

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Urban Intensification Taskforce

Aim

To propose a way forward for achieving better urban intensification outcomes for New Zealand and, in particular, the Auckland region.

Context

Building and Construction sector leaders met in Auckland on 1 August 2008 at the invitation of the Minister for Building and Construction. Particular issues identified by the forum included that:

- productivity growth, especially labour productivity has been disappointing and is limiting sector ability to respond positively to change
- improving skill levels, across the board, is critical for improved sector productivity
- pressure on land use will continue to drive urban intensification – and that urbanisation is an issue for all New Zealand cities, not just Auckland and that:
 - there are not enough large scale intensification projects currently underway or planned to cope with future needs within current urban boundaries
 - the quality of urban intensification to date, in delivering sustainable urban environments, has been patchy and generally poor

To develop practical proposals to address the above issues it was decided to establish taskforces made up of industry, local and regional government, and central government leaders:

- A Sector Productivity Taskforce, to:
 - develop a sector wide skills strategy
 - develop an improved approach to the procurement of construction projects
- An Urban Intensification Taskforce, to:
 - develop proposals to improve current approaches to planning and coordination in support of improved urban development

It was proposed that the sector forum should reconvene in mid 2009 to consider progress on the above.

Urban Intensification

A number of issues relating to urban intensification were discussed including:

- A number of urban locations, particularly in the Auckland region, face an increasingly scarce supply of currently zoned greenfield land for residential, business and mixed-use development
- Achieving more efficient use of land through intensive development of town centres, suburbs and new urban areas is critical to enabling New Zealand's urban areas to grow sustainably
- Intensifying land use in strategic areas could provide New Zealanders with more housing choice, viable public transport and more satisfying places to live, work and play
- The pace and nature of urban intensification is currently insufficient to accommodate projected population growth
- This reflects significant impediments to achieving sustainable urban intensification in practice:
 - The lack of a strong vision to guide sustainable urban development
 - The long lead times involved in the land use planning and development process, particularly when re-zonings are required
 - The lack of coordination between the large number of parties involved in national, regional and local planning and implementation of large-scale developments
 - Issues of limited resources and skills shortages at all levels of government and the development industry
 - Community resistance to urban intensification proposals within existing urban areas
 - A lack of high-intensity housing suitable for families
 - Difficulties assembling useful parcels of land from fragmented groups of properties in town centres and suburbs
 - Difficulties funding urban development projects, particularly in the current climate of global financial instability
- Unless these problems are reduced or removed, shortages of land may constrain the future growth of our cities

Objectives

The objective of the Taskforce is to oversee the development of a strategy and action plan for achieving better urban intensification outcomes for New Zealand and, in particular, the Auckland region. This would include oversight of work to:

- Describe what successful urban intensification means in practice, including the value proposition
- Analyse the main barriers and impediments to the achievement of sustainable urban intensification, taking into account:

- underpinning legislation and regulation including the Resource Management, Local Government and Building acts, and professional practices, codes and capacity
 - the way that industry, the advisory profession, local and central government agencies and communities interact with each other in the process of land use planning and development
 - how infrastructure and other development activities are funded affordably and equitably
 - community resistance to intensification
 - the perceived lack of high-intensity housing suitable for families and the related lack of consumer demand
- Identify and assess possible options for better achieving sustainable urban intensification outcomes
 - Propose a way forward for achieving better sustainable urban intensification outcomes for New Zealand and, in particular, the Auckland region

Role

The role of the Urban Intensification Taskforce is to meet 3-4 times as required to:

- consider and agree a terms of reference for work to progress each of the above work streams
- oversee each work stream and in doing so:
 - identify and provide guidance to the taskforce secretariat on any issues affecting progress
 - ensure that appropriate connections and links are made between work streams
- consider the findings and proposals of each work stream including:
 - their relevance to the issues identified by the sector forum of urban intensification
 - the practicality of proposals and their ability to support urban intensification
 - how the proposals would be implemented, including the roles of industry, local and regional government and central government
- champion the proposed way forward with central and local government agencies and industry to seek their support in taking appropriate action

Membership

Taskforce members will be drawn from industry, local government and central government but the group is not intended to be representative. Individual members will be recognised sector leaders and will have knowledge and understanding of the strategic context in which

the development sector operates including the nature of issues, challenges and opportunities facing it from an urban intensification perspective.

The Taskforce may choose to establish working groups to progress particular work streams (e.g. a land use planning group). Membership of the working groups will be selected by the Taskforce and may draw on people from outside the Taskforce who are recognised for their specialist skills, knowledge and experience.

Reporting

The Taskforce will compile an overview of its findings and proposals (including advice on 'next steps' necessary to implement or further refine its proposals) and report to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Department of Building and Housing by March 2009. Once finalised, proposals will be presented to the sector forum when it reconvenes in mid 2009.

Accountability

The CEO of the Department of Building and Housing will, convene, but not chair, the Taskforce. A Taskforce Chair, to be appointed by the CEO, will be accountable to the CEO for the operation of the Taskforce. The Taskforce will report back to the CEO with findings and proposals (including advice on 'next steps' necessary to implement or further refine its proposals). The CEO will ensure the Minister is advised on progress.

Ministerial involvement

Ministers will not attend meetings of the Taskforce but will be regularly updated on progress and provide input via the Chief Executive, involving the taskforce chair as appropriate.

Support

In carrying out its work the taskforce will be supported by:

- A small secretariat that will provide administrative, analytical and communications support to the taskforces. The secretariat will manage and coordinate work on the Taskforce's behalf and pull together conclusions and proposals in the form of written reports and presentations.
- Working groups to be drawn from suitable skilled and experienced persons from across central government, industry and local and regional government to explore particular issues and develop proposals for the taskforce's consideration.
- Some funds, to be managed by the secretariat, to purchase research and analytical inputs