

Draft Housing Choice and Supply Plan Change – Karori and Tawa

November 2015

One page summaries of issues considered in developing the draft standards on the topics listed below are set out in the following pages:

- Building height and recession planes
- Open space requirements
- Front yard setbacks
- Site coverage
- Car parking
- Minimum site dimension

Additional one page summaries are also included for two other topics that help to address housing choice and supply generally and so are not specific to Karori and Tawa:

- House conversions
- Housing choice for an aging population

Building Height - Summary

What are we proposing?

The **existing building height** in the residential areas of Tawa and Karori is 8m. An additional 1m is allowed if a pitched roof is used in the building design.

Key features of the **draft changes** are:

- Maximum height 8m (with discretion to go to 10.4m in certain locations, subject to a notification test)
- Building Recession Planes = 2.5m/56° & 63° (depending on boundary orientation)
- Non-notification of applications if building standards are met
- Amend Policy 4.2.1.4 which discusses height breach considerations to further recognise in what instances these breaches may be considered acceptable

These changes are consistent with current plan approach for Johnsonville Medium Density Residential Areas (MDRAs) and will enable medium density development of approximately 2 storeys, with scope to build to 3 storeys (subject to an effects assessment on adjoining properties). Parties seeking to develop medium density housing will have an element of certainty around notification where the proposal is fully compliant with building standards. High quality design outcomes will be required and proposals will be assessed against a revised Residential Design Guide.

The draft amendment to Policy 4.2.1.4 will provide clear direction on the circumstances where additional height may be acceptable (along Principle Roads, such as Main Road, Tawa and Karori Road) while maintaining the signal that Council is seeking good quality design outcomes.

Background

To achieve the right balance between enabling more intensive housing whilst maintaining amenity for surrounding residents, the Council considered what height restrictions will be the most appropriate in Tawa and Karori.

The District Plan currently provides height restrictions within existing MDRA zones that range from 8 metres in Johnsonville to 10 metres in Kilbirnie. Discretion is also provided in Johnsonville to enable consideration of developments up to 3 storeys (10.4 metres) on a case by case basis, subject to a notification test.

Building recession planes (BRPs) are another planning tool used to complement the height limits by managing building bulk, height in relation to boundary, shading, and overlooking.

The review demonstrated that the height and building recession plane provisions applicable to medium density housing in Johnsonville are also appropriate for Tawa and Karori. The review considered the following matters:

- Feedback from the initial round of community consultation
- The existing height restrictions in the Johnsonville and Kilbirnie MDRA
- Amenity outcomes comparing the existing MDRA provisions with alternative height restrictions applicable in other main centres in New Zealand
- Character assessments of Karori and Tawa
- Advice regarding economic viability of development in these suburbs
- Review of previous decisions on resource consents

Consultation Feedback – March/April 2015

One of the biggest areas of feedback we received was on the issue of building heights, with 28% of submitters commenting that height should be limited to two storeys and ensure that designs fit with the local character. Accordingly, the draft standards propose to keep the 'permitted height' at 8m (or two storeys) for much of the draft boundary area.

Open Space - Summary

What are we proposing?

The **current** open space requirement in the Outer Residential Area is 50m² per dwelling.

The **draft standards** proposed to reduce this in the draft medium density residential area to 20m² per dwelling.

This reduction in open space strikes a balance between enabling intensification whilst providing adequate space for landscaping and outdoor amenity space for occupants. This ultimately helps integrate new development into the wider suburban setting.

A minor amendment to the wording within Building Standard 5.6.2.3 at Chapter 5 of the District Plan is required to reflect this change. In addition, the Residential Design Guide and Policy 4.2.3.2 are also proposed to be amended to strengthen the quality and outcome of shared open space areas within medium density developments.

Background

Adequate provision of onsite open space is important for the amenity of residents and also to provide an integrated approach to site planning. This ultimately enables a high quality design outcome and positive contribution to the wider townscape. Provision of “green” open space is an important aspect that was highlighted in the initial feedback from the Tawa and Karori communities.

An assessment has been undertaken to determine whether the current approach taken to open space provisions in existing Medium Density Residential Areas (MDRA) is appropriate for Tawa and Karori.

The table below summarises the existing ground level open space provisions requirements for a range of residential zones in the District Plan.

| | MDRA 1 | MDRA 2 | Outer Residential | Inner Residential |
|--------------------------------|--------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Ground level open space | None | 20m ² per unit | 50m ² per unit | 35m ² per unit |

There is no requirement to provide ground level open space in the more ‘urban’ contexts of Kilbirnie and Johnsonville MDRA (1), whereas in the Johnsonville MDRA (2) zone a minimum of 20m² of ground level open space is required for each unit. This open space can be provided as both private and/or shared open space.

The current ground level open space requirement in Tawa and Karori is 50m² (under the existing Outer Residential Area zoning). Reducing the minimum amount of open space required to 20m² per dwelling recognises the intensive nature of development anticipated in the MDRA zone.

The minimum ground level open space requirement of 20m² per unit is attainable, without unduly constraining the overall number of units. Coupled with the minimum front yard setback of 3m and the ability to landscape the onsite open space, the proposed provisions provide sufficient opportunity to assist the integration of more intensive housing within the “green” suburbs of Tawa and Karori.

Consultation Feedback – March/April 2015

A notable proportion of submitters (16%) commented that housing should include or have access to outdoor private, green or garden spaces.

Front Yard Setback - Summary

What are we proposing?

The **existing front yard setback** in the residential areas of Tawa and Karori is 3m or half the width of the road, minus 10m. Effectively, a reduced front yard restriction applies on sites that abut wide roads.

The **draft change** proposes a minimum front yard of 3m, regardless of the width of the road.

Background

A balance needs to be struck between enabling more housing whilst maintaining townscape qualities and amenity for surrounding residents.

The District Plan currently provides for a 3m front yard setback in the Johnsonville and Kilbirnie Medium Density Residential Areas (MDRAs). Given the suburban and “green” nature of Karori and Tawa, it is considered important to enable landscaping/green/open space at the front of a development site to soften the impact of new development upon the wider streetscape. Front yard setbacks of 3m also apply in the historically dense suburbs of Berhampore, Mt Cook and Newtown in the Inner Residential Area. A 3m setback is particularly appropriate in areas such as Karori and Tawa, which exhibit an established natural and green character. Ground level open space standards and site coverage limits will complement front yard setback by managing building bulk in relation to boundary, and providing a sense of openness around buildings.

The review demonstrated that front yard provisions applicable to medium density housing in Johnsonville are also appropriate for Tawa and Karori. The review considered the following matters:

- Feedback from the initial round of community consultation
- The front yard restrictions in the Johnsonville and Kilbirnie MDRA
- Amenity outcomes comparing the existing MDRA provisions with alternative density restrictions applicable in other main centres in New Zealand
- Character assessments of Karori and Tawa

Consultation Feedback – March/April 2015

Little feedback was received in relation to front yard setbacks, however the Tawa and Karori communities highly valued the existing natural qualities, such as green and open spaces within sites. The front yard standard of 3m is considered to strike the right balance between facilitating medium-density development, whilst providing an opportunity to soften the front of a site and maintain a good quality streetscape, which would assist in the integration of new development into the suburb.

Site Coverage - Summary

What are we proposing?

The **existing site coverage** in the residential areas of Tawa and Karori is 35%, with an additional 5% provided for uncovered decks above 1m.

The **draft change** proposes a maximum site coverage of 50%.

Background

A balance needs to be struck between enabling more housing whilst maintaining townscape qualities and amenity for surrounding residents. Given the height limit is proposed to stay at 8m based on the public feedback, increasing site coverage to 50% is considered to strike the right balance between facilitating medium-density development, whilst providing an adequate sense of openness. Coupled with open space and front yard standards, the site coverage standard is considered to assist in the integration of new development into the suburb.

The District Plan currently provides for 50% site coverage in the Johnsonville and Kilbirnie Medium Density Residential Areas (MDRAs). Site coverage of 50% also applies in the historically settled suburbs in the Inner Residential Area. Ground level open space standards and front yard setbacks will complement the site coverage by managing building bulk in relation to boundary, and providing a sense of openness around buildings.

The review demonstrated that site coverage provisions applicable to medium density housing in Johnsonville are also appropriate for Tawa and Karori. The review considered the following matters:

- Feedback from the initial round of community consultation
- Site coverage restrictions in the Johnsonville and Kilbirnie MDRA
- Amenity outcomes comparing the existing MDRA provisions with alternative density restrictions applicable in other main centres in New Zealand
- Character assessments of Karori and Tawa
- Review of design outcomes for previous medium-density proposals in areas with a 50% site coverage limit

Consultation Feedback – March/April 2015

Little feedback was received specifically in relation to site coverage, however the Tawa and Karori communities highly valued the general sense of openness around buildings and existing natural qualities, such as green and open spaces within sites.

Car Parking - Summary

What are we proposing?

No changes are suggested at this time to the current parking requirements, pending a wider city wide review of how parking is managed.

Background

Increased densities of residential development can generate increased demand for vehicular parking, whether this is on the development site, or on-street parking. On-site parking areas can result in poor residential amenity and character outcomes (due to high levels of hard surfacing) and compromise the ability to comprehensively develop a site and achieve increased density of development. Kerbside parking can have a negative impact on the efficient functioning of the transport network, particularly on streets with high traffic volumes, narrow streets, or streets that form part of strategic cycle and public transport networks.

It is proposed to increase the number of Medium Density Residential Areas (MDRA) in some of the outer suburbs of Wellington City. Despite the intention to increase housing density via the MDRA zone, the District Plan has a blanket carparking standard across all residential areas, which requires a minimum of one carpark for each household unit. There are no visitor parking requirements for the first 7 units of a given development, but are required at a rate of 1 space per 4 units thereafter.

Research has shown that suburban multi-unit developments generally provide 1 car park per unit, which is consistent with the District Plan's minimum requirement and aligns with market demand. However, there is an opportunity to review the parking allocation for visitors in the Medium Density Residential Areas.

Preliminary investigations, and feedback from the Tawa and Karori communities, suggest that residential streets in close proximity to town centres & public transport networks are sometimes utilised by commuters for all day parking. Therefore, the wholesale removal of the visitor parking requirement could result in additional on street parking pressure and further compromise the efficiency of the road network. Such collateral effects may necessitate additional management of on street parking in MDRA's, for example, with a residents' parking scheme.

A tension exists between the objective to enable high quality urban design outcomes with the competing demand for space within the public road network. Further investigation into how such overspill would be managed needs to be undertaken and integrated with Council's wider Parking Policy and Cycling Framework reviews.

The review of the Council's Parking Policy is expected to investigate parking environments in and around the residential streets next to town centres to ascertain the level of commuter parking in these areas. This will feed into the wider review of space allocation principles, which are also linked to the Cycling Framework and future bus network changes. Changes to the district Plan parking requirements may be one of the options identified as part of the review.

Consultation Feedback – March/April 2015

Concerns about car parking and the impacts of additional traffic on the local streets were raised by 9% of submitters. Comments included the need for control over additional parking demand arising from new development to reduce the impact on street parking.

Site Dimension Requirements - Summary

What are we proposing?

It is not proposed to apply a minimum site dimension provision to development occurring in the draft Tawa and Karori Medium Density Residential Areas (MDRAs).

Each proposal for a multi-unit development will continue to require resource consent, with discretion held in relation to design, external appearance, and siting. The Residential Design Guide, which provides guidance on what is an acceptable level of design for medium density housing, will remain an important tool in assessing all resource consent applications.

It is proposed to amend the explanatory text beneath Policy 4.2.1.4 to ensure the discussion around minimum site dimension within this policy relates only to the Johnsonville 2 MDRA context. Explanatory text elsewhere within Policy 4.2.1.4 will continue to guide the consideration of development where no minimum site dimension is required. Emphasis will remain on the importance of comprehensive development and the efficient use of land when considering development within a MDRA.

Background

There is an existing minimum site dimension for properties located within the Johnsonville 2 Medium Density Residential Area (MDRA). This approach was introduced to prevent 'ad-hoc' infill development from occurring, which can fragment land and make it difficult to amalgamate sites for comprehensive development at a later stage. Larger sites can provide more opportunities to achieve flexible and comprehensive design outcomes, whereas smaller allotments can restrict design options and compromise site planning.

However, the land closer to the Johnsonville town centre, known as MDRA 1, is not subject to this minimum site dimension. One key reason for this was to encourage redevelopment in the central part of Johnsonville first.

The Council has reviewed whether that minimum site dimension tool is a useful tool in the contexts of Karori and Tawa.

A valuation impact study has highlighted a number of constraints to development opportunities in Tawa and Karori. Existing land and improvement values have been identified as the major barriers to acquiring multiple parcels of land and challenge the viability of intensified development in some parts of these suburbs. The report encourages flexibility within the District Plan in these areas to ensure there is sufficient scope for re-development.

Based on the results of the valuation impact study, the current site dimension approach in the Johnsonville 2 MDRA is not proposed to be adopted at this time for Tawa and Karori. The Council is also not proposing a two-tier zone system that applies in the Johnsonville area either. Comprehensive development of sites within Tawa and Karori will still be encouraged, but the emphasis will be on design and amenity outcomes, rather than the overall size of the underlying development site.

House Conversions - Summary

What are we proposing?

It is proposed to make changes to the explanatory text beneath Policy 4.2.1.4 to recognise conversions as an acceptable development option in the Medium Density Residential Area zone.

Background

Recognising the economic constraints of redeveloping some properties in parts of Tawa and Karori, it is necessary to look at other ways to achieve greater housing choice and increased densities in addition to comprehensive redevelopment. House conversions, from one dwelling to two units may, in some situations, offer that additional housing choice. Conversions also provide additional housing choice, particularly to 1 and 2 person households and those seeking rental opportunities.

The District Plan currently provides for the conversion of an existing dwelling into 2 units as a permitted activity. While the District Plan permits conversions (subject to open space and car parking being provided), the policies do not specifically recognise the benefits of enabling conversions for providing additional housing choice and supply.

Desktop analysis of Tawa and Karori has highlighted a number of larger buildings that may be suited to alterations to enable additional units. Conversions of existing buildings will have fewer impacts on surrounding residential character and amenity, while creating additional residential units.

There is little evidence to suggest that the current plan approach has caused unnecessary uncertainty or delay in the consideration of such activities. However, the housing choice plan change process planned for 2016 provides the scope to strengthen the policy direction to better recognise the benefits of house conversions.

Consultation Feedback – March/April 2015

This issue was not specifically raised in submissions. However, submitters were concerned about the loss of character and amenity resulting from site redevelopments. Some submitters did question the viability of this form of development in parts of these suburbs too. Promoting house conversions more broadly may help to increase housing choice and supply while reducing the scope of effects on adjoining neighbours.

Housing Choice for an Ageing Population & Adaptability of Housing Stock - Summary

What are we proposing?

The **draft provisions** seek to introduce a framework of provisions that clarify how retirement villages and supported care facilities are to be treated in the District Plan.

The framework includes draft definitions, policies and an associated rule to clarify:

- General support for aged care facilities in residential areas (ie the 'activity' component are permitted activities)
- Acknowledge that key areas of concern are the impact of large scale developments on surrounding residential character. Managing density of the development at its boundaries will be a primary matter of discretion in the resource consent process for the 'buildings' and 'site development' component of these activities.
- Provide a policy framework and rule structure to accommodate this form of housing

The Residential Design Guide will also be amended to encourage adaptable residential building stock to help cater for the changing needs of the population.

Background

Wellington City's population is changing. The changing demographics, including an aging population and a projected decrease in the average household size, require greater flexibility in the type of housing provided.

In recent years, the aged care sector has changed significantly. Large scale development companies have emerged as the leading providers of housing for the elderly. As well as providing for hospital level care, larger providers also provide for homes for independent living where occupants have access to a number of on-site services and recreational facilities. Residents in 'retirement villages' have the ability to transition within the complex from independent units to units where higher levels of care are provided when their health needs increase.

For elderly people especially, the desire to age in place within their community is likely to be a key factor in their future housing preferences and decisions.

The District Plan does not specifically provide for large scale aged care facilities such as retirement villages, rest homes, and supported living facilities. With a growth in the development of retirement village complexes over recent years, combined with a need to consider more aged care housing options, it is appropriate now to consider whether the District Plan provides an adequate policy and rule framework to enable and consider aged care facilities.

This plan change provides an opportunity to address issues around housing choice and supply associated with changing population demographics. In addition, the Council is able to introduce measures to advocate for the adaptability of existing and new building stock to cater for the change in population, specifically in relation to adaptable unit design and accessibility design.