

1. Urban Environment

In the most recent legal submission from Joe Appleyard (20-Jun-2024), much has been written regarding the interpretation of 'urban environment', such that I feel we are now down in the semantic weeds, which is of course, where they want us to be. So, I want to lift the conversation back up and apply a level of common sense but before I do so, I want to make the following points.

The NPS-UD has been quite prescriptive in its definition (predominantly urban and is or intended to be part of the housing and labour market of at least 10,000 people).

The term 'urban environment' is a phrase that has no inherent upper limit in terms of size or scale and it relies on the surrounding context to determine such. Urban environment can refer to a single, contiguous urban area, such as Rangiora or, it can be used in its collective form to describe an aggregation or a collection of many urban areas that may or may not be contiguous such as the greater Christchurch urban environment.

When we qualify the term **urban** environment by preceding it with a geographic boundary descriptor such as "Greater Christchurch", it does not render the entire area within that geographic boundary wholly urban in the same way that if we were to refer to the Greater Christchurch **rural** environment it would not render the entire area rural. Rather, when combined, these words simply provide a convenient way to refer to the areas that exhibit urban characteristics that also exist within the geographic area of Greater Christchurch. I mention this because I note that 26.1 b) there are a number of individuals cited in the joint witness statement who consider 'all of greater Christchurch area predominantly urban or intended to be'.

Rangiora is an urban environment in its own right, while it is also, simultaneously, part of the wider Greater Christchurch urban environment. The same cannot be said for Ōhoka. Ōhoka is not an urban environment in its own right – how can it possibly be urban when it has a 156 ha working dairy farm at the centre of the geographic area that defines its boundary. If this development were allowed to proceed, Ōhoka certainly would become Urban, but it is not urban today.

The only criteria by which Ōhoka can be contorted to meet the threshold of 'urban environment' as defined by the NPS-UD is by virtue that its location falls within the geographic area defined as Greater Christchurch in Map A of the CRPS and, by extension it is therefore deemed to be part of a housing and labour market of at least 10,000 people – that market comprising **all** the urban environments within the Greater Christchurch area.

If that is the only criteria by which Ōhoka can gain entry into the not-so-exclusive 'urban environment' club (i.e., not by its own characteristics but by association to the wider Greater Christchurch **urban** environment), then effectively, every residential property that falls within the Greater Christchurch boundary also meets that same low bar, which makes a mockery of the intent of the NPS-UD. Taken to the extreme, any single residential property that falls within the Greater Christchurch area would equally be deemed 'predominantly urban' and would equally be a part of the housing and labour market of 10,000 people. Clearly, this is not the intent of the NPS-UD.

2. Well-functioning Urban Environments

The NPS-UD directs councils to provide sufficient development land to meet demand and to do so in a way that creates well-functioning urban environments.

Improving how our cities respond to growth to enable improved housing affordability and community wellbeing

What is the National Policy Statement on Urban Development (NPS-UD)?

National direction that sets out objectives and policies for urban development under the Resource Management Act 1991. Councils must give effect to these objectives and policies.

Why do we need an NPS-UD?

Constraints in the planning system have made it harder for people to build and live in the homes they want, where they want. This has led to high land prices, unaffordable housing, and a system that incentivises land banking and speculation. It has also resulted in people having poor access to employment, education and social services. This impacts most on our poor, vulnerable and younger generations.

Where does it apply?

Some policies apply only to 'Tier 1' local authorities in Auckland, Christchurch, Wellington, Tauranga and Hamilton. These include the most restrictive policies, particularly regarding intensification.

Others apply to both Tier 1 and Tier 2 (Napier-Hastings, Nelson, Whangarei, Palmerston North, New Plymouth, Rotorua, Dunedin, Queenstown). The majority of policies, including car parking, apply to all urban environments that have, or are planned to have, more than 10,000 inhabitants.

Buildings in city centres are taller and denser, giving more business and apartment dwellers a choice to work and live there, where productivity is highest.

Buildings within a walkable range from city centres, metropolitan centres and planned rapid transit stops may not be too tall, but they are taller.

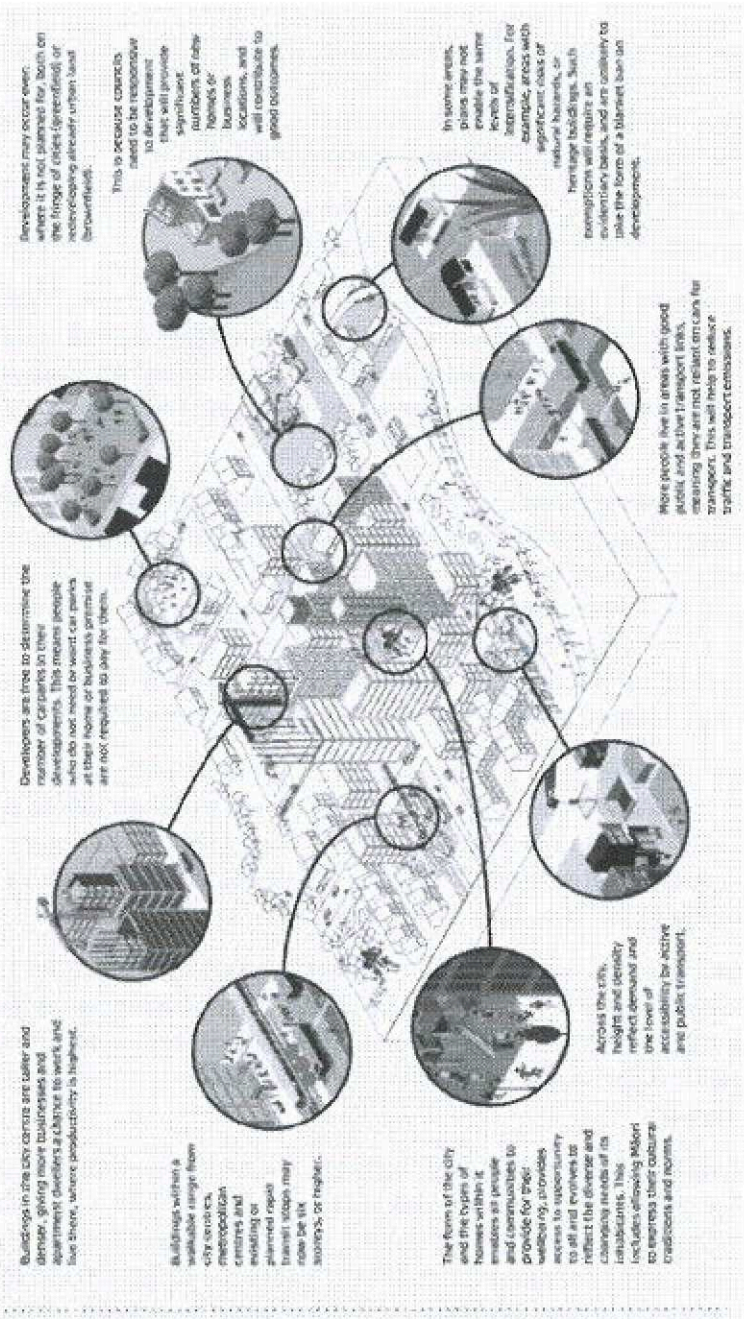
The form of the city and the types of houses within it makes an impact on people and can contribute to provide for people with different needs. Policies to all and workers to reflect the diverse and changing needs of its residents. This includes allowing Māori to restore their cultural traditions and regions.

Developers are free to determine the number of cars in their developments. This means people who do not need to use cars are not required to pay for them.

This is because councils need to be responsive to development that will provide significant numbers of new homes or business locations, and will contribute to good outcomes.

In some areas, places may not provide the same level of services. For example, areas with significant heritage buildings, or other heritage buildings, such as heritage buildings, are unlikely to take the form of a blanket ban on development.

More people live in areas with good public and active transport links, meaning they are not reliant on cars for transport. This will help to reduce traffic and transport emissions.



Well-functioning has a formal definition under Policy 1 however, the following info-graphic best articulates what the policy authors were thinking when they formulated this term.

Key point of interest include:

1. Towns and cities exist as cohesive, highly connected, multi-modal systems comprising public and active transport links
2. Buildings in the city centre are taller and denser giving businesses and apartment dwellers a chance to live and work in close proximity, where productivity is highest
3. Combinations of public transport modes, intersecting at key transport hubs so that commuters can not only travel efficiently between urban centres but they can also travel efficiently within urban environments
4. Well-functioning urban environments offer green spaces to meet the recreational and emotional well-being needs of its citizens
5. Development may occur even where it is not planned, at the fringes of cities (greenfield) or by redeveloping already urban land (brownfield) (10km-30km outside of existing urban centres is not "city fringe")

The NPS-UD is a visionary policy document that recognises the need to change the way we develop our towns and cities. It recognises that we cannot continue to do what we have always done and simply pick the low hanging fruit, with little regard for the long-term ramifications of what inevitably become fragmented pockets of urbanisation rather than building for the future, a cohesive set of infrastructure and services that operate seamlessly together.

3. Covid – working from home

I want to make a very quick point in this post-Covid era where, according to a recent survey by Hays Recruitment (Appendix 1), 55% of office workers now spend at least 2 days per week working from home. That is over half of the office workers spending over 40% of their working week from home and it is sucking the lifeblood out of our city centres, which rely on large numbers of people spending little and often. Planners have an obligation to existing business owners by creating the conditions for a thriving inner city and to not simply pander to individual developers who seek to line their own pockets with little regard for the overall prosperity of our urban communities.

4. Public Transport

We acknowledge RIDL's attempt to meet policy 3 by providing a bus service for 10 years. Public transport is so, so much more than a shuttle between an isolated satellite town and a public transport corridor. Cities up and down the country, and across the globe work tirelessly trying to coerce drivers out of their vehicles. The reality is, is that unless driving becomes exorbitantly expensive (through congestion charges or parking fees) or it becomes inefficient due to traffic congestion, people are not going to swap their cars to add an extra 30+ minutes to their journey, to wait for a connection in the cold and rain, to sit packed in amongst fellow passengers spreading all manner of germs when they could be sitting in their warm, comfortable vehicles, in their own quiet headspace listening to their own choice of music/talk-back/podcast etc.

This is a long-term, multi-generational issue that requires a change in the way we view our urban environments, not as separate built structures that requires a daily commute between housing and employment but as a cohesive, multi-faceted system where our work, living, social, health and well-being needs mesh neatly together in one cohesive environment.

5. NIMBYism

I want to pivot briefly and draw a comparison between NIMBYism and a community just wanting to preserve the character of their village and its surrounds. It would be easy to assume that ORA's objection is just another case of NIMBYism.

NIMBYism is typically about essential infrastructure that *no-one* wants in their backyard. Things such as a prison, or a refuse station, or perhaps a freezing works. This development is not undesirable in and of itself, it's just that it is the wrong development (both in terms of style and scale) for the quiet semi-rural community the size of Ōhoka. A similar development at Bellgrove in Rangiora attracted little resistance, because it is in keeping with the existing character of the area and would have been deemed a natural progression of the existing suburban feel.

An analogy will help illustrate. Mr Philip Carter, until quite recently, owned an exclusive property up on the cliffs in Sumner and he would have enjoyed spectacular views of the beaches running up through Pegasus Bay and on a clear day, perhaps as far north as Cheviot. Now, imagine, if a developer were to submit a plan change seeking to build a top-end hotel off the beach in Sumner. Think something along the lines of that iconic white sail shaped hotel in Dubai, the Burj Al Arab. I imagine Mr Carter senior, along with every other Sumner resident would, understandably, have put up a great deal of resistance to such a proposal. Not because of NIMBYism, but because such a structure would irreparably change the character of Sumner and, for some, it would destroy their uninterrupted ocean views and the amenity value that they are entitled to.

This development is the equivalent of the scenario I just described. It is not NIMBYism. It is simply a community fighting for our right to preserve the character of our village.

And to reiterate, we are not anti-development per se. There has been a great deal of expansion in and around Ōhoka/Mandeville over the past 14 years. If the Carters were proposing another Keatley Place or Wilsons Drive, I doubt anyone would have batted an eye lid. But of course, a Keatley Place style subdivision doesn't offer the super profits that this development would bring. This development is all about money and nothing about contributing to well-functioning urban environments.

6. Flooding

Following on from AJ's presentation related to flooding, ORA understands that RIDL tried and failed to obtain land closer to Rangiora. Ōhoka is now their poor second choice for getting a foothold into the Waimakariri market.

Interestingly, in the recordings of a similar application hearing for Lincoln, and in response to the commissioner's question of how do they [RIDL] go about locating suitable land, we hear Mr Tim Carter who clearly states "...we look at the natural restrictions to development so we spend a lot of time looking at floodplains...and that, in our view, rules out a lot of Waimakariri". He goes on to say "... Very hard to find greenfield land development opportunities due to conditions and the flooding conditions in Waimak".

7. Mark Todd/Mayor Wayne Brown

Mark Todd (not of the 1980s equestrian fame) is one of the co-founders of Ockham Residential, a development company based in Auckland who specialise in building high-end inner city apartment

blocks. Mark has recently made headlines by calling out a number of developers in the Auckland region for doing exactly what the Carters are attempting to do here, which is to buy up rural farmland land approx. 20km out of town and then seek to have it rezoned, thereby benefitting from massive upside with no regard for the longer-term issues that this continual urban sprawl brings.

At the launch of their most recent project opening, the Greenhouse, just off Ponsonby Road, Mayor Wayne Brown added to the criticism when he said "The more residents in the CBD, the better. We actually have all of the roads and the infrastructure here, as opposed to Drury where, if we're not careful [the council], we'll be paying to subsidise".

We applaud the likes of Mark Todd for leading the way in creating vibrant urban environments and for showing that developers can be part of the solution and still make money.

8. Closing

And on that note, I just want to conclude by saying that the community of Ōhoka remains overwhelmingly against this development. The only reason there are not 600+ submissions in this stream opposing this development is that because this submission was lodged ahead of PC31, it snuck in under the radar – hidden in plain sight. This subdivision proposal was not right for Ōhoka when it was submitted under PC31 and it was duly rejected. It remains the same pig, just wearing different lipstick. ORA asks that you consider the wider picture, not get sidetracked in the semantics of wordplay and reject this proposal in its entirety.

Appendix 1

Excerpt from Hays Recruitment survey

The split of days employees typically work onsite vs remote.

