

16 February 2012

Re: Johnsonville Library Expansion

This submission is from the Wellington Architectural Centre, a group which represents both professional and non-professionals interested in architecture and design, and in the promotion of good design in Wellington. Thank you for this opportunity to comment on this proposal.

The Architectural Centre does not support any of the four proposed site developments. We have a number of concerns which we believe none of the proposals comprehensively address. These concerns are about how the proposed redevelopment sites will reinforce the current problems of the Johnsonville village as a car-dependent and traumatised suburban fabric. We believe that this larger issue needs to be proactively addressed.

The Centre believes that the council needs to take a strong lead to ensure that Johnsonville can become a better example of a walkable village. Currently the town centre is severed by cars moving from carpark to carpark. The proposal to concentrate everything in a mall will determine that Johnsonville's centre largely becomes privatised space perimetered by carparking. Instead we suggest that key village functions (such as the library) be pepperpotted through the town centre, within a 800m diameter (the conventional notion of a walkable catchment in neighbourhood planning), rather than in one sprawling mall building, and that proper streets be defined between blocks, rather than having buildings set within a giant ocean of carparks. We strongly recommend that a walkable centre of buildings with interesting active edges and permeable boundaries be aimed for (supported by public transport), and that the decision regarding the siting of the library be part of a larger revisioning of Johnsonville.

In addition we query the rationale for expanding the library building with increasing trend in libraries to electronic books and library resources. While we acknowledge the important role libraries play as social spaces in communities, many libraries are also focussing on how they can provide resources to their patrons via the internet, possibly meaning that physical library visits may plateau rather than increase. What is the research informing the decision to expand the library?

Thank you again for this opportunity to comment on this proposal to expand Johnsonville Library. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully

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