

Summary of Consultation

on the

Tawa housing choice and town centre planning

May 2015, City Planning and Design



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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

In 2008, Wellington City Council consulted on the potential for a number of suburban centres being zoned for increased residential density. At the time, it was agreed that two areas, Johnsonville and Kilbirnie, would be the focus of this work initially. The rezoning in Johnsonville and Kilbirnie has been completed and the planning provisions allowing medium-density housing are in effect in those areas. In February 2015, the Council agreed Tawa and Karori should be the next investigation suburbs for medium-density housing.

In parallel with the rezoning, the Council completed town centre planning and upgrade programmes for Johnsonville and Kilbirnie. The town centre upgrades support the planned increase in residents in these areas. Consequently, a town centre planning exercise and upgrade works are planned for Tawa and Karori.

1.2 Consultation process

The Council conducted an early consultation with the Tawa community on town centre planning and housing choices, from 19 March to 17 April 2015.

For this consultation, letters were posted to approximately 3900 ratepayers in Tawa. This included an information leaflet on housing choice and town centre planning, and a feedback form. The leaflet included mapping showing walkable catchments surrounding Tawa centre, in order to assist residents in identifying where medium-density housing could go. It also featured examples of medium-density housing. The key messages were:

- Best practice medium-density development is generally located around services and transport, ideally close to a town centre; and
- Medium-density housing can be done in a range of ways, sizes and formats; including two storey buildings.

Officers attended a drop-in centre at the Mervyn Kemp (Tawa) Library between 28 March and 4 April 2015. During these sessions, Council officers explained the projects and answered questions from the community. Explanatory posters outlined a number of issues and opportunities for residents to consider, including:

- There is an abundance of commercial space across several locations;
- We have installed wind screens between New World and Main Road, but there is potential to use this space more;
- Main Road is a key arterial, with a wide carriageway and angled parking. This encourages fast driving and makes pedestrian crossing difficult;
- The local train services attract a large number of park and ride commuters causing more parking on local streets;
- Tawa is well serviced with green spaces, schools, playing fields, a library, pool and other public facilities. However, changes to sites such as Coronation Park, or more consistent signage and street frontages could improve the local appeal;
- The Porirua Stream could be a town centre feature but has flood controls and is not easy to access; and

- There is land to the north and south of Tawa Junction which could be developed to complement the town centre.

The other activities undertaken during this consultation were:

- A webpage was setup specifically for consulting in Tawa, and included links to the Housing choices webpage and the town centre planning webpage. A feedback page was added to present initial consultation findings;
- A media strategy involving traditional and social methods. This included WCC webpages, Facebook, Twitter, newspaper, email alerts, etc;
- An information evening on Wednesday 1 April 2015 was attended by approximately 45 people;
- Council officers presented a paper to the Tawa Community Board;
- Council officers had a number of informal discussions with key stakeholders; and
- Tawa and Karori were featured on the 'Our 10 Year Plan' website, under Idea 6 'Strengthening Town Centres'.

1.3 Responses

The consultation resulted in 171 submissions, representing more than 280 submitters within the community. The submissions were:

- 155 submissions from the general community via the direct feedback lines. These were the feedback forms either posted, completed online, or emailed to Council officers;
- 11 submissions from 'Our 10 Year Plan website'; and
- 5 submissions from associations (KPCD Properties Limited; Simon's Pharmacy; Tawa Community Board; the Architectural Centre Inc.; and the New Zealand Centre for Sustainable Cities).

2.0 Consultation outcomes

2.1 Key themes

Common themes emerged through the consultation process. The responses highlight what submitters consider important, worth continuing or what needs improvement in both the residential and town centre parts of Tawa.

The themes related to the proposed medium-density housing in Tawa are below:

- Generally people accept that Tawa is suitable for medium-density housing; although the impact on existing residential dwellings is a key concern;
- The most accepted locations for medium-density housing are around the town centre and along public transport routes;
- Submitters question the demand for medium-density housing in Tawa, given that population growth has been slow in recent years;
- Design controls on medium-density housing are important; such as setbacks, heights, open space provisions, and sunlight and noise controls;
- Two storeys is the preferred height for medium-density housing;

- High-quality design and materials are necessary to ensure new housing is appropriate in the local context;
- Medium-density housing should not look all the same and as such, diversity in design is encouraged;
- Neighbours approval should be sought where medium-density housing goes next to them; and
- Design controls should be the same as or no less stringent than the existing standards.

The themes related to the town centre of Tawa are below:

- The number of vacant shops is a key concern;
- Retaining the existing shops is an important issue due to competition from neighbouring centres such as Porirua and Johnsonville;
- There is a good existing community atmosphere;
- The community would like to see improvements to the town centre, including more seating, hanging flower baskets, trees and plants;
- There is a good range of shops, facilities and services, however there is a need to attract new businesses to the area and a wider variety of them;
- Access to the town centre is good, including active and public transport. However, improvements to the latter are required;
- Open space needs to be retained and even expanded upon;
- Traffic congestion, safety and the amount of heavy vehicles that pass through the town centre are all issues that need to be resolved; and
- The Porirua stream needs to be enhanced and piped at some sections.

2.2 Comments by question

Housing choice

Question 1: Where should medium-density housing development happen in your suburb?

69% of submitters (192 submitters) support medium-density housing and 29% of submitters (82 submitters) oppose it. Of the 192 supportive submitters, 38% agree that medium-density housing should be located within walking distance from the town centre.

By the numbers

- **53% of submitters support medium-density housing around the centre or transport links.**
- **14% of submitters support medium-density in other areas of Tawa**, such as selected streets mostly around the town centre and in some outer areas of Tawa.
- **13% of submitters support medium-density housing generally and in Tawa** but have not specified where in Tawa they would like it to go.
- **13% of submitters do not support medium-density housing in Tawa for a reason.** This is primarily because of character concerns, although other reasons such as a lack of capacity in terms of existing

infrastructure and there being no evidence of demand for medium-density housing in Tawa were also given.

- 15% of submitters **do not support medium-density housing generally and in Tawa** but have not given a reason as to why they do not support it in Tawa nor have they specified where they do not want it to go.

Question 2: What standards should we have to manage the design of medium-density housing?

This question attracted a wide range of responses. The common themes are:

- Two storeys is an acceptable building height;
- Privacy, sunlight access and noise restrictions are important;
- Setbacks, site coverage and insulation requirements are the proposed controls;
- Medium-density housing needs to be of a high quality in terms of design and materials;
- Neighbours approval should be sought where medium-density housing will go next to them; and
- Open space is desired, preferably a private space with some acceptance of shared spaces.

By the numbers

- 41% of submitters see **setbacks, site coverage, sunlight access, privacy, noise and height as key controls.**
- 35% of submitters want controls to **limit height to two storeys and to ensure that medium-density housing is of a high quality.**
- 25% of submitters recommend medium-density housing should include or have **access to outdoor private, green or garden spaces.**
- 18% of submitters want **quality of design and types of materials included** in the controls.
- 16% of submitters suggest **neighbours approval should be obtained where medium-density housing goes next to them.**
- 15% of submitters suggest **the existing rules and controls should be used** to govern medium-density housing.
- 13% of submitters highlight **diversity in design should be encouraged and unification should be avoided.**
- 10% of submitters reference **parking controls for new development**, with the common theme being that space should be provided for off-street parking.
- 10% of submitters **support building above two storeys**, with most of those preferring a maximum of three storeys.
- 5% of submitters want **environmentally friendly development.**

Town centre planning

Question 3: What do you like most about your town centre?

Submitters mention the town centre is compact and walkable and is well serviced by train connections. There is also a strong sense of community and atmosphere. 65% of submitters like the shops,

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community services and accessibility of the town centre and 39% of submitters like the urban character and the community atmosphere of Tawa.

By the numbers

- 40% of submitters suggest the **town centre has a good range of shops, facilities and services.**
- 39% of submitters think the **town centre is convenient** (size and access are good, although parking is identified as an issue).
- 29% of submitters highlight **Tawa has a good community atmosphere.**
- 15% of submitters suggest **public transport services are good.**
- 12% of submitters **like the existing urban character.**
- 9% of submitters highlight they **like that the town centre is not overcrowded.**
- 8% of submitters think **the town centre has good car parking.** This is because there is an abundance of fee car parking.

Question 4: What are the most important issues for your town centre?

48% of submitters are concerned about the short and long term economic viability of the town centre. This concern stems from the fact that there is a large amount of vacant shops in the town centre, which are either run down and/or need modernising. In addition, the town centre is considered by submitters as being too small to be viable. There is also a need to retain the existing shops, and attract new ones, including a wider variety of them. 30% of submitters say there are issues in the town centre regarding its character and do not want this exacerbated by the creation of 'ghettos'.

By the numbers

- 40% of submitters reference **transport and traffic issues.** Congestion is highlighted as a major problem during peak times, followed by car parking and public transport.
- 28% of submitters mentioned **general infrastructure is already failing or at capacity.** Stormwater and the Porirua Stream are known issues in Tawa.
- 19% of submitters say they have **concerns regarding the character of the town centre.** In particular, it is suggested the town centre is lacking or has no identity or heart.
- 18% of submitters say **open spaces in the town centre need to be better maintained and upgraded.**
- 17% of submitters suggest the **town centre needs more community services and facilities.** Some ideas include a Council office, a velodrome and a building or space for public events.
- 13% of submitters specifically mention **retaining existing shops in the town centre is an issue.**
- 12% of submitters suggest there needs to be **more frequent public transport services and the reliability of these services needs to be improved.**
- 11% of submitters note the **town centre needs to be made more pedestrian friendly.** Submitters suggest this could be done by making provision for more pedestrian crossings in the town centre, with some submitters even suggesting that one or two of the existing pedestrian crossings be removed and located elsewhere.
- 10% of submitters highlight **competition from neighbouring centres such as Porirua and Johnsonville is a concern.**

Question 5: Are there any improvements you would like to see in your town centre?

Primary improvements sought to the town centre relate to shop diversity, partial or complete redevelopment of the town centre and public realm improvements. 26% of submitters would like active and public transport improvements and 14% of submitters would like to see traffic safety measures put in place as well as a reduction in heavy vehicles that pass through the town centre.

By the numbers

- 34% of submitters want **more local shop offerings**. Specifically, a hardware store, a butcher and another supermarket to compete with the existing one.
- 31% of submitters **want improvements made to the public realm**, including more seats, hanging flower baskets and trees and plants.
- The transport issues attract a range of support and solutions:
 - 21% want the **congestion improved**;
 - 19% want **active transport improvements**;
 - 8% want **traffic calming implemented in Tawa**, which could be physical changes to the roads or a 40km/h speed limit;
 - 5% would like the **car parking improved**; and
 - 5% would like **public transport improvements in Tawa**.
- 18% of submitters **want open spaces retained and even expanded upon, including the facilities within these spaces**;
- 17% of submitters **want more community facilities and services in Tawa**;
- 16% of submitters **would like to see the town centre partially or completely redeveloped**. For instance, some submitters think that town centre should be completely demolished and rebuilt;
- 15% want **increased shopping and retail diversity** in the town centre;
- 13% of submitters would like the **existing shops to be retained and/or upgraded**;
- 12% of submitters want **pedestrian improvements**. This includes more pedestrian crossings, the removal of angle car parking along the Main Road and lights installed at all pedestrian crossings;
- 8% of submitters **want the Porirua Stream enhanced and piped at some sections**; and
- 7% of submitters would like **cycling improvements**. Such improvements include more cycle lanes and the removal of angle parking along the Main Road.

3.0 Conclusions

The main messages from the public consultation are:

- The overall response was supportive of medium-density housing around the town centre and along public transport routes.
- More meaningful consultation is required on the standards for medium-density housing. Responses were lacking detail due to the wide question posed. Limiting the height of buildings to two storeys was the only significant response.
- Submitters are concerned with new housing not fitting in with the existing local character.
- Car parking is important, and may involve a range of solutions. Primarily medium-density housing should provide space for off-street car parking.

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- Active and public transport linkages are good, however improvements to these modes of transport are required. For instance, submitters want to see more pedestrian crossings as well as more frequent and reliable public transport services.
- Submitters note the short and long term economic viability of the town centre is a major issue and as such, some submitters are worried Tawa will turn into a 'ghost town'.
- The library and other civic buildings form a valuable hub for the community. However, there is a need for more community facilities and services in the town centre.
- The accessibility and range of shops, facilities and services are what submitters like the most about the town centre.
- The town centre has a good community feel and submitters do not think this should be compromised in favour of medium-density housing.