

15 July 2016

NPS Urban Development Capacity
Ministry for the Environment
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Auckland City 1143

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Dear Sir / Madam

Boffa Miskell



RE: Proposed NPS on Urban Development Capacity

This submission is made on behalf of Boffa Miskell Limited on the Proposed National Policy Statement on Urban Development Capacity (NPS: UDC).

Boffa Miskell Limited is a New Zealand-owned environmental planning and design consultancy. Our company provides expert advice to government departments, councils, infrastructure providers, iwi-based organisations and private sector developers.

Boffa Miskell supports the establishment of a policy approach that is directed towards ensuring that a sufficient supply of urban land is made available. We also support the co-ordination of planning decisions with infrastructure providers to ensure the aspirations of future land allocation are achievable.

We note that decision making relating to efficient and effective allocation of land for future urban growth and development is reliant on an appropriate balance being struck between the needs of people and those of the wider environment and its associated natural elements and systems. Our submission is primarily about how to achieve this balance.

'Environmental Wellbeing'

We note that there is an inconsistency in the way that 'environmental wellbeing' is included and considered in the discussion and supplementary summary documents, with environmental wellbeing identified as an important resource management consideration in the latter but not in the former (refer Objective OA1 and Policy PA3).

Although we recognise the need to consider effects on the environment is implicit in the NPS (i.e. Part 2 RMA requirements), the omission of explicit reference to environmental wellbeing in the policy gives the impression that initial decisions regarding land allocation are intended to be made ahead of considering the broader environmental context.

This impression is further reinforced by the supporting commentary in the discussion document where the concepts of protecting and managing our heritage, landscapes and amenity values are framed as a “cost” that decision makers need to better understand in identifying urban allocation opportunities (pg.21).

By contrast we note that the document is silent on the balance required by decision makers to ensure that future urban development is directed towards areas with either negligible or readily manageable environmental constraints. These are areas that will have lower development costs and can support the objective of providing land for affordable long term urban development.

In our view, to be sustainable the ongoing identification and allocation of land to enable affordable urban development needs to be guided by a clear understanding of its suitability relative to the environmental opportunities and constraints that exist (e.g. environmental values, natural hazards). The increased costs and inefficiencies of attempting to make the ‘wrong place work’ has potential to decrease affordability and sustainability of such urban growth, thus compromising the ability of people to provide for their social, cultural and economic wellbeing.

To achieve a more effective approach, we recommend the following amendments be made to the NPS: UDC (text to be added is underlined).

Objective OA1 and Policy PA3:

OA1: *To support effective and efficient urban areas that enable people and communities to provide for their social, economic and cultural wellbeing while recognising the need to have appropriate regard to relevant environmental opportunities and constraints.*

PA1: *In implementing the objectives A1 – A3, decision makers must:*

- *Recognise the environmental opportunities and constraints that exist in relation to the development of urban areas.*

Guidance to balance identified Urban Development Capacity with other national direction

Alongside the adoption of the NPS: UDC, we note that the government proposes to introduce a package of non-statutory guidance to assist local authorities implement the proposed policy. Amongst the information intended to be provided is how to balance the proposed NPS with other national direction or specific matters listed in section 6 and 7 of the RMA.

Given the importance of providing for sustainable urban growth in an effective and consistent manner, we strongly support the preparation of an appropriate guidance package to assist local authorities to deliver this outcome.

The discussion document is currently silent on the timeframe within which a guidance package will be introduced. To ensure the NPS: UDC is effectively implemented we recommend that appropriate guidance is released at the same time as the final version of the NPS is issued.

We note such guidance is not necessarily new and similar land availability guidance is already available in overseas jurisdictions such as the UK¹.

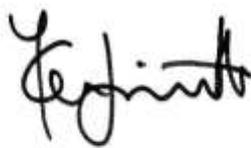
By way of example, matters assessing environmental suitability alongside land supply considerations could typically include:

- *Physical constraints such as access, infrastructure, natural hazards,, pollution or contamination;*
- *Potential natural environment effects including effects on significant cultural and ecological sites and outstanding natural features and landscapes;*
- *Appropriateness and likely market attractiveness and feasibility for the type of development proposed;*
- *Contribution to regeneration priority areas; and*
- *Environmental / amenity impacts experienced by would be occupiers and neighbouring areas.*

Boffa Miskell appreciates the opportunity to submit on the proposed NPS: UDC, and would be happy to assist if there is any aspect of this submission you would like to explore further.

Yours faithfully

BOFFA MISKELL LTD



Ken Gimblett
Director

¹ <http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/guidance/housing-and-economic-land-availability-assessment/>