



Align

**WELLINGTON
ELECTRICITY**

SUBMISSION –

LOWER HUTT
PROPOSED DISTRICT
PLAN 2025

2 MAY 2025

Bringing places and
communities to life.

Submission on publicly notified proposed district plan

Clause 6 of Schedule 1, Resource Management Act 1991

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To: Chief Executive, Hutt City Council

Via email to district.plan@huttcity.govt.nz.

- **This is a submission from:**
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- **I could not gain an advantage in trade competition through this submission.**
- (Deleted – not applicable as trade competition is not relevant).
- **The specific provisions of the proposal that my submission relates to, my submission on those provisions, and the decisions I seek are included in the attached submission table.**
I also seek all further, alternative, necessary, or consequential relief as may be required to give effect to the matters raised in this submission.
- **I wish to be heard in support of my submission.**
- **If others make a similar submission, I will consider presenting a joint case with them at the hearing.**

1. Introduction

Wellington Electricity Lines Limited (WELL) is responsible for the safe, reliable, and efficient supply of electricity to the Hutt City region. Electricity is essential for everyday life as it powers homes, businesses, healthcare services, schools, and public services, supporting the functioning and growth of the community. Access to electricity is fundamental to the well-being and safety of every individual and business in the region.

As an essential service provider, WELL must maintain and upgrade its infrastructure to meet growing demand and continue providing a reliable supply. This includes activities such as trenching, cabinet installation, pole replacements, and the addition of pole-mounted transformers. These tasks are necessary for the ongoing operation and development of the electricity network.

WELL submits and wishes to be heard on the following provisions of the Proposed District Plan (PDP), with the aim of creating a regulatory environment that allows for the balanced efficient delivery of this essential service, while respecting environmental and cultural considerations:

Minor Upgrading:

WELL seeks clarification and refinement of provisions relating to "minor upgrading" activities, such as reconductoring, pole replacements, and the installation of new pole-mounted equipment. These activities are key to maintaining a resilient electricity network and, while WELL acknowledges the need for oversight, believes the consent requirements should align with the low-impact nature of these works.

Trenching in Road Reserves:

WELL submits on provisions that impose area-based limits on trenching works. As electricity infrastructure is typically linear, trenching often covers large distances. WELL seeks a more flexible approach to these provisions that recognises the temporary nature of trenching works and the need for practical management of these activities.

Sites and Areas of Significance to Māori (SASM):

WELL respectfully submits on the thresholds set in INF-S19 regarding trenching in SASM areas. While WELL fully respects the importance of cultural values, we believe a more balanced approach is needed that allows for essential infrastructure works to proceed with appropriate protocols in place. WELL suggests amending the provision to reflect the practical realities of infrastructure maintenance while ensuring cultural concerns are respected.

Protection of Infrastructure Corridors:

WELL submits that provisions related to infrastructure corridors should allow for more flexibility regarding development near key infrastructure. It is important that safe separation distances and access for maintenance are maintained, and WELL seeks an approach that accommodates development while supporting the ongoing reliability of the network.

Integration of Renewable Generation:

WELL also seeks the inclusion of a new policy under the Renewable Energy chapter to ensure the Plan appropriately recognises the technical and operational constraints of the electricity distribution network when integrating distributed renewable generation. This addition is intended to support alignment with national industry regulations and provide clearer guidance to plan users regarding the practical limits of network capacity and safety obligations.

WELL conditionally supports provisions in the PDP that align with the operational realities of electricity distribution. The proposed amendments aim to create a more practical regulatory framework that supports the provision of electricity services, while balancing environmental and cultural concerns.

2. Specific Provisions Subject to Submission

The following tables identify provisions in the Proposed Plan that WELL either opposes or supports subject to specific amendments

- Please note that definitions, objectives, policies, rules and standards not specifically listed below is **supported** in principle by WELL.

2.1 Definitions

Term	Position	Reasons	Relief sought
Building	Conditionally support (with proposed amendment)	The definition of "building" includes any roofed physical construction fixed to land, which could unintentionally include small utility cabinets. Although cabinets are defined separately and function as network utility structures, there is no explicit statement that they are	Proposed Amendment to the Definition of "Building": <i>Add</i> <i>For the purposes of this Plan, "building" does not include network utility structures, such as cabinets, equipment enclosures, transformers, or similar infrastructure used</i>

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		excluded from being treated as buildings for the purpose of building-related controls. This creates interpretation risk where cabinet installations might inadvertently trigger zone-based rules relating to buildings (such as setbacks, site coverage, or stormwater thresholds).	<i>for the provision of electricity, telecommunications, or other utilities, where these are managed under the infrastructure provisions of this Plan.</i>
Temporary Activity	Conditionally support (with proposed amendment)	To be amended to explicitly include mobile electricity generators, particularly those used: during planned outages, for emergency backup, and for temporary supply.	Amend the definition of “Temporary Activity” to include mobile electricity generators used during planned or unplanned outages, maintenance works, and network upgrades, with reference to their temporary nature and limited on-site duration.
Upgrading of infrastructure	Oppose with suggested alternative	No longer includes “minor upgrading”; now overly restricts common and low-impact works like reconductoring and minor pole height adjustments.	Reinstate a clear and practical definition for minor upgrading , or amend INF-S2 to permit routine upgrades where the effects are similar to existing infrastructure. This should include reconductoring, replacing poles, and minor relocations or volume changes to meet safety or compliance – Refer to submission on INF-S2

2.2 Objectives and Policies

	Chapter	Reference	Position	Reasons	Relief sought
1	Renewable Energy	REG-(ADD)	Request inclusion of a new policy	To ensure the Plan acknowledges the technical and operational limitations of the electricity distribution network when integrating distributed renewable energy generation.	<p>Add new policy</p> <p><i>“REG-Px - Connection and integration with electricity infrastructure</i></p> <p><i>1. Integration of renewable electricity generation must occur in a manner that aligns with the technical and operational capacity of the electricity distribution network.</i></p> <p><i>2. Connection is subject to assessment and approval under Part 6 of the Electricity Industry Participation Code 2010, including compliance with safety, voltage stability, and load management requirements.”</i></p>
2	Protection of Infrastructure	PINF-P1 <i>Protection of nationally significant infrastructure</i>	Conditionally support (with proposed amendment)	Protection is essential, but the policy may be too rigid around development near key corridors.	<p>Amend PINF-P1 by adding the following clause at the end:</p> <p><i>“Enable development within or near infrastructure corridors where:</i></p> <p><i>a. Safe separation distances are maintained in accordance with the New Zealand Electrical Code of Practice for Electrical Safe Distances (NZECP 34:2001);</i></p> <p><i>b. Access to infrastructure assets for operation, inspection, maintenance and</i></p>

					<p><i>upgrades is retained;</i></p> <p><i>c. Effects on the operation, resilience or integrity of the infrastructure can be avoided, remedied or mitigated through design, layout or built form; and</i></p> <p><i>d. The infrastructure owner has been consulted and supports the development approach.”</i></p> <p>This ensures the policy remains enabling while continuing to protect infrastructure integrity and safety.</p>
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2.3 Rules and Standards Opposed to or Supported in Principle

Reasons of **opposition** are elaborated on in the justification assessment below the table.

	Chapter	Provision	Position	Reasons	Relief Sought
1	Infrastructure	INF-R2	Conditionally support (with proposed amendment/clarification)	Rule needs to be amended to reinstate a practical ‘minor upgrading’ threshold. Otherwise, this rule is opposed as it becomes unworkable.	<p>Amend INF-R2 to include an additional clause:</p> <p><i>“This rule includes routine minor upgrading activities such as reconductoring of existing lines, replacement or strengthening of poles and cross-arms, and the installation of pole-mounted</i></p>

					<p><i>equipment (such as switches, fuses, or communications devices), where the effects are no greater than those of the existing infrastructure and the works comply with relevant safety and engineering standards.”</i></p> <p>This amendment reinstates the flexibility previously provided under the “minor upgrading” rule and ensures that essential, low-impact upgrade activities remain permitted.</p>
2	Infrastructure	INF-S17: <i>Trenching in Road Reserve</i>	Oppose with suggested alternative	<p>INF-S17 restricts trenching based on cumulative area thresholds, many of which are as low as:</p> <p>These thresholds do not account for the linear nature of electricity infrastructure, where trenching often exceeds 250 metres in a single project. Nor do they consider the temporary and reinstated nature of these works, or the fact that they are typically carried out within road reserves already subject to engineering and safety oversight.</p>	<p>Amend INF-S17 to include an exemption:</p> <p>Exemption:</p> <p><i>This standard does not apply to trenching works located within the road reserve or designated infrastructure corridors, where the works are associated with a network utility service and:</i></p> <p><i>a) The works are temporary in nature and reinstated within 10 working days;</i></p>

					<p><i>b) The works comply with the Electricity (Safety) Regulations 2010;</i></p> <p><i>c) The works are managed under a certified Construction Management Plan, Traffic Management Plan, and Earthworks Management Plan prepared in accordance with the Erosion and Sediment Control Guidelines for the Wellington Region (Greater Wellington Regional Council, 2019); and</i></p> <p><i>d) The works do not result in long-term land disturbance or permanent modification to surface conditions beyond reinstatement to pre-existing conditions.</i></p> <p>Alternatively, WELL seeks that the area thresholds for trenching within road reserves be significantly increased (e.g. to 1,000 m² per 12 months or based on linear trench length), to better reflect the operational realities of infrastructure</p>
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					delivery where effects are temporary, managed, and reinstated.
3	Infrastructure	INF-S19 <i>Sites and Areas of Significance to Māori (SASM)</i>	Respectfully Oppose with suggested alternative	The current thresholds (50m ² area and 600mm depth) are too restrictive and do not reflect the operational needs of infrastructure providers such as WELL. These thresholds effectively require consent for most trenching and maintenance works, even where cultural effects are minimal or managed through established protocols. This could result in unnecessary delays to essential electricity infrastructure upgrades or emergency works.	<p>Amend S19 be amended to include an exemption for electricity infrastructure trenching works as follows:</p> <p>Exemption <i>This standard does not apply to trenching works associated with electricity distribution infrastructure where the works:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. Are for the purpose of installing, maintaining, or upgrading underground electricity cables;</i> <i>2. Are temporary and linear in nature, and reinstated within 10 working days of completion;</i> <i>3. Are managed under a certified Earthworks Management Plan and Construction Management Plan, prepared in</i>

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					<p><i>accordance with the Erosion and Sediment Control Guidelines for the Wellington Region (Greater Wellington Regional Council, 2019); and</i></p> <p>4. Are undertaken in accordance with an Accidental Discovery Protocol (ADP)</p> <p>This rewording would enable minor, well-managed trenching to proceed without unnecessary consent requirements, while still maintaining cultural protection and environmental oversight. It is consistent with approaches in other district plans (such as Auckland's Unitary Plan).</p>
4	Infrastructure	INF-S2: <i>Upgrading of Infrastructure</i>	Oppose with suggested alternative	Minor upgrading now restricted.	<p>WELL seeks that INF-S2 be amended to better provide for essential electricity distribution upgrades. This includes the following specific amendments and additions:</p> <p>Amend INF-S2(Clause 1) to read: <i>"The replacement, realignment or</i></p>

					<p><i>relocation of a line, any pipe (excluding a gas transmission pipeline), support structure, conductor, cross arm, switch, transformer or ancillary structure must be within 10 metres of the existing alignment or location."</i></p> <p>Clauses 2 to 12 are supported as notified.</p> <p>In addition, WELL seeks the insertion of the following two new clauses:</p> <p><i>13. Permitted upgrading includes reconductoring of existing lines, pole strengthening, and the installation of new pole-mounted equipment such as switches or transformers, provided the works are visually integrated with the support structure and do not materially increase visual dominance.</i></p> <p><i>14. Upgrading works located within the road reserve are permitted where operational and safety requirements necessitate the</i></p>
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					<p><i>changes, and where the effects are no greater than those of the existing infrastructure.</i></p> <p>Alternatively, WELL supports the reinstatement of the “minor upgrading” rule framework used in the Operative District Plan, which permitted routine, low-impact infrastructure upgrades subject to effects-based thresholds and recognised engineering best practice. This approach provided a more enabling and practical consenting pathway for network maintenance and resilience.</p>
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3. Justification for Relief Sought

3.1 Essential Nature of Electricity Infrastructure

Electricity distribution infrastructure is vital for urban development, economic growth, and public safety. It underpins daily life and supports essential services such as healthcare, education, and business operations. The proposed plan should facilitate, rather than restrict, WELL’s ability to install, maintain, and upgrade these critical services. WELL proposes amendments that seek a balance between the practical technical realities of electricity infrastructure and protecting the environment, ensuring that the necessary development and maintenance of the electricity network can proceed in a safe, efficient, and sustainable manner.

3.2 Definitions

Clarification of key definitions is essential to ensure the district plan is interpreted and applied appropriately to electricity infrastructure. Specifically, WELL seeks amendments to the definitions of “building” and “temporary activity” to avoid unintended consenting requirements for small utility structures and mobile generators. WELL also proposes the inclusion of a rule or definition that clearly provides for minor upgrading activities such as reconductoring, pole replacement, and the installation of pole-mounted equipment, which are currently excluded but vital for network resilience and ongoing maintenance.

3.3 Policies

Wellington Electricity seeks the inclusion of a new policy under the Renewable Energy chapter to acknowledge the technical and operational constraints of the electricity distribution network when integrating distributed renewable generation. This will ensure the Plan reflects national regulatory requirements and provides clear direction for both developers and decision-makers.

For PINF-P1, amendments are sought to ensure the policy enables compatible development near nationally significant infrastructure, provided that operational access, safety, and asset integrity can be maintained. These changes strike an appropriate balance between protection and practicality, ensuring the plan remains enabling while managing risk effectively.

3.3 Rules and Standards

The Proposed District Plan removes the previously permitted activity status for minor upgrading, which previously allowed essential electricity works where effects were minimal. Routine activities such as reconductoring, pole replacement, and the installation of pole-mounted equipment are now heavily restricted under INF-S2. This provision limits upgrades to narrow spatial thresholds and prohibits modest increases in height or scale. These limitations do not reflect how electricity infrastructure is maintained in practice and create delays due to the requirement to apply for consent for routine maintenance activities typically carried out in road reserves or easements.

Electricity is essential for the daily functioning of homes, businesses, healthcare, and public services. The limitations imposed by INF-S2 could affect the efficient delivery of electricity services, as essential upgrades, such as replacing aging infrastructure or installing new equipment, would be delayed by the need to apply for consent. This could impact the reliability and safety of the electricity supply for the Hutt City community.

WELL seeks amendments to INF-S2 to explicitly permit these types of upgrades, reinstating a practical consenting pathway for essential infrastructure maintenance. By providing a streamlined process for minor upgrades, the plan would allow WELL to carry out essential improvements without delays that affect the quality or reliability of service.

Similarly, trenching for underground cables is a core part of WELL's operations and is typically managed through certified construction and earthworks management plans. The thresholds under INF-S17 do not reflect the linear and temporary nature of trenching activities. The default application of area-based limits across multiple zones can cause delays in routine network upgrades and maintenance due to the consent requirement. Trenching activities are necessary for ensuring the continuous and reliable supply of electricity. The application of area-based limits, which fail to account for the linear nature of trenching, could cause delays in routine upgrades and repairs, hindering WELL's ability to maintain an efficient and reliable service. This could lead to service disruptions, impacting businesses, critical services, and everyday consumers. WELL seeks either an exemption for trenching within road reserves or an increase in thresholds to reflect operational realities, noting that larger earthworks are already captured under regional rules. A more practical approach would help streamline these essential works while still respecting the environment and minimizing impacts on other land uses.

With respect to Sites and Areas of Significance to Māori (SASM), the current thresholds in INF-S19 would require consent for most trenching works, even where effects are minimal. WELL is committed to respecting cultural values, and acknowledges that these sites require careful consideration. However, the very low thresholds could be managed through established protocols such as an Accidental Discovery Protocol (ADP), ensuring cultural values are protected while allowing essential works to proceed efficiently. WELL proposes that works within SASM areas be permitted with appropriate cultural safeguards in place, avoiding unnecessary delays for routine infrastructure maintenance.

4. Decision Sought

WELL seeks that Hutt City Council adopt the amendments outlined in the submission tables, which set out the specific relief sought in relation to definitions, objectives and policies, rules, and standards. These amendments are intended to ensure the Proposed District Plan 2025 provides a practical and enabling framework for the delivery, operation, and maintenance of electricity distribution infrastructure.

In particular, WELL seeks:

- Amendments to the definition of “building” to exclude network utility structures such as cabinets and enclosures, and amendments to the definition of “temporary activity” to include mobile electricity generators (as detailed in the Definitions table);
- Clarification and refinement of relevant policies, including a new policy under the Renewable Energy chapter and amendments to PINF-P1, to ensure they reflect operational realities and statutory obligations;
- Amendments to INF-S2 to permit routine minor upgrading activities such as reconductoring, pole replacement, and installation of pole-mounted equipment.
- Exemptions or increased thresholds for trenching works under INF-S17 and INF-R9/10, where works are temporary, linear, and managed through certified construction and earthworks plans.
- Amendments to INF-S19 to enable trenching in Sites and Areas of Significance to Māori where effects are minor and appropriate protocols are in place.

The relief sought in this submission is necessary to support the delivery of vital electrical infrastructure, support the efficient delivery of critical infrastructure, and ensure the plan appropriately reflects the operational needs and regulatory obligations of electricity distribution. WELL supports the overall direction of the plan with some exceptions and seeks these targeted refinements to ensure it functions effectively in practice.

5. Conclusion

The Proposed Lower Hutt City District Plan 2025 presents an important opportunity to create a clear framework for managing infrastructure. While the overall direction is supported, it is crucial that targeted amendments are made to ensure the plan remains practical and adaptable to the needs of essential services, particularly electricity distribution.

The changes outlined in this submission are vital for the continued efficient delivery of electricity infrastructure, which is fundamental to daily life. These amendments are needed to facilitate routine, low-impact, and safety-driven works, including clarifying definitions, enabling minor upgrades, adjusting trenching thresholds, and refining policies to reflect the operational realities of electricity networks and statutory obligations. Without these amendments, the ability to maintain and enhance the electricity network would be delayed, potentially impacting the safety, reliability, and efficiency of electricity supply for Hutt City residents and businesses.

The relief sought, as detailed in the accompanying submission tables and justification section, is necessary to ensure that the electricity network remains safe, resilient, and capable of meeting the growing demands of the community.

WELL respectfully requests to be heard at the hearings to ensure that these critical amendments are fully understood and addressed, helping to shape a district plan that allows electricity services to continue meeting the needs of the community now and into the future.



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