BEFORE THE INDEPENDENT HEARINGS PANEL
OF HUTT CITY COUNCIL

UNDER	the Resource Management Act 1991 ("**RMA**")
AND	
IN THE MATTER	of the Proposed Hutt City District Plan ("**Proposed Plan**")

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF JAMES KENNETH ALLEN ON BEHALF OF WASTE MANAGEMENT NZ LIMITED AND TE KĀREAREA LIMITED (HEARING STREAM EIGHT)

RURAL PRODUCTIVITY

27 OCTOBER 2026

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This statement of evidence addresses rural productivity matters relating to the proposed rezoning of 30 Benmore Crescent, Manor Park ("**Site**") from General Rural to General Industrial zone, with a Benmore Crescent Precinct, or to a Special Purpose Industrial zone in the Proposed Plan.

1.2 In its current state, the Site's rural productive capacity is close to zero. Most of the Site is covered in gravel and other fill, which lacks the physical and chemical properties needed to support plant growth. It is not productive land, and its rezoning will have no impact on the productive capacity of the district or region.

1.3 The Site is also not highly productive land under the National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land 2022 ("**NPS-HPL**"), as it is identified as "Town" with no recorded land use capability ("**LUC**") classification in the New Zealand Land Resource Inventory ("**NZLRI**"). While the Site could technically be remediated by removing the gravel and other fill, in my opinion that is not a realistic prospect due to significant constraints, including:

(a) the small scale of the Site, which limits viable options to a few capital-intensive, high-return crops such as gold kiwifruit;

(b) the low suitability of the local climate for such crops;

(c) uncertain availability of water to support production;

(d) potential impacts on water quality in Te Awa Kairangi / Hutt River and Dry Creek;

(e) proximity to residential areas sensitive to the unavoidable effects of agricultural and horticultural production, such as spray drift, odour and noise;

(f) isolation from other rural land and from supporting growing and processing infrastructure, increasing costs; and

(g) the cost of removing the gravel and other fill.

1.4 As a result, it is extremely unlikely an informed investor would remediate the Site for rural use when far more suitable rural sites are available elsewhere.

1.5 On this basis, there is no rural productivity reason to retain the General Rural Zone, and from a rural production perspective it would be appropriate for the Site to be rezoned to General Industrial (or an equivalent industrial zone).

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 My full name is James Kenneth Allen. I am managing director of AgFirst Waikato (2016) Limited. I am also a director of AgFirst Manawatu-Whanganui and AgFirst Taranaki. I am a previous chairman (and director) of AgFirst Consultants New Zealand Ltd. I have been working as an agribusiness consultant since 1996.

2.2 I hold a Bachelor of Agricultural Commerce (farm management and rural valuation majors) from Lincoln University, and a Masters in Agribusiness, also from Lincoln University.

2.3 My relevant qualifications include accreditation in Farmax, and in intermediate and advanced Sustainable Nutrient Management. I am also an NZIPIM Dairy Farm Systems Certified Consultant and a certified nutrient management adviser.

2.4 The core basis of my experience relates to farm management consultancy, in its wider context. I have 30 years' experience working in this field of expertise. This work includes farm management system design and advice on land use optimisation.

2.5 I am a life member and registered member of the New Zealand Institute of Rural Professionals, where I was national president for two years. I am also a director of Nutrient Management Advisers Certification Programme Limited.

2.6 I have been engaged by Waste Management NZ Limited ("**WM**") and Te Kārearea Limited ("**TKL**") to assess rural productivity matters relating to the proposed rezoning of the Site to General Industrial zone or Special Purpose Industrial zone. I visited the Site on 17 September 2026 to assist with the preparation of this statement.

Code of conduct

2.7 Although this is a Council hearing, I confirm that I have read the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses contained in the Environment Court Practice Note 2023 and have complied with it in preparing this evidence. I will continue to comply with it when giving oral evidence. Except where I state that I am relying on the evidence of another person, the issues addressed in this

evidence are within my area of expertise, and I have not omitted material facts known to me that might alter or detract from my evidence.

3. SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

3.1 This statement of evidence will:

(a) describe the existing Site conditions relevant to rural productivity;

(b) provide my assessment of the Site's rural productivity potential and the appropriateness of the proposed rezoning;

(c) respond to rural productivity matters raised in the Section 42A Report dated 12 October 2026 ("**Section 42A Report**"); and

(d) provide an overall conclusion on the proposed rezoning from a rural productivity perspective.

3.2 In preparing this evidence I have read the following documents:

(a) the Section 42A Report as relevant to rural productivity matters; and

(b) the technical reports prepared for the bulk earthworks consent for the Site (RM220258), being:

(i) ENGEO Ltd, Detailed Environmental Site Investigation – Te Rangihaeata, 30 Benmore Crescent, Manor Park (4 February 2022); and

(ii) Tonkin & Taylor Ltd, Te Rangihaeata / Manor Park Development – Geotechnical Assessment Report (13 May 2022).

4. SITE CONTEXT

4.1 The Site is legally described as Section 1 SO 493901, comprises 13.21ha and is held in Record of Title 738223. The Site is located between State Highway 2 (Western Hutt Road) and the Wairarapa Line rail corridor to the east (Designation KRH-03). It is bounded to the south by Te Awa Kairangi / Hutt River.

4.2 The Manor Park residential area (Mary Huse Grove) is located further east, beyond the active Wairarapa Line rail corridor.

4.3 The Site is currently zoned "General Rural" and is subject to the General Rural Activity Area provisions of the Operative Hutt City District Plan ("**Operative District Plan**"). The Operative District Plan defines a General Rural Activity Area as an area "where more extensive rural activities occur".[1] The Operative District Plan describes rural areas as distinct from urban and rural residential areas due to "large land parcels and the low intensity of both the activities and buildings".[2]

4.4 A similar zone is proposed for the Site under the Proposed Plan, being the "General Rural Zone". This zone is for areas "primarily used for rural activities and development and low-density residential development that retains the existing rural and open space character of the areas".[3]

4.5 A visual inspection of the Site on 17 September 2026 revealed the following:

(a) The Site is flat, predominantly open and has been modified by bulk earthworks following an approved resource consent (RM220258).

(b) Approximately 70-80% of the Site is covered in either a gravel pad or roading (Figures 1 and 2).

(c) The remaining 20-30% of the Site comprises unimproved grasses and scrub along the boundary of the Site (Figure 3) and in the bed of Dry Creek (Figure 4).

(d) The Site is not currently used for any rural purpose and has a history of light industrial use over recent decades, largely associated with roading and railway projects. Historic aerial imagery shows pastoral grazing and horticulture on the Site in the 1950s, with gravel extraction established over the southern part of the Site by the mid-1960s. Both activities had effectively ceased by around 1995.[4] Further detail is provided in Mr Gibson's evidence.[5]

(e) The Site is lacking in what I would regard as rural character (from a rural production perspective) as a result of limited vegetation, lack of mature trees and absence of farming infrastructure.

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1 Operative District Plan, Chapter 8 Rural, Introduction, b. General Rural Activity Area.

2 Operative District Plan, Chapter 8 Rural, 8B General Rural Activity Area, Issue.

3 Proposed Plan, Part 3 – Area-specific Matters, Zones, Rural Zones, GRUZ – General Rural Zone.

4 Section 42A Report at [22]-[23] and [115]-[118] (historic aerial imagery from Retrolens).

5 Statement of Evidence of David Gibson (Hearing Stream Eight) dated 27 October 2026 at [4.5].

(f) The Site is significantly disconnected from any other rural land.

Figure *1*: Aerial photograph of the Site from Google Earth Imagery (12 October 2026) with approximate boundary ***overlayed*** in yellow.



Figure *2*: Gravel pad representative of the Site.



Figure *3*: Unimproved grassland and scrub around the borders of the Site.



Figure 4: Scrub along Dry Creek.



4.6 Site constraints are recorded as including a fault line, highway and railway noise, and (under the Proposed Plan) flood hazard overlays associated with the adjacent Te Awa Kairangi / Hutt River, although I understand the consented earthworks have since raised the Site above the river flood level. As a result, the Site is considered unsuitable for residential development as described in Ms Goodwin's evidence.[6]

4.7 ENGEO Ltd, in a detailed site investigation completed for Rosco Investments (4 February 2022), dug multiple test pits across the Site and described the soil encountered as "fill material throughout the site; however fill material characteristics varied. In Zone 1, the majority of soil encountered within the first 0.5 m below the ground surface (bgs) was sandy-gravel fill material and the majority of soil encountered between 0.5 and 1 m bgs was natural silty-sand and sandy-silt; in Zones 2 and 3, the majority of soil encountered was gravelly-sand fill material; in Zone 4, the majority of soil encountered was sandy-gravel fill material".[7]

4.8 Tonkin & Taylor's geotechnical assessment records fill of approximately 2 to 4 m in thickness containing refuse debris such as red brick, rebar, metal, concrete and glass.[8] ENGEO identified asbestos-containing materials and heavy metals, including lead, in the fill, which would require management under site management plans if disturbed.[9]

4.9 Resource consent RM220258 authorised bulk earthworks across the Site, involving approximately 130,000 m³ of cut and 160,000 m³ of fill, including up to 100,000 m³ of imported fill. This confirms that the Site is now covered by a substantial volume of fill. Further detail on the earthworks is provided in Mr Gibson's evidence.[10]

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6 Statement of Evidence of Angela Goodwin (Hearing Stream Eight) dated 28 October 2026 at [5.14]-[5.15].

7 ENGEO Ltd, Detailed Environmental Site Investigation - Te Rangihaeata, 30 Benmore Crescent, Manor Park (4 February 2022), section 6.3.

8 Tonkin & Taylor Ltd, Te Rangihaeata / Manor Park Development - Geotechnical Assessment Report (13 May 2022, Job No. 1015081.1000), section 2.2 and Table 2.1 (preliminary geotechnical and geological model).

9 ENGEO Ltd, Site Management Plan – Te Rangihaeata, 30 Benmore Crescent, Manor Park (26 June 2021), section 4 and Appendix 2 (summarising ENGEO's Detailed Site Investigation (November 2020) and Revised Detailed Site Investigation (June 2021)).

10 Statement of Evidence of David Gibson (Hearing Stream Eight) dated 27 October 2026 at [5.3] and [5.5]-[5.6].

5. PRODUCTIVE CAPACITY OF THE SITE

5.1 In my opinion, the rural productive capacity of the Site in its current state is close to zero. I have reached this conclusion for the four key reasons described in this section of my evidence, being:

(a) the Site's soil has little productive potential in its current state;

(b) there is no recorded LUC for the Site, which is identified as "Town" in the NZLRI provided by Manaaki Whenua / Landcare Research;

(c) while the gravel and other fill could technically be removed from the Site, that is not realistic given the Site's scale, its location and the greater value of other land uses; and

(d) while the Site could support some other rural uses, such as a rural contracting yard, these do not depend on the Site being zoned for rural use.

5.2 I address these further below.

The soil has little productive potential

5.3 Soil and soil quality underpin rural use. In my opinion, the Site's productive potential has been significantly limited by most of the Site being covered in gravel and other fill.

5.4 The fill lacks the structure and organic material that allows soil to retain nutrients and water for plant use, and is therefore effectively incapable of supporting rural production.

5.5 The gravel pad, roading and creek bed that cover much of the Site mean that it is unsuited to rural production.

5.6 In my view, the Site should not be considered productive land, and its rezoning will have no impact on the productive capacity of the district or region.

5.7 I address the hypothetical scenario of remediating the Site, and the potential productive value of the underlying soil, at paragraphs 5.10 to 5.24 below.

Land use capability

5.8 In attempting to understand the LUC of the Site, I accessed "Our Environment", a publicly accessible database provided by Manaaki Whenua / Landcare

Research, which displays LUC information from the NZLRI. The land area was classified as "Town" with no LUC recorded.

5.9 In its current state, my professional opinion is that the Site cannot be described as capable of supporting a productive land use. LUC 8, the poorest quality land, is described as having extreme limitations preventing commercial production and therefore best suited for conservation and water management. A gravel pad and fill at the Site support neither of these uses.

Potential for remediation to restore productive capacity

5.10 While it is technically feasible to remove the gravel, earth fill, and buried waste from the Site, which could arguably allow a return to some form of productive rural use, I consider this is unrealistic due to the cost of removing fill, and uncertainty around the impact of such earthworks on the underlying soil. Before the consented bulk earthworks, Tonkin & Taylor assessed the existing fill to be 2–4 m deep across the Site.[11] Those earthworks have since involved further filling (including imported fill) to raise the Site platform, so I expect the depth of fill to be removed is now at least 2–4 m and greater in places.[12]

5.11 However, putting economic and practical factors to one side, I have considered this possibility and what land uses might be employed.

5.12 If the fill material were to be removed, the underlying natural ground could potentially support some rural (agricultural and horticultural) uses. However, Tonkin & Taylor's ground model indicates that the natural ground beneath the fill comprises a relatively thin layer of sandy silt (typically 0.5–2 m) over sandy, cobbly alluvial gravels, and little topsoil remains across most of the Site, which mostly shows mixed alluvial soils and gravels at the surface.[13] The land is also likely to be limited by summer moisture deficits, requiring irrigation to maintain productivity. Water availability to support such production systems may be available via abstraction from Te Awa Kairangi / Hutt River, but is not guaranteed.

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11 Tonkin & Taylor Ltd, Te Rangihaeata / Manor Park Development - Geotechnical Assessment Report (13 May 2022, Job No. 1015081.1000), section 2.2 (preliminary geotechnical model).

12 Hutt City Council, Resource Consent Decision RM220258 (Rosco Ice Cream Ltd, 30 Benmore Crescent) dated 21 December 2022, section 1; Statement of Evidence of Stuart Farrant (Hearing Stream Eight) dated 27 October 2026 at [4.5] and [4.7].

13 Tonkin & Taylor Ltd, Te Rangihaeata / Manor Park Development - Geotechnical Assessment Report (13 May 2022), section 2.2 and Table 2.1; Statement of Evidence of Stuart Farrant (Hearing Stream Eight) dated 27 October 2026 at [4.4]-[4.5].

5.13 This means that, at best, parts of the Site's natural soils would arguably be capable of supporting rural use. However, such a redevelopment is extremely unlikely to occur due to:

(a) the scale of the Site;

(b) the location of the Site; and

(c) other land uses creating more value for the Site.

5.14 I address these three matters further below.

Scale of the Site

5.15 At 13.21 ha, the Site has little economic value as a standalone unit for agricultural production. Based on Beef + Lamb NZ 2025/26 data, a low capital intensity grazing system would deliver an estimated farm profit before tax and reward for management of approximately $626/ha.[14] This is a total of $8,260, representing a 0.57% return on the rating valuation of $1.44 million.[15]

5.16 In my opinion, at 13.21 ha, the scale of the Site limits the range of economically viable production systems to high-value intensive horticultural enterprises, such as gold kiwifruit. The Site is too small for standalone commercial-scale vegetable or apple production. While the Site appears to have been used for horticultural production from at least the 1950s, with diminishing activity up to 1995, this does not indicate an ability to produce crops at the scale and intensity required to be commercially viable today. That use also pre-dates the Site being covered in fill.

5.17 The Site is not highly productive land under the NPS-HPL. Until regional mapping is completed, the NPS-HPL applies to land that is zoned general rural and is LUC 1, 2 or 3 as mapped in the NZLRI. The Site is mapped as "Town" in the NZLRI, with no LUC assigned, so it does not meet that definition.[16][17] The NPS-HPL is addressed further in Ms Goodwin's evidence.[18]

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14 Beef + Lamb NZ Economic Service, Eastern North Island Class 5 Finishing Model, https://www.beeflambnz.com/industry-data/farm-data-and-industry-production/sheep-beef-farm-survey (accessed 22 October 2026).

15 Hutt City Council, Rates Report for 30 Benmore Crescent, Manor Park (generated online 13 October 2026).

16 Section 42A Report at [41] and [143].

17 NPS-HPL, clauses 1.3 and 3.5(7).

18 Statement of Evidence of Angela Goodwin (Hearing Stream Eight) dated 28 October 2026 at [5.41]-[5.42].

Location of the Site

5.18 The Site is physically separated from other General Rural zoned land in the district. This means the Site is isolated from other rural land and it cannot be amalgamated with other rural land to form a practicable operational unit. As a standalone site, it is also well away from the support and processing infrastructure required for many production systems, which would increase costs and economic vulnerability. For example, if the Site were used for kiwifruit production, the closest kiwifruit growing area is Whanganui, and accessing rural supplies or labour from that distance is impractical.

5.19 Land suitability data for the Wellington area suggests the Site's potential for intensive horticultural production such as kiwifruit is limited, because of soil and climate factors that impact crop yields. For example, the relatively cool spring and autumn climate of the Lower Hutt area means the growing season, measured in growing degree days (heat units), is marginal for crops like kiwifruit. This is likely to result in variable yields from year to year, impacting commercial viability. This is reflected in the Ministry for Primary Industries' land use suitability mapping for kiwifruit,[19] which evaluates land and climate limitations and rates suitability at the Site's location at 0.5 (on a scale of 0 to 1). By comparison, established kiwifruit growing areas such as Te Puke are rated as considerably more suitable.

5.20 The Site borders Te Awa Kairangi / Hutt River and Dry Creek. Converting land to intensive use may not be possible, depending on the impact of that use on the receiving water bodies and their ability to absorb it. For example, intensive horticulture uses tools such as synthetic nitrogen and phosphate fertilisers which, even when well managed, can leach or run off into waterways and contribute to deterioration in water quality. A receiving water body that is already under stress is less able to cope with additional discharges.

5.21 The Site is also close to a residential area, which is likely to preclude many rural production systems because of effects that cannot be eliminated, such as spray drift, odour and noise. For example, kiwifruit production requires the use of agrichemicals, including Hi-Cane, which is a recognised source of contention with neighbours.

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19 Ministry for Primary Industries, Kiwifruit crop suitability and yield map (May 2023), available at https://landuseopportunities.nz (accessed 22 October 2026).

Other land uses create more value for the Site

5.22 My observation in similar work has been that rural land uses create comparatively fewer economic opportunities for the local economy. For example, a 10ha kiwifruit orchard may create two to three full-time employment opportunities along with some seasonal work, whereas an industrial development creates jobs during construction and ongoing employment in the community as businesses move into the development.[20]

5.23 The value of remediating the Site for rural use is highly questionable, with enough technical concerns to suggest that available options are unlikely to deliver an acceptable economic outcome for an informed investor. I expect such an investor would instead choose a site in an established rural area, closer to similar producers and established rural support infrastructure, and where they would not have to incur the significant cost of removing 2-4 m or more of gravel and other fill before starting.

5.24 Overall, based on these considerations the Site has little productive capacity in its current state and is unlikely to be viable as a rural business even if it were remediated through removal of the gravel and fill currently present on Site.

Potential for "rural use" to support productive capacity

5.25 The Site could support rural use and productive capacity in other ways, even in its current state. However, such uses do not depend on General Rural zoning. Possibilities include use as a contracting yard or transport hub supporting the rural sector.

5.26 A contracting yard or transport hub may be accommodated under General Rural zoning, as the Proposed Plan provides for activities that support, or are compatible with, rural activities, subject to compliance with the zone standards. However, the Site is practically disconnected from rural areas with sufficient farming activity to support such businesses. While there is rural zoned land on the other side of State Highway 2, it is not directly accessible from the Site and is largely used for lifestyle blocks and conservation rather than the commercial rural production most likely to use these services. I expect a start-up rural support business would be more likely to locate in a rural area, closer to its clients.

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[20] Statement of Evidence of Fraser Colegrave (Hearing Stream Eight) dated 27 October 2026 at [5.57]-[5.58] and [5.60], and Table 3.

5.27 The General Industrial zone would not preclude such rural support businesses from being established, as it provides for industrial activities such as the storage, distribution and repair of goods, machinery and vehicles, subject to compliance with the zone standards. The Site is also much larger than such businesses would typically need, so they may instead be tenants within a broader development.

6. RESPONSE TO THE SECTION 42A REPORT AND SUBMISSIONS

6.1 I have reviewed the Section 42A Report. I support the recommendations relating to rezoning from General Rural Zone to General Industrial Zone and the reasoning for such recommendations. In particular, I agree with the reporting officer that the Site is isolated from the main areas of rural zoned land, is modest in area for a rural site, is highly modified, is not categorised as highly productive land, and that the loss of the rural zoning would have no discernible impact on the district's rural productive capacity.[21] My evidence supports those conclusions.

6.2 Regarding retention of the General Rural Zone, several submitters raise concerns about the loss of rural character[22] and amenity values, as distinct from rural productivity issues. My focus is rural productivity, and I do not address rural character matters; these are dealt with by Ms McRae (landscape, visual and natural character).[23]

6.3 As noted, the General Rural zone permits a range of rural production activities, and in my experience, rural zones primarily focus on enabling rural productivity. The Site does not have high rural production values, nor does it possess attributes that necessitate a General Rural zone to protect production qualities. Because it is isolated from other rural land and has not been used for rural activity for around 30 years, it does not support current rural activity, and its removal from the General Rural Zone will have no adverse impact on other rural areas. For the same reason, I am not aware of any rural production

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21 Section 42A Report at [119] and [143].

22 Anne Rainey, 292.1 (industrial zoning "eliminates the rural character"); Shayne Hawtin, 36.2 (rural zones "protect the rural character of the land"); Allison Sivorarath, 382.1 and Vieng Sivorarath, 389.1 ("impacts on rural character of community and wildlife restoration efforts"); Rachel Stevenson, 193.2 ("character of the area"); Bernard Fernandopulle, 75.2 (a waste transfer park "is not ideally suited to the characteristics of the community"); Manor Park and Haywards Residents Community Incorporated Society, 377.4 (retention and enhancement of natural character, open space and recreation values).

23 Statement of Evidence of Emma McRae (Hearing Stream Eight) dated 27 October 2026.

activities near the Site that would be affected by potential reverse sensitivity if it were rezoned to an industrial use.

6.4 I note that no submitter has provided evidence that the Site is needed to support rural activities or production in the district, as also recorded in the Section 42A Report.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1 In its current state, the Site's rural productive capacity is close to zero. It is covered in gravel and other fill, is not highly productive land, and its rezoning will have no impact on the productive capacity of the district or region.

7.2 While the Site could technically be remediated by removing the gravel and other fill, that is not realistic given its scale, location, cost and the greater value of other land uses. Other rural support uses do not depend on rural zoning.

7.3 Accordingly, there is no rural productivity reason to retain the General Rural Zone, and from a rural production perspective it would be appropriate for the Site to be rezoned to General Industrial (or an equivalent industrial zone).

James Kenneth Allen
27 October 2026