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**REPORT 2**  
*(1215/15/IM)*

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## **DRAFT JOHNSONVILLE TOWN CENTRE PLAN**

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### **1. Purpose of Report**

This report seeks approval to release the draft Johnsonville Town Centre Plan (Appendix 1) for public consultation. This draft plan is the first of a series of long-term plans that aim to implement the 'Growth Spine' under Council's Urban Development Strategy.

### **2. Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 1. Agree to release the draft Johnsonville Town Centre Plan for public consultation over May/June 2007.*
- 2. Endorse the anticipated funding implications outlined in the draft action plan before agreeing to consult.*
- 3. Note that the results of consultation and a final plan, including a detailed action plan programme and draft plan change, will be reported back to the Committee before the end of the year for further consideration.*

### **3. Background**

Council's Urban Development Strategy, approved as part of the LTCCP, established a 'growth spine' to direct growth over the next 50 years along nodes and corridors that can be well serviced by public transport. One of the key implementation actions arising out of this strategic direction was the preparation of a series of centre plans to provide detailed guidance on managing growth (this was approved as a new initiative in early 2006). Johnsonville is a key growth node in the Growth Spine and is the first of three key centres to be the subject of a town centre planning process.

The Northern Growth Management Framework (2003) outlines a number of principles that are relevant to the future development of Johnsonville. These include:

- building on existing communities
- strengthening town centres

- developing attractive, diverse and liveable neighbourhoods that offer housing choice, promote walkability and allow for intensification over time
- promoting a strong sense of identity
- providing attractive public open spaces within neighbourhoods
- innovative and creative approaches to economic growth and working in partnership with stakeholders.

For Johnsonville, the Framework specifically proposed to intensify in and around the centre to assist the viability of the rail system, improve park and ride provision, and investigate new motorway on and off ramps at Helston Road.

The centre planning process started in July 2006 through research on key issues affecting Johnsonville. This led to the preparation of an 'Issues and Context Report' which was publicly released as part of a period of public consultation on Johnsonville town centre held from September to November 2006. This consultation included:

- a letterbox campaign to all residents, businesses and community organisations in Johnsonville suburb (approx 5,000) using a purpose designed leaflet
- an internet information page and information at libraries and service centres
- a telephone and field survey of most businesses (195) in Johnsonville town centre
- three public drop-in sessions held at Johnsonville Community Centre in October
- meetings with local community organisations
- a workshop with the owners of the Johnsonville Mall
- consultation with public-sector agencies and infrastructure operators
- formal submissions of which 201 were received.

The consultation undertaken so far revealed strong support for redevelopment in the town centre, including improvements to the range of shops and facilities, improvements to community facilities and better quality urban design. However there was considerable concern (80% of submitters mentioned this as a top priority) about transport issues, including traffic congestion, parking and the quality of public transport facilities. A full summary of the submissions is available separately.

## **4. Discussion**

### **4.1 Purpose and Scope**

This draft Town Centre Plan provides a framework to guide the long-term development of Johnsonville over the next 20 years. It sets out a future vision for Johnsonville and identifies how change will be managed. The purpose of the draft town centre plan is to 'mature' the centre and accommodate growth in residential, retail and business activities. Completion of the plan will enable the

Council to direct and prioritise its resources and encourage and direct private and public investment in the town centre.

Johnsonville is the largest and most significant town centre in Wellington outside the central city and plays a key role in servicing the northern suburbs. Johnsonville is at a crossroads, with significant changes proposed to its retail heart, improvements to its transport systems, and continuing residential growth – this draft town centre plan seeks to harness and guide these changes to make sure that these opportunities enhance the town centre and deliver benefits to the wider northern suburbs communities.

The draft town centre plan aims to take a holistic approach to the future of Johnsonville, considering all four well-beings (environment, social, economic and cultural) in the context of urban development. Whilst the Action Plan is focussed on the role of Council, it is clear that the vision cannot be successfully achieved by Council alone. Coordinated investment and initiatives across a range of public and private sector organisations will be necessary.

As this is a draft town centre plan, it contains proposals and an indicative action plan, but not a detailed implementation programme or fully worked-up changes to the district plan. This will enable and encourage genuine engagement with the community on the vision, the overall direction and the key principles.

## **4.2 Opportunities**

Johnsonville has significant potential to become not only a major growth node for Wellington City but a model for transit-orientated development in New Zealand. It has many of the ingredients necessary to deliver this change:

- excellent access to both rail and bus transit networks
- healthy retail core
- a substantial catchment population that is growing rapidly
- good road access to both the surrounding suburbs and the wider City
- large underutilised sites in the town centre
- relatively flat topography in and around the town centre
- clear role as the sub-regional centre for the northern suburbs.

Major change is already happening in Johnsonville. The proposed redevelopment of the Mall and much of the land within the 'triangle' over the next few years provides an immediate opportunity to achieve rapid change and if carefully managed, the achievement of a number of the town centre plan's objectives. This redevelopment may involve an injection of almost \$200m into Johnsonville, providing new shops, entertainment and leisure facilities, and an upgraded rail and bus interchange. There has also been a recent surge in resource consents for infill housing in Johnsonville, both 'backyard' subdivision as well as development schemes for 40+ townhouses. Council has a programmed upgrade of the Keith Spry Pool over the next two years, is working on a library investment plan that may have implications for the location of future investment in Johnsonville, and is doing a major upgrade of the trunk sewer line commencing in May/June through Capacity. Greater Wellington and

OnTrack are also programmed to invest significant amounts upgrading the Johnsonville line within the next five years, including new rolling stock.

This level of change provides a unique opportunity for Johnsonville. Harnessed and steered appropriately it can provide a step-change for Johnsonville, taking it away from its current role as a suburban centre and creating a multi-functional town centre that delivers a wider range of services for the sub-region and one of the most desirable places to live and work in Wellington City. It can also provide the impetus for change in other areas, by creating the right environment to attract potential purchasers of apartments and inducing addition investment in local jobs. The town centre plan and its subsequent implementation can play a key part in achieving this added value. Without such a clear vision, there is a risk that growth may not maximise the benefits to the community and only exacerbate the existing problems of congestion, the imbalance of jobs and housing, the lack of housing choices and the low urban design quality.

#### **4.3 Constraints**

One of the major constraints to growth is the high levels of traffic and congestion at peak times. This issue must be addressed if the significant growth outlined in this town centre plan is to be realised successfully. As well as some proposed improvements to local road intersections, the major opportunity is the creation of new on and off ramps to SH1 at Helston Road. Initial modelling has shown that this could substantially reduce the amount of traffic on Johnsonville Road by creating a more attractive route for through traffic. Council's draft Annual Plan includes budget for 2007/08 to undertake further investigation of this project. As well as road improvements it is also critical that the strongest emphasis is also given to the opportunities to enhance the use of the existing public transport systems as well as walking and cycling. The town centre plan outlines the likelihood of significant housing growth in and around the town centre – this will provide a much bigger catchment of people able to walk to public transport – particularly rail. In addition to this it is critical that major new developments are specifically designed to facilitate the use of public transport and are not solely reliant on car transport.

Changes will also be required to the District Plan to facilitate the outcomes envisaged in this draft town centre plan. This would include reviewing the policies and rules applying to the Suburban Centre and Residential zones.

#### **4.4 Recommended Role of Council**

The development of this draft town centre plan is the first major new project aimed at implementing and demonstrating Council's new strategic direction. It aims to take a holistic view of a place with significant growth potential (in this case Johnsonville) and provide a framework to guide a wide range of Council actions and initiatives.

International research has clearly shown that successful place-making requires Council to take a more active facilitation role, beyond a traditional development control function. This is because a passive approach is unlikely to deliver the

objectives of a major urban change initiative. One of the key actions recommended for Council is therefore the appointment of a 'Town Centre Coordinator'. This role would facilitate change to assist in the implementation of the TCP, through:

- **engaging with stakeholders** – ongoing communication with a diverse range of stakeholders, including Council, Greater Wellington, government departments and agencies, other public sector agencies, the private sector and the community
- **championing the TCP** - selling the vision of the TCP, building consensus and buy-in, and addressing blockages
- **identifying opportunities** – for development, capital works or other initiatives. The town centre coordinator would identify these, package these up and look for suitable investors and partners to realise these opportunities
- **attracting and coordinating funding and investment** – this might involve working with a future Land Development Agency to unlock development opportunities and realise investment, attracting private sector investment, or coordinating existing investment public sector plans to achieve a greater critical mass.

This sort of approach to managing major urban change is increasingly becoming best practice in all the major Australian cities (ie Melbourne, Sydney, Perth, Brisbane, Adelaide); and is already well established and highly successful in the UK, Europe and the US.

The key benefits of this approach are in the effectiveness and speed of achieving change, the ability to have a greater influence on the type of change to better accord with the draft Town Centre Plan objectives and the ability to leverage in other public and private sector investment. For instance, initial research on development levers has shown that achieving the desired level of housing intensification may be difficult given the barrier presented by the high ratio of improvements to land value. Achieving residential development in the town centre itself may also be difficult given the lack of precedents and the unwillingness of the private sector to take-on a perceived risk. This may mean that some of the key planks of the Town Centre Plan will not be realised relying just on the private sector. Whilst the appointment of a town centre coordinator would require new funding, it may be possible to fund this through a targeted rate.

#### **4.5 Draft Goals and Concept Plan**

The draft Town Centre Plan includes 11 goals to guide the future long-term development of Johnsonville. They outline the key elements of the Council's plan and are supported by a draft Concept Plan which captures the key initiatives and proposals for the long-term development of Johnsonville.

1. Facilitate and manage growth
2. Encourage more people to live in and around the town centre

3. Develop Johnsonville Road as the 'mainstreet'
4. Improve design quality and sense of place
5. Develop a fuller range of town centre functions
6. Retain a compact town centre
7. Maximise the potential of the public transport systems
8. Managing traffic better
9. Improve community facilities
10. Improve public spaces
11. Widen the economic base of the town centre

It is the wide-ranging nature of these goals and their interrelationship that is important to achieving successful urban change in Johnsonville. For instance: growth in housing without matching growth in jobs would only add to traffic levels; growth in the numbers of residents without improvements to the rail services would only add to the existing congestion on rail at peak times; apartment living may only become a reality if the urban design quality and overall vibrancy of the town centre is enhanced.

#### **4.6 Action Plan**

The Action Plan included as part of the draft Town Centre Plan, outlines Council's intentions as well as indicative timing, relative priority and any resourcing implications. Many of the proposed actions are able to be achieved through existing programmes and budgets. For instance, changes to the district plan will be considered as part of ongoing reviews of the Suburban Centre zone and the management of infill housing. However there are some actions that will require additional funding and some that may be part funded through other means such as development contributions or a targeted rate.

Of the top priority actions, listed as "essential" in the Action Plan, the major new funding implications are as follows:

<b>Action Plan Tasks</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Funding Requirements</b>
4 (+ action 1,2,5,12)	town centre coordinator	new initiative required (proposed funding from targeted rate)
10	rail/bus interchange	possible funding contribution (majority funding from developer/GWRC)
11	Helston Road SH1 interchange	possible funding contribution (majority funding from development contributions/LTNZ)
19 (+ capital work 6)	community hub	possible funding if library relocated
20 (+ capital work 2, 3)	pedestrian accessibility	possible funding of improvements to pedestrian crossings and underpasses

capital work 1	road intersection improvements	funding contribution (majority funding from development contributions/LTNZ)
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Whilst any new initiatives will be considered through the annual planning process, it is important that the Committee acknowledge these future funding requirements in approving the draft town centre plan.

#### **4.7 Next Steps**

It is proposed to facilitate a public engagement programme in May/June 2007 on the draft Town Centre Plan. This will include maildrops, public open days, meetings with community organisations, liaison with key public and private sector organisations, and internet feedback.

The draft Town Centre Plan will be reviewed in the light of the feedback received and any further available information. A final Plan will then be prepared for consideration by Council towards the end of the year as part of a package of measures to steer and manage change in Johnsonville. This will include a detailed Action Plan programme, and any recommendations for changes to the Development Contributions Policy. It is also expected to be accompanied by a draft district plan change for both the Suburban Centre zoned land and the surrounding residential area. Lessons learnt from other major urban change areas is that it will be important to quickly back up Council's bold vision for Johnsonville with the necessary policies and rules to facilitate change and achieve quality outcomes.

## **5. Conclusion**

This report recommends that Council release the draft Johnsonville Town Centre Plan for public consultation. This is an important plan for the City, not only it is the first of a series of centre plans that aim to deliver Council's strategic direction for urban development, it also brings together a number of strands of Council's emerging policy direction, including: better management of residential infill development; a renewed focus on centres for commercial development; better quality urban design; and transit-orientated development. The draft Town Centre Plan also signals a more active leadership role for Council in managing major urban change in line with international best practice.

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## **Supporting Information**

### **1) Strategic Fit / Strategic Outcome**

*The draft Town Centre Plan directly implements Council's strategic direction for urban development as well as the Northern Growth Management Framework.*

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

*There will 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 detailed proposals.*

### **3) Treaty of Waitangi considerations**

*There are no known considerations.*

### **4) Decision-Making**

*This is not a significant decision.*

### **5) Consultation**

#### **a) General Consultation**

*Extensive consultation has been carried out with key stakeholders and the wider community to develop this draft Town Centre Plan. Approval is sought for public consultation on the draft plan.*

#### **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 draft Town Centre Plan foreshadows amendments to Council's District Plan. These will be detailed as part of the further report back to SPC.*