

My name is Wayne Donnelly. I am presenting on behalf of my daughter Katy Donnelly who owns and lives in a house on Rossiter Avenue, Waterloo. Our submission number is 079.

My career includes periods as Director of Planning for Auckland Council and CEO of Rodney District Council where I was responsible for bringing about new district plans under the RMA – albeit in somewhat different circumstance to what Hutt City faces today.

I currently live in a precinct in Auckland that was zoned Terrace Housing and Apartment Buildings under the Auckland Unitary Plan. That zoning is very similar to your proposed higher density residential zones. I am seeing first hand what that is going to look and feel like.

We are not opposed to well controlled intensification that puts enough emphasis on recognising that amenity around these proposed multi story developments is also important alongside meeting demand for new dwellings. We have lived in other cities, particularly Geneva, where 7 and 8 story apartment blocks are common but they are not jammed into quarter acre sections that have since been subdivided.

On the first matter of new dwelling demand and supply, the 2022 Housing Capacity Assessment Report for Hutt City quantifies the demand for new dwellings over 30 years to be in the order 25,000. I have not been able to find an estimate of the realistic number of new dwellings enabled by Plan Change 56 but it will be several multiples of that demand. Plan change 78 – the parallel plan change in Auckland appears to be providing for 90 years of growth. Whatever the number is for Lower Hutt, it will represent a massive overshoot over demand which will bring around its own issues for the Council and its ratepayers over time.

On the second matter of surrounding amenity, it seems to have been completely overlooked that PC56 means many more people living over the top of each other sharing the same open spaces, be they parks or road reserves, that the current population does without any plans to provide more such space. Intensification is about more people being able to walk and cycle etc – in this context every access way becomes important open space.

Our submission in broad terms is about promoting that Hutt City recognise that Plan Change 56 represents a gross oversupply of new dwelling capacity and take every step it can to soften the impact of intensified development in the interests of improving the general neighbourhood amenity and active mode and recreational functionality. Further, that Hutt City recognise that every open space not built on has amplified importance in the higher density zones and that should be recognised in its development standards and how they are applied.

In our submission (79.2) we proposed two ways in which this could be achieved at the more granular level. Both have either been dismissed or rejected outright in the Planner's report.

Rule 4G 4.2.4 states “ Where the boundary forms part of a legal right of way, entrance strip, access site, or pedestrian access way, the height in relation to boundary applies from the farthest boundary of the legal right of way, entrance strip, access site or pedestrian access way.”

Our submission was that this should not automatically be the case because it could lead to poor neighbourhood outcomes. For example, the rule applies to pedestrian access ways – which will become increasingly important infrastructure in the intensified walking communities. The rule potentially turns these access ways into unpleasant and unsafe canyons. Rule 4G4.2.4 creates full height vertical walls along the boundaries of these access ways rather than step back with height.

The same can be said for private roads that serve multiple sites – this is the circumstance with Katy’s property on Rossiter Avenue. Even current vehicular rights of way will take on a different purpose requiring greater amenity under Plan change 56.

Paragraph 468 of the Planners Report states;” Katy and Wayne Donnelly (079) seek that the standard be amended to so that the Height in Relation to Boundary applies at lot boundary instead of farthest boundary of a right of way. This is considered an efficient approach as shading a right of way has little effect on sunlight access for residents, and it is recommended this approach be retained.”

The Planner’s comment is correct but it misses the point of our submission. That is; that in the scenario of Plan Change 56 grossly overproviding for new dwelling capacity more weight and attention should be given to the surrounding amenity and walking environment even if the development capacity of some individual lots is less efficient.

Our second proposal was to reduce the preclusion of notification of resource consents where multiple standards were exceeded by an application. Paragraph 115 of the Planner’s Report rejects this proposal for the stated reason that preclusion is required under the MDRS. I do question whether that fully applies to the High Density Residential Zones.

Collectively the proposed standards for that zone are massively different from controls that have applied in the past. Their collective impact is yet something to be discovered. To remove even the prospect of notification will encourage developers to seek scale beyond even that envisaged by the standards. In my experience as a manager responsible for the operation of district plans, it is the prospect of notification that tempers the demands of developers and creates a check and balance beyond the resolve of council officers which will be worn down over time. Otherwise gravity happens and things move in the direction of the constant unchallenged pressure.

If preclusion actually is a legislated requirement then Council should look at a policy intervention to be applied.

For example; if an application proposes to exceed any standard it will need to demonstrate that the impact on those affected is no greater than that achieved by compliance with the standard or there is compensating benefit to those affected from where the maximums of the other standards are not approached by the application.

In our submission we may have proposed devices to meet our concerns that are not allowable or realistic. However, our overall message is the same, this is a massive change, there is gross over provision of new dwelling capacity in Plan Change 56 without compensation provision of recreation space and amenity for the many new residents to come. In that circumstance Council should give itself greater capability to mitigate the worst impacts of intensification around the edges than it currently does. If our proposals are to continue to be rejected or are unworkable, then our challenge to Council is to find and implement other ways of doing the same.