

Statement of evidence/submission of Peter Brass

Good afternoon Chairman and Commissioners

Introduction

1. My name is Peter Brass. My wife Sharon and I purchased 3.1 hectares in Ripponvale road in 2001 with the intension of setting up a small 2-hectare cherry orchard and retiring to Cromwell Central Otago. We planted the cherry orchard in 2003 and moved to 422 Ripponvale Rd in 2013. We previously resided in Invercargill having owned and operated a large plant seedling nursery for thirty years known as Evandale Plant Production which employed over thirty staff. We are residents of the Cromwell community. In addition to growing cherries we have a separate Air B n B facility as well as producing plants and produce for the local Alexandra, Queenstown and Cromwell markets from Labour weekend through to Easter.
2. I am also a member of Residents for Responsible Development group and believe in the voice of this group.
3. I consider it my duty to the community of Cromwell and its future development to speak out against plan change 13 (PC13), My conscience wouldn't allow me to rest without knowing I had done all I could in my limited capacity to prevent such an absurd proposal.

Background

4. When I first heard of plan change 13, it was one of disbelief and indignation that there was a gap in local development that allowed a plan change such as PC13 to be accepted. I, like a large number of local residents believed mistakenly that our council was capable of preventing such money hungry carpet bagger developers of inflicting their plans on us.

5. Again to my disbelief we witnessed the development of a rock wall and wooden rail fence as well as extensive landscape planting which felt as if the developer was sending an audacious message that despite any efforts on the part of objectors he had the financial resources to push the proposal through and that the outcome was a fait accompli. Reinforcing this message, a large sign was subsequently erected confirming the intention of a new residential development along with a small building presumably as onsite sales office.

Evidence/ submission

6. First let me say I have no expertise in the Resource Management act and find the process and language quite daunting at times. I have attended many of the submissions and have learnt a small amount of the process.
7. All my original nine points of objection in my submission have been well covered by previous parties who have submitted to the commissioners. I will reiterate one or two of these but wish to add further points that I would like considered.
8. Chris Meehan in his submission as the proponent put forward the idea that there is a "housing crisis in Cromwell." This is his main tenant in order to promote the need for PC13. I have yet to see the evidence that would show this to be the case and in fact looking at the Spatial Framework I can see a raft of land becoming available both now and in the near future. Just in this past week the local community paper The Cromwell Bulletin published comment from the Sew Hoy estate of their intention to develop their 28.8 hectare site.
9. Sure, there is a housing crisis but that crisis is in Queenstown, and the residents and Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC) are now waking up to the effects of rampant growth by trying to slow and limit that growth. I.e. the airports plan for greater tourist numbers. Out of control growth only brings problems of congestion, infra structure costs and other issues. The big question is why should a developer be allowed to export Queenstown's housing problems to Cromwell. Simply put , profit and because I can. No need

to worry about the community and it's feelings, once I have sold the last section I'm gone and it's no longer my problem.

10. Cromwell's growth over the last five years has been rapid as retirees' eye up Cromwell as a desirable location coupled with tourism, commercial businesses, viticulture and increasing cherry production. Growth is always dependant on jobs and getting a return on investment, without this future forecast, no growth, no jobs, no investment.
11. Cromwell's future growth has been addressed by the community participation in the Cromwell Eye to the Future masterplan and their confidence that the council has a way forward for the future in the Spatial Framework document. PC 13 is a disruption to the masterplan and should be rejected outright.
12. So, if we increase the accommodation for Queenstown by building in PC13 then maybe half of the residents commute each day by travelling the 50-kilometre journey which takes up to 1 hour (depending on future congestion) a total of 100 kilometres and 2 hours travelling time. Residents might be able to afford the house in PC 13 Cromwell but the cost of travel and time lost commuting each day will add a huge burden to the families living in PC13.
13. As a resident of Ripponvale road I have observed over the last five years the increase in traffic flow through the Kaiwera Gorge. In order to get onto the main highway, I often have to wait up to five minutes before there is a break in the flow. This is more of an issue during the summer months.
14. I have also noted the increase in the number of times each week I hear the emergency response sirens of teams travelling into the gorge to attend traffic accidents. The Kaiwera Gorge is an extremely dangerous stretch of highway prone to accidents, ice, rock falls and periods of road closure. From the stand point of productivity it makes no sense for employers in Queenstown to have employees commuting each day.

15. Single use plastic bags have now been outlawed as of the 1st of July by decree of the government to show their concern for pollution, global warming/climate change/climate crisis/climate emergency. Our government has even taken a stand by signing the Paris accord committing to reduce our carbon output. The lakes district council has even signed a climate emergency document on the 27/6/19. If we are so concerned why would we allow all that extra carbon to be generated by people commuting daily from Cromwell to Queenstown. The pollution of plastic bags pales into insignificance when the government could exercise its power by stopping foolish satellite developments such as PC13.

16. So, if PC 13 was to go ahead I can envisage the developers of the housing looking at the potential for these smaller residences being used for tourist accommodation especially with regard to the new cycle trail which will connect Queenstown to Cromwell. I wonder if Winton Development would be prepared to put into their covenants a clause preventing tourist accommodation and reserving it for actual residents so confirming their stance on a housing crisis.

17. To date the PC13 process has expended large amounts of money and time, not only for the developer but also for the CODC and the residents of Cromwell, a huge distraction in our lives when we have more rewarding activities we could pursue. The futility of this exercise in stupidity is beyond belief. The residents of Cromwell put their faith in council to develop their community in a responsible manner. PC 13 has shown by the 400 odd submitters plus those submitting in person to the commissioners, the extent of their opposition. The residents have allowed the process to continue, they believe the commissioners will turn down PC13 but they also believe it will end up in the environment court where it will probably be granted only to be appealed again by the residents of Cromwell. The opposition to PC 13 continues to stack up as more evidence comes to light and will not be concluded by the legal process. The community of Cromwell in my opinion will continue to voice their indignation and action until PC 13 is withdrawn.

18. PC13 is only of value to Winton Development as long as a good profit can be achieved. I would suggest that the cost incurred to date are no doubt only the beginning of a long drawn out process where the time taken to develop maybe years not months. Market conditions can change quickly during that time with the prospects of another economic slowdown or worse still a larger global financial collapse like 2008. The tourism growth at the moment seems inexhaustible but signs for the past season showed a drop-in number. Making a loss on PC 13 could become a real possibility.

Conclusion

19. My recommendation to Mr Meehan and the proponent Winton developments for PC13 is, "quit while you are ahead and avoid additional costs," your best out is to sell the land for the use it is best suited for, viticulture or orchards.

20. In conclusion I would submit that based on the preponderance of submissions you have heard so far plus my token gesture that the commissioners reject the proponents Plan Change 13.

21. Thank you.

Peter Brass
3rd July 2019