



Report 10.647  
Date 7 December 2010  
File ENV/10/02/02

Committee Council  
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## Building competitive cities – submission

### 1. Purpose

To seek approval of the Greater Wellington submission on the discussion document entitled “Building Competitive Cities – Reform of the Urban and Infrastructure Planning System”.

### 2. Significance of the decision

The matters for decision in this report **do not** trigger the significance policy of the Council or otherwise trigger section 76(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 2002.

### 3. Background

The Ministry for Environment recently released a discussion document entitled “Building Competitive Cities – Reform of the Urban and Infrastructure Planning System” (the discussion document) for comment. Public submissions close on the discussion document on Friday 17 December 2010.

This is part of the second stage of the Government’s Resource Management Act reform programme and follows on from the Resource Management Act Streamlining and Simplifying Amendment Act 2009. The discussion document identifies potential problems with the current regulations and processes used to design, plan and deliver urban and infrastructure development. A range of options are presented to improve the planning system for New Zealand’s urban areas and infrastructure. The “options for change” are not limited to the Resource Management Act (RMA). They extend to the Local Government Act 2002 (LGA), Land Transport Management Act 2003 (LTMA) and the Public Works Act 1981 (PWA).

There are two work streams informing the discussion document: a planning and urban design work stream and a social and economic infrastructure development work stream.

The purpose of the discussion document is to:

- Improve knowledge and understanding of the issues facing planning and urban design and infrastructure in New Zealand
- Ensure that the options that have been indentified address the right issues, and
- Seek input and views on the options for reform and their likely impacts and effectiveness.

The submission has been prepared with input from officers from across the Council. The preparation of the submission has also been informed by discussions with Local Government New Zealand and other local authorities (including regional councils, unitary authorities and territorial authorities).

#### **4. Key aspects of the Greater Wellington submission**

The draft submission is contained in **Attachment 1** (to be tabled at the meeting).

The draft submission provides general comments on the purpose of the discussion document and the identified problems, followed by more detailed comments on the specific options presented in the discussion document.

The main focus of the submission is on the implications for the planning framework within the Wellington region and then more specifically the implications of the changes to the designation system for Greater Wellington's operational activities.

##### **4.1 Key points in the submission**

###### **4.1.1 Changes to Part 2 of the RMA and definitions**

The discussion document suggests potential changes to the definition of environment and amenity values and changes to section 6 and/or 7 to include specific references to quality urban environments and the benefits of infrastructure.

The draft submission questions the effectiveness of these changes. It is common practice for local authorities to consider the 'urban environment' to be included within the term 'environment'. The potential changes to section 6 and/or 7 would also have limited effectiveness as a balancing exercise between the matters would still be required.

###### **4.1.2 Greater national direction and clarity**

The discussion document highlights that a potential problem is the lack of national direction. Support for increased national direction to guide local authority planning is signalled in the draft submission. However this is in the context of national policy guidance focusing primarily on strategic planning issues, and improving processes and planning practice.

The submission states strongly that local government must be involved in the development of national policy guidance. The submission also notes that national guidance must add value over and above the direction set out in the RMA.

#### 4.1.3 Spatial planning

The draft submission does not comment on the options for spatial planning legislation for Auckland Council, but focuses on spatial planning generally, and how a spatial plan might operate in the Wellington region.

In the draft submission, Greater Wellington:

- Supports spatial planning in principle
- Supports that provision for spatial planning be included in the LGA
- Supports mechanisms to simplify the implementation of spatial plans through RMA, LTMA and LGA planning documents
- Believes further work is required to identify a spatial planning model that will work outside of Auckland
- Does not believe that regional spatial planning should be mandatory in all regions, but that if a spatial plan is prepared there must be provisions included in any legislation to ensure its implementation.

#### 4.1.4 Improving tools for land assembly

The discussion document presents an option for improving the mechanisms for land assembly by extending the scope of the PWA to allow local authorities to acquire or amalgamate land for major urban regeneration projects and/or developing new tools. The draft submission supports further investigations into mechanisms that would enable local authorities to facilitate urban regeneration projects.

#### 4.1.5 Designation System

The options presented in the discussion document focus on the eligibility for requiring authority status, the designation approval process and the role of the decision maker.

The draft submission supports a review of the designation system. It supports the development of a two-tiered approach (full/limited) to eligibility for requiring authority status, provided that Greater Wellington is eligible for full status and retains decision-making powers. The types of the activities we undertake are of regional benefit and current regime (with full requiring authority status) works effectively.

The draft submission supports a designation process that allows for longer term forward planning, protection against incompatible development, a longer lapse

period for some designations and protection for constructed infrastructure assets.

## **5. Communication**

No communications are necessary at this time.

## **6. Recommendations**

*That the Council:*

- 1. **Receives** the report.*
- 2. **Notes** the content of the report.*
- 3. **Approves** the submission in Attachment 1 (tabled at the meeting).*
- 4. **Delegates** to the Chair of the Council any minor amendments to the submission.*

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**Attachment 1:** To be tabled at the Committee meeting