

Submission PR250/14

Beacon Pathway Incorporated Submission to Auckland Plan

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Submission to the Auckland Plan

Beacon Pathway Incorporated supports Mayor Len Brown's vision

"for Auckland to be the world's most liveable city"

and commends Council Officers for bringing together *Auckland Unleashed: the Auckland Plan discussion document*.

In order to achieve the Mayor's vision, Beacon believes that Council needs to:

- Be franker and more realistic about the challenges facing our City, nation and the planet in the next one to five decades.
- Recognise that our homes and neighbourhoods are key foundations of "the liveable city". Most of our current homes and neighbourhoods will continue to be where Aucklanders live for the foreseeable future.
 - Many of our neighbourhoods are dysfunctional and a burden on our city.
 - A large proportion of our homes are inadequately insulated, cold, damp and have an adverse negative impact upon the health and productivity of our cities workforce.
 - Our homes are high users of energy and water.Regrettably our new homes perform little better.
- Build off current Council programmes (for example, Retrofit Your Home) to educate and incentivise homeowners to renovate their homes. Work with landlords to improve the standard and performance of rental housing.
- Influence new housing development, recognising the importance of available land, by:
 - leading and facilitating exemplar new medium density housing projects in partnership with central government agencies and developers to deliver affordable housing.
 - developing new programmes to encourage developers, builders and homeowners to build higher performing homes and neighbourhoods.
- Guide the strategic direction of Council controlled enterprises ensuring CCO statements of intent are aligned to Council strategy – for example, for Watercare to adopt demand management policies as supply side strategies to reduce demand for reticulated water, defer investment in costly pipes and reservoirs while building resilience in our utility networks against future challenges.

- Engage with a broader spectrum of industry and, in particular, the building and construction sector which will deliver much of our future city.

What is Beacon Pathway Incorporated Society?

Beacon Pathway Inc. has its origins in a limited liability company of the same name, formed to undertake a research contract for the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology (FRST). Completion of the contract, on 30 June 2010, brought to an end six years of research and activities aimed at improving the performance of New Zealand's homes and neighbourhoods. An end-of-term review by FRST commented on the success of Beacon's research programme in terms of both research advances and driving change. However, under the terms of the Shareholders' Agreement by which Beacon Pathway Ltd was set up, the end of the contract also brought to an end the company.

Despite the progress made, the job Beacon Pathway Ltd started is not finished. The step change required to transform New Zealand's costly, inefficient and poorly performing housing stock has not yet occurred. In recognition of this, two former shareholders in Beacon Pathway Ltd, Waitakere City Council and New Zealand Steel, proposed a successor organisation to build on the success of the original programme and address outstanding issues in the performance of new and existing homes.

Beacon Pathway Incorporated Society was formed by stakeholders with a shared vision of the potential benefits of improving New Zealand's homes New Zealand Steel, Certified Builders, EECA, Insulpro Manufacturing Ltd, CRESA, Christchurch City Council, Resene Paints and Fletcher Aluminium. The Society's objective is to transform New Zealand's homes and neighbourhoods to be high performing, adaptable, resilient and affordable through:

- Facilitating and undertaking demonstration projects which show the benefits of higher performing new and existing homes.
- Facilitating and providing robust research which builds a fact-based platform for sustainable, affordable, buildable and comfortable homes.
- Enabling Members to lead the transformation of the built environment in New Zealand
- Collaborating with and bringing together other stakeholders in New Zealand's residential built environment to create greater change.

Question 1 – *The Big Picture*

Global megatrends shaping Auckland (Items 38 – 45) understates the future challenges facing Auckland. The Plan needs to address:

- Doing more with less. Auckland needs to invest now to respond to peak oil and develop public transport, cycle and pedestrian access. The City can no longer afford suburban developments isolated from places of work which rely solely on motor vehicle access.
- The current challenges and risks of climate change. These are stated only mildly. How will the City respond to the increased incidence of climate events brought about by global warming?
- The future challenges of climate change. These are also understated and the City needs to plan for anticipated sea level rises which will threaten major roads, valuable residential and commercial property.

Auckland Past & Present – Housing (Items 107 – 109)

The report fails to acknowledge that Auckland has (along with all other New Zealand cities) done an appalling job at developing safe, desirable medium density housing neighbourhoods. Poor design, short term thinking and inadequate building methods / systems have delivered leaky apartment buildings which discourage citizens from living in denser living environments.

Question 2 – *Making Auckland more child friendly... and a City that young people are proud to live in*

Auckland currently has the majority of houses it will have in five decades. Many of those homes are poorly insulated and inadequately heated. These cold damp houses have a disproportionate impact on Auckland's youth, increasing the incidence of asthma and respiratory ailments in our youth, creating absenteeism in our schools and placing a burden on our health system.

Auckland Council's Retrofit Your Home programme is commendable in encouraging homeowners to renovate their homes. Unfortunately, programmes such as this have done little to encourage landlords to insulate / heat their properties.

For Auckland to have a healthy and well educated children, Council needs to stimulate innovative delivery models to renovate the rental properties which comprise over a third of Auckland's homes.

Question 4 – *Widening role and services of Auckland schools*

Schools could provide a community hub for educating both children and parents in healthier and resource-efficient housing through exemplar projects in classrooms, for example, on rainwater collection / reuse, solar water heating, safe forms of heating.

Schools, along with sports clubs, churches and community groups, could assist in identifying substandard housing and coordinating interventions to address cold, damp homes in conjunction with the government funded Warm Up New Zealand Programme.

Question 5 – *Auckland Plan addresses housing needs*

The Plan should address housing needs as follows:

- Develop plans / policy to improve existing housing, particularly rental housing, through innovative educational and demonstration programmes targeting those in most need.
- Recognise shortage of available land / lack of traditional development funding for housing and develop innovative public / private partnerships to enable new affordable housing development on council and central government land in close proximity to CBD or major transport routes
- Rigidly maintain urban limits to restrict future car-dependent suburban developments on the urban fringe which, while seeming to provide cheaper land and housing, have hidden costs transport, travel time and environmental impacts.

Question 10 – *Economic development and five priority areas*

The Auckland Plan currently focuses on seven sectors of our economy:

- Tourism
- Education
- Food technology
- Finance
- High tech
- Marine
- Creative industries

The Plan sets KPIs and targets for growth in regional exports with little detail as to how these targets are to be achieved. The Plan needs a framework and methodology for engaging with and enabling the rest of the Auckland's industry / commercial activity.

Question 13 – *Priorities and sectors that the Auckland Plan should focus on in developing a productive high value economy*

The Auckland plan currently focuses on seven sectors of our economy:

- Tourism
- Education
- Food technology
- Finance
- High tech
- Marine
- Creative industries

Unfortunately the majority of these sectors create low wage employment.

The Plan details the requirements of “world class infrastructure” but does not specify the critical role of, and Council relationship with, the building and construction sector upon which the future infrastructure, urban form and development will be dependent.

Question 18 – *Auckland - an eco-city*

One of the cities which formed the Auckland Council was an exemplar Eco-City on the world stage. Waitakere City was an early world leader in achieving a balance of economic, social, environmental and cultural values across the city. We would suggest that the Auckland Council look closely at the Waitakere Eco-City model and build from its success, rather than seeking to reinvent the wheel.

The Auckland Plan’s proposed framework (290) depicts the Auckland Eco-City model as environmentally focused. Measures focus on emissions, waste and water demand, all of which are important environmental indicators, but ignore the broader characteristics of a sustainable city. The proposed Auckland Eco-City ignores importance of the quality and effectiveness of civic governance, the economic health of the region, the quality of life of the people of Auckland, and our respect for, and engagement with, the diverse cultures which make up our City.

Question 22 – Promote and support high quality development

Council needs to lead in the provision of high quality development. Council could partner with central government and building / construction sector to realise development on council and central government land in close proximity to CBD, town centres and major transport routes.

Question 25 – Controls to manage and achieve intensification with high quality outcomes

Quality outcomes are not solely the result of controls, and development in New Zealand is well controlled through Resource Management Act and Building Act.

Quality outcomes result from collaborative processes where developer and council work together to achieve common outcomes.

Beacon suggests the issue is not one of control, but rather how Council behaves and the robust process employed by Council to deliver better quality outcomes.

Question 26 – The way Auckland should grow

Beacon does not support the relaxation of the MUL. Beacon Pathway supports the proposal to allow more intensive development.

Research carried out by Beacon in 2009 suggests that there is a

broad alignment between value and prevailing planning views around the relationship between built environments, neighbourhoods and sustainability. Cities that are able to achieve a positive dollar sustainability value across the city are all cities that have inner city high and medium density areas. Where the city system is dominated by low density, non-mixed use neighbourhoods, the overall sustainability value of those cities' neighbourhood built environment tends to generate net costs rather than net benefits¹

However, Beacon does not support intensive development in coastal areas, given that these areas may be vulnerable to sea level increase.

Beacon supports the stated aim (p.150) of a

compact city model that focuses growth in centres and corridors., supports public transport and protects rural areas from further residential and business development.

¹ *K Saville Smith, Valuing Sustainable Neighbourhoods, Report NH3112(2) for Beacon Pathway 2009*

Question 26 – Infrastructure planning principles

Beacon Pathway supports the principles in note 451 and would propose that Council build resilience to address the challenges listed in notes 38 – 45, particularly with respect to climate change and resource availability.

Missing from these principles is demand management, and specifically, demand management as a supply side strategy, which has been an effective economic and environmental strategy to reduce demand for water from reticulated services. For example, Beacon's case study of Tauranga City Council found:

Based on an economic analysis commissioned by Beacon Pathway from Market Economics, it is estimated that as a result of implementing a water demand management approach, Tauranga City Council (TCC) has delayed the implementation of the next major water supply infrastructure identified for the city's water supply, by approximately 10 years with a net benefit to the community of \$53.3 million in 2009 terms.²

² *N Smith, G McDonald, A Framework for Valuing Water Demand Management: Tauranga City Council case study, Report WA7090/6 for Beacon Pathway 2009*