



Consultation Document

Government's new housing rules: What it means for Auckland

Introduction

Over the past few years, central government has taken a much stronger role in planning for the growth of New Zealand's largest and fastest growing cities. This means new rules for enabling more building height and housing density.

These are directed by the government's National Policy Statement on Urban Development 2020 (NPS-UD) and the Resource Management (Enabling Housing Supply and Other Matters) Amendment Act 2021 (the Act).

These government requirements will enable higher-density housing, such as apartments, terrace housing and townhouses, across our city particularly in areas close to public transport and centres with shops, jobs and community services.

We have prepared a preliminary response to the NPS-UD and the Act, that shows how we think they could apply to Auckland. We are asking for feedback on the preliminary response from 19 April to 9 May 2022.

We must then publicly notify for submissions a proposed plan change to the Auckland Unitary Plan (our planning rulebook) by 20 August 2022.

This summary of the preliminary response is explained in more detail in the supporting information sheets listed below and shown in the planning maps in the NPS-UD map viewer. These are available on akhaveyoursay.nz/housing.

Information sheet #1: Overview of draft changes for intensification

Information sheet #2: Walkable catchments

Information sheet #3: Residential intensification in walkable catchments and the Terrace Housing and Apartment Buildings Zone

Information sheet #4: Intensification around suburban centres

Information sheet #5: Medium Density Residential Standards (MDRS)

Information sheet #6: Qualifying matters (Part 1)

Information sheet #7: Qualifying matters (Part 2)

Information sheet #8: The City Centre Zone

Information sheet #9: Special Character Areas

For more detail and information about how to use the NPS-UD GIS map viewer please see *Information sheet #10: NPS-UD GIS map viewer user guide* on akhaveyoursay.nz/housing.

Requirements for intensification

The NPS-UD focuses on housing of six storeys or more in and around our largest urban centres (including the city centre) and around rapid transit stops (like Auckland's train stations and busway stops). The Act requires Medium Density Residential Standards (MDRS) that enable housing of up to three storeys to be built on most residential sites across the city.

The requirements from the NPS-UD and the Act mean we have to change the rules in the Auckland Unitary Plan for how properties can be developed.

How the proposals described here apply to different places in Auckland is shown on the preliminary response maps in the NPS-UD map viewer (a link is available on akhaveyoursay.nz/housing).

For an overview and more information about the draft changes for intensification please see *Information sheet #1: Overview of draft changes for intensification* on akhaveyoursay.nz/housing.

Intensification inside walkable catchments

A walkable catchment (required by the NPS-UD) is the area around a train station or busway stop, or a large urban centre, within which an average person would walk to that location.

The government requires councils to identify walkable catchments around the city centre, metropolitan centres and rapid transit stops where buildings of six storeys or more must be enabled. This could be achieved by modifying the existing Residential – Terrace Housing and Apartment Buildings Zone to enable buildings of at least six storeys.

The intention is to focus growth within walkable distances so more people can choose to live close to urban centres for shopping, entertainment, community services or meeting friends, or to catch public transport to get around.

This also helps to reduce congestion and greenhouse gas emissions with people driving less distances to reach the places and services they need and want.

We are proposing:

- a 15-minute walk (around 1200 metres) from the edge of the city centre.

- a 10-minute walk (around 800 metres) from the edge of the metropolitan centres and around rapid transit stops, such as a train station or stop along the Northern Busway.

These are subject to modifying factors such as the topography, for example steep hills, and physical barriers including motorways.

The zoning proposal shown in the NPS-UD map viewer to enable intensification inside walkable catchments is called Residential – Terrace Housing and Apartment Buildings Zone – Modified.

For more detail and information about walkable catchments please see *Information sheet #1: Walkable catchments* on akhaveyoursay.nz/housing.

For more detail and information about residential intensification in walkable catchments and the Terrace Housing and Apartment Buildings Zone please see *Information sheet #3: Residential intensification in walkable catchments and the Terrace Housing and Apartment Buildings Zone*.

Intensification around town and local centres

The government has also required us to enable greater building heights and housing densities in and around our neighbourhood, local and town centres.

The height and housing densities we enable are required to match the level of commercial activity and community services in each centre (such as the number of jobs, shops and businesses). This could be achieved by increasing the amount of land zoned Residential – Terrace Housing and Apartment Buildings Zone around some centres and newly applying it around others.

Town centres are larger suburban centres in Auckland that provide for a wide range of shops, services and activities for their surrounding neighbourhoods. They are often spread across a couple of city blocks, and along main roads. Some examples are Glenfield, Glen Eden, Parnell and Papatoetoe town centres.

Local centres are smaller suburban centres that serve local areas and neighbourhoods. Local centres might have 20 or 30 shops and some small offices.

Neighbourhood centres are very small groups of shops and businesses that serve their immediate neighbourhood (for example the local dairy and hairdresser).

The zoning proposal shown in the NPS-UD map viewer to enable intensification [around town and local centres](#) is the Residential – Terrace Housing and Apartment Buildings Zone.

For more detail and information about intensification around suburban centres please see *Information sheet #4: Intensification around suburban centres* on akhaveyoursay.nz/housing.

Medium Density Residential Standards (MDRS)

We are required by the Act to allow medium-density housing across most of Auckland's residential areas. These are the suburban areas outside of the walkable catchments and the areas around centres talked about above.

This could be achieved by modifying the existing Residential – Mixed Housing Urban Zone to enable MDRS to apply.

This will allow new housing of up to three-storeys (including terrace housing and low-rise apartments). The MDRS also allows three houses on a site without the need for a resource consent. The intention is to enable more houses to be built across the suburban housing areas that make up most of Auckland's urban environment.

The zoning proposal shown in the NPS-UD map viewer to enable MDRS in most of Auckland's suburban housing areas is called Residential – Mixed Housing Urban Zone – Modified.

The Act also requires the council to replace its housing design standards for things like the amount of a property that buildings can cover, the size of outdoor spaces and how much of property can be landscaped.

For more detail and information about MDRS please see *Information sheet #5: Medium Density Residential Standards (MDRS)* on akhaveyoursay.nz/housing.

Qualifying matters

The government allows for some qualifying matters - exemptions - to modify three-storey and six-storey building heights. Qualifying matters are a characteristic which can be used to protect sites of cultural, historic, or ecological significance or to avoid development in areas with natural hazards.

The government has already identified a number of required qualifying matters and allows us to identify other qualifying matters relevant and important to Aucklanders.

For more detail and information about qualifying matters please see *Information sheet #6 Qualifying matters (Part 1)* on akhaveyoursay.nz/housing.

Required qualifying matters

The government has already identified a number of qualifying matters, that must be protected and reflected in proposals for intensification. They include:

- (a) a matter of national importance under section 6 of the RMA
- (b) a matter required by any other National Policy Statement
- (c) a matter required to give effect to Te Ture Whaimana o Te Awa o Waikato – the Vision and Strategy for the Waikato River
- (d) a matter required to give effect to the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park Act 2000 or the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Act 2008
- (e) any matter that ensures the safe or efficient operation of nationally significant infrastructure
- (f) open space provided for public use
- (g) an area subject to a designation or heritage order
- (h) a matter that implements or ensures consistency with iwi participation legislation
- (i) the requirement to provide sufficient business land suitable for low-density uses

We have identified the overlays and rules in the Auckland Unitary Plan that deal with these matters and have proposed an appropriate way to protect them in our preliminary response.

The zoning proposal shown in the NPS-UD map viewer to respond to these qualifying matters is either the Two-Storey Single Dwelling Residential Area or Two-Storey Medium Density Residential Area. Which of these proposals applies depends on the nature of the qualifying matter that is being protected or recognised.

Other qualifying matters that we are proposing

The government allows us to identify additional qualifying matters relevant and important to Aucklanders. To include our own qualifying matters, we must provide strong evidence to justify why it should reduce building heights and housing density in a particular area taking into account the government's strong direction to enable more housing.

The additional qualifying matters the council thinks are important for Auckland include:

- Special Character Areas – older established areas of special architectural or other built character value
- The Ridgeline Protection Overlay – prominent ridges in Auckland that add scenic character
- The Local Public Views Overlay – views that contribute to neighbourhood character
- The Auckland War Memorial Museum Viewshaft – a popular viewing point from a landmark building
- The Stockade Hill Viewshaft – a significant local viewing point
- Character buildings in City Centre Zone and Queen Street Valley Precinct – pre-1940's buildings that add to the character of the Queen Street Valley and other parts of the city centre
- Some of the existing built form controls in the city centre (e.g. allowing sunlight into public places)
- Areas with long-term significant infrastructure constraints – for example water supply, wastewater, stormwater and transport

The zoning proposal shown in the NPS-UD map viewer to respond to these qualifying matters is either the Two-Storey Single Dwelling Residential Area or Two-Storey Medium Density Residential Area. Again, which of these proposals applies depends on the nature of the qualifying matter that is being protected or recognised.

For more detail and information about the qualifying matters the council is proposing please see *Information sheet #7: Qualifying matters (Part 2)* on akhaveyoursay.nz/housing.

For more detail and information about proposed changes to the City Centre Zone please see *Information sheet #8: The City Centre Zone* on akhaveyoursay.nz/housing.

Special Character Areas

'Special character areas' are older parts of the city that have special architectural or other built character value. They are covered by the Special Character Area Overlay in the Auckland Unitary Plan.

Many of Auckland's older residential suburbs were built around the early public transport network and emerging town centres. This is where our special character areas are generally located.

The government is now directing us to enable increased housing density (e.g. buildings of six-storeys or more) within walkable catchments of town centres and public transport networks, and up to three storey buildings elsewhere. Some of these areas are covered by the Special Character Area Overlay.

The government has not included special character areas as a qualifying matter. However, we are proposing to include identified areas of special character as a qualifying matter that reduces limits on building heights and housing density to ensure the character values of these areas are retained.

The zoning proposal shown in the NPS-UD map viewer to respond to the special character areas qualifying matter is the Two-Storey Single Dwelling Residential Area.

For more detail and information about special character areas please see *Information sheet #9: Special Character Areas* on akhaveyoursay.nz/housing.

Areas with significant infrastructure constraints

We are investigating whether we can clearly identify areas in Auckland with long-term significant infrastructure constraints as a qualifying matter. As with special character areas, this is not a qualifying matter that is required by the government, and therefore including this as a qualifying matter will require strong justification and technical evidence.

These areas could potentially include neighbourhoods that are prone to significant flooding, where water supply and wastewater networks may not be adequate to cope with more growth and are very costly and/or difficult to upgrade, or where access to public transport, cycling and walking infrastructure is not adequate and very costly and/or difficult to provide.

Including this as a qualifying matter would reduce the limits on building heights and housing density that would otherwise be enabled.

We have not yet determined how we might be able to apply this qualifying matter. At this stage, we want feedback on whether to include this as a qualifying matter or not.

If we include it as a qualifying matter, we will show the extent and location of any changes to height and housing density requirements in our plan change to be notified in August 2022.

What we are asking for feedback on

The changes set out in the NPS-UD and the Act are not optional. By law, we must change the Auckland Unitary Plan to put these new rules in place. However, the NPS-UD allows us to make a limited number of decisions to help shape the future of our city such as:

- The distances of walkable catchments where buildings of six storeys or more are required
- The size of the areas around our suburban town and local centres where additional building height and housing density can occur, and what the building heights and density limits are
- Other additional qualifying matters (a feature or characteristic which can reduce the three-storey and six-storey building height limits) that should apply in Auckland.

We want your feedback

We want your feedback on the parts of the preliminary response described here. Your feedback will help inform the plan change we are required to notify to the Auckland Unitary Plan. For more information and the feedback questions go to akhaveyoursay.nz/housing.

We must publicly notify the plan change by 20 August 2022. You can then make a submission on the plan change, so that your views are considered by an independent hearings panel who will make recommendations back to the council in 2023/2024.

How you can have your say

We strongly suggest you read the supporting information provided at akhaveyoursay.nz/housing before giving feedback.

We encourage you to give feedback online at akhaveyoursay.nz/housing, or you can complete the form and return it to us using one of these options:

- **Email:** Scan your completed form and email it to unitaryplan@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz.
- **In person:** Drop your completed form off at your local library or service centre.
- **By post:** Place your completed form in an envelope and send it to freepost address: Unitary Plan Team, Auckland Council, Freepost Authority 182382, Private Bag 92 300, Auckland 1142.

Feedback must be received by Monday 9 May 2022.