



Save Our Hills (Upper Hutt) Incorporated



Ministry for the Environment
c/- Shayna Swain
Auckland Policy Office

19 July 2016

Draft National Policy Statement on Urban Development Capacity

Submission from Save Our Hills (Upper Hutt) Incorporated

Purposes of the Society:

'Save Our Hills' is an incorporated society.

"Vision and objectives:

"Our objectives are to preserve and enhance Upper Hutt's rural environment, bird-life and bush-covered ridgelines and hillsides, and to promote the development of future urban growth around existing infrastructure, shopping centres, and public transport hubs (electric rail stations).

We see this as the most sustainable way to provide for the future growth of Upper Hutt.

"Our aim is to preserve Upper Hutt's heritage, and the special character of our very accessible natural environment for its recreational, ecological, landscape and visual values."

The draft NPS on Urban Development Capacity, at it's core in PA1 (p12), focuses on urban form. The following key outcomes are sought by decision makers:

- *"Providing for an urban form that maximises the potential for social and economic exchange within the urban area.*
- *Providing for the efficient use of resources, having particular regard to scarce urban land and infrastructure.*
- *Enabling the competitive operation of land and development markets."*

Discussion on urban form tends to reflect the opinions of two opposing camps – those who advocate for compact urban form, and those who advocate for sprawl.

It is clear from our above-stated vision and objectives that Save Our Hills is unashamedly an advocate for compact urban form as the most sustainable way of providing for future growth. We acknowledge however that others are equally committed to advocating for continued outward (and often low-density) expansion on fringe greenfield sites.

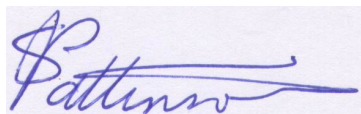
It seems that the draft NPS on UDC takes neither side. Advocates of compact urban form are likely to underpin their arguments with the first two bullet points (above) from PA1, arguing for compact urban form as a means of maximising social and economic exchange, and of making the most efficient use of scarce resources, including land and infrastructure.

Advocates of outward expansion are likely to underpin their arguments with the third bullet point, arguing that ring-fencing artificially inflates urban land prices and therefore the solution to affordable development (eg housing) is to remove the ring-fences and make more fringe greenfield land available for development.

It seems that what the draft NPS on UDC requires is not one approach (compact urban form) or the other (sprawl), but holds both out as potential possibilities, so long as the objectives of social and economic exchange, efficient use of resources and infrastructure, and competitively-priced land supply are met.

Save Our Hills asks that this be made clearer in the final document. We ask that it be made clearer that future urban form is a matter of choice, and that local authorities are not being coerced by this NPS to pursue one form of development over another, but that what local authorities are being required to do is to engage with and heed the preferences of their constituents and pursue the future urban form preferred by the majority of people they represent, and achieve that urban form in a way that meets all the objectives in PA1 to PA3.

Yours respectfully,



Stephen Pattinson
President
Save Our Hills (Upper Hutt) Inc.