

Newlands Community Meeting

25 November 2015 – Newlands Community Centre

WCC Officers: Dan Batley (presenter), Karen Williams (note taker)

Councillors: Cllr Justin Lester, Cllr Malcolm Sparrow, Cllr Andy Foster (late),

Members of the public: approximately 35 people in attendance

Apologies: Cllr Ritchie

Welcome by Councillor Justin Lester

NB. Session was recorded and will be placed on the Newlands/Paparangi Progressive Association website.

WCC Presentation by Dan (available on Council website)

Public feedback/questions

Question: What does the Council define as 'medium-density housing'

Answer: Generally accepted definition in NZ is 30-60 dwellings per hectare. Typically equates to about 1 dwelling per 250-300m². There's no minimum lot size in Wellington, development is instead influenced by density controls (e.g. site coverage, open space, setbacks, heights etc).

Question: So is this essentially infill housing? Is there a maximum limit per development?

Answer: Looking to encourage more comprehensive development, rather than adhoc infill. The District Plan does not currently limit the number of units – but rather uses tools such as site coverage, open space and carparking as a way to manage the intensity of a development. High quality design outcomes are a key part of the overall process.

Discussion regarding development in Middleton Road in Johnsonville, Cr Lester noted that this was consented under the current Outer Residential Area rules and planning framework.

Question: Will Woodridge eventually get another road that doesn't require all traffic to go through Newlands?

Answer: The Structure Plan provides for road corridors that will eventually be constructed on the other side of Woodridge and will mean all traffic will no longer be directed through Newlands. Woodridge is part of a much wider long-term development that is currently managed by the Lincolnshire Farms Structure Plan.

Question/Statement: Referring to the low growth projections, i.e. 300 houses in Newlands, there was scepticism that these are actually accurate. Woodridge has more than just 10 houses built each year. Is there even a need for this if Woodridge is expanding at its current rate?

Answer: The forecasts are a relatively blunt tool and are based off census data and are undertaken using forecasting tool/calculations by specialised demographers. Also note that

these forecasts are based on current growth rates, they do not take into account the rates if medium-density housing is introduced. The Woodridge catchment sits outside of the Newlands-Ngauranga population forecast catchment and therefore the growth rates in that area do not impact on the forecast assumptions for Newlands.

Question: What is going to happen with public transport? The bus service is already oversubscribed during peak morning periods and the congestion on Newlands Road is already significant. More development up in Woodridge is only making this worse. What is going to happen in this space?

Answer: We will work with Greater Wellington Regional Council in an advocacy role to see how public transport can be improved. This project provides a mandate to investigate that further and push a case for greater services. This feedback helps lend weight to seeing how we might be able to influence improvements in the public transport system.

Statement/Comment: Metlink has recently altered the bus timetables to reflect the fact that the bus service is taking longer to arrive in the city centre. It isn't putting on more services, but rather is showing that the travel time is longer.

Statement/Comment: Some didn't receive material through the post.

Answer: Acknowledge this. Unfortunately there was an error in the rates database that was used in the mailout. The submission timeframe has been extended to 7 December 2015 partially in response to this and also in recognition of the timing of the Public Meetings.

Question: Carparking is also an issue – developments are already occurring that aren't providing the minimum number required.

Answer: Cr Lester - In the case of the development at Frankmoore Ave, Johnsonville, the matter of carparking was closely considered. Given the site's proximity to the Johnsonville centre and public transport networks, the Council considered 15 (of 18) carparks was adequate.

Dan Batley – do not anticipate removing minimum parking requirement as part of this process. Every application is assessed for design, traffic and parking consideration. If approval is provided to reduce carparkign, this is made having reviewed the capacity of the road network, availability of onstreet parking, proximity to public transport.

Question: Will applications in the medium-density area be notified?

Answer: In the Johnsonville and Kilbirnie context the building standards (site coverage, heights, setbacks etc) provide the basic framework. If a design is presented that meets these parameters, then non-notification applies and the assessment is based on design outcomes. If the proposal breaches the building standards, then notification of affected parties is a matter that would be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Question: So that means that a development can go through without being notified to neighbours?

Answer: Essentially – so long as it complies with bulk and density controls. That is why we are seeking community feedback at this stage of the process. The medium-density zone would

provide greater certainty to residents around what scale of development is appropriate, but the non-notification process also provides certainty to those looking to develop that there will be no lengthy delays in the process. Residents can sign up as "concerned neighbours" if you would like to be informed of any resource consents on adjoining sites. This is an informal service, but does not provide a resident with formal status in a resource consent application process.

Statement/Comment: Concern expressed that the Council simply approves every application and doesn't advocate for better design outcomes.

Answer: The Council does, and will continue to, assess each application on its own merits. The Council is also looking at ways to ensure design outcomes are enhanced.

Question: Where will this development go? There doesn't appear to be any land around for this form of development?

Answer: There are a number of ways to achieve this. Development can be located at the rear of existing properties (especially if multiple neighbours get together to form a development site); some houses may be demolished to make way for new development; existing homes could be converted into multiple dwellings. The Council will not be undertaking/leading this development, it will be up to individual property owners.

Question: How will this housing accommodate the elderly?

Smaller homes are needed for a whole spectrum of the population, 1 & 2 person only households won't just be elderly people. However, the Council is also looking at ways to encourage adaptive design to enable those with limited mobility to live on ground floor with guest rooms above. Units could also be separated so a unit is located on the ground level, with an additional unit on the top floor. The Council is also looking at including guidelines in the Residential Design Guide to advocate for adaptive living for all sectors of the community and Council Officers can also advocate for this form of housing in 'pre-application' meetings. The Council does not control the market and does not have the power to require only single storey homes to cater for the elderly.

Statement: Developers appear to have all of the power – for example what has occurred in Spenmoor Street.

Question: Were there any changes to the Johnsonville medium-density rules as a result of community concern before the process went to the Environment Court?

Answer: Cr Lester – no, the changes were made at the Environment Court.

NB. Correction – changes to the height limit were made at the Council Hearing – i.e. reduction from 3 levels to 2 levels.

Question: Has the Council commissioned valuation assessments to see what the impact is on property values when a medium-density residential area is introduced to an area?

Statement: Jim Candiolutis – A Valuer has advised that land values do go up, but this relates only to the land (as its development potential has increased). Value of home and improvements do not go up. Will there be any compensation?

Answer: Cr Lester – no.

Question: If this change comes, will people be restricted from building structures such as carports on their existing sites?

Answer: Not looking to limit current ability to construct additions/new structures. The proposed medium-density rules would relate to intensification of housing stock, so if you want to build an additional unit(s) then resource consent would be required.

Question: There is a lot of Council housing in Newlands at the moment – what is happening with this?

Answer: No current plans to redevelop this. It will need to be looked at closely in the future for maintenance etc and options will be looked at then. Eg. There is a forward programme to refurbish the Bachelor St flats, but there are no plans for redevelopment at this stage.

Question: The current framework doesn't achieve good design outcomes – how can we have confidence that better design will be achieved if this plan is introduced?

Answer: We are working harder on multiple fronts to improve design outcomes. We are looking to strengthen the Residential Design Guide, working with architects/designers/developers to lift their game, strongly emphasising the importance of requiring high quality design with the implementation team (resource consents).

Question: What about children in this form of housing?

Answer: Newlands will remain a suburb that accommodates a large number of families. Family homes will remain relevant and accordingly there will remain a large number of homes to accommodate this part of the community. However, there is a changing household make-up with more households only accommodating 1-2 people. This is the primary market that will be catered for by this form of housing.

Cr Lester – also depends on where families are locating – gave personal anecdote about his family moving into a larger home vacated by older people.

Question: Will the open space in Helston Road be rezoned to provide for this form of development?

Answer: No. Open space areas will remain.

Question: What about stormwater and sewerage infrastructure?

Answer: As well as the 'above ground' considerations such as design, traffic and parking, the Council also looks at the capacity of the infrastructure network. If upgrades are required, then developers have to undertake these as part of their proposal. The Council has also commissioned some work from Wellington Water to better understand the existing capacity and limitations of the local infrastructure network.

Question: Acknowledge the changing demographics and ageing population, but note that there are 4 schools in the 5-10 minute walking catchment. Shouldn't families with children locate in this area?

Answer: Family homes will always remain relevant in this catchment. Concept is to locate greater intensification within close proximity to the amenities, services, and public transport. It's about providing housing choice to a range of the population.

Question: How do we state that we oppose this?

Answer: Note that on your submission form. Ideally we are seeking constructive feedback – however most people are making it very clear whether they support this concept or not.

Cllr Lester closed the meeting off and invited everyone again to please make their views clear in the feedback to the Council.

Meeting closed at 9:40pm.