

Planning Update

11 February 2026: Overview of Planning Function & RMA National Direction

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Overview

- District Planning Function Overview
- National Direction Updates (December 2025)

Section One

District Planning Function Overview

District Planning Functions

	District Plan Review	Growth Planning	Strategic Planning Policy
Function description:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review, maintenance & update of District Plan (District Plan Review Project) Process Private Plan Changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forward planning for housing, commercial & industrial growth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic planning advice & projects Commissioning studies & reports
Examples of Key Current Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan Change E: Town Centre & Mixed Use Designations Review Planning Maps Review Section 35 monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Capacity Model Village & Settlement Growth Blueprints Precinct 1-3 & Feilding Nodal Review Industrial & Commercial Land Demand NPS:UD housing monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Planning Strategic Relationships Submissions RMA Reform Policy advice for LTP, Development Contributions, etc

Forward works calendar

	2026/2027	2027/2028	2028/2029
District Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan Change E: Town Centre & Mixed Use Designations Review Monitoring & Review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing Local Landuse Plan as required by Planning Act 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Landuse Plan notification & hearing process
Growth Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feasibility investigations on next growth areas Housing Capacity Model update NPS:UD housing monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feasibility investigations on next growth areas Housing Capacity Model update NPS:UD housing monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Capacity Model update NPS:UD housing monitoring
Strategic Planning Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparing for Regional Spatial Plan Iwi/hapū relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Spatial Plan notification and hearing Iwi/hapū relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Spatial Plan appeals? Participation in Environment Plan Iwi/hapū relationships

Section Two

RMA National Direction Changes

Background

- December 18 – Govt released 3 new, and 7 amended RMA national direction instruments.
 - First of several tranches (RMA replacement system will have more)
- Came into force (i.e. must be complied with) from 15 January 2026.
- National direction instruments have the status of secondary legislation under New Zealand law. That means our planning documents and practices must be consistent their content.



National Direction Changes

- The three new national direction instruments are:
 - Resource Management (National Environmental Standards for Detached Minor Residential Units) Regulations 2025
 - National Policy Statement for Natural Hazards 2025
 - National Policy Statement for Infrastructure 2025
- The national direction instruments which have been amended are:
 - National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land Amendment 2025
 - New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement Amendment 2025
 - National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity Amendment 2025
 - National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management Amendment 2025
 - Resource Management (National Environmental Standards for Freshwater) Amendment Regulations 2025
 - National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation Amendment 2025
 - National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks Amendment 2025

Relevance

- Most NPSs and NESs are worded in such a way as to not require us to make immediate changes
 - NPS and NES provisions trump our district plan, so the immediate effect is on consent decision-making considerations.
- May have some impact on future plan changes – but Plan Change E is the only live plan change currently.
- Unclear how much of the national direction will feed directly into the post-RMA system? (e.g. do they form part of a ‘deemed’ or interim National Policy Direction set?)

Section Three

Granny Flats

Resource Management (National Environmental Standards for Detached Minor Residential Units) Regulations 2025

Details

Contents	1	Title
	2	Commencement
Preliminary provisions	3	Interpretation
	4	Transitional, savings, and related provisions
DMRU permitted activity	5	Permitted activity: rule
	6	Permitted activity: standards
	7	District plan rules and standards
	8	Regional plan rules
District plan rules and standards may be more lenient	9	District plan rules and standards may be more lenient
DMRU must comply with other legislation	10	DMRU must comply with other legislation
When DMRU needs resource consent	11	When DMRU needs resource consent
Schedule 1 Transitional, savings, and related provisions		Explanatory note Administrative Information

Advice

- Regulations do not cleanly mesh with existing District Plan provisions or Council requirements.
 - E.g. stormwater & site coverage. Consent notices
- Some complexity for applicants & Council:
 - New processing pathway: must comply with regulations for Council to issue a PIM.
 - If do not meet regulations, proposal defaults back to regular planning system.

Relevance

- Possibly signals the look & approach of future planning system & use of Regulations.
- Likely to require an increase in monitoring & enforcement.
- Need to review related processes – e.g. development contributions.
- Will require changes to our future Housing Capacity Model & infrastructure modelling.



Section Four

NPS Natural Hazards

Details

- Mandatory to assess any current or future resource consent application subject to a natural hazard.
- The only hazards that the NPS-NH applies to are flooding, landslips, coastal erosion, coastal inundation, active faults, liquefaction and tsunamis.
- Proportionate: Risk Matrix table provided to assist process.
- Recognition that information is uncertain.

Figure 1: Risk matrix

		Likelihood Level						
		Almost Certain	Very Likely	Likely	Possible	Unlikely	Rare	Very Rare
ARI (years)		up to 10	10-20	20-50	50-100	100-500	500-5000	> 5000
AEP		10% or more	10% to 5%	5% to 2%	2% to 1%	1% to 0.2%	0.2% to 0.02%	< 0.02%
Consequence Level	Catastrophic	Very High	Very High	Very High	High	Medium	Medium	Medium
	Major	Very High	Very High	High	High	Medium	Medium	Medium
	Moderate	High	High	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Low
	Minor	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Low
	Negligible	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low

Note: The top end of the likelihood range includes the top end year, that is: Likely = over 20 years and up to and including 50 years.

Relevance

- NPS concise - indication of future national direction?
- Signals direction Govt may take towards natural hazard management in future planning system.
- Unclear how applies on the ground:
 - What actual standards around risk and acceptability are used? Some reports previously completed will not have been prepared with this use in mind.
 - Standing issue of gaps in the NZ hazard maps.
- Council will need to participate in development of the system – will matter for future consenting.



Section Five

NPS Infrastructure

Details

- Ensures that the planning and consenting system recognize benefits of infrastructure.
- Speaks to common issues & concepts in the infrastructure space (operational & functional need, corridor management, status of infrastructure providers)
- Must be taken into account in current & future infrastructure consenting.
- Some exclusions – e.g. where other infrastructure NPS apply.

Relevance

- Future MDC infrastructure projects will benefit from the NPS being in place.
- Greater protections around infrastructure corridors?
- Links to future planning system:
 - E.g. Spatial plans reference in Policy 3.
 - NPS is very succinct compared to others developed in recent years.
 - NPS still contains competing outcomes.
 - “Guidance” language



Section Six

**NPS: Highly
Productive
Land**

Background

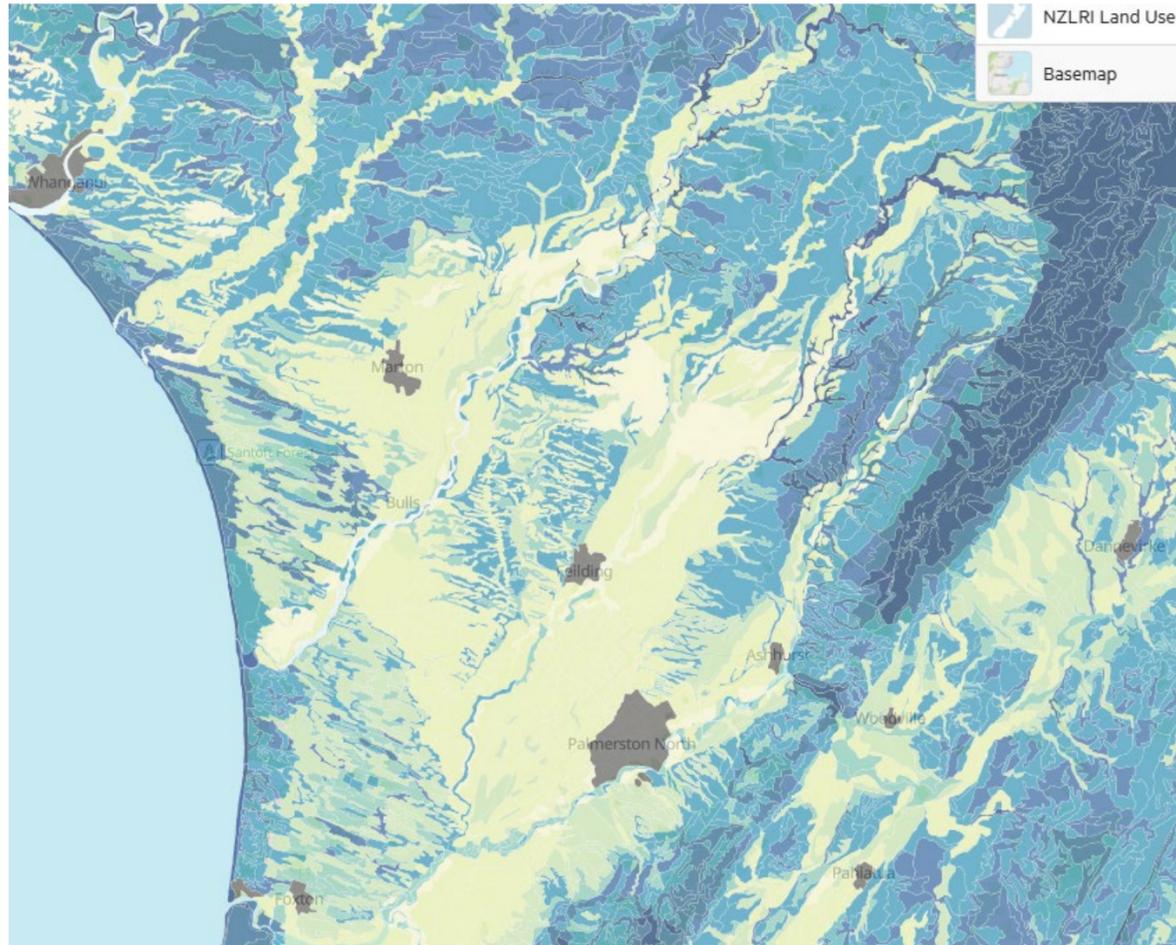
- NZ lost too much productive farmland to urban expansion and rural lifestyle development, esp. in South Auckland
- Response = NPS [national policy statement] in 2022
 - Interim definition: applies to rural land, that is NZRLI Class 1, 2 or 3 (unless identified in plans as future urban).
- Regional Councils had until Oct 2025 to map highly productive land.
- Restrictions on all activity except land-based primary production.



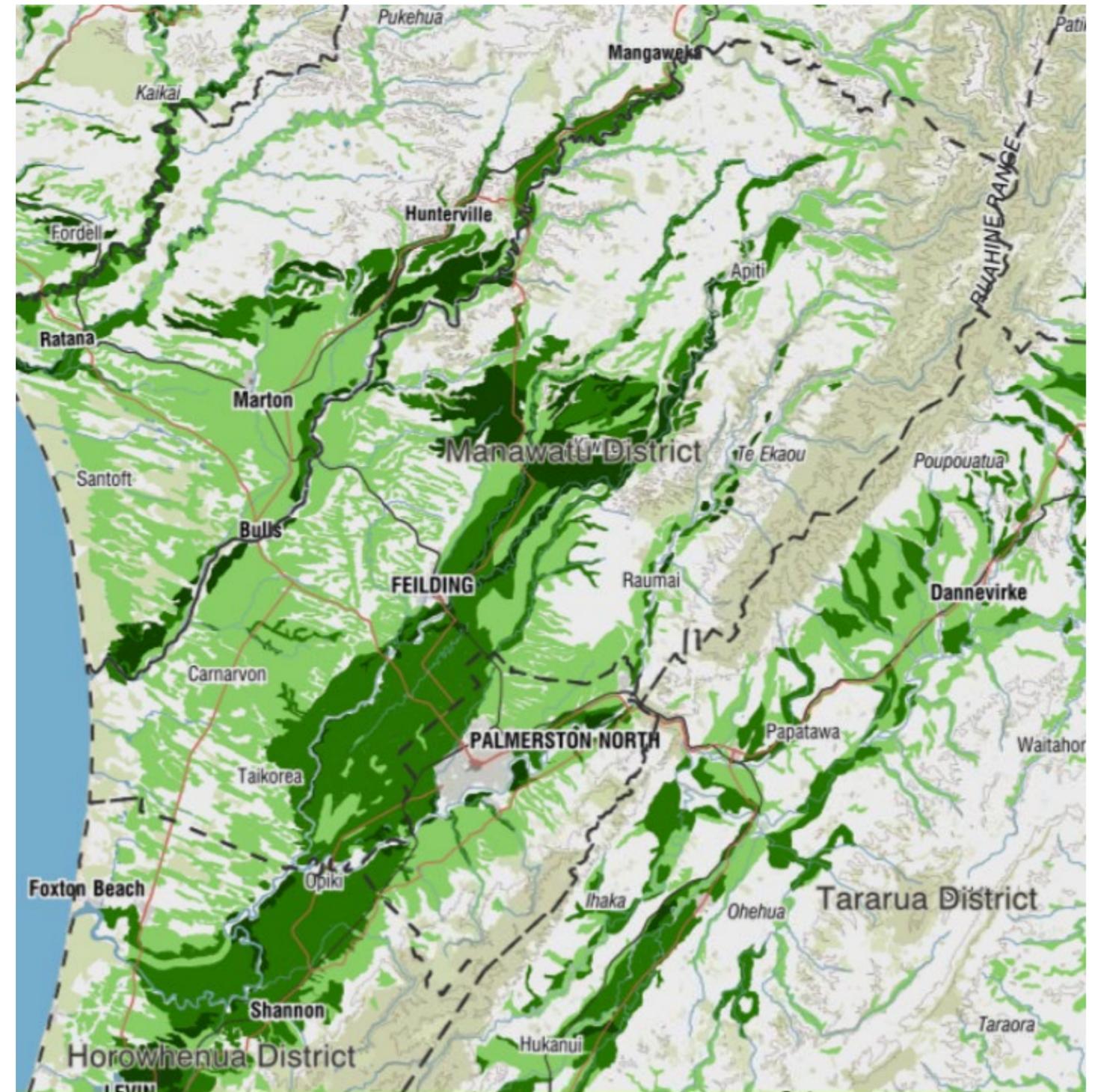
MDC Concerns

- Which map applies? 40% of the Manawatū meets interim definition – all urban areas.
- Discomfort around future impact on Manawatū & being able to provide for rural living.
- Limited acknowledgement of where land is already fragmented – i.e. additional lifestyle development on smaller lots.
- Poor recognition of existing non-primary-production land uses which are not zoned (e.g. airfields and schools)
- NPS does not recognize the breadth of industries & activities that support land-based primary production.
- Being a NPS means application varies across the country depending on current District Plan rules.

Mapping



NZLRI 2021



Manaaki Whenua Our Environment

2025 Updates

- LUC 1, 2 or 3 Land Definition: now allows for improvements to the New Zealand Land Resource Inventory.
- Exclusion of LUC 3 Land where:
- Clause 3.5(7): if subject to resource consent for subdivision, use or development. Does not apply to rural lifestyle.
- Clause 3.6(6) from urban rezoning restrictions.
- Clause 3.9 changes to recognize mining & quarrying of national or regional benefit
- Clause 4.1 Timeframe for Regional Council mapping pushed out from Oct 2025 until Dec 2027.



Final Thoughts