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MILLSWOOD

Flood-prone land fight

BID TO WIDEN CREEK FACES RESISTANCE

Celeste Villani
Tom Conlin

STANDING on a bridge in his Millswood backyard, Don Osborn looks down at the now-dry Brown Hill Creek bed.

In the 12 years since he built his house, the creek has flooded just once.

But, under a plan to widen the creek by as much as 10m to reduce the risk of flooding downstream, Mr Osborn fears he will lose control of some of his land – by his reckoning, around 20 per cent of his property.

A pepper tree, which about 10 years ago Unley Council described as “untouchable”, may now have to be removed.

More than 250 trees along the creek potentially face the axe.

Mr Osborn is one of more than 37 residents seeking up to \$16 million in compensation for easements to widen Brown Hill Creek.

The proposed easements along a 1.9km section of the creek are said to be the answer to a one-in-100-year flood.

Mr Osborn said his backyard, and the land of 66 other residents throughout Unley and Mitcham, was worth much more than the combined \$1.5 million compensation the Brown Hill Keswick Creek Stormwater Project Steering Group was recommending.

The Unley Save Our Creek



Don Osborn and Tom Pearce are concerned about plans to widen Brown Hill Creek.

Picture: DEAN MARTIN



Environs Trees (SOCKET) group member said his property would “lose a heap of character” if the pepper tree and other vegetation were removed.

“Undeveloped land could be valued around \$800,000 in this area,” Mr Osborn said.

“If you get \$20,000, that

doesn't even come close. The council will say, and have said, that you won't lose your land if you get an easement ... but then they can come and do anything with it – it gives them the option to make changes.

“All I really want is control of my land.”

Duncan Basheer Hannon Lawyers, acting on behalf of the landowners, has written to Unley, Mitcham, Burnside, West Torrens and Adelaide councils urging them to “reflect on the wisdom” of the proposed flood mitigation plan.

The letter said low offers would cause “significant disruption and, if necessary,

litigation”. Steering group chairman Terry Buss, also West Torrens chief executive, said it was not clear whether the threat of legal action would delay the plan to floodproof 2000 homes, the majority in his council area.

He said the easement budget was based on property valuations.

“We just haven't plucked a figure out the air,” Mr Buss said.

“We're talking about an easement over a creek, which already can't be used for anything other than a creek.

“It's not as if they can build a swimming pool or a tennis court ... If that was

the case then there would be a higher value.”

Tom Pearce, of Mitcham, also a member of SOCKET, is continuing to push for a retention dam rather than widening the creek.

“We believe it is the most suitable and it would be the one that serves the community the best,” Mr Pearce said.

Unley Council chief executive Peter Tsokas said \$1.5 million in compensation was reasonable, but costs could change.

The \$150 million project is funded by the state and federal governments and Unley, Mitcham, Adelaide, Burnside and West Torrens councils.

UNLEY

Standing up for high-rise neighbours

Celeste Villani

A CONTENTIOUS seven-storey development planned for Unley Rd is too big, will cause traffic chaos and affect neighbours' privacy, an Unley councillor has warned.

Cr Michael Hewitson has written to the Development Assessment Commission calling for the \$80 million development – opposite the Cremorne Hotel – to be rejected in its current form.

He said it was important to address the issue because it was the first proposal under new planning laws which allowed developments up to five storeys on Unley Rd. He did not want it to set a precedent for future applications.



“The State Government are running the show and they have insisted on high-density housing,” Cr Hewitson (pictured) said. “We have to protect the heritage and streetscape of Unley.”

Planning Department spokesman Jason Rayfield said all complaints and concerns had been forwarded to Xinyu International Group, the company behind the development.

He said the complex would be assessed against Unley Council's development plan.

In January, Unley councillors and staff said they “generally” supported the redevelopment but they asked issues including privacy and parking be addressed.

A date for the commission to assess the application was yet to be set.

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11 March



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