

Urban Development – NZPI Policy Statement (draft – April/2020)

POSITION STATEMENT (Drawn from recent submissions)

The Resource Management Act focus on effects has tended to drive the resource management system to be reactive, rather than proactive, despite its purpose's reference to "the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations".

Since enactment there has been a storm of local, regional and national interventions aimed at delivering outcomes. These range from Treaty Settlements, Urban Design Guidelines, Medium and High Density Development Guidelines, Growth Strategies, Urban Development Strategies, Smart Growth Strategies at local and regional levels (all of which sit outside the RMA), to the recent proliferation of National Policy Statements and the Urban Development Bill – all of which have been efforts to plug gaps in urban planning.

Current national direction practice is illustrated in proposed NPS's for Urban Development Capacity, Highly Productive Lands, Indigenous Biodiversity and Freshwater Management. Respective policies and priorities originated out of different Ministries: MBIE (Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment), MPI (Ministry for Primary Industries) and MfE (Ministry for Environment), while MHUD (Ministry of Housing and Urban Development) has its own urban planning agenda and a requirement for a Government Policy Statement on Housing and Urban Development.

Gaps in the urban planning system continue and include the lack of coordinated national guidance, the absence of good long term planning frameworks and tools (such as spatial plans), and the lack of national guidance and direction related to urban liveability indicators and integrated planning.

NZPI's recommended practical directions for reform are summarised in the following submission points, which are reproduced from NZPI's previous submissions:

- The RMA framework could remain, to enable development to occur within agreed, regulated and monitored environmental bottom-lines, but it needs to include land use, infrastructure plans and outcomes, and be organised so that it has direction at a national level, and outcomes planned and delivered at regional and local levels;
- National direction policy statements that are geared toward urban development should be about strategic forward planning, rather than reactive issue planning;
- Changes to the planning framework need to enable interagency cooperation inherent in a framework of multiple layers. This requires distinct national issues and plans, and local issues and plans. Spatial planning approaches at regional level are supported;
- There is a need to standardise rules and systems for example with an appropriate national template system, allowing for local overlay provisions and variation, and to provide clear rights of involvement, participation and of appeal in plan making;
- Economic and social externalities of development including losses and gains affecting public and private property need to be provided for (this includes value uplift taxes/betterment levies to fund infrastructure) by means of national policy statements and enhanced s.32 type processes.

ABOUT THE ISSUE

Urban development and how it is managed and planned for is strongly linked to the daily lives of a large proportion of New Zealand's population. Over 73 % of the total New Zealand population lives in the 17 main urban areas (ie. Centres with populations greater than 30,000), and over 55 % of the population lives within the largest urban centres of Auckland, Christchurch, Wellington and Hamilton.

These populations rely on the housing, infrastructure and employment delivered by urban development, as well as the services and amenities offered by urban centres. The way in which these key elements of daily life are planned for, delivered, and managed have significant influence on the liveability, intrinsic qualities and environment performance of cities, including:

- Access to housing (including a diverse range of housing types provided at a range of prices / rental levels);
- How easily citizens can move around urban areas, and the extent of choice in how citizens can move around;
- The state of the natural environment, including air quality and the quality of waterways and the coastal marine environment;
- The quality of the built environment, including urban design and the heritage qualities of cities;
- Maori values.

Urban development also has implications beyond the boundaries of cities. Both in New Zealand and in the global context, cities are a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. Therefore, how planning addresses rapid urban development has significant implications for how the pressing issue of climate change is addressed.

Cities also typically exert a strong influence on their peri-urban boundaries. In the New Zealand context, important agricultural land often lies at the edges of our high growth urban centres. The pressures of high rates of urban population growth often result in pressures at the urban edges.

PRESSURES ON PLANNING AND PLANNING FRAMEWORKS

Urban planning is fundamentally concerned with managing urban development. Where urban development is *rapid, as it is in many parts of New Zealand now*, urban planning becomes a more complex undertaking. In particular, when urban development is rapid, urban planning typically has to weigh up a number of competing interests, and make *trade-offs*.

Planning has two key, related functions in relation to urban development; setting the strategic direction for an urban area, regulating development. A third function, often neglected in planning in New Zealand is monitoring the social, economic, cultural and environmental outcomes resulting from regulation – and then recalibrating regulation to address any issues highlighted by the monitoring.

In terms of long term strategic planning, best practice urban planning should align planning for land use (and its density or intensity) with planning for infrastructure. 'Spatial planning' – a term much used and debated - is in simplistic terms a process of aligning land use and infrastructure planning across multiple agencies over the medium and long term, in a manner that is expressed 'spatially' ie. through the use of maps as well as accompanying descriptive text (including a robust policy and implementation

framework). Best practice spatial planning is also about place governance – the process whereby communities and citizens participate in management and decision-making which affects their collective affairs – which is quite different from top-down planning.

Over the past 10 years, significant criticism has been directed at the performance of planning in relation to urban development in New Zealand. Central government, and the development sector, have been particularly vocal critics. Urban development has been a key policy focus of both the current and previous governments.

For the current Labour-led government, the *Urban Growth Agenda* forms the central policy focus on urban issues. The UGA has 5 interconnected focus areas:

- **infrastructure funding and financing** — enabling a more responsive supply of infrastructure and appropriate cost allocation;
- **urban planning** — to allow for cities to make room for growth, support quality built environments and enable strategic integrated planning;
- **spatial planning** (initially focused on Auckland and the Auckland-Hamilton corridor) — to build a stronger partnership with local government as a means of developing integrated spatial planning;
- **transport pricing** — to ensure the price of transport infrastructure promotes efficient use of the network;
- **legislative reform** — to ensure that regulatory, institutional and funding settings are collectively supporting UGA objectives.

PLANNING PRINCIPLES

The specific NZPI planning system principles to guide planning for urban development should:

- Deal with housing choice and affordability in an integrated way through the planning system;
- Promote community engagement, including consultation, participation and increased community understanding and support for planning processes;
- Integrate infrastructure provision with land use development & link to funding arrangements;
- Promote social opportunity nationally and ameliorate social inequality;
- Have the flexibility to respond to changing and unforeseen circumstances.

SPECIFIC ADVOCACY POSITIONS

- NZPI needs to engage with government's review of planning frameworks and advocate for a hierarchy of national guidance, and regional and local planning, that is consistent with NZPI planning principles;
- NZPI should follow closely the government's evolving consideration of spatial planning and how it is defined and applied. NZPI needs to develop its own approach to spatial planning which strikes a balance between being traditional and highly structured and being more responsive and adaptive, while being consistent with NZPI planning principles;
- NZPI needs to develop a position on how to measure effects, costs and benefits including more robust processes of data collection and analysis focusing on evaluating and reporting specific urban development outcomes.

NZPI'S PREFERRED APPROACH

Leadership

- The adoption of multi-disciplinary and collaborative practices, by working alongside related professionals and government to ensure an evidence based and integrated response to housing issues.
- Encouraging the government to develop a national planning framework that provides a strategic context for policy and guide decision-making.
- Working with other regulatory, development, infrastructure and service agencies to identify and target both planning and non-planning policies and practices that negatively impact housing supply, demand and affordability.

Education, research and innovation

- Advocating for reliable and meaningful housing demand, supply, and affordability data and forecasting that integrates city and region-wide datasets.
- Supporting innovation in housing types and methods of construction and delivery, to cater for changing household types and community needs.
- Planners taking a leading role in helping communities deal with change via greenfield development and urban renewal that increases diversity of housing types and densities in their neighbourhoods.

Policy and practice

- Continued improvements to land use planning and redevelopment policies and processes to encourage increased housing supply, while ensuring appropriate balance with community involvement and quality outcomes.
- Promoting and facilitating the provision of diverse dwelling types and densities in appropriate contexts, to ensure that the housing needs of residents are catered for at all stages of life.
- Leading coordinated, cost effective and timely delivery of urban transport, community and utility infrastructure with housing construction in greenfield and urban infill areas.
- Promoting legislation that incorporates the requirement for periodic assessments of housing supply and affordability into strategic and local planning strategies.
- Promoting policy and practice that recognises and addresses the connection and need for integration between housing, transport and access to employment and services to support affordable living.
- Advocating and facilitating the delivery of the social infrastructure necessary to support affordable, accessible and appropriate housing for vulnerable members of the community, including low income families, people with special needs and indigenous communities.
- Considering infill and urban renewal precincts as areas for value capture to provide essential property and social infrastructure and affordable housing.
- Promoting the implementation of innovative planning policies that support affordable housing.

Capacity development

- Ensuring NZPI provides members with access to best practice resources on urban development issues and an understanding of the ability of planning to influence housing supply and affordable housing provision.

Collaboration and partnership

- Working with other peak bodies, industry organisations, research groups and government to enhance our professional connections and understanding of urban development and housing issues and potential solutions.

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