

Urban Design Memo

To: Craig Sharman

From: Colin Hattingh

Subject: Urban Design Comment – Rotokauri North Private Plan Change

Date: 5 July 2021 File: _____

The purpose of this memo is to provide comments in relation to urban design for the relevant application. These comments consider the standards, assessment criteria, design guide criteria and objectives and policies relevant to the application.

INTRODUCTION:

1. The private plan change applies to approximately 140ha in Hamilton's north-west. The land is currently zoned Future Urban, and the plan change seeks to enable urban development.

PURPOSE:

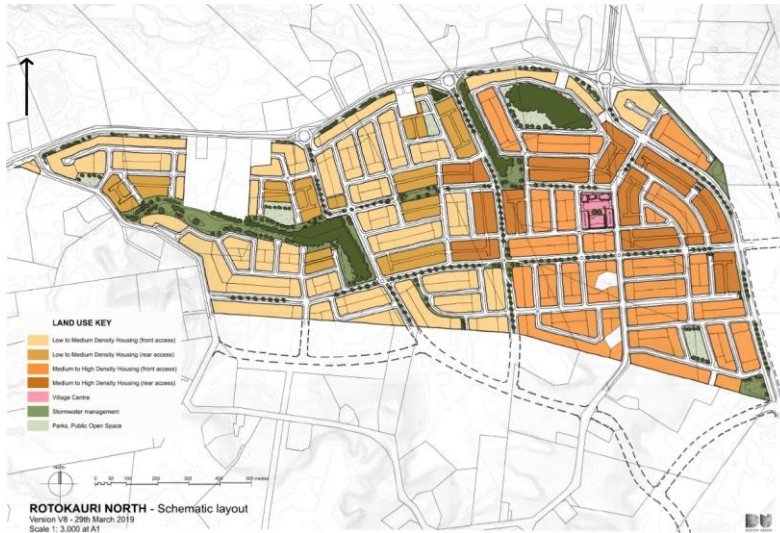
2. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the urban design aspects of the proposal.
3. The comments relate to the approach and principles described in:
 - a. The Urban Design Assessment (Attachment 15) prepared by Ian Munro, dated April 2019.
 - b. The Planning Assessment (AEE) prepared by Tollemache Consultants, dated April 2019.
4. I do not consider myself an expert in landscape assessments and do not comment on the Landscape and Visual Effects Assessment (Attachment 17).

DEFINING URBAN DESIGN:

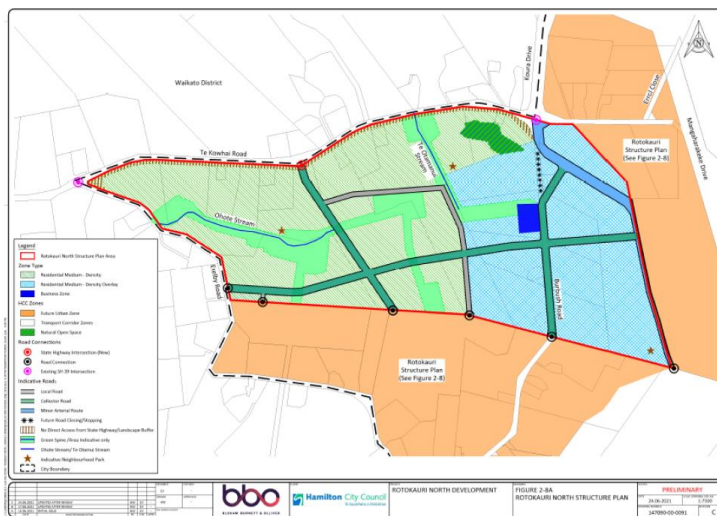
5. In my experience, the term 'urban design' is often misunderstood and incorrectly applied. Where architecture focuses on individual buildings, urban design seeks to address the wider context and is concerned with the relationship between buildings, streets, public spaces and neighbourhoods to ensure that they are both functional and attractive.
6. As discussed under 25.15.1 (Operative District Plan, Volume 1) "*Urban design applies not only to the appearance but also the function and feel of buildings and public spaces including streets*". Importantly, it "*focuses on public frontages and spaces and addresses elements such as streetscape, walkability, sustainable design, mixed-use development, 'active edges' of building frontages, and people's safety and accessibility*".
7. In my opinion, urban design can be defined as "*The art of designing the public environment of a city, including the interface between private properties and the public environment*". The public environment includes any area that is accessible to the public without control or restriction – mainly public spaces, malls, arcades, streets, avenues, parks, waterfronts etc.
8. Urban design (in my opinion) is not concerned with the detailed architectural expression of individual buildings as this is often a subjective matter.

BACKGROUND:

9. Work on this portion of the growth cell has been ongoing for a few years. The goal is to ensure that any development proposal reflects the application of best-practice urban design principles.
10. To this end, several design workshops were held which led to the development of an indicative Masterplan (see image below) showing a preferred option (one of several alternatives explored) for how the land could be subdivided to support a high-quality residential neighbourhood.



11. Although the Masterplan will remain as a non-statutory document, the outcomes achieved demonstrate the value of the process. The Masterplan underpins and provides the basis for all the provisions and maps that have subsequently been drafted, giving HCC and others confidence that the stated urban design outcomes can be achieved.
12. Based on the above master planning process and refinement, I believe that the proposed Structure Plan (see below) builds on the various opportunities and constraints that the site presents and that it presents a well-considered alternative for this portion of the wider Rotokauri growth cell.



13. The masterplan was not submitted to the Urban Design Advisory Panel.

EXISTING POLICY CONTEXT

14. From an urban design perspective, I consider that the following Operative District Plan (ODP) provisions are particularly relevant to this proposal:

Objectives and Policies

Chapter 2: Strategic Framework

Urban Design Approach

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| Objective 2.2.3 | Promote safe, compact, sustainable, good quality urban environments that respond positively to their local context. |
| Policies | |
| 2.2.3a | Development responds to best practice urban design and sustainable development principles, appropriate to its context. |
| 2.2.3b | Development responds to Low Impact Urban Design and Development and Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles. |
| 2.2.3c | Development enhances civic, natural heritage, cultural, ecology and surrounding public space networks. |

Chapter 25.15.2: Urban Design

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| Objective 25.15.2.1 | Urban environments that promote the retention and enhancement of urban amenity values, i.e. pleasantness, aesthetics, coherence, cultural and recreational values: |
| Policies | |
| 25.15.2.1a | Streetscape quality, public open spaces and pedestrian amenity are improved through appropriate streetscape and built form which enhances the appearance, functionality, comfort and safety of the pedestrian environment. |
| 25.15.2.1b | Built form and public amenity features, including public art, are encouraged to enhance public awareness of historic and contemporary heritage and culture. |
| Objective 25.15.2.3 | Continued enhancement of public and personal safety throughout the City, by reducing opportunities for crime to occur. |
| Policies | |
| 25.15.2.3a | The assessment of and appropriate responses to Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles is required within subdivision and development proposals, to reduce threats to personal safety and security and to promote the delivery or development of environments where people feel safe. |
| Objective 25.15.2.5 | Urban environments that integrate land use with transport planning to provide permeable, highly connected and sustainable transport network |
| Policies | |
| 25.15.2.5a | Activities that are well located in respect of travel demand promote an efficient transport hierarchy and compact City around key nodes and circulation networks. |
| 25.15.2.5b | Development promotes connectivity and accessibility with pedestrian routes, cycleways, public reserves and green corridors. |

PROPOSAL

Urban Design Assessment (Attachment 15):

15. In terms of the 'Urban Design Assessment' (Attachment 15) I concur with and highlight the following aspects of the approach followed by the applicant:
 - a. The structure plan and provisions reflect the application of several best-practice urban design principles.
 - b. The focus is on the creation of a compact, integrated community where residential uses are supported by a range of other activities including a neighbourhood centre, schools, parks and open spaces, a well-connected roading network, housing choice and a subdivision that minimises cul-de-sacs and rear lots, and a block layout to create a connected and walkable development.
16. As summarised on Page 6, the plan change has been guided by the following overarching design principles:
 - a. *"require a well-connected and walkable block and street network that recognises the road hierarchy and the needs of strategic through movement;*
 - b. *require development to activate and front public spaces, and have private space to the rear, and avoid lot frontages becoming dominated by vehicle access and parking functions;*
 - c. *maximise housing choice and variety, including affordable housing;*
 - d. *maximise the efficiency of development in a way that contributes to a high-quality built environment and new neighbourhood character;*
 - e. *prominently integrate public open spaces and storm water facilities into the neighbourhood and have them contribute to its character;*
 - f. *integrate logically into and otherwise be consistent with the Rotokauri Structure Plan;*
 - g. *maximise solar access to lots and ensure a good standard of on-site amenity is achieved; and*
 - h. *ensure the daily needs of residents are met as conveniently as is possible".*
17. I concur with the assessment (page 8) that *"the site forms part of a logical urban growth opportunity that will in time connect living, working, recreation and transportation."*
18. I concur with paragraph 6.14 that *"The concept 6 master plan has been used to reverse-engineer the proposed zone plan for Rotokauri North and...By being based on a well-tested master plan, that the zone plan and Structure Plan can be confidently relied on as representing an achievable starting point for subdivision."*
19. The structure plan reflects some of the key components of the indicative masterplan including:
 - a. key collector and arterial roads
 - b. access points
 - c. green corridors, storm water facilities and indicative open spaces
 - d. protection of the SNA
 - e. medium density zoning across the site
 - f. identification of a neighbourhood centre
20. The applicant is proposing that the various urban design and form outcomes will be delivered through several new, specific objectives and policies, rules and methods that are applicable to the Rotokauri North Structure Plan area only. This includes an "Acceptable Solutions Code" which must be met for duplex units to remain as permitted activities. While this, in my opinion, may further complicate the District Plan making it harder to navigate and therefore potentially less useable for the reader, the overall approach is supported from an urban design perspective.

21. I support the proposed lot and resulting block dimensions which will be controlled through the new provisions within Chapter 23 (proposed Rule 23.7.8) of the District Plan.
22. Regarding duplex units, I support the inclusion of the Rotokauri North Acceptable Solution Code as a rule (Rule 4.14) as this is an efficient and effective way to ensure the Rotokauri North Area develops in an integrated way as envisaged by the Masterplan.
23. While I support the Acceptable Solutions Code and provision of affordable duplex units, I do not concur with the statement on page 20 that accommodating two cars - one per unit parked side by side - will not create *“any greater adverse streetscape or pedestrian amenity effects than a standard house could”*.
24. The above implies (shown in the image below) that the single car park for each unit will be accessed by a double width vehicle crossing and that the crossing must be located to one side of the site.



25. In my opinion, this will create a poor outcome for the resident(s) of the unit that has the carparking area in front of their unit and could cause a variety of unintended outcomes, for example if one of the owners wanted to fence their carpark.
26. In my opinion, another option should be available to residents, where the vehicle crossing and parking area are centrally located. This approach has been implemented by the developer in their ‘Auranga’ development (Karaka) as shown below.



27. In my opinion, this layout represents a clearer and more reasonable option for the residents of each unit, whilst still achieving the density and streetscape outcomes envisaged by the plan change.

28. Apart from the above, in general I support the various provisions, rules and standards proposed for the zone including those that relate to HIRTB, site coverage, building height, the provision of super-lots, setbacks, separation and privacy and the size of outdoor living areas.
29. I would request further clarification on the proposed rule 4.8.6 (removal of service courts) and the implications for bin storage, as this area is normally used for that purpose (recognising that Rule 25.12.3.1 is still applicable)

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

30. In summary, therefore, from an urban design perspective, I consider that the various provisions will help deliver the overarching design principles that have guided the PPC proposal.
31. The overarching guiding principles listed are supported from an urban design perspective. Further, I support and concur with the following statements from the Urban Design Assessment (pg. 37):
 - a. *“The PPC has been based on the provision of affordable housing and a variety of housing typologies and to this end the Council’s existing MDRZ development controls have been reviewed and augmented so as to maximise the efficiency at which high-quality housing can be provided. This includes provision for an ‘acceptable solution’ approach to duplex housing. This model is considered to be industry-leading and is particularly supported”.*
 - b. *“Changes proposed to the ‘standard’ MDRZ zone rules also seek to require higher standard of urban design quality, and well-laid out subdivisions that are walkable and safe. This includes attempts to minimise cul-de-sac roads and rear lots and govern the maximum dimensions of urban blocks so as to not undermine pedestrian convenience and legibility”.*
32. And the following from the Assessment of Environmental Effects (pg. 88): *“The proposed RNSP has been based on the opportunities and constraints identified from a wide range of technical inputs and analyses and is intended to replace the existing RSP for this area of land. Given the development potential of the area, a structure planning approach is adopted for the purpose of this PPC to determine the most logical locations for amenities within the RNSP area, and to preserve key linkages into the existing RSP area (so as not to comprise development in the remainder of the Rotokauri area and to ensure integration)”.*
33. From an urban design perspective, the proposed suite of provisions applicable to the Rotokauri North Structure Plan Area, are supported. In my opinion, they are complimentary to each other and will assist in the delivery of a well-connected and integrated medium density residential neighbourhood as described in the Urban Design Assessment.
34. The only concerns are related to the proposed location of the two-bay car parking area and seeking further clarification on the proposed removal of service yards and what alternatives are available to residents for the storage of bins.