

Gavin & Sue Stilwell  
Summary:

Gavin and Sue Stilwell,  
Applicants

- a) This proposed development has derived from poor horticultural returns and has been intended to utilise our assets for retirement and succession planning whilst keeping the community and environment in the forefront of design.
- b) We have been involved with the rural industry for over 50 years with shearing and fencing operations leading to farm ownership. We have been actively involved in horticulture for 38 of those years, firstly growing kumara in the north then an 870 tree/7ha avocado orchard and a 4000sqm covered block of passion-fruit in Taranaki, now at our current property of 250 avocado trees and 2000sqm of covered passion-fruit.
- c) The key consideration for our subdivision proposal is the lack of financial viability of the avocado industry with 3-4 ha now considered as a minimum area producing 20-25t/ha as the baseline for economic sustainability, this is not only very difficult to achieve due to many factors such as bi-annual bearing, weather etc but also to gross over production worldwide so basically small orchards, especially an exposed one like ours are now no longer viable. This is further reinforced by the fact that banks won't lend on avocado orchards.
- d) Another point that should be considered, is this area has very limited potential for horticultural development. Ohiwa Peninsula's land typography, soil types and exposure to inclement weather does not support horticultural development scale or demands. After 5 years of kiwifruit sampling for Ag First, I am aware of where the productive and readily available land for horticulture is. The highly productive areas in Opotiki which have room to grow are Paerata Ridge, Tablelands and further up the East Coast.
- e) During our rural industry experiences, plus a degree in Lincoln University we have built a good knowledge of environmental issues balanced with achieving productivity. This can be evidenced by the complete reestablishment of formal garden outlay to one totally changed to native plantings and passionfruit orchard at our current dwelling.
- f) Having been involved in endangered bird work with the Wildlife Service primarily black robin, takahe and kakapo and being an original member of the group that rediscovered the 'taiko' / magenta petrel on the Chatham Islands gives further understanding of the co-existence of nature and planned development.
- g) Pest control over the last 7 years - where I used to shoot a significant number of rats per night, we now have a much reduced vermin population. Being an active member of the Ohiwa Sanctuary group and assisting in pest control throughout the community has seen a large increase in local birdlife. The planned plantings will create a diverse ecosystem on our land and enhance these gains.
- h) The proposed planting of over 10,000 natives will also add to the visual effects of the development and will compliment the existing subdivisions to our east and south.
- i) To conclude, we have considered all these factors plus as we have gone along, the feedback of the community, Iwi, coupled with comments from ODC to propose a reduction from 9 to 7 vacant lots. We have also significantly increased our native tree plantings. We strongly believe that this proposal will result in positive visual and environmental effects to the area.
- j) We understand this activity is discretionary and, with the assistance of the community, Shae & Chris, believe we have a strategy that will satisfy the concerns and criteria required.
- k) We would like to thank all involved in this process for their time and effort and ask that you look favourably on our application and grant us Resource Consent.