

Date: 7th October 2025

To: The Expert Panel

To whom it may concern,

Re: Fast-Track Application for Ashbourne Project – [REDACTED] Matamata

We own the property at [REDACTED], being all the land described in:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(**“the Property”**)

We have sold the property to Unity Management, with settlement scheduled for 31 May 2026.

We have reviewed Matamata Development’s substantive application for the “Ashbourne” development (**“Project”**). Our land is included as the western section of the Project.

Consent

We have previously consented to the Project as part of Matamata Development’s Fast-track referral.

We reiterate our support of the Project.

We are aware that the owners of the Highgrove development to the east of the Property do not wish public access to be granted into Highgrove Ave (from Lot 3). We have no objection to that request as we retain road access through Lot 2 in the interim.

Additional comments from Grant & Craig Hemmings, part owners & Directors of RA Hemmings Ltd below.

Summary

Development is coming to Matamata in general and Station Road in particular whether we like it or not

As farmers we are already experiencing significant pressure from other land users, local residents and road users and this pressure is only likely to increase further in the future. Running the farm this close to Matamata has only become much harder since we took over with new management and improved farming systems 7 years ago. In that time, we’ve lost the ability to milk on 12ha of our own land adding significant cost to our system and reducing profitability.

Our farm is only half the size of an average NZ dairy farm and we have no opportunity to increase the size of the farm through acquisition. Intensification (System 5) will only result in further clashes with other land users and local residents. The farm also doesn’t financially support the shareholders or produce a satisfactory return on Capital.

Conversion of farmland to residential, retirement village, and solar developments generally results in an improved economic output per hectare compared to traditional agriculture.

Introduction:

The farm has 2 blocks of land. The main block is at [REDACTED] and consists of 75 hectares. A secondary block is located across the road at [REDACTED] and consists of 12 hectares

The farm was is now owned Grant, Craig and Austin Hemmings (deceased) when our parents passed away. Our Father and Grandfather began farming at this location on Station Road circa 1953. Austin's 3 adult children are the other beneficiaries. Grant and Craig are active directors.

The farm has a mixture of soil types from average to poor. Poor soil types include ash-peat mix and clay. My father used to complain about the poor soils types when I was a boy. I remember him saying the topsoil was only about "quarter an inch thick."

Dad worked hard to remove old stumps and put in surface drains – a technique called 'hump and hollowing.' This along with animal defecation and the subsequent worm activity has impacted the land positively, and now the land has significantly better soils. As noted, the exception was the soils in the land closest to town, these soils were always good.

The danger of the Station Road crossing.

We have a permit from Matamata-Piako District Council to bring the cows across the road from our secondary block for milking. We used to bring the cows across the road as quickly as possible and then walk them down the verge to the entrance gate. A mat was used to keep effluent off the road. However, the developers of Highgrove estate obtained a 'cease and desist order' to stop us using the verge next to their development. The Council said we could instead take the cows down the middle of the road (about 100 metres). However, our manager at the time Rimu Anderson suffered almost daily abuse from drivers when trying to do this. One driver threw dirt at him and there was a near accident on several occasions as cars travelling from town normally speed up to travel down Station Road. In the end we made the decision not to bring cows across the road even though we retained the permit to do so. Our current manager (1st season on the farm) was abused by drivers on the road the first time he tried run the herd across to the block. We even had complaints from road users to Matamata Piako District Council recently for just taking contracting machinery across the road as we now can only use that block to make supplementary feed. The solution proposed to us by the council is to hand sweep the road – this is impractical and dangerous even though we have done this in the past.

This change in management has resulted in the loss of milking land (the effective milking platform hectares is now 85ha less the 12ha across the road which is 73ha). In my view it is not an issue of right or wrong, it is simply an issue of inevitable friction caused by changing land use.

The option of high intensity farming to improve farm efficiency:

The average NZ dairy farm is 153 hectares. We are now under half this size at 73ha effective milking platform. This affects the profitability of the property, particularly in years of low payout

We have looked at the option of making the farm a 'System 5' high input system. This means we could run significantly more cows – say 325, instead of the current 265 (which is already a high stocking rate). This would also mean building feed pads, feed bunkers and significantly upgrading our

effluent management systems. Part of effluent management would include spraying effluent onto more of the farm paddocks, including the ones next to the Highgrove development between our farm and Matamata. If we did this it is almost inevitable that we would get daily odour complaints from the residents at Highgrove. Feed pads will also generate significantly greater odour effect.

We are currently running a system 3 farm with additional feed brought in as silage and in shed meal to supplement homegrown feed. All young stock are grazed off the farm as well as 36 to 40% of the milking herd for 6 weeks in the winter when they are dried off which is also very costly. We are already running our farm close to the total nitrogen input limits (fertiliser, feed generated N etc) and any intensification could very likely be limited or stopped due to increasing compliance around nutrient loading set by the Regional Council and Fonterra Regulations. The only option we have to mitigate Nitrogen loading from a fertiliser input is to use reasonable quantities of chicken manure 3 times a year from broiler farms which isn't subject to Nitrogen reporting (as it's an "organic" product) but this also creates a strong smell and would be subject to complaints especially since the prevailing wind is W/SW towards Matamata.

In reality there is no opportunity to expand the farm size into a more efficient and larger dairy unit. We have Station Road on one side dominated by land that is subdivided into small blocks and/or unavailable to dairying. On the other side is an organic dairy farm (owned by Vosper's and unavailable for sale) and the bottom of the farm is a river and the Highgrove subdivision at the top end.

Looking forward to the future we have no options open to us as a farming operation to improve the economics and/or efficiency of our farming operation.

Location

Station Road is away from the main highways connecting Matamata to Auckland, Hamilton and Tauranga, so it is perceived as quiet yet accessible to town. Large groups of cyclists regularly ride up into the Peria foothills. Matamata is part of the so called 'golden triangle' that links Auckland, Hamilton and Tauranga. In my view it is inevitable that there will be demand for development in Matamata as pressure increases on the urban centres of Auckland and Tauranga in particular

Land-use change

From what we understand converting farmland to **residential** and **solar** uses generally results in improved economic output compared to traditional agriculture, primarily through increased land value, diversified income streams, new job creation, and the significant economic activity generated by the construction phases.

Residential Conversion

- In general, land used for housing and associated services (like retirement villages) generates significantly higher market value and economic activity per unit area than agricultural production.
- Construction of these facilities involves substantial initial capital investment and infrastructure development, creating local jobs and stimulating regional economic growth.
- Retirement villages provide ongoing economic benefits through services, resident spending, and attracting further investment.

Solar Conversion (Agrivoltaics)

- A dual-use model (agrivoltaics) offers a way to generate significant renewable energy while maintaining agricultural activities (i.e. grazing the pasture around the solar farm), providing a dual income stream.
- Agrivoltaics can increase overall land use efficiency compared to using separate plots for each activity.
- Solar farm construction and maintenance create new jobs, particularly in rural areas.

While agriculture is a crucial part of New Zealand's export economy, generating \$48.9 billion in annual export revenue, the economic output per hectare from residential and solar conversion (especially agrivoltaics) is often higher or more diversified. Optimising land use by just 10% through such transitions could add an estimated \$10 billion to the New Zealand economy.

Yours Faithfully

Grant Hemmings (Director and Shareholder of RA Hemmings Ltd)

Craig Hemmings (Director and Shareholder of RA Hemmings Ltd)