

Council Briefing Meeting Minutes

Date: Wednesday, 20 May, 2020
Time: 9:00 a.m.
Location: Virtual Meeting Room

In Attendance Her Worship the Mayor Sheryl Mai
 (Chairperson)
 Cr Gavin Benney
 Cr Vince Cocurullo
 Cr Nicholas Connop
 Cr Ken Couper
 Cr Tricia Cutforth
 Cr Shelley Deeming
 Cr Phil Halse
 Cr Greg Innes
 Cr Greg Martin
 Cr Anna Murphy
 Cr Carol Peters
 Cr Simon Reid

Not in Attendance Cr Jayne Golightly

Scribe Sue Reid (Democracy Advisor)

1. Apologies

Cr Jayne Golightly (absence).

Her Worship the Mayor convened the briefing at 09:00 and welcomed Ms Sarah Bishop (Isthmus) and Ms Angie Crafer (Flow Transportation Specialists) from the external consultant team. She said the Complete Streets Masterplan was a key action out of the award winning City Core Precinct Plan and acknowledged the team for this award from the New Zealand Planning Institute before handing over to Ms Sonya Seutter (Senior Strategic Planner).

2. Reports

2.1 Complete Streets Masterplan Final Draft

Ms Seutter introduced the project which had started as a result of the City Core Precinct Plan and allowed a fresh look at the streets and consistency. A movement network plan with transport modelling, was included as part of the

process. Councillor involvement and direction included five briefings and workshops with the final draft being presented to Elected Members at this briefing.

Ms Bishop (Principal Landscape Architect) had been involved in the project for over a year and said it was a good milestone to be presenting a final draft to Elected Members. She introduced Ms Crafer who gave Elected Members her background experience. Ms Jade Kake (Matakohe Architecture) was based in Whangarei and was able to bring local knowledge to the team and carried out the role in the project of building connections to local iwi and hapu and leading the engagement with mana whenua.

Ms Bishop said the scope of the masterplan acknowledges the work and energy that is apparent in the waterfront environment. It focuses on the city streets and spaces and recognises the connection to the waterways.

The slide covered six design principles which are focused on people and enable it to be a living document which sets the foundation to test future projects and developments against. There are five key moves which Ms Seutter went through in more detail before covering the process street by street.

Ms Bishop outlined the local landscape context to understand the environment and what is unique about Whangarei, including the relationship to the waterways and providing access to the city core centre. She said the city occupies a low lying area overlooked by Parihaka and the Pukenui Forest and is contained with a network of streams. Almost all the entries to Whangarei cross a water body which is something to celebrate in terms of character and context.

The work that Ms Kake has led around hapu engagement was workshop-based with local hapu and sought to align values and understand sites of significance. Understanding the environmental basis of the waterway network and what it has to offer including wider cultural connections. It was a rich process and began the longer running process of engagement with tangata whenua to help celebrate culture and identity in the city.

Ms Bishop showed a slide of the original structure of Whangarei in 1954 to understand the past, how the city has developed over time and how it might move forward into the future.

A slide on the existing street typologies showed the street network as it stands at the moment and Ms Bishop explained the arterial roads which provide access and movement to and through the city, to collector roads which support the main system. The sequence of local roads goes from a transportation focus to pedestrian focus of streets and all connect back into the particular character of the areas, industrial zone and civic precinct.

Ms Bishop said the proposed street typologies build on proposals brought to council last year and endorsed at that point. It shows Dent Street as a waterfront boulevard with a footpath but still accommodating the amount of traffic required. There is extended pedestrian environment in Cameron Street and pedestrian connection to the waterfront environment along John Street. This will enable vehicle movement and access and provide parking, whilst still lifting the pedestrian and cycle amenity in that area.

Ms Crafer continued the presentation and said vehicle and bus movement is really important for the city, particularly the centre so people can easily travel around, conduct business and shop. She said there are some key proposals that enable and help this to occur. These included a slow speed zone of 30km/hr for the core area to make it a lot safer for pedestrians, an extension of the pedestrian precinct and making John Street one-way and pedestrian focused.

Rose Street is the bus hub, with facilities to be upgraded for both passengers and bus drivers, and it is envisaged bus frequencies will increase over time to accommodate people working and living in Whangarei. A key aspect is to try to reduce vehicles moving through the core area and keep the majority of through movement to the perimeter roads.

Pedestrian and cycle movement will provide better connectivity and build on the work council is already undertaking with cycle facilities. Slow speeds, better amenities and a lot more space provided for pedestrians will result in more people who want to walk around when you look at traffic modelling and future scenarios for pedestrians and cyclists.

Ms Crafer said traffic modelling, carried out by Council's staff, fed into the movement network plan which is part of the master plan. They have been able to test and refine this using outputs from the model which shows the master plan will work in terms of vehicle operation and something will be needed to reduce vehicle numbers that would eventuate if we don't end up with a change of people using buses, cycling and walking instead of vehicles. The modelling has been done by independent consultants and been reviewed by Ms Bishop and Mr Mark Seakins (Roding Consultant).

The key thing that has been changed as a result of the modelling is centred around the Walton roundabout. In future when there is growth, this will get busy and whilst it might be signalised originally, it was realised this would affect the operation of the network significantly. This will be looked at in future.

Ms Crafer explained which roads would need to be signalised to help bus access and pedestrian movement and said signalised pedestrian crossing facilities are included in master plan and modelling. Software for systems will ensure, whilst crossing first stage, signals will stop traffic for the second stage.

Modelling at an early stage was also used to consider a one-way system and this shows it operates well with less friction and more efficient movement of vehicles, but also has significant issues. It is a deterrent for pedestrians feeling safe and being able to cross the road, a problem for emergency access and for visitors finding their way round. As a result, the option was not taken forward and also because of congestion problems in morning peak times. The master plan as proposed will have ability to provide better connectivity across streets around the core because of that.

Ms Crafer gave examples of the layouts and options that were looked at for the key intersection upgrades which were looked at and modelled in detail. She also outlined what signalised pedestrian controls were being put in place to better connect and be able to park in areas to the east of the city core and cross over easily.

Referring to the redistribution of car parking, Ms Crafer said they understood car parking was a key component of facilities being accessible but the location and use of parking can be changed. She said this builds on Council's parking management strategy written in 2011. They are looking at relocating some parking away from the streets in the core centre to a little further away.

Overall, potentially 30 out of 2,200 car parks could be lost, but Ms Crafer said this is likely to be unnoticed, but one of the key things is to find the right parking in the right place. Time constrained parking is being looked at so people can park close to amenities but only for two hours. Those working in the city would have longer term parking but with a five to seven minute walk rather than right outside their business.

Ms Bishop continued the presentation and said the plan was recognition of the environment in which the city sits and delivers on principles and key moves outlined earlier. An energised waterfront creates an energised city. She touched on a number of projects which had been identified and outlined these.

Six masterplan components had been identified in the presentation and Ms Bishop explained these strategies.

The second part of the presentation covered the Streetscape Design Manual which seeks to deliver on design principles for the entire scope of the process. Each street has a double page spread, showing the role it currently plays. Work was undertaken with the Council team to look at opportunities and proposal for each of these streets, always checking back to the underpinning principles for the project and process.

The technical component of the plan shows how maintenance access is involved to understand the particular components of each street and includes material, furniture and lights. It is broken into three areas, provides

consistency and identifies where money is best spent with a systematic approach to materials and procurement processes in bulk.

Ms Bishop concluded the presentation by outlining each of the key streets in the manual individually.

The meeting adjourned at 10:12 and reconvened at 10:22.

Discussion and Questions from Councillors:

- There was lengthy discussion around car parking and the reduction of 30 car parks, in view of the loss of 200 car parks from the Town Basin area and the anticipated 2.5% growth in population.
Ms Crafer responded this issue comes up in many projects, particularly because parking is seen to be a prime resource for certain activities. She said the reduction in parking is not a lot in the context of how much parking there is and there is the potential that new developments will have their own parking incorporated within the buildings such as low multi storey and garages. The parking management strategy has some good tools and principles to manage the parking that is available now more efficiently. This would mean better use of prime land that is potentially not taken up in the best way possible. She said survey information showed there is currently spare occupancy. Less car parks might mean someone has to walk a bit further, but Ms Crafer also talked about the rise in electric mobility.
- Concern was raised by Elected Members about the increase in traffic lights. Ms Crafer responded this is about people being able to move around more safely and said roundabouts work best when you have equal flows on the approaches to a roundabout, otherwise you get a dominant flow and a lot of queueing.
She said in terms of signalised pedestrian crossings, it is important for people who are mobility or visually impaired, or those uncertain about crossing roads, feel they can cross safely. In the current climate, safety is a key aspect of roads and this means a change in thinking about the use of streets to provide a movement function for people who might be on foot, scooter or bikes and who need to cross the street at busy intersections.
- Maintenance was discussed and that money was needed for parks and to ensure trees are maintained appropriately and have enough space to grow.
- Consideration needs to be given how the plan fits within the context of post COVID-19 and what impact that will have on the central business district and city core area.
- There was discussion around Dent Street, which is a throughway, being turned into a boulevard area.

- Connecting the Town Basin to the city core with some form of bridging structure was raised and for the issue to be thought of in a creative way. Mr Dominic Kula (General Manager – Strategy and Democracy) said options for a low bridge were worked through and presented to Elected Members in December with discussion around short term and long term crossing with different views and opinions. He said today the focus was on getting the whole package in front of Elected Members to have this discussion.
- Connection to the city core in terms of cycleways was raised and that the pattern of movement for them needs to be a lot clearer. Also, a look at the bylaws in place which affect cyclists.
- The Bank Street group are waiting for heritage signage and there is no acknowledgement or recognition that Bank Street has the largest number of heritage buildings left in city.
- Reyburn Street not seen as being part of the core. With the Civic Centre development going ahead and Rust Avenue being seen as the civic precinct, it should connect seamlessly with the city core.
- There is a group looking at residential development in terms of the inner city and there is a need to look at enabling the treatment of traffic to reinforce that.
- Climate change was discussed and a child-friendly city with ways to attract young people into the city which would be vibrant and fun.
- There was support for the 30 km/hr speed limit and for the storm water cleaning and rain gardens.
- Hapu sites of significance add cultural context.
- Would like to see a continuity plan not pieces in isolation to show what the maximum benefit we get from it will be.
- The Complete Streets Master Plan is consistent with the actions in the already adopted City Core Precinct Plan. It is a vision already agreed with the community and this is one of the key actions that has come out.
- There was a request for details to be provided of investment which had been made so far.

Mr Kula asked that Elected Members email the team with questions which will be responded to appropriately. All feedback will be worked through and the next step will be to come back to the Strategy, Planning and Development Committee.

3. Closure of Meeting

The meeting concluded at 11:27.