

# Your Questions Answered

## Plimmerton Farm Development

We have reviewed all of the information, met with environmental experts, partnered with environmental organisations, had in-depth discussions with residents, Councils and the developer to ensure we could provide an exhaustive list of answers to your most complex questions.



# What is this Proposed Plan change all about?

Plimmerton Farm is 384 hectares in area. Upper Hutt developer Malcolm Gillies and business partner Kevin Melville bought Plimmerton Farm in 2018 from the Benge family who had owned it since the 1960s. It is currently zoned Rural but Porirua City Council and the developer are working together to get it rezoned Residential and Commercial. If the land is rezoned it will result in substantial landform modifications. Most of the Plimmerton Farm site drains directly into Taupo Stream and Taupo Swamp which in turn drain out into Porirua Harbour at Plimmerton Beach. Minister Parker (Minister for the Environment) has agreed to PCC's request that the proposed Plan Change be 'streamlined' under the Resource Management Act. This means that there is no right of appeal to the Environment Court. The hearing Commissioners (appointed by PCC) will make recommendations to Minister Parker.

For more information on this: <https://porirua.govt.nz/your-council/getting-involved/public-consultation/proposed-plan-change-18-plimmerton-farm/>



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**This Plan Change proposal is really important locally, regionally, and nationally... Why?**



Not only is the Proposed Plan Change seeking to rezone the land called Plimmerton Farm from Rural to Urban and Commercial, but most of us did not realise that THIS IS THE ONLY CHANCE WE HAVE TO NOT ONLY GIVE FEEDBACK ABOUT THE ZONE CHANGE, BUT TO ADVOCATE FOR THE CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH THAT LAND IS DEVELOPED OVER THE NEXT 20+ YEARS. **THE ONLY CHANCE!**



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## Why is Friends of Taupo Swamp & Catchment (FOTSC) concerned about this?



FOTSC is both an advocacy group and an action group!

We work with many key local regional and national environmental organisations to advocate for the special area in which we are all based. We also raise the money, clear the pest weeds and plant a few thousand wetland plants each year in a 5 year restoration programme on the PCC owned part of the Taupo Swamp wetland, Ulric Street, Plimmerton. As for the proposed Plan Change: we know this could potentially have massive negative environmental impacts on what is a beautiful part of our city. We want to be proud of what our grandchildren inherit because of our actions now.



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## **We are hearing a lot of community concern about what happens on that land. Why?**

Plimmerton Farm is very visible from SH1. Its steep hills form the backdrop to an extensive catchment area draining into the internationally recognised Taupo Swamp Complex, and all the wetlands on both sides of the highway. We are hearing that people are also very concerned about how the adverse effects from the proposed bulk earthworks are managed. We are hearing that people from all over NZ are concerned at the loss of those connected wetlands which perform a vital function in the health of waterways, the richness of ecosystems within them. We are hearing from some that any elimination of ecological areas on that land is not an option.

For more information:

<https://www.forestandbird.org.nz/sites/default/files/2020-06/202006%20F%26B%20Kapiti-Mana%20Newsletter.pdf>



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## **We know we need houses. What should we be worried about in this development?**

Managing the adverse effects from bulk earthworks has never been the forte of PCC or Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC). We need to just look at the adverse outcomes from the likes of the Transmission Gully motorway, and the recent Whitby and Aotea residential developments for the many instances where consents were not followed nor adequately monitored. Sediment ponds built to mitigate the effects of earthworks have time and again failed to cope with rainfall events. With the land in question here (ie mostly steep hills, deep wooded valleys) the risks of permanently damaging existing water flows & unique ecological sites is something future generations would question and shake their heads over. We want to be proud of what we do now.





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## Taupo Swamp is a highly regarded biodiversity treasure that should not be put at risk



Any development which sees even one event of sedimentation entering that swamp system will mean not only a degradation of habitat but will impact on the important role swamps and wetlands have as a natural filter for water runoff downstream and out into the harbour

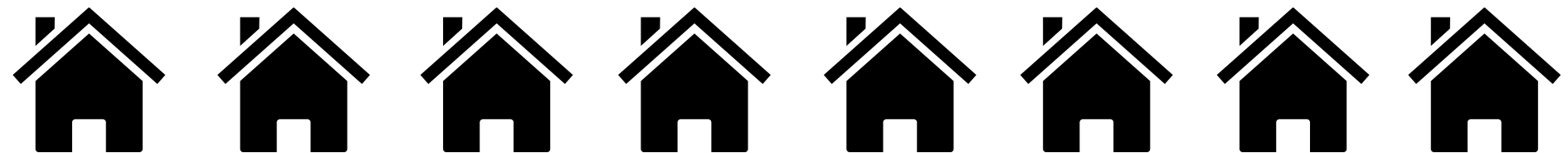
For more information: <https://qeiinationaltrust.org.nz/taupo-swamp-an-outstanding-wetland-treasure/>



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## What is meant by the Taupo Swamp Complex and why are people concerned about its future with this Plan Change now up for discussion?

Taupo Swamp itself consists of around 25 hectares which lie between State Highway 1 and the North Island Main Trunk railway between Plimmerton and Pukerua Bay. The wetland has a number of 'arms' on the east and west of the main body of the wetland. The arms to the east of the main body are within Plimmerton Farm but have SH1 running between them and the main body of the wetland. They are all connected by natural water flows and have specialised wetland plants thriving within them. The main body of the Taupo Swamp and those two 'arms' are known as the 'Taupo Swamp Complex' by Greater Wellington Regional Council and recognised as 'Outstanding Natural Wetlands'. However, there are several more wetlands on Plimmerton Farm (FOTSC members have walked over that and seen some of the treasure there: clear springs, wooded valleys, a lone ancient Totara, and areas of pristine harekeke wetland). These wetlands would certainly qualify as 'Outstanding' but could not be scheduled in the Regional Plan as a previous landowner would not allow any evaluation of their ecological values. Taupo Swamp itself was identified and ranked as a Wetland of National Importance for Biodiversity (Ausseil et al, 2008). Taupo Swamp is already classified as an 'Acutely Threatened' Land Environment.



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## So what about all the other streams and wetlands in the catchment? How do they fit into this?

Almost all the water coming off the hills on either side of SH1 flows down into the valley and out into the harbour via the swamp, the wetlands and onto Plimmerton Beach. There are branches of those streams on Plimmerton Farm. At the moment they go under the highway through a number of culverts and out unto the harbour via Taupo Stream.



In times of persistent rain the area around Plimmerton Domain, St Theresa's School and Church, and the SH1 roundabout flood. Locals know it as Lake Ulric! The removal of natural watercourses, tree cover, changes to natural landforms, and the inevitable hard surfacing of building can only make this flooding worse. With all the 'evidence' provided by the Developer, FOTSC remains unconvinced that development plans can mitigate against this risk. For instance, the area designated as 'Commercial' in the proposed plans will sit in a wetland area which will be lost because it will be filled and raised a few metres



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**Water Quality.** All the water coming off the hills of Plimmerton Farm flows down into the Taupo Swamp wetlands, the Taupo Stream, and out into Plimmerton Beach. Our community tell us that they want urban design for the future, not the past



PCC assures us that the storm water planning for Plimmerton Farm is being managed by a team of engineers, an ecologist, urban designers, landscape architects and planners. FOTSC has walked over that land. We continue to be dismayed to see plans for dams on streams, waterways filled in, intensive housing planned for steep slopes which all need levelling, filling, cutting. Building a substantial retirement village, a school and residential housing surrounding this beautiful pristine Plimmerton Swamp East is a travesty. We need to advocate for better than that - there has to be a better way.



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Pictures of an area of  
pristine harekeke  
wetland and a lone  
ancient Totara on  
Plimmerton Farm





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## There are only 2-3% of original Wellington wetlands remaining

The Taupo Swamp Wetlands - which includes the area from Whenua Tapu cemetery down to the mouth of the Taupo Stream at Plimmerton beach on both sides of SH1 - is currently owned by QEII National Trust, private owners, Porirua City Council, with the developers of Plimmerton farm (who hold a large portion on the east side of SH1). The wetlands on the proposed Plimmerton Farm are all intricately connected with the central spine of the swamp and its wetlands on the western side of State Highway One. Some of these will be lost if the current plans go ahead. The development could result in huge amounts of sediment clogging up the wetlands on PFD land.

The developer intends creating 'constructed wetlands' at the lowest part of the development at the Camborne end to "offset" what will be covered over or culverted with the density of housing there. We argue that the value of wetlands lies in the way they connect. Loss of connection between parts of the catchment is not effectively offset by creating "new" wetland. You can't recreate streams and wetlands following earthworks because of changes to hydrology and ecological connections. Yes, there are what are called 'offset plantings' in the plans but FOTSC members tell us that because of lack of commitment by developers and/or ineffective conditions imposed by Councils these most often fail.



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**People are telling us that they don't want to see the types of subdivisions we are seeing right now in Porirua. It is time to tell the Minister of the Environment this**



In local subdivisions such as Aotea, the newer parts of Whitby and Kenepuru Landing we see land forms, natural streams and areas of native vegetation bulldozed & obliterated. New plantings NEVER replace the diversity of what nature has formed. If we need more housing then there are better ways of doing this - it can be done, is being done right now in parts of Auckland.



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**We get worrying feedback about current consents in Porirua – people really want any consents put in place for the development of this land to be rigorously enforced**

With evidence about other current local developments such as the Aotea subdivision, Transmission Gully, Duck Creek in Whitby, and Kenepuru Landing, FOTSC sees non-compliance with agreed conditions, especially during construction, as a major threat to the unique ecological systems within the PFD area and the wider Taupo Swamp catchment. Monitoring and enforcement services are 'starved' which has meant that every major development in Porirua over the past 30 years has poured sediment into the harbour.



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**We want assurance that the waterways within the PFD site will have protection in perpetuity. That they continue to be monitored and advocated for now and for future generations**



The development as currently planned will take place over a number of years. In that time much institutional knowledge about the site can be lost. We would like to see a statement of clear responsibilities re the custodial duties of any owner/ part owner, with consent conditions NOT running out as they are now in other developments which we are aware of.



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## **Our place is special. Plimmerton deserves best practice subdivision**



Modern best practice subdivisions can be good all round: for new residents, for the environment and for locals. Plimmerton Farm developers are promising best practice – BUT cutting corners for convenience and profit isn't acceptable. Plimmerton deserves best practice subdivision in Plimmerton Farm. From the details from the developer so far, we are not convinced that in environmental terms that is what we will get. Loss of existing wetlands, loss of connected waterways which connect those wetlands, loss of green cover and biodiversity are but a few concerns. Roads go through wetlands, streams are dammed to control water runoff after the land is cleared and flattened.



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## **Ok, so how do members of Friends of Taupo Swamp & Catchment see this proposed Plan Change? What are you standing up for?**

1. We want any planning to be based on good information about the site, in terms of its hydrology, biodiversity, flora and fauna. There are limited studies and reports out there, but they are inadequate for the purposes of evaluating possible impacts of the development. We don't have enough good information and we don't think the Minister does either.

2. We want to see evidence of the very best DETAILED plans as to how adverse effects of earthworks, loss of natural systems etc are going to be managed if the change to Residential and Commercial zoning is accepted by the MfE.

3. We want to be assured that any consents / conditions set down for this development are not only at an optimum level, but that they are rigorously enforced at every step of the way by PCC and GWRC. With insights gained from current Porirua developments FOTSC sees non-compliance with agreed conditions as the major threat to the unique ecological systems within Plimmerton farm.

4. We have walked over that land. We want to be assured that the planning process will ensure that wetlands and streams, along with all agreed natural areas are protected in perpetuity, and enhanced where possible. We want to see the establishment of clear responsibilities for the ongoing care and management of such areas at the outset and into the future.



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**There is a lot of information on this site! If I want to make a submission by 2 July, what are some main points I could focus on?**



“Plimmerton's my home, and I want more faces but not more traffic from Plimmerton Farm. Design it so most people walk, bike, or scoot to and from our village. Now's the time to tell them!”

Isabella, Plimmerton

Our place is special - Plimmerton deserves 'best practice' subdivision. You could raise any of the environmental issues we have raised here - water runoff, sedimentation are the biggies.

You don't need to be an expert! You don't need to write a book - a paragraph will do. If you want to think about other concerns, there are many which come to mind: increased traffic, walkways & cycleways, urban planning and creating functioning communities from the word go, schools, roading, loss of landscapes such as hills and wooded valleys, pressures on current Porirua water infrastructure, the rail network, parking, rates and who will pay for what in any development, increased pressure on Plimmerton Village and the local beaches, what this could mean for you and your children/grandchildren...and so on...



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**Thank you for being part of helping ensure we get the best outcomes for Pimmerton.**



Friends of  
Taupo Swamp  
& Catchment

You can find more information about us, along with a submission guide to help you on our website [www.tauposwamp.org](http://www.tauposwamp.org).