

**THE MATTER**

of the Resource Management Act 1991

**AND**

**IN THE MATTER**

Of an application for land use consent (LUC 2016-90) at 1069 Highcliff Road, Pukehiki.

**BY** ALISON CHARLTON

**Applicant**

**TO** DUNEDIN CITY COUNCIL

**The Council**

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**BRIEF OF EVIDENCE OF ALISON CHARLTON**

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## **Introduction**

1. My full name is Alison Clare Charlton.
2. I was living elsewhere on the Otago Peninsula when my partner Allan and I decided to move in together. We had driven past 1075 Highcliff Road on many occasions and noticed that it had been on the market for a long time. We pooled our resources and bought it, together with 1069 Highcliff Road. We have lived here for approximately seven years.
3. The property was very run down and we have made dramatic improvements to both 1069 and 1075 Highcliff Road over the years, including adding water tanks, improving the water supply for stock, mending and erecting fences, repairing old farm buildings, planting additional natives, fertilising the pasture and clearing gorse and other pest plants. We have also removed a vast quantity of rubbish left by the previous owner, including a large amount of scrap metal and broken glass.

## **Motivation behind my application for resource consent**

4. My separation from Allan has prompted my application for resource consent to build a residential dwelling for myself on 1069 Highcliff Road. The decision to separate was mine, but Allan is supporting me through this process because we are both strongly attached to the property and he would like to like to continue living at 1075 Highcliff Road. The other option is for 1069 Highcliff Road to be sold separately so that I can be paid out my share of the equity. This could result in an application for a less sympathetic development by someone who does not feel so passionate about the site and its values.
5. A common theme running through the opposing submissions is that Allan and I are conspiring to build a house on the vacant title and then sell up, gain financially and leave the neighbourhood. This could not be further from the truth and the fact that we are being accused of that is insulting and particularly upsetting to Allan as it was not he who instigated the separation or came up with the idea to build another house.
6. Therefore, my motivation for doing this is so both of us can stay on the property we love. Fortunately, we remain on good terms so we know that we can be neighbours.

## **Continued use as farmland (both sites)**

7. The property at 1069 Highcliff Road will still be used primarily as grazing for livestock, such as alpacas and sheep. The rough pasture on this site is particularly suited to alpacas. The purpose of the proposed farm shed is to provide shelter for the animals,

shearing and fleece sorting facilities and storage for farm equipment, etc. The alpacas bring in a small income. We sell the manure at the roadside and I sell most of the fleeces, keeping some aside for hand spinning yarn to sell or to knit with. I also sell items knitted from coloured sheep and alpaca fleeces. The addition of a decent-sized farm shed will make it possible to continue these activities on this site.

8. 1075 Highcliff Road will continue to be used by Allan for calf rearing and cattle grazing. The large farm shed on this site is currently set up for calf rearing. Currently there is not enough shelter for the alpacas, sheep and cattle in bad weather. With the alpacas moved to my site and a new farm shed erected, Allan will have access to another farm shed (previously used for the alpacas) for his livestock. This would enable him to buy in more calves and increase the earning potential of this activity.
9. Therefore, both 1069 and 1075 Highcliff Road will be used more productively than they are currently.

#### **Protection of conservation**

10. My top priority is to preserve the Peggy's Hill Conservation Covenant and enhance the indigenous bush on 1069 Highcliff Road. Additional plantings will encourage more birdlife and the watercourse will be healthier due to the riparian planting.
11. Pasture will be kept down by grazing, which is obviously important for pest control, and areas used for grazing will be carefully fenced so native vegetation is out of reach of stock. Regular pest control like possum baiting will continue. I will very gratefully accept any advice from STOP regarding appropriate species for new plantings, and of course I will continue to assist STOP with pest control and removal of Darwin's barberry by allowing them unrestricted access to the property.

#### **House design and way of living**

12. My main aim is to make the house merge with the landscape and not be visible to direct neighbours and other surrounding properties. The proposed house is of very simple design, similar to a farm shed. It will nestle into the hillside and be painted in an appropriate dark colour. My plan is to use pre-made insulated panels for the building, resulting in fast construction and a passive design with minimal impact on the environment. I plan to install a composting toilet and for grey water to be recycled. Electricity will be brought in underground; however, I am also keen to investigate the affordability and practicality of solar power (there are often extended periods of fog and low cloud enveloping the property). One of the rooms in the house will be a 'studio' for activities such as hand spinning, weaving and painting. Water will be obtained from a

spring on the property. Where possible, more mature trees will be planted as part of the initial plantings around the house (i.e. larger than the Pb3 size stipulated by landscape architect Mike Moore) to speed up the screening process.

### **Effects on immediate neighbours**

13. I would like to briefly address some of the concerns expressed in opposing submissions by two immediate neighbours, the Lawrences on Camp Road and the Furlongs on Highcliff Road. Among other things, these neighbours are worried about what they will see from their properties.
14. I chose this house site specifically because of its low visibility from the road, neighbouring properties and more distant properties and my desire for privacy (I do not want to see any neighbours from my house). The Lawrences say the shed and dwelling will be on the paddock next to their house and they will see unsightly buildings. I think they are confused about the positioning of these two buildings. There is an entire paddock between their house and the farm shed and the dwelling will be nowhere near their house. Both buildings will be sympathetically designed to blend into the landscape and screened by current and additional plantings. Even if the shed was erected right now (without additional plantings) the Lawrences would not see it because of the established vegetation. The proposed house will be more than adequately screened from their house by the macrocarpas already in place, with any gaps filled by additional plantings. The Lawrences will still have their rural outlook – it will just be enhanced by more native vegetation.
15. The Furlongs think the potential house site is higher up than it actually is. If they study the photographs and plans provided by Mike Moore, they will see it is considerably lower down the hillside than they have indicated on their own photographs. The indicative cross-section drawing by Mike clearly shows how the house will be set into the slope below the framework planting so I don't believe they will see it at all from lower down on their property. I can't be certain what they will see from higher up. If anything, they might see the dark-coloured roof.
16. There will be no exterior lights, such as driveway lights, although a small porch light may be necessary on dark nights.
17. As for other concerns expressed by the Lawrences, I would like to reassure them that there will be *no* increased noise and *no* increased traffic. This is because there will still only be two people living at 1069 and 1075 Highcliff Road and only two cars.

18. The Lawrences also state that they do not have confidence that native plantings will be maintained and gorse and weeds controlled by the owner. I was surprised by that comment because they don't even know me. I am perfectly capable of maintaining the plantings and clearing gorse and it is my aim to do so. They haven't lived here very long so they might not realise that a *huge* amount of gorse has been cleared from both sites since we moved here. The lines of rotting gorse in the paddock are testament to that and STOP's submission acknowledges the work that has been done on the Darwin's barberry with our assistance. The clearing of gorse, Darwin's barberry and other weeds will only gain momentum if this development goes ahead.

### **Tourism**

19. A couple of submissions imply that residential activity on this site will have a detrimental effect on tourism. I have worked in wildlife tourism on the Peninsula and met numerous tourists. I do not think this minor residential development will deter them, particularly as the property will retain its rural character. Incidentally, tourists often stop on the roadside outside the property to get a close-up view of the alpacas and if we happen to be around they comment on how much they enjoy seeing them. We even had a busload of people out here recently to photograph them. When the alpacas are moved to 1069 Highcliff Road, along with additional coloured sheep, I'm sure this will create a point of interest for visitors to the area and enhance their experience rather than detract from it.

### **A final word**

20. My wish is to stay on the property I love, live a simple, sustainable lifestyle and enjoy the peace, birdlife and stunning landscape whilst continually enhancing the property. I appreciate that others have made the decision to live here because of the rural landscape and I do not want to destroy that or disturb their enjoyment of their properties. I appreciate this place as much as they do.