

**BEFORE THE INDEPENDENT PANEL
OF KAPITI COAST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

IN THE MATTER of the Resource Management Act 1991 ("RMA")

AND

IN THE MATTER of Private Plan Change 4 ("PC4") to the Kāpiti Coast District Plan ("Plan") - 65 and 73 Ratanui Road, Otaihanga

**HEARING STATEMENT OF ALEXANDRA KATHERINE GARDINER
ON BEHALF OF WELHOM DEVELOPMENTS LIMITED**

LANSCAPE AND VISUAL

13 FEBRUARY 2026

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 My name is Alexandra Katherine Gardiner. I am a landscape architect engaged by Welholm Developments Limited in relation to Private Plan Change 4 ("Plan Change"). My qualification and experience are set out in my primary evidence.

1.2 I confirm that I have read the Expert Witness Code of Conduct set out in the Environment Court's Practice Note 2023. I have complied with the Code of Conduct in preparing this evidence and will continue to comply with it while giving oral evidence before the Hearing Commissioners. Except where I state that I am relying on the evidence of another person, this written evidence is within my area of expertise. I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions expressed in this evidence.

1.3 This Statement provides a brief summary of key aspects of my primary evidence (dated 16 January 2026) with an added focus on outstanding matters that remain between myself and the Reporting Officer, since the filing of my primary evidence. These outstanding matters include:

- (a) the location and extent of perimeter planting;
- (b) the degree of naturalness and treatment of the northern dunes; and
- (c) building height and setbacks.

1.4 I confirm that I have read the Section 42A Addendum Report (3 February 2026) and the addendum evidence for Council by Ms Deyana Popova (Urban Design)¹ and Ms Angela McArthur (Landscape).² My opinions set out in my primary evidence remain unchanged and are maintained.

2. SUMMARY OF PRIMARY EVIDENCE

2.1 The Plan Change seeks to rezone approximately 12.65ha of land at 65–73 Ratanui Road ("Site") from Rural Lifestyle Zone ("RLZ") to General Residential Zone ("GRZ"), with a new Development Area ("DEV3") supported by a Structure Plan, policies and rules enabling residential development and a

¹ Dated 31 January 2026.

² Dated 30 January 2026.

retirement village. The Structure Plan identifies locations for vegetated and landscaped buffers to manage sensitive interfaces and assist integration.

2.2 My primary evidence responds to the Kāpiti Coast District Council's ("KCDC") Section 42A Addendum Report and the addendum evidence for Council by Ms Popova and Ms McArthur. I have also responded to the various matters raised by submitters.

2.3 Findings from my primary evidence are that:

- (a) The Plan Change Area sits on the eastern edge of Paraparaumu, forming the transition to Otaihanga. It is identified as a medium-priority greenfield growth area in KCDC Growth Strategy. Rezoning in this location represents a logical consolidation of the existing urban envelope rather than outward sprawl.
- (b) The Site presents modified dune landforms, grazed paddocks, scattered vegetation, a channelised stream and a man-made pond; it is visually discrete from most public vantage points, with meaningful views limited to a short section of Ratanui Road and occasional glimpses from Otaihanga Road / Kotuku Park.
- (c) The Plan Change Area is within the Coastal Environment but has low to very low natural character, reflecting long-term pastoral use, channelised drainage and predominantly exotic vegetation. Effects on natural character are very low. The recommended sensitive earthworks and indigenous restoration (wetlands / stormwater) improve legibility of natural patterns locally. In my opinion, the outcomes are consistent with maintaining and enhancing natural character within this modified part of the Coastal Environment.
- (d) Landscape character effects of the rezoning are low–moderate adverse initially, lowering to very low when mitigation measures establish (eg street trees, perimeter planting / landscaping, wetland restoration).
- (e) Visual effects on adjacent dwellings range from neutral to low–moderate adverse, dependent on proximity and outlook.³ These effects can be appropriately managed through sensitive earthworks and context-specific design of perimeter buffers, targeted to higher-sensitivity interfaces.

³ As assessed in Table 1 of the LVEA.

- (f) Owing to the contained visual catchment and screening by landform / vegetation and existing development, views from public spaces are low or very low.
- (g) Effects will be appropriately managed through context-specific mitigation measures including street trees and amenity planting; targeted vegetated or landscape buffers at the perimeter of the Site (focusing on higher-sensitivity interfaces rather than a uniform site-wide belt); sensitive edge earthworks favouring natural batters (particularly at the northern and eastern boundaries); open-space / reserve design; walk / cycle connections; and stormwater / wetland restoration.
- (h) Retention of the northern dune should not be mandated. Rather, platforms should be sensitively integrated with the existing dune landform to maintain natural transitions at the Site edge and avoid abrupt level changes, using batters rather than retaining walls where practicable.
- (i) Rezoning to GRZ at this location is appropriate and consistent with strategic growth planning. Landscape and visual effects of the proposed development are not significant and will diminish as planting establishes, supporting approval of PC4.

2.4 Additionally, in my section 92 response, I referred to the perimeter buffers having a width of 5m. This measurement was used to illustrate an order of magnitude which would provide meaningful screening and was not intended to become a prescriptive standard. My primary evidence clarifies that buffer widths should be determined at resource consent to reflect the varying visual sensitivity along the Site's boundaries: in some locations a 5m width may be necessary, while elsewhere a narrower width will achieve the intended outcomes. Accordingly, a blanket 5m buffer around the entire perimeter is not considered appropriate. The Reporting Officer's Section 42A Addendum Report also broadly aligns with this.⁴

3. **RESPONSE TO SECTION 42A REPORT AND ADDENDUM REPORT**

3.1 There is a high degree of agreement between parties on landscape matters, including with the findings regarding the scale of effects, visibility, and appropriateness of residential development at the Site. However, there are a

⁴ Section 42A Addendum Report at [44]-[45].

small number of outstanding matters that remain between myself, the KCDC's landscape and urban design experts and the Reporting Officer. I summarise these below.

The extent and location of perimeter planting

Extent

- 3.2 Ms McArthur and Ms Popova recommend that the proposed DEV3-P1 and DEV3-P2 policy should include an anticipated minimum 5m buffer width in order to achieve screening / filtering and integration purposes, with the specific dimension confirmed at consent. Additionally, in her addendum Ms Popova also queries why a 5m buffer width should not be applied along "*the limited extent of buffers shown in the Structure Plan (ie without extending the buffer along the entire site perimeter)*"⁵
- 3.3 In my opinion a blanket 5m width is too prescriptive and does not respond to context. Instead, I consider that an effects-responsive approach to the design of the buffer is more suitable, where appropriate outcomes can be achieved via consent conditions based on localised visual sensitivity and level of effect.
- 3.4 Visual sensitivity varies materially around the perimeter of the Plan Change Site. Some stretches of the buffer warrant greater planting depth and / or bunding (such as those where neighbouring residential dwellings are in proximity), while others (such as where views are already filtered by landform or vegetation, or distance mitigates effects) can achieve the appropriate outcomes with less.
- 3.5 A single metric risks over-mitigation in some places and under-mitigation in others. An outcomes-based requirement enables precise, site-specific responses at the consent stage. Mitigation can then respond to a detailed design proposal, ensuring actual visual effects are appropriately and effectively managed. The intention is not to fully screen any future residential development. Residential development is already zoned on this Site, and this Plan Change is seeking a greater level of residential density which can be integrated into the local context.
- 3.6 The requirement of a Landscape & Earthworks Plan that maps buffer segments, provides justified widths for each segment, details species / planting densities, bunds / batters, and construction sequencing, and secures

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Deyana Popova's Addendum Memorandum at [25].

establishment and maintenance of all planting can be achieved via appropriate consent conditions.

Location

- 3.7 Both Ms McArthur and Ms Popova recommend that buffers extend around the entire perimeter (including Ratanui Road). In my opinion, and as detailed in my evidence, buffers should be applied where they are needed most, not uniformly around the full Site. Requiring a continuous perimeter would risk an artificial edge and segregation from an area anticipated to urbanise over time, as indicated by KCDC's Growth Strategy.
- 3.8 The intent of the Landscape and Visual Effects Assessment ("LVEA") recommendations is to deliver targeted mitigation where visual sensitivity is greatest, specifically along boundaries where neighbouring properties have direct views into the Site (ie parts of the southern and eastern boundaries, and localised western interfaces). That is where layered planting and natural batters would be the most impactful.
- 3.9 The Site sits within a medium-priority greenfield growth area in KCDC's Growth Strategy – the surrounding area is expected to urbanise over time. A uniform and dense perimeter risks creating an inward-looking, segregated edge inconsistent with an area expected to urbanise over time. Targeted widths enable integration, maintain permeability, and avoid "over-buffering" along interfaces where it is not required for screening purposes.
- 3.10 Along Ratanui Road, I agree that a suitable interface is required, however I believe that a streetscape-led interface would be more suitable, rather than a vegetated perimeter buffer. Again, we are not looking at fully screening residential development, rather integrate it appropriately. A streetscape-led interface would comprise kerb and channel, footpath and berm, regularly spaced street trees, and frontage design that enables frontage to the street and passive surveillance. Typical cross-sections and a street tree palette can be secured at consent, ensuring a coherent urban street edge and avoiding a development which is separated from the street environment.

The degree of naturalness and treatment of the northern dunes

- 3.11 Both Ms McArthur and Ms Popova seek stronger direction to retain or enhance the northern dune landform.
- 3.12 I support sensitive earthworks at the Site's edges. However, the intent is sensitive integration, not wholesale retention. Development should avoid

abrupt level changes and prefer natural batters over retaining walls, with planting to reinforce the natural transition.

3.13 In my opinion, this approach enables earthworks to achieve practical development outcomes while maintaining a natural transition at the Site's edges. It does not preclude modification to the landforms, instead requiring sensitive earthworks to avoid adverse outcomes. This approach achieves the LVEA outcomes while maintaining practicality on a site with overall low naturalness.

Building height and setbacks

3.14 I agree with Ms McArthur's observation that retirement villages often include large buildings which could cause visual dominance issues if located in proximity to a neighbouring property or dwelling. This issue is also raised in Ms Popova's Addendum Memorandum.

3.15 I agree that the placement of large or over-height buildings along Site boundaries has the potential to generate visual dominance effects for adjoining properties, particularly where building bulk is concentrated in close proximity to sensitive residential interfaces. However, the proposed policy framework for the Plan Change area requires that all future development, including retirement villages, comply with the proposed Development Area Chapter provisions of the GRZ. It also requires provision of a Landscape and Earthworks Plan to show how effects on neighbouring dwellings will be mitigated. Where compliance is not achieved, the activity status defaults to non-complying.

3.16 In his Hearing Statement, Mr McDonnell has recommended amendments to the proposed Development Area Chapter to require that retirement villages comply with the GRZ-R33 bulk and location standards as a controlled activity, otherwise they escalate to restricted discretionary under a new rule DEV3-R4. In such cases, matters relating to building height, scale, and boundary relationships, including potential visual dominance effects, would be directly considered and addressed through the resource consent process.

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Having reviewed the Section 42A Report, Addendum Report, and associated expert evidence, I remain of the view that the landscape and visual effects of the Plan Change can be appropriately managed through effects-led perimeter treatment provisions, sensitive earthworks, and consent-stage design secured

by conditions. My professional opinions as presented in my substantive evidence are unchanged.

Alexandra Katherine Gardiner

13 February 2026