



PO Box 41 316 St Lukes, Auckland 1346, NZ.

Watercare Services Limited Central Interceptor Notice of Requirement and Resource Consent application – Hearings

Summary of Evidence by the Mt Albert Residents Association Incorporated (MARA)

2nd August 2013

Introduction

The Mt Albert Residents Association (MARA) serves Mt Albert residents by protecting and promoting Mt Albert's community interests, unique identity, character, heritage and environment. It fosters strong, connected communities, and provides a focus, leadership and structure for advocating the interests of Mt Albert with national and local government agencies, local bodies, institutions or individuals.

Our organisation's area of particular interest within the Central Interceptor project is the proposed Lyon Ave site.

The Roy Clements Treeway

Mt Albert is the suburb which is the most under-represented for green space per capita in the whole of Auckland. Because of this, the Roy Clements Treeway is regarded as a precious gem of nature. Not only does Mt Albert have the least amount of public parks and reserves area per head of population, but the Roy Clements Treeway is hugely significant for its long-lasting and on-going community connection. Most of the trees within the reserve's boundaries were planted by hand, not by paid council workers, but by volunteer Mt Albert Grammar School staff and students, parents, and the wider local community. It functions as a generator of the spirit of belonging, and helps to create the sense of community and neighbourly involvement which Auckland Council so actively strives to promote.

Community engagement is ongoing, not only for the large number of people who walk and run along the treeway every day, but by bringing people together with regular tree planting, weeding and maintenance events. To destroy the work of the community is to destroy our sense of place and our identity, in an area which already grapples with the dislocation of multiculturalism, rising crime rates and rampant tagging. Our community does not need this.

The St Lukes Environmental Protection Society (STEPS) submission and summary of evidence states very well the reasons why construction within the treeway would have a huge, unnecessary and ongoing social cost. We do not wish to waste time by needlessly repeating information, but would like it to be known that MARA stands alongside STEPS and supports its position, recommendations and call for mitigations.

Consideration of alternative locations

MARA does not consider the damage to the treeway is warranted, and believes other locations for both site access and the tunnel access shaft are still available.

We thank Watercare for their research into the MAGS playing fields as an alternative site, and especially thank them for the site layout drawing, which does its best to show as much land needing to be taken up by the construction works as can be possibly used. One assumes the term “efficient use of space whilst impacting as little as possible on other users” was not included in the brief.

Phillips Building carpark

A possible alternate location for the construction site is the rear carpark of the “Phillips Building” at 2 Wagener Place. This is crown owned land, with no trees at all. The interceptor tunnel runs directly beneath it and the distance from the diversion chamber to an access shaft built near the northern edge of this carpark would be no greater distance than that to the proposed access shaft at the MAGS playing field site.

Vehicle access to the carpark might be via the Phillips building’s own driveway to the south of the building. Or it might still be via The St Lukes Garden Apartments, with vehicles transferring from Morning Star Place to the under-utilised carpark at the west end of the Westfield Mega Center, then moving further on to the carpark at the west end of the Phillips building.

Connection pipelines might be built in corridors of land which require only small numbers of trees to be affected. Removing a vehicle turning area and access shaft construction from the treeway would reduce significantly the amount of treeway land required for the project site and related impacts on the treeway.

Open space in the treeway

Another improvement to consider is a slight realignment of the main tunnel toward the east, so an access shaft can be built in the more open space of the treeway near to the currently proposed drop shaft. The new drop shaft could be located along its proposed pipeline, somewhat closer to the diversion chamber.

Trucks have room to turn within the triangle of carpark at the very end of Morning Star Place, and Watercare might arrange with Westfield St Lukes that affected SLGA residents could park their cars in the carpark at the western end of the mega centre for the duration of construction.

Removing this need for a vehicle turning area within the treeway and moving the access shaft to open land, would again condense the amount of land needed in the treeway for the project site, possibly by as much as half. This would result in a greatly reduced number of trees needing to be removed, and reduced related impacts on the treeway.

There is room aplenty in the “Phillips” carpark and it is seldom used for cricket. Adopting a more sensible approach to how much land is reasonably required within the project site can be shown by better utilizing open space. If the phrase “efficient use of space whilst impacting as little as possible on other users” is included in the design brief, it is just possible that the choice of either of these alternative locations may result in levels of destruction and permanent disfigurement to one of Mt Albert community’s most significant features, which may be tolerable to all parties.

Summary

MARA calls into question the wisdom of the location of the current proposed project site at Lyons Ave, in particular the access shaft and associated vehicle turning area.

MARA does not consider the currently proposed damage to the treeway is warranted, when other locations for both site access and the tunnel access shaft are available.

Yours sincerely,

Sir Harold Marshall
Chair,
Mt Albert Residents Association.