



Normandale Residents Association

Contact
P. Matcham
President

Submission on Draft Hutt City Council

Annual Plan 2010-2011

General comments

We are particularly concerned that priority in the LTCCP is given to projects that support long term sustainability, socially, environmentally and financially.

We are also concerned with the level and manner of ongoing informal consultation between Council and residents. We address this more fully under Other Issues below, but in this context we also wish to record our appreciation of the support and assistance the NRA has received from Council Officers and Western Ward Councillors, and the degree to which officers have sought our input on matters of concern to our community.

Managing Finances

We recognise that it is necessary to build reserves of borrowing capacity in anticipation of large capital works in the near future, but we also believe that current services and immediate projects should continue to be provided and improved. We recognise and accept that this may require a marginal increase in rates above inflation but whilst we acknowledge the necessity of Council's fiscal prudence, we are concerned that this does not become an end in itself. .

Fees and charges

We support the proposed changes to fees and charges.

In addition we advocate the introduction of metered water supply. We consider that potable water, as a finite resource, is an appropriate candidate for 'user pays'. However any introduction of metering should be supported by the use of a reverse step charge regime to encourage conservation.

Changes to projects

McKenzie Pool. We suggest that the proposed work is started within the 2010/11 financial year during the normal winter closed period. Completion would then be in the following financial year thus splitting the cost across two years.

Stormwater improvements. We consider that projects under this heading are essential and any deferment unacceptable.

Upgrading substandard roads and Roothing network improvement. We consider that these works should not be delayed, but that the design concepts should be reviewed to ensure that pedestrian safety and shared space concepts are given a priority. Within Normandale and the Western Hills, many 'Sub standard' roads have a high historic value, and their vehicle unfriendly nature contributes markedly to safety by enforcing caution and below legal limit speeds. However we consider that in many cases pedestrian

separation is a priority, and that this can be achieved at a marginal cost by following the principle of “fit for purpose” rather than mandated standards developed for use in an urban environment.

We have no view on the remaining projects listed

Transforming the CBD

We consider that upgrading the CBD is a priority for the City, and support the goals established by the community workshops in 2009. We are dismayed however that the concepts presented omit any reference to the shared space concept developed by Hans Monderman and recommend that any development of the CBD be based on this concept.

The CBD and the city as a whole would benefit from the increased safety demonstrated by similar projects in Europe, and Hutt City would also benefit by being seen as a world leader in urban design.

We note with dismay that Hutt City has a poor record of injury accidents involving pedestrians, with an upward trend from a comparatively high base, and consider that the needs of pedestrians should be given priority in all new developments, subdivisions, and urban design projects.

With regard to the suggested Margaret Street bridge and re-location of Melling Station, we consider that this as shown would be counter productive. The concept ignores the high level of commuter traffic, both car and pedestrian, that accesses Melling station from the Western Hills. Whilst we can see some merit in a pedestrian and cycle bridge linking Pharazyn street to Margaret Street, we consider that any traffic alteration should be integrated with the NZTA Melling interchange design, and that further work should be deferred until that time.

Vision for the City

We support the vision as set out and in particular support the proposal to enhance the entrances to the city. We specifically endorse the further planting of trees on road verges and the undergrounding of cabling.

Selling 8 Kensington Avenue Petone.

We support this proposal

Amending The City's gambling policy

The NRA does not wish to comment on Gambling per se, however we believe that, based on the information currently available to us, in considering gaming machines in isolation, the costs to society of gambling addiction is greater than the social benefits derived from the distribution of one third of the take to community (principally sporting) groups.

We therefore support option 3 of those presented. However, if option 5 were to be adopted we consider that a more appropriate machine to population ratio would be 1:300 in line with Wellington City.

Other Issues

Second tier representation

The LTCCP refers to the workshops and community meetings held in 2009. A key outcome of those meetings was the need for more open and easily accessible communication between Council and the public, both directly and via Resident's associations.

We consider that the currently implemented regime has singularly failed to meet this objective. In particular, the Central and Western ward committee, has withdrawn itself from any contact with residents associations and so far from encouraging engagement, has withdrawn to the splendid isolation of Council chambers. Whilst we have no direct contact with other ward committees, anecdotal evidence from personal contacts indicate that a similar problem exists elsewhere. We therefore consider that the current model is flawed and should be discontinued. We would advocate the appointment of dedicated liaison officer(s) at council, tasked with attending all resident association meeting and being a highly visible contact point for anyone wishing to raise or pursue an issue with Council.

If ward committees are to be retained to preserve a degree of equity with those parts of the City having Community Boards, we believe that representatives should be elected rather than appointed, and that clear terms of reference be given that requires the committee to hold its meetings within all parts of its constituency, and for members to directly engage with existing community groups such as residents associations.

Street lighting

We are concerned over the insidious spread of street lighting to the rural parts of Normandale. We oppose this on two grounds. First that, contrary to popular opinion it is demonstrably detrimental to road safety. On the narrow, winding roads that characterise the historical Western Hill suburbs, there are no long distance views, and at night the approach of vehicular traffic is first signalled to pedestrians, cyclists etc by the loom of the vehicles headlights. In some cases, this can be perceived when the vehicle is several hundred metres distant, long before the driver could be aware of the pedestrian. With street lighting, this early warning is lost, and hearing becomes the only warning before the vehicle emerges from a bend ten or so yards distant. Similarly there is no benefit in visibility to the driver, who indeed loses the same early warning of other vehicles.

Secondly we consider that light pollution is of major concern. The acknowledgement of this problem is wide spread. The US Park Service defines light pollution as:

“the illumination of the night sky caused by artificial light sources, decreasing the visibility of stars and other natural sky phenomena. Also includes other incidental or obtrusive aspects of outdoor lighting such as glare, trespass into areas not needing lighting, use in areas where or at times when lighting is not needed, and disturbance of the natural nighttime landscape”

The impact of light pollution goes far beyond the ability to observe stars however. We note that in Australia public lighting is the single largest source of local government's energy use and hence greenhouse gas emissions, and have no reason to doubt the figures are similar for New Zealand.

Within New Zealand Tekapo's efforts to preserve its dark sky as part of its bid for World Heritage status is well known, but much larger cities, such as Flagstaff in Arizona USA have also adopted a dark sky policy.

We recommend that within the city as a whole all new or replacement street lights be of a full cut off design, and that within the rural areas of the Western Hills, at the very least, no further street lighting be installed. We would prefer that those street lights that have over the last ten years gradually encroached on these areas be removed.

Reduction in service levels

We note with dismay that the service levels provide by the contracted services to Parks and Gardens to maintain the entrance to Normandale continues to decline. The area moved has markedly decreased, leading to a widespread increase in tradescantia infestation. This has been exacerbated by the contractors continued use mowers that spread broken stems which then root. In one area no maintenance has been carried out at all, apparently due to a minor rock fall. In view of the considerable effort Normandale and Maungaraki communities have spent in both time and money to improve this area, we request that appropriate maintenance be re-instated with effective rather than minimum cost procedures.