



## RM Reform - Update on urban design in the future RM system

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Security Level	In-Confidence	MfE Priority:	Non-Urgent

	<b>Action sought:</b>
To Hon Phil Twyford, Associate Minister for the Environment	For noting only.
CC Hon David Parker, Minister for the Environment	

Actions for Minister's Office Staff	<b>Return</b> the signed report to MfE.
Number of appendices and attachments 0	Titles of appendices and attachments: Nil

### Ministry for the Environment contacts

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## RM Reform - Update on urban design in the future RM system

### Purpose

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1. This aide memoire provides an update on work proposed to integrate urban design into the future Resource Management (RM) system, following the whiteboard meeting between you and Minister Parker on 5 May 2022.

### Background and content

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*Foundational work on urban design has been progressed*

2. You have been delegated responsibility for matters relating to urban policy, primarily as they relate to RM reform. Officials understand that the Minister for the Environment has asked you to lead work on urban design in the future system.
3. There has been some foundational work on urban design completed, including the scoping session that you had with officials in November 2021. At this meeting, you agreed to urban design being “the form, layout, and function of the built environment at a variety of scales; from streets and spaces through to towns and cities.” You agreed urban design is about “the way places work and function” and is “three dimensional across a range of scales”.
4. Urban design considers both the form and function of urban areas to achieve a quality outcome, and the processes used to achieve this, through place making or other design-led initiatives. Thus, urban design is both a process and an outcome, and urban design as part of the RM reform package would embed both a process for urban design, and policy direction on what constitutes a quality design outcome in the future system.
5. Urban design within the future system is intended to provide direction at a range of different spatial scales, as detailed in Figure 1 below.

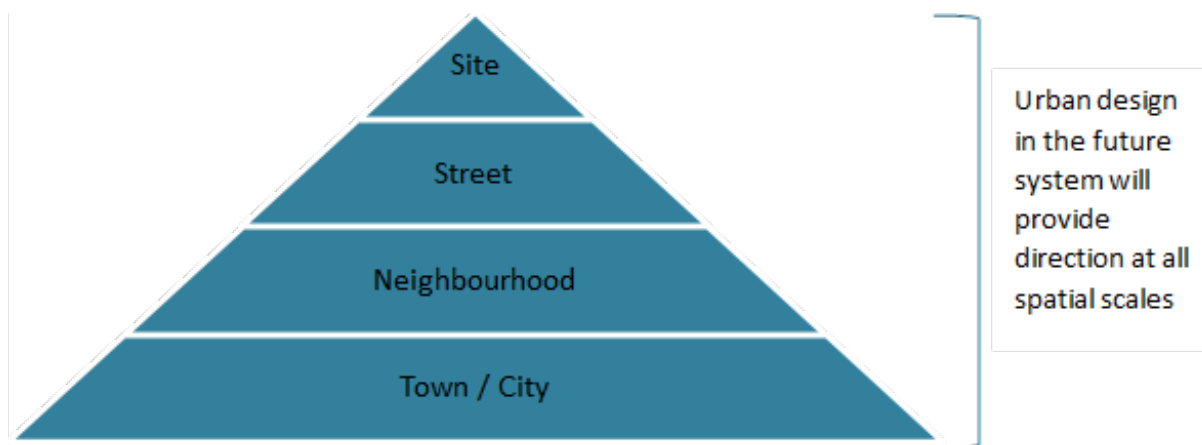


Figure 1 Spatial scales of urban design

6. There is existing guidance that sits at most of these levels, including:
  - a. The Ministry for the Environment has developed a National Medium Density Design Guide, due for release by the end of May 2022. This provides site-level design guidance on medium density residential developments.
  - b. Kāinga Ora have produced a range of site-level guidelines for state housing, and housing solutions for Māori, and Pacific people<sup>1</sup>.
  - c. Waka Kotahi have produced a street-level guideline, the Aotearoa Urban Street Planning and Design Guide<sup>2</sup>.
  - d. Te Aranga Principles<sup>3</sup> are a set of outcome-based principles in the Auckland Design Manual that provide guidance at all spatial scales. The principles are founded on intrinsic Māori cultural values and designed to provide practical guidance for enhancing outcomes for the design environment.
  - e. In 2005, the Ministry for the Environment collaborated with a range of stakeholders to create the Urban Design Protocol<sup>4</sup>, a voluntary commitment by central and local government, property developers and investors, design professionals, educational institutes and other groups to undertake specific urban design initiatives. The protocol provides guidance on urban design at all spatial scales. The urban design work programme presents an opportunity to refresh the Urban Design Protocol with guidance on urban design that aligns with the five objectives of RM reform, including by ensuring it is appropriately bicultural and focuses on enhancing and restoring the natural environment.
7. The guidance outlined above provides a good foundation for the urban design work programme.
8. Looking ahead, officials have begun work on identifying elements of well-functioning urban environments that might constitute a quality design outcome in the future system. Examples of these elements include (but are not limited to) adequate urban tree cover and water sensitive urban design that reduces reliance on hard engineering solutions such as stormwater pipes. Such elements align with the direction of the recently released Emissions Reduction Plan and draft National Adaptation Plan, which both identify urban design as a strategic opportunity to support emissions reduction and climate resilience in urban environments.
9. Officials will engage with local government, iwi and Māori, other agencies, NGOs, the infrastructure/land development sector, and urban design practitioners to explore these elements in more detail.

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<sup>1</sup> Kāinga Ora Design Guidelines. <https://kaingaora.govt.nz/publications/design-guidelines/>

<sup>2</sup> Aotearoa Urban Street Planning and Design Guide. <https://www.nzta.govt.nz/about-us/about-waka-kotahi-nz-transport-agency/environmental-and-social-responsibility/urban-street-guide/>

<sup>3</sup> Te Aranga Principles. [https://www.aucklanddesignmanual.co.nz/design-subjects/maori-design/te\\_aranga\\_principles](https://www.aucklanddesignmanual.co.nz/design-subjects/maori-design/te_aranga_principles)

<sup>4</sup> Urban Design Protocol. <https://environment.govt.nz/publications/new-zealand-urban-design-protocol/>

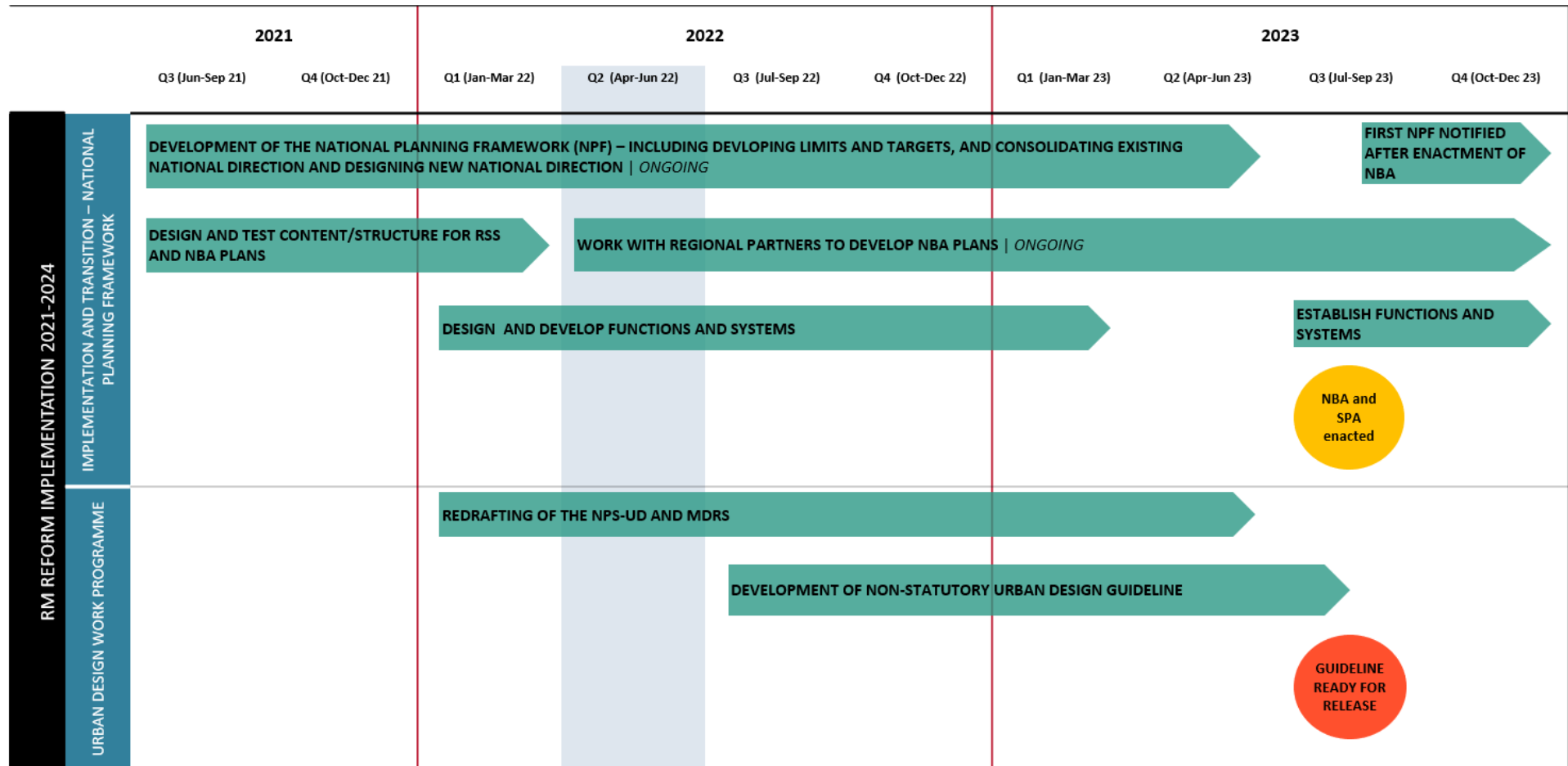
*An urban design work programme to September 2023 is currently being developed*

10. At the whiteboard meeting on 5 May 2022, you and Minister Parker agreed that urban design should be positioned as part of the RM reform package. You asked how work on urban design could be progressed in time to influence the first tranche of Natural and Built Environments (NBA) plans, and requested officials map out what progress could be made on urban design in this parliamentary term.
11. At this meeting, it was agreed that adequate urban tree cover is an element of quality urban design and that urban design provisions within the future RM system could be an avenue to provide for urban tree protection and enhancement. Officials will investigate this as part of an urban design work programme.
12. To ensure that urban design, including urban trees, forms part of the RM reform package, officials will develop a work programme that:
  - a. delivers advice on how urban design aligns with the outcomes of the Natural and Built Environments Act (NBA) and determining its place in the NPF, noting that urban design will not be included in the first NPF but could be considered for inclusion in future amendments to the NPF
  - b. integrates urban design into the NPF roadmap, most likely for inclusion in future amendments to the NPF (if deemed appropriate for inclusion in the NPF)
  - c. produces a relevant, practical, and engaging non-statutory urban design guideline to work alongside the first NPF and influence the first tranche of NBA plans, that is developed using a collaborative process. This process would involve working with local government, iwi and Māori, and Urban Growth Agenda (UGA) agencies<sup>5</sup>, NGOs, the infrastructure/development sector, and urban design practitioners. Due to the quick turnaround of the guideline, officials may need to use existing forums to engage with these groups – eg, the Local Government Steering Group and the iwi/Māori groups engaging on RM reform. Officials note there will be limited time for consultation on the guideline if it is to be ready for release by September 2023.
13. A proposed timeline for this work programme is provided in Table 1 below. Officials note that these timeframes are indicative only and that further advice on the urban design work programme will provide more specific dates and deliverables.
14. Officials consider urban design is closely aligned with the urban planning pillar that underpins the UGA, and that direction on urban design will have implications for initiatives delivered through the UGA. UGA Ministers are interested in this work and receiving updates on its progress. As such, Ministry for the Environment officials intend to work with other UGA agencies to develop the urban design work programme and will report on progress to the UGA Ministers group.

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<sup>5</sup> UGA agencies that will be involved include Te Tūapapa Kura Kāinga – Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, Ministry of Transport, Waka Kotahi, Department of Internal Affairs and Kāinga Ora.

Table 1: Indicative timeframes for urban design work programme



## Next steps

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15. Officials will engage with other UGA agencies to develop advice on how urban design aligns with the outcomes of the NBA and the purpose of the NPF, and its role in the future RM system. Officials will report back on progress to the UGA Ministers group.
16. Officials will engage with other UGA agencies to determine the best approach to working with councils, iwi and Māori and key stakeholders, to test and develop policy on urban design.
17. Officials are speaking to the Local Government Steering Group on 3 June 2022 with the intent of seeking their views on how they could be involved in supporting the development of the urban design guideline.
18. Officials will report back on engagement with other agencies and key stakeholders by the end of June 2022.

## Signature

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