Opening Statement Of Darryl Sycamore
Awa Koura Mining Limited, RC250077, Sandy Point, Queensberry

My name is Darryl Sycamore. I am a planner for Terramark Limited and am a full member of the New Zealand Planning Institute.

Although this is a Council hearing, I have read the code of conduct for expert witnesses as set out in section 9 of the Environment Court's Practice Note 2023. I have complied with the Code when preparing my evidence and recognise my role is to objectively assist the Panels understanding of the proposal.

The Council's reporting planner, Ms Spalding, recommends the consent be refused. She does acknowledge that most effects are acceptable, or can be managed by conditions. Her recommendation is driven primarily by noise, which she describes as finely balanced.

Noise

With respect to noise effects, there is no real debate about the technical assessment. Mr Styles accepts the modelling methods and the worst-case approach. Mr Shanks' evidence is that predicted levels comply with the District Plan limits at all existing assessment positions, and that Mr Styles agrees, that is except for those properties where written approval has been given. I have relied on those findings to form my assessment.

So the real question is whether this level noise associated with a mining activity is anticipated in the Rural Resource Area. In my opinion it is.

As I have explained, the National Planning Standards 2019 (and updated in 2022) includes mining within the definition of primary production in the definition standard. Consistent with rural zone standards, there is explicit acknowledgements of the role that mining plays in the Central Otago economy in the Rural Resource Area provisions for the District Plan. It is my view that mining is an anticipated part of rural character within the RRA, even though it requires site specific assessment through the consent process. It is not appropriate to characterise mining noise as

an industrial process or of a different character to what residents in the RRA can expect to experience from time to time.

The standard applied by the applicant is consistent with other recent extractive decisions within Central Otago. Mr Page, in his submissions has referred to the decisions of Road Metals Queensbury Quarry, Amisfield Quarry and Parkburn Quarry at Pisa Moorings as having a 55dB LA10 standard. In 2023, Hawkswood Mining at Millers Flat obtained consent through the Panel with that same standard albeit for the full duration of the daytime period being 7am to 10pm. As a planner, I consider unless there are clear reasons not to, the Plan should be applied consistently. The 55dB LA10 standard has been applied in those circumstances, and I consider it appropriate to apply it to this application.

Amenity

On amenity, I accept that mining will be an adverse change for the closest neighbours. Mr Moore assesses the effects as up to 'moderate to high' or in RMA speak, 'more than minor' from seven properties for between six and twenty-four months. None are assessed as having significant effects for any duration, and from most other properties there is little or no effect. Mr Milne, the Council's landscape peer reviewer, considered effects on neighbours to be nil to moderate. Both landscape architects agree the effects are temporary and neither consider the effects unacceptable. I have relied on both landscape experts in forming my effects assessment.

Conclusion

The landowner has agreed to the mining occurring prior to exercising the 8-lot subdivision consent. Once mining is completed, the site will then be developed and the character of the property will change in perpetuity.

For those reasons and as set out in my evidence it is my opinion consent can be granted, subject to conditions. I am happy to answer any questions.