

Strategic Priorities aimed at ensuring future quality of built form in the town centre

Initiatives under this Theme include:

- Changing several controls and requirements in the District plan in order to enable development of a type and form that is beneficial for the Blenheim Town Centre as whole.
- Considering the establishment of an urban design panel or other application assessment techniques to ensure high quality development that is appropriate for its context and is aligned with the aims and objectives of this vision.



Strategic Theme:

10

A Focus on Architectural Quality

5.10.1 The district plan and development controls

The IBD workshop process identified several issues with the District Plan relating to built form and quality. Like most District Plans, the development controls and rules within the Marlborough District Plan are based largely on the most recent Scheme prepared under the Town and Country Planning Act, prior to 1991 and the requirements of the Resource Management Act. Problems with the relevance of many rules, and with the inconsistent quality of development that complies with rules, were commonly identified.

A comprehensive review of all planning provisions in the Central Business and Primary Shopping zones within the District Plan is recommended. This review should not be about creating more or less rules, but rather on identifying the *right* rules that make development easier to undertake, but in a manner which also helps make Blenheim a better, more attractive, and more vibrant place.

A departure away from simple bulk and location envelope planning (ideal for isolated rural and landscape view settings) - in which the outline of a building is controlled, but the detail within is not, should be a critical outcome of this process. In most cases, the detail of entrances, public and private space transitions, façade design, and material use have a greater relevance to how a building sits within an intimate, busy urban context than whether the building is half a metre above or below a generic height limit.

Without prejudicing the outcomes of the District Plan review recommended above, it seems likely that a more restrictive land-use consent approach will be necessary. By way of example, greater or more explicit reservations of control and where appropriate restricted discretionary status will give the Council ability to act on best practice design principles and recommendations from such sources as an Urban design panel.

	ORANGE PRIMARY SHOPPING	BLUE CENTRAL BUSINESS
SITE COVERAGE	100%	100% less setbacks
HEIGHT	20 m	12 m
STREETSCAPE	Verandas on street frontage	Setbacks: 1.5m for 33% of street frontage; 3m for 66% of street frontage
LANDSCAPING	None	10% site area green landscaping
PARKING	None	<u>Offices:</u> 1/35 m ² gross area <u>Restaurants and Bars:</u> 1/10 m ² ; 1/15 m ² outdoor eating area <u>Retail:</u> Less than 1000m ² floor area: 1/25 m ² g.f.a.; Greater than 1000 m ² floor area: 1/25 m ² for first 1000m ² ; 1/30 m ² of remainder <u>Cultural/Entertainment:</u> 1/4-5 persons the facility is designed to accommodate. Cash in lieu of parking possible

ABOVE FIG. 5-97: Current relevant provisions under the Resource Management Plan



ABOVE FIG. 5-98: Existing District Plan zoning

5.10.2 Proposed District Plan changes

Various changes which could be considered under a District Plan Change for the central business and primary shopping zones were identified. These indicatively related to activity status, assessment criteria, and development control methods at least as much as modifications to objectives and policies. In particular, the following key issues could be better managed from an urban design perspective:

ISSUE	ELEMENTS
INTERFACE / AMENITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Building facades - Corner treatments - Site service screening - Minimum balcony areas - Ground floor condition - limiting ground floor uses to certain activity types - Parking treatments - Non active use treatment - Aural amenity protection - Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design
CONNECTIVITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pedestrian entrances and movement - Vehicle entrance and movement - Servicing - Parking requirements which are more site and use responsive - Maximum parking standards, e.g. of 1 space for residential activities
DIVERSITY / ADAPTABILITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flexible buildings to convert uses - Amending provisions relating to retail and commercial activities (especially relating to car parking) - Providing for a mix of uses (unit types and sizes)
BUILDING BULK & MASS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establishing minimum height provisions above or below which requires resource consent - Area / site specific height assessment - Viewshafts affecting height - Managing horizontal and vertical mass - Minimum lot sizes for comprehensive developments
LEGIBILITY + IDENTITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Respond to local identity through specific heritage provisions - Architectural character
ENVIRONMENTAL RESONSIVENESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Solar access - Natural ventilation - SW treatment and disposal - Shading/wind effects - Energy efficient building design and materials - Landscaping which relates to activity scale + location

5.10.3 Urban Design Panel

One way identified to raise the standard of urban design within Blenheim's town centre could be through the establishment of an urban design panel. Typically, an urban design panel provides independent pre-application advice, and assesses Council-initiated strategic projects and resource consent applications by private developers. Panels can also assist with improving the efficiency of the consent process through early identification of design issues. To date, advisory panels have been established in Auckland City, Manukau City, Tauranga City, Christchurch City and Queenstown Lakes District Council. Panel members most typically include professionals in the fields of urban design, architecture, planning, landscape architecture, transportation planning, development, and property. While output from panels has been inconsistent, there does appear to be a general consensus approving of their use, especially if membership is managed to ensure balanced representation across relevant disciplines, and vice versa that it is not dominated by any one.

Launching an urban design panel in Blenheim could be a positive tool used alongside other regulatory and policy changes to help improve the quality of development and the urban environment. It may also have some limitations. Consideration should be given to:

- the associated costs of setting up and running of a panel. Most panels provide no cost to developers with the costs of administration, panel members fees etc absorbed by the Council. This can become a considerable cost.
- because of its size and distance from major cities, the available pool of potential panel members (and expertise) may be lower than in main centres. This may affect the quality of all possible members, or preclude the ability to have a rotating panel and more assured neutrality. This could result in the 'picking and choosing' of panel members by applicants, or of an unacceptable occurrence of bias.
- potential for undermining of the panel whereby the sitting (active) panel members representing the Council, are in opposition to other (non active) panel members on behalf of a consent applicant. This could result if private sector developers deliberately looked to recruit non-active panel members.

Alternatives options for the recommended Regional Urban Design Panel would be:

1. A 'roving' Marlborough District-wide Urban Design Panel.
2. The use of independent Hearing Commissioners with urban design expertise for major developments.
3. Establishing an information requirement from MDC for an urban design assessment from approved urban designers at the resource consent application lodgement stage.
4. Processing of resource consents by an external consultant / Council approved party.

5.10.4 Urban design guideline

The workshop participants identified the opportunity for a user-friendly, practical urban design guideline (as a non statutory resource management mechanism) specific to the town centre. These have been successfully used elsewhere in NZ. This could include specific guidance on adaptive reuse and development sensitivity towards heritage and character buildings. Voluntary use of such a guide could be maximised if it related to a processing 'advantage' through District Plan provisions or an urban design panel process.

5.10.4 Cost estimation, timeline & prioritisation

Ref.*	page	Action	Admin./ Physical	Timeline: short (<2yrs); medium (2-5 yrs); long (>5yrs)	Priority: high/medium/low	Comments/ assumptions
P2	102	Prepare a Town Centre Development Design Guide which also covers heritage / character as a non-statutory planning tool to guide appropriate responses to new development and adaptive reuse development	administrative	Short term	High	Note: Also identified in Part 5.9.
P10	102	Complete a Development Opportunities Study to investigate potential strategic property development opportunities, possible property acquisitions and preliminary development concepts	administrative	Short term	High	
P11	102	Implement a District Plan Change in the Primary Shopping / CBZ zones to provide greater control of built form and streetscape quality. This should include the revision of certain rules to be more site and context responsive such as: parking provisions, landscaping requirements, street interface, height and signage	administrative	Short term	High	
P12	102	Investigate the introduction of a Regional Urban Design Panel to oversee major resource consent applications within Blenheim. Alternatively, consider other suggested constructions greater urban design control of built form and streetscape quality.	administrative	Short term	High	
P13	102	Encourage redevelopment of the area bound by Hutcheson Street, Nelson Street, Taylor River and Opawa River for residential and commercial uses, under strict quality guidelines	administrative	Short term	High	
P14	102	LTCCP / Local Government Act review of MDC Development Contributions Policy relating to new development in Blenheim	administrative	Medium term	High	