Draft Wellington Urban Growth Plan 2014-2043 - Feedback from Mt Cook Mobilised

Your name	Peter Cooke, Carol Comber, Ross Tanner
Company or organisation name	Mt Cook Mobilised
Street address	c/- 13 Rolleston St
Suburb	Mt Cook
City	Wellington
Phone	381 3913
Email	mtcookmobilised@gmail.com

This submission has been prepared one behalf of Mt Cook Mobilised, a group which represents residents of Mt Cook, and is affiliated to the Newtown Residents Association.

The suburb of Mt Cook is a short walking distance from Cuba St and Downtown Wellington – it has a mixture of old heritage/character housing, and high density apartment dwellings, as well as "social" housing, with both Housing NZ and the Wellington City Council providing high-density accommodation in our suburb. The population of Mt Cook is diverse, multi-ethnic, and ranges from established residents of 20+ years, to new migrants and a transient student population; from seniors to a growing number of couples with young families. Mt Cook is also a major commuter route. It is bordered by high traffic roads such as Arras Tunnel and its extension into Karo Drive (which constitute State Highway 1), and Wallace Street which runs through the middle of the suburb into Taranaki Street and carries more traffic than Adelaide Road (the main route from the Mt Victoria Tunnel to Wellington Hospital). These streets are juxtaposed alongside pedestrian walkways which help promote walking as Mt Cook's first choice in transport. About 30% of our households do not own or run a private motor car, and a high proportion of all residents are commuters.

We have read the draft Urban Growth Plan, and its executive summary. In general we thought that the plan is a very important and useful document. We like its emphasis on six focus areas: Transformational growth areas; Liveable and vibrant centres; Real transport choices; Housing supply and choice; Natural environment; City resilience.

We would in particular however like to comment on an aspect of the transformational growth area focus that is described in the Plan. This is the Adelaide Road Framework.

In 2008 Mt Cook Mobilised made a submission to the City Council about the then draft Adelaide Road Framework. We attended, and presented our submission to, a Council Committee meeting. We have however not received much feedback on our submission, and indeed in the intervening years there has not been much evidence that the framework has resulted in much if any improvement to the Adelaide Road environs.

We supported the overall vision outlined in the Draft Adelaide Road Framework, subject to the addition of some additional wording at the time:

> 'A high quality mixed-use area that is a more vibrant, attractive, better connected, accessible and safer place accessible and safer place *which meets social needs* for all people living in, working in, and using the area'.

We also supported the proposed outcomes of providing for greening of the area, quality public spaces, and strengthening connections between open spaces; strengthening the local community; improving the Adelaide Road transport corridor for multiple forms of transport.

However we did note some concerns in our submission. For example:

1. Pedestrian and cycle access to Adelaide Road from the west needs to be improved, with wide, well-lit people-friendly boulevards. There needs to be more obvious signs or indications that walkways lead somewhere

2. We strongly supported the suggestion of an access route from Adelaide Rd up to the Town Belt between Government House and the hospital (or between Government House and Wellington College).

3. We were (and remain) concerned about the intensification of the Adelaide Road area, when we have seen no traffic projections and management scenarios that help us understand how foreseeable congestion and safety issues will be dealt with. We still want to ensure that the Council does indeed undertake traffic projections for the Adelaide Road area, incorporating flows to and from the area through peripheral traffic routes such as exist in Mt Cook (Hutchison Road, Bidwill Street etc,). This is in order to allow residents to assess the impact on their neighbourhood of changes in traffic flows resulting from the proposed development in Adelaide Road.

4. There needs to be greater provision for play spaces for children, located where people are likely to congregate, e.g. for shopping, and places where people can stop, sit and talk.

5. We asked to be involved in the identification of character areas and buildings in particular. Mt Cook Mobilised remains keen to work closely with Council in developing a suitable guide that allows for:
   - More stringent protection of some heritage structures / locations
   - The context-sensitive adaptive re-use of character buildings
   - The construction of sustainable modern structures that appropriately reflect the sense of place[1] we want to establish in the Mt Cook.

6. We expressed some concern about the prospect of intensive residential growth along the northern part of Adelaide Road.

   - In Adelaide Rd. we perceived a risk of two "walls" up to 24 metres high, with shade problems, wind tunnel effects, blocking views, etc. We want to see view lines (using 3D modeling) to get a better sense of the impact of proposed developments
   - Also the proposed height controls (6-8 floors) exceed by a big margin the building heights recommended for Urban Center zones (3-5 floors) in new urbanist design codes[2] being widely adopted in the US to guide urban redevelopment. This makes the case for retaining existing height controls (4-6 floors) in order to maintain a sense of scale appropriate to the community setting.
   - If Council continues to plan for a 6–8 story height limit, then we would like to see how buildings could be sensitively designed at this upper height limit (e.g. use of staggered frontages – recess lines, and light wells and forecourts) to reduce a sheer wall effect.

[1] See 'Smart Growth Principles', http://www.smartgrowth.org/about/principles/default.asp including 'Sense of place': http://www.smartgrowth.org/about/principles/principles.asp?prin=5

[2] "In keeping with the new urbanist principle that the neighborhood is the basic unit of urban form, the SmartCode provides design criteria for streets, blocks, open spaces and buildings based on their geographic location from rural preserve to urban core. Municipalities can adopt the SmartCode as a replacement for aging zoning ordinances…" http://planningwiki.cyburbia.org/SmartCode See Smart Code 9.2 downloadable from http://www.smartcodecentral.com/smartfilesv9_2.html

- We want Council to ensure that new developments really reflect the framework and achieve the overall outcome; that designs fit with the overall framework and the surrounding context and complement existing buildings. Developers should not be permitted to build just because they comply with specific District Plan parameters, if their designs cannot contribute to the overall effect the framework has been created to achieve.
- On the Tasman Street boundaries of Zone Two (discretionary height up to 18 metres), the character housing on the other side of the streets (including Tainui, Ranfurly, Howard St etc areas) should not be dominated by 5 or 6 story buildings facing on to Tasman Street. Such protections should be incorporated into the current District Plan, given that it appears to allow up to 6 story structures to be built in this Zone Two area. In addition to the Tasman Street boundary with the mixed use area, in Douglas Street there are character houses, and on the other side of the street there is the potential for 6-8 story high commercial buildings (currently a vacant lot).
- We encouraged Council to ensure that the Adelaide Road Framework should allow for a suitable transition zone between character residential and multi-story residential/commercial that is more than 5 metres of road asphalt. There are other areas where the planned intensification of usage butts up against current low level residential housing, and across the whole Mt Cook area there should be suitable controls in place to ensure that there is not a harsh boundary between the two usages.

7. We proposed there be a process of systematic evaluation of the proposed plan, noting that, Mt Cook Mobilised has some capacity to assist with suitable evaluation design, and we want to participate usefully in such processes.

8. We invited the Council to include Mt Cook Mobilised in the development of community-centred design guides. We expect such design guides to be given explicit weight in the planned review and amendment of the District Plan design criteria and guidelines.

9. Parking. The Urban Growth Plan refers to parking in the central business district and the effect of its availability on trading. It also reinforces Council's support for car share plans. Wallace Street in Mt Cook is a narrow street where a cycle lane and/or bus lane may be planned. Consideration needs to be given to providing some alternative parking spaces for residents if parking is removed along Wallace Street, (e.g. Upper and lower Carrington Street are no exit streets where angle parking may be feasible; the car park at Te Whaea is a generous size, one suggestion is that an investigation could be done into allocating some parking places for residents of Wallace Street.)

Conclusion

Most of the comments made above were also contained in our submission in 2008. We continue to hold these concerns and ask that both in consideration of the draft Wellington Urban Growth Plan, and in implementation of the Adelaide Road Framework, that the Council listens to these concerns and adapts the plans and their implementation accordingly.