

Submission

Beacon Pathway Submission to Hibiscus and Bays Draft Area Plan

Date	22 November 2012
Author	Nick Collins
Position	CEO, Beacon Pathway Inc.

What is Beacon?

Beacon Pathway Incorporated (Beacon) aims to transform New Zealand's homes and neighbourhoods to be high performing, adaptable, resilient and affordable. To achieve this, Beacon works collaboratively across the residential sector, brings together demonstration projects to provide proof of the benefits of improving New Zealand's housing stock, and underpins these with robust fact-based propositions.

The Beacon Pathway Incorporated Society builds on the successful research programme completed by Beacon's original consortium which developed a whole-of-house approach to improving the performance of both new and existing homes, using demonstrations and monitoring to provide proof of the benefits of improving New Zealand's housing stock. Much of this work was developed with Waitakere City Council and is available free of charge on the Beacon website www.beaconpathway.co.nz. Tools developed by Beacon include:

- Neighbourhood Sustainability Framework – a framework and tools to measure the sustainability of neighbourhoods
- HSS High Standard of Sustainability® – performance benchmarks for a sustainable home which take a whole-of-house approach to improving the performance of both new and existing homes. This encompasses energy, water, indoor environment, waste, and material/product selection.
- A HomeSmart approach to assessing existing homes and developing a renovation plan – this methodology underpins Auckland Council's Retrofit Your Home initiative.
- *Policy Options for Sustainable Homes: A Resource Manual for Local Government* - this provides an overview of the range of tools available to councils to encourage people to make more sustainable choices in their homes and neighbourhoods

Beacon believes that these tools and approaches can contribute to developing high performing homes and neighbourhoods which are a key component of achieving the Council's vision of *the world's most liveable city*.

Beacon's Members include: Christchurch City Council, EECA, New Zealand Steel, Fletcher Aluminium, Certified Builders, Resene and Insulpro Manufacturing.

Nick Collins

Chief Executive, Beacon Pathway Incorporated

PO Box 74618, Greenlane, Auckland 1546

Business Phone: (09) 522 5170

nicke@beaconpathway.co.nz

1 Beacon's comments

Beacon supports the development of Area Plans with the purpose of showing how the Auckland Plan will be put in place at the local level, and congratulates the Hibiscus and Bays Local Board as being one of the first Local Boards in Auckland to create their Area Plan.

The Auckland Plan details a clear path towards achieving *the world's most liveable city, and hous[ing] all Aucklanders in secure, healthy homes they can afford*. In Beacon's view, quality, sustainable and affordable housing and neighbourhoods must underpin much of the progress required to achieve the vision and direction as outlined in the Auckland Plan. This will not be achieved by incremental change – transformational change is required.

Beacon acknowledges the relative advantages that the Hibiscus and Bays Local Board area starts with – a beautiful natural environment, strong communities, and a higher degree of wealth. This has resulted in lower levels of social deprivation and higher home ownership rates. The housing-related impacts of social deprivation – homelessness and rough sleeping, overcrowding and preventable housing related hospitalisations – are seen less frequently in the Hibiscus and Bays area.

However, in terms of housing, there are a number of challenges facing Auckland which are also likely occurring in the Hibiscus and Bays area:

- An increasing proportion of households which spend more than 30% of their income on housing costs
- Decreasing home ownership rates
- An underperforming existing housing stock
- An undersupply of new housing.

It is pleasing to note that the Area Plan emphasises compact urban form around town centres and transport nodes. However, the Area Plan does not appear to allow for the flexibility in densities that will be required to achieve the projected population increases. For example, maximum residential building heights of two to four storeys are allowed for in the draft Hibiscus and Bays Area Plan, whereas the draft Māngere-Ōtāhuhu Area Plan allowed up to

eight storeys. Beacon submits that further flexibility be provided regarding maximum residential building heights, particularly around town centres.

Beacon supports concentrating future residential growth around the four town centres Browns Bay, Orewa, Silverdale and Whangaparaoa with some growth around local centres. Therefore Beacon supports the prioritisation of these town centres as places that need future planning (p36).

Beacon notes the significant current and planned new development – 1800 new dwellings at Millwater, Orewa West (2800), Gulf Harbour (1500), Weiti Village (550) and Long Bay (2800). Any new developments need to high performing, both in terms of the homes built and the neighbourhoods. For example, subdivisions need to be laid out for maximum solar gain. Infrastructure such as passenger transport, parks and broadband must be planned for delivery as new homes arrive. If no services are available locally, there is a risk of ending up with car-dependent development, where people need to drive to get a newspaper or some milk.

There also needs to be a strong emphasis on already existing infrastructure – especially homes and neighbourhoods. Across Auckland, over half of the housing stock of 2040 already exists in today's houses. Recognising this, older homes will need to be retrofitted to reduce energy use, help address health inequalities, and reduce the cost to residents of keeping their houses warm and dry.

Therefore in terms of housing, the draft Area Plan needs to be delivering on the broad range of actions to achieve the Auckland Plan's Strategic Direction 11 - *House all Aucklanders in secure healthy homes they can afford* and its targets (refer Appendix 1).

- Increasing housing affordability. While the Hibiscus and Bays area has a higher than average household income, housing affordability is likely to be becoming an increasing issue for many local residents. Beacon supports the development of a broad range of housing types and sizes around town centres and transport nodes as outlined in the draft Area Plan. There are also a range of other activities which can assist in housing affordability including actions to reduce the costs of running a home such as insulating, rain water collection and reuse, and the use of photovoltaic panels to generate energy.
- Increasing home ownership. Home ownership has a number of benefits for individuals and the community, particularly around stability for children in terms of educations and building stronger community ties. While home ownership rates in the Hibiscus and Bays Local Board area are high – in 2006 nearly three quarters of families owned their own home compared to 64 percent regionally – home ownership rates are likely to be mirroring the drop experienced in other parts of Auckland.
- Increasing the number of new homes being built. To meet existing needs, the Auckland Plan (paragraph 609) forecasts that an additional 13,000 new homes need to be built in Auckland each year. The Draft Area Plan notes there are likely to be 25,000 new homes in

the Hibiscus and Bays area in the next 30 years. This equates to nearly one-third of the houses currently being built across the whole of Auckland.

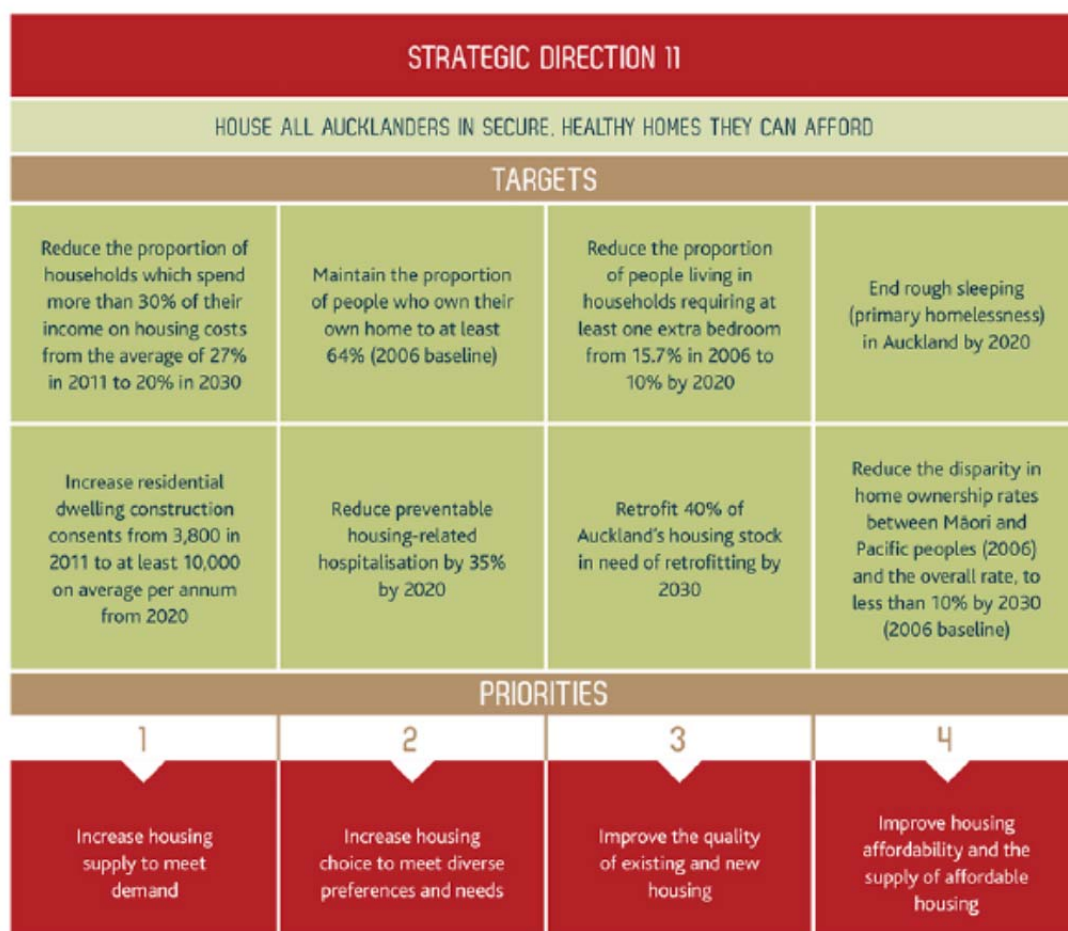
It is pleasing to note the draft Area Plan proposes development around town centres and transport nodes. However, actions need to be taken by the Auckland Council to ensure these developments occur at the densities needed to cater for projected population increases, in a timely manner and that best practice design is incorporated into both residential and non-residential development, from subdivision location and design, through building design and implementation. Beacon has developed a Neighbourhood Sustainability Framework and Assessment Kit which provides a robust evidence-based tool that Auckland Council could use to assist in developing more sustainable neighbourhoods.

- Improving the quality of existing homes to reduce the poor health outcomes arising from damp and cold housing. Much of Hibiscus and Bays housing stock, like the rest of Auckland, is likely to be performing poorly. For example, 294,000 houses in Auckland were built before 1979, the first full year in which insulation was mandatory, and a further 138,000 built between 1979 and 2000, a period when insulation standards were poor. Recognising this, older homes need to be retrofitted to reduce energy use, help address health inequalities, and reduce the cost to residents of keeping their houses warm and dry. Therefore it is pleasing to note that the draft Area Plan includes the action *encouraging green building design..... in the retrofitting of existing building stock*. A number of excellent programmes exist which focus on increasing the performance of existing homes such as Auckland Council's Retrofit Your Home and EECA's Warm Up New Zealand. As the part of Auckland Council closest to their local community, the Hibiscus and Bays Local Board has an important role to play in encouraging the number of houses being retrofitted. Auckland Council's current \$6m annual funding of Retrofit Your Home allows for the retrofit of approximately 1200 homes per annum and Warm Up New Zealand (EECA) provides additional government funding.

Achieving the vision – *the world's most liveable city* – will require bold innovative solutions and hard decisions to encourage and require the major changes in behaviour needed. Oncoming climate change, peak oil and economic tightening reinforce the need for development that is well-connected and serviced by public transport, housing/commercial building stock which is energy, water and waste efficient, and opportunities for diversity of supply - water, energy and localised waste management. Climate change strategies, a move to a low carbon future, improved community resilience and other aspects of 21st century sustainability must be woven through any future developments in the Hibiscus and Bays area. This must be coupled with strong leadership, innovation and a focus on working collaboratively across communities, industry and central government, and the various aspects of Council (including Council Controlled Organisations) to deliver a sustainable future.

The Auckland Plan provides the foundation for moving Auckland to a more sustainable future and all other Auckland Council, Local Board and Council Controlled Organisation strategies policies and plans must be delivering on the framework provided in the Auckland Plan.

2 Appendix One: Auckland Plan – Strategic Direction 11



3 Appendix Two: Beacon resources

3.1 Neighbourhoods

Neighbourhood Sustainability Framework and Assessment Kit

Beacon's Neighbourhood research team has developed a framework and tools to measure the sustainability of New Zealand neighbourhoods. The Kit is available free to help planners, designers, neighbourhood managers and developers identify, discuss and prioritise changes to improve the sustainability of both new and existing neighbourhoods.

Opportunities for councils include using the tool to:

- Assess all new neighbourhood developments and potentially to set a minimum threshold for new developments to meet
- Assess for reductions in development contributions
- Fast-track desirable developments
- Assess existing neighbourhoods to guide resourcing decisions and draw out the critical issues for neighbourhood improvement and planning.

Download from

www.beaconpathway.co.nz/neighbourhoods/article/the_neighbourhood_sustainability_framework

The value of neighbourhoods

Beacon's research has identified that low density non-mixed use (e.g. neighbourhood that are almost entirely residential) generate net costs rather than net benefits for a city. As a corollary, mixed use, medium density neighbourhoods are of value to cities. Research which awarded monetary values to different neighbourhoods showed that a sustainable neighbourhood is worth \$1,362 per household compared to a negative value of \$595 per household for NZ's least sustainable neighbourhoods.

Find out more at

www.beaconpathway.co.nz/neighbourhoods/article/valuing_sustainable_neighbourhoods

3.2 Homes

HSS High Standard of Sustainability®

A sustainable home is the sum of its parts. Beacon's focus is on whole-of-house sustainability - encompassing energy, water, indoor environment, waste and material/product selection. Taking this approach, we have developed a set of performance benchmarks to achieve a sustainable home - the HSS High Standard of Sustainability®.

See www.beaconpathway.co.nz/being-homesmart/article/beacons_hss_high_standard_of_sustainability

Policy Options for Sustainable Homes – A Resource Manual for local government

Beacon Pathway has conducted research into the council-induced barriers to building and renovating high performing homes. The research found that policy and regulatory barriers to sustainable building choices exist in:

- administering the Building Act and Building Code
- inflexible conventional infrastructure standards (particularly for water)
- District Plan provisions that provide no allowance for sustainable designs such as passive solar orientation or features such as rainwater tanks (e.g. traditional development controls for height, yards, and height-in-relation-to-boundary).

Councils throughout New Zealand have developed a range of initiatives to encourage people to make more sustainable choices in their homes and neighbourhoods, and are seeing some good results. The Resource Manual provides an overview of the range of tools available to councils, and gives detailed examples of policies and practices already in place in New Zealand. Beacon recommends that Auckland Council explores a number of the options outlined in the Resource Manual to assist in realising the visions outlined in the Auckland Plan.

Download the Manual from www.beaconpathway.co.nz/further-research/article/a_resource_manual_for_local_government

3.3 Expertise

Beacon Pathway has considerable expertise in the sustainability of New Zealand homes and neighbourhoods and has worked extensively with local councils. We welcome the opportunity to further discuss how we can help with Auckland Council and local boards.