TO: Hamilton City Council

SUBMISSION ON: Proposed Plan Change 12 – Enabling Housing Supply

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COMPANY NAME: Chow:Hill Architects, and on behalf of the following NZ Institute of Architects Local Branch members:

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DO YOU WANT TO BE HEARD IN SUPPORT OF YOUR SUBMISSION? [required] YES

MY/OUR SUBMISSION IS:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit on the Proposed Plan Change 12. This submission is made on behalf of a group of Hamilton-based Architect Practices. We have reviewed the information and have reflected on the question, what will this mean for our built environment?

The Practices provide Architecture, heritage and urban design expertise to Hamilton's public and private sectors.

Summary:

Cognisant of the pressure facing Hamilton City Council (HCC) to revise the District Plan incorporating the requirements of The National Policy Statement – Urban Development, and the Resource Management (Enabling Housing Supply and Other Matters) Amendment Act, we appreciate that Plan Change 12 is a complex matter requiring a balance of various interest – some competing – City growth goals and Community effects.

Precisely because of the complexity of PC12, the broad-brush effects on the future of our city, the feedback we have received indicating a lack of understanding amongst the citizenry, and particularly some alarming unintended consequences, that **we oppose the proposed Plan Change 12**.

Recommendation:

That HCC delay Plan Change 12 with the objective of:

- Allowing more time for targeted public consultation;
- Providing more finely grained zoning requirements and overlay extents;
- Mitigating unintended consequences.

Examples of potential unintended consequences (in no particular order):

- Amenity: It is generally noted that clauses related to amenity have been removed. Amenity equates to attractiveness and pleasentness of a place and so, by logic, no amenity equates to unattractiveness and unpleasantness of a place.

- Business Zones:
  There appears a disconnect between building intensity (6.4.4) or floor area ratios and raised height limits. On the assumption that floor area ratio takes precedence over height limits, so the potential of building/land owners to be frustrated is extremely high as they cannot maximise the opportunity that is afforded by a raised height limit. Additionally, "encouraging" above-ground residential is meaningless when no incentive or disincentive is outlined.

- City Centre Zone:
  The removal of Service area requirement per residential unit (cl.7.4.8) could potentially lead to insufficient quality outcomes depending on the scale of the development. In the Rules / Specific Standards, Residential density increases (cl7.5.3.b) across all 3x precincts (100%, 150%, 67% respectively), but / and there are no longer any minimum floor areas for Residential Units, nor any requirement to have a limit on the number of one-bed/studio units in a large development (deletion of cl.7.5.3.f) which can easily lead to 'mono-cultures' with lack of socio-diversity.
  No longer any minimum daylight standards to apartments. The residual requirement here is solely to address an active street façade, and nothing to do with daylight amenity to residential units. Summarising: These matters can lead to poor living standards and well-being outcomes.

- Accessible Living:
  The minimal requirements in the plan for provision of residential accommodation suited to people with disabilities, or the elderly. The move from single houses to a proliferation of 3 x 3 walk up units will worsen what is already a dire lack of suitable accommodation for this sector, especially for those in wheelchairs. I believe the move to intensify in those areas closest to good public transport, work, amenities etc (ie areas preferred by many people who are unable to drive) will further disadvantage these people if the proposed plans are implemented. The proposal to require 10% of accommodation to be accessible <u>where 10 or more units are built</u> can be expected to provide a minimal amount of suitable housing , as it can be expected that developments of 10 or more units on a site will continue to form only a small part of the total new build. We would like to know how the need has been assessed, how the required numbers have been calculated, evidence that this rule will provide an appropriate level of accessible accommodation. We believe that PC12 will disinfranchise those with disabilities.

- High Density Residential:
  It appears to us that there is a maximum height limit of 21m (plus a portion of roof) as per 4.4.5.4a and an aspiration for 6 stories height. 21m height limit barely works for 6 storeys unless we are unconcerned about the quality of outcomes. Concern is that we will have a

plethora of 6-storey, minimum floor to floor height, relatively flat-roof estate projects, akin to the Projects/Social Housing Estates of the 1950s to 1970s in UK/USA, especially if there is no Urban Design quality standard to be achieved.

- Medium Density Residential:
  The MDRS introduces a range of height, density and amenity standards, such as a maximum permitted height of 11m, 50% site coverage, minimum 1m x 1m outlook space for habitable rooms, minimum site setbacks and so on. Some of these, such as the outlook space requirements, severely compromise amenity and risk creating 'slum' developments.

- General Residential:
  If 11m high houses can be built throughout General Residential zones 'as of right' then this will undoubtedly result in property owners having views and sun blocked, with no recourse to appeal against the development. Public disaffection will accompany this is our view.

- Urban Design Quality:
  Given Qualifying Matters have been identified based on the values, purposes and environmental risks perceived, we are surprised that the wellbeing of the community is not explicitly noted. The quality of an urban environment determines to a great degree the quality of life and wellbeing by way of reduced crime, recreation, accessibility, neighbourhood connectivity, transport options, social relationships, residential satisfaction, physical health etc. We would recommend that Urban Quality then, is a qualifying matter. The HCC Urban Design Panel consists Urban Designers, Architects, Transport and Civil Engineers, Societal and Infrastructure experts and the like. The City guide, VISTA, is already in place, and we recommend the place and profile of the UDP be raised in order to interact in more cohesive ways within the District Plan context, moreover, Urban Design may be incorporated into Assessment Criteria. We see here the opportunity of embracing Central Government requirements to increase housing whilst enhancing the environment through thoughtful design implementation.

- Infrastructure Capacity Overlay
  There is concern that the required three Waters Capacity Assessment will incur increased time requirements and costs, both for HCC and for private developers. Given the desire to increase housing supply, we believe the apparent broad nature of the overlay will result in a slowing down of residential development due to the flow-on effect of time and cost to home buyers and renters.

- Character Zones
  This chapter has been removed
  As a result of removal there is no option of character which in other councils remain. It could be modified to an overlay.

Conclusion:
The proposed changes and their support documents appear to contain a number of ideologies that increasingly aim to restrict liberty and will necessitate sacrifice. That is a recipe for a city that is difficult to live in – a road that Hamilton has already travelled down quite a distance.

The primary objective of the NPS-UD is to de-restrict the processes for developing (mainly) intensified residential stock, so that greater efficiencies can be achieved in the infrastructure and services of cities, and so that housing can be made available more rapidly to alleviate the current shortage.

Declaring all of the general residential zone eligible for intensification in a 3x3 format as-of-right, is likely to embody a number of pitfalls. These are:

- Severely compromised aural and visual privacy (overlooking; proximity);
- Loss of outlook and sunlight;
- Presumption that this type of intensification will depend heavily on on-site stormwater devices, for which there will be an ever-decreasing ability to accommodate this;
- The likelihood that on-site stormwater devices will add excessive and duplicated consultants' and maintenance costs, and will rapidly decrease in effectiveness due to damage and lack of maintenance;
- Presumption that the values of all diverse groups in the community are monocultural and can be accommodated within the urban design theories featured, and touted as "international best practice";
- The likelihood that, due to increased coverage and on-site stormwater retention, on-site dampness will increase, exacerbating already bad levels of respiratory illness in this region;
- The likelihood that the typology will become monotonous, and not inclusive of the cultural and ethnic diversity that is the reality of Hamilton's citizenry.
- The lack of oversight that the architectural and urban design of such development will be subject to.

Some strategies for displacing these unwanted outcomes are:

- Prioritising the upgrading of underground infrastructure in selected areas within general residential zones (to be identified) so as to facilitate and accelerate higher density development than the 3x3 infill concept (through more comprehensive design, and using higher quality construction methodology beyond minimum standards, to break up the 3x3 'carpet' that would otherwise result;
- Council takes responsibility for developing stormwater treatment features on public land, not individual sites, which creates public open space of meaningful scale, is more reliable, and is easier to maintain (or maintenance-free), and keeps individual sites drier;
- Council sponsoring or incentivising the expression and utilisation of culturally diverse design, visual symbols, typologies and amenity values, in order to acknowledge and promote everyone in a conscious, explicit and inclusive manner.

In their current form, publications released for review for purposes of seeking feedback, appear to be contrived around principles that are aspirational, ideological, and not inclusive, and there is no transparency regarding who have been consulted, or how the 'story' has been carried to them. This goes back to the caution about disaffecting groups within the community. The processes and forums for council-led changes are routinely characterised by obscurity, overselling, lack of transparency, selective incompleteness, lack of access to documents, and lack of direct access to persons who are decision-makers. This is a disincentive for community participation, and can lead to council proceeding on the basis of little more than its own set of aspirations.

The primary recommendation therefore, is that the pace of implementation of this seemingly hurried plan be paused or reigned in, so that a more thorough and transparent process can be undertaken both in the communities and among the team steering these plan changes, and, so that the the people into whose hands this process will be entrusted, can be interrogated and verified.

BJ Squair
30 September 2022