

By email

30 June 2025

Hon Chris Bishop
Minister of Housing, Infrastructure, Transport and Minister Responsible for RMA Reform
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

Kia ora Minister,

Urban growth in the Wellington region

I attended your address to the Wellington Chamber of Commerce recently and have been following government announcements on proposed changes to urban development settings closely.

I am pleased to hear your strong support for increased intensification around rapid transit nodes, CBDs and metro centres. This is a central pillar of the Wellington Region's Future Development Strategy (FDS), which has a strong emphasis on increased intensification in the metro areas of Hutt Valley, Wellington, Porirua and Kāpiti. I am pleased also to see proposals in the Going for Housing Growth discussion document about strengthening existing intensification requirements along public transport corridors and how to enable greater mixed-use in our cities through standardised zoning.

However, I disagree with your comments that the Wellington Region, through the Regional Policy Statement, Natural Resources Plan and the Future Development Strategy, is constraining development in the region. This is not the case. The Wellington Region FDS was developed to accommodate population growth of 200,000 over the next 30 years – allowing for much more growth than the Stats NZ projections of 79,000 over the same period. Our planning for the FDS identified that more than 80% of this new growth can be accommodated in brownfield land – through redevelopment and intensification, with the remainder through identified greenfield development areas.

This should reassure you that the Wellington Region is not constraining development in the region through any hard urban/rural boundaries. Instead, these documents facilitate development, based on considerations of resilience, proximity to existing infrastructure and the sequencing of new infrastructure, impacts on freshwater systems, protection of highly productive land, ensuring efficient operation of utilities, and other important considerations.

Avoiding unlimited sprawl beyond existing urban areas also makes sense from a fiscal perspective. We know from research undertaken on comparative costs of different urban form in the region that from an infrastructure provision perspective, greenfield development comes at a much greater cost to ratepayers and taxpayers than compact urban form proximate to metro centres and transport nodes. (See our report: [Comparative-cost-of-urban-form.pdf](#).) These findings align with analysis undertaken internationally, most notably in the State of Victoria, Australia and the United States.

Given the significant cost pressures on both central and local government, and the government's directives to limit rates rises, it makes sense to be capitalising on existing infrastructure for new urban growth, rather than increasing the burden on the ratepayer through the provision and maintenance of costly new infrastructure to service unplanned greenfield developments.

Our region is also actively progressing plans for Transit Oriented Developments (TODs) around Metlink train stations, which will help unlock housing capacity in locations proximate to transport links and other amenities. We are gearing up to present a proposal to you on TODs at Porirua Station, Johnsonville Station and Waterloo Station; it will be critical to have government support for these projects. We are eager that policy settings support making the most of existing infrastructure and new tools (such as development and delivery partnerships, financing structures, and land acquisition and assembly methods) better support this sort of development, which is a win-win for our communities. It provides much-needed housing growth and revitalises town centres with high-amenity, mixed-use development, while minimising the cost of infrastructure provision on the ratepayer.

I look forward to your response and engaging with you further on our plans for TODs in the Wellington region.

Ngā mihi



Daran Ponter

Chair – Greater Wellington

Deputy Chair – Wellington Regional Leadership Committee

CC: Mayors and Mana Whenua Chairs, Wellington Regional Leadership Committee