

Ian and Joanne Morgan

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7th November 2025

RE: SUBMISSION IN RESPONSE TO FAST TRACK APPLICATION – ASHBOURNE DEVELOPMENT - FTAA-2507-1087

To the Fast Track Expert Panel,

As long term residents and property owners within the Eldonwood community, we wish to formally express our opposition to the proposed Ashbourne Development.

We are the owners of the property at [REDACTED], which directly adjoins the land to which this application relates and I also represent the other Eldonwood land owners as Chairperson of the Eldonwood Residents Association. As an adjacent landowner, we are particularly concerned about the potential impacts the proposed Ashbourne Development may have on our property and the wider Eldonwood community. Any changes to land use, access or infrastructure in such close proximity have the potential to directly affect our privacy, outlook, amenity and property value as well as the overall character and tranquillity of the neighbourhood we invested in. It is therefore essential that our concerns, as adjoining residents, are given full consideration in the assessment of this proposal.

Eldonwood, established in 2007, was developed as New Zealand's first Garden Village - a visionary concept focused on creating a carefully planned Rural/Residential estate that provides residents with a peaceful, spacious and high quality lifestyle. The estate comprises 75 generously sized sections ranging from 1,000m² to one hectare, each designed to complement the natural landscape and maintain a sense of openness and tranquillity. Eldonwood is distinguished by its lush pastures, post-and-rail fencing, mature trees, hedgerows and expansive walking trails, all of which contribute to its unique charm and connection to the surrounding rural environment. The estate's sweeping rural views and strong emphasis on privacy, landscape harmony and environmental quality have fostered a vibrant and close knit community. Eldonwood represents a successful example of thoughtful, sustainable development - one that respects both its residents and the character of the Matamata countryside.

Eldonwood is administered under a body corporate structure responsible for the management and maintenance of the estate's private roads, street lighting, walkways, trees, communal gardens and reserve areas. All residents contribute through annual levies to ensure the continued upkeep and high standard of these shared amenities. Like many owners, we purchased our properties in Eldonwood with the clear understanding that we were investing in a private, Rural/Residential zoned development designed to uphold a high level of amenity, privacy and environmental quality. This zoning and governance model were central to the development's appeal and to the expectations of those who chose to make Eldonwood their home. The integrity of this environment, its spacious design, visual character and tranquil atmosphere is fundamental to what makes Eldonwood unique. Any proposal that threatens to compromise these values or alter the intended Rural/Residential character of the surrounding area would undermine the original vision and investment made by its residents.

Lack of economic benefit

The Fast Track process is intended to streamline and expedite approvals for projects that deliver clear and significant regional or national benefits. However, in this case, we do not believe the proposed Ashbourne Development offers meaningful economic benefit to the Matamata community. While there may be short term gains during the construction phase and limited employment opportunities in aged care and retail, these are not substantial or enduring. Matamata is a small rural community already facing an oversupply of residential sections that remain unsold, reflecting a lack of housing demand and limited local employment opportunities. As such, the proposed development does not demonstrate the long term economic value or regional significance that would justify fast track approval.

Lack of natural justice

The Fast Track legislation undermines natural justice by granting applicants extensive opportunities to prepare and promote their proposals, while the affected communities are not given equal access or reasonable time to understand or scrutinize the application. This imbalance is further exacerbated by the developers' ability to advance their projects without engaging in meaningful consultation with those most directly impacted.

Lack of Infrastructure

The infrastructure required to support a development of this magnitude is simply not in place. Matamata's existing water, stormwater, wastewater and road networks are already operating at or near capacity and would be unable to cope with the additional demands generated by such a large scale project. Recently, the Matamata A&P Show - an important local event held on land adjacent to Eldonwood - along with the Matamata Group Day, had to be cancelled due to the high water table and excessive ground saturation. This provides clear evidence that the land around Eldonwood is prone to significant water retention, making it unsuitable for large-scale development. Notably, portions of this land are already recognised as being within a designated flood zone.

The Waikato Regional Council suggests that water flows to the nearby Waitoa River and Piako River should be minimised to avoid extensive flooding issues downstream and to avoid possible hazards to the wider district, including possible risk to people or property.

There are also critical community services such as healthcare, schools, retail facilities, St John Ambulance and the local Fire Brigade who are already under significant pressure and would struggle to accommodate a sudden and substantial population increase. An influx of potentially over 1,500 new residents would place an unsustainable strain on these essential services, further compromising their ability to meet the needs of the existing community. Without major infrastructure upgrades, none of which appear to have been adequately planned or costed, this development would create long term challenges for both service delivery and community wellbeing.

Incorrect information provided

After reviewing the application submitted by Matamata Development Limited, we have identified several significant inaccuracies. Notably, some affected landowners were not notified of the proposed development. Additionally, Appendix 3F lists the address for the ecological assessment as 162 Studholme Street, which is actually the location of Lockerbie Estate in Morrinsville. Furthermore, the landscaping assessments were apparently conducted on 24 June and 8 November 2025, yet the report is dated 3 June 2025 - prior to the assessment dates - raising concerns about the validity of the documentation.

Access and connectivity

The introduction of access or connectivity to a new housing development particularly one that does not align with Eldonwood's established character poses a direct and negative impact on the privacy, amenity and property values of not just Eldonwood but

also Highgrove, Peakedale and Station Road properties. Although the Ashbourne consultants have stated that vehicle or pedestrian access between Eldonwood Drive or Chestnut Lane and the proposed Ashbourne development will not be required, we note that this remains subject to consent from the Matamata Piako District Council. Should the development proceed, the Eldonwood Residents Association would require Matamata Development Limited to formally surrender all rights of way and parking easements over the private road immediately following settlement to ensure that no future access can be created. Additionally, we note the inclusion of a proposed pedestrian link to the southern boundary of Eldonwood Drive, which we strongly oppose and request be removed from the plans. Any agreement to a partial surrender of the easements would require the approval of the Eldonwood community, ensuring that Matamata Development Limited has no legal right to access Eldonwood Drive or the eastern spur of Chestnut Lane.

We also note that Matamata Development Limited's application proposes running services beneath the Eldonwood walkway, connecting through a portion of the perimeter pathway. We strongly oppose this proposal, as the walkway is privately owned and maintained by Eldonwood residents through the payment of annual levies. Allowing external infrastructure works beneath this area could compromise the integrity of the walkway, create future maintenance and access issues and unfairly burden residents with potential repair or reinstatement costs. The walkway is an important Eldonwood asset, and any disruption or alteration to it is unacceptable.

Earthworks

It would not be feasible or reasonable for Eldonwood residents to have to endure the presence of unsightly topsoil and clay piles, as indicated in Matamata Development Limited's application, being placed along or over our boundary fences. Such activity would significantly disrupt the peaceful enjoyment of our properties. The associated earthworks would generate excessive noise, vibration and dust, directly impacting residents' wellbeing and daily lives. These effects would cause frustration, stress and a loss of outdoor amenity, particularly for those living closest to the boundary. Given that Eldonwood is a well established and tranquil residential community, any such disturbances would be entirely inappropriate and unacceptable. Robust conditions must therefore be imposed to prevent the storage of materials, topsoil or clay piles near shared boundaries and to ensure that construction activities are managed in a manner that fully protects the amenity of existing residents.

Land Zoning

We all purchased our properties in Eldonwood with the clear understanding that the neighbouring land was zoned Rural/Residential, not for a high density residential development of the scale now proposed. The Ashbourne project comprising approximately 520 residential dwellings, a commercial hub, a retirement village of 218 units and two solar farms represents a dramatic departure from the established zoning and character of the surrounding area. While we acknowledge the importance of strategic planning to accommodate future population growth, this proposal does not align with either the current or projected needs of the Matamata community. Matamata is a small rural township with modest growth projections and there is no demonstrated demand for development of this magnitude at present or in the foreseeable future. The scale and intensity of the proposed Ashbourne Development are disproportionate to the size and capacity of the town's existing infrastructure, services and employment base.

Council Planning

The Matamata Piako District Council has already identified and planned for appropriate areas of residential expansion on the eastern and northern side of Matamata where essential infrastructure such as the Waste Water Treatment Plant and other utilities are better positioned to support future growth. Concentrating new development in those designated areas is a more logical, sustainable and efficient approach that aligns with the district's long term planning framework rather than introducing an over scaled project that would fundamentally alter the character and amenity of the Matamata community.

Traffic Implications

The safety of exiting Eldonwood Drive onto Station Road is already a significant concern and this issue would be greatly intensified by the proposed Ashbourne Development. Station Road currently experiences high traffic volumes with cars frequently parked on both sides of the road creating visibility and congestion challenges for motorists and could cause a number of issues around the safety of the children. The situation is made more complex by the fact that Station Road serves as the main thoroughfare for access to four schools, two daycare centres and the new sports stadium (currently under construction). Adding substantial additional traffic from a large scale residential and commercial development would dramatically increase congestion and elevate the risk of accidents, particularly during peak school and event times. It is clear that Station Road is not an adequate or safe arterial route to accommodate the traffic demands this

project would generate. Comprehensive traffic impact assessments and infrastructure upgrades would be essential before any consideration of such a development could proceed.

Solar Farms

The inclusion of two solar farms within the proposed Ashbourne Development raises significant concerns for the Eldonwood community. While we acknowledge the importance of renewable energy and support sustainable initiatives in principle, the location and scale of these solar installations are inappropriate within close proximity to an established Rural/Residential neighbourhood. The visual impact of large solar arrays, associated glare and the industrial appearance of such infrastructure would fundamentally alter the rural character and aesthetic of the surrounding landscape.

Furthermore, there are potential issues relating to noise from inverters and maintenance activity, loss of visual amenity and ecological disruption due to land clearance and reflective surfaces. The introduction of solar farms also raises concerns about property values as prospective buyers may be deterred by the industrial nature of the adjoining land use. If renewable energy generation is to be pursued, it should be located in appropriately zoned rural or industrial areas well separated from residential boundaries and subject to robust environmental, visual and acoustic impact assessments. The Eldonwood community strongly opposes the inclusion of solar farms in the current proposal due to their incompatibility with the surrounding land use and the significant adverse effects they would impose on neighbouring residents.

Retirement and Aged Care Needs

While Matamata currently has an adequate supply of retirement and lifestyle village accommodation, there is a shortfall in dedicated care facilities. The township does not require another retirement or lifestyle village at this time, but there is a growing need for higher level aged care and medical support services due to the area's ageing population. This includes rest-home, hospital and dementia care beds, as well as in-home and transitional care options that allow residents to remain within their community as their needs change. Existing facilities already provide sufficient independent living options and further expansion risks creating an over supply of retirement units that do not address the real gap in aged care services,

Landscaping Requirements

If the Ashbourne Project were to proceed, the Eldonwood Residents Association would require comprehensive landscaping and mitigation planting measures (at Matamata Development Limited's cost) to protect the visual and environmental amenity of the surrounding community. This should include the establishment of a substantial green buffer zone of no less than eight metres wide along the shared boundaries between Ashbourne and Eldonwood to preserve privacy and maintain the rural character of the area. Planting should be undertaken using mature native species at 900mm centres to ensure immediate and effective screening, enhance biodiversity and provide long term environmental benefits, 100mm bark mulch cover and installation of a full irrigation system. Additionally, we would expect a detailed landscape management plan to be developed outlining maintenance responsibilities, timeframes and assurances that the plantings will be retained and cared for in perpetuity and agreement that planting will commence immediately on successful application to allow growth prior to start of construction of these stages. We would also expect a suitable consent notice would be registered on the adjoining Ashbourne titles. These measures are essential to reduce the visual and environmental impacts of the development and to ensure that the amenity of existing residents is not diminished.

Our Reservations

We do not believe that Matamata has a sufficient need for this proposed development. There is no clear economic justification for it and it fails to meet the criteria of national or regional significance. The proposal demonstrates minimal urban design merit and comes at a time when there is limited demand for new housing and few local employment opportunities to support such growth.

Furthermore, the development would place unnecessary strain on existing physical and social infrastructure and would consume a substantial area of productive rural land with high landscape value. It also undermines established Council planning processes which have already identified more appropriate locations for residential growth within Matamata.

It is apparent that the developers have shown little regard for the Matamata community with the proposal appearing to prioritise profit over people and disregarding the long term social and environmental wellbeing of the area.

Our Request

We respectfully request that the Expert Panel decline the Ashbourne application in its entirety on the grounds outlined above.

Should the Expert Panel determine to approve any part of the proposal it must do so only under strict conditions that safeguard the interests of existing residents and the character of the Matamata community. We as Eldonwood owners, would require the following conditions to be met:

1. Formal surrender of all rights-of-way and parking easements over the private road to occur immediately following settlement.
2. Removal from the application of the proposed pedestrian link to the southern boundary of Eldonwood Drive.
3. No legal access granted to Matamata Development Limited to Eldonwood Drive or the eastern spur of Chestnut Lane. Any partial surrender of easements must have the formal approval of the Eldonwood Residents Association.
4. Removal from the application of any proposed services running beneath the Eldonwood walkway or through any portion of the perimeter pathway.
5. Exclusion of all topsoil and clay piles being placed along or over the Eldonwood boundary fences.
6. Implementation of a fully landscaped green buffer zone of no less than eight metres wide, at Matamata Development Limited's cost, along all shared boundaries to include:
 - a. Mature native plantings at 900mm centres
 - b. 100mm bark mulch cover
 - c. Full irrigation system installation
 - d. A detailed Landscape Management Plan prepared outlining maintenance responsibilities, timeframes and assurances that plantings will be retained and cared for in perpetuity, with planting to commence immediately upon approval
 - e. A Consent Notice registered on the adjoining Ashbourne titles confirming these obligations.

For future correspondence, please contact: [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]