



Submission on the Wellington City Council Draft Long Term Plan 2018-28

Introduction

The Newtown Residents' Association has been an Incorporated Society since July 1963. We are residents and business owners from Newtown and the surrounding area, who take a keen interest in the community and local issues. We are concerned with maintaining and improving our area's liveability, connectedness and sustainability and working to make our community a thriving, diverse, great place to live.

Submission

We have reviewed the Draft Plan and the projects and proposals for the five priority areas, but we do not address them all in detail. We have focussed on the aspects that seem to impact most directly on Newtown and the surrounding area.

Resilience and environment: Te manahua me te taiao

Water storage and network improvements

We strongly support the speedy development of the Prince of Wales Reservoir.

We are however mindful of the upheaval and inconvenience that will be experienced by the Mt Cook community during the construction of the reservoir. We support the Mount Cook Mobilised request that the Wallace Street Pipeline team locate 10 temporary car parks that can be utilised during this work.

Waste water network improvements

We strongly support the upgrade of the waste water network.

Stormwater networks

We are concerned about the management of stormwater across the city, not just in regard to the Tawa and Miramar Peninsular projects discussed in the Draft Plan.

There are times in our area when the existing infrastructure is clearly insufficient and the streets are flooded. This is exacerbated by the rain running off hard, impervious surfaces.

We strongly support water sensitive urban design. There is increasing housing density across the city, including in our area. When this is infill housing or redevelopment of single unit sections to multiple units more and more of the land is covered. However some of the developments in Newtown are repurposing land that was formerly commercial, and where this involves demolishing existing buildings or concrete covered yards there is the potential to increase the amount of land available for porous surfaces to absorb rainwater.

We would like to see an emphasis on managing stormwater by increasing the extent of porous surfaces so that less water enters the stormwater network and more infiltrates to ground. As well as reducing the quantities of water being drained, this will also reduce the load of contaminants such as heavy metals and hydrocarbons entering streams and the harbour. Increased street planting would assist, while also improving amenity and providing habitat for indigenous flora and fauna.

Built Heritage Incentive Fund

As one of the areas known to have heritage buildings which do not meet the earthquake standards we have a particular interest in this area. We welcome all initiatives to assist building owners with funding and support to make these buildings safe and to maintain their heritage values.

Predator Free Wellington

We strongly support the Predator Free Wellington initiatives.

As the goal of predator control is to protect vulnerable wild life, in particular our native birds and lizards, we also advocate for an increase in street and other plantings to improve habitats and connect patches of native bush to create 'eco corridors'.

Community-led trapping

We also strongly support community-led trapping. However the plan only proposes supporting groups trapping in the city's reserves. We advocate for extending the availability of grants to groups such as Predator Free Mt Cook, Newtown and Berhampore who provide traps and support to people trapping predators on their own property. Controlling predators on reserve land will be ineffective if it isn't backed up with control on private land as well.

Security of water supply

Water is a major issue and we support investing in securing its supply.

Waste management and minimisation

We strongly support the Waste Management and Minimisation Plan. We also want to recognise the contribution of our Newtown Festival Zero Waste Team to our awareness of the importance and the challenges of waste minimisation. We believe that their efforts have had an effect beyond what happens on Fair day and have had a much wider educational impact. It is satisfying to see how many illustrations in WCC publications about waste minimisation are photos of the team members at work at the Festival.

Housing: Ngā kāinga

The Strategic Housing Investment Plan

We, like others in Wellington, are acutely aware of the increasing number of people who are unable to find safe, healthy, affordable housing, whether as owners or tenants. We are interested in ways to address this, but our response to this proposed plan at present is “not sure”. There is too little detail and too many uncertainties for us to support it. For instance, the SHIP goal of “750 new social and affordable housing units” says nothing about the proportion of “social” to “affordable” units, and yet the former will increase the Council housing stock for the future while the latter will be sold.

We strongly support the continuance and increase in Council housing. There are a number of such housing complexes in our suburb. We support this and approve of the moves that have been made, and are continuing to be made, to upgrade these homes. However we ask that if repairs are needed in Council housing remediation occurs with urgency – this is prompted by the situation of a family whose flat was damaged by fire and who are now in overcrowded accommodation while they wait to return. We would also support the provision of emergency housing in our area.

On the other hand we are very doubtful about the possible ‘disposal’ of council land. We are very concerned at the prospect of publicly owned land passing into private hands. We also note that although some housing might be ‘affordable’ when it is first built and sold it is likely to be subject to market forces before too long and the ‘affordability’ will be eroded.

Wellington Housing Strategy

We agree with the principles and desired outcomes of the draft housing strategy but our doubts about the proposed mechanisms, i.e. the SHIP, Special Housing Areas and an Urban Development Agency, mean that we do not give it unqualified support.

Special Housing Areas

We do not support SHAs when they are established without wide consultation and rely heavily on overriding provisions of the District Plan. We cannot accept that while most home owners have the amenity value of their properties protected by District Plan rules, others can have these protections swept away by SHA processes. We ask WCC to be mindful of protecting existing owners’ rights alongside the goal of increasing available housing.

Two special housing areas were introduced into Newtown by stealth, seemingly purely to circumvent the District Plan, one to gain bulk and location advantages relative to affected neighbours, the other to build on an historically interesting site without pre-demolition consultation.

SHAs might be an effective mechanism for increasing affordable housing if their establishment is linked to a requirement that the resulting homes are indeed affordable. This doesn’t seem to have been the case so far.

We suggest that the Comprehensive District Plan review proposed under the Sustainable Growth area be prioritised. Consenting processes shouldn't be so cumbersome that developers need a SHA as an incentive, but they should do their job of protecting agreed District Plan standards.

Special Housing Vehicle (Urban Development Agency)

Our Association supported the development of an Urban Development Agency in our submission to the WCC draft Annual Plan 2016/17. However early last year the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment called for submissions on proposed legislation to establish Urban Development Agencies nationwide. We objected strongly to aspects of the proposed legislation, saying in our submission "The extensive powers in these proposals allow developers to completely disregard the wishes, culture, and quality of life of the community concerned. The Urban Development Authority may have only a tenuous relationship with the Territorial Authority, and the community would have no way to hold the UDA accountable for the consequences of their actions."

The future of this proposed legislation under a new government is unclear. Our continued support of a UDA in Wellington would depend on the planning of redevelopments being done in full consultation with the community.

Te Whare Oki Oki

Services such as a 'wet house' have our support in light of informed opinion that these services will make a difference to the wellbeing of a number of homeless people in our community. We would also encourage increased emphasis on meaningful activity and occupation. We support all council provided accommodation having community rooms and programmes to combat social isolation.

Transport: Ngā waka haere

We recognise the urgent need for transport choices that are low-carbon, healthy, and affordable that also add to the amenity and character of Newtown.

Council should place weight on the findings about Transport within the Progress Report for the "Our Town Newtown" project. The project used a range of methodologies to proactively reach out, and engage with, as wide a range of people as possible (i.e. through questionnaires, workshops and events). Of the wider considerations beyond the facility upgrade being considered, the most frequent suggestion in all of the 8 categories (ranging from 'community space' through to 'safety') was "addressing cycleways/cycling infrastructure" (75 times or 41%). In the "Transport" category the second most recorded suggestion was "address traffic congestion volumes" (37 times or 20%) (pg. 23). The authors recommend that the top suggestions are incorporated into long term planning for Newtown (pg 30).

Cycling Master Plan

We understand that consideration of the extension of the Cycleway through Berhampore, Newtown and Mt Cook is to resume after a considerable hiatus. We will expect that the principles of inclusive co-design will be followed as an essential part of this project.

We support the proposal to deliver cycling improvements over a 10 year, rather than 20 year, time frame, with the proviso that there is extensive engagement with the community to resolve the inevitable competing interests.

Newtown should be prioritised because it is already an important cycle route, and so a greater improvement in people's safety could be achieved. There are adjustments that could be made even before a formal cycleway is established which would improve safety. These include reducing speed limits and increased signage.

Our Association has long advocated for safe cycleways that provide protection for novice riders at intersections. We recommend that design methodologies are deployed that allow extensive local input and maintain on-street carparking. Proof of concept that these three attributes can successfully combine and fit the complex urban grid of the southern suburbs was established in the pilot programme led by Red Design that WCC part funded back in 2014.

We note the success of the temporary Cycle Hub with the ReBicycle Trust training ground and the Mechanical Tempest free workshop which our Festival Trust has helped establish (short term) on a local development site and urge the council to commit resources to making this a permanent feature somewhere in our community, here on the transport corridor.

Let's Get Wellington Moving (LGWM)

We welcome news about improving transport in Wellington, including improved cycling and rapid transit such as light rail. Our Association has long been interested in the benefits of light rail linking the CBD, Wellington Hospital, central Newtown, the Zoo, Kilbirnie, Wellington Airport, and Miramar. The recently suggested corridor that used Taranaki Street and a tunnel to Adelaide Rd, that linked Wellington High, Massey University, Wellington College and Wellington East Girls College into this transport spine, provided a visionary city network that would transform the liveability of our city, and our southern suburbs.

When routes from Ngauranga to the Airport are being considered Newtown can be seen as a 'transport corridor', but to us it is where we live, work and play. We want to partner with GWRC / WCC in a co-design process to ensure transport plans support our vision of a thriving, diverse community and a great place to live.

Sustainable growth: Te kauneke tauwhiro

Planning for Growth

The proposal in this area that we are most interested in is the review of the District Plan. In particular we support streamlining consenting processes and making them user-friendly.

Wellington Zoo upgrades

We strongly support upgrading facilities at Wellington Zoo.

Arts and Culture: Ngā toi me to ahurea

Strengthening cultural facilities

We support the proposed investment in strengthening Council cultural facilities. They are housed in irreplaceable heritage buildings and although preserving them is expensive we regard it as necessary.

Additional support for the arts

We strongly support this proposal.

The vibrant arts, events and festivals in our city are essential to the essence of Wellington, a city we can all be proud to belong to.

We have a particular awareness of and sensitivity to this from hosting the Newtown Festival for so many years, and experiencing at first hand the joy of this celebration and the way it enhances our sense of place and community.

We support the proposals to add additional events to the calendar. However of course when we already have a very successful event in our suburb that provides a 'world of food and music', injecting colour and vibrancy and enhancing Wellington's claim to be a Capital of Culture, we trust that this will be supported to continue. Our Association would like the hugely popular Newtown Festival put on a sustainable footing. We urge the Council to increase core funding in the budgeted arts support to provide at least the extra \$30,000 that the Newtown Residents' Association requested in 2016 and that the Newtown Festival Trust has again requested for the 2019 Newtown Festival and onwards. Ethical remuneration for the artists who perform requires at least this amount of increase in the 3 year core funding.

The Association notes the success of the temporary shopfront gallery and performance space the Newtown Festival Trust been able to establish and run for 18 months in an un-leased mainstreet retail premises. This facility provides vital free support to theatre groups and artists city wide and brings vibrancy to central Newtown. We would like the council to commit resources to making something of this ilk a permanent feature in our community's cultural landscape.

Further Comments

We are fortunate in Newtown as we have benefitted from the establishment of the Kia Ora Newtown base and the appointment of a Community Liaison Officer for Newtown. We definitely support this being continued and expanded to all other suburbs. In addition to this our participation in a co-design process of local planning through the "Our Town Newtown" project has brought us into a closer relationship with Council officers, and we appreciate this connection.

In spite of this we have continued to have unmet needs that we have made submissions about in the past.

Street cleaning has been a perennial problem. We hope that this has been solved with an additional dedicated cleaner on the team, and we are grateful for the advocacy from the Community Liaison Officer that has led to this. It is a very new development however so we will be monitoring its progress.

The **demand for carparking** outstripping supply is also a constant problem which needs creative attention.

We support **increasing street planting**. As we have noted in the past, some of the previous plantings have died and haven't been replaced. Replacing missing plantings and adding others can provide habitat for native birds, and connect patches of native bush. This will complement community trapping, improve amenity, and assist with stormwater management.

There has been a longstanding expectation that the only **public toilets** in Newtown will be upgraded, but this is yet to happen. We have also regularly requested **additional public toilets in Carrara Park**. Carrara Park has been designated a Community Play Space, but lacks the amenities expected in such a space. We do celebrate that we have finally got a drinking fountain in the park, but we also regard toilets as essential to optimise its useability.

We hope that these matters will be attended to as part of the council's 'business as usual' in the near future.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission. We would like the opportunity to speak to Councillors about it in the appropriate forum.

Rhona Carson

President, Newtown Residents' Association

May 15th 2018

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