

Hearing 19: Ohinewai Rezoning and Development

By: Waikato District Council (Jo Healy)
Subject: Social Impact Assessment Summary

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Our Ref: 4218981

My name is Joanne Healy, I am a Social Impact Specialist employed by Beca Ltd and am representing Waikato District Council. I have a Bachelor of Science in Geography and Environmental Science and a Bachelor of Health Science. I have been conducting social impact assessments for the last 4 years and prior to this have over 15 years' experience working in social and health services in the community.

Summary

This is a summary of social impact specialist review I have conducted on behalf of Waikato District Council in relation to submissions for Hearing 19: Ohinewai Rezoning and Development.

I consider there remains outstanding issues in relation to the following three areas:

- Methodology – Specifically the reliance on Masterplan outcomes for assessment
- Provision for staged development – the timing and implementation of social infrastructure
- Social impacts – including assessment, management and mitigation and changes to proposal

Methodology

The Social Impact Assessment (SIA) conducted by Mr Quigley on behalf of Ambury Properties Limited (APL) considers the full implementation of the Masterplan (including full extent of infrastructure provisions). I note that alternative (feasible) delivery scenarios and the potential outcomes of these alternatives, particularly the potential for only partial delivery of the residential development outcomes, remain largely unassessed. I remain of the opinion that there is potential that the intended and unintended consequences of alternative scenarios (such as only partial development of the residential areas of the proposed plan change) could have at best neutral and potentially negative impacts.

I remain of the view that the potential positive social consequences have a level of uncertainty, in that they rely on a scenario of both full development and delivery of the full masterplan (in the latter case, some of this relies on delivery by others). This is supported by the social impact assessment findings provided by Waikato Regional Council which indicate that impacts of the residential development could result in neutral to negative social consequences. Acknowledging that these conclusions could be supported by further assessment, I concur that this is a possibility (a potential effect).

Provision for Staged development

I note that since conferencing there has been further development of staging to include community infrastructure. Staging provisions proposed by APL specifically transport and community infrastructure provides a degree of certainty in the delivery of the masterplan and associated social benefits identified by Mr Quigley in his assessment of the Masterplan. However, most industrial and a large portion of residential (approximately half) can be developed prior to the central park and walking/cycling connections to Huntly (Stage 5A,5B and 5C) being provided.

I note that the community centre and sport fields will be staged a year in advance (Year 5 stage 4) of central park and walking and cycling connection to Huntly and that APL. This does go some way to addressing potential social consequences that could arise if development was stalled, however it does not assure the local open space provision immediately around the residential area or opportunities for

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alternate modes of transport connections to and from Huntly beyond the limited existing public transport and private vehicles .

As noted above social infrastructure is still quite late in development. In addition, there is flexibility (consent required) for staging to occur out of sequence and for the associated social infrastructure to not be provided (albeit as a discretionary activity). Residential development can proceed as a discretionary activity without the implementation of infrastructure in accordance with Table 16.6.5.1.

This raises the following potential social issues:

- Currently the majority of industrial development lead before residential development which provides some assurance of employment for residents on site and delivery on assessed social outcomes, if residential development proceeds (as a discretionary activity) prior to the majority of industrial development this has the potential to change the social outcomes of the development particularly if some of the industrial development does not proceed
- Proceeding as a discretionary activity potentially allows for residential development without social infrastructure:
 - If development then halts it is without social infrastructure
 - If residential development is allowed to proceed without social infrastructure as staged it is not clear when implementation of social infrastructure will occur or is it possible to then proceed without it at all

As a discretionary activity the proposed objectives do state that commercial and residential components are specifically to support the industrial growth of Ohinewai and policies provide for public transport connections. However, if the Plan Change is to proceed I consider that policy 7 could be strengthened to set out the vision of a high quality urban environment providing policy that seeks to achieve the APL objective of the ability to work live and play in the area.

Social Impacts

In terms of the industrial plan change and employment that is generated from this there is potential for positive effects for many people. However, I do not share the certainty of where these effects will occur nor that the likelihood of these effects are “almost certain”, as there are too many uncertainties of full delivery of the masterplan and where employees will come from. There is the potential to not fully realise the potential positive employment benefits due to the car dependency to reach this plan change area and employment opportunities.

In terms of the residential development there are uncertainties related to the delivery of affordable housing and potential social consequences around affordability and suitability of housing that require consideration. In addition necessary resources (alternate employment, education, further social and commercial amenities) are not offered onsite and will require cars to access these which may generate unintended negative social consequences.

Conclusion

Overall, I consider that the social effects of the industrial and employment activities proposed by the Plan Change are generally positive. The social effects of the proposed residential zoning is more uncertain due to limitations of the assessment. On the basis of the information before me, I consider these could be positive but alternatively could result in adverse social outcomes.

Joanne Healy