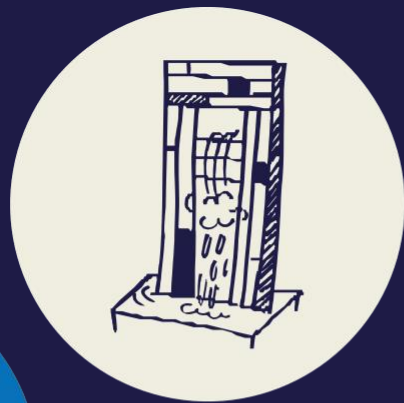


HAMILTON CITY COUNCIL – STAFF SUBMISSION

Engagement Draft of the Transitional National Planning Framework Proposal

Ministry for the Environment



13 December 2023



**Hamilton
City Council**
Te kaunihera o Kirikiriroa

Improving the Wellbeing of Hamiltonians

Hamilton City Council is focused on improving the wellbeing of Hamiltonians through delivering to our five priorities of shaping:

- **A city that's easy to live in**
- **A city where our people thrive**
- **A central city where our people love to be**
- **A fun city with lots to do**
- **A green city**

The topic of this submission is aligned to all of Hamilton City Council's five priorities.

Council Approval and Reference

This staff submission was approved by Hamilton City Council's Chief Executive on 13 December 2023.

Hamilton City Council Reference D-4931552 - Submission # 753.

It should be noted that the following submission is from staff at Hamilton City Council and does not therefore necessarily represent the views of the Council itself.

Key Submission Points

- 1.** We welcome the transitional National Planning Framework (NPF) and support its purpose in providing direction on the development of Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS).
- 2.** We support the inclusion of existing Resource Management Act (RMA) national direction in the preparation of the transitional NPF.
- 3.** We note that the NPF does not explicitly acknowledge existing local plans prepared under the RMA. There is no acknowledgement of the significant investment into these plans, nor guidance on how to ensure the good work done at the local level is not lost in the transition to a new framework.
- 4.** The recent changes to district plans stemming from new national guidance have contributed to “planning fatigue” for many local communities. Any ability to reduce the uncertainty, cost and potential relitigation of already settled planning policy should be an important consideration in the design and implementation of the new planning system.
- 5.** We have also identified that additional guidance is required to effectively address the wide array of environmental management issues that vary significantly from region to region.
- 6.** We support the scenario planning approach and support the scenarios proposed for inclusion in the transitional NPF.
- 7.** We have identified opportunities to ensure integration is achieved within the built environment. While we support the approach to integrating the natural and built environments, more attention to integration within the built environment is required.
- 8.** We have identified a critical gap in the monitoring framework set out in the transitional NPF. Specific monitoring provisions related to the built environment are needed to ensure good outcomes are being met in urban areas.

Introduction

9. Hamilton City Council staff welcome the opportunity provide feedback on the Ministry for the Environment's **Engagement Draft of the Transitional National Planning Framework Proposal**.
10. We understand that the National Planning Framework (NPF) will be delivered in stages, with the transitional NPF proposal scheduled for public notification in April 2024.

Transitional NPF Purpose

11. We welcome the transitional NPF and support its purpose in providing direction on the development of RSS. The Overview Draft provides clarity on how the NPF will work to implement the Natural and Built Environment Act (NBA) and Spatial Planning Act (SPA). The use of a transitional NPF initially, followed by a second NPF once RSS preparation has begun, is a practical way of managing the transition to a new system.

Inclusion of Existing National Guidance

12. We support the inclusion of existing RMA national direction in the preparation of the transitional NPF. The National Policy Statements (NPSs) and National Environmental Standards (NESs) have been introduced at pace over the last few years. This new national direction has provided long-sought guidance at the local level. However, at times this direction has gone too far in prescribing the approach local governments must take. Despite this, we support carrying national direction across to the transitional NPF to ensure this good work and momentum is not lost.

Guidance on Existing Local Plans

13. While the existing national guidance features heavily in the transitional NPF, the document is silent on the existing policies and plans produced at the local level under the RMA. There is no acknowledgement of the significant investment into these plans. Significant investment into RMA plans has occurred since 1991. Furthermore, these plans have evolved since their initial introduction through various plan changes and review cycles over this period. For example, each of the Waikato Region's 14 plans have been through an average of three reviews, not including plan changes and variations in the intervening periods. However, there is no recognition of the time, resource and effort that has gone into preparing these plans.
14. The transitional NPF does not explicitly address the opportunities to take advantage of the good work which has already occurred at the local level. The maturity of the RMA plans in the Waikato, alongside the strong national direction in recent years, mean that many local plans are largely fit for purpose. Additionally, the Waikato sub-region has undertaken significant planning outside of RMA processes to form the Future Proof Partnership and Strategy (refer to <https://futureproof.org.nz/>). There is no guidance in the transitional NPF as to how the work done to produce existing RMA plans and non-statutory spatial plans like the Future Proof Strategy may be incorporated into the new system.
15. We also want to highlight the significant consultation that the various RMA plans and non-RMA plans have gone through. This has been time consuming and costly for both the community and Council, and we observe a level of "planning fatigue". The recent changes to district plans stemming from new national guidance have added to this. Ongoing changes have also contributed to uncertainty and unease for various parts of the community, ranging from developers through to homeowners. Any ability to reduce the uncertainty, cost and potential relitigation of already settled planning policy should be an important consideration in the design and implementation of the new planning system.

Managing Regional Diversity

16. Hamilton City Council's 17 February 2023 submission on the Natural and Built Environment Bill (refer [here](#)), raised concerns that plan amalgamation would result in the loss of local context and nuance,

increased complexity, and increased cost of developing, navigating, and using a regional plan. There is significant diversity within the Waikato Region (and all regions) in the characteristics of different communities and environments, and the issues they face. A specific example is the scale difference in protecting Significant Natural Areas (SNA). As an urbanised area managed by a territorial authority, Hamilton has very different SNA protections compared to Waikato Regional Council. We are concerned that these types of environmental protection are not well suited to a one-size-fits-all approach. Overall, our position is that any benefits of a combined RSS are likely to be outweighed by the significant challenges in preparing it. We would like to see guidance on managing this regional diversity in the preparation of RSS to mitigate these challenges.

Scenario Planning

17. We support the scenario planning approach and support the scenarios proposed for inclusion in the transitional NPF. We are supportive of the four long-term issues identified to be addressed in the scenario planning process (enabling development capacity, natural hazards and climate change, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and protecting the ecological integrity of the natural environment). We are also supportive of including a range of scenarios related to these four issues in the scenario planning process. Additionally, we support considering full and partial implementation of key actions because of future uncertainties about feasibility or affordability.

Integrated Management of the Built Environment

18. We are supportive of the general approach taken to integrated management in the transitional NPF. However, significant improvements are required to ensure integration is achieved within the built environment. The current provisions do not take a holistic approach when considering the built environment, which will reduce opportunities to achieve good urban outcomes. Greater consideration is needed of the interaction between various aspects of the built environment, for example, land use and transport integration, and the long-term sustainability of new housing. Encouraging this more holistic, integrated approach will support development of urban areas which function well as a whole.
19. Integration in infrastructure planning, funding and delivery is critical to reinforcing integration in the built environment. The integration of infrastructure can be strengthened throughout the Integrated Management and Long-term Planning sections of the transitional NPF.

Monitoring and Reporting

20. Monitoring of built environment indicators is a critical gap in the monitoring and reporting framework set out in the transitional NPF. A key driver of resource management reform is improving the management and functioning of the built environment. Specific monitoring provisions are needed to ensure good outcomes are being met in the built environment. We would like to see specific attributes related to the built environment, which must be monitored and reported on.
21. The New South Wales Government has a useful set of built environment indicators which could provide inspiration for the attributes which could be monitored in New Zealand ([refer here](#)). These indicators are wide ranging, but include accessibility to key facilities by different modes, housing diversity, mix of uses, urban heat and building density. It is a missed opportunity to leave such critical aspects of a well-functioning urban environment from the monitoring and reporting framework set out in the transitional NPF.
22. Clear and consistent guidance is also needed to support the requirement for Regional Planning Committees to *“broadly assess emissions impacts of the region’s infrastructure and urban development scenarios to inform options for low-emissions development strategies.”* There needs to be clear and consistent guidance from central government on how these emissions impacts are calculated, so that there is consistency in how RSS are developed. This will also help with tracking whether our strategies are progressing towards the 2050 target.

Further Information and Opportunity to Discuss our Submission

23. Should the Ministry for the Environment require clarification of the submission from Hamilton City Council staff, or additional information, please contact **Mark Davey** (Urban and Spatial Planning Unit Manager) on **07 838 6995** or email mark.davey@hcc.govt.nz in the first instance.
24. Hamilton City Council representatives would welcome the opportunity to discuss the content of this submission in more detail with the Ministry for the Environment.

Yours faithfully



Lance Vervoort
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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