

**BEFORE INDEPENDENT HEARING COMMISSIONERS
AT LOWER HUTT**

**I MUA NGĀ KAIKŌMIHANA WHAKAWĀ MOTUHAKE
TE AWA KAIRANGI**

IN THE MATTER of the Resource Management Act 1991 (Act)

AND

IN THE MATTER of the hearing of submissions on the
Proposed Lower Hutt District Plan

HEARING TOPIC Residential and Rural Zones (Hearing
Stream 3)

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF JOHN ROSS ON BEHALF OF
SILVERSTREAM PARK CHRISTIAN CENTRE**

(CORPORATE)

5 JUNE 2026

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. My full name is John Stuart Ross. I am the founding donor and a Trustee of Silverstream Park Christian Centre. I am authorised to give this evidence on behalf of Silverstream Park Christian Centre Charitable Trust.
- 1.2. I have been involved with Silverstream Park Christian Centre since I bought and donated the property to the charitable trust in 1990. I am familiar with the landholdings, activities, facilities, history and future intentions relating to the land at:
 - (a) 320 Eastern Hutt Road, Stokes Valley.
 - (b) 3 & 15 Reynolds Bach Drive and Section 2 SO 429576¹.
 - (c) Sections 1–5 SO 461420.
- 1.3. My evidence is given in support of Silverstream Park Christian Centre’s submission on the Proposed Lower Hutt District Plan.
- 1.4. My evidence addresses:
 - (a) The existing Silverstream Park Christian Centre, including the Silverstream Retreat, and the role in the community.
 - (b) The consented development plan being implemented, and future accommodation and residential development intentions. This is also illustrated in **Attachment 1**.
 - (c) The relief sought through the submission [Ref: 32].

¹ This unaddressed parcel of land owned by Silverstream Park Christian Centre was inadvertently omitted from the submission text but is shown in submission Figure 1.

- (d) The section 42A report concerns and recommendations, including the Silverstream Park Christian Centre's 36 years' operating near Silverstream Landfill.
 - (e) The practical implications of the zoning and precinct provisions for Silverstream Park Christian Centre activities.
- 1.5. Planning and engineering matters are addressed by other witnesses.

2. THE SILVERSTREAM PARK CHRISTIAN CENTRE AND SILVERSTREAM RETREAT

- 2.1. Silverstream Park Christian Centre owns the land holding at 320 Eastern Hutt Road, Stokes Valley (and adjacent land). The 38ha (100 acre) site is located on the northern boundary of Lower Hutt and sits on a terrace overlooking the Hutt Valley, surrounded by native bush and bordered to the west by Te Awa Kairangi / Hutt River.
- 2.2. The site is not a typical property. It is a large, established, mixed-use retreat and community facility with a long history of lawful use. Development of the site goes back to World War II when a rehabilitation centre and hospital were authorised in early 1941. The hospital was in use by the US Navy from August 1942 to April 1944 when there were as many as 1,600 people staying there at any one time and later taken over by the Wellington Hospital Board.
- 2.3. Today, the Silverstream Retreat operates on the site, and is a long-established facility, that has been extensively renovated and modernised throughout. The Retreat provides a range of accommodation, conference, function, assembly, recreational and community facilities, and is an important community asset.

- 2.4. The Retreat currently includes nine residential dwellings. The Retreat currently has accommodation for approximately 300 bed guests, five separate conference venues, breakout rooms and much more.
- 2.5. Over the past 36 years, hundreds of thousands of people have passed through the property as guests, residents, visitors, staff, contractors, event attendees or facility users. Presently, in any given week, there is somewhere in the order of 1,000 people through the property, equating to over 50,000 people per year. Many of these use the facility at no charge or discounted rates.
- 2.6. The Retreat continually has guests that return and I often hear them say how they enjoy that every time they come back they see further improvement to the site and its facilities.
- 2.7. The facilities provided on the site are not easily replicated elsewhere in Lower Hutt, and this contributes to the social, cultural and economic wellbeing of Lower Hutt and the wider region.

3. CONSENTED DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND CURRENT CONSTRUCTION

- 3.1. Silverstream Park Christian Centre is currently implementing part of its latest development plan that was consented last year (RM240225). This includes significant new community and event facilities, including:
 - (a) A new event centre with capacity for approximately 750 people seated (or 1,000 standing), currently under construction.

- (b) A youth centre with capacity for approximately 200 people seated (or 250 standing).
 - (c) Associated infrastructure upgrades throughout the site, including three waters and new private roads and parking.
- 3.2. The fact that these facilities have been consented and are now under construction is important context for the Panel. The proposed precinct extension sought by Silverstream Park Christian Centre is not based on an uncertain or theoretical future proposal. It relates to the practical implementation of a consented development plan.

4. FUTURE ACCOMMODATION AND RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT INTENTIONS

- 4.1. In addition to the consented event centre and youth centre now under construction, Silverstream Park Christian Centre has further plans.

Accommodation

- 4.2. The next stage being considered is approximately 50 motel units. This would support the development plan, event, conference, accommodation, youth, community and visitor functions.
- 4.3. Over time, Silverstream Park Christian Centre would like to increase accommodation capacity. These future plans are important to satisfy community needs and long-term viability. The event centre and youth centre will increase the ability of the existing Silverstream Retreat to host larger events and groups.
- 4.4. Additional accommodation is needed so that the Retreat can properly. This is important to the Retreat's long-term viability.

Residential

- 4.5. Silverstream Park Christian Centre last year pursued a resource consent application (RM250027) for a 12-lot subdivision on the southern hill of the site, also accessed off Kingsly Street. The scheme plan is attached to the planning evidence of **Mr Cooper**.
- 4.6. A number of enabling steps have been completed, including:
- (a) Obtaining a right of way easement from Hutt City Council over the land at the end of Kingsly Street².
 - (b) Obtaining a drainage easement from the owners of 81 Kingsley Street to connect into the public sewer main.
- 4.7. That resource consent application was withdrawn in May last year on the basis that it would be more appropriate to re-apply once the Proposed District Plan zoning framework was resolved.
- 4.8. A 29-unit development option has also been investigated for the land.

5. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN 320 EASTERN HUTT ROAD AND 3 & 15 REYNOLDS BACH DRIVE AND SECTION 2 SO 429576

- 5.1. Silverstream Park Christian Centre's submission seeks that the Silverstream Retreat Precinct be extended over its land to include 3 & 15 Reynolds Bach Drive and Section 2 SO 429576. These parcels are intimately connected to the consented youth centre, indeed the building and overflow car parking straddle the land.

² Under section 348 of the Local Government Act, approved on 17.04.2025.

- 5.2. The properties are not, in practical terms, unrelated, undeveloped and vegetated, pieces of land. They form part of the broader setting and future development context. I return to this later.
- 5.3. It is important that the District Plan precinct boundary reflects the way the precinct actually operates and is expected to develop.

6. SECTIONS 1–5 SO 461420

- 6.1. Silverstream Park Christian Centre’s submission also addresses the land described as Sections 1–5 SO 461420. The Proposed District Plan applies General Rural Zone to this land.
- 6.2. Silverstream Park Christian Centre in their submission sought a Large Lot Residential Zone for this land. However, its position is now that General Rural Zone is most appropriate.

7. RELIEF SOUGHT

- 7.1. Silverstream Park Christian Centre seeks the following relief:
 - (a) Rezoning 320 Eastern Hutt Road from proposed Large Lot Residential Zone to Medium Density Residential Zone;
 - (b) Rezoning 3 & 15 Reynolds Bach Drive and Section 2 SO 429576 to Medium Density Residential Zone and extending the Silverstream Retreat Precinct to cover the land parcels;
 - (c) Any consequential amendments needed to give effect to that relief. This transferring the precinct provisions into the medium density chapter and necessary changes that arise.
- 7.2. Although it relates to the Open Space Hearing Stream, it is more efficient to address it here rather than attend again. The relief to unzone the small area of road reserve at end of Kingsley Street

(or rezone to Medium Density Residential remains for reasons in the outlined submission. As mentioned previously, a right of way easement has been approved by Hutt City Council to enable future subdivision of the adjacent land (which is part of the site).

- 7.3. The notified General Rural Zone is no longer opposed and that relief is withdrawn. The notified precinct standards permitting all buildings, events, and visitor accommodation are fully supported.
- 7.4. The reasons for seeking relief are:
 - (a) The site has a long-established residential, accommodation, conference, assembly and retreat community function use. It is not simply a conventional large-lot residential property, with a mixed use. The current operative zoning for most of 320 Eastern Hutt Road is Medium Density Residential, with the proposed down-zoning unjustified and out of context.
 - (b) The consented youth centre (under construction) and event centre needs an enabling planning framework that reflects the Silverstream Retreat and future facilities' actual and emerging role and location. The precinct boundary should reflect this.
 - (c) The requested zoning better reflects the site's urban context, while responding to the site constraints. Future effects can be addressed through resource consent, infrastructure requirements and site-specific controls.
- 7.5. The relief sought in the submission is therefore not speculative. It is connected to a real and staged development pathway for the site, including consented facilities now under construction, future accommodation growth, and residential options already enabled.

8. RESPONSE TO SECTION 42A REPORT

- 8.1. I understand that the Residential Zones section 42A report (and by cross-reference the Rural Zones section 42A report) recommends rejecting Silverstream Park Christian Centre's submission.
- 8.2. It is disappointing that no consultation has been undertaken with the Silverstream Park Christian Centre to better understand the site context and relief sought. This evidence seeks to inform the Panel and correct several errors and provide necessary context.
- 8.3. I understand the reporting officer's concerns relate mainly to:
- (a) stormwater servicing;
 - (b) natural watercourses;
 - (c) absence of a current Wellington Water flood model;
 - (d) wastewater servicing and potential need for upgrades;
 - (e) water supply and reliance on private infrastructure; and
 - (f) potential reverse sensitivity effects associated with Silverstream Landfill.
- 8.4. Silverstream Park Christian Centre accepts that these are important matters. I briefly address each of the concerns below.

Engineering and servicing

- 8.5. I refer to the engineering evidence of **Mr Godwin** that considers that future development can be designed to respond to infrastructure, water, wastewater, stormwater and flooding

matters. The planning evidence of **Mr Cooper** is that these matters should not be fatal flaw to the rezoning requested.

Landfill reverse sensitivity

- 8.6. I understand the section 42A report raises concerns about potential reverse sensitivity effects associated with Silverstream Landfill.
- 8.7. While I am not a landfill or air quality expert, I offer the following lay evidence based on my long years of experience with the site.
- 8.8. Overall, my observation of the landfill operation is that it is well managed, and that progressive staging and capping has improved over the years. From time to time, particularly in still weather conditions, I have noticed an odour that I would describe as similar to decomposing grass. I am not an odour or landfill-gas expert.
- 8.9. Based on my 36 years of close involvement with the Silverstream Park Christian Centre, I am confident that this infrequent odour has not affected the Silverstream Retreat's ability to operate successfully. To the best of my recollection, I am not aware of staff, guests, residents or users of Silverstream Retreat making complaints about infrequent odour or other effects from the landfill, and I do not recall making any complaints to the landfill or Council.
- 8.10. This is highly significant because the Silverstream Retreat has accommodated and hosted a very large number of people over many years (in the order of hundreds of thousands of people).

- 8.11. The common feedback received from guests and users is not that the landfill affects their experience. Rather, the feedback is often that the Silverstream Retreat is a peaceful and tranquil place.
- 8.12. In my view, the long operating history of the Retreat is important context for considering reverse sensitivity. The Retreat has existed near the landfill for decades, has hosted very large numbers of people, and has not, in my experience, generated complaints or pressure on the landfill. I accept that future development should still be designed and managed carefully. I also accept that the landfill is an important public facility and should not be compromised. However, I do not consider that proximity to the landfill should prevent the District Plan from fully recognising the existing situation and providing a reasonable and certain planning pathway for future development of the site.

Zoning relief

- 8.13. Drawing on the evidence of **Mr Cooper** and **Mr Godwin**, and my own lay evidence, I am of the view that the zoning relief requested in this evidence is most appropriate for the site. There is no servicing issue that cannot be managed by detailed design for future development, as has been the case with consenting the development plan. In my view, the proposed change from the current Medium Density Residential zoning to Large Lot Residential does not adequately reflect the site's established higher intensity use. I welcome the panel to visit the site.

9. PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCES IF RELIEF IS NOT GRANTED

- 9.1. If the relief is not granted, Silverstream Park Christian Centre will face a more constrained planning framework for a site already

being developed in accordance with the consented development plan.

9.2. In particular:

- (a) The main site will remain in a lower-density residential zone that does not fully reflect or enable the existing and future role of the Silverstream Retreat and new facilities;
- (b) The precinct boundary will not properly reflect the consented event centre under construction, and overflow parking, with the site's Section 2 SO 429576 unzoned;
- (c) Future accommodation growth, including the proposed motel units, may face a more complex and uncertain consenting pathway;
- (d) Residential development options for suitable parts of the land may be unduly constrained;
- (e) Opportunities to support community, youth, sporting, clubs, churches, kapa haka, events, accommodation and recreational activities may be limited.

10. CONCLUSION

- 10.1. Silverstream Park Christian Centre is concerned that the notified zoning and precinct do not provide enough flexibility for the Silverstream Retreat to fulfill its vision which has been shared many times with both Hutt City Council and Upper Hutt City Council, of which both have always expressed support. The relief requested recognises the sites established and future activities.

10.2. The Retreat is an established and important facility. It provides accommodation, conferences, assembly, recreation and community facilities that benefit Lower Hutt and the wider region.

John Ross

Dated 5 June 2026

ATTACHMENT 1: SILVERSTREAM RETREAT PHOTOS



ATTACHMENT 2: DEVELOPMENT PLAN



Note: Artist impression. Source: Cuttriss / Silverstream Retreat.