

# Auckland's Draft Plan

## An overview

STUART RYAN BARRISTER | [www.stuartryan.co.nz](http://www.stuartryan.co.nz)



The Auckland Council has released for submission the *Draft Auckland Plan*, which is intended to guide the region's growth and development over the next 20–30 years. The *Draft Auckland Plan*, otherwise known as the spatial plan for Auckland, is a requirement of the Local Government (Auckland Council) Act 2009.

The Draft Auckland Plan is a glossy 250 page colour document which can be seen online on the Council's website, along with an executive summary titled *Creating the World's Most Liveable City*. It is accompanied by a:

- *Draft Economic Development Strategy*.
- *Draft Auckland City Centre Master Plan*, and
- *Draft Waterfront Plan*.

It is the aspirational objective of the Draft Auckland Plan to make Auckland the world's most liveable city by 2040. Within this period the region will have to prepare to accommodate an additional 1 million people and 400,000 dwellings.

### **Submissions open to 25 October 2011**

Submissions can be made on all four of the draft plans until 4.00pm on Tuesday, 25 October 2011.

The Council will hold hearings on submissions in November 2011 and will then adopt the Auckland Plan in February 2012.

### **What status will the Draft Auckland Plan have?**

The Draft Auckland Plan, to be adopted under the special consultative procedure of the Local Government Act, will be implemented through the Auckland unitary plan (due out in early 2013). The unitary plan will in due course replace the existing district and regional plans from the former city, district and regional councils.

The legal relationship between the Draft Auckland Plan to planning instruments under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) is currently unresolved. At this stage the options proposed by Government are that the Draft Auckland Plan:

- replace existing strategic plans under the RMA, or
- be given statutory weight under the Auckland legislation with strengthened legislative linkages (allowing the Draft Auckland Plan to 'influence' existing planning instruments).

Both of these options will require statutory amendment. Legal commentators have expressed concern about this uncertainty.

If the Draft Auckland Plan is adopted under the consultative mechanisms in the Local Government Act and later elevated to statutory status under the RMA then participation rights typical to RMA processes (such as rights of appeal) may, in effect, be undermined.

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### **Summary of Key Features**

#### **Population Growth and Demographic Change**

Medium to high growth projections suggest that by 2040 Auckland could reach a population of between 2.2 and 2.5 million (the current population is just under 1.5 million).

Auckland's ethnic diversity is likely to continue to increase. One third of children in New Zealand live in Auckland. While Aucklanders are on average younger than other New Zealanders, the proportion of the population over the age of 60 is projected to increase from 10% in 2006 to around 19% by 2040, which has clear implications for the provision of health and care services.

#### **Development Strategy:**

##### **It's all in the RUB (Rural Urban Boundary)**

The strategy is to provide a quality compact Auckland.

To accommodate growth of up to 1 million people by 2040 around 5,000 – 6,000 new hectares of new undeveloped (greenfield) land will be provided for residential, business and employment

STUART  
RYAN

P + 64 9 357 0599  
M + 64 21 286 0230  
F + 64 9 280 1110  
E [stuart@stuartryan.co.nz](mailto:stuart@stuartryan.co.nz)  
[www.stuartryan.co.nz](http://www.stuartryan.co.nz)

Level 11, Southern Cross Building  
59–67 High Street, Auckland  
PO Box 1296, Shortland Street  
Auckland 1140, New Zealand

purposes at greater densities than current zoning provides for. Areas for greenfield development will fall within a new rural urban boundary (RUB). The difference between the RUB and the previous metropolitan urban limit (MUL) is that the RUB will define the limits to long-term growth for at least the next 30 years (life of the Draft Auckland Plan) and no urban development will be allowed outside this RUB.<sup>1</sup> Auckland Council assumes responsibility for ensuring that sufficient land is available for development by the sequencing of development of greenfield land. The development strategy is described in two maps setting out the Auckland wide development strategy, and the urban core strategy.<sup>2</sup>

“ Auckland’s growth to 2040 is intended to be achieved through a 75:25 split between growth in existing urban areas, and growth in new greenfield areas ”

Through the Council’s use of the RUB, Auckland’s growth to 2040 is intended to be achieved through a 75:25 split between growth in existing urban areas, and growth in new greenfield areas (currently classified as rural land) and rural satellite centres.<sup>3</sup> This will require rezoning land to achieve greater urban densities. It is stated that there is capacity for approximately 25,000 additional dwellings within existing greenfield areas already identified or under development for residential uses. The general intent is for these areas to be developed before additional greenfields are released.

Eight growth areas for investment are prioritised in the first three years of the plan. The eight prioritised growth areas are:

- The City Centre including the waterfront;
- Hobsonville;
- New Lynn Metropolitan Centre;
- Onehunga Town Centre and suburban area;
- Tamaki – Town Centre and suburban area;
- Takapuna Metropolitan Centre;
- Warkworth Satellite;
- Pukekohe Satellite

These growth areas will amend existing zoning to allow greater densities to be achieved.

## Rural Auckland

The draft plan aims to keep rural Auckland rural in character and seeks to discourage “sprawl” by seeking to restrain future Auckland growth within a compact city due to the costs and unaffordability of servicing outward growth. Auckland’s rural areas will fall outside of the new rural urban boundary (RUB). Rural productive capability is to be safeguarded by protecting versatile soil classes, and preventing fragmentation and the conversion of land to non-rural activities.

## Urban Auckland

The strategic direction for urban Auckland is to make ongoing provision of planned land capacity for 20 years residential demand, with five years constrained land capacity “ready to go”.

The draft plan recognises a tension between providing for expected population growth of between 700,000 and 1 million new residents in Auckland over the next 30 years while avoiding a more sprawling city. The draft plan states the challenge is to create opportunities for more intensive styles of living. It is acknowledged “*intensive living and mixed-use developments have had a chequered past in Auckland*”, and that there is “*some mistrust at a community level that we can deliver desirable intensive urban environments.*”<sup>4</sup>

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Good practice urban design principles are specified all for development.<sup>5</sup> The plan states that careful attention needs to be given to the way in which low-density suburban areas may transition to medium-high density environments.<sup>6</sup>

The plan notes that there is concern over the scarcity of industrial land. The draft plan states that nearly one third of industrial land has been used for non-industrial purposes over the last decade, principally for retail, office and residential use.<sup>7</sup> It is stated that it is likely that Auckland will require around 1,000 hectares of additional business land to meet expected growth in industrial areas over the next 30 years and that “in order to meet forecast demand, the release of greenfield land will be managed to ensure adequate supply of industrial land across the region.”

## Auckland’s Housing

Due to population growth projections of between 330,000 and 400,000 additional dwellings are expected to be required for Auckland by 2040.<sup>8</sup> This means that Auckland will need at least 11,000 additional houses each year to meet this demand. Current Auckland housing activity levels are around half the volume required. Directives seek to encourage and to incentivise the

retro-fitting of existing housing stock to improve housing quality (and energy efficiency), and to require new housing stock to be sited and designed to address best practice urban design and sustainable housing principles.<sup>9</sup>

Objectives are set to improve housing affordability, although specific objectives to achieve this goal appear aspirational.

The draft plan does target (amongst the eight areas for short-term growth) the Tamaki area in a 'Tamaki transformation program', and notes that Housing Corporation ownership of 56% of the housing stock in Tamaki (comprising the suburbs of Glen Innes, Point England and Panmure) provides an opportunity for urban regeneration and intensification.<sup>10</sup>

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### Auckland's Transport

Capturing much of the initial media interest in the Draft Auckland Plan, targets and priority areas are set to integrate transport planning with land use development decisions via a series of decision making principles.<sup>11</sup> Expenditure targets are set for major infrastructure projects to support the development of Auckland.

A number of aspirational statements are made supporting a city rail link, which is acknowledged to require “new funding and revenue tools”.<sup>12</sup>

An additional harbour crossing is likely to be required by 2030 with the current preference being an alignment between St Mary's Bay and Wynyard Quarter.<sup>13</sup>

### The Southern Initiative

While the draft plan notes that many Aucklanders are doing well, at the same time approximately 30% of Aucklanders or almost 400,000 people live in communities of high deprivation (measured by 9 socio-economic factors from the New Zealand census). Areas of greatest disadvantage are concentrated in the south of Auckland.

In the chapter titled “The Southern Initiative”, the Draft Auckland Plan recognises areas of four local boards Mangere – Otahuhu, Otara – Papatoetoe, Manurewa and Papakura as areas of high population growth, but also areas of high deprivation with high local unemployment. Youth unemployment is currently 36%. One-third of households are Housing New Zealand tenants. A range of aspirational objectives are set to address these issues in conjunction with central government and other agencies.

### Heritage

The Draft Auckland Plan provides directives to protect nationally, regionally and locally significant historic heritage and to ensure that existing built and cultural heritage guides new development in accordance with specified urban design principles.

A target is set to increase the number of scheduled heritage sites and areas by 100% from 2,100 to 4,200 by 2040.

### Implementation Framework

Chapter 12 of the Draft Auckland Plan sets out an implementation framework, including the projected budgeting for infrastructural development. A table (table 12.4) sets out proposed areas of change across the Auckland region and a timetable for the investigation, planning, and delivery of development to 2050.

This includes the priority areas of the city centre, the identified growth areas for short-term growth, development along existing transport corridors, and a development timetable to apply generally throughout the region.

### Conflict between Housing Affordability Objectives and Urban Limits?

Central government politicians and others have criticised the plan to implement the rural urban boundary. Environment Minister Dr Nick Smith has said the government was concerned about the council's “ambitious” plan for 75% of future development in Auckland over the next 30 years to occur within the RUB boundary, as that was “very high” compared to Australian cities.

Dr Smith said the government was in talks with the council over the relationship between urban limits and section prices, and was worried the council's move would further drive up section prices in Auckland. ACT Party Leader Dr Don Brash has pointed to research by economist Arthur Grimes showing the existing metropolitan urban limit (MUL) has already made land immediately inside the MUL between eight and 13 times more expensive than land immediately outside the existing MUL.

Getting the Council to back down on implementation of the rural urban boundary (RUB) seems unlikely, but clearly there is a tension between the Draft Auckland Plan's objective for creating a quality compact city, while maintaining land supply for the projected population growth over the next 30 years, and improving housing affordability within the Auckland Region.

Stuart can be contacted at [stuart@stuartryan.co.nz](mailto:stuart@stuartryan.co.nz)

<sup>1</sup> Draft Auckland Plan, page 31

<sup>2</sup> pages 37–38

<sup>3</sup> page 113

<sup>4</sup> page 113

<sup>5</sup> see Box 8.3 and box 8.4, page 124

<sup>6</sup> page 125, and see figures 8.5 to 8.8, page 126

<sup>7</sup> page 73

<sup>8</sup> page 137

<sup>9</sup> page 139

<sup>10</sup> page 120

<sup>11</sup> page 163

<sup>12</sup> page 165

<sup>13</sup> page 167