

11 September 2009



Marlborough District Council
PO Box 443
Blenheim

Re: Blenheim Urban Design Strategy Feedback

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Blenheim Urban Design Strategy.

We wish to specifically comment on the proposal to relocate the Blenheim i-SITE to a new building in Alfred Street which we strongly disagree with for the following reasons:

1. The primary role of the i-SITE is to encourage visitors to stop in a region to find out what there is to do and to influence their decision to stay.
2. A key criterion for any i-SITE is to be located at a highly visible site preferably close to the major visitor flows or visible from entry/exit highways with high traffic volumes. Currently i-SITES in Cromwell and Hokitika are being moved from central town locations to main highways to specifically address this issue.

Tourism New Zealand consumer research (2007)

What people said... Presence of an i-SITE in a town signals to passing visitors that this place has something to stop for; encouraging people to stop and find out what that is...
"If there is no information centre you know there is nothing to do there, so you may as well keep going"

3. An i-SITE located within the town centre would mean visitors need to seek it out vs naturally coming across it when entering the town.
4. If visitors have made it to the town centre then they have already begin to engage with the region.
5. It is important the i-SITE focuses on its role of attracting visitors to stay in the region rather than being in a convenient location for local Marlburians who are not the primary target.
6. The effectiveness of the i-SITE would be compromised by moving away from the main traffic flow. There is concern that a reduction in visitors through the door will impact on the i-SITE's ability to earn revenue, and therefore its viability.
7. The current location provides ample parking and space for travellers arriving by campervan, cars and coach to access and manoeuvre around the i-SITE. There are concerns that the proposed location would have limitations with parking for campervans and coaches and consequently cars stopping briefly for information.

8. The door count for the Blenheim i-SITE reflects growth in numbers from 155,653 in 2006 to 165,735 in 2008. It is estimated that visitors arrive by the following means: 50% in cars, 30% on the bus, 10% in a campervan, 5% on foot, 5% on the train.

Tourism Flows Research shows that in 2005, 1.84 million visitors travelled on State Highway 1 between Christchurch and Blenheim, 1.31 million between Picton and Blenheim and 1.25 million on State Highway 6 between Renwick and Blenheim. By 2012 these numbers will increase by 10 - 13%. These figures alone suggest that a successful Visitor Centre should be located close to the juncture of State Highway 1 and State Highway 6 and this is further reinforced by Qualmark's Assessments Criteria for Visitor Information Centres that states: *The key requirement is to have a **highly visible site preferably close to the major visitor flows** in the area.*

9. The current location connects visitors arriving by coach and train acting as the main transport interchange for the town.
10. The potential to include services such as an internet cafe will be diluted if situated in the town centre as it would compete with established coffee shops.

Yours sincerely

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