

SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE: GREG HUNT ON BEHALF OF GIBBSTON VALLEY STATION

1. My name is Greg Hunt and I am the CEO and one of two directors of Gibbston Valley Station. I have provided evidence in support of our rezoning submission dated 29 May 2020. My background and experience are detailed in that document.
2. Gibbston Valley is in the unique position of having an established brand that is well known in the New Zealand tourism and hospitality market. It is perceived as a quality brand with a quality product providing a quality experience for those visiting our facilities. We have worked very hard to create this perception and it is one that we can bring to the development of the Rural Visitor Zone, should the commissioners agree with its inclusion in the District Plan. It is also important that any proposal in a Rural Visitor Zone is one that is financially viable and will be seen as an asset to the local community.
3. For the past 16 years we (myself and the Gibbston Valley team) have been working towards developing Gibbston Valley as a destination, not only for wine and food but for experiences and accommodation. We completed the Lodge and Spa adjacent to the Winery at the end of last year and had the Gibbston Valley Resort Zone, on the flats of the station land, approved at the end of last year. I foresee that development in the Rural Visitor Zone will stand separately from either of these developments and have its own unique attributes.
4. We have been actively engaging with the New Zealand Transport Agency since 2008 regarding our various access points for the station, including the establishment of underpasses and very recently, the possibility of a roundabout. The Agency is very supportive of the approach that we take to development and I believe this is testament to the fact that they did not oppose our zoning requests for the resort or the rural visitor zone.
5. You have now visited the site and I am sure recognise that it has a sense of serenity and separation from the activities of Gibbston closer to the State Highway. I believe those staying in our Lodge & Spa may stay in the retreat lodge for a different experience, or in the future our guests in the resort would also book a stay for a different experience. In addition I would foresee it will be available for independent travellers, tourists, business retreats and so on. To create an image in your mind of the style of the lodge, imagine Minaret Lodge. It is this sense of being separated from the day to day hustle and bustle and being able to relax that will be a point of difference to other accommodation options.
6. As I outlined in my evidence, the fact that we have an existing management team in place to develop and run this facility also gives certainty to the wider and local community that we can create an amenity that will be an asset, not only to ourselves but the outside community as well. When considering proposals like this, I believe it is important to see how realistic the applicant is and what is their experience in creating something that is appropriate, and will be financially successful.
7. In my evidence I outlined the reason for asking for 180 days for a 'residential' stay in the accommodation units. It is important that we retain as high of an occupancy rate as we can throughout the year. Covid-19 has taught us that events can occur where we do not have visitors, but owners may utilise the facilities for a longer period during these events. In addition, the owners or their friends and family may come and stay for a month or longer during specific seasons. The more certainty we have in regard to our overall occupancy means the more certainty we have in retaining our staff and the financial viability of the development.

8. The provision for workers accommodation is also essential to our business, not only for providing essential accommodation but helping us retain and secure key staff in long term positions.
9. I am happy to discuss any matters with you.

Greg Hunt
30 July 2020

