



BRF-1648 RM Reform – Aide Memoire Update on urban design in the future RM system

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Security Level	In-Confidence	MfE Priority:	Non-Urgent

	Action sought:
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	Provide to Minister for noting only
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

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

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” to improve the wellbeing of people and the environment, and that urban design 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 policies 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 guidance and direction 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 (MfE) released the National Medium Density Design Guide¹ in 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 people².
 - c. Waka Kotahi have produced a street-level guideline, the Aotearoa Urban Street Planning and Design Guide³.
 - d. Te Aranga Principles⁴ 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, MfE collaborated with a range of stakeholders to create the Urban Design Protocol⁵, 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 replace the Urban Design Protocol with guidance on urban design that aligns with the five objectives of the RM reform programme, and the purpose and outcomes of the Natural and Built Environments Act (NBA).
7. The guidance outlined above provides a good foundation for the urban design work programme. Urban design guidance and direction in the future RM system is intended to build on this existing guidance to ensure coherence across the system.
8. Looking ahead, officials have begun work on identifying elements of well-functioning urban environments that might constitute a good 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. The Climate Change Commission also recommended promoting urban design solutions that acknowledge Iwi/Māori whakapapa, identity and tūrangawaewae and the need to preserve and protect their wāhi tapū and sites of cultural significance⁶. The urban design work programme represents an opportunity to respond to this recommendation.

¹ National Medium Density Design Guide. <https://environment.govt.nz/publications/national-medium-density-design-guide/>

² Kāinga Ora Design Guidelines. <https://kaingaora.govt.nz/publications/design-guidelines/>

³ 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/>

⁴ Te Aranga Principles. https://www.aucklanddesignmanual.co.nz/design-subjects/maori-design/te_aranga_principles

⁵ Urban Design Protocol. <https://environment.govt.nz/publications/new-zealand-urban-design-protocol/>

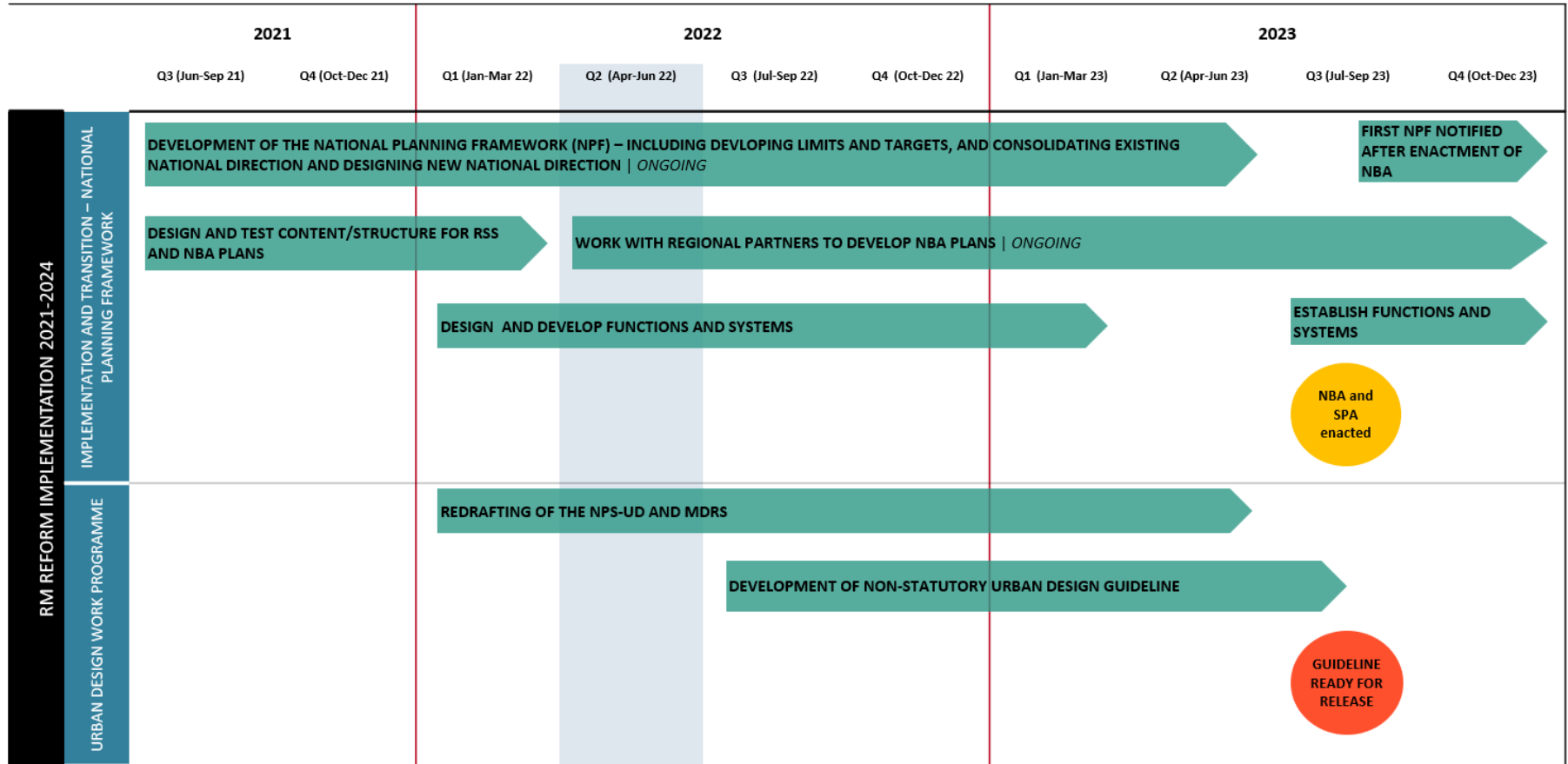
⁶ Recommendation 16.2 of the Climate Change Commission's report Ināia tonu nei: a low emissions future for Aotearoa. <https://www.climatecommission.govt.nz/our-work/advice-to-government-topic/inaia-tonu-nei-a-low-emissions-future-for-aotearoa/>

10. You have discussed with officials other elements of urban design you would like explored through the urban design work programme. These elements include transit connectivity, walkable and bikeable streets, access to amenities such as parks and playgrounds, access to services (eg, through the use of mixed-use zoning, 20 minute neighbourhoods), and crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED).
11. 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.

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

12. 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 NBA plans, and requested officials map out what progress could be made on urban design in this parliamentary term.
13. 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.
14. 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 purpose and outcomes of the Natural and Built Environments Act (NBA) and determines its place in the National Planning Framework (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 document that is completed and published in time to work alongside the first NPF and influence the first tranche of NBA plans. This guideline will include a set of design 'standards' that will be developed and finalised with the intention of being considered for transition into future amendments to the NPF.
15. A proposed timeline for this work programme is provided in Table 1 below. Officials note that these timeframes are indicative only and that further updates on the urban design work programme will provide more specific dates and deliverables. Officials intend to update you on this via your regular policy meetings with officials.
16. Officials consider urban design is closely aligned with the urban planning pillar that underpins the Urban Growth Agenda (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, MfE officials intend to work with other UGA agencies on the development of the urban design guideline document and will report on progress to the UGA Ministers group.

Table 1: Indicative timeframes for urban design work programme



The key deliverable of this work programme will be the urban design guideline document

17. The purpose of the urban design guideline document is:
 - a. to articulate what good urban design practice is throughout the system and
 - b. to provide decision makers with clear direction on what constitutes a quality outcome for the built environment.
18. The urban design guideline document is intended to facilitate a shift away from urban design practice that focuses on overly subjective amenity values, to urban design practice that focuses on the way urban spaces work and function to provide for the purpose and outcomes of the NBA.
19. The urban design guideline document will be developed using a collaborative process. This process will involve working with local government, iwi and Māori, Urban Growth Agenda (UGA) agencies⁷, NGOs, the infrastructure/development sector, and urban design practitioners. Due to the quick turnaround of the guideline document, 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.

Parts of the urban design guideline document will be considered for transition into future amendments to the NPF

20. The urban design guideline document will not initially have statutory weight. However, a set of ‘standards’⁸ will be included in the document with the intention they can be considered for transition into future amendments to the NPF. To signal that urban design will later be considered for transition into the NPF, officials intend for urban design to be included in the roadmap for future content of the NPF.
21. This roadmap is intended to lay out how and when the NPF will be amended over time to provide for the full range of matters and outcomes the NBA requires it to provide for. The briefing titled *BRF-1193 RM Reform 201 - Content and staging of the National Planning Framework* notes that officials have proposed some of the matters (including urban design) to be included in the roadmap but that officials will seek feedback from other agencies, iwi/Māori, local government, interest groups and a proposed NPF advisory group before confirming this roadmap.
22. Inclusion in the NPF roadmap would convey the expectation that decision makers should work toward providing for the urban design standards in the first tranche of planning documents created in the new RM system. However, officials note that the standards may be modified when considered for transition into the NPF, as this content will be required to undergo the process determined for inclusion in the NPF – likely a Board of Inquiry process or similar.
23. The urban design standards will provide decision makers with direction on what constitutes a quality outcome for the built environment in the new RM system. The



⁷ UGA agencies that will be involved include Te Tūapapa Kura Kāinga – Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, Ministry of Transport, Department of Internal Affairs and Treasury, as well as UGA delivery agencies Waka Kotahi and Kāinga Ora.

⁸ Note the term ‘standards’ is used in this aide memoire but once further clarity around plan content and structure is available, this term may change.

standards within the guideline document are not intended to be so prescriptive that they stifle innovation or do not allow an urban environment to grow and change over time. The guideline will allow decision makers the flexibility to determine how they can support implementation of the standards through the working components of their plans.

24. Alongside the design standards, other content will be developed with the intention of providing guidance for effective implementation of the standards. What this might look like in practice is a guideline document comprising a set of design standards, with examples demonstrating how each standard might be achieved. This will provide decision makers with clear direction on good urban design practice and provide the guidance necessary to operationalise the design standards through their planning documents.
25. Table 2 (below) outlines an approach to considering the urban design standards for transition into the NPF, noting that this is dependent on how the NPF is designed and developed.

Table 2: An approach to considering the urban design standards for transition into the NPF

<i>First NPF</i>	Non statutory urban design guideline works alongside the first NPF – includes design ‘standards’ and guidance to support implementation of the design standards	
		
<i>Future amendments to the NPF</i>	Design standards transitioned into future amendments to the NPF using the process determined for future amendments to the NPF	Possibility for guideline to be updated and used to support implementation of the design standards in the NPF, if still required

Consultation and Collaboration

26. Officials have shared this aide memoire with other UGA agencies and associated delivery agencies to introduce MfE’s urban design work programme and signal the intent to work collaboratively with these agencies.
27. The Ministry of Transport and Waka Kotahi were broadly supportive of the work and noted the wide range of existing guidance on urban design that they would like to see built on and enhanced by this work.
28. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Development queried whether the RM system is the right system to work through to achieve urban design outcomes. However, they have expressed interest in working with officials at MfE to establish the scope of urban design policies in the future RM system, and the problem definition that guides policy development. Their preference is that the urban design work programme has the oversight of UGA Ministers as they have significant portfolio interests in this work.
29. Kāinga Ora have expressed support for the work and their interest in working with officials at MfE, noting that they have significant urban design capability.
30. The Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) queried whether there was a more representative group than the Local Government Steering Group that officials could engage with on urban design matters. From an implementation perspective, DIA queried whether the non-statutory nature of the urban design guideline would be sufficient to drive the change in urban design practice that is being sought.

31. Officials will use UGA structures and processes as a forum for working through this feedback as policy development progresses.

Next steps

32. Officials are speaking to members of Ngā Aho, a network of Māori design professionals, and the Local Government Steering Group, to see how both groups would like to be involved in the development of the urban design guideline document. Officials will keep you updated on these engagements via your regular policy meetings with officials.
33. Officials are currently working to produce a more detailed timeline of deliverables than those listed in Table 1. Officials will keep you updated on this via your regular policy meetings with officials.
34. Officials are using UGA structures and processes to discuss the scope of MfE's urban design work programme and the role of other agencies in this work. MfE officials will be holding workshops to discuss with other UGA agencies the problem definition, the scope of the work programme and the role of other agencies in developing the urban design guideline document. Officials intend to brief UGA Ministers on the outputs of these workshops at the next meeting of UGA Ministers.

Signature



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