

**IN THE MATTER** of the Resource Management Act 1991

**AND**

**IN THE MATTER** of an application for resource consent by Woolworths New Zealand Limited for the construction and operation of a supermarket and associated activities at 58 Great South Road, Pokeno

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF PETER BUCHAN  
ON BEHALF OF WOOLWORTHS NEW ZEALAND LIMITED**

**CORPORATE**

**1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 Woolworths New Zealand Limited ("**Woolworths**") bought the site at 58 Great South Road, Pokeno ("**Site**") in 2012 and obtained resource consent for a Fresh Choice supermarket in 2017.
- 1.2 With the rapid growth in Pokeno, and in light of feedback received from the community, Woolworths reviewed our supermarket offering and decided that a larger supermarket would better service the community's needs. As such, Woolworths lodged resource consent for a larger full range Countdown store on the Site ("**Proposal**").
- 1.3 There are a number of factors that influence the design of a supermarket. As well as needing to be operationally efficient and safe, a successful supermarket needs to be convenient, accessible and offer a good range of products to its customers.
- 1.4 Woolworths has worked closely with the Council and its consultants to develop a supermarket that meets these requirements and achieves the outcomes that the Council envisages for Pokeno's Town Centre. I consider that the proposed supermarket will achieve this.

- 1.5 Both prior to lodgement of the application for the Proposal, and after notification, Woolworths has engaged with the Council, neighbours, submitters and the wider community. This has resulted in a Proposal which has the support of the Council officers and many in the community.

## **2. INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 My name is Peter Buchan and I hold the dual position of Portfolio Manager Countdown and National Manager of Property Super Value / Fresh Choice for Woolworths. I have worked for Woolworths for eight years. I am responsible for a property portfolio of approximately 130 Countdown, Fresh Choice and Super Value supermarkets. As part of my remit, I am also responsible for the development of new stores.

- 2.2 I have been the client representative for the Woolworths proposals at Pokeno for the last three and a half years, initially securing resource consent for the previously proposed Fresh Choice supermarket. I have led the team as proposals have evolved through to the current Proposal.

- 2.3 I hold a Bachelor of Science degree in Land Economics from Paisley University, Scotland (1987) and am an Elected Member of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (1989). I have over 30 years working in the property industry in the United Kingdom and New Zealand.

## **3. SCOPE OF EVIDENCE**

- 3.1 This statement of evidence will provide a brief overview of Woolworths and its development philosophy, our involvement in Pokeno generally and with the development of this Site in particular.

- 3.2 I will also explain the operational requirements of the proposed Countdown Pokeno and comment on the design of the store from a site layout perspective. I also discuss the engagement Woolworths has undertaken with the Council and the community.

#### **4. WOOLWORTHS' DEVELOPMENT PHILOSOPHY**

- 4.1 Woolworths currently operates over 180 Countdown stores nationwide together with a portfolio of 70 Franchisee stores operating under the Fresh Choice and Super Value brand. In the Waikato region, Woolworths operates 15 Countdown stores and employs over 1,860 people.
- 4.2 Woolworths has a long and consistent history of working with communities and councils to deliver developments that best enable community wellbeing.
- 4.3 When considering future supermarket development opportunities, Woolworths first identifies the areas and communities which have a need for, and would benefit from, additional supermarket services. An appropriate site is then identified.
- 4.4 Successful supermarkets rely on being considered by their customers as being convenient, accessible and providing a good product offer. Failure to achieve these cornerstone principles in the context of the community which any new supermarket serves will result in failure.
- 4.5 Typically, the selected locations are on routes that are used by the population to move to and from work or (as is proposed at Pokeno) within town centres.
- 4.6 A well-located Countdown store will provide both short and long term employment opportunities for an area. In the initial construction phases, the development will provide jobs directly for construction workers, as well as positive flow-on effects for the wider industry. Once a supermarket is developed and operational, it will provide significant full-time and part-time jobs for supermarket staff.

#### **5. WOOLWORTHS' INVOLVEMENT IN POKENO**

- 5.1 Pokeno has a rapidly growing population, and the area is expected to experience further urbanisation and intensification over the coming years. Having regard to this, the Council as part of its strategic planning has appropriately identified a need for the Pokeno Town Centre to be further developed in order to service the growth in the area. Woolworths is looking to be part of this future with its proposed supermarket development.

- 5.2 Woolworths originally bought the site at 58 Great South Road in 2012 as a strategic purchase. The longer term potential now envisaged was not anticipated at the time. To accommodate the current Proposal, Woolworths had to acquire additional adjoining land to the north of the Site earlier this year.
- 5.3 The total Site acquired is located centrally within the Pokeno Town Centre with frontage to Great South Road.
- 5.4 Woolworths originally applied for, and was granted, resource consent to construct a Fresh Choice supermarket at the Site in 2017 (LUC0139/15). The existing consent authorises a supermarket of 1,100m<sup>2</sup> gross floor area ("**GFA**"), as well as ancillary retail, signage, earthworks and impervious surfaces.
- 5.5 Following the granting of the Fresh Choice consent, Woolworths continued to liaise with both Council and the local community on the proposed development.
- 5.6 Strong representations from the community were made to Woolworths that we review the scale of the proposed development having regard to the speed of growth within Pokeno. In particular, the feedback received was that:
- (a) The proposed Fresh Choice supermarket would act as a 'top up' shopping supermarket offer.
  - (b) A 'full scale' offer would better service the growing community's requirements.
  - (c) A 'full scale' offer would remove the current need to travel to alternative locations for customer's main supermarket shop. (Currently, the nearest 'full scale' supermarket for residents of Pokeno is in Pukekohe, some 15km away.)
  - (d) A larger supermarket would act as a catalyst to achieving other wider objectives sought for the town centre.
- 5.7 The key consideration for Woolworths at that time was the commercial viability of a larger full service supermarket. Whilst our growth projections indicated in the medium term a larger scale supermarket would be sustainable, the shorter term sales projections were less favourable.

- 5.8 Growth within Pokeno has, however, continued at pace. This continued growth, and the community feedback, has given Woolworths sufficient confidence to look to invest in the now proposed 3,000m<sup>2</sup> GFA Countdown store.
- 5.9 The resulting reduction in travel time for Pokeno residents and the increase in employment that will result from the development of the Proposal will not only benefit the community, but will also contribute to the economic development of Pokeno town centre. Once developed, the store will employ over 90 team members.

## **6. DEVELOPMENT OF COUNTDOWN POKENO**

### **Description of the Proposal**

- 6.1 The Proposal is to develop a 3,000m<sup>2</sup> GFA full-service Countdown supermarket with 146 carparks. The supermarket building is located at the northern end of the Site with the carpark to the front.
- 6.2 As outlined in the evidence of Ms Panther-Knight and Mr Scott, the development will also include on-site and boundary landscaped planting as well as the construction and ongoing maintenance of a public plaza / seating area along the Great South Road frontage.
- 6.3 As part of the Proposal, the paper road (Wellington Street) which is on the southern boundary of the Site will be built by Woolworths and vested in the Council to provide for two lanes of traffic to and from the intersection of Wellington Street with Great South Road.

### **Factors influencing the design**

- 6.4 As indicated in section 4.4, to be successful supermarkets must be considered by their customers to be:
- (a) convenient;
  - (b) accessible; and
  - (c) providing a good product offer in a well laid out store.
- 6.5 In addition, successful supermarkets need to be designed to be:

- (a) operationally efficient; and
- (b) address health and safety considerations (eg ensuring that loading and servicing activities are sufficiently separated from customer movements).

6.6 The proposed development at Pokeno has considered and responded to each of these five factors as part of its evolution to the current Proposal. In addition, considerable thought has been given to the location, form and nature of the public open space which has been incorporated into the Proposal to assist in achieving the urban design outcomes sought in the District Plan.

#### **Design development**

6.7 In earlier discussions with Council and their consultants, the possibility of having the proposed supermarket to the front of the Site was raised. In short, two scenarios were raised by the Council for consideration:

- (a) **Option A** – maintain the current supermarket orientation in the Proposal with the store located to the front and carpark to the rear.
- (b) **Option B** - locate the supermarket to the front but turn it 90 degrees with the entrance facing Wellington Street / Great South road.

6.8 The table in **Attachment 1** summarises why each option has been discounted from an operational perspective to Woolworths and is also as a non-desirable outcome for the community.

6.9 In summary, Woolworths has carefully considered alternative site layout options and has worked with the Council and their specialist consultants in finding a solution which will work for our customers, work operationally, not create unacceptable health and safety issues, and also provide an urban design solution which looks to accommodate the principles sought in the District Plan to 'add value' and further the development of the town centre. This is further discussed in the evidence of Ms Panther Knight.

6.10 For the full period that I have been involved in this project, my team and I have sought to both work closely with the Council (and its consultants) and take into account the feedback from the local community. In turn, Council staff, Council's consultants and the community have significantly influenced my thinking and in turn the scale, form and site layout proposed as we have refined our design.

- 6.11 I am proud of the process undertaken and believe the resulting Proposal is an outcome which will work operationally and provide added value for the Pokeno community. I am also really pleased it is a design that the Council officers support.

## **7. ENGAGEMENT**

### **Pre-lodgement**

- 7.1 As noted above, following the grant of the Fresh Choice consent, Woolworths continued to engage with both the Council and Pokeno community. Of particular note, in terms of the influencing the form and scale of the supermarket, the following sessions were held:

- (a) As the lead Woolworths' representative, I was invited to a community engagement session in the latter part of 2017. This was not a 'Countdown Development' meeting but rather a session focused on the wider issues associated with Pokeno town centre and the vision for the future. From Woolworths perspective, I took two key messages from the session:
- (i) there was a strong desire for Countdown to be part of the future; and
  - (ii) there was a strong aspiration for a larger supermarket than we had been looking to develop.
- (b) In February 2018, (together with Greenstone Group (project management consultants to Woolworths)) I attended a pre-meeting with the chair of the Community Committee (Helen Clotworthy) prior to an open meeting of the Community Committee. Whilst not the original intention, this meeting focused on frustrations associated with adoption and speed of realisation of the aspirations for the future of the wider town centre. We had limited input in the discussion.
- (c) At the follow on open meeting in February 2018, representatives from Greenstone and I spoke on where we had got to with our considerations and requested feedback. Essentially we indicated a definitive store size and layout at that time had not been determined. We thought that increasing the store size to circa 2,000m<sup>2</sup> GFA with

some expansion space may be possible (at that time Woolworths had not acquired the additional land). We were not prepared to proceed with a development which compromised the car parking either from a layout or numbers perspective as it would lead to failure. We understood that there were urban design considerations which were required to be accounted for in any Proposal. The key feedback provided at this session was – please think bigger; please get on with it and deliver.

- 7.2 In parallel with lodging the current application, Woolworths and Greenstone (on Woolworths' behalf) wrote to and engaged with proprietors of properties adjacent to the Site.
- 7.3 As noted above, Woolworths also engaged extensively with the Council prior to lodging the application for the Proposal.
- 7.4 Woolworths requested that the Council publicly notify the application to ensure all interested parties had the opportunity to comment.

#### **Submissions received**

- 7.5 17 submissions were received on the Proposal and I was pleased to note that 14 of those submissions were in support. Those submissions in support said that:
- (a) the supermarket will provide access to necessary commercial services that have not been available to date;
  - (b) the Proposal is well designed and provides an attractive streetscape to Great South Road; and
  - (c) adverse effects on the environment appear to be appropriately mitigated.
- 7.6 One submission from the Ministry of Education ("**Ministry**") was neutral on the Proposal. The Ministry's comments related to the pedestrian safety around the Proposal and the new Wellington Street. Woolworths engaged with the Ministry, and the Ministry has confirmed that their concerns have been addressed and that they no longer wish to be heard at the hearing.

7.7 Two submissions were received in opposition to the Proposal from Z Energy and Pokeno Bacon Co. The response to those submissions is outlined in Ms Panther Knight's evidence and Mr Georgeson's evidence.

7.8 I have also met with both these parties over recent weeks and also Mr Odom from the Community Council (Greenstone have also been involved in the discussions with the parties / their consultants). I comment briefly on each.

#### *Z Energy*

7.9 I understand that their core concerns do not relate specifically to the Proposal but rather the operation of Z Energy's activities in the town centre. We have had a positive exchange with Z Energy and out of discussions have agreed (subject to Council approval) to amend the Wellington Street / Great South road junction detailing. The revised plans are set out in Mr Georgeson's evidence who concludes that the revised design is appropriate to address Z Energy's concerns.

7.10 We have also indicated we support the removal of a carpark space on Great South Road to assist their truck exist tracking path, should Council consider it necessary in relation to the revised Wellington Street intersection design and to respond further to Z Energy's submission.

7.11 My view is that fundamentally the underlying concerns Z Energy have are issues which require further liaison between Z Energy and Council as part of the 'growing pain' associated with delivery of the vision of the future of Pokeno town centre and the ongoing operation of a truck stop within it. I believe these issues will need to be considered further irrespective of progress with the Proposal.

#### *Pokeno Bacon*

7.12 I understand from the submission lodged by Pokeno Bacon and my meeting with Ms Clotworthy on 7 August (this meeting was held in Ms Clotworthy's capacity as a local business owner and not chair of the Community Committee) that her core concern relates to the loss of the 'public parking' (as she sees it) on Great South Road and related issues. She is also concerned that this could impact her business.

- 7.13 The angled carparks on Great South Road straddle the Site boundary. I understand that these carparks were provided as goodwill by a former owner of the Site. The carparks are not public and there is no obligation for Woolworths to provide them.
- 7.14 From Woolworths' perspective, we do not own sufficient land to accommodate all of the requirements of the development (including the public open space to the front) and continue to accommodate the current car parking arrangements which encroach on our Site.
- 7.15 In any event, Woolworths has provided carparks within the Site that I understand exceed the requirements of the District Plan. Further, following consultation with the Council, and in line with their requests, we have provided for the incorporation of new public parking provisions into the design of Wellington Street. I understand that Council's intention is that this will partially offset the current parking arrangement on Great South Road.

*Community Committee*

- 7.16 We have met also with Mr Odom on behalf of the Community Committee. Our understanding is that the Community Committee is supportive and the focus of the comments in their submission relate to frustrations with the delivery of the wider vision for Pokeno town centre.

**8. CONCLUSION**

- 8.1 The Proposal is a product of Woolworths carefully listening to the Pokeno community's feedback and responding to the community's needs. Woolworths has considered a number of site layout options and worked collaboratively with the Council to refine the design.
- 8.2 I consider that the Proposal represents a design that will work for our customers, meet Woolworths' operational requirements and provide a design solution that is acceptable to the Council in terms of achieving the outcomes sought in the District Plan.

**Peter Buchan**  
**14 August 2019**

### Attachment 1

#### Option A - move supermarket forward

Criterion	Response
Convenience	<p>Significant convenience failures for customers as the car parking is not visible from Great South Road; car parking is detached from the entrance of the store; customers will look to park on Great South Road in preference to the carpark on the Site due to proximity to the store entrance and customers using the carpark will need to walk around the loading area and side of the supermarket to enter the store.</p> <p>Not a desirable outcome.</p>
Accessible	<p>There is a disconnect between the store entrance and the carpark meaning it is not accessible in a customer friendly manner. This will lead to customers either not using the store or looking to park on Great South Road when possible.</p> <p>Not a desirable outcome.</p>
Product and store layout	<p>Not impacted.</p>
Operationally Efficient	<p>The store is not impacted internally but externally the management of the Site conflicts (between customers and loading areas) is not efficient and creates health and safety issues.</p> <p>Not a desirable outcome.</p>
Health and Safety	<p>Unacceptable solution as there is a major conflict between customer access and servicing of the store. Significant issues 'created' on Great South Road.</p> <p>Not a desirable outcome.</p>
Urban Design	<p>Retail entrance to Great South Road is achieved. However, the underlying aspirations of the District Plan are not achieved as customer car parking is detached and will be under-utilised. There is also a loss of dedicated public open space.</p> <p>Not a desirable outcome.</p>

**Option B - move store forward and re-orientate**

Criterion	Response
Convenience	<p>Two entrance location options: at Great South Road or adjacent to carpark.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Great South Road entrance option - parking is not visible; carparking is detached from the entrance; customers will look to park on Great South Road in preference to carpark due to proximity to entrance, and customers using carpark will need to walk around the supermarket.</li> <li>• Adjacent to carpark entrance option - parking not visible from Great South Road and the store is operationally detached from town centre.</li> </ul> <p>Neither outcome is desirable.</p>
Accessible	<p>Great South Road entrance results in a disconnect between store entrance and carpark means it is not accessible in a customer friendly manner; will lead to customers either not using store or looking to park on Great South road when possible.</p> <p>Adjacent to carpark entrance – parking is not visible; store is operationally detached from town centre.</p> <p>Neither outcome is desirable.</p>
Product and store layout	<p>Due to the site width, the store layout will be significantly compromised and loading area would require to be 'wrapped round' carpark.</p> <p>Operationally inefficient and unattractive to customers.</p> <p>Not a desirable outcome.</p>
Operationally Efficient	<p>Significantly impacted due to store layout and loading area compromises.</p> <p>Not a desirable outcome.</p>
Health and Safety	<p>Unacceptable solution as there is major conflict between customers and servicing of the store. If there is a Great South Road entrance, this creates issues on Great South Road.</p> <p>Relationship between service area and carpark creates a significant health and safety issue due to interface issues between customers and servicing deliveries.</p> <p>Not a desirable outcome.</p>
Urban Design	<p>Great South Road entrance - Retail entrance to Great South Road is achieved, however underlying aspirations of policy not achieved; customer car parking detached and underutilised; loss of dedicated public open space.</p> <p>Adjacent to carpark entrance – Blank wall to Great South Road; underlying aspirations of policy are not achieved; customer car parking underutilised; loss of dedicated public open space.</p> <p>Not a desirable outcome.</p>