

Name: Benjamin Ormsby
Organisation (if applicable):

WHICH OPTION DO YOU SUPPORT?

- Option 1 (the Council’s proposal): Right investment, right time**
Comments:

- Option 2: Borrow more, do some projects earlier**
Which projects would you like to see completed earlier and why?

- Option 3: Borrow less, do some projects later**
Which projects would you like to see deferred to later and why?

Other:

- None of these options** Yes
Comments: I do not support the current scenario that council is proposing and therefore I cannot support the staging of investment in that scenario

- Don’t know**
Comments:

PROPOSAL TO PERMANENTLY CLOSE THE MUNICIPAL POOL

Do you support or oppose the proposal to permanently close the Municipal Pool? Support

Comments: I would like to see the site remediated into a park. I would like any new pool to be located near to the current site, rather than in the north of the city where residents are already served by other facilities

OTHER COMMENTS:

Hamilton City Council Draft Long Term Plan submission

Who is Hamilton For?

The theme of my submission is the question; Who is Hamilton For? The draft LTP presents a vision from Hamilton City Council (Council) that continues to prioritise greenfields suburban development over compact walkable neighbourhoods. It prioritises the movement of cars over all other considerations. Business as usual is not good enough if Hamilton ever wants to be taken seriously and to attract the young talented workers that will build a strong economy. Is Hamilton about having housing for everyone? Is Hamilton for cars or is Hamilton for people? My vision is for a Hamilton that enables everyone to have a happy, healthy life here.

I am happy to come and discuss the evidence behind the statements in this submission with Council.

Priorities:

1. balance the books
Borrowing and debt should be used to allow greater investment when it is needed while placing the burden of cost on all who benefit not just current ratepayers. Council needs to rethink the strategy of spending on big expensive projects and rather look at the quick wins and smaller projects that will have a big impact. Council should review the proposed roading projects and commit to investing in bicycling infrastructure in the next 3 years. Transport spending should recognise the cost benefits between new and existing infrastructure. There should also be a balance of spending on the different transport modes that recognises the capacity of those modes to carry more people to and from their destinations.
2. become the third city economy of NZ
This is an excellent aspiration and something that all people of Hamilton and the wider Waikato region can be proud of. I thoroughly support Hamilton taking its place as the centre of the third largest regional city economy in Aotearoa. Other cities in New Zealand recognise that supporting prosperous communities requires investment. Hamilton needs to look at how it can invest in people and improve their experiences of Hamilton, rather than just building more roads.
3. Provide outstanding infrastructure
Investment in infrastructure should cater for all people that do or will call Hamilton home. That means investing in better walking environments in existing suburbs, improving and installing proper separated bicycle paths on main streets, improving bus stops and upgrading intersections so that pedestrians and bicycles can cross easily and safely.

Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch are investing in quality bicycle-friendly infrastructure such as separated bicycle lanes. These cities

recognise the importance of quality bicycle infrastructure and the benefits it brings to those cities.

Walking is by far the most important mode of transport in our most valuable economic locations like Lambton Quay, Wellington or Queen St in Auckland. Retail is only one reason for making city centres more pedestrian-friendly. Economic change, especially the growing importance of knowledge-based firms, has made the walkability of business centres all the more important. The exchange of ideas and information is crucial for the productivity of knowledge industries. That's one reason why knowledge-intensive businesses – like finance, insurance, IT and professional services – tend to cluster together in city centres. Much of the sharing of ideas and knowledge takes place face-to-face. And those face-to-face encounters are very often the result of a walking trip.

Some of the best walking and bicycling routes in the world have few conventional pedestrian and bicycle facilities. “Neighbourhood greenways” are a form of street treatment where simple measures such as lower speeds, traffic restraints, way-finding and crossing treatments are used to create an environment that is friendly for walking and biking. They are particularly useful for connecting people to community facilities such as schools, parks, shops and other key destinations in a neighbourhood and beyond. Neighbourhood greenways are a popular tool in North America (e.g. Portland and Vancouver) but have yet to catch on here in New Zealand, despite many similarities in street environment.

One of the key reasons for my support of greater walking and biking investment is that it improves the choices people have for how they get around. It means that using a car to get around isn't the only option – People can choose the best option for the trip/s they want to make (which may still be a car).

Overall vehicle kilometres travelled in New Zealand have been flat for almost a decade according to the Ministry of Transport. It is reasonable to assume that the eight-year-old trend of flat traffic volumes will continue, at least in the near term.

4. Strengthen our connection to the Waikato River

The connection between the city and the river is one of the greatest assets for Hamilton. The identity that the river gives physically to the city and emotionally and spiritually to the people, should be celebrated.

In a world where capital is footloose, if we can't differentiate Hamilton from every other small city, we have no competitive advantage. To keep Hamilton youthful and growing we need to attract and retain young people.

5. Have the best garden in the world

Hamilton Gardens is an amazing asset, and should be leveraged off to create other opportunities within Hamilton. Improving the access from the gardens to Hamilton East and to the bicycle paths along the river will create synergies for tourism and hospitality. This will also mean that more people can choose to walk or bicycle to the gardens from their homes nearby.

6. Have an active, strong, commercial central city with distinctive suburban villages

Having an active, strong, commercial central city is important, but it should not preclude the central city having any other role. Central city areas are no longer just 'central business districts' where people commute to work and then return home in the evening. Central city areas are now the life of cities in New Zealand and internationally.

The central city should be a place to live, interact, share ideas, create, play and do all the various activities that people enjoy. Younger people are moving back to the central city areas seeking vibrancy, nightlife, active arts and culture and the ability to live with greater choice and flexibility. Accommodating the demand for living accommodation and the associated needs of residents in the central city should be a high priority for the council. Many issues that the central city currently faces would be ameliorated by an increase in residents living in the central city.

It's tempting, if someone hasn't seen the varied stages of the process from decline to revitalisation, to imagine that some cities just "naturally" have attractive and successful city centres, and others just don't. This isn't true; it takes the right sort of investment over a long period of time to build up the attractiveness of a city centre and of crucial importance is getting people to live there

The idea that the remainder of Hamilton should be suburban villages represents an ideal that is long past its use by date. Suburbs are boring. Suburbs are expensive, and cost more in infrastructure than denser urban centres. Suburban sprawl removes productive land from use, and ties people into unhealthy lifestyles and car dependency.

For me, the use of the term 'village' represents an anti-development agenda, where change and intensification of housing is strongly objected to. Hamilton is not a village or a collection of villages. It is a small but growing city with areas of more or less dense housing, business, employment and industry. To promote the idea that it is a series of villages, risks locking in the idea that no change or development should happen, which is very dangerous for a city that is trying to grow and develop.

7. Become an urban garden

The natural elements are a great asset within the environment of Hamilton. One of the key things to focus on is the recognition and

restoration of indigenous natural environments within Hamilton. The Vision and Strategy for the Waikato River is the strategic overarching policy document for resource management within the Waikato River catchment, and there is an opportunity for Hamilton City Council to show leadership in restoring and protecting the city's greatest natural asset – the Waikato River.

There is an ongoing programme by the council to plant exotic trees as street trees or specimen trees. I support the use of exotic species in some instances (the heritage value of Oaks or London Plane trees is important) but generally, native trees should be given preference in all planting situations. Our native flora and fauna are a point of difference and we must capitalise on that. Biodiversity in New Zealand is in decline and the opportunity for cities like Hamilton to be recognised as a place that supports biodiversity should be recognised. Waiwhakareke natural heritage park and Jubilee park are great examples of how an urban park can preserve valuable indigenous biodiversity values and be an asset to the community.

8. Provide access to affordable housing

One of the most important aspects of affordable housing is choice. An increase in the range of housing types available and an increase in the number of each type available should be supported by Council. This allows people to choose the lifestyle they can afford rather than being forced to buy or rent something that doesn't suit them.

By the council supporting development on greenfields areas through infrastructure provision, only expensive single family homes will be built and they are both unsuitable and unaffordable for younger families and both younger and older couples without children. Young people in Hamilton are under significant financial pressure with student debt and a competitive job market, which may mean that many leave to find better paying work in more affordable locations. Putting up rates to pay for infrastructure needed in new suburbs will also send people looking for other places to live.

The land component of housing costs has grown rapidly over the past 20 years. Land costs can account for up to 48% of the cost of new dwellings. By building more intensive developments the land cost is spread over a greater number of dwellings thereby making them more affordable.

Growth

Hamilton is a relatively low density city. Growth focussed at the periphery is contributing further to this situation. Until the numbers of dwellings being consented in existing areas is equal to the number of greenfields dwellings being consented, the assertion that growth is 50% existing/50% greenfields in Hamilton is false.

When investing in new infrastructure in greenfields development there is an

inequity in the contribution from development contributions and from ratepayers. Ratepayers should not be forced to subsidise sprawl by being forced to pay for the expensive new infrastructure to support it. Intensification provides for a greater number of ratepayers relative to the size of the infrastructure making things more affordable for everyone. New greenfields development is typically the lowest density and least efficient use of money for infrastructure.

Cost of administering services varies directly in proportion to how far apart homes are spaced. Most sprawling areas impose three times the annual cost per household as the most compact areas. A car sits outside, idle and depreciating, for most of its life. Instead of people spending their money on expensive mortgages for large suburban houses and multiple cars to get to and from work, they could spend that money on other things that support and keep money in the local economy.

Hamilton may not face the same magnitude of problems as bigger cities such as Auckland or Wellington, but it faces the same medium and long term issues such as an aging population and ongoing upward trend of the price of oil. Because of Hamilton's size, there is the opportunity to build a compact and efficient city that is resilient against the coming environmental and economic pressures of the next few decades.

We have one of the top ranking world's most liveable cities just up the road and perhaps we should look to what Auckland is doing and leverage off Hamilton's proximity to this. Auckland is currently working hard to improve the neglected modes of transport (i.e. PT, walking and bicycling) and investing in the city central areas.

Transport

I am not a 'cycling enthusiast' nor a 'walking advocate'. I am an average resident who expects to be able to use the most rational transport choices available. Walking for short trips (<1km), biking for daily trips to work, shopping or recreation (1-5km) and car or bus for longer journeys (>5km). Providing for all those choices should be the Council's priority. However, funding should recognise that all journeys encompass some walking (even if it's just from the car park to the shops). Therefore walking journeys should have the most investment.

The Council should be planning to reduce the number of motor vehicles per capita as the population grows by ensuring people make better use of public transport, walking and biking. In the draft LTP, Hamilton's roads will have to accommodate an estimated 130,000 additional daily journeys to work or to drop children at school by 2045. The mode chosen for these additional journeys should be walking, biking and public transport as much as possible.

Schools are already dangerous areas for children because most people use cars to get to work and drop children off at school. It wasn't that long ago that children mostly walked or bicycled to get around and were healthier for it. Streets outside schools have become clogged and unfriendly to those not in

cars. This needs to change through better street design that supports walking and biking to school and work.

Electric and driverless cars are not going to solve problems of traffic congestion and parking, and roads will still require bitumen that comes from expensive imported oil. We don't need driverless cars; we need carless drivers (i.e. walking and biking).

It used to be in Hamilton that one of the biggest barriers was the river. Now probably the biggest most obstructive barrier in Hamilton is the street network.

More and more higher speed roads are being built and they have a huge negative effect on the movement of people in the city. They act as a barrier and create a moat which people cannot get across. This is because only the most confident and abled people can cross these roads, or the access points are so few and far between that people are not willing to walk or bicycle there. This creates ghettos within the city where people can only move about in their suburb and do not travel to other areas or the city centre.

The ring road is a major culprit. Cobham Dr prevents people from getting from Hamilton East to the Hamilton Gardens despite it being an international attraction. Wairere Dr is such a barrier it even has a fence along Dey st to stop people accessing the parks on the other side. I have witnessed people jumping over the fence and running across the road because there are no crossings near by. It was a huge missed opportunity to create a boulevard that would have enhanced the area for everyone. Mill st acts as a major barrier to the city centre from the north and visitors in the 'motel zone' have an unpleasant and unrewarding journey to get to Victoria st.

It's not only the ring road however. Tristram St is a barrier to anyone living on the western side of the city centre, with few safe crossing points to get to the city. Even Grey st in Hamilton East has no safe crossing point between Cobham Dr and Cook st. People must take their chances against motor vehicles. Even families in Steele Park cannot get to the river path safely and that is only 20 or 30 metres away.

The current on-street painted bicycle lanes are useless for everyone except the most confident bicycle riders. Motor vehicles do not respect or recognise the painted lanes. Because 8 yr olds or 80 yr olds cannot use them safely, they should not be considered bicycle lanes. The bicycle lane network is patchy at best, and even in extreme cases (such as the southern end of River road and on Memorial Dr) disappears completely, along with the footpath, which is ridiculous and totally unacceptable in a modern city. Just like motor vehicles, bicycles need a network of connected paths that go to where they need to travel.

There are plenty more examples of streets creating an unsafe barrier to people moving around the city. Design of the street network should take into account all users including people on bicycles and pedestrians that have different levels of ability. There is no place for roundabouts in Hamilton as

they are dangerous and unfriendly to all but the most confident and abled. Council should focus on making the street network safer and more permeable. There should be crossing points that everyone can use, wherever pedestrians and bicycles wish to go. Motor vehicles have been afforded that privilege and Council should treat everyone equitably and provide the same for walking and cycling.

Funding Options

The three options do not look at the most effective prioritisation of spending, but rather present one scenario and ask people to chose if they want it sooner, later or as needed. Let's bring spending on the best value for money projects forward and leave the lower value spend for later.

That will mean that expensive gold plated roading projects are delayed and smaller, less expensive but better value projects such as bicycling improvements are brought forward.