

Memorandum

TO: Emma Christmas, Policy Planner

FROM: Peter Christos, Urban Designer

DATE: 18 October 2019

SUBJECT: **UD ADVICE: MINIMUM BUILDING HEIGHT IN CENTRES**

Hi Emma,

Minimum building height in Centres

1. Background

1.1 Issue

The minimum height of 6m required for buildings and structures, and additions and alterations in centres (Rule 18.6.5.2 of the 2GP) may not be appropriate for some centres. This rule captures all buildings and structures on the site and therefore applies to buildings at the back of the site and those that may only be used for storage.

1.2 Description of centres

Principal Centres : Green Island, Mosgiel, Port Chalmers and South Dunedin (existing buildings 4-8m height)

Mix of one and two storeyed buildings with verandah cover. Heritage buildings feature. Consistent zero front yard setbacks. Not too many gaps/side yards. Consistent development on both sides of street. High degree of continuous open shop fronts (big windows at street). Carparking behind buildings and metred on street. Some new buildings but predominantly heritage/older shops. Mosgiel and South Dunedin having stronger destination retail focus. Moderate amount of residential above shops.

Suburban Centres: Caversham, Gardens, Mornington and Roslyn (existing buildings 4-8m height)

Mix of one and two storeyed buildings with some larger (older) buildings providing a focus. Mainly consistent zero front yard setbacks. Some gaps/side yards. Consistent development on both sides of the street. Shop fronts are generally open at street level. Limited residential above shops.

Rural Centres: Outram, Middelmead, Waikouaiti and Waitati (existing buildings 3-6m height)

Single storeyed buildings - generally standalone. Side yards/empty lots are common. Mainly zero front yard setbacks. Regular gaps/side yards. Variable shop front treatments and verandah cover.

Small commercial buildings and some small industrial buildings make distinction with adjoining residential character. Some large heritage buildings provide a focus. No residential above shops.

Neighbourhood Centres: Andersons Bay Terminus, Brighton, Brockville, Corstorphine, Forbury, Helensburgh, Hillside, Larnach, MacAndrew Bay, Maori Hill, Musselburgh, the southern part of Andersons Bay Road, the area adjoining the University and Wakari (existing buildings 4-8m height)

Located to be prominent and distinct from residential buildings on collector roads. Mix of one and two storeyed buildings. Generally, development is on one side of street only. Setbacks vary between zero - room for angle car parking (no parking behind buildings). Built character varies between centres. Limited first floor residential above shops.

Neighbourhood Convenience Centres: Kaikorai North, Kaikorai South, North Dunedin and South Mosgiel (existing buildings 4-8m height)

Less distinction between residential and commercial built form with housing integrated into centres (opposite side of road etc/ infill). Setbacks vary – some parking in front of buildings. No clear distinction through building height (one and two storeys). Mixed small to medium businesses including pubs/bottle store /small super market. No residential above shops.

Neighbourhood Destination centres: St Clair and Portobello (existing buildings 4-8m height)

Built form is distinguished from residential. Some two storeyed buildings provide sense of hierarchy (more so St Clair). Some large heritage buildings. Development focused to single side of street. Generally, zero setbacks with parking on street (degree of vehicle dominance due to volume of visitors). Some gaps/side yards. Reduced verandah cover.

1.3 What are other councils doing?

Wellington: 7m minimum

- *New buildings or structures or additions to the frontages of buildings and structures along any primary or secondary street frontages in Centres, as identified on maps 46 to 49D, shall have a minimum height of 7m. This standard does not apply where Standard 7.6.2.3.1 applies.*
- *7.6.2.3.1 Any building or structure must comply with the applicable building recession plane rule for the Residential Area at any point along a boundary adjoining the Residential Area. In addition, no building or structures in Centres shall be higher than 3 metres within 5 metres of a Residential Area boundary.*
- *7.6.2.2.2 The ground floor to floor (stud) height of all new buildings along **primary and secondary street frontages** in Centres, as identified on maps 46 to 49D, shall be at least one-third higher than the upper storey(s) of the building.*

Christchurch: ground floor - floor to ceiling must be no less than 3.5m applies to all centres other than local.

- bonus heights apply at medium density neighbourhoods (with setback of bonus height where adjoining a residential zone).

Queenstown: 4m minimum floor to ceiling in one specific zone (Lakeview sub zone)

Auckland: 3 storeys (min) applies to Core Retail Centre only

- Auckland Design Manual: 3.5-4m floor to underside of slab for commercial buildings
- Habitable rooms (above ground floor) min floor to ceilings of 2.7 to enable future commercial use.

Hamilton: no minimum height

Nelson: 5m minimum within in DP#2 (development permitted).

2. Consideration of matters

Why have minimum height?

- Centres provide both a focal point for commercial and social/community interaction. Certain centres should have a height hierarchy that establishes their importance and function.
- A minimum height could encourage new development to incorporate residential units above shops and intensify activity at centres and better support PT.
- Minimum heights could reduce the risk of sudden height drops within centres which could have negative visual effects and weaken the build hierarchy.

3. Options

Option 1 - Apply a minimum height to larger centres only

Benefits

- Larger centres that may be more likely to have residential above shops could continue to have a minimum height, but small centres which are more likely to have lower buildings and less likely to contain residential activity would not have a minimum height specified.

Costs

- Could be a risk of inconsistent height of buildings in some centres but given heights are already inconsistent and there is no great height disparity, this is not considered to be a major problem.

Option 2 - Have no minimum height for centres

Benefits

- Most centres have buildings with heights ranging from 4-8m. Specifying a minimum height of 6m is not consistent with what is existing. By not specifying a height, development can be designed to fit the purpose of the building

Costs

- Could be a risk of inconsistent height of buildings in some centres but given heights are already inconsistent and there is no great height disparity, this is not seen to be a major problem.

Option 3 – Apply a minimum height to buildings on the street frontage

Benefits

- Only buildings on the street frontage or visible from the street are captured by the rule and buildings on the back of sections or small storage sheds, garages etc. are not captured by the rule.

Costs

- May add unnecessary cost without visual benefits in already low rise centres.

Option 4 – Allow for consideration of height based on height of buildings on adjoining sites

Benefits

- consistency with the average building height within the centre (+/- rule) - new buildings no more than one storey more/less than neighbouring buildings.
- Allows for assessment of height of adjacent buildings and some consistency or averaging.

Costs

- Only useful in bigger centres and perhaps not necessary in Dunedin context where heights are moderate to low.

4. Recommendations

Options 1, 3 and 4 are not recommended because: the proposed minimum height is above the height of many existing buildings within centres. In some instances, the proposed minimum height could in fact make it difficult for new buildings to conform to an existing consistent built height. Having said this, a minimum height that encouraged mixed use development and retained a sense of building hierarchy/consistency would be positive; however, this may need to be closer to 8m.

I recommend Option 2: This could allow the developer to better respond to local conditions without having to add costs to conform with a consistent minimum height- that may or may not exist. Controlling negative views would be better achieved through screening rather than minimum building height.

Regards, Peter Christos

Urban Designer