

PC50 Rural Focus Group – Meeting 3 Notes



28 JAN 2020, 7-9PM – ROTARY LOUNGE, UPPER HUTT LIBRARY

Introduction and task explanation:

Meeting began with a review on the progress of Plan Change 50 and what the next key stages of the process are, including when Issues and Options public consultation will likely take place.

Council Officers asked the Group whether there were any comments on the operation of the Focus Groups. The release of the Focus Group members' names to the public was mentioned, however the consensus from the group was that the names would not be released.

The release of the meeting notes from the previous two meetings was also enquired about, however Council Officers confirmed that the meetings minutes had been publicly released and are available on the PC50 webpage.

Focus Group members entered into a small discussion regarding the motivations of residents who are moving to Upper Hutt, suggesting that affordability rather than quality was the main pull factor. However, members agreed that the fact that Upper Hutt is a place where people can 'start' is not a bad thing.

It was also noted that the current Upper Hutt City Vision, 'Life, Leisure, Live It' should be changed.

Issues & Options Review Session

Council Officers explained the objective and activity of the focus group session. The session would focus on the draft Issues and Options which have been developed for 7 different rural localities, and General Rural Issues and Objectives. The focus group session would allow the members to provide their thoughts on the so far developed Issues and Options.

The members were split into 3 pairs and 1 individual, and were allowed 9 minutes for each locality to consider and write down their thoughts on the Issues and Options. Council Officers circulated among the groups to answer any questions from members.

Once this activity was completed the group reformed. A quick rundown on the different localities was then undertaken as a group, to allow any further comments to be made. The below is a summarisation of the key thoughts for each locality as provided by the group as a whole.

Kaitoke:

- The group believed that encouraging and supporting of the rural economy throughout this area, and the other rural areas, was key. This includes the organisation and facilitation of events which support the rural economy, with farmers markets used as a good example.
- However, it was also noted that there were very few large communal farms within Upper Hutt, and that the support should be aimed at small sustainable farming and promoting self-sufficiency. This will help to retain the rural community of Upper Hutt, whilst promoting food security and resilience.

Whitemans Valley:

- The group commented that they did not support the statement that accessibility to the southern part of Whitemans Valley from Pinehaven was good, stating that the road was not particularly safe, especially with the pressure of multiple road users at the same time.
- The members also stated that accessibility to this area is reliant on private transport due to the absence of public transport links. The members agreed that proximity to Pinehaven good, but accessibility was not.
- As such the members commented that it is important to consider both access and the effect on road movements from any subdivision

Moonshine:

- The members commented on the potential for Transmission Gully to result in an increase in traffic on SH58. There was commentary that locals had received advice that this would result in an increase of 19,000 vehicle movements per day, and due to an increase in accessibility, the area could become more desirable and property prices could increase.
- It was commented that some hillblock around Moonshine could potentially be subdivided, but the location would need to be considered carefully.

Gillespies/Akatarawa:

- Members enquired on what exactly was being defined as the Valley Floor area, with Council Officers responding it generally followed the course of the river.
- Members highlighted flooding does occur along the valley floor which therefore limits what you can build there. Hazard mitigation would need to be undertaken.
- There were mixed views on widening the Akatarawa Road, which members agreed would likely be difficult and not a preferable option.
- It was agreed that the Upper Akatarawa Valley does not have much potential.

Te Marua:

- There were strong opposition opinions from some members on the previous Maymorn Structure Plan.
- Some members of the focus group were more positive on the potential for this area to be subdivided, whereas others believed that the area contained highly productive land and therefore should be used for production instead of development. No consensus was reached on this.
- It was noted by some members that the Plan is for the future, and that rural land will likely need to be developed to meet future needs.

Mangaroa:

- One member noted the effect that Plan Change 42 has had on the potential to develop this area through the mapping of flood extents and the development restrictions associated with this.
- Focus group members mentioned the old army buildings (36 Flux Road) in this area and their potential future use. The buildings are now in private ownership, but members were keen to see the buildings used for a new purpose, with the potential to rezone the land to allow this to occur.

General comments:

After the localities had been discussed, there was a small amount of time to allow for the discussion of more general issues which members had some thoughts on. These are listed below:

- One member was vocal on the need for more adherence and recognition of national and regional base policy to ensure better protection of the environment at a localised level.
 - Council officers noted that this would be considered as part of their requirement to regard and give effect to high order planning documents under the Act.
- The establishment of open spaces and community facilities and services within the rural area was also noted, and that these should be built for both the existing and potential future communities.
- One member also noted how the existing rural area is already transitioning to a more lifestyle based environment, with a noted absence of larger scale farming taking place.

Next meeting:

Council Officers enquired to whether the group would be happy to run a group session with the residential focus group. However, the consensus was that this would probably not be beneficial, with concerns raised about the objective and management of such a meeting.

Members put forward some alternative ideas, which included a session where they could consider the Issues and Options from the residential side independently, citing that they all have experience living in the residential area.