces between them, where both are of equal urban design importance. I consider that it is possible to undertake development up to 35% coverage with

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<sup>7</sup> Recommendation 1a Page 8

<sup>8</sup> Page 28

<sup>9</sup> Explanation 5.1 Living Zone Provisions

FAR at 0.4:1.0 and still maintain the low rise, low density character that is apparent at Old Beach.

### **Topography, Lot Layout and Block Structure**

46. The original development pattern responds to the relatively flat underlying topography of Waikanae Old Beach. The Old Beach Area stands out as a distinctive entity with unique characteristics that clearly differentiate it from the remaining parts of the wider study area and the Beach Residential areas of Paekakariki, Raumati and Otaki. The character differences relate to history of subdivision and development, small regular elongated east west block structure with good connectivity and general consistency of subdivision and building age patterns.<sup>10</sup>
47. Most of the dwellings in the subject area address the street. The rectilinear layout of these deep sections with narrower frontages were predominantly surveyed to derive a north south orientation. The ideal orientation for dwelling to receive as much sunlight access as possible. This existing structure and the side yards and sunlight access provisions will have a tendency for any development to work with and follow this rectilinear form.
48. The additional 5% coverage in my view, would not lead to an additional bulk or visual detracting when viewed from the street. I accept that there will be some minor additional bulk at ground level when viewed from a side or neighbouring section. However, in my view the effect of this extra 5% will be minimal and most likely could be considered no more than minor.
49. Conversely, I think that reducing the site coverage to 30% has the potential to lead to adverse visual effects where there is a desire to develop up to the gross floor area ratio. The reduced coverage has the potential to push a greater portion of development up to the second floor to achieve the desired outcomes around the floor area.

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50. Placing a limit of 30% coverage on a lot with a FAR of 0.5:1.0 – allows for a very generous second storey. This scenario will allow urban development to proceed on a vertical basis.
51. Using the average lot size of 750m<sup>2</sup> the upper limit of a second level in the 0.6:1.0 ratio is 225m<sup>2</sup> and with the 0.4:1.0 ratio an area of 150m<sup>2</sup> is elevated. These are both substantial volumes to elevate up to 8 metres in a special character of Waikanae Old Beach.
52. It is my opinion that overtime; the cumulative effects of this vertical development (elevation and bulk) have the potential to negatively impact on the strong sense of place and the unique characteristics that clearly differentiate old beach from the wider study area.
53. Of note in the character assessment, but not referred to in Mr Muspratt’s report is the finding that:
- building height patterns are predominantly single-storey (79.1% of buildings in the total study area are single storey, and 86.1% in the Old Beach Area.*
54. Therefore, 86% of buildings in the Old Beach Area are single story.

#### **Verandas, covered decks and carports**

55. Verandas, covered decks, and carports are more permeable features and generally contribute to the visual amenity and character of the built form. These covered areas are included in the site coverage and gross floor area calculation. Confirmation from Matt Muspratt on this point is outlined below.

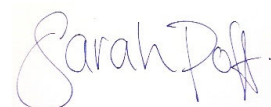
*Gross Floor Area means the sum of the gross area of all floors of all buildings on a property, measured from the exterior faces of the exterior walls or from the centre lines of walls separating two buildings. Gross floor area also includes covered yards and areas covered by a roof but not enclosed by walls.<sup>11</sup>*

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.kapiticoast.govt.nz/media/37742/response-panel-minute-2.pdf>

56. The inclusion of these permeable structures as part of site coverage and gross floor area could see people relinquish such features at ground level under the 30% Coverage. There would be an incentive to push the remaining floor area up in order to reach the gross floor area available.
57. Allowing an additional 5% coverage of a site – in the case of 750m<sup>2</sup> section would allow an additional 37.5m<sup>2</sup> of coverage, which I am of the opinion would reduce the likelihood of two storey construction while have a minimal, and likely no more than minor impact on the overall visual amenity of the area.
58. At the same time, the Commissioners could feel comfortable reducing the floor area ratio for the Old Beach area from 0.6:1.0 to 0.4:1.0 to help protect and enhance the unique character of the area.
59. Taking my example of a 750m<sup>2</sup> section with site coverage of 35% (262.5m<sup>2</sup>) and a floor area ratio 0.4:1.0 (300m<sup>2</sup>) – this would allow a ground floor area of 262.50m<sup>2</sup> and a total floor area of 375m<sup>2</sup>, which would mean if the maximum ground floor area were developed there is 112.5m<sup>2</sup> of second storey floor area available.
60. Waikanae Old Beach is a distinctive entity with unique characteristics that makes it stand out from the wider study area. There is a very real risk of eroding the essential character of the Old Beach area should the scale of future development be incongruous with the existing pattern.
61. The provisions put in place need to be more in line with the existing pattern of development if the essential characteristics of the Old Beach Area are to be protected and maintained.

Dated this 24<sup>th</sup> day of July 2020



Sarah Poff  
Landscape Architect (NZILA)