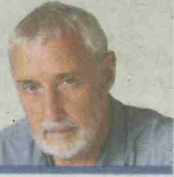


Neighbours win bulky-building rethink

John Cousins



A TAURANGA neighbourhood is celebrating a victory by the "little people" over a developer's plan to build a residential and commercial development next to the Bayfair Shopping Centre.

City council independent hearing commissioner David Mead has declined the application by Farm Street Developments to build eight apartments and a ground-floor health centre and dispensary on a residential 812sq m section.

His decision coincided with the council saying that it intended to look at rezoning some areas of the city to achieve intensification targets.

Mr Mead went against the recommendation by a senior council planner that the mixed use development in Farm St should be granted consent because the adverse effects were "acceptable" and consistent with the District Plan.

Instead, he argued that the bulk and scale of the building would have generated more than minor effects on Leander St residents who lived in the area behind the development.



BATTLE WON: Campaigners Tessa Blackett (left), Dr Kevin Giles, Dr Kerry Willoughby and Stephen Bird at the site of an Arataki development thwarted by community action.

PHOTO/JOHN BORREN

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He said the residents had a reasonable expectation that the District Plan would maintain the qualities of their living environment that the plan identified as relevant. He also said the development generated a "substantially greater scale of effect" than what could be reasonably anticipated from a permitted development.

Tessa Blackett, who represented 18 other Leander St householders living behind the development, said it showed how the little person could make

a difference.

One of the good things to come out of it was how the process had brought the community together, she said.

Residents were proud of their neighbourhood and if the area around the shopping centre was going to be intensified, then the council should use planning changes, she said.

Ms Blackett was backed by Farm St resident and architect Stephen Bird, who said changes should not be ad hoc.

"There is no doubt it's an area in transition but it should be done by a planned approach."

He suggested the council revisit the special intensification

nodes that met strong community resistance in the early 2000s.

City Transformation Committee chairman Councillor Larry Baldock said a report was coming to next month's meeting to look at rezoning areas of the city for greater intensification.

"We are going to look at what areas are going to work and then listen to the community."

He was confident they could end up with better living environments than what they had now with infill housing.

The commercialisation of Farm St beside the shopping mall was noted by Mr Mead.

"I find that the extra height and bulk of the proposed build-

Non-complying aspects of the development proposal included

- Density three times the standard of one unit per 325sq m.
- Maximum site coverage nearly 80 per cent greater than permitted.
- Building height exceeds 9m maximum by 1m to 3m.
- Encroached into daylighting plane by up to 6m.

— Russell de Luca

ing on this road frontage will fit with the street scene as it is likely to emerge.

"A real-world interpretation of the context of the area would suggest to me that substantial redevelopment of the northern side of Farm St, opposite the mall, was likely in the foreseeable future."

Sue McArthur of Farm Street Developments said she was disappointed with the result but pleased that Mr Mead had no concerns with the development in respect of introducing intensification into the Farm St environment: "We are now considering our options and are confident we will find a design solution that satisfies everyone. There is no 'us and them' approach here, Arataki is a neighbourhood where people live and work and it's important for us to get this right."

Teens flee as car bursts into flames



SMOKY: Smoke billows from a car which burst into flames in downtown Mount Maunganui.

PHOTO/DUNCAN LOWRY



WRITTEN OFF: The damage left behind after a car's engine caught fire in Mount Maunganui.

PHOTO/SKYLAR DOUGLAS

By Kiri Gillespie

A teenage girl couldn't believe her eyes when her car burst into flames seconds after she hopped out of it.

Skyla Douglas had been driving with friends for lunch in Mount Maunganui yesterday when they first noticed something was not right.

"I was just pulling into the park with my friends when we saw some smoke and we could smell it. At first we thought it overheated and wouldn't be too bad but as we were hopping out of the car we realised there was a lot of smoke."

The engine of the blue Peugeot 206 was on fire.

Miss Douglas said a man driving past alerted

them to sparks coming from the bonnet.

"There were a lot of people panicking on the streets but me and my friends were pretty calm."

One of the group called 111 while two others moved people away from the car and Miss Douglas popped the bonnet.

"It was pretty crazy. It progressed to flames pretty quick and had smoke filling the whole street," she said.

The group took refuge from the smoke inside a local shoe shop as firefighters took control of the fire. "[They] were really helpful and understanding. They said it appeared to be an electrical fire and the whole engine was burnt."

Miss Douglas said the

car was taken to the wreckers as it had been written off "but we have insurance so it's okay".

Mount Maunganui station officer Steve Wright said Miss Douglas and her friends did the right thing by getting out and away from the vehicle and calling 111.

"We're pretty confident it was an electrical malfunction."

"There's a lot of energy that runs through the wires and cables through a car. With a malfunction that energy would have kept building up until it reached ignition."

Firefighters arrived and extinguished the fire before Miss Douglas' father arrived to pick her up.

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