

Submission PR250/19

Beacon Pathway Submission to the Draft Annual Plan 2012-2013 for Christchurch City Council

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What is Beacon?

Beacon Pathway Incorporated aims to transform New Zealand's homes and neighbourhoods to be high performing, adaptable, resilient and affordable. To achieve this, Beacon uses demonstrations and monitoring to provide proof of the benefits of improving New Zealand's housing stock.

Beacon Pathway Inc. 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. Much of this work is available free of charge on the Beacon website (www.beaconpathway.co.nz). Tools developed by Beacon include:

- *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 more sustainable homes and 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 underpins Auckland Council's Retrofit Your Home initiative.
- Neighbourhood Sustainability Framework – a framework and tools to measure the sustainability of neighbourhoods
- *Slowing The Flow*, a framework for developing a water demand management strategy www.beaconpathway.co.nz/further-research/article/a_framework_for_councils, and *Water Demand Management: An Economic Framework to Value*, a method for valuing the benefits of demand management (www.beaconpathway.co.nz/further-research/article/reports_and_presentations_water).

Beacon believes that these tools and approaches can contribute to developing Christchurch as a world-class boutique city.

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

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Beacon wishes to speak in support of our Annual Plan submission.

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1 Summary - Beacon's response on the Draft Annual Plan

Beacon congratulates the Christchurch City Council on developing its 2012-2013 Annual Plan, detailing the work programme over the next year to continue the rebuild and development of Christchurch. Beacon believes that achieving the vision of *“a world-class boutique city, where people enjoy a sustainable lifestyle, a healthy environment, a strong economic base and the diverse landscapes of the city and peninsula”* will require a step change in the types of activities provided by the Council and how these activities are delivered. It cannot be achieved by just fixing the existing 20th century infrastructure and delivering business as usual. Nor can it be achieved without addressing the performance of cold damp housing which has an impact on people's health, productivity and quality of life.

1.1 Key points from Beacon Pathway's submission

1.1.1 Step change needed to achieve vision - there are cheaper smarter way of doing things than just fixing up the existing

Delivering a 21st century Christchurch will require a step change in the types of activities provided by the Council, not just the fixing of existing infrastructure and delivering business as usual. Climate change strategies, a move to a low carbon future, improved community resilience and other aspects of 21st century sustainability must be drawn through the Annual Plan work programmes. This needs to include not only a demand management approach to the management of natural resources but also opportunities for diversity of supply - water, energy and localised waste management.

Achieving Christchurch's vision will require strong leadership, innovation and a focus on working collaboratively across communities, industry and central government, backed by a range of innovative strategic and policy approaches, actions and delivery (including exemplar projects) the likes of which have not been seen in New Zealand before.

A key component of achieving this vision is improving Christchurch's housing stock and developing high performing neighbourhoods.

1.1.2 Quality homes and neighbourhoods underpin Christchurch's pathway to a more liveable city

Beacon supports the realisation of a quality compact city with intensification around transport hubs. This will require an urban design framework with a strong emphasis on resilience, low impact design, demand management and diversity of infrastructure supply. In Beacon's view, quality, sustainable and affordable housing and neighbourhoods are fundamental to a world class city.

This can be achieved by:

- Developing medium density housing within the CBD which is well-designed for flexible use over its lifetime (e.g. for construction workers, students and families).
- Ensuring that high performing housing and neighbourhoods are a key part of each of the spatial initiatives being developed as part of City Planning and Development (pp. 100-101 Annual Plan). There are opportunities for sustainable housing (new and retrofit) and neighbourhood pilot examples within these projects.
- Retrofitting homes and neighbourhoods to improve their performance.
- Ensuring that transport infrastructure supports, not undermines, neighbourhood development.

Council needs to take a key role in the building of strong communities so that residents feel a sense of belonging to their neighbourhoods and take pride in their region. For communities to become stronger, more resilient, better able to meet their needs, and a better place to live, Beacon believes Council must work closely with communities to ensure the design and function of local places (dwellings, neighbourhoods and connecting infrastructure such as roads and parks) meets the needs of local communities.

1.1.3 A liveable city demands quality housing stock

Much of the existing housing in Christchurch, like much of New Zealand housing, is cold, damp and unhealthy which leads to poor social and health outcomes. There is a need to improve wellbeing by retrofitting the poorly performing housing stock, particularly as part of the rebuild of earthquake damaged housing. Improving the performance of buildings can benefit the health and productivity of building occupants, as well as generating community-wide benefits such as savings in infrastructure investment and improvements to air and water quality and the natural environment.

There are a number of successful council programmes elsewhere in New Zealand exemplifying how councils can encourage homeowners to improve their homes e.g. Auckland Council's Retrofit Your Home and the previous Clean Heat programme from Environment Canterbury.

In addition to improving existing homes, new high performing homes and neighbourhoods need to be built, not more of the same poor performing homes. To do this, Council needs to encourage medium density development in the CBD rather than the current unsustainable growth on the urban fringe. Houses currently being built are often poorly orientated to the sun and place an unnecessarily high burden on the region's infrastructure (roads, water and wastewater systems).

Where it is necessary to build on the urban fringe, Council must take steps to facilitate the development of more sustainable housing by:

- Ensuring all subdivisions orientate sites for maximum solar gain.
- Incentivising developers to remove covenants which restrict the use of off-site house manufacture and limiting the re-use of modern houses from within the red zone.
- Incentivising developers to include rainwater capture/re-use, lowering the demand on Christchurch's already stressed water infrastructure and making better use of what nature provides.

1.1.4 Council is a key player determining Christchurch's housing outcomes

Beacon's research shows that councils that want to successfully promote more sustainable homes can make it easier for homeowners to build and retrofit more sustainable homes.

In addition, Council strategies, policies and plans particularly influence the design of neighbourhood and need to take full account of climate change, reducing reliance on fossil fuels and other aspects of resilience and sustainability such as demand management, local sourcing and local initiatives.

1.1.5 Importance of demonstration projects

The current high levels of planning, repair and rebuild of Christchurch's homes and neighbourhoods, reinforces the need for exemplars of best practice being made available to residents and industry. These exemplars of best-practice neighbourhoods, retrofit options and high performing new homes need to be established as quickly as possible and contribute to the tools, incentives and education needed to shift to a more sustainable way of doing things.

Current examples include:

- Christchurch Housing Showcase - a pilot example of affordable, sustainable urban living
- Build Back Smarter – examples of how to improve the performance of homes as part of the repair of earthquake damage
- Working with industry players to build a high performing exemplar house on the HIVE site.

2 Beacon Pathway's specific comments on 2012-2013 Annual Plan

This section provides comment on specific sections of the Christchurch City Council Annual Plan for 2012-2013.

Overall comments

At a time of so much change, it is critical that developments are grounded in the City's vision, its goals for the future, and its community outcomes. While some parts of Christchurch are focussed on just the basics of living, it is important that the aspirations of the community as expressed in the 2006-2016 Long Term Council Community Plan, Central City Plan and other strategic documentation, are not lost. Beacon submits that the Council's strategic framework be included in the Annual Plan.

Facilities Rebuild Plan (p. 7 summary document)

The Annual Plan summary notes that, in a separate process, the Council is looking at the future of all 1600 buildings it owns, including commercial and community facilities. All planning, repair and rebuild work should take account of best practice for neighbourhood and building design, particularly around the ongoing performance and running costs of the building.

Financial Overview (pp. 53-71)

Infrastructure is a major cost to Council. Council must focus on demand management, resilience, and creating an enabling environment for innovative solutions, including localised and diverse networks for all infrastructure – roading, waters, energy.

Beacon supports user charges to signal the cost of services and as a demand management tool. However, an analysis of the positive externalities from a good or service must be undertaken as, in some cases, the benefits arising may be such that the service or good should be rates funded.

Beacon supports fixed and volumetric charging for water and wastewater service as a demand management tool and to identify the cost associated with its use.

Water Supply and Wastewater Collection and Treatment Activities (pp. 75-78)

Beacon submits that Christchurch City Council mandate the use of rainwater tanks in new buildings and encourage their use in renovations underway in the city e.g. through ensuring that the consenting process is easy for residents to navigate. Not only will this supplement the city's supply in peak water use periods, but will increase resilience by enabling households to have a backup to the reticulated system.

Beacon also submits that Christchurch City Council investigate local servicing options and distributed systems for wastewater, particularly for areas currently not well served by centralised infrastructure. In rural and peri-urban areas, greywater systems should also be supported more strongly as a method to sit alongside more conventional on-site wastewater disposal systems.

Regulatory Services (pp. 81-82)

Council must take steps to facilitate the retrofit of existing housing, particularly as part of the repair of earthquake damage, and for the development of more sustainable new housing by:

- Encouraging improved insulation of housing when discussing consenting for the repair of earthquake damage.
- Encouraging medium density development in the CBD rather than the current unsustainable growth on the urban fringe.
- Ensuring all subdivisions orientate sites for maximum solar gain.
- Incentivising developers to remove covenants restricting the use of off-site house manufacture and limiting the reuse of modern houses from within the red zone.
- Incentivising and mandating developers to include rainwater capture/reuse, lowering the demand on Christchurch's already stressed water infrastructure and making better use of what nature provides.

Refuse Minimisation and Disposal (pp. 83-84, 178)

Beacon is supportive of the processes underway in both pre- and post-earthquake Christchurch to manage construction waste which is a major contributor to landfill. The building of an average three bedroom house sends five tonnes of new material waste to landfill. Good construction management can cut this to two tonnes without significant cost to the builder/developer. Beacon supports the strong approach that Christchurch City Council has developed to the management of construction waste through use of bylaws and supports the ongoing strong implementation of this bylaw at this difficult time.

Beacon supports user charging for both domestic and commercial refuse as a waste minimisation tool.

Community Support (pp. 97-98, 108) – Housing, Social Housing

Much of the existing housing in Christchurch, like much of New Zealand housing, is cold, damp and unhealthy which leads to poor social and health outcomes. Beacon submits that there is an opportunity to improve wellbeing by retrofitting the poorly performing housing stock, particularly as part of the rebuild of damaged housing. There are many long-term benefits to be gained from making more sustainable building choices. Improving the performance of buildings can benefit the health, productivity and resource efficiency of building occupants, as well as generating community-wide benefits such as savings in infrastructure investment and improvements to air and water quality and the natural environment.

To increase the performance of existing houses in Christchurch Beacon submits that the Christchurch City Council:

- Actively encourages uptake of the Warm Up New Zealand Programme run by EECA
- Implements a whole-of-house sustainability programme such as the Auckland Council's Retrofit Your Home programme. This is a voluntary ratepayer assistance programme that achieves household energy and water efficiency outcomes by providing:

- An optional whole-of-house sustainability assessment.
- A home sustainability plan with easy-to-follow, personalised, house-specific recommendations and appropriate action steps, together with a Homeowner's Manual.
- The opportunity to access central government subsidies and grants for installing insulation and clean heat along with additional financial assistance from the Council (a targeted rate) to undertake sustainability improvements such as rainwater tanks and other water efficiency devices.
- Develop solutions for working with landlords to tidy up rental properties.
- Improve the performance of housing owned by Christchurch City Council - much of this housing was either scheduled for renewal or has been damaged in earthquakes. Beacon submits that any social housing work (either renewals or redevelopment) be designed to create high performing homes and neighbourhoods.
- Providing exemplars of best practice available for use in renovations in conjunction with other parties.

City Planning and Development (pp. 100-101)

Beacon strongly supports activities to realise a quality compact city, with enduring town centres and neighbourhoods, and good design in all development. Beacon supports the intensification to medium density development around transport hubs (below five storeys), with a resulting reduction in suburban sprawl. Housing and neighbourhood sustainability, both in terms of new build and retrofit, are key aspects to developing a resilient city.

Specifically Beacon submits that:

- Local area planning has a focus on developing high performing homes and neighbourhoods.
- The Council continues to prioritise development of the Christchurch Housing Showcase, by advocating to CERA regarding the importance of developing this project early as a pilot example of affordable, sustainable urban living and by making available land for the development of the Housing Showcase
- District Plan changes be made to mandate the use of rainwater tanks, orientation of subdivisions for maximum solar gain and other sustainability features be undertaken
- Council make provision to fund the recommendations from the Canterbury Sustainable Homes Working Party including reduction or removal of covenants on properties requiring housing to be of a certain size or value, or disallowing relocatable homes.