

Ponsonby proposal brings mixed reviews

By Elizabeth Allan

A \$250 million commercial development has split the Ponsonby community – some see it as a mall that will blight their heritage landscape, while others welcome the extra business it will bring.

The Marlin Group mixed-use development is on a 1.3ha site, formerly home to the DYC vinegar factory, between Williamson Ave and Crummer Rd.

Project manager Paul Hudson says Soho Square will be a series of five three-floored buildings with public spaces between them.

"It's open air. It's not a mall at all – it's a street," he says.

The buildings will have apartments, offices, shops, cafes and restaurants, with carparking underground.

Auckland City Council received 800 submissions about

the development and only about 50 were supportive.

Ken Johnson, a director of Whitespace Gallery on Crummer Rd, says the plans look ugly.

Ponsonby is the closest thing Auckland has to a heritage area, he says.

"Everyone expected a really fantastic development, then instead what we get is something you'd see at Penrose or Albany."

Cheryl Lilly, manager of Sera Lilly clothing shop, says Soho Square has not been thought out well enough.

"Development is great but you've got to think long and hard about the impact on the environment," she says.

"I don't see how it's going to fit in – it's going to be an eyesore."

But Michelle Oliver, floor manager at Rocco restaurant on Ponsonby Rd, says Soho Square would be great if it brought more retail to the area.

And Mark Castle, owner of the French Art Shop, is all for the development.

"I've been here 17 years and people say they want more foot traffic and parking in the area.

"Every business in Newmarket has benefited from having the Two Double Seven mall down one end, in terms of parking and shopping," he says.

But general manager of the

Newmarket Business Association, Cameron Brewer, says Ponsonby retailers might suffer.

"The problem with Ponsonby Rd is it's a very long and quite thin strip of retail – it's not consistent," he says.

"If the Soho development was going in where the fire station was, at the top of Franklin Rd, and had Ponsonby Rd frontage, it would be great for retailers because they could feed off it.

"But because it's down the end, it will suck the life out of what's there."

Soho Square was designed by Ignite Architects, who also did downtown Auckland's Chancery.

Mr Hudson said the two developments are similar, except Soho is five times as big.

The most distinct features of Chancery are its domes and the various heights of its buildings, and Marlin Group has yet to get

resource consent for this at Soho Square.

Without those features, Soho Square might look like a traditional mall from the outside – flat-topped and modular – but with a public plaza in the middle.

Jane Arthur, a shop assistant at Time Out bookshop in Mt Eden, says any kind of mall in Mt Eden would not fit with the "nice community feel" in the village.

"But the Chancery style isn't so bad with an open courtyard and slightly different shops," she says.

Judith Cross, owner of Passion for Paper in Parnell, thinks malls are for "a certain type of people and those people don't live in Ponsonby".

Either way, construction of Soho Square's underground carparks is well under way so it won't be too long before the people of Ponsonby can see exactly what they are getting.

"Everyone expected a really fantastic development, then instead what we get is something you'd see at Penrose or Albany."

Whale meat piling up in Japan, says Greenpeace

By Veronica Johnston

Whale meat is being stockpiled, not just consumed, in Japan, says Greenpeace.

Communications officer Kathy Cumming says the Japanese Government is using growing whale meat consumption figures to justify its plan to hunt 50 humpbacks next year.

However, recent figures from the Japanese Fisheries Agency reveal "4962 tonnes of whale meat were stockpiled in Japan, as of October 2006", she says.

A poll on scientific whaling prepared by the Nippon

Cetacean Research, says the opposite, in fact, is true.

"Whale meat is a popular meal choice by the Japanese public, despite a drastic decrease in supply and, contrary to claims by Greenpeace, demand is increasing each year."

Toru Ishii, a journalist writing for national newspaper *Asahi Shimbun*, has written about how widely available whale meat is becoming.

"Back in Japan, whale meat is once again becoming a feature on dinner tables," he says.

"Tsubohachi, which operates a chain of Japanese-style pubs, now offers a plate of sliced raw whale meat for 650 yen on its regular menu.

Sky journalist Peter Sharp reports there is also strong demand for whale meat in Japan's top restaurants.

"Whale meat is a speciality of the house – it is an expensive culinary delicacy."

The Japanese and New Zealand delegations to the International Whaling Commission were due to discuss the issue at a recent meeting in Alaska.

New Zealand's head delegate, conservation minister Chris Carter, requested the talks to try to deter Japan from a new cull of whales.

Greenpeace's Japan spokesperson, Junichi Sato, is opposed to the cull, saying he is among a growing number of opponents to the eating of whale meat.

"The Japanese Government claims that all Japanese people are supporting this whaling. However, many Japanese know nothing about it."



PHOTO: GREENPEACE

WHALES: on or off the menu?

Research Centre in June, 2006 confirms how unpopular whale meat is in Japan, she says.

The poll suggests that 95 per cent "rarely or never" eat whale meat, says a Greenpeace press release.

But Hiroshi Hatanaka, director general of the Institute of



PHOTO: VALERIE SCHULER

GOOD CAUSE: A Trademe auction will raise money for homeless people in Auckland.

Celebrity city mission

By Valerie Schuler

Auckland celebrities are again auctioning themselves and their services to support the homeless.

All proceeds of this year's Aucklanders for Auckland auction on trademe.co.nz are going to the Auckland City Mission winter appeal.

The auctions, which will run over a three-week period starting on July 9, include a round of golf with former All Black and TV personality Marc Ellis.

Last year's auctions offered drumming lessons with Shelton Woolright from Blindspott and an afternoon of pampering at Servilles with Charlotte Dawson, which fetched \$665.

TV3 weather-girl Toni Marsh and real estate guru and TV presenter Michael Boulgaris also took part.

City Mission fundraiser Mathieu Holt says celebrities who will help out with this year's auction are yet to be finalised, but the response has been excellent so far.

Money raised will go towards

food, clothing and other services offered by the mission to the city's most needy individuals and families.

"Winter is the hardest time of the year for our customers, especially those living on the street, and the winter appeal helps us generate the income we need to cope with demand," says Holt.

A 42-year-old, known only as Jake, says he has lived on the streets for more than two years and is a regular visitor to the

"You meet a lot of good people at the mission and you get to enjoy some company"

mission's Hobson St drop-in centre.

"You meet a lot of good people at the mission and you get to enjoy some company. In winter we get hot soup and cups of tea," says Jake, originally from Tauranga.

"It's pretty awesome that

famous people want to help us."

Non-celebrities, particularly business people, are also offering their services for auction.

So far, financial mentoring, a catered dinner party and private yoga lessons are up for grabs to the highest bidder.

This is the second year that the mission is using Trademe auctions as part of its winter appeal.

Last year the campaign, which was nominated as a finalist in the New Zealand Direct and Interactive Marketing Awards, raised \$50,000 for the not-for-profit organisation.

The mission's drop-in centre, which relies mainly on the help of volunteers, serves hot food and drink to more than 300 people every day.

The centre also offers free health and counselling services and gives the homeless an opportunity to sit down for a cup of tea or a game of chess.

The mission is still looking for celebrities and businesses that want to give their services for this year's auction.