Review of Solid Waste Management and Minimisation Bylaw 2018 – detailed response to issues

This information is to inform you of the outcome of the consultation on the Solid waste Bylaw.

Council received 58 submissions stating a wide range of views. Based on the feedback, Council made some substantial changes and formally adopted the revised Bylaw on 20 November.

Key issues

Event Waste Management and Minimisation Plans (WMMPs)

What we proposed

Council proposed a change where every event held on Council-owned or managed land would require an event WMMP as part of the event approval process. For more information, see the consultation document.

What the community told us

We heard from 57 submitters.

- 60%[1] of submitters supported Council's proposal;
- 17% preferred the status quo;
- 11% preferred no event WMMPs;
- 7% had another idea; and
- 5% had no opinion.

Submitters generally agreed on the need to minimise waste but had different views on how to achieve that.

What Council decided

Council supported the view that event WMMPs need to be managed by Officers in a way that is:

- proportionate to the risk; and
- user-friendly; and
- cost-effective for event holders and Council.

Council amended the Bylaw to:

- Exclude events that are not of significant scale or risk, such as:
  - family picnics,
  - events on land managed by Reserve Boards (unless the Board supports the WMMP)
  - events held on land subject to a lease or licence from Council and carried out by a community organisation in accord with their lease or licence
  - hawkers, mobile shops or stalls regulated under the Trading in Public Places Bylaw
  - events that are **NOT** expected to:
    - attract more than 150 attendees; and
    - require shared use of a public space; and
    - involve supply of food and/or drink and/or merchandise; and

[1] All percentages are rounded up or down to the nearest percent.

    - occur at a time and/or over a duration of time when people would normally expect to eat
- Avoid unnecessary cost for event holders by keeping documentation short and simple; and
- Ensure the solution is proportionate to the risk.

Construction site WMMPs

What we proposed

Council proposed a change where Council could require a construction site WMMP to be prepared for any building project with a value of $500,000 or higher. This would remain a discretionary power (which is not currently exercised) but if exercised it would also apply to residential projects, not just non-residential. For more information, see the consultation document.

What the community told us

We heard from 56 submitters.

- 0%[2] of submitters supported Council's proposal;
- 21% preferred the status quo;
- 52% preferred mandatory WMMPs;
- 16% had another idea; and
- 11% had no opinion.

Council noted clear feedback:

- the practical realities of implementing WMMPs from local representatives of the building sector;
- opposing the existing discretionary provisions on construction site WMMPs;
- expressing concern about the cost of regulation; and
- expressing support for minimising the diversion of waste to landfill.

Again, submitters generally agreed on the need to minimise waste but had different views on how to achieve that. For more information see the Summary of feedback.

What Council decided

Noting the overall feedback, and in the light of information from the Master Builders and Certified Builders associations, Council decided to:

- offer education for local builders and sub-contractors on what building materials can be recycled and reused (and what can't); and
- provide information for builders on where they can send reusable materials in cases where local collection is not available.

Council also removed all requirements for construction site WMMPs from the Bylaw. Council will look at this issue again in 2026 after education and information around minimising waste has been offered and provided to local builders.

Retrieval of bins in the central business district

What we proposed

Council proposed no changes to rules around retrieval of bins in the CBD. Instead, we asked whether businesses in the Ashburton CBD should be required to bring in their bins by a specific time following collection.

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[2] All percentages are rounded up or down to the nearest percent.

What the community told us

We heard from 55 submitters.

- 42% supported the council's proposal
- 38% favoured a noon collection
- 13% favoured a 6 pm collection
- 2% had another idea.
- 5% had no opinion

Some submitters noted that CBD collection time starts at 7.00 am, not 7.30 am as stated in the draft bylaw. Submitters also raised questions about collections affected by public holidays.

What Council decided

Council preferred that businesses continue to manage this themselves and no change has been made to the current arrangements. Council will share the feedback we received with CBD businesses.

Officers confirmed to Council that CBD collection time as specified under the solid waste contract is 7am. This error was corrected in the Bylaw. Where CBD collection day is followed by a public holiday, Council's view is that a sensible regulator would clarify expectations and exercise reasonable discretion. Council's expectation/practice is that if collection occurs on a public holiday, and limited businesses are open with few people around, we see no need to enforce this aspect of the Bylaw and bins would come in the next day by the required time.

Other issues

Food Organic Garden Organic (FOGO) conditions of service – Council received submissions asking that kerbside collection times are more regular and that once introduced, FOGO (or green) bins be collected as early as possible in the day to minimise odour issues. This involves a trade-off as more trucks and more drivers (and therefore more cost) would be needed to give everyone an early collection. Council is currently working through a commercial tender process to select its waste management contractor from 2026 onwards and will address these issues through that process.

Staff also noted that there were issues earlier this year with the regularity of timing of collection. This was due to the loss of a large truck which was replaced by two smaller trucks, necessitating extra staff. Smaller vehicles and new drivers impacted the timing of collection. Council and its contractors strive to ensure a consistent service and the issues experienced earlier this year have largely been resolved.

Rural drop-off facility bins – Council received several submissions about bins at rural drop-off facilities that are "locked open". Submitters commented that they need to be locked open wider to enable efficient disposal of recyclables. The lids at rural transfer station bins are locked open for various reasons. Open lids lead to litter on windy days and wet materials on wet days. Limiting how far the lids open prevents dumping of large items like appliances or large bags of waste. Large bags of recyclables cannot be deposited either as the material must be loose for sorting. Unflattened cardboard takes up room in the bins and is hard to sort at facilities. Councillors will be meeting on site with Council Officers to take a closer look at this issue and investigate a solution that allows for easier recycling while still preventing the unwanted dumping of rubbish.

Recycling bin audits – Council received three submissions opposed to the audit of recycling bins and the removal of bins where users are persistently or severely non-compliant. We estimate that fewer than 1% of the approximately 11,500 businesses and households have had bins removed. The good recycling habits of the other 99% helps keep costs down, as badly contaminated recycling ends up in landfill, resulting in additional landfill charges. Alongside other measures, bin audits have helped Ashburton

achieve a consistently low level of recycling contamination. Council intends to continue with recycling bin audits and the rules on removal of bins for persistent or sever non-compliance.

Overfilled bins – Council proposed no change to clause 8.7.5.4, relating to overfilled bins. After receiving community feedback, it decided to delete clause 8.7.5.4. Instead, Council will promote the use of the "Snap, Send, Solve" app to report bins that need to be emptied. We are also adopting a submitter's suggestion to place QR codes on the bins for this purpose. Littering offences can continue to be enforced under the Litter Act 1979.

Support for waste-to-energy plants – Some submitters referred Council to the use of waste-to-energy plants as a future waste management solution. Council disposes of its residual waste to Kate Valley landfill, which is a comprehensively engineered and modern landfill facility that operates to the highest international standards. The facility is consented for 35 years until 2039.

Kate Valley also generates electricity from the biogenic methane created in the landfill. Today it generates enough electricity to power 2,000 homes. Kate Valley will continue to capture methane for energy generation well after the landfill is at capacity. Meanwhile it retains the carbon content of residual waste within the landfill, unlike incineration.

Council is unlikely to explore waste-to-energy alternatives until Kate Valley is nearing end-of-life. Council expects it would explore all reasonable and practicable residual waste disposal options including their economic, financial and environmental sustainability in the light of the waste management technologies and standards applying at the time.

As the Kate Valley partnership owns 2,500 Ha of land (of which the landfill occupies 37 Ha), another future option is to piggyback off the existing infrastructure and seek consent for another site at Kate Valley.

How much recycling is actually recycled? – This question was asked by a variety of submitters**.** When the recycling is clean and properly sorted, almost all of what we collect from yellow bins is recycled.

Plastics are sorted into their like materials (1, 2 & 5). Number 1 or PET plastics (like meat trays and clear plastic bottles) go to Flight Plastics in Wellington to be turned back into more PET items. Number 2 or HDPE plastics are used for milk bottles, packaging of cleaning products, and pipes amongst other things. Milk bottles are exported and processed overseas. Cleaning product packaging goes to Future Post in Waiuku (40 km south of Auckland) who turn them into fence posts. Number 5 or polypropylene plastics (like medicine bottles, lunch boxes, household bottles, plant pots) also go to Future Post.

Glass collected in Ashburton is taken to Visy's plant in Auckland where contamination from things like labels and neck rings is removed. The glass then gets recycled into new bottles at OI, also in Auckland. Paper/Cardboard are exported, currently to Indonesia. This is also referred to as mixed fibre and all fibre from the South Island has been exported for some time. Aluminium and tin cans are either directly exported or sold to the local market. Either way they are eventually exported.

Recyclables can sometimes go to landfill when they are contaminated with other items that cannot be recycled. In our district, the contamination rate for kerbside recycling bins is low, due to the support of the community and our commitment to ongoing public education and bin auditing. It's a different story for our recycling bins in public places (such as the town centre), which are often badly contaminated and end up as rubbish.

What waste services does Council provide? – Council received a number of submissions asking what services were provided, asking for other services to be provided, or demonstrating that the submitter was not fully aware of the services that are provided.

Council provides a kerbside collection service to over 11,500 households and businesses. There are around 14,400 households in the district, and after subtracting businesses most households still receive a kerbside collection service. In rural areas, there is less demand for a kerbside collection service and rural kerbside collection would be much less cost-effective.

There are resource recovery parks at Ashburton and Rakaia, a Methven green-waste and inorganic material drop-off facility, and rural recycling drop-off facilities at Carew Peel Forest, Fairton, Hakatere huts, Hinds, Lauriston, Mayfield, Mt Somers, Pendarves, Rangitata huts, South Rakaia huts, Staveley & Willowby. Rural households can take their recyclables to any of those locations.

We accept polystyrene at Resource Recovery Parks free for residential and at a cost for commercial.

More detail on the range of materials that can be recycled and re-used by drop-off at Council facilities, and the charges or conditions that apply, is contained in the Bylaw and in the Long-term Plan or Annual Plan. All those documents can be found on Council's website.