

**REPORT OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON SUBMISSIONS TO THE DRAFT  
HERETAUNGA PLAINS URBAN DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY****EXECUTIVE SUMMARY****1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 HPUDS is a collaborative approach by the Hastings District Council, Napier City Council and Hawke's Bay Regional Council to plan for urban growth on the Heretaunga Plains for the period 2015-2045. The Heretaunga Plains covers an area which embraces Waipatiki to the North, Waimarama to the South, Maraekakaho to the west and the Pacific Coast to the east.
- 1.2 The Strategy is a broad scale, long-term, integrated land-use and infrastructure strategy prepared under the framework of the Local Government Act. Much of the strategy can however, only be implemented through subsequent changes to the Regional Policy Statement and District Plans prepared under the Resource Management Act (RMA). Accordingly further detailed research, policy analysis and formal public consultation will occur before key recommendations take statutory effect. The strategy sets a direction and framework for this work and sends a strong signal to the community and development interests about how the Councils see urban development occurring in the future.
- 1.3 This Executive Summary presents the key findings of the Joint Committee appointed by the Napier City Council, the Hastings District Council and the Hawke's Bay Regional Council to hear and make recommendations on submissions received on the Draft Heretaunga Plains Urban Development Strategy (HPUDS).

**2.0 Background**

- 2.1 Before reporting back on the submissions we consider that it is important to recall what it is we are trying to achieve through HPUDS. We start by reminding ourselves that the Heretaunga Plains is a resource rich area of New Zealand, blessed with high value soils, good water supply and a temperate climate. Understandably with such resources the Plains have been the focus for settlement with the main industrial base being the agriculture and horticulture sectors. The value of the soil and water resources to the economy and the wellbeing of the community remain vitally important, but ongoing growth in the residential and industrial sectors has led to increasing competition for the water and soil resources.
- 2.2 Over the past twenty years urban development on the Heretaunga Plains has been characterised by single dwelling greenfields subdivision and development on the flats and lightly sloping elevated sites; often on productive land with some containing what could be described as highly versatile soils for food production.

Intensification has been through infill development where the back part of a section is subdivided off and a single dwelling erected so two detached dwellings exist where one previously stood. This is not considered a good urban design outcome and places unplanned pressure access existing infrastructure networks, which is difficult to plan for and expensive to accommodate.

- 2.3 Another feature has been the development of rural residential sites and strong demand for rural lifestyle lots; to the point that the lifestyle value of rural property exceeds its value for commercial food production.
- 2.4 These features contrast with the previous 20 years of development in the Hastings area, with greenfields development on the shingle beds in Flaxmere area and the Havelock North hills.
- 2.5 There is a strong emergent concern about continuing “urban sprawl” over productive land, especially the more versatile soils, and the land value distortions that rural residential and lifestyle lot development creates. The result is that commercial food production is not sustainable economically, and that this form of residential growth is not sustainable environmentally and socially, particularly against the backdrop of “peak oil”, carbon emissions and climate change.
- 2.6 In addition Napier and Hastings previous Urban Growth strategies, while cognizant of each other, were developed independently of each other and for a variety of reasons, the release of greenfields land has been uncoordinated and un-balanced. This has led to situations where such land was in short supply in one city and abundant in another. The lack of balanced locational choice has led to people choosing to live and work in different centers, driving increased travel, fuel use, carbon emissions and demands on the road transport infrastructure. Again this is no longer considered sustainable and balanced supply choices between the two centres and coordinated implementation of growth areas is considered very important to the community and the environmental outcomes we desire.
- 2.7 Accordingly the key drivers for HPUDS are;
  - Community recognition that both the soils and water resource are finite and under increasing pressure and should be better managed.
  - The need to take a sub regional view to the growth needs over a longer period of time for balanced growth.
  - The need to identify where the knowledge gaps are in planning for the long term growth.
  - Accepting that the employment base of the Heretaunga Plains will continue to rely on land based industry.

- Establishing appropriate and planned responses to long term issues such as climate change and energy efficiencies.

### **3.0 Submissions**

3.1 A total of 108 submissions were considered, many covering multiple points of submission. As a result we needed to consider the points of submissions under a number of wide ranging themes, rather than submission by submission. These submission themes are covered in the Summary of Submissions and Findings and the Full Report. More detail is available from the officers' reports, which helped inform our deliberations, alongside a great many thoughtful submissions. This Executive Summary accordingly deals only with the major areas of concern

### **4.0 Vision and Principles**

4.1 An important part of the strategy development was the establishment of a Vision and Guiding Principles. These formed the basis for evaluating different growth scenarios. Similarly they formed an important part of evaluating the submissions. The Vision and Guiding Principles themselves were open for challenge through the submission process, however no submissions were received in relation to them; giving us confidence that the strategy was generally heading in the right direction.

4.2 The Principles were comprehensive in nature and we note however that there will be situations where principles will conflict with each other and some compromises will be required. Without denigrating the importance of each of these principles, the Committee wishes to paraphrase the more important ones relating to the recommended settlement pattern, which is where the more significant issues were raised, as follows:

- Protection of versatile soils for food production.
- Settlement patterns that promote sustainable transport and reduced fuel dependency.
- Balanced housing choice, on both flat and elevated land, between Hastings and Napier.
- Choice in housing type, location and affordability.

### **5.0 Settlement Pattern**

5.1 Deriving from the Vision and Principles and the evaluation of the alternative scenarios the Draft Strategy proposed a more compact urban form that:

- Avoids the more versatile soils and retains productive use where possible.

- Moves toward establishing long term urban limits to define boundaries and create certainty.
- Promotes more intensive re-development within existing urban areas and greenfields locations.
- Builds on existing urban settlements.
- Promotes greater variety in housing choice and affordability.
- Recognises Mana Whenua aspirations.

5.2 Accordingly, the proposed settlement pattern is intended to be a framework that will provide choice of location, whether that is in Napier or Hastings, or in an urban or rural environment; and choice of housing type to cater for growing families or people living alone. At the same time, we want to ensure that our existing transport and water services infrastructure are used efficiently. Overall, we want to make sure that urban development does not unnecessarily expand over the versatile and productive soils of the plains.

## **6.0 Major Findings on Submissions**

### Assumptions, Monitoring and Adaptability.

- 6.1 A number of submissions raised concerns about the underlying growth and demographic assumptions, including the possible housing needs of the elderly and Maori populations, which are expected to form a greater proportion of the total population over the planning period. In a similar vein a number commented on the need for regular monitoring and review to ensure the strategy remained adaptable to changing circumstances.
- 6.2 We are clear in our own minds that this is an urban development strategy, not an economic development strategy. The strategy is therefore about how anticipated growth should be accommodated and provided for. We consider that the detail of what type of housing will be needed or possible in the future will be determined by the demand from those future communities. In that respect we note for example, that the demands of older people have changed significantly over the last 30 years and are likely to continue to change over the next 30 years.
- 6.3 We are satisfied that the strategy has been developed using commonly applied methods and the growth assumptions are based on the best available data and are consistent with national trends and a large number of global influences. The most robust and accepted method in setting base demographic assumptions from which to plan for has been used. We accept however, that there is no absolute certainty in determining what the future may hold and trends may change dramatically, although it is more likely that the changes will be gradual and detectable.

- 6.4 Accordingly we have recommended that growth rates and other underlying assumptions should be reviewed no less than after every census so that necessary adjustments made in good time. Furthermore we have recommended changes to outline the specific circumstances that might lead to a reconsideration of growth areas and the criteria that should to be applied in the event that more, or less, greenfields land may be needed in the future under different growth projections.

#### Settlement Pattern, Urban Limits and Greenfields Sites

- 6.5 We heard a lot of submissions concerned with the concept of a more compact settlement pattern, defined urban limits and the potential consequences of intensification. The latter we discuss below. Turning to the former two, we have above outlined our reasoning for our endorsement of this fundamental principle of the draft strategy.
- 6.6 We comment further, that unless the boundary between rural and urban is clear at the outset, it can be difficult for Councils to manage, long term land use and infrastructure and its funding. It is important, in our view, that council, developers and the community know which areas are for future development and when this is likely to occur. How and when such limits begin to manage urban growth on the Heretaunga Plains, will be established and included within regional and territorial authority policy and regulatory documents formulated under the RMA 1991.
- 6.7 However the transition to this end state of a clear urban boundary envisages the need for more greenfields sites. Unsurprisingly therefore, we considered a number of submissions seeking the inclusion of greenfields land that was not identified in the settlement pattern as a growth area, and opposition to some that were on the basis of the “natural capacity” of the soil resource.
- 6.8 While each argument in isolation may have merits, the purpose of the strategy is to put new growth areas into an overall context and direction for a future end state. Accordingly we do not deal with these in this Executive Summary, but note that we considered them against the overall thrust of a compact urban footprint and our criteria for new greenfields site selection aimed at “rounding” or “squaring off the existing urban perimeter, especially where soils are of lesser versatility or productive capacity is already compromised.

#### Intensification

- 6.9 An overwhelming number of submissions dealt with the concept of intensification, including the volume, rate, desirability or undesirability and the pre-conditions and conditions necessary to successfully achieve it. A number of submissions generally supported intensification, but queried whether the intensification targets can be met within the timeframe suggested in the strategy. There appeared to be

some confusion over the transitioning timeframe to achieve the targets indicated in the draft strategy as published.

- 6.10 The strategy aims to enable the sub-region to make a gradual shift from the current forms of development to a more intensified type as it is implemented. Rather than aiming for 60% intensification over the period from 2015 to 2045, we have recommended that transitioning from 45% at 2015 to 60% at the end of the period as a more realistic target. This requires amendments to the allocated growth between greenfields, intensification and rural development to reflect a more gradual evolution of the housing stock and amenity conditions than the published draft implies.
- 6.11 It should be noted that the target remains a stretch target, as traditional intensification methods using infill subdivision necessarily has limits in supply and multi site redevelopment will be needed. In addition to regular monitoring and review, we also note that the strategy contains a number of specific actions which focus on further work to evaluate the capacity of the existing built environment to meet intensification targets. This work will be required prior to any specific references to the settlement pattern being given statutory effect in the RPS and District Plans.
- 6.12 Turning to the benefits and potential amenity and other pitfalls of increased residential intensification, the committee agrees that intensification will need to be carefully managed to ensure positive outcomes. Intensification must be part of a package that ensures amenity levels and quality of life for residents is enhanced.
- 6.13 We detected a misunderstanding in the submissions of what was meant by the term "intensification". We note that the intensification targets will not be met by traditional infill methods where individual lots are subdivided from the rear of an existing site. There will need to be a change in how intensification might be carried out through the use of design guidelines, district plans, financial incentives and possibly demonstration projects. More importantly it is important that people understand that intensification will take place across four different sectors:
1. Greenfield areas (new housing areas) will be required to achieve more houses per hectare.
  2. Intensification of parts of the city through redevelopment of existing sites.
  3. Brownfield sites. These are large areas of land within the existing built area of the city where the use may change and create opportunity for residential development.

4. Traditional infill development where 1 site is divided into 2 lots.

- 6.14 There are two notable points here. Firstly, on the growth rates predicted, the target level of intensification will not be achieved immediately, but will be worked towards over the period. In most cases the change will be largely imperceptible year on year in most parts of the existing environment. Secondly, intensification areas will be targeted to areas more suited to intensification and with higher amenity outcomes than traditional infill, which could otherwise happen anywhere. Special character areas and those with newer housing stock, or difficult topography are unlikely to see much if any change. We have made recommendations to strengthen the strategy on these and other points relating to good urban design.
- 6.15 Beyond this the strategy needs to remain high level, and other than acknowledging the issues and providing some general direction, detailed aspects can only be ensured through district plans and associated Council initiatives as outlined above.

Coastal Settlements

- 6.16 Several submissions were concerned that the positive contributions that coastal residential growth can make to the region have not been addressed by the Strategy.
- 6.17 We are reminded that the strategy is predicated on a sustainable development approach. Such an approach avoids excessive dispersal of communities from major employment and business nodes and main population centres, which would otherwise encourage increased travel and car dependency, fuel use and carbon emissions. Accordingly it seeks to provide some limited coastal location choice, building on existing coastal communities where servicing issues can be overcome and in areas free from natural hazards and sensitive natural areas and landscapes.
- 6.18 We are mindful that the recommended changes to implementation of the preferred scenario mean that more Greenfield land will be required in the early years of the planning period for the HPUDS strategy as the region works towards increasing its level of intensification to the 60% target. Coastal areas could potentially help to supply some of the additional and delay/reduce the need to open up further greenfield areas on the urban periphery that may be more suitable for primary production.
- 6.19 The most appropriate area for more growth in the coastal market is, in our view, the Te Awanaga/Haumoana area and we have made some recommendations to increase the housing allocation in these areas

### Rural Residential, Rural Lifestyle and Rural Housing

- 6.20 Again we heard a number of submissions on the contribution these sectors of the housing market could make to meeting demand. We will not spend much time on this here, except to say the evidence we have is that there is a surplus of rural residential sites close to the urban areas already.
- 6.21 More remote rural residential and rural lifestyle lot development is in fact advancing a dispersed settlement pattern that is not sustainable in the long term, with reverse sensitivity implications for rural production. Other than allowing for the limited choice for the market that is already available, no greater opportunities, in our view, should be encouraged.

### The Heretaunga Plains Soil Resource

- 6.22 One of the primary drivers of the Strategy is the protection of the plains soils from urban sprawl and many submissions, both written and verbal, strongly supported this approach. At the same time some submissions expressed concern that 'ring fencing' the plains and protecting the soils at all costs would hinder the region unnecessarily. It was pointed out to us that a range of terms have been used in the strategy with respect to describing the soils the strategy aims to protect. These terms include; versatile soils, versatile soils for productive purposes, productive soils and productive land.
- 6.23 We heard that the Heretaunga Plains uniqueness is a combination of fertility, climate and water and that is what gives it its versatility. These submitters considered that there was a lack of guidance in the strategy for planners to determine what soils should be protected from development and that a simple matrix to guide planners is required. We also heard of the need to take into account climate change and the possibility of new crop types being grown in this area and also that the strategy needed to be flexible enough to allow development on poorer blocks of soil.
- 6.24 We refer back to the key principle which we find encapsulates the essence of what this Strategy is seeking to achieve in this area: Productive value of its soil and water resources are recognized and provided for and used sustainably. We see no need to alter the wording in any way.
- 6.25 However, we do see the need for further clarity regarding the soil resource to be protected from use of the word versatile so everyone is clear on what we are seeking to protect. The corollary of that is that we can then address what can, and what cannot, happen on soils that are not classified as 'versatile'.
- 6.26 While versatile soils may warrant a higher degree of protection, not being classed as so does not mean it is appropriate that they are available for urban use where that is contrary to the other principles of this strategy, sustainable development under the LGA or sustainable management of natural and physical resources

under the RMA. It is important that we get clarity around this issue, so everyone understands the implications of having their land declared versatile or otherwise. The collation of information about the soil /climate/crop type potential and limitations is important from an economic development perspective and the Regional Council, along with the economic development agency can assist in the collation of that information.

### Mana Whenua

- 6.27 We received many submissions from various mana whenua interests. There was an understandable misconception that the strategy, while on the one hand recognizing mana whenua interests in marae based housing and papakainga housing opportunities, did seem to arbitrarily limit those to within the allocation for rural housing.
- 6.28 The officers' report and recommendations, which we endorse, re-assured most of those submitters. In essence we recommend no limits on marae based and papakainga housing where the servicing constraints can be overcome.
- 6.29 We do however want to be clear that we do not expect large scale development of this nature that would undermine the strategy. We consider that such development that does occur will reduce the allocations for future growth across greenfields, intensification and rural development. That is all three classifications as we see it as an alternative for some Maori from these more conventional housing sectors.
- 6.30 We also want to be clear that servicing will likely have to be on-site and funded other than through Councils. The expectation of minimising the loss of versatile soils that the strategy is partly predicated also needs to be strongly considered and responded to in Maori housing developments. We have recommended a Hui be held with the Joint Committees' of the respective Councils', mana whenua submitters and other mana whenua related agencies to make these aspects very clear.

## **7.0 More Information.**

- 7.1 We have produced a Summary of Findings and Recommendations as a bullet point type quick references so readers can see what we are recommending in relation to the different themes raised in the submissions that are of interest to them. The Full report provides more detail on our reasoning for those wishing to have it and we note that the officers reports on the submissions provide even more detail and these are available upon request.