

## **Background Information**

### **Proposed District Plan Change 18 – Oriental Bay Height Area**

#### **Background**

Council initiated a review of the planning provisions covering the Oriental Bay Height Area in 2000. It was intended that the review would build on comments made by the Environment Court regarding Oriental Bay, and work towards meeting Council's obligations to undertake further work in return for District Plan appeals being withdrawn. Involved in the review was the formation of the Oriental Bay Working Group to identify, consider and debate the key planning issues for the area.

The Planning Study emphasised that Oriental Bay is a key back drop to Wellington's city centre. It is an important venue for public recreation and private residential living. The aspect and topography of the area provides a unique opportunity within Wellington for intensive, high quality, medium to high density residential development. This development potential must be balanced against the requirement to maintain and enhance the existing character and amenity of the area, protect heritage values, and maintain appropriate levels of amenity for surrounding properties.

#### **Proposed Plan Change**

As a result of the planning study it is proposed that the following items be addressed by way of a District Plan Change.

##### **1. Oriental Parade Design Guide**

The Oriental Bay Height Area is presently the least regulated residential area in Wellington with most properties subject to only provisions controlling maximum building heights and sunlight access. It is the only residential area in the City that still permits some degree of medium to high rise residential development. Relying solely on maximum building heights and sunlight access planes to control development will not ensure that new buildings are compatible with the scale, harmony, coherence and character of the Oriental Bay area.

To reflect Oriental Bay's high visibility and its role as a public/private interface, it is considered appropriate that the area be provided with a design guide. The design guide outlines the existing character and values of the area, and provides guidance to assist new developments to make a positive contribution to the streetscape and the surrounding environment. It also addresses some issues unique to Oriental Bay such as the treatment of building tops, side and rear walls, and liveability.

It is recommended that the design guide be applied within the Oriental Bay Height Area as a Discretionary Activity (Restricted). In considering applications for resource consent Council's discretion would be restricted to the building's design, external appearance and siting. The design guide is focused on the potential impact of medium to high rise apartment style developments on the Oriental Bay environment. The design guide would

apply to all new buildings, and significant additions and alterations to existing buildings, but the following works would be exempt:

- additions and alterations to existing buildings three storeys or less in height that do not result in additional storeys being added to the building ;
- or,
- works not requiring a building consent; or,
- works not visible from a public place or which do not alter the external appearance of the building.

## **2. Revised Building Heights (110-174 Oriental Parade)**

As part of an agreement reached in 1999 to withdraw appeals to the proposed District Plan, Council agreed to undertake additional research and consultation into the potential for revising the maximum heights of the properties from 110-174 Oriental Parade.

This stretch of Oriental Parade is unique in the Oriental Bay environment. It is dominated by St Gerard's Monastery which sits 50 metres above Oriental Parade, separated from the Oriental Parade buildings by the green slope of the escarpment. The vertical height of the escarpment means that buildings on Oriental Parade could be built higher than the present maximum of 16 metres above mean sea level (amsl) with little or no effect on the amenity of properties to the rear. However the escarpment has also been identified as having significant landscape and townscape value because of its proximity to the central city, and because of its role as the pedestal for St Gerard's. In landscape terms it is desirable to minimise obstruction of the escarpment by buildings and structures.

A staggered height option is proposed based on the recommendations of Chris McDonald (Architect, Urban Designer). The proposed heights are:

- 110-142 Oriental Parade - retain the existing 16 metre height limit
- 144-164 Oriental Parade - 22 metre height limit (currently 16 metres)
- 166-176 Oriental Parade - 26 metre height limit (currently 16 metres)

All heights are measured above mean sea level which is approximately 3 metres below ground level. It is considered that this option offers the most appropriate balance between private development, public and private amenity, and the protection of the historic heritage values of the Monastery and escarpment.

## **3. Revised 20% threshold for Discretionary Activity height increases**

At present there is a 20% discretionary height increase applying to the properties in the Oriental Bay Height Area (there are 3 exceptions to this rule). This provides the ability to apply for a Discretionary Activity (Restricted) resource consent to increase the maximum height of a building by up to 20%. Application for a Non-Complying Activity resource consent may also be made to increase the height of the building by more than 20%.

Concern has been raised during the Oriental Bay Planning Study that the existing 20% discretionary height increase is excessive given the maximum heights of some properties in the Oriental Bay Height Area. The table below indicates the potential scale of the 20% height increase.

<b>Oriental Bay Height Area Maximum Height (metres amsl)</b>	<b>20% Increase</b>
28 metres	5.6 metres
22 metres	4.4 metres
19 metres	3.8 metres
16 metres	3.2 metres
13 metres	2.6 metres

<b>Inner Residential Area</b>	<b>20% Increase</b>
10 metres	2 metres

<b>Outer Residential Area</b>	<b>20% Increase</b>
8 metres	1.6 metres

The maximum building heights in the Oriental Bay Height Area are set at levels that respect the location, heights, views and amenity of properties to the rear. The area is therefore sensitive to any increases in height above the stated maximums. In this situation it is considered that the 20% discretion limit is too blunt a mechanism to ensure positive environmental outcomes and potentially sends the wrong message to property owners and developers. The current discretionary limit implies that large buildings are able to accommodate larger increases in maximum height without adversely impacting on the surrounding environment, yet there is little evidence to suggest that this is the case. The discretionary height limit should be set at a level that reflects the level of increased development that can realistically be sustained by the Oriental Bay environment.

It is proposed that the 20% limit be replaced with a set measurement of two metres which better indicates the level of height increase that may potentially be able to be accommodated within the Oriental Bay environment. To help promote positive urban design in the area it is proposed that the two metre height discretion be limited to the provision of building top design features.

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