

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 My name is Gurvinderpal Singh. I hold the position of Team Leader of Development Planning within the Urban Planning and Design Group at Kāinga Ora – Homes and Communities (“**Kāinga Ora**”).

1.2 The key points addressed in my evidence are to provide:

- (a) The background to Kāinga Ora and the statutory context within which it operates;
- (b) An overview of the Kāinga Ora portfolio and public housing demand in the national context, and within Upper Hutt City and the Wellington Region, noting the discrepancy between the Kāinga Ora portfolio and the demand by typology for public housing.
- (c) A summary of the Kāinga Ora submissions on the Upper Hutt City Council (“**the Council**” or “**UHCC**”) Proposed Intensification Planning Instrument (“**IPI**”), including the rationale for the relief sought, and in particular comments about:
 - (i) The extent to which the Council is giving effect to the NPS-UD;
 - (ii) The desirability for regional consistency, particularly in relation to the application of a High Density Residential Zone (“**HRZ**”) and a Medium Density Residential Zone (“**MRZ**”) in Upper Hutt;
 - (iii) Areas where Kāinga Ora seeks greater levels of intensification to be enabled, including the application of a proposed new height variation control in the HRZ surrounding the City Centre Zone (“**CCZ**”); and
 - (iv) The inclusion of Design Guides.

1.3 Kāinga Ora considers the current planning regulations across the District constrain the ability to create and deliver well-functioning urban

environments. If the requested relief is adopted, it will provide for increased development capacity in locations around the highest order centres in the Upper Hutt City context, a built form that is consistent with the intent of the NPS-UD, and aid in the consenting and delivery of housing, being affordable housing, homes for first-home buyers, and significant market capacity across the city, and a choice of housing typology and size.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 My name is Gurvinderpal Singh. I hold the position of Team Leader of Development Planning within the Urban Planning and Design Group at Kāinga Ora.
- 2.2 I hold a Bachelor of Planning (Honours) from the University of Auckland and I am a Full Member of the New Zealand Planning Institute. I have held roles in the planning profession for the past 14 years and have been involved in advising on issues regarding the Resource Management Act 1991 (**RMA**) and district plans.
- 2.3 My experience includes ten years in various planning roles within local government. For the past 4 and a half years' I have been employed by Kāinga Ora.
- 2.4 I have been providing development planning expertise within Kāinga Ora (as Housing New Zealand) since 2018. In this role I have:
- (a) Undertaken assessment and identification of redevelopment land within the portfolio;
 - (b) Provided input into the strategic land planning, including the Asset Management Strategy, various investment and land use frameworks, and various structure plan processes of Kāinga Ora;
 - (c) Provided advice on, and management of, the regulatory planning processes associated with Kāinga Ora residential development projects;

- (d) Managed engagement with local authorities, local communities and other agencies on matters relating to regulatory policy frameworks associated with residential development;
- (e) Provided advice on, and management of, input into strategic planning activities including plan changes and plan review processes throughout the country. More recently, this has included providing technical planning expertise and project management of Kāinga Ora submissions to the Proposed Whangārei District Plan, Proposed New Plymouth District Plan and the Proposed Waikato District Plan and submissions on Plan Changes implementing the Resource Management (Enabling Housing Supply and Other Matters) Amendment Act (**Amendment Act**) and the National Policy Statement on Urban Development 2020 (**NPS-UD**) across the Waikato, Bay of Plenty and Wellington Region.

2.5 I confirm that I am authorised to give corporate evidence on behalf of Kāinga Ora in respect of the Upper Hutt City IPI.

3. BACKGROUND TO KĀINGA ORA

3.1 Kāinga Ora was formed in 2019 as a statutory entity established under the Kāinga Ora – Homes and Communities Act 2019 ("**Kāinga Ora Act**"), and brings together Housing New Zealand Corporation, HLC (2017) Ltd and parts of the KiwiBuild Unit. Under the Crown Entities Act 2004, Kāinga Ora is a crown entity and is required to give effect to Government policy.

The Government Policy Statement on Housing and Urban Development

3.2 The Government Policy Statement on Housing and Urban Development ("**GPS-HUD**") was published on 28 September 2021 and provides a shared vision and direction across housing and urban development, to guide and inform the actions of all those who contribute to the housing

and urban development sector. The GPS-HUD outlines the need for concerted and ongoing action across six focus areas to realise the vision, outcomes, and future envisaged for Aotearoa New Zealand:

- (a) Ensure more affordable homes are built;
- (b) Ensure houses meet needs;
- (c) Enable people into stable, affordable homes;
- (d) Support whanau to have safe, healthy affordable homes with secure tenure;
- (e) Re-establish housing's primary role as a home rather than a financial asset; and
- (f) Plan and invest in our places.

The Kāinga Ora – Homes and Communities Act 2019

3.3 The Kāinga Ora Act sets out the functions of Kāinga Ora in relation to housing and urban development.

3.4 Kāinga Ora is the Government's delivery agency for housing and urban development. Kāinga Ora therefore works across the entire housing spectrum to build complete, diverse communities that enable New Zealanders from all backgrounds to have similar opportunities in life. As a result, Kāinga Ora has two core roles:

- (a) being a world class public housing landlord; and
- (b) leading and coordinating urban development projects.

3.5 The statutory objective¹ of Kāinga Ora requires it to contribute to sustainable, inclusive, and thriving communities through the promotion of a high quality urban form that:

- (a) provide people with good quality, affordable housing choices that meet diverse needs;

¹ Section 12, Kāinga Ora Homes and Communities Act 2019

- (b) support good access to jobs, amenities and services; and
- (c) otherwise sustain or enhance the overall economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of current and future generations.

3.6 The statutory functions of Kāinga Ora in relation to urban development extend beyond the development of housing (which includes public housing, affordable housing, homes for first home buyers, and market housing) to the development and renewal of urban environments, as well as the development of related commercial, industrial, community, or other amenities, infrastructure, facilities, services or works.

3.7 In its capacity as an Urban Development Agency, the approach Kāinga Ora has taken across the IPI plan changes among Tier 1 authorities has been to ensure the intentions of the Amendment Act and the NPS-UD are incorporated within district plans appropriately and that ultimately permissive and/or enabling provisions are introduced through these plan changes to facilitate the creation of well-designed and well-functioning urban environments.

4. OVERVIEW OF THE KĀINGA ORA PUBLIC HOUSING PORTFOLIO AND DEMAND

National Context

4.1 Kāinga Ora is responsible for providing homes to those most in need from the Ministry of Social Development Housing Register (“**Housing Register**”). Kāinga Ora is currently the largest residential landlord in New Zealand, providing public housing² to more than 186,000 people³ who face barriers (for a number of reasons) to housing in the wider rental and housing market.

² Public housing is an umbrella term for state housing and community housing.

³ Kāinga Ora – Homes and Communities Annual Report 2021-22; <https://kaingaora.govt.nz/assets/Publications/Annual-report/Annual-report-2021-22.pdf>, see page 29.

- 4.2 Kāinga Ora owns or manages more than 69,000 properties throughout Aotearoa, including about 3,700 properties for community groups that provide housing services and transitional housing⁴.
- 4.3 Public housing is a subset of affordable housing and meets the housing needs of people who face barriers to housing in the wider rental and housing market. In general terms, housing supply issues and broader events such as the Covid-19 global pandemic and financial market issues have made housing less affordable and as such there is an increased demand for public housing.
- 4.4 There has been a marked change in the type of public housing that is required by the Kāinga Ora tenant base:
- (a) Demand has increased for single bedroom housing required for single persons, the elderly or disabled, and larger homes with four to six bedrooms required to house larger families;
 - (b) As a result, the size of many state houses does not match the changing demand for public housing, with a large proportion of the Kāinga Ora housing stock comprising older 2-3 bedroom homes on large lots which are too large for smaller households and too small for larger households; and
 - (c) This has meant that Kāinga Ora has had to review its housing portfolio and assess how it can respond to the changes in demand, given its current housing supply is skewed towards 2–3-bedroom houses that do not meet the needs of tenants and/or are uneconomic to maintain.
- 4.5 To meet this need, Kāinga Ora is undertaking one of the largest housing delivery programmes, with an additional 2,973 new public homes (including 946 leased to community housing providers) being added to

⁴ Managed Stock National Summary as at September 2022
<https://kaingaora.govt.nz/assets/Publications/Managed-stock/Managed-Stock-National-Summary-September-2022.pdf>

the Kāinga Ora housing portfolio between October 2019 and October 2022⁵ and a continued demand to create more homes.

Upper Hutt City Context

- 4.6 Kāinga Ora manages a portfolio of approximately 400 properties in Upper Hutt City with 66% of this existing portfolio being three and four bedroom single-detached dwellings on large lots and only 2% consisting of one bedroom dwellings.⁷
- 4.7 Kāinga Ora has approximately 23,000 applicants⁶ (based on the household) on the public housing waitlist across Aotearoa, with around 192 applicants seeking a home within Upper Hutt City. This is close to 10% of the waitlist demand for the Wellington region. The demand for one bedroom homes in Upper Hutt City makes up approximately 56% of the total demand for homes on the Housing Register.⁷ Combine that with the demand for 2 bedroom homes, 84% of the applicants on the Housing Register are seeking for a 1 and 2 bedroom homes in Upper Hutt City.
- 4.8 There has been a marked increase in the number of applicants waiting for a home in Upper Hutt City. From December 2017 to December 2022, the Housing Register has seen an approximately 255% increase in applicants in Upper Hutt City).⁸ This is similar to and consistent with national and regional public housing demand trends and where current portfolio make-up cannot provide for the needs and demands of the applicants on the Housing Register. Therefore, Kāinga Ora is having to consider how it repositions its portfolio in Upper Hutt to meet this demand.⁸

⁵ Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, Government Housing Dashboard <https://www.hud.govt.nz/stats-and-insights/the-government-housing-dashboard/change-in-public-homes/#tabset>

⁶ Ministry of Social Development, Housing Register as at December 2022. <https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/housing/housing-register.html>

⁷ Ministry of Social Development, Housing Register as at December 2022

⁸ Ministry of Social Development, Housing Register as at December 2022

5. KĀINGA ORA SUBMISSIONS

- 5.1 Kāinga Ora has lodged comprehensive submissions to the UHCC IPI. These submissions arise from the operational and development needs of Kāinga Ora, but also reflect a wider interest in delivering the strategic vision and outcomes sought through the Amendment Act and the NPS-UD. The intent of the submissions is to ensure the delivery of a planning framework in Upper Hutt that contributes to well-functioning urban environments that are sustainable and inclusive which contribute towards thriving communities that provide people with good quality, affordable housing choices and support access to jobs, amenities and services.
- 5.2 Through submissions on the various IPI processes across the country, one of the Kāinga Ora strategic goals is to ensure the implementation of the NPS-UD and the requirements of the Amendment Act achieve their stated outcomes.
- 5.3 It is undisputed that there is a high demand for housing in Aotearoa, and to supply a greater number of homes in locations that connect well to jobs, education, transport and amenities. There is, therefore, a strong need to build up, rather than out. Intensification, when done well, can bring a range of benefits to an area, such as greater opportunity for investment in infrastructure and local amenities, increased safety and a stronger sense of community and more public green spaces when part of comprehensive redevelopments.
- 5.4 As New Zealand's Urban Development Agency tasked with creating more homes across New Zealand at pace, Kāinga Ora supports plans that enable more people to live in locations that have good access to jobs, amenities and services that meet their day to day needs, and that enable enough housing supply so that current pressures are eased.
- 5.5 Kāinga Ora has focused on ensuring that local authorities do not undermine the step-change intended by the NPS-UD by protecting the status quo through overly liberal use of qualifying matters to reduce the application of the policy 3 directives and MDRS. Seeking to favour the

status quo in this way defeats the purpose of the NPS-UD and is inconsistent with policy 6(b).

5.6 It should be noted that Kāinga Ora submitted on all IPIs across the Wellington Region, with interest in establishing a regionally consistent planning framework that responds to the regional growth projections and the natural relationships between the urban environments within the Wellington Region.

5.7 It should be further noted that, in reviewing and making submissions on the UHCC IPI, Kāinga Ora undertook an assessment of the centres hierarchy at a local and regional scale, and has refined its approach to ensure that proposed residential intensification responds to role and function of the centre within a regional context. For example, Kāinga Ora considers that the proposed CCZ operates more as a Metropolitan Centre Zone (MCZ) in a regional context. Kāinga Ora does not seek that the CCZ is renamed or rezoned to the MCZ, but has sought built form outcomes within walkable catchments consistent with other MCZs in the Wellington Region. Kāinga Ora has also refined its position with respect to Silverstream and Trentham and considers these centres operate as Local Centres.

5.8 It is acknowledged that the IPI as notified has the potential to reduce regulatory constraints, increase housing supply, and ultimately contribute to and provide for well-functioning urban environments for all New Zealanders. However, the following key themes of the IPI, as notified, compromise the extent to which the planning provisions enable appropriate development within Upper Hutt:

- (a) The lack of clarity and consistency in the application of Policy 3 of the NPS-UD, including the corresponding density provisions and proposed walkable catchments.
- (b) Lack of additional intensification provided within a walkable catchment of the city centre; this is highest order centre in Upper Hutt with the highest level of commercial amenity and services, and is the most suitable location to enable more

people to live in these areas to give effect to Objective 1 and 3 of the NPS-UD. This also allows for a 'step-down' in urban built form from the city centre, which has unlimited building heights;

- (c) The use of the GRZ as a zone for the rest of the residential urban environment outside the HRZ. Kāinga Ora considers this to be regionally inconsistent, especially with Hutt City, and therefore creates inconsistency in plan frameworks within the region. This is particularly relevant for the Hutt Valley which plan users and developers, such as Kāinga Ora, consider holistically when planning and identifying strategic investment and development opportunities. Kāinga Ora supports a MRZ zone for the Wellington Region, and considers this to be consistent with the National Planning standards and its goal to achieve nationally and regionally consistent planning frameworks; and
- (d) Reference and required compliance with proposed GRZ provisions within the HRZ provisions; Kāinga Ora considers this creates a complicated planning framework for plan users and does not appropriately differentiate between the planned urban built form of the GRZ (proposed as MRZ by Kāinga Ora) and the HRZ.

5.9 If the Kāinga Ora submissions on the UHCC IPI are adopted, particularly in relation to the above and as sought by the expert evidence submitted on behalf of Kāinga Ora, then the constraints inherent in the IPI in its notified form would be reduced, and the IPI would enable greater development capacity in the areas of Wellington City that are most appropriate for urban intensification. It has the opportunity to enable the delivery of a variety of homes to meet the needs of all people of Aotearoa.

6. RESIDENTIAL ZONES

- 6.1 Kāinga Ora seeks that the General Residential Zone (“GRZ”) is renamed as the Medium Density Residential Zone (“MRZ”) for regional consistency and to better indicate the purpose and description of the zone.
- 6.2 Kāinga Ora seeks proposed GRZ (sought as MRZ in this submission) and HRZ provide greater design flexibility to recognise the planned urban built form. Revisions are also sought to expand the application of notification preclusion statements and inclusion of specific provisions for small-scale commercial activities at ground floor level in the HRZ.
- 6.3 Kāinga Ora also seeks the removal of reference to the GRZ rules and standards within the HRZ and that provisions are refined and simplified.

7. COMMERCIAL AND MIXED USE ZONES

- 7.1 Kāinga Ora seeks to enable and provide for a greater level of commercial services and amenity to support the residential intensification enabled through the IPI and recognise the future need, role and function of these centres within the Upper Hutt urban environment. Kāinga Ora considers that the spatial extent of some centres should be expanded to provide a well-functioning urban environment, specifically related to the City Centre Zone; Silverstream Town Centre; Trentham Local Centre; Trentham North Local Centre and Wallaceville Local Centre. Kāinga Ora supports the evidence of its experts in this regard.

8. DESIGN GUIDES

- 8.1 Kāinga Ora takes a consistent position on the use of design guides in District Plans nationally.
- 8.2 Overall, Kāinga Ora seeks that Design Guidelines generally sit outside of the plan as a non-statutory document and assist the plan user as a guide informing the design process for proposals and to assist applicants understand how to achieve the planned outcomes of the

plan. The planned outcomes should be clearly described and identified in objectives, policies, rules and relevant matters of discretion for activities and rules.

- 8.3 Design guidance should be seen as a tool to assist an applicant to understand the relevant objectives, policies and assessment criteria of the Plan. The guide is simply that, a guide, and directly including it in the assessment criteria elevates the guide to a de facto rule or standard in its own right.
- 8.4 If there are critical outcomes that the Design Guidelines are trying to achieve, then these matters should be referred to in the relevant assessment criteria and/or matters of discretion and effects standards/rules in the Plan. Design Guidelines are more appropriate as a non-statutory planning and advisory tool that can assist the plan-user in interpreting and complying with the District Plan provisions and, more importantly, any such guidelines can be updated and amended accordingly to best practice without having to go through a Schedule 1 process.
- 8.5 To some extent, this position is consistent with Kāinga Ora's position on matters such as the appropriate approach to hazard maps which, because of their dynamic nature, are best left as non-statutory documents informing the approach to risk mitigation in the relevant plan, rather than being incorporated into the plan itself.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 Through its submissions on UHCC IPI, Kāinga Ora is seeking to assist Upper Hutt City to achieve the objective of creating a well-functioning urban environment. This can be done in a manner which enables the redevelopment of existing brownfield land to make better use of infrastructure (including social infrastructure) and improve the social and economic wellbeing of the community and is in line with the Amendment Act and the NPS-UD.

- 9.2 Upper Hutt City has an important role within the Wellington Region and planned growth, and the planning framework should reflect this role and function and enable as many people as possible to live in areas of high demand and accessibility to jobs, amenity and services.
- 9.3 Kāinga Ora considers that the IPI, as notified, has the potential to reduce regulatory constraints and increase housing supply. If the Kāinga Ora submissions on the IPI are adopted, then the constraints applied by the zoning and provisions of the Plan in its notified form would be further reduced, allowing more people to live in areas that are in close proximity to employment, commercial amenity, community services and public transport.
- 9.4 It would provide a development capacity for delivery of significant additional public housing, affordable housing, homes for first-home buyers, in the most appropriate locations to support a well-functioning urban environment for all New Zealanders.

GURVINDERPAL SINGH

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