National Policy Statement on Urban Development Consultation
Ministry for the Environment
PO Box 10362
Wellington 6143
c/o npsurbandevelopment@mfe.govt.nz

10th October 2019

To whom it may concern,

ENA submission to MFE consultation on Proposed National Policy Statement on Urban Development

The Electricity Networks Association (ENA) appreciates the opportunity to make a submission to the Ministry for the Environment’s consultation on “Proposed National Policy Statement on Urban Development”.

The ENA represents the 27 electricity distribution businesses (EDBs) in New Zealand (see Appendix B) who are providers of critical infrastructure for any new urban developments.

ENA is supportive of the proposed NPS on Urban Development but we have a few high-level comments that we would like to bring to your attention.

1) Amenity values: We agree with the proposed objectives and policies related to amenity values. In particular, we note that conflicts can arise in urban environments between the amenity values provided by trees and the utility provided to communities by a safe and secure supply of electricity via overhead power lines. Providing greater direction on how these two sometimes competing uses of urban space can assessed will be beneficial, as we don’t think the value to communities of a safe and secure electricity supply is currently properly accounted for in such assessments.

2) ‘Up’ and ‘out’: We note the support provided in the NPS to enable urban intensification – allowing for more building ‘up’ and ‘out’. Whilst we are supportive of the need to allow greater urban intensification in New Zealand’s major urban centres, we strongly encourage the government to consider the need to protect existing infrastructure corridors and the means to access these. As we’ve noted in the point above, a secure supply of electricity is a
key requirement for safe, healthy and functional communities. It is therefore very important that when urban intensification occurs due consideration is given to protecting the existing infrastructure (e.g. overhead powerlines, underground cables, substations) and the means by which this infrastructure is accessed to enable maintenance and repair. As the intensification of urban spaces increases, sufficient space must be reserved and protected for key infrastructure, such as electricity lines.

3) Out-of-sequence greenfield developments: As ENA noted in our submission on the NPS:UD 2016, early engagement with infrastructure providers is crucial to ensure that developments can proceed smoothly and as cost-effectively as possible. It is vital that both local authorities and developers engage with the relevant EDB at the time that strategic documents and development plans are being produced. This is especially important in the case of out-of-sequence greenfield developments.

4) Removal of some urban areas from scope of NPS:UD: We understand and accept the rationale for removing some urban areas from the full scope of the NPS:UD. We wish to note that local population growth and the ensuing need to provide for greater development can arise quickly (in planning terms) and updating an NPS can be a lengthy process. We suggest the government consider whether the NPS:UD could be updated in a sufficiently timely manner, if it became necessary to re-incorporate some of these urban areas into the scope of the NPS:UD.

If you would like to discuss any of the points raised in this submission in further detail please contact [details below].

Yours sincerely,

Electricity Networks Association

For more information contact [details below]
Phone: [details]
Appendix A - Consultation questions

1) Do you support a National Policy Statement on Urban Development that aims to deliver quality urban environments and make room for growth? Why/Why not?
   • Are there other tools under the RMA, other legislation or non-statutory tools that would be more effective in achieving a quality urban environment and making room for growth?

ENA is supportive of the proposed NPS on Urban Development.

2) Do you support the approach of targeting the most directive policies to our largest and fastest growing urban environments? Why/why not?
   • Do you support the approach used to determine which local authorities are categorised as major urban centres? Why/why not?
   • Can you suggest any alternative approaches for targeting the policies in the NPS-UD?

As detailed in our covering letter above, ENA has some concerns that it may be difficult to re-introduce smaller urban centres to the scope of the NPS:UD in a timely fashion, should the need arise. We suggest the government consider whether this would be achievable, and if not, consider how such a change in scope could be made more quickly.

3) Do you support the proposed changes to future development strategies (FDSs) overall? If not, what would you suggest doing differently?
   • Do you support the approach of only requiring major urban centres to undertake an FDS? Would there be benefits of requiring other local authorities to undertake a strategic planning process?
   • What impact will the proposed timing of the FDS have on statutory and other planning processes? In what way could the timing be improved?

No comment.

4) Do you support the proposed approach of the NPS-UD providing national level direction about the features of a quality urban environment? Why/why not?
   • Do you support the features of a quality urban environment stated in draft objective O2? Why/why not?
   • What impacts do you think the draft objectives O2–O3 and policies P2A–P2B will have on your decision-making?

As per our comments above, we encourage the government to recognise in the NPS:UD that provision of a safe and reliable supply of electricity is crucial feature of a quality urban environment. As such, proper consideration should be given to the need to provide and protect both the infrastructure that provides this supply (e.g. electricity lines and underground cables, substations, etc) and the means by which these can be accessed for the purposes of maintenance and repair. Reverse sensitivity effects from development near this infrastructure should also be avoided.
5) Do you support the inclusion of proposals to clarify that amenity values are diverse and change over time? Why/why not?
   • Do you think these proposals will help to address the use of amenity to protect the status quo?
   • Can you identify any negative consequences that might result from the proposed objective and policies on amenity?
   • Can you suggest alternative ways to address urban amenity through a national policy statement?

As we noted in our covering letter, we consider that there is considerable amenity value in the provision of a safe and reliable supply of electricity. Providing greater direction on how this amenity value can be assessed against others will be beneficial, as we don’t think the value to communities of a safe and secure electricity supply is currently properly accounted for in such assessments.

6) Do you support the addition of direction to provide development capacity that is both feasible and likely to be taken up? Will this result in development opportunities that more accurately reflect demand? Why/why not?

No comment.

7) Do you support proposals requiring objectives, policies, rules, and assessment criteria to enable the development anticipated by the zone description? Why/why not?
   • Do you think requiring zone descriptions in district plans will be useful in planning documents for articulating what outcomes communities can expect for their urban environment? Why/why not?
   • Do you think that amenity values should be articulated in this zone description? Why/why not?

No comment.

8) Do you support policies to enable intensification in the locations where its benefits can best be achieved? Why/why not?
   • What impact will these policies have on achieving higher densities in urban environments?
   • What option/s do you prefer for prescribing locations for intensification in major urban centres? Why?
   • If a prescriptive requirement is used, how should the density requirements be stated? (For example, 80 dwellings per hectare or a minimum floor area per hectare).
   • What impact will directly inserting the policy to support intensification in particular locations through consenting decisions have?

No comment.
9) Do you support inclusion of a policy providing for plan changes for out-of-sequence greenfield development and/or greenfield development in locations not currently identified for development?
   • How could the example policy better enable quality urban development in greenfield areas?
   • Are the criteria in the example policy sufficiently robust to manage environmental effects and ensure a quality urban environment, while providing for this type of development?
   • To what extent should developers be required to meet the costs of development, including the costs of infrastructure and wider impacts on network infrastructure, and environmental and social costs (recognising that these are likely to be passed onto future homeowners and beneficiaries of the development)? What impact will this have on the uptake of development opportunities?
   • What improvements could be made to this policy to make development more responsive to demand in suitable locations beyond areas already identified for urban development?

As per our remarks in our covering letter, we strongly encourage early engagement and discussion with infrastructure providers when local authorities and developers are making their strategic development plans. This is especially important in the case of out-of-sequence greenfield development.

10) Do you support limiting the ability for local authorities in major urban centres to regulate the number of car parks required for development? Why/why not?
   • Which proposed option could best contribute to achieve quality urban environments?
   • What would be the impact of removing minimums in just high-and medium-density, commercial, residential and missed-used areas, compared with all areas of a major urban centre?
   • How would the 18-month implementation timeframe impact on your planning processes? What support should be considered to assist local authorities when removing the requirement to provide car parking to ensure the ongoing management of car parking resources?

No comment.

11) Do you think that central government should consider more directive intervention in local authority plans?
   • Which rules (or types of rules) are unnecessarily constraining urban development?
   • Can you identify provisions that are enabling higher-density urban development in local authority plans that could be provided for either nationally or in particular zones or areas?
   • Should a minimum level of development for an individual site be provided for across urban areas (for example, up to three storeys of development is a permitted activity across all zones)?
   • Given the potential interactions with the range of rules that may exist within any given zone, how could the intent of more directive approaches be achieved?
12) Do you support requirements for all urban environments to assess demand and supply of development capacity, and monitor a range of market indicators? Why/why not?

No comment.

13) Do you support inclusion of policies to improve how local government works with iwi, hapū and whānau to reflect their values and interests in urban planning?
   - Do you think the proposals are an appropriate way to ensure urban development occurs in a way that takes into account iwi and hapū concerns?
   - How do you think local authorities should be directed to engage with Māori who do not hold mana whenua over the urban environment in which they now live?
   - What impacts do you think the proposed NPS-UD will have on iwi, hapū and Māori?

No comment.

14) Do you support amendments to existing NPS-UDC 2016 policies to include working with providers of development and other infrastructure, and local authorities cooperating to work with iwi/hapū? Why/why not?

As per our remarks in our covering letter, we strongly encourage early engagement and discussion with infrastructure providers when local authorities and developers are making their strategic development plans. Such engagement will ensure that developments, along with the provision of supporting infrastructure, can proceed as effectively and efficiently as possible.

15) What impact will the proposed timing for implementation of policies have?

No comment.

16) What kind of guidance or support do you think would help with the successful implementation of the proposed NPS-UD?

No comment.

17) Do you think there are potential areas of tension or confusion between any of these proposals and other national direction? If so, please identify these areas and include any suggestions you have for addressing these issues.

No comment.
18) Do you think a national planning standard is needed to support the consistent implementation of proposals in this document? If so, please state which specific provisions you think could be delivered effectively using a national planning standard.

No comment.

Other Comments

ENA supports the inclusion in a NPS:UD of the definition of ‘other infrastructure’ as including ‘energy’. ENA considers that this is important so that the objectives and policies and discussion contained in the NPS-UD regarding the need to enable ‘other infrastructure’ and the need to consult with providers of ‘other infrastructure’ includes electricity infrastructure providers such as EDBs.

ENA notes the need for the NPS:UD to be clear and consistent in the use of the terminology of ‘infrastructure’ so that it is clear that this includes those types of infrastructure that are included in the definition of ‘other infrastructure’, including ‘energy’.
Appendix B – ENA Member Companies

Alpine Energy
Aurora Energy
Buller Electricity
Counties Power
Eastland Network
Electra
EA Networks
Horizon Networks
Mainpower NZ
Marlborough Lines
Nelson Electricity
Network Tasman
Network Waitaki
Northpower
Orion New Zealand
Powerco
PowerNet
Scanpower
The Lines Company
Top Energy
Unison Networks
Centralines
Vector
Waipa Networks
WEL Networks
Wellington Electricity
Westpower