

Open Space - Summary

What are we proposing?

The **current** open space requirement in the Outer Residential Area is 50m² per dwelling. The **draft standards** propose to reduce this in the draft MDRA to 20m² per dwelling. In addition, a general change is being proposed to the District Plan, which will remove the requirement for converted units to provide ground level open space in the Outer Residential Area, where there is no increase to the existing building footprint. This will enable greater housing choice throughout the city, without adversely impacting on the character of the Outer Residential Area suburbs.

The proposed reduction in open space in the MDRA 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.

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.

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 in the more suburban suburb of Newlands. The table below summarises the existing ground level open space provisions requirements for a range of 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

Medium-density housing typically has less open space associated with each unit, which is one of the attractions to homeowners and residents seeking a low maintenance property. Retaining the 50m² for future MDRAs will constrain the ability to increase development densities.

The minimum ground level open space requirement of 20m² per unit is attainable from a development feasibility perspective, 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 Newlands.

The District Plan currently enables dwellings to be converted without the need for ground level open space in the Inner Residential Area and Medium Density Residential Areas, so long as the conversion relates to an existing building. This recognises the diversity in housing stock and enables the provision of greater housing stock in existing residential neighbourhoods without adversely impacting on the character of these areas. It is proposed to extend this exemption of ground level open space to the wider Outer Residential Area.

Consultation Feedback – October –December 2015

Provision of “green” open space is an important aspect that was highlighted in the initial feedback from the Newlands community during the 2015 initial consultation. The proposed change strikes the balance between provision of onsite open space, whilst enabling development a greater intensity than that which is currently provided for.

Front Yard Setback - Summary

What are we proposing?

The **existing front yard setback** in the residential area of Newlands 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 MDRAs. Given the suburban and “green” nature of Newlands, 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. Many sites in Newlands have large, generous front yards, some of which blend with the street berm.

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 Newlands, which exhibits an established natural and green character. Ground level open space standards, onsite landscaping, 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 Newlands. 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 assessment of Newlands

Consultation Feedback – October-December 2015

Little feedback was received in relation to front yard setbacks, however many submitters 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, which would assist in the integration of new development into the suburb.

Building Height - Summary

What are we proposing?

The **existing building height** in the residential areas of Newlands 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
- Identify height sub-areas within a draft Newlands MDRA Design Guide, which signals where additional height may be appropriate around the town centre.

These changes are consistent with current plan approach for Johnsonville 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 4.2.1.5 will provide clear direction on the circumstances where additional height may be acceptable while maintaining the signal that Council is seeking good quality design outcomes. To provide greater clarity around this, a Newlands Residential Design Guide appendix also identifies the “height sub-areas”.

Background

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) 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 Newlands. 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 assessment for Newlands
- Advice regarding economic viability of development in these suburbs
- Review of design outcomes for previous medium-density proposals in existing MDRA zones

Consultation Feedback – October-December 2015

One of the biggest areas of feedback we received was on the issue of building heights, with 24% of submitters specifically commenting that height should be limited to two storeys. Accordingly, the draft standards propose to keep the ‘permitted height’ at 8m (or two storeys) within the Newlands draft MDRA.

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 40% in Newlands.

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 40% is considered to strike the right balance between facilitating medium-density development, whilst providing an adequate sense of openness. Coupled with onsite landscaping, 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 MDRAs. Site coverage of 40% applies in Roseneath and Aro Valley. 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 has concluded that site coverage standard in Newlands should be set at 40%, which recognises the smaller scale of the town centre footprint (which has less ability to “absorb” higher levels of density compared with Johnsonville and Kilbirnie). In addition, the steep topography in Newlands makes site coverage of 40% more appropriate. 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 assessment for Newlands
- Review of design outcomes for previous medium-density proposals in existing MDRA zones

Consultation Feedback – October-December 2015

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

House Conversions - Summary

What are we proposing?

Amend the explanatory text beneath Policy 4.2.1.4 to recognise conversions as an acceptable development option in the MDRA zone.

In addition, a minor amendment to the wording within Building Standard 5.6.2.3 at Chapter 5 of the District Plan is being proposed, which will remove the requirement for converted units to provide ground level open space in the Outer Residential Area, where there is no increase to the building footprint. This will enable greater housing choice throughout the city, without adversely impacting on the character of the Outer Residential Area suburbs.

Background

In recognition of the economic constraints that surround the redevelopment of existing properties, it is necessary to look at additional mechanisms to achieve greater housing choice and increased densities alongside comprehensive redevelopment. House conversions, from one dwelling to two units, may in some situations offer that additional housing choice.

The District Plan currently provides for the conversion of an existing dwelling into 2 units as a permitted activity (subject to provision of ground level open space and onsite car parking). Having reviewed this, it has been determined that where existing homes are converted to two units, without extending the existing building form, there will be no requirement to provide 50m² of ground level open space, as this is a density control. Conversions of existing buildings will have fewer impacts on surrounding residential character and amenity, while adding to the available housing stock.

While the District Plan permits conversions, the policies do not specifically recognise the benefits of enabling conversions for providing additional housing choice and supply. Desktop analysis indicates that a number of larger buildings in the areas currently under investigation may be suitable for minor alterations that could enable additional 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 provides the scope to strengthen the policy direction to better recognise the benefits of house conversions. Removing the requirement to provide onsite ground level open space for both units, where there is no corresponding increase in building bulk, aligns with this wider policy direction.

Consultation Feedback – 2015

This issue was not specifically raised in submissions. However, submitters were concerned about the loss of character and amenity resulting for site redevelopments. Promoting house conversions more broadly may help to increase housing choice and supply while reducing the scope of effects on adjoining neighbours.

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.

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 – October-December 2015

Concerns about car parking and the impacts of additional traffic on the local streets were raised by 17% 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 Newlands Medium Density Residential Areas.

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. In addition, an appendix for the Newlands MDRA has been prepared, which will sit within the wider Residential Design Guide and will reinforce key design considerations that are particularly relevant in Newlands.

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 Newlands.

A valuation impact study has highlighted a number of constraints to development opportunities. The report encourages flexibility within the District Plan in these areas to ensure there is sufficient incentive for re-development.

The current site dimension approach in the Johnsonville 2 MDRA is not proposed to be adopted at this time for Newlands. Instead, the development standards (e.g. height, building recession planes, open space, yards, site coverage etc) and the resource consenting process will determine the appropriate level of development on a site. Comprehensive development of sites will still be encouraged, but the emphasis will be on design and amenity outcomes, rather than the overall size of the underlying development site.

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.

In addition, a general change is being proposed to the District Plan, which will remove the requirement for converted units to provide ground level open space in the Outer Residential Area, where there is no increase to the building footprint. This will enable greater housing choice throughout the city (including opportunities for elderly residents to live independently next to their wider family), without adversely impacting on the character of the Outer Residential Area suburbs.