

Khandallah Community Meeting Notes– Thursday 19th November 2015, 7:30pm – 9:45pm

- Officers present: Daniel Batley and Karen Williams (presenters), Liz Moncrieff (note taker)
- Packed hall, estimate about 230 people in attendance.

Welcome by Councillor Jo Coughlan

WCC Presentation by Dan and Karen (available on Council website)

Khandallah Residents Group - Diane Calvert

- Invited remainder of the Khandallah Residents Group to step forward
- Newly formed group, not an Association as such.
- Strong feeling about the project following the drop-in centres and need for further information
- Thanked Councillors for ensuring a public meeting held.
- Medium Density Housing project appears to have come out of the blue for the community.
- Not against some increased density/infill/intensification, but want to ensure plans fit the purpose and enhance the community.
- Community not just about buildings.
- Council says only at investigation stage, but Khandallah is part of overall project involving 7 suburbs (Johnsonville, Kilbirnie, Tawa, Karori, Newlands, Island Bay and Khandallah).
- Consider this is a cookie cutter approach and the Council lacks capacity to deal with each suburb's unique identity and needs.
- Khandallah is different to other suburbs. We've been directed back to Wgtn Urban Growth Plan, which has already been consulted on. It is a 74 page document and Khandallah mentioned on about page 50.
- All parts of Council need to work together. We invited senior members to come along – but they couldn't make it. Mayor's put in her apologies too.
- Some of the existing examples of Medium Density Housing are against current rules, so not surprising there is lack of trust from the community in Council being able to apply their own rules.
- Handed out details for Khandallah residents group.
- Answer questions in feedback form exactly how you want to answer it.

MP Brett Hudson - National List MP based in Oharui:

- Considered there was a misapprehension that central government driving this discussion about Medium Density Housing, although noted that Council Officers noted this wasn't the case.
- National Government long held the view that artificial constraints on the availability of land drives up house prices.
- The Government is seeking to address this by negotiating agreements with Councils to increasing housing supply. The Special Housing Areas accord the Government has with WCC is an example of this. The idea is to remove barriers to land supply, but doesn't demand high intensity housing.

- But the Government does acknowledge that medium density housing might provide part of the discussion/solution. The Government is not imposing this solution on local government. Medium density housing is a matter for discussion between councils and local communities, following a consultation process.
- Then spoke of a recent good consultation example involving NZTA and the Petone to Granda link road. Concerns of Tawa and Takapu Valley residents were heard and a different route has been selected to reduce impacts on these communities. Consultation processes can work and he encouraged people to have their say.

Public feedback/questions

Question/statement: 7 suburbs being consulted and how many of these have been rejected so far? Are the odds against us to oppose this?

Answer: Only two have been confirmed in the Plan. Consultation process part of process on MDH still going ahead. Council officers consistently reporting to council who agree to next stage. Independent decision making process through RMA. This process is by no means a done deal.

Question/Statement: Referring to the low growth projections, it was noted that a developer just bought two sections next door, approximately 2000m² of land. Under the existing District Plan, the Council planners told us that the developer entitled to build two houses per sections. ie 4 instead of two dwellings. Developer has refused to confirm how many houses will be built. It could be 6, it could be 10. Don't trust planning process. Why do we need a dramatic change to DP, when there is no real need for this based on the growth projections?

Answer: The Plan doesn't provide for absolutes. It is structured to deal with developments at different levels, ie ranging from permitted development to development that need a consent process. In those cases, it is a design led process where the Council assess the effects and notification may occur depending on process.

Question/statement: Appreciate having professional planners here. Overall, understand city growth management about having high density in centre, low density in outer suburbs. Aren't we already a low density suburb?

Answer: CBD living quite different to what we are talking here. Wellington has constrained urban limits and the Outer Green Belt is a part of this. This work is about providing for different housing choices in a range of ways. The opportunity to downsize to smaller homes to obviously present here.

Question/statement: Tony Randell spoke, noting he was a "Refugee from MDRA in Johnsonville". Noted they ended up in the Environment Court over the proposal to introduce MDRA in Johnsonville. Costs of around \$10,000. When we faced it – it was called an "area of change", with the intention being to change housing in suburban centres. Their community worked hard and were determined, but so were the Council. They also had early consultation phases and they considered their feedback was ignored. Felt the fight against MDRA stacked in favour of the Council. If council really cared about you, it will introduce a design guide – it isn't necessary to increase density rules. I give you a 50/50% change of stopping this. This is the time when you need to say no. You are a village and not a town centre.

Cllr Justin Lester: He noted he was elected to Council off the back of opposing MDRA development in Johnsonville. Noted some sites that weren't MDRA in the end still ended up

with multi-unit developments on them and they didn't have the tighter controls imposed on them as a result. Explained the permitted baseline again and the process for getting resource consent. Referenced the Middleton Road example, noting the original proposal was to build 21 units, came back to 18, then 16. Officers working hard to get better design outcomes. Talked about Multi unit development on Ganges Road (former fire station) as a good example. example as being a good example. There are some benefits to MDRA in terms of suburban investment to support future growth. Noted that Graeme Sawyer (who fought the Council against MDRA in Johnsonville) recently told him it hasn't been as bad as he thought due to stricter design controls. Invited the community to give feedback, consider the benefits too and not to throw the baby out with the bath water.

Question/statement: Few people in Khandallah who want to downsize from large family homes to apartment block – most people want to downsize and stay here – they might want smaller (but not small), probably detached, possibly semi-detached, own small piece of land, but don't want the degree of intensification being talked about now by the Council. Noted that the Minutes of TUD 9th Sept – vote for an investigation in MDH in Khandallah. We want to know how each councillor voted on this. Did they expect a plan to go out to residents for comment less than a year later. The definition of medium density housing is 30 – 65 dwellings per hectare. The District Plan and design guides state that complementing existing character is not a factor in medium density housing areas.

Answer: Cllr Woolf – noted he was overseas when vote occurred, but was supportive of engagement and consultation. He spoke to the Council's engagement policy. This project is in a very early stage and the debate is healthy. The outcome is not a fait accompli. Very important that you should be able to put your feedback into the equation.

Cllr Coughlan noted that she always votes to go out for consultation because she needs to understand what the community has to say. The consultation process important one and it is a continual struggle to meet communities' expectations on consultation. Staff and councillors are well intentioned in this process and we all want a good result for the city.

Question/statement: Neighbour of development in Middleton Road spoke up citing her extreme frustration over the development and behaviour of the developer. What was approved by the Council was not what was built. How can you guarantee that what you approve is what is built?

Question/statement: The Council is putting the cart before the horse here. There is no demand for this in Khandallah. Also there is no town centre plan. The document published is a disgrace. The Wgtn Urban Growth Plan makes lots of promises for centres with medium density housing. But we don't yet know yet what the town centre plan will have in it. The Town centre plan should come first before housing.

Answer: Starting the town centre planning process alongside the housing work. Consultation critical part of the town centre plan.

Question/Statement: Who makes the decision - planning department or elected council?

Answer: Elected Council.

Question/Statement: Allan Taylor noted that he doesn't have Khandallah specific information even after asking for it from Council. Each suburb is unique and considered this process is a "one size fits all" whether we like it or not. He quoted: "I know what I believe, don't confuse me with debate". Considered there was inconsistent information between the brochure and council website. If concerned you need to have a say, tell us your needs and Councillors too. Given the 30 year time

horizon, why is there such unseemly haste in the process. It has caused much anger, distress and upset. The damage needs to be repaired and treat residents with respect. He is seeking a firm and sincere commitment from Councillors to achieve a joint effort, with all solutions and all necessary time to bring process to fruition. Need to ensure planners instructed to this effect and intention. Noted that medium density housing will likely become major issue for elections next year.

Answer: Cllr Woolf noted he wasn't committed to the Plan as yet – we are listening first. We need to work together on this but some other aspects, such as trust and confidence issues have been eroded and need to keep working on these. Councillors are talking about this and discussing these issues seriously. For MDRA to succeed, everything has to line up, including RMA (noting comments from Sir Geoffrey Palmer that the RMA as it is now is not how it was first conceived). Officers need to be aligned in interpreting the legislation. If the stars don't align (eg, character, homes (not houses), liveable communities, benefits for the community) then he won't vote for it. Happy to extend process to work on this together. He is working hard to introduce better methods at Council to avoid court arguments. Shocked at way consultation approached, though not through the fault of officers.

Cllr Foster also spoke noting that we do have issue in Wellington and are working across the City to address a growing and aging population. Talked about growth management across the city – greenfields, CBD, suburbs. Need to make sure new housing is sustainable. Accept there is a need to take more time, we don't need to rush the process. We want to hear what do you value and what you don't want to sacrifice. We will listen with sincerity. Yes we will take local views into account. Each community is different and this isn't intended to be a cookie cutter approach.

Question/statement: Thomas Davis spoke noting he's lived 17 years in suburb. He has never seen turnout for a public meeting from Khandallah as strong as this. We aren't first suburb that has gone through this. Karori has made submissions, it is Wellington's biggest suburb, but still only about 250 submissions. Urged all people present in the meeting to put in a submission. The Council provided form is helpful, but he noted that regardless of the fact there was no question about whether you liked medium density housing or not, the officers did report on this in their summary of the Karori submissions, ie whether people support or oppose medium density housing. So do note your support or not. Considers the definition of medium density housing is an issue and need to make this more widely understood. There is more information on the website, such as the two different versions of rules for Johnsonville. I am not that old, but officers tell us there are people in suburban communities who want to downsize. Invited members of the audience to hold up hands who agreed with this – a handful of hands shot up. Questioned where the data to support this downsizing trend. Noted that officers have done a good job, especially fronting up and walking into the lion's den – let's not shoot the messengers. The District Plan can't require certain housing to be occupied by elderly. He asked for a show of hands to people oppose to medium density housing in Khandallah – resulting in almost all of the audience putting hands up. Wondered about the capacity of schools to cater for additional students that would come into the suburb. Someone else from the audience noted that the school principals at a recent meeting notes that all schools at capacity, but the Ministry of Education says "not to worry" we'll make sure there is enough room.

Question/Statement: Ron Gall spoke up to support this proposal. He has lived in area for many years and seen significant change in that time. Noted the arrow of time does not stop or go backwards; we need to think of the future. He recalled the significant community backlash over the construction of the houses on the former firestation site. It was unbelievable but now people love those houses. Development will only happen with a willing seller and by the time this starts to have

any real impact on us, many of us will have passed on to a better place. We need to move to the future. We want a vibrant village and it's important to still have shops here. Considered there was a lot of NIMBYs in Khandallah.

Question/Statement: We don't want to repeat poor quality examples. Doing nothing not a solution and saying no is not good enough either. The speaker asked people to remember the proposed development of townhouses on No. 9 Nicolson Road. The Council tried to work closely with this community on this but felt constrained by the District Plan provisions. We need to work to improve the District Plan to improve outcomes. In the end the neighbours bought the property to save it from development. We know this community, we need to come up with a form of intensification that is going to work for us and this council. Definitely say no way to 30-65 dwellings/hectare, but do need to find the appropriate level of intensification to meet the identified, very small need for more housing. Need to encourage developers to develop housing suitable for older people, which would then free up larger homes for families.

Question/Statement: A woman with a legal background spoke up noting that most people don't feel capable of taking legal action. Mediation is a much more accessible route for most people. Noted that this meeting was not originally part of the consultation plan with the community. Noted the land around here very expensive. Considered that assuming developers expect to make a profit, considering the amount of money paying for the land and with requirements for good design, they will need to put on a lot of units to make the development succeed. Reflected on the Chch earthquake experiences, considered it was important for us to know whether the Council considered resilience to earthquakes. Noted that lots of green space is needed to support post-quake emergency/recovery needs of communities. If looking to 30 years, we need to recognise next 30 years will probably be different in the way people live their lives. More people working from home and living further out from town. Tsunami risk is another factor to consider. Huge need for green space for children and young people too. The research shows that children having less interaction with outdoor recreation and need more engagement with nature.

Question/Statement: Endorsed those views, cart becoming before the horse. Need more meetings like this to understand these issues. Feels like things are being done back to front at the moment.

Question/Statement: Have heard a lot about consultation, but wondered why we need to do this. Why can't we just have a referendum?

Answer: Cllr Lester noted that a referendum could happen but it doesn't ultimately help anyone. Development proposals will still occur. We need tighter design and better planning. In terms of the town centre planning, that is for the community to provide feedback on. Noted the significant investment made in Johnsonville – roading, new library, pool. He also referred to the development site on the corner of Frankmore Ave and Moorfield Road where the developers worked with the Council for 12 months to get design approved, after the first designs were knocked back.

Officer Dan Batley also commented noting that this project relates to a 30 year timeframe, but the District Plan has to be reviewed every ten years. There won't be an overnight change, but do need people to continue to engage.

Statement: Brett Hudson responded to criticisms about the RMA, noting that the Government were committed to making reforms, noting there are some hurdles to change. There seems to be two different views on this. Our view is that local government across NZ are interpreting the RMA in many ways creating a myriad of different rules across the country. Challenged local councillors to be

able to state that the government has unequivocal support of elected councillors to push through RMA performs. Also noted that the Environment Court has overturned council decisions around its interpretation of the DP (perhaps referencing the Roseneath fencing issue?).

Cllr Foster responded by noting that the general tenor of the proposed changes to the RMA would be to make development easier, by making notification harder. Already about 2% of consents notified. Through a combination of changes to the legislation this has changed how our rules in the Plan work. The Government wants more houses built and set up the Special Housing Areas Accord programme to deliver this. That process prevents notification of neighbours.

Question/Statement: Nowhere has it been defined what medium density housing actually is. You talk about the building envelop provisions but the concepts are so vague that it is hard to know what to comment on. Need to understand the broad spectrum of what it could be. Don't want to rush the process or pre-empt it.

Question/statement: If ten units were built on a section this year (ie the amount of units needed each year to support growth), would the Council then say no more this year? Where can you stop this?

Answer: Officers noted that they are not aware of cities that put on limits on new housing in that way. We currently use site coverage controls to manage overall building density. Not intending to put in a rule stating developers must achieve a minimum density of 30 units/hectare. We use population projections as the 'best information' we have to use to plan for the future.

Question/statement: Let's get to the point. If I'm a developer and get my plans signed off but I build more than why I'm allowed to what can the Council do about this?

Answer: Officers noted this becomes a compliance issue. The RMA allows for retrospective consents to be considered for work already done, but if the issues are significant enforcement action can also be taken. In the past this has resulted in the work having to be removed.

Cllr Coughlan closed the meeting off, noting that the Councillors were keen to find mutually agreeable solution by working with locals. She invited everyone again to please make their views clear in the feedback to the Council.

Meeting closed at 9:40pm.