

Speaking notes for Michael Kelly

Appearing for Claire Nolan and others Group 275

1. My name is Michael Kelly. I am a historian and heritage consultant and I am presenting evidence on behalf of the 'Claire Nolan and others group 275' (which I have shortened to the 'Newtown Group').
2. As noted in my evidence, I am currently undertaking as-needed contract work for the WCC on resource consents. I am part of the Wellington Heritage Professionals group, which is presenting a series of submissions to these hearings.
3. Newtown is one of Wellington's inner-city suburbs and was laid out by William Mein Smith in 1840 for the New Zealand Company. Like all of Wellington's inner-city suburbs, Newtown has a particular character that is derived from its aspect, topography and development.
4. In common with most of the other inner-city suburbs, Newtown's character is dominated by late Victorian, Edwardian and pre-World War II housing. There is a wide variety on display but most of the housing is generally modest in size, which reflects predominantly working and middle-class occupation. While the suburb has certainly lost housing to commercial expansion and intensification, it has many streets that remain intact. As noted, the changes exhibited by many of Newtown's houses are highly characteristic of Wellington's inner-city suburbs and something that can be embraced.
5. The Newtown Group has outlined their hopes for changes to the Proposed District Plan, based mainly around an expansion of the proposed character area to that outlined in the Officers' Recommended Plan, which would bring in Balmoral Terrace, Blucher Avenue and Coromandel, Daniell, Harper, Lawrence, Owen and Stoke Streets.
6. Along with that, they would also like to see Green, Emmett and the eastern half of Normanby and Donald McLean Streets also included (possibly as Heritage Areas) to acknowledge their value as streets that were settled relatively early in Newtown's history.
7. My support for the group's position is based on the following:
 - The parameters of the character areas approved for the PDP seem to be arbitrary and not evidence-based.
 - It offers the opportunity to retain a larger and more coherent portion of the suburb's oldest houses. If the character of the suburb is important, and I would argue that it is, then a larger area would present that character much more comprehensibly, rather than if it were fragmented or marginalised.
 - It would help reduce the likelihood of tall apartments randomly popping up in predominantly low-scale streets by confining these to particular zones. The

effects of larger buildings on relatively low-rise areas are magnified by their anomalous size.

- Although it will not retain anywhere near all of what has been described as the 'rug of Newtown' [the roughly rectangular portion of Newtown between Riddiford / Mansfield Streets (east), the Town Belt (west), Mein Street (north) and Roy Street (south)], it will offer a level of protection for some of it. The eastern sweep of Newtown is one of the suburb's defining characteristics.
 - Lastly it would help retain the general scale of a series of dead-end streets that abut the town belt and are one of the most interesting features of Newtown. As in other parts of inner Wellington, the juxtaposition of older houses and the open space and vegetation of the Town Belt is a quintessential Wellington experience.
8. I support the group's request for the inclusion of the four streets that join Riddiford Street, namely Green, Emmett, Normanby and Donald McLean Streets. In particular, I find the exclusion of Green Street from both the Boffa Miskell report and the PDP inexplicable. The houses in that street and the others named are likely to be among the oldest in Newtown. I would also recommend the inclusion of Minerva Street.
 9. I would note that, although my evidence is in support of the Newtown Group, some of the more general points I have made would apply equally to other inner-city suburbs with heritage character. Wellington has lost so much of its built heritage, the preponderance of value now lies in its inner-city suburbs.
 10. One matter that will likely be addressed in Stream 3 is the dichotomy between character and heritage areas and whether some of what are currently character areas in Newtown (and elsewhere) might qualify as heritage areas. I have proposed examples of matters that could be examined in Newtown in a style similar to that undertaken at Mt Victoria and Thorndon to help identify clusters of housing that would qualify for a higher threshold of protection.
 11. The Newtown Group wishes to achieve a better balance between intensification and character protection in Newtown. Character protection would help retain some of the traditional scale and grain of the suburb and the unique configuration of places that Newtown's blend of location, topography and development have produced.