

# THE AUCKLAND PLAN DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

## SUBMISSION BY



### Introduction

1. Haines Planning makes this submission on the discussion document with the intention that it stimulates further professional and intellectual debate among our planning colleagues in the Council.
2. Our team comprises internationally qualified and experienced planners including Aucklanders born and bred. As a long established Auckland-based planning practice, consulting throughout New Zealand to a diverse range of solely private sector clients,<sup>1</sup> our market-related experience convinces us that Auckland will continue to be the country's leading "city of opportunity".
3. A key question arising from our optimism about Auckland's future is whether the realisation of opportunities will be enhanced or diminished by the proposed direction in which the Spatial Plan takes the city-region over the next 30-years.

### General

4. Our team congratulates our Council colleagues for producing a wide ranging and comprehensive discussion document within a relatively short space of time since the formation of the Auckland Council.
5. The discussion document provides a useful and interesting compendium of the various issues and opportunities that the Council has determined to be within its purview.
6. We consider the document is very strong on aspirational statements and the umbrella goal to make Auckland the world's most liveable city is laudable.
7. The discussion document is also inspirational in terms of some of the data it contains. We refer in particular to the fact that population and household growth is effectively assured, with the projected 330,000 new households being equivalent to "three Wellingtons" [371]. Other stand-out data which support the inevitable growth that Auckland is facing are as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> Refer [www.hainesplanning.co.nz](http://www.hainesplanning.co.nz) for further detail.

- a. 35% of New Zealand's GDP.
  - b. Gateway to over 70% of all international arrivals to New Zealand.
  - c. Home to over 60% of New Zealand's top 200 companies.
  - d. Logistics hub for 32% of New Zealand's exports and 61% of its imports.
  - e. 31% and 32% of New Zealand's business and employees respectively.
  - f. 46% of New Zealand employees in the finance sector.
  - g. 51% of wholesale trade employees, highlighting the distributional role of Auckland as an import port to the rest of New Zealand.
  - h. 45% of all media and telecommunications employees.
  - i. 43% of all employment in the professional scientific and technical service sectors.
  - j. 41% of all New Zealand tertiary students.
8. Although strong on aspiration, the discussion document presently disappoints when it touches on delivery mechanisms. While some of the thinking around "delivery" lacks clarity, we expect this will be rectified with more time being available between the close of submissions on the discussion document and release of the draft Spatial Plan.

### **Spatial Planning and Growth Planning**

9. In our view, the lack of clarity around how to deliver on the opportunities that await Auckland arises from a failure to explicitly recognise that spatial planning and growth planning are inextricably linked. We acknowledge the five internationally accepted objectives for spatial planning [14] and note that growth planning is an implicit component within each of the objectives. However, the wording of these objectives should not be allowed to obscure the reality and primacy of growth planning which is implicit in each.
10. Where growth is referred to elsewhere in the document, it also remains generally implicit, rather than being addressed explicitly and unequivocally.
11. In our view, growth planning, as a fundamental component of spatial planning, must feature more prominently in the yet to be released spatial plan if Auckland is to capitalise on its greatest asset; namely, its ability to grow and attract growth. In this regard, it is pleasing to note that the discussion

document acknowledges that “A primary driving force of change in Auckland is population growth and change” [95].

12. In order to capitalise on Auckland’s growth abilities, it is our submission that the Council, with the guidance of its planning advisors, needs to clearly articulate its paradigm for growth in the city-region over the next 30-years.

### **Growth Paradigms**

13. For most of the past 30 years, Auckland has lived under two growth paradigms generated by the former Auckland Regional Council and its predecessor organisations. These paradigms “coping with growth” and “managing the region’s growth” are discussed below. As an aside, it is interesting to note that, for those old enough to remember, Auckland underwent much more significant changes in the 30-year period 1951 to 1981, compared to the period 1981 to 2011.
14. The language of the paradigm “coping with growth” gives an immediate clue as to the attitude of those tasked, at that earlier time, with growth planning. Under this paradigm, growth was perceived as difficult and problematic, something to be viewed with a degree of negativity. The discussion document’s upbeat tenor about the future of Auckland suggests that such negativity towards growth belongs in a bygone era, although we note the word “cope” is used in the discussion document [135] when discussing the relationship between funding and a growing city.
15. The second paradigm “managing the region’s growth” is odious insofar as it is potentially bland, and vague to the point where it can conceal equivocation and subtly negative attitudes towards growth.
16. Our team supports the paradigm “Providing for Growth”. In our submission, this is the only true planning paradigm and we discuss below what it entails. Firstly, however, it is important to contextualise the significance and importance of growth both to Auckland and New Zealand.

### **Providing for Growth**

17. In our experience of dealing with development projects in over 40 territorial planning authorities throughout New Zealand, we have found widespread acceptance of the benefits of growth. Antipathy towards growth has been a strangely Auckland phenomenon.
18. We expect that such antipathy will be receding in the wake of events over recent years; namely, the residential market recession, the global financial

crisis and the loss of 10 percent of the nation's economy arising from the Canterbury earthquakes.

19. In the national context, it is clear that only Auckland is capable of achieving significant population levels and growth relative to the rest of New Zealand. Over time, Auckland will become increasingly more important to the economy and well-being of New Zealand. Already, it is only Auckland that enables New Zealand to be recognised as a Pacific-rim nation. This leads to a question as to whether there is a moral obligation on Auckland to provide for growth in the interests of the rest of New Zealand.
20. The urban form and growth planning model advanced exclusively in the discussion document has its provenance in the former Auckland Regional Growth Strategy. It was previously dubbed the compact city model and is now re-titled the "quality" compact city model. It seems that the same "compact city" model has been used when identifying the three "big picture" opportunity areas, these being the international city centre, the north western and southern opportunity areas.
21. The two opportunity areas in the south and northwest seem reasonable insofar as they capitalise on the recent SH20 and SH16 / 18 improvements in those respective parts of the city-region. Our main concern is that they do not go far enough in shaping *"a step change for Auckland and its people"* [66], as we outline below.
22. As a generality, and conceptually, we consider the "quality" compact city model is intellectually robust and defensible. The only problem is that, when applied to Auckland's uniquely shaped land mass, the quality compact city fails to provide for Auckland's growth. This is openly acknowledged in the discussion document, which states:  
  
*"It is apparent from data and evidence that the forecast population is unable to be accommodated within a quality compact Auckland, based on realistic capacities."*
23. The honesty in this acknowledgement is appreciated. Regrettably, however, rather than consider other more viable urban form models, based on the acknowledgement that there is no shortage of non-urbanised land in the city-region [374], the discussion document identifies *"new options and ways of doing things to make it happen"* [406].
24. The new options and ways of doing things is to introduce yet further governance changes in the form of potentially coercive regeneration and redevelopment authorities. While such authorities can be beneficial in terms of delivering certain planning outcomes, it is our submission that the city-

region firstly needs a realistic and realisable planning vision before any consideration is given to more regulation and further changes to administrative arrangements.

25. If a redevelopment authority is subsequently deemed to be necessary, that organisation (even if it has wide ranging powers) will also be guided by market realities and desired community outcomes. The authority will not be able to unduly force delivery of unrealistic outcomes if there is community and market resistance to those. In other words, it would be unacceptable for such an authority to use public funds in a manner that does not achieve acceptable financial returns, or indeed results in financial losses.

### **Fundamental Issues of Growth**

26. The discussion document defines the fundamental issue as *“whether or not urban growth should be contained within some form of urban boundary. If the answer is yes, then it is a matter of trying to have the most appropriate policy package to achieve the goal.”* The inference in this statement is that urban containment should continue to be prioritised over urban growth.
27. We consider this definition of the fundamental issue is flawed. We believe the flaw arises from the Council uncritically equating the “quality compact city” with the former Regional Growth Strategy’s containment model.
28. Pages 129-131 of the discussion document show a number of “urban structure” plans, which seek to demonstrate that super city grids have enabled “most” international cities to re-invent themselves based on a well-endowed roading and transport system. We take no issue with that proposition. We simply note that the plan showing Auckland demonstrates how unrealistic it is to make valid comparisons between Auckland and other more established traditional cities. Indeed, the map shows how vastly different Auckland is (owing to its unique isthmus landform, with growth directions limited by harbours and coastlines and extensive ranges in the west and east).
29. While it is useful to reflect on the experiences of other international cities, we consider it is unwise to promote urban form models for Auckland that are the equivalent of trying to put a square peg into a round hole. In our submission, a uniquely Auckland solution is needed, which:
  - a. Provides for growth;
  - b. Enables containment and intensification where appropriate and realistic;
  - c. Reflects the city-region’s unique physical geography;

- d. Achieves the integration of land use and transport.
30. At this juncture, we note that there is no National Policy Statement which seeks to control population growth and movement between Auckland, Hamilton, Tauranga and Whangarei. We are not aware of any suggestion that central government would support Auckland's population growth being "throttled", and its redistribution to Hamilton, Tauranga and Whangarei, as beneficial and in the national interest. In the absence of such policy guidance, we believe the Council can base its spatial planning on the premise that central government wants Auckland to provide expressly for growth within its own city-region.

### **Alternative Urban Growth Models**

31. The two urban form models which satisfy all the requirements of 29 and 30 above are the "linear city" and the "satellite city" models.
32. The "linear city" model acknowledges that Auckland can only grow in northerly and southerly directions. It is predicated on strong sub-regional centres and the aim that each sub-region should be able to provide sufficient recreational, commercial and employment opportunities for its residents. Its extent will be defined by a new metropolitan urban limits boundary, itself determined by a combination of intensification policies and how much land is needed to accommodate the projected 330,000 households within the next 30-years.
33. The "satellite city" model could largely adopt the current limits of Auckland's metropolitan areas, but provide for Auckland's growth in satellite "cities" or centres such as Pokeno, Pukekohe, Dairy Flat, Helensville, Orewa, and Waimauku or Kumeu / Huapai. Necessarily, these satellite centres would be connected to the metropolitan area and each other by high speed transportation links.
34. In our view, the satellite city model is preferable as it is more adaptable into the future and able to provide for further, yet to be projected, growth for the subsequent spatial planning period of 2042 to 2072.
35. We anticipate that the Council will ultimately be guided by real world considerations, as expressed in the discussion document in the following terms:

*"While theoretical capacities go a considerable way to providing for Auckland's future population, real world capacities are significantly less. Realistic capacities are based on real world constraints and drivers for growth*

*which prevent ultimate capacity take-up. Real world constraints includes such things as land ownership patterns, fragmented titles, desired community outcomes, infrastructure constraints etc” [406].*

36. We also anticipate that the Council might recognise the correlation between an overly constrained land supply model and affordable housing, the latter terminology having crept into Auckland’s vocabulary in the last 10 – 15 years. In our view, the two alternative urban form growth models identified above offer greater scope for addressing the demand-supply equation that impacts directly on housing prices.

### **Growth Planning Methods**

37. Taking real world constraints into account, we believe it should be possible for the Council to clearly set out realistic assumptions for capacity uptake. By taking 330,000 households as the starting point, certain assumptions can be made about housing type and density preferences based on the age structure of the projected population. Once the hectarage of the new residential land-use component is estimated, it becomes possible to apply multipliers (again with assumptions clearly set out) to consequentially determine other land areas needed for commerce, employment, recreation, transportation routes, education, expansion of established centres, growth of new centres etc.
38. Armed with that knowledge, spatial planning can begin based around the two urban form growth models we have identified. Conceptually, at least, spatial planning can be viewed as being relatively straightforward insofar as the objective is to overlay a “3-D receptacle” on different urban form models to demonstrate that the potential growth can be accommodated based on the clearly articulated assumptions holding true.
39. The role of subsequent monitoring will therefore become one of systematically tracking the reliability of the assumptions and making changes to the spatial plan if trends emerge that cast doubt on the validity of earlier assumptions.
40. It is the factor of uncertainty in all forecasting work that causes us to prefer the satellite city model, simply because it provides more options for staging land supply and more potential directions in which to accommodate growth, in the event that earlier predictions are revised upwards.

### **Cost of Options**

41. The above approach to spatial planning will allow a number of potentially viable options to be prepared as the basis for future consultation with, say, two or three options tested in terms of their implementation costs. Again,

assumptions which underpin the costing exercises will need to be articulated to allow public understanding, scrutiny and input to the draft Spatial Plan.

42. Since the relatively recent introduction of the development contributions regime (post-dating release of the Regional Growth Strategy), there appears to be no longer any reason for Auckland local government to fear the costs of growth. These costs are now met by charges placed on the users of each household growth unit or equivalent.
43. We also note the Council's strong vision for growth of an attractive public transport system, with a strong emphasis on establishing rail links to the airport, the North Shore and inner city rail links. The cost of these major initiatives is well publicised and it is clear that the funding issues are significant. By providing for the projected 330,000 households over the next 30 years, in the manner we have suggested, it may be the case that some of the funding risks for such projects are diminished, with costs and potential levy arrangements having less impact on households and individuals when spread across a much larger population base. Indeed a "providing for growth" paradigm might lead to a changed central government view on Auckland's major infrastructure proposals, if that growth translates into beneficial effects on the national economy, and Auckland is viewed as being a good investment opportunity for further taxpayer funding.
44. Overall, we believe the alternative way of approaching spatial planning (which we have traced above, deliberately only in outline) will deliver a more credible and visionary Spatial Plan for Auckland.

### **Auckland "Unleashed"**

45. We stop short of expressing any strong opinion on the extent of economic benefits that might flow from a Spatial Plan that provides pro-actively for all of Auckland's anticipated growth. We note that the discussion document recognises that *"a growing Auckland population will itself support an expanding economy"* [115]. We therefore believe it is possible to establish the linkages and the multiplier effects that a "city of opportunity" can deliver to the economy of Auckland and New Zealand overall.

### **Conclusion**

46. The discussion document states that it is important to *"set a clear spatial policy direction as soon as possible"* and that *"The Auckland Plan must be focussed on both aspiration and delivery"* [7, 213]. It also states that the *"goal now is to use our strengths to improve our economic performance and contribution to the national economy"* [48]. We agree entirely with these statements.

47. We also agree that Auckland has a “*culture of creative energy and a can-do mentality*” [56]. In our view, this needs to be mirrored by a can-do Council particularly in terms of its approach to spatial planning, but also in the way it conducts business on a day-to-day basis. The new wine skin demands new wine.
48. The discussion document [432 – 434] outlines a number of potentially dire considerations that need to be addressed through the Spatial Plan in the first instance. We therefore trust that this submission will assist the Council’s thinking in developing a vision that addresses these considerations and provides for growth in a manner that truly unleashes Auckland for the benefit of the city-region’s inhabitants and New Zealand as a whole.
49. The requirement to prepare a spatial plan for Auckland provides the city-region with a defining opportunity in respect of giving direction to its future growth. It is a one in 30-year opportunity for the Council to “get it right” by seeing the bigger picture. If more time is needed to produce a robust, visionary and directive spatial plan, then so be it.



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