

**UNDER**

the Resource Management Act 1991

**IN THE MATTER**

of a request to Kaipara District Council  
for Private Plan Change 81: Dargaville  
Racecourse by the Dargaville Racing Club  
Inc

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF MEREDITH DALE ON BEHALF OF THE APPLICANT**

**URBAN DESIGN**

**10 MARCH 2023**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 My full name is Meredith Joy Dale. I am an Urban Designer and Strategist at The Urban Advisory, an independent urban strategy and design consultancy.
  - 1.2 I hold a Bachelor of Engineering (First Class Honours) in Civil Engineering which I obtained in 2014, and a Master of Planning (Professional) and Urban Design (First Class Honours) which I gained in 2021, all from the University of Auckland.
  - 1.3 I am a member of the Urban Design Forum Aotearoa NZ.
  - 1.4 I have worked as an urban designer for 4 years at The Urban Advisory. In my role I have undertaken projects including providing urban design expertise to resource consent applications, plan changes, housing feasibility studies, preparing masterplans and providing independent urban design review advice. A common area of my practice is providing urban design input to strategic projects including facilitating cross-disciplinary integration in complex urban redevelopments, urban regeneration programmes, and affordable housing developments. I held short-term roles in urban design as a student at Christchurch City Council and the Auckland Design Office of Auckland Council during 2018-2019. Prior to this, I was a civil engineer at Thomas Civil and Environmental Consultants for three years and a Junior Development Engineer
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at Auckland Council for one year. In total I have 9 years experience in the built environment industry in New Zealand.

- 1.5 This evidence is in respect of an application by Dargaville Racing Club Inc for Private Plan Change 81: Dargaville Racecourse.
- 1.6 My evidence will:
- (a) Summarise my involvement with the development of PC81;
  - (b) Summarise the key recommendations of my report;
  - (c) Comment on issues raised by submitters relevant to my area of expertise;
  - (d) Comment on the Council Officer's report.
- 1.7 I have read and agree to abide by the Environment Court's Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses as specified in the Environment Court's practice Note 2023. This evidence is within my area of expertise, except where I state that I rely upon the evidence of another expert witness as presented to this hearing or a report that formed part of PC81. I have not omitted to consider any material facts known to me that might alter or detract from any opinions expressed. I have no conflict of interest to declare.

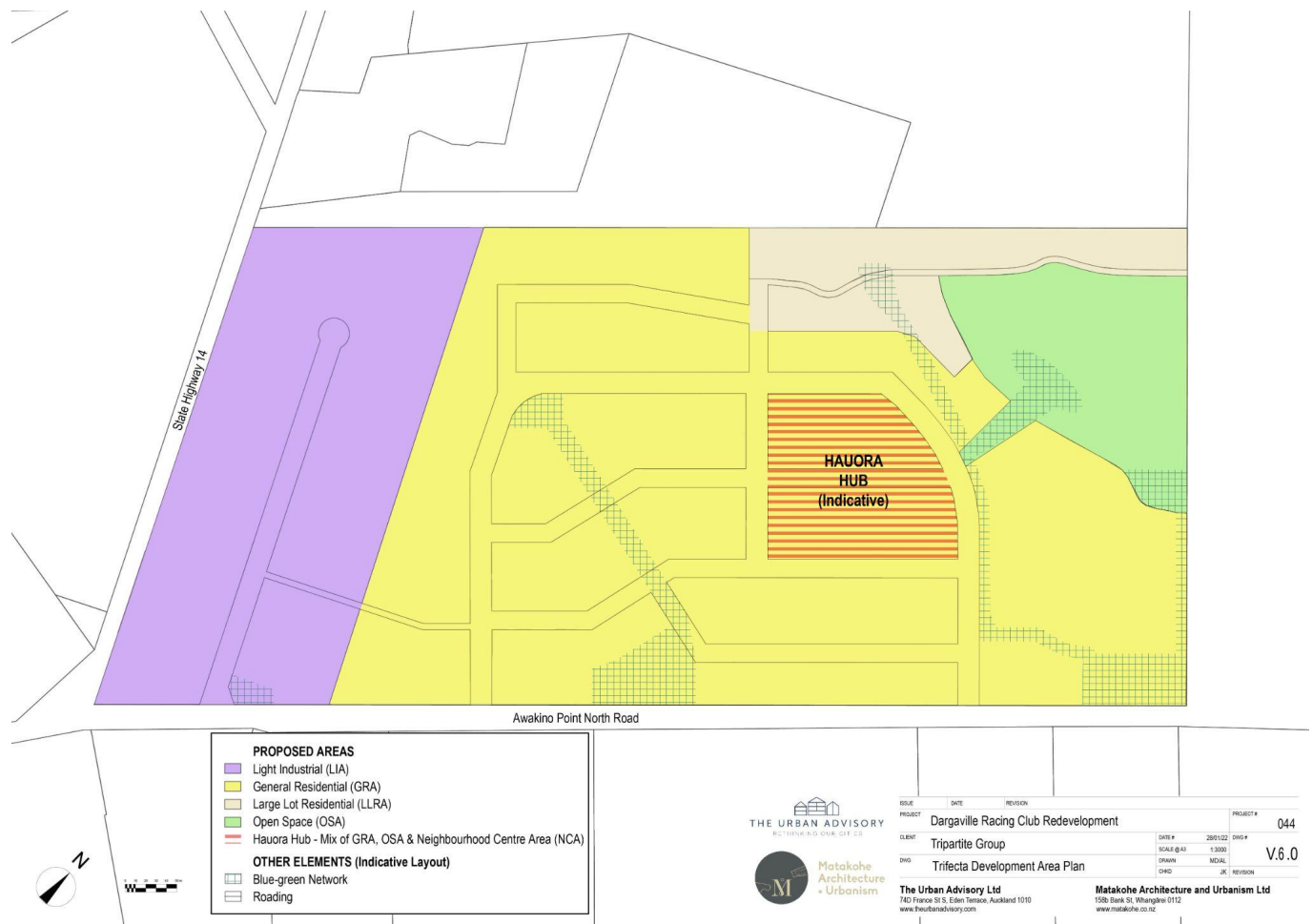
## 2. INVOLVEMENT WITH PC81

- 2.1 My involvement in PC81 began when The Urban Advisory was engaged by the Dargaville Racing Club, on behalf of the Tripartite Group, in March 2021 to prepare a Concept Development Plan, Market Demand Analysis, and Social Impact Assessment to support a plan change for the redevelopment of the Dargaville Racecourse. The Tripartite Group comprises the Dargaville Racing Club, the Dargaville Community Development Board and Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Whatua.
- 2.2 This scope outlined in paragraph 2.1 was then expanded through variations to include an Urban Design Assessment, community consultation and a Retirement Living Demand Assessment to support the plan change application.
- 2.3 My specific role in PC81 was to lead the urban design inputs. In my role I was assisted by Jade Kake from Matakohe Architecture and Urbanism, and John Mackay from John Mackay Urban Strategy Ltd. Ms Kake provided urban design advice and cultural design integration advice to urban design for the Urban Design Assessment, and prepared some of the drawings for the Concept Development Plan. Mr Mackay provided peer review and quality assurance of the Urban Design Assessment.
- 2.4 I visited the site on 22 April 2021 and I am familiar with the site location, context, and its characteristics that relate to urban design matters.
- 2.5 I prepared a report entitled Urban Design Assessment dated January 2022 which was submitted as Appendix 8a to PC81.
- 2.6 In addition to my lead urban designer role on PC81, I led the coordination of other inputs required to deliver the scope in 2.1 and 2.2, including the:
  - (a) Social Impact Assessment dated December 2021 (Appendix 9);
  - (b) Market Demand Analysis dated December 2021 (Appendix 7); and
  - (c) subconsultant inputs and reporting for the Economic Impact Assessment dated December 2021 (Appendix 6).
- 2.7 The PC81 planning provisions respond to the recommendations in the Urban Design Assessment I prepared.

### 3. KEY ELEMENTS AND THEMES OF MY REPORT

3.1 The key elements and themes of the Urban Design Assessment were:

- (a) Recommendation for the adoption of the Trifecta Development Area Plan (TDA), in Figure 7 of Urban Design Assessment (also included below, Figure 1)



**Figure 1.** Dargaville Racecourse Proposed Plan Change - Trifecta Development Areas

- (b) Preparation of an indicative illustration, the Concept Development Plan, which presents a possible built form outcome of the TDA. This is shown in Figure 6 and Appendix 2 of the Urban Design Assessment.
- (c) A summary of evidence and insights which informed the urban design rationale, philosophy and overall development of the TDA and Concept Development Plan which included:
- (i) an urban design analysis of the site location and context (Section 2 of report);

- (ii) consideration of the design brief including the Tripartite Group aspirations for the site and its development (Section 3.1 of my report) and the strategic opportunity of the development for Dargaville (Section 3.2 of my report); and
  - (iii) review and consideration for other technical reports prepared for the plan change.
- (d) Creation of a design philosophy to guide the urban design approach for the development of the Dargaville Racecourse. The design philosophy is based on the concept of hauora which is a Māori concept of holistic health, wellbeing and community wellness. This philosophy has been informed by the widely used Māori model of wellbeing, Te Whare Tapa Whā developed by Tā Mason Durie, which expresses four dimensions of wellbeing with connection to whenua: mental & emotional, spiritual, physical, family & social. This philosophy led to the recommended Hauora Hub, a central area of the development which integrates and co-locates General Residential Area, Open Space Area and Neighbourhood Centre Area. This area seeks to support and promote hauora through an urban design-led approach which provides for a centralised, accessible and complementary mix of land uses at the heart of the development which offer shared community facilities, services and public spaces.
- (e) The Hauora design principles (see Appendix 2: Concept Design Report in Urban Design Assessment) which are the key design elements for this urban design response, seeking to create a neighbourhood that supports the hauora and wellbeing of residents and enhances the natural environment. The design principles are:
  - (i) environmental sustainability;
  - (ii) intergenerational resilience;
  - (iii) people-centred: connected, safe and inclusive; and
  - (iv) complement not compete (with Dargaville town).
- (f) Urban design outcomes proposed for each development area within the TDA to support implementation. In Section 3.5 of the Urban Design Assessment I outline the urban design outcomes intended for each development Area type, including Areas within the Hauora Hub. These have informed the planning provisions for PC81, including:
  - (i) TDA-LU-S3 Hauora Hub;
  - (ii) TDA-GRA-S10 Residential Density;
  - (iii) TDA-GRA-S11 Residential Unit;

- (iv) GRA-REQ1 Information Requirement - Urban Design and Density; and
- (v) TDA-NCA-S10 Residential Unit.

3.2 The specific Open Space Areas enabled by the TDA are referred to differently in the Urban Design Assessment and planning provisions. For clarification purposes, in this Brief of Evidence Open Space Areas are referred to as per the TDA chapter planning provisions, which are:

- (a) Hillside Open Space Area, located on the elevated portion of the Development Area site, with its prime vantage point over the Northern Wairoa River and the landscape beyond;
- (b) Hauora Open Space Area, located close to the Neighbourhood Centre Area, with its proximity encouraging connectivity and vibrancy between the two community areas;
- (c) Neighbourhood Open Space Area, a pocket park in easy walkable proximity to be used by the surrounding neighbourhood for a variety of outdoor informal recreational activities and community uses; and
- (d) Blue-Green Open Space Area, having a dual purpose for stormwater management and walking-cycling linkage. The stormwater function is compatible with providing a habitat for mahinga kai (food gathering areas) and cultural harvest e.g. harakeke (flax).

#### **4. SUBMISSIONS**

4.1 I respond to submissions relevant to my expertise below.

4.2 For this Brief of Evidence I have interpreted 'green spaces', as referred to by George McGowan in submission point 9.1, to mean both private and public open space areas. Public spaces include all Open Space Areas proposed including the Neighbourhood Open Space, Hauora Open Space, the Hillside Reserve, and the Blue-Green Network, and private open spaces within residential sites.

4.3 For this Brief of Evidence I have interpreted 'green spaces' in submission point 13.1 by Donald and Adrienne McLeod and submission point 17.1 by Jarrod McKelvie and Stephanie Rockell to mean public open spaces only. This includes the range of public Open Space Areas proposed including the Neighbourhood Open Space, Hauora Hub Open Space, the Hillside Reserve, as well as the Blue-Green Network.

### **George McGowan - Submission point 9.1**

- 4.4 *The submitter notes the proposal supports the growth of Dargaville, but seeks an amendment to provide less housing and more green space.*
- 4.5 In my opinion, the recommended TDA and planning provisions will achieve an appropriate provision of housing and 'green space' (as interpreted in paragraph 4.2) for this site, its context and the overall development opportunity PC81 seeks to respond to. As such, from an urban design perspective, I do not support amending the TDA and planning provisions to reduce the provision of housing and increase the provision of 'green space'.
- 4.6 For housing and 'green space', I considered and balanced a range of inputs and factors using best practice urban design techniques and principles when preparing the Urban Design Assessment to enable an appropriate amount and types of housing and 'green space', as well as other land uses and functions. With specific regard to submission point 9.1, these inputs and factor considered included:
- (a) the site location and context, including housing demand in Dargaville (refer to Appendix 7), site landscape features and the existing provision of public open space amenities in Dargaville (refer to context analysis in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 of the Urban Design Assessment);
  - (b) the design brief, including Tripartite Group aspirations for a Retirement Village and the desire to make best use of this strategic opportunity for Dargaville;
  - (c) the proposed hauora design philosophy, including the intent to support and sustain hauora for residents (and the whenua/land) through this development;
  - (d) any physical infrastructure and other technical or spatial requirements to support viable development (e.g. stormwater management areas, geotechnical remediation and network civil infrastructure); and,
  - (e) the financial feasibility of the development proposal (refer to Appendix 6).
- 4.7 For housing, PC81 provides for a range of medium and low density housing in the General Residential Area, including the central Hauora Hub. In GRA, a maximum density of one residential unit per 500m<sup>2</sup> average gross site area is permitted (TDA-GRA-S10). In GRA, a minimum density of one residential unit per 400m<sup>2</sup> gross site area is a controlled activity as per TDA-SUB-S3 and, 300m<sup>2</sup> minimum gross site area as a restricted discretionary activity as per TDA-SUB-S4. Lower density housing is provided for in the Large Lot Residential Areas (maximum density one

principal residential unit per 4,000m<sup>2</sup> permitted as per TDA-LLRA-S6 Principal Residential Unit). The land use mix, density and housing yield anticipated to be achieved by the illustrated Concept Development Plan, which I developed with Ms Kake, are summarised in Table 1 (page 12) of the Urban Design Assessment.

- 4.8 For 'green space', PC81 provides for a range of public Open Space Areas (5.75ha area in Concept Development Plan), with additional public 'green space' areas provided by the Blue-Green Network. In addition, private 'green space' can be achieved on residential sites in permeable areas, through landscaping treatment. The planning provisions, which are consistent with my recommended urban design outcomes, require a minimum of 30% pervious area for General Residential Area sites and a minimum 60% pervious area for Large Lot Residential Area sites. Collectively, I consider that the provision of 'green space' in this development is appropriate and reasonable for the amount and intensity of housing proposed.
- 4.9 With respect to the financial feasibility of the development proposal, the Economic Impact Assessment (Appendix 6) included analysis of development feasibility scenarios by The Property Group. This analysis tested a range of development scenarios with different yield and housing intensity. It found that lower housing yield and/or a smaller area for residential land use (than that provided for in the TDA and planning provisions) would not support a financially viable development. Additionally, the relative area provided for both housing and light industrial activities was informed by the demand insights in Market Demand Analysis (Appendix 7), and the hauora design principle to 'complement not compete' with the Dargaville township commercial area.
- 4.10 The submitter notes the proposal supports the growth of Dargaville. The urban design response has sought to respond to the demand for more housing and this strategic opportunity to support the growth of Dargaville by enabling more housing. The Concept Development Plan provided for 434 residential lots that would enable a variety of new low and medium density housing, supporting the growth of Dargaville.
- 4.11 To support and enable hauora outcomes to be delivered through development, I applied the hauora design philosophy and design principles to my Urban Design Assessment and development of the TDA. I led the urban design choices which were made to achieve and support hauora outcomes, including enabling a range of housing types, different large 'green space' areas, the Blue-Green Network and introducing the Hauora Hub. I also developed and described the desired urban design outcomes and recommended policies and standards related to urban



design for each residential and 'green space' area (refer Section 3.5, Urban Design Assessment). These have informed the proposed planning provisions for PC81 which I support.

- 4.12 My view is that the urban design response will enable an efficient and effective use of the available land for both housing and 'green space' (as well as other land uses). The proposed Open Space Areas are reasonably sized for the scale of the development, collectively and individually, in my opinion. These areas are located in close proximity and are accessible to the medium and low density residential areas, linked by a permeable movement network (including the Blue-Green Network corridors) and to the Hauora Hub - the focal point of the neighbourhood. Overall the development provides convenient and close access to public natural and recreational 'green spaces' for future residents which supports hauora and holistic wellbeing. The TDA and planning provisions will also provide future residents with private 'green space' areas (of varying extent, depending on the residential density and layout as discussed in item 4.7 and 4.8) which support hauora also.
- 4.13 I recognise that PC81 proposes a relative provision of housing and 'green space' that is different to what is generally observed in Dargaville at present. Dargaville township has a low density suburban character and surrounding rural residential character. In the existing township area, residents have access to several large public open spaces, however there is arguably less neighbourhood block permeability and variable proximity to public 'green space', depending on the location, compared to what is proposed in PC81.
- 4.14 It is my view as an urban designer that the highly permeable neighbourhood structure proposed, and the diverse and well-considered provision of shared public 'green spaces' in the development serves to mitigate any perceived reduction in private on-site amenity or access to 'green space' in residential areas, when compared to wider Dargaville. It will also likely reduce the need for car-trips to access public 'green spaces'.
- 4.15 In my opinion the replacement of the GRA with the Large Lot Residential Area and the low density residential character it would provide for is not a viable approach for this development site, design brief and the development opportunity the site offers. In particular, the Tripartite Group design brief included the aspiration to develop a Retirement Village on this site. The Market Demand Analysis (Appendix 7) included a Retirement Village Demand analysis which confirmed the need for this type of housing development in the local area. In my Concept Development Plan, I have sought to provide for and enable a Retirement Village in the GRA which is reflected in the TDA and planning provisions. For this site, development of the intensity of a Retirement Village, of a medium density character, requires reticulated infrastructure connected to Council networks

which has a capital cost due to the site location, and therefore implications on development feasibility as discussed in paragraph 4.9.

- 4.16 From an urban design perspective, I believe the TDA and planning provisions have proposed appropriate and reasonable amounts of both housing and 'green space'. It has balanced development yield, feasibility and hauora outcomes to achieve an effective development outcome that could reasonably deliver on this strategic opportunity for Dargaville, to provide more housing and deliver hauora for future residents.

**Donald and Adrienne McLeod - Submission Point 13.1**

- 4.17 *The submitter notes that with the high intensity of housing they are concerned about the lack of amenities for Tamariki and Rangatahi housed within the site if PPC81 were successful. While the submitter acknowledges PPC81 proposes some green space areas (mainly on hilly areas) there is nothing proposed in the way of sports facilities that would keep Tamariki and Rangatahi active. The submitter considers it is vitally important that Kaipara District Council ensure that there is adequate and suitable facility to allow Tamariki and Rangatahi to engage in an active lifestyle.*
- 4.18 I have interpreted 'green space' in this submission point as per my interpretation in paragraph 4.3.
- 4.19 In my opinion the type and amount of public 'green space' areas provided for are appropriate for the scale of development and the number of houses proposed. The proposed Open Space Areas, including elements of the Blue-Green Network, will provide a variety of spaces close to home where tamariki and rangatahi can engage in active lifestyles and connect with the natural environment, which will contribute to their hauora (wellbeing).
- 4.20 In paragraphs 4.5 - 4.16 I have discussed the factors I considered and balanced in my urban design response for the recommended 'green space' provision, housing intensity, development feasibility and yield.
- 4.21 I do not support the submitter's position that there is a lack of amenities and specifically, lack of a sports facility available for rangatahi and tamariki. From an urban design perspective, a development of this scale and type does not and should not need to provide every kind of neighbourhood or urban amenity within the site to be successful. The amenities provided by a town or urban area, and the local neighbourhood work together to enable access and choices for recreation, and contribute to the hauora or wellbeing of residents.
- 4.22 Large, specialised amenities like multi-sports facilities, are generally provided at the community scale where it is economical and desirable to serve a wider population. In my opinion it is inappropriate that a single development of this scale should determine if additional sports

facilities are required for a community or not; these are decisions made by Council in consultation with their community. The Kaipara Spaces and Places Plan 2021-2030 is a regional strategy which provides a framework to guide future decision making on providing play, active recreation and sports facilities in the District, including Dargaville. In urban design terms, the provision of one large sports field or multi-sports facility located within 5 km is a suitable urban outcome for a population of 5,000 people like Dargaville, not including school sports facilities. This is in alignment with similar small towns in New Zealand such as Matamata (population ~9,000) which has two large multi-sports parks, and Kaikohe (population ~4,000) with one large multi-sport facility area.

- 4.23 From an urban design perspective, I considered it not necessary and uneconomical to duplicate the public sporting amenities already available in the Dargaville township within this development. Furthermore, the KDC Parks team advised that vesting any additional public reserves was not a priority in the Kaipara District. This was taken into consideration in my urban design approach and response to the site.
- 4.24 Dargaville already provides a range of community-wide amenities including public sports facilities. These facilities are accessible to the development area and appear to have capacity to serve the needs of the existing and future community provided for through PC81. Sportsville is a great example of an existing multi-sports facility serving Dargaville. It was developed through extensive community effort, opening in 2018, to meet 'the need for a sports area where families could enjoy a multitude of activities in an easy reach location for the Dargaville community'<sup>1</sup>. It has many fields, courts and community facilities for a range of sporting activities. In Dargaville, local schools also provide sports facilities for the benefit of students and the wider community.
- 4.25 The provision of the Hillside Reserve has a range of benefits for future residents and the wider Dargaville community which are discussed on page 28 of the Urban Design Assessment. These include, making best use of the site elevation for enjoyment of scenic views, maintaining natural springs and overland flow paths, providing a landscaped buffer between the development area and surrounding rural land uses and, achieving a low-maintenance reserve typology that can be vested to Council for long-term public benefit.

#### **Dargaville Community C/- Roger Rowse - Submission Point 17.7**

- 4.26 *The submitter has concerns with regard to the lack of green space for playgrounds and recreational activity for children within the PPC81 area and the loss of the equestrian facility.*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://sportsvilledargaville.com/history-of-sportsville/>

- 4.27 I have interpreted 'green space' in this submission point as per my interpretation in paragraph 4.3.
- 4.28 For the reasons already stated, I do not share the submitter's concerns about lack of green space and consider that, from an urban design perspective, the type and amount of 'green space' proposed, including enabling playgrounds, are appropriate for the scale and type of development.
- 4.29 A variety of open space and recreation functions are enabled including passive and active recreation opportunities. I developed the Open Space Area outcomes (Section 3.5 of Urban Design Assessment) which have informed the planning provisions, to ensure a range of recreational opportunities for people of all ages enabled within the development area. The proposed Open Space Areas including the Blue-Green Network, Hillside Reserve, Hauora Open Space and Neighbourhood Open Space have provisions which can provide for a range of recreational activities and spaces where children can play including playgrounds as per TDA-OSA-R8, which contributes to their hauora (wellbeing). These provisions enable future development of play facilities in Open Space Areas, if desired by the developer, at the Resource Consent and Building Consent stage of development.

### **Jarrod McKelvie and Stephanie Rockell - Submission Point 18.3**

- 4.30 *The submitter notes that the density of a satellite settlement to Dargaville with suggested dwellings over 20% the amount of dwellings in nearby Dargaville is absurd without the serious addressing of schooling, medical facilities, or grocery stores. The submitter considers that PPC81 is a development concept better suited to a city fringe than that of a charming rural hub.*
- 4.31 As discussed in paragraphs 4.9, 4.10 and 4.15, the urban design response and housing provision for this site has been prepared with consideration for the Market Demand Analysis and notable demand for housing in the Dargaville and Kaipara area including for retirement living.
- 4.32 For a plan change of this nature and scale, I consider that it is not necessary to require the applicant to address and coordinate the provision of major community amenities like schools, medical facilities or shopping. The TDA and planning provisions provide for small scale local amenities commensurate to the scale and location of the development, which is consistent with the hauora design principle of 'Complement not Compete' with the Dargaville township. In paragraphs 4.38 and 4.39 below I discuss planning provisions which enable educational facilities.

### **Other submissions**

4.33 Several submissions refer to matters that are primarily addressed by other technical experts, however I provide a secondary response in support of them, as is relevant to my expertise in urban design.

#### **Shared Path**

4.34 Submission points 3.2, 5.7, 9.1, 10.3, 15.6 which relate to the proposed shared path have been responded to from a technical and feasibility perspective by Mr McKenzie, as it is predominantly a transport engineering matter. However, from an urban design perspective, I support Mr McKenzie's evidence and add that the shared path will improve active mode connectivity for residents, students and workers travelling to and from the Dargaville township and the Development Area. The path will also provide connectivity to the internal pedestrian network within the development including footpaths and pathways within the Blue-Green Network and Open Space Areas.

4.35 From an urban design perspective, a shared path offers an attractive, safe and user-friendly link when compared to painted cycle lanes or having no active mode link at all. Providing a quality, dedicated, safe linkage for active mode travel will encourage pedestrians, cyclists and other micro-mobility users to choose active, low-emissions travel for everyday trips between the development and Dargaville, more often than without its presence. Overall the shared path supports hauora outcomes for the development.

4.36 A shared path on the proposed alignment was indicated in the Kaipara Spatial Plan 2050 Key Moves for Dargaville (Figure 8, Urban Design Assessment).

#### **Blue-Green Network**

4.37 Submission point 3.3, related to the technical and feasibility perspective of stormwater management and the proposed Blue-Green Network, has been responded to by Mr de Wet as it is predominantly a civil engineering matter. However, from a secondary urban design perspective, I add that the TDA and planning provisions have proposed the Blue-Green Network to achieve multiple functions for the future neighbourhood. It develops a network with open spaces and walkways through the neighbourhood, integrating water sensitive design approaches for stormwater management while providing natural amenity areas for residents and visitors to enjoy. The Blue-Green Network also enhances pedestrian connectivity through the neighbourhood block structure and contributes to the pedestrian walkability and accessibility around the development area. These functions will collectively contribute to the hauora of residents and the community.

## **Educational Facilities**

- 4.38 The submission from the Ministry of Education related to planning provisions for enabling educational facilities has been responded to by Ms Anich as it is predominantly a planning matter and Mr McKenzie from a transport engineering perspective. From a secondary urban design perspective, I support enabling provisions for educational facilities within the Neighbourhood Centre Area and General Residential Area, as they are appropriate and consistent with the urban design outcomes sought for these areas. I note that, within the Hauora Hub, the Neighbourhood Centre Area may not be sufficient to accommodate a school, for example.
- 4.39 I do not support the provision for Educational Facilities within the Large Lot Residential Area as they are not consistent with the urban design outcomes sought for these areas. The urban design outcomes for the Large Lot Residential Area (LLRA) have sought to enable a development typology that is suitable for sloped topography, limited access to roading and water network infrastructure, and can serve as a transition between the development and the surrounding rural area. LLRA will enable development with a low density character of housing and on-site water systems which will complement the existing rural-residential environment and support rural-residential lifestyles. For this reason, more intensive activities like multi-unit residential development, retirement villages and papakāinga-style living is not appropriate in this area. These uses are not permitted within the planning provisions proposed (refer TDA-LLRA-R15 to R17). In my opinion developing education facilities in the LLRA is similarly an incompatible land use and should not be enabled or permitted within the LLRA.

## **5. COUNCIL OFFICER'S REPORT**

- 5.1 I have read the 42A report prepared by Council Officers and there are no matters raised that I need to respond to from an Urban Design perspective.

**Meredith Dale**

10 March 2023

