

8th October 2014

CHRISTCHURCH REPLACEMENT DISTRICT PLAN

SUBMISSION FROM: NEW ZEALAND INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS - CANTERBURY BRANCH

[Extracts from the Christchurch Replacement District Plan are highlighted in "blue"].

INTRODUCTION

The NZIA Canterbury Branch is pleased to provide this submission on the Christchurch Replacement District Plan: Stage (1) Priority Chapters notified on 27th August 2014.

We acknowledge the immense challenge Christchurch City Council faces in preparing the Christchurch Replacement District Plan in a very tight timeframe and the staff and consultants involved to date are to be commended for getting the documents out for formal submission within the deadline they have been given. That said, we all would have liked the opportunity for more extensive consultation on the proposed changes and the opportunity to provide informal recommendations on these changes prior to notification. The process being followed with the Auckland Draft Unitary Plan, which has involved extensive meetings and informal consultations with the Urban Design Forum [UDF], and given the UDF the opportunity to make a submission and recommendations on the proposed changes at a draft plan stage, is a much more inclusive process that draws on the considerable knowledge and expertise of the design professions.

We would also like to acknowledge our appreciation to the Council Urban Design Team who met with our branch representatives prior to this submission to discuss the proposed changes to the Christchurch Replacement District Plan and explain the rationale behind these changes.

The NZIA Branch Committee fully **supports** the Christchurch City Council's intention to improve the quality of urban and suburban development by aiming to achieve high quality urban design outcomes.

We **support** the new format of the Christchurch Replacement District Plan [CRDP] which is a massive improvement on the current plan. It has been simplified which helps and the web format is great. Well done.

The NZIA Branch Committee has a number of concerns relating to parts of the Christchurch Replacement District Plan however and we consider that some of these changes may not readily deliver the desired outcomes. Typically we do **not support** any increase the number and type of rules and prescriptive design standards that currently burden the Resource and Building Consent process. In the longer term we would like to see a progressive shift to a more discretionary planning system, with reliance on rules reduced to the very simplest of applications



It is our understanding the CCC Urban Design Team are familiar with the Auckland Urban Design Forum [UDF] submission on the Auckland Draft Unitary Plan (dated 31st May 2013). We consider that some of the sentiments and recommendations expressed in the UDF submission are also particularly relevant to the Christchurch situation and the Christchurch Replacement District Plan process.

[A] STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS CHAPTER:

- 1.0 We **support** the strategic direction and key objectives incorporated in the Introduction & Strategic Directions Chapters, which provide a base framework for all other chapters.
- 2.0 We **support** the overarching statement relating to the key strategic outcomes from the Christchurch Replacement District Plan:- *"The plan needs to reflect our community's desire for vibrant, lively communities where people interact easily and effortlessly, and where public and active transport link people to their everyday amenities and destinations. This means great design-led environmentally sustainable buildings and planning...."*
- 3.0 We **support** the over-riding aspiration in the Replacement District Plan to ensure that Christchurch retains and enhances its own unique features both natural and man-made.
- 4.0 We acknowledge there is pressure to accommodate increasing levels of subdivision, use and development. The cumulative effects these activities have on the naturalness, quality and values of outstanding natural features and landscapes needs to be considered. We **support** protecting our historic heritage, historic character and natural heritage.
- 5.0 We **support** the emphasis on reinforcing the underlying "village" structures of Christchurch's urban form by encouraging urban growth and intensification around these nodes.
- 6.0 We **support** the philosophy of a "quality compact city" model. Council needs to remain committed to the model to ensure we get the level of intensification required to support a modern urban city.

[B] COMMERCIAL CHAPTER:

- 1.0 We **support** the policy intent of this chapter which is *"focussed on high quality urban design outcomes, activity concentrated within a network of centres, increased density in commercial centres, and avoidance of adverse effects on the CBD."*
- 2.0 We **support** the general principle that the Business Zones are intended to *"reinforce the role of centres as focal points for business and community investment."*



3.0 It is commendable that neighbourhood commercial centres are identified and intensified, and that uses within these centres are given an urban design framework that will achieve the desired quality and consistency without impacting negatively on the CBD. We **support** the concept of a hierarchy of centres.

4.0 It is important the CBD is supported as strongly as possible in order for the rebuild to attract the right types and mix of uses that will stimulate landowners, attract developers, and provide a range of spaces for tenants and users. It is important that the [CRDP] support this stimulation and that processes streamline rather than complicate progress. It is important high quality Urban Design and Building Design outcomes are encouraged and nurtured, and that the processes around design and style guidelines are beneficial to property owners.

We make the point that the development controls are generally not written in such a way as to demand performance outcomes. We have concerns about arbitrary controls that also contribute to building form and which run the risk of poor building outcomes where development is driven by rule conformance, rather than as a result of achieving quality outcomes driven by performance criteria.

While fully appreciating the desire and need to provide certainty for land owners and developers, and recognising the fact that they and the CCC Planners prefer clearly defined prescriptive rules to give them this certainty, we suggest the Commercial Zones are not under particular pressure at the moment and recommend that more time be allocated to develop controls that will allow and incentivise (reward), and encourage good development.

5.0 We **support** the creation of a positive relationship between developments on a site adjacent to Public Open Space in all zones, and this should be the objective of controls in these areas. Built edges should respond to the Public Open Space so as to provide opportunities for passive surveillance as well as an attractive boundary edge.

[C] INDUSTRIAL CHAPTER:

1.0 We **support** the policy to reduce the number of Industrial Zones to a General Industrial Green Zone, Heavy Zone and Industrial Park Zone.

2.0 We **support** the policy to recognise and provide for Industrial Zones with different functions to cater for a range of industrial activities depending on their needs.

3.0 We **support** the policy to encourage redevelopment of existing industrial zones for industrial activity, particularly in areas that have lost industry and associated employment opportunities.

4.0 We **support** the avoidance of Stand- Alone Office/Retail activities within the Industrial Zones unless these activities are an inseparable and supporting part of the industrial activity and ancillary to it. The purpose of this policy is to encourage invigoration of the Central City and Commercial Centre locations for Office and Retail activities.



- 5.0 We **support** the policy that seeks to avoid the development of new Office Parks which undermine the District and Neighbourhood Centres as the focus for new office accommodation.
- 6.0 We **support** the redevelopment of Brownfield sites for new Residential and Mixed Use activities.
- 7.0 We **support** the proposed increased set-backs from Residential Zone boundaries.
- 8.0 We **support** the improvement of visual amenity throughout all the Industrial Zones.

[D] RESIDENTIAL CHAPTER & SUBDIVISION CHAPTER:

- 1.0 We **support** the encouragement of increased residential supply and density, particularly around the Central City and Commercial Centres.
- 2.0 We **support** the replacement of existing housing units with higher density units, either by splitting or adding onto, provided there are good design guidelines in place to control this intensification. The ability to convert one dwelling to two also raises concerns around quality. While the idea should result in more affordable accommodation, we are unsure how this will work in reality. With good design, this could work for many households but we submit that this provision should be linked to a restricted discretionary activity to avoid the worst outcomes. This intensification could also change the nature and character of existing residential neighbourhoods unless it is carefully handled.
- 3.0 We **support** further consideration of the Terrace Housing typology and believe this should be promoted in the Mixed Use Zones as a desirable method of achieving intensification through small scale developments. This is a popular and traditional housing type, partly because each house has its own identity (when compared to an apartment), it has the very attractive potential for fee simple titles and precludes the need for a body corporate. We support any rule changes that would encourage Terrace Houses in Mixed Use Zones near the Central City and Commercial Centres.
- 4.0 We **support** the strategic aim to restrict urban sprawl and not squander valuable agricultural land for housing development
- 5.0 We **support** the encouragement of Social and Comprehensive Housing developments in close proximity to the Central City and Commercial Centres. Social and State Housing offer an opportunity where the Council can work together with a single owner, with contiguous property ownership, to provide high quality, large scale, planned intensification. The Council is encouraged to reference exemplar Social Housing projects throughout New Zealand and internationally as a bench mark for ensuring high quality urban design and residential amenity is provided by these developments. Evidence has shown that tenants take real ownership of these communities, and social outcomes are markedly enhanced, when these developments are properly designed with consideration, empathy and respect for the occupants who live in this type of accommodation.



6.0 While we support any improvements in the quality of our housing we do **not support** the mandatory Lifemark and Homestar rules incorporated in the Replacement District Plan. These are matters that should be addressed by the Building Act only. It is our understanding the proposals by Christchurch City Council are contrary to Section 18 of the Building Act 2004 in that they require building work to achieve a higher performance criteria than that of the Building Code. An owner may well choose to build to a higher level than the Building Code requires but this cannot be a requirement of any other Act unless that Act contains express provision to enable it to override the Building Code.

The Building Code levels are set by Government following extensive consultation and cost-benefit studies; and allowing Councils to write their own building rules negates the whole purpose of the nationwide uniform Building Code which was introduced in part because of ill-considered and unnecessary variations in building requirements that existing around the country.

We do not consider introducing special rules just for new housing within the Christchurch city limits is the right way to go. The residential rules within the District Plan should be focussed on what is occurring within the site boundaries and any evaluation should consider bulk, location, height, access to sunlight, setbacks, privacy, connections to street, connections to neighbours, and effects on neighbours only.

We have also had some of our highly experienced branch members, who are exclusively involved in the residential sector, consider the potential cost implications associated with complying with the increased insulation Homestar requirements and based on a typical budget house we estimate the proposed District Plan requirements will add in the order of \$15,000 per dwelling. When the Life-Star inclusive and adaptive design requirements for new residential dwelling are also included we estimate the additional costs could be as high as \$25,000 for a typical budget house.

We understand the Council Representatives who drafted these changes have sought independent industry advice based on a typical group housing example and believe the combined costs of implementing the Homestar and Lifemark requirements is about \$2,700 per dwelling. We believe these costs will be substantially more making potential conflicts with housing affordability a real concern.

7.0 We do **not support** the changes proposed to the Outdoor Living Space rule and believe the following revisions should be considered.

- The requirement for half of the minimum outdoor living area receiving sunshine at midday on the shortest day of the year is just too harsh. The sun at midday at 22 degrees is even harsher than the recession plane at 2.3m above ground at 26 degrees. (ie A future neighbour has the right to block more sun than a building on your own site that you can control.). We suggest adjusting this sun angle for the worst case scenario to 35 degrees.



- The rule needs to be revised so that it only applies to structures on the same site. If neighbours houses are taken into account it could make some developments unbuildable.

Similar concerns relating to proposed overshadowing rules were also highlighted in the Auckland UDF submission on the Auckland Draft Unitary Plan. We also support changes to the controls relating to Outdoor Space and believe the [CRDP] should consider some more simple rules for Outlook Areas from the main windows of habitable rooms only. The Auckland UDF recommendation proposed:- *"Buildings should not overshadow the Primary Outlook Area, including those on neighbouring properties. Buildings should be designed to allow Outdoor Living Areas and Balconies to receive at least 3.0 hours sunlight at the equinox (21st September) for 50% of their area, which shall be part of the Primary Outlook Area adjacent to the Main Living Room windows. Compliance can easily be demonstrated by shadow diagrams and CAD sunshade modelling."*

- 8.0 The Site Coverage rule excluding eaves and roof overhangs up to 600mm needs further clarification. What does the definition of eaves mean? Generally an eave does not include a gutter and this should therefore be excluded from the 600mm roof overhang. If it is decided to increase the eave to say 900mm for aesthetic reasons the extra floor area being added should only be the difference between the 600mm and the 900mm otherwise the cost in terms of loss of buildable area makes a good design decision overly restrictive.
- 9.0 With respect to Site Coverage we recommend keeping with the old Residential Floor Area assessment as opposed to the new Site Coverage Rule. It is understood that the CCC Urban Designers have undertaken extensive modelling to explore the benefits associated with the proposed changes but in the timeframe available to prepare this submission we have not fully explored the rationale behind the proposed changes. Our initial opinion however is that the existing residential floor area rule allows greater flexibility in terms of where mass can be placed on site, thereby allowing for more interesting forms. Our concern with the new Site Coverage Rule is that it appears to encourage 'pancaking' will all mass directly above each other, and 3-Storey development. By encouraging 3-Storeys you are going to effect the neighbouring sites more in terms of loss of privacy, loss of sunlight and general bulk.
- 10.0 We support the removal of the continuous length rule for walls and roofs in residential areas and consider this to be a positive change.
- 11.0 We do not support 3-Storey development in the Residential Suburban Zone. One of the unintended consequences of the Site Density rules allowing Multi-Unit Residential Developments in the Residential Suburban Zone is that no developers might bother with the Medium Density Zones. We are concerned that the "bigger developer with resource consent scenario", with its embedded processes to lift design quality, may not deliver the numbers of new dwellings required in these zones, and that such developers will find it easier to continue a "business as usual" approach to building detached houses at the urban periphery.



12.0 We **support** the proposed Restricted Discretionary Resource Consent process in principle but require more clarity on how this might work.

13.0 We **support** the Comprehensive Planning –New Neighbourhood rules in principle but require more clarity on the intended rules .The initial response we have received from developers is that the rules appear very onerous.

14.0 We **do not support** additional rules that introduce more complexity .These ultimately result in non-compliances of some sort which require Resource Consent approvals. If the key objective is to create better residential living environments the rules should be simplified for all zones to promote innovation and diversity.

As the city intensifies, the high quality design solutions required will become increasingly difficult to achieve by adherence to rules. The strict application of rules will, in many instances, result in design solutions that are counter to the quality compact city aspirations.

There is opportunity to simplify the rules and, while many of the rules inherited from previous plans have been rationalised, we consider there are many remaining which require further consideration and analysis. In particular we **support** the idea that, to the extent possible, the same development controls should apply across different residential zones.

[E] TRANSPORTATION CHAPTER:

1.0 It is understood a key theme of this chapter was finding the balance between the following opposing concepts:

- Providing certainty and consistency versus enabling flexibility and choice.
- Reducing regulation versus ensuring the transport network is safe and efficient.
- Protecting the strategic transport network versus protecting residential amenity.
- Encouraging parking with permeable surfaces versus reducing dust, and mud and gravel on roads in urban areas.
- Reducing cost for development versus encouraging developments to provide facilities to encourage cycling and walking.
- Providing convenient parking spaces for people with disabilities versus providing active street frontages.
- Encouraging smaller vehicles versus ensuring parking spaces are wide enough to be useable for people who chose to have larger vehicles.



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2.0 We strongly **support** the philosophy of transport planning being fully integrated with land use planning within an aspirational “quality compact city”.

3.0 We strongly **support** the “spatial” integration to optimize living, business and other uses within and connected to the transport and movement space, throughout all the areas of the CRDP. We consider that this is necessary to enable the transport spaces and access to transport required for the high quality ‘liveable’ intensification desired for the city in the CRDP.

4.0 Generally all proposed rule changes should align with, but not exceed existing NZ Standards and the Building Act/Code requirements.

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5.0 We **support** the intention to require parking to be predominantly at the rear or side of buildings wherever possible.

6.0 We **support** the concept of increasing facilities for cyclists and encouragement of this mode of transport, but the new requirement for Showers is substantially above what the Building Code currently requires. We do **not support** the requirement to provide lockers for cyclists.

7.0 We are concerned about the impact of the requirements to provide Disabled Carparking for buildings with a GFA > 2500m² even when no other carparking is required. This rule creates holes in the urban streetscape, and multiple crossings, where buildings are otherwise built up to the street boundary. We acknowledge the importance of providing accessibility for all and note that this requirement has been removed for buildings with a GFA < 2500m². We understand this is an example of trying to strike a balance between accessibility and encouraging development up to the street frontages.

8.0 It is noted the key changes to car-parking requirements proposed involve a reduction for Retail activities, similar provisions to the current Operative District Plan for Industrial activities, and unchanged provisions for Office activities and Food & Beverage activities.

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9.0 It is noted that the requirement for partial or fully Integrated Traffic Assessments [ITA] is now triggered by the following car park numbers:-

- Retail (45No. + carparks)
- Offices (101 No. + carparks)
- Food & Beverage (32No.+ carparks).
- Industrial (50No.+ carparks)
- Warehouse/Distribution (208No.+ carparks).



We do **not support** the threshold for an ITA for Retail & Food Beverage Outlets at 70m² Floor Area and consider this very low, although we have been advised this threshold is the same as in the current Operative District Plan and similar to other councils .ITA's can be very expensive, especially when modelling is required, and we believe this requirement will be a disincentive for small business owners intending to establish boutique type retail food and beverage outlets.

In order to provide certainty and consistency as to when an ITA is required we understand it is not proposed to introduce the ability to modify this requirement on a case by case basis. The ability to provide a more basic ITA for smaller activities has been introduced however.

- 10.0 We do **not support** the blanket ban on backing required for manoeuvring for parking and loading areas and consider this too onerous. We recommend deletion of rule (a) and retention of rule (b).
- 11.0 We **support** the encouragement of permeable parking wherever practicable and would like to see CCC incentivise this with a possible reduction in Development Contributions similar to the approach being adopted by Auckland City Council. Best practice is to provide permeable surfacing and water treatment on site rather than seal .We have been advised however that compared to the current Operative District Plan the areas where parking is required to be formed and sealed has been reduced. Now only urban activities and sites accessed from sealed roads are required to have carparking formed and sealed .An additional assessment matter has also been added to consider *"whether the materials used for the car park surface and the car park's stormwater management system will adequately manage contaminants from run-off and flooding"* to increase the discretion available to grant consents for permeable surfacing.
- 12.0 We **support** the change to base all manoeuvring on 85% vehicles and applaud the reduction in vehicle dimensions as forward -thinking. This will encourage people to consider purchasing a smaller vehicle to manoeuvre into tighter spaces, ultimately requiring less space on the road, using less fuel, and leaving more space for alternative transport modes.
- 13.0 We **support** the use of Parking Reduction Factors as a means to reduce onsite carparking requirements, development contributions and overall project costs. Due to the impact that a shortfall in parking can have as a result of overspill parking it is acknowledged there needs to be careful consideration as to whether the parking reduction factor is appropriate in each location and for each activity. They are therefore proposed to be assessed on a case by case basis rather than as an automatic right. Having pre-application meetings early in the design stage and undertaking ITA's early on in the design process is encouraged so that on site carparking requirements can be more carefully considered.



[F] NATURAL HAZARDS CHAPTER:

1.0 It is noted the policy changes are focussed on reducing flood damage in areas affected by major flood events (1 in 200 year flood event) by raising floor levels. This has increased the extent of the city within the Flood Level and Fill Management Areas and the minimum Finished Floor Levels required. Flooding affects nearly 50% of the city.

We support the adjustment to boundary Recession Planes where houses need to be elevated to meet the new Minimum Finished Floor Levels. A number of our members are extremely frustrated that the Revised Flood Levels currently drive unnecessary Resource Consent processes requiring neighbours consents and cannot wait to see this rule change introduced.

SUMMARY:

It is important the CBD is supported as strongly as possible in order for the rebuild to attract the right types and mix of uses that will stimulate landowners, attract developers, and provide a range of spaces for tenants and users. It is important that CRDP supports this stimulation and that processes streamline rather than complicate progress. It is important high quality Urban Design and Building Design outcomes are encouraged and nurtured, and that the processes around design and style guidelines are beneficial to property owners.

The NZIA Branch Committee suggests a carefully drafted set of Design Guidelines, and their qualitative assessment, should replace many of the Prescriptive Rules, and that the planning approval process becomes more advisory and collaborative rather than adversarial and prescriptive. Consultation, especially when undertaken early on in the project, should streamline the consenting process and not add extra stages. Participants should want to become involved rather than finding ways to circumvent the process. Therefore the process must be seen as beneficial not detrimental, speeding up timeframes rather than extending them, and providing tangible planning benefits to those engaged in the process. The role of the Urban Design Advisory Panel could be strengthened, with approvals given at this stage of the process replacing the later requirement for Resource Consents.

The most important part of such an approach will be to state the overarching Objectives and Outcomes for the whole city, and then for the CBD, the neighbourhoods and commercial/retail centres, the special design, historic and special amenity areas, the natural hazard areas, and so on, and to communicate these within the Guidelines. Guidelines should be interpretive, with expert professionals being able to safely apply the principles to each project being scrutinised, and encourage sensible, practical and appropriate outcomes. Guidelines should cover the Environment (Natural, Technological, Social, Cultural /Historical), Social Framework, Urban Design and Neighbourhood Design.



00 The NZIA Branch Committee suggests an Incentive approach is taken, to reward those projects that meet the Required Outcomes. Improved timeframes and stronger design outcomes will in themselves be rewards, but if a non-adherence to Rules is replaced with interpretation, design adjustment and a certain amount of flexibility as to how outcomes are achieved on a particular site, then the waiving of specific planning requirements in order to achieve an enhanced outcome could be seen as a 'reward' to the property owner or developer. This should be a win-win situation that advantages the city, adjacent property owners, and the individual property owner.

01 To achieve this scenario the outcomes, benefits and rewards must be readily understood and the people interpreting them – council staff and consultant advisors – must be knowledgeable, skilled, and confident facilitators and decision makers. The NZIA Branch Committee recognises the time it may take to consult, analyse and detail a comprehensive set of Guidelines and identify suitable interpreters, but feel this investment is crucial to achieve a high-quality Christchurch City. We also acknowledge the argument for more professional consultants is a difficult one, but we believe the Urban Design Advisory Panel has been exemplary in contributing to the quality of rebuild developments so far. To have their role extended – and repeated with additional UDAP's covering different zones of the city – could give the CCC the means to lead the way in terms of Urban Design and City Environment outcomes. Planners, architects, engineers and their clients need to work closely with the CCC to achieve the best possible outcomes within efficient timeframes. Well-organized and well-informed UDAP's will lessen the regulatory load on CCC staff and speed up the consenting process.

While we support the Restricted Discretionary Resource Consent Process as a move in the right direction we note that the decisions of council –appointed hearings panels will not be subject to appeal rights, which puts a much greater onus on the quality of decisions to be made under this process

02 There is global interest in the Christchurch rebuild. There needs to be a shift away from solving problems to designing outcomes. Design-Thinking is creative thinking. Creative thinking delivers better outcomes for the environment, for people, for businesses, cities, and governments. Christchurch has the opportunity to be regarded as the design-thinking centre of New Zealand. New Zealand and Christchurch should embrace this opportunity to restructure and rebuild the city well, and deliver the highest possible urban and social outcomes. We all want to achieve a beautiful city, and it is critical that design quality is both emphasised and incentivised

The NZIA Canterbury Branch is available and keen to help CCC achieve the best City Plan possible. We fully acknowledge the challenging constraints around the timeframes and process being followed to produce the CRDP.



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The NZIA Canterbury Branch request an opportunity to speak to our submission before the Hearings Panel.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Colin Corsbie', written over a horizontal line.

Colin Corsbie

Registered Architect. FNZIA.

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NZIA Canterbury Branch Chairman