

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **GROUP TAKES COUNCIL TO COURT TO PROTECT AUCKLAND'S HOUSING HERITAGE**

Auckland. September 16, 2016 - The CHARACTER COALITION today lodged an appeal in the High Court asking the Auckland Council to look again at zoning changes under its Unitary plan in a number of the City's suburbs.

The appeal focuses on late changes made without public consultation that could put older character homes at risk for no demonstrable benefit.

Convenor Sally Hughes says "The process trampled on people's rights with a last minute decision to change the zoning in many streets, effectively denying people the chance to have any say in the matter."

The Coalition's legal challenge is aimed at restoring residents' "right to be heard."

"The Unitary plan process allows for this appeal and it's extremely important the planners look again at a small number of areas.....once the character homes in these suburbs are gone, they are gone for ever. We only have one chance."

"This appeal won't hold up the bulk of the Unitary plan, and it will have no impact on affordability of Auckland houses. It involves less than 1 percent of our housing stock." says Hughes.

The Coalition says the last minute changes have all the hallmarks of someone getting out a marker pen and drawing a thick line around the City's main arterial roads indiscriminately targeting character areas.

"People living along and beyond main transport routes in suburbs like Onehunga, Westmere, Glendowie, Grey Lynn, Henderson, Grafton and Blockhouse Bay woke up one morning to find their rights had been completely trampled on, it was undemocratic and unrealistic."

"Some streets that contain important character homes suddenly went from single house only, to zones allowing 3 storey apartment blocks."

"In some of the affected streets, like Francis Street in Grey Lynn, houses date back to the early 1900's. Others in Westmere contain noted 1920s bungalows. In Grey Street, Onehunga there are important turn of the century villas that add greatly to the suburb's character.

Sticking multi-storey apartment blocks next to them doesn't make sense and will not solve Auckland's housing issues."

"We are not against intensification, Auckland needs that; but you get only one chance to do it properly and rushing it could prove to be a big mistake."

The COALITION says the Council may be adopting a population growth rate that is too high, despite being advised against it by Statistics New Zealand.

"Statistics NZ its mid-point projections should be used by planners (750,000 more people by 2040) instead the Council went with the figure of one million."

"What if immigration slows down over the next 20 years? And we have lost irreplaceable character streets due to a Council blunder?"

"There is massive value in our stock of wooden buildings.....they are what gives the city its unique character. Let's not blow it."

For more information  
Sally Hughes  
Convenor - Character Coalition  
027 284 3344  
sallyhughes1@me.com

\* The Character Coalition represents 66 groups from Warkworth to Pukekohe and has worked for five years to preserve Auckland's internationally regarded built heritage. The Coalition participated in the Auckland Council and Independent Hearings Panel consultation rounds on the Unitary Plan.

\* The Auckland Unitary Plan was passed by the Auckland Council in August, with the right to appeal specific provisions open to the public until Friday September 16. Appeals only affect the parts of the Plan in question. The rest of the plan's provisions which are not subject to appeal come into force automatically.