



Sustainable Ōtautahi Christchurch Submission

on the

Our Space Draft for Consultation November 2018

The Government's National Policy Statement on Urban Development Capacity (NPS-UDC) came into effect in December 2016. That document makes it clear that growth is to be planned and managed to support the long-term needs of people and communities. That is the background to this Our Space document. In our opinion, last year's change of Government towards a coalition with markedly-different approaches means that there is the need for us to think very differently about plans for the future.

"Urban growth" seems to be a default option in the Our Space Draft, albeit qualified by the need to "manage" growth. "Sustainable growth" also reflects the previous government's urban growth agenda. In all of these contexts, it is in fact "economic growth" that is being referred to. Until very recently this was defined, explicitly or implicitly, as growth in GDP. This growth is assumed to be "market led" unless decisions are made to set out a different approach. We can identify only one example currently before us which refers to social/affordable housing.

While economic growth has been a default policy mantra for most societies for a long time, it is not until recently that the reality of "*uneconomic growth*" has been realised, validated

and quantified. In short, it is now well-known that economic growth measurements are largely computed by only including positive contributions to GDP and ignoring the growing reality of what economics refers to as “negative externalities”, where further “growth” may actually involve more damage to Environment, Society, Economy and Culture than real benefits. Promotion of further economic growth is also unavoidably associated with non-renewable, especially fossil fuel, resource use and its inevitable by-products of global climate change and pollution. This has been documented for many advanced economies, including NZ.

Our Submission is based on a call to take seriously the idea that our city and our nation may already have reached a stage where this policy update for the Greater Christchurch Settlement Pattern may not be what it is designed to be and may in future years be regarded as having been an undesirably risky direction to be following. Given that local government only has limited powers and is subject to priorities set by central government, it could be argued that this exercise will, by default, follow previous government policy that emphasises simple GDP growth

We submit that this Update needs URGENTLY to address the truly long-term needs of the Greater Christchurch area taking account of zero carbon aspirations etc.

We note that the Local Government Act will shortly be amended to restore the statutory responsibility for local government as being to uphold the Four Well-beings, and that the 2019 Budget will be a Wellbeing Budget. The opportunity for a wider approach to planning is soon to be enacted by the current Government. It would be a pity if this well-intentioned Draft before us were to be overtaken by a markedly-different framework for development shortly after it is put into place.

Faced worldwide by what has been termed a Gathering Storm of interconnected high-level risks (climate change, sea-level rise, financial system breakdown, depletion of high-quality resources such as petroleum, pandemics, poverty, starvation, mass migration, escalating tensions between large highly-militarised countries and so on) any confidence in the idea that continuing the previous government’s simplistic Business as Usual approach into the long term future is at best naïve and at worst criminally-irresponsible. Our grandchildren deserve better.

The future envisaged in the Our Space draft will not happen in the way it is described. A comprehensive risk-based approach is badly needed, to bring a strong dose of realism into planning. Even though this particular planning exercise is directed only towards allocation of land for the EXTRA housing and business expected in the near future, we see it as vital that it takes into account a much larger frame of reference than has been used in this Draft.

A much broader summary of the overall situation we in New Zealand are experiencing has been provided by the expert work of the Third Sector Organisation (TSO) Wise Response Society (www.wiseresponse.org.nz) in its Submission, in response to a recent discussion paper from Treasury on Resilience and Future Wellbeing. It is included here as a Supplement to our Submission, with the permission of Wise Response.

To summarise our main points, the finer points of detail in the Draft, relating to future “growth needs” for housing, business, land, transport and so on must be firmly-redirected towards Big Picture issues such as those referred to above. If the foundations on which we plan to build our regional future are as unsound as we believe, the risks of continuing along this path of market-led growth will become very clear, probably within a generation. It is perhaps not inappropriate, given the outcomes of the 2011 Earthquakes, to make an analogy with the history of Christchurch’s urban development, where putting building foundations on inappropriate soils started in the late 19th Century, with disastrous effects when the 2011 earthquakes happened. Clear thinking about the Future must take centre stage in our planning, in place of rose-tinted dreams of the previous Business as Usual.

We also submit that our work in Sustainable Ōtautahi Christchurch, together with that of Wise Response and many other such groups is typical of the contribution to policy formation by a wide range of Third Sector Organisations (TSOs). These bring together considerable expertise, technical and other, from the wider community, with people working together, most of them voluntarily without payment, for the common good “for us and our children after us”. We wish to signal that consultation processes currently followed by government are seldom put forward in a way that encourages respect for meaningful inputs from TSOs.

Due November 30th