

Council Briefing Meeting Minutes

Date: Thursday, 11 July, 2019
Time: 12:30 p.m.
Location: Council Chamber
Forum North, Rust Avenue
Whangarei

In Attendance
Her Worship the Mayor Sheryl Mai
Cr Crichton Christie
Cr Vince Cocurullo
Cr Tricia Cutforth
Cr Shelley Deeming
Cr Phil Halse
Cr Cherry Hermon
Cr Greg Innes (Chairperson)
Cr Anna Murphy

Not in Attendance
Cr Gavin Benney
Cr Sue Glen
Cr Greg Martin
Cr Sharon Morgan

Scribe Jennie Thomas (Democracy Adviser)

1. **Apologies** - Crs Sue Glen, Gavin Benney, Greg Martin, Sharon Morgan
2. **Reports**

2.1 Review of feedback on the Draft Whangarei District Growth Strategy

Cr Innes convened the meeting and handed over to Tony Horton (Manager-Strategy) to run the presentation.

In terms of the feedback received, Mr Horton noted that public feedback had been open for five weeks from 20 May to 24 June. There had been 408 responses received and of those there were 688 separate items of feedback were generated. The responses were comprised mostly from on-line surveys, but also with some traditional written feedback.

Two hundred of the public that provided feedback also provided their contact details and asked to be updated as the strategy progresses and is implemented. A copy of

the summary feedback report, along with the next steps of the process, will be emailed to these parties.

From the feedback received there were eight key issues raised:

1. The management of development and growth in our coastal areas
2. The balance between intensification and greenfield development
3. Better recognise the importance of business and key industries
4. Transport resilience
5. The effects of climate change on future development
6. Housing choice and affordability
7. Community involvement and engagement
8. Design of subdivision and development

Mr Horton ran through and summarised each issue separately.

The management of development and growth in coastal areas –

A large amount of this feedback came from Parua Bay and Whangarei Heads residents. This relates to objections about the amount of growth anticipated for Parua Bay and Whangarei Heads as well as the small lot sizes provided through the recent Rural Plan Change. Some feedback questioned whether Parua Bay should remain a growth node and called for a moratorium on new development until further consultation had occurred. The feedback raised concerns that infrastructure cannot keep up with the growth and that development will be detrimental to the character of the area. There was also feedback on a proposed live-in park for Whangarei Heads.

Having said that, Mr Horton noted, there were slightly different views relating to development in coastal areas with support for more infrastructure and providing more amenity such as open space. There were a number of items of feedback that called for the growth nodes, like Parua Bay, to remain.

The balance between intensification and greenfield development -

The feedback showed a trend towards support for intensification of housing in existing developed areas and in key growth areas/nodes. There was a lot of comment on poor quality designed subdivisions. The importance of green and open space, especially in high density development, was noted.

There was also a number of comments on public transport needing to align with growth areas and to support intensification.

Feedback was also provided on aligning our investments in cycling, walking and shared paths, and more generally around infrastructure, to support intensification and future developments.

A number of specific locations were identified for residential or future development opportunities, including North of Kamo, Tikipunga, Otaika and to a lesser degree Riverside.

A number of points raised related to areas that should not be intensified due to:

- Flood or natural hazard risk
- Reverse sensitivity issues particularly for industrial activities and around quarries in the district
- Natural and coastal character. There was a specific submission on the foothills of Mt Manaia
- Not well connected suburban areas or those that don't have the amenity to support more intensive living
- Puriri Park was specifically mentioned in a number of feedback items
- Productive and agricultural soils

The importance of business and industries –

Feedback recommended that greater emphasis be given to the importance of business and key industries which include:

- Northport
- Refinery
- Quarries
- Tourism
- Service Sector

Further comments around business and key industries included key points on reverse sensitivity and the relationship between future housing and existing industrial areas. The importance of improving infrastructure in particular transport, including the State Highway and rail. Feedback supported a focus on businesses, new and existing, in the central city.

Comments were provided on the need to identify new areas for commercial areas. Suggested areas included Springs Flat and Hikurangi to provide more choice and options for these sectors.

Transport Resilience –

Feedback on the important issues in terms of future growth and resilience of transport included:

- The need for better public transport links across the District. Including both areas of growth and rural areas
- How to manage traffic congestion and, as intensification happens in urban areas
- Roothing improvements, such as new roads, bypasses and junction improvements including specifically the Riverside/Onerahi bypass

- Support for more active transport with reference to more cycling and walking opportunities
- Better integration of transport and landuse planning
- Importance of rail, particularly for industry
- Four lanes needed for State Highway 1

The effects of climate change on future development –

There was a lot of feedback around climate change and how we take this into account in relation to growth. There was discussion on the need to ensure new growth areas will not be adversely affected by climate change in 50-100 years and the need for a strategy or policy to address these issues.

There was feedback on seawalls providing protection for parts of the city and the wider district.

The feedback provided was encouraging in that it wasn't a high level view on climate change but more in relation to development in specific parts of the District.

Housing choice and affordability -

Feedback received highlighted the issues of choice and affordability in the housing market. Supply was not seen as our biggest issue, but the choice of housing we are allowing. Comments were made on the need for more apartments and townhouses and a choice across the district, not just in the city centre. Some suggested a greater choice in suburban areas and growth nodes. Housing choice also should be linked with good public transport, accessibility and affordability.

Community involvement and engagement –

Another issue that generated a lot of feedback was the need for better community involvement. Feedback included:

- Council does a poor job of consulting and engaging with the community
- Decisions are made about development without proper community input or transparency
- More and better consultation is need for future plans to be successful
- Certain areas have requested that they are consulted on new development and subdivision proposals
- Meaningful involvement of hapu in new development proposals
- A small number of people suggested that further community input could slow down or stop development

Design of subdivision and development –

There was a lot of comments relating to design in relation to housing development including:

- The poor quality of recent subdivisions and why the badly designed developments are allowed to happen
- The need for better design in areas of natural or coastal character
- The need for better design and a greater scale of development in the city centre
- The poor design and appearance of our entranceways
- The importance of amenity, warm dry homes and access to open spaces for a good quality of life
- New development should be sustainable/green buildings

Other notable comments –

Some of the feedback did not fit in the main categories. These included:

- A number suggested that we delay the strategy until the 2018 Census results are released
- There should be better alignment with the Northland Regional Policy Statement
- The impact and pressures of tourism
- Need to consider the biodiversity and protect areas of natural vegetation
- Infrastructure should be provided in advance of development
- Proactive provision of open space before the land is built on
- Investigate protection of views to our key natural features
- Need to incorporate the work done in the structure plans for coastal areas
- Implementation of the development plan for Council owned land adjacent to the Community Centre at Parua Bay

There were quite specific comments around the provision of infrastructure. There should be a proactive approach for open space before developments are built. There was some feedback on protecting views which is common in Auckland and some were suggesting we adopt a similar approach.

Central government update –

Mr Horton advised that the central government adopted the National Policy Statement (NPS) on Urban Development Capacity in 2016. A number of discussions have taken place with the Ministry for the Environment and the Ministry of Housing. Basically, central government are indicating they are going to review and amend the NPS. They have said the NPS is a process driven document and they wish to change the focus into a policy or direction driven document.

There may be changes to our high growth status as they are considering broader indicators.

These changes will provide more robust policy direction for the Growth Strategy and District Plan as to how growth and development are managed. There will be changes to the monitoring and reporting requirements.

Central government, at this stage, are seeking feedback on the proposed changes in August and are looking to adopt the changes by April 2020.

The changes are frustrating in that the NPS is a relatively new document which staff have come to understand. The changes could be quite significant and could lead to changes in how the Growth Strategy is developed.

Considering these possible changes staff have provided two options for possible next steps.

Option 1 -

Revise strategy with the aim for adoption in August. The key risk being that the strategy will need to be amended again in 2020 to accommodate the changes to the NPS. The other risk being that growth assumptions will need to be revised due to the 2018 Census results.

Option 2 –

Seek support from Central Government to bring the strategy to a point of a working draft.

A second iteration of the document which includes the census data and changes to the NPS, which will align government policy, be brought back to the next Council to adopt.

Staff would continue to work across Council to refine the strategy further. We would also continue to work with stakeholders and communities to refine the content of the working draft. This provides an opportunity to go back to and receive more feedback.

There are some risks involved with this option but Council still have the 30/50 Strategy to work with.

Feedback was requested from elected members on which they saw as the best option to continue with.

Feedback received:

The consensus from elected members was to continue with a modified Option 2 in which staff would continue to assess the situation and have information available when the next iteration of the NPS becomes available.

Other feedback centred around this option allowing for an educational aspect to this discussion on the strategy. We need the communities to take ownership of the strategy and we can do this by providing more detail to them and potentially being able to consult other communities that we have not received feedback from. When

requested, Mr Horton advised that staff could provide a programme of further education and discussion with communities to elected members.

It was noted that the time of the consultation may have influenced the content of the feedback received due to key debate taking place in communities such as Parua Bay and Maunu.

Feedback included that the strategy did not want to be based on incorrect data so it made sense to incorporate the more up to date data when the Census was published.

Comment was made that it would be interesting to gauge any feedback received from the Raumanga area regarding the entranceway into Whangarei.

It was suggested that further feedback regarding broader infrastructure needs and how the business sector and community see these requirements would be helpful.

Comment was made that deliberation was needed on the timing of new infrastructure to allow for growth for the next 30-50 years. The placement of sports grounds, new water sources, arterial roads, old and new parks and reserves all need careful consideration. It was stated that infilling within the city boundaries was an important point to consider as well as maintaining and upgrading our roads.

There was some discussion on what the community had advised in their feedback, they saw as undesirable development and whether the solution to poor design could only be addressed through the District Plan. It was advised that this area is being discussed with and could also be addressed by the regulatory side of Council.

It was noted that there had been interesting feedback from the Ministry for the Environment that for future development strategies authorities should work in close collaboration with all authorities. Mr Horton advised that two members of the steering group on this programme are from the Northland Regional Council. There were two way conversations happening on environmental as well as some bigger issues between the two councils.

The feedback from NZTA was noted as valuable in regards to their comments on future rail, shipping, technology and climate change in relation to promoting public transport.

It was discussed how spatial planning could be incorporated in any further discussions that took place with communities in relation to the strategy.

It was stated that there is a need to think cyclically in regards to the whole Growth Strategy and to consider the circular use of resources as a move towards sustainability.

There was discussion on the importance of community involvement and engagement and the feedback that had been received now and in the past regarding the perception that consultation was undertaken in a seemingly poor manner. It was

noted that some of the language we use, particularly around planning, is not readily understood. The style of communication used is key.

It was stated that Council need to focus on growth for the whole district not just centrally. We should be setting out our growth nodes, ascertain where we wish to grow and how. The ideal location for business, such as supermarkets, should be considered.

It was stated that updated key communication needs to occur with submitters on the process going forward.

Mr Horton advised when queried, that there are a number of councils in a similar position to ours. From meetings held, the general consensus is to continue with similar action as our Option 2. Auckland and Christchurch Councils have already adopted their Growth Strategy's but are constantly reviewing them due to their growth.

Cr Innes summarised that some action on projects identified in the LTP could occur, we should look at a broad spatial plan for Whangarei as an indicator for infrastructure, momentum needed to continue with the strategy with discussions with community including integrated spatial planning and the design of subdivision.

Dominic Kula advised a lot of the infrastructure discussed, is already identified in other strategic documents such as the 30 year infrastructure strategy. The next step would involve staff coming back with information on a modified Option 2 and to provide visibility on both this and what can realistically be achieved through ongoing community engagement and education.

Cr Cocurullo left the meeting at 1.39pm during feedback from elected members.

3. Closure of Meeting- The meeting concluded at 1.48pm.