

Submission

Submission to National Policy Statement on Urban Design background paper

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I am happy to be contacted about our submission.

About Beacon

Beacon Pathway Ltd (Beacon) is a research consortium that seeks to radically change the design, construction and renovation of New Zealand's homes and neighbourhoods. Beacon aims to bring about a significant improvement in the sustainability of the residential built environment in New Zealand through science-based New Zealand research.

The Foundation for Research, Science and Technology matches funding from Beacon's shareholding partners, a unique mix of industry, local government and research organisations: Building Research, Scion, New Zealand Steel, Waitakere City Council and Fletcher Building.

Beacon's vision of:

Creating homes and neighbourhoods
that work well into the future
and don't cost the Earth

will be realised through the achievement of the following two goals:

1. To bring the vast majority (90%) of New Zealand homes to a high standard of sustainability by 2012 and;
2. That every new subdivision and any redeveloped subdivision or neighbourhood from 2008 onwards be developed with reference to a nationally recognised sustainability framework.

Submission

This submission is in two parts, firstly an outline of the key points that Beacon Pathway wishes to make about the Scope of a National Policy Statement on Urban Design Background Paper and then specific responses to the questions set out in that background paper.

Key Points

- The focus needs to be on the regeneration, improvement and reconditioning of the existing built environments of cities and towns.
- A precautionary approach needs to be taken with regard to any developments outside the boundaries of existing built environments.
- Urban design needs to facilitate the interconnections between households, neighbourhoods and broader town and city infrastructure and amenities.
- Urban design should develop resilient neighbourhoods and businesses including:
 - Producing and managing key resources within local built environments, particularly energy and water.
 - Recycling of waste within the urban environment.
 - Protecting soils that can be used for food production at the household or neighbourhood scale.
- A resilience orientation rather than an adverse effects approach needs to be undertaken.

Key Questions

1. *Need for a NPS and priorities*

Cities and settlements are the contexts in which, for the vast majority of people, their social and economic lives are carried out. The built environment in which social and economic life is carried out is a major determinant of environmental outcomes in two ways, both of which need active planning and management. Firstly, the built environment directly impacts on bio-physical environments and ecosystems. Secondly, built environments impact on the way in which people live. An Urban NPS needs to acknowledge and provide the framework for managing both those dynamics to:

- Increase liveability
- Generate resilience
- Reduce adverse effects

It is important that the Urban NPS focuses on regeneration, improvement and reconditioning of the existing built environments of cities and towns. Too frequently, urban design policies, protocols and tools are directed at new developments or significant redevelopments and developments associated with significant changes of use such as the current redevelopment of Hobsonville. The reality is, however, that the environmental, social and economic viability of our settlements is dependent on built environments that will not be able to be cleared and

redeveloped as a clear greenfield, brownfield or greyfield site. The NPS needs to ensure that regeneration and improved performances of existing built environments is prioritised over new sites.

The NPS needs to integrate good planning for the future with clear requirements for best practice management of the built environment and the continuous improvement of that management. Management must be a central part of the NPS. Without appropriate on-going maintenance of settlement systems, the liveability and sustainability of settlements will be compromised irrespective of the merits of its fundamental design characteristics.

2. NPS structure

The NPS needs to be outcomes-focused and provide a framework for robust, results-based planning and management. While design detail should not be prescriptive, it is imperative that planning, investment and management decisions can be demonstrated to contribute to clearly specified results.

3. Scope of the NPS

The fundamental issue on which the NPS scoping paper is not clear, is the status of the NPS within the statutory framework. It is imperative that the NPS provides an integrated approach to urban design which brings together and rationalises the imperatives embedded in a variety of statutes that go beyond simply the RMA. Those statutes include the RMA, the Local Government Amendment Act, the Building Act, land transport legislation, and the new affordable housing legislation. It should also align with the proposed revision of public health legislation. It is not appropriate that the NPS be constructed only in the context of the RMA. This would be antithetical to the demands of planning for and managing the complexity of urban systems.

4. NPS and Scale

City and town systems are, by their very nature, cross-scale. They connect dwellings and the people that live in them to neighbourhoods and a hierarchy of amenities and systems constitute towns and cities as a whole. The NPS needs to acknowledge this and provide a policy and performance framework that optimises that connectivity while building local resilience within towns and cities.

The NPS should embrace planning at a regional level in a way that actively protects rural resources, particularly soils, and sets out performance principles for provincial towns and settlements.

5. Qualities of the NPS

The NPS should be active, forward-looking and visionary. It needs, however, to recognise that implementation and practice tie where we are today to the future that we plan. We have already stated that it needs to take an integrative approach both in the context of scale and in relation to bringing together and articulating cross-legislative requirements and purposes. It should:

- Be results oriented.
- Integrate affordable, sustainable housing, transport and health promotion as critical outcomes for liveable and sustainable cities and towns.
- Prioritise action within the boundaries of existing cities and towns.
- Take a precautionary approach to greenfield developments.
- Be resilience directed.
- Incorporate outcomes related to:
 - Producing and managing key resources within local built environments, particularly energy and water.
 - Recycling waste.
 - Protecting soils that can be used for food production at the household or neighbourhood scale.