

In response to: Independent Hearing Panel Direction #18

Non-expert submission: Peter Were

Re HHA Queens Avenue

12 October 2023

Dear Commissioners

Mr Knott's Supplementary Statement contains reference to assessment of Queens Avenue as a potential HHA:

48. In completing these assessments, I have found that in two cases, Fairview Downs area and Queens Avenue area, that if I assessed the areas as a desk based exercise without reference to their existing physical condition I would have found that they would have achieved different scores against the 'historic qualities' criteria than I have recorded in my assessment. They would each score:
 1. a) Fairview Downs – Moderate; and
 2. b) Queens Avenue – High.
49. However, I do not consider it appropriate to consider this matter in isolation of the current condition of the areas. I consider that the degree of change which has taken place in each diminishes their significance against the 'historic qualities' criteria, as the changes reduce the ability to appreciate the historic qualities significance of the areas. I have therefore scored them both 'low' against this criterion.
50. Were I not to have taken this approach they would have each been recommended as an HHA.

With reference to "the current condition of the areas" that preclude them from consideration: it is precisely owing to Hamilton City Council's apparent disinterest in preserving what is left of the city's early 20th century heritage that has rendered these areas to be judged as inadmissible.

If Council had been more proactive in protecting older buildings en masse, more aware of the destruction of heritage communities that their apathy condoned, and more attuned to the finite nature of older neighbourhood streetscapes we would not be in the invidious position of sentencing what remains of our built heritage to a death by a thousand cuts (or bulldozing or demolition teams).

Destined to be the country's third-largest city in a few decades, what by then will be left to signal that in its infancy Hamilton actually had a past, besides its mid-century sausage flats, early 21st Century townhouses, and speedbump roundabouts?

I'm not advocating to create or engender a Ponsonby, a Parnell, a Mount Vic, a New Regent Street or a Six Sisters.

Hamilton needs its own distinctive – albeit a little imperfect and a bit ragged around the edges – Old Hamilton as testimony to its past.

Every means available to Council should be applied to give deep consideration to classing at least parts of Queens Avenue as an HHA, despite as Mr Knott pointed out its high fences and tall hedges that partly obscure the streetscape.

Overlook preserving the city's remaining older housing stock now, and condemn Hamilton thereafter to architectural amnesia.

