

PC50 Residential Focus Group – Meeting 4 Notes

30 JULY 2020, 7-9PM – UPPER HUTT LIBRARY

Introduction and task explanation:

The meeting began with a brief introduction and welcome, which included introducing the new Planning Policy Manager, Emily Thomson, to the group. Emily provided a brief background about herself and her career, as well as her involvement in PC50.

Council Officers offered a brief overview of the work which has been undertaken so far on PC50 to ensure the group understood where PC50 is currently at along its projected timeline, specifically mentioning the Issues and Opportunities consultation which ran from March to May 2020.

Officers proceeded to provide context regarding changes to national legislation which have come into force since the last meeting, namely the Resource Management Act 1991. This included updates to the authority of the Environmental Protection Authority, changes for the allowance of the consideration of climate change under the RMA, and the repeal of public notification preclusions and ministerial involvement in local decision making.

The National Planning Standard for Urban Development (NPS-UD) was also introduced to the group by Officers, including its specific removal of parking restrictions, the enablement of six storey development and greater housing diversity, and the integration of a housing bottom line to the Plan. Officers presented a visualisation of walking distances from rapid transport stops where six storey development would need to be considered for enablement. Council officers explained that 'walking distance' had not yet been defined by the NPS, as well as explaining that the housing bottom line in the NPS would be based on the HBA figure (Wellington Housing and Business Development Capacity Assessment 2019), which reflected development sufficiency over a 30 year period.

Members of the groups queried the impact that the removal of parking restrictions would have, as well as how the enablement of six storey development would affect the character of Upper Hutt. Officers mentioned that these effects will be relatively new for Upper Hutt, and that the new NPS is a significant change which Upper Hutt will need to consider. The newly-completed Residential Character Assessment would be a significant basis for character evaluation.

Officers went on to inform the group of the consultation response received for the Issues and Opportunities engagement. Public response and feedback from specific topics was briefly discussed.

Workshop exercise:

After this discussion the focus group members split into smaller groups. Groups were asked to provide feedback on draft broad outcome statements for residential areas and the methods on how these outcomes could be achieved, including whether they felt further outcomes should be stated to more clearly define the intended future state of residential areas.

Post-exercise feedback session:

After the feedback exercise was completed, members were asked for any additional feedback they wished to provide on the topics. The comments received for each topic are shown below.

Topic 1 - Management of Growth Areas

- Members mentioned that it was important that identified growth areas had suitable levels of access due to concerns regarding traffic which the associated growth could result in. This included access to different modes of public transport and active transport.
- Members also noted concern regarding the provision of infrastructure needs alongside development growth, with the provision of new schools being specifically mentioned. Officers explained that the District Plan was not directly responsible for the delivery of schools, but rather based on role capacity constraints, as assessed by the Ministry of Education. However, Officers

conceded that it was important to consider how new development has an effect on local infrastructure, including location and capacity of local schools. Members mentioned the potential opportunity to set aside land within those growth areas where schools could potentially be located.

Topic 2 - Intensified Urban Living

- Members were concerned about the impact of six storey development on the city, highlighting that the current character of Upper Hutt is not generally high-rise or multi-storey development.
- Officers asked members what their primary concerns over the enablement of six storey development would be. Members mentioned that they were concerned about the impact of larger buildings overshadowing the existing residential buildings in the area and the potential loss of sunlight. Furthermore, members mentioned that they should be set back from the road, citing the BUPA development on Fergusson Drive as an example which they would not wish to see replicated. The vacant space in front should also be developed as greenspace, rather than being concreted and used for the likes of parking. It was also commented on that there should be a provision of greenspace alongside new development, and that this greenspace should have natural character, rather than more developed greenspace areas.
- Officers asked the members for their opinion on multi-use development as part of six storey development areas. Members were in general agreement that retail on the ground floors and residential above could be acceptable, but highlighted that there are already issues with filling the existing retail space in Upper Hutt. It was concluded that perhaps only local hospitality outlets and other supportive commerce may be more appropriate. Members made it clear that they were against residential on the ground floor within the CBD as this would contravene CPTED Principles (Crime Prevention through Environmental Design).

Topic 3 - Subdivision and distinctive character

- Members mentioned that the retention of certain character can stifle the introduction of new character which may be necessary to meet the needs of local communities. It was therefore important to recognise that newly built areas may form part of future distinctive character areas, and that character changes over time.
- Members also noted that they would like to see clear urban design outcomes to ensure new development results in high quality character.
- The integration of CPTED principles into new development was also raised as an issue through the discussion.

Topic 4 - Housing diversity, choice & affordability

- Members did not provide any comments on this topic and were largely in agreement with what had been stated by officers.

Topic 5 - Sustainability & home enterprise

- Members suggested that all new development could incorporate solar power utilisation. It was also enquired about the potential for incentives (such as rates rebates) for the uptake of sustainability features in development, however Officers informed members that that is something outside the control of the District Plan. This instead required Council to introduce such a policy (under the Local Government Act).

- Officers used this opportunity to inform the members on the recently adopted Upper Hutt Sustainability Strategy, and how this will be factored into consideration through PC50.

Close & Next Meeting:

An overview of how this feedback contributed to future policy development and public engagement was provided. Officers also detailed the intended accelerated timeframe due to the Covid-19 lockdown, stating that they would like to meet again in roughly 3-4 weeks, which members agreed to.