

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

Subdivision - policies of the Proposed district plan.

Sue Edens is a Land owner/Farmer in the Coromandel.

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

Both have been elected members on the Thames Coromandel District Council

The very purpose of subdivision is to allow for an increase in density. The total area of land is fixed and with well over half the district locked up with either social infrastructure or set aside for ecological protection the remainder is a precious resource requiring careful consideration as to how it can best be utilised for production and to accommodate an increasing demand. What I see is many policies and submissions simply saying we should ignore that demand without any consideration of the consequences.

The result of any restriction in supply results in an increase in price until the market no longer sees the product as desirable. If this is related to an area such as this we will see an increase in property values until those who try and earn a living can no longer afford to live in this area and then the cost of ownership for the rest will increase because of a lack of services to the extent that they will not want to be here.

To have a balanced supply and demand will take the sudden changes out of the property values and also what is needed is a variety of options to cater for the various needs of a population. The whole country is in crises with a lack of affordable housing because of regimented planning based on predetermined beliefs of those who are meant to be planning for the growth and allowing for it.

They have failed and here we are continuing that path.

We submitted for policy 16.3 1d that the subdivision should maintain a low density rather than the same density as required in the planners proposed policy. Any subdivision is an increase in density so to maintain **the** density is not possible. This is also reinforced with the reference to **the** rural area where we would like it to be a rural area.

Policy 1e we wanted modified as in a similar manner so as subdivision could take place by using the term **an** instead of **the**.

The same concerns apply to the residential zones.

We asked for an additional policy to be added in regard to high quality soils. We see that the retirement of this valuable resource is more important than its use. We oppose this as nearly half the district is already in conservation estate or restricted in use and with any restrictions on clearing vegetation possibly another 10% has no productive potential. Take out other public land and the area available is further reduced. Why waste the best productive land. There is plenty more marginal land that could be lost to production so why target the best.

This land is often isolated and so is not able to be productively utilised with traditional grass based farming on a scale required to maintain profitability. The best utilisation of this land is for horticultural use. Because the land has not been used for this there is no proven record of what crops will produce well. It is also impossible to buy this land without buying large amounts of additional land not required for a sustainable operation. I own a passionfruit orchard. The average size orchard in New Zealand is 0.6 Ha. There are no orchards over 2Ha. To be required to buy 20Ha to only utilise 10% makes the land value too high to be practical. We asked for a policy to say that where these pockets of high quality soil were less than 100Ha if amalgamated then a subdivision standard of an average of 5Ha apply.

The policies relating to coastal residential development all refer to special character. I am not aware of any unique characteristics of any of the towns and as an architect would find it difficult to pick any style of building particularly in regard to the many newer houses in these areas. In fact most are oversized suburban group houses typical of our cities. The street layouts are not unique. So what is the special character that is so important to retain.

If this is to do with density why has the minimum lot sizes either increased by a third from 600 m² in what was the coastal residential zone or doubled from the previous 400 m² coastal village zone. Why has a new rule been introduced into these zone to increase the non-sewered minimum to firstly 1000 m² and now possibly 1200 m² without any reference to soil testing but still allowing the same site coverage. There is not even the logic of making the non-sewered lots twice the size of sewered to allow for them to be subdivided if sewage becomes available.

Coastal land is the most precious of our district land so why waste it by only allowing suburban type development at very low densities. This is particularly a waste since 90% is likely to be used for limited periods of time by people living in other areas. We suggested encouraging boat storage close to launching sites as these properties are becoming

dominated with oversized garages to accommodate the increasing size of boats to match the increasing size of house. The bach is long gone from most of these coastal towns.

We also submitted on the retention of the existing conservation lots where the proposal the maps are clearly wrong with much rural land being not included in the areas identified and that the standards too high. Again the allowance of smaller lots on marginal land would introduce a population that would better care for the restoration of that land. What is proposed will encourage the fragmentation of the most critical existing ecological areas with a corresponding decrease in its viability. The coastal margin is often under-represented in biodiversity and encouragement of its restoration should be given some priority. Low density residential use rather than existing grass based farming with the hills sliding into the sea would be better for the environment and the social and economic well being. It is this area that needs the encouragement to retire land rather than the existing retired areas and high quality soils.

The residential zone standards are limited in variety and requirements which means they do not cater for both a variety of needs and values. Zoning to create affordable houses creates ghettos which is not what is required. What we have suggested is for developers to be able to adjust the standards so as only the perimeter needs to meet the same standard as the adjoining houses and that within a large subdivision a variety of section sizes can be provided. If the consultation leading up to this district plan had of included such qualified people as architects then the possibility of appropriate rules may have been possible so as such a scheme may have had a good set of rules around it to make it work. With the limited time and resources to make submissions we are left with a situation of not being able to cover all aspects but as the applications are discretionary such a statement would open the door for discussion with developers. Council still has a say in what is acceptable.

The submission to introduce blanket esplanade reserves has serious financial implications to the ratepayers for which no section 32 analysis has been carried out. Even if it is possible for Council to legally introduce such a drastic change to the district plan by submission there is a moral responsibility before introducing such a change to carry out full costings which then need to be put through the Ten Year Plan before introducing it to the district plan. Without this being done the councillors would be negligent and so become personally responsible for the financial shortfalls that could happen.

Conclusion

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