



CONFERENCE 16/17th April 2007 Duxton Hotel Wellington

## CASE STUDY

# Waikato Councils Adopt The Hamilton City Development Manual

Waikato District Council  
Hamilton City Council

### Presenters

Richard Bax  
Community Assets Group Manager  
Waikato District Council

Joan Whittaker  
Roading QA & Systems Co-ordinator  
Waikato District Council

### Presented By

**SOLGM**  
NZ SOCIETY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANAGERS



### In Association With



Local Government New Zealand  
*te pūtahi matakōkiri*

**INGENIUM**  
ENGINEERS FOR PUBLIC ASSETS

**ALGM**

### Principal Sponsor

 **Civic Assurance**  
PROTECTING COMMUNITY ASSETS

# **Waikato Councils Adopt the Hamilton City Development Manual**

## **Executive Summary**

The six councils surrounding Hamilton City (HCC) have recently adopted the Hamilton City Council's Development Manual to replace their existing Codes of Practice. The Manual is a means of compliance with district plans, and so the infrastructural elements of developments can be approved very quickly when the manual is followed. The Development Manual also includes a set of standard technical specifications, which can be used in contract documents.

The use of these common documents makes it easier for surveyors and contractors to work in the city and the various districts in the Waikato region. This provides a cost benefit through lower contracting costs, reduced document costs, and easier contract management for council staff. The HCC manual is accessible on the internet and each council is able to add their own special requirements if required.

## **The Problem or Issue / Initial Environment**

### The Birth of the HCC Development Manual

In 1995, engineering staff at Hamilton City Council (HCC) identified the need to significantly review their Code of Practice for Urban Subdivision (COP), which was modelled on the old standard NZS4404:1981 : Code of Practice for Urban Land Subdivision. The standard was tagged for review, but seemed to be a way off at that stage and HCC were not satisfied that the revised standard would suit what they wanted to achieve anyway. The old standard and the HCC COP were formulated to fit with developments under the old Town & Country Planning Act 1977 rather than under the outcome-focused Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA). The Standard included the requirements for developers for infrastructural services such as water supply, roading, etc.

HCC wanted a common document that would cover all work on developing infrastructural assets for the City, whether they were created as part of a subdivision, or by way of a Council-driven capital works programme. After much discussion and research, the Development Manual concept was born. The manual would comprise four volumes (described below).

A small in-house team was put together to drive the project and a project manager appointed. One person was selected from each of the technical service areas (e.g. water, roading, etc) to drive the preparation of their sections. Part of the project manager's role was to edit the various sections, as they were prepared, to ensure a consistent style and approach throughout. The project was supported by HCC's Management Executive with the intention of presenting it to Councillors once the project was completed. As the work was carried out as an extra to their normal workloads, there was added pressure on the staff involved which led to inevitable delays.

The original four volumes of the Development Manual were developed as follows:

*Volume 1 Subdivision Processes*

This volume describes the processes by which a developer applies for resource consent for subdivisional development.

The volume sets out the information that the developer is required to submit to Council and the response (processing) times that the applicant could expect from Council if their application complies with the requirements and includes all of the specified information. It also sets out clear lines of communication between the developer and Council and covers final acceptance of the work and issue of the Section 224c certificate of the RMA.

*Volume 2 Design Guide*

This volume contains design guidelines for all aspects of the infrastructural assets that are to be provided as part of the development.

It sets out a “preferred means of compliance” with the outcomes and rules set out in the HCC District Plan. It is not mandatory, but if followed the application will generally be approved. Designers may submit an alternative design but must be able to clearly demonstrate how the alternative design will achieve the required outcomes. These guidelines are also used for designing the City’s infrastructural assets by internal design staff or consultants.

*Volume 3 Standard Technical Specifications*

This volume contains a comprehensive set of standard technical specifications for all of the infrastructural assets that are provided for the city. It includes lists of approved materials that are to be used when constructing stormwater, wastewater and water supply services.

The specifications are required to be used for subdivision works and Council-driven contracts alike, whether designed and contracted by internal staff or consultants. The specifications ensure a consistency in the standards of infrastructural assets and provide confidence for the future maintenance of those assets, with particular benefits in future repairs, fittings, quality of fittings, material life, etc. The Standard Technical Specification Volume is also published independently of the other volumes for use by Council contractors.

*Volume 4 Quality Systems*

This volume sets out a series of quality processes that are to be followed to assure Council that the assets delivered are in fact to the required standard, whether delivered by development or under a Council contract. The volume also sets out the requirements for as-built information and drawings for all infrastructural assets.

A *General Information* section at the front of the manual describes the purpose and proposed use of the Manual, the parties involved, interpretations, manual control and the process to be followed when improvement opportunities are identified.

## Industry Acceptance

The Hamilton City Development Manual was eventually launched in hard copy format in 1998 and received widespread acceptance from the development and contracting industry in Hamilton. In 2004, following the release of NZS4404:2004 : Land Development and Subdivision Engineering, HCC reviewed the manual in line with the new Standard and made the decision to continue with the Development Manual because of its widespread acceptance and versatility. Some minor changes were required to the Manual however and the document was subsequently updated, reprinted and made available on the internet via the HCC website.

As the manual is a “controlled document” all users are encouraged to submit an “Opportunity for Improvement” form (OFI) if they find an area where they consider an improvement can be made. Ongoing feedback from developers, surveyors and contractors is encouraged to give them a better feeling of “ownership” for the manual. Where HCC staff agrees a change to the manual then this change is made at the next scheduled update (currently annual) and registered users notified. With the manual available on the internet, the incorporation of updates is easily handled and the web version is always the official current version.

## District Council Interest

In 2001 some of the district councils which neighbour Hamilton City, including Waikato District, approached the HCC to discuss the possibility of adding to and amending the Development Manual to give it a wider application in the Waikato region. At that stage some of the district councils had their own Codes which were predominantly based on the City’s original Code of Practice for Urban Land Development, whilst others had nothing, or were using the HCC Code de facto. They all generally felt that, as many of the contractors and consultants who worked for them were Hamilton based, there could be real advantages in using the same design standards and technical specifications.

Staff at Waikato District Council (WDC) had already been using HCC’s standard technical specifications for their urban road design and construction for several years and WDC’s contract documents usually referred to the Development Manual for urban roading contract works. WDC and Waipa District Council (Waipa) were also informally using the Design Guide as one means of compliance with developers – generally, if the developers referred to it the two councils would be happy to accept it, except for some areas, such as road widths, where the WDC or Waipa District Plans had different requirements.

Many of the region’s contractors were the same as those contracting to HCC. All rural authorities have urban centres and expectations in those areas were rising. The districts believed that HCC handled urban development well, while the district councils were good at rural development. Combining these could be to everyone’s benefit. It would save time and effort – instead of each district producing their own codes, why not have one shared document which was well managed and kept up to date?

The fact that HCC was intending to make the Manual available on-line in 2004 made it even more attractive to the districts. All parties agreed and could see the potential benefits outweighing the one-size-fits-all issues that could, and eventually did, arise.

Various discussions between staff at HCC and the neighbouring district councils took place and eventually, in 2003, six of the rural councils agreed to the buy-in. They were the districts of:

- Waikato
- Waipa
- Matamata-Piako
- Otorohanga
- Waitomo
- Hauraki

## **Description of the Project / Response**

### Initial Discussions

HCC were very supportive and encouraging, especially at senior management level. They agreed to make changes to their Manual to include rural requirements subject to them being appropriate. HCC's view was that they took improvement comments from the users already and the buy-in of the districts was just an extension of that process.

Discussion about sharing of costs was parked while the project got underway – that could be sorted out once the magnitude of the project was understood.

Ownership of the document was discussed and although it was initially considered a good idea to have a jointly-owned document, in the end it seemed easier to leave it as HCC-owned with the districts as key stakeholders. HCC was managing the manual extremely well so it was considered by staff that it was best to leave it that way, with HCC maintaining overall control.

### The Review Process

The review process eventually proved to be a long one, taking over 3 years to complete!

After some initial discussions under the leadership of a HCC representative, two cross-Council working teams were set up to work through the changes that would be required to the existing Manual for the installation of services in subdivision and contract works in the districts, particularly the rural areas. These teams were made up of key staff members who were responsible for the development and or contracting areas in their respective district.

One team was roading based and was tasked to look at the roading design and construction requirements and the other team was utilities based which was required to look at the stormwater, wastewater and water supply requirements.

Progress was extremely slow initially. It was not clear in those early stages just how the district requirements were going to be incorporated into the existing manual, so it was hard to make any progress. There was no project leader appointed from the district councils, so no-one was steering the teams in any direction. (As neither of the authors was directly involved in the project at this early stage, we are unable to comment on other reasons, if any, for the slow progress in the early stages.)

When HCC completed the 2004 upgrade of the Development Manual and posted the document to the internet, the district teams had made little progress so the upgrade was not able to incorporate the rural requirements at that time. Following completion of the update however, the HCC Development Manual Co-ordinator (a co-author of this paper, who 6-months later moved to WDC) was asked to join the district roading team to assist with their review. The purpose of this unofficial appointment was simply to arrange and call meetings, take and distribute minutes and prompt team members, where appropriate, to complete their respective tasks between meetings. This became the trigger for reasonable progress to be made, at least for the roading team.

The two teams gradually worked through each part of Volumes 2 and 3 noting and discussing differences. The roading group also (by default and identified need!) took responsibility for reviewing the other general parts of the Manual such as the General Information section, the planning application processes of Volume 1, and the earthworks and landscape sections of Volumes 2 and 3.

Because the HCC Manual had been written solely for Hamilton's use, terminology throughout the document, particularly in the planning application processes of Volume 1, were very much HCC-specific and referred to HCC organisational groups, units and position titles. However, planning application processes were different in each Council.

These non-technical differences tended to cloud the issue in the early stages and made the task at hand seem really difficult. Would we need to ask HCC to change all of these references to somehow include everyone? How would they respond to such a request? Would it spoil the readability of the Manual and make it cumbersome?

Eventually it was decided to not try to incorporate district variances into every page, but rather to add the district requirements as a supplement, in the form of a new volume. The organisational differences were then covered by one paragraph inserted into the General Information section of the main HCC Manual and in the introductory section of the district supplement, stating that a particular position or unit in HCC should be interpreted as the equivalent position or group in the relevant District Council.

Once the decision had been made to work towards a separate volume, progress became easier, and the two working groups were able to concentrate on the real technical differences and issues. Wherever possible, we tried not to make change simply for change sake.

Where only minor changes were needed to the existing manual to suit rural requirements, these matters were often referred to HCC in the form of an "Opportunity for Improvement" form (OFI). In most cases, HCC agreed to make the change at their end so that there was no need to include it in the district supplement.

## Technical Issues and Differences

The review process required the districts to think about their own existing requirements in comparison with what other districts were doing and try to reach a compromise where these differed. Where relevant, some had to modify their requirements or practices so that a single, common district standard could be reached. Some examples of these differences were:

- the use of different pipe materials around the region
- different pump station designs and requirements
- differences in vehicle entranceway and separation requirements
- different requirements for road openings and reinstatement

These issues were mostly resolved by one of three methods:

- i) proposing changes to the HCC Manual once agreement was reached by all parties, and this happened in many cases;
- ii) by including in the District Supplement where district requirements were different to the city, again with everyone's agreement; or
- iii) where districts had different requirements and agreement could not be reached, a note would be made in the District Supplement to refer to the individual district council for specific requirements.

Individual District Plan requirements were the most difficult to work around in an effort to reach a compromise. With the relevant District Plans in varying stages of review, it was not possible to reach agreement on several aspects of the rural requirements at that time, so each district needed to set their HCC Development Manual adoption dates in accordance with their plan review process.

As it became apparent that agreement was never going to be reached in all areas, it also became obvious that it was probably going to be necessary for each district to prepare a separate Addendum to cover the unique requirements for that district. It was agreed at that stage that these Addendums would be prepared following completion of the District Supplement, rather than further delay the completion of the supplement. These addendums could take time to prepare and would eventually replace existing District Codes of Practice.

## Other Problems Encountered

Initially, the utilities review team had difficulty getting all districts to buy in to the plan. Some districts were too busy to provide the right resource to come to the meetings and share their knowledge/information, so the requirements and practices of those districts could not be discussed or evaluated in the early stages. Generally it was a matter of being too busy and seeing the project as useful but not as a high priority.

Other problems that were encountered along the way included:

- The initial lack of a project driver – someone to organise the meetings, take minutes, push team members to provide information or participate, distribute information, etc.
- The frequent changing of team members, due to the movement of key staff between councils or going to other employers.
- There were a few people that were keen to stick to what has gone before and not so keen to look at other, maybe better ways of doing things.
- The difficulty in getting changes into the district plans, and the different status of each council's district plan.
- The likely training required for staff to implement changes.

Most of these difficulties were overcome by some individuals making an additional effort. This was either through providing time to their staff to co-ordinate and manage the meetings, or by their own efforts.

Like any project, a leader is required to drive and make things happen. Whilst each team may have appointed their own leader (whether officially or by default) no-one seemed to be overseeing the project as a whole. Once the Manual co-ordinator joined the roading review team, steady progress was made and the roading section of the District Supplement was completed in about 12 months.

### Completion and Adoption

Following completion of the Roding part of the District Supplement, the Manual co-ordinator (who by then had moved to the WDC Roding Group) was seconded to the district utilities review team to assist them to complete the stormwater, wastewater and water sections of the Supplement.

The co-ordinator then put the complete District Council Supplement together and worked closely with HCC staff to make the few changes required to the main part of the Development Manual (mainly references to the new rural requirements) and to incorporate the supplement as a new volume (Volume 5) when the Manual was next updated in mid-2006.

This project was primarily driven by engineer officers of district councils with very little awareness or interest from elected representatives until formal adoption of the Manual by councils. This was necessary due to the links to District Plans.

Final adoption by participating District Councils was to be from October 2006 onwards depending on the status of their own district plan review.

The Waikato District Council signed off on the adoption after a briefing on the benefits and was pleased with the proposal. Council felt that the project was an example of the benefits of collaboration of the various councils in the Waikato with strong support from HCC. Although Council adopted the Manual from 1 November 2006, staff decided not to formally notify their consultants, surveyors and contractors until the Council-specific Addendum had been prepared to officially replace our existing Codes of Practice.

Although the adoption had not been formerly notified, WDC Roding and Community Assets staff held a meeting with their contractors and consultants around the time it was signed off by Council. At this meeting, our proposed adoption of the HCC Development Manual, with the District Council Supplement, was announced and the change seemed to be widely accepted and welcomed by the industry.

The WDC Addendum is now almost complete and we expect to formally notify our full adoption by the end of April 2007.

### **Results – Financial and Service Level Impacts**

The benefits of this combined approach to development requirements are seen as many and varied. They include:

- A means of compliance for infrastructural works with District Plans.
- Common engineering standards across the region for developers, surveyors and contractors means less arguments, mistakes, easier checking of applications, etc.
- Consistency with standards.
- Cost effectiveness for districts.
- Cost effectiveness in the production and administration of construction contracts.
- A larger knowledge base for inputs and improvements.
- Staff moving between Councils already know the document.
- Opportunity to work more closely, e.g. staff cover and exchange, common contracts, purchasing strategies.
- The opportunity for Councils to meet regularly to discuss common compliance issues/problems etc with a view to standardising development requirements across the region.

Recent feedback from staff, developers and contractors, as well as Environment Waikato (the Waikato Regional Council) has been very positive.

The cost savings by having one common system are considerable but difficult to quantify. As an example, HCC's cost to re-write the Development Manual was in the order of \$100,000 of staff time. Although the cost to carry this out at each District Council would be less, it would still be significant. The ongoing savings to each Council, as well as contractors and developers, is estimated at tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of dollars a year.

### **Prospects / the Future**

The HCC Development Manual is a living document which is regularly reviewed and updated.

The Councils who have participated in this buy-in exercise intend to meet regularly to review and discuss progress, issues arising and change requirements.

Council-specific Addendums will continue to be produced and included in the District Council Supplement.

Over time, it is expected that the Council-specific Addendums and the combined District Council Supplement will reduce in size as further discussions take place and agreement is reached between the participating councils on rural requirements.

Other improvements expected in future include further and continued refinement to all volumes and improved web functionality.

### **Adaptability / Transferability**

The writers consider that this project could be repeated anywhere provided there is enough desire from all parties to make it work. All parties must get behind the proposal and be prepared to put in the hard yards to reach the desired outcome.

The HCC Development Manual, with the District Council Supplement, could also be further extended to include other districts in the wider Waikato and surrounding regions.

### **Conclusions**

The sharing of resources such as the Hamilton City Development Manual has provided the participating councils with the opportunity to work together, learn new ideas and network. With this comes a better understanding of common issues, the opportunity to combine forces to reduce workloads and costs, and to make it easier for staff, developers and contractors.

However, to be successful, there is a real need to appoint someone, not necessary one of the technical experts, to drive, co-ordinate and prompt as required, and to get full buy-in from each council involved.

### **Contact for Further Information**

Name:	Richard Bax, Community Assets Group Manager, or Joan Whittaker, Roading QA & Systems Co-ordinator
Local authority:	Waikato District Council
Street Address:	15 Galileo Street, Ngaruawahia
Mail address:	Private Bag 544, Ngaruawahia
Phone:	07 824 8633
Fax:	07 824 8091
E-mail:	Richard.Bax@waidc.govt.nz Joan.Whittaker@waidc.govt.nz