

Helen Ridley – oral submission S198, PC2 of 2021 District Plan

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helenridley3@gmail.com

Tēnā koutou katoa

Ko Kōtirana, ko Aerana, ko Ingarangi, hoki ngā whakapaparanga mai,

Engari

Ko Aotearoa, ko Somalia, hoki ngā whenua tupu,

Ko Ōtākou te kāinga,

Kei Ōtaki au e noho ana,

Ko Helen Ridley tōku ingoa.

Tēnā tātou katoa.

Thank you all for the opportunity to speak to my brief submission, and thanks especially, to Ngāti Raukawa iwi for opening your arms, as always, to host us at this beautiful marae.

Please excuse me for switching to English.

Just a small bit about my background here, which has bearings on my thoughts about the proposed plan change PC2.

I first came with my family to Ōtaki in 1987, as an older but newly trained teacher to work at Ōtaki College. I moved my family here from the South Island for the express purpose of enabling my three school age children to go through a bilingual stream at Ōtaki College, run then by Nan Gray, and later, Mereana Selby. I taught there for 7 years, and the bilingual department and the Raukawa marae were significant cornerstones in our lives then and beyond. We were looked after by this marae, and I believe under the protection of its mountains, rivers and sea.

During that time also, we lived at different times in two of the then schoolhouses, one in Mill Rd, one in Waerenga Rd, and then settled in Bell St. This whole area, I understand, was (and is) the papakāinga of the Carkeek, Rikihana, Johnson and Bell whānau....but much of that land lost through pressured sales to the Crown, or vested in the Ikaroa Māori land board.

I returned to Ōtaki 7 years ago, after a long time away – and now am privileged (almost certainly by historical injustices) to be living on Mill Rd in what is described as the marae precinct, on what I have subsequently learnt is part of the Carkeek kāinga land. I am just a beginner in understanding the history of the Ōtaki town area and its implications – I am ashamed that much to me in my early time was invisible to me, and I am still only a beginner in my learning.

Since my return I have been overwhelmed by the exciting developments, which are evident to me as non-Māori living in the midst of the old town. I can now walk down the street and hear Te Reo spoken naturally all around me by children and adults. I can still travel from sea to mountains, a clear

pathway that shows the significance of the connection of the town to nature, and allowing important sightlines to mountains and sea. This pathway also shows the ascendance of significant Māori places of learning and creative expression, including the Wānanga, Kura, Ngā Purapura, Māoriland, the mara and others forming what has been described as a `mātauranga Māori education zone' for all of Aotearoa, not just Ōtaki. On this pathway I can also witness beautiful tāngata-led visible architectural designs based and built (and not 4 stories high) by tāngata whenua. On that same pathway the community can access the growing tāngata-led health services that have held us up throughout Covid lockdowns and beyond.

I am welcomed to participate in this world.

All of these things, and more, are why I live here, and I believe are why others would come here. These developmental changes, appropriately, are Māori led. This is a Māori town. This is the special character of Ōtaki, and my view is that, quite apart from Te Tiriti obligations, all planning needs to support and reflect this 'character', which is built on tāngata whenua values and tikanga.

So...how does this connect to the current PC2 plan changes? Well, it's not up to me, but here are some of my thoughts and suggested changes;

1. The identification of Ōtaki as a 'future urban zone' is surely a misnomer, and evidence of the 'one size fits all' approach to application of MDRS that appears to dominate the overall KCDC plan change suggestions. Who decided on that vision? On what basis? It does not align with the special character of Ōtaki or differentiate the area in any way to make Ōtaki attractive to 'more residents, businesses and community services' as directed by the government. Let alone to what I understand of tāngata whenua values. It does not make sense. Please rescind.
2. Ensure that tāngata whenua values and tikanga are reflected consistently and strongly throughout the District Plan, not just relegated to lists of discrete 'scheduled' items in a list or relegated to sections on papakāinga. I understand that the work on papakāinga was a positive outcome of some meaningful partnership with tāngata whenua, and I support that area of the draft plan, but was same kind of partnership carried out throughout all aspects of the plan changes? Surely this is a given these days, and a Treaty of Waitangi requirement?
3. I suggest revising language changes accordingly, as suggested by other submissions. Some strong words like 'ensure', 'protect', have been eliminated and replaced by language that weakens perceptions of Council commitment. Weak words like 'acknowledge', 'consider' 'will recognise...' (what does that mean anyway?). I support all of the Wānanga and Ngā Hapū o Raukawa submission suggestions around language changes.
4. Review the zoning areas, in line with iwi knowledge and advice, and the recent Tiriti o Waitangi claim research information on ancestral land. Pause intensification changes until the Treaty process has gone through. This will give time also for Council and iwi to jointly plan with regard to impacts of current climate change, land use and infrastructure issues that have been brought to the forefront by recent climate events.

5. Consider the extension of the marae precinct zone to stretch to include wider town areas, the papakāinga areas, through the old town shopping and community support areas through Main St. and surroundings, into County Rd. Surely papakāinga development can exist within an extended marae precinct? What value is there, apart from for commercial developers, in having 6 storey buildings in the old town area, (let alone, how will the infrastructure cope when it is already struggling)? What will 4 storeys do to sight lines? To the sunlight and essential green areas and mara of the town? What evidence is there that the town precinct and community will benefit socially or commercially from upward development?
6. Review the design guides in accordance with the request and partnership offer as discussed in the submission of Te Wānanga O Raukawa. In Ōtaki there is visible evidence that tāngata whenua have access to creative and development expertise and energy that can ensure that visible and physical aspects of change in the town reflects across the board tāngata whenua values and tikanga. Not only should co-design with tāngata whenua be a given, but it will ensure building planning that strengthens the visible special nature of this town.
7. In listing the above, I want to acknowledge the hard work that has already been on these plan changes, by Council and submitters and tāngata whenua. All are under pressure to follow government directives within a short time frame, and somehow meet pressing social housing and development needs. There will be much work going on that I don't know about. However with the current drastic wakeup call around climate change and its tragic impact on people, all species and the earth, the Council has additional reason put a pause on intensification and zoning boundaries until further national and Wellington regional plans are reviewed and realistic decisions made around infrastructure, housing and land use etc.
8. Finally, I support the submissions of Ngā Hapū o Raukawa and Te Wānanga o Raukawa. Above all, I hope the Council can ensure the meaningful partnership essential in working with tāngata whenua in getting these planning changes right.

Thank you for listening. Ngā mihi ki a koutou.