

The New Planning Paradigm: Three Places Based Case Studies of Collaborative Structure Planning and Urban Design

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Introduction

Planning and designing new places is a challenging, risky, expensive and dynamic process. It requires a partnership approach, involving many people but ultimately requires good organisational planning with a hint of good luck along the way.

In April 2005, a similar presentation was made to the NZPI Conference with a paper titled "*Planning in partnership - innovative approaches to planning for growth management in Papakura District*". (Refer web link following). This paper is a good source of the theoretical context and approach to collaborative planning as a technique.

The presentation revisits examples of collaborative planning exercises 6 years on with recent examples of successful and effective planning and design collaborations which have resulted in widely accepted design led based Plan Changes at:

- Karaka Lakes – Hingaia – Papakura
- Pokeno – Franklin (now Waikato District)
- Belmont – Pukekohe

These case studies have been chosen as they are at different stages of planning and development (implementation). The presentation covers:

- the collaborative planning approach – application, advantages/disadvantages
- case study profile
- observations and learnings
- Conclusion

Collaborative Planning

A collaborative planning approach can apply where Council agree to meet landowner and developer aspirations and deliver on community outcomes in a timely and effective manner in situations of limited organisational capital (financial, human resources), extensive statutory obligations and complex integrated projects.

A partnership approach demands credibility, accountability, legitimacy and delivery. These principles can underpin a Heads of Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), (as a vehicle), to support process and task functions of Council under both the RMA and LGA.

Advantages and Disadvantages

- The approach offers significant advantages to overcome funding and resource constraints that would otherwise prevent the Council in meeting its regional and local growth obligations
- The approach facilitates the advancement of a programme through the statutory process in accordance with integrated planning outcomes anticipated by strategic concepts with relatively little opposition or appeals. This can result in significant cost savings to Council and business (opportunity cost of time and of holding land) and ensure that further refinement of development intentions can be advanced
- The approach is less random and assists with comprehensive planning outcomes and guides the expectations of landowners towards the aims and constraints of Council
- The resulting proposed plan change has the support of the key stakeholders thus minimising the risk of litigation
- There are robust checks built into the process in the form of Council's technical and political control and review, Council legal review, the hearing process under the RMA, and the opportunity for affected parties to lodge references to the Environment Court
- The approach of pooling resources can minimise costs (avoid duplication); ensure better environmental outcomes and a quicker development path (avoiding extensive, costly and unnecessary litigation) without imposing significant financial burden on ratepayers
- The approach represents a proven and tested process within the New Zealand context of resource management under the RMA
- The Council is in control of the process at each and every step along the way, with checks and balances being in the form of Council Officials, Council's legal advisers and peer review experts, and most importantly the general public through the RMA submission and hearing process.
- The approach is suitable primarily where there is a defined land area (planning unit) covered by or within a growth or structure plan area and where the respective landowners present themselves as a collective entity
- A perception of unfairness and collusion by the Council can emerge in the public forum, requiring clear and careful communication as the planning process progresses
- Partnerships require good management practices such as role differentiation, project management, financial and communication skills, and
- A collaborative approach does not negate the necessity for experienced and skilled in-house staff

The essence of this planning approach is good process; clear tasks and agreed outcomes. This is often/best articulated in a MOU which sets the 'ground rules' for engagement, the deliverables, responsibilities and an indicative programme.

Our Involvement

Harrison Grierson has been actively involved in the southern Auckland residential market with structure plan, plan changes and development of new suburbs and towns at Takanini (noticeably Addison, Hingaia (Karaka Lakes and Karaka Harbourside), Pokeno - Franklin, Pukekohe West (Belmont) and most recently Kingseat in Franklin.

Karaka lakes – Hingaia, Papakura

Hingaia was identified in the Auckland Regional Growth Strategy 1999 as capable of supporting a minimum of 10,000 people over 30 years.

Landowners formed an Incorporated Society to engage with Council to advance planning and development.

A structure plan and comprehensive stormwater management plan was prepared for 684 hectares. Landuses, transport and staging was identified and a masterplan prepared to visualise outcomes.

Harrison Grierson instructed by Council to prepare Plan Change to effect vision, principles and anticipated outcomes of Structure Plan process. Public Plan Change 5 produced with design based planning provisions for subdivision and medium density housing assessed through design assessment consenting process.

Karaka Lakes 40ha and 400 lots. Subdivision design evolved from masterplan and based on principles of:

- Connectivity
- Diversity
- Legibility
- Open Space/Amenity
- Streetscape
- Original Character
- Sense of ownership
- CPTED

Project has been successful attracting major residential builders, Fletchers and Universal Homes.

Pokeno – Franklin

Pokeno has a strategic location adjacent to SH1, SH2 and NIMTR. It is identified in Franklin Growth Strategy with potential to accommodate 6,000 people over 20 years within 400 hectares.

Landowners formed a Consortium (PLC) and in partnership with Council (refer MOU) sought to advance the comprehensive planning and design of Pokeno with the vision of an “urban village in a rural setting”. This comprised:

- plan development to support regeneration of existing Town Centre
- peripheral residential greenfield expansion of 200 hectares
- industrial greenfield expansion of 80 hectares
- associated sportsfields, parks and reserves
- integrated infrastructure

Structure Plan Document and ICMP prepared. Structure Plan underpinned by extensive research, public consultation. Concepts introduced included:

- live, work, play
- self sufficiency
- full lifecycle needs

Public Plan Change 24 introduced new industrial zones and Residential 2 zone providing for design consideration of subdivision and medium density development. Rules require subdivision and development to respect structure plan map (embedded in Plan Change). Consent requirements of the Plan Change include (for example):

- a) Subdivision Design Assessment Criteria (RDA) comprises assessment against the following design elements:
 - road, reserve and access networks
 - block size, lot type and orientation
 - roads and accessways
 - pedestrian links and routes
 - reserves
 - stormwater reserves
 - interface design
- b) Medium Density Housing Design Assessment Criteria, comprising the following elements:
 - location, extent and mix
 - public interface
 - external appearance
 - planning, position and orientation
 - private open spaces
 - visual and acoustic privacy
 - parking and access

Design assessment criteria also apply to development in the Business (Town Centre) zone and Neighbourhood Centre.

Progressive greenfield implementation occurring through residential and industrial consent approvals.

Belmont – Pukekohe

Belmont comprises an urban extension of some 70 hectares and anticipated population of 2,000 people located adjacent to Pukekohe. A group of landowners approached Council to effect the rezoning of land to support Council's Growth Strategy. An Incorporated Society was formed and an MOU with Council completed.

Belmont's genesis is also 'grass-roots', informed by policy expectations with a strong local flavour. Following similar processes of Karaka and Pokeno; a structure plan document was prepared and informed by concept planning and a masterplan to confirm yield and landuse relationships. Effective public consultation including with MOE has culminated in a school being identified central to the site.

A vision was developed for Belmont:

"Belmont is a safe, healthy and visible community that integrates with Pukekohe whilst creating a neighbourhood of distinction reflecting elements of its past and the wellbeing of its residents"

Derived from the following principles:

- Belmont is compact and contained and forms strong linkages both to the existing urban area of Pukekohe and to the rural land on its periphery.
- Belmont provides, where possible, local employment and recreational opportunities, as well as offering residential options.
- Belmont is guided by quality urban design, offering a variety of lifestyle choices and attractive environments.
- Belmont should develop in a manner which maintains or enhances locally significant landforms, vegetation, water quality and the integrity and viability of the Whangapouri Stream watercourse.

The Plan Change adopts the Residential 2 zone from Pokeno with similar urban design principles applied from the Urban Design Protocol and best practice.

The Plan Change is awaiting Council Hearing, with very few submissions.

Observations and Learnings

- Large scale projects require clear project scope, role definition and structure (MOU).
- Collaboration informs, educates and encourages effective communication. It manages expectations.
- Collaboration fosters synergistic benefits of multi-disciplinary inputs in a cross-functional manner.
- Urban design and planning functions are allowed to be creative and as such are informed and iterative.
- Place based planning is encouraged through analysis, vision establishment, review and strategy.
- Building a community led definition of values and aspirations encourages ownership and acceptance. Effective public consultation essential.
- Solid research and analysis (evidence based) and effective stakeholder engagement reduces resistance and extent of appeals (e.g. Karaka-Hingaia - Transit only; Pokeno – no submissions opposing Plan Change in principle – 2 minor appeals outstanding).
- Innovative design solutions can be expensive (e.g major features: low impact stormwater management) in capital, and risky.

- Council operational considerations relevant to Asset Managers which can temper innovation and distinguished place making.
- Good developers should be rewarded with supportive regulatory processing. Going beyond the minimum should not be a handicap.
- Lifting the bar – in plan development, plan administration and integration of urban design considerations in decision-making.
- Institutional capability can inhibit progress and alignment can be problematic.
- Challenging and enjoyable. An inclusive planning approach can ‘test’ the mettle of anyone – but it is fun!

CONCLUSIONS

- Effective collaboration implies a shared vision.
- Successful urban design informs good place making.
- An integrated public/private sector partnership approach is resource efficient and effective. Front end loading the statutory process is important to minimise risk.
- Education of and understanding of design and planning concepts and principles through such processes reduces resistance and confrontation and supports best practice.
- The projects outlined are examples of successful collaborative planning processes that represent a continuum of planning and design inputs.
- Collaboration implies – win-win.

Please refer to the following link for further detail and example of the collaborative structure planning process:

<http://www.harrisingrierson.com/article/page/technical-papers/m/302/>

Including:

- Memorandum of Understanding
- Public Open Days – Consultation documents
- Masterplan and Structure Plan Graphics
- Design Assessment Criteria
- Original 2005 NZPI paper on Planning in partnership – innovative approaches to planning for growth management in Papakura District