

27. URBAN DEVELOPMENT AREA

27.1 Introduction

The land between Johnsonville and Tawa forms part of the natural land corridor that provides one of the two main access routes to and from the city. The recent history of the area has been one of progressive urbanisation. Pastoral farming has continued to decline and has been replaced, in the main, by suburban residential development.

The urbanisation of the area was first planned by the former Hutt County administration in the 1960's and has continued in various forms since this time. Following the incorporation of the area into Wellington City in April 1973 a detailed study of the area was initiated. The Churton-Bridgetown-Grenada Development Report that resulted was adopted by Council in November 1976. This provided the basis for the planning of the area for the next two decades or more.

The introduction of the Resource Management Act in 1991 and the preparation of the new District Plan under this Act signalled changes in the approach to planning and land development in the area. The management of urban development on the edge of the city was identified as a significant resource management issue for the city and an initial step was taken through the adoption of the Subdivision Design Guide to achieve development consistent with the aim of promoting a more sustainable urban form.

To further advance the planning of the area Council decided in 2000/01 to undertake a comprehensive planning review of the northern suburbs of the city. The purpose of the review was to create a growth management plan for the northern suburbs with the following objectives:

- *To consolidate the northern part of Wellington City into a highly attractive, efficient and accessible urban area that realises its potential of contributing to the city as a whole.*
- *To enhance, protect and link significant landscape, ecological and natural features of the area as a foundation for sustainable urban living.*

After an intensive consultative process the Northern Growth Management Framework (NGMF) was adopted by the Council in October 2003.

The NGMF is predicated on a growth of 9000 people over the next 20 years and is based on the premise of building on existing communities. The proposed growth is intended to be accommodated in three main areas: Stebbings Valley to the north of the existing Churton Park subdivision; the Lincolnshire farm block between the motorway and the Horokiwi rural area; and land around the lower Takapu Valley.

Planning for the urbanisation of these development areas involves a wide range of initiatives to be applied progressively. The actions for the ten years from 2003 are detailed in the Implementation Plan that accompanies the NGMF.

The key contribution of the District Plan to the wider planning process is to provide an appropriate regulatory framework for the assessment of future land development proposals. In this respect the Council has decided that the first requirement is to establish a zoning that will provide certainty to the landowners, developers and adjacent communities regarding the future use of the land for various urban purposes.

District Plan implementation

Before urban development processes occur a structure plan must be adopted as part of the Urban Development Area provisions. A structure plan is a framework to guide the development of land by defining the future development and land use patterns, areas of open space, the layout of nature and infrastructure (including transportation links), and other features for managing the effects of development. It is intended that structure plans will be prepared by the Council in consultation with land owners and other interested parties and will reflect the values and principles of the NGMF. Structure plans will be introduced progressively over time in advance of new urban development.

Under the Urban Development Area provisions a resource consent will be required for all subdivision and associated earthworks. Applications will be assessed against approved structure plans that will apply to various areas, the Subdivision Design Guide and the Code of Practice for Land Development.

The rules provide for the continuation of existing rural activities as 'interim' uses and for the establishment of cleanfills that might be required to facilitate subdivision development. Provision is also made for some residential activities to enable building development to proceed prior to the completion of subdivision processes.

It is intended that following the depositing of subdivision plans, further District Plan changes will be initiated to rezone land within structure plan areas to reflect the intended future land uses. New urban development will then proceed in accordance with the provisions of the respective area based provisions that apply.

As the structure plans may seek outcomes that are not covered by existing area based provisions consideration will be given to the initiation of further District Plan changes for the introduction of appropriate new provisions, for example:

- Minimum requirements to promote more intensive residential development in residential areas close to employment or neighbourhood centres
- The planning and design of employment or neighbourhood centres through the assessment of comprehensive development plans or similar methods
- The limitation of inappropriate uses in employment or neighbourhood centres

27.2 Urban Development Area Objective and Policies

OBJECTIVE

- 27.2.1 To provide for sustainable urban growth in the northern suburbs of the city consistent with the vision, objectives, themes and values of the Northern Growth Management Framework.**

POLICIES

To achieve this objective, Council will:

- 27.2.1.1 Identify existing rural land suitable for new urban development and progressively rezone this land to facilitate development in accordance with approved Structure Plans.**
- 27.2.1.2 Allow all permitted rural activities to continue until urban development occurs.**
- 27.2.1.3 Ensure that Structure Plans are responsive to the physical and ecological context of the area to which they apply, establish a sound public space structure, promote the coordinated and integrated provision of infrastructure and transport networks and otherwise reflect the vision, objectives, themes and values of the approved Northern Growth Management Framework.**
- 27.2.1.4 Require all development proposals, including subdivision, land use and associated earthworks to be assessed against approved Structure Plans.**
- 27.2.1.5 Ensure at the early design stages that developments proposed near high voltage transmission line corridors comply with all relevant regulations and codes of practice.**
- 27.2.1.6 Ensure the sound design, development and servicing of subdivisions.**
- 27.2.1.7 Promote a variety of residential densities and housing types including more intensive residential development, close to employment or neighbourhood centres.**
- 27.2.1.8 Encourage mixed use development but ensure that non residential uses are appropriately integrated as part of the overall design of new developments.**
- 27.2.1.9 Ensure that employment or neighbourhood centres are developed in a coordinated manner and are integrated with and protect the amenities of the surrounding neighbourhood.**
- 27.2.1.10 Ensure that neighbourhood centres are well designed, compact and well connected with a high level of amenity to provide facilities for local people as opposed to destination retailing.**

- 27.2.1.11 Ensure that most employment centres land is retained primarily for non-retail employment related uses and are well designed, compact and well connected with a high level of amenity.**
- 27.2.1.12 Ensure that large out-of-centre retail developments do not adversely impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of other town centres and do not;**
- **compromise Wellington’s compact urban form;**
 - **result in a loss of vibrancy and vitality of other Centres;**
 - **lead to an inefficient use of resources;**
 - **compromise the use and future development of sustainable transport options.**
- 27.2.1.13 Provide for rural /residential development on steeper hillside areas while ensuring that subdivisions and building development are designed to fit the natural features and landscape of the site.**
- 27.2.1.14 Ensure that proposed landuse and subdivision activity will not compromise the future development or subdivision of land for urban development purpose.**

METHODS

- Rules
- Structure Plans
- Design Guides (Subdivision and Multi-Unit Housing)
- Code of Practice for Land Development
- Northern Growth Management Framework
- Operational activities (management of infrastructure)
- Advocacy (Partnership for the North)

The policies and implementation methods for the Urban Development Area are designed to facilitate the change of existing rural land to urban use. The provisions cover mainly ‘greenfield’ land between Johnsonville/Newlands and Tawa.

The Urban Development Area provisions are ‘interim’ to the extent that future plan changes will rezone land to reflect intended uses. The Urban Development Area provisions will however provide certainty to land owners that their land is clearly identified for urban development.

Future District Plan changes will be imitated by the Council at a time when subdivision plans for various stages of the structure plan, or significant parts thereof are deposited with new titles issued. New zonings will be introduced as appropriate to reflect the uses established under the structure plan. This will avoid future owners requiring resource consent for development that might otherwise be permitted under the ‘standard’ District Plan zonings.

In the interim, under the Urban Development Area zoning all land development, including subdivision and earthworks have been included as a Discretionary Activity (Restricted) to enable all relevant aspects of land development to be fully assessed.

With particular regard to retailing the Council will manage any large out-of-centre retail developments in the Urban Development Area to assess the impact on the vitality and viability of surrounding town centres (particularly Tawa, Johnsonville and Newlands). In such cases an impact assessment report will generally be required. In addition and where it is appropriate, Council will also consider how large out of centre retail developments will impact on Regionally Significant Centres in the wider Wellington Region.

A key assessment tool will be Structure Plans that are included as part of the Urban Development Area provisions. Structure Plans establish the essential urban structure for the land to be developed, including infrastructure and transport networks.

The processes for assessing and implementing land development proposals will work to ensure that developments reflect the vision, objectives, themes and values of the Northern Growth Management Framework, i.e. developments that:

- Achieve highly liveable and attractive urban environments for communities*
- Protect the landscape and ecology of the area*
- Acknowledge the heritage and culture of the area*
- Provide infrastructure to meet the areas needs*
- Have a high level of accessibility and are well connected to surrounding communities.*

