

Submission on the Clean Water Consultation Document 2017

To: Ministry for the Environment
watercomments@mfe.govt.nz

From: Todd Property Group Limited
Attention: Neil Donnelly /Brigid Kelly

Introduction

1. The Todd Property Group (Todd Property) is responsible for designing and delivering some of New Zealand's largest urban developments in a high quality and sustainable manner. These projects include:
 - Stonefields – 100 hectares, providing 2500 homes within a master planned community in Auckland;
 - Ormiston Town Centre - 19 hectares delivering a multi-functional town centre for the new community emerging in Flat Bush, Auckland;
 - Long Bay – 162 hectares, providing 2000 dwellings in Auckland;
 - Pegasus – a master planned community providing 1700 homes north of Christchurch;
 - Napier Hill – a redevelopment of the previous Napier Hospital site involving a range of residential living options from standalone housing to apartments; and
 - Kapiti Landing – a 125 hectare business park which includes the operation of the Kapiti Coast Airport.
2. A number of these developments involve greenfields development, transforming historically low yielding land into needed housing in high population growth areas. Todd Property is conscious of the different freshwater water issues that can arise in rural and urban environments and indeed the difference between current and previous water treatment practice.
2. **General Submission**
3. Todd Property wishes to comment on the following matters:
 - a. Similarities and differences between urban and rural freshwater issues.
 - b. Opportunities for improved freshwater environments as part of urban development, including improving existing infrastructure networks.
 - c. Proposed amendments to the National Policy Statement on Freshwater Management.

Similarities and differences between urban and rural freshwater issues

4. Todd Property entirely supports the development of good management practice for both rural and urban freshwater systems (Section 6, Future Programme, 6.2 Good management practices) and agrees that *“Many land owners and developers are already leading the way when it comes to good practice of freshwater management”*. Integrated management of freshwater resources is appropriately recognised by the NPS-FM (Policy C1) and there is necessarily an overlap between rural/urban freshwater management; however, there are also key differences in terms of land uses, the types and source of the contaminants, and practical responses to freshwater management issues.
5. The consultation document and the NPS-FM focus on the impact of rural land uses on water quality and rural, industrial and commercial extractive uses on water quantity.¹ This is understandable given the MfE/Statistics NZ recent publication ‘Our Fresh Water 2017’ notes that less 1% of New Zealand’s land is used for urban purposes. While existing urban and rural areas are certainly the key areas for freshwater management in New Zealand, the limited consideration of urban development (now recognised in its own NPS) has resulted in a gap and some confusion. Todd Property is concerned that there is currently little consideration of urban development in freshwater reform and, until such time as this is addressed (circa 2019 in the current programme) there is real potential for the urban development objectives of the NPS-UD to be hampered by a lack of clarity about how the NPS-FM is intend to apply.
6. It is very common for new urban areas to include a number of waterways of varying value, size, quality and flow. Integrated management in a master-planning process can improve overall water quality and stream health in certain circumstances and at significant cost to home buyers, however it is inevitable that changes to existing systems will occur and this can potentially be interpreted as meaning adverse effects will arise. The provision of housing in greenfield areas often involves reclaiming, redirecting or restoring waterways while also increasing impervious areas within catchments. The NPS-FM, as currently drafted has been interpreted by some as requiring the total avoidance of adverse effects on even degraded second order streams during the provision of housing .
7. While there will be impacts on stream systems from the provision of new housing, these will be, under current practice, significantly less than the impacts that are currently allowed to continue via existing Council controlled infrastructure.
8. In this respect there will always be an inherent conflict between providing housing in new urban areas and certain provisions in the NPS-FM, with Objective A2 being especially problematic. It is simply not possible to ‘maintain and enhance’ water quality in all aspects in new housing freshwater units without significantly increasing the cost of housing creating discord between the NPS-FM and other areas of best practice resource management. In Todd Property’s view, the lack of direction about how the NPS-FM is intended to apply to

¹ For example, the consultation documents refers to current work underway with councils and industry groups and some funded initiatives through Sustainable Farming Fund and the Primary Growth Partnership

urban development is currently impacting on urban land development, both in terms of timing and cost, and should be addressed before 2019 to avoid diluting the intent of the NPS-UD.

Opportunities for improved urban freshwater environments through urban development and improving existing infrastructure networks

9. Todd Property has experience in developing both brownfields and greenfields urban developments and implements a water sensitive design approaches in its developments. Long Bay provides a number of examples of improvements to waterways that can be made through redevelopment of land from rural to urban (before and after photos available at <https://okuraresidential.co.nz/environmental-protection/>). Similarly Stonefields, a brownfields development in the former Mt Wellington quarry has converted a former ground water sump created by past quarrying into a wetland highly valued by its community and demonstrates that water quality improvements can be made in existing urban areas through private initiatives (see attached).
10. While historic urban development practices have certainly resulted in degraded water quality in urban environments, recent development practices have started to change this and the implementation of water sensitive design methods such as those seen at Long Bay and Stonefields is now considered common practice when providing housing, although noticeably less common in the operation of existing public assets such as roads and stormwater treatment devices.
11. Even if new developments improve existing waterways through land development practices, the net effect of urban growth on freshwater will remain negative unless existing infrastructure networks are similarly improved, for example, making concerted efforts to reduce the number of existing roads which do not include treatment devices for run off and retiring or redesigning stormwater and wastewater systems that are no longer fit for purpose. Todd Property understands the proposal to set freshwater objectives below national bottom lines in situations that are either naturally occurring or relate to specifically listed existing significant infrastructure (noting that no infrastructure is currently listed in Appendix 3 to the NPS-FM) and where it is reasonably necessary for the continued operation of the infrastructure. However, given the extent of the issues created in urban areas by existing infrastructure it considered that the NPS-FM should continue to seek that operators of existing infrastructure take the lead in alleviating urban water quality issues given this is by far the largest source of contamination within urban waterways and ultimately the marine environment.

Proposed amendments to the National Policy Statement on Freshwater Management 2014

12. Todd Property has little comment on the changes proposed to date to the NPS-FM other than repeating that there is a need to ensure that attempts to address effects on water quality and quantity from rural and industrial uses do not unsustainably hamper the provision of housing in new urban areas.

13. Todd Property appreciates the opportunity to provide the above comments and seeks to engage with the Ministry or other relevant parties if this would be of assistance in establishing parameters for urban freshwater issues arising in housing provision. Further direct engagement would, in Todd Property's view, be valuable given it may be difficult to draft an elegant solution to the demonstrable conflict between achieving the purpose of the NPS-FM and the necessary provision of housing in new urban area.

Wetland development - Stonefields, Auckland

