

Oral submission by Brian Sharp and Sue Edens to Thames Coromandel District Plan.

Settlement Growth and Development. Section 15 of the Proposed district plan.

Sue Edens is a Land owner/rate payer in the Coromandel.

Brian Sharp is a Registered Architect that had an architectural/draughting business based in Thames for 25 years.

Both have been elected members on the Thames Coromandel District Council.

The plan has been divided into sections for convenience and this makes it difficult to be succinct in making a submission as each section contributes to the whole and the whole needs to be looked at as to whether it will achieve the purpose of the RMA.

Key words here are “enables people and communities to provide for their social, economic, and cultural wellbeing”.

This plan when considered as a whole will fail that purpose.

Auckland is growing fast but much of rural New Zealand towns are shrinking and even in some cases will probably collapse.

Thames is a town where its legacy industries are collapsing slowly and little new industry is replacing it. Its future if it can transition is as a retirement village and retail centre for the Hauraki area – Western Coromandel.

It used to be the support town for the Whole of the Coromandel but as the Eastern population has grown Services have sprung up there to compete against Thames reducing the market to make many of these services non-viable.

Saying Growth should occur in Thames will not make it Happen. The town suffers from old infrastructure and due to its desire to retain the character of the old town, poor foundation material and lack of economic viability intensification will not happen. The town is totally reliant on protection from both flooding and sea inundation. With global warming this will become more of an issue. A visit to Brown Street on a spring tide is advisable.

The Town has potential but this plan will not help it.

Whitianga has had a large growth spurt with the introduction of the Canal development.

This has created much industry related to the growth and introduced some first time retirement population to the town. As the growth drops off Whitianga will suffer like many of the East Coast towns in that a larger portion of the houses will be just summer Baches.

With a reduced proportion of permanent population and as development gets further from the sea then it will become less desirable and slow down. The population employed in development will move on leaving a hollow town in winter.

This will happen even quicker as Whitianga is the centre for development support for the wider Mercury Bay Area. Any attempt to restrict the growth outside Whitianga will result in less growth in Whitianga. Whitianga has appeal as a base for boating but does not have a surf beach, a feature of the many beaches around it. It will only attract a limited number of people wanting a beach house by the sea.

The traditional farming activity that surrounds this area is suffering as high land values and farming efficiencies are reducing their viability and there is a reducing population employed on them.

Whangamata is an isolated town that has reached the extent of its natural boundaries.

The only way of practically growth is for intensive re development.

This is not reflected in this plan. It has not been tested on the public and until it has there should not be a policy to say that it will happen.

Blue Print.

The Blueprint exercise undertaken by Council was predetermined in its outcome and did not start off with an analysis of what has created the development in the district, what each town contained and where they are going.

It is difficult to remain positive about this process when it is obvious that this process is not about consultation but simply justification. The staff report argues that the blue print has been to consultation and is now well based with it inclusion in the RPS. Such a prescriptive rule within the RPS was a total manipulation of the RMA process by a vested interest party.

It is only a few people who realised that this was happening and only us who put our money forward to challenge this manipulation of the process.

We could not afford to spend unlimited funds and are well aware of the costs in taking action. We managed to change this Policy to at least allow this district to consider alternatives to what was proposed.

To now receive a report that spends much time to try and reinforce the Blue Print when this is the first time we have been allowed to provide input to what should be a neutral committee indicates to us that this process is an exercise to justify decisions already made.

Policy 10

We are not full time involved with this district plan and have tried to provide a positive input. To criticized us for not using the correct terminology such as our submission on policy 10 in not constructive. Council has the ability to collect funds to service new development but has chosen not to. That does not mean that the development may not be appropriate.

Objective 1

To say that it is good planning to restrict development to where services are available assumes that all services have surplus capacity in those areas or will be cheaper to upgrade.

I do not believe that this is the case and that these towns all have systems in place that are not adequate and that this council is trying to direct development into the towns where they can collect financial contributions to subsidise the necessary upgrades as a form of rates subsidy. There is also an element of monument building by Elected members and it is easy to target people who cannot vote.

In our submission regarding **policy 2e** we wanted to not eliminate development simply because of a reverse sensitivity issue that may arise by re wording this to make it clear that it is those who chose to develop or purchase in an environment where there may be an issue that it is their problem and it is not up to council to sort it out. We know the RMA does not offer compensation but for some reason people who build close to a noisy or dusty road want someone else to pay to fix their problem. The more we respond to such claims the more they want. By making it a policy to not allow you to build anywhere that reverse sensitivity may occur will just end up in restricting development. Please read what we asked for in its full context as the staff reporter has clearly not.

We know what you are doing is a major undertaking and there are many who see any development as evil. We also see that inappropriate development is destroying this environment.

Good residential land is a valuable resource and I see in this plan that the minimum section sizes are proposed to increase which will further add to their development costs and to the costs of maintaining services to them. The only way to make affordable land available is to

reduce costs and availability, not increase costs and reduce availability. A mixed density allows some smaller lower cost sections. This as well as looking carefully at council requirements and costs is needed if any affordable housing is considered as being part of providing for social wellbeing.

The plan pretends that the coastal villages have unique character but the houses being built in these villages are typical suburban houses of no particular character.

Conclusion

We ask that our submission be read carefully and due consideration be given to including the many changes we have requested.