

## SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

### Nick Goldwater – Ecology

1. My evidence addresses key issues raised in the Section 42a report including, but not limited to, the mapping and assessment of SNAs at the subject property, managing effects on threatened species, baseline surveys for threatened fauna species, and ecological provisions of Variation 3 of the Taiwawe Catchment Structure Plan.
2. As part of my initial ecological assessment, I spent two days ground-truthing indigenous vegetation at the subject property, which involved mapping and describing habitat types, assessing ecological values and threats, and recording species lists for plants and animals. In my report I assessed the existing habitats at the site against the criteria in the Waikato Regional Policy Statement.
3. Targeted surveys for fauna such as lizards, bats, and cryptic birds were not in the scope of my assessment, given that very little vegetation is proposed for removal (exotic pine and none within the SNA area). However, all habitats were assessed in terms of their suitability for supporting threatened species, including geckos, bats, and cryptic wetland birds. Baseline fauna surveys will take place prior to the commencement of any earthworks and/or vegetation removal.
4. Parts of two SNAs occur on the subject property: SNA TC363 (Taiwawe Forest Fragments) and SNA TC364 (Hot Water Beach Bush). It is unlikely that these SNAs had been previously ground-truthed, but now have been through the field surveys completed. Overall, I consider that vegetation and habitats at the site are of 'local' significance, although it is possible that this level of significance could increase following the baseline fauna surveys.
5. The presence of Coromandel brown kiwi in the catchment is a key issue raised by submitters. I acknowledge that dogs and increased traffic are real threats to local kiwi and, as such, strict measures will need to be implemented to ensure kiwi and other vulnerable fauna species are protected. Rules have been included in the latest version of the Taiwawe Catchment Structure Plan to provide for a ban on cats and strict controls for dog ownership, including the requirement for dogs to undergo kiwi aversion training and keeping dogs in an enclosed run on each dwelling. In addition, a sustained programme of pest animal control targeting rodents, possums and mustelids will benefit resident indigenous fauna at the subject site, including threatened bird and lizard species.
6. No farming will be permitted inside the Conservation Area. Stock will be excluded from all indigenous bush, including existing and planted vegetation, together with wetlands and streams. As such, there will be no adverse ecological effects

resulting from any continued livestock farming outside the Conservation Area, as subdivision progresses.

7. I am confident that the Ecological Management Plan will achieve long-term ecological functioning of indigenous biodiversity within the Conservation Area, over and above the provisions in Rule 8 of the Proposed Thames-Coromandel District Plan. An Incorporated Society that is legally obligated to fund and implement an ongoing programme to control pest plant and animal species, together with an ongoing programme of monitoring, is more likely to achieve positive ecological outcomes than would a number of disparate land owners occupying the same area. It should also be emphasised that funding measures such as extensive indigenous revegetation, remediating fish barriers, and long-term monitoring and reporting on pest animal control is unlikely to occur under Rule 8 subdivisions.
8. I have read the statement from Mr Vares for the regional Council. In response to that I have recommended amendments to version 11 of the Structure Plan to record and express an overarching objective for the Ecological Management Plan, and to include specific performance targets for rodent and possum trapping (as now shown in Versions 12 and 13). Beyond that, I do not consider subdivision staging as a form of 'adaptive management' is required. The Structure Plan would lead to the enhancement of ecological values over the existing situation rather than result in adverse effects on the SNAs. I am confident the objective and targets set out in the Ecological Management Plan can be achieved.
9. I have also read the letter prepared by Mr Gerry Kessels of Blue Wattle Ecology (dated 8 March 2021) and responded to it in my statement of rebuttal evidence (dated 31 March 2021). The key matters raised and responded to included (i) the ecological values of the Taiwawe catchment, (ii) the potential ecological effects of the proposed development, (iii) an assessment of effects on wetlands, and (iv) the timing of targeted baseline fauna surveys.
10. It is important to note that, in my opinion, much of Mr Kessel's commentary would be relevant to an activity directly affecting an SNA, such as clearance of indigenous vegetation. I reiterate that there will be no vegetation clearance within SNAs at the property. The whole premise of the Structure Plan is instead to assume that both habitat and fauna are significant, and to protect and enhance accordingly. More detailed pre-development surveys under the Ecological Management Plan will set a robust baseline against which the efficacy of pest plant and animal control can be measured, as well as the positive effects from removing stock.
11. Mr Kessels listed a number of potential adverse effects that could result from the proposed development. In my statement of rebuttal evidence, I have clearly responded to each potential effect and, where necessary, have referred to the evidence of other experts such as Mr Kelsey (regarding wastewater discharges) and Mr Chapman (regarding stormwater runoff). This has also included an evaluation against the EclA guidelines, revealing a "very low or 'low' level for all potential adverse effects following the appropriate implementation of the recommended mitigation measures.

12. I have made it clear in my statement of rebuttal evidence that no wetlands will be adversely affected by the proposal. Rather, all existing wetlands will be enhanced and protected in perpetuity under the proposed Taiwawe Catchment Structure Plan. In addition, there will be a minimum setback of 20 metres from all wetlands and streams.
  
13. I conclude by acknowledging the concerns raised by the submitters with respect to the potential ecological effects of the proposed development. Indeed, some of the comments provided by key submitters have helped to shape the latest version of the Taiwawe Catchment Structure Plan. If the provisions in the Structure Plan are appropriately implemented, I consider that the positive ecological outcomes at the site and the wider catchment will be a marked improvement on the current regime of pastoral farming with no or only limited control of pest plant and animal species, at landowner discretion.