

Submission

ON THE PROPOSED NATIONAL POLICY STATEMENT FOR HIGHLY PRODUCTIVE LAND



Discussion Document – dated 14 August 2019

TO Ministry for the Environment
SUBMISSION ON Proposed National Policy Statement (NPS) for Highly Productive Land
NAME OF SUBMITTER Frank and Juliet Reynolds

The submitter could not gain an advantage in trade competition through this submission.

The submitter is not directly affected by an effect of the subject matter of the submission that—

- a) adversely affects the environment; and
- b) does not relate to trade competition or the effects of trade competition.

SUBMISSION PART IN SUPPORT/PART IN OPPOSITION

This submission has been prepared on behalf of our clients, Frank and Juliet Reynolds, in response to the discussion document that Central Government has recently released on the National Policy Statement for High Productive Land (NPS).

It is our understanding that the NPS would elevate the protection of highly productive land to a matter of strategic national significance, of which local authorities would need to consider when making decisions under the Resource Management Act 1991. The implication is that the NPS will require Councils to protect highly productive land from urban development unless it can be demonstrated that “there is a practical/ functional need for development/ subdivision on that land”.

The Reynolds have been farming landowners (dairy and horticulture) in Franklin South Auckland for over 50 years, on land that is generally classified as Class 2 and 3 under the Land Use Capability (LUC) classification system. They have also been active property developers and take a long-term/ legacy view towards the land that they develop.

Over this time, the Reynolds have seen the returns on dairy and horticulture significantly decline while the costs of owning land on the fringe of urban Auckland significantly increase. As a result, traditional farming practices have become uneconomic and the urban rural fringe area has changed from a predominantly pastoral /horticultural landscape to one of lifestyle blocks.

The Reynolds currently own two farms on the edge of a small town in Franklin. One of the farms is currently zoned for urban purposes in the Auckland Unitary Plan and they are currently in discussions with infrastructure providers to secure the necessary infrastructure to enable the land to be subdivided and sold for houses. The costs of providing and planning for this infrastructure are in the tens of millions of dollars and they would not want to see an NPS prevent this land that is currently zoned for future urban from becoming available for housing. Accordingly, the Reynolds support the position that the NPS would not apply to land zoned for urban or future urban purposes.

The Reynolds also own another farm that adjoins the same small town in Franklin, which is not presently zoned future urban. However, local iwi have expressed a desire to see a Site of Significance (an area of reclaimed estuary), restored and have asked the Reynolds to stop the cropping operations on the balance of the farm. While in principle the Reynolds are supportive of restoring the estuary, in order to fund this they would need to have the balance of the property zoned for urban purposes, which could be compromised if the land were to be protected for its productive value.

It is our client's submission that a blanket directive to protect highly productive land is overly simplistic and fails to recognise the 'on- the-ground' realities of individual areas. There needs to be a balance between the protection of productive land and other competing values, including the availability of land for urban growth in appropriate locations. An NPS protecting Class 1,2,3 and 4 land elevates the protection of soil over other matters such as the provision of housing and cultural values. It is our view that the current Resource Management framework already allows these often-competing values to be assessed in an appropriate and balanced manner. The proposed NPS should acknowledge Government's proposed National Policy Statement for Urban Development Capacity so that sufficient land can be identified to accommodate population growth and provide more affordable housing.

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