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Mayor Dick Hubbard
Mayor Auckland City
Private Bag 92516
Wellesley Street, Auckland

Dear Mayor Hubbard

Wynyard Point (the Tank Farm) - A singular opportunity for Auckland NZ.

The Committee for Auckland has always recognised this project as critically important for the development of Auckland as a globally competitive city, and hence for New Zealand.

Now estimated as a two billion dollar project with capacity to draw 8.6 million visits to Wynyard Point each year, while housing 3 -10,000 people, and an unestimated number of jobs and new workplaces for the economy of the future, this has the potential to be the single biggest regeneration project in the history of the city.

For the last 2 years we have advocated the position that this special project, in this special place, needs a special delivery vehicle unlike anything we have put together in New Zealand to date. We can benefit from the experiences of other waterfront cities avoid the mistakes they have made, and make this project a catalyst for urban development and economic growth.

But we believe this special project needs more than three weeks of review, discussion, reflection, testing, analysis, and the addition of informed comment from all the sectors of our community, as well as those with experience in redevelopment and the governance of major initiatives. This is a 10 – 20 year project of national significance. There are complex interactions with other infrastructure plans not all of which are in the hands of the agencies involved in this project. While recognising the need for action the review period of three weeks seems unduly hasty

To shoehorn this concept into a three week timeframe in order to meet a deadline agreed some years ago in an entirely different context is to risk seriously compromising the opportunity.

We set out below why we believe more time is needed for development of the plan for this redevelopment. In summary:

- The agencies and owners of the land are largely new and inexperienced with such a development
- The development is large and the interaction with other parts of the city complex
- There are many stakeholders with much to offer, but they need to be given more time to engage. We should involve international per review. We need to test and retest the concept
- A transparent and credible establishment process is needed to re-engage public who could be excused for having a jaundiced view of waterfront planning after the development of the apartment blocks on the Eastern side of the waterfront

Auckland's agencies and the Wynyard Point landowners are new to these challenges

Waterfront redevelopments, with their tradeoffs and competing interests are notoriously complex. The parties engaged in the current Wynyard Point concept – the ARH, the ARC, POAL, and the ACC – are very new to such a project. None of these bodies, nor any of their appointees, were selected with this challenging undertaking in mind.

We would be the first to support momentum on this project, but rushing a tentative consortium of interests with a project of this importance is unfair to them, to the owners of the land, and to Aucklanders, who so highly value our waterfront, and value being part of a harbour city second to none.

The development is large and the interaction with other parts of the city complex

Commentary and feedback from Auckland interests highlights the complexity of the project: its scale, multiple jurisdictions, differing visions and expectations, multiple landowners, financial challenges, its long term nature, maintaining momentum over political cycles, the tradeoffs and the balancing that is needed.

Without a comprehensive approach which deals with all of these issues as a package, Committee for Auckland has concern to see that we (Auckland) are well positioned to deliver a project of this scale and importance, despite sound conceptual bones, at a time when the city region and its economy can scarcely risk faltering.

The Committee for Auckland has been involved in detail through the process of thinking about waterfront schemes, and some of our Members have been passionate advocates of waterfront development through the early days of Harbour Edge, Britomart, and the AWAG process.

We have gone into the detailed documents for the Wynyard Wharf development. With each development scenario - AWAG, POAL, now ACC- there has been a different set of premises and assumptions, gaining strength as knowledge of the site deepens.

But the devil is in the detail. Consider for example, one assumption in the detail of Key Moves of 8.6 million visits. We support a visitor target as a touchstone for design and other decisions; but what is in behind this number; how many are people working, living and visiting; the mix is a vital consideration, particularly as people want to avoid an overbalance of residential development.

Each of the issues is important, and will take time to work through. The Key Moves are a substantial piece of work, but raise issues about what is being provided, and how it is best delivered.

The work behind ACC's *design concept* - the green axis, the blue axis, and the hub, and the work underpinning *The Journey*, and translated into *Key Moves* is, we can see, is substantial and considered.

The Moves' deserve the fullest consideration, as their breadth across regulatory and non - regulatory interventions brings into play the question of mechanisms and delivery vehicle(s). The options identified for this are the empowered development corporation which we favour, or the less durable umbrella co-ordinating agency (Mercer Delta.)

We have neither seen nor heard anything that suggests that the more radical option of an empowered vehicle is not the best fit for Auckland's situation, particularly as a method of securing momentum across political cycles.

There are many stakeholders with much to offer

We want the opportunity to elaborate our points face to face, to interact with your design team and other stakeholders as has been the practice to date, particularly now that there is a concrete and well developed scenario in place demanding real consideration. For this design scenario we thank the City, but the process is indecently in haste.

The worst outcome for Auckland's waterfront is a legal battlefield. We have watched Wellington go through this, and we have had this with our own Britomart development wars. The Britomart precinct is a good lesson for us; with now operative District Plan rules, the development agreement, Plan of Works, detailed precinct planning. Structures have been developed which support ACC as owner, and Bluewater as the skilled and experienced development partner, delivering the project to an agreed mix and standard. But this has taken time, and focus.

None of these is yet in place for the waterfront – for 35 hectares of prime Auckland waterfront land of inestimable value to the region. What are we thinking of?

We urge you to access the very best opinion and experience, from wherever it can be found. There is every reason for this waterfront to be “the one about which everyone writes about”. Surely. Getting it right by May is not a practical option. It is fair neither to the site, to its owners, to investors including public sector investors, to prospective residents and users, to the visitors from across the region.

For all that, please be assured that our view is that the design concept – the blue axis, the green axis, and the hub – is sound. The concept of The Journey is a robust response to creating Wynyard Point as a destination across a challenging distance.

What remains absent is the evidence of testing the concepts against some critical factors: what is the right mix of resident, worker, and visitor and will these concepts deliver that mix? What mix of built and open space is optimal for success? Which mix of activities draws visits and generates a healthy city economy? What mix of prescription versus organic development is the right balance? Who says, and who chooses? Without these assurances, the public feedback fears an oversupply of apartments, and overemphasises the need for ‘open’ space.

A transparent and credible establishment process is needed

We believe that the Fung Task Force process from Toronto has much to commend itself, and will bring forward the assurance Auckland is looking for about the mix of the project, its funding and delivery as an integrated package.

You will note the re-emergence of the twelve critical success factors for waterfront development from the international review by Mercer, and a question that these are all in place. There is clear mistrust within the community that past experiences with the quality of apartments and the eastern waterfront mixed use might be repeated. Whether this is fair or unfair is not the point. Assurance is needed.

The proposals and the mechanisms for their delivery should now be tested in a transparent way to demonstrate that Auckland does indeed have in place all the known factors for success before we begin.

And finally while there is a need for speed this should not translate into undue and risky haste. This space may give Auckland its last opportunity to revitalise the city, to re-engage people with the waterfront, and develop something iconic. Not all of this space needs to be developed at once. Some could certainly be land banked but decisions we make today will still be felt in 50 years time. Let’s not make them without due consideration.

Given the importance of the project for Auckland we are loathe to make a superficial response, and would prefer to have the time for the careful and considered consideration your proposals merit.

We query whether the parties to the Environment Court MOU might go about making a request for additional time from the Environment Court, in the best interests of building community and stakeholder buy-in, and to avoid the risks of being derailed. From there we would imagine some experienced peer review group tests the assumptions behind the Wynyard Point concept, and the mechanisms of getting it built.

There is wide commitment to delivering an outcome which is economically successful for the region and financially viable for the owners and investment partners.

The project is one for all Aucklanders, not for the benefit of only some, and needs our combined talents to add value, and to provide the greatest chance of success over the next 15 to 20 years.

We thank you for the opportunity to make comment prior to the draft Plan Change and continue to offer our input in any way which is constructive.

Yours sincerely



Sir Ron Carter
Chairman
Committee for Auckland