

Whangarei District Plan Hearings PC85 A-D

Ross and Kathy Woods – Westridge, 42 Crawford Rd, Maungakarama, Northland.

We grow avocado on 6 ha, 4ha which is owned and 2ha leased.

We are currently zoned Rural Production Environment but there are submissions seeking that this area be rezoned Rural Living Environment.

We have 3 avocado properties on this road, all growing avocados. There are limited places that are suitable for avocado production and this area has suitable soil, topography and water availability.

42 Crawford Rd has good draining soil and a gentle slope that helps with frost mitigation and surface water drainage.

Challenges with growing in the area include reverse sensitivity, climactic variations, historical proliferation of small subdivisions along the roadways.

We think that proposed change would allow further subdivision of small blocks increasing and increase the need for water provision and sewerage drainage.

We think that the proposed plan would allow for subdivision to occur and create a disjointed living area that snakes along roadways which would be difficult to supply with services of water and sewerage. There is already concern with e coli levels in the ground water supply of the township and there would need to be provision for treatment of sewage before more population growth could occur.

If the area was rezoned Rural Living we would potentially have more neighbours and restrictions on spray application, noise from normal horticultural practices and a change in land values that could increase the rating costs of the blocks under production.

We would like to leave the area in the Rural Production Environment zoning.

Alternative areas for Rural Living could exist at Maungakarama village which is 1.5 km away and has provision for expansion in the district plan.

Whangarei District Plan

Grower case study

I am Thomas Schmutz and with my wife, Celine Westerlund, (trading as Celine Westerlund and Thomas Schmutz Partnership) we have a 2.33 Hectares at 967 State Highway 14 Maungatapere (Whangarei)

While this is a small orchard with currently 180 Avocado trees we are in the process to expand the planting. We grow avocados for both export and domestic supply.

We grow avocados in Maungatapere area due the soil type, climate, topography, water, natural shelter from native bush surrounding the property and the economic benefits for the district. Rich volcanic soil being the number one factor for growing and situated right on the foot of Maunu mountain makes this a perfect location.

We face a number of challenges growing in this area. These include close neighbours, weather patterns and increasing traffic.

Orchard spraying is becoming an increasing challenge for us. Our main challenge is one of our neighbours, when I notify them with an upcoming orchard spraying there are constant threats, words and unnecessary tensions between us. Already now we keep the spraying programme to an absolute minimum (about 3 sprays a year). A certain amount of spraying is an absolutely must to meet the necessary requirements for our current export plan. Together with Chris Frost (Orchard consultant / advisor) I have arranged meetings to explain our spray programme, the reasons for spraying and the type of chemical we are using. Our orchard was established in 1997 by Frank and Marilyn Muldowney way before any other houses were built.

The other challenge we are facing is the protection of our trees from the weather, particularly cyclones. To do that there is a certain height of 'shelterbelts' required to stop and slow down some of the stormy weather patterns Northland experiences. Again, I have experienced constant battling with my neighbour. He has already cut down one of the long existing shelterbelts on our property to suit him without permission from us. Shelterbelts are an absolutely critically requirement on any orchard to protect trees from wind and frost.

If our property is left in RPE we will be able to run our business as we do today. Having a good relationship with our neighbours is key as most of them understand our requirements for running our horticulture business. Currently we do not have any District Plan restrictions that impact on our business. We live in an area of Whangarei that should be protected from land development.

There are potential effects if the area is to be rezoned Rural Living. These include potential impacts on water, sewerage, roading, noise and rates.

Water

- Water takes will be an issue if more bores are granted through Resource Consent within the RLE.

- RLE will require water tanks for roof catchment and I am concerned that this may lead to restrictions put on spraying. Chemical usage is a requirement for horticulture businesses, and although sprays these days are more pest targeted they are still a requirement for export markets. Even organic growers use sprays and fertiliser.

Sewerage

- How will this impact on the environment if sections are granted to 4000m²?

Roading

- Roothing will become more congested than what it currently is. With the 'new' traffic lights in place at the end of State Highway 14 (beginning of Maunu Rd by the Hospital) the increased traffic cannot cope during peak hours! Additional development will require plans to widen and upgrade the road (again).

Rates

- Rate Increases will impact our business due to the cost of land values increasing, under Rural Production rates are presently at a sustainable level.

Noise

- Restrictions on noise limiting the use of chippers, air blowers, and air guns for birds.

The Council should consider alternative areas for Rural Living away from horticultural production.