
REPORT 4
(1215/52/IM)

INFILL HOUSING REVIEW – A TARGETED APPROACH TO INFILL HOUSING IN WELLINGTON CITY

1. Purpose of Report

To seek approval from the Committee to release the discussion paper *Promoting Quality of Place – A Targeted Approach to Infill Housing in Wellington City* for public consultation.

2. Executive Summary

Infill housing is not a new phenomenon as it has been occurring throughout the city for decades, especially from the 1950s onwards. However, the scale, nature and location of infill that has been built in recent years is now causing significant concern for residents of established residential areas.

Some of these concerns are related to the growth pressures we are facing. The population of Wellington City grew by nearly 18,000 over the last five years and is not showing any signs of slowing down. We are getting older and have fewer people living in each home which is pushing up demand for infill housing and more intensive forms of housing such as townhouses and apartment blocks.

The way we manage growth through infill housing is one of the key challenges for the City and a high priority action area for Council. We also need to ensure that our approach to infill housing is sustainable, promotes the efficient use of resources and meets future demands, including the need for more affordable housing.

In responding to these challenges, the discussion paper introduces the idea of a targeted approach to infill housing based on:

- **Areas of stability** – infill housing and development opportunities could be constrained in areas that are poorly serviced or have significant values worth protecting
- **Areas of limited infill** – status quo for infill housing but improving quality to protect lifestyle and character
- **Areas of change** – comprehensive redevelopment resulting in moderate to significant increases in residential density and potential to change the character of some parts of the city.

The suggested approach provides for growth and at the same time builds on the long standing philosophy of Council to maintain a compact and sustainable city.

Release of the discussion document, if approved by Committee, will be coordinated with the public notification for Proposed District Plan Change 56, which proposes to introduce a revised planning regime to improve the quality of individual infill housing developments. This will ensure a combined public consultation package on the infill review as recommended at the Councillor workshop in February this year.

3. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 1. Receives the information.*
- 2. Agrees to release the discussion paper on infill management (attached as Appendix One of this report) for public consultation.*
- 3. Delegates to the Portfolio Leader for Urban Development the authority to approve minor editorial changes to the final version of the discussion paper.*
- 4. Notes that the release of the discussion paper will be coordinated with the notification of Proposed District Plan Change 56 to ensure a combined public consultation package on infill housing is presented to the public.*
- 5. Notes that the results of consultation and the proposed steps forward will be reported back to the Committee before the end of the year for further consideration.*

4. Background

Wellington City is experiencing considerable pressure from infill housing.

While infill housing has been promoted as part of our compact city approach, there is evidence in some areas that development is impacting on valued suburban character and amenity through poor design quality. There is also concern that infill development is being encouraged (or at least allowed) in areas that are not well suited to further intensification due to these areas having poor access to transport, community services and other infrastructure. There is anecdotal evidence that these conditions exist in a number of residential areas.

Issues such as these were subject to considerable scrutiny by councillors during the 2006/07 LTCCP development process. To this effect, Council voted 'improving the way infill development is managed in residential areas' as the highest priority action area for the 2006/09 triennium.

In responding to this task, a dual approach to the review of infill housing has been taken:

Part 1 – Proposed District Plan Change 56 – Managing Infill Housing Development

This examines the specific District Plan provisions affecting the adverse effects of infill development in residential areas, focussing more closely on infill in the Outer Residential Area. This work is designed to respond quickly to immediate concerns with infill housing by amending crucial rules in the District Plan that affect the quality of infill housing.

Part 2 – Targeting of Infill Housing

This project reviews the Council's current approach to infill (allowing it almost anywhere), with the objective of developing a more refined approach for the location of infill development and also areas of intensification. This includes how such development will produce a better fit with land use and transport infrastructure.

Significant progress has already been made on Part 1 through the preparation of Proposed District Plan Change 56 which focuses on the technical rules and standards for individual infill housing development.

The release of the discussion paper on targeting of infill housing (Appendix One) represents the beginning of the public consultation phase for Part 2 and is the focus of this report. The discussion paper has been developed taking into account the feedback on draft concepts at the Councillor workshop held in February this year.

5. Discussion

5.1. Purpose of the discussion document

The discussion paper at Appendix One is titled *Promoting Quality of Place – A Targeted Approach to Infill Housing in Wellington City*.

The purpose of the paper is twofold. Firstly, to explain the idea of taking a more targeted approach to residential infill development in Wellington City, and secondly to seek public feedback and generate discussion on these ideas.

In doing so, the paper is broken into the following sections:

- Section 1 explains what the review of infill is about. It defines the term infill housing, explains what we mean by a targeted approach and informs the public what we are proposing to do.
- Section 2 provides a snapshot of Wellington City and comments on some of the key drivers behind the review.
- Section 3 explains the existing approach to infill development as set out in the District Plan, and introduces the Urban Development Strategy intent of targeting development through the growth spine.
- Section 4 discusses the reasons why we are considering changing our approach to the location of residential infill. The paper argues that a targeted approach will:
 - Result in a more efficient and sustainable city
 - Build on our sense of place
 - Better meet the needs of a changing population

- Ensure we can accommodate growth in the right places
 - Provide opportunity to better manage change and increase certainty.
- Section 5 explains the concept of change areas: *Areas of stability* – where infill housing would be tightly controlled or not allowed at all. *Areas of limited infill* – where infill housing would be allowed but with a greater emphasis on quality. *Areas of change* – where comprehensive re-development of housing would be encouraged, resulting in moderate to significant increases in residential density.

The discussion paper does not identify specific locations for each category of change, but provides information on what we would consider in making these choices, including public feedback and the results of technical research.

- Section 6 explains how to provide feedback.

5.2. How are we proposing to consult

The discussion paper is to be used as the basis for public consultation. This will be available on request and downloadable from Council's website. The public will be asked to respond to specific questions and make general comments. Feedback can also be made directly through a submission form on Council's website.

The release of the discussion paper will occur jointly with the notification of Proposed District Plan Change 56. This will ensure a combined public consultation package on the infill review is presented to the public as recommended at the Councillor workshop in February this year.

The Resource Management Act requires notification of Proposed District Plan Change 56 to be carried out at the city-wide level. A leaflet on the targeting of infill housing (Part 2) will be included with the public notice to ensure every household in the city is aware of both parts of the review.

The consultation process is proposed to start in May 2007 for a period of at least six weeks. This will be supported by a communications plan that includes an editorial in the 'Our Wellington' page of the Dominion Post.

It is also proposed to hold a number of public forums. These will cover both parts of the review and may include specific briefings to different interested parties such as professional institutes, the development industry and residents groups. A programme for these meetings will be finalised following endorsement of the recommendations in this report.

5.3. Links to other projects

As discussed previously, the release of the discussion paper is closely tied in with the notification of Proposed District Plan Change 56.

The review of infill housing also has close links with the place-based implementation projects associated with the growth spine, which pursue a targeted approach to residential development. The first of the place-based projects, the Johnsonville Town Centre Plan, examines how residential

development could best support the future aspirations for the town centre. This work has already provided some valuable in-sights into the constraints and opportunities for infill and intensification in and around Johnsonville town centre. The town centre plan will be consulted on in May 2007. Similar place-based studies will be carried out in the next two years for the Adelaide Road to Newtown corridor and Kilbirnie town centre.

The review of infill housing informs (and is informed by) a number of strategic infrastructure projects such as the Ngauranga to Airport Study, asset management plans and the bus priority plan.

5.4. Research programme

During consultation officers will continue to gather technical information to help determine the appropriate locations for targeting. This includes research on the character of residential areas, transport constraints, social and environmental effects and other infrastructural issues. It is expected that technical research and information gathering will continue throughout the rest of this year and into the first part of 2008. Ongoing research includes:

- An assessment of the methods and tools to achieve more affordable housing.
- A GIS study identifying the likely capacity for infill housing in all of the city's residential areas. The has so far found that inner residential areas have very limited capacity but we have considerable capacity for ongoing infill housing development in the outer residential areas.
- Develop maps showing which parts of the city are accessible and walkable to public transport and town centres and which parts of the city are not.
- Undertake focus groups and resident satisfaction surveys to better understand perceptions and issues associated with infill housing, including environmental and social effects of infill housing.
- A city wide stocktake of water-based infrastructure. The stock take has so far indicated that, at current rates of growth, there are no major infrastructure constraints relating to water supply, wastewater and stormwater although continuing investment will be required to ensure that existing levels of service are maintained.
- A study of economic conditions required to promote comprehensive residential development.
- An assessment of roading infrastructure constraints and opportunities related to infill housing and intensification. Building on the work done for the Ngauranga to Airport Study, this examines the capacity of the overall roading network and identifies areas where existing and proposed roading and infrastructure investment could best support intensification. This work will include a preliminary examination of capacity for off-street parking.
- A city wide assessment of townscape character, identifying key characteristics of each suburb and providing an assessment on how well each

area could accept change. The methodology and scope of this work is yet to be determined, and is likely to be influenced by feedback on the discussion paper.

- A stocktake of centres, clarifying their role, existing land uses and supporting social and physical infrastructure.

The findings of the consultation and the research programme will be reported back to the Strategic Policy Committee by the end of 2007. The report back will recommend a way forward and may suggest potential areas best suited to infill housing and intensification and those that are not.

Any change to the current approach will be reflected in amendments to the Urban Development Strategy and, in time, in the District Plan.

6. Conclusion

This report recommends that Council release the discussion paper *Promoting Quality of Place – A Targeted Approach to Infill Housing in Wellington City* (Appendix 1) for public consultation. The release of the discussion paper signals the start of the public consultation phase for Part 2 of the overall review of infill development in Wellington City.

The mooted move to a targeted approach to infill housing would be an important decision for Council and the City as a whole. Not only because it responds to the highest priority issue in Council at present, it also represents the first major shift in Council policy direction for residential development since the current District Plan was notified in 1994.

Contact Officer: Paul Kos, Senior Strategic Advisor Urban Development

Supporting Information

1) Strategic Fit / Strategic Outcome

The discussion paper directly implements Council's highest priority strategic action for urban development.

2) LTCCP/Annual Plan reference and long term financial impact

There may be future implications for capital and operational expenditure, however these are not able to be specified at this stage. A further report back to SPC is proposed which will include any detailed proposals.

3) Treaty of Waitangi considerations

There are no known considerations, although Treaty partners will be consulted on the review of infill housing.

4) Decision-Making

This is not a significant decision under the LGA.

5) Consultation

a) General Consultation

Extensive consultation is proposed with key stakeholders and the wider community on the discussion paper. Approval is sought for public consultation on the discussion paper.

b) Consultation with Maori

Maori will be consulted as part of the proposed consultation process.

6) Legal Implications

There are no legal implications at this stage.

7) Consistency with existing policy

This report is consistent with Council policy. The discussion paper accords with our engagement policy and strategic direction as set out in the Urban Development Strategy.