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Inquiry into using land for housing
New Zealand Productivity Commission
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Sent via email

To Whom it May Concern,

Submission to the Inquiry into using land for housing

Q1. Is it helpful to think of the planning and development system as a means of dealing with externalities associated with land use and coordination problems? What other factors should the Commission consider in evaluating the role of the planning and development system?

Planning and development are only 2 components of 'externalities' others such as how long land developers/ persons 'sit' on land before releasing and the reasons why they do this should be looked into.

Q2. Can the current land planning and development system be made to work better to benefit cities throughout New Zealand? Is a different type of planning system required to meet the needs for housing in New Zealand's fastest growing cities?

Yes streamlined processes could have benefits. Auckland is really the only NZ jurisdiction that is in need of any form of special planning system to support land supply for housing, given population growth compared to housing supply. You could look to greater Christchurch and the planning frameworks used here to expedite the release of land for housing following the earthquakes. Critical however, is the need to link and ensure the required infrastructure is delivered ahead of or at the same time as the houses themselves, as well as ensuring high quality living communities are delivered through appropriate design, density and master planning guidelines if this were to be progressed.

Q3. What criteria should the Commission consider in evaluating the current land planning system in New Zealand?

Need to link sales data with local authority data, need to see if there is a difference between when consent is granted and when land is actually developed – should show if the practice of “land banking” is having an effect on land supply. It is not just local authority but the industry itself that will impact upon the land supply for housing.

Q9. How easy is it to understand the objectives and requirements of local authority plans? What improves the intelligibility of plans?

Very difficult, it is increasingly the norm for an individual to have to go to a professional planner to assist with even the most standard of household resource consent applications. Impacting on those who want to perhaps increase density by 1 or 2 units and flows onto impacting the product produced. Planning systems must put a customer lens on plan developments and interpretation rather than only focusing on meeting regulatory needs. Make it customer centric and not the other way around.

Q19. What impact does transport planning have on the supply of development capacity?

It is a long running fact that transport planning and land use planning are linked. We still separate them here in NZ therefore it results in continued disjointedness in the readiness of infrastructure provision (roads and public transport services). Joining these 2 disciplines in the plan making process can reduce this risk. Infrastructure feasibility generally (including transport matters) and delivery must be form part of the assessment for considering the release of land supply for housing.

Q38. In your experience, what impact do conditions on resource consents have on the viability of development projects?

If unduly onerous can incur additional costs onto the development. Local Authority monitoring and review of internal processes can ensure that conditions meet their statute tests – fair, reasonable and necessary.

Q40. Are there issues relating to the process for challenging or changing decisions which impede the supply of effective land for housing?

Yes the very fact that your only recourse is via the Environment Court and or the high court is a hugely expensive exercise – if mediation services or other intermediate steps were introduced this could reduce the use of development money on the process rather than the product.

Q47. Is there sufficient alignment of incentives for the various organisations involved in the provision of infrastructure to support housing? If not what could be done to improve alignment?

This in my view is a critical part of the formal planning process. The viability of each type of infrastructure to support the proposed area of land for use as housing needs to be assessed the time consideration is given to any given location for future or proposed release of land. In my recent experience here in NZ it does not appear to me that this is part of normal and standard process when local authorities or even developers are looking at land to release for housing it appears its whomever has land on offer is considered rather than if it is the right

land in the right location that should be released. The cost and analysis of infrastructure provision feasibility should form part of the standard assessment criteria when Local Authorities and even central Government are looking at land potentially suitable for release into development for housing.

Q49. What comparative information about the provision of infrastructure to support housing should the Commission be aware of?

Need to align the viability of infrastructure provision with the location of the land proposed for release to provide for housing.

Q54. Do development contribution policies incentivise efficient decisions about land use, or do they unduly restrict the supply of land for housing?

No they are not used to their best potential, therefore no I do not think they restrict the supply of land for housing.

Having to align with the requirements of 2 statues is unnecessary and unduly restricts their use and effectiveness, remove from either the Resource Management Act or the Local Government Act.

By improving planning policy in this area you could then define when and how contributions would be sought and used creating certainty for developments whilst ensuring that at least an initial or partial funding source for a developments required infrastructure could be project planned for delivery in a timely manner to support the housing development e.g. many London boroughs, such as the London Borough of Hillingdon, use developer contributions, regulated via supplementary planning policy documents, for just this purposes e.g. roading, public transport, affordable housing, education health and community facility provision. These supplementary planning policy documents detail when a contribution will be sought, how the sum is calculated and gives an indication on where the funds will be spend and within a timeframe, not more than 5 years form when the contribution is received.

Q58. Do councils in high growth areas require a range of approaches for funding infrastructure?

Yes thinking outside the box for solutions needed – I would say this really only applies to Auckland at this time.

Q60. What are the main advantages and disadvantages of having infrastructure vested in council controlled organisations.

This would also apply to those government and nongovernment organisations that have infrastructure vested in them.

Main advantage is that they can bring forward delivery of infrastructure when the need arises.

Disadvantage is that due to funding pressures they can also change their mind on timing of delivery of infrastructure that a development may have relied upon when undertaking the planning process.

Q71. How common is the use of covenants in new housing developments? To what extent are private covenants restricting the supply of development capacity?

My view is that they are used too much, here in Christchurch it appears that they are used in every new development post earthquakes. This leads to loss of cultural and social difference and diversity in the communities built and the design of the developments themselves. They also restrict the introduction of social inclusion principals whilst restricting the ability for different housing types to be delivered – such as increased density and/or use of alternative materials to build less costly dwellings that could then be utilised or delivered as some form of affordable housing model.

Thank you for the opportunity to place this submission and I look forward to corresponding as the inquiry moves through its phases.

Yours sincerely,



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