



April 21st 2025

Submission on the Wellington City Council Long-term Plan 2024-34 Amendment and Annual Plan 2025-26.

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 on the Long-term Plan Amendment

This submission on behalf of the Newtown Residents' Association has not taken a position on the majority of the Long Term Plan Amendment Options. There is a range of views about these, and many Newtown residents will be making individual submissions.

This submission concentrates on an aspect of Te Awe Māpara – Community Facilities Plan, with a focus on the plan for toilets in Carrara Park. It also comments on upgrading suburban town centres.

Te Awe Māpara – Community Facilities Plan

The capital programme proposal under this heading recommends “Reduce by \$10m in years 8 and 9”. We strongly object to this proposal.

The consultation document notes that the funding is currently not targeted to any particular programme, because investigations are still being carried out as to what facility upgrades are needed. However community facilities are important and generally underfunded, so we protest at losing any money from this budget – even if it is postponed to years 8 and 9.

Te Awe Māpara – Community Facilities Plan: Needs Assessment for Toilets in the new Owen St Park

We request a review of the ‘5 minutes walk’ criterion for toilet provision, and that the provision of toilets in the new Owen St Park is reconsidered.

We recently asked for toilets to be included in the design of the new Owen St Park, and although this was considered, the relevant motion to Council was narrowly defeated because Council Officers outlined the policy that toilets should only be approved if there were no other toilets available within 5 minutes walk. There are public toilets at Newtown Park, and this was deemed to be within the 5 minutes walkable catchment.

The relevant section of Te Awe Māpara is 5.9: Wharepaku tūmatanui Public toilets

This says on P93 • *Spatial analysis based on an indicative 5-minute walking catchment has been used to identify potential areas to investigate for provision.* However this is a general statement, not specific to parks. It is also a very imprecise standard – a ‘5 minute walk’ is very different for a fit adult, a caregiver with a small child, or an elderly person with mobility issues – and in practice it is often small children or the elderly who need a toilet at quite short notice. The supposed ‘5 minute walk’ from 177 Owen St to Newtown Park is unrealistic for many patrons.

On P94 there is a section on ‘Needs assessment’ which references Te Whai Oranga Pōneke (Open Space and Recreation Strategy) provision targets:

- *Accessible public toilets are provided at destination parks and cemeteries/urupā.*
- *Public toilets should be available within 300 metres of community neighbourhood parks, urban parks and significant beaches.*
- *Public toilet provision will be considered at signature and regional trail destinations as classified by the Regional Trail Framework.*

In the Wellington Playspaces Policy (2017) Parks, or Playspaces, are designated slightly differently – a ‘Destination Playspace’ is one *that attracts residents, visitors and tourists. Users may stay for 2 hours or more.* Frank Kitts Park is the only ‘Destination Playspace’ listed, not surprisingly as in the 2017 policy ‘central city location’ is one of the criteria for this designation.

The Playspaces Policy makes a distinction between ‘Community Playspace’: *Enough activities to keep children and/or youth aged people entertained for at least an hour and* ‘Neighbourhood Playspace’: *Handy place for a quick play.* It is reasonable enough that a Neighbourhood Playspace should have public toilets available within 300 metres, but the provision of toilets is listed among the amenities expected in a ‘Community Playspace’. Carrara Park is designated a Community Playspace. We hope that the lack of toilets is on the way to being solved for Carrara Park, but the status of the Owen St Park has not yet been settled.

Our submission is that the Owen St Park will more than meet the criteria as a Community Playspace, and should have toilets. However we would go further and say that when any Park – or Playspace – has BBQ facilities installed it should be regarded as a Destination Playspace. A BBQ attracts visitors of all ages who are going to settle in while they prepare food and enjoy an extended stay – the presence or absence of ‘tourists’ as in the definition above is irrelevant to the need for toilets. The Owen St Park goes further than this – as well as BBQs and play equipment it will have a stage, which will make it easy to put on a range of events. We definitely think it should be regarded as a ‘Destination Park’, and as such should have accessible toilets installed.

Legislation. We note that P92 of Te Awe Māpara cites the Local Government Act 2002 – *under Part 7, there are obligations to assess sanitary services (as defined in the Health Act). This requires assessment, from a public health perspective, of the adequacy of services – in light of health risks to communities from the absence or deficiency in services, quality of services, and the current and estimated future demand for services.* It is unfortunately true that when there are no toilets many park patrons whose children need a toilet are going to take advantage of concealing bushes and go anyway. Even adults do

this at times. It shouldn't happen but it does, meaning that the 'absence or deficiency of services' has definite public health consequences, which would be ameliorated by providing toilets in parks.

We also request a review of how Te Awe Māpara is progressing, as we have questions about the information that is currently available about this.

The community facilities plan was published in 2023. It is an aspirational document, with a lot of discussion about community needs and community involvement. This is woven into the text, and on p 49 the steps for community involvement are laid out – from working with the community to understand needs, through consultation on funding priorities, to keeping the community informed about implementation, finishing with seeking community feedback on delivery and performance. This sounds admirable and comprehensive but perhaps it is only intended to apply when an actual upgrade is underway.

On p98 it is stated that "Implementation of this plan (including the actions) will be overseen by an internal Community Facility Steering Group." Has the Community Facility Steering Group been established? A search of the WCC website produces no results. We would hope that if the steering group exists it would be possible to know who is on it, and also that there would be a Newsletter, or regular reports, of what progress has been made on the items in the Te Awe Māpara Action Plan.

Also on p98 there is a stated intention to review the plan every 3 years – but 3 years is a long time to wait. Would it be possible to have at least an annual review – a quick check through of each item in the Action Plan, with a brief note of what has happened – which anyone can access? It would certainly go some way to meeting the objective of keeping the community informed about implementation.

There are two Newtown projects we are interested in, and we have had very different experiences with community involvement and information:

- **The construction of a new park on the site of the former workingmen's bowling club, 177 Owen St**, which is currently underway. We are asking to revisit the decision about installing toilets, but apart from this we are pleased about the amount of involvement with planning and information about progress we have had; the Council Officers discussed the design with us and other community representatives and have kept us informed along the way. Construction has started and seems to be making good progress. A search of the WCC website leads to an update with the final design and information about work starting, and expected completion in June, so anyone interested can find out what is going on.
- **The installation of toilets in Carrara Park.** Community advocacy led by our Residents' Association resulted in this item being added to the Action Plan for Newtown: • *Community petition for public toilet at Carrara Park and Council resolution to investigate options for low-cost provision for toilets at the park.* However since the project was added to Te Awe Māpara in October 2023 we have had no involvement in decisions, or even any direct information about what decisions have been made or why. There are a number of complications about this discussed under the heading of "Toilets for Carrara Park".

Toilets for Carrara Park

There is a long history to this topic. The Newtown Residents' Association campaigned for toilets in Carrara Park ever since the Park was first constructed in 1995, but the repeated requests were turned down or ignored for almost 30 years.

In 2023 we tried again and made a submission asking for toilets to be included in Te Awe Māpara – The draft Community Facilities Plan. As 'Community Advocacy' was one of the criteria for inclusion we also initiated a petition requesting toilets- which gained 392 signatures in the few weeks it was open - and asked for letters of support from the community.

The campaign was successful, and WCC Officers recommended adding this project to Te Awe Māpara 'for further investigation'. When it came to the vote at the WCC Social, Cultural, Economic Committee, on October 12th 2023, both Cr Nureddin Abduraman and DM Laurie Foon spoke very positively about the need for these toilets. A motion was proposed by Councillor Abdurahman and seconded by Deputy Mayor Foon, and the most important clause was *Direct officers to investigate options for the low-cost provision options of toilets at Carrara Park in the 2024-34 Long-Term Plan*. This was passed unanimously.

We heard nothing more, but at some point there must have been a decision to defer these toilets to year 4 of the Long Term Plan 2024-34, because on February 15th 2024 there was a meeting of the Kōrau Tōtōpū | Long-term Plan, Finance, and Performance Committee to approve budgets, policies, and strategies for the 2024-34 LTP and one of the budget items approved was *13.9. Agree to bring forward the funding to upgrade Carrara Park toilets to year 2 of the LTP from year 4 of the LTP*. This was passed, and in the decision register it was ticked off as 'completed'.

We still didn't hear anything directly from the Council, although our ward Councillors kept us informed of this decision. In May 2024 when we made our original submission on the LTP we asked for assurance that there was a plan to proceed with installing the toilets in the near future. Again we heard nothing, but we didn't pursue it because we were confident that the decision noted above would be implemented. However this month our Councillors both asked what progress had been made on the toilets, and we were shocked and dismayed that the answer was "*Carrara Park toilet is in Y4 of the LTP, so planning has not begun yet.*"

We don't know whether the February 2024 decision was overlooked and never implemented, or if there was an internal decision to change it back again. Either way we strongly protest about the idea of making the community wait any longer for such a basic amenity.

For decades people's enjoyment of a trip to the park has been clouded by there being no toilet, meaning they have either left earlier than planned or, regrettably, gone behind a bush. This lack became even more obvious after the BBQ and picnic tables were installed, and more people wanted to stay longer for family outings, including birthday parties – which happen most fine weekends. This unmet need has gone on for far too long.

We request that the February 2024 resolution is honoured, and that the funding for Carrara Park Toilets is now included in the Annual Plan for 2025-26.

Upgrade suburban town centres

We note that there is funding in the LTP for future upgrades, although the proposal is to defer it until years 4 and 8.

Our request is that when decisions are made about this Newtown is given a high priority, as the town centre is overdue for an upgrade. A lot of the paving is uneven and unsafe and the area as a whole needs a lot of attention and renewal.

Submission on the Annual Plan 2025/26

We request that funding for Carrara Park Toilets is included in the Annual Plan for 2025-26.

The background to this is described in our Long-Term Plan Amendment submission.

Mātai Moana Reserve on Miramar Peninsula

We support Option1 – that Council will partner with Taranaki Whānui on their proposal for the penninsular.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

Rhona Carson

President, Newtown Residents' Association

April 21 2025