

# Workshop on Discussion Document on Providing for Residential Growth in Epuni, Waterloo and CBD Edge

## Record of Comments

Held on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2015 6pm to 8pm at Dowse Art Museum, Laing's Road, Lower Hutt

### *Attendees:*

#### Non-submitters on Discussion Document

Facilitator – Andrew Guerin (Boffa Miskell)

Council officers - Dan Kellow, Divisional Manager Environmental Policy  
Allison Tindale, Environmental Policy Analyst

Councillors – Margaret Cousins, Chair of Policy and Regulatory Committee

James Beban, Cuttriss Consultants

Denis Page, Local Resident

#### Submitters on Discussion Document

Central Area Committee – Sue Lufrentz (Chair)

Desiree Mulligan

David Jones

Christine Chong

Stephen Pattinson, Co-Design Architects

Claire Bear

Carolyn Nimmo

Peter Barlow

Peter Elder

Peter Wilcock

Philip Barry

Neil McGrath

Joanne Gallen

Kevin Doyle

Jocelyn Reddy

Julie Hogan

Spencer Joe

Robin Parnham

Rick Anderson

Participants had a wide range in viewpoints from strongly negative opinions towards intensification, those more neutral towards intensification but with concerns as to how change will be managed, to those who identified themselves as broadly supportive of intensification, but wanted to see better quality development than has occurred elsewhere.

The following notes are based on written comments provided by participants, as well as notes taken by Council officers present.

### **Points raised by participants grouped by theme**

#### CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE FOR AREA WITHIN ZONE

- Lower Hutt has or had an image/reputation as a “Garden city”. Why change this?
- Need to look at aesthetics.
- Concern that intensification will create “ghettos” or “slums”.

- Concern about “*domino effect*” – that area of intensification will spread over wider area.
- Need a balance between growth and public spaces.
- Need to consider building diversity.
- Some participants enjoy the feeling of space their area currently has.
- Concern that changes would lead to an “*ugly city*” with multi-storey buildings.
- Could that changes will result in blocks of high density development.
- Area will be overly dominated by buildings.
- Mixed-use areas and developments can provide a range of benefits, such as reduced need to travel.
- The aesthetics of new development, will affects its acceptability to the community. Good aesthetics are vital.
- Concern that high density development does not mix in well with suburban centres. Conflicts exist between these types of uses.

#### CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE FOR AREA NEAR ZONE

- Request for buffer between suggested Residential Growth Zone and Special Residential Activity Area.
- There should be no extreme “*step-wise*” or hard graduation in height, length or density with “*respect to areas not in zone*”.
- Concern that changes could be seen as setting a precedent for other areas, especially neighbouring areas. Should be clear that changes allowed in one area are not sought in another. Referred to “*silence*” (lack of specific mention) in the District Plan, sometimes being interpreted as implicit acceptance.

#### BUILDING QUALITY AND DESIGN

Issues relating to building quality were raised by groups of submitters with different attitudes towards intensification. The key point of difference between groups was that participants with more positive attitudes intensification were more likely to suggest methods to improve quality, whilst those with more negative attitudes were more likely to express doubts that the Council could satisfactorily manage design quality.

- Concern about building height, especially above two stories.
- Concern about increased site coverage and impermeable (hard) surfaces.
- Intensification often does not represent “*best practice*”;
- Buildings need to be fit for purpose to meet future housing needs and to be suitable to accommodate a diversity of people.
- Benefit of new development putting in “*universal design*” features (ability of older persons to age in place);
- Accessibility features can be easy/cheap to provide if incorporated at the design/building stage.
- Mixed-use developments need to be considered. They offer transport advantages.
- Need to consider international experiences and international good practice – intensification is occurring in other locations in New Zealand and overseas
- Some participants were generally supportive of intensification, but wanted to see it done right and resulting in quality development. They want it to be a better quality than generally done.

- Some participants indicated they were happy for some additional dwellings to be built, but this needs to be good quality.
- Don't trust developers to build good projects. There is no imperative to create quality buildings.
- Concern that focus of developers will be on money making and not about beauty (appearance).
- Lack of developer accountability to existing community. Focus is on short-term profits than on contributing to community/public good.
- Concerns that the Council will enable developers to build something that is not optimal.
- Developers will take advantage of rules.
- Lack of confidence in the Council's ability to secure/demand good design.
- Lack of confidence in Council ability to police compliance with any rules.
- Some participants stated they did not like the appearance of some new development, particular new housing at the corner of Myrtle Street and Woburn Road and at the corner of Ludlam Crescent and Whites Line West.
- Concern about inappropriate retrofitting – where existing buildings/sites are modified for higher density types of development than initially intended.
- Retrofitting on small sites not intended to accommodate higher levels of development should be prevented. Comprehensive development of larger areas is preferable.
- Allowing planning on a wider scale is better than small disconnected developments. For example, it would be better to see large parcels of land owned by Housing New Zealand to be completely cleared and redeveloped.
- Need to tightly control design – new development should be compatible with area.
- Concern about unattractive infill housing.
- Infill housing generates rubbish and collection issues.
- Concern that building materials used will be cheap.
- Require variation in height, length and bulk of structures. No cookie-cutter designs.
- Homogeneous (i.e. highly repetitive) strips and developments need to be discouraged.
- Architectural styles should be sympathetic to existing environment, not necessarily equivalent, but not extreme clashes in style.
- Direction should be taken from regional policy statement on urban form/design/landscape.
- Need to avoid "*ghettoisation*";
- Suggested consideration of "*patio*" or "*courtyard housing*" arranged around communal open space.
- New developments should cater for mixed age groups in each development.
- Suggest the use of a staged increase in height, both over time and location, with a gradual increase in scale and density.
- Infill development is disliked. New development in Te Aro, Wellington is a better alternative.

#### PUBLIC AND PRIVATE OPEN SPACE

- Need a balance between growth and public spaces.
- Concern about a loss of greenery.
- Concern about loss of green space.
- Should be looking at protecting all existing reserve space and looking to create new spaces. Council's own documents recognise a shortage of reserves currently in this area.
- Mature trees and existing vegetation should be protected, as these could help soften the appearance of developments more quickly.
- Access to a reserve should be within a five minute walk of most residences.

- The quality and usability of outdoor space is more important than site coverage.
- A narrow path or grass strip around a detached dwelling is not a quality outdoor space.
- Need to consider the availability of space.

#### AMENITIES OF EXISTING RESIDENTS

- Concern about effects on home investment;
- Concern that changes will devalue existing properties (i.e. lead to lower property values).
- Concern about negative impact on existing levels of amenity enjoyed, from new and infill development.
- Participant not sure it is worthwhile for them to further invest in their home/property (e.g. carry out alterations/renovations) in the face of possible changes. They may prefer to move.
- Some participants indicated changes in Discussion Document would encourage them to move elsewhere.
- Existing residents may feel forced to move.
- Existing development may be "*hemmed*" in by larger developments. Effects on amenity will create pressure to sell.
- Occupants of existing small houses surrounded by larger development would feel like they are "*blocked up and in a cave*".
- Want the impact on neighbouring properties to be managed, so as to not be too negative. One participant indicated they expected some change was hard to avoid.
- New houses will be too close. Only 1m separation from boundary required now. This will be worse for three storey buildings setback 3m from boundary.
- Possibility of noise disturbance.
- Concern about loss of privacy. Privacy issues increases for each additional storey of development.
- Concern about overshadowing of properties by tall buildings.
- Request for buffer between suggested Residential Growth Zone and Special Residential Activity Area.
- Need to consider sunshine, privacy and views.

#### AMENITIES OF FUTURE RESIDENTS

Only those participants who identified themselves as broadly supportive of intensification, referred to items related to the amenities of future residents.

- Should be able to age in place.
- Should be able to access a diversity of developments.
- Should be connected to wider area.
- Should be within walking distance to a range of services.
- Need to consider sunshine, privacy and views.

#### SERVICES/INFRASTRUCTURE

- Concern about impact on public services and infrastructure.
- Reference to existing drainage problems and concern that effects will worsen.
- Drainage system is already struggling during heavy rain.
- One participant referred to surface water flooding on their property, which they attribute to a new development.
- Wastewater drainage is insufficient.
- Infill housing will take up too much "*earth*" used for natural drainage (ground absorption).

## TRANSPORT

- Concern about additional vehicles on roads.
- Concern about general traffic effects.
- Increased traffic would lead to increased pollution.
- Concern about parking congestion. Many households have two cars. Where will they park?
- Concern about traffic management and traffic planning in the area.
- Need to consider walkability of area, safety of cyclists and availability of public transport.
- Transport improvements are needed such as cycle lanes between Waterloo and Epuni Train Stations.
- Transport improvements would reduce the demand for car parking at train stations.
- A less car orientated environment should be provided.
- “Walkable urbanism” starts at a floor area to site ratio (FSR<sup>1</sup>) of 0.8. Currently most New Zealand suburbs have a FSR of 0.3.

## NATURAL HAZARDS

- Concern as to how area will manage if earthquake happens. There will be a lack of space for people to camp in gardens if dwellings are damaged.

## DWELLING TYPES

- One participant stated they were supportive of terraces, as an efficient form of housing.
- One participant stated they had formally lived in the United Kingdom where attached forms of housing were more common. Felt that New Zealanders had a lack of experience with semi-detached housing, as this was not the “Kiwi” thing. They felt that this type of housing could be attractive and thought that methods like acoustic insulation were available, which could be used to deal with noise disturbance between units.

## OTHER

- Change in demographics occurring.
- Population bulge of elderly.
- What are the objectives?
- Explanation of boundaries for suggested growth zone and subareas requested. Why were areas included or excluded? Concern that boundaries were not consistently drawn.
- There is no need to target the area around train stations, as walking to train stations is healthy. Larger area is in walking distance to station.
- What is the ability to provide for intensification in this area?
- Questions regarding consultation. One participant mentioned he did not receive letterbox drop.
- Object to Waterloo being targeted for intensification, especially for multi-level buildings.
- Need for several approaches to deliver population growth wanted.
- Persons attracted to an apartment lifestyle would want to live in a city like Wellington, rather than this location.
- Older persons do not want to live in concentrations.
- New population could lead to decile ratings for schools going down with flow-on effects.
- An “enormous concern” is the lack of need to get permission from neighbours.

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<sup>1</sup> The Operative District Plan for Lower Hutt currently does not use a floor area to site area ratio (FSR) rules. These types of controls are more common in Australia. For a site measuring 1,000m<sup>2</sup>, a FSR of 0.8 would result in a gross floor area (GFA) of 800m<sup>2</sup>, whilst a FSR of 0.3 would result in a GFR of 300m<sup>2</sup>. A FSR rule generally allows for a developer to choose how building bulk is to be arranged, such as a higher building footprint with a lower height, or a taller height with a smaller building footprint and greater outdoor space.

- Existing landowners would be tempted to take “*money and run*”, especially for larger sites, with little regard for the future use of the land and the effects of this on neighbours.
- Hutt City needs to be beautified.
- We have lost shops in High Street, Lower Hutt to Petone. Take out the parking meters.
- Objection to existing multi-unit provisions, which allow for multi-unit development to be applied for and approved across a wide area, rather than areas closest to services.
- Why didn't the Council demand that new development in Pomare provide high density residential development?
- Reference to what was considered to be poor development allowed elsewhere e.g. Queensgate Westfields and Rebels/Briscoes store in Lower Hutt.
- Concern about several changes which have occurred in Lower Hutt environs over time.
- Would the Boutcott Retirement Village be so controversial if it was like a weatherboard mansion house and made more homely and in keeping with the appearance of other development in the suburb.

#### RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS PROVIDED BY COUNCIL OFFICERS

- All submitters (except those who indicated they did not want updates) will receive updates, when available.
- Interested persons will have the opportunity to make verbal presentations to a hearing panel at a later round of public consultation. Councillors will not be hearing verbal presentations on the Discussion Document.
- Interested parties have the ability to speak in the public comment section at the commencement of Committee meetings. Submitters will be kept informed when items come to Committee and relevant Committee agenda reports prepared.
- The draft boundaries of the Residential Growth zone and sub-areas were a first go at drawing a boundary. The boundaries will be reconsidered in light of submitter comments.
- The Council arranged for leaflets to be dropped into letterboxes throughout the suggested Residential Growth zone. Additional consultation will occur at a later stage.
- Additional investigations are expected to be carried out. This information will be made publicly available.
- The planning framework for the Lower Hutt CBD, has changed since the construction of the Rebel Sport/Briscoes Building (and associated demolition of earlier building) in Lower Hutt.
- The existing site coverage rule is 35% for the General Residential Activity Area and 40% where the Medium Density Overlay applies. Breach of this rule triggers the need for resource consent for a single development. For multi-unit development (i.e. development providing more than 3 dwellings or units on the same site), breach of this rule triggers additional considerations at the resource consent stage. Development which breaches this rule is generally seen as more difficult to obtain resource consent for.