

**BEFORE THE INDEPENDENT HEARINGS PANEL**

**UNDER** the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA)

**AND**

**IN THE MATTER** of an application by Onoke Heights Limited for resource consents for a 93 lot residential subdivision on Dip Road, Whangarei

---

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF PHILIP THOMAS LEATHER  
ONOKO HEIGHTS LIMITED  
6 NOVEMBER 2023**

---

## **MAY IT PLEASE THE INDEPENDENT HEARING PANEL**

### **INTRODUCTION**

1. My full name is Philip Thomas Leather. I am a Director of Onoke Heights Limited, the Applicant for resource consents that are the subject of this hearing. I have taken on a lead role in the project, alongside the Project Managers, due to the passing of Mark Holland earlier this year. However, I have been closely involved with the project since its inception, working alongside Mark Holland in all decision making.
  
2. The Application and planning evidence for Onoke Heights sets out the proposal in detail. As such, I haven't repeated this detail here. My evidence will address:
  - A. my experience, including other developments I have been involved with in Whangarei and elsewhere as well as my philosophy for such projects; and
  
  - B. the Onoke opportunity and my vision for the Site.

### **EXPERIENCE**

3. I am an owner and Director of "Builtsmart Limited", a transportable housing construction company based in Huntly. In addition to the development projects where Builtsmart has been involved, I have also been a director or shareholder in companies undertaking major residential developments in both the North and South Islands. In Whangarei, these have included:
  - A. Totara Parklands. 400 sections undertaken over an 8-year period in stages, completed in December 2021. The development also included a childcare centre and a retirement village/care centre operated by Bupa.
  
  - B. The James. 70 sections completed in 2022.
  
  - C. Three Mile Bush. 75 sections - funded and shovel ready..

## **PHILOSOPHY**

4. We do what we say we will do – to Council, our contractors, and our purchasers. We honour our commitments. We have long standing relationships with our contractors, and we build to create communities for families to live in for a very long time.
5. We pride ourselves on the quality of our developments. Our developments have stormwater ponds (rather than tanks), flat building platforms, enhanced waterways and public access (reserves), and high-quality vegetation planting. These features set them apart from others and provide a high-amenity environment for the residents and wider community with positive environmental outcomes.
6. Mark Holland and I shared a solution-based approach to developments. “front footing” any issues and being transparent and working constructively to resolve such issues. I remain willing to work constructively with submitters who have concerns about the Onoke application.
7. I believe that the Onoke Heights proposal will achieve positive outcomes, particularly the enhancement of the stream and the offset planting of native trees. While the existing trees through the centre of the Site cannot remain, these will be replaced, plus more, in accordance with the proposed conditions of consent.
8. Above all, the development proposed by Onoke Heights Limited is one where the purchasers and resulting communities will be proud to call their home.

## **ONOKO HEIGHTS PROPOSAL**

9. As set out in the plans and evidence, the proposed subdivision is for 93 residential lots, with drainage, and recreational reserves to vest and other associated works; and retaining walls within the setback of road and side boundaries. Central to the proposal is the protection and enhancement of the riparian margin of the stream to the south of the Site, together with provision of reserves which will vest in the Whangarei District Council. These reserves will provide public amenities for the future residents as well as others.

10. A key reason why we purchased the land was its Residential Zoning (which was the outcome of a recent Whangarei District Council plan change) and its prime location. The Site is adjacent to existing residential areas in Kamo, close to transport links, schools, and walkways. The greenspace to the north of the site including the Department of Conservation reserve and Hurapaki mountain provide an aesthetically pleasing environment for people to live.
11. Through Mark Holland, Onoke Heights Limited sought to engage and consult with local Hapu. This desire to engage constructively with Hapu has not changed and the Onoke Heights team has continued to communicate with Hapu representatives. I am disappointed that their concerns have not been able to be resolved to date. Onoke Heights Limited remains open to considering options to address the concerns as part of conditions of consent.
12. The proposed development is in keeping with what the District Plan anticipates and on completion, will provide a high quality and affordable place for people to live. I am concerned that the Whangarei District Council planner has recommended declining consent. This makes no sense when it was the Council that changed the zone to Residential Zone.

## **CONCLUSION**

13. The Application has been submitted on behalf of an experienced developer, with a reputation locally – including with Council officers – of creating quality residential developments, with numerous benefits for both the future residents of the Site as well as the wider community. The proposal is within the Residential Zone, the experts for Onoke all agree that the proposal will have minimal effects. The proposed conditions will mean that the water quality and health of the stream to

the south will be improved, walkways and parks will be provided, and the development will offer an affordable option for housing.

14. I trust that through this hearing we will demonstrate that the proposal warrants being granted consent.

**DATED** this 6<sup>th</sup> day of November 2023



---

**Philip Thomas Leather**